

BUTTERFLY IN  
AMERICA  
An Opera in Four Acts  
Prologue and Epilogue  
Original Story and Libretto by Patricia Herzog  
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## Characters

Butterfly, immigrant from Nagasaki

Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton, Naval Lieutenant, Butterfly's Nagasaki 'husband'

Kate, Pinkerton's wife

Boy/Akira, Butterfly's son with Pinkerton

Customs Officer

Takuya Imamura (Tak), Butterfly's husband

Tak's sister

Saki, Butterfly's daughter with Tak

Mrs. Floyd, Butterfly's employer

Franklin Floyd, Mrs. Floyd's husband

Saki's two girls

Henry, Tak's shop assistant

Gladys, Henry's sister

Karu, Saki's husband

Little Tak, Saki's son

Crowd/unnamed Individuals

San Francisco -- Delta (Utah) -- Berkeley

1907 -- 1953

Prologue, San Francisco, 1907

*One year after the Great San Francisco Earthquake and Fires. Three years after Pinkerton's ship Abraham Lincoln first sailed into Nagasaki Harbor. The ship has arrived in the Port of San Francisco. The deck is crowded with passengers waiting to disembark. Pinkerton, Kate and the boy are standing by the railing looking at the dock below. The boy is holding Kate's hand. With the other hand he waves a little American flag. Butterfly has already gone ashore. She is looking up at them. They do not see her.*

PINKERTON (*distressed by the smoldering remains of the city*)

San Francisco ... in ruins!  
A heap of smoldering ashes!  
The earthquake ... the fires ...  
My god what a mess!

KATE

Poor boy!  
He doesn't eat.  
He's barely said a word.  
You see it, too ...  
Don't you, Frank?  
The boy wants his mother.

PINKERTON (*to Kate in a low pleading voice*)

His mother ...  
You're his mother, Kate!  
Make him forget her!  
Make me forget her, too, Kate.  
(*recollecting the horror*)  
That beautiful face ...  
Drenched in blood ...  
Drained of life ...  
Frozen in death.

KATE (*to the boy, intent on cheering him, raising the hand with the flag and making a wave motion with it*)

Wave hello ... like this!  
Go on ... wave your flag!

PINKERTON

Go on, son!  
Wave your flag!  
*(loudly proclaims)*  
America forever!

BUTTERFLY *(responding from the dock)*

America forever!

BOY *(sees his mother and cries out)*

Mama!! Mama!!

*A great commotion. The boy breaks free and runs down the gangway onto the dock before anyone can catch him. He runs to his mother. Butterfly drops her bags and takes him up in her arms. She sets him down. He clings to her side. She clutches him tightly.*

PINKERTON *(frozen in place, cries out in shock)*

Butterfly ...  
In America!

KATE

Poor boy!  
Unhappy boy!

PINKERTON

The boy is mine!  
She has no right!  
They'll never let her keep him!

KATE

Let him go, Frank!  
He'll run away ...  
He'll run right back to her.

PINKERTON

How dare she!  
Look how he clings ...  
My own flesh and blood!  
He ... he ....  
He hates me!

KATE

Let him go, Frank!

*Butterfly and the boy start to move away from the ship.*

PINKERTON

How on earth? ...  
I saw her die ...  
Right there before my eyes!

KATE

Your geisha is a very good actress.

PINKERTON (*incredulous*)

She faked it?  
Staged her own death?  
But why? What for?

KATE

The American Consul ...

PINKERTON

Sharpless!

KATE

The day before ...  
I saw him at her door ...  
A letter ...

PINKERTON (*anxiously interrupting*)

A letter? What for?  
(*realizing*)  
A passport!  
(*furious*)  
The cunning shifty Sharpless ...  
The bastard saw it her way!  
What does he know about women?  
The bastard took her side!

(*turns to look again at Butterfly and the boy*)  
Look now!  
Look how he clings!

KATE

Let him go, Frank!

*Still waiting to disembark, Pinkerton and Kate watch as Butterfly and the boy continue to make their way through the crowd. They are about to disappear when Pinkerton cries out.*

PINKERTON

Butterfly! Butterfly!  
Where are you going?  
Where are you taking my boy?  
(*filled with anger and self-pity*)  
I don't deserve this!

*Butterfly and the boy are too far from the ship now to hear him. Pinkerton points to them in desperation and shouts down to the people on the dock below.*

Stop! Stop her!  
Over there ...  
Delicate and fragile as blown glass ...<sup>i</sup>  
The beautiful woman with the blue-eyed boy!  
Stop her!  
Make her come back!

KATE (*bitterly disappointed, to herself*)

He still loves her.

*Butterfly and boy disappear into the crowd. Amid the hustle and bustle, Pinkerton is barely heard and no one responds.*

PINKERTON (*crying out to himself, oblivious of Kate*)

Butterfly! Butterfly!  
Where are you going?  
Where are you taking my boy?

*Butterfly and the boy have moved away from the ship. They are in a temporary structure, a covered area open to the dock on one side. Butterfly is standing with a customs officer who is demanding to see her passport.*

OFFICER (*impatient, looking suspiciously at Butterfly and the boy*)

Passport, please!  
Passport!  
You are not allowed to enter.  
Where's your passport.  
Are you deaf?

*Butterfly is flustered and confused. The officer grows increasingly impatient. He gestures to her bag. She gives it to him. He reaches in and finds a piece of paper with an official stamp on it. Butterfly looks relieved.*

OFFICER (*reading the document and then staring at the boy*)

“Cio-cio-san, also known as Butterfly ...  
... and her son.”  
Who is that boy?  
The boy with no name ...  
The boy with blue eyes.  
Where is his father?

BUTTERFLY (*hesitating, haltingly*)

His father ... in America.

OFFICER (*looking around him*)

Where is he?  
Go and find him.  
No husband ... no entry!

BUTTERFLY (*points to the letter, alarmed*)

But the letter!  
I can stay!

OFFICER (*nastily*)

Not without a husband!  
America and Japan ...  
They Just agreed.  
They just shook hands.  
(*snickers*)  
A Gentlemen's Agreement.  
You can't stay here ...  
Not anymore ...  
Not without a husband!

Oriental!  
Taking our jobs!  
Ruining our schools!  
You and your half-breed must go.  
You can't stay here ...  
Not in this country ... not anymore!

(*laughs, amused by what he has said, then looks at Butterfly sternly*)

*Butterfly grasps the Officer's angry tone but doesn't understand his words. In great distress she looks around to see if anyone will help her. Tak, a distinguished-looking gentleman of about forty, neatly attired in a business suit, has just finished business with another man. They exchange papers and shake hands. The man moves away. Overhearing the Officer and Butterfly, Tak moves closer.*

OFFICER (*insistent*)

Who is that boy?

BUTTERFLY (*getting more and more upset*)

He is mine!

OFFICER

Who is that boy?

BUTTERFLY

He is mine!

OFFICER

What is his name?



BUTTERFLY

He is mine! He is mine!

TAK (*to Butterfly, gently, trying to be helpful*)

You must tell the gentleman his name.

BUTTERFLY (*comprehending, lowers her eyes and bows graciously, then looks down at the boy*)

The boy ...

TAK (*gently urging*)

The boy's name ...

BUTTERFLY (*quietly, desperately searching her thoughts*)

The boy ... is Sorrow ... is Joy.<sup>ii</sup>

OFFICER (*laughing contemptuously*)

These people are ridiculous!

TAK (*gently suggesting*)

The boy with the bright blue eyes ...  
Akira is bright.

OFFICER (*impatient, uncomprehending*)

Akira is *what*?

TAK (*explaining*)

In Japanese.  
Akira is bright ... in Japanese.

BUTTERFLY (*relieved and happy, looking at Tak and then at the boy*)

Now here is my son!  
My son ... Akira!

OFFICER (*addressing Tak*)

And her husband?  
The boy's father?

BUTTERFLY (*looks down and pauses for a long time, then lifts her eyes and looks directly at Tak*)

Here ... here he is!  
My husband is here!

*Startled, Tak takes two steps back, still facing Butterfly and the boy.*

TAK (*to the officer*)

One moment, please.

*Tak bows slightly and moves slowly away. He is visible to the audience but not to Butterfly. Crowds of people from the boat are milling about, waiting to go through customs. The Officer loses patience waiting for Tak and starts to harass Butterfly and her son.*

OFFICER (*firmly*)

Come with me.  
You're going back.  
You can't stay here.  
You don't belong.

*The Officer tries to force Butterfly and her son from where they are standing. Butterfly stands firm, refusing to move. She holds her frightened child tightly. People crowd around them. A few sympathetic onlookers are outshouted by an angry majority.*

CROWD (*jeering, chanting*)

| The Japanese must go!  
| The Japanese must go!  
| They meet us with a smile.  
| But they're working all the while.  
| And they're waiting ...  
| Just to steal our California!  
| The Japanese must go!  
| The Japanese must go!  
| The Japanese must go!  
| The Japanese must go! <sup>iii</sup>

OFFICER (*firmly*)

Come along now.  
Come with me now.  
No American ever was made ...  
of Japanese stuff!<sup>iv</sup>

CROWD (*continuing to jeer*)

| No American was made!  
| No American was made!  
| The Japs must go!  
| The Japs must go!  
| No American was made!  
| The Japs must go!

INDIVIDUAL CROWD MEMBERS

(*softer in tone*)

Look! Look!  
Those blue eyes!  
Is that her child?  
He's crying now ... poor boy.  
Look! Look! (*gesturing to where Tak had been standing*)  
Is that her husband?  
He can't be!  
Those blue eyes!  
That curly blond hair!

*There is general laughter in the crowd and a shaking of heads.*

TAK (*to himself*)

How did I get so old?  
(*shrugs*)  
I am better off alone.  
(*moves a few steps closer to Butterfly, still standing where she cannot see him, looking at her and speaking to himself in hushed tones.* )

I have never seen such beauty!  
But the half-breed boy ...  
He will never belong.  
I am better off alone.  
(*edges closer to Butterfly and hears the mocking crowd*)  
Poor woman!  
Look! They're taking her away!

OFFICER (*sees Tak and motions him to come near*)

Well, you see how it is!  
What's your answer?

TAK (*hesitates, looking at Butterfly, who looks down*)

OFFICER (*impatiently*)

I said ... what's your answer?

TAK (*slowly, softly, surprised by his own words*)

My bride.

OFFICER

Speak louder.  
Say it loud ...  
So everyone can hear!

TAK (*louder and more deliberate*)

My bride.

OFFICER (*sneering*)

And the boy?

TAK (*resigned*)

Akira ...  
Akira is my son.

OFFICER (*gesturing with his chin towards the exit*)

I see how it is.  
Go along, then.  
This business is over!  
Enough wasting my time!

*Butterfly bows to Tak and follows him with the boy. The jeering crowd has moved on.*

BUTTERFLY (*nervous but determined*)

Here I am ... your bride.  
Here is my boy ...  
Your boy ... Akira.

TAK

I am your husband, Tak.  
You are Butterfly, my bride.  
We will marry in my church.  
Your faith will be mine.

BUTTERFLY (*recalling Pinkerton's betrayal and recoiling with fear*)

In church ... yes.  
Three long years I waited ....  
(*starts to panic, looks for an exit*)

TAK (*sensing her fear*)

Why are you are afraid?  
I am your husband.  
(*trying to reassure*)  
Akira is my son.  
Come! Quickly!  
Let's go away from here!

*Tak, Butterfly and the boy make their way through the crowd, exiting the stage.*

END OF PROLOGUE

ACT I Scene 1 (1909)

*Butterfly, Tak, Akira and four-month-old Saki, cradled in Butterfly's arms, are approaching Tak's place of business.*

*Tak Imamura  
Restorer and Seller of Fine Japanese Prints, Est. 1894.  
1610 Geary Street, San Francisco*

*The sign is in English and also in Japanese characters. Also seen are adjacent Japanese storefronts (laundry, jewelry, barbershop, hotel and rooming house) with some English but mostly Japanese signage, evincing the hustle and bustle of a lively commercial street in Japantown. Inside the store is a large work table and a smaller desk. In the back is a closed door leading to an additional room. Prints, covered and uncovered, are neatly stacked up against the walls. Work tools are neatly arranged on a shelf on the wall nearest the work desk. Prints for sale are hung on the walls. The appearance is of a lively enterprise, the space is crowded but neat. Butterfly is wearing a modest yet elegant kimono—the first and only time we see her dressed that way. The baby is wearing a white Christening gown and Tak has on his finest suit of clothes. Accompanying them are Tak's sister and her husband, Tak's business associates, church members and various others, including some children—all part of a tightknit community. The scene is lively and the mood is festive.*

TAK (*unlocking the front door and turning to his face the crowd, flushed with excitement*)

Please, please come in!  
One and all! One and all!  
Please come in! Please come in!

*Butterfly enters and passes the baby to Tak's sister. Guests press forward, singly and in groups, bearing gifts—mostly food (sticky rice, beans, pickled vegetables, fish, sweets), money and small things like a handkerchief, beautifully wrapped in paper or silk. A group of three or four women, gifts in hand, approaches Butterfly.*

WOMAN ONE

These are little things for the baby ...  
For little Saki.  
Please accept our humble gifts.

BIUTTERFLY (*warmly, bowing slightly, receiving gifts as is customary with both hands*)

Thank you, thank you!

*Several other woman approach.*

WOMAN TWO

Please accept these little things.  
One for the baby and one for Akira ...  
From his nursery school friends.

BUTTERFLY (*smiling, bowing and motioning Akira to come forward*)

Thank you!  
Akira, a present for you!  
Say “thank you”!

AKIRA (*shyly turning towards the women and bowing*)

Thank you.

MAN ONE (*steps forward with a largish gift of what looks like an artwork bearing a customs stamp with a Japanese inscription*)

From Japan ...  
Fine Wind, Clear Morning ...

TAK (*surprised, greatly moved, bows deeply at the man*)

The Hokusai?  
(*hesitates*)  
I cannot.

MAN ONE (*gently insistent, characteristically modest*)

It is not much.

TAK (*modestly refusing*)

I cannot accept such a gift.

MAN ONE (*persisting*)

Especially for you ...

TAK (*relenting*)

So thoughtful ... so generous!  
I am so grateful.  
Thank you!  
Thank you very much!  
(*they shake hands*)

CROWD (*others come forward, bowing  
and bearing gifts and good wishes*)

Please accept my humble gift.  
Good luck!  
To good health and long life!

TAK (*bowing in appreciation*)

Thank you!  
Thank you one and all!  
To good health and long life!

*Tak distributes sake cups to the guests, takes out the sake and fills their cups in  
the traditional Japanese manner. Man One takes bottle and pours sake for Tak.*

Cheers! Kanpai!

CROWD

Cheers! Kanpai!

*The women and children start to leave. The men mostly stay behind, celebrating and  
drinking.*

CROWD OF WOMEN

Sayonara! Mata!  
See you next Sunday.  
Doumo! Mata!  
Goodbye Akira!  
See you next Sunday!  
See you in school!  
(*to Saki, now cradled again in Butterfly's arms*)  
Good by little one!  
Goodbye! Goodbye!



*Butterfly bows to her guests, hands the baby to Tak's sister and gracefully moves towards the back of the room as she continues to wave good-bye. She enters the door of the back office and closes it softly behind her. A minute later, while the crowd is still celebrating, she re-emerges wearing street clothes.*

SISTER *(to Tak, authoritatively )*

The baby stays with me.  
*(motioning to Akira and speaking in a disdainful tone)*

The blue-eyed boy goes with her.

*Butterfly re-enters and approaches Tak. Akira runs up to her and stands by her side, eating a sweet.*

BUTTERFLY *(to Tak, apologetically)*

Must go now.  
Must go by two.  
Party tonight for Mr. Floyd.  
Must catch the bus.  
Must not be late.  
Must go now.  
Must hurry now.  
Must not be late.

SISTER *(to Butterfly)*

The baby stays with me.  
The boy goes with you.

BUTTERFLY *(nods to the sister in assent, then turns to Tak)*

Must go now.  
*(looks at Akira, then back at Tak, reassuringly)*  
It is okay.  
*(turning to the boy)*  
Akira, come with me!

*Bows to Tak. Turns to the remaining guests, now mostly men. Bows and exits the front door with Akira.*

CROWD

Sayonara! Doumo!  
Mata! Ashita!

*The men start to leave. Tak waits until they are all gone. He loosens his tie, unbuttons his jacket and starts for the back room where Butterfly had changed into her work clothes. He reappears in work clothes, rolls up his sleeves, sits down at his desk, turns on the oil lamp, pours more sake and starts going over his accounts.*

TAK (*figuring*)<sup>iv</sup>

Five ... Ten ... Twenty ...

Thirty ... Thirty-six ... Forty-three.

Yatto owatta!

Finally done!

*(takes more sake, sits back in his chair)*

Business is good ...

Still not enough.

We have a daughter now.

Another mouth to feed.

*(pauses)*

The Hiroshige ...

Rent for a year ... maybe more.

*(brightening)*

Maybe I can sell it!

*(resigned)*

If only I could sell it!

*(pauses, pours more saki, looks at the papers on the desk)*

Maybe I added wrong.

Five ...

ten ...

twenty ...

thirty ...

Thirty-six ...

Forty-three *(sighs)*

Not enough ...

Not enough.

*Empties the saki bottle, turns off lamp. The room goes dark.*

END OF SCENE

ACT I Scene 2

*The interior of a dining room of an elegant mansion in Pacific Heights, overlooking San Francisco Bay. In the middle is a dining table with cleaning materials in a basket and three vases with fresh--cut flowers. Behind the table are French doors leading onto a patio from which the Bay can be seen in the distance. An elaborate hutch with dishes, glassware, silverware, etc. is adjacent to the French doors. A door stage left leads to the kitchen. A door on the opposite wall leads to another interior space. Along the wall opposite the kitchen is also a small table and chair. On the table are a pair of silver candlesticks, a pistol and a copy of the San Francisco Chronicle. Butterfly is in her domestic's uniform. Akira is crouched quietly in a corner behind the dining table playing with little animal figures. Mrs. Floyd is bustling about nervously.*

MRS. FLOYD (*irritated*)

It's late.  
Dinner is at eight.  
Mr. Floyd will be home soon.  
Of all days ...  
Did you have to bring the boy?  
The nanny's off ...  
And the girls are at my mother's.

BUTTERFLY

I apologize.  
I am very sorry.

MRS. FLOYD

The boy will stay with you overnight.  
Dinner won't end 'til midnight.  
A very long night!

BUTTERFLY (*sighing to herself, under her breath*)

A very a long day.

MRS. FLOYD

What is that you say?  
How many times have I had to ask:  
"Speak louder ...  
No one will understand!"

BUTTERFLY

I am so sorry. Please forgive me.

MRS. FLOYD

Seven guests.  
Four gentlemen ... three wives.  
The cook was here at ten.  
I won't pretend ...  
We're way behind.

BUTTERFLY

Sorry.  
Very sorry.

MRS. FLOYD:

Bass under glass,  
Noisette of baby lamb,  
Potatoes julienne, Cold,  
fresh asparagus.  
And for dessert, Pear Anglaise.<sup>v</sup>

*(with Butterfly, moves towards the hutch, gesturing at various items)*

The plates, the glass, the crystal.  
Don't forget the silver.  
Forks and spoons and knives.  
Every last piece.  
Polish every last piece. *(turns  
to face the little table)* The  
candlesticks, too.  
And don't forget the pistol.  
Frank loves to show it off.  
Every last piece!

BUTTERFLY

I polish that one, too.

MRS. FLOYD

Be careful ... mind your English!  
Did you read the morning paper?  
You must read the morning paper!  
Just like I told you.

Practice your English!  
Read the morning paper!  
*(Embarrassed, Butterfly looks down. Mrs. Floyd looks at her, trying to remember something, then exclaims)*  
Oh, I almost forgot!  
The baby's christening day!  
*(rushes into the kitchen and rushes back out, presents in hand—a box with a bow and an unwrapped wooden airplane)*  
This is for the baby...  
And this one's for the boy.

BUTTERFLY *(bows deeply and demurs)*

I really cannot ...  
I really cannot.

MRS. FLOYD

What nonsense is this!  
*(urges the gifts on Butterfly)*  
Here ... take them ... take them!  
And no more bowing ...  
Not in this house ...  
How many times have I told you!

BUTTERFLY *(takes the gifts)*

You are so kind! So kind!  
*(Akira jumps up and runs to his mother. She hands him the airplane and he runs back to the corner and starts playing.)*  
Akira! Come and thank Mrs. Floyd!

AKIRA *(runs back, starts to bow but then stops himself)*

Thank you.

*He runs back and plays airplane, making loud engine noises.*

MRS. FLOYD *(irritated at the noise)*

Go along now, Akira ...  
Go along and play outside.

*Akira looks at his mother, who nods. Mrs. Floyd opens the French doors. The boy skips outside onto the patio overlooking the bay. Mrs. Floyd closes the doors behind him.*

Hurry up now, Butterfly!  
Get on with your work!

*Mrs. Floyd disappears into the kitchen. Butterfly takes out the silver polish and cloths from the basket, goes to the little table, starts to polish the candlesticks, looks down at the paper and reads the headline aloud, haltingly.*

BUTTERFLY

ANTI-JAP LAUNDRY LEAGUE INTENSIFIES BOYCOTT

*Sits down and reads aloud, selectively, slowly and with difficulty.*

Cunning Japs take jobs ...  
Whites search for work in vain.  
Swarming Asiatics ...  
Immigration laws must change.

Buy from whites.  
Have all your work done by whites.  
Whites prize the values you prize.  
Whites love the country you love.<sup>vi</sup>

*(disgusted)*  
My English lesson for today!

*Butterfly appears to hear something and looks around her with apprehension. Franklin Floyd bursts in from the door opposite the kitchen. He is wearing sports attire and carries a set of golf clubs. He puts down the clubs and approaches Butterfly.*

FRANKLIN *(cheerfully, casually, with ease)*

How pretty you look today!  
Delicate and fragile ...  
Just like your name!

*Butterfly looks at him with a neutral expression.*

MRS. FLOYD *(entering from the kitchen)*

Oh, there you are, Frank.  
Come and help me with the chairs, will you?

FRANKLIN (*winking at Butterfly, then looking at Mrs. Floyd*)

You really should give the girl a raise, dear.

MRS. FLOYD (*casting a knowing glance at Butterfly, then back at Franklin*)

You really should keep to your own business, Frank.

*A crashing of dishes is heard in the kitchen. Mrs. Floyd rushes back.*

FRANKLIN (*undisturbed and undeterred, approaches Butterfly and says in a lowered voice*)

How is it you're so darned pretty?

*Butterfly pretends not to notice. She picks up the pistol and starts to polish it. Franklin glances at the kitchen door, and, still hearing commotion inside, edges closer to Butterfly.*

C'mon. Why do you ignore me?

*Butterfly steps back, trying to ignore him.*

FRANKLIN (*moving still closer*)

Don't you think a pretty girl deserves a kiss?

BUTTERFLY (*lifts the pistol from the table and takes one step further back*)

Don't come near me!  
You ... you ...  
Franklin!

FRANKLIN (*startled, then recovering and laughing*)

That gun isn't loaded.  
(*extending his arm*) Give it here.

BUTTERFLY (*standing her ground and pointing the gun right at Franklin's face, looking at him fiercely*)

Stand back ...  
Or ... or ... I'll kill you!

*Stunned but not frightened, Franklin remains in place, silent and motionless.*

In Japan I married an American.  
His name was Franklin, too.  
*(laughs bitterly)*  
He thought I was a doll ...  
And played with me.  
He thought I was a butterfly ...  
And caught me in his net.  
Delicate and fragile ...  
He thought I was.  
He thought like you.  
He was wrong!

MRS. FLOYD *(enters from the kitchen, now in an apron, holding a dish towel. Butterfly quickly hides the gun beneath her uniform.)*

Franklin, leave the girl alone.  
Let her get her work done.

BUTTERFLY *(assuming a submissive posture, turns to Mrs. Floyd)*

Sorry.  
Please excuse me.  
I will do everything right away.

*Franklin exits the way he entered. Butterfly sets busily to work. Mrs. Floyd sighs and returns to the kitchen. Akira is seen, but not heard, outside. He is completely absorbed in play and unaware of anything else.*

END OF ACT I



Act II (1942)



*The Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor (December, 1941) and the U.S. is uprooting Japanese Americans on the West Coast and transporting them to internment camps. Tak, in his early 70's, and 38-year-old Akira are in their shop, packing up the last of its contents. The furniture is gone; all that remains are a dozen prints packed up and leaning against the walls. Also in the shop are overstuffed suitcases and duffle bags filled with personal belongings. As before, we see into the shop through its entrance with its sign, which now reads: "Tak Imamura and Son ...". The street is empty.*

*Adjacent businesses have been shuttered and on their boarded--up storefronts are signs, two makeshift and one official.*

Thank you for your business.  
We look forward to serving you again soon.

Evacuation Sale  
Everything Must Go!

Western Defence Command  
Civil Control Administration  
San Francisco, California, April 1, 1942  
To all persons of Japanese ancestry, alien and non-alien  
You will be evacuated<sup>v</sup>  
Report to your local transfer station  
*Take only what you can carry*

BUTTERFLY

Only what you can carry ...

TAK (*counting bills*)

Five hundred,  
A thousand,  
Fifteen hundred ...

BUTTERFLY

(*interrupting*)

Stop all this counting!  
Quick, Tak!  
The curfew ...  
We'll be late!

TAK (*ignores her, continues to count*)

Two thousand ...  
Twenty-five hundred.  
(*puts money in envelope*)  
There! It's done!

AKIRA (*trying to reassure*)

Our money will be safe, Father.

TAK (*ignores Akira and hands the envelope to him in disgust*)

Here ...  
Take it to the bank.

BUTTERFLY

Hurry, Akira!  
There is no time!  
Come back straight away.

TAK (*absorbed in packing*)

A business ... a home ...  
Take it ... take it away.  
Everything we own!

AKIRA (*still trying to get Tak to respond*)

Our money will be safe!

TAK (*turns to Akira, softening his tone*)

Don't be too sure, my son.

AKIRA

I'm a citizen, don't forget!  
This is America ...  
I have rights!

BUTTERFLY

Stop all this arguing! What  
does it matter now? We  
have no choice.

TAK (*ignoring Butterfly, speaking to Akira*)

You heard the general:  
"A Jap's a Jap.  
It makes no difference  
Whether the Jap's  
A citizen or not." <sup>viii</sup>  
Or maybe ...  
With your blue eyes ...  
You think you're not a Jap!

BUTTERFLY

What are you saying?  
Akira is your son!

AKIRA (*trying not to be provoked*)

Our money will be safe ...  
If we cooperate.

TAK (*mutters to himself*)

Cooperate ... nonsense!

BUTTERFLY

Stop all this arguing!  
Quick, Tak!  
Ready your bags.  
We'll be late!

TAK (*mocking*)

Citizen Akira!  
Take this money!  
Give the bank everything we have!

*Exit Akira*

BUTTERFLY (*reflecting aloud on what is happening to them*)

America does not see ...  
We are with her!  
Ready to fight!  
We are America, too!

*Looks around and notices with alarm the prints wrapped up and leaning against the wall.*

They're still here!  
The prints are still here!

TAK

I could not sell them.  
Not even one ... not even cheap.  
No one wants to buy Japanese.  
Henry says he'll take them.

His sister Gladys has an attic.  
They'll be safe, he says.  
*(resigned)*  
Besides, we have no choice.

BUTTERFLY

The pictures will be safe.  
Henry's not a helper ...  
Not like the others.  
To Akira, he's a brother.

TAK *(to himself, disgusted, audible to Butterfly, who ignores him)*

No Akira's brother!

BUTTERFLY

One week to get out!  
One week they give us ...  
Only one week!

*Enter Henry, the young African American helper, and his younger sister Gladys, unassuming and very attractive.*

Henry!  
Thank goodness!

HENRY *(looking at the pictures)*

How many?

TAK

All of them ...  
A dozen.

HENRY

Truck's outside.  
*(to Tak and Butterfly)*  
You remember Gladys.  
She's married now.  
Her husband just enlisted.  
She came to say good-bye ...  
To Akira.

BUTTERFLY *(to Gladys)*

Akira isn't here.

GLADYS *(to Butterfly, trying to hide her disappointment)*

Please say good-bye for me.

*(to Henry)*

The truck is running ...

I will wait outside.

*Butterfly nods politely to Gladys.*

TAK *(ignores her completely)*

You're a good man, Henry.

*Henry starts carting out the wrapped prints.*

BUTTERFLY

Thank you, Henry!

*Henry sets to work taking the prints out to the truck.*

TAK *(turns to Butterfly)*

You rented the house?

BUTTERFLY

The very last minute.

TAK

What do they pay?

BUTTERFLY

So cheap ...

I'm ashamed to say!

TAK

The pictures, the letters, your father's sword ...

BUTTERFLY

Buried beside the lilac!  
I dug all night!

TAK (*momentarily transported*)

The lilac by the gate ...  
In fresh earth planted with these hands ...  
(*looks at his hands*)  
Strong and steady.

BUTTERFLY (*claps her hands sharply, twice*)

Hurry up now!  
No time for idle talk!

*Enter Saki, visibly pregnant, and her two school-age girls. Saki is weighed down with an overstuffed bag and satchel. The girls have overstuffed backpacks. All the bags are set down in the middle of the room. They both pull out a tiny American flags attached to sticks.*

BUTTERFLY

Here is Saki!

TAK (*looking at Saki with concern*)

How will you manage?  
How will you carry all that?

BUTTERFLY (*to Saki, agitated*)

You're late!  
Why so late?

SAKI (*apologetic, out of breath*)

Spring Festival Day.  
They said good-bye ...  
To all their friends at school.

TAK (*mocking*)

Good-bye to all their friends!  
Good-bye to all their friends!  
(*laughs bitterly*)  
What friends?  
What nonsense!

SAKI

Father, please!  
It's their country, too!

*The girls pay no notice. They are busy at play, making the pledge of allegiance, saluting, standing at attention like mock soldiers, waving their flags. After each pose they burst into laughter.*

TAK (*turns to look at them*)

What on earth are they doing?  
For heaven's sake –  
Stop them!

BUTTERFLY

You cannot stop them, Tak.  
It's their country, too.

*Akira re-enters*

AKIRA

Henry!  
I saw your truck!  
I said good-bye to Gladys, too.  
We are so grateful!

HENRY (*embraces Akira, shakes hands with Tak, waves good-bye to the others*)

I've got them all now.  
Good-bye! Good luck!

BUTTERFLY, SAKI AND THE GIRLS (*waving their flags*)

Good-bye! Good-bye!  
Good-bye! Good-bye!



*Exit Henry.*

TAK (*turning anxiously to Akira*)

What did they say?

AKIRA

Nothing.  
They took the money. Here  
is our receipt. (*hands Tak a  
slip of paper*)

TAK (*looks at the paper, then addresses Akira angrily*)

And you?  
What did you say?

AKIRA (*mildly defiant*)

We are not enemies, but friends.<sup>ix</sup>  
They can count on us ...  
To cooperate.

TAK (*angry and disgusted*)

Nonsense!

AKIRA (*provoked*)

In America  
I am a free man.  
Equal to every other man. I  
uphold the law.  
I respect the flag.  
I'm not bitter.  
I won't lose faith!<sup>x</sup>

TAK

Nonsense!

AKIRA (*insisting*)

We'll get it back ...  
You'll see ...  
If we cooperate.

Our home, our business ...  
Everything!

TAKI (*angry, mocking*)

Akira Imamura,  
Proud citizen of the United States of America!

*The children undo their satchels, take out toys and start playing.*

SAKI

Put those back!

BUTTERFLY (*to Tak and Akira*)

Stop this nonsense!  
All of you!

*(momentarily transported)*

Listen! Listen!  
The sea of America ...  
Heaving and surging ...  
Dark currents pull us under.

We go down in roiling waters.  
Make darkness our home ...  
For a time.

O America!  
We are America, too!

Do not grow weary!  
Do not lose faith!

One day ... one fine day ...  
We will see ... again ...  
On the sea's smooth surface ...  
The shining face of America!

O America!  
You have strayed ...  
You have betrayed your own!

Mend your ways ...  
Mend them soon!  
Let justice shine forth once more!

*(claps her hands, breaking the spell)*

Quick now!  
Let's go!

AKIRA *(turning in alarm to Saki and the girls, looking at her pregnant belly and then at all the bags)*

Where is Karu?  
Why so late?  
Only what you can carry ...

SAKI *(trying to be brave)*

The girls and I will manage.

AKIRA

Not with that belly!  
But where is he?  
Why so late?

*Saki fights back her tears, trying not to appear upset in front of the children. She turns to Butterfly.*

BUTTERFLY

They took him this morning for questioning.  
They took them all ... all the reporters.  
They told Saki not to wait.

*Preparations come suddenly to a halt. All eyes are on Butterfly, whose plea for patience and faith has now been cast in deep shadow. The music surges darkly to a close.*

*The Act ends with window shades drawn, one by one, gradually darkening the entire stage—a foreshadowing of the drawn shades that darkened the trains transporting the internees to the camps.*

*Intermission. Transition music (possibly suggesting the darkened two-and-a-half-day train ride to Topaz Internment Camp in Delta, Utah).*

ACT III Scene 1 (1943)

*Topaz Internment Camp vaguely seen on a scrim through a cloud of fine white desert dust. A hand-made sign "Welcome to Topaz: Jewel of the Desert" stands a short ways away from the official U.S. Government sign "Central Utah Relocation Center."*

*Outside the doorway of a room in one of the barracks is Tak sitting on a rickety folding chair. He is neatly groomed and dressed in jacket and tie. Old and frail, he stares into space. Inside the cramped but tidy room Butterfly is sweeping out the interminable dust with a half-broken broom. We see a potbellied stove, two army cots with blankets, a cord with one bare light bulb hanging from a poorly tacked-on corrugated metal ceiling, a crudely fashioned wooden bench and some makeshift wooden shelves. Flushed with excitement, Akira, wearing work clothes and carrying a spade, arrives at the doorway.*

AKIRA

Father! Father!  
The recruiters are here!  
Hiro is going ...  
Ichiro, too.  
Sato and Seb ...  
They've all signed up ...  
Eager to show ...  
Whose side we're on.

TAK (*looking at Akira with a shifty gaze*)

You can't go.  
You're too old.

AKIRA

I know.  
There's more.  
They want us to swear allegiance.

BUTTERFLY (*in the doorway, broom in hand, not understanding what Akira is saying*)

The flag?

AKIRA (*takes out a piece of paper and reads aloud*)

Well ... sort of ...

"Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever ordered?"

“Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese Emperor, or any other foreign government, power, or organization?”

TAK (*incredulous*)

Want me to swear allegiance?  
Why you put me in here?  
(*laughs and gives a mock salute*)  
Sign me up!

AKIRA (*intently*)

They want to let us go.

TAK (*looking at Akira with a shifty gaze*)

Go where?

BUTTERFLY (*eagerly*)

Go home?

AKIRA

Out of here!

TAK

They want us to go fight and die!  
Change color of our skin ...  
They let us go home!

BUTTERFLY (*to Tak, in earnest*)

Our children are citizens, Tak ...  
Free and equal.  
Their future is here.  
We must place our faith in America.<sup>xi</sup>

TAK (*bitterly*)

You ask me to give up my country?  
Then where do I go?  
I have no country!

AKIRA (*firmly*)

Yes or no, Father.  
Everyone must sign.

TAK

Go and get more coal!  
Go and get more rice!

AKIRA

You know I cannot.

TAK (*laughs*)

Oh! I forgot!  
In this country everyone is equal!  
(*bitterly insistent*)  
Go and get more coal!  
Go and get more rice!

AKIRA (*looks at his watch*)

I must go back.

*Exit Akira.*

TAK (*to Butterfly*)

You see?  
He doesn't listen anymore.  
No one listens anymore!

BUTTERFLY

Try not to be angry, Tak.

TAK (*bitterly angry*)

Who did you marry?  
America, that's who!  
The man in Nagasaki ...  
He was America, too!

BUTTERFLY

Don't be angry, Tak.

TAK (*softening*)

Butterfly, my beautiful bride ...  
I am not angry.  
All these years ...  
We endured ... we survived!

BUTTERFLY

I see it, too, Tak.  
I'm not blind.

TAK

You see it, too!  
Poor Butterfly ...  
America betrayed you!

America, the beautiful.  
America, the betrayer.

No!  
I will answer no"!  
I will revere the Emperor!  
I will go back to Japan!

*The sun is setting. The music of the Bon Odori<sup>vi</sup> starts.*

BUTTERFLY (*excited, looking in the direction of the music*)

Look, Tak!  
The lanterns ... the dancers!  
The Bon Odori!

*We see the internee dancers in traditional garb, moving ceremonially to music played on traditional instruments.*

TAK (*excited*)

The Bon Odori ...  
Just like in Japan!

BUTTERFLY

Just like in America!

America is not one thing ...  
America is many things!

*(looks around excitedly)*  
Hurry ... Tak!

TAK

Go ...  
I stay here.

*Butterfly rushes inside and reappears wearing a simple kimono. We hear the Bon Odori getting louder--the dancers are processing not far from the barracks. They come into view and Butterfly joins them. Tak looks on affectionately as she and the others continue to process out of view.*

*The sun goes down and the moon is shining brightly in the sky. The music of the Bon Odori fades and we see Butterfly, a lilt still in her step, slowly returning to the barracks. She moves about in dancelike fashion, completely unaware of Tak's presence, now mostly obscured by darkness.*

BUTTERFLY *(appearing almost white in the light of the moon, looking down)*

In the coolness ...  
Is the moon sleeping ...  
In the water?

*(she looks up and sees a handsome man, also drenched in moonlight, standing nearby. He is wearing a lieutenant's uniform.*

Looking at the moon ...  
You look beautiful!<sup>vii</sup>

*In a moment of ecstasy, Butterfly and Pinkerton, in his lieutenant's uniform, are transformed into young lovers who dance in the moonlight.*

*A few moments later the lights of the guard tower go on, extinguishing the moonlight and awakening Butterfly from her reverie. She approaches Tak just as Akira arrives, eager and out of breath.*



AKIRA

Father!  
They want to sign me up!

TAK

Fool!

AKIRA

To be a volunteer!

TAK

You risk your life!

AKIRA

My sister has three children.  
Their father was arrested.  
I am needed here.

*(pauses)*

I told them no.

*(nervously thrusts questionnaire, on a clipboard with a pen, in front of Tak)*

Father ... take it ... please ...

Yes or no ...

Everyone must answer yes or no.

BUTTERFLY *(addressing Tak)*

You want to answer “no”?  
You go away alone!

*Tak does not move towards the questionnaire. For a long time he stares at it, then looks up at Akira with a hard expression, then down again at the questionnaire, still without moving towards it.*

END OF SCENE

ACT III Scene 2 (August, 1945)

*The war is over. The Japanese surrendered on August 6<sup>th</sup>, after the U.S. bombed Hiroshima and then Butterfly's native Nagasaki. Tak, visibly older and weaker, is sitting in the same tattered chair outside the door to their room. Butterfly is standing in the doorway. Clustered around the doorway are Akira, and Saki, Karu and their three children (the youngest, a boy born in the camp, is three; the older girl is 12, the younger nine). Many suitcases and satchels are lying about. The family is preparing to leave the camp. They are waiting for Henry and Gladys, who are coming to drive them back home.*

SAKI (*excitedly*)

Any minute now ...  
Any minute now ...  
Henry will be here!

TAK

I will stay *here*!

AKIRA (*gently*)

Father ...  
We are going home now.  
To our house with the white picket fence.  
To your garden with the lilac!

TAK (*insisting*)

I will stay *here*.  
They take care of me *here*.

AKIRA

Did you forget our business?

TAK

Business?  
What business?  
No business,  
No prints.  
Everything is gone!

*Enter Henry and Gladys. They approach from afar.*

AKIRA (*pointing to the still-distant figures*)

Here they are!  
(*in hushed tones to Butterfly and Tak*)  
Her husband was shot down ...  
Earlier this year ...  
The South Pacific.  
(*waits for a response which doesn't come*)

BUTTERFLY

Tak!  
Are you listening?

TAK

The Negro?  
I don't know him.  
What do you want me to say?

AKIRA

A man ...  
Like you and me!

TAK (*dryly*)

Too bad.

*Akira runs to greet them. Henry says something that we cannot hear and Akira embraces him. Henry goes to greet Butterfly and Tak, then picks up some of the bags and takes them to the truck. Akira and Gladys hang back. Careful not to be seen, they embrace rather too passionately. Akira runs up to Tak.*

AKIRA

The prints in the attic ...  
Henry just said ...  
They're all still there!  
Every last one!

TAK (*stubbornly insistent*)

I don't care!  
I stay *here*!

BUTTERFLY

You go, Akira.  
Go with Saki.  
We'll come soon.

AKIRA

No, Mother ...  
I will stay here with you ...  
And Father.

BUTTERFLY (*hugging the grandchildren*)

Good-bye! Good-bye!

KARU AND CHILDREN

Good-bye! Good-bye!

SAKI

Good-bye, Mother!  
Good-bye, Father!

AKIRA (*to Saki*)

We'll be home soon!  
I promise!

*Akira and Saki embrace. The children rush to Akira and embrace him.*

CHILDREN (*to Tak*)

Goodbye, Ji-chan!

TAK (*to his grandchildren but not the others, with special warmth*)

Goodbye ... Goodbye

KARU (*warmly shaking Akira's hand*)

Thank you!  
(*addressing Butterfly and Tak*)  
Goodbye and see you soon!

*Exit Saki, Karu and children*

BUTTERFLY

Saki's children cling to you.  
All the children flock to you.  
Like little ducklings ...  
They follow you.

TAK (*turning to Akira*)

You must marry now, my son.  
Time to have a family.

AKIRA

Henry also said ...  
Later ... when the time is right ...  
His sister Gladys ...

TAK (*interrupting*)

Nonsense!  
A Japanese woman!  
One of your own kind!

AKIRA

Look at me, Father!

TAK

You're a handsome man!  
I see the women chase you!

AKIRA (*interrupting*)

Chase me, yes.  
Marry me, no.  
Blue-eyed, wavy-haired babies ...  
Not for the Japanese!  
They won't marry out.  
Their parents won't let them!  
Their parents are just like you!

TAK

You plenty Japanese!

AKIRA

Plenty Japanese for this place!

TAK

You marry a Japanese woman!

BUTTERFLY

Give him time, Tak.  
When we're home ...

TAK (*interrupting*)

Topaz home now!  
Here we are ...  
With our own kind!

AKIRA (*provoked*)

Our own kind! Our own kind!  
In prison with our own kind!  
We stand apart from others ...  
We hold ourselves above the rest.  
Where does it get us?  
In prison with our own kind!  
(*angrily*)  
We stand with the Negro on common ground!  
We stand condemned by race! <sup>xii</sup>  
Jim Crow ... Jap Crow ...  
We do not stand alone!

BUTTERFLY (*to Akira, pleading*)

More time ...  
A little more time!  
Your father needs a little more time!

AKIRA

No more time, Mother!  
They want us out now!

END SCENE

ACT III Scene 3

*Same spot, in front of the doorway, one month later. Butterfly is standing alone amid an assortment of packed bags and belongings. Tak's empty chair is still there. She is holding a small, plain wooden box. Akira arrives out of breath.*

AKIRA

The bus is here.

BUTTERFLY

Your bags?

AKIRA

On the bus.

BUTTERFLY

The money?

AKIRA

At the gate.

BUTTERFLY

How much do they give?

AKIRA

Twenty-five dollars.  
A handsome sum.  
Like they give you when you get out of prison.  
*(looking at her belongings)*  
Is this everything?

BUTTERFLY

Yes.

AKIRA *(carefully)*

And Father?

BUTTERFLY *(holding back her tears)*

Here ... in this box.

*(She extends both arms with the box in her hands, as if giving Akira a gift, then quickly draws her arms back and holds the box close to her chest.)*

He is going home ...  
Just like I said.

AKIRA *(trying to say it gently)*

Too bad he can't stay here ...  
With his own kind.

BUTTERFLY

Never!

*Akira takes Butterfly's bags. Slowly they walk towards the exit, past the guard tower with an armed sentry standing outside, and through an opening in the barbed-wire fence. Just before the gate, an official counts out bills and hands them each the money.*

OFFICIAL *(to Akira and then Butterfly)*

Here are twenty-five dollars ...  
And for you, kind lady.  
Good luck!

*Akira takes the money, barely acknowledging the officer. Butterfly bows ever so slightly. Just as they reach the exit Akira stops and turns round to look back. A scant number of the remaining residents and staffers are standing by the fence, waving good-bye and wishing good luck. With genuine warmth, he returns their farewells and good wishes.*

CROWD *(waving)*

Good-bye! Good luck!  
Good-bye! Good luck!

AKIRA *(waving)*

Good-bye! Good-bye!



*Still clutching the box with Tak's ashes, Butterfly's response to the well-wishers is muted by grief. She turns around and waves good--bye. As they walk through the barbed--wire fence, Akira puts the bags down and looks back once again, surveying the scene as if to etch it in his memory. Butterfly does not look back but continues to walk forward towards the bus offstage.*

AKIRA *(saluting with bitterness)*

Sayonara, Topaz!

*Akira turns again in the direction of the bus, picks up the bags, and continues walking.*

END OF ACT III

ACT IV Scene 1

*Fall of 1945. A modest one--story house on a quiet leafy street in Berkeley. We see the house from the street. We see the house next door. We can see inside the entryway of Butterfly's house into the dining room. Both houses have a picket fence and a path leading to the front door. Everything is in good order at the neighbor's house. At Butterfly's house the paint is peeling off the fence and several pickets are missing. The path is overgrown with weeds. The bushes and plant beds are mostly dead.*

*Butterfly, Saki and her boy, now three, are standing inside the dining room, registering what's happened. The boy is scared and clings to Saki's side. Windows are broken and glass shards are scattered all about. The dining table is scratched and upturned. All its legs broken. There are no chairs and no other furniture. On the floor are dirty dishes, some of them broken, desiccated food, beer cans, cigarette butts and trash. The curtains are torn to shreds and wind is whistling through broken panes of glass.*

BUTTERFLY (*turning to Saki, calmly*)

Go and get the police.

SAKI

They won't come.

BUTTERFLY

You don't know!

SAKI

You read the letters from home ...  
They warned this would happen!  
You saw the sign down the street:  
'Japs Keep Moving ...  
White Man's Neighborhood!'

BUTTERFLY

Our neighbor, then.  
Mrs. Ford.

SAKI

You saw the neighbors ...  
You saw them sit and stare behind the blinds.  
Mrs. Ford's not there.

*The boy jumps and Saki shudders. Butterfly does not flinch. She is concentrating on something.*

LITTLE TAK

What was that?

SAKI

A rat.

*Still concentrating, Butterfly goes through the doorway to the kitchen, then returns.*

BUTTERFLY *(takes pen and paper from her purse, draws up a list. With no surface to write on, she uses the palm of her hand.)*

Rags, vinegar, cardboard, tape ...

A mop, a broom, a pail.

*(looks out the window)*

The shed is locked.

*(pulls a set of keys from her bag and shows Saki the right one)*

Here is the key.

Go get me hammer and nails.

SAKI *(disgusted)*

With liberty and justice for all ...

What nonsense!

BUTTERFLY

Don't talk like that ...

Don't talk like your father.

We must have patience.

SAKI

Patience for what?

BUTTERFLY

Give them time.

They need more time.

SAKI

Time ... is that your faith?

BUTTERFLY

America is not one thing!  
You and I are America, too!

SAKI (*laughs sarcastically*)

Tell that to the neighbors!

BUTTERFLY (*with resolve*)

America is not all at once ...  
America is still becoming!

SAKI (*looks around*)

Broken glass and shattered dreams.

BUTTERFLY

Stop whining!  
Stop hiding behind blinds!  
Step out of the shadows ...  
Tell your neighbors ...  
You are America, too!

SAKI

Are you kidding?

BUTTERFLY

Are you afraid?

SAKI

Afraid for my children, yes.  
What will they find ...  
When they step out?  
Taunts and slurs ....  
Bigotry and hatred!

BUTTERFLY (*impassioned*)

Find?  
Not find!  
Make!  
Where else on earth ...  
Are we so free ...  
To make ourselves ...  
What we will be?  
(*music swells*)  
Nowhere!

SAKI (*looks out of the front door*)

Look!  
Here comes Akira ...  
And Henry with his truck.

*Akira and Henry appear in front of the house. The boy rushes out to greet them. Akira and Little Tak hug warmly. Henry and Tak shake hands.*

LITTLE TAK

Uncle Akira!  
Henry!

AKIRA

Where's your grandma?

*Butterfly and Saki step out the front door. An attractive woman, modestly dressed, steps out of the truck.*

AKIRA

This is Gladys, Mother ...  
Henry's sister.

GLADYS (*warmly*)

Nice to meet you.

BUTTERFLY (*reserved*)

Nice to meet you.

GLADYS

Hello Saki!

SAKI

Hello Gladys!

GLADYS

This must be Little Tak.  
How do you do!

LITTLE TAK (*steps forward, nudged by Saki*)

How do you do!

AKIRA (*bursting with good news*)

Mother! The prints are there!  
Every last one!  
Give it time ...  
You will see ...  
We'll get it all back!

SAKI (*taking Little Tak by the hand*)

I must go and get the girls.  
Mother needs ...

BUTTERFLY

Rags, ammonia, vinegar ...  
A mop, a broom, a pail ...  
Oh, and soap for clothes ... dish soap, too.  
(*hesitates, looks at Saki*)  
I forgot ...

SAKI (*makes a face and explains to Akira and the others*)

They broke all our dishes.

GLADYS (*to Henry*)

I will go.

HENRY

Here ... take the keys.

GLADYS *(to Saki)*

Can I take you somewhere?

SAKI *(nodding)*

The school bus stops not far from here.  
Thank you!

*Gladys, Saki and Little Tak walk towards the truck. The men go into the house. Butterfly moves towards the lilac bush, now dead. Akira emerges from the back of the house with a shovel. He points to the bush.*

AKIRA

Here?

BUTTERFLY *(pointing and nodding)*

Just to the right ...  
I dug all night.

*Akira drives in the shovel, then he stops. His foot rests on top of the shovel. Butterfly moves a few feet away. She looking around at all the dead plantings.*

AKIRA *(to himself, apprehensive about what he will unearth, echoes Saki)*

They broke all our dishes.

END OF SCENE

ACT IV Scene 2

*Several days later. The house has been swept clean. In place of the destroyed dining table is a folding table and chairs. The holes in the window panes have been patched with cardboard. Outside, through the bare panes, the sky is bright brilliant blue. Inside, it is rather dark. Butterfly is seated at the table. On it are a lamp, scissors, scotch tape, a worn scrap book and a metal box. Scattered about on the table are photos, letters and newspaper clippings.*

*Akira and Gladys have come to replant Butterfly's garden. Gladys has brought Butterfly an oil cloth for the table. Butterfly graciously receives it, gathers and lifts the materials off the table, then replaces them on the cloth. Akira picks up some of the pictures.*

AKIRA *(to Gladys)*

Here is Father standing beside his prints!  
How proud he looks!

Wedding day at City Hall!  
I remember! I was there!  
A dignified couple ... don't you think?

BUTTERFLY

Here is little Akira ...  
In his favorite sailor's suit.

AKIRA

My father was in the Navy ...

BUTTERFLY *(interrupting)*

Your father ...  
Tak was your father!

AKIRA

Of course he was, Mother.  
Tak was my father.



BUTTERFLY

Oh ... and here we are ...  
Standing in front of the shop.  
Saki is ten and you are fifteen  
A big boy!

GLADYS

Handsome, too.

*Butterfly casts a sideways glance at Gladys.*

AKIRA (*sensing tension and trying to diffuse it, picks up a picture and shows it to Gladys*)

Here is Saki in her cap and gown.  
UC Berkeley ... with honors!

BUTTERFLY

Go into the garden now.  
I must finish my work.

*Butterfly returns to her scrapbook as Akira and Gladys exit the front door.*



BUTTERFLY (*bends over the table, reads the headlines, arranges the clippings and pastes them into the scrapbook*)

“Fat Man Dropped on Nagasaki”

“Tokyo Radio says Japs Quit”

“Peace riots erupt around San Francisco, leaving seven dead”

(*collapses back in her chair and lets out a quiet cry*)

My father was a samurai.

He died a hero’s death.

With his sword he took his life.

He left me to survive.

*Trembling, she opens the box and takes out her father’s knife – the one he took his life with.<sup>xiv</sup> She reads the inscription.*

“Who cannot live with honor must die with honor.”

*Distracted with grief, she enacts a suicide, running her hand over the blade to test its sharpness, bringing the blade to her neck and positioning the point at the jugular vein, then letting the blade fall from her hand to the floor.*

Na – ga – sa – ki

Hidden in deep green hills ...

Our house ... perched high ...

The sea below.

I see it! I see it!

Summer nights ... scented gardens.

Paper lanterns floating in darkness.

Na – ga – sa – ki

There is my mother!

She climbs the steep hill ...

Catches her breath.

Calls out to me.

Here I am, Mother!

Here I am!

I will never leave ...

Na – ga – sa – ki

A stranger in my garden!  
He tramples on my native soil.

“I am America!” he says.  
“Go Away!” I say.  
I send him away!

Na – ga – sa –ki

END OF SCENE

ACT IV Scene 3

*Gladys is kneeling beside a flower bed that she has just finished planting. Akira is bringing in loads of fresh dirt and plantings from the truck.*

AKIRA *(standing near Gladys, looking down at her)*

Your hands are delicate and graceful ...  
Like my mother's.

GLADYS

Your mother was beautiful.

AKIRA

She still is.

GLADYS

She still is.  
*(after a pause)*  
Her son is very handsome, too.  
*(looking up at Akira earnestly)*  
You never married ... why?

AKIRA *(shrugs)*

Not Japanese enough.  
If the daughters want ...  
Their mothers don't ...  
They won't let them marry out.

GLADYS

With blue eyes and blond curls ...  
You could pass for white.

AKIRA

I will not lie!

GLADYS

You could have anyone, Akira ...  
Anyone you want!

AKIRA

I suppose ...  
I suppose I was waiting for you, Gladys.

*Akira kneels down beside Gladys. She looks down at the flower bed, her delicate hand resting on the spade.*

GLADYS (*tenderly*)

Such different worlds we come from!  
You know it, too ...  
It cannot be.

AKIRA

I don't know what can be.  
All I know is I'm alone.  
I should never have been born ...  
That's what I know!

*Gladys looks up at Akira, achingly, searchingly, then looks down again. She is deeply troubled but doesn't know what to say. Akira crouches beside her. Gladys continues to look down at the flower bed, her delicate hand resting on the spade.*

AKIRA (*gently placing his hand on hers, speaks to her softly but urgently, overcome with passion*)

Come away with me, Gladys!  
Come away with me now!

Even before I knew you ...  
I loved you!

Touch me, Gladys ...  
With your beautiful hands.

Come away with me, Gladys!  
Come away with me now!

Take me deep inside ...  
With your beautiful hands.

Cry out, Gladys! Cry out!  
My sorrow turns to joy!<sup>xv</sup>

*Gladys is trembling. She looks up at Akira, looks around to see that they are unwatched, then slowly frees her hand from under his. Akira has a profound look of rejection. Slowly, deliberately, she wipes her hand on her skirt, then reaches up and pulls him towards her. They embrace passionately. The stage goes dark.*

END OF ACT

Epilogue (Summer, 1953)

*The house has been given a fresh coat of paint, the picket fence has been repaired, the plants in the front yard are flourishing. A lilac bush, still young, has been planted where the original one stood.*

*Dressed in her finest suit of American clothes, Butterfly is standing at the doorway greeting her guests. She is still beautiful. Her delicately chiseled features have not coarsened with age. In one hand she holds a finely lacquered Japanese fan, which she uses occasionally. Above the door a banner reads: "WELCOME HOME, CITIZEN BUTTERFLY. She has just come from her naturalization ceremony at City Hall. The Immigration and Nationality Act (McCarran-Walter Act), passed days before the close of 1952, finally abolished racial restrictions on immigration, permitting first-generation Asian Americans, the only group to have been excluded on the basis of race alone, to be naturalized for the first time.*

*An American flag is affixed to a pole attached to the front door. Friends and neighbors, many of them white, along with their children and grandchildren, have gathered in celebration. They are bearing food and gifts. Saki, now forty-three, is there with husband Karu and their three children. Henry, his wife and their two sons are there. Gladys, now married to an African American man, is there with her husband and baby girl. Forty-nine-year-old Akira has not yet arrived. The mood is relaxed and festive: children are playing, everyone is mingling. Butterfly, now sixty-three years old, has finally come home to America.*

*Moments later, Akira appears at the gate. He is with a stranger, an older man in his seventies, still strong and youthful, with bright blue eyes and a shock of curly gray hair. The stranger is bearing a gift enclosed in box with a lovely silk bow. No one but Akira seems to know who he is. Akira opens the gate and the two of them walk arm-in-arm towards Butterfly. Seeing Akira and the stranger approach, Butterfly closes her fan and steps out of the doorway towards them. She wants to be gracious and hospitable but is at the same time perplexed and disturbed by the apparent intimacy between her son and the stranger.*

PINKERTON (tenderly)

Butterfly ...  
How beautiful you still are!  
(hands Akira the gift)  
Give me your dear hands and let me kiss them!

*Butterfly is flustered but gracious. She hesitates, give the fan to Akira, then lets Pinkerton take her hands. She knows, and yet doesn't know, who this is. Pinkerton kisses her hands and gently releases them. He looks up at the banner above the doorway and then back at Butterfly.*

How long did America make you wait?

*(Thinking back ruefully)*  
She made you wait ... forever.

AKIRA *(handing the gift back to Pinkerton)*

Go ahead, dad ...  
Show her the gift ...  
The one you brought from Nagasaki.

*Pinkerton takes the gift and gives it to Butterfly. Butterfly takes it, looks up at him, and reflexively, as if time had stood still, starts to bow.*

Go on, Mother!  
Open it!

*Butterfly opens the box and takes out a beautifully lacquered Japanese music box.<sup>viii</sup> In her face we see the shock of recognition (much quieter than was Pinkerton's at seeing Butterfly on the dock in San Francisco!). She lifts the lid and listens to a few notes--we hear echoes of the music Puccini wrote for Butterfly--and now she knows, in full conscious awareness, that the man with Akira is Pinkerton. Butterfly looks up at Akira, still standing arm-in-arm with his father. She looks back at Pinkerton and returns his tender gaze with gratitude and forgiveness.*

END OF OPERA



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<sup>i</sup> In Puccini's opera, Butterfly tells Sharpless, putting her words in the mouth of the little boy: "Today, my name is Sorrow (*Dolore*). But tell dad, write to him, that on the day of his return, Joy, Joy, (*Gioia*) shall be my name!"

<sup>ii</sup> Spickard, p.65

<sup>iii</sup> San Francisco Mayor James Phelan, Adapted from the quote. Quoted in Spickard, p.63.

<sup>iv</sup> The numbers are a quotation from the opening lines of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*.

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<sup>v</sup> Food items take from a menu at the Hotel St. Francis, San Francisco, 1919.

<sup>vi</sup> Taken from *The Columbia Documentary History of the Asian American Experience*, ed. Franklin Odo (Columbia University Press, 2002): "Present immigration laws, together with the cunning of the Jap, are resulting in thousands of these Asiatics swarming in upon the industrial market, and Japanese house servants, cooks, waiters, shoemakers, laundry workers, etc., are filling places while white men and women walk the streets in vain in search of work .... This is no idle alarm. The Japanese are not a *future* menace. They are working us great harm *now*.... There are legal remedies ... and the time will come when the people of California will apply them.... Meanwhile, there is a remedy that each individual can apply: HE NEED NOT PATRONIZE.... WE ASK YOU TO BUY FROM WHITES. WE ASK YOU TO BUY GOODS MADE BY WHITES. WE ASK YOU TO HAVE YOUR WORK OF ALL KINDS DONE BY WHITE MEN AND WOMEN WHO LIVE AS YOU LIVE AND PRIZE THE IDEALS AND COUNTRY THAT YOU PRIZE...."

<sup>vii</sup> Adapted from a photo, courtesy of The Bancroft Library, in *Images of America: San Francisco's Japantown*, The Japantown Task Force, Inc. (2005; Arcadia Publishing) <sup>viii</sup> Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt," Military Commander of the Western Defense Command (1942).

<sup>ix</sup> From Abraham Lincoln's First Inaugural Address, 1861.

<sup>x</sup> Adapted from the Japanese American Creed, written by Mike Masaoka for the Japanese American Citizens League, 1941

<sup>xi</sup> Adapted from the Creed of the Topaz Volunteers for Victory.

<sup>xii</sup> The term "Jap Crow" appears in Larry Tajiri, "Farewell to Little Tokyo," *Common Ground*, Winter 1944, pp. 90--94. *Common Ground* was a literary quarterly (1940--49) devoted to multicultural affairs. The magazine had many distinguished contributors.

<sup>xiii</sup> A reference to *Dove sono i bei momenti* from Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*.

<sup>xiv</sup> In the original opera, Butterfly uses this same knife to kill herself, In *A New Ending for Madama Butterfly*, as in the original "Madama Butterfly" story by John Luther Long, Butterfly starts to kill herself but then she stops.

<sup>xv</sup> See footnote 1.

<sup>xvi</sup> A direct quote from the love duet at the Act I of Puccini's opera.

<sup>xvii</sup> Puccini drew musical inspiration for his opera from a music box.

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<sup>i</sup> From Puccini's opera, Act I: *Lieve qual tenue vetro soffiato*

<sup>ii</sup> In Puccini's opera, Butterfly says these are the boy's names: Sorrow before Pinkerton returns; Joy when he comes back.

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<sup>iii</sup> Spickard, p.65

<sup>iv</sup> San Francisco Mayor James Phelan, Adapted from the quote. Quoted in Spickard, p.63.

<sup>v</sup> Adapted from a photo, courtesy of The Bancroft Library, in *Images of America: San Francisco's Japantown*, The Japantown Task Force, Inc. (2005; Arcadia Publishing)

<sup>vi</sup> Traditional Nenbutso Folk Dance to welcome the dead.

<sup>vii</sup> Taken from a Basho haiku.

<sup>viii</sup> Puccini drew musical inspiration for his opera from a music box.