

Kagekiyo

SEAMI

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PERSONS

A Girl (Kagekiyo's daughter).

Her Attendant

Kagekiyo the Passionate.

A Villager. Chorus.

Girl and Attendant:

Late dewdrops are our lives that only wait

Till the wind blows, the wind of morning blows.

Girl:

I am Hitomaru. I live in the valley of Kamegaye. My father Kagekiyo the Passionate fought for the House of Hei and for this was hated by the Genji. I am told they have banished him to Miyazaki in the country of Hy ga, and there in changed estate he passes the months and years. I must not be downcast at the toil of the journey; for hardship is the lot of all that travel on unfamiliar roads, and I must bear it for my father's sake.

Girl and Attendant:

Oh double-wet our sleeves

With the tears of troubled dreaming and the dews

That wet our grassy bed.

We leave Sagami; who shall point the way

To Totami, far off not only in name?

Over the sea we row:

And now the eight-fold Spider Bridge we cross

To Mikawa. How long, O City of the Clouds,

Shall we, inured to travel, see you in our dreams?

Attendant:

Kagekiyo

Kagekiyo

We have journeyed so fast that I think we must already have come to Miyazaki in the country of Hy ga. It is here you should ask for your father.

The voice of Kagekiyo is heard from within his hat.

Kagekiyo:

Behind this gate,

This pine-wood barricade shut in alone

I waste the hours and days;

By me not numbered, since my eyes no longer

See the clear light of heaven, but in darkness,

Unending darkness, profitlessly sleep

In this low room.

For garment given but one coat to cover

From winter winds or summer's fire

This ruin, this anatomy!

Chorus: speaking for Kagekiyo.

Oh better had I left the world, to wear

The black-stained sleeve.

Who will now pity me, whose withered frame

Even to myself is hateful?

Or who shall make a care to search for me

And carry consolation to my woes?

Girl:

How strange! That hut is so old, I cannot think that any one can live there. Yet I heard a voice speaking within. Perhaps some beggar lodges there; I will not go nearer.

She steps back.

Kagekiyo:

Though my eyes see not autumn

Kagekiyo

Kagekiyo

Yet has the wind brought tidings

Girl:

Of one who wanders

By ways unknown bewildered,

Finding rest nowhere

Kagekiyo:

For in the Three Worlds of Being

Nowhere is rest, but only

In the Void Eternal.

None is, and none can answer

Where to thy asking.

Attendant: going up to Kagekiyo's hut.

I have come to your cottage to ask you something.

Kagekiyo:

What is it you want?

Attendant:

Can you tell me where the exile lives?

Kagekiyo:

The exile? What exile do you mean? Tell me his name.

Attendant:

We are looking for Kagekiyo the Passionate who fought for the Taira.

Kagekiyo:

I have heard of him indeed. But I am blind, and have not seen him. I have heard such sad tales of his plight that I need must pity him. Go further; ask elsewhere.

Attendant: to Girl, who has been waiting.

It does not seem that we shall find him here. Let us go further and ask again.

Kagekiyo

They pass on. **Kagekiyo:**

Who can it be that is asking for me? What if it should be the child of this blind man? For long ago when I was at Atsuta in Owari I courted a woman and had a child by her. But since the child was a girl, I thought I would get no good of her and left her with the head-man of the valley of Kamegaye. But she was not content to stay with her foster-parents and has come all this way to meet her true father.

Chorus:

To hear a voice,

To hear and not to see!

Oh pity of blind eyes!

I have let her pass by;

I have not told my name;

But it was love that bound me,

Love's rope that held me.

Attendant: calling into the side-bridge.

Hie! Is there any villager about?

Villager: raising the curtain that divides the side-bridge from the stage.

What do you want with me?

Attendant:

Do you know where the exile lives?

Villager:

The exile? What exile is it you are asking for?

Attendant:

One called Kagekiyo the Passionate who fought for the Taira.

Villager:

Did you not see some one in a thatched hut under the hillside as you came along?

Attendant:

Why, we saw a blind beggar in a thatched hut.

Kagekiyo

Villager:

That blind beggar is your man. He is Kagekiyo.

The Girl starts and trembles.

But why does your lady tremble when I tell you that he is Kagekiyo? What is amiss with her?

Attendant:

No wonder that you ask. I will tell you at once; this lady is Kagekiyo's daughter. She has borne the toil of this journey because she longed to meet her father face to face. Please take her to him.

Villager:

She is Kagekiyo's daughter? How strange, how strange! But, lady, calm yourself and listen.

Kagekiyo went blind in both his eyes, and finding himself helpless, shaved his head and called himself the beggar of Hy ga. He begs a little from travellers; and we villagers are sorry for him and see to it that he does not starve. Perhaps he would not tell you his name because he was ashamed of what he has become. But if you will come with me I will shout "Kagekiyo" at him. He will surely answer to his own name. Then you shall go to him and talk of what you will, old times or now. Please come this way.

They go towards the hut.

Hie, Kagekiyo, Kagekiyo! Are you there, Kagekiyo the Passionate?

Kagekiyo: stopping his ears with his hands, irritably.

Noise, noise!

Silence! I was vexed already. For a while ago there came travellers from my home! Do you think I let them stay? No, no. I could not show them my loathsomeness. . . . It was hard to let them go, not tell them my name!

A thousand rivers of tears soften my sleeve!

A thousand, thousand things I do in dream

And wake to idleness! Oh I am resolved

To be in the world as one who is not in the world.

Let them shout "Kagekiyo, Kagekiyo":

Need beggars answer?

Moreover, in this land I have a name.

Chorus:

"In Hy ga sunward-facing

Kagekiyo

Kagekiyo

A fit name found I.

Oh call me not by the name

Of old days that have dropped

Like the bow from a stricken hand!

For I whom passion

Had left for ever

At the sound of that wrathful name

Am angry, angry."

While the Chorus speaks his thought Kagekiyo mimes their words, waving his stick and finally beating it against his thigh in a crescendo of rage. **Kagekiyo:** suddenly lowering his voice, gently.

But while I dwell here

Chorus:

"But while I dwell here

To those that tend me

Should I grow hateful

Then were I truly

A blind man staffless.

Oh forgive

Profitless anger, tongue untended,

A cripple's spleen."

Kagekiyo:

For though my eyes be darkened

Chorus:

"Though my eyes be darkened

Yet, no word spoken,

Men's thoughts I see.

Kagekiyo

Kagekiyo

Listen now to the wind

In the woods upon the hill:

Snow is coming, snow!

Oh bitterness to wake

From dreams of flowers unseen!

And on the shore,

Listen, the waves are lapping

Over rough stones to the cliff.

The evening tide is in.

Kagekiyo fumbles for his staff and rises, coming just outside the hut. The mention of "waves," "shore," "tide," has reminded him of the great shore-battle at Yashima in which the Tairas triumphed.

"I was one of them, of those Tairas. If you will listen, I will tell you the tale. . ."

Kagekiyo: to the Villager.

There was a weight on my mind when I spoke to you so harshly. Pray forgive me.

Villager:

No, no! you are always so! I do not heed you. But tell me, did not some one come before, asking for Kagekiyo?

Kagekiyo:

No, you are the only one who has asked.

Villager:

It is not true. Some one came here saying that she was Kagekiyo's daughter. Why did you not tell her? I was sorry for her and have brought her back with me.

To the Girl.

Come now, speak with your father.

Girl: going to Kagekiyo's side and touching his sleeve.

It is I who have come to you.

I have come all the long way,

Through rain, wind, frost and dew.

Kagekiyo

Kagekiyo

And now you have not understood; it was all for nothing.

Am I not worth your love? Oh cruel, cruel!

She weeps.

Kagekiyo:

All that till now I thought to have concealed

Is known; where can I hide,

I that have no more refuge than the dew

That finds no leaf to lie on?

Should you, oh flower delicately tended,

Call me your father, then would the World know you

A beggar's daughter. Oh think not ill of me

That I did let you pass!

He gropes falteringly with his right hand and touches her sleeve.

Chorus:

Oh sad, sad!

He that of old gave welcome

To casual strangers and would raise an angry voice

If any passed his door,

Now from his own child gladly

Would hide his wretchedness.

He that once

Among all that in the warships of Taira

Shoulder to shoulder, knee locked with knee,

Dwelt crowded

Even Kagekiyo keen

As the clear moonlight

Kagekiyo

Kagekiyo

Was ever called on to captain

The Royal Pinnacle.

And though among his men

Many were brave and many of wise counsel,

Yet was he even as the helm of the boat.

And of the many who served him

None cavilled, disputed.

But now

He that of all was envied

Is like Kirin grown old,

By every jade outrun.

Villager: seeing the Girl standing sadly apart.

Poor child, come back again.

She comes back to her father's side.

Listen, Kagekiyo, there is something your daughter wants of you.

Kagekiyo:

What is it she wants?

Villager:

She tells me that she longs to hear the story of your high deeds at Yashima. Could you not tell us the tale?

Kagekiyo:

That is a strange thing for a girl to ask. Yet since kind love brought her this long, long way to visit me, I cannot but tell her the tale. Promise me that when it is finished you will send her back again to her home.

Villager:

I will. So soon as your tale is finished, I will send her home.

Kagekiyo:

It was in the third year of Juyei,

At the close of the third month,
We of Heike were in our ships,
The men of Genji on shore.
Two armies spread along the coast
Eager to bid in battle
For final mastery.
Then said Noritsune, Lord of Noto,
"Last year at Muro Hill in the land of Harima,
At Water Island, even at Jackdaw Pass,
We were beaten again and again; outwitted
By Yoshitsune's strategy.
Oh that some plan might be found, some counsel given
For the slaying of Kur ." So spoke he.
Then thought Kagekiyo in his heart,
"Though he be called 'Judge,'
Yet is he no god or demon, this Yoshitsune.
An easy task! Oh easy for one that loves not
His own life chiefly!
So he took leave of Noritsune
And landed upon the beach.
The soldiers of Genji
"Death to him, death to him!" cried
As they swept towards him.

Chorus:

And when he saw them,
"What great to-do!" he cried, then waving

Kagekiyo

His sword in the evening sunlight

He fell upon them swiftly.

They fled before his sword–point,

They could not withstand him, those soldiers;

This way, that way, they scuttled wildly, and he cried,

"They shall not escape me!"

Kagekiyo: breaking in excitedly.

Cowards, cowards all of you!

Chorus:

Cowards, all of you!

Sight shameful alike for Gen and Hei.

Then, thinking that to stop one man

Could not but be easy,

Sword under arm,

"I am Kagekiyo," he cried,

"Kagekiyo the Passionate, a captain of the soldiers of Hei."

And swiftly pursued, with naked hand to grasp

The helm that Mionoya wore.

He clutched at the neck–piece,

Twice and again he clutched, but it slipped from him, slid through his fingers.

Then crying "He shall not escape me, this foe I have chosen,"

Swooped like a bird, seized upon the helmet,

"Eya, eya," he cried, tugging,

Till "Crack" the neck–piece tore from the helm and was left in his hand,

While the master of it, suddenly free, ran till he was come

A good way off, then turning,

Kagekiyo

Kagekiyo

"O mighty Kagekiyo, how terrible the strength of your arm!"

And the other called back to him, "Nay, say rather 'How strong the shaft

Of Mionoya's neck!'" So laughed they across the battle,

And went off each his way.

Kagekiyo, who has been miming the battle, breaks off abruptly and turns to the Villager. The Chorus speaks for him.

Chorus:

"I am old: I have forgotten things unforgettable!

My thoughts are tangled: I am ashamed.

But little longer shall this world,

This sorrowful world torment me.

The end is near: go to your home;

Pray for my soul departed, child, candle to my darkness,

Bridge to salvation!

He rises to his feet groping with his stick, comes to the Girl, and gently pushes her before him towards the wing.

"I stay," he said; and she "I go."

The sound of this word

Was all he kept of her,

Nor passed between them

Remembrance other.