

Pioneering Memoirists of the Tenth Century

Two long-lived prose forms, the travel account and the confessional memoir, were inaugurated in the tenth century by two consciously innovative writers, Ki no Tsurayuki (ca. 872–945) and the woman known as Michitsuna's Mother (937?–95). Tsurayuki's work, *A Tosa Journal* (Tosa nikki), was completed around 935; that of Michitsuna's Mother, *The Gossamer Journal* (Kagerō nikki), probably in the 970's.

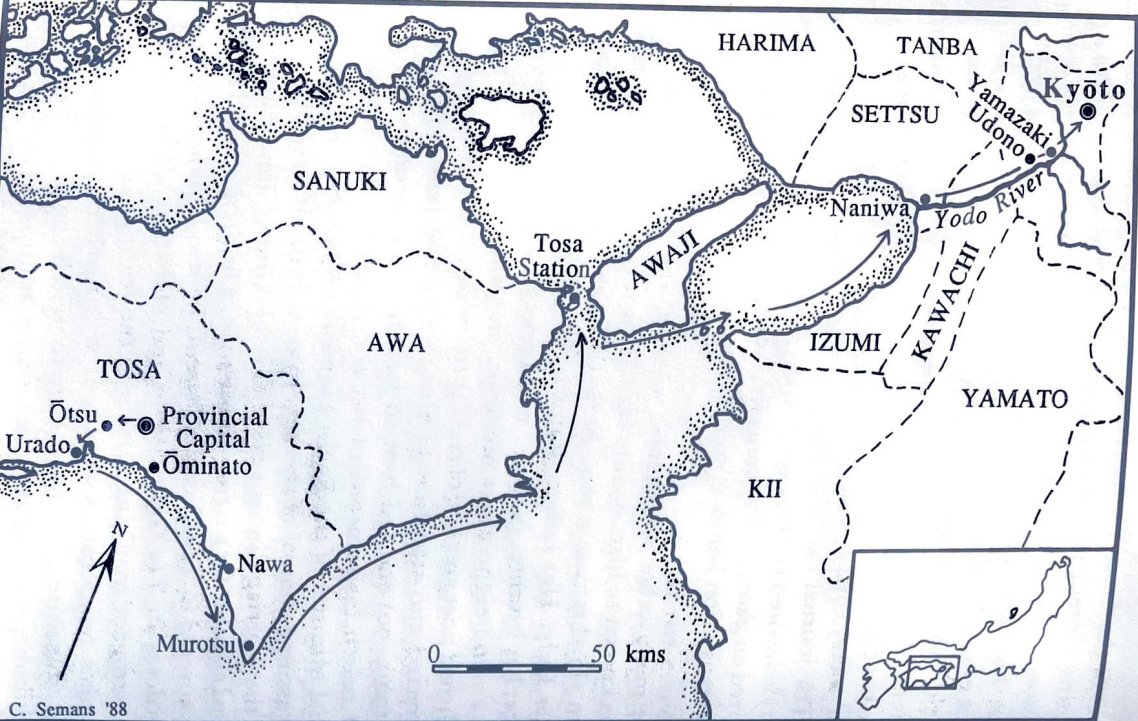
Tsurayuki was an obscure young bureaucrat around 902, when he was named one of four compilers of the future *Collection of Early and Modern Poetry*. He emerged as the collections principal compiler and the author of its influential kana preface, and subsequently became recognized as the leading professional poet of the age, although his official career never prospered. In addition to producing many screen poems and other verses on commission for the higher nobility, he compiled another anthology, *New Selection of Japanese Poetry* (Shinsen waka, ca. 935), which missed the honor of imperial sponsorship only because the sovereign who had commissioned it died before it could be presented. Aside from the kana preface, *A Tosa Journal* is his only important prose work.

Tsurayuki was appointed to a five-year term as Governor of Tosa, a province on the island of Shikoku, in 930. *A Tosa Journal*, which describes an anonymous Governor's return from Tosa to the capital, is believed to have been written shortly after the end of his tour of duty. The prose portion of the work is essentially a framing device for almost sixty poems, most of which were presumably composed by him during his own journey home, but which are attributed to a number of different

members of the Governor's party by the narrator, who is proclaimed in the opening sentence to be a woman. Tsurayuki's assumption of a feminine persona pays lip service to the view that Chinese was the appropriate prose medium for a man. The device is, however, a transparent one—for example, the narrator tends to indulge in masculine locutions and crack masculine jokes—and the contemporary reader must have been intended to see through it. Tsurayuki's implicit suggestion is that the time has come to treat Japanese prose as the equal of Chinese, a point made for poetry thirty years earlier with the *Collection of Early and Modern Poetry*. The journal can also be regarded as a form of advocacy for the poetic style favored by Tsurayuki and embodied in the *Collection*, which emphasized elegance, witty conceits, wordplay, and mellifluous diction. The translation below is complete.

Like many other aristocratic women, the author of *The Gossamer Journal* is known to history only by a name indicative of her relationship to a man, in this case a son. Nowadays, she is sometimes called the Gossamer Lady. Her father, Fujiwara no Tomoyasu, was a provincial Governor; her brother, Nagatō, was a poet of some repute. By the time she was around eighteen or nineteen, she was reported to be both an accomplished poet and one of the "three beauties of Japan," a reputation that attracted the attention of the twenty-five-year-old Fujiwara no Kaneie (929–90) and led him to take her as a second wife. It was a brilliant match for someone of her social status. The able son of the influential Minister of the Right Morosuke (908–60), Kaneie was destined to assume control of the government himself in the 980's. At the time of the marriage in 954, he held the kind of junior appointment considered suitable for a rising young man of high birth, and by 974, the last year covered in *The Gossamer Journal*, he was a Major Counselor.

Anecdotes in *The Great Mirror* and elsewhere depict Kaneie as a forceful, arrogant man, insensitive to the feelings of others. The Gossamer Lady's relationship with him was further complicated by his wife, Tokihime, was probably the factor that imposed the greatest strain on the marriage. She produced only one child, Michitsuna (955–1020), whereas Tokihime gave birth to five, all of whom became important political assets for their ambitious father. Kaneie never broke with the Gossamer Lady completely, and he saw to it that Michitsuna pro-



The Tosa Journal voyage

pered at court, but he communicated with her less and less often as time went on. Although her memoir is silent on the subject, she turned increasingly to literature for consolation, becoming a poet of professional stature who participated in contests and composed screen poems on commission. The poet-critic Teika (1162–1241) included her in his celebrated *One Hundred Poems by One Hundred Poets* (Hyakunin issu); thirty-six of her compositions found their way into imperial anthologies; and she is represented in various unofficial anthologies as well. Takasue's Daughter, the author of *The Sarashina Diary*, was her niece; Murasaki Shikibu, a relative by marriage. She is thought to have become a nun toward the end of her life.

The Gossamer Lady tells the reader at the outset that her work is not a romance, a "conventional tissue of fabrications," but something new—an unvarnished account of what happens when a girl without powerful family backing embarks on a marriage with a man who can divorce her simply by ceasing to visit or communicate with her. Her memoir is divided into three books, covering, respectively, the years 954–68, 969–71, and 972–74. The first book, a self-contained entity with a definite beginning and ending, is a poem-studded retrospective account of the first fifteen years of the marriage, a period during which the narrator's primary emotions are anxiety, jealousy, resentment, and sadness. The second is a more detailed description of a three-year period during which she begins the painful process of reconciliation to increasing neglect; and the third, similarly detailed, presents her as a woman in her thirties who has learned to view Kaneie objectively, her old anger and misery gone, and to think of him as someone who is no longer a significant part of her life.

The first book is translated below.

Memories came flooding back. Among many sad, poignant thoughts, the most poignant were of the little girl, born in that boat, chartering and shouting in noisy groups, made the grief of a certain person more unbearable than ever. He murmured a poem to someone who understood his feelings:

umareshi mo
kaeranu mono o
wa ga yado ni
komatsu no aru o
miru ga kanashisa

What sadness to see
how young pine trees have sprung up
inside the garden
of one who is bereft
even of a child once born.

He also composed this, possibly because his feelings still demanded expression:

mishi hito no
matsu no chirase ni
mimashikaba
tōku kanashiki
wakare semashi ya

If the child's lifespan
had been a pine's thousand years,
that distant parting,
that sad, eternal farewell,
would never have happened.

It is hopeless to try to record all the unforgettable and painful things that come to mind. After all, I suppose the best thing to do is to tear up these sheets at once.

The Gossamer Journal

There was once a woman who led a forlorn, uncertain life, the old days gone forever and her present status neither one thing nor the other. Telling herself that it was natural for a man to attach no value to someone who was less attractive than others and not very bright, she merely went to bed and got up day after day. But then it occurred to her, as she leafed through the many current tales of the past, that such stories were only conventional tissues of fabrications, and that people might welcome the novelty of a journal written by an ordinary woman. If there were those who wondered what it was like to be married to a man who moved in the very highest circles, she might invite them to find an answer here. Her

memory was not good, either for the distant past or for more recent events, and she realized in the end that she had written many things it might have been better to omit.

Eighth Year of Tenmyaku [954]

After I had received overtures from various quarters, none of them serious enough to record, there was an offer of marriage from Assistant Guards Commander Kanete, the son of an exalted house. Instead of employing a male intermediary, a young maidservant, or the like, as most men would have done, he chose to drop hints to my father in person, sometimes as though in jest and again with a serious air. We let him know that we considered the match unsuitable, but he sent a mounted Escort to pound on the gate in blithe disregard of our message. The Escort and his companions created such a commotion that our people could scarcely make themselves heard to ask where they had come from. The visit caught us unprepared, so I simply accepted the message—and then there was more commotion.

Upon inspection, the paper proved to be different from the kind usually chosen for love letters, and the gentleman's handwriting was unbelievably bad, even though I had heard it praised to the skies. It was all very strange. This was the sum total of the message:

oto ni nomi	I long in my heart
kiikeba kanashi na	to converse with the cuckoo:
hototogisu	these rumors, alas,
koto katarawamu to	have of themselves rendered me
omou kokoro ari	a prey to melancholy.

While my ladies and I were trying to decide whether I needed to answer it, my old-fashioned mother intervened. We could not ignore the attention; I must write something, she said. This was my poem:

katawarumu	Please do not persist,
hito naki sato ni	O cuckoo, in fruitless song
hototogisu	outside a house
kai nakarubeki	where there dwells no person
koe na furushi so	with whom you might care to speak.

With that as a beginning, he sent repeated messages, to none of which I replied. Then this poem arrived:

obotsukana
oto naki taki no
mizu nare ya
yukue mo shiranu
se o tazunuru

Utterly distraught,
I can but liken you
to the Mute Cascade.
It is as hard to meet you
as to find where the shallows flow.

I said I would answer later—whereupon, quite irrationally, he sent this:

hito shirezu
ima ya ima ya to
matsu hodo ni
kaetikonu koso
wabishikarikere

How sharp is the pain
when an answer fails to come
while I wait and wait
in breathless expectancy,
hiding my feelings from others!

"It won't do to snub a man like him," my mother said. "You'll have to send a reply." So I had a suitable message composed by a waiting-woman skilled in such matters, and we sent it off. Absolutely delighted to receive even a communication of that nature, he besieged us with missives. This poem was added to something he sent:

hamachidori
aro mo nagisa ni
fumiminu wa
ware o kosu nami
uchi ya ketsuramu

No visible sign
of tracks left on the strand
by the beach plover:
might it be because a wave
has surged in to wipe them out?

On that occasion, too, I avoided a direct reply by having someone else write for me.

Another message came, its tone earnest. "I was pleased to receive such a serious response, but it grieves me that you should still refuse to write in your own hand." There was a poem at the end:

izure to mo
wakanu kokoro wa
sotaredo
korabi wa saki ni
minu hito no gari

Happy though I am
to hear from either person,
this time I address
the lady whose handwriting
I have not been privileged to see.

Nevertheless, I used a surrogate again.

So the days and months passed while we kept up a sedate correspondence.

Autumn approached. In a postscript to one of his letters, Kamie

wrote, "It distresses me that you should seem so firmly on your guard. I cry to put up with it, but what can be the reason for my plight?" [His poem:]

shika no ne mo
kikoenu sato ni
suminagara
ayashiku awanu
me o mo miru ka na

I live among men
where the cry of the stag
does not reach one's ears.
Is it not strange that my eyes
refuse to close in sleep?

My reply was simply this poem, with the comment, "Strange, indeed!"

takasago no
onoe watari ni
sumau tomo
shika samenubeki
me to wa kikanu o

I had never heard
that you would be likely to lie
thus sleepless alone,
even if you were dwelling
near the peak at Takasago

Again, after a while, this came:

ōsaka no
seki ya nakanaka
chikakeredo
koewabinureba
nagekite zo furu

For all its closeness,
it cannot be swiftly crossed.
I live in misery,
unable to pass beyond
the Meeting Hill Barrier.

My reply:

koewaburu
ōsaka yori mo
oro ni kiku
nakoso o katraki
seki to shiranamu

Please understand this:
the famed Nakoso, "Don't Come,"
is a stronger barrier
than the one at Meeting Hill
you say you cannot cross.

Many serious messages went back and forth, and then one morning there was this:¹¹

yūgure no
nagarekuru ma o
matsu hodo ni
namida ōi no
kawa to koso nare

The flow of my tears
resembles the Ōi,
"Stream of Abundance,"
as I await the hour
when evening shadows fall.

¹¹ A "morning-after" poem, ending the courtship stage of the relationship, which has followed the approved pattern of masculine ardor and feminine coyness.

My reply:

omou koto
ōi no kawa no
yūgure wa
kokoro ni mo arazu
nagare koso sure

My heart in turmoil,
I can but weep to contemplate
nightfall, the time
when sad thoughts are as abundant
as the Ōi River's flow.

This arrived on the morning after our third night together:

shinonome ni
okikeru sora wa
omōede
ayashiku tsuyu to
kiekaeritsuru

Why might it have been?
Most oddly, when I arose
just before daybreak,
my spirit fainted away
as though it were a dewdrop.

My reply:

sadame naku
kiekaeritsuru
tsuyu yori mo
soradanome suru
ware wa nani nari

And what might I be?
Forced to rely on someone
as fickle as the dew,
am I not even worse off
than those evanescent drops?

He came to see me while I was making a brief stay away from home for some reason. This note arrived the next morning: "I had hoped that I might spend a leisurely day with you today, at least, but I gathered that it would be inconvenient. How is everything? I can't help thinking you hid yourself in the hills to get away from me." This was my only reply:

omōenu
kakio ni oreba
nadeshiko no
hana ni zo tsuyu wa
tamazarikeru

Planted near a fence
where it had not thought to be,
the blossoming pink
spills dewdrops from its petals
when someone comes to pluck it.

The Ninth Month arrived. Toward the end of the month, there was a letter after he had stayed away two nights in a row. My reply:

kiekaeri
tsuyu mo mada hinu
sode no ue ni
kesa wa shigururu
sora mo wari nashi

Even from the sky,
affliction too cruel to bear:
showers fall this morning
on sleeves still drenched with moisture
from dewdrops of bitter grief.

He answered at once:

omoiyaru
kokoro no sora ni
narinureba
kesa wa shiguru to
miyuru nataramu

That raindrops should seem
to fall in showers this morning
can only be because
my passionate heart has merged
with the sky above your house.

He arrived in person before I could respond.

If I remember correctly, I composed this poem on a rainy day after another brief absence, when he had sent word to expect him that evening:

kashiwagi no
mori no shitakusa
kuregoro ni
nao tanome to ya
moru o mirumiru

Does the oak each evening
still tell the grass it shelters,
"Depend on me,"
although it knows full well
that the rain is leaking through?

He smoothed the matter over by coming instead of sending a reply.

The Tenth Month began. A number of impatient letters came while our household was observing a period of ritual seclusion. This poem also arrived:

nagekitsutsu
kaesu koromo no
tsuyukeki ni
itodo sora sae
shiguresouramu

Why must showers fall,
adding their moisture to a robe
turned inside out
and drenched with the tears of one
whose heart is heavy with grief?¹²

My reply was far from original:

omoi araba
hinamashi mono o
ika de ka wa
kaesu koromo no
tare mo nururamu

If the fire of love burns,
it can surely keep things dry.
How might it happen
that the garments you reverse
should be as wet as mine?

Meanwhile, it was decided that my father, the person on whom I relied, was to take up a position in Michinoku. It was a melancholy season of the year, and my marriage was still so new that I did not feel on

¹² According to a popular belief, turning one's sleeping-robe inside out would bring dreams of one's beloved.

intimate terms with Kaneie. Whenever he came, I sat with tear-filled eyes, unutterably gloomy and miserable. My sympathetic attendants seemed to be saying among themselves that his behavior showed he would never desert me, but I could not share their faith in outward appearances, and dismal forebodings crowded into my mind.

The day came when my father and his party had to go. Father could not restrain his tears. Needless to say, my own grief was sharper still—quite beyond words. Even when the others warned that it was getting late, Father could scarcely bring himself to leave. He rolled up a piece of paper, put it in a nearby writing box, and went away with tears streaming down his face.

It took a while to summon the spirit to see what he had written. After the party had disappeared, I composed myself, went to the box, and found a poem:

kimu o nomi	This thought fills the mind
tanomu tabi naru	of the traveler who trusts
kokoro ni wa	in Your Lordship alone:
yukusue tōku	may the marriage go on as long
omōyuru ka na	as the road that lies ahead.

In a fresh access of grief, I realized that Father must have left it as a message for the husband who was henceforth to assume responsibility for me. I put the poem back, and Kaneie arrived soon afterward. I was too miserable to meet his eye.

He tried to coax me into a good humor. "Why are you so sad?" he asked. "There's nothing unusual about going to serve in the provinces. You must be acting this way because you don't trust me." The poem in the writing box caught his attention. Moved, he sent an answer to the place from which Father was to start:

ware o nomi	You say you rely
tanomu to ieba	on me alone: when you return,
yukusue no	you will see that my pledge
masu no chigiri mo	is as enduring as the pines
kite koso wa mime	at Sue-no-matsuyama.

The days went by. It saddened me to think of how Father must be feeling out there in the provinces—and what was even worse, Kaneie's affections seemed far from reliable.

The Twelfth Month began. A messenger came from Kaneie, who

had ascended Mount Hiei to do something at Yokawa: "I am snowbound here. I miss you terribly and think of you all the time." I sent this poem back by the same man:

kōrunamu	Forlorn though it be,
yokawa no mizu ni	the snowflake on the frozen stream
furu yuki mo	at Yokawa
wa ga goto kiere	is less likely to vanish
mono wa omowaji	than this spirit faint with love.

Soon the year drew to a close.

Ninth Year of Tenryaku [955]

Around the First Month, at a time when Kaneie had not visited me for two or three days, I went to stay somewhere, leaving instructions with a servant to give him this poem if he came:

shirareneba	Its heart unfathomed,
mi o uguisu no	the disconsolate warbler
furiderutsu	ventures forth crying
nakite koso yuke	toward whatever field or hill,
no ni mo yama ni mo	leaving the city behind.

He replied:

uguisu no	Even though its flight
ada ni mo yukamu	may lead the capricious warbler
yamabe ni mo	into the mountains,
naku koe kikaba	I will not fail to seek it
tazunu bakari zo	as soon as I hear its cry.

It was at about that time that I became pregnant. A difficult spring and summer followed, and then, around the end of the Eighth Month, I gave birth. Kaneie was most thoughtful and solicitous, both before and after the delivery.

One day around the Ninth Month, after he had left, I idly opened a letter box and discovered a message intended for another woman. Dumbfounded, I scribbled a poem on the edge so that he would at least know I had seen it:

utagawashi	At sight of a note
hoka ni wataseru	intended for someone else,

fumi mireba
koko ya today ni
naranu to suramu

I can but wonder:
might this perhaps spell the end
of your visits to my house?

Toward the end of the Tenth Month, he absented himself for three nights running, just as I had anticipated.¹³ He was quite offhand about it. "I thought I would stay away for a little while to test your feelings, and the days slipped by before I knew it," he said. He left in the evening, with the excuse that a directional taboo would make it awkward to go from my house to the imperial palace in the morning. I told someone to follow him, my suspicions aroused, and was informed that he had stopped at a house on Machijiri Street. It was no more than I had expected, I thought. But for all my distress, I did not know how to bring the subject up.

Two or three days later, there was a rapping on my gate toward dawn. I thought it must be he, but was too miserable to have my people open the gate, and he went off in what seemed to be the direction of the house on Machijiri Street. The next morning, unwilling to let the incident pass, I composed a poem, wrote it out with special care, and attached it to a faded chrysanthemum:

nagekitsutsu	You cannot know
hitori nuru yo no	how long it seems until dawn
akuru ma wa	for someone who lies
ika ni hisashiki	on a solitary bed,
mono to ka wa shiru	lost in melancholy thought.

He wrote in reply, "I had intended to keep knocking until your people opened the gate, even if it meant staying there until dawn, but a messenger found me—someone sent from the court on urgent business—and I had to leave. I can see why you were angry." His poem:

ge ni ya ge ni	It is true what you say
fuyu no yo naranu	of winter nights. Yet I have learned
maki no to mo	that a pine-wood door
osoku akuru wa	may cause painful waiting, too,
wabishikikeri	when it is slow to open.

He was bafflingly matter-of-fact about the whole affair. I might not

13. Spending three consecutive nights with a woman usually indicated a serious commitment.

have minded so much if he had tried to be secretive for a time—pretending to have to go to the palace or something like that—but his disregard of my feelings was too much to bear.

Tenth Year of Tenmyaku [956]

The Third Month of a new year arrived. I think we probably decorated the house with peach blossoms.¹⁴ I waited for Kaneie on the Third, but he failed to come. That was also the one day on which there was no visit from the gentleman who ordinarily liked nothing better than to be with my sister. Both men showed up early on the morning of the Fourth. Our ladies had been expecting them since the night before. They produced the festival things from our respective apartments, saying that it would be a shame to let them go to waste, and I scribbled off an idle verse, vexed by the sight of blossoms broken from boughs meant for the Third:

matsu hodo no	What good does it do
kinō sukinishi	to break off those flowers today?
hana no e wa	Yesterday you drank
kyō oru koto zo	blossom wine with another
kai nakarikeru	while I sat waiting for you.

I was determined not to show the poem to Kaneie, whose behavior I had found altogether too provoking, but he noticed my efforts at concealment, captured the paper, and composed a reply:

michitose o	Please be sure of this:
mitsubeki mi ni wa	the one whose love is plighted
toshigoto ni	for three thousand years
suku ni mo aranu	will not drink blossom wine
hana to shirasemu	year after year with another.

My sister's husband heard about the exchange and composed this:

hana ni yori	We stayed away,
suku chō koto no	lest by seeking the blossoms
yuyushiki ni	and drinking the wine
yoso nagara nite	we might be considered
kurashiteshi nari	mere frivolous ladies' men.

14. The Third of the Third Month was the date of the Peach Festival, an occasion for drinking peach wine, eating special cakes, and composing poetry.

Kaneie had now become open about his involvement at Machijiri Street. There were many times when he actually seemed to regard even his first wife, Lady Tokihime, as an impediment. My own situation was indescribably distressing, but I could do nothing about it.

It was embarrassing for everyone that I should be a witness to my brother-in-law's constant comings and goings, so that gentleman decided to move his wife to a place where they could feel more comfortable. The prospect of being left alone added to my gloom. Miserably aware that I would hardly ever be able to see my sister, I sent out this poem when the men brought the carriage up:

nado kakaru	How might it happen
nageki wa shigesa	that my dwelling becomes a place
masaritsutsu	where the tree of grief
hito nomi karuru	puts forth luxuriant leaves
yado to naruramu	while the people fade away?

The gentleman answered:

omou chô	Please do not equate
wa ga koto no ha o	this expression of regard
adabito no	with the leaves of words
shigeki nageki ni	put forth by one whose faithlessness
soete uramu na	makes the tree of sorrow grow.

And with that the party left.

Just as I had expected, I spent the days and nights alone from then on. My marriage was satisfactory enough in material respects; it was just that Kaneie's feeling for me was not what I had thought it would be. But according to the gossips, I was not the only sufferer; he had also stopped visiting his wife of many years. Lady Tokihime was a person with whom I sometimes exchanged messages, so I sent her this on the Third or Fourth of the Fifth Month:

soko ni sae	Where might be the swamp
karu to iu naru	in which they can put down roots—
makomogusa	those water oats
ika naru sawa ni	the reapers have harvested,
ne o todomuramu	cutting to the very bottom?

Her reply:

makomogusa	The marsh from which
karu to wa yodo no	the water oats have vanished

is this one at Yodo:
people said they had struck root
in the bottom where you dwell.

The Sixth Month arrived. On the First, it was still pouring rain. Looking out toward the garden, I murmured to myself:

wa ga yado no	On the tree of grief
nageki no shitaba	growing at my dwelling,
iro fukaku	the lower leaves have turned
utsuroikeri	while the long rains have fallen
nagamefuru ma ni	and I have lived in misery.

The Seventh Month arrived.

One day Kaneie came, just when I had persuaded myself that it was better to have the relationship end than to be visited merely for the sake of appearances. I received him in silence, which did not seem to please him. Then one of my attendants mentioned the poem about the lower leaves, and he composed this reply:

ori narade	The colored foliage
irozukinikeru	that assumed autumnal hues
momijida wa	ere its season came
toki ni aite zo	has taken on new beauty
iro masarikeru	now that its proper time is here.

I pulled over the inkstone and wrote this:

aki ni au	Though I grieved to see
iro koso mashite	even the lower leaves turn,
wabishikere	I am far more wretched
shitaba o dani mo	now that all the foliage
nagekishi mono o	has encountered autumn's touch.

So the days went by. Kaneie's visits did not cease entirely, but it was impossible for me to feel at ease with him, and our relations grew more and more strained. There was even a time when he turned around and "traveler falling down on Standing Mountain."¹⁵ A close neighbor, who knew how things were going, sent over this poem after his departure:

15. Kaneie utters a brief phrase, *taomuru ni tachiyama*, that can be interpreted either as a quotation of a proverb, "[Travelers] fall down but Tachiyama [Standing Mountain] keeps on standing," or as a complaint against the author, "Talked down, I retreat." Tachiyama (3,992 m., now called Tateyama) is in Toyama Prefecture.

moshio yaku	That the salt-fire smoke
keburi no sora ni	should have drifted away
tachinuru wa	toward unknown skies—
fusube ya shitsuru	might it be because the flame
kuyuru omoi ni	of jealousy burns too hot?

Our mutual stubbornness had thus reached the point of provoking unwelcome comment from the neighbors. Around that time, there was an especially long period when I saw nothing of him.

Now that his affections had strayed, he removed his belongings from my house, something he had never done in the days when things were going well. I told myself that the end had apparently come; I was to be left without even a memento. But a letter arrived ten days later. He wrote this and that and added at the end, "Please send me the small-bow arrow I left tied to one of the pillars on the curtain-dais." I had forgotten that one thing, at least, had remained. I unfastened the arrow, took it down, and sent it off with a poem:

omoizuru	I thought there would be
toki mo araji to	no time when a memento
omedomo	might make me think of you,
ya to iu ni koso	but now this commission
odorokarenure	has called the arrow to mind. ¹⁶

During this period when his visits had ceased, I tried in vain to keep from listening to his men clear the way with discreet coughs as he traveled at night past my house, which lay on his route home from the imperial palace. But I was not sleeping well—as the poem says, "the nights were long; sleep would not come"—and I was always aware, with feelings quite beyond description, whenever he went by. There were times when I longed above all never to hear of him again, but then I would learn to my annoyance that another man was trying to persuade one of my attendants to act as a go-between, because "people say she no longer receives visits from the gentleman who used to come so often," and I would spend every evening in misery.

According to the gossips, Kaneie was also staying away altogether from Lady Tokihime, the consort who had borne him so many children. I

16. Line 4, loosely translated as "but now this commission," contains a pun that yields two meanings: "Now that you say, [Send] the arrow [ya]" and "Now that you say, 'He' [ya]!"

sent her a solicitous message, in the thought that her position was even worse than mine. Because it happened to be around the Ninth Month, I added this poem to my expressions of sympathy:

fuku kaze ni	Even though the web
tsukete mo towanu	long trodden by the spider
sasagani no	may vanish in the sky,
kayoihi michi wa	I trust the wind if need be
sora ni tayu tomo	to tell you of my concern.

Her reply was cordial:

iro kawaru	When I consider
kokoro to mireba	how it causes things to change,
tsukete tou	I find it odious—
kaze yuyushiku mo	that wind you have enlisted
omoyuru ka na	to tell me of your concern. ¹⁷

Unable to maintain my pose of aloofness forever, I did see him occasionally. And so the winter arrived. Living with the baby as my sole companion, I found myself murmuring the old poem, "What is the reason? I long to question the whitefish gathered at the weir."¹⁸

First Year of Tentoku [957]

The new year began, bringing with it the springtime. Kaneie sent a messenger to fetch a book he had left by mistake—one he had been carrying around to read. I wrote this on the paper in which I wrapped it:

fumi okishi	Because the wild waves
ura mo kokoro mo	have rolled in to ravage
aretareba	the beach it once trod,
ato o todomenu	no longer does the plover
chidori narikeri	leave its tracks in the sand.

Although he would have done better to remain silent, he sent back a glib answer:

17. Tokihime views the wind as responsible for the changing color of the autumn leaves. A pun on *iro* ("color"; "feelings") yields a second meaning: "I'll dislike the wind if it deprives me of your friendship by causing your feelings to change."

18. A slight misquotation of a poem in *Tales of Yamato*, Sec. 89: *ika de nao / ajiro no hio ni / koro towan / nani ni yorite ka / ware o towanu* ("Somehow, I would like to ask a question of whitefish gathered at the weir: tell me where he goes and why he fails to come to

kokoro aru to
fumi kaesu tomo
hamachidori
ura ni nomi koso
ato wa todome
ato wa todome

You may return the book,
thinking my affections have strayed,
but the beach plover
wishes to leave its tracks
on no other shore than yours.

The messenger was still there, so I replied:

hamachidori
ato no tomari o
tazunu tote
yukue mo shiranu
urami o ya sennu

Were I to seek
the place where the beach plover
leaves its tracks these days,
I would doubtless see many shores
as I sought to find the way.

With such exchanges, the summer passed.
His favorite's confinement approached. He selected an auspicious

direction, got into the carriage with her, and rode past my very gate, preceded by disagreeably loud shouts, and followed by a procession so long that the whole city must have buzzed with gossip. My maids and the others raised a great fuss when they saw me faint and speechless. "What a cruel thing to do! There were plenty of alternative routes." I wanted to die as I listened to them, but we cannot control the length of our life. I hoped that I might at least never have to see him again.

A letter arrived two or three days later, while I was still seething with resentment. Astonished by his insensitivity, I opened it to read, "I have been unable to call lately because someone here has been ill, but the affair ended safely yesterday. I fear I would be unwelcome if I were to visit you in a state of dejection." Could anything have been more shocking or bizarre? I replied only that I had received the message. Someone asked the messenger about the birth, and he announced that the child was a boy, tidings that deepened my distress.

Three or four days later, Kaneie himself put in a nonchalant appearance. I made it clear that I could see no reason for the visit, and he left in embarrassment before long. The same kind of thing happened several times afterward.

The Seventh Month arrived. Around the time of the wrestling matches, he had the effrontery to send me an old set of robes and the material for a new set, the former to be repaired, he said, and the latter to me". The speaker, a woman, assumes that because the fish approach (*yori*) the weir, they must know whom the man visits (*yori*) and why (*man ni yorie*) he fails to come to her.

be freshly tailored. I was so angry I could hardly see straight when I looked at them.¹⁹ "Poor fellow!" my old-fashioned mother said. "Apparently they can't sew very well at his house." But the maids crowded around and agreed that the request was unreasonable: I ought to say my women were too clumsy to do a proper job. After I had sent the things back, I learned that he had had to farm them out in one place and another, just as I had foreseen. No doubt he found my refusal annoying; I heard nothing for more than twenty days.

A letter arrived one day—I have forgotten just when. "I would like to visit you but feel unsure of my welcome. If you will extend a definite invitation, I will try to summon the courage to come." I wanted to ignore it, but several people said, "That would seem dreadfully rude. It would be going too far." So I sent this:

ho ni idete
iwaji ya sara ni
oyoso no
nabiku obana ni
makasere mo mimu

He replied:

I have no intention
of begging you to come.
I shall simply wait
for the pliant miscanthus
to bend wherever it pleases.

ho ni ideteba
mazu nabikinanu
hanasusuki
kochi chō kaze no
fukamu manimani

Once the plumes appear,
the feathery miscanthus,
eager to yield,
will follow whenever
the east wind bids it come.

The messenger was still there. With an effort, I composed a conciliatory response:

arashi nomi
fukumeru yado ni
hanasusuki
ho ni idetari to
kai ya nakaranu

Were it to beckon,
I fear it would do no good—
the plumed miscanthus
growing at the dwelling
where the harsh gale ever blows.

Then we saw him again.
This exchange took place as we lay gazing at the riot of color in the garden. (Both of us must have been annoyed about something.) Kaneie-

19. They appear to have been intended for the women.

momokusa ni
midarete miyuru
hana no iro wa
rada shiratsuyu no
oku ni ya aruramu

That all kinds of flowers
should offer this spectacle
of different hues—
might it simply be because
white dewdrops tinge their petals?²⁰

My reply:

mi no aki o
omoidaruru
hana no ue no
tsuyu no kokoro wa
ieba sara nari

To ask is to know
the function of those dewdrops
on the flowers
blooming in many colors
now that autumn is here.

Thus another coolness developed between us.

On the night of the Ninetenth, he began to show signs of leaving around the time when the moon rose above the rim of the hills. I must have looked as though I were thinking that he might at least spend that night with me, for he said, "If there is any reason why I should stay . . . " But I had no wish to seem insistent. I composed this poem:

ikaga semu
yama no ha ni dani
todomarade
kokoro mo sora ni
idemu tsuki o ba

If the restless moon
chooses to course through the sky
rather than to stay
at the rim of the hills,
what can I do to stop it?

He stayed after making this reply:

hisakata no
sora ni kokoro no
izu to ieba
kage wa soko ni mo
tomarubeki ka na

Whenever the moon
sets forth on its journey
across the heavens,
its reflection must appear
in the depths of the water.²¹

Then again, he came two days after an autumn gale of nearly typhoon force. "Most people would have sent to see if we were all right after a storm like the one the other day," I said. He may have taken my point, for he answered with a nonchalant verse:

20. Dew was thought to produce autumn colors. Puns give the poem another meaning: "I can see that you're fretting about something. Obviously, you don't trust me enough to speak out." Lady Gosamer's reply can be taken to mean, "If I fret, it's because I fear you have tired of me. Look into your heart for an explanation of my behavior."

21. "Because you accuse me of restlessness, I'll stay with you tonight."

koto no ha wa
chiri mo ya suru to
comeokite
kyô wa mi kara mo
rou ni ya wa aranu

I kept my letter,
fearing that the leaves of words
might be blown astray,
but today, as you can see,
I have come to ask in person.

I replied:

chirikite mo
roi zo shitemashi
koto no ha o
kochi wa sa bakari
fukishi tayori ni

Though it might have strayed,
an inquiry would surely
have arrived at last,
its leaves of words delivered
by an east wind such as that.

He countered with this:

kochi to ieba
ôzô narishi
kaze ni ikaga
tsukete wa towannu
atara nadate ni

You can hardly say
the east wind blew toward you alone.
Think of the gossip
if I had relied on it
to convey my inquiry!

Determined not to be put down, I retorted:

chirasaji to
oshimiokikeru
koto no ha o
kinagara dani zo
kesa wa towamashi

Had you been concerned
to prevent those leaves of words
from being scattered,
you would have made inquiry
when you arrived this morning.

He seemed to concede that I was right.

Again, around the Tenth Month, he started to take his leave, explaining that he had something important to attend to at home. The heavy rain, a downpour rather than a seasonal shower, did not seem to deter him. Taken aback, I could not help murmuring this poem:

korowari no
ori to wa miredo
sayo fukete
kaku ya shigure no
furi wa izubeki

I can understand
the importance of the affair,
but need you rush off
so late at night, regardless
of these torrential showers?

He left anyway. Was ever a man so headstrong?

Second Year of Tenmeu—Second Year of Ōwa [1758–62]

Kaneie seemed to have lost interest in his former favorite after the birth of her child. It had been my spiteful wish that the woman might live to know my agony, and that very thing was happening now. What was more, she had even lost the son whose arrival had created such a commotion. The unrecognized daughter of an eccentric Prince, she had lived in abject poverty, managing to survive only through the recent help of those who were attracted by her lineage and knew nothing of her true situation. I could imagine how she must be reacting to this latest abrupt turn of events; it was a satisfaction to reflect that her suffering was worse than mine.

I heard that Kaneie was now paying regular visits to his first wife. Unhappily, I myself saw him as seldom as ever.

It was around this time that my son began to talk. "I'll come again soon," he kept saying, imitating the parting words with which his father invariably took his leave.

With things as they were, I could not help feeling uneasy and depressed. Well-meaning people urged me to cheer up and stop acting childish, but it was not easy to follow their advice. Kaneie ignored my unhappiness. He defended his behavior as perfectly acceptable, made no attempt at concealment, and acted as though he could not possibly be considered blameworthy. I longed desperately to let him know exactly how I felt, but whenever I tried to broach the matter my resolution faltered, my heart began a disagreeable pounding, and I found myself struck dumb. So I decided to set down my thoughts in writing for him to see. I composed this poem, which I left on the lower shelf of a two-tiered cabinet:

omoe tada	Please feel for me!
mukashi mo ima mo	Does it not seem fated
wa ga kokoro	that the uncertainty
nodokekarade ya	I suffer now as in the past
hatenubeki	must last all my days?
misomeshi aki wa	In the autumn when we met,
koto no ha no	I could not restrain
usuki iro ni ya	the fears I knew in secret
utsurou to	that the vows you swore
nageki no shita ni	might fade into somber hues
nagekareki	like leaves on a tree.

fuyu wa kumoi ni
wakareyuku
hito o oshimu to
hatsushigure
kumori mo aezu
furisobochi
kokorobosoku wa
arishikado
kimi ni wa shimo no
wasuru na to
iokitsu to ka
kikishikaba
sari tomo to omou
hodo mo naku
tomi ni harukeki
watari nite
shirakumo bakari
arishikaba
kokoro sora nite
heshi hodo ni
kiri mo tanabiki
taenikeri
mata furusato ni
karigane no
kaeru tsura ni ya to
omoitsutsu
furedo kai nashi
kaku shitsutsu
wa ga mi munashiki
semi no ha no
ima shi mo hito no
usukarazu
namida no kawa no
hayaku yori
kaku asanashiki
soko yue ni
nagaruru koto mo
taenedomo
ika naru tsumi ka
omokaramu
yuki mo hanarezu

In the winter, I was sad,
my sleeves drenched by tears
as by seasonal showers,
my spirits as gloomy
as skies overcast with clouds,
grieving to have lost
the father who went away
toward a distant land,
but I assured myself,
"There is nothing to fear"—
for had I not been informed
of his words to you,
his plea not to forget me?
And yet all too soon—
in the twinkling of an eye—
you grew indifferent,
as remote as a white cloud
high in the heavens,
and I went on in a daze,
uncomprehending,
until a mist came hovering
to make the break complete.
To no avail did I wait,
thinking constantly,
"Surely the time must come
when he will return
like a homing wild goose."
Thus have I lived on,
comparing my existence
to your affection,
for both have proved as hollow
as a cicada husk.
Nor is it merely of late
that your cruelty
has made my tears fall without cease,
flow in swift streams:
long indeed have I suffered
from your shallowness.
Heavy must be the burden
of sin I shoulder—
the karma-tie denying me

kakure nomi
 hito no ukise ni
 tadayoite
 tsuraki kokoro wa
 mizu no awa no
 kieba kienamu to
 omoedomo
 kanashiki koto wa
 michinoku no
 tsutsuji no oka no
 kumatsuzura
 kuru hodo o dani
 matade ya wa
 sukuse tayubeki
 abukuma no
 aimite dani to
 omoitsutsu
 nageku namida no
 koromode ni
 kakaranu yo ni mo
 fubeki mi o
 nazo ya to omoedo
 au bakari
 kakehanarete wa
 shikasyuga ni
 koishikarubeki
 karagoromo
 uchikire hito no
 ura mo naku
 nareshi kokoro o
 omoite wa
 ukiyo o sarenu
 kai mo naku
 omoidenaki
 ware ya semu
 to omoi kaku omoi
 omou ma ni
 yama to tsumoreru
 shikitaie no
 makura no chiri mo
 hitorine no

freedom from you,
 condemning me to exist
 in uncertainty,
 the hostage of a fickle heart.
 I long to perish,
 to vanish like a bubble
 on the water,
 yet it saddens me to think
 of my father.
 Ought I to sever our ties
 by not even waiting
 until he comes from the north,
 that land where vines curl
 on the Hill of Azaleas?
 I must bide my time
 until we can meet again—
 so I think as I grieve.
 "Why not pronounce Buddhist vows,"
 I have asked myself—
 "why not embark on that life
 in which tears of grief
 never dampen one's sleeves?"
 But though I were a nun,
 what longing I would feel,
 knowing I had lost
 all hope of being with you!
 Whenever I recalled
 how once you came visiting
 and there was nothing
 to mar our intimacy,
 I fear I could not
 but shed nostalgic tears:
 to no avail
 would I have turned my back
 on this cruel world.
 While I have agonized thus,
 my thoughts in turmoil,
 the total of all the nights
 I have spent alone
 must have exceeded by now
 the number of motes

kazu ni shi toraba
 tsukinubeshi
 nani ka taenuru
 rabi nari to
 omou mono kara
 kaze fukite
 hitohi mo mieshi
 anagumo wa
 kaerishi toki no
 nagusame ni
 ima komu to iishi
 koto no ha o
 sa mo ya to matsu no
 midorigo no
 taezu manebu mo
 kiku goto ni
 hitowarae naru
 namida nomi
 wa ga mi o umi to
 tataedomo
 mirume mo yosenu
 mitsu no ura wa
 kai mo araji to
 shirinagara
 inochi araba to
 tanomekoshi
 koto bakari koso
 shiranami no
 tachi mo yorikoba
 towamahoshikere

in the mountain of dust
 on the pillow.
 In vain do I tell myself,
 "This absence won't last."
 When you appeared the other day
 in the wake of the storm,
 it was only to go off
 like a cloud in the sky.
 "I'll come again soon," you said,
 and the child, trusting
 those soothing words, waited
 expectantly,
 repeating, "I'll come again,"
 over and over.
 Each time I had to listen
 to his mimicry,
 I wept in embarrassment;
 tormented by grief,
 I shed tears that gushed forth
 like a lake in flood.
 Though I fear it be vain—
 for you come no more
 than seaweed to the lakeshore
 at Mitsu-no-ura—
 I would like to ask of you,
 if by chance you approach
 as a white wave nears the beach,
 whether you meant it
 when you won my trust with the words,
 "Never as long as I live."

He appeared after the usual interval, but I did not go out to join
 him, and he left discomfited, taking along my poem. Presently, this
 came from him:
 orisomeshi
 toki no momiji no
 sadame naku
 utsuru iro wa
 sa nomi koso
 au aki goto ni
 tsune narame

Do not think me like
 the ordinary man whose love
 wanes with the years,
 fading as each autumn
 the leaves on the trees
 lose the color they flaunted
 when first we picked them.

ikodo iitoku
hatsushimo ni
fukaki iro ni ya
narinakemu
omou omou no
tae mo sezu
itsu shika matsus no
midorigo o
yukite wa mimu to
suruga naru
tago no uranami
tachiyoredo
fuji no yamabe no
keburi ni wa
fusburu koto no
tae mo sezu
amagumo to nomi
tanabikeba
taenu wa ga mi wa
shiraito no
makuru hodo o
omowaji to
amata no hito ni
sekasureba
mi wa hashitaka no
suzuro nite
natsukuru yado no
nakeraba zo
furusu ni kaeru
maninami wa
tokuru koto no
arishikaba
hitori fusuma no
toko ni shite
nezame no tsuki no
maki no to ni
hikari nokosazu
morte kuru
kage dani miezu

my feeling too, frostfall,
just as frostfall,
the first of the year, tinges
the leaves on the trees.
The fire of my passion
burning as ever,
I longed ardently to see
the child who waited—
yet when I sought to approach
as waves to the shore
at Tago-no-ura Beach
in Suruga,
I was received by billows
of jealous smoke,
rising as from Mount Fuji,
unremitting,
and you kept your distance
like a cloud in the sky.
Although I came as ceaselessly
as thread spins on a reel,
you thought my visits too few:
"He does not love me."
You encouraged your people
to be unfriendly,
to make me feel embarrassed
and ill at ease.
But there was no other place
where I felt at home,
and thus there were occasions
when I came to you
from the palace, like a hawk
flying to its nest.
And I lay perforce alone
with a single quilt:
wakeful in the night, I saw
not a trace of you.
There was naught but the moonlight,
streaming in through crevices
in the door made of pinewood.

care ka yoku
akashikemu
aka naru tsumi no
ika naru tsumi no
omoki zo to
iu wa kore koso
tsumi narashi
ima wa abukuma no
ai o mide
kakararu hito ni
kakare ka shi
nani no iwaki no
mi naraneba
omou kokoro mo
isamenu ni
ura no hamayū
ikukasane
hedatcharesuru
karagoromo
namida no kawa ni
sobotsu tomo
omoi shi ideba
takimono no
kono me bakari wa
kawakinamu
kai naki koto wa
kai no kuni
hemi no mimaki ni
aruru muma o
ika de ka hito wa
kaketomemu to
omou mono kara
tarachine no
oya to shiruramu
katagai no
koma ya koitsutsu
inakasemu to
omou bakari zo
aware narubeki

You say you
you have committed.
you no transgression
Is there no speech?
in that very speech?
Why wait until your father
returns from the east?
Entrust your fortunes at once
to a better man.
I am not as insensible
as stone or wood:
I will do nothing to stop you
if you wish to be free.
And if by any chance
a river of tears
should drench the sleeve of your robe
after barriers
manifold as crinum leaves
have set us apart,
then if you but call to mind
the trials you endured,
the memory will suffice
to dry your eyes, at least.
Although I know it is vain
to try to hold you—
as vain as for a warden to seek
to impose restraints
on a horse that has run wild
at Hemi Pasture
in the province of Kai—
yet it is saddening
to wonder if the young colt
doomed to live half-trained—
the child who seems to know
his father's face—
must neighe disconsolately,

The messenger was still there, so I sent this:

natsukubeki
hito mo hanateba
michinoku no
mumaya kagiri ni
naramu to suramu

This must be the last
of the horse from the pasture
in Michinoku,
left to its own devices
by the one who should tend it.

I am not sure what moved him, but he sent a prompt reply:

ware ga na o
obuchi no koma no
areba koso
natsuku ni tsukanu
mi to mo shirareme

If I resembled
the wild horse of Obuchi—
the one that ran away—
then you might think of me
as impossible to tame.

I answered:

komauge ni
narimasaritsutsu
natsukenu o
konawa taezu zo
tanomikinikeru

Because the keeper
dislikes the horse more and more,
he does not tame it:
it has had to pin its hopes
on the small rope of a colt.

And he replied in turn:

shirakawa no
seki no sekeba ya
komaukure
amata no hi o ba
hikiwararitsuru

The barrier
of Shirakawa holds
the horse in check:
that is why its coming
has been so long delayed.

"But I shall come to see you the day after tomorrow," he said. It was the Fifth of the Seventh Month. He was observing a fairly long period of ritual seclusion, which was why he wrote as he did. I answered:

amanogawa
nanuka o chigiru
kokoro araba
hoshiai bakari no
kage o mi yo to ya

By promising
a visit on the Seventh,
are you telling me,
"Be content to meet as often
as the Tanabata stars"?

Perhaps he saw my point, for he seemed a little more considerate during the next several months.

I learned with satisfaction that the unspeakable woman in Machijiri

street was now frantically engaged in futile efforts to recapture his affections.

I was far from easy about my own marriage, but I kept telling myself that matters were out of my hands: unbearable as life sometimes seemed, it was probably my karma to be unhappy. Meanwhile, Kaneie received fourth Rank after having been a Lesser Counselor for a number of years, and he ceased both to serve in his old office and to attend His Majesty in the Courtiers' Hall. Then, much to his annoyance, the new appointments list named him Senior Assistant Minister of a ministry that dealt with a very undesirable class of people.²² He stopped going anywhere except to his wives' houses, and there were times when he spent a leisurely two or three days with me.

This message came from the Prince who headed the distasteful ministry:

midareito no
tsukasa hitotsu ni
narite shi mo
kuru koto no nado
taenitaruramu

Now that our duties
join us like random threads
ordered in a skein,
why should it be, I wonder,
that the spinning has ceased?²³

Kaneie replied:

rayu to ieba
ito zo kanashiki
kini ni yori
onaji tsukasa ni
kuru kai mo naku

It is very sad
to hear talk of breaking off.
I shall have gained nothing
by changing to the office
where I hoped to be with you.

The Prince sent a prompt rejoinder:

natsuhiki no
ito kotowari ya
futame mime
yoriariku ma ni
hodo no furu ka mo

It is as natural
as to spin thread in summer:
time is bound to pass
while one goes around calling
on two or three different wives.

22. The appointment was to the War Ministry, where Kaneie's duties would have brought him into contact with the military, a class held in contempt by the nobility. The Emperor Daigo.

23. A pun on *kuru* ("spin"; a form of *ku*, "come") yields another meaning: "Why have you ceased to come?" Kaneie, in his reply below, pretends to think that it is the Prince who will not be appearing at the ministry.

Kaneie replied:

nanahakari
ari mo koso sure
natsuhiki no
itoma ya wa naki
hitome futame ni

The number, I fear,
may total seven or more.
I would not lack time
were it merely a question
of one or two *me* of thread.²⁴

And from the Prince:

kimi to ware
nao shiraito no
ika ni shite
ukifushi nakure
taemu to zo omou

Let the two of us
agree to go separate ways
with feelings intact:
let our relations be as smooth
as cleanly twisted white thread.

"Two or three wives' was a grave understatement! I am observing ritual seclusion now, so this must be the end," the Prince said. Kaneie replied:

yo o fu tomo
chigiri okiteshi
naka yori wa
itodo yuyushiki
koto mo miyuramu

A man and his wife
may go their separate ways
after many years,
but no such painful breach need part
one comrade from another.

Shortly after the Twentieth of the Fifth Month, I avoided a forty-five-day directional taboo by moving into a house belonging to my father, which was just across a hedge from the place where the Prince was staying. The seasonal rains, which persisted into the Sixth Month, were so heavy as to keep both the Prince and Kaneie indoors.²⁵ My father's house was a leaky, ramshackle affair. The interior got soaked, and the resultant commotion elicited an embarrassing poem from the Prince:

tsurezure no
nagame no uchi ni
sosoguramu
koto no suji koso
okashikarikere

Bored and disheartened
by these interminable rains,
I have found amusement
in observing the furor
where there seems to be a leak.

Kaneie replied:

izuko ni mo
nagame no sosogu

Since this is a time
of general commotion

24. *Me* (a unit of weight) puns on a homophonous word for wife.
25. Kaneie is staying with the author when this exchange occurs.

koro nareba
yo ni furu hito wa
nodokekaraji o

as the long rains cause leaks,
the exceptional man alone
may boast of a tranquil heart.

Again, from the Prince, "So you say you are upset":

ame no shita
sawagu koro shi mo
omizu ni
tare mo koi ji ni
nurezarame ya wa

Since this is a time
when continual rains cause
general commotion,
everyone's robes must be drenched
by mud from the flooding waters.²⁶

Kaneie:

yo to tomo ni
katsu miru hito no
koi ji o mo
hosu ma araji to
omoi koso yare

There must be no time
for his muddy robes to dry—
that gentleman
who never ceases to roam
from one brief love to another.

Again, the Prince:

shika mo inu
kimi zo nururamu
tsune ni sumu
tokoro ni wa mada
koi ji dani nashi

You are the one
whose robes are drenched by your failure
to stay as I stray.
Mud has yet to stain a man
who keeps always to the same place.

I read it with Kaneie. "Really, how he talks!"

Another message came from the Prince on a day when Kaneie had taken advantage of a clear spell to visit his first wife. "I told the man His Lordship was not here, but he insisted on leaving this anyway," the maid said when she brought it in. The poem:

tokonatsu ni
koishiki koto ya
nagusamu to
kimi ga kakio ni
oru to shirazu ya

Are you not aware
of how I have lingered
beside your hedge,
hoping to comfort a heart
ever longing to see you?

"But I have given it up as a bad job and left."

I showed Kaneie the poem when he arrived two days later. "It's no

26. Puns give the last two lines a second meaning: "All the men (including you) must be drenching their sleeves with tears because the rain prevents them from pursuing their amours."

use answering now; too much time has elapsed," he said. He merely sent a note: "I am sorry not to have heard from you recently." The Prince replied:

mizu masari
ura mo nagisa no
koro naraba
chidori no ato o
fumi wa madou ka

It is the season
when ever-rising waters
make the shore disappear:
that must be why the plover
finds no place to leave its track.²⁷

"This is what I thought when I saw your letter," he wrote in the cursive script used by women. "Your complaint was quite unreasonable. But I am delighted to hear that you plan to call on me." Kaneie responded in masculine script, which made me feel sorry for the Prince:

uragakure
miru koto karaki
ato naraba
shiohi o matamu
karaki waza ka na

If the plover's tracks
be hidden on the shore,
impossible to see,
I must suffer the suspense
of waiting for the ebbtide.

Again, the Prince:

ura mo naku
fumi yaru ato o
watatsumi no
shio no hiru ma mo
nani ni ka wa senu

It would be pointless
to wait for the ebbtide
on the boundless sea,
merely to search for tracks
where there is no shore to be found.²⁸

"That is how I feel. Why do you persist in these odd misinterpretations?"

Meanwhile, people elsewhere had presumably performed the purification ceremonies, for it was now the day before Tanabata, the fortieth of my directional retreat. I had been suffering from a racking cough and other painful symptoms, so I decided to go up to the usual mountain temple, both to commission prayers against a possible spirit possession

27. The main message, conveyed by puns: "I wrote to you; the letter must have gone astray." The Prince continues with a reference to a portion of Kaneie's letter not mentioned by the author.

28. Puns yield another meaning: "The letter was sent with no ulterior motive; why wait for one to appear?" The Prince's comment below conveys a similar message: "My original letter was of no importance. I have a feeling that you have read it and interpreted it as a love letter to your wife."

and to escape the heat, which was still unbearable in my cramped quarters.

On the Fifteenth and Sixteenth, throngs of people came to the temple for the Festival of the Dead, carrying their offerings in all sorts of strange ways—on shoulder poles, on their heads, and the like. I watched the spectacle with Kaneie, touched and amused.

When I left with my health restored, it was to go to the city, my directional retreat at an end.

The autumn and winter passed uneventfully.

Third Year of Ōwa [963]

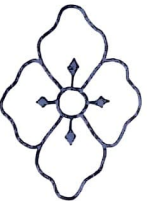
Nothing of importance happened after the start of the new year. With Kaneie so uncharacteristically attentive, I felt completely happy.

He had received Couriers' Hall privileges early in the First Month. On the day of the Kamo Virgin's purification, a message arrived for Kaneie from the same Prince (the head of the ministry): "I would like to join you in your carriage if you plan to view the procession." There was a poem near the edge of the paper.²⁹ Having learned that the Prince was not at his usual residence, we tried his house on Machijiri Street but were told, "Only Her Ladyship is here." I composed a poem to send in, using a borrowed inkstone, and the Prince's consort joined us for the outing.

Some time afterward, I called on the consort while she was staying at the Prince's house of which I have spoken, the one across the hedge from us. The miscanthus there, which I recalled as having put forth delightful plumes the year before, was now forming healthy, slender-leaved clumps. "If you intend to divide them, I wonder if I might have one or two," I said. Then a little later, when I happened to be on my way to the riverbed, I pointed out the house to an attendant and sent a message to the staff. "I would like to visit Her Ladyship, but there is someone with me just now. Please ask her not to forget the miscanthus I mentioned the other day." With that, I went on.

The purification did not take long, and I was soon home. "The miscanthus has arrived from the Prince's house," someone said. The plants had been set elegantly erect in a long box, with an amusing poem on green paper attached to one of the stalks:

29. Missing except for an initial line. The author's poem referred to immediately below, apparently a polite greeting from one lady to another, is too garbled to be intelligible.



A Court Lady's Musings

Sei Shōnagon's personal name is unknown. Sei, the first element in her court name, is the Sino-Japanese reading for the first character used in writing Kiyowara, her surname; Shōnagon (Lesser Counselor), the second, may have been an office held by a male relative. Her clan, the Kiyowara, was not politically influential but included a number of scholars and minor poets and traced its lineage to a seventh-century Emperor. Her father, Motosuke (908–90), a scholar and minor bureaucrat, was one of the compilers of the second imperial poetic anthology, *Later Collection* (Gosenshū, ca. 951).

There is little definite information about Shōnagon's life. Some scholars hold that she was married to a certain Tachibana no Morimitsu, and that the failure of the match led her to enter court service. She is conjectured to have been a lady-in-waiting to Empress Teishi from around 993 until the end of 1000, when the Empress died, and to have written her *Pillow Book* (Makura no sōshi) around the first decade of the eleventh century.¹ Nothing reliable can be said of her later years. There is a theory that she married again, to a man who predeceased her, and a persistent legend holds that she died as a poverty-stricken nun, presumably in karmic retribution for her sharp tongue.

At court, she was prominent among the thirty or forty women who attended Teishi, the consort of Emperor Ichijō. Teishi had been pre-

sented as an imperial bride early in 990, when she was around thirteen or fourteen and the Emperor was ten, and had received the title of Empress in the Tenth Month of the same year, subsequent to the appointment of her father, Fujiwara no Michitaka, as the imperial Regent. The *Pillow Book* depicts her as presiding with gentle grace and humor over a light-hearted, fashionable salon in which Shōnagon, a mistress of urbane badinage, played a highly visible role. Her palace apartments appear to have been irresistibly attractive to the youthful Emperor and his gentlemen, and to have retained their gaiety and literary tone even after 995, the year in which Michitaka's death shattered his children's prospects. The *Pillow Book* is divided into approximately 320 sections, the exact number varying from one textual line to another. About eighty-five, including many of the longest, consist of random reminiscences; about sixty others record opinions, comments, and imaginative sketches; and the remainder are devoted to lists. The twenty-one sections presented here are weighted in favor of the first two categories but include a few representative examples of the third.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

Emperor. Emperor Ichijō (980–1011; r. 986–1011)

Empress. Fujiwara no Teishi (976?–1000). Oldest daughter of Michitaka by his principal wife; consort of Emperor Ichijō; mistress of Shōnagon

Imperial Lady. Fujiwara no Senshi (962–1001). Mother of Emperor

Ichijō; sister of Michitaka

Kamo Virgin. Princess Senshi (964–1035). Daughter of Emperor Murakami by Empress Teishi's paternal grand-aunt, Fujiwara no Anshi

Korechika (973–1010). Oldest son of Michitaka by his principal wife

Matsugimi. Childhood name of Korechika's son Michimasa (993–1054)

Michitaka (953–95). Son of Fujiwara no Kaneie; Imperial Regent; father of Empress Teishi

Michiyori (971–95). Son of Michitaka by a secondary wife

Mikushigedono (ca. 983–1002). Fourth daughter of Michitaka by his principal wife

Naka-no-kimi (981?–1002). Genshi, second daughter of Michitaka by his principal wife; became consort of the Crown Prince in 995, after the

1. There is no consensus concerning the meaning of the *Pillow Book's* title, which seems to date from the medieval period. A *sōshi* was a sewn book or booklet, as opposed to a scroll; *makura* means "pillow." It has been variously suggested that a pillow book may have

been a memorandum book, a collection of secret jottings, a notebook kept under a pillow or otherwise close at hand, etc.

events described in Section 256 (called Lady Shigeisha from the palace building where she lived after her marriage, thus the use of the name is anachronistic here)

Regent, *see* Michitaka

Ryūen (980?–1015). Third son of Michitaka by his principal wife; became a monk

San-no-kimi (?–?). Third daughter of Michitaka by his principal wife; became married a Prince

Shigeisha, *see* Naka-no-kimi

Tadataka (Minamoto; ?–?). Court official; Chamberlain, Secretary of Ceremonial later

Takaie (979–1044). Second son of Michitaka by his principal wife Ukon-no-naishi. Lady-in-waiting to Emperor Ichijō

Chūnagon, Kohyō, Kowakagimi, Saikyō-no-shōni, Saishō, Uemon,

Ukon. Ladies-in-waiting to Empress Teishi

The Pillow Book of Sei Shōnagon

I

In spring, the dawn. As the light gradually increases, the rim of the hills reddens just a bit, and we see slender purplish-red clouds trailing in the sky.

In summer, the night. I need not mention the times when the moon is visible, but it is pleasant also to watch fireflies flitting to and fro in the darkness. Even the falling rain has its charm.

In autumn, the evening. When the bright setting sun has sunk very close to the mountaintops, it is moving even to see crows flying toward their roosts in groups of three or four or two. Still more delightful is a file of wild geese looking very tiny. Then, too, the wail of the wind and the plaints of insects when the sun has quite disappeared.

In winter, the early morning. The morning after a snowfall needs no comment. When the frost is very white, or even when the air is bitter with frost, the sight of servants hastily kindling fires and carrying glowing charcoal here and there seems peculiarly appropriate to

Toward midday, when the temperature rises a little and the season gradually abates, the fires in the braziers turn into disagreeable cold gradually abates, the fires in the braziers turn into disagreeable white ash.

5

It is said when parents make a beloved son into a monk. The decision has its reassuring aspects, to be sure, but it is pathetic that people should think of the young man as no more human than wood or stone. A monk eats coarse vegetarian fare and cannot even fall asleep without incurring criticism. If he is young, he will probably have his full share of curiosity. Why should we expect him to avert his eyes from women, all hypocrisies? Yet some people will be ready to blame him for a critical abhorrence? And an exorcist's lot is even worse. He goes around to single glance. And all the other mountains, exposing himself to Kinburen, Kumano, and finally succeeds in acquiring wonder-working powers. Then word of his prowess spreads, people summon him to all kinds of places, and he becomes a harried victim of his own popularity. It is no simple matter to subdue a malignant spirit when the patient is desperately ill. The exorcist may easily nod off, exhausted by the strain. And then it is awkward, indeed, to hear someone say in a censorious voice, "That exorcist spends all his time sleeping." We can imagine how he must feel.

But I am talking about the past. Monks nowadays seem to lead a comfortable life.

7

The Emperor's cat, Lady Myōbu of Fifth Rank, was a sweet little creature, and His Majesty took a lively interest in her welfare. One day, her attendant, Uma-no-myōbu, noticed that she had ventured out to the edge of the veranda. "You naughty thing! Come back inside," she said. The cat went on dozing in the sun. Uma-no-myōbu called out to the palace dogs to give her a scare. "Where are you, Okinamaro? Come and bite Lady Myōbu!"

The foolish Okinamaro bounded up, thinking she was serious, and the cat ran behind the blinds in a panic.

The incident was a great shock to the Emperor, who had witnessed it.

from the Imperial Dining Room. He tucked the cat into his bosom, summoned his attendants, and issued a command to Chamberlain Tada, taka when that gentleman reported. "Punish Okinamaro and exile him. Do it right now!" A group of men set out in noisy pursuit of the dog. The Emperor scolded Uma-no-myōbu. "I'll have to find someone else to take care of Lady Myōbu. Her present attendant is unreliable," he said.

Uma-no-myōbu stayed away from the imperial presence to show her remorse. Meanwhile, the men found the dog and told the Palace Guards to chase him away.

We all felt sorry for Okinamaro. "Poor fellow! He used to have such a self-satisfied air! On the Third of the Third Month, the Controller-Head Chamberlain took him around with a willow wreath and peach blossoms on his head and cherry blossoms girdling his middle. He could never have dreamed that this would happen to him," we said.

Three or four days went by. Then around noon one day, we heard a dog uttering piteous yelps. We pricked up our ears as the howls continued, and all the other dogs rushed yapping to investigate. A cleaning woman hurried in. "Two Chamberlains have been ordered to beat the dog. He's going to die! They're punishing him because he came back after His Majesty sentenced him to exile," she said.

Alas! It could only be Okinamaro. The howling finally ceased, just as we were about to send to make the Chamberlains desist. (They were Tadataka and Sanefusa, it seemed.) "The dog was dead, so they dragged him outside the gate and left him," someone said.

That evening, while we were all feeling depressed about Okinamaro's sad end, a hideously swollen, repulsive dog came into view, trembling miserably. "Could he be Okinamaro? There certainly hasn't been any dog like that around here lately," I said. One of the other ladies called him by name, but he paid no attention. Some said he was Okinamaro; others disagreed.

"Ukon would recognize him," Her Majesty said. "Somebody call her."

Ukon was in her room. A messenger went to tell her that she was needed on urgent business, and she presented herself. Her Majesty pointed to the dog. "Is that Okinamaro?"

"There is a resemblance, but this is a frightful-looking animal. And

Okinamaro always dashed up happily when I called him, but this dog won't come at all. It must be a different one. People say they flogged Okinamaro to death and threw his corpse away. He couldn't have survived a beating by those two men," Ukon said. Her Majesty looked grievous.

We offered the dog some food at nightfall, but he rejected it, and we decided that he was definitely not Okinamaro.

The next morning, I went to do Her Majesty's hair. She performed her ablutions and inspected her coiffure while I held the mirror. As I waited on her, I noticed the same dog crouched beside a post. "Ah," I murmured to myself, "they gave Okinamaro a merciless beating yesterday. How sad to think that he must have perished! I wonder what kind of body he has been reborn into. It must have been a dreadful experience for him." To my astonishment, the dog, which had seemed sound asleep, began to shudder and weep.

"Then it is Okinamaro, after all! He tried to keep from being recognized last night!" I was both touched and diverted. Letting the mirror fall, I said, "Well, so you're Okinamaro!" He barked frantically, flat on his belly.

Her Majesty laughed in surprise. The ladies-in-waiting gathered around, and the Empress summoned Ukon-no-naishi to tell her what had happened. The Emperor appeared, attracted by the sound of laughter and voices. "It's astonishing! Who would have expected such sensibility from a dog?" he laughed.

His Majesty's ladies-in-waiting also heard the news and assembled, and this time Okinamaro stood up and moved when he was called. But his face still looked swollen. "I wish we could get somebody to treat him," I said. "Now the truth comes out," Her Majesty smiled. "You've been on his side all along."

Tadataka sent a message from the Table Room when he got wind of the affair. "Is it really true? Let me see him."

"The very ideal! The dog isn't here," we answered.

"Very well, I'll find him eventually. You won't be able to hide him forever."

Later, Okinamaro was pardoned and restored to his old status. But I still felt mixed emotions when I thought of how he had come forward, trembling and barking, after my words of commiseration. It had been a

22. Things That Violate Our Expectations

A dog barking in the daytime.²

A weir in springtime.³

A red-plum robe in the Third or Fourth Month.⁴

A birth chamber when the baby has died.

A brazier or hearth with no fire in it.

An ox-driver when the ox has died.

A learned doctor who sires a succession of girls.

Going to a house to avoid a directional taboo and being offered no entertainment. This seems especially inappropriate and disappointing if it happens at the change of seasons.

A letter from the provinces with no accompanying souvenir. Some might say the same of a letter from the capital, but it is quite enough that such a communication should describe recent events and tell the recipient other things he or she would like to hear about.

After having taken great pains to prepare and send off an attractive letter, one waits in breathless anticipation to see what response it will elicit, but the reply is astonishingly slow to arrive. Then, while one is still agog, the original letter comes back. Whether rolled or formally twisted, it is now so dirty and crumpled that even the superscript has disappeared. "The person was not at home," the messenger reports. Or: "They could not accept it because they were observing ritual seclusion."

This is exceedingly depressing and disconcerting.

Again, one is waiting after having dispatched a carriage to fetch a guest whom one confidently expects to come for a visit. At the sound of returning wheels, people go out to meet her, only to see the carriage attendants enter the carriage shelter and thump down the shafts. When asked for an explanation, the attendants say, "She has gone out today. She won't be coming." Then they depart with the ox in tow.

household has made a great point of welcoming him as a son-in-law. And when his heart has been captured by some high-born lady in court service, how miserable the deserted wife feels as she yearns wistfully for his return!

A baby's nurse leaves the house with a promise to return shortly. When the child misses her, others try to distract him, meanwhile sending to her to come at once. "I am afraid I won't be able to get back tonight," she replies. This is more than disconcerting; it is downright hateful.

We can imagine the feelings of a man who expects a woman in vain. And when a woman expects a man, the sound of a discreet knock on the gate in late evening makes her heart beat a little faster. She sends to see who it is, but it proves to be someone else, a person of no possible interest. What could be more disconcerting?

An exorcist trying to expel malignant spirits puts on a confident expression, instructs the medium to hold a vajra and a string of prayer beads, and sits chanting a sutra in a strident voice, but the spirits show not the slightest inclination to retreat, nor does the spirit protector of the Law enter the medium. This is most disconcerting for the assembled men and women of the household, who are also offering prayers. After two hours of chanting, the exorcist tires. "The guardian spirit refuses to enter your body. Be off with you," he tells the medium. "Well, that did no good at all," he remarks as he takes back the beads. He rubs his forehead, yawns, leans against something, and falls asleep.

Expectations are cruelly dashed at the house of a man who fails to get a post when official appointments are conferred. It has been rumored that the master is sure to receive something this year, and his dispersed former attendants—people from the countryside and others—have congregated in such numbers that there seems barely room to put down the shafts of all the carriages that arrive and depart. These people are eager to accompany the candidate when he goes to offer prayers; they eat and drink and generally raise a commotion. But the appointments ceremonies draw to a close. By dawn on the following morning, there has still been no knock at the gate. Voices are heard clearing the way as the senior nobles leave the imperial palace. And then a group of servants come trudging in with crestfallen faces—men who have waited for news

2. Dogs were expected to bark at night as watchdogs.
3. Weirs were used as fish traps in the autumn and winter.
4. Red-plum robes (and with purple linings) were supposed to be worn only from the

outside the office since evening, shivering with cold. Nobody has the heart to question them. When outsiders ask, "What is His Lordship's present title?" the reply is always the same: "He is the Former Governor of Such-and-such Province." Those who have pinned their hopes on the gentleman are devastated. During the course of the morning, the once-dense throng gradually melts as people steal away by ones and twos. Longtime household members, who cannot very well leave, count over next year's likely provincial vacancies on their fingers and walk around looking pathetically glum. We can imagine how disconcerting it has been for them all.

When somebody sends off what seems a fairly good poem, it is disconcerting to receive no answer. If the missive is a love letter, the author must simply accept the situation, but it is disappointing that there should not be any acknowledgment when one has devised a clever treatment of a subject. Again, expectations must inevitably be dashed when an old-fashioned person with an abundance of leisure sends a mediocre poem about the past to someone who is busy and popular.

Eager to provide herself with precisely the right fan for an important occasion, a woman asks to have one designed by a person whose taste she trusts. The fan arrives on the day of the event, decorated with a picture that is not at all what she had in mind.

When a messenger comes with a farewell present, a gift for a birth celebration, or the like, it is disconcerting to receive no reward. People should always give him something, even if he brings no more than a medicinal ball or a hare stick. He will be delighted to receive an unexpected gratuity. On the other hand, he is bound to feel disappointment if he goes away empty-handed after having arrived in high hopes, confident that so important an errand as today's must merit some recompense.

It is disconcerting when there is no commotion about getting a birth chamber ready, even though the daughter of the house has already been married four or five years.

Also disconcerting are parents who nap together in the daytime when they have grown children—or worse, grandchildren crawling about. Even a child of ten or so will probably be quite taken aback by the sight of his mother and father napping together. And if they bathe in hot water after awakening, they actually arouse feelings of anger.

Constant rain late in the Twelfth Month. Shall we compare it to the feeling we have when we slip up during a 100-day regimen of vegetarian fare?⁵

Layered white robes in the Eighth Month.⁶
A wet nurse who has run out of milk.

24. Things People Look Down On

The north side of a house.
A person with a reputation for excessive good nature.
A very old man.
A loose woman.
A crumbling earthen wall around an establishment.

39

A preacher ought to be handsome. It is only when we keep our gaze fixed firmly on a good-looking monk's face that we feel the holiness of the text he expounds. If the man is ill-favored, our gaze wanders and we lose track of what he is saying. For this reason, it seems to me that listening to an ugly monk's sermon may actually lead us into sin. But I must not write these things. Although it might have been all right when I was a little younger, the thought of sin terrifies me now.

When I contemplate my own sinful heart, I wonder about the honesty of those who make a point of being the first to arrive wherever there is to be a sermon, informing us that sutra expositions are holy occasions and that they themselves are bursting with piety.

40

In earlier times, men who had stepped down from the office of Chamberlain would not even serve as imperial outriders, much less show their faces at the palace during the first year after their departure. Things seem very different nowadays; they bear the title of Former Fifth-Rank Chamberlain and receive many commissions to discharge. Still, they are

⁵ The rain is inopportune because it interferes with the preparations for New Year events. Scholars are at a loss to explain the reference to vegetarian fare.
⁶ Their season is winter.

less busy than before, and it must seem to them that they have a great deal of time on their hands. Thus they find themselves bustling off to hear a sermon, and after the first two or three times it becomes a habit. Even in the torrid heat of summer, we see them sitting in vivid red underrobes with their feet tucked into pale blue or dark gray trousers. Sometimes they wear ritual seclusion tags on their hats, as though to tell us, "Even though today is a day of seclusion for me, there can be no harm in going out to perform a pious act." Or they may hurry in, chat with the preacher, take it on themselves to find places for ladies' carriages, and otherwise show themselves at home.

To his profound amazement, one such gentleman spots a friend whom he has not seen for a long time. He sits down next to him, talks, nods, tells an amusing story, spreads his fan wide, presses it to his lips and laughs, idly fingers his ornate prayer beads and flicks the tassels toward his companion to emphasize everything he says, pronounces on the merits of the carriages, and compares the sutra services and Eight Expositions sponsored by this person and that. Meanwhile, he ignores the preacher's remarks. But his inattention does not matter. He hears similar sermons all the time. They are an old story to him, and he certainly does not see anything novel about this one.

People of quite a different type may arrive shortly after the lecturer has taken his seat. A carriage draws up, preceded by unobtrusive shouts from its outriders, and three or four slim young gentlemen emerge, some clad in hunting robes and others wearing cloaks lighter than cicada wings, with baggy trousers and thin silk singlets. When they enter, accompanied by an equal number of attendants, those present move over and make room for them to sit at the foot of a pillar near the dais. They give the impression of having stopped in on the spur of the moment, but they rub their beads, prostrate themselves, and listen closely. The lecturer, who must consider the visit a signal honor, begins to preach with all the eloquence at his command, determined to give a performance so impressive that everyone will be talking about it. The gentlemen choose an opportune moment to withdraw, before the final pious exclamations and prostrations. On their way out, they glance toward the carriages, exchanging comments. The ladies inside the carriages wonder what they are saying. If we recognize them, the incident has a special charm; if not, it is amusing to speculate about their identities as we watch them leave. When someone announces, "There was a sutra exposition at such-

and-such a place," or "At such-and-such a place, they held an Eight Expositions service," and we reply, "Was So-and-so there?" it is really too much to have the other person say, as though the answer were obvious, "Why, my dear, of course." To be sure, there is no reason to avoid such events altogether. Even lower-class women seem to attend them with great frequency. But in the old days, a gentlewoman did not go out on foot. Under exceptional circumstances, she might venture forth in an elegant travel costume, but not to any destination other than a shrine or temple. And so far as I have heard, not many such people went to hear sermons. If one of them were alive to see what goes on today, how critical and censorious her eye would be!

49. Elegant Things

A young girl's trailing white summer robe, worn over a lavender chemise.

Shaved ice, mixed with vine syrup and put into a new metal bowl.

Fallen snow on plum blossoms.

A sweet infant eating a strawberry.

A duck egg, broken.

Crystal prayer beads.

65. Bridges

The bridges of Asamursu, Nagara, Amahiko, Hamana, and Hitotsu. The Sano Boat Bridge. The bridges of Uashime, Todoroki, and Ogawa. Anything spanning a ravine or providing passage across the face of a cliff. Seta Bridge. The bridge on the Kiso Road. Horikawa Bridge. The Raven Bridge. The Lovers' Meeting Bridge. The floating bridge at Ono. Yamasuge Bridge (an interesting name). Utrane Bridge.

74

Secret trysts are especially enjoyable in the summertime. The short night slips by before the lovers can get a wink of sleep. The latticed shutters have all been left up, and the garden looks delightfully cool. As the couple exchange a few essential last words, a crow flies directly in front of them, cawing in a loud voice. Most amusingly, they suddenly feel very much exposed.

75

It is also pleasant to hear a temple bell, its sound seeming to emanate from some remote fastness, when one is buried under the bedclothes with a lover on a bitter night. I find it intriguing that the initial cockcrow should sound infinitely far away (the bird's beak still being tucked under his wing), and that the second and third should seem closer and closer to the garden.

78

Of the cubicles assigned to the ladies-in-waiting at the imperial palace, those in the corridor are especially interesting.⁷ The wind comes sweeping through when the upper shutters are raised. In summer it is delightfully cool, and in winter I enjoy the occasional flurry of snow or hail that finds its way inside. Because the rooms are considered too cramped to accommodate children, young visitors are told to sit hidden behind the folding screens, and to refrain from laughing and making noise as they do in apartments elsewhere—which is all to the good.

During the daytime, the occupants can never relax their vigilance, and at night, amusingly enough, they must be even more careful. Footsteps echo all night long. I like it when the sound of shoes breaks off, someone raps with a single finger, and the person inside recognizes the knock instantly. The tapping goes on without eliciting a response. The woman, not wishing to be thought asleep, makes a little movement or rustles her clothing, and the man realizes that she is still up. The sound of a fan being wielded is another sign that she has not retired. If the season is winter, the man may hear the faint noise of fire tongs being thrust into a brazier, even though someone is trying to be quiet. This inspires him to knock with renewed vigor and to call out. Sometimes the woman slips close and listens behind the locked door.

Perhaps a group of courtiers may come along chanting poems. Nobody has knocked, but a woman has opened her door, and they all come to a halt, whether they had intended to visit her or not. There are too many to fit inside, so some of them stand outside chattering for the rest

7. Probably the corridor on the west side of the Tōkaden, a building assigned to the Empress Teishi. The corridor led directly to the Seiryōden, where the Emperor lived, and was used by courtiers and others going back and forth between the Seiryōden and the Geishimō Gate, the main northern entrance to the imperial residential compound.

of the night—an entertaining spectacle. The blinds are delightfully green, the stand-curtains bright and fresh. The callers catch the merest glimpse of the woman's skirts. It is interesting to see well-born gentlemen, their informal cloaks open at the back, and olive-clad, self-satisfied Chamberlains of Sixth Rank standing before the earthen wall with their sleeves aligned primly, unable to find a place by the door.

I enjoy watching from elsewhere while a man pushes against the blinds of a room and sears himself halfway inside, dressed in deep purple trousers and a resplendent informal cloak, with the tips of a brilliantly colored inner robe peeping out at the bottom. It is also pleasant if the visitor pulls over a tidy inkstone and scribbles off a note, or if he borrows a mirror to comb a few errant locks on the side of his head.

A woman sits behind a portable curtain-stand three feet high but, most interestingly, there is a little space between the top of the stand and the decorative cloth edging the beam from which the blinds hang—a gap just big enough for a man standing outside and a woman seated inside to look each other in the face. There may be a difficulty if one person is very tall and the other short, but this is the way it works for people of ordinary height.

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The dance rehearsal before the Kamo Special Festival is uncommonly diverting.⁸ People from the Bureau of Grounds hold long torches aloft, their necks buried in their collars against the cold, and the tips seem in constant danger of hitting something. There is a delightful sound of music, the flutes begin to play, and we sense the uniqueness of the occasion. If some gentlemen in formal court attire drop by to chat, the warnings of the courtiers' Escorts are subdued and quiet: they are clearing their masters' way, to be sure, but their voices harmonize with the music in a manner pleasantly different from the usual shouts. Toward dawn, as we await the performers' departure, we hear a group of nobles singing, "The Ears of Rice Growing in Untilled Paddies," their voices a little more interesting than earlier. An earnest fellow, striding homeward at a brisk pace, evokes a burst of laughter. "Wait awhile," somebody says. "I believe one of the ladies wonders why you're wasting a

8. The rehearsal, which took place in the courtyard east of the Seiryōden, was not visible from the cubicles on the west side of the Tōkaden, but the music was audible, and some of the participants used the corridor.