

things, is that he made me suffer so—it became possible only by my passing through that experience. When I think of these things, I realize that not one person did me any harm—not even Haya, the serving maid who walked about hurriedly and pertly, revealing my faults to the world; nor even Katsu, the cook who served no purpose other than to talk back to me. I ought to refer to them all as my benefactors. Now I am surrounded with only good maids, and I hear their compliments (even if they may be lies) about how no mistress treats her maids better than I do. If this is so, it is because I realized that the maids' poor service was a reflection of my own heart. There is no villain in this world who torments people without any reason, and even the gods do not send misery down on people who from head to toe contain not one whit of wickedness. The reason I can say this is that even someone like me, who handled everything around her unwisely, who was a good-for-nothing with no redeeming feature, yet whose heart remained stainless: even one such as I could be granted something as adorable and beautiful as this boy.

When I was about to give birth to this boy, I was still enveloped in a fog. It didn't appear that this fog would lift easily even after the birth. But for some reason, when he raised his first cry at birth, my body was filled with adoration and love, and though I bemoaned my fate, if someone had made to take him away, I would have abandoned my obstinacy and not allowed anyone to touch him—he belonged to me and no one else—and I would have smothered him in hugs.

That my husband and I think the same way was first shown to me by this child. I would hug the child, I would kiss his cheeks and say, "Baby is not Dada's, Baby is Mama's alone. Even if Mama goes off somewhere, Mama won't leave Baby behind. Baby is mine, mine!" The baby smiled, as if he somehow understood, and I thought that this cheerful adorable boy was not at all like his cruel-hearted father. I had decided that the child was mine, but when my husband returned home from somewhere with an unhappy expression, he would sit down at the baby's pillow side, and with an unsteady hand he would hold up a pinwheel or shake a rattle, and, rubbing his dark face as though he were afraid he might weep, my husband would say, "In all our house, only Baby cheers me." As I watched this, worrying that the baby might cry or be afraid, I found that the baby smiled and grinned at my husband in the same way he had at me. One time, my husband, twirling his beard between his fingers, said, "Do you think this child is adorable?" "Of course," I answered. "In that case, you're adorable too," he said, a pleasantry entirely out of his usual character. He laughed in a loud voice, and his face at that moment bore an undeniable resemblance to this child's features. He was adorable; how could I have spent all this time hating my husband? If I treat him well, he treats me well. They say that children are sometimes the wisest teachers; I have been taught everything about life by this child, a boy who has yet to speak his first words!

2

Her Daily Life

Tamura Toshiko

I

She was twenty-one years old when she married Nitta.

After they came to know each other by chance at a certain place, Nitta began to fall in love with her. Masako too was in love with the man. He wished to marry her, but around that time Masako was feeling doubts about marriage because of apprehensions not uncommon among intelligent, modern young women who were capable of thinking about their ego. It was not that she was afraid of marriage; rather, she was thinking too hard about her postmarital self. Misgivings about how she would be treated by the man after marriage, in particular, made the young Masako turn an inquiring eye toward all sorts of married lives in society.

There, all she found were cases of humiliation of women, about which she could only feel indignant. She noticed a thick chain that wound around each woman's waist. Masako saw nothing but the pale, ghostly faces of those who had completely lost themselves. One woman was so busy washing baby diapers all day from morning to night that she panted unhealthily when pumping a mere bucket of water. Another was the man's absolute servant. In each case, the woman's heart was compressed by her husband or children, and the blood of all those living women, which should course freshly through the veins, was made muddy and sour like sewer water. They had no leisure to think reflectively about such things as pure love. They knew nothing else but to busily direct attention toward their children with the kinds of vulgar, instinctive love that dogs and cats lavish on the young they bore. Moreover, women had no leisure to think about their responsibility for their homes. Even for their

"Kanojo no seikatsu" (1917). From Tamura Toshiko, *Tamura Toshiko sakuhinshū* (Tokyo: Origin Shuppan Sentā, 1988), vol. II. Translated by Kyoko Selden. Translation copyright 2011 by Kyoko Selden.

housework they felt no responsibility. They merely laid hands unconsciously, as if in a daze, on chores that pressed on them. Indeed, miscellaneous duties were heaped like a mountain before family women. The tattered clothes of men's lifetime piled up day after day before women without a moment's pause. Daily chores endlessly continued hour after hour with hardly any boundaries. Thus, women were too exhausted to discover the greatest meaning called responsibility in their lives. Like a doll on a float that advances in swimming motions as it is pulled from the front and pushed from the back, women, with their souls totally closed, passed one blind day after another as their doll-like bodies were pushed from the back and pulled from the front.

Masako shuddered when she thought of such daily lives of women. No matter what, she thought, she would refuse to accept such a life. She wanted to keep herself alive. She must not seek a married life that might make her lose her soul before the man's ego. She was determined to live by herself to the end, while honoring her existence. She must not fall into the trap of marriage in quest of a servile pretext called love. In order to stably maintain herself in terms of a material life too, she worked toward a profession. While gaining a livelihood by means of uninspired writing, Masako also continued to pursue her desire for self-enhancement. But when she chanced to encounter Nitta, the young Masako fell in love.

Nitta asked her again and again to marry. He wanted to possess the entirety of the woman he loved. But Masako did not respond to that for a while. Agonizing over how to unify love that came unexpectedly and marriage, at one point this intelligent woman wondered if she must discard love for the sake of principle. And when she realized that it was after all an unnatural course, Masako agonized all the more.

"Somehow or other, I wish to live freely," Masako said to Nitta. "I want to keep my love free and natural. I don't wish to be obliged by love to marry. Wouldn't it be possible for you and me to live freely in love forever, while avoiding marriage?" To him, her words sounded like the sheer fantasy of a maiden who did not yet know physical love. He found her seriousness rather humorous. He confessed to Masako with what passion he desired her physically. She blushed at his unmasked words but could not feel contempt for this man's desire. She thought it natural. Still, she could not bring herself to want to marry. In the man's intention to ask for marriage rather than in the emotion with which he sought carnal love, she found cowardliness and ugliness. To give herself to her lover was a matter of Masako's eternal freedom, but to agree to marry was to have her entire life closed off by the man. That the man pressed her to marry, she thought, was the same as encircling her with an iron chain in order to deprive her of freedom all her life.

"Marry I will not," she said. Nitta told her that that idea was wrong.

"I have a feeling that you regard me in the same way as you do ordinary men in the world. I believe I have a rather newer understanding of women. I don't think of you at all as my inferior. I think of you as one to share equal rights with me. I respect your independent spirit. Needless to say, we should not construct the typical husband-wife relationship. In every point you are my partner, and I am your friend. I will recognize your freedom more than before, and help you open up the path you are trying to follow. To let you live freely also means to let myself live freely. I am not merely asking for your hand as a housewife. In having you as my wife and at the same time wanting you to respect yourself as a woman with a soul is my ideal of marriage. That I think is true marriage. And it is also sacred marriage. If such a marriage cannot be hoped for, I would sooner not ask you to marry," Nitta spoke earnestly.

Masako was extremely pleased by his words, which she thought were truly understanding of women. They conveyed profound understanding not just of her but of women broadly; and hearing her lover talk this way, she could only think his human scale large and his sentiments lofty. That was, as Nitta said, true marriage. The man offered to recognize her freedom. And he offered to respect her intention and her art. It was impossible for her not to believe those words. Her lover was a new man. Living with this new man's new understanding, she believed, would make her the happiest woman in the world.

They married. Nominally as his wife, she was to spend mornings and evenings at Nitta's house. They decided that they would live in separate rooms. They forbade each other to casually enter each other's room. Masako studied in her room. As she felt it humiliating to be fed by her husband, she did not forget to produce things, however slight they might be, by her own strength. Nitta was a philosopher and critic of modern times. He too shut himself in his room, engrossed in writing and reading.

They needed a maidservant. It was hardly possible for Masako alone to handle all the chores, including cleaning, washing, and cooking. In particular, therein would originate the process of her becoming a housekeeper and letting her ideas rot. Both Masako and Nitta feared it. To him too it was painful to have her allocate portions of her important study hours to housework. So they decided to have a maidservant. One young woman after another entered his house, but they could not find a single ideal maid.

Every one of them was unclean. Their work was disorderly, irregular, and slovenly. Unless ordered, their slow brains remained rusty, refusing to move. They misunderstood the meaning of loyalty, which they thought meant doing things exactly as told. They left everything undone unless told. Taking the initiative to do unrequested chores, they felt, was presumptuous. It was utterly impossible to find an ideal woman who would mirror in her brain the housekeeper side of Masako's thoughts and silently perform accordingly.

Masako instantly became exhausted. She was tired from ordering and tired from teaching. The nuisance of repeating, in her study, the order of housework to the maidservant sapped her nerves. The manners and movements of the ignorant maidservant irritated the intelligent woman. Rather than dealing with such a servant all day, Masako thought handling housekeeping by herself would be far less onerous and even enable her to secure some of her time as her own. The maid casually entered Masako's study, where her husband could not come in at will, and unsparingly disturbed her calm thoughts by consulting, "What shall I do with that? What shall I do with this?"

In the end Masako stopped having a maid. She picked up the habit of clearly separating her housekeeping time from her study time and occupying her brain only with things in the kitchen during the time she was there.

It was easy. Nitta was also thinking about sharing housekeeping chores. He thought it a duty he had toward the one who had equal rights. When she came out to the kitchen, he did so. While she cut vegetables, he turned on the gas. When she washed soiled utensils, he scrupulously wiped them with a cloth. They cleaned the house together. They even felt they could enjoy meals better that way. Rather than experiencing the nuisance of having an ignorant maidservant in the house, sharing the housework was refreshing and helpful in making Masako calm. Physical work proved agreeable because it switched off a part of her brain tired from thinking. With her slender arms, she energetically swept outside the rather spacious house. When wearing a white apron and cutting vegetables with a sharp knife, she sometimes found a certain elegance in the act.

"It's unexpectedly better to have housekeeping chores. My mind has come to work very delicately, as if my nerves were always on a cogwheel. I'm so glad to find this sharpness in myself," said Masako. She was diligent.

But this did not last long, either. Miscellaneous chores she could not process began accumulating. His shirts to be laundered, socks to be mended—even such things required her minute attention. When chores were put in order, the order collapsed instantly. Each time a guest visited, she had to rise from her chair. Serving tea or serving coffee seemed a trifling thing, and yet it derailed her day by slicing into her hours. Although Nitta at first felt sorry about this and tried to handle those chores by himself, as the woman thought about her time so the man could not help but think of his time. Like her, he participated in housework. He made efforts to help with the woman's everyday duties. How much of his work time was taken away by these insignificant odd jobs he did not know. When in his study, he could not refrain from thinking of this. Before he realized it, he started neglecting housework. In particular, he had the serious responsibility for the life the two shared. He was in a situation to have to work harder than before in order to make a living. The facts of

their daily life compelled him to handle new male duties and responsibilities toward society. The more conscious he became of this, quite spontaneously, his conduct started showing his evaluation of his work as important and large, and the housework, like washing his own shirts and helping to boil vegetables, as extremely light. He no longer was attentive enough to leave his desk and hasten to the kitchen on hearing a sound from there. Masako's housekeeping chores gradually increased. It came to the point where housework was a matter she coped with. Chores, chaotic like garbage, tormented and agonized her.

Falling into confusion she no longer knew how to handle, Masako sometimes neglected cleaning the house. But the moment she slackened, love and understanding for the man's work made her feel she could not keep still. The wish to let him feel as happy as possible urged her to work. Being an intelligent woman, her heart functioned with delicate care as she worked around him. No matter when, she could not leave that meticulous attention. At each moment, Nitta's emotions and feelings were vividly reflected in her mind. She was unable to forget her good intentions of helping him keep his composure by being as attentive as possible.

The man tended to be absent from home. Having many connections outside, he went out every day. Masako had stopped going out at all. Aside from shopping in the neighborhood, she now felt extremely lazy about dressing up and going out. That was because she could not stay without paying attention to housework. Almost neurotically she concentrated on handling and finishing housework, and securing time for her own study as much as possible, if only one hour longer. After being home weeks in a row, sleeping and waking from night to day, sometimes she gazed vacantly at the clear sky. Recalling the free, happy mood from the days when she used to make trips by herself, she was occasionally tempted by the color of the sky. She instantly checked the impulse, however.

"Traveling stirs no interest in me now."

II

Masako could not at all settle into her own studying. Keeping to her room, she thought about her present life. At times she felt that even love between husband and wife felt oppressive. Noticing that she was unwittingly trying to always locate herself within Nitta's feelings, she could not resist feeling repugnance about the servility of her sentiment.

No matter how she looked at it, her life was subordinate to the man's. This was the undeniable fact of their life together. Nitta, who recognized the woman's freedom and swore that he would keep open the way she wished to live, was not unaware that after all their present life was depriving the woman of her freedom.

Masako once was high-spirited, with a sharp sense of art, full of *joie de vivre*. Seeing her now dispirited and pale, keeping to her room all day long, Nitta was overwhelmed with pity. While wishing to free Masako as much as possible from the troublesome housework, the effort soon began to exhaust him. While watching the touching attempt of the woman, who, with a certain amount of patience and faith, tried her best to handle the housework, there was nothing he could do but reassure himself over her heroic faith and turn his face away.

"Are you managing to study?"

"Yes, I am."

Hearing this answer, all Nitta could do was silently feel relieved. When finding by his side his wife who did everything for him with good intentions and compassion, Nitta was very happy. More than when she was withdrawn to her room and engrossed in her own work, Nitta felt deeper love for Masako when she faced him with wifely feelings. That his wife wished to have more time to be in her room even at the cost of this loving thought was, to him, desolate and painful. He did not, however, confess that to her. He was ashamed of it, thinking it an insult to his ideological friend. He blamed himself, thinking it servile to demand such feelings from her. Even so, he could not deny that she appeared beautiful and lovely when she was handling housework with wifely gentleness, active mind, and minute attention. It was certainly sad for Nitta that Masako would become a complete housewife for him, but, for example when feeling tired, it was painful for him to see Masako's face likewise deeply troubled from serious thinking.

Masako knew all this. She knew everything Nitta was feeling about her. A sudden expression of joy, indicative of his fondness of the moments when she was a good wife, emerged from time to time on his face without his knowledge and surprised her. The more she became aware of it, the more she felt disappointed by her life. And yet her love for Nitta did not let her go against his momentary demand when he wanted her as his good wife. She felt that, motivated by a wish to be a good wife in response to his satisfaction, coquetry had inadvertently pervaded the bottom of her heart. For her it was the first step of dreadful compromise.

She felt so much pain that she made conscious efforts to interpret with great precision, and truly understand, her daily life. Her circumstances that forced her to handle housekeeping despite her inability, her love for her husband, her understanding of his work—and, most important, her art, along with the pain of seeing her life gradually oppressed by marriage—she thought of these things as if mathematically calculating one thing after another, jotted them down, and critiqued them. She had reached a point where going to the kitchen overwhelmed her with pain, and she felt she could hardly continue this kind of work. Not only that; the more she devoted herself to housekeeping, the

harder her intelligent mind worked to prevent her from being inconsiderate about anything whatsoever. In particular, becoming even more sensitive to the management of the man's clothing and the meals she served him, she was unable to ignore any negligence in those areas. Masako was often more tortured than helped by her own intelligence.

In order to escape from the confusion stemming from that contradiction, she thought a number of times about returning to a single life. If she were alone, her faithful, kind mother at home would handle all the housework that was part of Masako's current burden. Masako would not have to worry about her clothing. No detail of cooking or laundry would trouble her. She would be able to work freely in a position like the one Nitta occupied. Masako could not refrain from longing for her past life when she was alone and had her sovereign rights. She pondered returning to her single life.

"Our love is genuine. Just because our lives become separate, our mutual love will not turn out to be unfortunate. Rather, we will be able to separate ourselves from troubling things that lead our hearts to confusion, and instead continue our studies calmly."

This was how she tried to think. However, it was just a matter of theory. After living together, if only half a year, the idea of parting was profoundly painful. Unable to make the effort it would require, she thought and thought again. "The entirety of your present life is love," she mentally addressed herself. "There is nothing but love. To lead a full life simply as this love guides you will be what is natural for your current life." When this new thought filled her brain, Masako felt, as if coming to her senses, that she was able to clearly grasp a proper creed for her life. It was nothing novel, but she repeated in her heart that a life of love was beautiful, pure, and happy. She thought she should not let go of it and tried to firmly hold it with her soul. She was ready to try to deduce the meaning of her future life solely from such love.

She had once thought her feelings servile when much time went to coiffing and making up for the man, but she felt at peace now that she thought her love for the man made her adorn herself. When thinking that doing housework too was one of the manifestations of sincerity toward the man, she also felt at peace. Viewing housework as hardship was precisely what was cowardly. She should sort out steps of her work clearly and in the greatest detail in order to manage it all. Doing so represented her strong self. She would carry out her housework perfectly and without delay, and beyond that she would gradually open up her own path of life. She would on the one hand tend to her duty as a wife, and, on the other, would diligently seek the way for living as a woman who possesses a soul. That would prevent any contradiction in her life. Fulfillment of her love should be able to proceed with a certain harmony between the two parallel lines. So thought Masako.

This conclusion helped her collect her confused senses to some extent. After pleurably taking care of housework, she was able to turn to her work in her study with a composed, relaxed attitude. A certain kind of delight even lurked in that relaxed mind of hers. She was also able to try to please Nitta's feelings in a very natural way. The two gradually came to enjoy loving each other as a married couple. In the husband's strong embrace, the wife felt totally meek without any hint of selfishness, and this she felt was extremely beautiful. Unlike mere friendship, which was unstable—she had used this expression with the intention to connect their lives as partners—the man's love as a husband was healthy with the kind of strength that made her adore him. On occasion she felt enchanted by that powerful love. When feeling so, unawares she sweetly flattered his feelings. Masako no longer thought her coquetry subservient. In the way that intuitive desire, which the male and female genders naturally possess, revealed itself in their bodies with a delicate difference in strength, Masako could not but feel an even greater charm.

III

Two years passed as they spent days and months together. Their life was happy for a while. Clinging to her creed of love, Masako repeatedly brushed away all feelings of discontent and inadequacy.

That creed of love soon threatened to slip away from one hand. Aside from loving each other, at times the two of them ran against life's facts about which they had to fight. Although she quickly repented after each quarrel, a vague sense of humiliation followed each time and remained in her chest. With bitter thoughts, she gazed at the trace of that insult in herself.

Naturally, Masako had not neglected her work in her room. After long months gaining experience she became capable of efficiently handling housework and was able to turn to her own work with greater enthusiasm.

Around that time her artist comrades from before her marriage, all males, resumed visiting her frequently. They were sincere, understanding young people who respected her fine talent and superior art and whom she treated as spiritual friends. When paying a visit, those friends enjoyed talking with Masako more than with Nitta. She too was ready to welcome them with pleasure, as before, those who understood her art well. Having been buried in her housework, away from society for some while, she could not but feel excited once again when seeing them. Without exception, their eyes gleamed with a yearning for art. Looking at that gleam alone made her feel waves of joy in her chest. The words of those friends who were burning with new ambitions, which had reached her after a long while, never ceased to create a strong, ringing echo in her heart. She felt almost like dancing with joy, hand in hand

with those young friends, in the large sky of yearning for art—thoroughly tasting the joy, she felt intoxicated when parting with them.

Afterward, when she poured all her yearnings for art on Nitta and expected him to powerfully calm her excitement, she felt disappointed as if everything had instantly turned dark. It was because he had never looked so spiteful and cold. Looking as if at the height of displeasure, he was sunk into a strange reticence. When the piercing silence of the man, who nearly seemed to be crushing with his teeth all manner of pains, whipped at her chest that had been full of yearning and pathos, Masako was simply miserable. Suppressing her panting, oppressed breathing, she could only ask quietly why he looked so displeased. On such an occasion, Nitta answered,

"I suppose you don't have to associate with such friends."

"Why should I not associate with them?"

"I can't say exactly why, but it is painful for me that you associate with those people."

"How can I believe you said such a thing?"

Taken aback by the words, so lacking in understanding, she looked at him in silence.

"You don't take me seriously at all," she said quietly after a while.

"Those people are my most valued friends," she added. "Why should I not associate with them? I think it odd. I have no right to object like that about your friends. The same applies to you too. How can you raise such an objection?"

"It's not an objection. It's unpleasant to me that you talk with those young people."

"How ignorant you are. How self-debasing. You are insulting me. You don't recognize my freedom, do you?"

Masako further reviled him. She said nothing was so mistaken as his attitude.

"Are you telling me to be isolated? Are you telling me to remain alone? Can I not have friends?"

Masako was so sad she burst into tears. To her Nitta seemed utterly cruel. He looked like a man with the heart of a rock, with neither sympathy nor understanding. She was filled with hatred for him.

"I am mistaken. But I can't do anything about it," Nitta said. He could do nothing about his ugly, ignorant jealousy. He could not even begin to think of setting free the path of her life.

"Even if you lose one hundred friends," he explained, "that doesn't mean solitude. I don't know why you think of such a thing as isolation. I have greater understanding and sympathy than your one hundred friends, don't I? You don't need friends. I think it fine for you to be by yourself."

Masako cried even more bitterly. What a lonesome life this would be—she cursed the man as she continued to cry.

Eventually, their love restored them to where they had been. Ashamed of his jealousy, Nitta apologized to Masako. His jealousy, naturally, was what had insulted her. She was again able to return to her merry life. She was able to talk to Nitta freely and with emotion about her friends' impassioned words.

"Mutual understanding is really pleasant. It makes me happy. I should never disappoint Masako," he swore to himself.

But that was just for the moment. After Masako spent time with her friends, no matter how he tried Nitta was unable to wipe away his displeasure. Wearing a cheerless, cloudy expression on his face, he did not speak to her for some time.

"He's suffering after all," she thought. "He forgets what our marriage was like. He's after all an ordinary man. He cannot understand a woman in a new way." Masako sometimes reviled him to herself, but even as she did so she knew that deep down gentle sympathy for him flowed like water from the thawing snow.

She had to bend herself at the depths of despair in her dark daily life. There was nothing that made her fear her husband, but she could not bear seeing Nitta's displeased expression.

"You don't believe me. You don't understand me. You insult me," she pleaded many times; but stirred by sympathy for the man tormented by uncontrollable jealousy, she felt like forgiving everything. As a result, she unconsciously began to avoid her friends. Before she realized it, the young artists, who had no guilt whatsoever and were on friendliest terms with her, were gradually distanced from her.

"I'm sorry I have a lot of work to do right now. . . ."

"We have a visitor right now. . . ."

Making such excuses, she tried as much as possible to reduce the source of Nitta's torment. When Masako did not see her friends, he cast his face down before her like one penitent for a crime. On such occasions, they loved each other even more than usual.

Still, Masako felt lonesome. "What can I do?" Irritated, she constantly looked around with searching eyes. While wishing for her life to be broad, she sadly realized that it was on the contrary becoming more and more narrow. To have to be with Nitta alone was too confining. Although she loved no one else but Nitta, for the moment she could not refrain from having friends in art around her. Their ideas cast various reflections on hers, stirring something new in her desire for art that had been beginning to decline. They were stimulating to her. But she had to sacrifice those precious friends for his sake.

Nitta too had many friends. Naturally they were not of the different gen-

der. He had meetings with them and also visited them at home. If Masako suggested that he cut off his relationship with those friends, what would his answer be?

"They are my precious friends," he would definitely say. Wasn't it the same with men and women? Why was Nitta himself able to seek friends, but not Masako?

"If my friends too were of the same gender as mine, there would be no problem."

When she thought this way, she was disappointed that there was none among her acquaintances of the same gender whom she wanted to have as a true friend.

Around that time Nitta had just begun translating a full-length foreign novel. He had to take up various jobs for the sake of earning a livelihood for two. Because Masako considered it humiliating to a woman to force her husband to support her, she assisted, partly for her own study, taking over easy parts. She did not neglect to comfort Nitta in the evening when he was exhausted from work. Half her daytime hours went to housework, but Nitta too comforted her. Seated face-to-face in his study, when the two of them busily wrote with pen and ink or discussed the meaning of a passage while being mutually taught and helped, winds of June blew through green leaves outside the windows, occasionally filling the room with a fragrance of the trees that was like fresh wine. They were indeed happy. Nitta was particularly happy. She was talented. She was bright. She was gentle without affectation. She was clever with her hands in everything. She was good at putting work in order. Her loving smiles were beautiful. Male visitors having gradually disappeared, by then she was totally by herself at home. She was able to distance from herself even her own mother. She stayed by his side to help with his work healthily and diligently—Nitta found in this their happy life.

"I will never love another woman," he said to Masako.

IV

Masako's health was gradually failing. She felt that something was wrong with her but could not locate the source. Her chest felt tight, or she had a headache; in particular her brain was constantly muddled in an unhealthy way. Although Nitta said that it was probably because she did not exercise much, she could not persuade herself to go out any more than before.

Masako was scared when she thought of how very stable her life had become. It was the kind of stability found in a patient when a disease has become chronic. She found it frightening that, while she had an illness, she was no longer troubled by it. She was not really happy. When his love

and her love coincided, she thought she sensed infinite happiness, but it eventually changed into a fearful, unhappy feeling. And she could not avoid keenly sensing that Nitta's love leaned toward selfishness in all situations. While she felt sympathy for the circumstances that unconsciously made his demands upon the woman self-centered, his egoistic love constantly made her uncomfortable.

There were times when her creed of love was completely shaken off. The creed gradually faded from her heart. Trying to protect her creed meant that she also had to embrace his one-sided, egoistic love. She knew she was hardly capable of doing such a thing. It was all too ludicrous that she had attempted to place love at the center and infer the meaning of her daily life from there. She realized that she did not necessarily have to love. For her own sake, rather, she had to be prepared to fight against him. Such a thing as a creed of love meant debasing herself. She should not be so weak as to lose herself under such an ambiguous, doctrinal name as a creed of love. She had somewhat too large an ambition in her soul to live within this sort of inflexible love. Occasionally she felt impatient at heart, somehow wishing to break through her surroundings.

Having stopped assisting her husband with his work, she began to hide in her study. There, she was absorbed in her own creative writing. What was frightening, however, was that after nearly two years of housework, the habit never stopped neurotically urging her to attend to chores of all kinds. When she was at her desk, chores around her suddenly occurred to her and tormented her. Nor was she able to completely forget Nitta. While he was out she was peaceful, but when he was home, her attention was drawn toward him in ways that obstructed her thoughts.

Her creative writing did not at all proceed. For days in a row, she was absentminded whenever she was in her study. In the end, she even considered herself unable to create her own world. She gradually sank to a condition resembling that of a sufferer of hysteria. Now and then, she bitterly cried or lost her temper. Sensing the overflowing vigor of Nitta's entire body was enough to make her envious. And the man's invisible power that constantly ate its way into her life was simply hateful to her.

More frequently than before, she turned on him or resisted him. Learning to enjoy picking a violent quarrel with him on trivial matters, she felt proud as if she had subjugated the man if but for that moment. Nitta mistakenly ascribed her play with this sort of ignorant emotion to her natural disposition, hitherto hidden but now coming out in the open. He could not refrain from blaming her waywardness. There was no longer proper understanding or spiritual affinity between them. Even the effort to understand each other was, for them, humiliating. The two, who at the beginning understood each

other on the basis of their pledge to walk along the supreme path of life, now hurled insults at each other as if toward a base, vulgar being.

"Marriage is to blame."

Both Nitta and Masako were made to think this. In their marriage was nothing of the metaphysical or spiritual that they had had in mind at the start. The only thing that remained was carnal union. Helped by its impressions alone, they barely managed to continue with their bestial love—Masako sometimes even went to the extreme of thinking thus.

"The wife's obedience, loyalty, modesty, and best behavior were part of life manners especially chosen as an important means for beautifying married life. These were expected patterns of married life rather than female virtues, and, unless studying them and hiding under their shadow, a woman can hardly bear the humiliation of the bare sight of married life." This was what Masako jotted down one day on the edge of a piece of paper.

After a while, however, the intelligent woman attempted to once again recover her own life. If she could not cast off her present life, she thought, there was no choice but to make that life adjust well to her. She decided to follow the feminine fate she had taken a step into and to look for herself afresh therein. It was a miserable decision, but she thought it would allow her to determine her spiritual direction for the time being.

Her efforts were not wasted. When a critical essay she finally finished writing was published, it instantly met high appraisal from some young men and won popularity. The essay, which poignantly introduced the lives of women imprisoned in marriage, revealed her thorough thinking, candid expressiveness, and ardent emotion. Referring to how this young woman, unlike others, at any rate demonstrated a flare of strong self-awareness, the men praised her as being full of promise. Following the publication of this piece, many people visited her again. The old artist friends who once distanced themselves also came over. She found joy in freshly associating with those people. Strangely, there were some around her who wished to direct special, intimate feelings toward her. She did not feel contemptuous of them at all.

The home situation improved at the same time. Nitta was pleased that Masako could undertake her own work for the first time since marriage. Seeing his response, she too naturally felt happy. Her life began to brighten. For her, everything was a source of pride. Even tending to housework brought her a pride she had never experienced before.

"For women to handle housekeeping on the one side and, on the other, keep step with men socially means that they work twice as hard as men. The difference in power aside, in terms of the amount of work women are superior to men."

This kind of pride increased her vitality even more.

The two of them were again able to love each other without disruption. Never at all being bothered by her daily life, Masako could fully focus on her creative world. Around that time she learned to halfheartedly leave undone the housework on which she had once placed so much emphasis.

It was precisely when Masako was feeling vaguely enticed by one of the men around her who tried to be particularly intimate with her, when she was making painful efforts to overcome the temptation. She found something physically unusual, and this weighed on her for a long time. When it was known to be pregnancy, she was shocked as if she had collided with an unforeseen situation. All day long that day she cried in her room.

"It's all over now," she thought. A sad despair—rather than thinking of the folly of having believed there would never be a child between them, she dwelled desperately on another new responsibility added to her life.

"I have to additionally think about becoming a good mother. I have to think about maternal responsibility."

Nitta had no compassion whatsoever for her despair. He was pleased by the expectation of the birth of a child between them.

"Are you pleased that I am going to be a slave? You are delighted about sacrificing my life for you and the child," she said through her tears. Nitta was silent. He asserted that he ought to think about parental responsibility just as she did. The only difference was that he wouldn't experience the pains of childbirth. But nothing could be done about it—Nitta kept so silent about her coming sacrifice that he began to appear in her eyes as a man of insidious wiles.

Masako was embarrassed by her appearance. She felt even greater embarrassment when face-to-face with the man by whom she felt tempted. Why was this? She disliked even thinking about it.

"When the child arrives, promise to send it away somewhere right away. We share something more precious than a child."

When Masako said this, Nitta agreed. If raising a child obstructed her work in her room, he said, it was fine to do as she suggested. Naturally he loved her more than the child not yet born.

"Why do women have to give birth?"

Masako thoroughly cursed women's fate. Hatred for Nitta began to roughen her feelings again. She walked outside in desperation day after day. Irritability, which nearly led her to destroy her body by throwing it against something, always kept her from staying still.

Physically, however, she was all the healthier. The child in her womb kept growing with no knowledge of its mother's agony. As if to demand the

mother's love, it was trying to transmit the subtle warmth of love from the womb to the maternal sense of touch. Masako often received stimulation from that sense.

"Self-knowledge ultimately means that I become aware of being a woman."

It was difficult for Masako to be saved from this despair. She abandoned the work she had begun. Regardless of such circumstances, nine months quickly passed before her eyes.

In winter, the third year into their marriage, a lovely boy was born.

Nitta chose a good name for the child. Masako, who had insisted that the child be given away, did not mention this after the birth, as if she had forgotten all about it.

"Maternal responsibility."

Such a thing was no big deal for her. Aside from loving what she loved, no thoughts occurred to her at this point. Her nerves were tightly strained as she loved what she loved. She was unable to let others hold the child even for a moment. Covered entirely by beautiful, natural love, no other sentiments surfaced; she was simply gazing at the lovely thing.

Masako had to have a babysitter for the child. Her daily chores increased. She was not, however, bothered by them. It was not rare that, for the child's sake, she hardly slept at night. While perceiving the expression of pain on the little thing's face, her attention never lapsed for a moment. With all the attention, all the care, all the cautiousness for the little thing, she had no leisure to think about herself. While her eyes were bloodshot and her skin was rough and pale from lack of sleep, she never felt any fatigue. Unable to watch her miserable state morning and nights, Nitta started to talk about sending the child away.

"How can I entrust the boy in another's hands? I will raise him myself. He's really dear to me. I have already transcended things like maternal responsibility or sacrifice. I have nothing to think about any longer," she answered.

VI

Once again, her soul started waking to the world of ambition. Holding the lovely child in her hands alone was no longer sufficient to fulfill her desire for life. Especially, seeing her husband have to work twice as hard as before and seeing his efforts to do so, Masako could no longer sit still. She thought she must assist him if only in material ways.

She entered her study with her baby in her arms. But it constantly obstructed her work. When excited about her creative desire, she simply held him tight and shed tears unable to hate or revile the lovely obstruction. When tears of

fretfulness fell from her eyes; she just sat limply afterward, idly embracing the little life.

The babysitter was totally useless for caring for the child. Rather, she caused more trouble. Nitta suggested having Masako's mother over so as to eliminate at least the trouble with the child. Masako's mother was a good person but was not the kind of person who could really understand Nitta's and Masako's life. She was convinced that everyone in the world lived with the same kind of sentiment as she did. Both Nitta and Masako could only keep company with her with wry smiles.

Although the mother came over right away to be with her daughter and grandson, she behaved assertively toward her daughter, who was unused to handling a baby; this did not please Masako. The child-raising approach Masako envisioned differed totally from what her mother had in mind. Over this, Masako daily complained, or, helped by the willfulness allowed between blood relatives, flew at her mother. The feelings of Nitta, who stood between them, were an added bother to Masako.

"If she were Nitta's mother, I would be more patient." This was Masako's thought when she decided that she would ask her mother to leave. Her mother was unable to help in the family long, either, for she had the children of Masako's siblings to care for.

Once again, Masako kept the child by her side. It was not rare that she read while carrying the child on her back, or wrote while breast-feeding him. The child grew in good health but occasionally surprised the young mother by running a fever, or simply crying and crying miserably, unable to convey what he wanted. Falling into a situation similar to that during the time following marriage when she could not work in her study, she was unable to handle half what she wished to do.

"How much time in the world do I have?"

Masako began to think about her time again. Unlike when she was troubled only by housekeeping, now that she was troubled by her child, she was unable to demarcate her own time from hour to hour. All she could do was steal some unplanned free time from the child. There was no choice but to do her real work during those intervals.

Soon, however, a second habit entered into her life. Just as she first came to be able to leave her housework half completed, this time she learned to keep her attention toward the child halfway. It was fine for everything to be halfway. She came to be able to search for a thought while handling the child, conceive an idea while cooking in the kitchen, and contemplate while laundering. She was now able to sit at her desk with complacency while hearing the baby cry.

What enabled her to do so was precisely the strange power latent in daily life. She was able to equally divide the double and triple portions of her life,

harmonize them, distinguish them, separate them, and coordinate them. When looked at from outside, her life was rather tragic. Yet, while handling that much housework, she was publishing larger numbers of creative and critical pieces. She seemed to be struggling, with effort and willpower alone, amid prohibitive binds against inevitable female fate. A miserable life, a pitiful life—but she did not feel that way herself. She felt the mother's pride in the child, the wife's rights toward her husband, and her pride in her own art. Yet she tried to avoid interpreting that pride as pride. It was not pride, she thought, but something that should be named love. It was her love for the child, for her husband, and for herself. Everything was love. Her life was love. She thought the strength of her daily life was the strength of love.

She felt as if her perception of love were infinite. Different from a creed of love she once pursued, she was now reaching an interpretation by which she herself was an incarnation of love. While shining with joy, she did not neglect to create her own world either.

Was this problem of daily life a problem that never again had to be repeated? She would probably have a second child. A temptation, similar to what she experienced with that man when she was pregnant with her first child, would assault her again. For her artistic sentiment would not allow her to remain aloof to fascinations and temptations of all kinds. The world of her creativity would expand infinitely as she dashed toward it. Then she would have to fight again against her present life of love. Unlike those small fights that had flashed from time to time in her past life, greater strife would undoubtedly oppress her soul.

And when she realizes that she can hardly run away from the pitiable, inevitable fate of femininity, she would once again advocate a new "life of love."



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