

MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA

1 EXT: JAPANESE SEACOAST. STORMY DAY. WIND. [WINTER]. * 1

DEAD LEAVES scatter from twisted, skeletal trees that toss in the harsh wind on the cliffs above the water's edge.

Below the cliff at the edge of the sea, VILLAGE WOMEN gather fish laid to dry on wooden drying racks. The women hurry, trying to escape the storm. In the rough waves, FISHERMEN stand and pull in their nets. An OX is tethered to a wayward boat, straining to pull it from the angry sea and safely to shore.

Clinging to the edge of the cliff is a tiny ramshackle, lopsided "tipsy house". RAIN starts to batter its broken shingles. Covering under the eaves, a frightened macaque. A home-made windchime bangs, tinkling. A lantern glows behind a patched rice-paper door. The CAMERA moves inside to the soft murmur of men speaking in JAPANESE:

TANAKA *
(off-screen) *
*You've done all that you can for *
you wife, Sakamoto-san **

2 INT. TIPSY HOUSE STORM. DAY. [WINTER]. 2

TANAKA (50) and old SAKAMOTO (late 60s but seems older; *
weathered, bent) confer in whispers. SAKAMOTO's wife, MOTHER *
(40) reclines, wrapped in a quilt. She is frail, her face
etched with pain. She opens her eyes briefly to drink a
medicinal tea: they are a silver color.

In secret, her daughters CHIYO (9, clean-limbed, delicate) *
and SATSU (15, slow, earthy) listen behind a make-shift
screen. The TWO MEN continue in JAPANESE: *

TANAKA *
*Have you made any provision for *
your daughters?*

SAKAMOTO *
(his head bowed in shame) *
I've nothing left. Nothing. *

Without understanding Japanese, we still comprehend the grave *
situation. *

Satsu grips little Chiyo's hand tightly:

TANAKA

*You're not young. Like this house.
One good storm could carry you off.*

Satsu turns away, she cannot bear to hear more. But little Chiyo desperately presses her ear against the "wall":

SAKAMOTO

*I've nothing left to offer them but
my prayers.*

TANAKA

*Let me take them; I will make
arrangements--.*

Sakamoto eyes him with both alarm and regret.

SAKAMOTO

I could never--.

TANAKA

*Any life would be better than the
one that awaits them here.*

4

OMIT

* 4

5 OMIT * 5

6 INT: TIPSY HOUSE. PRE-DAWN. WIND. [WINTER]. 6

Abrupt awakening. In darkness Satsu and Chiyo are rudely roused. Sakamoto's weathered old face distorted by the light of his oil lamp. *

 SAKAMOTO
 (in Japanese) *
Quiet! *

7 EXT: TIPSY HOUSE AND CLIFF PATH. PRE-DAWN. WIND. [WINTER]. 7

In the pelting rain, Sakamoto grimly lifts Chiyo into Tanaka's wooden cart, handing her to Satsu. In front, Tanaka takes the reins of the OX. Sakamoto lifts his lantern for a final look as the cart pulls away. His old eyes fill with tears. *

In Chiyo's face, rainwater and sorrow stream together down her face. The softly accented VOICE of a mature woman narrates in ENGLISH: *

SAYURI'S VOICE *

A story like mine should never be told. *

Chiyo is jolted about in the back as Tanaka's fish-stained cart rattles over rough road. *

SAYURI'S VOICE (cont'd) *

For my world is as forbidden as it is fragile; without it's mysteries, it cannot survive. *

Low-hanging branches whip the cart; Satsu pulls Chiyo close to guard her from them. Tanaka urges the oxen onward. *

SAYURI'S VOICE (cont'd) *

My family lived in a tipsy house in a tiny village called Yoroido on the Sea of Japan. When I was born, my father was already old. My mother said he was like wood, as rooted to the earth as an old Sakura tree. But she and I were like water. Water doesn't stay in one place; it flows quickly-- *

The heavy oak wheels carve grooves through the mud. In the driving rain, they fill with water, which courses in rivulets across the ground, tiny rivers. *

SAYURI'S VOICE (cont'd) *

-and when something blocks the way, water makes a new path. *

A RIVULET veers to one side rather than pass over a stone. *

8

EXT: SMALL TOWN RAILWAY DEPOT. EARLY MORNING. [WINTER].

8

Chill gray light. A coal-fired TRAIN ENGINE--like a great, black DRAGON, belching smoke, with one malevolent white eye-- idles on the platform. [Japanese sign: "Senzuru"].

SAYURI'S VOICE

I certainly wasn't born to the life
of a geisha.

MEN load mailbags, boxes of dried fish, sacks of rice. Few passengers are boarding. On the platform waits MR. BEKKU (middle-aged, impersonal, cold).

SAYURI'S VOICE (cont'd)

Like so much in my strange life, I
was carried there, by the current.

Tanaka greets Bekku, leaving Satsu and Chiyo huddled close to each other, shivering in their bare feet. They hold hands tightly. Tanaka makes the girls stand in front of Bekku:

TANAKA

Bow to Mr. Bekku.

Satsu bows obediently, but Chiyo is too frightened; she just stares at Bekku, dumbstruck. His haori (jacket) & kimono are of smooth silk; his hands as soft as a woman's.

TANAKA (cont'd)

You too.

Shaken out of her stupor, Chiyo bows. When she raises her head, Bekku notices her haunting silver eyes.

MR. BEKKU

Hm. Curious eyes. *

CHIYO

I have my mother's eyes.

MR. BEKKU

(to Tanaka)

What are their names?

TANAKA

She's Chiyo. Her sister is Satsu.

Bekku turns to Satsu and prods her.

MR. BEKKU

They're sisters? She looks like a
peasant next to this little one.

TANAKA

Their father does not want them to
be separated.

Bekku hands him an envelope and both men bow. Tanaka touches
the girls reassuringly, encouraging them:

TANAKA (cont'd)

Be good.

Gripping their elbows, Bekku propels Satsu and Chiyo into the train car. Chiyo tries to twist free, calls to Tanaka:

CHIYO

Tanaka-san!

Mr. Bekku jerks Chiyo on board.

TANAKA

(calling after them)

Mata yo!

9	OMIT	9
10	EXT: TRAIN IN RURAL JAPAN. DAY. {WINTER}.	10
	The TRAIN winds through a magnificent vista of hills and trees still stark with winter.	
11	OMIT	11
12	OMIT	12
13	OMIT	13
14	OMIT	14
A15	EXT. CLOSE ON TRAIN WHEELS - TRAIN ARRIVING MIYAKO [WINTER]	A15
	Sparks fly from the train brakes, and the SOUND of metal wheels scream against metal tracks.	
15	INT./EXT. TRAIN STATION - MIYAKO. EVENING. {WINTER}.	15
	Bekku and his two tiny wards disembark from the train. He ushers them through the bedlam of PASSENGERS, TRAIN OFFICIALS and BAGGAGE HANDLERS. Bekku puts Satsu and Chiyo in the RICKSHAW. He climbs in, wedging himself between Chiyo and Satsu.	* *

16

EXT: RICKSHAW MOVING - STREETS OF THE HANAMACHI. MIYAKO.
NIGHT. [WINTER].

16

Chiyo keeps peeking past the huge form of Bekku, glimpsing passing buildings and brightly-lit electrical signs.

POV image: A DISTINCTIVE TORII GATE spans the entrance to a huge SHRINE, flanked by rows of HUGE WHITE PAPER LANTERNS.

They have crossed the winding river known as the Sonogawa; they're met by a crush of BICYCLES, HORSE-DRAWN CARTS, RICKSHAWS, and AUTOMOBILES.

GROUPS of MEN in Western clothes and fedoras pass by the YUKIMOTO TEAHOUSE, its wall hung with lanterns and theatre posters covered with Japanese & Chinese characters.

Chiyo curiously cranes to see more but Bekku shoves her back and pins her firmly.

17

EXT: THE OKIYA - IN THE HANAMACHI. NIGHT. [WINTER].

17

Narrow streets are crowded with shuttered wooden facades and the silhouettes of low tiled roofs. The darkness is punctuated by a few red lanterns in the near-distance.

BEKKU

Sokode.

The rickshaw arrives at a wooden entrance gate. Bekku pulls the girls from the rickshaw.

He slides open the gate. Chiyo sees a lantern hanging over a wet stone courtyard, and beyond that, the entrance into a traditional Japanese okiya. The door is open:

A mysterious female SILHOUETTE glides toward Chiyo, pauses. Her shape moves into the light of the lantern above the path, revealing:

HATSUMOMO (28), in full geisha regalia: Gorgeous kimono, sensuously-upswept hair studded with dangling hair ornaments. A mask of pearl-white make-up sets off a blood-red mouth and large almond-shaped eyes rimmed with fluid black.

Behind her, AUNTIE (55) strikes a flint, "flinting" Hatsumomo for luck; SPARKS rain upon her back.

Bekku pushes the girls down onto the wet ground. Hatsumomo steps imperiously past in her delicate sandals and pure white tabi [gloves for the feet]. As she sweeps by, Chiyo turns her face up to watch:

The geisha's fluid kimono sleeves slowly lift like dreamy silken wings. She glides away like a butterfly of the night.

Auntie moves to the girls, cane in hand. She walks with a slight limp, her hip jutting forward.

AUNTIE

These are the girls from Tanaka?

BEKKU

Sisters, yes, from Yoroido.

AUNTIE

(peers at Chiyo)

This one maybe. The other one, no.

Bekku roughly yanks Satsu back into the rickshaw.

BEKKU

Hayaku.

The DRIVER pulls away. Chiyo rushes into the street. Crying, Satsu reaches out for her, but Auntie captures Chiyo. The rickshaw flies on:

CHIYO

Satsu!

SATSU

Chiyo-chan!

18

INT. OKIYA - MOTHER'S ROOM. NIGHT. [WINTER].

18

Auntie slides back a door to the okiya.

AUNTIE

Show your respect for Mother. You must not speak; I will answer for you.

(calling)

Okasan!

MOTHER (O.S.)

(from within)

Come in!

Auntie pushes open a shoji screen, revealing a dark room where a RADIO plays. Through spirals of smoke, Chiyo can see a neatly-coiffed woman kneeling before accounting books, smoking a long traditional pipe: MOTHER (40s, business woman). Auntie grips Chiyo and whispers:

AUNTIE
Kneel. And head down! Never look
her in the face.

Auntie shoves Chiyo's head down. Smoke streams from Mother's nose as she appraises the grubby child. She motions: Closer.

MOTHER
How old are you?

AUNTIE
She is Year of the Rooster.

MOTHER
Only nine?

Mother makes a dismissive sound and examines Chiyo's dirty feet. She pulls up Chiyo's dress to look at her straight legs; runs her thumb down Chiyo's spine. Chiyo blurts:

CHIYO
Where is my sister?

Auntie claps a hand over her mouth. Mother looks at Chiyo:

MOTHER
Let me see those eyes.

Auntie stares. She hadn't noticed before.

MOTHER (cont'd)
Too much water.

AUNTIE
But *Okasan*, a little water is good,
to guard against fire. You won't
have to worry about the okiya
burning, and losing all your
kimono.

Mother considers this impassively. She gestures, Go on.

MOTHER
These country girls. Too late to
send her back now.

19

DEEPER INSIDE THE OKIYA

19

Auntie pushes Chiyo up a step-tansu into the darkness of the second floor. Chiyo notices a door ajar and peers inside.

GRANNY reclines, an elderly figure with a balding crown and decayed teeth speckled with gold fillings; her skin yellowish and sagging. Her chin moves as she mumbles sutras under her breath. Chiyo recoils.

AUNTIE

Mm. Yes. Granny. This used to be her okiya.

Auntie leads Chiyo down a dark crooked passageway.

CHIYO

What happened to her skin?

AUNTIE

(by way of explanation)
Lead. That old make-up was poison.

Auntie pushes Chiyo up a few small steps --

20

INT: MAID'S ROOM. SECOND FLOOR. NIGHT. [WINTER]

20

AUNTIE

Keep her quiet. Mother is downstairs.

-- to PUMPKIN (11, round-faced, comic.) Auntie shuts the door and Chiyo hears the bolt fall. She beats on the door --

CHIYO

Let me go! Let me go!

She weeps as Pumpkin tries to pull her away --

YOUNG PUMPKIN

Shhh. Stop that. Mother will hear you; she's got a bamboo stick.

CHIYO

I want my sister!

Pumpkin pulls Chiyo onto her futon, and muffles her sobs with the quilt.

YOUNG PUMPKIN
I cried, too, at first.

You know, it is easier if you just forget everything that happened before you came to the okiya. If you impress Mother, and do exactly as she says--

(beaming at the possibility)
--she will send you to school to be a geisha!

CHIYO
A what?

YOUNG PUMPKIN
A geisha. Like Hatsumomo! You will get to drink sake, and sleep until noon.

PUMPKIN grins encouragingly, and sticks her chest out. She wears two braids, pinned to her scalp. One sticks up, jaunty, like a stem.

YOUNG PUMPKIN (cont'd)
(beat)
I am Pumpkin.

And an apt name it is, given her hairstyle.

CHIYO
Where is my sister?

YOUNG PUMPKIN
Probably in another okiya in the Hanamachi.
(with painful clarity)
Your family sold you to this house.
You live here now.

As this sinks in, ON CHIYO'S FACE --

21 EXT: BACK OF OKIYA - NEXT DAY. DAWN. [WINTER].

21

Shivering, Chiyo (naked) squats on the stones near the privies, Auntie scrubs her feet with a hard brush. Mother hands Chiyo her dark *tabi* (socks) and *geta* (rough wood sandals.)

MOTHER

Inside, you wear these. Outside, these. We don't display our naked feet like monkeys.

Next, Mother impatiently wraps Chiyo in a servant's kimono.

MOTHER

Remember to always shut the shed door, so the rats don't get in. If I ever find it open--even an inch--it's the bamboo stick for you. Now get to work. Be quiet! Hatsumomo is sleeping.

(calling)

Pumpkin!

22 EXT. STORE ROOM & BACK GARDEN. DAY. [WINTER].

22

Chiyo scrubs the stepping stones while Pumpkin cleans the shed. Pumpkin explains in a whisper (which gets louder as she continues):

YOUNG PUMPKIN

Two nights ago Hatsumomo had to stay at the tea-house until dawn, entertaining three Judges--and when she got home, she cried, "I'm sooo tired!" And then she started--

(PUMPKIN makes a snoring sound)

--and she knocked over a candle, and it singed her kimono and her futon started smoking, and Mother came in and said, "Pumpkin! You must stay awake, all night, so Hatsumomo doesn't burn down the whole okiya!"

(a breath, and then)

When I am a geisha I will sleep as late as I want. I will wear a fancy kimono, and my hair will be in a split-peach!

CHIYO

A what?

Pumpkin curls her tongue and sticks it out; it looks like a "split peach." Together, she and Chiyo giggle.

HATSUMOMO

Why can't you be QUIET?

Pumpkin freezes in terror. Even with tousled hair and smudged mascara, Hatsumomo is gorgeous. She spies CHIYO instantly, and gives her a long, slow appraisal.

HATSUMOMO (cont'd)

So this is the new arrival? A pity she still stinks of fish.

She lights a cigarette casually and moves toward Chiyo. Mother steps out onto the veranda:

HATSUMOMO (cont'd)

Hope you didn't pay much for her, Mother. Not with those eyes. Water runs away.

Mother dumps her tobacco ashes into a bin:

MOTHER

I pay too much for all of you.

Mother leaves. Smiling, Hatsumomo bends down and tucks back Chiyo's hair, a sisterly gesture.

HATSUMOMO

Stay out of my room. Your fingers smell; I can't have you touching my things.

Her fingers linger.

23

INT/EXT: LADDER & ROOF OF OKIYA. LATE DAY. [WINTER].

23

Pumpkin and Chiyo carry water from the well in the garden.

CHIYO

When can I go outside?

YOUNG PUMPKIN

Outside the okiya? You can't. It's not allowed.

Carrying their buckets INSIDE, the girls climb the narrow fixed ladder that leads to the roof. Pumpkin climbs ahead:

CHIYO

How will I find Satsu?

YOUNG PUMPKIN

You can't just walk up to every house in the Hanamachi. Do you know how many there are?

CHIYO shakes her head "no."

YOUNG PUMPKIN (cont'd)

Look.

Pumpkin arrives on the roof and looks out over the Hanamachi [we don't see yet]. Chiyo pulls herself up, sees with a jolt:

OVERHEAD FROM THE ROOFTOP - THE HANAMACHI & BEYOND. LATE DAY. [WINTER].

Against a backdrop of softly rounded misty hills are THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS OF SLATE-BLUE TILED ROOFS so impenetrably close together, they seem almost to overlap.

Pumpkin dumps her bucket into the water tank, splashing some on the tiles. Chiyo, crushed, stares at the maze of roofs.

24

INT. GRANNY'S ROOM - OKIYA. DAY. [WINTER].

24

Chiyo carries a tray laden with food for Granny: rice and tiny white fishlings with dead, black eyes. She places it down in front of the old woman, who barks:

GRANNY

It is freezing! Close the window.

Dutifully, Chiyo goes to the window and starts to pull it shut. Outside--on the street--she can't help noticing:

Hatsumomo, with a handsome young man; KOICHI (30s). With a smile, he pulls her into a clandestine embrace. He kisses her neck, and whispers in her ear. Hatsumomo dissolves into girlish giggles.

For a moment, Chiyo is absorbed by the sight of them. She snaps back to attention when she hears:

MOTHER (VOICE)

Chiyo!

Chiyo yanks the window shut tightly.

MOTHER (cont'd)

Chiyo! Come quickly!

25

INT. HATSUMOMO'S ROOM. DAY. [WINTER].

25

Mother, cradling her ugly Japanese spaniel TAKU, slides open Hatsumomo's door, revealing a room in disarray.

MOTHER

Hatsumomo is at the bath house.
Tidy up.

CHIYO

But she made me promise--

MOTHER

Hatsumomo does not run this okiya.

She gives Chiyo a sharp poke and Chiyo forces herself to go into the room.

Futon and quilts are piled in a tangled heap. Grimy white *tabis* and old wooden sushi boxes lie strewn among crumpled tissues and spilled face powder and movie-photo magazines. Chiyo leans down to pick up a box of powder; she does not hear Hatsumomo come in:

HATSUMOMO

Why, look who's in my room.

Chiyo jumps up. Hatsumomo snatches up her dusting powder:

HATSUMOMO (cont'd)

Did you touch this??

(sniffs, sarcastic)

I can just hear the General now.

"Why, Hatsumomo. You used to smell of jasmine; what's this new perfume?"

(wrinking her nose in distaste)

"Blowfish?"

(savagely)

I told you never to touch my things! Can't you understand why?

CHIYO

Because your General will say,
"Hatsumomo, you stink."

Hatsumomo stares at her, displeased with her delivery.

HATSUMOMO

At least you don't smell as bad as your sister.

(MORE)

HATSUMOMO (cont'd)
 You know she was here. She came
 by, looking for you.

CHIYO
 (stunned)
 What?

HATSUMOMO
 (ingenuous)
 Was I wrong to ask her to leave?

CHIYO
 (with poignant urgency)
 Please. Tell me where she is.

Hatsumomo looks at her with a luminous smile.

HATSUMOMO
 Only if you swear yourself to me
 first. Yes? Now get out.

26

INT. TATAMI ROOM & KIMONO ROOM. OKIYA. DAY. [WINTER].

26

AUNTIE
 The only reason Mother tolerates
 Hatsumomo is because she brings in
 good money.

Auntie kneels amid a feast of colors, folding the many silk kimono piled around her, then placing them neatly in lacquered boxes. Chiyo climbs a ladder and places the boxes in stacks along the walls.

AUNTIE (cont'd)
 Never forget, it is Hatsumomo who
 pays for your supper. The clothes
 on your back. By the time she was
 twenty, she had already earned back
 her purchase price. Unheard of! She
 has been the talk of the hanamachi
 ever since.

Chiyo curious fingers one of the kimono:

CHIYO
 These are all hers?

Auntie snatches the kimono away.

AUNTIE
 Certainly not. They belong to the
 okiya.
 (displays summer kimono)
 (MORE)

AUNTIE (cont'd)
 A kimono like this, made of
 Tatsumura silk? It would take a
 lifetime to earn! A Sea Captain
 had this made for Granny when she
 was only fourteen.

Under Auntie's deft folding, the exquisite embroidery
 disappears and the kimono goes into a red lacquered box:

AUNTIE (cont'd)
 A geisha needs an elegant wardrobe,
 just like an artist needs ink! If
 she is not properly dressed, then
 she is not a true geisha.

CHIYO
 Nobody told me what a geisha is.

AUNTIE
 You will find out soon enough. I
 have news for you, child.

Chiyo looks at her, puzzled.

AUNTIE (cont'd)
 ...Mother has determined. It is
 off to school with you.
 (beat)
 You are to become geisha.

CUT TO:

27 INT/EXT. OKIYA - VARIOUS ROOMS. EARLY MORNING. DAY. [WINTER]. 27

Pumpkin's feet hurry down the STEP-TANSU, Chiyo behind her.
 The girls wear simple cotton school kimono.

At the entrance of the okiya, Pumpkin hops into her shoes.
 Mother unfastens the bolt on the gate and hurries Pumpkin and
 Chiyo through:

MOTHER
 Quick. Quick.

For the first time since her arrival, Chiyo steps into the
 street. Pumpkin yanks her --

28 EXT. STREETS OF THE HANAMACHI. VARIOUS. EARLY MORNING. 28
 [WINTER].

Pumpkin and Chiyo run down the street, wooden geta clattering
 on the paving stones.

SONOGAWA & BRIDGE

The girls race across a bridge that spans the flowing Sonogawa, gracefully overhung with bare-limbed cherry trees.

Chiyo's head swivels at TWO MAIKO walking past, their hair fashioned in the traditional split-peach style. Pumpkin grins, and points at them. Once again, she curls her tongue into a "split peach."

Together she and Chiyo laugh. Pumpkin pulls Chiyo after her into a tunnel --

PUMPKIN

Hurry!

As they run, Pumpkin jumps up to touch a low-hanging FISH CARVING and make it swing; a child's ritual. She races down a jumbled alley toward the theatre. Suddenly, Chiyo breaks rank:

CHIYO

(with resolve)

Pumpkin! I'm sorry; I'm going to run-- I'm going to find Satsu--

This makes PUMPKIN stop, cold.

YOUNG PUMPKIN

No! Chiyo, don't!

(beat)

You will ruin your own chances, and mine too! Please. Stay with me!

Pumpkin notices a morsel of food in the gutter. She gives a cry of discovery in Japanese.

PUMPKIN

Mite, mite!

To Chiyo's disbelief, Pumpkin squats down and snatches up a dirty skewer of food fallen from a vendor's cart. She takes a bite:

PUMPKIN (cont'd)

Mm, squid!

Pumpkin pulls Chiyo into --

29 INT/EXT. KABURENJO THEATRE & SCHOOL. CONTINUOUS. DAY. 29
[WINTER].

The girls race along walkways to the school's entrance,
Pumpkin still chewing the squid --

YOUNG PUMPKIN (CONT'D)
If you are not careful, Mother will
toss you back onto the street, and
then what? You will wind up with
your obi tied in front.

CHIYO
"In front?"

YOUNG PUMPKIN
You know. A prostitute. Because
they spend so much time on their
backs.

CHIYO
What is a "prostitute"?

Pumpkin doesn't reply but climbs a wall of cubby holes like a
ladder and puts her sandals at the top. Chiyo follows.
Pumpkin jumps down and grabs a shingle from the basket by the
entry and hangs it on the wall among HUNDREDS OF NAMES.
Chiyo tries to read them, but Pumpkin pulls her away:

PUMPKIN
Look for your sister later!

30 INT/EXT. GEISHA SCHOOL. DAY. [WINTER]. 30

As Chiyo and Pumpkin race to class.

They run by a row of 6 MAIKO, who go through precise dance
movements as the FEMALE TEACHER (elegant, older) beats time
with her folded fan, calling out the steps in Japanese. A
silver-haired GEISHA beats a tsuzumi.

Pumpkin and Chiyo cut through the school garden past a TEA
CEREMONY CLASS (5 Geisha) and a CALLIGRAPHY CLASS (6 Maiko,
led by one female teacher.).

They pass a tatami room where 5 GEISHA play the shamisen led
by a MALE TEACHER, and enter:

A classroom where a ragged line of 8 YOUNG GIRLS in cotton
kimono try to follow a weary FEMALE TEACHER. A STUDENT
kneels by a small Victorola, winding the scratchy recording.

The Teacher barks out the steps in Japanese, hitting the girls with her fan.

Pumpkin and Chiyo dart into line at the back of the room, but the Teacher bears down upon them, smacking her fan as she shouts out the time in cadence:

TEACHER
You - are - late!

The Teacher whacks Pumpkin with her fan, keeping time, as Pumpkin tries clumsily to perform the steps and Chiyo tries to follow. The Teacher shoves the shoji door closed.

CUT TO:

31 INT. ENTRY AREA OF OKIYA. LATE NIGHT. [WINTER].

31

Alone, Chiyo kneels, trying to stay awake as she practices her shamisen. The sound of raucous LAUGHTER:

KORIN
Sssh, Hatsumomo-san, you'll wake
the entire house.

Hatsumomo and her geisha friend KORIN (20s) arrive drunk and giggling. Korin spies Chiyo:

KORIN (cont'd)
Your big sister is thirsty. So am
I. Go get us some beer.

HATSUMOMO
I'm not in the mood for beer.

KORIN
I know what you're in the mood for,
and his name is Koichi.

Hatsumomo flares; she doesn't want Korin to give away her secret:

HATSUMOMO
What did you say? *

KORIN
I'm sorry. I forgot -- *

HATSUMOMO
You're just jealous someone cares
for me! *

32

INT: KITCHEN - THE OKIYA. LATE NIGHT. [WINTER].

32

Hatsumomo opens a package wrapped in silk. She spreads out a ivory colored, embroidered kimono.

HATSUMOMO

Guess who this belongs to?

Hatsumomo wets an ink block:

HATSUMOMO (cont'd)

I will give you a clue. A geisha as desired as she is...ought to keep a close eye on her clothes!

KORIN

It's Mameha's?? How did you get it?

HATSUMOMO

Bribed her maid.

She laughs, enjoying her own cleverness. Hatsumomo dips a calligraphy brush, and gives it to Korin. Korin begins giggling; she has a failure of nerve:

KORIN

Oh I can't. I can't.
(eyeing Chiyo)
Give it to her.

She thrusts the brush back at Hatsumomo. Hatsumomo smiles at Chiyo, who shrinks back. Hatsumomo grabs Chiyo's wrist and forces the brush into her hand, points to a place on the kimono --

HATSUMOMO

There.

Chiyo hesitates. Their eyes lock:

HATSUMOMO (cont'd)

Remember? You swore yourself to me.

Chiyo reluctantly takes up the brush.

HATSUMOMO (cont'd)

Now then, little Chiyo. It's time to practice your calligraphy.

Hatsumomo points to a place on the kimono. Chiyo touches the brush to the milky fabric, leaving a smear of heavy black ink. Korin giggles. Hatsumomo glares at Chiyo as if to say "Again." Chiyo wets her brush a second time.

33

EXT. MAMEHA'S APARTMENT BUILDING NEAR THE SONOGAWA. NIGHT.
[WINTER].

33

Hatsumomo and Korin huddle with Chiyo in the shadows:

HATSUMOMO

Do not let anybody see you.

Chiyo walks quickly and leaves the folded kimono at the door. A figure opens the door, flooding Chiyo's face with light:

Chiyo sees a beautiful woman--MAMEHA (29)--whose long long glossy hair flows over a nearly transparent kimono. Their eyes meet. Chiyo runs blindly --

ABRUPT CUT TO:

34

EXT: BACK GARDEN & PRIVIES - OKIYA. DAY. [WINTER].

34

Gripping Chiyo, Mother pours a bucket of water over her back and begins severely lashing her with a bamboo rod.

MOTHER

Thieving rat! That kimono was worth more than you!

AUNTIE

Careful, Okasan! You will hurt yourself more than her. Let me.

Auntie seizes the rod and Mother walks back into the Okiya.

35

EXT. BACK GARDEN & PRIVIES. CONTINUOUS. DAY. [WINTER].

35

AUNTIE

Kneel.

Chiyo kneels, weeping, ashamed. Auntie painfully lowers her twisted hip and sits on the stone step.

AUNTIE (cont'd)

What have you done to Hatsumomo?

Chiyo looks up tearfully.

CHIYO

I haven't done anything, I promise you.

AUNTIE

Whatever you've done to anger her, you'd be wise to stop. Now.

(when Chiyo is silent)

You would like Hatsumomo to be your big sister, wouldn't you? Then you must learn to please her.

(beat)

Lie face down.

Chiyo obeys. Auntie gets to her feet painfully, favoring her hip.

AUNTIE (cont'd)

When I was young, Granny was Mother of this okiya. One day I was naughty, speaking out of turn, as you often do. Granny whipped me so fiercely, I was crippled. And so I never became a geisha. I could never repay my debt.

Auntie's rod comes down, *swish!*

AUNTIE (cont'd)

And so everyone in the okiya suffered.

Another *swish!* Chiyo suffers the beating stoically.

AUNTIE (cont'd)

(when Chiyo complies)

I will beat you "just so." To spare you the agony I have endured.

Swish!

- | | | |
|----|--|----|
| 36 | INSIDE THE OKIYA - CONTINUOUS. [WINTER].
Mother listens with satisfaction, then turns up the radio. | 36 |
| 37 | BACK GARDEN & PRIVIES - CONTINUOUS. [WINTER].
Auntie walks away, leaving Chiyo sobbing on the ground.
Chiyo hears the veranda shoji open. Hatsumomo lounges against her door with a sly smile. She is drinking sake. | 37 |

HATSUMOMO

I told you not to let anybody see
you.

Chiyo turns on her with tears of pain:

CHIYO

I have kept my promise. So tell me.
Where is she?

Hatsumomo licks the rim of sake cup, then puts it down. She reaches out to Chiyo, cradling the child's hands in her own.

HATSUMOMO

She's in the next hanamachi in a
house called Tatsuyo.

(beat)

Trust me, little Chiyo. You will
find her.

CUT TO:

38 EXT: OKIYA & HANAMACHI - NIGHT. RAIN. [WINTER]. 38

RAIN sheets from tile roofs. WATER rushes along the street as in a stream, overflowing the curbstones.

39 INT. HATSUMOMO'S ROOM. NIGHT. RAIN. [WINTER]. 39

Hatsumomo stands in her wig cap, looking wan except for vibrant red lips. A cigarette dangles from her mouth. Mr. BEKKU forcefully tugs back her obi ties. Hatsumomo bridles, and hisses:

HATSUMOMO

Tighter!

And BEKKU gives another fierce yank. The sound of Hatsumomo's sharp little cry stops Chiyo, who peeks through the doorway. Hatsumomo catches Chiyo's face in the mirror.

HATSUMOMO (cont'd)

Chiyo! You will walk me to the
Yukimoto teahouse, won't you?

They lock eyes; a private communique sizzles between them.

HATSUMOMO (cont'd)

Then you will stand and wait for
me?

40 EXT. HANAMACHI STREETS. NIGHT. RAIN. [WINTER]. 40

They set out, Chiyo, shivering, holding a scarlet oiled-paper umbrella high over Hatsumomo as she lifts her kimono above the puddles.

41 EXT: YUKIMOTO TEAHOUSE COURTYARD. NIGHT. RAIN. [WINTER]. 41

Rain batters down. Chiyo, soaked to the bone, waits under the scant shelter of the red umbrella.

42 EXT: YUKIMOTO TEAHOUSE COURTYARD. NIGHT. RAIN. [WINTER]. 42

The tea room's front doors are open slightly to the courtyard. Through a decorative screen, we glimpse for the first time the hidden teahouse world:

CHIYO'S POV FROM COURTYARD - INSIDE THE YUKIMOTO TEAHOUSE

A simple room with handsome golden screens and warm, brick-red walls, polished dark wood. Hatsumomo and TWO OTHER GEISHA kneel before a GROUP OF MEN seated at low portable tables, pouring sake. Laughing and smiling, Hatsumomo looks the part of a perfect geisha, the very soul of beauty and wit.

43 EXT. YUKIMOTO TEAHOUSE COURTYARD. NIGHT. RAIN. [WINTER]. 43

The red umbrella sits open on the ground in the front courtyard garden, abandoned. Rain pours in torrents.

44 EXT. PATH ALONG THE RIVER. NIGHT. RAIN. [WINTER]. 44

CLOSE ON CHIYO'S FEET RUNNING as her wooden sandals pound sure-footedly along the river path, splashing through puddles.

45 EXT: NIGHT STREETS IN THE NEXT HANAMACHI. NIGHT. RAIN. [WINTER]. 45

Chiyo runs past DRUNKEN MEN into seedier streets:

46 EXT: THE SEEDY PART OF TOWN. NIGHT. RAIN. [WINTER]. 46

The rundown "teahouses" in this hanamachi look different from the elegant Yukimoto.

Here, the roof tiles are crooked and broken. Under cracked lanterns, WOMEN huddle in doorways and sit lined up behind barred windows, their white faces and red lips crudely painted.

Chiyo speaks to a WOMAN in a doorway. The Woman points, gives Chiyo directions. Chiyo hurries on.

47

EXT: PLEASURE HOUSE - SEEDY PART OF TOWN. NIGHT. RAIN.
[WINTER].

47

Chiyo yanks on a wooden door, knocking as hard as she can. Finally a small panel slides open. An OLD CRONE looks out.

CHIYO

Satsu.

The panel snaps shut. Chiyo beats on the door, to no avail:

CHIYO (cont'd)

Satsu! From Yoroido! Satsu!

Chiyo stands uncertainly, soaked to the skin, her hair and thin kimono plastered to her body. She casts around helplessly, and sees:

From a dark side doorway, a MAN in Western clothes departs. Behind him in the shadows, Chiyo can see a young woman; her silhouette is familiar. Chiyo calls:

CHIYO (cont'd)

Satsu? Satsu!

Satsu edges into the lantern's crimson glow and Chiyo races to her.

SATSU

Chiyo-chan!

They embrace but something is in the way. Chiyo realizes: Satsu's cumbersome obi is tied in front.

SATSU (cont'd)

What took you so long--

CHIYO

--But Satsu, I tried--

SATSU

(recriminatory)

I went to your okiya weeks ago!

They laughed, and turned me away---

Chiyo sees in the light: Satsu's face is marred by a beating.

CHIYO
-Please, I did not know--

*

SATSU
I thought you'd forgotten me--

*

CHIYO
Satsu, no--I could never--

*

SATSU
I've missed you so much--

*

CHIYO
Let's leave--tonight--

SATSU
But we'll need money, Chiyo--I know
where I can steal some, first thing
tomorrow--

CHIYO
No, please--tonight--

SATSU
Tomorrow. Meet me at the Sasame
bridge. As soon as it's dark--

A sudden sound; the front door opens. Footsteps. Satsu's
face fills with alarm.

SATSU (cont'd)
Now I have to go--quickly, before
someone catches us--

Chiyo, trembling, desperately clings to Satsu as her eyes
fill with tears. Satsu pushes her away.

CHIYO
What if I cannot get away?

SATSU
Be there, Chiyo. It's our one
chance. Once I've left I can't go
back. I've waited as long as I
can. Now--go!

Satsu disappears into the house.

48

EXT. FRONT ENTRANCE AND BACK GARDEN - OKIYA. NIGHT. RAIN.
[WINTER].

48

Chiyo tries the gate - it slides open.

Chiyo hesitates at the entrance of the okiya, and then slips quietly around the side, via the narrow passage.

In the back garden, Chiyo moves covertly toward the kitchen and the back door - but she hears a NOISE and sees:

In the STORAGE ROOM, the heavy door has been left ajar.

Chiyo hears the rustle of mice burrowing into bags of rice inside. She hastens to close the door --

-- and sees inside the dark room something strange and fascinating: Hatsumomo is lying under a man. It is Hatsumomo's boyfriend KOICHI (30, handsome). Koichi spies Chiyo and leaps to his feet.

KOICHI

What is she doing here?

HATSUMOMO

What?

KOICHI

She's seen us.

Hatsumomo's stricken by his words. Koichi gropes among the rice bags for his sash, dressing hastily. Hatsumomo grabs Chiyo:

HATSUMOMO

Stupid girl!

In the okiya, a light comes on.

HATSUMOMO (cont'd)

Why have you come back? The perfect chance to escape...

They freeze as they hear Taku start barking madly inside. KOICHI finishes pulling on his clothes.

HATSUMOMO (cont'd)

Koichi, please--

KOICHI

Look at us, sneaking around like criminals--

HATSUMOMO
Koichi, don't--

KOICHI
It's degrading.

They hear hurrying footsteps and Mother's voice calling:

MOTHER'S VOICE
What's going on?

HATSUMOMO
(to KOICHI)
Go! Now!

Koichi ducks out the side path -- just as Mother and barking Taku appear at the tatami room door onto the veranda:

MOTHER
Show your face!

Hidden in her obi, Hatsumomo finds some money. Thinking fast, she stuffs the bills inside Chiyo's kimono. Mother--bamboo stick in hand--halts at the sight of Chiyo and Hatsumomo in front of the store room. Taku is barking into the dark, toward the narrow side path. Auntie has come out in her night kimono.

HATSUMOMO
Look! Okasan! I caught her. She was running away with her sister, the whore.

Hatsumomo snatches Chiyo's kimono open. Money spills out. Mother whirls on Chiyo and begins beating her.

MOTHER
You little thief!

Chiyo, terrified, finally breaks her silence --

CHIYO
No! She is lying!

HATSUMOMO
--after all we have done for her--

CHIYO
--I saw her with a man--right there
(the "bed" of rice bags)
- His name is Koichi!

HATSUMOMO

SHUT UP!

Mother stops abruptly, stares at Hatsumomo, seeing the truth.

MOTHER

You shut up. Take her arms.

In the pouring rain, Auntie seizes her arms; Hatsumomo gives a startled cry. Mother reaches under Hatsumomo's kimono and parts her legs. Mother withdraws her hand, smells her fingers. Hatsumomo chokes back a defiant tear. Her face is crimson. Mother slaps Hatsumomo hard, making her gasp.

MOTHER (cont'd)

You are never to see him again.

Her make-up running, Hatsumomo glares at Chiyo with full loathing.

MOTHER (cont'd)

Bolt the gate. No one is leaving this okiya.

Chiyo's face falls.

49 INT/EXT. OKIYA. [WINTER]. 49

Auntie rolls the heavy front door shut with a *klunk!*

50 INT/EXT. VERANDA & BACK GARDEN OF OKIYA. DUSK. [WINTER]. 50

The rain has stopped; water drains from the tiled roof and rushes in the garden's gutter. Chiyo crouches low, scouring the stepping stones. She glances at the sundial in the garden; the light slants long across it. It's late. She looks anxiously toward the sky, and can see the moon, starting to reveal itself on the horizon. Night is approaching.

Chiyo rises, and her heart swells in her chest; it's time to make her escape, but how? She glances to and fro, just as MOTHER passes through the garden, and tosses her a recriminatory look. It makes Chiyo cower, and she sinks back down, scrubbing the stones with renewed fervor. Satisfied, MOTHER disappears.

A few drops of water from above fall onto Chiyo's face. She wipes them away. A few more drops fall.

She looks up and notices that the water is coming from the chain of verdigris bells that hang from the gutter. With her eyes she follows the path of the gutter up to--

The roof.

51 EXT. OKIYA ROOF. NIGHT. WET ROOF. [WINTER].

51

Chiyo steps out onto the roof by the water tank. She sees: The maze of tiled roofs.

Stepping out on her wooden sandal, Chiyo tests her weight on the roof tiles. Her wet shoe skids on the rain-slick tiles and comes out from under her. Chiyo falls on her bottom hard and barely saves herself from tumbling down the slope.

Her shoe falls, clattering down the tiles and plummeting off the edge into the garden. The noise sets off Taku's barking (O.S.).

Chiyo gathers her courage. She takes off her other wooden shoe and leaves it perched on the ridge of the okiya's roof.

Chiyo inches, half sliding, down the sloping tiles to the edge of the roof, which is adjacent to the NEXT OKIYA'S roof.

52 EXT. BACK GARDEN & PRIVIES. CONTINUOUS. NIGHT. [WINTER].

52

Taku barks hysterically, running around and around Chiyo's fallen shoe, sounding the alarm.

53 EXT: NEXT OKIYA'S ROOF. CONTINUOUS. NIGHT. [WINTER].

53

Chiyo gathers her courage and jumps --

She falls onto the NEXT OKIYA'S SLOPING ROOF (#2). Her bare feet slip and scramble for purchase. Then her fingers grip the wet tiles, and one foot wedges safely against a tile.

Chiyo scrambles across the roof and swings her legs over the ridge cap. She slowly lets herself skid down the low slope and at the bottom, and sees: A gap between her and NEXT OKIYA (#3). Taku's barking sounds farther away.

Chiyo crouches at the edge, her toes curling over the tiles' edge. She pushes off, drops to the NEXT ROOF (#3), catches her balance: Safe.

Chiyo clambers up this even steeper slope (#3). Hand over hand, she climbs to the top; she seems to be gaining strength. Her hand grasps the cap tiles. The tiles hold.

Chiyo reaches up with her other hand. Now both hands safely grip the cap tiles. Her fingers tighten as she hauls herself up. She can see the NEXT OKIYA'S ROOF (#4), and beyond that, the tangle of electrical wires on a pole and red lanterns in the street -- Freedom.

The cap tiles (#3) give way with a clatter. Chiyo skids helter-skelter down the long wet slope of the roof. She screams -

Her chin knocks against a tile, hard, jerking her head back. STARS pinwheel in the NIGHT SKY --

BLACK OUT

54 INT. MOTHER'S ROOM. NIGHT. [WINTER].

54

CLOSE ON AN ACCOUNTING BOOK

With a fine-point brush, Mother makes a notation in her accounting book on her desk.

A MALE DOCTOR leaves. Pumpkin sees him out and closes Mother's door.

Chiyo lies on a futon, her arm is bandaged, her chin cut. Mother impassively adds up figures in her accounting book.

MOTHER

Dr. Moro is very expensive. You seem to be racking up quite a debt.

(ticks down the column)

Kimono, destroyed. Geisha school. Rice and pickles, train ticket, Mr. Bekku - all this on top of the money I paid Mr. Tanaka, and for what? *The two most worthless girls in Japan!*

(makes an entry)

And now I hear that your sister has run away. I will have to return the money Mrs. Tatsuyo paid for her. That is quite a sum.

CHIYO

Perhaps you should send me home.

MOTHER

(with a harrumph)

Who can I send you home to?

Mother goes to her tansu and takes out a cloth-wrapped object. She unwraps two black lacquered tablets with gold letters. Chiyo recognizes them at once.

MOTHER (cont'd)
 These came weeks ago from Mr.
 Tanaka.

Mother leaves them. Auntie picks up the accompanying letter:

AUNTIE
 "Dear Satsu and Little Chiyo: As
 one who was once an orphaned child
 myself, this humble person is sorry
 to inform you that six weeks after
 you left for your new life in
 Miyako, the suffering of your
 honored mother came to its end--"

Chiyo's face fills with tears.

AUNTIE (CONT'D) (cont'd)
 "--and only a few weeks afterward
 your honored father departed this
 world as well. This humble person
 feels confident both your honored
 parents have found their places in
 paradise."

Chiyo picks up each tablet in turn, clasping them tightly to her breast.

AUNTIE (cont'd)
 "But happily--in the okiya--your
 own future is assured."

Auntie's voice as she reads the letter fades, and is supplanted by another:

MOTHER'S VOICE (O.S.)
 You will never be a geisha. You
 are too head-strong.

55 INT. KITCHEN - OKIYA. [SPRING].

55

Her arm bandaged and wearing rags, Chiyo cleans all the household shoes; all around her are dozens of sandals.

MOTHER'S VOICE (O.S.)
 If I could sell off your bones to
 pay back all that you owe, I'd rip
 them right out of your body.

Mother drops her bundled school items and her shamisen, to be returned.

56 EXT. GEISHA SCHOOL. DAY. [SPRING].

56

The exterior wall displays ROWS OF SPRING FESTIVAL POSTERS. Branches of blooming CHERRY hang over the walkways of the school, but Chiyo walks by them without seeing.

MOTHER'S VOICE (O.S.)
You will pay back the okiya another way: as a drudge.

57 INT. GEISHA SCHOOL. DAY. [SPRING].

57

Chiyo places her wrapped shamisen and her school clothes & books at the open classroom door:

MOTHER'S VOICE (O.S.)
Each week, a few coins, and maybe--
maybe--by the end of your life,
your debt will be paid.

Inside, a group of 6 beautifully-costumed young MAIKO (led by a female teacher) rehearse for the "Spring Dances" with paddles of willow and cherry blossoms. Four other MAIKO wait their turn.

Chiyo notes the MAIKO without emotion; she knows now that this world is closed to her forever.

58 EXT: FOOT-BRIDGE OVER THE SONOGAWA. DAY. [SPRING].

58

Chiyo pauses on the bridge, tears streaming. WEEPING CHERRY TREES drop their blossoms in the stream; the blossoms float away on the water's gentle surface. Chiyo watches them, yearning.

CHAIRMAN'S VOICE
It is too pretty a day to be so unhappy.

She looks up into the broad face and compassionate eyes of THE CHAIRMAN (34). He is handsome and graceful. He notices her cut chin and bandaged arm.

CHAIRMAN (CONT'D)
Did you fall down?

Chiyo is too shy to answer. The Chairman crouches which brings them face to face. Chiyo ducks her head rather than meet his eyes.

CHAIRMAN (cont'd)

Why so shy? Nothing to be ashamed of; we all stumble from time to time.

He offers her handkerchief, and--embarrassed--she dabs her face. The Chairman gestures toward the most beautiful of the three geisha in his company.

CHAIRMAN (cont'd)

You see that enchanting lady in pink? Once--when she was just a maiko--she fell clean off her okobo.

When The Geisha laughs in response, it borders on music.

GEISHA

It's true; I did. *

CHAIRMAN

And now look at her; so elegant.

GEISHA

Mr. Chairman, shouldn't we hurry? We'll miss the beginning. *

Bowing, Chiyo would back away, excusing herself, but the Chairman stops her with a gentle hand. He shrugs at the geisha:

CHAIRMAN

We see the Spring Dances every year. We can spare a moment. *

The geisha turn inward, twittering among themselves. The Chairman turns to Chiyo. *

CHAIRMAN (cont'd)

What's your name? *

She doesn't respond. *

CHAIRMAN (cont'd)

Don't be afraid to look at me. Someone has been cruel to you. Or perhaps life has been cruel. *

CHIYO
I don't know, sir.

CHAIRMAN

None of us find as much kindness in
this world as we should.

(and then)

Do you like sweet plum, or cherry?

CHIYO

You mean - to eat?

The Chairman laughs and leads Chiyo toward the footpath that
goes along the stream, where a VENDOR sells shaved ice.

CHAIRMAN

I like sweet plum myself.

(to the vendor)

Both kinds.

Chiyo hungrily watches the Vendor put a scoop of lurid pink
into a paper cup. The Chairman hands it to her:

CHAIRMAN (cont'd)

I wait for these every spring.

Chiyo takes her first bite; when she pulls the cup away from
her lips, they're stained with color. She smiles coyly.

CHIYO

Now I'm a geisha, too.

The CHAIRMAN laughs.

CHAIRMAN

And so you are!

As they take bites of their ices, Chiyo absorbs him with
wonder.

CHAIRMAN (cont'd)

How did you come by such surprising
eyes?

CHIYO

My mother gave them to me.

CHAIRMAN

Generous of her, wasn't it?

CHIYO

As you have been to me.

CHAIRMAN

Smile for me, won't you?

Chiyo can't help it; she does.

CHAIRMAN (cont'd)
There now. That is your gift to
me.

He wraps some coins in his handkerchief and tucks it into her hand.

CHAIRMAN (cont'd)
This will buy your supper. Now
promise me one thing. Next time you
take a tumble...no frowns.

He smiles back at her, and she nods. Chiyo watches the Chairman walk away toward the geisha who await him; they fold their arms around him, like butterfly wings, and he seems to disappear. Chiyo stares after them longingly, transfixed.

59 EXT: HANAMACHI. DAY. [SPRING].

59

Chiyo runs through the Hanamachi, on a mission.

SAYURI'S VOICE
In that moment I changed from a
girl facing nothing but emptiness -

60 EXT. TORII GATES. DAY. [SPRING].

60

Chiyo continues to run through a corridor of huge broad orange torii gates that meander far up a wooded hillside.

SAYURI'S VOICE (CONT'D)
- to someone with purpose. I saw
that to be a geisha could be a
stepping stone to something else.

Chiyo arrives at the SHRINE and stretches up to reach the huge bell cords. She pulls the ropes and claps three times.

SAYURI'S VOICE (cont'd)
The money he had given me could
have bought fish and rice for a
month. But I gave it back in
prayer.

She opens the handkerchief: The Chairman's coins. Chiyo drops the coins in the offering box and bows. She kneels:

SAYURI'S VOICE (cont'd)
 I asked one day to be worthy of the
 chairman's world...to meet him
 again...and to become a geisha.

Cherry blossoms blow past the serene altar of the shrine and
 become SNOWFLAKES.

61 EXT. THE HANAMACHI. LATE DAY. SNOW. [WINTER] 61

SNOW blows around the eaves of the shuttered okiyas, and
 fills the ridges of the tiled roofs of the Hanamachi.

We hear a tinny RADIO, reporting the news about Japan's war
 with Russia and Allied and Axis powers battling in Europe.

62 INT. ENTRY & TATAMI ROOM - OKIYA. LATE DAY. SNOW. [WINTER] 62

An older Bekku straps Pumpkin (16) into her obi, grunting.
 Pumpkin gives cries of discomfort as he pulls the cords ever
 tighter. She hollers up the tansu steps:

PUMPKIN
 Chiyo! Did you find my comb yet?

AUNTIE
 Here, let me.

Chilly adult BARE FEET appear, pattering down the cramped
 stairs, as Chiyo (15) hurries to obey. As she descends, we
 see she's graceful even in a maid's rags; she wears a
 servant's long braid. Chiyo hastens to Pumpkin, ornamental
 comb in hand.

PUMPKIN
 Arigato. I couldn't sleep! I was
 so worried about my stupid hair!
 (with dread)
 Am I lopsided?

Chiyo art-fully wedges the comb into Pumpkin's maiko
 hairstyle, and whispers:

CHIYO
 You look beautiful.

Pumpkin gives her a grateful smile. They briefly, covertly
 clasp hands. Then Mother appears with Auntie (both dressed
 for the occasion) and the girls' hands come apart. MOTHER
 scrutinizes Pumpkin's rounded hairstyle, the haircomb
 sticking out at a jaunty angle:

MOTHER

With your hair like that, you look more like a Pumpkin than ever! Don't poke your neck forward like a tortoise!

-- as she plucks at Pumpkin with critical tweaks. Chiyo is all but invisible; Bekku absently kicks her aside.

Hatsumomo appears, impossibly beautiful in a flamboyant kimono.

HATSUMOMO

She is not ready? We will be late!

Pumpkin takes her in, dismayed. Bekku laughs:

BEKKU

Poor Pumpkin - Her debut, and everyone will be staring at you.

HATSUMOMO

Hurry up.

MOTHER

This time - tune your shamisen before you play. When you make a fool of yourself, it is your Big Sister who gets the blame.

(re: Pumpkin's tears)

Stop crying! Your face will run.

63 INT/EXT: ENTRANCE OF OKIYA & FRONT GATE. NIGHT. SNOW. [WINTER]

63

TWO RICKSHAWS (the first carrying Hatsumomo and Pumpkin, the second-Mother and Auntie) disappear into the veil of swirling snowfall. Chiyo turns back sadly. By the door she sees: Pumpkin's shamisen.

Chiyo grabs it, looks down at her bare feet. Chiyo snatches up Auntie's garden clogs --

64 EXT. HANAMACHI & SONOGAWA STREAM. NIGHT. SNOW. [WINTER]

64

Carrying the bundled shamisen, Chiyo runs in Auntie's garden clogs, down the snowy streets, over the frozen Sonogawa. Delicate icicles hang from the barren weeping-cherry trees.

65 INT/EXT: YUKIMOTO TEAHOUSE. NIGHT. SNOW. [WINTER] 65

The Yukimoto TEAHOUSE OWNER (female) takes the bundled shamisen from Chiyo. The door slides shut on Chiyo. She hesitates --

66 BACK GARDEN OF YUKIMOTO [WINTER] 66

Chiyo slips around to the back garden, hoping for a glimpse of Pumpkin's debut.

The closed shojis encased by an outside layer of glass panels present a blank face to the verandas. Chiyo can hear LAUGHTER and VOICES, BOTTLES CLINKING.

Curious, Chiyo steps stealthily onto the veranda. A filigreed iron lantern lights the snowy stone step. The glass panel is open a very tiny crack. Chiyo quietly slides it open and passes through. She sneaks up to the shoji screen and crouches. Chiyo wets her finger and presses it to the paper of the screen creating a tiny transparent circle. Chiyo peeks through:

67 POV - INT. YUKIMOTO TEAROOM. NIGHT. [WINTER] 67

In the warmly-lit room, eight or more WELL-DRESSED MEN sit at lacquered tables waited upon by Hatsumomo, Korin.

The men applaud as Pumpkin sings and plays the shamisen.

INSIDE THE TEAROOM

A CLIENT notices a SILHOUETTE on the shoji. Someone is on the veranda. Curious, he alerts men on either side of him.

68 BACK GARDEN OF YUKIMOTO [WINTER] 68

Chiyo strains to see more-- Pumpkin has gone out of view. The shoji suddenly flies open:

It is The Chairman, inches from her, face to face. Chiyo knows him at once. It takes her breath away.

The light from the tearoom falls directly on Chiyo and her distinctive silver-gray eyes. She looks ethereal.

The Chairman is halted, perhaps by her beauty, perhaps by a memory - but in that moment as he stares at her, time stops.

Chiyo reflexively bolts.

Other Clients, amused, walk out onto the veranda. The Chairman, stands in the garden, oblivious to the snow falling on him.

69 EXT. YUKIMOTO TEAHOUSE COURTYARD. NIGHT. SNOW. [WINTER] 69

A MALE SERVANT sweeping the front steps catches sight of Chiyo as she runs to the front gate. The Teahouse-owner orders him to follow the stranger. He drops his snow broom and races after her.

70 EXT: STREET & YUKIMOTO, THE HANAMACHI. NIGHT. SNOW. [WINTER] 70

With the Male Servant calling behind her, Chiyo runs into the street, her wooden geta slipping on the ice. Chiyo yanks off the shoes and runs --

71 EXT. IN THE HANAMACHI - CONTINUOUS. NIGHT. SNOW. [WINTER] 71

Chiyo ducks into a dark nook and lets the RUNNING FOOTSTEPS go past.

When they are gone, from inside her kimono Chiyo takes something she has kept pressed against her heart:

SAYURI'S VOICEOVER

The winter that I turned fifteen,
Fate brought me three things: I
saw the Chairman again.

Chiyo's cold fingers caress the Chairman's finely embroidered handkerchief.

72 EXT. THE HANAMACHI. EARLY DAY. SNOW. [WINTER] 72

A lone figure in black with a black parasol glides through the white tempest, down a narrow street toward the okiya.

SAYURI'S VOICEOVER (CONT'D)

Granny left us. And most surprising
of all....

73	OMIT	73
74	OMIT	74
74A	EXT. FRONT GATE & ENTRANCE OF OKIYA. EARLY DAY. [WINTER] A slender gloved hand reaches up to ring the gate's bell.	74A
74B	INT. TATAMI ROOM - OKIYA- CONTINUOUS [WINTER] Mother notices a mysterious stranger at the front gate.	74B
	MOTHER Quick Chiyo, put up the screen. (to herself) Why is she here?	* * * *
	Mother picks up Taku and disappears. Chiyo grabs the screen and rushes to obscure Pumpkin, who's sitting, scooping rice into her mouth.	* * *
	Auntie barks:	
	AUNTIE (to Chiyo) Open the gate!	
	Chiyo runs to the entry.	

75

INT. ENTRANCE OF OKIYA. EARLY DAY. [WINTER]

* 75

Chiyo sees Mameha, and crumples inside with fear (the ruined kimono!). She bows low to hide her face, as Mameha steps out of her sandals and goes inside.

76

INT. ENTRY & MOTHER'S ROOM/OFFICE - OKIYA. EARLY DAY.

76

Mother, tightly-coiffed and in a somber colors, bows as Auntie leads Mameha into Mother's room & office. Her desk is set up with pen and paper and abacus.

Auntie closes the door & instantly puts her ear to the crack. Pumpkin's all ears, too. Chiyo grabs a rag and begins to polish the floor by Mother's door. She, Auntie and Pumpkin crane to hear:

MOTHER

Mameha-san, I know that you would never joke at an old lady's expense-

-

Auntie inches the door open more, and the voices are clearer:

MAMEHA

I was only thinking on your behalf...Now that your beloved Granny is gone, you have no need for a maid--

MOTHER

But Chiyo?

MAMEHA

Just think how she would enrich your okiya!

MOTHER

I have to tell you...she is unusually stupid.

(beat)

And her debt...!

MAMEHA

A geisha returns her investment faster than a maid.

Chiyo whispers to Pumpkin, incredulous:

CHIYO

Are they really talking about me?

Pumpkin, nods, equally stunned. Meanwhile:

MOTHER

I would never question the great Mameha. But you could choose anyone in the Hanamachi--

MAMEHA

You flatter me, truly--

MOTHER

--I'd give you my Pumpkin, if she were not already tied to Hatsumomo--

MAMEHA

--please, I would never dream of asking--

MOTHER

Besides, I can always sell Chiyo to Mrs. Tatsuyo.

MAMEHA

But with your eye for beauty and your nose for talent...surely you can see what a terrible waste that would be!

MOTHER

If you were not the kind-hearted geisha I know you to be...then I might think you were dishonest.

(beat)

Even conniving.

MAMEHA

Oh?

MOTHER

I might think you were scheming against Hatsumomo.

MAMEHA

Then I'm grateful, Mrs. Nitta, that you don't have a suspicious mind.

MOTHER

Perhaps you can pique my interest with--

MAMEHA

--yes?--

MOTHER
--your offer?

MAMEHA
(brass tacks now)
I will cover Chiyo's schooling. All
of her expenses. Till after her
debut.

MOTHER
Now I'm confident you are teasing--

MAMEHA
I could not be more sincere. If
Chiyo hasn't repaid her debt within
six months after her debut--

MOTHER
(scoffing)
Impossible! Too little time!

MAMEHA
(resolutely)
--then I will pay you twice over.

Mother is astonished by the proposal -- but not more
astonished than Pumpkin and Chiyo in the hallway:

MOTHER
Why, no Geisha could ever--

MAMEHA
You see? I am willing to assume
all the risk.

MOTHER
Mameha-san, you might as well toss
your money away!

MAMEHA
I am certain you will not object to
one, trivial condition...

MOTHER
Yes?

MAMEHA
If Chiyo erases her debt in the
time allowed...you will have no
part in her future earnings.

MOTHER

Mameha-san! My respect for you is too great...too vast...to allow you to make such a foolish wager.

(clearly accepting her:)

Let me fetch the account books.

Chiyo drops her polishing rag and darts away. Pumpkin dives back into her morning rice bowl. Auntie picks up the rag and pretends to polish the door frame as Mother appears. Mother gives Auntie a look as she retrieves her books.

77

INT. GRANNY'S OLD ROOM - THE OKIYA. DAY. [WINTER]

77

MOTHER

It's too good to be true. Mameha is up to something.

Mother & Auntie draw the bamboo shade and open the window of Granny's dusty old room. They begin moving Granny's things out of what will now become CHIYO'S ROOM.

AUNTIE

She is not in it for the money, that much is for certain. Rumor has it--ever since the Prime Minister bought her *mizuage*--she has been rich! They say he paid a record sum.

MOTHER

Is that so?

Chiyo undresses behind a simple cotton kimono that Pumpkin holds open, changing out of servant's rags. She whispers:

CHIYO

"Mizuage"?

Pumpkin blushes and gestures with her hand: I can't say. Hatsumomo pauses at the doorway:

MOTHER

Absurd to think she noticed Chiyo -
!

HATSUMOMO

It's that kimono.

(to Chiyo)

She remembers how you destroyed it. Now she wants to get even.

MOTHER

(askance at Hatsumomo)
That sounds less like Mameha and
more like another geisha I know.

HATSUMOMO

(ignoring Mother's jibe)
Poor little Chiyo. I fear for you.

MOTHER

An odd picture, isn't it?
Hatsumomo sweeping into teahouse
after teahouse with our little
Pumpkin...and Mameha with our maid?

Mother & Auntie shake their heads, astonished. Chiyo is
paralysed with embarrassment. Mother and Auntie leave.

CHIYO

I'm so far behind; I will never
catch up to you.

PUMPKIN

Don't worry, Chiyo-chan. I will
help you.

HATSUMOMO

Pumpkin! You are never to speak to
her again...

She pinches Pumpkin's lip hard, and Pumpkin cries out -

HATSUMOMO (cont'd)

...Now you are rivals.

Pumpkin gives Chiyo a haunted look, conveying regret and
guilt.

CUT TO:

78

EXT. MAMEHA'S BEAUTIFUL APT. & SMALL GARDEN COURTYARD. DAY.
[WINTER]

78

Along the Sonogawa, ICICLES melt from the trees, dripping
jewel-like droplets. In the foreground sits the Baron's
impressive automobile. Chiyo hesitates outside Mameha's
apartment, shivering and summoning her courage.

She sees: A handsome man, THE BARON (45), emerges from the
apartment, with Mameha seeing him out. Chiyo bows humbly:

CHIYO
Konichiwa.

MAMEHA
Chiyo is my new protege.

THE BARON
As lovely as her big sister! And
with eyes the color of rain.

He gives Chiyo a smile that flusters her. Mameha walks The Baron to the entrance. Chiyo peeks curiously.

79

INT. MAMEHA'S BEAUTIFUL APARTMENT. DAY. [WINTER]

79

In Mameha's light-washed, calm apartment:

MAMEHA
The Baron is a very special man to me; my *danna*. Someday if you are fortunate, you will have a patron, too. Don't kneel. You're not a servant girl anymore.

Embarrassed, Chiyo stands before her, head bowed, blushing.

MAMEHA (cont'd)
Step into the light.

Chiyo does; Mameha looks into her face.

MAMEHA (cont'd)
I see water in you.

CHIYO
Does that displease you?

MAMEHA
Water's powerful. It can wash away earth, put out fire, even destroy iron. But you have not drawn on those strengths, have you?

Chiyo shakes her head mutely. Finally she whispers:

CHIYO
About your kimono...

MAMEHA
You may apologize, if you wish.

Chiyo drops and bows, her forehead on the mat -

MAMEHA (cont'd)

Why, that is a perfect bow - for a pig farmer. Don't drop your head. Fingertips together; elbows in. No weight on the hands. Yes.

Chiyo accomplishes a correct bow.

MAMEHA (cont'd)

As for that kimono - I am no fool, Chiyo. Hatsumomo cannot tolerate competition.

CHIYO

She is jealous of you?

MAMEHA

Not me, I'm afraid.
(with significance)
Someone closer to home.

CHIYO blushes.

MAMEHA (cont'd)

Rise. Not like a horse. Slide your foot forward - that's it. Now walk.

(watching her)

You are a magnificent geisha!

Mameha walks Chiyo over to the window seat overlooking the stream. They sit.

MAMEHA (cont'd)

Tell me, Chiyo, does Mrs. Nitta ever speak of the future?

CHIYO

Not to me.

MAMEHA

Well, someday soon, she will have to name an heir. One of her own geisha, to succeed her.

(leading her)

Strange, isn't it, that she has not adopted Hatsumomo--

CHIYO

And released the tiger from its cage?

MAMEHA

You have a gift for expression.

The Maid brings in a tray; she pours the tea.

MAMEHA (cont'd)

And if Mrs. Nitta adopts Pumpkin,
that is hardly a threat! But a
little girl with eyes like rain...

CHIYO

But Mrs. Nitta would never choose
me.

MAMEHA

On the contrary; that is our goal.

Surprised, Chiyo splashes the tea as it is handed to her.

CHIYO

It is?

MAMEHA

Of course. If you do not inherit
the okiya, then we will all be at
the tiger's mercy.

Chiyo blows on her tea. Mameha stays her:

MAMEHA (cont'd)

Water's always in such a hurry.
(smiles)
Perhaps it is just as well. We
have no time to lose.

Mameha takes up her cup, and Chiyo follows.

CUT TO:

80

INT. PUBLIC BATHS. THE HANAMACHI. DAY. [WINTER]

80

Chiyo undresses at the bath house.

CHIYO

When does a geisha choose her
danna?

Mameha is amused and a little offended.

MAMEHA

I'm afraid it's the other way
around.

(MORE)

MAMEHA (cont'd)

(then)

Focus on your studies, Chiyo.
Music, the art of conversation.
Contrary to popular opinion, that's
the surest way to attract a danna;
on your feet...not off them.

Carrying their towels to conceal their naked bodies, they
step into a tiled room filled with steam..

MAMEHA (cont'd)

Pretend, for example, that I am
pouring tea...

Mameha sits on a bathing stool, using bathing implements as a
"teapot" and "cup".

MAMEHA (cont'd)

You kneel, just so. You angle the
pot low, spout close to the cup,
so the aroma does not escape...

She mimes pouring.

MAMEHA (cont'd)

Now here is where you can add a
touch of intrigue. Say I'm
entertaining the Baron. Like so
many clients, he is trapped in an
arranged marriage with a woman he
does not love. So--in the
teahouse, when he is seeking *my*
company instead--I reward him.
Like this.

She drapes the washcloth like a "kimono sleeve."

MAMEHA (cont'd)

With a glimpse of my wrist. Seeing
that demure little trace of naked
skin...well, it gives him pleasure.

As Chiyo practices pouring while holding her "kimono sleeve" -

MAMEHA (cont'd)

When you are sitting down--
(crowding Chiyo)
- for the briefest moment, press
your leg against his.
(when Chiyo starts to
giggle)
Always by accident, of course! Or,
this -

Mameha tucks up damp tendrils at her nape, demonstrating:

MAMEHA (cont'd)

Or this: "These little hairs are such a nuisance, always trying to escape."

CHIYO

(copying)

"These little hairs are such a nuisance..."

Laughing, Mameha leads her to the steaming bathing pools:

MAMEHA

Oh, dear. We have leapt from "intermediate" to "advanced" so quickly. You maiko are supposed to be all innocence.

(subtly wicked smile)

At first.

They drop their towels and step into the bath.

GO TO MONTAGE:

CLOSE UP: A black brush dips into a make-up jar of austere white--

81 INT: GEISHA SCHOOL. DAY. [WINTER]

81

--white tabi feet dance across a tatami floor. Chiyo practices with 8 VERY YOUNG GIRLS, towering over them. She turns a shoulder, and--

CLOSE UP: --the back of a long, elegant neck is revealed. The white make-up brush outlines two sharp points--

82 EXT. MAMEHA'S COURTYARD- DAY. [WINTER]

82

--the sharp sound of a bucket as Mameha lowers icy water in front of Chiyo. Chiyo plunges her hands in. Mameha counts to ten, then thrusts a shamisen at her, and Chiyo begins to pluck the strings with cold, blue fingers--

CLOSE UP: --as long fingers angle a brush, etching a pair of scarlet lips--

83 EXT: HANAMACHI. DAY. [WINTER] 83

--that smile from a Japanese movie poster; Chiyo teeters past on the tall wooden shoes of a maiko. Mameha helps her until Chiyo falls off the curb into the street; and a rickshaw rattles by, sending up a cloud of dust-- --

CLOSE UP: --that settles as a cosmetic puff powders a newly rouged cheek bone--

84 IN MAMEHA'S APARTMENT. DAY. [WINTER] 84

--two sumptuous paper fans flip open as Mameha tutors Chiyo in dance. Both dressed in their underkimonos, Mameha teaches Chiyo a tricky move. Chiyo mimics her, tossing a fan, and-

85 INT. KABURENJO THEATRE. DAY. [WINTER] 85

--catches it onstage, in a dance rehearsal 10 MAIKO her own age. She glances down the line of dancers to see Pumpkin.

In the audience, Hatsumomo and Mameha watch their fledgling maiko. They don't acknowledge one another; their eyes are fixed on the stage.

Meanwhile, Pumpkin grins coyly at her friend Chiyo, and curls her tongue in a "split peach", just as she did when they were children. Chiyo suppresses a smile, and executes a graceful turn without missing a beat. Pumpkin, however, is fatally amused by her own hijinks; she's thrown off balance and drops her fan.

Mameha casts a discreet, competitive look in Hatsumomo's direction, to gauge her response. Hatsumomo sits with her back stiff, and shoots Pumpkin a look that could straighten a bonsai tree--

CLOSE UP: --as a coal stick glides across an arched eyebrow, accentuating it with black---

86 INT. BEAUTY PARLOR. THE HANAMACHI. DAY. [WINTER] 86

---Chiyo's long, black hair is combed out flat by A MALE HAIRDRESSER (middle-aged), who then applies hot wax with an iron.

MAMEHA
Beauty is cruelty.

Chiyo grimaces in protest--

- 87 INT. CHIYO'S ROOM. NIGHT. [WINTER] - DAY 87
- as Mother replaces her pillow with a wooden stand. Next, Mother sprinkles rice powder liberally around the base. In her new split-peach hairstyle, Chiyo rests her neck on the stand; she tries to make herself comfortable, closing her eyes--
- 88 INT. CHIYO'S ROOM. MORNING. [WINTER] 88
- which open the next morning. Slowly Chiyo realizes her head has slid off the wooden stand. Rice powder is matted on her hair and eyelashes. She tries in vain to pluck it out as Hatsumomo stands in the doorway, laughing--
- 89 EXT/INT. BEAUTY PARLOR. THE HANAMACHI. DAY. [WINTER] 89
- as Hatsumomo and Pumpkin exit, Pumpkin's coiffure immaculately lacquered, every strand in perfect place. Meanwhile--inside--Mameha shakes her head, sympathetically as the Hairdresser once again draws wax through poor Chiyo's hair--
- CLOSE UP: --as a bejeweled ornament slides gracefully into the upswept hair-style of a maiko--**
- 90 INT. MAMEHA'S APARTMENT. DAY. [WINTER] 90
- colorful maiko kimono festoon the room. Chiyo goes "shopping" among Mameha's collection. Mameha holds up a beautiful kimono--
- CLOSE UP: --and two pale arms slide into a sheer under-kimono--**
- 91 EXT: STREETS OF THE HANAMACHI. DAY. [WINTER] 91
- now dressed in fluttering kimono, Chiyo and Mameha step into the street.

MAMEHA

The fortune-teller suggested
November 3rd for your debut--

CHIYO
 (crestfallen)
 November? Can't it be sooner?

MAMEHA
 Sooner?
 (laughing)
 Water certainly likes to rush!

CLOSE UP: --in quick succession, eight silk bands called himo are drawn and bound--

MAMEHA (cont'd)
 You cannot call yourself a true geisha until you can stop a man in his tracks, with a single look.

CLOSE UP: --a lavishly embroidered cream kimono closes, left over right--

CHIYO
 No one can do that.

Mameha turns her back to the street:

MAMEHA
 Choose someone for me.

Chiyo indicates a PASSING MAN who walks absently toward them. Mameha takes a few small steps, her eyes downcast. As the Man reaches her, Mameha lifts her eyes to meet his. The Man stops, he turns to watch Mameha go.

Chiyo, amazed, hurries to catch up with Mameha.

CHIYO
 If I can do that - may I debut sooner?

CLOSE UP: A man's hand yanks the obi strings tight on the back of a geisha's kimono.

MAMEHA
 Perhaps.

CHIYO
 (game now)
 Go ahead, then. Choose someone for me, Onei-san.

Mameha looks around, selects a DELIVERY BOY pedalling in the street, his bicycle loaded with a towering stack of bundles.

MAMEHA

Make him fall over. With one look.

Close up: --eyes flash in a hand mirror--

Chiyo hesitates anxiously. Then she sees a solution:

A TRUCK is backing slowly out of an alley.

In a split-second, Chiyo boldly steps into the street and stares directly into the Delivery Boy's face as he passes. Surprised, the Boy momentarily turns his head --

-- then hears a truck's HORN. The Boy brakes and swerves --

The bicycle's heavy load topples, spilling its driver and cargo across the pavement. Mameha sends Chiyo a wry look.

CLOSE UP: ---a tin make-up box slams shut--

MAMEHA (cont'd)

You are ready.

93

INT. THE OKIYA. NIGHT [WINTER]

93

MOTHER and AUNTIE, dressed for the occasion, wait impatiently in the entry-way. Mameha flings open the shoji screen of the tatami room to reveal:

Chiyo, now as flawless and painted as a gorgeous, Japanese doll, in the full make-up of a maiko. Her hair is waxed a shiny black; Mameha's richly embroidered "butterfly-sleeve" kimono falls in lush pools of silk at her feet. Chiyo moves across the room and stops at a full length mirror. She stares at herself in the glass. Tears well in her eyes.

*
*
*

Chiyo looks to Mameha. Even Bekku's impressed.

*

*
*

Mother intercedes--

MOTHER

Hurry up! You are not making money
standing there gawking at yourself--

94 INT/EXT: ENTRANCE OF OKIYA. EVENING. [WINTER]

94

CLOSE on Chiyo's foot as the snowy *tabi* parts and the thong
of her shoe slides between the gloved toes.

Chiyo walks down the path on her tall maiko shoes and pauses
under the lantern, in the same spot where she first laid eyes
on Hatsumomo. Behind her Auntie strikes the flint.

AUNTIE

For luck.

SPARKS fly behind Chiyo.

95 EXT. BEHIND YUKIMOTO TEAHOUSE. SUNSET. [WINTER]

95

In the garden, Mameha and Chiyo exchange three cups of sake
(served by the teahouse-owner) in a "sisters" ritual. Mother
and Auntie stand in attendance.

MAMEHA

This binds us together forever as
sisters. Today you leave your
childhood and cast away your name.
From this day forward, you will be
known by a new one...with the same
lilt, the same music as the water
you resemble...

(a pause, and then)

..."Sayuri."

Sayuri, formerly Chiyo, bows her head in gratitude.

INT. YUKIMOTO TEAHOUSE. NIGHT. [WINTER]

The TEAHOUSE OWNER--teetering with a tray stacked with sake and beer--barrels down the deep red hallway toward the tea room. LAUGHTER and conversation spill from the room as she flings open the shoji doors.

EIGHT MEN are seated in conversational groups at low tables around three sides of the room. In the seat of honor, we recognize The Baron. The OTHER MEN are mostly older and all wealthy, their spirits loosened by sake. The host, Hatsumomo's favorite client THE GENERAL (55, chainsmoker), wears a Japanese military uniform.

TWO GEISHA move gracefully among the tables, serving sake as they chat among the men.

Behind a screen, before they make their entrance:

MAMEHA

Tonight, you will attend the Baron.

CHIYO looks at her, uncertain. Isn't he Mameha's territory?

MAMEHA (cont'd)

A new maiko always attends the honored guest. Ready?

SAYURI

Onei-san, thank you.

Mameha smiles.

They enter,, bowing on the floor, murmuring their greetings etc. Then they hurry toward the Baron with small steps. The General lifts his sake cup:

THE GENERAL

Friends, we have the pleasure to witness the debut of a new maiko.

Some of the men applaud, and all lift their glasses. With quick small steps that make her kimono hem ripple, Sayuri approaches The Baron and kneels, blushing. The Baron eyes her playfully, admiring. To Mameha:

THE BARON

I remember those eyes. What was her name?

Mameha looks to Sayuri, giving her permission to respond. Sayuri feels a pang of pleasure as she speaks the word:

SAYURI

"Sayuri".

MAMEHA

(whisper)

You may replenish the Baron's tea.

Sayuri self-consciously takes up the teapot. She aims the spout low, close to the Baron's cup, so the aroma doesn't escape. Meanwhile-- with the other hand--she draws back her kimono sleeve, exposing her wrist, pausing exactly as Mameha has taught her.

The Baron's eyes drift to Sayuri's arm. After a few seconds have elapsed, Sayuri is mortified to realize that the Baron's cup is still empty -- no tea is pouring from the spout of the depleted tea pot.

THE BARON

She's determined, isn't she? If there'd been a drop of tea in that pot, I believe Sayuri would have gotten it out--

Everyone laughs. Under her make-up, Sayuri is flushed with embarrassment.

MAMEHA

Now don't tease, Baron. It's her very first time.

97

CLOSE ON MAMEHA & SAYURI - SHORT TIME LATER

97

Mameha's fingers pluck the strings of her shamisen, accompanying Sayuri.

Sayuri gracefully dances with two fans, just as Mameha taught her. As Sayuri dramatically tosses and catches one of the fans, she sees:

The Teahouse Owner leading in Hatsumomo and Pumpkin. Hatsumomo seductively advances on the Baron's table, Pumpkin in tow.

HATSUMOMO

Baron...Forgive me for intruding - General Tottori was good enough to ask us to call.

The General, tipsy, has no memory of it but he is pleased to fill her cup with sake. Sayuri and Mameha end the dance, and the men applaud.

HATSUMOMO (cont'd)
 What a beautiful dance! Yes,
 Pumpkin?

Deftly, Hatsumomo takes a fan from Pumpkin and demonstrates.

HATSUMOMO (cont'd)
 Her fans are so hypnotic that you
 never notice her feet.
 (turns to Sayuri)
 What is your name?

MAMEHA
 Her name is Sayuri.

HATSUMOMO
 "Sayuri" - a name as sweet as she
 is!
 (to the General)
 I'm afraid these days, even a
 common chambermaid can call herself
 a geisha.
 (her eyes narrowing in
 Sayuri's direction)
 So it's nice to see such a sincere
 young maiko. Isn't it?

THE GENERAL
 (caught in the middle,
 stammering)
 Why, yes. Indeed.

MAMEHA
 (to Sayuri)
 Surely you would like to thank
 Hatsumomo for her gracious
 compliments.

SAYURI
 There is so much I would like to
 say to Hatsumomo.

HATSUMOMO
 Sometimes, the wisest remark is to
 say nothing.

SAYURI
 What better advice to follow than
 your own?

MAMEHA
 Sayuri--

Sayuri bows low to Hatsumomo.

HATSUMOMO

I was a maiko myself once.

SAYURI

Of course. But it's been such a very long, long, long, long...

The Baron and the men laugh. Sayuri continues demurely:

SAYURI (cont'd)

...time.

Hatsumomo bridles.

HATSUMOMO

Little Sayuri has studied to be a geisha for such a short time, she hasn't learned her manners.

(to the General)

Tell me. Would you ever send a man into battle before he's ready?

THE GENERAL

Never. My men are trained to kill.

HATSUMOMO

(to Mameha)

Perhaps her debut came too soon.

THE GENERAL

(stifling laughter)

On the contrary, Hatsumomo....I'd say...I'd say she *hit her target!*...

The Baron laughs, too, and the laughter grows, filling the room. Hatsumomo glares, ashen. Pumpkin bites her lip to keep from grinning. Mameha smiles at how her protege has handled herself. Sayuri bears the peaceful look of triumph.

CUT TO:

98

INT: SAYURI'S ROOM. THE OKIYA. NIGHT/DAWN. [WINTER]

98

Abrupt awakening: Hatsumomo jerks Sayuri awake by the hair and slaps her. In a quiet rage, she whispers:

HATSUMOMO

I shall destroy you.

With another vicious yank, Hatsumomo leaves her.

CUT TO:

99 OMIT

99

100 EXT: RICKSHAW GOING THROUGH A RURAL PARK AND OVER A BRIDGE
OUTSIDE OF MIYAKO. DAY. [WINTER]

100

Shaded by a colorful parasol, Mameha and Sayuri ride in A RICKSHAW past an ornate pagoda; Sayuri in full maiko attire and make-up.

MAMEHA

She can destroy you. She will spread rumors, stalk you from tea-house to tea-house, then steal your clients and turn them over to Pumpkin! All in the hope that Mrs. Nitta adopts Pumpkin instead of you!

SAYURI

What can we do?

MAMEHA

We've got to out-wit her. To find a safe haven...somewhere beyond her reach, where you can practice your skills without any interference. And I've found just the place.
(gives her a card)
Your first sumo match.

SAYURI

What?

MAMEHA

(nodding)

It is sold out. Hatsumomo could not gain admission if she were a rat and scurried under the seats.

SAYURI smiles, her appetite whetted.

MAMEHA (cont'd)

Today you will meet Iwamura Ken. He founded the Iwamura Electric Company in Osaka.

(MORE)

MAMEHA (cont'd)

My client for years. His partner
Nobu...well, they say what he lacks
in charm, he makes up for in savvy--

SAYURI

You don't approve of Nobu?

MAMEHA

He does not approve of us. *

Off Sayuri's dismayed look:

MAMEHA (cont'd)

You like a challenge, don't you?

Mameha laughs merrily, as the RICKSHAW passes over a graceful
bridge in the Japanese countryside.

101

INT. SUMO MATCH. DAY. [WINTER]

101

Suspended over the mounded *dohyo* (clay sumo ring) is a roof
resembling a Shinto shrine, and hung at the corners with
giant colored tassels honoring the four season. All around
the ring rise tiers of boxes filled with kneeling SPECTATORS.

In the ring, two almost naked *rikishi* (FIRST PAIR OF SUMO
WRESTLERS) are already in combat as Mameha and Sayuri make
their way to the first tier boxes.

As Sayuri and Mameha approach the box where their clients
wait, MEN turn their heads, looking to see which box will
receive the honor of two such beautiful geishas.

MAMEHA

(whispers)

Be attentive. I will do the rest.

Sayuri follows Mameha nervously toward two men seated in a
first tier box. Sayuri realizes that one of the two men
seems somehow familiar. He rises and greets Mameha warmly:

It is The Chairman. Sayuri's heart is pounding as she bows:

MAMEHA (cont'd)

Chairman Iwamura, President Nobu,
this is my new younger sister
Sayuri. *

SAYURI

Hajimemashite.

As Sayuri gazes momentarily into the face she has longed to see, the Chairman abruptly averts his eyes, and speaks instead to NOBU:

CHAIRMAN

Nobu-san.

NOBU (42, strong presence of power and intelligence) is focused on the match. He cries out the name of the wrestler whom he sponsors ("Tochinoyama!"), then berates him in Japanese. The Chairman tries again: *

CHAIRMAN (cont'd)

Nobu!

When Nobu turns to greet Sayuri, she feels a slight shock:

Nobu's face is disfigured, badly scarred on one side; his right hand is a web of puckered scars. Mameha deftly makes the introduction --

MAMEHA

Nobu Toshikazu-san.

Nobu gives a shout as THE SECOND SET OF WRESTLERS mount the ring. Mameha seats Sayuri between the Chairman and Nobu, and manages to whisper in Sayuri's ear: *

MAMEHA (cont'd)

Injured in Manchuria. War hero.

CHAIRMAN

Sayuri, is this your first encounter with sumo?

Sayuri nods, too nervous to speak. She is aware of how close they sit, her leg and his almost touching as they kneel.

CHAIRMAN (cont'd)

Nobu-san will have to educate you.
I cannot tell one wrestler from the next. *

*
*

CHAIRMAN (cont'd)
(gestures around tent)
Did you notice our contribution?

Mameha notices the electric lights, gives a delighted cry.

MAMEHA
Lovely!

The CHAIRMAN turns to Sayuri:

CHAIRMAN
We closed a new deal in the countryside. We're harnessing the power of water to bring electricity to some of the smaller villages.

MAMEHA
It was in the newspaper, wasn't it?

NOBU
With the Chairman's picture, yes?
(teasing his friend)
You compensate for all my shortcomings, don't you?

A RUNNER delivers a pot of tea and cups. Sayuri takes up the pot to pour the Chairman his tea. She draws back her sleeve, and breaks the silence:

SAYURI
May I ask: How does someone harness the power of water?

The Chairman glances at Sayuri's wrist, then meets her gaze evenly--

CHAIRMAN
You should never ask an engineer to explain a thing. Because he will--

NOBU
Iwamura. Let the girl watch sumo!

Sayuri, teapot in mid-air, freezes, her gaze riveted: Across the ring, Hatsumomo is arriving with Korin.

MAMEHA

Korin, that little jade! She has brought a guest.

They see: Hatsumomo looks through opera glasses at the Chairman. Mameha raises her fan for a private tete-a-tete with Sayuri:

MAMEHA (cont'd)

Quick. Turn your attention to Nobu--

SAYURI

(with dread)

But Mameha-neisan--

MAMEHA

(rapid-fire)

She finds him repulsive. She'd never steal him away. Mislead her.

Mameha lowers her fan. Instantly Sayuri shifts the teapot to Nobu's cup. The Chairman's face falls, but he works to conceal his disappointment. Sayuri improvises:

SAYURI

Perhaps Nobu-san will be kind enough to explain the rules of the match.

The Chairman glances into his cup; it's only half full. Mameha swoops in, pouring the rest of his tea.

NOBU

Three things matter in life: Sumo, business and war. Understand one, you know them all. But why should a geisha care? You spend your time plucking strings, and dancing.

Nobu turns away, scowling; sips his tea. Sayuri senses Hatsumomo watching. She redoubles her efforts.

SAYURI

I humbly beg to differ. What is sumo but a dance between giants? What is business but a dance between companies?

(beat)

I'd like to know about every kind of dance.

*

*

The Chairman smiles, impressed. Nobu begrudgingly begins pointing out elements of the match:

NOBU
*Shiomaki...*They are throwing salt
to purify the ring. *

The two combatants quickly move from their "fair play stance" to a glowering crouch as they face off in the small ring.

NOBU (cont'd)
That man is Miyagiyama. The
greatest fighter in Japan. *

SAYURI
But he is so tiny-- *

NOBU
Only compared to his opponent!
Miyagiyama may use *hataki komi*---
are you listening?

Sayuri has one eye on The Chairman, but quickly reforms:

SAYURI
Yes.

NOBU
Hataki komi is a movement a smaller
combatant uses to throw the larger
man off balance. Victory does not
always belong to the powerful--

Nobu watches intently as the Wrestlers prepare and throw more salt, prepare again, building tension. He points brusquely:

NOBU (cont'd)
Look. There. In his eyes.

The Wrestlers tense and prepare to charge. At the same time, Mameha sees: Hatsumomo has left her seat and is making her way toward them. Mameha gathers herself apologetically:

MAMEHA
I am afraid our time has come to a
close--

CHAIRMAN
Going so soon?

NOBU

Not yet--I want her to see--

The Wrestlers crouch on their fists. Finally the larger man, SAIHO, charges.

MIYAGIYAMA uses the force of Saiho's impact to swivel out of the way. In that same instant, he brings his hand down on the back of Saiho's neck; Saiho flies over the lip of the ring and sprawls into the SPECTATORS. The encounter is over in less than two seconds.

NOBU (cont'd)

Now that - is *hataki komi*.

SAYURI

I see now why you like Sumo.

(with compassion for
Nobu's deformities)

You can never judge a man's power
by his appearance alone.

Nobu looks at Sayuri--full on--for the first time. He's truly touched by her insight. He says to Mameha:

NOBU

You may bring her again.

102

A SHORT TIME LATER

102

Sayuri & Mameha leave the match, among a press of SPECTATORS:

SAYURI

What are we to do? Hatsumomo found
us again!

MAMEHA

Do not worry. Like a true sumo
wrestler, you threw her off
balance! Nobu is the perfect
diversion.

Sayuri peeks back at Chairman. Only Nobu watches them go.

SAYURI

(worried)

Suppose he believes my
advances...suppose he takes an
interest in me?

MAMEHA

And violates all his high-minded
morals? Never.

SAYURI

But Oneisan...you heard him. He
asked to see me again.

MAMEHA

(musing)

Yes....he did, didn't he?

(back to business)

In the days ahead, Sayuri, I am
going to require all your trust. I
have it, don't I?

Sayuri nods.

*

MAMEHA (cont'd)

Good! Then our only enemy is time.

*

CUT TO:

103

INT. KITCHEN. OKIYA. [WINTER]

103

Sayuri digs through a stack of old newspapers near the stove.
She tears one open and finds: A BLACK & WHITE PHOTOGRAPH of
the Chairman.

104

INT. SAYURI'S ROOM. NIGHT. [WINTER]

104

Alone, Sayuri uses a hair ornament to pry out the false
bottom of a lacquered box. In the compartment, she places
the news photo of the Chairman next to the same handkerchief
he gave her so many years ago.

CUT TO:

105

EXT. NEAR MAMEHA'S APT. DAY. [SPRING]

105

Sayuri hastens over the Sonogawa footbridge. Mameha watches
from her balcony.

106

INT. MAMEHA'S APARTMENT. DAY. [SPRING]

106

Mameha uses the tiny blade of a folding knife to open the seam of a beautiful *maiko* kimono. The MAID ushers Sayuri in, then leaves.

SAYURI

Onei-san.

MAMEHA

Tonight, we will deliver a quick blow to Hatsumomo. *Hataki komi.*

SAYURI

How?

Mameha drapes the kimono on Sayuri and checks the split seam against Sayuri's right leg.

MAMEHA

We will meet Nobu-san at the Tsunashima restaraunt. But first....a visit to Dr. Crab!

*

Mameha pinches the end of a smouldering charcoal pencil -

SAYURI

Dr. Crab?

Mameha pulls up Sayuri's kimono exposing her leg.

SAYURI (cont'd)

Onei-san!

MAMEHA

Hold still. It's a little nickname he has earned over the years.

Mameha pokes her eyebrow charcoal into the slit to mark Sayuri's leg. Sayuri looks on bewildered.

MAMEHA (cont'd)

Now cut your leg where I've marked it.

SAYURI

(shocked)

What?

MAMEHA

Or I will cut it for you.

SAYURI

Onei-san...have you gone mad?

MAMEHA

(suddenly, harshly)

Do you trust me, or don't you?
Well?

Mameha's dead serious. Sayuri picks up the knife, her face a study in perplexion.

SAYURI

Couldn't I just pretend to have a
stomach ache?

MAMEHA

Go ahead! Do it!

Sayuri swallows hard, then presses the blade against the charcoal mark on her thigh. She gives a gasp of pain. Mameha says, almost with a lilt:

MAMEHA (cont'd)

And now we go fishing for a certain
Crab...

107

INT. DR. CRAB'S CLINIC & HOME. HANAMACHI. DAY. [SPRING]

107

DR. CRAB (45, odd, meticulous) wears a metal head reflector:

DR. CRAB

Careless with the sewing scissors,
were you?

Mortified, Sayuri lies on the examining table under a ghastly clinical light. She wears the kimono Mameha prepared for her, opened to expose her pale thigh.

DR. CRAB (cont'd)

Right through your beautiful
kimono...Pity.

He inserts his forefinger through the slit and wiggles it, his finger grazing Sayuri's skin.

MAMEHA

It won't leave a scar, will it?
Sayuri is a special girl at a very
special time in her life.

Dr. Crab instantly understands the allusion, of course.

DR. CRAB

With those eyes, you must be quite
a commodity.

He examines the cut, bringing his face close to her leg.

DR. CRAB (cont'd)

A clean cut. Won't leave a mark, I
promise. But I'd best prescribe a
bit of antiseptic--

He smiles down at Sayuri as his fingers massage some salve in
a circular fashion all around the tiny red wound.

108 OMIT

*108

109 EXT: TSUNASHIMA RESTARAUNT. NIGHT. [SPRING]

109

Open-air verandas adjoin, decorated with glowing lanterns.
On the lower veranda, Hatsumomo attends the General and his
MILITARY CRONIES. She displays Pumpkin to them like a china
doll.

The CAMERA moves on & we see: On the next veranda, Nobu, the
Chairman and BUSINESSMEN chat amongst themselves.

Wrapped in fur-trimmed cloaks over their kimono, Mameha and
Sayuri prepare to enter. Mameha shows Sayuri a tiny origami
box that opens--like a blooming flower--to reveal a SWEET-
RICE CAKE with a dab of red.

MAMEHA

Ekubo. At the right moment, slip
it to Nobu. Discreetly..
(at her puzzled look)
He will know what it means.

The MAIDS bring in trays. Sayuri and Mameha follow them in,
kimono hems ruffling in a liquid flow.

For a fleeting moment, Sayuri and the Chairman lock eyes; she skirts past him. The Chairman smiles as Mameha bows:

MAMEHA (cont'd)

Konbanwa.

At the General's table, Hatsumomo watches, amused, as Sayuri obediently hurries to Nobu's side. Nobu extends his sake cup to Sayuri impatiently.

NOBU

You have kept us waiting.

MAMEHA

Please forgive us, Nobu-san.

With an apologetic smile, Sayuri quickly takes up his bottle.

Sayuri sees: Hatsumomo, spilling gossip into the General's ear. In response, the General glances over at Nobu and laughs. Then he whispers the gossip to the person next to him. Soon, the scuttlebutt is circling the table.

Sayuri realizes--with a jolt--that Nobu is speaking to her.

NOBU

The Chairman thinks I should take more pleasure in life...music, and the theater! What is your impression?

The Chairman looks to Sayuri, curious to hear her answer.

SAYURI

It is useless to push a cart sideways.

The Businessmen laugh. Sayuri blushes, amends:

SAYURI (cont'd)

One could not wish Nobu-san to be anyone but Nobu-san.

CHAIRMAN

I could not agree more. *

He extends his cup to Nobu warmly.

CHAIRMAN (cont'd)

I owe this man everything. Kampai. *

EVERYONE

Kampai. *

The men drink.

*

NOBU

--He gives me too much credit, as
usual--

The Chairman smiles at Nobu's modesty.

A maid brings in a tray of fresh sake, and places it on the table. *

Nobu produces a small box wrapped in silk. He unwraps it, and hands it to Sayuri. *

NOBU (cont'd) *
(downplaying the gift)
It's a trinket. I found it a few days ago.

An awkward silence. Sayuri, The Chairman and Mameha are all speechless. Finally:

CHAIRMAN
Why, Nobu. I had no idea you were so sentimental. *

NOBU
Call it my new leaf.

The Chairman is quietly stunned. *

Sayuri glances at Mameha, uncertain how to respond. Mameha gives a signal nod: Thank him. Sayuri bows, blushing:

SAYURI
Arigato gozaimasu.

NOBU
My mother...she used to wear something similar.

Nobu lifts the lid of the box: A simple but elegant COMB. Sayuri just stares at it.

NOBU (cont'd)
You do not like it?

SAYURI

Forgive me, I have never received a present before.

A most unwelcome Hatsumomo appears, Pumpkin at her heels, en route to another affair:

HATSUMOMO

Konbonwa.

(She notices Nobu's gift)

Ah, what a beautiful comb!

*
*
*

Kneeling, she takes the comb from the box and--with a surgeon's precision--places the comb in Sayuri's hair.

HATSUMOMO (cont'd)

Such a joyous moment, Sayuri!

(with a glance at Nobu,
and then to Sayuri)

You are finally getting what you deserve.

*
*

As Hatsumomo steps away, Sayuri lifts her gaze in time to catch the Chairman's guarded expression.

CHAIRMAN

How lovely.

Hatsumomo and Pumpkin bow before leaving:

HATSUMOMO

And now will you excuse us, please?

We have another engagement.

(to Mameha)

Many, in fact.

(as they leave)

Pumpkin!

*
*
*
*
*
*

And--like a sudden tsunami--they vanish. Discreetly, Mameha produces from her sleeve the origami box: The mizuage cake. Bowing to Nobu, Sayuri covertly slips the box into his unscarred hand. Flustered, Nobu covers it with his scarred hand at once. Chairman intuits what has happened, looks away. Sayuri whispers:

SAYURI

You are most kind.

110

EXT. HANAMACHI. LATER. SAME NIGHT. [SPRING]

110

Mameha hurries along, Sayuri tries to keep up. She looks miserable, but Mameha is elated:

MAMEHA

Now--

(hands her origami box)
--give this one to Dr. Crab.

Sayuri takes the box, but blurts:

SAYURI

Mameha, please!

MAMEHA

(surprised)
You're upset.

SAYURI

I want to trust you, I do! But you
have to tell me what's going on--

MAMEHA

(her voice rising in
defense)
I am ensuring your future--

SAYURI

But tell me how! I beg you!

They step up into a rickshaw. Mameha explains:

MAMEHA

I am trying to orchestrate a
bidding war.

SAYURI

What for?

MAMEHA

Your most precious attribute.

SAYURI

And what is that?

MAMEHA

Your *mizuage*.

The rickshaw pulls away.

111

EXT. HANAMACHI - CONTINUOUS

111

Riding along in the rickshaw.

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MAMEHA

Did Mother ever tell you about the
"eel in the cave?"

Sayuri turns a blazing red. Mameha gives an exasperated
sigh, but forges on.

MAMEHA (cont'd)

Well, every once in a while... a
man's... eel... likes to visit a
woman's... cave.

SAYURI

Yes, I know.

MAMEHA

(alarmed)

You do?

SAYURI

I live with Hatsumomo.

The rickshaw turns the corner.

ON ANOTHER STREET

MAMEHA

Your cave is untouched. Men like
that, it is quite valuable. We
call this mizuage. And to become a
full geisha, you must sell it to
the highest bidder.

SAYURI

Did you sell yours?

MAMEHA

Years ago, when I was only
fourteen. The largest sum ever
paid; ten thousand yen. I freed
myself from debt--started a new
life--and so will you.

The rickshaw exits frame.

COVERED WALKWAY

The rickshaw pulls away in the background as Mameha leads Sayuri briskly down a covered walkway.

MAMEHA (cont'd)

When you slip the rice cake to Dr.
Crab it is a sign that says your
mizuage is ripe for sale. *

112 EXT. TANIZATO TEAHOUSE COURTYARD. NIGHT. [SPRING] 112

Mameha and Sayuri arrive at the entrance door. The TEA HOUSE OWNER (female, 60, sophisticated) stops them:

TEAHOUSE OWNER

The Doctor has no desire to see you
tonight. - Or any night.

Her sharp black eyes go to Sayuri accusingly and she shuts the door. Mameha and Sayuri exchange a devastated look which says: "Hatsumomo; who else?"

113 EXT/INT. ENTRANCE & OKIYA CORRIDOR. NIGHT. [SPRING] 113

As Sayuri approaches, she hears Hatsumomo berating Pumpkin:

HATSUMOMO'S VOICE

I spent the whole night sipping
sake and beer--I need *food*,
Pumpkin! Noodles! Something! Go
out and fetch it now!

Pumpkin stumbles down the steep tansu steps, harried. She draws up short at the sight of Sayuri and chokes back sobs. Sayuri touches her but she pushes past:

SAYURI

Pumpkin...Pumpkin...

PUMPKIN

I am not supposed to speak to you--

SAYURI
Hatsumomo can not treat you this
way--

PUMPKIN
--she can treat me however she
chooses--

Pumpkin groans in frustration; her sandal thong has broken.
Sayuri quietly takes it from her to repair it:

SAYURI
Why can't we speak, Pumpkin? You
were my first friend in the world--

PUMPKIN
Our lives have changed now.

SAYURI
Hatsumomo went to see Dr. Crab,
yes?

PUMPKIN
Chiyo-chan, I have to go--

SAYURI
(more pointedly now)
Didn't she?

PUMPKIN
I do not know--

SAYURI
Of course you know--you shadow her
every step--

PUMPKIN
--if she did, would I tell you?--

SAYURI
--if you still care for me--

PUMPKIN
--you expect me to betray my big
sister?--

SAYURI
--has she made you cruel, too--

PUMPKIN
(faltering)
--no--

SAYURI

My Pumpkin always told the truth--

PUMPKIN

--but--

SAYURI

--the truth!---

Pumpkin fights her tears and finally breaks. She pulls Sayuri into the dirt corridor of the okiya:

PUMPKIN

Tonight...We went to the Tanizato to see Dr. Crab! I sat outside, but I could still hear through the screen. Hatsumomo-neisan said to him, "I live in the same okiya as Sayuri!" His eyes got big, and he said "Really? Tell me everything about her!" And she said, "Oh, sir, I mustn't! It would only curl your toes!" That made him even more curious. "Well," said Hatsumomo-neisan, as smooth as silk, "Did you know that she brings men back to her room?" "No!" he cried. "Common sailors, and fishermen, too," said Hatsumomo-neisan. And the Doctor looked queasy, like he didn't want to hear anymore. But she kept going. "At all hours, of the night, like an alleycat!" And then the doctor got very quiet, and stared for the longest time at his hands. And Hatsumomo-neisan said, "What's the matter? Have I told you more than you wanted to know?"

Sayuri understands everything now.

PUMPKIN (cont'd)

I wanted to say something but how could I, Chiyo-chan, how?

(then, still wincing)

Am I really like her? Am I?

SAYURI

Of course not.

PUMPKIN

Is Mameha-san cruel to you, too?

SAYURI

No. She's so kind to me, Pumpkin.
But sometimes I worry she's taking
me further from the things I want.

Sayuri helps her slip on the mended sandal.

PUMPKIN

That man, Nobu.
(wrinkling her nose)
Do you really like him?

SAYURI

(sadly)
No.

PUMPKIN

That's what I thought. Do you like
someone else?

Sayuri looks at Pumpkin; does she know? Sayuri blushes, and
rises to leave:

PUMPKIN (cont'd)

Don't worry about me, Chiyo-chan.
I'll be fine. Better than fine.
(beat)
Mother plans to adopt me. So my
dream of having someplace to live
out my life may come true. Jhah-
ne!

Pumpkin hugs Sayuri then rushes out. Sayuri is stunned.

114 EXT. ZEN GARDEN. DAY. [SPRING]

*114

As they walk, Mameha and Sayuri talk in low tones:

*

MAMEHA

We can still prevent it.

SAYURI

How? Hatsumomo has poisoned Dr.
Crab against me!

MAMEHA

Forget about him. There are plenty
of other fish in the sea.

SAYURI

The Chairman has been kind--

*

MAMEHA

Sayuri! Nobu and the Chairman are
business partners. They would
never bid against one another.

(beat)

It is time we cast a wider net--

Mameha smiles, the wheels in her head turning.

CUT TO:

115 EXT: HANAMACHI. DAY. RAIN. [SPRING]

115

Rain falls mistily along the narrow side-streets. Hatsumomo
darts homeward from the bathhouse.

MAMEHA (V.O.)

Suppose you were the object of
every man's fantasy--

SAYURI (V.O.)

What do you mean?

MAMEHA (V.O.)

--and became the most famous geisha
in all Miyako--

SAYURI (V.O.)

But I am not.

MAMEHA (V.O.)

You will be--

Hatsumomo sees a festival poster on a kiosk and stares in
disbelief: the PAINTING of a maiko with silver eyes can only
be Sayuri. She tears it down with a "rip."

116 INT. TATAMI ROOM - OKIYA. DAY.

116

At the table Sayuri, Pumpkin, Mother and Auntie eat their
meal. Hatsumomo stalks in, the crumpled poster in her hand.

HATSUMOMO

Who is responsible for this?

MOTHER

Ask Mameha.

Pumpkin stares at the poster, aghast.

PUMPKIN
How did Sayuri get to be the lead?

MOTHER
(to Pumpkin)
It's your own fault! You should
practice more!
(to Hatsumomo)
You keep her out too late, dragging
her from teahouse to teahouse--

Hatsumomo looks at Sayuri, outraged.

PUMPKIN
(still forlorn)
I want my picture made.

HATSUMOMO
(to Sayuri, insinuating)
What did Mameha do? Speak to the
director "in private?"

SAYURI
Not every geisha uses that kind of
currency.

HATSUMOMO
I am looking forward to your
performance.
(with venom)
You know how I adore watching you
dance, Chiyo.

She departs, with a flick of her finger upturning a dish of
sauce over the poster of Sayuri.

117 INT/EXT. KABURENJO THEATRE AND COURTYARD LOBBY. NIGHT. 117

THEATRE-GOERS dressed in spring finery crowd the theatre
entrance. RICKSHAWS pull up in front. An elaborately
decorated one carries The GENERAL and HATSUMOMO. Blazing
white lanterns bank A HUGE POSTER of Sayuri and her silvery
eyes. Out in public, the image is even more imposing.

118 INT. KABURENJO THEATRE AND BACKSTAGE. NIGHT. 118

From the wings we see 10 MAIKO on stage in identical costumes
- Pumpkin among them, nervous and trying hard -- twirling
brilliantly colored fans.

Sayuri's hands tremble as she tries in vain to slide a glass ornament into her hair. Mameha glides into view in her mirror; she presses her cheek to Sayuri's and whispers:

MAMEHA

They've all come...The Baron, Nobu-san, our beloved Hatsumomo and that dapper General of hers--

SAYURI

(a tad too fervently)
Anybody else?

MAMEHA

(arching an eyebrow)
Even your old friend, Dr. Crab.

Gently, Mameha takes the glass ornament from Sayuri's nervous fingers, and expertly places it in her coiffure.

SAYURI

Onei-san. What if I dance poorly--what if I disgrace myself, and no one takes interest--?

MAMEHA

Shhhh. You will be glorious! Now it's time.

119

THE HANAMICHI

119

A FIGURE appears at the back of the house, dressed as a courtesan in an ornate head-dress, in tall black lacquered shoes, carrying a translucent parasol -- Sayuri, making her entrance.

"Snow" falls as she dances her way along the mirrored *hanamichi* (a long ramp that extends from the back of the house to the stage). When she spies the Chairman in the audience, she barely averts a stumble.

CLOSE UPS reveal Mother, Auntie, Mr. Bekku, The General, Hatsumomo, Dr. Crab, The Baron, Mameha, and Nobu are watching from the audience. They are moved by Sayuri's dance of unrequited love. The Chairman is particularly enthralled.

As the dance comes to a close--and Sayuri descends into the madness of grief--she discards her parasol, steps out of her shoes, loses her ornate cloak and soon falls weeping on the *hanamichi*. The snow swirls around her.

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In the audience, Dr. Crab arches an eyebrow, intrigued. Others around him burst into spontaneous applause.

120 EXT. COURTYARD LOBBY OF KABURENJO THEATRE, NIGHT (SPRING) 120

The applause continues as a shower of white Kabuki streamers descend over the opening night festivities. A dance troupe with a red sonangasa, accompanied by two shamisen and a taiko drum. MAIKO and OTHERS mix with the Baron, Chairman, Mr. Bekku and OTHER MEN. Some guests kneel at low tables served by Geisha. Others stroll through the courtyard. The General is flanked on either side by Hatsumomo and Bunzo.

As people congratulate her, Sayuri cranes to find the Chairman -- but Mameha brings her to Dr. Crab instead.

MAMEHA

(containing her own surprise)

Sayuri, you remember the doctor.

SAYURI

I hope my performance pleased you, Doctor.

DR. CRAB

You dance with such profound feeling.

An insistent Mameha presses an ekubo box into Sayuri's hand.

SAYURI

I most humbly thank-you.

MAMEHA

It seems you've once again caught the Doctor's interest.

SAYURI

And I am most grateful. If you have heard any gossip--

DR. CRAB

Yes.

SAYURI

--then I hope you will follow your own advice.

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DR. CRAB

What would that be, pray tell?

SAYURI

Seek a second opinion.

Sayuri offers the box to him with a bow. Hatsumomo says Dr. Crab accept the *akubo* box -- obviously a mizuage cake. Just then, the Baron descends upon the Chairman:

BARON

Ah, Chairman. Sayuri gave such a passionate performance, don't you think?

Sayuri blushes at his remark.

CHAIRMAN

Indeed.

BARON

Mameha, did you invite the Chairman to my estate this weekend?

(to the Chairman)

It's my annual blossom viewing party.

MAMEHA

Baron, I told you, I can't go. I have an urgent appointment.

Hatsumomo swoops in with a sly laugh --

HATSUMOMO

Taking care of a little nuisance?
Or was that a naughty secret?

The Baron, embarrassed in front of Chairman, gives Mameha an angered look. Mameha, stung, covers.

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HATSUMOMO (cont. 8)

Baron: Wouldn't Sayuri look
stunning among the flowers on your
estate?

BARON

Yes. Very pretty.
(to Mameha)
Be sure to send her along.

HATSUMOMO

With a chaperone, of course. I'm
certain Mrs. Bekku will oblige.

Bekku nods his assent.

MAMEHA

It's a fine idea, Baron. But
Sayuri is required at the theatre.

BARON

Mameha, I expect to see her there.
Nobu, coming Saturday?

NOBU

All that way to see a cherry tree?
I will leave that to the Chairman.

Hatsumomo whispers to the Baron and he laughs. Mameha
murmurs to Sayuri, worried.

MAMEHA

If you'd rather not go...

Sayuri watches the Chairman as he exits. Of course she will
go to the Baron's party.

SAYURI

I'd like to go. Very much.

Concerned, Mameha starts to whisper in her ear.

121

EXT. BAMBOO FOREST IN MIYAKO. DAY. [SPRING]

The Baron's LIMOUSINE passes along a road through towering
walls of thick green bamboo stalks.

MAMEHA (V.O.)

Then be on your guard, every
moment.

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At the window of the limousine, Sayuri's white-painted face
peers out in wonder.

MAMEHA (V.O.) (cont'd)

There's a reason Hatsumomo wants you there. I know the Baron well, Sayuri. He has a weakness for women like us...and he doesn't take refusal lightly!

122 EXT. BARON'S GATES. DAY. [SPRING] 122

The Limousine pulls up to the Baron's impressive GATES. Sayuri steps out, followed by Bekku.

123 EXT. BARON'S ESTATE. DAY. [SPRING] 123

The Baron's spacious Japanese gardens are dominated by a magnificent old CHERRY TREE. PEACOCKS strut on the lawns.

Sayuri looks for The Chairman to no avail. Mr. Bekku follows her, aloof. The Baron's WEALTHY PARTY GUESTS - in fashionable Western clothes - take notice of Sayuri. They crowd around her. Flashbulbs pop.

The Chairman, strolling by himself, hears the activity and sees Sayuri, flustered, trapped by the horde. He cuts through-

CHAIRMAN

Excuse me. Sayuri. Today, even the cherry blossoms are envious of her.

--and escorts a grateful Sayuri to safety.

124 CHAIRMAN & SAYURI, WALKING ALONE 124

As she strolls beside the Chairman, Sayuri's feet aren't exactly on the ground.

CHAIRMAN

Something I've been wanting to say to you for some time now.

Sayuri's waits with bated breath. Then:

CHAIRMAN (cont'd)

I'd like to...to thank you for your attention to Nobu.

SAYURI
 (hides disappointment)
 Oh?

CHAIRMAN
 Nobu can be a difficult man. So severe. Hates parties, sake only in moderation, and he disdains geisha. But...he is fond of you.

SAYURI
 Because you admire him, I respect him more.

CHAIRMAN
 He would never tell you himself; he's far too modest. We were fighting in Manchuria together. There was an explosion. He protected me from the worst of it. As you might imagine, I owe him quite a debt.

SAYURI nods, moved.

CHAIRMAN (cont'd)
 Nobu's taught me a great deal. Patience, for one thing. I--in turn--have tried to teach him. You have to savor life while you can.

SAYURI
 The lesson of the cherry blossom.

CHAIRMAN
 See? That is why Nobu likes you. We must not expect happiness, Sayuri. It is not something we deserve. When life goes well, it's a sudden gift. It cannot last forever.

Like this moment. A shower of cherry petals surprises them. The Chairman smiles down at Sayuri as he gently removes each petal from her hair.

THE BARON'S VOICE
 Ah Sayuri, there you are.

The Baron is above them on another path; Bekku lurks nearby.

THE BARON
 I have a present for you.

125

INT: ESTATE - LATER. DAY INTO EVENING. [SPRING]

125

As the Baron leads Sayuri and Mr. Bekku deep into his Art Deco Mansion, the SERVANTS discreetly close the shoji doors behind them.

THE BARON

Mameha asked me to show you my kimono collection...It's quite venerated. My grandfather and my father collected kimono before me.

A shoji door slides shut, and Mr. Bekku disappears. Sayuri looks back, alarmed. Yet another shoji closes, stranding her alone with the Baron in the heart of the house.

THE BARON (cont'd)

I've given a number of valuable kimono to Mameha...I like to give presents to beautiful girls.

Surrounding them, burnished gold MIRRORS. The Baron presents her with a folded kimono:

THE BARON (cont'd)

It's yours. Try it on.

SAYURI

The Baron is too kind. I will happily try it on. With Mameha-neisan, when the Baron returns to Miyako--

THE BARON

Who knows when that will be? Put it on. Now. Don't be shy.

He pulls her against him and reaching behind her, jerks open the knot of her *obi-jime* (obi cord). Sayuri pushes away, but the silken obi cord spills to the mat.

THE BARON (cont'd)

Don't worry. I am experienced in knotting obis. Untying them as well.

SAYURI

Please...

The Baron takes her hand, forcing it against the bristles of his cheek. Then he turns her palm upward, grazing it with his lips. Sayuri tries to wrest her hand away.

SAYURI (cont'd)
Mr. Bekku is waiting--

THE BARON
Bekku's waiting for no one.

He begins to unwind her obi. Sayuri sees the Chairman's handkerchief fall to the floor.

She kneels and grabs it quickly. In that moment the Baron unfastens the *datejime* -- the waistband underneath the obi. Her kimono releases in front. Sayuri gives a cry and clutches at the fabric, desperate to conceal herself.

The Baron grabs her from behind, pinning her arms back. He looks at her in the mirror ahead: her kimono open, her eyes closed, and her head turned away so that the curve of her neck is exposed. He nuzzles her.

SAYURI
Stop, please. Stop now.

Undaunted, the Baron drops her outer kimono and it puddles around her. She stands--almost naked--in her underkimono.

He releases that, too. Her under-kimono falls open. Shamelessly, he reaches under it. She tries to resist, but hands scuttle across her flesh like spiders.

SAYURI (CONT'D) (cont'd)
No. No...

The Baron unties her final garment. With a whisper of silk, he loosens the *koshimaki* (final layer) from around her hips. Sayuri sobs, and kneels low in an effort to hide her breasts. The Baron kneels beside her, and coos tenderly:

THE BARON
Sayuri, I only want to have a look.
Nothing wrong in that. Any man
would do the same.

As slowly as a parent might peel the cover from a sleeping child, he opes Sayuri's underrobe. Her beautiful back...the heart-shaped curve of her naked hips...her tabi-feet peeking out from beneath...

Slowly he forces her to sit up, whispering, coaxing, begging her to stand naked before the glass. Sayuri turns her face away, squeezing her eyes shut. Clenched in her fist, the Chairman's handkerchief.

As the Baron admires her body, he slips his own hand into the dank crevices of his own kimono, to pleasure himself.

Sayuri, weeps silently; the very portrait of both beauty and humiliation. Suddenly, she turns to him. Her eyes are swimming with tears. They pierce his soul.

MOMENTS LATER

The sliding door slides open and the Baron strides out. Behind him on the floor, Sayuri lies, cast aside amidst a pile of silk.

CUT TO:

126 INT: ENTRANCE OF OKIYA. NEXT DAY. [SPRING] 126

Auntie pulls back the door to reveal Mameha. She is dressed in formal black, and austere with anger.

127 EXT. OKIYA. VERANDA AND BACK GARDEN [SPRING] 127

Sayuri enters and bows.

SAYURI'S VOICE

Onei-san.

MAMEHA

I heard a message on the wind.

Alone with Mameha, Sayuri stands, head bowed:

MAMEHA (cont'd)

So careless!

(choking back furious
sobs)

You have ruined all our plans!

SAYURI

I did nothing!

MAMEHA

Please, Sayuri, do not insult me--I
know the Baron better than that--

SAYURI

He gave me a kimono -

MAMEHA

You sold yourself for a kimono??

SAYURI

I did not sell myself!

She sees--to her dismay--that Mameha is unconvinced.

MAMEHA

Today's the day I accept bids for your mizuage! Well, what price can I hope to demand, with a finger pointed at your back?

SAYURI

He looked at me. That's all, *onei-san*.

-- which only wounds Mameha more.

MAMEHA

You will be examined at the *mizuage* ceremony. If you're found to be worthless -

SAYURI

- I am not worthless!

With a sorrowful look, Mameha leaves.

128

INT: TATAMI ROOM & MOTHER'S ROOM-OKIYA. DAY INTO EVENING.
[SPRING]

128

Seen through a slight opening in the shoji: Mameha is sequestered in Mother's private office, managing the bids for Sayuri's mizuage. She negotiates on Mother's telephone.

In the TATAMI ROOM, Auntie keeps checking the wrist-watch she keeps tucked in her obi.

Everyone is waiting: Sayuri, Pumpkin, Auntie too. They hear the TELEPHONE ring, and the prompt click as Mameha grabs it.

Hatsumomo saunters in eating a yellow plum.

HATSUMOMO

How much longer is this going to take?

Sayuri doesn't gratify Hatsumomo with a reaction. The TELEPHONE rings again.

HATSUMOMO (cont'd)

Besides, who wants a plum, when someone has already had a bite?

She and Bekku exchange a covert look of triumph. Sayuri hears the shoji door slide open. Mameha steps out, and passes Mother a slip of paper. Hatsumomo scoffs.

HATSUMOMO (cont'd)

What is it? Twenty yen? Thirty?

Mother fixes her glasses to her nose and peers at it anxiously:

MOTHER

This can't be the right amount--

MAMEHA

I trust you agree; I have won the wager.

Mother gapes at Sayuri, mute.

MAMEHA (cont'd)

Sayuri's made history. No *mizuage* has ever been sold for more. Not even mine.

(a dramatic pause, and then)

Fifteen thousand yen.

Sayuri stares, stunned. Hatsumomo and Pumpkin are floored. Bekku chokes. Auntie begins to cry. *

AUNTIE

Unbelievable.

SAYURI

Arigato gozaimasu, oneisan.

MOTHER

Of course none of it will go to Sayuri. Or to you, Mameha.

This stops Mameha, short. Mother announces smugly:

MOTHER (cont'd)

It goes to this okiya. All fifteen thousand yen--to this estate--

SAYURI

I do not understand--

MOTHER

--which Sayuri will inherit, as my adopted daughter.

Gasps all around.

PUMPKIN
(weakly)
What?

HATSUMOMO
(enraged)
You wouldn't dare--

MOTHER
(flaring too)
I'm entitled to do as I choose--

HATSUMOMO
But you promised the okiya to
Pumpkin--

MOTHER
(scoffing at Pumpkin)
Look at her! Still a virgin maiko!

Choking back sobs, Pumpkin bolts from the room. Sayuri
watches after her, her glee momentarily dimmed:

*
*

SAYURI
Can't you adopt us both?

MOTHER
Quiet, Sayuri!
(back to Hatsumomo)
I'm no fool. Pumpkin would only be
your puppet. How long will it take
before you kick us out onto the
street--

HATSUMOMO
But I have given you my life--

MOTHER
Yes! Your impudence! Your foul
temper!

HATSUMOMO
Who paid for the silk on your back?
The rice in your bowl? The
tobacco in that pipe of yours?

MOTHER
Don't exaggerate! You have never
even had a danna--no, oh no--

HATSUMOMO
 (sensing what's to come)
 Don't say it--

MOTHER
 You chose that no-good Koichi--

HATSUMOMO
 Stop it!

MOTHER
 Sneaking through your window at all
 hours of the night--

HATSUMOMO
 Enough!

MOTHER
 Not like a geisha--like a common
 prostitute!--

HATSUMOMO
 Quiet!

MOTHER
 Besides, you are getting old.

An icy chill descends between the two women.

MOTHER (cont'd)
 But Sayuri... Sayuri is destined to
 become a legend.

Simmering, Hatsumomo starts to leave.

HATSUMOMO
 My dear, *okasan*...we will see,
 won't we?

Mother turns to her newly-adopted daughter:

MOTHER
 Sayuri, your room is too small.
 Take Hatsumomo's.

This stops Hatsumomo cold in her tracks; she shoots Sayuri a
 look that says, "I'm not done with yet."

MOTHER (cont'd)
 From now on, your name is Nitta
 Sayuri.

MOTHER (cont'd)
(to Sayuri)
You may thank me.

Sayuri, speechless, bows. With a flare of her kimono, Hatsumomo is gone. Mameha excuses herself to Sayuri and Mother:

MAMEHA
I'm happy to forsake my share of
the money, on Sayuri's behalf. As
Miyako's most renowned geisha, she
will no doubt be a credit to us
all.

*
*
*
*
*

She turns to Sayuri, and says soulfully:

MAMEHA (cont'd)
May I congratulate you both.

*
*

Mameha bow and leaves. Sayuri hurries after her:

129

EXT. OKIYA. NIGHT. [SPRING]

129

Sayuri catches Mameha in the street:

*

SAYURI
Oneisan!
(her voice choking with
gratitude)
Everything we wanted, you made
happen. Thank you.

*
*

She realizes Mameha is suppressing tears.

MAMEHA
Isn't success sweet?

SAYURI
May I ask who--

MAMEHA
Dr. Crab.

From Sayuri, a sharp intake of breath.

SAYURI
Was Nobu disappointed?

Mameha tries to keep her voice even:

MAMEHA

Nobu did not bid. It was against
his mighty principals.

(beat, then painfully)

Dr. Crab was opposed by The Baron.
My Baron. You want to know the
truth, Sayuri?

(a difficult confession)

He was the highest bidder. Forgive
me...but I let it go to Dr. Crab.
I think you understand why.

SAYURI

I swear to you, I am innocent -

MAMEHA

Of course you are! No man would bid so much for a thing he had already taken. It is my own fault. I did not protect you.

And then Mameha brushes aside these serious thoughts in favor of a more tender one:

MAMEHA (cont'd)

Celebrate this moment, Sayuri.
Tonight, the lights in the Hanamachi all burn for you.

She bows a deeply respectful bow. Sayuri returns it.

130 OMIT

130

131 INT. DR. CRAB'S CLINIC & HOME. EVENING. [SPRING]

131

Under a clinical light, Dr. Crab prepares a futon with white hospital sheets. He sets a high pillow at one end of the futon, and a low pillow next to it for himself. He smooths a hospital towel across the mid-section.

Sayuri is led in to the room by Dr. Crab's elderly maid. Sayuri wears a pretty kimono robe. The maid closes the shoji screen and exits.

Crab opens a wooden case that contains twenty or thirty sealed vials. In each is a brown-stained wad of cotton. Dr. Crab opens an empty vial and fastidiously prepares a square of clean gauze. He takes up a pen and writes a label: "Sayuri."

We SEE among the vials, similarly marked: Each is labeled with a geisha's name. Among them is a vial marked: "Mameha".

Dr. Crab indicates the futon and helps Sayuri lie down. He settles her head on the high pillow. He lifts her hips and slips the towel under her. He adjusts the light, and loosens the tie around her robe. He unties his own.

He opens her kimono as his body moves in to obliterate hers.

TIME CUT TO:

132 EXT. HANAMACHI. NIGHT. [SPRING] 132

Sayuri returns from her visit to Dr. Crab in a rickshaw; She looks resplendent in a yellow silk kimono. Its collar is now a vivid white.

133 INT. OKIYA. NIGHT. [SPRING] 133

The shoji screens to the tatami room are open; Sayuri enters to find Mother waiting. Mother rises and comes to her; in Sayuri's face, a change: the knowledge she has entered a new realm. Tenderly, Mother cradles Sayuri's face in her hands.

MOTHER

My daughter. You have turned the collar. You are a full geisha now.

Sayuri smiles, coy but proud. She hurries up the tansu stairs to her room:

134 INT. SAYURI'S NEW ROOM (HATSUMOMO'S OLD ROOM). NIGHT. 134
[SPRING]

Hatsumomo, lounges on Sayuri's futon with her back to the door. A single oil lamp on a low table lights the room: *

SAYURI *

What are you doing in my room? *

With a sardonic smile, Hatsumomo welcomes Sayuri into her own ranks: *

HATSUMOMO

I came to congratulate you. *

SAYURI

Please get out. *

Hatsumomo laughs, and rolls over to reveal: she's found Sayuri's lacquered box and is rifling through her keepsakes! *
The photo of the Chairman, the handkerchief-- *

HATSUMOMO *

Why, little Chiyo! Look what I found. *

(MORE) *

HATSUMOMO (cont'd)
 (re: handkerchief)
 --his initials; how elegant.
 You've been hiding this for a long
 time--

*
*
*

Hatsumomo dips the handkerchief into an oil lamp.

*

HATSUMOMO (cont'd)
 The sacrifice every Geisha must
 make--

*
*
*

SAYURI

Don't.

*

Sayuri lunges for her. Hatsumomo falls against a kimono mounted on display rods. Sayuri grapples for the Chairman's handkerchief. Hatsumomo skirts away and runs to HATSUMOMO'S ROOM (Sayuri's old room)--

*
*
*
*

-- and tries to slam the shoji on Sayuri's hand, but Sayuri gets in.

*
*

Hatsumomo stuffs the handkerchief into her kimono:

*

HATSUMOMO
 Isn't this where you keep it? Next
 to your heart?

*
*
*

Sayuri rips Hatsumomo's kimono open. As they struggle for the handkerchief, Sayuri's HAIR ORNAMENT falls out onto the floor; it has a long lethal-looking double-pronged shaft with pointed tips. Both women seize on the same thought: It is a weapon.

Hatsumomo darts for the ornament but Sayuri snatches it up and holds it like a knife. Hatsumomo tries to wrench it from her. In a counter-move, with sumo-like agility: Sayuri releases the hair ornament to grab the handkerchief away from Hatsumomo.

With a cry, Hatsumomo flies at her, stabbing at Sayuri with the lethal hair pin. Sayuri flees -

-- into the corridor, where she knocks into one of several oil lamps. It sways crazily, making bizarre shadows. Sayuri ducks away.

Hatsumomo yanks Sayuri back, off-balance. Sayuri twists free but stumbles and nearly falls down the tansu stairs. She catches herself.

Hatsumomo swipes at her with the hair pin. Sayuri recovers and runs into HER OWN ROOM, slamming the shoji. Hatsumomo stabs the fragile old rice paper, puncturing it so--

-- the hair pin barely misses Sayuri's face on the other side. Sayuri recoils. Hatsumomo throws open the shoji with a madwoman's strength. She runs at Sayuri --

Sayuri deflects the blow with a pillow. Hatsumomo slashes the pillow, and buckwheat husks fly. Sayuri throws the pillow at Hatsumomo's face. Hatsumomo swipes blindly with the hairpin, hacking away at the air --

Mother brings down her bamboo stick, hard. Hatsumomo gives a cry of pain and grabs her wrist. The hair pin falls. Mother picks it up.

MOTHER

(to Hatsumomo)

I should have kicked you out long ago.

*

Hatsumomo is breathing in frantic gasps, clutching her wrist, her clothing torn and her hair wild.

HATSUMOMO

I should have left long ago!

*

MOTHER

Get out!

*

*

HATSUMOMO

Very well...but before I go, let me end this...my gift to all of you!

*

*

*

She picks up the oil lamp and throw's it at Sayuri's kimono. They ignite, sparking a flame.

*

*

In great gulps, FIRE devours the water image on one of Sayuri's kimono.

Mother grabs Sayuri's quilt and tries to smother the flames. Sayuri snatches her kimono, trying to save them. Inspired now, Hatsumomo bolts for the corridor and grabs another oil lamp off the wall. She hurls it toward Sayuri, who ducks. The lamp crashes against a rice paper wall, and ignites it.

*

Pumpkin rushes up the tansu stairs. Hatsumomo cracks an oil lamp against the wall, showering glass on Pumpkin. Shaken, Pumpkin retreats down the stairs.

*

*

In the KIMONO ROOM, Auntie desperately grabs red lacquered boxes. Pumpkin rushes to her aid.

*

Upstairs, the okiya starts to scorch and cinder. Hatsumomo sinks down amongst the flames, which are as angry as the fire in her eyes.

CUT TO:

135 INT./EXT: OKIYA. DAWN. [SPRING] 135

Aftermath and a red sky. In the quiet dawn, Hatsumomo walks away, bereft of everything, even her household possessions. She turns back to stare at the okiya a final time, her face smeared with ash. *

The second floor is blackened by fire, but the house still stands. Through the skeletal frame of a shoji screen window, Sayuri watches as Hatsumomo turns, vanishing into the mist. *

From above, the MENACING ROAR of AIRPLANES. A FORMATION OF ALLIED BOMBERS flies low over the torii gate, their silhouettes terrifying against the reddish sky. *

Suddenly, the LURCHING ROAR of MILITARY TRUCKS--

136 EXT. HANAMACHI & SHINTO SHRINE - DAWN. [WINTER] 136

--TRUCK WHEELS turn as JAPANESE MILITARY TRUCKS cross the bridge into the Hanamachi. JAPANESE SOLDIERS unload and disperse, begin pounding on doors of okiyas. A TRUCK fitted with a loudspeaker cruises by:

TRUCK LOUDSPEAKER

"This sector is to be evacuated, everyone must leave. - This district is closed by official order. Please cooperate..."

137 EXT. YUKIMOTO TEAHOUSE & HANAMACHI STREET. DUSK. [WINTER] 137

The teahouse lanterns are extinguished. Theatre posters peel on the long wall where GEISHA huddle in clusters, belongings heaped around them. SOLDIERS patrol as the geisha wait.

MILITARY TRUCKS arrive. SOLDIERS herd a group of frightened geisha into the back compartment. They toss aside the geishas' belongings - not enough room in the truck. KORIN fights to be allowed onto the truck.

Chairman steps down from a truck and pays the Soldier -- he has bribed his way into the Hanamachi. Chairman strides off, followed at a respectful distance by an ELDERLY SERVANT.

Chairman walks past GEISHA huddled on the ground, wrapped in quilts and finery. Some geisha cook over tiny fires. OTHERS sell their finery to each other. Money changes hands. Chairman keeps searching.

The SOUND OF MORE BOMBERS passing overhead. Sayuri, consoling Mameha, looks up to see the Chairman striding toward them. Mameha gives a relieved cry:

MAMEHA

Chairman! They are sending us away, but they won't say where--

CHAIRMAN

Osaka, to work in the factories. But you must not go. The city is a prime target; they have already bombed the train station. Get your things, quickly.

Sayuri & Mameha take their bundles. Sayuri grabs her shamisen. The Chairman leads them toward rickshaws:

CHAIRMAN (cont'd)

Nobu and I are trying to find safe havens for as many of you as we can. Here -

He passes Mameha to a DRIVER and hands her a certificate --

CHAIRMAN (cont'd)

- Work certificate. Nurse's aid in Wadayama. Best I could do. Friend of mine is Chief Surgeon there. Hurry!

(to RICKSHAW DRIVER)

Take care of her.

The Rickshaw Driver assists Mameha into his rickshaw. Mameha realizes that she and Sayuri are to be separated:

MAMEHA

Sayuri-chan! I will write to you!

SAYURI

Oneisan!

Chairman has handed Sayuri's bundle to the Elderly Servant:

CHAIRMAN

This is Arima; he will take you into the hills. Nobu has got a friend there; a kimono-maker. He is sewing parachutes now.

(gives her certificate)

Anyone stops you, show them this.

SAYURI

Do I have to go?

CHAIRMAN

It's remote, you will be safe---

SAYURI

What about you? You said Osaka was dangerous---

CHAIRMAN

Our factory's there. I have no choice.

(then)

I will express your gratitude to Nobu-san.

Her gaze is locked on his as her rickshaw pulls away. *

SAYURI'S VOICE

Because I had endured starvation and hard work before, I knew I could survive. *

138 OMIT 138

139 OMIT 139

140 OMIT 140

141 OMIT 141

142 EXT. RURAL RIVER. MIYAKO HILLS. 1945. DAY [AUTUMN]. 142

THE OMINOUS REFLECTION OF AIRPLANES IN DARK WATER *

The water ripples in their trembling wake.

SAYURI'S VOICE (CONT'D)

But for what purpose? The war was so devastating, so brutal. We weren't merely defeated...we were destroyed. Whole cities evaporating in clouds of smoke. *

An inky red liquid the color of BLOOD begins to course through the water's current, billowing in sanguine clouds.

SAYURI'S VOICE (cont'd)
The people I knew...after years of
blood-shed, what terrible fates had
befallen them?

We follow the bloodish liquid down its watery path...where will it take us? Toward some terrible carnage?

SAYURI'S VOICE (cont'd)
Most of all, the Chairman.

Now, we see the source of the tincture: long bolts of cloth, newly dyed, unfurled in the water like floating banners.

SAYURI'S VOICE (cont'd)
Was he even alive? And if
so...would he even remember? I
thought of my old life as a geisha
in the Hanamachi. It felt as
remote--as hazy--as a dream.

Standing knee-deep in a river, her clothing rolled to her waist, a PEASANT WOMAN: we barely recognize that it's Sayuri. The Kimono maker ARASHINO (middle-aged, weathered, kind) oversees as she and a host of OTHER WORKERS rinse their textiles.

ARASHINO
When you've finished, you can
string it up to dry, along with the
others.

Sayuri raises her hands from the stream; her skin is stained with dye.

143 LATER

143

Near the RIVER: Tall bamboo poles suspend billowing "prayer flags" of drying kimono fabric. Among OTHER WORKERS, Sayuri hangs the fabric. A YOUTH hurries to her, calling -

YOUTH
Sayuri. A man from Osaka has come
to see you.

Sayuri drops her work and pushes through the wilderness of fluttering silk panels. As she hastens, she pulls a peasant's scarf off and tries to neaten her hair.

Her heart in her throat, Sayuri sees a man in a fedora making his way toward her through the luminescent banners of silk. She believes for a moment it is the Chairman. The silk lifts, and her heart falls: The man is Nobu.

144 LATER

144

Nobu and Sayuri wander among the silk banners:

NOBU

General Tottori was captured, and
tried as a war criminal. The Baron
lost his fortune and committed
suicide--

SAYURI

What about the okiya?

NOBU

Mr. Bekku is gone, but the others--

SAYURI

Auntie and Mother?

NOBU

(with a smile)
--indestructible as always.

Sayuri summons the courage to ask the foremost question on
her mind.

SAYURI

And the Chairman?

NOBU

As well as can be expected.

From his pocket, Nobu takes a tiny shard of concrete rubble:

NOBU (cont'd)

This is all that remains of our
factories.

She touches him tenderly.

SAYURI

I am so sorry, Nobu-san.

NOBU

Sayuri, We want to rebuild. But to
do that, we will need your help.

*

SAYURI

What can I do?

NOBU

Somewhere under those rags...are
you still the greatest geisha in
Miyako? *

Sayuri hides her stained hands.

SAYURI

(with a rueful laugh)
If a tree has no leaves or
branches, can you still call it a
tree?

NOBU

With nothing but rubble at my feet,
can I still call myself a business
man?

He takes her work-worn hand in his, noticing its roughened
and patchy stains. *

NOBU (cont'd)

I should have taken better care of
you. *

SAYURI

Please. You saved my life. I owe
you so much in return.

He gives her hand an affectionate squeeze.

NOBU

The Chairman and I need American
financing. There's a man--a
certain Colonel Derricks--who has
the power to grant us a contract.
I showed him your picture. He
requested to meet you. *

He looks at her, imploringly.

*

NOBU (cont'd)

I am not a persuasive man, Sayuri.
But...if you and a few geisha would
once again put on your kimono and
join us--we could show the
Americans how hospitable our
country can be--

*

*

*

*

*

SAYURI

(with longing)

How I wish, Nobu-san! But that was
a long time ago.

NOBU

I have no doubt, Sayuri, that you
could still melt the heart of any
man, no matter how resistant.

This slightly bald confession gives Sayuri pause; she doesn't
want to encourage Nobu.

NOBU (cont'd)

I am not accustomed to begging.
But please know that--if you
consent--the Chairman and I would
be most grateful.

Just his name exerts its inexorable pull. SAYURI's torn.
What should she do?

145 EXT: THE HANAMACHI. DAY. [AUTUMN].

145

Dressed in peasant work trousers, her hair in a long tail,
carrying a very small bundle, Sayuri crosses the bridge into
the Hanamachi, past the Shinto shrine. She is stunned to see
a world utterly transformed and corrupted:

On the main street, SOUVENIR SHOPS selling tea sets and cheap cotton kimono: "KIMONO \$\$20\$\$". AMERICAN flags are plastered everywhere; American JEEPS clog the streets. A RESTAURANT touts "HAM BURGER". At a shop, WOMEN stamp a "geisha face" on scores of identical plaster dolls in paper kimono.

Clusters of AMERICAN G.I.s in "civvies" weave down the street - they are drunk in broad daylight. The G.I.s shout at Sayuri, overly-friendly:

DRUNKEN G.I.

Hey, Mama-san! Where ya going? etc

Sayuri evades by ducking into an alley. She emerges at:

146 EXT: TANIZATO TEAHOUSE. DAY. [AUTUMN]

146

AMERICAN G.I.s stand in a long queue, watched by MPs under signs: "1 CHIT PER G.I." "YOU MUST ACCEPT THE GIRL YOU ARE ASSIGNED." At the entry, Sayuri sees:

JAPANESE PROSTITUTES in cheap kimono greet the G.I.s.

MAMEHA'S VOICE

Tell Nobu there are so few genuine geisha left in Miyako!

147 INT: MAMEHA'S APARTMENT. DAY. [AUTUMN]

147

Mameha's place is run-down; divided by makeshift curtains into small rooms. Mameha is elegant even in a cotton kimono with a frayed white collar; but she has a shattered quality now; a fragility Sayuri has not seen before.

MAMEHA (CONT'D)

Only "geesha girls"! Every hooker with a painted face and a silk kimono says she's one of us! No one can tell the difference anymore!

SAYURI

All the more reason for us to oblige him--

MAMEHA

Why?

SAYURI

To show them the truth of who we are--not the common women they believe us to be--

MAMEHA

Sayuri...when my poor Baron filled his pockets with stone...I was desperate. What could I do? I sold my kimono. I traded my jade combs for rations. It was painful at first, but I have made my peace.

A FEMALE BOARDER carries HER BABY through the room, en route to the street. When she's out of ear-shot, Mameha continues:

MAMEHA (cont'd)

Now I make a small but tidy living, renting rooms. I am not about to start chasing the past--

SAYURI

It might do you good.

MAMEHA

How?

SAYURI

To remind you that--once with a single glance--you could bring a man like the Baron to his knees.

Mameha's conviction falters. She's tempted now.

MAMEHA

Well...I did keep one kimono.

Sayuri looks up, hopeful. Mameha rummages among her things and takes out an ornate kimono box:

MAMEHA (cont'd)

The Baron gave it to me, when he became my danna.

They reverently caress the fabrics: Gorgeous relics of a time now lost. Saruyi's eyes brim with gratitude.

SAYURI

Thank-you, O-neisan.

MAMEHA

So tell me. What do we know about entertaining Americans?

148 EXT: YUKIMOTO TEAHOUSE. DAY. [AUTUMN] 148

Across JAPANESE POSTERS are plastered U.S.O. canteen announcements and G.I. graffiti: "KILROY WAS HERE".

149 INT. YUKIMOTO TEAHOUSE. DAY. [AUTUMN] 149

Bare-chested AMERICAN G.I.s in boxer shorts and dog-tags spill out of a tea room, laughing.

Drunken SERVICE MEN clumsily dance with fans to a RECORD PLAYER's American pop music. One GI strums a shamisen as if it were a guitar. PUMPKIN, in a garish kimono with dog tags around her neck and an officer's cap on her head, "teaches" them, laughing and flirting and smoking a cigarette between her teeth.

A G.I. kisses Pumpkin on the mouth. Pumpkin sees a peasant girl watching from the corridor:

The peasant girl is Sayuri.

PUMPKIN
(with a squeal)
Chiyo? Hey, Chiyo-chan! Is that
you?

150 INT/EXT: RUN-DOWN NOODLE BAR - HANAMACHI. NIGHT. [AUTUMN]. 150

Broken-hearted Japanese music whines. Wedged at a tiny noodle bar, Pumpkin slurps her soup and smokes at the same time. STEAM rises from pots, half-obscuring PEOPLE waiting behind them: WORKING CLASS JAPANESE and a few AMERICAN GIs.

SAYURI
I have no right to ask favors of
you, Pumpkin. I know that--

PUMPKIN ignores Sayuri's remark, and says blithely:

PUMPKIN
Guess what? I only smoke
Chesterfields now.

SAYURI
I have wanted to apologize to you
for so long-- about the okiya--

PUMPKIN
(still ignoring her)
These soldier-boys, you know who
they've got me singing--

SAYURI
--it should have gone to you, not
me--

PUMPKIN
--Frank Sinatra, and Dinah Shore--

SAYURI
--if it is in your heart to forgive
me--

PUMPKIN
(abruptly)
Sayuri, don't.

Pumpkin looks at Sayuri. Underneath her tough demeanor,
Sayuri can still see the impish spirit of her old friend.

PUMPKIN (cont'd)
The honest truth? I'd rather chew
sand than go back to all that.

SAYURI
Then you are not angry with me?

PUMPKIN exhales, blowing smoke.

PUMPKIN
Don't worry about me, chickadee -
I've got more clients than I can
handle.

SAYURI
You seem so at home with these
Americans.

PUMPKIN
(with a sly wink)
They're bastards.
(beat)
So who's this Colonel? Sounds like
top brass.

SAYURI
He has the power to approve
American financing for Nobu and the
Chairman.

Pumpkin slurps her soup, finishing it --

PUMPKIN

So is he willing to pay us American dollars? Cash?

She looks at Sayuri expectantly, hunger in her eyes.

151 INT. TATAMI ROOM - OKIYA. NIGHT. [AUTUMN]. 151

Western sofas and chairs dominate the room, which is stacked with liquor and cigarettes, sewing machine parts, light bulbs, samurai swords, K-rations - anything that can be sold on the black-market. In a haze of tobacco smoke, a WOMAN with bobbed hair talks on the telephone. The black-marketer is Mother.

MOTHER

Don't waste my time. You think I'm a sucker? I want sixty cases Lucky Strike or I'm taking my business to Sergeant MacPhee...

KIKO (9, Auntie's new girl) runs through, carrying towels to -

152 KITCHEN 152

Sayuri's wet hair streams down the back of her under-kimono. Sayuri scrubs her hands ruthlessly in a steaming little bowl of bleach and water, using a hard brush.

153 KIMONO ROOM 153

Sayuri digs through the stacks of black market goods piled high in the kimono room. She finds a lone dusty kimono box and opens it.

154 SAYURI'S ROOM 154

With her sewing box open on the floor, Sayuri expertly sews a new collar onto the frayed old kimono.

155 INT: SAYURI'S ROOM - OKIYA. NEXT DAY. [AUTUMN] 155

Sayuri's hair is smoothed into a modest twist. She wears the newly-repaired kimono. She stares: traces of Miyako's most celebrated geisha, restored. Auntie (older, thinner) ties her obi. Kiko watches. Auntie finishes:

AUNTIE

See? You are yourself again.

156 EXT. LANDING STRIP WITH HANGAR. DAY. [AUTUMN]

156

On the tarmac, an U.S. transport PLANE idles. At the open hangar door a U.S. ARMY JEEP deposits Sayuri. She sees:

The Chairman, standing alone, his back to her. Sayuri approaches, her heart pounding. The Chairman turns:

CHAIRMAN

Sayuri, just look at you. It's as if the war never happened.

His face opens in a smile. Sayuri bows, overcome.

SAYURI

I am so glad to see that the Chairman is safe.

CHAIRMAN

Please accept my apologies, asking this of you--

SAYURI

There is nothing I can do to return your kindness.

But even as she speaks, a voice intrudes -

NOBU (O.C.)

Sayuri!

Then she sees: The Chairman is with Nobu and Mameha (elegant in a kimono) and TWO AMERICANS - COLONEL DERRICKS (50, career Army) is worldly, with an off-the-cuff charm that masks his baser appetites. His Lieutenant, HUTCHINS (32, West Point)-- is considerably greener and more impressionable--

*
*
*

NOBU (cont'd)

May I present Colonel Derricks.

*

With a coy smile Sayuri bows; DERRICKS follows suit.

*

DERRICKS

Konichiwa. You're even more stunning in person. My associate, Lieutenant Hutchins.

*
*

(to Hutchins)

Sayuri is one of the Mysteries of the Orient I've told you about--

*

SAYURI

A mystery that perhaps you can solve.

Hutchins holds up a camera:

HUTCHINS

Would you mind?

Sayuri's eyes meet the Chairman's briefly. He smiles, sympathetic. The Colonel offers Sayuri his arm and a suave smile; she accepts both. Together, they pose.

SAYURI

A perfect souvenir.

She smiles, demurely. The camera flashes.

PUMPKIN'S VOICE

Who likes whiskey??

An Army Jeep has pulled up. Pumpkin jumps down with a happy squeal, wearing a colorful kimono and waving a bottle of Scotch. For her, the party's already started.

PUMPKIN (CONT'D)

Chairman, don't tell me you started the party without me.

The propeller breeze lifts Pumpkin's skirts and Pumpkin gives a happy shriek.

HUTCHINS

(under his breath to
Derricks)

She's a live wire...

CHAIRMAN

May I present - Pumpkin.

The Lieutenant snaps a picture, to Pumpkin's apparent delight. Mameha and Sayuri exchange a look, mortified for her.

NOBU

Gentlemen?

Nobu ushers them across the tarmac, Pumpkin pretending to pull the Chairman by the necktie, and Derricks escorting Sayuri.

157

INT. MILITARY PLANE. DAY.

157

In the cramped fuselage, the whir of the engines is deafening. Derricks flips down benches, and proffers seats to Sayuri:

DERRICKS
Please, 'be my 'guest--

Sayuri can't hear a word,, and looks at him helplessly.

DERRICKS (cont'd)
(again, above the roar)
--HAVE A SEAT, WON'T YOU?

Sayuri glances toward the Chairman, hoping to sit close to him. But Pumpkin has already claimed him, pulling him down on the opposite bench. Mameha sits on his other side. And Hutchins--his Adams apple bobbing in his throat--sidles down next to Pumpkin, clearly smitten. What can Sayuri do but respond:

SAYURI
(to Derricks)
Thank you, I am most grateful--

He tugs on his ear; what?

SAYURI (cont'd)
--PERFECT. YES.

Dispirited, Sayuri sinks down to find herself cramped between Derricks and Nobu. In the din, talk is futile. The Colonel smiles at her, and she offers a coquettish glance. But she can't help staring at the Chairman longingly, as he, Mameha and Pumpkin all dissolve into giggles over a joke she cannot hear.

158

EXT. TAKAMAYA HOT SPRINGS RESORT. LATE DAY. [AUTUMN]

158

Sayuri--in a robe--pads through the women's dressing area en route to the natural, lagoon-like hot spring. She hears VOICES and LAUGHTER.

Sayuri takes off her robe behind the wall of the dressing area, and modestly slips into the spa waters.

PUMPKIN
Don't be shy, gentlemen!

Pumpkin gestures to the men to come and join the ladies; she, and Mameha are already relaxing in the pools. Derricks, Hutchins, Nobu and the Chairman slide over to them. By Japanese custom, everyone is naked. A wooden tray floats, holding bottles of sake.

HUTCHINS

Back home, a bath is nothing but a quick shower on cold tile with a bar of lye soap--

DERRICKS

(with an expansive sigh)
Ah, but here, you make everything a ritual, don't you?

SAYURI

That is the art of turning habit into pleasure, Colonel.

DERRICKS

Said like a true geisha!

Nobu nods, but his face betrays a slight wince.

CHAIRMAN

If we are in business together, then perhaps we will visit you some day. I'd love to see the United States.

HUTCHINS

Why, sure. We could teach you some of our customs. Like forks and proper chairs and what it feels like to sleep on a real mattress--

*

Pumpkin bulldozes in:

PUMPKIN

(already drunk)
I know a little game we can play. It's called "Truth and Lies."

DERRICKS

I know that game, too. Back home, they call it "marriage."

Hearty male laughter all around.

PUMPKIN

(giggling)

No! I'm serious. Now listen closely. Sayuri knows the rules--

HUTCHINS

I never met a woman who didn't!

More laughter, louder from the Americans than the Japanese.

SAYURI

(acquiescing)

Each person says two things. One is true; the other is not.

PUMPKIN

If you guess right, the liar pays the price.

--demonstrating the price: A big swallow of sake right from the bottle. The men laugh.

DERRICKS

So it pays to lose!

Laughter, louder from the Americans than the Japanese. Pumpkin tries to think of a story -

PUMPKIN

I go first! Now let me see...One day in Sapporo, where I was born, a fisherman caught a talking fish. Trouble is, it only spoke Russian--

CHAIRMAN

- The other story is the true one, and I have not even heard it yet!

Everyone laughs. Pumpkin pushes the Chairman, flirting:

PUMPKIN

If I drown, it's all your fault.

-- taking a big swallow of sake. She tips backward in the water and Chairman has to catch her. Sayuri and Mameha exchange a look: Pumpkin's behavior is crossing the line.

CHAIRMAN

Your turn, Nobu-san.

NOBU

(declining to play)

I am no match for these geisha;

(MORE)

NOBU (cont'd)
they are experts in the art of
deceit.

PUMPKIN
Sayuri, maybe. I'm an expert in one
thing and one thing only: sake!

Chairman floats the tray of sake over to Sayuri:

CHAIRMAN
Sayuri. The truest story you know.

All eyes are on Sayuri. She gathers her courage. When she starts to speak, the timbre in the room changes; from raucous to almost reverential.

SAYURI
Once when I was a little girl...on
the banks of the Sonogawa...a
handsome stranger gave me a cup of
ice--ice that tasted as sweet as a
mid-summer plum--

The Chairman and Mameha exchange a look. In Mameha's eyes, an implicit challenge to the Chairman: *will you or will you not acknowledge the truth of Sayuri's story?* The Chairman's about to blush; then he interrupts:

CHAIRMAN
I think we have to stop the game.

PUMPKIN giggles, very drunk.

CHAIRMAN (cont'd)
If Pumpkin drinks any more sake,
she will pass out.

PUMPKIN
Now that - is a true story.

Everyone laughs. Sayuri looks at the Chairman, crestfallen.

CHAIRMAN
Here - Mameha - Sayuri - help her.

And the party starts to break up. Mameha helps the limp Pumpkin out of the pool and into her bathing kimono. As Sayuri starts to climb out of the water, Derricks corners her:

DERRICKS
So...ah...what's the protocol?

SAYURI

Excuse me?

DERRICKS

Suppose I wanted to see you. In private.

Sayuri watches as the Chairman gently guides a hapless Pumpkin toward the dressing rooms; Pumpkin rests her head on his shoulder.

SAYURI

I beg your pardon, Colonel; that is not a geisha's custom--

DERRICKS

If it's a question of price--

SAYURI

If there were a price, you could never afford it--

Nobu looks on, jealous, even as Sayuri rebukes the Colonel, darting under his arm and getting away --

DERRICKS

Wait--now just a minute--

159 INT. GAZEBO - A SHORT TIME LATER. NIGHT. [AUTUMN]

159

Nobu turns angrily on Sayuri --

*

NOBU

I saw the two of you whispering--
you have arranged some kind of
tryst, haven't you--

Sayuri matches his rage with her own:

SAYURI

What did you promise him?

Glaring at her, he pours himself a glass of whiskey.

NOBU

Your company! Nothing more!

SAYURI

He seemed to expect a great deal--!

NOBU

If I had wanted a common whore, I
could have hired one---

SAYURI

What are you trying to say-- *

NOBU

Just the idea of you with him--with
any man--you would be dead to me,
Sayuri---

Nobu slams his glass on the table so hard it shatters.

NOBU (cont'd)

*Can't you see that I want you for
myself?*

He opens his hand. In it, shards of glass. Blood creases
his palm. Sayuri grabs a cloth but Nobu waves her off
angrily --

NOBU (cont'd)

You have ruined me. Before we met,
I was a disciplined man. *

He does not let her assist as he wraps his hand with cloth.

NOBU (cont'd)

I should not have asked you to
come. The Chairman was against it;
I should have listened to him. *

SAYURI stares at the floor, and says quietly:

SAYURI

(staring down)

I must beg your forgiveness, Nobu-
san. I was foolish to think you
would barter me away.

NOBU

Then you made no arrangement with
the Colonel--

SAYURI

Please. Don't insult me again.

NOBU looks up at her, his eyes rimmed in red. *

NOBU

If he ratifies our contract, then I
will be a man of means again.
There is nothing I want more,
Sayuri...than to become your danna.

SAYURI

(blanching)

I already owe you far too much--

NOBU

I will not be refused!

SAYURI

Please--

NOBU

--we are tied to each other, I know
you feel it too--

SAYURI

I never meant to mislead you--

NOBU

(evenly, but with force)
Sayuri. I do not like things held
up before me that I cannot have.

- 160 EXT. WOMEN'S TATAMI ROOM. RESORT. NIGHT. [AUTUMN] 160
Distraught, Sayuri hurries up the path to Mameha's room.
- 161 INT. WOMEN'S TATAMI ROOM. RESORT. NIGHT. [AUTUMN] 161
Sayuri pleads with Mameha.

SAYURI

When you first introduced me to
Nobu--I was such a fool to give him
my attention-

*
*

MAMEHA

Nonsense--

SAYURI

I never meant to make him care--

MAMEHA

(shocked)

You cannot refuse him. You must not!

*

SAYURI

But Mameha why?

*

MAMEHA

What is he to think? He safeguarded your life--

*

SAYURI

And so he owns it?

MAMEHA

Sayuri. I know what's it like to try and scrape by without a danna--

SAYURI

--I'll do something--anything else--

MAMEHA

--renting rooms, scrounging for every meal--is this the life that you want?

SAYURI

--I want a life that is mine--

MAMEHA

Nobu has never treated you with anything but kindness--

SAYURI

I don't want mere kindness!

MAMEHA

What more can we expect?

SAYURI
You had feelings for the Baron,
didn't you?

MAMEHA
(beat)
I never allowed myself that.

SAYURI
Don't lie to me.

MAMEHA
In time, you learn--

SAYURI
--I don't want to learn--

MAMEHA
Sayuri! We don't become geisha to
pursue our own destinies!
(harshly)
*We become geisha because we have no
choice.*

On Sayuri's trapped expression --

CUT TO:

162 EXT. TAKAMAYA HOT SPRINGS RESORT. NIGHT. [AUTUMN]

162

Pumpkin, dressed, is going to dinner when a frantic Sayuri
stops her on the path:

SAYURI
Pumpkin?

PUMPKIN
What is it? What's wrong?

SAYURI
Nothing. I have a favor to ask,
that's all.

PUMPKIN
Ask.

Before speaking, Sayuri glances nervously to her left and
right to ensure that the coast is clear.

SAYURI
At nine o'clock--bring Nobu to the
pool, on the far side of the garden-

Pumpkin lifts a savvy brow.

SAYURI (cont'd)
Not a minute before, not a minute
after, yes? And--please--do not
tell him that I will be there,
waiting--

PUMPKIN
It's a surprise?

Sayuri notes Derricks smoking on a distant terrace.

SAYURI
(with gravity)
Yes. It's a surprise.

Pumpkin watches Sayuri walk away; her expression is
unreadable. *

A163 EXT. HOT SPRINGS RESORT. BRIDGE. NIGHT. [AUTUMN] A163

Sayuri finds the Colonel, smoking. Privately, they confer.
We don't hear a word. *

163 EXT: PAVILION - HOT SPRINGS RESORT. NIGHT. [AUTUMN] 163

From a slight distance: Derricks, Hutchins, Nobu and the
Chairman sit down for dinner. All of the men wear kimono.
Mameha pours sake. TWO GEISHA serve dinner.

Derricks, checking his watch, swallows his drink and
discreetly excuses himself from the group.

164 EXT. ON THE PATH TO THE PRIVATE POOL. NIGHT. [AUTUMN] 164

As Derricks walk down the path, he looks to see if anyone is
following. He checks his watch; it's five minutes until
nine. *

165 EXT. PAVILION - SAME TIME. NIGHT. [AUTUMN] 165

From a slight distance: Pumpkin enters the pavilion where the
men are seated. Pumpkin kneels between Nobu and the Chairman
and begs their pardon for interrupting them.

166

INT. PRIVATE POOL ENCLOSURE. NIGHT. [AUTUMN]

166

Sayuri waits, nervously. She glances at her own watch. She hears the shoji screens slide open, and the Colonel enters. She buries her watch in her clothing, then rushes to greet the Colonel. She silently ushers him inside.

*
*
*
*

Sayuri slides shut the privacy door. The rustic wooden hut is dimly lit by lanterns; hazy steam rises from a rectangular pool. Sayuri efficiently unknots Derricks's obi. With trembling fingers, she jerks the knot of her kimono sash.

DERRICKS (CONT'D)

Please. Allow me.

He picks at the knot slowly as she watches with barely hidden impatience. She glances at his watch and grabs the knot, unties it herself.

DERRICKS (cont'd)

The pool?

SAYURI

Here.

Sayuri hastily arranges herself on the wooden platform beside the hot pool. She opens her kimono slightly. Derricks kneels over her. Sayuri glances at his watch. Where is Pumpkin?

SAYURI (cont'd)

Wait.

Derricks senses her sudden nervousness and hesitates:

DERRICKS

Are we doing this or not?

She nods, eyes on his watch: The face has misted, but she can see -- it ticks forward from 9 o'clock. Derricks starts to kiss her. To buy time, Sayuri twists away.

DERRICKS (cont'd)

You don't kiss?

Again he tries to kiss her. Again she turns her face away.

DERRICKS (cont'd)

Come on now. Don't be shy. I know you people kiss--

Finally he opens his kimono, and rolls on top of her,
cradling her face in his hands.

167 EXT. PAVILION - SAME TIME. NIGHT. [AUTUMN] 167

Two feminine feet, padding down the walk-way at a clip, followed by two male ones.

168 INT. PRIVATE POOL ENCLOSURE. NIGHT. [AUTUMN] 168

The Colonel, on top of Sayuri, pins her arms to the ground. Sayuri lets out a sound somewhere between a gasp and a sob. The pavilion door slides open, and Pumpkin steps in.

Sayuri and the American turn and see Pumpkin. Then behind Pumpkin comes -- The Chairman.

Chairman recoils, shocked. Sayuri pushes the Colonel away, grabs her kimono to herself.

The Chairman quickly steps out. Sayuri, dressing hastily, rushes past Pumpkin and out the door, and sees -

169 EXT. PATH TO THE PRIVATE POOL. NIGHT. [AUTUMN] 169

The Chairman walks away quickly in the moonlight. Sayuri whirls on Pumpkin who has followed her out:

SAYURI

How could you? You don't know what you have done!

Pumpkin's expression morphs; suddenly, she has the same hauteur--the same cruel calm--as her teacher Hatsumomo.

PUMPKIN

But I do.

SAYURI

I do not understand; Why did you have to bring the Chairman? *

PUMPKIN

Because I know how you feel about him.

(MORE)

SAYURI

-so Hatsumomo did teach you to be
cruel--

*

Pumpkin's mouth stretches into a tight, joyless smile.

PUMPKIN

A long time ago you took something
from me...the only thing I'd ever
truly wanted.

(beat)

Well. Now you know how it feels.

*

In Sayuri's face, the sting of betrayal.

170 EXT. RESORT - CLIFFS AND THE SEA. DAWN. WIND. [AUTUMN] 170

Alone, Sayuri walks in the wind and spray. She has never
felt more alone, more degraded.

DERRICKS (V.O.)

To a new partnership, gentlemen.

171 EXT. TAKAMAYA RESORT ENTRANCE GATE. DAWN. [AUTUMN] 171

The Chairman and Nobu smile graciously, bidding the Americans
farewell.

DERRICKS

I like the way you people do
business. Sealing it with a kiss.

They start climbing aboard their jeep to depart.

172 EXT. RESORT - CLIFFS AND THE SEA. DAWN. WIND. [AUTUMN] 172

Sayuri lets the tears come, wiping them away with the
Chairman's handkerchief.

173 EXT. TAKAMAYA RESORT ENTRANCE GATE. DAWN. [AUTUMN] 173

The jeep revs its motor, and Derricks winks at Nobu, man-to-
man:

DERRICKS

Give my regards to Sayuri now,
won't you?

As the vehicle pulls away, Nobu feel as if he's been smacked in the face. He covers, clenching the muscles in his jaw.

174 EXT. RESORT - CLIFFS AND THE SEA. DAWN. WIND. [AUTUMN] 174
 The wind rises. Sayuri raises her hand, and lets the handkerchief go. The wind seizes it and carries it away; with it, everything Sayuri has ever known.

175 EXT. HANAMACHI STREETS. ANOTHER DAY. [AUTUMN]. 175
 A scorching red sun rises over Miyako, like a crimson halo in the sky.

176 INT. THE OKIYA. SAYURI'S ROOM. DAY [AUTUMN] 176
 Sayuri sits in darkness; the shoji screen flies open, and Mother appears, with Kiko underfoot *

MOTHER
 Sayuri! Quickly! *

Sayuri lifts her eyes.

MOTHER (cont'd)
 The Matsushima Teahouse just called--
 - you are to meet a very important
 client tonight-- *

SAYURI
 (dully)
 Who? *

MOTHER
 Iwamura Electric! It must be
 Nobu, yes? *

Sayuri's jaw muscles clench, but she says nothing. *

Mother heads to the door and looks back with pride.

MOTHER (cont'd) *

The Americans are financing his
 company; he's going to be one of
 the richest men in Osaka! Surely
 he wants to honor his promise...to
 become your danna at last! *

Mother beams with pride at Sayuri. Inside, Sayuri crumbles. *

MOTHER (cont'd) *

It's about time. Finally, a return
 on my investment. *

(MORE)

MOTHER (cont'd)

(to Kiko)

Perhaps one day, you will be as
lucky!

*
*
*

Sayuri looks at Kiko sadly, then says almost to herself:

*

SAYURI

No geisha can ever hope for more.

*
*

SAYURI (cont'd)

177 OMIT

177

178 EXT. MATSUSHIMA TEAHOUSE. GARDEN. DUSK. [AUTUMN]

178

Sayuri makes her way across the bridge to the teahouse. Her face has become as frozen, as perfect as a mask.

The TEAHOUSE MISTRESS ushers Sayuri into the garden. Japanese maple trees frame a small pond. In its center, a floating platform, accessible by a series of stone steps. On it, a low table with a sake tray. In her long kimono, Sayuri almost seems to walk across the water until she reaches the tiny island. She kneels, waiting for Nobu to arrive.

Sayuri is distracted by a gust of autumn wind, which sends red maple leaves scattering across the water. She feels a hand alight on her shoulder; she looks up to greet Nobu. Instead, she sees the Chairman.

*

SAYURI

Chairman, where is Nobu-san?

*

CHAIRMAN

(calmly)

He won't be coming tonight.

*

SAYURI looks stricken.

SAYURI

(with alarm)

Is something wrong?

*

CHAIRMAN

He knows what happened. It is not in his nature to forgive.

*

Sayuri feels a sick rush of shame; she cannot meet his eyes.

SAYURI

Chairman, what happened on the island --

CHAIRMAN

Please. You do not have to explain--
-The look in your eyes was so
desperate--like you might drown--

*

*

SAYURI

But I have shamed myself so deeply,
past all forgiveness--

*
*

CHAIRMAN

No I am the one who must be
forgiven.

*
*

Sayuri bows, her lashes wet with tears:

SAYURI
I do not understand.

CHAIRMAN
Perhaps--if you had only known the
truth-- *

SAYURI
The truth?

Now it's the Chairman who's anxious, hopeful that Sayuri
won't condemn him.

CHAIRMAN
Some years ago, I was on my way to
the theater. I saw a little girl,
weeping by the Sonogawa. I stopped
to buy her a cup of sweet ice--

SAYURI raises her head to look him in the face. Her eyes are
wide with incredulity.

SAYURI
You knew I was that little girl?

The Chairman nods.

CHAIRMAN
Didn't you ever wonder why Mameha,
took you her under her wing.

SAYURI
(the truth dawning)
Mameha came to me because of you. *

The Chairman nods again. *

SAYURI (cont'd) *
I wish you could have told me long
ago-- *

CHAIRMAN
What could I do? I owe Nobu my
life. And so--when I saw he had a
chance at happiness with you--I
stood silent. But I cannot any
longer. *

(beat)
I hope it is not too late.

Sayuri bows her head.

CHAIRMAN (cont'd)

Don't be afraid to look at me
Chiyo.

*
*

He gently raises her face to meet his gaze; she is crying. *
Passion, then insecure hope. *

SAYURI

Can't you see? Every step I have *
taken since I was that child on the *
bridge has been to bring myself *
closer to you. *

The Chairman kisses her tears. Then he kisses her; her first *
kiss, tender and true. Sayuri's heart is soaring, liberated *
at last. *

SAYURI'S VOICE

I cannot tell you what guides us in
this imperfect life.

The Chairman and Sayuri walk along the water's edge in the *
teahouse garden; we see them reflected in the pond's surface. *

SAYURI'S VOICE (cont'd)

But when I look back, I see myself,
falling toward the Chairman as
surely as a stone must fall toward
the earth.

Red leaves from the maple tree fall onto the pond, and glide *
over its surface, disrupting the reflection of the two *
lovers. *

SAYURI'S VOICE (cont'd)

Our world is no more permanent than
a wave that rises on the ocean.

*

The ripples in the water clarify: Sayuri walks alone by the
water, dressed in Western clothes now, smartly tailored. Her
hair is cut fashionably short--

*

*

*

179 EXT. PARK. DUSK. [WINTER, 1956]

*179

--as she strolls by a pond in a different park. She pauses
by the water's edge.

*

*

SAYURI'S VOICE (CONT'D)

The people we have known, even the
earth beneath our feet, can all
disappear in the tide.

*

*

*

A small boy (4), runs to her as a flock of pigeons disperse
with a flurry.

*

*

SAYURI'S VOICE (cont'd)

There's only one way to anchor them--
safely--in our hearts: to tell
their stories.

*

*

*

The child grabs her hand and pulls her.

*

SAYURI'S VOICE (cont'd)

The Chairman left this world a
while ago...

*

*

*

Together they stroll toward the street.

SAYURI'S VOICE (cont'd)

...and yet, I have him still.

*

*

They turn a corner--

*

180 EXT. FIFTH AVENUE. NEW YORK CITY. DUSK. [WINTER 1956.]

180

---and we recognize the place; we're in 1950's New York.
It's Fifth Avenue at rush hour. Businessmen step out of
office buildings; secretaries skirt by bustling delivery boys
in bikes. Policeman on horseback. Mother and son are swept
up in the rolling sea of people.

*

*

*

*

*

SAYURI'S VOICE

For I have lived my life again,
telling it to you.

*

*

*

Like some vast current, the crowd carries them along until-- *
at last--they vanish. *

FADE OUT.