

Introduction



The Tale of Genji (Genji monogatari) was written around the beginning of the eleventh century by a member of the middle-ranking nobility at the Japanese court, a woman known to us as Murasaki Shikibu (ca. 973?–1014?). Murasaki is not a surname, nor is Shikibu a personal name: the two together make up a sobriquet translatable as “purple ceremonial.”

The polite avoidance of personal names was one of the notable characteristics of aristocratic society in the Heian period (794–1185). A brief inspection of *The Tale of Genji* itself, which adheres to contemporary practice, shows that Murasaki Shikibu's narrator and characters prefer to identify men in terms of the offices they hold, as in the case of the prominent figure Tō-no-chūjō, who serves in the dual capacity of head chamberlain (*tō*) and middle captain (*chūjō*). A clan or place-name may distinguish a character from another who holds the same title; thus, “the Reizei emperor” is the particular retired sovereign who lives at the Reizeiin, an imperial property in the capital. Feminine sobriquets may be derived from order of birth within a family (Naka-no-kimi, “second daughter”), location (“the Fuji-tsubo lady,” a woman who lives in a building of that name at the imperial palace), or the title of an office held by the woman herself or by a male relative (Mikushigedono, “the mistress of the wardrobe”; Chūnagon “[lady related to a present or former] middle counselor”). A member of either sex may acquire a name through association with a poem (Genji's son Yūgiri, “evening mist”), a memorable incident (Yūgao, “the lady of the [flowers called] evening faces”), or a distinctive personal attribute (Kaoru, “the fragrant [gentleman]”).¹

1. Murasaki Shikibu changes the characters' sobriquets as they move from one status to another, but it is common practice to use standardized terms in referring to them. Thus, Genji



In *The Tale of Genji*, the true name of a character is seldom divulged.² In real life, men's personal names were probably almost always a matter of general knowledge, however infrequently they may have been used, but that seems not to have been the case for women. At any rate, relatively few full names of Heian women have been preserved, and Murasaki Shikibu's is not among them. Scholars assume that the second element in her sobriquet derives from positions her father is known to have held in the Ministry of Ceremonial (Shikibu-shō), and most of them believe that the first element is a reference to Murasaki, the principal feminine character in the first forty chapters of *The Tale of Genji*, whose name comes from a poem.

Little is known of the author's personal life. She belonged to a minor branch of the Fujiwara, the great clan that dominated the court during most of the Heian period. Her great-grandfather, Middle Counselor Kan'esuke (877–933), had been a fairly prominent figure, the maternal grandfather of an imperial prince, but her grandfather and father had become members of the so-called *zurō*, or career provincial governor class, men of middle-ranking status who could not aspire to important offices. Her father, Tametoki (?–?), was not even a bureaucratic success at his own modest level. He held insignificant positions in the central bureaucracy between 984 and 986, but lost them after the abdication of Emperor Kazan (968–1008; r. 984–86), the ruler who had appointed him. In 996, after a hiatus of ten years, he managed to secure appointment to the governorship of Echizen Province, but no new assignment awaited him on his return to the capital four years later, and he remained out of office until 1008, when he obtained a pair of minor posts in the central administration. He was named governor of Echigo Province in 1011 but returned to the capital in 1014, before the expiration of his four-year term. In 1016, he took Buddhist vows. The last mention of him as living occurs in a document written two years later.

Tametoki seems, in short, to have been a man who was either unable or unwilling to form and preserve the patronage relationships necessary for bureaucratic advancement—someone similar in certain respects, perhaps, to the eccentric Akashi novice in *The Tale of Genji*. But this is only one side of his story. Ever since its inception, his branch of the Fujiwara clan had produced poets distinguished enough to have their works included in imperial anthologies.³ He himself graduated in Chinese literature from the state

² [member of] the Minamoto clan," is standard for the work's main character, whom the narrator sometimes calls "the young Genji lord," "the shining Genji," or the like, but more often identifies by means of an official or residential title.

³ The only exceptions in this translation are Fujiwara no Koremitsu and Minamoto no Yoshikyo, two middle-ranking courtiers who render private services to Genji in a patronage relationship.

⁴ His grandfather, Kan'esuke, was important both as the patron of Ki no Tsurayuki (the principal compiler of *Kokinshū*, the first imperial anthology of Japanese poetry, ca. 905) and as a poet in his own right, with 55 poems in imperial anthologies. Kan'esuke's most famous

Introduction

5

academy, where he studied under the famous scholar Sugawara no Fumitoki (899–981); and he was always regarded as one of the premier Chinese poets of the day. Whether in office or out, he composed poems at home, associated on friendly terms with leading literati, frequented the salon of the cultivated Prince Tomohira (964–1009), and participated in Chinese and Japanese poetry meetings, both at the imperial palace and in the mansions of great figures like Fujiwara no Michinaga (966–1027), Michinaga's sister Senshi (962–1001), and his son Yoritomi (992–1074).

Tametoki seems to have been married at least twice, once to a woman of whom nothing is known except that she bore him three children, older half-siblings of Murasaki Shikibu; and later, after around 970, to Shikibu's mother, who was herself a member of a Fujiwara family of poets, and who gave birth to two daughters and a son. It is believed that she died when the second daughter, Shikibu, was still very young, and that Tametoki reared their offspring. The son, Nobunori (d. 1011), grew up to become a minor poet and minor court official. He left his post to join Tametoki in Echigo but died soon afterward. Nothing is known of the older daughter.

Shikibu is thought to have spent her girlhood with her father. She was with him during the first part of his tour in Echizen, by which time she was well along in her twenties—beyond the usual age for marriage if she was born around 973, as is tentatively assumed by many scholars. It seems reasonable to surmise that Tametoki had become concerned about providing for her future, because she almost certainly returned to the capital ahead of him to marry one of his friends, probably in 998 or 999. The bridegroom, Fujiwara no Nobutaka (d. 1001), was in his mid-forties, the father of at least three children by the numerous women in his life. Also a member of the *zurō* class, he had been more successful than Tametoki and was in comfortable circumstances. In spite of his polygynous history, the marriage appears to have been a happy one until it was cut short by his death in an epidemic in 1001. It produced one child, a daughter, Kenshi (b. 999).⁴

In a short memoir written a few years after she was widowed, Shikibu describes her bereft existence at home as lonely and sad.⁵ As was true of

composition is GSS 1102, which is said to have been written when he was worried about his daughter's future in the imperial harem: hiro no oya no / kokoro wa yami ni / aranedomo / ko o omou michi ni / madoimuru ka na ("The hearts of parents are not realms where darkness reigns—yet how easily we wander in confusion on the path of love for a child?"). *The Tale of Genji* contains a number of allusions to this poem.

⁴ Kenshi is a personal name. It probably entered the historical record because she enjoyed an unusually successful career, including recognition as a poet, liaisons with important men, and appointment as nurse to a future emperor. Kenshi ultimately achieved junior third rank and held a prestigious position in the Handmaids Office.

⁵ Aside from a small collection of her poems, this memoir is our main source of information about Shikibu's life, but its biographical content is meager. Both the poetry collection and the memoir ("diary") are translated in Bowring, *Murasaki Shikibu: Her Diary and Poetic Memoirs*.



most aristocratic Heian women, even those in fortunate circumstances, she must have had many empty hours to kill, and she doubtless engaged in the usual pastimes of her sex—among them, studying old poems and writing new ones, reading romances, and looking at picture books while someone read aloud the tales that the paintings illustrated. To a modern reader, it seems unremarkable that someone with her literary antecedents should have decided to try her own hand at fiction. There were many romances available as guides, and she also possessed some knowledge of the Chinese classics and their treasure trove of stories, acquired as a result of listening while her father attempted to drum the texts into young Nobunori's ears. But the few extant pre-*Genji* romances all show evidence of male authorship, and it may well be that *Genji monogatari* is not only, by general agreement, the great masterpiece of Japanese classical fiction, but also the first significant feminine venture into a previously masculine field. As with so much else in Murasaki Shikibu's career, however, this must remain speculative. We can say only that she probably began to write *The Tale of Genji* not long after her husband's death, while she was living quietly at home.⁶

Meanwhile, the court was recovering from a power struggle. Fujiwara no Kaneie had been named regent in 986, upon the accession of his grandson, Emperor Ichijō (980–1011, r. 986–1011); and Michitaka (953–95), Kaneie's oldest son by his principal wife, had succeeded to the office after his father's death in 990. Michitaka had then secured the title of empress for his daughter, Teishi (976?–1000), also in 990, and had groomed his favorite son, Korechika (973–1010), to be his eventual replacement. Upon Michitaka's death, however, his sister Senshi (962–1001), Emperor Ichijō's influential mother, had obtained the regency for their brother Michikane (961–95), who was next in order of birth. Michikane died in an epidemic seven days later, and Senshi again intervened against Korechika (whom the emperor seems to have favored because of his love for Teishi), prevailing on her son to grant the equivalent of regental authority to the next brother, Michinaga (966–1027). Michinaga moved quickly to consolidate his position. In 996, he drove Korechika into exile; in 999, he made his eleven-year-old daughter, Shōshi (988–1074), a junior imperial consort; and in 1000

6. Scholars have suggested that Murasaki Shikibu may have been moved to try her hand at a *monogatari* ("tale") because she had read *The Gossamer Journal* (Kagerō nikki), a tenth-century feminine memoir that anticipates, on a small scale, her own probing analyses of the psychological aspects of relations between the sexes. The memoirist, known as "Michitsuna's Mother" (936?–95?), was a wife of Fujiwara no Kaneie (929–90), the clan chieftain whose granddaughter, Shōshi, was soon to employ Shikibu as a lady-in-waiting. Michitsuna's Mother was also related, very indirectly, to Shikibu herself: her sister's husband was the brother of Shikibu's maternal grandfather. It seems more likely that Shikibu would have had access to tons of *The Tale of Genji* at home, but little is known about the way in which manuscripts which is now regarded as a landmark in the development of Japanese belletristic prose, was actually the only work of its kind available to a contemporary reader.

he saw to it that Shōshi acquired the title of empress, with the result that Emperor Ichijō became the first sovereign in Japanese history to possess two wives of imperial rank.

Michinaga exerted unparalleled influence at court for the rest of his life, ultimately becoming the father-in-law of three emperors, one retired emperor, and a crown prince; the grandfather of two emperors; and the father of two regents.

Teishi died in the twelfth month of 1000, a day after giving birth to a daughter, her second. She and the emperor had been a devoted couple for ten years, and he and his courtiers had delighted in visiting her palace apartments, where her attendants could be counted on for witty, literate conversation and amusing diversions. Now she was gone, but she had left behind a son, Prince Atsuyasu (999–1018), who represented a potential threat to Michinaga's line unless Shōshi and her future offspring could weaken old ties in the emperor's mind.

Before presenting his child-daughter in 999, Michinaga had gone to great lengths to assemble tasteful, luxurious furnishings for her apartments in the Fujitsubo, to equip her with an elaborate trousseau, and, equally or perhaps more important, to find a group of forty ladies-in-waiting capable of competing with Teishi's entourage. "Her attendants had been selected with the utmost discrimination," reports *A Tale of Flowering Fortunes* (Eiga monogatari), a contemporary history. "It was not considered sufficient for a candidate to be personable and even-tempered: even if her father held fourth or fifth rank, there was no hope for her if she was socially inept or lacking in the niceties of deportment, for only the most polished and elegant were accepted."⁷ There is no specific mention in this passage of an effort to recruit literary women, but it is known that Shōshi's ladies-in-waiting included two of the most talented poets of the age, Ise no Tayū (?–?), entered ca. 1007? and Izumi Shikibu (b. ca. 977?, entered ca. 1009?). Akazome Emon (?–?), a well-known poet who is generally accepted as the author of *Flowering Fortunes*, herself served Shōshi's mother and frequented the empress's rooms.

In view of Michinaga's interest in the creation and maintenance of a brilliant salon for Shōshi, it is no surprise to learn that Murasaki Shikibu entered the empress's service after the original chapters of *The Tale of Genji* began to circulate—probably in 1005 or 1006, when Shōshi was in her late teens and Shikibu was around thirty. Like the Akashi lady in her book, Shikibu seems to have felt ill at ease in a milieu so much more exalted than her own, particularly since she was by her own account reticent and introspective, but her memoir contains warm praise of her mistress. She considers herself Shōshi's favorite attendant and reports with satisfaction that she has tutored the empress in the poetry of Bo Juyi, keeping the sessions private to

7. McCullough and McCullough, *Tale of Flowering Fortunes*, 1: 218.



avoid being criticized for her unfeminine Chinese learning. On the whole, she was probably happier at court than she would have been at home; and the connection with Michinaga, a man of great wealth, assured her of an ample supply of paper, a precious commodity, as she continued work on the book. She is known to have moved with Shōshi to the Biwa Mansion, one of Michinaga's properties, after the death of Emperor Ichijō in 1011, and to have remained in her service as late as 1013. Many scholars believe that she died in 1014, thus predeceasing her father and, perhaps, causing his early return from Echigo. It is possible, but not demonstrable, that she continued to write *The Tale of Genji* until the end of her life.

Genji monogatari is a long work in fifty-four chapters (five volumes in modern Japanese printed editions). The standard English translation of the title implies that it is a story about someone named Genji, which is reasonably close to the truth. The dominant character in the first forty-one chapters is Genji, the shining one, a dazzlingly handsome, charismatic, gifted prince, born of a minor consort without family support, whom his imperial father has thought it best to shield from succession struggles by making him a subject with the Minamoto (Genji) surname. But an alternative translation, *Tales of the Genji*, would be equally possible, because Genji's son Yūgiri occupies the center of the stage in a number of those chapters, and Genji himself dies well before the end of the book, between Chapters 41 and 42, after which the author turns her attention to the activities of two of his descendants, one actual and one putative.⁸

There is, in a word, no single protagonist in *Genji monogatari*. Nor is there a carefully crafted plot or a clearly discernible theme. Rather, most of the work conforms to a pattern, conspicuous throughout the history of pre-modern Japanese prose, of bringing together a group of more or less independent parts into a loosely structured whole. If we can consider it to be in some sense an eleventh-century precursor of the Western novel, as many have done, it is largely because Murasaki Shikibu concerns herself above all with human relationships and the emotions they engender.

For purposes of discussion, Japanese scholars have found it convenient to divide *The Tale of Genji* (as we shall continue to call it) into the forty-one chapters before Genji's death and the thirteen chapters following it, and to subdivide the first and larger segment into Part One (Chapters 1–33), dealing primarily with events in Genji's life until he reaches the age of thirty-nine, and Part Two (Chapters 34–41), during which he ages from thirty-nine to fifty-two. The rationale for the subdivision is that Chapters 34 and 35, which are by far the longest in the book, mark a shift to a dark period

8. Three transitional sections, Chaps. 42–44, serve as a bridge to the final 10, known as actually the offspring of a liaison between Genji's son but the end of Genji's life; and Nijō, Genji's young wife and another man, born toward

in what has been, on the surface at least, a singularly fortunate and enviable public and private career—the start of a series of events, attributable in part to long-standing flaws in Genji's character, that culminate in the loss of Murasaki, the woman who gives meaning to his life. Murasaki dies in Chapter 40, and in Chapter 41 the stricken Genji is last seen preparing to take Buddhist vows.⁹

Part One begins with two chapters that might be said to function as background for the tale that begins in earnest with Chapter 3. In Chapter 1, “Kiritsubo,” the narrator runs briskly through an account of her hero's first twelve years, a period in which he loses his mother, a minor consort beloved of the emperor; lives at court as his father's favorite son; becomes a subject; develops a boyish crush on the Fujitsubo lady, a beautiful new imperial consort who is reputed to look like his dead mother; and enters into an arranged marriage with the minister of the left's daughter, Aoi, who does not interest him.

In a long episode accounting for almost all of Chapter 2, “The Broom Tree,” Murasaki Shikibu prepares the way for much that is to follow in Genji's private life. The occasion is a discussion about women, which takes place on a quiet rainy night in the Kiritsubo pavilion at the palace, once the residence of Genji's mother and now assigned to Genji himself. Those present are Genji, five years older than when we saw him last, and thus in his teens; two other youths of his own age—his great friend Tō-no-chūjō and a minor courtier called Shikibu-no-jō—and a somewhat older courtier, Uma-no-kami, who seems to be in his early twenties.

Early in the conversation, Uma-no-kami introduces what has come to be known as the “hidden flower theme” in *The Tale of Genji*, describing a hypothetical situation that seems to have had a strong appeal for young nobles whose principal wives were not necessarily of their own choosing. If a girl with every advantage turns out supremely well, he says, that is no more than we might expect. “What would be amazing would be to discover

9. The Uji chapters are not represented in this translation, which confines itself to noteworthy events in Genji's life; and they will not be discussed here. It should be noted, however, that many people regard them as Murasaki Shikibu's finest achievement. The structure is tighter than in the rest of the book; the principal characters are few in number and brilliantly drawn; and the relationship between human emotions and the natural environment, always a concern in Heian court literature, is impressed on the reader with consummate skill as Kaoru and the women in his life try to cope with their problems against a backdrop of wild waters and brooding wintry mountains. See Seidensticker, *Tale of Genji*, the standard complete translation; and, for commentary, Ramirez-Christensen, “Operation of the Lyrical Mode.” For an astute, comprehensive study of the entire work, see Shirane, *Bridge of Dreams*, which makes extensive use of the voluminous publications of Japanese specialists. The *Genji* is also discussed at length in three recent books: Field, *Splendor of Longing*; Konishi, *History of Japanese Literature*, Vol. 2; and Okada, *Figures of Resistance*. For a useful handbook, see Bowring, *Murasaki Shikibu: “The Tale of Genji.”* An alternative to the Seidensticker translation is Waley's *The Tale of Genji: A Novel in Six Parts*, which reads well but contains many mistranslations, cuts, and additions. (“Six Parts” is a division created by Waley.)



an unbelievably sweet, appealing maiden shut up in a lonely, dilapidated, vine-choked dwelling, her very existence unknown to others. We would marvel at finding her there, and would feel strangely drawn to her just because of the way she has confounded our expectations. Her father would perhaps be old and disagreeably overweight, her brother ill-favored, but she would lead a dignified life inside her predictably undistinguished rooms, and would lead a dignified life inside her predictably undistinguished rooms, and the polite accomplishments with which she whiled away the time would seem delightful. Her skills might in fact be limited, but we'd still consider her unexpectedly interesting. I don't say she could be singled out as superb or flawless—just that it would be hard to dismiss her.” Of the women with whom Genji becomes seriously involved, approximately half, including Murasaki, fall into this category.

A little later, Uma-no-kami throws out the observation that a man might do worse than “look for a completely childlike, docile woman, train her a little, and marry her,” another notion that Genji seems to take to heart. He discovers Murasaki, the rarest of his hidden flowers, when he is eighteen and she is around ten, educates her with spectacularly successful results, and weds her when she is around fifteen. Seventeen years later, he makes a somewhat similar, if less wholehearted, effort to mold someone else to his liking, this time the teen-aged Third Princess, whom, at her father's request, he has brought into his household as a primary consort.

Uma-no-kami, the sophisticate, also has an opinion about how a woman should behave when a man looks elsewhere. “A husband's love will increase if a woman remains calm in every situation, merely hints at her knowledge of causes for jealousy, and speaks only in an unobjectionable, roundabout fashion of matters at which she might easily take offense. In more cases than not, he'll be moved to mend his ways,” he says. We may wonder if this view was inspired by Murasaki Shikibu's experience with her own much-married husband. It is in any case the stance adopted by Murasaki and others who are successful in their relations with men in *Genji monogatari*; and the Rokujō lady, whose jealous spirit wreaks havoc in Genji's life, becomes an object lesson in the terrible consequences of feminine vindictiveness. The Rokujō lady first appears in Chapter 4, “Yūgao” (Chapter 3 in this book), as a deceased crown prince's proud, elegant widow, seven years Genji's senior and morbidly afraid of derisive gossip, whom Genji has previously managed with difficulty to seduce, and whom he neglects because of her difficult personality. “Yūgao” begins with the summer of Genji's seventeenth year, at approximately the same time as the rainy night discussion in Chapter 2. We see, then, that Genji is already involved with three women—his wife, Aoi; his stepmother, the Fujitsubo lady, for whom he nurses a secret passion; and the Rokujō lady. Later in the chapter, we are told that he has also been writing to a cousin, Princess Asagao, and in the last section of the chapter (not translated), he makes love to Utusemi, a “hidden flower” he has chanced upon.

Chapters 3–6 describe a series of hidden-flower adventures, each centering on a different woman (or child, in one case)—Utusemi, Yūgao, Murasaki, and the safflower lady—each taking place in the same general period, when Genji is seventeen to nineteen, and each capable of standing alone as an independent story. At the age of twenty, Genji begins an off-and-on affair with Oborozukiyo, a lady who has been chosen by her influential family for presentation to the reigning emperor;¹⁰ and at the age of twenty-five, he is seen paying an occasional visit to an undemanding woman known as the lady from the house of the scattering blossoms.

Self-exiled in Suma to escape the ire of Oborozukiyo's relatives, who have discovered his transgression, he enters into a halfhearted liaison with the Akashi lady, another hidden flower—halfhearted because by this time he is devoted to Murasaki, who has become his principal wife after the Rokujō lady's jealous spirit has brought about Aoi's death. His return to the capital, at the age of twenty-eight, marks the beginning of a long period of happy life with Murasaki. From time to time, he is attracted to other women—Akikonomu, Asagao, Tamakazura—but never so strongly as to threaten Murasaki's place in his heart, and indeed never even to the point of physical intimacy. It is only when he reaches forty that he establishes the Third Princess as a primary wife, thereby setting in motion the chain of events that ends with Murasaki's death.

Those who regard Genji as a champion womanizer may feel that the foregoing summary makes their case. It might be argued, however, that his is not a remarkable showing, particularly in view of the prevailing standards of behavior for noblemen. Almost all of his liaisons began before he was nineteen years old. The two in his early twenties (with Oborozukiyo and the lady from the house of the scattering blossoms) were not serious; the one with the Akashi lady took place under special circumstances; and we know of no other real involvement until his lukewarm agreement to marry the Third Princess, eleven years later.

Murasaki Shikibu's own view of Genji's conduct seems ambivalent. At the beginning of Chapter 2, the narrator says, “Genji made his mistakes—so many, indeed, as to lay him open to the charge that his fine sobriquet, ‘the shining one,’ was a misnomer; and there even seems to have been talk (which can only be called malicious) about affairs that he tried to keep secret, afraid of acquiring a reputation for indiscretion if still more tales of his amours should be passed on to future generations. In reality, his sensitivity to the world's opinion was acute. He was the soul of circumspection, and the Katano lesser captain must have been vastly amused by his lack of romantic, interesting adventures.” At times, characters in the tale remark on his roving eye; at other times, they praise his sobriety and reliability where women are concerned.

10. Genji's half-brother, the Suzaku emperor, who had replaced their father, the Kirtsubo emperor, on his retirement.



The Katano lesser captain, the protagonist of a lost tale, was presumably a romantic hero like the one in *Tales of Ise*.¹¹ Mentions of the captain in at least three extant Heian works attest to the popularity of such tales, as does the survival of *Tales of Ise* itself; and Murasaki Shikibu was clearly catering to contemporary taste when she created a series of entertaining stories about the amorous adventures and misadventures of an idealized young hero. It must have been the success of those initial products of her brush—some of the episodes now clustered in the early chapters of *The Tale of Genji*—that led to her appointment as a lady-in-waiting to Empress Shōshi.

Chapters 12 and 13, “Suma” and “Akashi,” describe Genji’s two-year sojourn in the west as an exile, a period in which he hears about the beautiful daughter of a retired provincial governor and, at her father’s urgent request, favors her with his attentions. We might regard them as essentially a variation on a familiar theme—inspired, perhaps, by Korechika’s sensational exile a few years earlier. But the Suma-Akashi sequence also functions as a major turning point in *The Tale of Genji*. Previously, the narrator has concentrated on Genji’s love affairs and other aspects of his private life; after his return to the capital, he emerges as a powerful public figure, the man around whom court society increasingly revolves.¹²

Genji’s half-brother, the Suzaku emperor, whose poor health has been a major factor in his recall, abdicates in favor of the crown prince, the Fuji-tsubo lady’s young son. As a result, power passes into the hands of Genji, the boy’s half-brother and main male relative, and of Aoi’s father, the former minister of the left (who emerges from retirement to become regent and chancellor), with the Fuji-tsubo lady an important influence in the background. Genji rises rapidly. He becomes palace minister at twenty-eight, takes over as chancellor at thirty-two, after the death of Aoi’s father, and at thirty-nine is granted “status equivalent to that of a retired emperor”—*jindaijō tenmō*, an unprecedented honor—because the emperor has learned that Genji is his true father.¹³

Meanwhile, the Rokujō lady has died, committing her daughter, Akikonomu, to Genji’s care; and Genji has presented the girl to the emperor, whose rear palace already houses a daughter of Tō-no-chūjō, Genji’s old friend.¹⁴ Inspired, perhaps, by accounts of the days when Emperor Ichijō’s

11. *Ise monogatari* (ca. 950), a collection of poem-centered anecdotes in which an anonymous “man of the past” woos a variety of women.

12. Some scholars attribute the change to the broadening of Murasaki Shikibu’s horizons after her arrival at court; some also surmise that Michinaga’s example influenced the author’s portrayal of the post-Suma Genji, and many point to the existence, in Japan as elsewhere, of a conventional story pattern in which a young protagonist is forced out of society, undergoes trials, and ultimately rises to an exalted status.

13. The secret of Genji’s seduction of the Fuji-tsubo lady had been known only to Genji, the lady, one of her attendants, and a bishop in whom the attendant had confided, but the bishop had told the emperor the truth several years earlier, at the time of the lady’s death.

14. “Rear palace” (*kōkyō*) is a general term for the area in the lady’s death where the consorts lived. Akikonomu’s father was the late crown prince.

first imperial consort, Empress Teishi, was still alive, Murasaki Shikibu devotes a chapter, “The Picture Contest,” to the rivalry between the two young women and their backers—a competition won by Akikonomu, who is named empress two years after her presentation, when she is twenty-four and the emperor is around fifteen. A few years later, Genji arranges a marriage between his daughter, the eleven-year-old child of the Akashi lady, and the crown prince (a son of the Suzaku emperor); and after the prince’s accession, which takes place when Genji is forty-six, it is a son of this Akashi consort (later to be named empress) who promptly becomes the next heir-designate.

If Genji falls short of Michinaga’s record as a maternal relative of the throne and a sire of powerful men, it is only because he has been less amply blessed with children: he possesses but one daughter, the Akashi girl, and one acknowledged son, Yūgiri.¹⁵ In other respects, he is a public figure of equal or superior stature. Long ago, in his childhood, a skilled physiognomist had said of him, “He bears the stamp of one destined to ascend to the supreme status of emperor and become the father of the nation, but turmoil and distress may ensue if that happens,” a pronouncement that had influenced the Kiritsubo emperor’s decision to remove him from the possible line of succession. Now, in his maturity, the prophecy seems to have been essentially fulfilled. As we have seen, his formal status is equivalent to that of a retired emperor. Also, a few years after his return from exile, he has built the Rokujō Mansion (Rokujōin), a huge, magnificent residential complex occupying four city blocks—its size equaled in real life only by the great Reizeiin, an imperial property used by retired sovereigns—and there, in an arrangement reminiscent of the rear palace at court, he has provided accommodations for Murasaki, for the Akashi lady, for the lady from the house of scattering blossoms, and for the imperial consort Akikonomu during her stays away from the palace. When he takes the Third Princess as a wife, he does so not by visiting her at home, as was the custom among subjects, but by receiving her at the Rokujō Mansion as though she were a new consort entering the imperial palace. And when the Third Princess and Murasaki live in the mansion as dual principal wives, the relationship is not dissimilar to that of Emperor Ichijō’s two principal consorts, Empress Teishi and Empress Shōshi. In his public persona, at least, Genji has indeed become the shining one who eclipses all rivals, fictional or real-life.¹⁶

15. His supposed second son, Kaoru, is not born until he is 48, four years before he disappears from Shikibu’s narrative.

16. Scholars have pointed out that it was no longer possible in Murasaki Shikibu’s day for anyone other than a Fujiwara to exercise supreme power at court. As a Fujiwara woman dependent on Fujiwara patronage, Shikibu probably meant no criticism of the status quo when she elevated Genji at the clan’s expense. If we assume that both Genji and the Fuji-tsubo lady figured in her original early chapters, this portion of Part One is perhaps to be regarded as merely a narrative in which two important characters happen to have been born into the imperial clan. Or, as is often proposed, she may have intended to evoke romantic nostalgia for an earlier era.



A grand establishment like the Rokujō Mansion was designed primarily to serve as a luxurious setting for banquets and ceremonies.¹⁷ In her memoir, Murasaki Shikibu describes such occasions at Michinaga's Tsuchinokado Mansion, a palatial residence that doubtless furnished a partial model for the Rokujō Mansion; and in the *Genji* she makes the Rokujō Mansion a backdrop for imperial visits and other great events illustrative of its owner's social prominence. The mansion also functions as a symbol of the domestic harmony Genji enjoys during the years between his return from Suma and the end of Part One. After some initial jealousy, Murasaki has learned to like and respect the Akashi lady, and she has known all along that the lady from the house of the scattering orange blossoms is more an object of Genji's charity than a threat to her marriage. The three women—and, when she is in residence, the quiet, gentle Akikonomu—live tranquil lives, linked but independent, the special character and taste of each reflected in the aspect of her garden.

For Murasaki, who lives with Genji in the southeast and most resplendent quarter of the establishment, and whose season is spring, Genji has provided a spring garden: "The hills were high and covered with spring-blooming trees, the pond was exceptionally spacious and tasteful, and in the garden closer at hand there were white pines, and trees and shrubs especially chosen for springtime enjoyment—red plum, cherry, wisteria, azalea, and the like—interspersed with occasional unobtrusive plantings to make a pleasant autumnal show."¹⁸

For Akikonomu ("Fancier of Autumn"), who owes her sobriquet to a passage in which she and Genji discuss the relative merits of spring and autumn (a perennial literary topic), there is a view designed to be at its best in autumn: "The existing hills had been planted with maples and other trees and shrubs to create a brilliant display of fall color, the clear waters of a spring had been channeled into a long stream, with additional rocks to enhance their sound and create cascades, and the total effect was of an autumn field stretching into the distance."

For the lady from the house of the scattering orange blossoms, there is a summer garden, because orange blossoms are a conventional summer image in Japanese poetry: "There was a cool-looking spring, and special attention had been devoted to summer shade. Near at hand, black bamboo trees, their depths intriguingly reminiscent of a mountain retreat. Care had been taken to create a hedge where deutzia flowers would bloom, and there were plantings of other summer trees and grasses—the nostalgic orange, varieties,"

gentians, and so forth—as well as some spring and autumn

17. See Ōta, *Shinden-zukuri no kenkyū*, p. 151.

18. From Chapter 21, "The Maiden," not included in this volume. The three passages that follow appear in the same chapter.

And for the Akashi lady, there is a winter garden, not merely because winter is the only season left, but because it was on a winter day, four years earlier, that she gave up her three-year-old daughter, whom Genji wished Murasaki to train as a future imperial consort: "A hedge of Chinese bamboo separated it from the storehouses. There were a great many pine trees, planted to offer a pleasing prospect when snow fell; also, a chrysanthemum hedge, to capture the morning frost in early winter, a grove of oaks to flaunt their color, and numbers of little-known trees transplanted from deep in the mountains."

Of the episode responsible for the Akashi lady's identification with winter, Haruo Shirane writes, "The snow, sleet, and frozen lake . . . reflect the emotional state of the heroine. . . . The snow, associated in Heian poetry and aesthetics with serene beauty, highlights her elegant figure even as it embodies her sorrow."¹⁹ This kind of association between man and his environment is a fundamental characteristic of classical Japanese poetry; and it is obvious that Murasaki Shikibu has poetic conventions firmly in mind, not only as she deals with each of the Rokujōin gardens in its turn, but also throughout her work. Time and again, she describes a scene in nature, relates it to human emotions, which may either harmonize with the surroundings or stand in ironic contrast, and concludes with a poem, usually a *so-liloquy* or part of an exchange, "a metaphorical fusion . . . in which the elements of the setting become the vehicle for the character's emotion."²⁰ In the passage below, we see Genji during the early days at Suma.

The winds of autumn, "the saddest season of all," blew at Suma. The breakers of which Yukihira speaks, in his "blowing across the barrier," sounded very close at night, even though the sea was a fair distance away; and to Genji it seemed that nothing could be as evocative of melancholy musings as autumn in such a place. Awakening alone one night, after his few attendants were all asleep, he raised his head from the pillow and listened to the howling gale. The waves seemed about to invade the room, and he wept unawares until his pillow was in danger of floating away. When he essayed a few notes on the seven-stringed *koto*, the sound was lonesome and uncanny, even to his own ears. He broke off and intoned the words of a poem:

koiwabite	That the breaking waves
naku ne ni magau	harmonize with these sobs
uranami wa	wrung from a grieving heart—
omou kata yori	is it because the wind blows
kaze ya fukuramu	from where someone yearns for me?

A situation of this kind in the *Genji* will almost always turn out to be classifiable under one of a small number of topics recognized in the Heian period as acceptable for serious poetic composition: the four seasons, love,

19. *Bridge of Dreams*, pp. 83–84.

20. Ramirez-Christensen, "Operation of the Lyrical Mode," p. 25.



parting, travel, laments, felicitations, and a few others (mostly lumped together as “miscellaneous”). Here the topic is travel, a rubric embracing residence away from the capital. Travel was, by definition, a lonely, depressing experience. Murasaki Shikibu sets the stage with auditory imagery evocative of autumnal bleakness, heightens the effect with allusions to old poems, moves on to an exposition of Genji’s feelings, which are exacerbated by the eerie sound of the koto (an instrument considered capable of establishing contact with unseen powers), and ends with a recapitulatory poem.

To point out that *The Tale of Genji* contains almost 800 poems is to imply correctly that every conventional poetic category is represented in the work. If we thumb through *Kokinshū*, the imperial anthology in which the categories were canonized, we find a fair number of poems, usually in the seasonal books and Felicitations, in which the speakers express happiness, admiration, uncomplicated aesthetic enjoyment, and other positive sentiments. More typically, however, the mood is sorrowful, elegiac, or, at best, pervaded with a gentle melancholy. Pleasure in the beauty of spring blossoms is tempered by thoughts of their ephemerality; longing for those left behind makes travel an ordeal; the deaths of friends and loved ones must be mourned; the brief transports of fulfilled love lead to the lasting sorrow of neglect and desertion; and there is an ever-present sense of the transience of earthly things. Murasaki Shikibu is too good a writer to confine herself to so narrow a tonal range, but the influence of the so-called “aesthetic of sensibility” (*mono no aware*) is visible even in the sunniest stretches of Part One.

Quite apart from poetic tradition, Shikibu had reason to introduce problematic situations into her glowing account of the years between Genji’s return from exile and his marriage to the Third Princess. We are told more than once that Genji and Murasaki are, in effect, living happily ever after, an ideal married couple. But it is not without reason that authors have tended to lay down their pens once they have straightened out the tangled affairs of their main characters. To hold our interest in this section of Part One and, no doubt, to answer requests from Empress Shōshi and others in her circle, Shikibu introduces extraneous subjects: brief follow-ups on some of Genji’s youthful love affairs; court politics; the maturing Yūgiri and his activities; elegant events at the Rokujō Mansion; and the long story of Tamakazura, the lost infant daughter of the lady of the evening faces (Yūgao), for whom Genji seeks eligible suitors, posing as her father while barely restraining his amorous impulses.²¹ Despite an occasional small manifestation of jealousy, Murasaki herself seems too secure, too perfect, to be interesting, and we hear relatively little of her.

All this changes with Chapter 34, “New Herbs: Part One,” the first of the eight chapters in Part Two.

As Part Two begins, the Suzaku emperor, who later becomes the imperial regent, Higekuro,

ailing and desirous of taking Buddhist vows, is trying to secure the future of his favorite child, the Third Princess, who is thirteen or fourteen years old, ready for marriage by Heian standards. After considerable deliberation, he offers the girl to Genji, who accepts with mingled reluctance, gratification at the connection, and curiosity. The princess enters the Rokujō Mansion as a second main wife early in the following year, her superior social status acknowledged by the spacious quarters assigned to her and her attendants. Murasaki accepts the situation gracefully. Some seven years later, when Genji is forty-seven, Murasaki falls gravely ill, and Genji goes to stay with her at his Nijō Mansion, an earlier residence that she has always considered her home. While they are away, Kashiwagi, one of Tō-no-chūjō’s sons, seduces and impregnates the princess. Genji finds out what has happened, and the birth of the child, Kaoru, is soon followed by the princess’s entry into religious orders and by the guilt-ridden Kashiwagi’s decline and death. Three years pass, during which the author’s attention shifts to Yūgiri’s affairs, and then, when Genji is fifty-one, he loses Murasaki, who has never made a complete recovery from her illness.

As this summary suggests, Part Two is shorter, less crowded with characters and events, and more tightly organized than Part One. There are some digressions—notably, the chapters dealing with Yūgiri—but they are relatively minor. The narrator concerns herself almost entirely with Genji’s marriage to the Third Princess and its consequences, and with the behavior and feelings of Genji and Murasaki during the last decade of their lives.

An attentive reader will already have discovered, in the course of Part One, that Genji’s character is not without its flaws. It seemed at the outset that Murasaki Shikibu might have meant to create a hero who would be the exact opposite of a man like Michinaga’s father, the regent Kaneie, who emerges in *The Gossamer Journal* and other contemporary writings as entirely devoid of sensitivity, especially in his relations with women. Kaneie’s indifference to the “aesthetic of sensibility” is revealed both by his callous treatment of his wife, Michitsuna’s Mother, and by his poor calligraphy; Genji’s perfect realization of the ideal, by his often-expressed solicitude for the feelings of others and his mastery of every polite accomplishment. Once Genji has made even a fleeting commitment, a woman need not fear abandonment: the Nijō and Rokujō mansions shelter a number of needy ladies, no longer of any particular interest to him, whom he provides with material comforts and a face-saving degree of personal attention. And all he asks in return is conformity to the model of tolerant womanly behavior set forth in Chapter 2, “The Broom Tree.”

What the “Broom Tree” ideal demands, however, is that the man be given free rein to indulge in affairs with other women. For Genji, his marriage to Aoi and his relationship with the Rokujō lady are both unsatisfactory because neither woman understands that she must accept occasional neglect; his marriage to Murasaki and his relationship with the Akashi lady are



smooth because neither makes inconvenient demands. As he admits to Murasaki, he has been spoiled, and despite his thoughtfulness and generosity, he is sometimes guilty of selfishness, self-pity, self-deception, and disingenuousness. When he finds himself with a dead secret mistress (Yūgaō) on his hands in a mysterious deserted mansion, his first reaction is to worry about gossip; when his misconduct with Oborozukiyo forces him into exile, he blames karma from a previous existence; when the imminence of his separation from the Akashi lady intensifies a previously tepid passion, he reflects, not on the plight of the pregnant girl, but on the unkindness of the fate that seems to have doomed him to a life of unhappiness. In his opinion, he enjoys a perfect marriage with Murasaki. He finds no flaw in her, and she is always his true love. But it is precisely in this relationship that his sensitivity proves to be obtuseness, and that self-deception leads to disaster. He does not realize, or does not choose to understand, that Murasaki's view of the marriage is very different from his.

Genji is the first and only man in Murasaki's life. When she is around ten, he becomes a surrogate for the father she scarcely knows.²² Too young for jealousy, she is merely appealingly forlorn when his affairs call him elsewhere. Later, when she is a child bride, there is little to suggest that his liaisons cause her deep distress, or that she even knows about all of them. The first real sorrow of her married existence seems to come with his departure for Suma.

The Suma-Akashi episode, which marks a turning point in Genji's life, proves equally portentous for Murasaki. Not only is Genji's confessed involvement with the Akashi lady hard to bear, but the lady produces a child—a daughter who can make him an emperor's grandfather. Murasaki herself is childless after several years of marriage, and is fated to remain so, a disturbing disadvantage for a woman married to an ambitious Heian aristocrat.²³ For the first time, she feels insecure.

After Genji's return from Suma, he takes his young daughter away from her mother and gives her to Murasaki to rear as a potential imperial consort. Murasaki's jealousy turns to pity, and she and the Akashi lady eventually become friends. During these years, Genji's fortunes flower, and we hear repeatedly of his great love for Murasaki and of the happiness of their marriage. Meanwhile, however, he courts Asagao (unsuccessfully) and takes a more than fatherly interest in his ward, Tamakazura; and the narrator reveals, in what seems almost a casual aside, that Murasaki wants to become a nun because she fears Genji will tire of her as she ages.

22. The high incidence of substitute figures in Murasaki Shikibu's work has been much discussed in *Genji* studies. Most of them are women: the Fujitsubo lady for the Kiritsubo lady, Murasaki for the Fujitsubo lady, the Akashi lady for Murasaki, and so forth.

23. "A woman's lot cannot be happy unless she produces a large family of children," writes the author of *The Gossamer Journal*. "I had failed to do so despite the length of my marriage; and I was tormented by thoughts of my own inconsequentiality." Quoted from McCullough, *Classical Japanese Prose*, p. 133.

As Part Two begins, Murasaki views the marriage with mixed emotions. On the one hand, she worries about her advancing age (she is thirty-one), about Genji's seeming inability to find contentment with one woman, and, no doubt, about her childless state. On the other, she has been Genji's main wife for seventeen years, unrivaled in status and, to all appearances, in his affections. Genji's marriage to the Third Princess is thus both a devastating shock and a confirmation of long-standing, half-unconscious fears and misgivings. The princess turns out to be an uninteresting little thing, nothing like the young Murasaki. It never occurs to Genji to fall in love with her, and Murasaki soon recognizes that she is no threat in that respect. It is, rather, the symbolic import of the marriage that causes her acute unhappiness. Genji now has a main wife whose exalted status demands that she be recognized as superior. Moreover, he has shown, Murasaki thinks, that he will always give his own desires priority over her happiness, confident in his ability to talk her around. How can she expect to hold the love of such a man after her beauty fades? The narrator describes her state of mind just before she falls ill:

As usual on nights when Genji was away, Murasaki stayed up late, listening to her attendants read stories aloud. In those old tales, which professed to record true-to-life happenings, a woman often got involved with a man who was fickle, licentious, and unfaithful, but he always seemed to settle down in the end. How strange that her own life should have remained so fraught with uncertainty! It was true that hers had been an unusually fortunate karma in some respects, but was she never to be free of these miserable forebodings—these worries that no woman could find enduring or acceptable? It was too much!²⁴

It is this unremitting mental turmoil that brings on Murasaki's illness in "New Herbs: Part Two," and that leads to her death some four years later. The "Broom Tree" prescription for a happy marriage proves to have been a false guide. From Uma-no-kami's point of view, Murasaki's conduct has been impeccable, but she has loved Genji too well, and the psychological toll has been too great. After her death, Genji expresses the wish that he had been more careful about causing her pain, but the main lesson he draws is that he has somehow been fated to suffer more than others in this life. Ironically, Genji the shining one, the exemplar of sensitivity, has failed to comprehend the fearful strength of the emotions aroused by his conduct—a strength symbolized by the apparition of the Rokujo lady's spirit at Murasaki's bedside—and the failure has destroyed both his dearest treasure and himself. If Murasaki Shikibu is to continue her narrative, she must find a new hero.

24. Here, as repeatedly in *Genji monogatari*, the ambiguity of classical Japanese makes it impossible to tell how much of the passage is quotation and how much narratorial comment. The author's portrayal of Murasaki's unhappiness follows conventions established in the Love section of *Kokinshū*, where the grieving woman in fear of abandonment is a familiar figure.



Kiritsubo



[From Genji's birth until his twelfth year]

During the reign of a certain sovereign, it happened that one rather insignificant lady enjoyed far greater imperial favor than any of the other consorts and concubines. She was regarded with contempt and jealousy by proud ladies of superior status—personages who had always taken their own success very much for granted—and her equals and inferiors among the concubines felt even more disgruntled. Perpetually agitated by her constant presence at the emperor's side, her rivals made her bear an increasingly heavy burden of resentment. And whether for that reason or another, she grew frail and melancholy, and took to staying away from court. The emperor, who pitied her with all his heart, ignored the criticism and treated her in a manner that seemed destined to go down in history as an exemplar of favoritism.

The senior nobles and courtiers averted their eyes in disapproval. "Nobody wants to watch such excessive displays of affection. This is the kind of thing that led to turmoil and trouble in China," they said. People in general also began to find the situation unpleasant and distressing—bad enough to inspire comparisons with Yang Gueifei.¹

Reassured by His Majesty's remarkable devotion, the lady continued to appear at court despite many humiliating affronts. Her father, a major counselor, was dead, and the absence of a reliable male sponsor left her pitifully helpless in an emergency, notwithstanding the exertions of her mother, the counselor's principal wife, who was an old-fashioned woman

1. Yang Gueifei (719–56) was the beautiful favorite of Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang dynasty in China. When a rebel seized the capital in 755, the imperial army blamed her and her influential relatives, and the emperor was forced to agree to her execution.



of great refinement, and who saw to it that the girl appeared just as well on ceremonial occasions as influential consorts and concubines who were blessed with two parents.

Perhaps the bond uniting the lady and the emperor was a legacy from a previous existence, for she was fortunate enough to bear a male child—moreover, one who glowed like a pearl, the prettiest baby in the world. The impatient emperor lost no time in having him brought to the palace, and when he looked at him, he thought he had never seen such a beautiful face. Everyone had been fussing over the oldest son, the First Prince, whose powerful backing made his succession seem assured. (The mother, a junior consort, was the minister of the right's daughter.) But the First Prince could not begin to rival the newcomer's beauty, and the emperor made the baby his personal favorite, seeing to his needs in every possible way, and merely bestowing public marks of special esteem on the older child.

The baby's mother had not entered the palace as a mere imperial attendant. People had accepted her as someone of consequence, and she had comforted herself as a noblewoman should. Her status had inevitably suffered because of the emperor's unreasonable insistence on keeping her at his side—his summoning her whenever there was an interesting musical entertainment or anything else to serve as a pretext, his penchant for detaining her while he lingered in bed in the morning.² But after the prince's birth she enjoyed very special imperial recognition, very special courtesies, and the First Prince's mother, the Kokiden lady, feared that the younger child might wind up in the crown prince's residence if things took a turn for the worse. The Kokiden lady had been presented at court before any of the other consorts. Her status demanded the sovereign's utmost consideration, and she was also the mother of children, so that he found her remonstrances both troublesome and pathetic.

Even though the baby's mother was sheltered by the emperor's august protection, there were many who subjected her to contempt and criticism; and the imperial affection became a source of misery, rather than of happiness, for someone so weak and fragile. Her apartments were in the building called Kiritsubo. Naturally enough, others were unhappy when the emperor went past their quarters on his constant visits to her. And when she went too often to his residence, the Seiryōden, they played unbelievably shabby tricks that ruined her attendants' skirts at bridges and galleries along the way. Or, very frequently, they conspired to torment her by locking both doors of an interior passageway she needed to use, so that she was trapped inside. Whatever the occasion, it was sure to bring some new addition to the endless list of her trials. Moved by her distress, the emperor transferred another concubine away from the Kōrōden, where she had always lived,

2. It was only women of low status who attended the emperor day and night. A recognized consort or concubine was expected to stay in her own apartments unless she received a specific summons, and to leave the imperial bedchamber before dawn.

and put those apartments at her disposal—an act for which, needless to say, she was never forgiven by the person in question.

When the young prince entered his third year, the emperor celebrated the assumption-of-the-trousers ceremony with lavish splendor, calling on all the resources of the palace storehouse bureau and the storeroom, just as he had done for his oldest son. There was much criticism of the way the event was handled, but it was impossible to dislike the boy, who was growing up with a beauty of face and disposition so uncommon as to seem quite unique. Knowledgeable people found it incredible that such a one should have been born into this world.

In the summer of that year, the Kiritsubo lady sought permission to retire from the palace because of a slight indisposition. The emperor refused to agree. Accustomed to seeing her in precarious health year after year, he said, "Stay awhile and see how you get along." But her condition worsened daily, and after a mere five or six days, she had sunk so low that her weeping mother persuaded him to release her. She resolved to depart unnoticed, leaving the young prince behind, lest she be subjected to fresh humiliation even at such a time. The emperor could postpone the parting no longer, nor, to his inexpressible sorrow, was it even possible for him to see her off. Her sweet face was emaciated, and she slipped toward unconsciousness, after struggling in vain to express her anguish. His mind in a daze, the emperor swore all kinds of tearful vows, but she lay there, unable to answer, her eyes dim and her body limp, as though she were no longer certain that she still lived.

The emperor was frantic with anxiety. He issued orders for her departure in a hand-drawn carriage, but then he went to her room, and again could not bring himself to let her go. "Didn't we promise to stay together always, even on the road to death? I know you're sick, but I don't see how you can abandon me and go your own way," he said.

She gazed at him with infinite sadness. [Her poem:]

kagiri tote	Grieved beyond measure
wakaruru michi no	to say farewell and set forth
kanashiki ni	on this last journey,
ikamahoshiki wa	gladly would I choose instead
inochi narkeri	the road of the living.

"If I had dreamed this would happen . . ." She gasped for breath. She seemed to want to say something more, but she was shockingly ill and weak. He longed to keep her there, just as she was, so that he might witness her fate with his own eyes, but a messenger arrived with an urgent plea from her mother: "We have engaged eminent monks to conduct certain prayer rituals, which are scheduled to begin today. They will be starting tonight." He forced himself to endure the agony of letting her go.

His heart too full for sleep, he waited impatiently for the first light of dawn. He was already giving way to dismal forebodings before his messen-



ger had had time to make the round trip. And when the messenger returned, it was with a stricken face. The people at the house, distracted and weeping, had announced that the lady had died shortly after midnight.

The emperor retreated into seclusion, shaken and dazed. His dearest wish was to keep the prince where he could see him, regardless of the mother's death, but there was no precedent for the child's remaining in the palace under such circumstances, and it was decided that he should leave. That his attendants should be weeping and wailing, and that the emperor himself should always be shedding tears, seemed strange indeed to the boy, who had no inkling of what had happened. Partings between parent and child are sad enough on ordinary occasions, but this one was indescribably moving.

There are forms that require observance, and people prepared for the cremation in the usual manner. The mother shed tears of bitter grief. "If only the smoke from my pyre might ascend with hers in a single plume!" she said. She called back one of the funeral carriages assigned to the ladies-in-waiting and got inside; and we may imagine her feelings when she reached Otogi, where solemn rituals were already under way. "Even with the body right there in front of my eyes, I was foolish enough to think of her as alive. Once I've seen the cremation site, I'll be able to accept her death," she had said earlier, in a show of bravery, but now, to the consternation of the others, she seemed in danger of tumbling out of the carriage. "This is exactly what we were afraid of," her people said.

A messenger arrived from the palace—an imperial envoy, sent to announce the Kiritsubo lady's posthumous elevation to third rank—and the proclamation of the edict called forth a fresh access of grief. The promotion had come about because of the emperor's keen remorse for his failure to so much as ensure that people should call her "Junior Consort" during her lifetime. "At least, I can raise her rank a grade now," he thought. There were many who resented even so innocuous an act.

To people of sensibility, the lady's death evoked poignant memories of her beauty and grace, of her mild, agreeable temper, and of how impossible it had been to dislike her. It was only the emperor's immoderate partiality that had made her an object of jealous spite. All the imperial ladies-in-waiting thought with affectionate regret of her sweet nature and loving disposition. It seemed that the poem "Now that she is no more" must have been composed at just such a time.³

The emperor never failed to send messages of condolence as the days slipped by and the various memorial rites took place. The passing of time served only to deepen his inconsolable grief, and he spent the days and nights with tear-drenched sleeves, uninterested in summoning anyone else

3. Traced in a 12th-century commentary, *Genji monogatari shaku*, to a poem not otherwise identified: *aru toki wa / ari no susabi ni / nikukanki / nakute zo hito wa / koishikarikuru* ("I found fault with her whenever the spirit moved while she was alive, but how dear she seems to me now that she is no more!"). See Tamagami, *Genji monogatari hyōshaku*, 1: 54.

to share his bed. Even for those who merely witnessed his misery, the autumn of that year was a dew-drenched season.

"She may be dead, but he's still so crazy about her that nobody else can feel happy," said the Kokiden lady, nursing her grievance.

Whenever the emperor saw the First Prince, he missed the young prince more, and he kept sending people to find out how the boy was getting along—trusted ladies-in-waiting, an old nurse, and so forth. One evening, when an autumn gale had brought a sudden chill to the air, his thoughts strayed to the Kiritsubo lady even more often than usual, and he decided to send a certain Yūgei-no-myōbu with a message to her mother. After dispatching her by the light of a beautiful early moon, he sat lost in melancholy reverie. He had been accustomed to enjoying music at such times. The Kiritsubo lady would play the koto with incomparable skill, and if she murmured some trifling bit of poetry, it was sure to excel the compositions of the other consorts. For a moment, he seemed to see her reclining by his side, but the form and face in the vision were less substantial than earthly darkness.⁴

When Myōbu's attendants pulled her carriage inside the gate at her destination, she was saddened by the aspect of the grounds. In earlier days, the widowed mother had managed to keep up the place as a suitable residence for her daughter, but the autumn storm seemed to have wreaked havoc on the plants in the garden, which had shot up while their owner lay prostrate, lost in the darkness of parental grief; and no visitor except the moonlight had braved the tangled growths of wild vines.⁵

After the guest had been received at the south entrance to the main hall, some time elapsed before she or the mother could find words. Then the mother said, "It makes me miserable to linger on like this. And now I feel terribly embarrassed to have an exalted messenger like yourself grope her way through the dew of these mugwort-choked grounds." She wept as though indeed unable to bear her lot.

"Naishi-no-suke told His Majesty she felt much worse—really devastated—after she came here and saw things for herself. Even for an insensitive person like me, the experience is almost too much," Myōbu said. After a brief pause, she delivered the emperor's message. "His Majesty said to tell you, 'For a time, I felt like someone in a dream, and I still can't seem to awaken, even though I am a little calmer now. There is nobody here to

4. Anonymous (KKS 647): *mubatama no / yami no utsuru wa / sadaka naru / yume ni ikura mo / masarazakeri* ("It was little better than the vivid dream I dreamt—that meeting with you in earthly darkness, black as leopard-flower seeds").

5. Fujiwara no Kanesuke (GS 1102): *hito no oya no / kokoro wa yami ni / aranedomo / ko o nou michi ni / madoinuru ka na* ("The hearts of parents are not realms where darkness reigns—yet how easily we wander in confusion on the path of love for a child!"). Ki no Tsurayuki (SS 8): *tou hito mo / naki yado naredo / kuru haru wa / yemugura ni mo / sawarazakeri* ("Though this is a house where nobody pays visits, springtime, when it comes, does not hesitate to brave the tangled growths of wild vines").



counsel me about ways of coping with this intolerable grief; I would be delighted to have you pay me a quiet visit. I worry a great deal about the little prince—it's sad to think of his living in a house of mourning. Come soon.' He could hardly talk for crying, but he was trying to control himself so as not to seem too emotional. It was a pitiful sight; I left without waiting to hear any more." She handed over the emperor's letter.

"I receive these angust words as a light for one whose eyes have been blinded," said the mother. She read the letter. With great sincerity, it said, among other things, "I had been waiting to see if time would do anything to raise my spirits, but the days and months have made my pain more unbearable, and now I am quite desperate. I also worry about the little boy who lacks a mother to help rear him. Please come to the palace and bring him with you as a memento from the past." She could not bear to read all of the poem he had included:

myagino no tsuyu tsukimushu kaze no oto ni kohagi ga moto o omoi koso yare	At the sound of the wind blowing to summon the dews of Myagino, it is the small bush-clover to which my thoughts turn.
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"Knowing as I do that longevity is a curse, I feel ashamed even to imagine the thoughts of the Takasago pines, and I surely could not presume to come and go at the imperial palace.⁶ I appreciate His Majesty's many gracious messages, but I could never accept for myself. Somehow, the little prince seems to have anticipated this invitation, and he is wild with impatience to go. His eagerness is only natural, saddening though it is for me. Please tell His Majesty all these things in private, just to let him know how I feel. It would be mauspius for the prince to keep on living with an unlucky person like me," the mother said.

Myōbu felt that she had better not take the time to see the child, who was in bed asleep. "I'd like to be able to describe everything about him, but His Majesty is probably waiting, and it's getting late," she said.

"I would welcome a chance to talk to you and gain some relief from the anguish of my loss—just to dispel a fraction of the darkness that clouds a parent's heart—so please pay me an informal visit whenever you have time," the mother said. "You used to come on happy, gratifying occasions. To see you the bearer of such a letter now . . . I know I'm repeating myself, but life is a burden to me. We pinned all our hopes on our daughter from the time of her birth, and my husband kept admonishing me about her up

6. Anonymous (KKJ 3057): ika de nao / ari to shirasei / takasago no / matsu no omo-
wau / koto mo hazukashi ("I must do my best not to reveal that I live. How embarrassing to
imagine the thoughts of the Takasago pines!"). Pine trees were symbols of longevity. The poet,
There were numerous pine trees at the Takasago Shrine (in southern Hyōgo Prefecture), in-
cluding one particularly old specimen, best known today from the Noh play "Takasago."

to the very moment of his death. 'Be sure she's presented at court as we always intended. Don't make the mistake of giving up because I'm gone,' he said. I thought it would be better for her not to enter the palace than to live there without influential backing, but I didn't feel able to ignore his last words, so I sent her off. As it happened, His Majesty always favored her extravagantly—far more than her status warranted. I think she tried to associate with the other ladies in the usual manner, hiding the inhuman affronts she suffered, but her rivals were frightfully jealous, and her life became such a series of torments that she finally died an unnatural death. To me it seems that His Majesty's love was more an affliction than a blessing. That shows how unreasonable a bereaved parent can be." The hour grew late as she faltered on in the same vein, choked with tears.

"His Majesty feels the same," Myōbu said. "He says, 'I realize now that hers was a cruel karma: our time together was destined to be short, and that was why I adored her in a way that shocked some people. The last thing I wanted was to cause anybody the slightest disappointment, but there was much unwarranted bad feeling because of her, and at last she left me alone like this. It's more than I can do to control my grief; I've turned into a disgraceful eccentric—which, I suppose, may also be the result of acts committed in a previous existence.' He sits there weeping, saying over and over, 'If only I knew what had happened in my last life.'" She broke down. Then, mindful of the need to hurry back, she said in tears, "It's very late; I must deliver your reply before dawn."

It was not easy to leave the simple dwelling where the sky stretched clear and cloudless in the light of the setting moon, the breeze blew cool, and the insects in the grasses seemed intent on evoking tears with their wails. [Myōbu recited:]

suzumushi no koe no kagiri o tsukushite mo nagaki yo akazu furu namida ka na	Though I were to wail like a shrilling bell cricket with unstinting voice, yet would the long night be too short to end the flow of my tears.
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The mother instructed a lady-in-waiting to respond:

iodoshiku mushi no ne shigeki asaju ni tsuyu okisouru kumo no uebito	The person who comes from the place above the clouds brings ever more dew to the neglected garden where insect voices lament. ⁷
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"The crickets must be complaining."

Since it was not an occasion for elaborate presents, the mother gave Myōbu some of the Kirisubo lady's things as keepsakes—a set of robes,

7. "Place above the clouds" was a term used of the imperial palace.



preserved in anticipation of just such a need, and also some toilet articles of the kind required for dressing hair in a formal coiffure.

Of course, the prince's young ladies-in-waiting were grieved by the Kiritsubo lady's death, but they considered their present surroundings boring and lonely, accustomed as they were to a busy life at court; and they also kept the emperor's melancholy state very much in mind. They declared themselves strongly in favor of an early return to the palace. But it was not a light decision for the grandmother. "People would be bound to gossip if the boy were accompanied by an unlucky woman like me. On the other hand, I'd worry if he were out of my sight for a minute," she thought.

Myōbu was touched to find the emperor still up. While making a show of interest in the luxuriant bloom of the garden, he was talking quietly with four or five especially cultivated ladies-in-waiting, whom he had summoned to act as his sole attendants. Of late, he had taken to looking day and night at a group of pictures commissioned by Retired Emperor Uda, who had also Sorrow"—paintings commissioned by Retired Emperor Uda, who had also commanded Ise and Tsurayuki to compose verses to go with them.⁸ Japanese and Chinese poems on related themes had become his favorite topics of conversation. Turning his full attention to Myōbu, he now questioned her about the visit, and she spoke in a soft voice of the deep compassion she had felt. He read the mother's letter: "I am overwhelmed by the honor Your Majesty has conferred on me. Your kind message brings new confusion to a mother's darkened heart." [Her poem:]

araki kaze	After the death of the tree,
fusegishi kage no	its protection against
karashi yori	the blustering wind,
kohagi ga ue zo	I ponder with anxious heart
shizugokoro naki	the fate of the young bush clover.

He probably overlooked the breach of decorum because of her distraught state.⁹ Determined not to make a spectacle of himself, he did his utmost to calm his feelings, but his anguish was beyond endurance. In his mind, he sought out and savored every memory of the Kiritsubo lady, including those from the days when he had barely met her; and he marveled that he had survived so long after the death of one whose briefest absence had caused him distress. His heart ached with pity for the mother. "It was always my intention to do something to repay her for going ahead with the presentation as the major counselor desired," he said, "but there's no use thinking about that now." He continued, "Even so, opportunity undoubtedly lies

8. "The Song of Everlasting Sorrow" is a poem by Bo Juyi about the tragic love of Emperor Xuanzong and Yang Guifei (translated in Birch, *Anthology of Chinese Literature*, pp. 266–69). Lady Ise and Ki no Tsurayuki were prominent poets of the late 9th and early 10th centuries.

9. The poem could be taken to imply that the emperor would not look after the child.

ahead for the young prince, once he grows older. His grandmother must pray to live a long time."

He asked Myōbu to let him see her presents. "If only the hairpin were the one in the poem—the token brought back from a visit to the dwelling place of the dead!" he said to himself.¹⁰ But such thoughts were vain. [His poem:]

tazuneyuku	Would that I could find
maboroshi mo ga na	a wizard to seek her out,
tsure nite mo	for then I might know,
tama no arika o	at least by hearsay, the place
soko to shirubeku	in which her spirit dwells.

There is a limit to what a brush can do, no matter how skillful the artist may be, and thus Yang Guifei's painted face and figure lacked the warmth of life. To be sure, one could recognize in the pictures the woman to whom the poet likened the Taiyi hibiscus and the Weiyang willow; and she was probably a brilliant beauty in her Tang-style robes. But to the emperor, with his memories of the Kiritsubo lady's engaging manner and touching charm, his lost love seemed beyond comparison with the color of any flower or the song of any bird. He had sworn day and night that they should be "as two birds sharing a wing, as two trees with joined branches," and now there was only the everlasting sorrow of the death that had made a mockery of his vows.¹¹

Delighted by the beauty of the moon, and having long ceased to frequent the Imperial Apartments, the Kokiden lady was making music late into the night while the sovereign sat desolate, his gloom exacerbated by the sighing wind and the chirring insects.¹² He listened with distaste, and the sound of the instruments aroused pity in the hearts of the courtiers and ladies-in-waiting who had been witness to his recent behavior. The Kokiden lady, willful and difficult by nature, probably wanted to let people know that the imperial grief was no concern of hers.

The moon set. [The emperor:]

kumo no ue mo	What light does it shed
namida ni kururu	at the neglected dwelling—
aki no tsuki	the autumn moon
ika de sunuran	whose radiance is dimmed by tears
asaji no yado	even above the clouds?

The emperor stayed up, fretting about the grandmother and child, while his attendants trimmed and re-trimmed the lamp until the oil was gone. The

10. In "The Song of Everlasting Sorrow," a Taoist priest finds Yang Guifei on an enchanted island, and receives from her a golden hairpin as a memento for the emperor.

11. The quotation is from "The Song of Everlasting Sorrow."

12. The Imperial Apartments (*ue no misubone*) were two rooms used by consorts and concubines when they came to the emperor's residence, the Setryōden, from their quarters elsewhere in the palace compound.



voices of men from the bodyguards of the right, identifying themselves for night duty, showed that the hour of the ox [1:00 A.M.–3:00 A.M.] must have begun.¹³ To avoid comment, he retired to the imperial bedchamber, but sleep refused to come. And when it was time to rise in the morning, he recalled the poem about sleeping “unaware of the dawning day,”¹⁴ and was seemingly as indifferent as in the past to his matutinal duties of state. He made only the merest pretense of eating breakfast, and at the formal meals later in the day, he betrayed a lack of interest that made all the people serving him sigh over his pitiful mien. His closest attendants of both sexes confessed to one another that they were at their wits’ end.

“Things were probably fated to turn out this way for him,” some people said, “but he was wrong to ignore all the complaints and resentment and act the way he did about her; it’s really too much for him to keep going on as though nothing mattered to him, not even affairs of state.” There were those who sighed and made whispered comparisons with a foreign ruler.

Time passed, and the young prince came to the palace. Now that he was a bit older, the emperor discerned in him a beauty that seemed more than ever not of this world, and he fretted lest he be destined to die young.

In the following spring, when it was time to name a crown prince, the emperor wanted to disregard the First Prince’s claim, but the younger child lacked influential support. Nor was the boy’s nomination likely to win general acceptance—on the contrary, he feared that it might prove dangerous to him. Thus he took care to conceal his true feelings. “Besotted though he is, he does know where to draw the line,” people said. The Kokiden lady breathed a sigh of relief.

Death came at last to the grandmother, the major counselor’s widow—perhaps in response to her prayers, for, inconsolable in her sorrow, she had asked that she might at least be allowed to go in search of her daughter. Again, the emperor was grieved beyond measure. It was the year in which the boy turned six: he was old enough to understand this time, and he wept for his grandmother. She, for her part, had told him over and over of her sadness at leaving him behind after so many years of loving intimacy. The boy lived entirely at court from then on. When he was seven, the emperor held the first reading, and he was so unbelievably quick and bright that his father actually worried about the significance of such brilliance.¹⁵

“I don’t see how anyone could dislike him now,” the emperor said. “Treat

13. The bodyguards of the left stood night duty during the first watch, from 9:00 P.M. to 1:00 A.M.; the bodyguards of the right, during the second watch, from 1:00 A.M. to 5:00 A.M.

14. Ise, speaking as Emperor Xuanzong (15 55): *tamasudare / akuru mo shirade / neshi mono o / yume ni mo miji to / omokakeki ya* (“Did I imagine that I would never so much as dream of her—not though I slept, blinds still drawn, unaware of the dawning day?”).

15. The first reading (*fumihitome*) was usually performed when the son of a high-ranking family reached the age of seven or eight. Ostensibly designed to show the child how to read, it repeated a few words after hearing them read aloud from the *Classic of Filial Piety* or some other suitable text.

him with affection, if only because he’s a motherless child.” When he visited his ladies, he took the boy along and let him go inside the blinds, even at the Kokiden. The Kokiden lady, for her part, could not bring herself to keep aloof from him, for his countenance was so fair that it would have elicited smiles from the most fearsome warriors. She had borne the emperor two daughters, but their beauty was not equal to his.

The other ladies also let the child see their faces. Simultaneously intrigued and daunted by a refinement and elegance astonishing in one so young, they all treated him as a companion with whom it would not do to be too artless and open.

It was only to have been expected that the boy would excel in his formal Chinese studies, but his proficiency at the koto and flute was also the talk of the palace. Indeed, so numerous and so rare were his accomplishments that it would undoubtedly seem a disagreeable exaggeration if I were to list them all.

Around that time, the emperor learned of a skilled physiognomist who had come to the capital with a party of Koreans. Mindful of Retired Emperor Uda’s injunction against summoning foreigners to the palace, he sent the young prince to the Kōrōkan in great secrecy. The major controller of the right, who had been assigned general responsibility for the boy’s upbringing, took him there as his own son.

The physiognomist kept cocking his head in bewilderment. “He bears the stamp of one destined to ascend to the supreme status of emperor and become the father of the nation, but turmoil and distress may ensue if that happens. We might consider the possibility that he is meant to assist with the government as an imperial surrogate, but that would contradict the signs I observe,” he said.

The controller was also a learned doctor, and the two engaged in an interesting conversation. They exchanged poems in Chinese, among them a clever composition in which the physiognomist said something to this effect: “I depart for home in a day or two, but I shall feel sad now that meeting this remarkable young man has brought me such happiness.” The prince produced a touching couplet, to which the Korean responded with extravagant praise and splendid gifts. There were also many gifts from the court to the Korean.

Word of the consultation inevitably spread. The emperor guarded the secret, but the crown prince’s grandfather, the minister, heard about it and formed his own suspicions concerning its significance.

The emperor was both a prudent man and also something of a Japanese-style physiognomist himself; and certain personal observations had hitherto kept him from even naming the boy an imperial prince.¹⁶ Now he made up his mind, impressed by the Korean’s sagacity. “I don’t want him to be set

16. Being officially designated as an imperial prince (*shinnō*) or imperial princess (*nishinnō*) conferred a social cachet and made the recipient eligible for special perquisites.



adrift as a rankless imperial prince, with no backing from any maternal relatives. And who knows how much longer I'll be emperor? The way to safeguard his future is to let him become a subject serving as a mainstay of the throne," he thought. He made sure that his son devoted increasing effort to many branches of learning. In view of the boy's remarkable intelligence, it seemed a shame to make him a subject, but he would be bound to incur suspicion if he became an imperial prince. Confirmed in this opinion by a wise astrologer with whom he took counsel, the emperor decided to name him a member of the Genji clan.

As the years went by, there was never a time when the emperor forgot the Kiritsubo lady. He arranged for the presentation of suitable consorts, hoping to find consolation, but society seemed incapable of producing anyone who might even rank in the same category, and he existed in a state of perpetual dissatisfaction.

As it happened, one of his attendants, Naishi-no-suke, had also served an earlier emperor whose fourth daughter was reputed to be a great beauty. The girl was being reared with the utmost care by her mother, the former empress. As a frequent friendly visitor at the empress's residence, Naishi-no-suke had seen the daughter from her childhood on, and she still managed to catch an occasional glimpse of her face. "I've served three emperors without encountering anyone who resembled her dead ladyship, but the empress's daughter looks very much like her now that she's grown. One seldom sees so lovely a countenance," she reported.

His hopes aroused, the emperor sent the mother a courteous request for the daughter's presentation. She temporized, alarmed by the Kokiden lady's malicious nature, and by the open contempt to which the Kiritsubo lady had been subjected, and she joined the late emperor in death while she was still trying to come to a firm decision. Recognizing that the princess had been left in a pathetic situation, the emperor sent earnest assurances that he would see to her needs just as he did for his own daughters. To her ladies-in-waiting, her guardians, and her older brother, Prince Hyōbukyō, it seemed that palace life, with its opportunities for diversion, would be preferable to a lonely private existence, and so she was presented. She became known as the Fujitsubo lady. She did indeed bear an astonishing resemblance to the Kiritsubo lady, both in face and in general appearance. Thanks to her lofty status, which predisposed people to admire her and any cause for dissatisfaction. The difficulty in the Kiritsubo lady's case had simply been that people were outraged by His Majesty's open preference for someone they refused to regard as entitled to special treatment.

The emperor still thought about the Kiritsubo lady, but his affections but obliterated—a poignant reminder of the evanescence of worldly things. As his father's constant companion, Genji was bound to see the lady the

emperor visited most frequently, whether she liked it or not. I need hardly say that none of the other imperial consorts considered herself inferior in appearance, and that all were in fact beautiful. But they were a bit past their prime. The Fujitsubo lady was young and sweet, and Genji caught glimpses of her in the natural course of events, try as she might to hide her face. He had heard from Naishi-no-suke of her close resemblance to the mother he could not remember, and in his boyish heart, he came to love her with wistful nostalgia—to yearn to visit her constantly, and to see her on terms of affectionate intimacy.

The two of them were the people the emperor loved best in the world. "Don't keep him at arm's length," he told the lady. "It's odd, but I feel as though I ought to consider you his surrogate mother. You mustn't think he's rude; he loving with him. His mother's face and expression were so much like yours that you could pass for her."

Young though he was, Genji found ways of demonstrating his fondness for the Fujitsubo lady—with small gifts of cherry blossoms, for instance, or of autumn leaves. His obvious devotion rekindled the Kokiden lady's old animosity, which was aggravated by a smoldering dislike of the Fujitsubo lady herself, and she could no longer bear the sight of him.

Genji's glowing beauty was incomparably appealing, far superior to the appearance of the crown prince who was so precious to the Kokiden lady, and whom society praised to the skies. People called him "the shining one." And the Fujitsubo lady, with whom he shared the emperor's deepest love, was called "the radiant sun princess."

Although the emperor considered it a pity for Genji to discard the hairdress and robes of a child, he arranged a capping ceremony when the boy was twelve. He assumed personal charge of the event, gave it his full attention, and made additions of his own to the prescribed ritual. Everything was to be perfect; he was determined that it should create no less a stir than the crown prince's capping, which had taken place in an earlier year at the Shishinden, and which everyone had pronounced magnificent. The banquets scheduled for various places became the subject of special commands, for, he said, the officials at the palace storehouse bureau and the granary might grow careless if they merely followed regulations.

The emperor's chair was placed facing eastward in the eastern chamber of the imperial residential hall, and in front of it were the seats of the initiate and the minister of state who was to confer the cap. Genji arrived during the hour of the monkey [3:00 P.M.—5:00 P.M.]. To those who saw the bright face framed in boyish loops of hair, it seemed a shame to alter his appearance. The treasury minister, who prepared the new coiffure, seemed to regret the responsibility as he cut the beautiful locks; and the emperor, looking on, found himself remembering the dead lady. If only she might have witnessed this scene! Only by stern self-discipline did he master his tumultuous emotions.



After the capping, Genji went to a retiring room and changed into a man's cloak. Then he descended to the courtyard to perform the dance of obeisance, a sight that moved all the beholders to tears. Again, the emperor was less able than others to control his feelings. He returned to the past with an anguished heart, experiencing anew the grief for which he had sometimes found solace.

Genji's beauty had increased to a startling degree, belying the misgivings of his father, who had wondered if it might not harm his looks to dress his hair in masculine style while he was still so young and delicate in appearance.

The minister of the left possessed one daughter, the offspring of an imperial princess, who had been reared with the utmost care. The crown prince had manifested an interest in her, but the minister had put him off, with the thought in mind that he might offer her to Genji instead. He spoke to the emperor, who encouraged the idea. "If that's what you want," the emperor said, "she could act as his bedmate.¹⁷ I don't know of anyone else who is prepared to help out with the capping ceremony." And so he had reached his decision.

Genji withdrew to the courtiers' waiting room, where he took a seat below the last of the imperial princes when it came time for the company to drink. The minister of the left dropped him a hint, but he was at an easily embarrassed age, and no reply occurred to him.

A handmaid arrived with an imperial summons for the minister. When he reported, the emperor gave him some gifts as a reward for his services during the ceremony. They were the usual things: an extra-large white robe and an additional set of clothing, transmitted through His Majesty's attendant Myōbu. With the wine, the emperor offered a poem in which he called the minister's attention to a matter that was on his mind:

io kinaki	When you tied the cord
hatsumotoryu ni	to hold the young boy's hair,
nagaki yo o	did you pledge in your heart
chigiru kokoro wa	that those two should be bound
musubikometsu ya	in permanent union?

The minister replied:

musubitsuru	Great will be my joy
kokoro mo futakaki	if his interest fades no more
motoyu ni	than the deep purple
koki murasaki no	of the cord I fastened
iro shi asezuba	with a pledge of eternal ties.

17. When a prince was initiated into manhood, the event was normally climaxed by the acquisition of a feminine bed partner (*sobushi*), a girl of good family, often somewhat his senior, who usually became his principal wife later.

Then he went to the courtyard to perform the dance of obeisance, descending by way of the long bridge.¹⁸ While there, he received a horse from the stables of the left and a perched hawk from the chamberlains' office. Gifts appropriate to their status were bestowed on the senior nobles and imperial princes ranged in lines at the foot of the stairs. By imperial command, the major controller of the right had provided the prescribed boxed delicacies and baskets of fruit for Genji to present to the emperor.

There was scarcely room for all the rice balls and chests of presents, which were even more numerous than the ones distributed after the crown prince's capping. This was in fact an occasion far more splendid than the other.

That night, the emperor sent Genji to the home of the minister of the left. During the reception ceremonies there, the minister treated the boy with a courtesy so exquisite that it seemed quite beyond precedent. Genji was still very childish in appearance, and to the host he looked almost frighteningly sweet and appealing. But to the daughter, who was a little the older of the two, the match seemed unsuitable and embarrassing.¹⁹

Not only did the minister enjoy the emperor's highest trust, but his consort, the daughter's mother, was His Majesty's full sister, the offspring of a former sovereign's empress. And as though those two circumstances were not enough to guarantee him a splendid position, he had now acquired Genji as a son-in-law. The marriage struck a devastating blow to the influence of the minister of the right, the crown prince's grandfather, who was expected to assume eventual control of the government.

The minister of the left had fathered a good many children by various ladies. One of them, the princess's son, held the dual positions of chamberlain and lesser captain. He was young and very handsome; and the minister of the right, unable to ignore so eligible a candidate, had arranged a marriage with his cosseted fourth daughter, even though his relationship with the boy's father was strained. The minister made it a point to treat him every bit as generously as the minister of the left treated Genji, and both sons-in-law enjoyed ideal relationships with their wives' fathers.

With the emperor constantly demanding his presence, there was little chance of Genji's settling down to life away from court. The boy cherished the secret belief that no woman could equal the Fujitsubo lady in beauty, and his love for her kept his young heart in turmoil. "If only I might marry someone like that—but there isn't anybody. His Lordship's daughter seems pretty and well-bred, but I don't really care for her," he thought.

Now that Genji had come of age, the emperor no longer allowed him inside the Fujitsubo lady's blinds as he had done in the past. The boy expressed his feelings by playing his flute in harmony with the consort's koto

18. The long bridge was a corridor connecting the Shishinden, a ceremonial building, with the Setryōden.

19. She was 16, four years Genji's senior.



when there was music, or sought consolation in the faint sound of her voice. Naturally enough, it was only at the palace that he felt happy. His visits to his father-in-law's house were sporadic—stays of two or three days after five or six days of service at court—but the minister did everything in his power to make him comfortable and refused to find fault with his behavior, which was, he said, entirely permissible for one of his years. Both for his daughter and for Genji, the minister selected ladies-in-waiting of exceptionally high quality. He also devised amusing entertainments, and in general took great pains to please the young man.

At the palace, the emperor gave Genji apartments in the Kiritsubo, where his mother had lived, and assigned to his service all the women who had attended the dead lady at court and at home, a disposition that made it possible for the group to stay together. In accordance with imperial commands to the palace repairs office and the bureau of skilled artisans, the Kiritsubo lady's old home was refurbished with incomparable magnificence. The original groves and the artificial hill had always been attractive, and now, with much commotion, work crews set about widening the lake to make the grounds perfect. "If only I could bring someone I loved to a place like this and live there with her!" Genji thought gloomily.

People say there is a tradition that it was the admiring Korean who first called Genji "the shining one."

The Broom Tree



[Summer of Genji's seventeenth year]

Genji made his mistakes—so many, indeed, as to lay him open to the charge that his fine sobriquet, "the shining one," was a misnomer; and there even seems to have been talk (which can only be called malicious) about affairs that he tried to keep secret, afraid of acquiring a reputation for indiscretion if still more tales of his amours should be passed on to future generations. In reality, his sensitivity to the world's opinion was acute. He was the soul of circumspection, and the Katano lesser captain must have been vastly amused by his lack of romantic, interesting adventures.¹

Around the time when he was still a middle captain, he took great delight in his court duties and seldom left the palace for his father-in-law's house. The minister's people suspected a case of "the confusion of secret love," but, to tell the truth, his was not a nature to be much attracted to frivolous, commonplace, spur-of-the-moment affairs.² Instead, he had a deplorable habit of very occasionally, and most uncharacteristically, setting his heart on a relationship that was bound to result in misery; and at such times his behavior was not always what it should have been.

During the unrelenting summer rains, the court observed an extended period of ritual seclusion, and Genji stayed on duty for an unusually long time. Impatient and disgruntled, the people at the minister's mansion continued to provide him with magnificent costumes, perfect down to the last

1. The Katano lesser captain, the hero of a lost romance, is said to have been an ever-successful philanthropist who paid no attention to public opinion. Tamagami, *Genji monogatari hyōshaku*, 1: 160.

2. Anonymous (1M, sec. 1): *kasugano no / wakamurasaki no / surigoromo / shinobu no mидare / kagiri shirarezu* ("Like the random patterns on this robe, dyed with young purple from Kasuga Plain, utterly confused is the heart of one secretly in love").



detail, and the sons of the house were always to be found waiting on him at the Kiritsubo. Middle Captain Tō-no-chūjō (the princess's son) was on especially close terms with him, more relaxed and informal than his brothers when there was music or some other entertainment. Somewhat heartlessly flirtatious and fickle, Tō-no-chūjō also found it distasteful to live with the daughter of the minister who treated him so well. He maintained his apartments at home in luxurious style and usually went along on Genji's visits to the family mansion, where he shared his Chinese studies and amusements day and night. Wherever Genji went, he was sure to be there. As a natural consequence of such close association, the two became great friends, their lack of reserve so complete that neither could conceal his innermost thoughts from the other.

It was a hushed evening toward the end of a long rainy day. The courtiers' hall was almost deserted, and things were also unusually quiet at the Kiritsubo. Genji sat next to a lamp, looking at books. From the cabinet beside him, he withdrew some letters on paper of various colors. Tō-no-chūjō was immediately curious, but Genji refused to hand the papers over. "I could show you a few that are harmless enough, but I'm afraid some aren't in the best of taste," he said.

"The frank ones you seem to consider 'not in the best of taste' are the very ones I want to see," his friend complained. "I can't profess to be any one of much importance, but I do manage to carry on a correspondence suited to my status, and it produces a surfeit of humdrum, hackneyed love letters. The only ones worth reading are the ones written when the senders are full of resentment and accusations—or perhaps when they're waiting impatiently at nightfall."

If it had been a question of letters from ladies of high degree, the kind demanding strict secrecy, Genji would certainly have hidden them away instead of letting them lie loose in an ordinary cabinet. These must have been less important—nothing to worry about. Tō-no-chūjō took them up and glanced through them, one by one. "Quite a collection!" He tried to identify the authors, and some of his guesses hit the mark. To Genji's amusement, he challenged the denials even when he was wrong. Genji guarded his tongue, misled him as well as he could, and finally repossessed the letters and put them away.

"You must be the one with the big collection," he said. "How about letting me see them? I'll be glad to open this cabinet afterward."

"I fear there's nothing worth showing," Tō-no-chūjō said. "I've gradually come to realize that it's almost impossible to find a woman one can regard as beyond criticism," he continued. "There seem to be many who possess surface attractions—they write a beautiful hand, know how to make just the right reply to a letter, and in general perform rather well in terms of what might be expected of them. But even so, if I were really choosing on the basis of such accomplishments, it would be hard to find

someone of whom I would think, 'I absolutely can't let her slip from my grasp.' Most of them take inordinate pride in their own skills and denigrate others in a thoroughly disagreeable manner.

"Sometimes, a man will get excited over reports of a skill possessed by a girl with a pair of doting parents who are rearing her in strict seclusion, their hearts set on a brilliant marriage. She's beautiful, gentle, innocent—and, with time on her hands because she doesn't mingle in society yet, she's become absorbed in some little art, taken up in imitation of those around her, at which she has become expert by dint of incessant practice. When the people who look after her mention her to others, they keep her weak points to themselves and talk up the reasonably good ones. And since the man has never seen her, how can he be sure that he should dismiss their reports as false, merely on the basis of guesswork? But once he gets on intimate terms with her, lured by the hope that it may all be true, she invariably disappoints his expectations." He breathed a deep sigh.

Genji smiled, as though his companion's rather intimidating display of experience had recalled a similar incident in his own past. "I wonder if there's any woman who can't boast of at least one accomplishment," he said.

"If there were, no man would let himself be persuaded to approach her. I imagine there are just about as many hopeless cases as there are paragons.

"When a girl is born into an exalted household, there will always be protective people around to conceal her faults, and she will naturally seem to be the peak of perfection. Women from the middle rank have distinct personalities and individual tastes; there are many ways of distinguishing among them. As for the lower class, they can be of no particular interest."

He seemed to have mastered every detail of his subject. His curiosity whetted, Genji said, "Now about those classes—what should the basis be for distinguishing among them? How shall we treat the high-born individual who sinks into ruin, loses rank, and scarcely lives like a human being, or the common fellow who rises to become a senior noble, decorates his house with all the self-confidence in the world, and considers himself as good as anybody else?"

Just then, Uma-no-kami and Tō Shikibu-no-jō arrived to participate in the ritual seclusion. They were great sophisticates, clever at argumentation, and Tō-no-chūjō drew them into a debate on the nature of class, delighted to see them. A good many disagreeable things were said.

"Even when a man rises in the world, people will reject him if his lineage doesn't fit his new status," Uma-no-kami declared. "And even if someone comes from an exalted family and continues to have a high opinion of himself, he'll suffer from want and be forced into unbecoming expedients if he can't make his way in the world, falls behind, and loses his popularity. Our decision should be that both belong in the second rank. Society has already defined the status of the so-called *zuryō*—the men who get involved in the job of governing the provinces—but there are gradations among them, and



in times like the present, it's all right to single out some who aren't too bad and include them at the middle level of the middle class. The kind of man I personally find a refreshing improvement on a boorish senior noble is someone of fourth rank, eligible to be a consultant, who enjoys a decent reputation, comes from a respectable family, and lives in comfortable style. There seems to be nothing he doesn't have in his house, no skimping anywhere, and he probably has any number of daughters, all being reared with fantastic solicitude, and all growing up without a flaw. Many such girls enter court service and score surprising successes."

Genji laughed. "It seems we'd better concentrate on the rich ones, doesn't it?" he said.

"You don't sound like yourself," Tō-no-chūjō said with a frown. "There's no point in discussing the girl who is born into a great house—a family irreproachable in lineage and reputation—but who is inferior both in her deportment at home and in the impression she makes on others. We can only shrug our shoulders in disgust and wonder how she managed to grow up like that," Uma-no-kami said. "If someone with the same advantages turns out supremely well, that's only natural. People think it is only to have been expected, and nobody is likely to exclaim in amazement, 'What a rare phenomenon!' Such a girl is beyond the reach of someone like me, so I won't go on about the top of the top class."

"What *would* be amazing would be to discover an unbelievably sweet, appealing maiden shut up in a lonely, dilapidated, vine-choked dwelling, her very existence unknown to others. We would marvel at finding her there and would feel strangely drawn to her just because of the way she has confounded our expectations. Her father would perhaps be old and disagreeably overweight, her brother ill-favored, but she would lead a dignified life inside her predictably undistinguished rooms, and the polite accomplishments with which she whiled away the time would seem delightful. Her skills might in fact be limited, but we'd still consider her unexpectedly interesting. I don't say she could be singled out as superb or flawless—just that it would be hard to dismiss her." He glanced at Shikibu, who remained silent. (Shikibu may have wondered if his friend was thinking of his own sisters, who had been the subject of a fair amount of praise.)

Genji must have considered the chances of such a discovery negligible, since it was impossible, after all, to find the right person at even the highest social level. He was leaning against an armrest, attired in an informal cloak that was draped with deliberate negligence over some soft white inner robes, its cords untied; and his beauty in the lamplight made it tempting to think of him as a woman. To see him was to sense the difficulty of choosing a woman who could be completely worthy of him, even if she were the highest of the high.

They talked on, comparing various types. "The world is full of women," said Uma-no-kami, "but when a man tries to pick a dependable spouse, he

learns how hard it is to settle on anyone, even a person who would seem perfectly all right as somebody else's wife. It is not all that easy, I imagine, to find men with the potential to serve as pillars of state, but it takes more than one or two people to run the government, no matter how able they may be. The superior accepts help from the inferior, the inferior defers to the superior, and broad-ranging functions are performed in a spirit of accommodation. When we come to think about the lone woman who must act as mistress within the narrow confines of a household, we can see that she'll have to have a great number of indispensable qualities. It becomes a case of 'When I venture *this*, thinking, since the case is thus—when *this* is well, *that* is ill,'³ and a man reconsiders, acknowledging the scarcity of candidates who are even marginally acceptable. It isn't that he deliberately adopts the role of a dilettante, indulging a flirtatious heart by meeting and comparing all kinds of women—no, he merely wants to satisfy himself that a girl is the wife for him, so he throws himself into the attempt to at least find someone he can love, and whose flaws are not egregious enough to require correction and instruction. His first such choice is bound to be hard.

"Once a man is married to a woman, it can be difficult for him to abandon her, even though she may not be what he could wish. People will remark on his constancy in staying with her, and, naturally, the fact that they are still together will cause others to surmise that she possesses exceptional qualities. But in all my observation of marriages, I've never encountered one that seemed unbelievably successful. And considering the problems of people like me, whose range of options is fairly wide, what kinds of alternatives are there for you young lords, who search at the very highest level?

"While women remain pretty and young-looking, they all make irreproachable behavior a point of pride. One of them may write to a man, but her ambiguous language and faint handwriting will keep him guessing. Or let's say a man calls on a woman and makes up his mind not to leave without actually meeting her. He'll be subjected to an unconscionable wait, and then, when he ventures a gallant sally, in the hope of at least eliciting a word or two, she merely murmurs a little something under her breath. All this is an excellent way to hide defects.

"Sometimes a man falls head over heels in love, fascinated by a woman's apparent gentleness and femininity, but the moment he begins catering to her whims, she turns into a tease. Of all their faults, I think this is the worst. "Seeing to her husband's needs is the one responsibility a wife can't neglect, so it would seem just as well for her not to brood over the pathos of ephemerality, or feel an obligation to respond with sensitivity to every fleeting phenomenon, or immerse herself in elegant pursuits. On the other hand, there's the plain-looking housewife who demonstrates her sense of respon-

3. Anonymous (KKS 1060): *soe ni tote / to sureba kakari / kaku sureba / ana uishirazu / ausa kitusa ni* ("When I venture *this*, thinking, 'Since the case is thus, *that* is what results. When I try *that* . . . what to say? When *this* is well, *that* is ill").



sibility by tucking her hair behind her ears and devoting herself heart and soul to domestic concerns. Her husband thinks, 'I can't talk to some outsider about everything that happens at court and elsewhere while I'm away—what people do, the good and bad things I remember seeing and hearing. If only I could discuss matters with a wife who would listen to me and understand what I say!' A smile comes to his lips, tears fill his eyes—or, often enough, he fires up with moral indignation about something or other. But what good would it do to tell her? He turns aside involuntarily, and a private recollection evokes a spontaneous laugh. 'I declare!' he says, talking to himself. He can scarcely help feeling depressed when she looks up, with her mind on something else, and asks, 'What's so funny?'

"Actually, it's not a bad idea to look for a completely childlike, docile woman, train her a little, and marry her. The man may have misgivings about her reliability, but at least he can feel that she's educable. And to be sure, he'll overlook the faults she commits in his presence the more readily because she's such an appealing little thing. But once they're apart and he sends a message about something that needs to be done, she lacks the judgment to decide how to take care of it, whether it's a matter of taste or something more practical. This is most disturbing: one feels, after all, that the flaw of undependability can be a source of infinite grief.

"And then there's the woman who's usually blunt and disagreeable but makes a wonderful appearance when the occasion calls for it." The omniscient debater heaved a deep sigh, unable to reach a conclusion.

"My present feeling," he continued, "is that I'm not going to make social position my main criterion—much less physical appearance. The one disqualification will be a terrible disposition. Otherwise, a man should simply choose for his lifetime companion anyone who is serious and placid by nature. If, in addition, she happens to be talented and discriminating, he'll rejoice. If she's a bit inferior in some respects, he won't dwell on her deficiencies: as long as she's faithful and not unreasonably jealous, he'll see that she acquires surface accomplishments in the natural course of events.

"A gentle, shy woman of the second kind may pretend not to notice things about which she might justifiably complain. To all outward appearances, she has nothing on her mind. But when she reaches the breaking point, she flies in secret to some remote mountain dwelling or isolated shore, leaving behind an indescribably poignant letter, a pathetic poem, and mementos that are sure to make the man think of her, whether he wants to or not. When I was a child listening to the ladies-in-waiting read stories, I used to feel deeply moved, even to the point of tears, by the plight of the women who made such decisions. But thinking about it now, I find their behavior rash and theatrical. Even if a wife has to put up with something at the moment, what could be more foolish than to doom herself to a lifetime of misery by ignoring her husband's sincere devotion, running away into hiding as though unaware of his feelings, and causing him no end of trouble—

all in order to test his heart? Her emotion swells, fed by people who praise her decision, and she's a nun before you know it. She seems to be in a state of enlightenment when she reaches her decision, and it doesn't occur to her that she may someday look back on her secular life with regret. But her acquaintances come to commiserate with her—"What a tragedy! To think you were ready to go this far!"—and the news of her action is greeted with tears by her husband, whom she still can't bring herself to hate. 'Why in the world did you do it when he loved you so much?' say her servants and elderly ladies-in-waiting. As she gropes for the tresses that once brushed her cheeks, her own face contorts with misery. She tries to be brave, but the tears overflow, and each time it's more than she can bear: she's so full of regrets that the Buddha must think her heart is more impure than it was before. It certainly seems to me that a woman is more likely to stray onto one of the evil paths when she's halfway enlightened than when she remains a sinful lay person. And even if the karmic bond is so strong that the man finds her before she takes the vows, the memory is bound to rankle in his mind. The truly strong, impressive marriage is the one in which the woman stays at the man's side through thick and thin, overlooking disagreeable incidents. Escapades like this are bound to leave a residue of uneasiness and constraint.

"It's also foolish for a woman to show open resentment and pick a quarrel with a man just because he gets involved in a meaningless affair with someone else. As long as he associates the wife fondly with the early days of their love, he will value the relationship, however attractive the other woman may seem; but the marriage may well end if she deluges him with complaints.

"A husband's love will increase if a woman remains calm in every situation, merely hints at her knowledge of causes for jealousy, and speaks only in an unobjectionable, roundabout fashion of matters at which she might easily take offense. In more cases than not, he'll be moved to mend his ways. On the other hand, a woman will find herself dismissed as negligible, no matter how sweet and appealing she may be, if she simply stands back, inordinately reluctant to interfere, and lets her husband do whatever he pleases. A man doesn't really get any fun out of drifting like an unmoored boat, wouldn't you agree?"

Tō-no-chūjō nodded. "It can be a serious matter when we have to doubt the fidelity of someone whose charm and appeal have captured our heart," he said. "We think we can reform the person by remaining faithful ourselves and overlooking the transgressions, but we aren't likely to succeed. On the whole, I suppose it's best to adopt an attitude of calm forbearance toward behavior at which we might take legitimate offense." This was a verdict that fit his own sister's case, he thought. He was disappointed and vexed to find that Genji had dozed off and had nothing to say on the subject.

Uma-no-kami, the expert, talked on, and Tō-no-chūjō paid close attention, eager to hear the rest of his dissertation.



"Think about some comparisons—for example, the woodworker who makes all kinds of things to suit his fancy. If one of his products happens to be a spur-of-the-moment trifle for which there is no fixed model, it may look stylish at first glance. 'Well! Here's another way to make that,' we think. As one such occasion follows another, the form keeps changing, and some of the results impress us as modern, fresh, and appealing. But when it comes to carefully fashioning a perfect piece of formal furniture—a decorative object made in the prescribed way—then the true expert demonstrates his unique skill.

"Again, there are many fine artists in the office of painting. When a group has been chosen to draw preliminary sketches in black and white, it's impossible to glance at the individual pictures and find clues to distinguish the superior from the inferior. In an extravagantly colored picture of Mount Penglai, the fairy isle no mortal has ever seen, or of fierce fish in wild seas, or horrendous Chinese beasts, or invisible spirits, the painter lets his imagination run riot to astound us the more, and the result will pass for the real thing, even though it's untrue to life. But the brush of a master is unique—far better than the efforts of a mediocre artist—when it comes to drawing ordinary mountains and streams and familiar dwellings in such a way that we think, 'That's it, exactly,' or inserting unobtrusive bits of scenery that seem appealing and gentle, or depicting range after range of densely forested rolling hills so that they seem infinitely remote from the busy world, or creating a meticulous design for a garden behind a rustic fence.

"Also in calligraphy, an ill-trained writer's characters may look skillful and stylish at first glance, with their dots running into lines and their vague aura of assertiveness, whereas the writing of someone who has mastered the essence of the art through painstaking study may appear unremarkable. But when we pick up the two specimens and compare them again, we see that the product of the competent hand is the better.

"That's the way it is in these relatively minor matters. So when it comes to the human heart, I certainly don't feel like trusting somebody who is all ences, even though it may sound a bit indecent." He inched closer on his knees, and Genji awoke. Tō-no-chūjō sat opposite with the expression of a true believer, cheek on hand. It was amusingly like the expression of a learned monk delivers a Buddhist sermon, except that this was the kind of occasion on which those present find it impossible to keep from discussing their love affairs.

"Early in my career, while I still held a junior post, there was a woman I fancied. I mentioned her earlier—the one who was no beauty. Being young never thought of making her my principal wife. I considered it a minor liaison and sought distraction in other quarters, she flew into jealous fits. I was annoyed

and wished she could be more even-tempered, but her attacks never let up. On the one hand, it was exasperating, but there were times when I felt sorry for her, too, wondering how she could keep on caring so much for someone so unreliable; and almost without realizing it, I lost the desire to roam.

"This woman paid scrupulous attention to all my needs and tried her best to see that everything was exactly as I desired. For instance, she would puzzle out ways to perform tasks she really was unequal to, determined to get them done for my sake; or she would devote tremendous effort to mastering a skill at which she didn't excel, so that I wouldn't find her wanting. I had thought that such behavior signified a strong will, but she was always submissive and gentle. She paid great attention to makeup and dress because she was afraid her ugliness might disgust me, she avoided strangers because she thought it might be a blow to my dignity for her to be seen, and in general she tried to be prudent and circumspect. As we went on together, I found no fault in her character except for the one thing—her intolerable jealousy.

"At that point, I thought, 'She seems to be an inordinately devoted, timid woman. If I can scare her just enough to teach her a lesson, she'll probably calm down and quit being so obnoxious.' It seemed to me that if I let her know I intended to break with her because I was fed up, anyone so submissive would be bound to mend her ways; and I intentionally put on a great show of coldness. Then, when she flew into one of her usual jealous rages, I said, 'Strong as our karmic bond may be, this kind of willfulness will sever it; I won't be seeing you anymore if this keeps up. If you want to break things off, just go on nursing your groundless suspicions. If you want us to stay together far into the future, you'll have to bear the hard things, learn to shrug them off, and quit being jealous. Then I'll love you with all my heart, and you'll be my principal wife when I rise to a modest prominence.'

"After I had gone on for a while in that lofty vein, satisfied that I was doing a fine job of teaching, she answered with a faint smile. 'I wouldn't be impatient or upset if it were simply a matter of accepting your present poverty and insignificance and waiting for you to move up in the world, but I can't bear the anguish of going on like this month after month and year after year, putting up with your cruelty and hoping against hope that you might change someday. The time has come for us to part.' The hostility in her voice aroused my anger, and I showered her with abuse. Too impatient to control herself, she seized one of my fingers and bit it.

"I turned on her with exaggerated reproaches. 'I'll never be able to perform my duties at court with a wound like this. Now how am I supposed to rise above the insignificance you cast up to me? I'll just have to become a monk.' I left, holding my finger curled against my palm and saying, 'Very well, today marks the end for us.' To my parting poem I added the comment, 'You can have no complaint!'



When with my fingers

I tell over the events

of our married life,

I see that jealousy

is far from your only flaw.

te o orite
aimishi koto o
kazoureba
kore hitotsu ya wa
kimi ga uki fushi

tears:

Angry though she was, she burst into

Your flaws I have told

in the silence of my heart

as time has gone by:

uki fushi o
kokoro hitotsu ni

this is indeed the hour

when I must bid you farewell.

ko ya kimi ga te o
wakarubeki ori

"Despite the quarrel, I didn't really intend to break with her, but I was leading an unsettled life, and I let the days slip by without even sending her a note. One night when a dreary sleet was falling, a group of us left the imperial palace together, after staying late to rehearse some dances for the Kamo Special Festival, and when we separated to go our own ways, I realized that her house was the only place I thought of as home. The prospect of spending the night alone at the palace was depressing—nor could I expect much warmth at the house of a rather affected lady I had been visiting. I resolved to go where I could be sure of comfort, and also to use the occasion to test her attitude. I felt a little sheepish and shy as I entered, brushing the snow from my garments with unnecessary vigor, but I said to myself that a visit on such a night surely ought to be enough to melt even so long hardened a heart.

"A dim lamp stood facing the wall, several soft, thickly padded robes were spread on a large incense basket, and all the curtains were up, just as though she had been hoping I might appear. 'No more than I expected,' I thought smugly. But she herself was not to be seen; nobody was there but a few ladies-in-waiting who were looking after the place. 'Her Ladyship went to her father's house at nightfall,' they said in answer to my questions.

"I had already been disappointed by her behavior—shutting herself up in the house, never sending a coquettish poem or elegant note or doing anything else of interest—and now in my irritation (and little as I actually believed it), I wondered if her shrewishness might have been part of a deliberate plan to turn me against her. But the perfect dyes and impeccable tailoring of the robes laid out for me showed that they had been prepared with more than usual attention, and that, in characteristic fashion, she had been thinking about me and my needs, even after apparently deciding to break with me.

"Whatever the evidence to the contrary, I was positive she didn't want to give me up. I tried some approaches, and she accepted them. She made no effort to confuse me by hiding, nor did she embarrass me by refusing to answer any of my letters. She merely said, 'If you continue in your old ways,

I won't be able to overlook it. If you learn to settle down, I'm willing for us to live together.' 'All very well,' I thought, 'but she can't bear to part from me.' Convinced that a little discipline would do her good, I made no promise of reform, but instead subjected her to some very perverse antics. She took it dreadfully to heart and died, and only then did I realize the folly of my sport.

"When she comes to mind now, I always have the feeling that she was a woman who met every requirement for a lifetime companion. There was no matter, however large or small, on which I couldn't consult her with profit. When it came to dyeing, she was a veritable Tatsutahime, and as a seamstress she was a marvel, as deft as the Weaver Maid." As he sat remembering her, she seemed to him infinitely pathetic.

"We'd probably settle for less than the Weaver Maid's skill if we could share the Ox-Driver's good fortune in keeping his spouse forever," Tō-no-chijō chimed in. "It sounds as though your Tatsutahime must have been truly unique among women. No wonder it's hard to find the ideal wife when we can't even count on things as trivial as blossoms and autumn leaves, which all too often display drab colors, unworthy of the season, and come and go without meriting our attention."

"Around the same time," Uma-no-kami resumed, "I was seeing something of a woman who had a nicer personality than the other one, and whose tastes seemed to be refined. She composed poetry, wrote a flowing hand, and played the koto agreeably—in fact, I didn't notice any shortcomings at all. She wasn't bad looking, either, so I paid her an occasional surreptitious visit, meanwhile relying on the nagger to look after me; and in time I fell deeply in love. When the other one died, I was dazed with grief, but it does no good to cling to the departed, and I got into the habit of paying her frequent visits. Gradually, I became aware of a somewhat flashy, flirtatious side to her character, which displeased me and led to the conclusion that she wouldn't make a trustworthy wife. My visits fell off, and presently it began to look as though she had taken a secret lover.

"As I was leaving the palace on a beautiful moonlit night in the tenth month, I met a certain courtier who joined me in my carriage. I decided to spend the night at the major counselor's place.⁴

"I have an odd feeling of concern about a house where someone has probably been waiting for me tonight," my companion said.

"As it happened, the woman I've been telling you about lived on the way. We could see the reflection of the moon in the lake beyond her outer wall (which was crumbling here and there), and the other man got out—unable, he announced, to go past a place where even the moon had sought a lodging. He had apparently been on close terms with my mistress for quite a

4. The major counselor was probably his father.



while, because he seated himself jauntily and gazed up at the moon from a sort of veranda, which was attached to a corridor near the middle gate. The white chrysanthemums had taken on a delightful reddish tinge, and the autumn leaves were scattering in the wind, as though in competition to forsake turn leaves were scattering in the scene. The man drew a flute from his breast and began to play, interspersing his piping with snatches of song, such as, "The shade is good."⁵

"Presently, I heard the mellow strains of a six-stringed koto, already tuned to the right key, harmonizing skillfully with the flute. The effect wasn't at all bad, nor did the modern sound of a *ritsu* mode seem inappropriate to the bright moonlight as it drifted from behind the bamboo blinds, summoned by the woman's gentle touch. Filled with admiration, the man walked over to the blinds. 'I see no sign that anyone has made his way through the autumn leaves in this garden,' he teased.⁶ He picked a chrysanthemum and offered it with a poem:

koto no ne mo tsuki mo e naranu yado nagara tsurenaki hito o hiki ya tomekeru	Splendid beyond words both koto and moonlight at this dwelling, but I wonder if they have held an indifferent man.
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'I really shouldn't talk that way.'

"How about another song?" he continued. 'Don't be ungenerous when there's someone here who can appreciate it.' To this and other jesting, familiar remarks, she returned a coquettish, affected answer:

kogarashi ni fukiawasameru fue no ne o hikidomobeki koto no ha zo naki	I have no words, nor has my koto notes sufficient to hold one whose flute harmonizes with the cold autumnal wind.
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"Unaware that I was listening to their badinage with mounting indignation, she tuned a thirteen-stringed koto to the *banshiki* mode and began to play in the currently fashionable manner. The music was not without its brilliance, but I found it loathsome.

"When a man is merely involved in a casual, off-and-on affair (with a lady-in-waiting at court, for example), it may be amusing enough, for as

5. A line from a folksong (*sabara*), "Asuka Well" (KDK's, p. 385): "At Asuka Well—that's good." The woman is expected to recall the second line, and to understand that the singer is here / *you* hito wa nashi ("Now autumn has come. Fallen leaves have covered the garden, and along the buried path no visitor makes his way").

6. Anonymous (KKS 287): aki wa kinu / moniji wa yado ni / furishikinu / michi fumiwa- along the buried path no visitor makes his way").

long as the liaison lasts, to watch his fair one flirt and preen herself on her attainments. But I couldn't help turning against this woman and judging her too little trustworthy, too forward, to qualify as a partner in what I would consider a permanent relationship, even though my visits might be irregular. I used the events of that evening as an excuse for breaking with her.

"When I think over those two experiences and compare them, I see that even as a youth I recognized the unseemly, untrustworthy character of a woman who would flaunt her talents like that. I expect to hold the same view with deeper conviction in the future. You gentlemen are probably interested only in flirtatious, yielding women—dewdrops on bush clover, as it were, seemingly ready to fall if we break the branch, or halstones on bamboo grass, ready to vanish if we pick them up. But you'll know better in another seven years or so. Take a humble man's advice: beware of the female who looks like an easy conquest. Such women commit indiscretions, and their men acquire reputations as fools."

To this advice, Tō-no-chūjō responded with his usual affirmative nod. Genji gave a slight smile in apparent agreement. "They're both rather awkward, embarrassing stories, aren't they?" he said, laughing.

"Let me tell you a story about a foolish woman," Tō-no-chūjō said. "She was someone whom I had begun to visit in strictest secrecy, and whom it had seemed worth my while to keep seeing in the same way. There was no thought in my mind of a permanent relationship, but she became dear to me as I got used to her, and I felt that it would be impossible to forget her, even though my visits were irregular. I noticed that she showed signs of regarding me as her protector, and that being the case, there were times when I couldn't help expecting her to get upset, but she didn't seem to notice that anything was wrong: however long my absence, she always seemed determined to act patient and resigned, and not to consider me a philanderer who merely dropped in now and then. Moved to compassion, I kept assuring her that she could count on me. She was a defenseless orphan, and I found it appealing that she thought, 'I'm all right; I have him,' whenever any problem came up.

"Then someone at my wife's house availed herself of an opportunity to drop a cruel, vicious innuendo in my mistress's ear. It happened during a period when I had let a long time elapse without visiting her, my mind at ease because of her mild manner; and it wasn't until later that I learned of it. Never dreaming that she had suffered such a harsh blow, I continued to stay away, without even sending a letter—though, of course, I didn't forget her. Meanwhile, she felt extremely depressed and vulnerable, especially since there was a child to consider. In desperation, she picked a wild pink and sent it to me." There were tears in his eyes.

"What did her letter say?" Genji asked.

"I don't seem to remember anything in particular. [There was a poem:]



yamagatsu no
kakiho aru tomo
orori ni
aware wa kake yo
nadeshiko no tsuyu

Though the rustic's fence
sink neglected into ruin,
may the kindly dew
descend now and again
on the wild pink at its base.⁷

"This reminder brought me to her house. As usual, there was no coldness in her manner, but she looked terribly unhappy, and she seemed to me to resemble a character in an old romance as she gazed disconsolately at the dew-drenched grounds of the neglected dwelling, weeping as though in rivalry with the wailing insects. [I recited a poem:]

Hard task though it be
to distinguish between flowers
in intermingled bloom,
there is still none to equal
the wild pink, "blossom of the bed."⁸

"My idea was to forget for the moment about the child, the 'wild pink of Yamato,' and concentrate on soothing the mother—on making it clear that I would guard her 'even against a speck of dust.' She responded with a poem, murmured as though the matter were unimportant, with no hint of serious resentment.

uchiharan
sode mo tsuyukeki
tokonatsu ni
arashi fukisou
aki mo kinikeri

A cold gale adds its threat
to the wild pink burdened with dew
where tears have dampened sleeves
employed to brush a dusty bed.
Love's autumn has truly come!⁹

"She tried to keep me from noticing her tears, which seemed to cause her great embarrassment, and acted as though nothing could be more distressing than to let me see that she minded my behavior. So I didn't worry; again, I stayed away. And she simply disappeared—vanished without a trace. She must be having a hard time if she's still alive. I'd never have let her wander off like that if she had made any demands on me in the days when I was fond of her. Nor would I have neglected her for such long stretches of time; I could have arranged to give her a certain position and look after her per-

7. Fence, dew, and wild pink are metaphors for the author, Tō-no-chūjō, and the child. Uses *tokonatsu*, another name for the flower, "wild pink," to mean the child, Tō-no-chūjō syllables of *tokonatsu* are homophonous with a word meaning "woman herself. The first two yori/ino to wa ga nuru / tokonatsu no Mitsuue (KKS 167): chiri o dani / seiji to zo omou / sakishi of dust since first they blossomed—those wild pinks, "flowers of the bed" where I lie with my wife".

9. The cold gale represents Tō-no-chūjō's wife; *aki* puns on "autumn" and a form of the verb *aku*, "tire of," of which Tō-no-chūjō is the subject.

manently. The 'wild pink' was an adorable child. I want very much to find her, but I haven't been able to learn anything about her yet.

"This woman would certainly seem to be an example of your unreliable type. Deceived by her placid air, I went on loving her without realizing that her heart was seething with anger—a fruitless, one-sided love, indeed. I'm bearing me, that there are evenings when her heart aches with love, and she knows there's nobody but herself to blame. She was an untrustworthy person, the kind a man can't keep.

"Your nagging spouse was a memorable woman, but such jealousy would be hard to live with—and, one suspects, might produce active dislike under the wrong circumstances. In the case of the accomplished performer on the koto, we must consider her flirtatious nature a damning flaw. There is also room for doubt about the true sentiments of my unreliable mistress. If we had to choose which of the three would make the best wife, I don't believe we could do it. This kind of comparison of good and bad points is far from easy. But where is there a woman who possesses all the virtues and lacks all the faults? Some may think of Kichijōten, but she's too otherworldly and mysterious for comfort." Everyone laughed.

"Shikibu must have some interesting stories. Tell us a little something," Tō-no-chūjō urged.

"What story from the lowest of the low could merit the attention of gentlemen like you?" Shikibu-no-jō demurred.

Tō-no-chūjō was serious. "Come on," he insisted. "You're wasting time." After mulling over possible subjects, Shikibu-no-jō began his account. "Once while I was still a student of literature, I ran across an example of the brainy woman. Just as in the case Uma-no-kami has described, she offered sage advice when I consulted her about my work, and revealed a marvelous ability to cope with the problems of everyday life. Her learning would have put some of our would-be scholars to shame, too. All in all, she was enough to make a man afraid to open his mouth.

"This happened at a time when I was visiting a certain professor to study with him. I'd been informed that he had several daughters, and when an opportunity arose, I made advances to one of them. The father heard about it and brought out the wine bowl. 'Listen while I sing of two ways,' he said.¹⁰ I wasn't especially eager to visit the girl, but I let myself become involved with her rather than offend him. She looked after me with loving care, seasoned our pillow talk with instruction in such Chinese lore as might help me in the proper execution of my official duties, and wrote me letters in a

10. A line from a composition by Bo Juyi. The poem continues, "It's easy for a rich man's daughter to get married, but she looks down on her husband; it's hard for a poor man's daughter to get married, but she's good to her mother-in-law." The professor is offering Shikibu-no-jō his daughter.



fine, clear hand, using formal, convoluted Chinese diction, unmarried by kana. Naturally, I couldn't stop visiting her. She was the teacher from whom I learned what little I can manage in the way of composing a lame sort of Chinese, and I still thank her for that. But it seemed to me that it would be embarrassing for a man to keep letting himself be shown up as a less-than-brilliant scholar in front of a woman he cherished as a true wife. And some one like the professor's daughter would certainly have no appeal at all for young lords who can dispense with strong, active feminine support. One side of me wanted to be rid of her, but I liked her well enough to keep seeing her, possibly because of some karmic affinity. Men don't have much backbone."

The others were curious to hear the rest of the story. Tongue in cheek, they egged him on. "Well, well! A most interesting woman, indeed." Although he knew their pleas were insincere, he returned to his subject with a comical expression of satisfaction.

"Once when something took me to her house after a long absence, I was annoyed to find that she received me from behind curtains instead of in the usual comfortable room. 'How absurd,' I thought. 'Is this her way of expressing displeasure?' It occurred to me that I was being given an opportunity to break with her. But my sagacious lady was not one to indulge in rash displays of jealousy. Well aware of the conduct proper to a wife, she uttered no word of reproach. In a high-pitched voice, she said, 'For several months now, I have been afflicted with the vapors, which I am treating with the "extreme heat" garlic decoction. The odor is pungent, and I must decline an interview, but I shall be happy to execute any minor commissions with which you may wish to charge me.' Unable to frame a suitable response to this admirable formal speech, I said merely, 'I understand.' She may have felt that something more was needed, for she called out as I prepared to leave, 'Come and see me when the smell's gone.' It seemed heartless to go without a word, but I couldn't bring myself to tarry, especially after an unbearable reek of garlic began to assail my nostrils. Poised for flight, I recited a poem:

sasagani no furnai shiruki yūgure ni hiruma suguse to iu ga aya naki	I don't understand why you say, 'Come by day' on an evening when the spider with its web had told you of my visit. ¹¹
--	--

'What kind of excuse is that?
'I dashed off without further ado. She sent a poem in pursuit:

11. The expression attributed to the woman, *hiruma suguse* ("Come by day"), can also mean, "Wait until the garlic smell goes." It was a popular belief that a spider spinning its web at dusk was a sign that one's lover would come that night.

au koto no
yo o shi hedatenu
naka naraba
hiruma mo nani ka
mabayukaramashi

If the two of us
were of those couples who meet
each night without fail,
what embarrassment would I feel
if you were to come by day?¹²

"It was a characteristically swift response," he concluded in a grave voice. The others burst into appalled laughter.

"You made the whole thing up!"

"Where would anyone find such a woman?"

"I'd rather settle down with a witch. That's gruesome!" The speaker snapped his fingers.

"That can hardly be called a story," said someone in a disparaging voice. "Tell us something a little more suitable."

Shikibu-no-jō sat motionless. "What could be better than that?" he asked.

"To me it seems pathetic that an inferior man or woman always wants to show people every last bit of what little it is that he or she knows," said Uma-no-kami. "A woman will lack charm if she achieves full mastery of the three histories and five classics, the core of the Chinese curriculum. On the other hand, we can hardly say that the mere fact of her sex renders her utterly ignorant, utterly incapable of coping with what goes on in public and private. Even though she may not make a point of getting an education, her eyes and ears will naturally pick up quite a bit if she's at all bright. But if, having acquired the ability to dash off Chinese characters, she stuffs a letter to another woman more than half full of them instead of avoiding them altogether, as would be proper, then the recipient thinks, 'How disagreeable she is! Why couldn't she have chosen a more graceful style?' It doesn't occur to the writer that her calligraphy lacks grace, but to the reader, whose voice will inevitably produce stiff, harsh sounds, it seems as though she has been trying to show off. This kind of thing is by no means uncommon, even in the highest circles.

"Nothing is more annoying than the would-be poet, the slave to the art who constructs a composition around some clever historical allusion and sends it to a man who is in no mood for versification. If he doesn't answer, he's a boor; if he can't rise to the challenge, he feels humiliated. Let's say it's around the time of one of the court banquets—for instance, the morning of the fifth-month festival, when he's about to rush off to the imperial palace and can't possibly sit down for quiet reflection about sweet flags, yet she sends him a poem with a handsome root. Or he may be frantically trying to cobble together a Chinese poem on some difficult topic for the ninth-day banquet, yet she sends a reproachful missive, hinting that her tears resemble dewdrops on chrysanthemums. She's imposing a burden on him just when it's least appropriate, and she makes herself appear tactless, rather than in-

12. Or: "If you were here when I smelled of garlic?"



genious as she had hoped, by dispatching her effort without stopping to think that he won't be able to pay any attention to it at such a time, even though he would undoubtedly have found it novel or touching if she had just held off and let him think about it later.

"On the whole, it's surely safer for a woman not to assume stylish airs or play the aesthete if she fails to understand which occasions are the ones on which others will think, 'Why did she have to do that? Couldn't she have left well enough alone?' Any woman will be well advised not to show every-thing she knows, and not to speak her full mind when she has something to say."

Genji's mind had been on the Fujitsubo lady all along. To him she seemed a woman with none of those deficiencies or excesses, and his heart was full as he asked himself where her like was to be found.

The discussion trailed off inconclusively into disreputable anecdotes, and presently a new day dawned.

The weather had finally taken a turn for the better. Genji left to go to his father-in-law's house, moved to sympathy by thoughts of the minister's concern over his long stay at the palace. All was brightness, elegance, and order at the mansion and in his wife's apartments. He told himself that this lady was eminently trustworthy, just the sort of serious person his recent companions had said it would be impossible to desert, but her correct, prim manner made him feel stiff and self-conscious, and he turned in frustration to teasing Lady Chūnagon, Nakatsukasa, and others among her pretty young attendants, meanwhile loosening his robes in the heat. The attentive ladies-in-waiting found his appearance delightful. The minister arrived, sat down beyond a curtain-stand in deference to his son-in-law's dishabille, and began to chat. Genji pulled a wry face. "It's too hot to talk," he said. The ladies giggled. "Sh! Be quiet!" Genji admonished, leaning on his armrest. He seemed very much at home.

Yūgaō



[Summer to tenth month of Genji's seventeenth year. Rokujō lady: 24; Yūgaō: 19; Aoi: 21]

It happened around the time when he was making secret visits to a lady in the vicinity of Rokujō Avenue. Feeling in need of a brief rest as he was on his way to her house from the palace, he stopped on Gojō Avenue to pay a sick call at the home of his former nurse, Daini, who had become a nun in search of relief from a grave illness. The carriage gate was bolted, and he sent someone to call Koremitsu.¹

Gazing idly at the squalid avenue while he waited, he noticed that the house next door had a new wickerwork fence made of cypress wood. The half-shutters above it had all been raised for a distance of four or five bays, and from behind pale, cool-looking rattan blinds a large number of attractive feminine foreheads were visible as their owners peeped at his carriage. The women were apparently moving about, and it seemed to him that they must be very tall as he tried to visualize their lower bodies. Intrigued, he wondered who they were. He had chosen a plain carriage and had prohibited the warning shouts that usually cleared his way; and now he ventured to expose his face for a better look, certain that he would not be recognized. The whole of the modest establishment was in view just inside the gate, which was only a shutter-like contrivance, raised on a pole; and its ramshackle appearance evoked poignant thoughts of the old poem, "What place might I single out."² Stately mansions are no less ephemeral.

As though proud that they were the only flowers in bloom, some blos-

1. We learn later that Koremitsu is the nun's son, and that Genji is his foster-brother (*meno-togo*) and patron.

2. Anonymous (*kks 987*): *yo no naka wa / izure ka sashite / wa ga naranu / yukitomaru o zo / yado to sadamuru* ("In this world of men, what place might I single out to be my abode? I will choose to lay my head wherever my journey ends").



soms had created exuberant splashes of white on a luxuriant green vine which was rambling over a species of board fence.

"I would like to ask a question of the person in the distance," Genji murmured.³

One of his escorts knelt.⁴ "Those vines, 'blooming with snow-white flowers,' are called evening faces [*yūgaō*]. The name makes one think of people worth noticing—but that's a wretched fence they're blooming on." The tangled vines had crawled along the crumbling, weakened eaves of all the dwellings in what was indeed a shabby neighborhood of mostly small, humble houses.

"Poor blossoms! Theirs is an unhappy karma," Genji said. "Pick one for me." The man went inside the raised gate and picked a flower. Modest though the household was, a pretty little girl, dressed in a long pair of thin yellow silk trousers, came to a tasteful sliding door and beckoned to him. She held out a heavily scented white fan.

"Put it on this for the gentleman," she said. "Those flowers don't have nice stems."

Just then, someone opened the gate and Koremitsu emerged. The man handed him the fan to give to Genji.

"Please forgive me; the key got lost. Nobody in this neighborhood would recognize you, but I'm sorry you had to wait in such a grubby street," Koremitsu apologized.

They took the carriage inside, and Genji got out. Koremitsu's older brother, the holy teacher,⁵ the nun's son-in-law, the governor of Mikawa Province, and Koremitsu's sister had all assembled, and all expressed their gratitude for the visit, which they considered the greatest of honors. The nun herself arose from her bed. "I don't mind giving up my old way of life; if I hesitated and agonized over renouncing the world, it was only because I feared I could no longer appear in your presence like this and enjoy the honor of your gaze. But I saved my life by taking the tonsure, and now I can await Amida's glory with a pure heart, thanks to this gracious visit. She shed weak tears.

"I've kept worrying because you haven't got any better in all this time, and I feel very upset and depressed because you've become a nun. But you must live to see me rise at court. Then there won't be anything to keep you from being reborn in the highest of the nine grades. They say the mere hint of a lingering worldly concern counts against a person." Genji's voice was choked with tears.

3. Anonymous (KKS 1007): *uchiwatazu / ochikarabito ni / mono mōsu ware / sono soko ni / shinku sakuru wa / nani no hana zo mo* ("I would ask a question of the person to be seen standing off in the distance: What flowers are those? I mean the ones over there, blooming with snow-white flowers").

4. Here and elsewhere in this book, "escort" translates *zurijin*, a name for a type of guard. See Glossary.

5. *Ajari*, a Buddhist title. See Glossary.

Even when a child falls below the average, a biased observer like a nurse will be foolish enough to regard him as perfect. The connection with someone as remarkable as Genji had naturally been a source of enormous pride for the nun, and she continued to weep without apparent reason, as though perhaps regretting her loss of the importance and dignity she considered herself to have acquired during her years of close personal attendance on him. Her children exchanged pained glances and nudges. Such a display of unprovoked tears in front of His Lordship could only make it seem that she was clinging to the world she had forsaken.

Genji for his part felt deep emotion. "After death claimed my natural protectors while I was a small child, there seemed to be a great many people ready to care for me, but you were the only one I felt really close to. Now that I'm grown up, there are constraints that make it impossible to see you morning and evening, or even to call and ask about your health whenever I please, but I always begin to feel unhappy when we're separated for a long time. 'How I wish that in this world there were no final partings!'"⁶ He wiped away tears as he spoke, his voice quiet and confidential, and the motion of his sleeve filled the room with fragrance. Forgetting their disapproval, the nun's children wept in sympathy. "When you think about it, Mother has been blessed with an extraordinary karma," they said to themselves.

Genji issued instructions for more performances of rituals. When he was ready to leave, he told Koremitsu to bring over a torch so that he could look at the neighbor's fan. It carried an intriguing scent of perfume from the robes of someone who seemed to have made regular use of it, and on it there was a poem, written in elegant cursive script:

<i>kokoroate ni</i>	just at a hazard,
<i>sore ka to zo miru</i>	might it perchance be his—
<i>shiratsuyu no</i>	the face in the twilight,
<i>hikari soetaru</i>	a <i>yūgao</i> enhanced
<i>yūgao no hana</i>	by the radiance of the dew?

Dashed off with a deliberate lack of individuality, the calligraphy suggested cultivation and taste. Genji was conscious of an unexpected stir of interest. "Do you happen to have found out who lives in the house to the west?" he asked Koremitsu.

Koremitsu wished Genji would curb his troublesome instincts, but he could not very well say so. "For the five or six days I've been here, I've been too busy with Mother, worrying and taking care of her, to find out anything about the neighbors," he answered in a snappish voice.

"I know you think I shouldn't have asked," Genji said, "but there's some-

6. Ariwara no Narihira (KKS 901): *yo no naka ni / saranu wakare no / naku mo ga na / chiyo mo to nageku / hito no ko no tame* ("For sorrowing sons who would have their parents live a thousand long years—how I wish that in this world there were no final partings").



thing about this fan that seems to need looking into. Call someone who's likely to know; ask him."

Koremitsu went inside, summoned the caretaker, and questioned him. "The house belongs to an honorary vice-governor. The wife is young and taker said, 'The husband is away in the provinces, a lady-in-waiting, who pays fond of elegant pursuits, and she has a sister, a flunky, I don't imagine he her frequent visits.' Considering that he's only a flunky, I don't imagine he knows anything more."

The poem would have come from the lady-in-waiting, Genji thought, not its father confident, familiar tone. He wondered if she might prove a severe disappointment. It was probably because of his usual susceptibility that he felt unable to ignore the overture, coming as it did from someone who had penetrated his incognito and reacted in what was, after all, a not displeasing manner. In a carefully disguised hand, he wrote a poem on a folded sheet of paper.

Were it to be seen
closer at hand, you might know
the evening face
of which you caught a glimpse
as twilight shadows gathered.

yorite koso
sore ka to mo mine
tasagare ni
honobono mitsuru
hana no yugao

He dispatched it by the same escort.

Although the lady had never met Genji, she had yielded to the temptation to let him know that she had glimpsed his unmistakable profile. Awkwardly enough, considerable time had elapsed without any acknowledgment on his part, but now the household was elated at having elicited a response, and the escort perceived that its members appeared to be debating a reply. That was too much, he thought. He went back to his master.

Genji set out very quietly by the dim light of his way-clearers' torches. The half-shutters had been lowered next door, and lonely rays of lamplight straggled through the cracks, fainter than a firefly's glow.

At his destination, everything bespoke a degree of comfort and elegance not to be found in the common run of dwellings—the groves of great trees, dignified, correct woman, and Genji probably had little leisure to remember the fence where the evening faces bloomed. He overslept the next morning. The sun was rising when he took his leave, and to those who beheld him in the early morning light, it seemed only natural that people should always be singing his praises.

On that day, also, he passed in front of the shutters. He had undoubtedly done so on earlier occasions, but the trifling incident of the fan had left an impression, and thereafter he looked at the house whenever he went by, wondering about its occupants.

Koremitsu put in an appearance several days later. "I've been taking care

of my mother, who still seems frail," he said. Drawing nearer, he added, "After receiving your instructions, I had someone question a person who knew about the house next door, but he didn't tell us much. According to him, a certain lady has apparently been living there in strict secrecy ever since the fifth month or thereabouts, but nobody has been told who she is, not even the members of the household. I've looked through cracks in the boundary fence a few times, and it's true you can make out the figures of young women behind the blinds. They wear what look like abbreviated trains draped around their hips—a gesture in the direction of formality, I'd say, as though they were waiting on somebody. Yesterday, when the rays of the setting sun were streaming into the house, I saw a beautiful woman sitting down to write a letter. She looked unhappy, and her attendants were trying to hide tears. I saw it all quite clearly."

Genji smiled. It would be interesting to learn more.

"A good reputation is important for someone in his position," Koremitsu thought. "But actually, when you think about it—his youth, the deference and praise he receives—he'd seem tasteless and dreary if he weren't a bit of a gallant. After all, the right woman will captivate any man, even one of those lesser mortals to whom society denies the privilege of infidelity." To Genji he said, "I manufactured a little pretext for sending a letter to the house, thinking that it might be a way to get a look at her, and a prompt reply came back, written in a practiced hand. She seems to have some fairly presentable young attendants."

"Approach her again," said Genji. "I won't be satisfied until I find out who she is." The house fell into the category dismissed by Uma-no-kami as the lowest of the low, but the lady seemed out of the ordinary. What if he were to discover an undreamt-of gem in those surroundings?

Autumn arrived. Through nobody's fault but his own, there were certain things that caused Genji overwhelming grief, and his wife existed in a state of constant bitterness because he visited her father's mansion so seldom.

The Rokujō lady was also much to be pitied, for there had been a perceptible diminution in his ardor since he had overcome her stubborn resistance. Others wondered why his present feelings lacked the passion that had driven him before she was his. Morbidly sensitive by nature, she had feared all along that the disparity between their ages would cause gossip if word of the affair leaked out; and now, more than ever, despairing thoughts crowded into her mind when she awoke during the painful nights alone.

One foggy morning, Genji left the Rokujō Mansion in response to repeated urging, sleepy-faced and sighing. Chūjō-no-menoto raised the shutters in one of the bays and moved the curtain-strand aside, as though inviting her mistress to watch his departure, and the lady raised her head to look out. It was as people always said: he was incomparable, lingering in seeming reluctance to pass the riot of bloom in the garden. When he approached the corridor, Lady Chūjō went to accompany him, a graceful, elegant figure in



a gossamer train that stood out with pleasing clarity against robes dyed in the seasonal aster combination. He looked back and drew her down to sit by the corner balustrade. Her correct posture and flowing hair seemed to him strikingly beautiful.⁷ [His poem:]

I would not have it said
that my heart has turned toward
a flower in bloom—
yet how hard it is to pass
without plucking a "morning face!"¹⁸

saku hana ni
utsuru chô na wa
tsusumedomo
orade suguki
kesa no asagao

"What shall I do?" he asked, taking her hand. No stranger to elegant badinage, she responded at once with a poem in which she pretended to mistake "a flower in bloom" for a reference to her mistress:

The one who starts for home
without even awaiting
a break in the fog
would seem to care but little
about a flower in bloom.

asagiri no
harema mo matanu
keshiki nite
hana ni kokoro o
tomenu to zo miru

Genji's modish page boy had been dispatched to the garden. A pretty child whose appearance might have been designed for the occasion, he now brought back a morning-face blossom, his bloused trousers wet with dew. It would have been pleasant to paint the scene.

Everyone felt drawn to Genji, even strangers who barely caught a glimpse of him. (After all, even a coarse mountain peasant seeks out a flowering tree when he needs a rest.)⁹ Of those who beheld his radiant countenance, not one well-born father but longed to send him his precious daughter, not one humble man with a presentable sister but hoped to have her serve him, in whatever menial capacity. And it was indeed unlike¹⁰ that he should have been an object of indifference to any discerning person who had been exposed to his charm at first hand, even through the receipt of a poem on a suitable occasion. It is easy to imagine that Chûjō and the other ladies-in-waiting were more than a little disturbed by his failure to treat the Rokujō Mansion as home.

7. Genji has been walking along the veranda outside the Rokujō lady's bedchamber. He is now approaching a corridor leading to another building, and ultimately to the street. Lady Chûjō (Chûjō-no-menoto), shown by her sobriquet to be an upper-rank lady-in-waiting, is said to have been light purple with a green lining, which was worn at the beginning of autumn, is variably a yellowish-green lining. "Correct posture" probably means with head modestly bowed.

8. The "morning face" (*asagao*) has been tentatively identified as the bellflower (now called *kikyo*), one of the traditional "seven plants of autumn."

9. The two *Kokinshû* prefaces (kana and Chinese) describe Ōtomo no Kuronushi's poems as "crude . . . like a mountain peasant resting under a flowering tree with a load of firewood on his back."

But to go back to the house of the evening faces, Koremitsu had been punctilious in his surveillance through the fence. "I simply can't learn who she is," he reported. "She seems bent on concealment. But I think her young ladies-in-waiting are rather bored. Sometimes they cross to the long south building, the one with the half-shutters, and peep through its blinds when they hear a carriage; and it's my impression that the one who seems to be their mistress will occasionally slip out to join them. From the little I can see of her, she is delightful. One day a carriage came along with attendants clearing the way. Some of the household were watching, and a child maid-servant called out, all excited, 'Lady Ukon! Come and see right away!' Lord Tō-no-chûjō is going by!" An older lady-in-waiting appeared and signed to her to be silent. "The ideal! Hold your tongue!" she said. "How do you know it's His Lordship? Let me see." She started across to the long building. There's a sort of plank bridge they use when they go back and forth; and in her haste, she caught the skirt of her robe on something, stumbled, and almost fell off. "I declare, this bridge is an absolute menace!" she said in a huff. She seemed to lose interest in the carriage.

"His Lordship was wearing an informal cloak, and he had his escorts with him. I saw So-and-so and Thus-and-so," the child said. She knew whose carriage it was—you could tell from the way she reeled off the names of the escorts and pages."

"I do wish I could have seen that," Genji said. It occurred to him that the nun's neighbor might be the very woman Tō-no-chûjō had told them about—the one his friend still remembered with affection. If only he could find out!

Koremitsu took note of his expression. "I've made it my business to court one of the girls; now I know every corner of their house. When I visit, I let them pull the wool over my eyes—I mean, I pretend not to notice that a certain young woman is careful to address the others as though they were all ladies-in-waiting together. They think they're being very clever about hiding the truth. There are children around, and whenever one of them uses an honorific by mistake, the grown-ups go to ridiculous lengths to distract my attention, trying to preserve the fiction that the ladies-in-waiting are the only people in the house." He laughed.

"You'll have to help me see them the next time I visit your mother," Genji said. Judging from the nature of the lady's dwelling, temporary shelter though it might be, he could only conclude that she must belong to the lowest class—the one that had been dismissed on the rainy night as beneath notice. But what if one were to be surprised by something of interest in such a quarter?

Reluctant to disappoint his master in the slightest way, and himself a seasoned philanderer, Koremitsu tried one scheme after another, and finally, through a high-handed tactic, he succeeded in introducing Genji into the mistress's bedchamber. I shall omit the tedious tale of his campaign.



The Tale of Genji

66

Genji had not pressed the question of the lady's identity, nor had he told her his name. He set out for her house in excessively coarse attire, traveling on foot, rather than by carriage as usual. Concluding that he must really be smitten, Korechika gave him his own horse and trotted alongside. "I'll be in trouble if my lady-in-waiting sees her lover walking like a scruffy commoner," he grumbled. But Genji was determined not to be found out. His only other attendants were the escort who had picked the evening face and a page whom nobody could recognize.¹⁰ Lest someone put two and two together, he even refrained from stopping to rest at his nurse's house.

The lady found Genji's reticence odd and disturbing. In an effort to learn where he lived, she sent people to escort his messengers home, and dispatched others to see where he went when he left at dawn, but all of them were deliberately led astray. At the same time, Genji had fallen deeply in love; the thought of not meeting her was unbearable. He castigated himself for his behavior, which he recognized as wrong and foolish, but his visits were frequent indeed. Although love has been known to cloud the judgment of the most serious, he had always avoided blameworthy conduct with admirable discretion. Now he suffered from a strange malaise, fretting in the morning because a whole day must elapse before his next visit. He would try his utmost to take a dispassionate view of the matter, to convince himself that he was irrational, that there was no reason to be carried away. In spite of her astonishingly gentle, candid nature—her lack of prudence and gravity, her childlike behavior—he was not the first man she had known. Nor was it likely that she could claim a distinguished lineage. He kept asking himself why he should feel so drawn to her.

The lady could not help finding it eerie and unsettling—quite like the behavior of a supernatural being in an old tale—that he should make a point of disguising himself in a shabby hunting robe, shield his face so that she never caught a glimpse of it, and postpone his visits until late at night, touching him that he was someone of high birth. Who could he be? Her suspicions fastened on Koremitsu. "I'm sure the roué next door arranged the whole thing," she thought. But Koremitsu maintained a facade of bland unawareness as usual in his visits, he flirted and joked as though she worried in an oddly unconventional way.¹¹

Genji's own mind was troubled. If he were to grow careless, lulled by her more notion than To-no-chūjo of where to disappear quietly, he would have no more on to some mysterious hiding place, who knew when she might the escort.

¹⁰ Murasaki Shikibu does not explain why the household would have failed to recognize the escort.
¹¹ The usual source of a woman's concern was a man's loss of interest.

could shrug off his failure to find her, but he was far from willing to let it go at that. In desperation, he thought of smuggling her into his Nijō Mansion, that he might spare himself the intolerable anguish of spending a night elsewhere for reasons of secrecy. It would be awkward if people found out—but if they did, it would probably be because karma had ordained it. What kind of bond could have aroused a passion such as he had felt for no other woman?

"How would you like to go to a place where you could feel perfectly at ease—where the two of us would have plenty of time to talk?" he asked her. "Everything just seems so odd! No matter what you say, I'm scared because you don't act like other people." The childish speech brought an indulgent smile to his lips. "You're right, one of us is probably a fox. Let me bewitch you," he said in a tender voice. She then became extremely submissive, willing to accept whatever he might do.

He was touched by her docility, her readiness to assent even to so shockingly unorthodox a proposal. To-no-chūjō's description of his lost lady came to mind at once, and he wondered again if he had stumbled on the wild pink, but he refrained from pressing her, telling himself that she must have reasons for concealing her identity. She was not one to run away suddenly into hiding just to make a dramatic gesture; she would act only if a man's visits dropped off. It even occurred to him to picture how pathetic she would be if his heart happened to stray a bit, although of course he had no intention of looking elsewhere.

It was the fifteenth of the eighth month, a brilliant moonlit night. Moonbeams streamed in through countless cracks in the board roof, affording an intriguing view of the kind of dwelling Genji seldom saw. It seemed to be getting on toward dawn; he could hear the rough voices of working people awakening next door.

"It's turned mighty cold!"

"Business is rotten this year."

"No use looking to peddle in the provinces, either. I don't know what I'm going to do."

"Hey, on the north! Can you hear me?"

As they hurriedly emerged from their sleeping quarters to begin their patetic occupations, their gabble was a source of embarrassment for the lady who lived so close. A snobbish, affected woman would probably have fainted if she had found herself in such an environment. But this lady was a calm person, not so deeply affected by painful, worrisome, or embarrassing things as to lose her refined, equable demeanor; and she seemed to regard the neighbors' ill-mannered hubbub merely as something incomprehensible—an attitude that served better than red-faced apologies to excuse her from personal responsibility in Genji's eyes.

More appalling than thunderclaps, the crashing thumps of a mechanical pestle began to reverberate next to their pillow, worked against a mortar by



someone's foot. Unlike the earlier voices, the sounds seemed intolerably noisy. With no inking of their cause, Genji could only marvel at their strangeness and their incredible volume. It did seem to be an annoyingly inconvenient neighborhood.

They could hear the constant indistinct blows of fulling hammers on mulberry-cloth robes drifting in from near places and far, and also the cries of wild geese flying overhead—poignant reminders of autumn's sadness.¹² Genji opened the sliding door of the room, which was at the front of the house, and the two looked out together. There was an elegant clump of black bamboo in the tiny garden, and the dew on the plants in this humble place sparkled quite as brightly as at his own mansion. Insect voices shrilled in unison. Even the crickets in the walls seemed within touching distance to someone whose ears were used to hearing them from afar, but Genji found their proximity an amusing novelty—a reaction we must doubtless attribute to the passion that made him overlook every shortcoming.

The lady was a sweet, touching figure in her subdued attire—a lavender robe, no longer new, over a lined white underrobe. No particular aspect of her appearance could have been called superior, but she was delicate and frail, and something in the manner of her speech evoked affectionate compassion. Watching her, Genji thought that a little less passivity would not come amiss, but he also felt a strong desire to be with her under more relaxed circumstances.

"Let's spend the rest of the night in peace somewhere nearby. It's really too much to stay on here like this," he said.

"Why should we go someplace else? This is a very sudden idea," she objected in a placid voice.

He then swore that their union would endure beyond this life, and she readily agreed to do as he wished. What an unusual woman she was, and how little she seemed to know of men! No longer concerned about what others might think, he summoned Ukon, told her to call his escort, and ordered his carriage brought to the veranda. There were things the people in the house would have liked to know, but they trusted him, understanding from his behavior how much he loved their lady.

It was almost dawn. No cocks were crowing, but they could hear an angel's voice praying as its owner prostrated himself, getting up and down with great apparent difficulty. Touched, Genji thought of the brevity of all human life, of its likeness to ephemeral morning dew, and he wondered what an old man might still find to ask for. The petitioner seemed to be purifying himself for a pilgrimage to the sacred peaks. He was intoning, "Hail to Maitreya, the Buddha of the future!"

"Listen to him," Genji said in a compassionate voice. "His thoughts aren't bent on this life alone." [He recited a poem:]

¹² It was a literary convention that cloth was fulled on autumn evenings by grieving

women whose husbands were far away.

ubasoku ga
okonau michi o
shirube nite
kon yo mo fukaki
chigiri tagau na

Revere as a guide
the faith inspiring the prayers
of that pious man:
be true to vows that will bind us
in the coming world as in this.

Mindful of the inauspicious occurrences associated with the Hall of Long Life, he had avoided mention of shared wings, pledging instead to be true until Maitreya's coming—a notably exaggerated commitment.¹³

[Her response:]

saki no yo no
chigiri shiraruru
mi no usa ni
yukusue kanete
tanomigatasa yo

I cannot foresee
a future full of promise—
not when my sorrows
show me what has been fared
from an earlier life.

It was a sad little answer.

The moon lingered above the horizon, and the lady, as though seduced by its example, hesitated about embarking on so unexpected an excursion. Genji set himself to overcoming her misgivings. Meanwhile, the moon ducked behind a cloud, and a beautiful dawn began to break. Unwilling to risk the embarrassment of being seen in broad daylight, he whisked her into the carriage and made his usual swift departure. Ukon rode with them.

They arrived at a certain mansion in the vicinity. Genji sent for the caretaker.¹⁴ It was very dark under the trees as they waited outside the gate, a dilapidated structure overgrown with tiny ferns; and Genji's sleeves were drenched, merely from raising the carriage blind in the heavy, damp mist. "I've never done anything like this before," he said. "I didn't expect to feel so nervous." [He recited:]

inishie mo
kaku ya wa hito no
madoiken
wa ga mada shiranu
shinonome no michi

Even in the past,
was ever heart as perplexed
as is mine today,
following at dawn a path
I have never known before?

Her answering poem was shy:

yama no ha no
kokoro mo shirade
yuku tsuki wa

Its bright rays, I fear,
may vanish in mid-heaven—
the moon journeying on,

¹³ According to "The Song of Everlasting Sorrow," it was in the Hall of Long Life that Emperor Xuanzong and Yang Guifei pledged to be "as two birds sharing a wing, as two trees with joined branches." On Maitreya, see Glossary.

¹⁴ Old commentaries identify the mansion as the Kawara-no-in, a residence of legendary grandeur built by a son of Emperor Saga, Minamoto no Tōru (822–95). Presented to Retired Emperor Uda in 895, it later fell into ruin. Murasaki Shikibu's contemporaries would have known it was nearby, and probably would have thought of it.



uwa no sora nite
kage ya taenan

"I feel so uneasy." She seemed to find the place frightening and eerie—probably, Genji thought in amusement, because she had grown accustomed to living in that crowded neighborhood. He had his men take the carriage inside the grounds, and there they waited, with the shafts resting on a balustrade, while the caretaker prepared a sitting room in the west wing. Ukon's spirits rose as she silently recalled certain incidents in the past. Genji's identity had become clear to her from the zeal with which the caretaker had gone about his work.

They left the carriage just as the surroundings were becoming faintly visible. Makeshift though the arrangements were, the caretaker had managed to furnish a room in attractive style. The man was shocked by Genji's lack of attendants. He had served him for some time as a junior steward, and was also one of the staff at the minister of the left's mansion; and he now came up and offered through Ukon to send for some suitable people. But Genji bound him to secrecy. "I have purposely sought out a secluded, deserted house. Don't mention this to anybody," he said.

The caretaker hastened to produce some rice and other food, but there were too few people to serve it in proper style. In this travel lodging, alien to all of Genji's previous experience, there was nothing to do but pledge that their union would rival the one in the poem about Long Breath River.¹⁵

When the sun was high, Genji got up and raised the shutters with his own hands. Gazing out across the ravaged, deserted garden, he could see groves of immense antiquity, looming like baleful presences. There was nothing of particular interest in the trees and bushes close at hand, which looked as though they were growing in a wild autumn field, and the lake was smothered by aquatic plants. It was an estate that had come to be more than a little intimidating. People were apparently occupying some rooms in one of the lesser buildings, but they were a considerable distance away.

"This has turned into an eerie place," Genji said, "but I'm sure its demon will excuse me." He had continued to hide his face, but now he reconsidered, noting that the lady showed signs of resenting his caution. To be sure, he thought, secrecy was inappropriate in the present state of their relations. He recited a poem:

yūtsuyu ni
himo toku hana wa
tamaboko no
tayori ni mieshi
e ni koso arikere

Lay it to a tie
formed when someone chanced to see
a mere passerby—
the flowering of the bud,
its bonds loosed by evening dew.

15. Uma no Kunihito (MYs 4482): *niotori no / okinagagawa wa / taenu tomo / kimi ni kō*
the deep-diving grebes, were to cease to flow, never would there be an end to the words I would
speak to you".

"How do you like 'the radiance of the dew'?"¹⁶
With a sidelong glance, she murmured a faint response, which he chose to consider amusingly ingenious:

hikari ari to
mishi yūgao no
uwatsuyu wa
tasogaredoki no
sorame narikeri

It was a mistake,
caused by dusk's uncertain light,
that led me to see
radiance in dewdrops
on yūgao flowers.

Genji's beauty was indeed incomparable as he sat at his ease, and the contrast with the surroundings made him look still handsomer, almost inauspiciously so. "I wouldn't let you see my face because I resented the way you kept me at a distance," he said. "Now, though, you have to tell me who you are. For all I know, you could be a fox." But the lady clung to her privacy, very much the bashful child. "I am but the daughter of a fisherman . . .," she said.¹⁷

"Oh, very well. I suppose it's my own fault." His reproaches gave way to intimate conversation, which was succeeded in turn by more reproaches and more conversation, and at length the day drew to a close.

Fruit and other dainties arrived from Koremitsu, who had managed to track Genji down. Koremitsu himself felt obliged to keep his distance, lest Ukon confront him with awkward accusations. Amused that Genji's infatuation had impelled him to become a vagabond, he could not but surmise that the lady must merit the devotion she inspired—nor could he suppress some feeling of disgust with the magnanimity that had prompted him to stand aside, instead of attempting what would probably have been a successful courtship of his own.

Genji was gazing at the evening sky, a scene quieter than anything in his experience. Upon observing that the lady seemed intimidated by the darkness inside the room, he raised the blinds next to the veranda and stretched out by her side. They looked at each other, their faces bright in the rays of the setting sun. She had considered the whole affair unbelievably strange, but now she forgot her qualms and relaxed in a delightfully appealing manner. She had clung to him all day long with a timidity that he found touchingly childish.

He closed the shutters early and called for the lamp to be lit. "You seem

16. His question is a reference to her first poem, "Just at a hazard" (p. 61). There is a pun on the bud bursting its coat and the untying of a mask, which Genji is here found to be wearing.

17. Anonymous (SKKS 1703): *shiranami no / yosuru nagisa ni / yo o tsukusu / ama no ko nareba / yado mo sadamezu* ("I have no abode, for I am but the daughter of a fisherman, spending my life on the shore where white waves roll in"). In the speech that follows, Genji introduces marine imagery from another poem by using the expression *warekara*, which can mean "from me" (i.e., "my fault") and is also the name of a small crustacean. Fujiwara no Naoko (KKS 807): *ama no kazu / mo ni sumu mushi no / warekara to / ne o koso nakame / yo o ba uramiji* ("Without blaming him, I mourn the faults that bring thoughts of the 'from me' shrimp dwelling on strands of seaweed harvested by fisherfolk").



perfectly comfortable now. I don't understand why you persist in keeping secrets," he complained.

It occurred to him that his father was probably trying to find out what had become of him. Where would the emperor's people be searching? But his chief concern was for someone he pitied. "I don't know what's got into me," he thought. "The lady at Rokujō must be terribly upset." It would be awkward if she resented his present companion, he could not help com- Moved by the artlessness of his present companion, he could not help com-

Moved by the artlessness of his present companion, he could not help com-

paired the two. If only he could rid the other of her excessive sensitivity, of the touchiness that made a visitor so uncomfortable! About halfway through the first part of the night, as he lay asleep, he dreamed that a beautiful woman seated herself near his pillow. "I consider you the most splendid of men," she said, "but you can't be bothered to visit me. Instead, you bring this common creature here to bask in your attention. It's too mortifying!" She seized his companion to pull her up. Startling awake as though from a nightmare, he saw that the lamp had gone out. The atmosphere of the room seemed ominous; he drew his sword and put it next to the pillow.¹⁸ Then he awakened Ukon, and she came to his side with a frightened look.

"Rouse one of the men on duty in the gallery. Tell him to bring a lighted torch," he said.

"How am I supposed to get there? It's dark."

He laughed. "You sound like a child." He clapped his hands, and a ghostly echo answered. The summons had not been loud enough to arouse anyone. To the lady, trembling with fear, their situation seemed desperate. She broke out in perspiration and fell into a faint.

"She gets these absurd fears," Ukon said. "Think how she must feel now!"

"She's so very frail," Genji thought. "Even during the daytime she just kept looking off into space."¹⁹ Poor child! He drew Ukon closer. "I'll wake somebody up. It makes a disagreeable echo when I clap. You stay with her awhile." He pushed open the double-leaved door on the west. The light in the gallery had also gone out.

A faint breeze had sprung up, and his few attendants had fallen asleep. There were only three of them—a young personal servant, the son of the yūgao blossom. The servant arose in answer to his call.

"Light a torch and bring it here," Genji said. "Tell the escort to twang his bowstring and keep shouting."²⁰ Do you think it's a good idea to drop off to

¹⁸. To ward off malignant spirits.

¹⁹. The editors of one modern Genji edition take this to be a sign of weak nerves. An early

commentator saw it as a portent of death. See Abe et al., *Genji monogatari*, 1: 239, n. 16.

²⁰. Murasaki Shikibu's mention of the sudden breeze may be intended to suggest the advent of a malignant spirit. The purpose of the bow-twanging and shouting was to warn off spirits by threatening them with military action, and with the names of Genji and his armed guard.

sleep in an isolated place like this? I thought Koremitsu was here. What's become of him?"

"Master Koremitsu was here, but he went home. He said, 'He hasn't given me any instructions. Tell him I'll come just before dawn to await his pleasure.'"

The servant, a member of the palace guards, could be heard twanging his bow with expert skill and shouting warnings against carelessness with fire as he went off toward the caretaker's room.²¹ The sound reminded Genji of the imperial palace. The roll call would be over by now; the guardsmen were probably twanging their bows and proclaiming their names. It was still not very late.

He went back inside and groped his way to the lady. As before, she lay prostrate, with Ukon face down beside her. "What's the matter?" he said to Ukon. "You act scared to death. You're probably afraid of a fox or something in this deserted place, but there's nothing to worry about as long as I'm here." He pulled her to her feet.

"I'm terrified! I was lying on my stomach because I felt sick. My lady must be petrified," Ukon said.

"So it would seem." To the lady, he said, "Why are you so afraid?" When he touched her, there was no sign of life. He shook her. She was limp and seemed unconscious. She was such a child, he thought in despair. Had a malignant influence stolen her spirit?

The servant arrived with a torch. Since Ukon seemed incapable of motion, Genji pulled over the curtain-stand to shield the lady. "Bring the light up," he said.

Disconcerted by the command, which would never have been issued in the normal course of events, the servant hesitated to venture beyond the threshold of the eave-chamber.

"Come along with it! This is no place for ceremony," Genji said.

When the light illumined the lady, he saw beside the pillow a figure whose face was that of the woman in his dream—a vision no sooner glimpsed than gone. He remembered an old tale in which just such a thing had happened. It was strange and uncanny, but his first thought was for the lady. His mind in turmoil, he lay close and tried to rouse her, indifferent to his own danger. "Wake up!" he urged. But her body was icy, for she had long since ceased to breathe. Words were of no avail, nor was there any reliable person to help him. A monk might have filled the need, had one been present.

Although he had made a show of courage earlier, the sight of his dead mistress was too much for his young heart. He clasped her tight in his arms. "Come back, my darling! Don't make me suffer this agony!" But the body was cold, starting to look unpleasant.

Ukon wept in a paroxysm of grief, her previous terror forgotten.

Genji took hold of himself, encouraged by the memory of what had hap-

²¹. He is going to get fire for the torch.



pened in the past, when a demon menaced a minister of state in the Shishinden.²² "No matter how things look, she's not going to die. It sounds frightful to hear someone wailing like that in the middle of the night. Don't make so much noise," he told her. But the suddenness of it all had been

stunning.

"It's very strange . . . someone here is suffering from a spirit possession. Send word at once for Master Koremitsu to come as fast as he can. If his brother, the holy teacher, is there, ask him quietly to come too. Be discreet when you deliver the message; don't let the nun hear you. She tends to be trying about things like this." His demeanor was calm, but there was a painful tightness in his chest. It was agonizing to think that he was responsible for the lady's death—and although that were not enough, the eeriness of the surroundings was beyond description.

Was it because the night was more than half spent that the wind had risen to a veritable gale? The sighing in the pines made it seem as though they were deep in the forest, and a strange bird uttered hollow cries. He wondered if it might be an owl.²³ Reflecting on the mansion's isolation and its unearthly atmosphere—exacerbated now by the complete absence of human voices—he regretted in vain the inexplicable impulse that had made him seek lodging in so dismal a place. Ukon clung to him in a daze, trembling like a dying woman. Was she to go too? Half-unconsciously, he held her fast. With no second rational person to consult, he felt at his wits' end. The lamplight was a mere dim flicker, and the darkness seemed impenetrable in some parts of the room, such as the area above the folding screens at the entrance to the inner chamber. He thought he heard footsteps approaching from the rear, the plank floor creaking as they advanced. If only Koremitsu would hurry! But Koremitsu was not one to spend every night in the same house, and the messenger searched place after place. The hours until dawn seemed as long as a thousand nights.

As a distant cock finally began to crow, Genji pondered his situation. What karmic bond had enmeshed him in an affair that might have cost him his life? True, he had started it himself, but what a sensation it would cause! It must be his punishment for harboring a reprehensible passion. "Once a thing has happened, it's bound to get out, no matter how hard you try! To keep it a secret. His Majesty will know, people at court will talk, the street ruffian will get hold of it. I'll be a laughingstock," he thought. Master Koremitsu arrived. Genji was annoyed. Here was the faithful attendant who stood ever ready to do his bidding—midnight or dawn, it made no difference—and he had absented himself on this of all nights!

²² According to an old story, Fujiwara no Tadahira (880–949) was accosted by a demon when passing through the deserted Shishinden on his way to execute an imperial decree. He chased it off by invoking the authority of the throne and drawing his sword. See McCullough *Otagaki*, p. 106.

²³ Considered a bird of ill omen. The chicks were said to eat their parents.

Moreover, he had even reported late when summoned. He called him in, but what he wanted to say was too distressing; the words refused to come.

When Ukon realized who had arrived, the whole history of the affair returned to her mind, and she burst into tears. Genji was also overcome. He had continued to embrace Ukon in his role of stalwart protector, but now, with Koremitsu's arrival, he breathed a sigh of relief, and his grief welled up. For a time, he gave way to irrepressible tears.

When he had pulled himself together, he said, "Something weird has happened here: to call it astounding would be an understatement. I remember hearing that sutras need to be recited after a sudden event like this, and I sent for the holy teacher so I could commission readings and prayers, but he hasn't come. Do you know why?"

"He went up to Mount Hiei yesterday," Koremitsu said. "This is amazing! Could she have been ill before she came?"

"I'm sure she wasn't," Genji said in tears. The pathetic expression on his handsome face wrung Koremitsu's heart, and he too began to sob.

Koremitsu had come, to be sure, but it is the man of mature years, experienced in the vicissitudes of life, who serves as a source of strength in a crisis. The two of them were only boys, with no idea what to do.

"We can't let the caretaker know," Koremitsu said. "He himself could be trusted because of his ties to you, but he'll have relatives around, people who'll let it out without meaning to. The first thing is for you to get away from this mansion."

"But no place is more deserted than this," Genji said.

"That's true," Koremitsu thought about it. "We can't go to Her Ladyship's house. Her attendants would start wailing and carrying on, and there'd be all kinds of questions among the commoners in that crowded neighborhood. The truth would be bound to get out. A mountain temple—that's it! People are always being buried in such places; we wouldn't attract any attention." He thought some more. "An old acquaintance of mine, a former lady-in-waiting, has gone to live in the eastern hills as a nun. She's my father's nurse, exceedingly ancient now. The district seems fairly populous, but her cell is quiet and secluded." He had the carriage brought so that they might merge unnoticed into the homeward stream of early-morning traffic.

Since Genji appeared to be incapable of carrying the lady, Koremitsu wrapped her in a quilt and put her in the carriage. The tiny body seemed pathetic rather than repellent. He had been unable to bring himself to truss her up like a parcel, and her flowing hair was enough to blind any eye with helpless tears. Overcome by grief, Genji wanted to stay with her to the end, but Koremitsu demurred. "Take the horse and go home to Niijō before the streets get crowded," he said. He put Ukon into the carriage with her mistress, gave his horse to Genji, and tied up his trousers for walking. Then he set out on the strange, unforeseen journey to the nunnery, his pride sacrificed to the compassion he felt as he looked at Genji's stricken face.



"If I don't see her now," he thought, "when in another world shall I find her looking as she did in this?" He mastered his fears and started out, accompanied by his usual attendants, Koremitsu and the escort.

The moon of the seventeenth night had risen, and Toribeno loomed in the distance when the party reached the riverbed, their way-clearer's torch a mere dim glow.²⁷ It was an eerie scene, but Genji let it pass unobserved, lost in agitated thought.

They arrived at their destination. In that area of unearthly loneliness, the nun's dwelling was a moving sight, a rude board-roofed cell with an adjoining chapel. Light from a sacred lamp shone faintly through the chapel blinds, inside the cell, the only sound was a woman's sobbing; outside the blinds, two or three monks talked and recited the sacred name in low tones. Vespers had ended at the temples, and all was still. Off toward Kiyomizu, the glitter of many lights pointed to the presence of throngs of people.²⁸ The nun's son, a monk of great virtue, was intoning a sutra in a holy voice. Genji felt he must weep until his store of tears was exhausted.

Upon entering the room, Genji saw that the lamp had been turned toward the wall. Ukon was lying down, separated from her mistress by a folding screen. He could imagine her misery. To his mind, there was nothing frightening about the lady's appearance: she was as charming as ever, quite unchanged. He took her hand. "Let me at least hear your voice one last time! What kind of karmic bond could it have been? During that brief interlude, I loved you with all my heart, and yet you went away and left me to suffer this anguish, this devastating grief." He broke down in convulsive sobs. The monks knew nothing about the two, but they also shed tears, astonished by the extravagance of his grief.

"Ukon, come home with me to Niijō," Genji said.

"In all the years since I was a child, I served her without once leaving her side. How could I suddenly abandon her and go off somewhere else? Besides, I have to tell the others what's happened. Her death is sorrow enough. I really don't think I can bear it if they blame me." She began to cry. "All I want is to follow her, to be part of the smoke from her pyre," she said.

Genji tried to comfort her. "It's natural for you to feel that way, but such is life in this world. There's no parting that isn't sad. And no matter how a person may die, die he will, for every life must end. Resign yourself to it and leave everything to me." He continued, "Even though I talk this way, I feel that I can't live much longer." It was not a reassuring remark.

"Dawn seems to be approaching. I think you should start back right away," said Koremitsu.

27. The dry bed of the Kamo River was used as a thoroughfare.

28. The crowds had perhaps assembled in anticipation of the following day. The 18th of each month was considered an especially good time for the worship of Kannon, the principal divinity at the Kiyomizudera.

Genji left the cell with deep emotion and many backward glances. The wayside foliage was heavy with dew, the morning fog so impenetrable that he seemed to himself a forlorn wanderer, setting off on a journey into nowhere. As he rode, he thought of how the lady had looked lying there, the same as ever to all appearances, clad by force of circumstance in his own red singlet, which was one of the robes they had used as cover. What might have been the origin of such a karmic bond? Noticing that he seemed unsteady in the saddle, Koremitsu helped him along, but near the bank of the Kamo River, in great apparent distress, he slid to the ground from the horse's back. "I wonder if it's my destiny to die by the roadside. I just don't see how I can get all the way home," he said.

Koremitsu was nonplused. "If I'd had any sense, I'd never have taken him on an excursion like this, whether he wanted to go or not," he thought. In dismay, he cleansed his hands in the river and prayed to Kiyomizu Kannon, for he could think of nothing else to do. Genji forced himself to take heart. He offered silent prayers to the buddhas, and finally, thanks to Koremitsu's help, he managed to reach the Niijō Mansion.

The ladies-in-waiting sighed to one another over the strange errand that had kept their master out so late. "It really won't do! He's been so unusually restless lately—all those clandestine outings—and now this! Why in the world would he ramble off that way when he looked deathly ill yesterday?"

Genji took to his bed, genuinely and miserably ill, and within two or three days, he was alarmingly enfeebled. The emperor was devastated. A hubbub of continuous prayer arose at temples and shrines in every quarter: rituals addressed to the gods, yin-yang purifications, Buddhist esoteric rites—I could not possibly list them all. The general public held to the vociferous opinion that his incomparable beauty was to blame; it was an ominous sign that he was not long for this world.

Desperate though he felt his illness to be, Genji summoned Ukon to the Niijō Mansion, assigned her a room near his own quarters, and enrolled her among his ladies-in-waiting. Koremitsu was frantic with worry, but he forced himself to seem calm and did what he could to help Ukon perform her duties, aware that there was nobody else for her to turn to. Whenever Genji felt a little better, he summoned her, sent her on errands, and so forth; and she was soon at ease with the other attendants. Although she was no beauty in her deep black mourning, she was a prepossessing enough young person.

"It looks as though I must die too—as though my fate has been determined by the bond forged during that strange, fleeting interlude. I can imagine how forlorn you must feel after losing the mistress you depended on for so long, and I had meant to try to comfort you by looking after you if I lived. Unfortunately, I'll probably follow her soon." He spoke in a confidential voice, shedding weak tears.

For the moment, Ukon put aside thoughts of the one whom grief could



not bring back. What a terrible waste it would be if such a life as this were extinguished!

The people in the mansion were beside themselves with worry, and messengers from the emperor came thicker than raindrops. Genji made a valiant effort to rally his spirits, awed by reports of his father's dismay.

The minister of the left hustled about on his son-in-law's behalf, paid daily calls, and made sure that the Niō household arranged for various kinds of prayers and rites. Whether or not it was due to his efforts, Genji started on the road to recovery, with no apparent lingering effects, after more than twenty days of critical illness. The return of his health coincided with the end of the ritual seclusion imposed by his defilement, and he felt obliged to put in an appearance at the Kiritsubo pavilion on the same night, mindful of the need to show proper appreciation for the emperor's solicitude. The minister called for him there and took him in his carriage to his own house, where he went to officious lengths to ensure his observation of the ritual seclusion and other precautions required after an illness. For a time, Genji's sense of disorientation was so strong that he felt as though he had been born into another world.

It was around the twentieth of the ninth month when he recovered. His extreme emaciation served only to refine his beauty. He often sat gazing into space and sobbing, and there were those among his mystified attendants who concluded that he must be possessed by an evil spirit.

One quiet evening, he summoned Ukon for a talk. "It still seems so strange," he said. "Why wouldn't she let me know who she was? She always kept that barrier between us, as though she didn't realize I'd have loved her even if she really had been a fisherman's daughter. It was hard to bear."

"It wasn't at all that she was determined to hide who she was. There just was no opportunity to mention so insignificant a name. From the outset, she considered it strange and incomprehensible that you should be in love with her—like a dream. She felt hurt by your reticence about your own identity. 'I've guessed who he is, but he won't tell me because he doesn't talk me seriously,' she said."

"Both of us were stubborn fools. I didn't want to be evasive, but I'm not used to doing things people disapprove of. I have to be very circumspect in my position—first of all, so His Majesty won't have occasion to reprimand me, but also because even a little joke addressed to a woman will cause gossip. It's an annoying situation. When I think of how strangely your mistress fascinated me after the trifling incident that night—of how I insisted on being with her—I can't help believing that her karma ordained that she should meet such an end. I pity her with all my heart, and yet I feel ill-used too. Why did I have to love her so much if our union wasn't going to last?"

"Tell me more about her. You shouldn't hold anything back now. When I commission sacred paintings to be offered during the seventh-day service, whom shall I tell myself they're for?"

"I don't want to keep anything from you; it was only that, after her death, I didn't think I ought to blurt out something she had treated as a secret. Both of her parents died prematurely. Her father was a middle captain of third rank. He loved her dearly, but he seemed to worry that his career was stagnating, and in the end he couldn't even maintain his hold on life. Later, through some little happenstance, she began to receive visits from Lord Tō-no-chūjō, who was still a lesser captain then. He kept up the relationship for three years and seemed to be very much in love, but some horrible threats came from the minister of the right's house last fall. Being an excessively timid person, my lady was terrified, and she stole away to the house of an old nurse, in the western sector of the city. It was a squalid place. She was unhappy there, and wanted to move to the hills, but that direction was unfavorable this year, so she took up residence in the shabby dwelling you know about, merely to avoid the taboo.²⁹ It was a sorrow to her that you found her there. She was far more diffident than most people; it embarrassed her to reveal her worries, and she always put on a placid front when you were together."

It was just as he had thought, Genji said to himself. His love and pity increased as the fragments of the lady's story came together in his mind. "I once heard Tō-no-chūjō lament the loss of a child. Did she have one?" he said.

"Yes, it was born year before last, in the spring—a sweet little girl," she said.

"Where is she? Give her to me without letting people know. It would be wonderful to have her as a keepsake of the lady whose loss is so hard to bear." He went on in a confidential voice, "I ought to tell Tō-no-chūjō about her, but he would be sure to overwhelm me with reproaches that wouldn't change a thing. In any case, I don't see what objection there could be to my rearing her. Make some excuse to the nurse, or whoever else is with her, and bring her here."

"I'd be very happy if you took her. It's sad to think of her growing up in the western sector, which is where she is now. There was nobody reliable to entrust her to at Gojō."

The quiet evening scene was like a painting—the poignant charm of the sky, the withering plants in the front garden, the feeble insect voices, the reddening maple trees. Looking out at it all, Ukon marveled that she had stumbled into such a splendid situation, and it was with a flush of embarrassment that she recalled the house at Gojō.

The throaty coo of a pigeon in the bamboo reminded Genji of how the same call had frightened the lady while they were at the ruined mansion, and a vision of her pathetic face rose before him. "How old was she?" he

29. In yin-yang cosmology, certain directions were unfavorable for an individual at certain times. If it was essential to reach a place, a person could spend one or more nights in a house from which he or she could travel in another direction.



asked. "It must have been because she was doomed to an early death that she seemed so strangely, so extraordinarily fragile."

"She would have been nineteen. After the death of my mother, who was one of her nurses, her father took pity on me and raised me with her. How can I keep on living when I remember that act of mercy? And yet I feel like the poet who regretted an intimacy he had once savored—during all those years, I relied on someone who was a rather helpless person."³⁰

"It's precisely lack of strength that makes a woman appealing. Clever, unobtrusive women don't attract men. I myself am not a brisk, forceful type, and I like someone who is gentle, susceptible perhaps to masculine deception when off guard, but nevertheless basically prudent and discreet, and submissive to her husband's wishes. If a man finds such a woman, corrects her flaws to suit his taste, and makes her his wife, she'll become very dear to him," Genji said.

"When I think of how my lady was exactly what you wanted, it seems such a pity!" Ukon began to weep.

The sky had clouded over, and a cold wind was blowing. Genji stared gloomily into space. Half under his breath, he recited a poem:

mishi hito no
keburu o kumo to
nagamureba
yūbe no sora mo
musumashiki ka na

The evening sky itself
becomes something to cherish
when I gaze at it,
seeing in one of the clouds
the smoke from her funeral pyre.

Ukon was unable to respond. "If only she could be here with him!" The thought made her heart ache. As for Genji, even the memory of the noisy cloth fullers evoked nostalgic feelings, and he murmured, "The nights are long," as he composed himself for sleep.³¹

To mark the forty-ninth day after the death, Genji made discreet arrangements for sutra recitations at the Lotus Concentration Chapel on Mount Hiei, including unstinting, meticulous provision for costumes and other appropriate offerings. Even the sutra scrolls and the decorations for the images received careful attention. Koremitsu's brother, the holy teacher, conducted the rites with impeccable dignity. To review the petition he composed, Genji called in his Chinese teacher, a professor of literature with whom he was on close terms. With a pitiful mien, he wrote that someone dear to him, not named, had breathed her last, and that he now commended her to Amida Buddha. "That will do as it is; nothing needs to be added," the professor said. He saw that Genji seemed sunk in misery, his eyes overflowing with irrepressible tears. "Who might the lady have been?" he wondered.

30. The poem has not survived.

31. The quotation is part of a line from "On Hearing Cloth-fulling Malters in the Night," a poem by Bo Juyi about wives fulling cloth while grieving for husbands absent on military duty.

must have had a splendid karma to have remained completely unknown to outsiders, and yet to have excited such remarkable grief."

Genji picked up a pair of trousers from one of the costumes he had quietly had tailored. [His poem:]

nakunaku mo
kyō wa wa ga yuu
shitahimo o
izure no yo ni ka
tokete mirubeki

In what other world
shall we meet with hearts at ease—
in what world untie
the strings I fasten today,
weeping, ever weeping?

He recited heartfelt buddha-invocations with his mind on the lady. She had been wandering up to this point; now she must be setting out on a designated path.

For no good reason, his heart beat faster whenever he encountered Tō-no-chūjō. He would have liked to let him know that the wild pink was being cared for, but he held his peace, unable to face the thought of his friend's reproaches.

Back at the Gojō house, everyone was greatly upset by the lady's disappearance, but there was nothing to go on, no way to find her. It was so odd, her attendants lamented, so strange that not even Ukon should have come back! Admittedly, there was no proof, but they whispered that appearances had pointed to Genji as their mistress's lover. They brought their complaints to Koremitsu, who professed bewilderment, talked as though he knew nothing at all, and continued to visit and flirt as before. The episode seemed increasingly dreamlike. Perhaps, they speculated, the man had been the disolute son of a provincial governor—someone who had carried her off into the countryside because he was afraid of Tō-no-chūjō. The mistress of the house was one of three children whose mother was the nurse in the western sector. Ukon's parentage was different, and the mistress, shedding nostalgic tears, thought that she must be withholding news of the lady's whereabouts for standoffish reasons of her own. Ukon for her part thought that she would become the center of a tremendous furor if she revealed the truth; and she also knew that Genji remained set on secrecy. She felt unable even to inquire about the little girl, and the lady's people continued in the same state of stunned surprise and ignorance.

Genji mourned on. If only he might at least dream about her! Instead, on the night after the forty-ninth-day services, his dreams were visited by an indistinct figure, the exact image of the woman who had appeared at the bedside in the mansion. Looking back on the event, he could not help believing that some creature at the ruined mansion had lodged itself in his person, and that the lady had died because she happened to be present also. It was a chilling thought.



Young Murasaki



[Third to tenth months of Genji's eighteenth year. Murasaki: about 10;
Fujiwara lady: 23; Genji's wife, Ai: 22]

Genji had begun to suffer from chills and fever. He ordered prayers for divine assistance, mystic invocations, and other rites, but nothing seemed to be able to keep the symptoms from recurring.

"There is a wonder-working monk at such-and-such a temple in the northern hills," somebody told him. "When this same sickness was going around last summer, he made many immediate cures in cases where others had produced no results with their intercessions. It would be troublesome if the others didn't succeed; I would suggest that you try him soon." He sent off a messenger, but the monk answered that age and infirmity had made it impossible for him to leave his cell.

"It can't be helped, then; I'll have to pay him a quiet visit," he said. He set out before dawn, taking only four or five trusted attendants. The cell was rather far back in the hills. In the waning days of the third month, all the cherry blossoms in the capital had passed their prime, but the trees in the mountains were still in full bloom, and there was a delightful haze in the sky. Unaccustomed to such freedom, he savored the scenery and the novelty of the journey.

The appearance of the temple inspired the utmost awe and reverence. He climbed to the sage's cell, a deep cavern on the side of a high peak. He refrained from mentioning his name, and his clothes were very shabby, but it was apparent from his bearing that he was of noble lineage. Surprised, the sage addressed him with a smile. "This is a great honor! Might you be pen to have come? I no longer think about this world; I've stopped performing rituals to secure worldly benefits," he said. He was indeed a most holy man.

The monk prepared appropriate charms, gave them to Genji to swallow, and chanted mystic invocations. Meanwhile, the sun rose high.

Stepping outside for a moment, Genji looked around. The high vantage point afforded a clear view of all the scattered cells lower down. Just below the winding path to the cave, there was a residence with a brushwood fence, similar to the residences of the other monks but more neatly laid out, and with trim buildings and galleries and a pleasant grove. "Who lives there?" he asked.

"That's where Bishop So-and-so has been in retreat for the last two years," said one of his attendants.

"The bishop is a man with whom one has to be on one's best behavior. It was a mistake to go to such absurd lengths with this disguise. I hope he doesn't find out I'm here."

A group of neat, pretty little girls appeared, also clearly visible as they drew offertory water and cut flowers.

"There must be a woman about the place," an attendant said.

"But surely the bishop would never install a woman there," said another.

"Who can she be?"

One of them went down and peered through the fence. "You can see a beautiful little girl, some young ladies-in-waiting, and some page girls, too," he reported.

Noting the advance of the sun as he performed his rituals, Genji wondered if the disease might be getting ready to flare up. Someone suggested doing something to take his mind off it, and he went out to look toward the capital from the mountain behind the cave. The haze extended far into the distance, softening the outlines of the trees in all directions. "It looks just like a picture," he said. "Someone who lived in a place like this could wish for nothing better."

"This scenery is nothing special. You would paint some remarkable pictures if you saw the ocean and mountains in other provinces. I'm thinking of places like Mount Fuji and Such-and-such Peak," one of his men said.

Someone else tried to amuse him with a lengthy discourse on the virtues of the bays and coasts to the west. "When it comes to places nearer at hand, nothing can compare with Akashi Bay in Harima Province," this man said.

"There isn't any single feature of particular interest; it's the strangely peaceful effect of the sea view that sets it apart. A former governor of the province is rearing a daughter there—a man who's just recently taken Buddhist vows. Considering that he was either the son or the grandson of a minister of state, he ought to have had a successful career, but he was an eccentric sort, and he resigned a middle captaincy rather than take part in court life. He became governor at his own request, but his tenure was something of a fiasco because he failed to win the respect of the local people. The idea of returning to the capital as a failure didn't appeal to him, so he shaved his head after



his term expired. Then he went to the coast and settled there instead of going to live in the mountains. It seems a perverse choice, and it's true that the province abounds in more suitable sites for religious retirement. But a remote mountain dwelling would have been too isolated and eerie for his young wife and child; and he himself also finds it diverting to live by the sea. "When I visited Harima recently, I took the opportunity to call and see how he was getting along. He may not have been able to carve a niche for himself in the capital, but there in Harima he owns a magnificent residence on a huge estate. Whether he was respected or not, he did wield the power of office, and he was bent on acquiring enough resources to make him rich for the rest of his life. He's also diligent in his prayers for the life to come, so he's actually a better monk than he was a layman."

"What about the daughter?" Genji asked.

"Not bad, I hear, either in looks or in personality. It seems that one governor after another has come forward with a formal request for her hand, and other people too, but he's turned them all away. Apparently, he's always lecturing her like a man on his deathbed. It's bad enough that I've sunk into obscurity like this. You're my only child, and I have special plans for you. If I die before anything comes of them—if the future I have in mind doesn't materialize—then it's up to you to throw yourself into the sea," he says.

"A most interesting tale," said Genji.

"So precious a daughter would make a fit consort for a dragon king in the sea," someone suggested.

"The father's aspirations do seem to be inconveniently lofty," laughed the narrator, Yoshikiyo. He was the present governor's son, a chamberlain who had been promoted to fifth rank that year.

"We know what a rake you are, Yoshikiyo. You've probably already made up your mind to ruin the father's plans," someone said.

"I imagine he's haunting the premises," said someone else.

"Oh, come on! Whatever the father thinks, she's probably just a courtier girl!"

"Besides, what can you expect of someone who's spent her whole life in the wilds, catering to the whims of an old-fashioned parent?"

"I hear they've used their connections to assemble attractive young attendants and pages from the best families in the city. Apparently, the way they look after her is quite amazing," Yoshikiyo said.

"That's all very well, but what if an unpleasant character takes over as provincial governor? The father may have a hard time holding onto her."

"Why do the father's thoughts plumb the ocean depths? The seaweed is a little interested. Aware of his penchant for the bizarre, his attendants surmised that he would remember the story, trivial though it was."

¹ He puns on *myrmine* (a kind of seaweed, "seeing eyes"), suggesting that people would criticize the father if they learned of his telling the girl to drown herself.

"It's getting late, and Your Lordship seems to have escaped an attack. You should start home as soon as possible," someone said.

The sage demurred. "It isn't merely a matter of the disease; some malignant spirits seem to be present, too. Spend tonight in quiet prayer and go home tomorrow," he said.

The attendants fell in with the suggestion, and Genji was attracted by the novel prospect of a night spent as a traveler. "All right, I'll leave at dawn," he said.

For want of other diversions to help him through the rest of the long spring day, Genji went down to the bishop's brushwood fence, trusting the hazy twilight to shield him from observation. He sent back all his attendants except Koremitsu and peered inside. There was a private icon in the west room directly in front of him, and devotions were being performed by someone who proved to be a nun. The blinds were slightly raised; flowers were apparently being offered. The nun, who seemed to be of high birth, was leaning against a pillar in the middle of the room, reciting in an infirm voice from a sutra placed on an armrest. Genji found her a moving sight—a woman in her forties, with an aristocrat's white skin, emaciated but full-faced, with attractive shoulder-length hair that seemed more pleasingly modern than if it had been left long. There were two neatly attired women with her, and small girls came and went at play. A girl of about ten came running in, dressed in a white chemise and a limp globeflower-yellow robe. Incomparably superior to all the others in appearance, she showed promise of developing into a remarkable woman. Her hair fanned out, swaying, as she moved, and her tearful face had been rubbed red.

The nun looked up. "What's the matter? Have you been quarreling with one of the girls?" she asked. Noticing a slight resemblance, Genji wondered if the child was hers.

"Inu let my baby sparrow get away. I had him under the incense basket," the child said with a woebegone look.²

"This really won't do!" said one of the two ladies-in-waiting. "That stupid girl needs another scolding. Where could the bird have gone? It was just getting cute, too. I hope a crow doesn't find it." She stood up and went out. She was a presentable woman with a long, flowing head of hair. It seemed that she was called Shōnagon-no-menoto, and that she was the one who took care of the child.

"Come, don't be a baby. You're a hopeless infant. It never crosses your mind that I might die any day now; all you think of is that sparrow. I keep telling you it's sinful to shut it up in a cage. What am I going to do with you? Come here," the nun said. The child knelt near her. The sweet face, the lustrous eyebrows, the forehead from which a childish hand had

² Inu is a child servant. Heian women warmed and perfumed robes by draping them over wickerwork baskets called *fusago*, which were inverted above braziers containing burning incense.



brushed locks of hair, the hair itself—all were immensely appealing. Her growth to adulthood would be worth watching; Genji thought, observing with an intent gaze. But the true source of his interest, he realized with her with an intent gaze. But the true source of his interest, he realized with her with an intent gaze. But the true source of his interest, he realized with

a start, was her striking resemblance to the lady he loved so dearly, so ex-
travagantly, that the mere thought of her brought tears to his eyes.
The nun stroked the child's head. "You have having it combed, but it's
nice hair. I worry about you, you're such an innocent. Some girls of your
age are so much more grown up. My young lady already had an excellent
understanding of what it meant when she lost His Lordship, her father, at
the age of twelve. How in the world will you get along if I leave you now?"
Tears streamed from her eyes, and Genji could not help feeling sad as he
watched. Child though she was, the girl looked the nun full in the face; then
she lowered her gaze and hung her head, her hair tumbling forward in beau-
tiful shining strands. The nun:

oitaranu It is hard for the dew
arika mo shiranu to pass from existence,
wakakusa o leaving the young herb
okurasu tsuyu zo to meet an unknown future
kienu sora naki when it grows to maturity.

Weeping, the other woman agreed:

hasukusa no The dew must not think
oyuku sue mo of passing from existence
shiranu ma ni while still unaware
ika de ka tsuyu no of what full growth will mean
kienu to suran for the newly sprouted herb.

As she spoke, the bishop arrived from another part of the residence. "Isn't this room a bit exposed? It's a pity you chose today, of all days, to sit so close to the outdoors. I've just heard that the Genji middle captain has come to the sage's cell up above to get spells for his chills and fever. He's made a point of keeping it quiet, so I didn't know about it; I haven't gone to pay my respects, even though I've been here right along."

"Oh, dear," said the nun. "We're certainly far from presentable. What if somebody has seen us?" They lowered the blinds.

"Genji the shining one—the name on everybody's lips. What do you say to taking this opportunity to see him? Beauty like his can make a person forget his cares and live a longer life—even someone in holy orders who doesn't care about worldly things. I think I'll just drop him a note." That was an audible rustle as the bishop took his leave.

Genji started back up the hill. "What a sweet child! Considering that those philandering companions of mine are always going off on private excursions like this, they must make all kinds of unexpected discoveries. Look at what I've stumbled across, as seldom as I get out," he thought, much

intrigued. "She's a perfect dear," he thought again. "Who can she be? I'd love to have her with me day and night as a consolation—a substitute for that other one." It was an idea that struck deep roots.

He was lying down when one of the bishop's disciples came and asked to see Koremitsu. The message carried to his ears in the narrow confines of the cell. "Someone has just informed me of your presence in our neighborhood. I ought to wait upon you immediately, but it troubles me that you have kept your visit a secret, knowing as you do that I am in retreat at this temple. It would also have been natural to furnish you with a lodging in the hermitage here. I am most disappointed."

Genji replied, "I began to suffer from chills and fever around the middle of the month. The constant attacks became unbearable, and when someone told me about this place, I decided on the spur of the moment to come here. I came in strict secrecy because I felt it would be awkward for so famous a healer if he failed to cure me—more embarrassing than for an ordinary monk. I shall be happy to visit you at once."

The bishop was prompt to present himself. Monk though he was, his great personal dignity and high renown made Genji self-conscious about his own casual appearance. After talking of things having to do with his period of retreat, the bishop urged Genji to visit him. "The hermitage is merely a simple brush-thatched hut like all the others, but I should like to show you the stream flowing from the spring, which is rather pleasantly cool," he said.

Genji decided to go, his desire to learn more of the appealing child outweighing the embarrassment with which he recalled the bishop's extravagant comments to the ladies who had yet to see him.

The garden was all that the bishop had promised, its trees and shrubs familiar enough in kind but meticulously arranged to create tasteful effects. Since it was the dark of the moon, basket-fires burned beside the stream, and lanterns had also been lit. The south apartment was tidily furnished.³ An elegant fragrance drifted in from somewhere, and the scent of sacred incense hung in the air. The remarkable perfume from Genji's robes, released whenever he moved, seemed to make the hearts of the ladies inside beat faster.

The bishop told edifying stories illustrating the ephemerality of worldly things, discoursed instructively on the life to come, and so forth. Genji reflected on the frightening nature of his own sin. By setting his heart on that impossible dream, he was condemning himself to a lifetime of misery in this world—and how much greater would be his torment in the next! He longed to retire to a dwelling like his host's—but then there was his concern for the sweet child he had seen before nightfall.

3. The south room in the main hall of an aristocratic residence was used for the reception of guests.



“May I ask who might be staying with you? I had a dream about wanting to visit someone, and now I see what it meant,” he said.

“The bishop replied with a faint smile. ‘A dream out of the blue, one might say. I’m afraid the visit would be a disappointment. You may not have heard of the late inspector-major counselor, who died a long time ago, but my younger sister was his principal wife. She took religious vows after his death, and recently she has been in poor health. As you see, I don’t go to the capital. She felt that this would be the best place for her, and she has joined me in retreat.’”

Genji thought he knew who the child was. “I have heard that the major counselor had a daughter. What became of her? I’m not asking with any romantic notion in mind; it’s just a plain question.”

“Yes, there was one daughter. It must have been more than ten years ago that she died. Her father took great pains with her upbringing because he wanted to present her as an imperial consort, but he died before he could manage it. The nun was left with the responsibility, and somehow Prince Hyōbkyō began to visit her in secret—I don’t know who the intermediary could have been. The prince’s main wife, a woman of the highest social standing, made life miserable for her in all sorts of ways, and the constant worry killed her. I saw close at hand how true it is that worry does cause illness.”

Genji realized that the little girl must be the daughter’s child. Was it because Prince Hyōbkyō’s blood ran in her veins that she resembled the lady? The thought strengthened his desire to take her under his wing. She was refined, beautiful, and unspoiled; why not bring her to live with him, educate and rear her according to his own standards, and make her his wife? “A sad story. Did she leave no offspring as mementos?” he asked in the hope of verifying the child’s identity.

“She had one child, born close to the time of her death. It was a girl, too. Now that my sister has entered her declining years, she tends to complain that the child’s a problem.”

It was as he had thought. “It will sound strange, but may I ask that you advise your sister to let me assume responsibility for the child? I do have something in mind. There is a lady with whom I am connected and whom I visit, but I live quite alone—possibly, I suppose, because the two of us don’t get along very well. I’d be humiliated if you dismissed me as just another libertine—if you simply said, ‘She’s too young.’”

“Your proposal would be most welcome if she were not still a complete infant; even in jest, you couldn’t treat her as a wife. Nor am I as a monk in what brings the wife to true maturity, since it is said that the husband’s behavior is and let her give you an answer.”

4. Prince Hyōbkyō and the Fujiwara lady were full siblings.

Overcome with youthful embarrassment by the bishop’s brusque speech and formal manner, Genji could think of no further way to plead his cause. “It’s time for a ritual in the Amida chapel,” the bishop said. “I haven’t performed the vesper service yet; I’ll return after I finish.” He set out for the chapel.

Genji was feeling wretchedly ill. A shower brought rain pelted down, a cold mountain wind sprang up, and he could hear the roar of a waterfall whose volume had suddenly increased. The chilling sound of a sutra reading reached his ears from time to time, chanted in a slightly drowsy voice. The surroundings were enough to move the most unreflective of men, and for Genji, his mind teeming with problems, there was no question of sleep. Although the bishop had said that he was merely leaving to perform the vesper service, it was now very late.

It was clear that the people inside the hermitage were also still awake. Despite their efforts at quiet, Genji heard the faint noise of rosary beads brushing against an armrest, and there was a hearteningly familiar rustle of skirts, suggestive of elegance and refinement. The hermitage was small, and the women were nearby. A row of folding screens had been erected as an outer wall for their room. He went over to it, pushed the middle screen slightly ajar, and rapped his fan against his hand. The ladies-in-waiting seemed startled, but they could scarcely pretend not to notice, and he heard one of them inch forward on her knees. Then she moved back a bit. “How strange! Perhaps I’ve made a mistake,” she said in an uncertain voice.

“But they say the Buddha never errs as a guide, not even in the dark.”⁵ His aristocratic young voice made her shrink from the thought of how her own speech must sound in comparison, but she said, “Where is it that you wish to go? I don’t quite understand.”

“This must seem very sudden; it’s natural that you should wonder. But may I just trouble you to pass along a poem?”

hatsukusa no	Ever since that glimpse
wakaba no ue o	of the young leaf on the herb
mitsuru yori	so newly sprouted,
tabine no sode mo	never has it been free of dew—
tsuyu zo kawakamu	the sleeve of the travel robe.

“I believe you must be aware that there is nobody here who might understand such a message. To whom could I take it?” she said.

“Please tell yourself that I must have a reason for giving it to you,” he said.

5. Genji’s rapping was a request for help. He implies here that someone in a religious household ought to share the Buddha’s attributes. The second half of his sentence is a light-hearted comparison of his own situation to that of the ignorant beings the *Lotus Sutra* describes as “entering from darkness into darkness without ever hearing the Buddha’s name.” See Hirvitz, *Scripture*, p. 133.



She went inside to inform her mistress. "A typical modern gallant!" the nun said. "He must think the child is of marriageable age. But how did he find out about the 'young herb'?" There was much that struck her as strange and puzzling, but it would seem discourteous to let too much time elapse. She sent back an answering poem and a comment, "Our sleeves are the ones that are hard to dry."

makura yuu
koyoi bakari no
tsuyukesa o
miyama no koke ni
kurabezararan
please do not compare
the dew of a single night
spent away from home
with the mossy robes of those
who dwell far back in the hills.⁶

"I don't understand at all why you communicate with me through a third person; it's not what I am used to. Forgive me, but I need to take this opportunity to have a serious talk with you," Genji answered.

"I thought he must have been misinformed," the nun said to her women. "I really feel at a loss to reply to so fine a gentleman."

"But won't you embarrass him if you don't see him?"

"You're right. I wouldn't like to speak to him if I were a young woman, but as it is . . . Besides, I can hardly ignore the honor of his saying he has something important to discuss with me." She moved forward on her knees.

"I'm sure you must consider me brash and thoughtless, but the buddhas know there is no frivolity in my heart," Genji said.

The nun sat in silence, a hint of constraint in her manner, and he felt too awkward to proceed immediately.

"Most assuredly, it is no insignificant karmic bond that brings us to converse like this on an occasion I could never have foreseen," she said.

"I wanted to speak to you about the little girl of whose plight I have heard so affecting an account. Won't you please bring yourself to accept me as a substitute for her dead mother? When I was a mere infant, I lost the one who should have been closest to me, and I have led a strangely unsettled, aimless life. It's because your granddaughter's situation is exactly the same as mine that I want with all my heart to ask you to let her be my companion. That's why I have taken this unique opportunity to address you, rude though it may seem."

"Your proposal would be welcome under different circumstances, but I fear you have been misinformed. Although there is someone here of whom I am the sole trail support, she is still a naive little girl, not a person you might take as a wife despite her shortcomings. I cannot accept your gracious offer."

"I've heard everything there is to know about her, so please don't stand recluses."

on ceremony; please just recognize that my intentions are not those of an ordinary man," he said.

But the nun refused to give him the answer he wanted. "He apparently doesn't understand that she's far too young for marriage," she thought.

The bishop was coming. "All right," Genji said, replacing the screen. "At least, I feel better for having brought the subject up."

It was getting on toward dawn, and the voices chanting repentance rites sounded very holy as they mingled with the sound of the waterfall, carried from the Lotus Concentration Hall by the mountain wind. [Genji recited a poem:]

fukimayou
miyamaotoshi ni
yume samete
namida moyōsu
taki no oto ka na
My dreams were dispelled
by voices borne on the gale
gusting from the hills;
my eyes overflow with tears
at the sound of the cascade.⁷

[The bishop:]

sashikumi ni
sode nurashikeru
yamamizu ni
sumeru kokoro wa
sawagi ya wa suru
The purified heart
of one who makes this his dwelling
remains unperturbed
by the mountain stream that has evoked
a visitor's sudden tears.

"This shows, no doubt, that I have grown accustomed to the sound."

The sky gradually lightened, and the mountain birds, invisible in the pervasive haze, raised a chorus of song that seemed to come out of nowhere. Moving with frequent pauses, a deer made its way through a brocade of many-colored blossoms, scattered in drifts from unidentified trees and bushes—a sight so novel that Genji forgot about his ailment.

Difficult though it was for the sage to move, he managed to reach the bishop's hermitage, and to perform a protective ritual on Genji's behalf, reciting the dharani with immense authority in a hoarse voice blurred by missing teeth.⁸

A number of people arrived to act as Genji's escorts for the return journey. They offered congratulations on his recovery. There was also a message from the emperor. The bishop did everything possible to welcome the visitors, sending all the way to the valley for unusual fruits and nuts. He offered Genji some wine. "I have sworn a solemn vow to stay here until the end of the year, but I can't help regretting it now, because it prevents me from going down to see you on your way," he said.

"My heart will stay with your hills and streams, but His Majesty is anxious."

7. The poem, a polite expression of thanks for a night's hospitality, contains overtones appropriate to the circumstances: "My dreams were dispelled" can mean, "I awoke from illusion." "Sound of the Waterfall" was a chant used for repentance rites.

8. Genji has been cured; the purpose of this ritual is to keep him healthy.



ious to see me, and I must show proper respect.
before these blossoms have passed their peak," Genji said. [His poem:]

miyabito ni
yukite kararanu
yamazakura
kaze yori saki ni
kite mo mirubeku

I shall go and say
to those who serve His Majesty:
"You must come to see
the mountain cherry blossoms
before the wind precedes you."

The splendor of his appearance and the beauty of his voice were sufficient

in themselves to dazzle the bishop:

udonge no
hana machietaru
kokochi shite
myamazakura ni
me koso usuranu

Savoring the feeling
that at long last I have seen
the *udonge* blossom,
I have no will to turn my gaze
toward the mountain cherry tree.⁹

Genji smiled. "But a flower that 'opens once when the time is ripe' would seem to be rare indeed."

Upon receiving the wine bowl from Genji, the sage looked at him with brimming eyes:

okuyama no
matsu no tobooso o
mare ni akete
mada minu hana no
kao o miru ka na

When I set ajar
the seldom opened pine door
deep in the mountains,
I behold a face resembling
a flower hitherto unseen.

He gave him a vajra as a talisman.¹⁰ The bishop then presented a gauzy silken bag, attached to a pine branch, which held a jeweled diamond-seed rosary obtained from Kudara by Prince Shōtoku, still in the original Chinese-style box; also some medicines in dark blue jars, attached to branches of wisteria and cherry blossoms; and various other gifts appropriate to the circumstances.¹¹ Genji had sent home for things to be offered to the sage and the lesser sutra recitants, as well as for other articles required in connection with his departure. He now made suitable gifts to everyone, including the neighboring peasants, presented his pious donations, and prepared to leave.

9. *Udonge* is Japanese for the *udumbara*, a small deciduous tree native to South Asia that produces clusters of small, figlike fruit. Because the flowers are well hidden, legend had it that *Sutra*, which compares the rare flowering of the tree to the rarity of preaching about the true doctrine. See Hurvitz, *Scripture*, p. 29.

10. The vajra (*tokō*), a clublike metal implement, symbolized the ability of the enlightened mind to smash all kinds of defilements.

11. "Diamond seed" (*kongōji*) probably means the hard, black fruit of the goldenbell (*Koeleria paniculata*, J. *mokugenji*), a small, deciduous East Asian tree. The stones were often used in rosaries.

The bishop went inside and told his sister exactly what Genji had proposed. "I can't say anything one way or the other now. I'll give him an answer in another four or five years if he's still interested," the nun said. Convinced that she would not change her mind, the bishop contented himself with a mere repetition of her words, an attitude Genji found deeply discouraging.

Genji sent the nun a note by a small page, one of the bishop's attendants:

yūmagure
honoka ni hana no
iro o mite
kesa wa kasumi no
tachi zo wazurau

In the uncertain dusk,
I saw but dimly the hue
of the blossom;
this morning I go forth
with vision obscured by haze.

The nun wrote back in elegant, aristocratic script, set down in an easy running hand:

makoto ni ya
hana no arari wa
tachuki to
kasumuru sora no
keshiki o mo minu

I shall wait to see
if it be true—this hint
from hazy skies
of regret to leave the place
where the blossom has come forth.

As Genji was entering the carriage, a large party of gentlemen, including his brothers-in-law, arrived from the minister's mansion to escort him, disturbed because he had left without telling people where he was going. Tō-no-chūjō, Sachūben, and others of the minister's sons were among those who had come in search of him. "We are always eager to accompany you on an excursion like this. The last thing we expected was to be left behind," they complained. Someone added, "It would be a shame to start back without lingering awhile in the shade of these gorgeous cherry blossoms."

They seated themselves in rows on the moss, near some rocks, and began to drink. The spot was below the waterfall, with a delightful view of the descending stream.

Tō-no-chūjō drew a flute from his breast and played with the skill of a master; Ben beat time lightly with his fan, singing, "Ah! It's west of Toyora Temple!"¹² The two were much superior to the ordinary run of courtiers, but it was impossible to look away from the peerless—indeed, uncanny—beauty of Genji's appearance as he leaned languidly against a rock. As usual, the party from the mansion included an escort who played the oboe, and there was also a gentleman, an enthusiastic amateur musician, who had brought a servant to carry his panpipes.

The bishop came out, personally carrying a seven-stringed koto. "Do play just one piece," he urged Genji. "It would be a treat even for our mountain birds."

12. From a folksong (*sabara*), "Kazuragi."



"I really don't feel at all well," Genji said. He played a little, and then they all set out. The most insignificant of the monks and pages shed tears of regret; and, of course, it was worse for the aged nuns and others inside the hermitage, who had never before seen Genji's like. One could scarcely believe that he belonged in this world, they said.

The bishop himself was affected. "What karma could have decreed the birth of such a man in this inconsequential land of the rising sun during the latter days of the Law? I find it very moving," he said, wiping his eyes.

The little girl was lost in naive admiration. "He's handsomer than His Highness, isn't he?" she said.

"If you think so, you'd better be his child," said one of the ladies-in-waiting.

She bobbed her head in vigorous assent, charmed by the idea. Whenever she played with her dolls or drew pictures, she made Lord Genji, decked him out in fine robes, and took great care of him.

Genji went first to the imperial palace, where he described his recent activities. The emperor considered him ominously thin. He asked about the sage's spiritual powers, and Genji reported in detail. "It sounds as though he merits appointment to the office of holy teacher. I wonder why I've never heard of a man who has performed so many exploits in the practice of his religion," His Majesty said in a respectful voice.

The minister of the left joined them. "I wanted to go to meet you for the return journey, but thought it best not to, in view of the private nature of your visit. Please stay with us for a day or two of quiet rest," he said to Genji. "Shall I escort you now?"

Little as Genji cared for the proposal, he felt obliged to go. The minister put him into his own carriage and got in the rear. He could not help feeling a twinge of conscience in the face of so much genuine solicitude.

The minister had made preparations at home in anticipation of the visit. During Genji's long absence, no pains had been spared to make the mansion even more perfect than before, a veritable gem of a stately dwelling.

As usual, Genji's wife seemed disinclined to emerge from the inner room in which she had secreted herself, and it was only after repeated paternal messages that she made a reluctant appearance. Like a princess in a picture, she sat where her attendants had placed her, motionless and correct. Genji felt—if only he could elicit an interesting reply by hinting at some of the things on his mind or describing his trip to the mountains. But she was so very reserved, so constrained and distant, and the formality of her manner had merely increased with the years. It was too much, too annoying. "I wished you could be more like other wives once in a while. You haven't even bothered to inquire about my health when I've been desperately ill. That's nothing new, but I do take it somewhat amiss," he said.

"Is neglect so painful?" She answered haltingly, with a sidelong glance, her face intimidatingly elegant and beautiful.¹³

"You almost never talk to me—and now I must confess to surprise. 'Visit' is hardly the word for people in our situation; it's a harsh way of putting things. But then you always make me feel small. Even though I do everything I can to try to change your mind, you just seem to dislike me more. Well, while there's life there's hope, I suppose." He entered the curtain-dais. She was slow to follow, and he stretched out with a sigh, uncertain how he might call her in. It may have been a further sign of embarrassment that he pretended to be falling asleep, meanwhile indulging in a series of gloomy reflections on his relations with women.

Much as he wanted to see the young herb mature, it was only natural that the nun should consider the child unready for marriage. The point would be hard to argue. But why not try to find some means of simply bringing her home, so that she might always be present to help him forget his troubles? He wondered how she could look so much like her aunt. Prince Hyōbukyō himself was aristocratic and elegant enough, but not particularly handsome. Could it be because the Fujitsubo lady was the prince's full sister? The child's kinship to the lady made her seem very precious, and he swore to himself that he would find a way to get her.

The next day, he sent courtesy letters to the hermitage. He probably took the occasion to drop a hint to the bishop. To the nun, he said in part, "When you seemed unwilling to consider my proposal, I felt too embarrassed to attempt a full explanation of what was in my mind. I would be so happy if this letter—this persistence—could convince you of the extraordinary depth of my feeling." There was an enclosure, a small knotted letter.¹⁴

omokage wa	All my heart I left
mi o mo hanarezu	with the mountain cherry tree.
yamazakura	Why, then, should its image
kokoro no kagiri	never absent itself
tomete koshikado	from what remains of me?

"I worry about the wind in the night, too."¹⁵
Needless to say, his calligraphy was exquisite; and the very style of the letter, with its casual wrapping, seemed superb to the dazzled eyes of the

13. "Neglect" paraphrases the lady's reply, which puts Genji on the defensive by punning on the verb *tou* ("inquire"; "visit"). Her question can mean either, "Is it painful when someone fails to inquire?" or, "Is it painful when someone fails to visit?"

14. Intended for the child Murasaki. As the name implies, knotted letters (*musubibumi*) were notes twisted into knots. They were used for love letters. More formal communications (*tatebumi*), such as Genji's letter to the nun, were written on flat pieces of paper and enclosed in envelopes bent and twisted at the ends. Genji's poem initiates Murasaki's association with cherry blossoms, her symbol throughout the book.

15. Prince Motoyoshi (sis 29): asa madaki / okite zo misuru / ume no hana / yo no ma no kaze no / ushirometasa ni ("Blossoms of the plum! I arose to inspect them in dawn's early light, fearful lest the wind in the night might have carried them away").



old women. It was with difficulty that the nun framed her answer; the *situa-*
tion was so delicate that she scarcely knew what to say.

"I had attached no weight to what you mentioned when you stopped by,
and I find it hard to reply now that you make a point of it. The child ^{cannot}
as yet even write the 'Naniwazu' poem in proper cursive form; your ^{kind}
letter has been wasted."¹⁶

One cannot rely
on a heart that tarries
just for the brief span
before the cherries scatter
on the peak where the harsh wind blows,
hodo no hakanasa
kokoro tomekeru
chiranu ma o
onoe no sakura
arashi fuku

"I worry even more."

To Genji's chagrin, the bishop replied in the same vein.
Two or three days later, Genji sent Koremitsu to the hermitage. "A
woman called Shonagon-no-menoto ought to be there. See her and go over
the matter thoroughly," he told him.

"There's no possibility he won't explore," Koremitsu said to himself.
"She's only a baby." He smiled as he recalled his glimpse of the child
through the fence.

The bishop expressed his appreciation of the honor of another letter. Ko-
remitsu asked to see Shonagon, met with her, and spoke at length of Genji's
sentiments and general situation. Glib as ever, he made it all sound very
reasonable as he rambled on, but everyone at the hermitage considered the
suggestion preposterous. What could Genji have in mind for a girl who was
so obviously not of marriageable age?

Genji's letter to the nun was also written in language of the utmost sin-
cerity. As before, he had included a note for the child. "It would give me
great pleasure to see those block characters." [His poem:]

asakayama
asaku mo hito o
omowanu ni
nado yama no i no
kakehanaruran
The love I bear you
is not shallow like the name
of Shallow Mountain;
why should you stay as remote
as a rockbound mountain spring?

The nun replied:

16. KKS, kana preface: "The Naniwazu poem was composed at the beginning of an impet-
regin: the Asakayama poem is a playful poem composed by a palace attendant. Those two are
as it were, the father and mother of poetry, the first lines we learn in calligraphy practice." The
Naniwazu poem appears later in the preface: naniwazu ni / saku ya ko no hana / fuyugomori
ina wa harube to / saku ya ko no hana ("Flowers on the trees in bloom at Naniwazu say, 'Now
the winter yields its place to springtime! Flowers blooming on the trees!'). The Asakayama
[Shallow Mountain] poem (MYs 3829), to which Genji alludes in his next note: asakayama
kage sae miyuru / yama no i no / asaki kokoro o / wa ga omowanaku ni ("The love I bear you
is not like the shallow pool, mountain spring water, holding the mirrored image of Shallow
Mountain itself").

kumisomete
kuyashi to kikishi
yama no i no
asaki nagara ya
kage o misubeki
How can I show her
to one whose shallowness must bring
regrets resembling those
of the traveler who sought to scoop
water from a shallow spring?¹⁷

Koremitsu's report was much the same. To Genji's disappointment, Shō-
nagon said, "If my mistress's health improves, she'll stay here awhile longer
and then move to her house in the city. I imagine she'll be in touch with
your master after that."

The Fujitsubo lady had withdrawn from the palace because of an indis-
position. Genji felt very sorry for the worried, woebegone emperor, but
he also reflected that now, if ever, was his opportunity. So great was his
mental turmoil that his visits to other quarters stopped altogether. Whether
he was at court or at home, he gazed absently into space during the day-
time; and after nightfall he harassed O-no-myōbu with entreaties. I can't
say how Myōbu managed it, but he did meet the lady in a quite inexcus-
able manner. Even while he was with her, he was tormented by the feeling
that it was only a dream. For her, the mere recollection of a certain aston-
ishing earlier event had been a source of infinite grief, and she had made a
firm resolve to prevent a repetition. Now she seemed extremely depressed
and upset; and the reserve and discretion of her demeanor made him feel
rather small, lovable and sweet though she was. He almost resented the
very qualities that set her apart from other women, the lack of any taint
of mediocrity. It was hopeless to try to express all that was in his mind,
or even to exhaust one of the innumerable subjects he wanted to broach.
He would have liked to be staying on Kurabu-no-yama [Darkness Moun-
tain], but the night was cruelly short, and he could only think, in despair,
that it would have been better if the meeting had not taken place.¹⁸ [His
poem:]

mite mo mata
au yo mare naru
yume no uchi ni
yagate magiruru
wa ga mi to mo ga na
I would become one
with this most precious of dreams,
for though I see you now,
there may never be a night
when we two meet again.

As he spoke, he choked with sobs. She could not help feeling sorry for him.
[Her poem:]

17. An allusion to a composition, also based on the Asakayama poem, in which the speaker
wets his sleeves scooping water, which turns out to be too muddy to drink. Anonymous (KKS)
987): kuyashiku zo / kumisometekeru / asakeraba / sode nomi nururu / yama no i no mizu ("I
regret my attempt to scoop a drink of water from the mountain spring: the pool has proved
shallow, and I have merely drenched my sleeves").

18. Kurabulnoyama appears frequently in classical Japanese literature as a place where
perpetual night might be expected. It has been variously identified as an old name for Kura-
mayama (in Sakyo-ku, Kyoto) and as a mountain in Ōmi Province (Shiga Prefecture).



Though I were to plunge
into an eternal dream
this self whose misery
knows no peer, would not my name
endure in shameful legend?

yogaran ni
hito ya tsuraen
tagui naku
ukimi o sameru
yume ni nashite mo

Though I were to plunge
into an eternal dream
this self whose misery
knows no peer, would not my name
endure in shameful legend?

Her distress seemed to him both natural and awesome. Lady Myōbu brought his cloak and the other articles of dress she had assembled. He returned home, stretched out with tears in his eyes, and spent the day in bed. As usual, the only response to his letter was a message from Ō-no-myōbu, announcing that her mistress had not read it. He had expected nothing more, but it was hard to bear, and he spent a listless two or three days in seclusion, without even visiting the imperial palace. It was a torment to feel that the emperor must be worrying lest he had contracted some new illness.

The despairing Fujiwara lady had concluded that some deed in a former life must have doomed her to misery in this one, and her mental turmoil worsened her illness. The emperor sent a stream of messengers urging her to return to the palace soon, but she could not decide to go. It occurred to her that her symptoms were those of a pregnancy, and she lapsed into misery and frantic anxiety about the future. During the hot weather, she arose from her bed even less often than before. After three months, her condition grew evident, and the surprise of her attendants sharpened the pain of her astonishing karma. Unaware of the facts, the ladies-in-waiting marveled that she had waited so long to inform the emperor. But there was something that only she herself knew beyond a doubt. Every detail of her appearance was familiar to her nurse's daughter Ben and to Ō-no-myōbu, the personal attendants who waited on her in the bath and elsewhere; and the two had wondered, but the matter was not one they felt free to discuss. Myōbu could only suppose, in shocked surprise, that her mistress bore the burden of an ineluctable karma.

The lady must have told the emperor that the malignant spirit responsible for her original ailment had masked the symptoms. Everyone else assumed that such was the case. The emperor showered her with solicitous inquiries of vague forebodings, and she existed in a state of unrelieved gloom. Meanwhile, Genji had a dream so bizarre that he called in an expert for explanation. The divination indicated a future that seemed utterly unattainable and unthinkable. "But there is also an unfavorable element," the man added, "something requiring circumspection on your part." It had turned out to be a delicate situation, Genji thought. "It wasn't my own dream," he said. "It was somebody else's. Don't mention this to anyone until the prophecy is fulfilled." He was still puzzling over it when he heard the news about the Fujiwara lady. Was this how the dream would come true? More eager than ever to see her, he besieged Ō-no-myōbu with pleas

but Myōbu felt extremely nervous; in her opinion, things were now even more complicated than before, and there was no way at all to contrive a secret meeting. He no longer received even the trifling one-line replies with which the lady had occasionally acknowledged his messages.

It was not until the seventh month that the Fujiwara lady went back to the imperial palace. The emperor was charmed by the novelty of her presence and moved by her frail appearance, and he loved her even better than before. Somewhat full of figure, with a face thin from worry, she remained a woman of incomparable beauty. As usual, he spent all his time in her apartments. With the season at hand during which music was most interesting, he also kept Genji at his side, calling on him to play the seven-stringed koto, the flute, or some other instrument. Genji did his best to behave in a discreet manner, but there were times when he failed to hide his passion; and on such occasions the lady could not help letting her thoughts dwell on things she would sooner have forgotten.

The bishop's sister had left the hermitage, her health improved. Genji learned where she was living in the city and sent an occasional letter. Naturally enough, the answer was always the same, but his longing for the Fujiwara lady was more desperate than ever during those months, and he thought of nothing else.

Toward the end of autumn, he felt unbearably sad and depressed. One night when the moon was especially beautiful, his thoughts turned belatedly to a place where he had been accustomed to pay secret visits. Raindrops had begun to fall, perhaps the beginning of a shower. His destination was near the intersection of Rokujō and Kyōgoku avenues, which seemed rather a long distance from his point of departure, the imperial palace. On the way, he noticed a neglected dwelling shaded by ancient trees.

"That house belonged to the late inspector—major counselor," said Koremitsu, who was attending him as usual. "I stopped by there for something one day, and a lady-in-waiting told me they were beside themselves with anxiety about the nun. She's apparently sunk very low."

"Poor lady! I ought to have called. Why didn't you let me know? Go in and tell them I'm here to inquire about her," Genji said.

Koremitsu sent someone inside with the message. "Tell them His Lordship has made a special trip," he said.

The ladies-in-waiting were taken aback when the messenger announced Genji's arrival. "This is awkward. Her Ladyship has gone into a shocking decline during the last few days; she can't possibly receive anyone," they said. But it would have been disrespectful to turn him away, so they tidied the south eave-chamber and ushered him in.

"Things are in a sad state of disarray here, but we did want to thank you for your visit, at least," said one of the nun's attendants. "Please forgive our lack of preparation and the remote location of this room."

It was indeed a novelty to be received in such a place, Genji thought. He



said aloud, "I've been wanting to call, but your opposition to my proposal has made me feel diffident about coming. Nobody told me you were so ill; it's most alarming."

The nun replied through an intermediary, "The malady is nothing new, but now it has entered the final stage. I only wish I could thank you directly for the honor of your visit. If you should happen to remain of the same mind about the matter you mentioned, please do take notice of the girl after she matures. The thought of leaving her in such a precarious position hinders me from setting out on the path I long to follow."

She was just in the next room, and he caught an occasional word as she addressed someone in a feeble voice. "What a great honor! I wish the child were old enough to thank him for me." Touched, he said, "I wouldn't have risked letting myself look like a lecher if I hadn't been serious. The moment I saw her, the attraction was so strong—so strangely compelling—that I am sure we must have been together in a previous existence." To the lady-in-waiting he added, "I feel as though this visit has accomplished nothing. Might I not hear a word or two from the little girl?"

"That is impossible, I fear. She went to sleep without knowing you were here."

Just then, footsteps approached from an inner room. "Grandmother, they're saying Lord Genji is here, the gentleman who came to the temple. Why aren't you looking at him?"¹⁹

The disconcerted ladies-in-waiting tried to hush her. "But didn't you say the very sight of him made you feel better?" she objected, pleased by the excellence of her advice.

Amused, but feigning deafness to save the attendants from embarrassment, Genji took his leave with polite expressions of sympathy. "It's true that she's a complete innocent," he thought, "but I could train her beautifully."

On the following day, he sent a courteous message of inquiry. As usual, there was a tiny note for the child:

iwake naki
tazu no hitokoe
kikishi yori
ashima ni nazumu
tune zo enaranu

Ever since the time
when the young crane's cry was heard,
unutterable
the plight of the hapless boat
seeking passage through the reeds.

"The same person . . ."²⁰

Written in a deliberately childish hand, the characters were so tasteful that the ladies told the child she must use them as models.

19. If the nun had received Genji, she could have peeped at him through the panels of the portable curtain-stand.

20. Anonymous (KS 734): *hoie kogu / tazanashobune / kogikaei / onaji hito ni ya / koi wataranamu* ("Am I to love on, going back to that same person, as a tiny boat makes its way through the canal and comes rowing home again?").

It was Shōnagon who replied, "The person you asked about is going to retire to the temple in the hills; it seems that any day now may be her last. If she fails to thank you in this world, she will do so in the next." He was deeply moved.

Autumn evenings were the times when his thoughts dwelt most obsessively on the lady for whom he pined, and the season must also have increased his irrational desire to secure possession of the little girl who was related to her. Recalling the night when the nun had composed the poem about the dew's reluctance to vanish, he yearned for the child. And yet there was a twinge of apprehension. What if she proved less than he anticipated? [He composed a poem:]

te ni tsumite	May I soon pluck it
itsu shi ka mo mimu	and make it mine—the young herb
murasaki no	growing on the plain,
ne ni kayoikeru	its roots akin to those
nobe no wakakusa	of the purple <i>murasaki</i> . ²¹

It was decided that the emperor would visit the Suzakuin in the tenth month. Everyone qualified to perform as a dancer was pressed into service—sons of exalted houses, senior nobles, and courtiers, as well as the usual professionals—and all were fully occupied with refining their skills, from princes and ministers on down.

Realizing that he had let considerable time elapse without inquiring about the nun at the temple in the hills, Genji made a point of sending off a messenger. The only response came from the bishop. "She finally succumbed on the twentieth of last month. Such is the way of the world, but I grieve for her."

He read the letter with a poignant awareness of the ephemerality of worldly things. And what of the child the nun had fretted over? At her age, she must miss her grandmother dreadfully. He dispatched a warm letter of condolence, moved by memories of his own mother's death, dim though they were. Shōnagon returned an appropriate answer.

He learned that the household had returned to the mansion in the city at the end of the mourning period, and a few days later he took advantage of a free night to call in person. The atmosphere at the neglected estate seemed

21. The *murasaki* (*Lithospermum officinale* var. *erythrorhizon*) is a groundwell common in dry meadows throughout Japan. About two feet high, it bears small, white, five-petaled flowers on its hairy-leaved stalk in summer, and its thick, purple roots yield a pigment that was prized as a dye. Here it functions as a metaphor for the Fujisubo lady, who derives her sobriquet from the purple wisteria (*fujii*) in the courtyard (*tsubo*) of her residence at the palace; later, it becomes the child's name. Genji's poem alludes to a poem Ariwara no Narihira composed to accompany a gift of a cloak to the husband of his wife's sister (KS 868): *murasaki no / iro koki toki wa / me mo haru ni / no naru kusaki zo / wakarezarikeru* ("When deep color stains the *murasaki*'s purple roots, we cannot but prize each grass and shrub on the plain stretching into the distance"). Narihira's poem says, in effect, "When a man's love for his wife is strong and deep, his affection extends to all who are associated with her; he makes no distinction between her and them."



erie, and it was easy to imagine how frightened a child might feel with few attendants. He was shown into the same room as before, and Shōnagon spoke of the nun's last moments and other things, weeping as she rambled on. Genji's own sleeve was soaked with sympathetic tears.

"It seems that her father proposes to take her in, but my mistress always worried about that. She's at an awkward age—and I fear her life would be enough to see through the behavior of others in a house presided over by a woman whom my own daughter found to be heartless and cruel, miserable if she joined all the prince's other daughters in a house presided over by a woman whom my own daughter found to be heartless and cruel, she used to say. There have been plenty of incidents to justify her misgiving, and so we do rejoice that you are kind enough to extend her this courtesy now, regardless of how you may feel in the future. We're just troubled because she's not ready for marriage—and young for her age, at that," Shōnagon said.

"Why is it that you hold back after I've explained my feelings so many times? I've realized that a special tie from another life is what makes me find her innocence so sweet and endearing. Wouldn't it be possible for me to speak to her without an intermediary?" [His poem:]

ashiwaka no
ura ni mirume wa
karaku tomo
ko wa tachinagara
kaeru nami ka wa
Though seaweed be scant
where young reeds grow in the bay
at Waka-no-ura,
the wave will not go back to sea
before it reaches the shore.²²

"That would really be too much."

"Indeed, you pay us a great honor. But . . ."

yoru nani no
kokoro mo shirade
waka-no-ura ni
tamamo nabikan
hodo zo ukitaru
The gemweed growing
in Waka-no-ura Bay
would be indiscreet
were it to yield to the wave,
ignorant of its intent.

"I am quite at a loss," she said.

The practiced skill with which she phrased her refusal tempered Genji's annoyance. "I shall surely cross . . ." he recited in a voice whose beauty thrilled the young ladies-in-waiting.²³

The child was in bed, weeping for her grandmother, when some of her playmates entered. "A gentleman in an informal cloak is here. It's probably the prince," they said.

²². Wordplay's yield a second meaning: "Although it may be hard to meet her, I won't leave until I do."

²³. Genji announces his determination to persevere by paraphrasing a poem by Fujiwara no Koremasa (c. 731): *hito shiranu / mi wa isogedomo / toshi o hete / nado koegataki / ashi shall cross the barrier at the Hill of Meeting*).

She got up and approached the room, asking in a sweet voice, "Shōnagon, where is the gentleman? Has Father arrived?"

"It's not the prince, but you mustn't treat me like a stranger. Come here," Genji said.

Child though she was, she recognized the voice of the splendid gentleman who had visited the temple. She went up to her nurse, afraid of having said the wrong thing. "Let's go, Shōnagon. I'm sleepy."

"Why must you hide from me now? Sleep on my knees. Come a little closer," Genji said.

"This is what I meant. She's still at the innocent age." The nurse pushed her charge toward him, and the child sat down with an unconcerned air. Genji put his hand inside the curtain. Her hair hung in silky strands above the soft robe, and the abundance of the ends suggested that it must be remarkably lovely. He took her hand.

Disconcerted and frightened by the approach of someone unfamiliar, she pulled away and retreated inside. "I said I wanted to go to bed."

Genji slipped in after her. "I'm the one who's going to care for you from now on. Don't be unfriendly."

"This is unnerving, sir. You're going much too far. Whatever you may say to her will be a waste of time," the nurse said in distress.

"She's only a child; there's no question of my doing anything. I merely want you to understand that mine is no ordinary love," Genji said.

A violent hailstorm made the night seem eerie. Tears came to Genji's eyes. "She must be dreadfully lonely with so few people around." It would be unbearable, he thought, to go off and leave her like this. "Close the shutters," he told them. "It's a terrible night out. I'll be on duty; the rest of you stay close by." He entered the curtain-dais with a matter-of-fact air.

The ladies-in-waiting were aghast. Shōnagon felt especially dismayed and indignant, but she merely sighed. There was nothing to gain by making a scene.

The terrified child trembled with apprehension, her fair skin roughening as though chilled. Moved to pity, Genji wrapped her in her singlet. Not unshocked by his own behavior, he began to talk in affectionate tones about things that he thought might please her. "How about coming to a place where there are lots of interesting pictures and dolls to play with?" he asked. His friendly, gentle speech calmed her fears, but she tossed and turned, too uneasy to sleep.

The storm raged throughout the night.

"It would have been truly lonely if His Lordship hadn't stayed. What a pity she isn't of marriageable age!" the ladies-in-waiting whispered to one another. The anxious nurse stayed as close as possible to the curtain-dais.

After the wind had died down a bit, Genji emerged in the dark, as though from a tryst. "Now that I've seen what a pitiful situation this is for her, I'll be even less able to keep from worrying. I want to move her to the place



where I lead my lonely life. She simply can't stay on like this forever; it's a wonder she hasn't been frightened to death," he said.

"The prince seems to have told her he'll be coming for her, but I imagine he'll wait until after the forty-nine days expire," Shōnagon said.

"He would be a natural source of support. Still, he's always lived apart from her; she must consider him as much a stranger as I am. This is only the first time I've been with her, but I'm sure I love her better than he does," said Genji, stroking the child's hair. He set out with many backward glances.

Mist veiled the vast expanse of the sky in a delightfully unusual manner, and pure white frost covered the ground. If he had been returning from a real tryst, he would have savored the scene; as it was, he felt a vague dissatisfaction.

He realized that his route was taking him past the house of a lady he had been visiting in strict secrecy, but there was no response when he ordered someone to rap on the gate. There seemed no choice but to have an attendant with a good voice recite a poem:

asaborake	Even when I wander
kin tatsu sora no	lost under mist-shrouded skies
mayoi ni mo	at break of day,
yukisuygaraki	I cannot pass beyond
imo ga mon ka na	the gate of my beloved.

After the man had chanted the lines twice, the lady sent out a maid servant, cultivated in appearance, who chanted a reply and returned inside:

tachiomari	If you have halted,
kin no magaki no	loath to pass the rustic fence
suguku wa	enshrouded in mist,
kusa no tozashi ni	the closed door of a grass-thatched hut
sawari shimo seji	should prove no obstacle.

Nobody else appeared. Dull as it seemed to go on home, Genji went back smiling to himself in affectionate recollection of the child's sweet face. The sun was high when he rose. He wanted to send a letter, but the message his brush idle. In the end, he dispatched some amusing pictures.

The prince called at the house on that same day. The premises were far more rundown than in the nun's lifetime, and the sprawling old mansion seemed even more deserted and lonely than before. "You can't stay in a place like this, not even for a little while," he said, looking around. "I'm going to take you to my house. Everything will be fine. Your nurse will have a room all to herself, and there are children to play with. You'll be very happy." He called the child closer. Her clothing was saturated with the rich scent from Genji's garments—a tasteful perfume, he thought, but it was said

that she must wear robes limp with age. "Over the years while she was living with the ailing old lady, I used to urge her to come and make friends with the people at my house, but she was strangely reluctant, and my wife also seemed hesitant about stepping forward. I'm sorry she has to move under these circumstances," he said.

"But there's no need for her to go right away," Shōnagon said. "She can stay here awhile longer, lonely though it is. I'm sure it will be best if she doesn't move until she's old enough to understand what goes on around her." She added, "She never stops grieving; she won't eat a thing." The child's face was indeed very thin, but it made her look all the more refined and appealing.

"You shouldn't carry on so," the prince told his daughter. "There's no use thinking about the dead now. I'm here; everything's all right." The day drew to a close as he talked on in the same vein, and he prepared to take his leave. The child wept to see him go, her unhappiness drawing tears from his own eyes. "You mustn't take things so hard. I'll move you to my house in a day or two," he said. He set out after many repetitions of this and other soothing remarks. The house seemed empty after his departure, and the little girl shed tears of loneliness.

No worries about the future crossed the child's mind; all her thoughts were of her grandmother, the person to whom she had been close for years, with never a moment's separation, and who was now dead. The intensity of her grief brought a lump to her throat and kept her from her usual play, child though she was. There were a certain number of distractions during the daytime, but she lapsed into gloom after dark. Unable to comfort her, the nurse wept with her. "How can you go on like this?" she said.

Genji sent Koremitsu to help the household for the night. "I ought to come myself, but His Majesty has summoned me," his message said. "I feel deep concern for the child after having seen her in those sad circumstances."

"This is no way to act at the beginning of a relationship, even if it isn't a real marriage," Shōnagon said.²⁴

"The prince will be sure to scold us for neglecting our duty if he hears about it," said someone else.

"Be very careful," Shōnagon told her charge. "Don't make some childish reference to Lord Genji when you happen to be talking to your father." But the child was disarmingly inattentive.

Shōnagon told Koremitsu of her concerns. "Perhaps an ineluctable fate will make her his wife at some future time. But in my opinion, she's far from ready for marriage now. I worry because I don't understand the motive behind your master's odd advances. Furthermore, her father called today and said, 'Take care of her so I don't have to worry; don't neglect your responsibility.' It's all terribly upsetting. Your master's gallantry is more worrisome

²⁴ A man entering into a serious relationship was expected to visit the woman on each of the two nights following their initial night together.



now than if things were going along as usual." She tried to keep from sounding too distressed, afraid that Koremitsu might think Genji had seduced the girl. Koremitsu had no idea what she was talking about.

Genji could not suppress deep sympathy when Koremitsu returned with his report, but the thought of visiting the child made him feel uneasy and hesitant. If people heard about it, might they not consider him indiscreet and perverted? It would be far better to bring her to his Niō Mansion.

He sent off a great number of letters. At nightfall, he dispatched Koremitsu with a message: "There are things that prevent me from coming. Will you think I don't really care about you?"

Shōnagon greeted Koremitsu with a few hurried words. "I have all sorts of things to do. The prince has suddenly announced that he'll be coming for us tomorrow. It's a wrench to leave the old familiar place, rundown as it is, all of milady's attendants are upset," she said. Since it was clear that they were busy with sewing and other preparations for the move, Koremitsu went back to Genji.

Genji was at his father-in-law's house, where, as usual, his wife had shown herself in no hurry to receive him. Vaguely irritated, he was strutting on a six-stringed koto, singing "Till a Field in Hitachi" to himself in an elegant voice.²⁵ When Koremitsu arrived, he called him close to question him.

The news was a blow. "Once she goes to the prince's house, I'll look like a perversity if I ask for her. And if I just go off with her, people will say I've kidnapped a child. I'll have to swear her women to temporary secrecy and take her to Niō before the prince comes for her," he thought. To Koremitsu he said, "I'll go there just before dawn. The carriage is all right as it is; just issue orders for one or two escorts to stand by." Koremitsu bowed and withdrew.

Genji could not quite make up his mind. "What shall I really do about this? They'll call me a lecher if word gets out. If only she were mature enough for people to assume we were in love, the affair would seem commonplace. Her father will probably learn where she is, and I won't be able to look him in the face." But he left the minister's house in the dead of night, unable to bear the thought of letting the child escape his grasp. His wife had been her usual indifferent, aloof self. He concealed his plans from the ladies-in-waiting by announcing that he had just remembered some pressing business at home; he would take care of it and come directly back. After putting on an informal cloak in his own apartments, he set out for the late nun's house, with Koremitsu as his only mounted attendant.

An unsuspecting servant opened the gate in response to the raps of Genji's man, and Genji had the carriage drawn inside quietly. When Koremitsu

²⁵ Genji is waiting in his wife's apartments. She is probably intended to hear the song, *fuzokubuta* (folk-song) in which the singer declares himself guiltless of infidelity.

tapped on a corner door, clearing his throat, Shōnagon recognized his voice. She came out.

"His Lordship has arrived," Koremitsu said.

"The child is asleep. How is it that you've come so late at night?" she asked, thinking to herself that Genji was probably on his way home from an assignation.

"I heard a while ago that she was about to move to the prince's house. I have something to say to her before she goes," Genji said.

Shōnagon laughed. "What can it be? She won't produce much of an answer." To her consternation, Genji entered the room. "Some older ladies are relaxing here," she said. "They're quite unrepresentative."

"Your mistress probably isn't awake yet," Genji said. "I'll get her up. How could anyone sleep through this enchanting morning mist?" He moved to the interior, where the women were too stunned to utter a word of protest.

The child was fast asleep. He picked her up and awakened her, and she opened her eyes. "Father has come for me," she thought, still half asleep. Genji smoothed her tangled hair. "Let's go. The prince has sent me for you."

Puzzled and frightened, she realized that he was not her father. "Now, now, this won't do. I'm just the same as your father, you know," he said. He carried her out.

"What are you doing?" said Tayū and Shōnagon.

"I told her I wanted to take her to a nice place because I was anxious about not being able to come here whenever I pleased. Now I am dismayed to learn that she's supposed to move elsewhere, which would make things still worse; I couldn't even send her a letter. So I'm going to take her to the place I mentioned. One of you ladies come with us," Genji said.

"Today is the worst possible time. What would we tell the prince when he came? The two of you will marry some day if that's your destiny. But this is so sudden! Milady's attendants are all at a loss," said Shōnagon in great agitation.

"Very well, the attendants can come later." Genji ordered his men to bring the carriage up. The astonished women gathered in a worried cluster, unable to decide what to do. The child wept, aware that something strange was happening. Realizing that there was no way to keep her, Shōnagon picked up the robes they had sewed for her the night before, changed her own garments for more suitable attire, and got into the carriage.

The new day had yet to dawn when they arrived at the Niō Mansion, which was close by. The men took the carriage to the west wing, and Genji got out with the child in his arms, holding her very gently. Shōnagon hesitated. "I still feel as though I'm dreaming; I don't know what to do," she said.

"Do as you please. The child is here now. If you want to go back, I'll have them take you," Genji said.



There seemed no alternative to getting out. It was all so dismayingly sad, so agitating. What would the prince say? And what would become of the child in the end? However things turned out, it was a sad misfortune to lose those on whom she ought to have been able to rely. The nurse's eyes filled with tears, but she did her best to restrain them, recognizing that they were inauspicious.

There was no curtain-dais in the room, which was not the one Genji was accustomed to using. Genji summoned Koremitsu and had him see to the installation of folding screens and a curtain-dais. There was not much more in the way of furniture—merely a curtain-stand and some cushions. He sent someone to the east wing for his night things and lay down. The terrified child was trembling with apprehension, but she spoke without giving way to tears. "I want to sleep with Shōnagon." Her voice sounded very young. "Now that you're a big girl, you aren't supposed to sleep with your nurse," Genji told her. She lay disconsolate, with tears in her eyes. The nurse sat dazed, incapable of sleep.

As day gradually dawned, Shōnagon looked around. The mansion and its furnishings were of course magnificent beyond anything in her experience; even the sand in the courtyard seemed to sparkle like jewels. She felt abashed in the face of so much splendor, but at least there were no fine ladies-in-waiting on duty in this wing, which was used only for the reception of guests with whom Genji was not on close terms. Nobody was around except for some menservants, waiting outside the blinds.

There were whispers among those who had caught a hint of a woman's arrival. "Who do you suppose she is? It can't be an ordinary affair."

Genji performed his ablutions and breakfasted in the west wing. The sun was high when he arose. "I'm afraid it will be inconvenient for you with no ladies-in-waiting. Why don't you call in some suitable ones from the other house this evening?" he said to Shōnagon. He sent for some page girls from the east wing—small ones only—and four pretty children arrived. The child was in bed, enveloped in one of his robes. He urged her to get up, administering her first lesson. "You'll hurt my feelings if you keep lying there. Would I treat you like this if I didn't care about you? Girls should have good dispositions." She was even prettier than she had seemed from a distance. Charming cozily, he sent for interesting pictures, toys, and other things with which to amuse her. When she finally arose, she was charming in her limp, deep-gray mourning robes, an innocent smile on her face. The sight brought an involuntary smile to Genji's own lips.

After Genji had crossed over to the east wing, the child went to the threshold and peeped through the blinds at the trees and lake in the garden. The gentlemen of fourth and fifth rank, new to her experience, moved back and forth in ceaseless procession, their cloaks a medley of black and red. Genji

had been right; this was an entertaining place. In her naive fashion, she was soon distracted by the interesting pictures on the folding screens.

Genji went nowhere for the next two or three days, not even to the imperial palace, so that he might converse with the child and win her affection. Perhaps with the thought of letting them serve as models, he produced various things with his brush for her inspection—practice characters, pictures, and so forth. He assembled them beautifully. One especially fine calligraphic specimen bore two lines of poetry: "I sigh at the mention of Musashino."²⁶ She picked it up and saw a verse, written in tiny characters:

ne wa minedo	I have not seen its roots,
aware to zo omou	but it is very dear to me—
musashino no	the kin of the plant
tsuyu wakewaburu	hard to approach through the dews
kusa no yukari o	of Musashino Plain.

"Come, you must write something too," Genji said.

"I don't write very well yet."

He smiled at the artless charm with which she raised her eyes. "You mustn't refuse to write just because you can't do it well. I'll teach you," he said. Even to himself, it seemed strange that he should be utterly beguiled by the childish way in which she grasped the brush when she turned aside to write.

"I made a mistake," she said in a shy voice, trying to hide the paper. He captured it and looked at it:

kakotsubeki	I feel uneasy
yue o shiraneba	because I don't understand
obotsuka na	why you have to sigh.
ika naru kusa no	What kind of plant can it be
yukari naruran	to which I am akin?

Childish though the calligraphy looked, its amplitude promised good things in the future. The resemblance to the late nun's hand was unmistakable. She should do very well if she studied examples of a fashionable style, Genji thought. He played dolls with her, assembling a whole row of houses, and found the pastime an excellent way to take his mind off his troubles. The ladies-in-waiting who had strayed behind scarcely knew what to say when the prince arrived and questioned them. Genji had instructed them to tell nobody for the time being; and Shōnagon, who was of the same mind, had sent word that they must maintain absolute silence. Thus they merely

26. Anonymous (KKRJ 3507): shiranedomo / musashino to ieba / kakotarenu / yoshi ya sa koso wa / murasaki no yue ("Though I have not seen it, I sigh at the mention of Musashino. And why should that be, you ask? The *murasaki* is to blame"). Genji puts his own interpretation on this poem, treating Musashino and *murasaki* as metaphors for the child and the Fuji-tsubo lady.



said, "Shonagon took her off somewhere." The prince could think of nothing useful to say. "Her grandmother was bitterly opposed to her coming to my house; I suppose the nurse, in a fit of officiousness, decided on her own to cast the child adrift, instead of confronting me with her objections." He set out in tears, flustering the ladies by telling them to let him know if they heard anything.

The prince also questioned the bishop to no avail. The memory of his daughter's sweet face evoked sad, nostalgic thoughts. No longer hostile toward the mother, his wife had looked forward to educating the child to her own liking, and she was distressed that it was not to be.

Ladies-in-waiting gradually assembled. Murasaki was exceptionally quick-witted and amusing, and her playmates, a group of page girls and page boys, felt delighted to participate in her games. She wept for the time on lonely evenings when Genji was away, but thoughts of the prince seldom crossed her mind. She had always lived apart from him, and her new patron was now the one to whom she clung, and whom she loved with all her heart.

Whenever Genji returned from an excursion, she was the first to welcome him home, chattering happily and entering his embrace without the least reluctance or shyness. He found her behavior immensely appealing. When a mature woman's suspiciousness and jealousy cause difficulties, the man may begin to wonder about the constancy of his own affection. He no longer feels comfortable; she for her part nurses a permanent grievance, and the unthinkable occurs without their willing it. But there were no such worries with Genji's delightful playmate. If she were his daughter, she would be too old for perfect freedom; he could never be so familiar as to lie down and get up with her. This was someone very special, very precious.