Month. If she recovered, she vowed, she would make a pilgrimage of gratitude to the temple in the Tenth Month. Furniture was transported on the appointed day, and rooms were suitably decorated. That evening, the ladies-in-waiting assembled before her in all their finery. Princess Teishi wore a coat in fallen-leaf colors over aster robes. Kenshi was a white figure, her two or three robes matched by her complexion. Her hair was disheveled at the knot where it had been tied in back, but not a strand was out of place below. One marveled at its length, which appeared to have increased during her illness.

On arriving at the temple, Kenshi took up residence on the north side of the eastern eavechamber in the Hall of the Five Great Mystic Kings. Michinaga occupied a room at the northwest corner of the building. A curtained chamber had been prepared for the Grand Empress's people in the northern eavechamber of the Golden Hall.

Five-altar esoteric rites were begun, sponsored by Michinaga with the aid of Yorimichi, Norimichi, Rinshi, and the Master of the Grand Empress's Household, Michikata, but two or three days passed without a sound from the possessing spirits. Michinaga and the monks were dismayed. Because Kenshi often sank into a comatose state at night, the monks would assemble to perform mystic invocations during the hours of darkness, but not even a yawn rewarded their efforts. Except that her condition remained unchanged, one might have believed that all the spirits had departed. Kyōmei and the others worried and lamented, humiliated by the futility of their ministrations, which they compared to scooping up water to throw at a rock.

Michinaga had assembled a large number of clerical vestments for the dedication of his 100 Śākyamuni images, planned for the Twenty-third, as well as other robes for an Eight Expositions Service, to be held immediately afterward. To his disappointment, it now appeared that he would have to cancel the ceremonies because of Kenshi's illness.

"There's no need to give up your plans," Kenshi protested. "I'm used to being sick by now, and I'll be able to hold out."

"How happy you make me!" he exclaimed. He rubbed his beads. "O Buddhas! For that noble speech, grant that she may be restored to instant health!" He went ahead with his preparations. Worshippers were to forgo the usual ostentation in making their offering-branches, he said; they must strive for decorous beauty instead.

On the dedication day, Shōshi arrived before dawn and went to the

northern eavechamber of the Healing Buddha Hall. As Princess Teishi and Rinshi were proceeding toward the southeast, a dozen or so yards from Kenshi's quarters, they were astonished to see the Grand Empress slip smoothly out on her knees to greet them. Overcome with joy, they interpreted the encounter at a miraculous boon from a Buddha.

The ceremonies began—first the dedication of the images at the Śākyamuni Hall and then the Eight Expositions. From the outset, the lecturers spoke of nothing but Kenshi's illness, which became the subject of endlessly repeated prayers. Michinaga distributed clerical robes to the participating monks, who numbered 100 as usual.

"If she directs a single thought to the hundred Śākyamuni images, it will mean another hundred years of life," one monk declared. The holy words of hope stirred the listeners to the bottoms of their hearts.

There were illustrations from the *Lotus Sutra* on the pillars, but most of the monks seemed too preoccupied with Kenshi to appreciate them.

The days of the Expositions passed swiftly. Michinaga distributed magnificent gifts to the monks at their conclusion. Shōshi regretted not having seen Kenshi when she was so close, but exalted personages are governed by inflexible restrictions on their conduct.

So the month ended. The nights lengthened with the coming of the Ninth Month. Kenshi was much worse. She seldom slept through until morning, and the strain of her nurses' labors left them nodding with fatigue, sturdy as they were. Asleep on her feet, Naishi-no-suke took to napping in the daytime.[15]

The distracted Michinaga recalled how Minister Kamatari, suffering long ago from an intractable malady, had recovered after a nun from China had made an offering of the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra*. He summoned Ryūsei, Iseki, Keinyū, and other worthy Nara monks to do the same, but there was no response. It seemed to him that Kenshi was simply waiting to go. Unable to look at her without bursting into tears, he felt as though years were being taken from his own life.

"Nothing can do any good now," Kenshi said. "Whether I live or die, I want to be at Biwa."

"It would never do to go back to the place where you fell ill," Michinaga answered. "The spirits must have put the idea into your head."

Shortly before dawn on the Seventh of the Ninth Month, Kenshi

15. Naishi-no-suke was Kenshi's childhood nurse.

moved to the New Southern Hall. Her failure to recover was a bitter blow to Michinaga, who had been confident of the curative powers of a retreat at his temple. The east side of the main hall was decorated for her.

Early on the morning of the Ninth, several kinds of fish arrived from Yorimichi. . . . It had been some time since Kenshi had tasted any, but she pulled a robe over her head in utter indifference. Despite all that had been done, the end seemed at hand, and bitter grief filled every heart.

The Tenth of the Ninth Month passed. Esoteric rites were performed at the New Southern Hall, with the Rain Bishop Ninkai and Bishop Shin'yo as officiants. Many of the ladies who had worked so hard at the Hall of the Five Great Mystic Kings went off home, promising to return on the following evening. The yin-yang masters all agreed that the patient would improve on the Fourteenth, and on the preceding night she did indeed rally enough to exchange a few words with her people.

Early on the morning of the Fourteenth, Kenshi expressed a desire for a bath. Orders were issued to the samurai, and the delighted boiler-house servants set about preparing water, but then she said that she was in a hurry: a small amount would do. Her ladies instructed Kaneyasu in the Serving Office to boil water and bring it as soon as possible. Kaneyasu hastened to obey, and when it arrived Kenshi slipped down to the bathing chamber on her knees to take her bath. The robes and mats she had been using for the past several days were all removed. After the bath she put on bright, fresh clothing, lay down, and sent someone to fetch Michinaga. He was in the bath himself, her father answered, but he would come at once. He rushed off to her apartments in his bath attire, afraid that she might be dying. There was no doubt that she was worse. He spoke to let her know he was there, and she gestured as though to cut her hair.

"Do you mean that you want to become a nun?" he asked.

She nodded, and he performed the necessary acts with tears streaming down his face. Her voice was very firm as she pledged to keep the commandments. Rinshi, who had arrived in the meantime, was too distraught to realize what was happening. Bishop Shin'yo, Past Lecturer Kyōen, and other holy monks assembled to perform mystic invocations, but the Grand Empress was sinking steadily. At the urging of Nagaie, Yorimune, and Yoshinobu, who were also present, she recited the name

of Amitābha Buddha in a strong, clear voice. It was heartrending to hear her chant mingling with the monks' frantic invocations. There was pandemonium everywhere inside and outside the hall. In the midst of it all, Kenshi's brothers and others came crowding noisily in the room.

As Kenshi's life ebbed, Michinaga cried out in anguish, "How can you leave your old father and mother? Take us with you!" The ladies who had gone home had suddenly reappeared, and their wails reverberated through the hall at the sound of his sobbing.

Death came to Kenshi at the Hour of the Monkey [3:00–5:00 P.M.] on the Fourteenth Day of the Ninth Month in the fourth year of Manju [1027]. She had been ill since the Eighth of the Third Month. She lay covered by a robe and surplice belonging to Michinaga, placed over her by Rinshi, with her own brilliant robes pulled over her head. Her hair, which looked as if it had been cut to hip length, had been clipped just above the tie. The shorn locks had appeared to be about six feet long when Michinaga held them up for the Mii Bishop to look at. "See what long hair she had!" he said. Dazed by emotion, the Bishop had burst into tears. It was he who administered the commandments immediately afterward. When Her Majesty was pledging so firmly to uphold them, who could have thought that the end would come so soon?

The hall echoed with wails. As the ladies talked on about their terrible loss, even their mistress's age became a subject of mournful complaint. Dismal and inauspicious though the tearful voices sounded, one could not help recognizing the special sadness of their plight.

Michinaga pulled the robes away from Kenshi's face. "I can't believe it's true," he cried. "Please wake up!" Rubbing his prayer beads, he rambled on in tears. "How cruel the Buddha is! To think that he would let me survive to know such sorrow!" No words could do justice to his misery. Rinshi had sunk to the floor in a faint.

Yorimichi looked after his mother with medicinal decoctions. Her sobbing, ever more violent, continued even after the lamps had been lit. The faint sound of Princess Teishi's frenzied weeping came from the room to which her uncles had taken her. Her grief was most natural, infinitely pathetic.

Yorimichi took Rinshi by the hand and led her away. "You must go too," the brothers told Michinaga. "You aren't looking at all well." Their father scraped his feet against the floor, bursting into tears, but

they drew him from the room, unwilling to let him stay. His chronic ailment seemed to be bothering him more than ever, and they led him off with touching solicitude. Yorimune, Yoshinobu, and Nagaie remained near Kenshi with the ladies-in-waiting. Naishi-no-suke was in a dreadful state, lying unconscious in her room with no notion that people were trying to get her to drink medicine.

At Michinaga's request, Bishop Shin'yo had stayed on after completing the esoteric rites that morning. His presence could no longer make a difference, but they left his altar intact, a mark of the special regard in which he was held.

Long though autumn nights may be, there was no peaceful sleep for anyone that night. Michinaga was stupefied with grief.

Aware that he could not abandon himself to sorrow, Michinaga summoned Morimichi to inquire about funeral arrangements. "I never dreamed it would come to this when I performed the purification rituals after Her Majesty first fell ill," Morimichi said. "The results of the divination were unfavorable, but I thought they would be changed by all the things you were doing. What a terrible tragedy!" Tears started from his eyes. "Well now, as to the day for the funeral, it seems that tomorrow would be best. It is a day of ritual seclusion for the Regent, but you need not avoid it for that reason. It is only days of seclusion for the Imperial Lady Shōshi that must be shunned, and tomorrow does not happen to be one. If the present opportunity is missed, it will be some time before there is another."

"Then tomorrow it seems fated to be," Michinaga answered, weeping. "I could see that theirs was an extraordinarily close relationship."

"There is a broad flatland called Ōtani east of Gion," Morimichi said. "That is the place for the funeral."

"Then go and make the necessary arrangements tomorrow," Michinaga directed. Morimichi withdrew.

Since Kenshi had given up her imperial status, it would have been improper to use a palanquin. Michinaga decided on a string-decorated carriage instead, in accordance with precedents established after the deaths of Empresses Senshi and Junshi.

On the following day, Michinaga supervised the activities of Kenshi's household officials and others close to her, who had begun to crowd into the hall early in the morning. Crews set to work on the roads along

the funeral route. Michinaga admitted tearfully that he felt too drained to manage the walk. The sobbing household officials went about their business with frantic haste as the day drew to a close. Moved by the contrast with the happy splendor that had always characterized their mistress's outings, the ladies-in-waiting shed floods of tears.

Soon it was time to put the body in the coffin. Because the task was beyond the ladies' strength, it was performed by Yorimune, Yoshinobu, Nagaie, Koretsune, and Korenori. Appropriate objects were added. Yorimichi was in ritual seclusion and could not be present. Four or five carriages were provided for the ladies. Weeping without restraint, they all begged to be allowed to go, but of course there was room only for the ones who had been closest to the Grand Empress.

The reader may imagine the wailing when the hearse set out. The departure was especially poignant because it coincided with the removal of the flooring [16] in the eastern corridor where Princess Teishi was to stay. Kenshi's nurses were too upset to see the body off, and Teishi's lamentations were more than the family could bear. How inadequate it seems to call such things pathetic or sad! It was chilling to see the ladies wearing mourning robes over the chrysanthemum and autumn-leaf costumes that had been their habitual attire in recent days. The funeral procession was a melancholy spectacle, utterly different in costumes and general appearance from the imperial lady's usual progresses, but it was also very grand as it moved along beneath the fine cloudless sky, which seemed a reminder of autumn's end.

A brilliant moon shone throughout the night, illuminating the mourners, the surroundings, and even the colors of the ladies' robes. Someone with a natural understanding of things gazed reflectively at the ladies' carriages, her thoughts moving from the unendurable sadness of the occasion to musings on the impermanence of worldly things. To console her aching heart, she recited these poems to herself:

fujigoromo	Like layered mourning robes,
kaesugaesu mo	our sorrows accumulate,
kanashiki wa	grief added to grief,
namida no kakaru	on this tear-bedewed journey
miyuki narikeri	our imperial lady makes.

16. To create an earthen-floored mourning chamber.

hanamomiji
orishi tamoto mo
ima wa tote
fuji no koromo o
kiru zo kanashiki

An end now to sleeves
woven of springtime blossoms
and autumn leaves.
How grievous it is to wear
wisteria mourning robes!

Because Michinaga was in no condition to walk, his sons and some of the others carried him on their shoulders. It must have been hard for them.

The mourners found a spacious building awaiting them at Ōtani.[17] Everything was clearly visible in the moonlight, which was brighter than day. The rites were slow to start, and it was late at night before the Buddha-invocations began. The chants of the monks, their voices broken by sobs, were so moving that it was difficult to restrain tears, even for people with no understanding of the fundamental causes and meanings of things. With the Hiei Abbot Ingen and the Provisional Archbishop Kyōmei serving as Leader and Invoker, Kenshi's remains vanished without a trace into smoke—a dreadful sight.

Naishi-no-suke acted as waitress that night, and of course the other ladies who had been close to the Grand Empress all descended from their carriages to help.[18] I must leave the scene to the reader's imagination. Remembering the First Month, when she had also served her mistress's repast, Naishi-no-suke shed floods of tears.

The rites were completed near dawn, and then the Kohata Bishop Jōki and Assistant Household Master Yoritō took the remains to Kohata.

So Kenshi went alone to mingle with the clouds and mist, leaving the others to turn homeward without her. What their number was I do not know, but their plight was deeply moving.

17. Erected for the cremation.
18. It seems to have been customary to serve a final meal to the deceased.

Short Tales of Aristocratic Life

"The Lesser Captain Plucks a Sprig of Flowering Cherry," "The Lady Who Admired Vermin," and "Lampblack" are three of a group of ten short tales preserved in a collection called *The Riverside* [*Middle*] *Counselor's Stories* (Tsutsumi chūnagon monogatari). One of the ten, "The Provisional Middle Counselor Who Failed to Cross the Divide," was written by an identifiable lady-in-waiting for a short story contest held in 1055 by her mistress, an imperial Princess; most of the others, all of which are anonymous, probably date from the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. If the title is to be trusted, the compiler was a court noble who held the relatively high office of Middle Counselor, but nothing more is known of him. The style of most of the tales is amply descriptive; the subject of all is the private life of the aristocracy, with emphasis in most cases on the vicissitudes of courtly love; and the authors devote less attention to plot than to atmosphere, mood, state of mind, and the everyday occupations and interests of a gossipy leisured society.

The three tales presented here are among the longest and liveliest in the collection. "The Lady Who Admired Vermin," well known in the West from Arthur Waley's early translation, is a humorous but surprisingly sympathetic portrayal of an unconventional girl with intellectual aspirations, a type for whom polite Heian society had little tolerance; "The Lesser Captain Plucks a Sprig of Flowering Cherry" develops as a

Translation by Robert L. Backus.

typical tale of romantic adventure but takes a bizarre turn at the end; and "Lampblack," in somewhat similar fashion, shifts abruptly from the celebration of courtly sensibility to slapstick comedy.

The Lesser Captain Plucks a Sprig of Flowering Cherry

Deceived by the moon into thinking it was dawn, he had risen in the depths of night from the bed where she must still be lying, wondering why he had gone, alas; but now that he had come too far to retrace his steps, he must press on: past cottages where none of the usual daylight noises could be heard, while in the streaming moonlight clusters of blossoming cherry rose dimly to shade off into the haze. One of these, a little more attractive than the others he had seen, made him reluctant to pass it by, and he was moved to think aloud:

sonata e to
yuki mo yararezu
hanazakura
niou kokage ni
tachiyoraretsutsu

I cannot bring myself
to take another step beyond this spot,
when I am being drawn
so urgently beneath the shade
of a tree where flowering cherry glows.

When suddenly the memory of one whom he had courted here before made him pause, and at that moment from a break in the earthen wall he thought he saw a white figure emerge, coughing loudly.

The place was sadly in ruin with no sign of being inhabited, so that however much he peered in one direction or another, no one was there to challenge him.

The person he had noticed was just going back, when he called to her, "I knew the lady who used to live here. Is she still in residence? Tell her that someone has come who would have a word with the mistress of these wilds."

"The lady does not reside here. She is pleased to live in some other place."

"How sad!" he thought uneasily when she told him this. "Can she have become a nun or some such thing?"

Then with a smile he said to her, "I wouldn't be surprised if you were going to meet that fellow—you know—Mitsutō." And as he bantered with her he heard the soft sound of a side door opening.

He sent his men a little farther down the road and concealed himself in a clump of miscanthus that grew thickly by an openwork fence, to watch.

"Lady Shōnagon! Is it dawn already? Go out and see."

She was a likely little girl, of charming appearance and dressed for night duty, her garments much wilted from sitting in, who was lovely to look at with her glossy chemise showing—ruby colored it may have been—and the fringe of her neatly combed hair set off against the back of her robe. Shielding her eyes with a fan against the brightness of the moon, she murmured, "'The moon and the blossoms . . . ,'" and as she stepped toward the blossoms closer to him, he wanted to give her a start, but kept still and watched for a while longer.[1]

Then an elderly lady spoke up: "Why isn't that fellow Suemitsu out of bed yet? Lady Ben! Oh, here you are. You should be on your way to prayers." This meant that they must be going to visit a holy place.

The girl he had seen would no doubt stay behind. "I am so disappointed!" she said. "Anyhow, I can just accompany you and stay somewhere nearby. I won't go to the shrine."[2]

To which the other replied, "You foolish child!"

Five or six people appeared, all dressed to go out. Apparently much distressed as she descended the stairs was the one who must have been the mistress, or so it appeared to him; and as he regarded her carefully, the tiny figure with her mantelet thrown back struck him as ever so child-like. And while her speech was pretty too, it also impressed him with its elegance.

"How lucky I am to have seen her!" he thought, and as day was beginning to dawn he took himself home.

He awoke to a sun shining high in the sky and wrote a letter to the

1. Minamoto no Saneakira (GSS 103): atarayo no / tsuki to hana to o / onajiku wa / kokoro shireramu / hito ni misebaya ("The moon and the blossoms on such a night too good to miss—if I could have my way, how I would like to have one see them who was a friend and shared my thoughts!").

2. The girl was apparently ritually defiled, perhaps by a recent death in her family or by menstruation.

lady with whom he had stayed the night before. "To have left you, my dear, so soon in the night, when your whole demeanor suggested how perfectly natural you thought it was for me to go—can you imagine how painful that was!" This and similar sentiments he put down on a sheet of soft paper, a dark green, which he attached to a sprig of willow and sent to her with the poem:

sarazarishi
inishie yori mo
aoyagi no
itodo zo kesa wa
omoimidaruru

To think that my feelings
are running like green willow threads
so much more tangled
on the morning of this day
than ever before we came to this!

Her answer was quite acceptable to the eye:

kakezarishi
kata ni zo haishi
ito nareba
toku to mishi ma ni
mata midaretsutsu

Those threads of yours
some time past did creep in my direction,
where you had never meant to go;
and hardly did they seem to straighten out
before they kept on getting tangled up
again.

While he was reading this, the Minamoto Middle Captain and an Assistant Commander of the Military Guards came with attendants carrying their target bows for them.

"Where were you keeping yourself last night? You were invited to a party at the palace, but we had to go without you."

"Why, I was here all the time. How strange that you didn't find me!"

The sight of blossoms falling so plentifully from the cherry trees, which were blooming in profusion, called forth the first half of a verse:

akade chiru
hana miru ori wa
hitamichi ni

When I see blossoms
falling to the ground too soon,
I feel with all my heart . . .

To which the Assistant Commander added:

wa ga mi ni kaeba
yowarinishi ga na

that if I could but take their place myself,
gladly would I fall and waste away.

"I'm afraid that wouldn't do much good," said Milord the Lesser Captain. He recited:

chiru hana o
oshimi tomete mo
kimi naku wa
tare ni ka misemu
yado no sakura o

Even if, sorry to see them go,
I kept the falling blossoms in their place,
were you not here to look at them,
with whom else could I wish to share the
pleasure
of the cherries that are blooming in my
yard?

And so in a playful mood they set off together. The Lesser Captain was thinking how much he would like to visit the place where he had seen the lady.

That evening he went to pay his respects to the family; and his features, when he raised the blinds and gazed out at the sunset in a darkening sky thick with haze, with blossoms falling in splendid profusion, were so ineffably ashine that even the glow of the blossoms, one felt, was quite overshadowed beside him. He tuned a lute to the *ōshiki* mode, and the play of his hands so serene and melodious over the strings seemed hardly within the powers of the most superb of women. He summoned others to him of similar talents, and they amused themselves in ensembles of varied composition.

"How could any woman fail to admire him? And indeed, near Guardsmen's Gate there is one who plays admirably. She appears to be most remarkable in everything she does."

Overhearing these remarks, which a certain Mitsusue let drop to his companions, he said, "Where do you mean? The run-down house with all the cherry trees? How did you see it, young man? Tell me what you know."

"Why, sir, it so happens that I have had occasion to go there."

"I saw such a place! Tell me everything you know about it."

It turned out that the young man was courting the girl whom he had seen among the lady's attendants.

"The mistress is the daughter of the late Minamoto Middle Counselor. She is really a beautiful lady, I hear. They tell me that her grandfather, the Major Captain, intends to take her in hand and present her to the palace."

"Still, you must work out something for me before that happens."

"I would like to, but I wonder how," said the youth and took his leave.

Lampblack

In the lower part of the city, a man of no mean quality, whose affairs were not prospering as well as they might, had for years been living happily enough with a certain woman, when he took a fancy to the daughter of a friend of his while frequenting their house, and was visiting her in private. Perhaps because of the novelty of the experience, he felt a deeper regard for the girl than for the wife he already had, and took so little care to keep from being seen when he visited her that her parents got wind of it. "Even though he has a wife of long standing, how can we stop him?" they said and left him alone with her.

His regular wife heard about it and kept wondering what to do. "This looks like the end," she thought. "They will hardly be satisfied just to have him visit her. I wish there were somewhere I could go. I must leave him before he makes my life totally unbearable." But she had nowhere to go.

The new woman's parents put their views forcefully: "Here we had a young man with no wife or anybody, who was eager to have her, and we should have married her to him. But then you started coming like this much against our will! It is really too bad, but since it would do no good to say anything, we have been letting it go on. But it makes us uneasy the way society is talking about it. 'A man who already keeps a wife!' they say. 'Even if he says he loves her, he will certainly set greater store by the one he keeps at home.' That's what they say, and they're right too!"

"I don't count for as much as most people, I admit," said the man. "But at least in my regard for your daughter, I doubt that you will find anyone who loves her more than I. If you feel slighted because I haven't moved her to my place, I'll move her right now. You really surprise me!"

"Do that much for her at least," they urged; and in the face of such insistence he could only wonder, "Alas, where am I to send the other one?"

Even though he was sad at heart, the new woman was more important to him; therefore, he decided to tell the old one what was happening and see how she would take it, and with that he went home to her.

The sight of her, refined and angelic, if slightly haggard from days of worrying, moved him to pity. It pained him to see her so subdued, too embarrassed to speak to him as she usually did; but since he had made that promise, he said, "As far as my regard for you is concerned, that has

not changed; but I started seeing her like this without letting her parents know, so I keep on going because I feel sorry for her. When I think how unbearable it must be for you, now I reproach myself. Why did I ever do it, I wonder. But I really can't see any way for a clean break now. They keep telling me to move her here because they will have to violate the soil over there.[4] What do you think? Are you wondering whether to go away? How can it hurt for you to stay here? You can stay on the same as you are, in a side room, you know. Where would you go if you sneaked away all of a sudden?"

"I guess he is telling me this because he means to bring her here," the woman thought. "She has parents and family, so she doesn't need to live here! What a thing to have him talk like this when it is perfectly plain that I have had nowhere to go for years!"

Although she despaired to think what he was doing, she answered unconcernedly, "Of course, you should. Move her as soon as possible. I will go away somewhere or other. Certainly it will be enough for me to have lived all these years without concern and free of the cares of the world."

The man felt so sorry for her that he added for her sake, "Why do you talk like this? It's not for good but only for a while. When she goes home I will bring you back." And after he had left, the woman spent the rest of the day weeping alone with her maid.

"The ways of the world are misery! What should I do? If that woman forces her way in here, I will look positively cheap in front of her. That would be too degrading. It may be a terrible-looking, low place to live in, I know, but I will go to Imako's house in Ōhara. I don't know anyone else." (The Imako she mentions must be a woman whom she used to employ.)

"That hardly seemed to me the sort of place you could stay in for a moment, Madam. Even so, you might go there for the time being until something better comes along."

So they discussed it together, and the sorrow she felt as she had the maid sweep the house and clean up was so intense that she wept and wept as she gave her personal letters and things to burn.

Since the man was busy getting ready to move the new woman in on

4. "Violating the soil" might offend the Earth God, who inhabited the kitchen fireplace in spring, the gate in summer, the well in autumn, and the yard in winter. If it was necessary to build or make repairs in the quarter the god happened to be occupying, the

the very next day, she could not easily make known to him what she needed. "Whom shall I borrow a carriage from?" she wondered. "Certainly I ought to ask him to escort me." It was absurd to ask for help now, but she sent word to him anyway: "I would like to go somewhere tonight, so if I could have the carriage for a while . . ."

When the man received the message he thought, "Alas, where does she plan to go? I must at least see her as she leaves." And he came promptly to her unobserved.

She was sitting near the veranda waiting for the carriage. In the bright moonlight she wept incessantly.

wa ga mi kaku	Could I have thought
kakehanaremu to	that I would be torn away
omoiki ya	from home like this,
tsuki dani yado o	when even the moon is settled here
sumihatsuru yo ni	forever serene in the house?

She was weeping as she spoke; and when at that moment he arrived, she acted as if nothing were the matter and remained seated with her face turned away.

"You wanted the carriage," he said. "But there is a problem with the ox. I can give you a horse."

"It's only a short distance, so it would be overdoing it to take a carriage. Well, the horse will do. But I must be going before it gets late."

At the urgency in her voice he felt how very sad it all was, but since everybody seemed to expect him the next morning at the other place, he could hardly get out of it; and so, regretting every moment, he had the horse led out, and it was brought up to the veranda. When she stepped forward to mount, he noticed how tiny she appeared in the brightly shining moonlight, how glossy and very pretty her hair looked as it fell the length of her figure. As the man helped her to mount with his own hands and went around arranging her clothing, she felt terribly unhappy, but controlled herself and said nothing. The way she looked as she sat on the horse, the tilt of her head, was so very beautiful that he was moved to say, "I will come along too, and escort you."

"I can manage," she said. "It is quite close. I will send the horse back

family moved elsewhere to avoid the consequences of disturbing him and stayed away until the work was completed.

soon. You wait here until then. It is such a shabby place that I could not have you see it."

"I suppose so," he thought, and stayed behind, seated on the edge of the veranda.

She did not have a lot of people accompanying her; she left with one page boy whose company she had been long accustomed to. As long as the man watched her, of course, she hid her feelings bravely, but as soon as the horse was led out the gate she wept bitterly on the road; until the boy was much affected, and as they proceeded farther, with the maid showing the way, he said, "You said it was quite close, Madam. How come you are going so far without anyone to accompany you?"

As it was a mountainous area and no one was abroad, she rode on weeping, feeling quite forsaken; while back home the man, too, sat deep in thought, all alone in the run-down house, and felt such a fondness for the memory of that most beautiful woman who used to live there that he found himself wondering of his own accord what she must be thinking on her journey, until, with the gradual lengthening of time, he had lain back on the veranda with his legs hanging down.

The woman arrived before midnight. She found the house to be very small.

"How can you mean to stay in such a place, Madam?" said the boy, looking at it with very evident regret.

"Hurry and take the horse back," she told him. "Your master must be waiting."

"If he asks me where you have put up, Madam, how shall I answer?"

"Tell him this," she said weeping.

izuko ni ka	If anyone asks
okuri wa seshi to	whither you attended her,
hito towaba	you have come as far
kokoro wa yukanu	as the disheartening river of tears,
namidagawa made	where the heart, withal, does not
	consent to go.

The boy was weeping too when he heard this, and mounting the horse, he arrived back home in a short while.

The man started from his sleep and saw that the moon had at length come close to the rim of the mountains. "Strange how late he is coming back! They must have gone a long way all right!" The thought affected him so much that he said aloud:

suminareshi
yado o misutete
yuku tsuki no
kage ni ōsete
kouru waza ka na

Oh, this longing
aroused by the light of the setting moon
as it goes away,
abandoning to solitude a house
where once it was wont to dwell serene!

And just then he noticed that the boy had returned.

"This is very strange. Why have you come back so late? Where were you?" he asked; and when the boy told him her poem, the man was so stricken that he broke into tears.

"Her not crying when she was here, why that was only pretending she didn't care!" The realization moved him so deeply that he decided to go after her and bring her back; and he said to the boy, "I never thought she was going to such a horrible place! Why, in a place like that she'll just waste away and die! Now I'm sure that I must go after her and bring her back."

"Oh, she kept weeping without letup, did Milady, all the way there!" said the boy. "What a shame when she deserves better!"

"We must get there before daylight," the man said, and, with the boy accompanying him, reached the place very quickly.

The house was indeed very small and run-down. The sight of it saddened him; and when he knocked, the woman, who had lain weeping new tears ever since her arrival, sent someone to ask who it was.

namidagawa
soko to mo shirazu
tsuraki se o
yukikaeritsutsu
nagarekinikeri

That river of tears,
not knowing where to find it,
I kept crossing
and recrossing pitiless shallows,
until at last I have drifted here!

When she heard this spoken in the man's voice, the woman was caught completely unawares, and was amazed not least to recognize the voice.

"Open up!" he said; and although they had no idea what he was doing there, they opened the door and let him in. He came over to where she lay and confessed his fault in tears, but she kept weeping throughout without so much as answering him.

"I can scarcely tell you everything I want to say now. Certainly I never thought you would come to a place like this when I sent you away. If anything, it is rather you who have been a great trial and embarrassment to me. I will tell you everything later when we have time. Let's get

back before daylight," he said, and gathering her in his arms, he put her on the horse and departed.

The woman was taken totally by surprise and went home all confused, wondering what had gotten into him. He helped her dismount, and they went to bed together. He comforted her on every score. "I will never go there again," he said. "To think that you feel this way!"

He loved her more than anyone in the world, and sent word to the person whom he had intended to move into the house: "I fear this is a bad time to have you over right now, because someone here is sick. It would be improper. I will come for you when this is over." And since he stayed home all the time, her father and mother were left to wonder in sorrow. His wife, on the other hand, thought herself as happy as if she were living in a dream.

This man was very impulsive by nature. "I won't be long," he said, and went off to his new woman's house in daylight. When they saw him come in, a sudden cry went up: "The Master is here!" The woman, who at the time was taking her ease, started up excitedly. "My box! Which one is it? Where is it?" she said; and, drawing her comb box to her, she meant to powder her face, but took out a packet of lampblack by mistake and was dressing herself up without even looking in the mirror.

"Tell him to wait a moment where he is. Not to come in," the woman said, and as she coated her face heedless of what she was doing, the man lifted the blind.

"My, you are quick to turn a fellow away, aren't you!" he said, and came in. She hid the packet and, with the makeup spread hit or miss, concealed her mouth behind her sleeve, and in the gathering dusk sat blinking about goggle-eyed, with fingerprints of the stuff splotched on her face, believing that she had made herself presentable. The man looked at her in amazement and wonder. She was such a fright that he could not think what to do; and so, without going near her, he said, "All right, I'll come back later on." For even a brief look was so scary that he quit the house.

The woman's father and mother had come to her room on hearing that he had arrived, but were told he had already left. "What a lack of sensibility!" they said in blank surprise; and when they looked at the young lady's face, they were startled to see it so scary. It was so bad that even her father and mother collapsed with fright.

"Why are you carrying on like this?" the daughter asked.

"Your face," they stammered, but could not find the words to ask what had happened to it.

"Strange. Why are they carrying on like this?" she wondered, and looked in the mirror. The reflection she saw there frightened her too, and she threw the mirror away, crying in tears, "What has happened to me? What has happened to me?"

The whole house was thrown into an uproar. "They're supposed to be doing everything they can over at his place to put him off from this girl. So see what has happened to her face because he was here!" And so they called in a diviner and were making a great fuss over her, when, noticing that her skin was normal where the tears had run down, her nurse crumpled up a piece of paper and wiped her face; and with that the skin was back to normal again.

It is certainly most amusing, the commotion they made because they thought she had been ruined over a thing like that.

Heian and Medieval Setsuwa

The eight tales below are drawn from two setsuwa collections, *Tales of Times Now Past* (Konjaku monogatari, ca. 1120?) and *A Collection of Tales from Uji* (Uji shūi monogatari, ca. 1210–20?). The first is a huge compendium containing more than 1,000 tales in thirty-one numbered books, three of which (8, 18, and 21) are missing. Books 1–5 consist of tales from India, almost all of them related to Buddhism; Books 6–7 and 9–10, of Buddhist and secular tales from China; Books 11–17 and 19–20, of Japanese Buddhist tales; and Books 22–31 of Japanese secular tales, concerning, respectively, the Fujiwara clan, feats of strength, masters of the arts and crafts, warriors, the workings of karma, the supernatural, humorous incidents, criminals and animals, love, and strange happenings. The collection is thought to have been put together by one or more monks for use as a preachers' handbook.

A Collection of Tales from Uji contains 197 stories, many of them humorous or concerned with the supernatural. About 40 percent of the total are related to Buddhism in one way or another, but the collection as a whole is less didactic in tone than *Tales of Times Now Past*. Nothing is known of the compiler.

The first four tales are from *Tales of Times Now Past* (16: 28, 25: 12, 27: 2, and 30: 5); the last four, from *A Collection of Tales from Uji* (78, 79, 125, and 166).

Tales of Times Now Past

How a Pilgrim to Hatsuse Acquired Riches Through Kannon's Aid

Once in the past, there was a young samurai in the capital who had no father, mother, wife, children, or friends. He went to Hatsuse and addressed the statue of Kannon. "I am a poor man with no resources at all. If my whole future is going to be like this, I'll starve myself to death in front of you. If there is any chance that you might help me a little, tell me so in a dream. I'll never leave here unless you answer me." He prostrated himself and lay face down.

"Who are you, talking this way?" the monks at the temple demanded. "We don't see that you have anything to eat. You would defile the temple if you died here. Who is your master?"

"I'm a poor man; how could I have a master? Kannon is the only one I can rely on. I don't have anything at all to eat," he said.

The monks assembled in conference. "This man is trying to intimidate Kannon by refusing to go away. It could be a serious matter for the temple; we'd better all see that he gets fed," they decided. They took turns feeding him. Thus sustained, he never left his place in front of the image, but stayed there resolutely, day and night, for thrice seven days.

Toward dawn on the twenty-first night, the man had a dream in which a monk emerged from inside the curtains to speak to him. "It is exceedingly improper of you to pester Kannon like this, just as if you didn't know that your poverty is the result of sins in a former life. But the bodhisattva will give you a little help for compassionate reasons. When you leave the temple, keep whatever touches your hand; be aware that it is a gift you are receiving," he said. After that, the man awoke.

Next, the man went to ask for food at the cell of a monk who had befriended him. He ate and started off. At the main gate, he tripped and fell on his face. When he rose, supporting himself with his hands, he clutched something that proved to be a piece of straw. "How could this be the bodhisattva's gift?" he thought. But he started home with it because of the dream. Meanwhile, a new day dawned.

As the man went on his way, a bothersome horsefly began to circle around his face. He broke off a branch from a tree and chased it away, but it came back again. He caught it by the leg, tied it in the middle with his piece of straw, and carried it along. Bound at the waist, the insect made frantic efforts to fly.

Presently, an aristocratic lady from the capital came riding toward the man in a carriage. She was accompanied by a pretty young child who was sitting with the blind rolled up. "What's that man carrying? Ask him to give it to me," the child said.

A samurai on horseback came over to the man. "You, there! The young master wants the thing you're carrying. Give it to me."

"This was a present from Kannon, but since it's called for in this way, I'll give it to you." The man handed it over.

"He was very nice about giving it up," said the people inside the carriage. They offered him three big tangerines wrapped in fragrant, thick, white crepe paper. "You're probably thirsty. Eat these," they told him.

"A single piece of straw has turned into three big tangerines," the man thought. He tied the fruit to a branch, shouldered it, and went on.

After a time, the man saw an important-looking gentleman who was traveling incognito, making a pilgrimage on foot to Hatsuse with a group of samurai. The gentleman was stumbling with fatigue. "My throat is parched. Get me some water to drink. I feel faint," he said.

In great agitation, the members of the party rushed around looking for water nearby, but there was none to be had. Just as they were at their wits' end, the man with the tangerines strolled up.

"Do you know a place near here where there's clean water?" they asked.

"There's no water nearby. What's the matter?" the man said.

"Someone on his way to Hatsuse is tired from walking and his throat is dry. We're looking for water."

"I have three tangerines. I'll give them to you," he said.

They awakened the master, who had fallen into an exhausted sleep, and gave him the tangerines. "A fellow here is giving you his tangerines."

"I was dying of thirst," the master said. He ate the tangerines. "I would probably have fallen by the roadside if it hadn't been for these. What splendid luck! Where is the fellow?" he said.

"He's here."

"What can I do to make him happy? Have our people brought up the food? Send him on his way with a meal."

No sooner had the master's instructions been conveyed to the man

than some people came into sight leading pack animals. They proceeded to erect curtains and lay mats in preparation for the noonday meal. They also fed the man.

The master gave the man three bolts of spotless cloth. "Words cannot express my appreciation for those tangerines. It's impossible to repay you adequately while I am traveling; this is a mere token of what I intend to do for you. I live at Such-and-such place in the capital. Be sure to call on me there," he said.

The man took the cloth, put it under his arm, and went on in high spirits. "The one piece of straw has turned into three bolts of cloth. Kannon must be helping me," he thought. At nightfall, he sought shelter in a small dwelling near the road. When dawn came, he jumped up and continued on his journey. During the Hour of the Dragon [7:00 A.M.–9:00 A.M.], he met a man on a fine horse who was loitering along the way, putting the beast lovingly through its paces. As he watched in admiration, the horse suddenly collapsed and expired. The dismayed owner dismounted, tore off the saddle, and tried to think of something to do, but it was all in vain. The horse was dead. The owner transferred the saddle to a nag from his entourage and rode off, vexed enough to clap his hands and weep.

One of the owner's servants had been left behind with orders to drag the body away and hide it. The man with the cloth walked up to where he was standing guard over the dead animal. "What kind of horse could it be that would die so suddenly?" he asked.

"The master thought he had a real treasure when he brought it to the capital from Mutsu Province. Lots of people offered to pay anything he asked for it, but he wouldn't give it up, and now he hasn't even got two bolts of cloth out of it. I'd like to skin off the hide, at least, but I don't know what I could do with it while we're on this trip, so I'm just standing here guarding the carcass."

"I was thinking what a wonderful horse it was when it dropped dead. Living things are strange! I don't suppose you could dry the hide right away, even if you did take it off. I live around here; I can take it off and put it to some use. Give the horse to me and go on home," the man said. He offered him a bolt of cloth.

"This is a gain I didn't expect," the servant thought. He seized the cloth and took to his heels like a fugitive, afraid the man might reconsider.

The man must have bought the dead horse because he thought, "Thanks to Kannon's oracle, I got a piece of straw that changed into three tangerines. Then the tangerines became three bolts of cloth. Maybe this dead horse will come back to life and the three bolts of cloth will turn into a horse." He washed his hands, rinsed his mouth, and bowed toward Hatsuse. "If this has happened through your aid, restore the horse to life at once," he prayed.

The horse opened its eyes, raised its head, and tried to get up. The man went over, took hold of it, and helped it to its feet. In great glee, he led it to a secluded spot in case anyone happened along, and there he let it rest until the end of the hour. When it had returned to its old self, he led it to a local house, exchanged a bolt of cloth for a cheap saddle, mounted, and started off toward the capital.

The sun set while he was in the vicinity of Uji, so he stopped at a house and converted his last bolt of cloth into food and horse fodder. When morning came, he went on to the capital.

In the neighborhood of Kujō Avenue, he noticed a house where people were hurrying around as though someone were setting out on business. "If I take this horse farther into the city, someone may recognize it and accuse me of stealing it. That would be awkward; I think I'll sell it here. A horse is a necessity at a place where a person is setting out on a trip," he thought. He dismounted and went over to the house. "Would you like to buy a horse?" he asked.

The master had just been looking for a mount. He was delighted to see such a splendid beast. "I don't happen to have any silk cloth on hand at the moment," he said. "Would you be willing to exchange it for some fields in a paddy area south of here, plus a little rice?"

"I need silk cloth, but I'll do as you ask because you need a horse," the man said. The master mounted, tried the horse out, and found it ideal. He bought it for two and a half acres of fields in his Kujō paddy area, plus a little rice.

After arranging about the bill of sale, the man went to stay in the house of an acquaintance in the capital, where he used the rice to feed himself. Two months later, when the rice was gone, he agreed to let a local farmer cultivate his fields in exchange for half the crop, which became his source of sustenance.

The man went on to establish a household and lead a happy life, blessed by one piece of good luck after another. Well aware that he owed

everything to the Hatsuse Kannon, he made constant pilgrimages to the temple.

This shows that Kannon's miracles have few parallels. So the tale has been told, and so it has been handed down.

How Minamoto no Yorinobu's Son Yoriyoshi Shot Down a Horse Thief

Once in the past, there was a warrior named Minamoto no Yorinobu. This Yorinobu learned that a certain man in the east possessed a superb mount. He dispatched someone to ask for the horse, and the owner had no choice but to send it off toward the capital. A horse thief saw the animal on the way, coveted it, and slunk along behind in the hope of stealing it. But the members of the warrior escort never relaxed their vigilance, and the thief had to follow the party all the way to the capital without accomplishing his purpose on the road. The warriors left the horse in Yorinobu's stable.

With matters in this state, someone told Yorinobu's son Yoriyoshi, "They've brought our lord a superb mount from the east today."

"Some fellow who doesn't deserve that horse may get my father to give it to him. I'd better look at it first. If it's really a superb mount, I'll ask for it myself," Yoriyoshi thought. He went to his father's house that very evening, braving a torrential downpour in his eagerness to inspect the horse.

"Why haven't I seen you for so long?" Yorinobu said. Then it occurred to him that Yoriyoshi had probably heard about the horse and come to ask for it. He continued before Yoriyoshi could answer. "They tell me a horse has arrived from the east, but I haven't seen it yet. The man who sent it said it was a superb mount. It's too dark to see anything tonight. Look at it tomorrow and take it away if you like it."

Yoriyoshi was delighted that Yorinobu had anticipated his request. "All right, I'll stand duty here tonight and look at it in the morning," he said.

In the early part of the night, the two talked; later, Yorinobu went into his bedroom and slept while Yoriyoshi rested nearby.

Around midnight, the horse thief entered the grounds under cover of the noise made by the rain, which was still falling. He got the horse, led it out, and left.

Minamoto no Yorinobu's son Yoriyoshi shoots down a horse thief (*Tales of Times Now Past*, 25.12)

There were shouts from the direction of the stables. "A horse thief has gone off with the horse they brought this evening!"

When Yorinobu heard the faint cries, he did not say to Yoriyoshi, "Did you hear that?" He sprang to his feet, pulled on a robe, tucked up his skirts, donned a quiver, and ran to the stables. Then he personally led out a horse, saddled it with a cheap saddle that happened to be handy,

mounted, and set out in pursuit, heading toward the Ōsaka Barrier mountain. He probably chose that direction because he thought, "The thief must have been an easterner who coveted that superb mount and followed it to the capital, unable to steal it on the way. He has taken advantage of the rain to make off with it."

Yoriyoshi, who also heard the shouts, thought as his father thought and followed the same course of action. Without a word to Yorinobu, he sprang to his feet, donned his quiver (he had slept in his clothes), and set out in pursuit alone, heading from the stables toward the barrier mountain. The father thought, "My son will undoubtedly come in pursuit." The son thought, "My father has undoubtedly gone ahead in pursuit."

Yoriyoshi galloped his horse, eager to catch up. Once he had passed the Kamo riverbed, the rain stopped and the sky cleared. He galloped even faster, and presently he arrived at the barrier mountain.

The thief was riding the stolen horse through some water near the mountain. No longer worried about pursuit, he was splashing along at a walk instead of galloping hard. Yorinobu hear the noise. Although it was too dark to see whether Yoriyoshi was there or not, he spoke up, just as though the two had arranged from the start to act at that spot. "Shoot! There he is!" A bow twanged before the last word left his mouth, and there was the sound of a hit, together with the clatter of stirrups on a horse running riderless.

Yorinobu uttered a few brief words. "You've shot the thief. Hurry up! Gallop after the horse and bring it back." Then he went home without waiting for Yoriyoshi to come back with the horse.

Yoriyoshi galloped after the animal, overtook it, caught it, and started back. Retainers who had got wind of the affair came to join him as he returned, one or two at a time. There were twenty or thirty of them when he arrived at the house in the city.

It was still dark when Yorinobu reached home, so he went back to bed without knowing how things had turned out. Yoriyoshi entrusted the repossessed horse to the retainers and went to bed too.

The next morning, Yorinobu emerged from his quarters and called Yoriyoshi in. He did not say, "Congratulations! You kept the horse from being stolen. That was a fine shot," or anything of the sort. He merely told his men to lead the horse out. They did so, and Yoriyoshi saw that it was indeed a superb mount. "Thank you. I'd like to have it," he said.

Although the subject had not been mentioned on the previous evening, the horse carried a splendid saddle. I wonder if Yorinobu meant it as a reward for shooting the thief in the night.

Those are hard people to understand, but such is the warrior mentality. So the tale has been told, and so it has been handed down.

How Retired Emperor Uda Confronted the Spirit of the Kawara-no-in Minister of the Left Tōru

Once in the past, there was a house called the Kawara-no-in, the residence of Minister of the Left Tōru. The Minister had laid out his garden to resemble Shiogama in Mutsu Province, filled its lake to the brim with sea water, and otherwise arranged things in the most splendid and tasteful manner imaginable. After his death, his descendants gave the property to Retired Emperor Uda. The Retired Emperor went there to live, and Emperor Daigo, his son, honored the mansion with occasional visits.

One night around midnight during the Retired Emperor's term of residence, there came a sound as of someone opening the storeroom in the western wing chamber, followed by the swish of approaching skirts. The Retired Emperor looked in that direction and saw that a man in formal daytime attire, with a sword at his waist and a baton in his hand, had seated himself respectfully two bays away.

"Who are you?" the Retired Emperor asked.

"I am the elderly master of this house."

"Lord Tōru?"

"Yes."

"Why are you here?"

"This is my house; I live in it. With all respect, your presence is inconvenient. I don't quite know what to do."

"This is very strange. I certainly wouldn't seize possession of somebody else's house; I am here because your descendants gave it to me. Whether you're a spirit or not, what you say is unreasonable!" the Retired Emperor shouted.

The spirit disappeared in an instant and was never seen again.

When the facts became known, the people of the day talked about

the Retired Emperor in awed voices. "He is no ordinary mortal. Nobody else could have stood up to Lord Tōru's spirit like that," they said. So the tale has been told, and so it has been handed down.

How an Impoverished Man's Deserted Wife Became the Spouse of the Governor of Settsu

Once in the past, there lived in the capital a poverty-stricken man of inferior status. Because he possessed no friends, parents, kinsmen, or dwelling, he took service in someone else's household. Then, having failed to find favor there, he moved from place to place in search of a better situation. But it was the same everywhere, and he was left with no recourse whatever, unable even to obtain employment in a noble household. In despair, he spoke to his wife, a young, pretty woman of gentle disposition who had followed him faithfully.

"I had always hoped that we would be together like this for as long as we lived in the world, but we get poorer every day. Maybe we're poor because it's a mistake to stay together. It's my feeling that we ought to separate and try our luck apart. What do you say?" he asked.

"I don't agree at all. I've been resigned to starving with you because I thought our plight was karmic retribution from a previous existence. But please go ahead and leave me. Then you can see whether all this ill fortune has been caused by our staying together," she said.

"That's the thing to do," the man thought. With a promise to meet again, the two went their separate ways in tears.

After that, the wife, who was young and pretty, entered the service of a person called ——. Her master liked her because of her gentle disposition. After his wife's death, he made her his personal attendant and mistress and loved her dearly; and in time, he recognized her as his wife and placed all the household affairs in her charge.

Meanwhile, the master became the Governor of Settsu. The woman lived a splendid life. But her first husband had fallen on worse and worse times after deserting her to seek his fortune alone. At last, unable to remain in the capital, he wandered off to Settsu Province and became a humble farm worker. He did not know how to till paddies, cultivate dry fields, cut wood, or perform other menial agricultural tasks, so his master sent him to Naniwa Bay to cut reeds. While he was at work there, the Governor of Settsu went to the province with his wife. The Governor

halted his carriage near Naniwa, strolled around, ate and drank, and otherwise amused himself, attended by a throng of retainers and kinsmen. His wife remained in the carriage to enjoy the interesting scenery at Naniwa Bay with her ladies-in-waiting.

Among the many laborers cutting reeds along the shore, there was one fellow who appeared to have seen better days. The Governor's wife stared at him, struck by his resemblance to her former husband. She looked hard again, wondering if she might be mistaken, and decided that it was undoubtedly he. "Alas!" she thought as she watched the shabby figure cutting reeds. "He's as feckless as ever. What karma from a previous life has brought him to this?" Tears filled her eyes to overflowing, but she summoned an attendant in an unconcerned manner.

"Call over one of those reed-cutters, that one there," she said.

The messenger ran to the man. "You're wanted by someone in the carriage." The man straightened up in amazement.

"Get a move on!" the messenger shouted in a threatening voice. The man dropped his reeds, tucked his sickle into his waist, and presented himself in front of the carriage. When the Governor's wife observed him at close hand, there was no question about his identity. He wore a dirt-blackened sleeveless hemp singlet, cut off at the knees, and a semiformal cap like a commoner's hat. His dirt-encrusted face, hands, and feet were indescribably filthy, and his shanks and the backs of his knees were spattered with blood where leeches had sucked them. Upset by the sight, the lady told someone to give him food and drink, which he gobbled down in a repulsive manner as he faced the carriage. Then she sent him out a robe, explaining to the ladies-in-waiting in the carriage that she had felt sorry for him when she saw him among the reed-cutters; he looked as though he had seen better days. She wrote this poem on the edge of a piece of paper:

ashikaraji
to omoite koso wa
wakareshika
nado ka naniwa no
ura ni shi mo sumu

You went away from me,
thinking you would not fare so ill
if we were apart.
Why, then, are you dwelling here
by the Bay of Naniwa?

The man was astonished by the gift of the robe. Inspecting it in amazement, he saw something written on the edge of a piece of paper. He picked up the paper and read the poem. "Ah! That lady is my former

wife. What a miserable, humiliating turn of fate!" he thought. After requesting the loan of an inkstone, he presented this reply:

kimi nakute
ashikarikeri to
omou ni wa
itodo naniwa no
ura zo sumiuki

Harder than ever,
this existence by the Bay
of Naniwa,
when I think how ill I have fared
since we two have been apart.

The Governor's wife felt sadder than ever. The man abandoned his reed-cutting and ran away into hiding. Thereafter, the Governor's wife did not mention the subject to anyone.

People utter foolish complaints about their lot through ignorance of the fact that everything is determined by karma from a previous existence.

Might the Governor's wife have related the story in her old age? At any rate, people learned of it and repeated it. So in these later generations the tale has been told, and so it has been handed down.

A Collection of Tales from Uji

The Mimuro Archbishop and the Ichijōji Archbishop

Also in the past, there were two esteemed prelates of the Miidera school, the Ichijōji Archbishop and the Mimurodo Archbishop. The Mimurodo Archbishop was the fourth son of Governor-General Takaie; the Ichijōji Archbishop was the fifth son of Major Counselor Tsunesuke. The Mimurodo Archbishop was called Ryūmyō, the Ichijōji Archbishop Zōyo. Both were holy living Buddhas.

The Mimuro Archbishop was a man of portly figure. Unable to fare forth and practice austerities, he remained steadfastly in front of his temple's principal image, his bell ringing day and night as he performed the rituals. The occasional visitor always found the gates closed. By knocking on the gate, a caller could sometimes scare up an attendant, who would ask, "Who is it?" Upon being told, "So-and-so has come," or "It is a messenger from the Retired Emperor," the attendant would say, "I shall inform His Reverence," and go inside.

The bell would keep on ringing for a long time. When it stopped, a

functionary would unbolt the gate and open one half just wide enough to admit a single person. Inside, the visitor would behold a pathless courtyard overgrown with vegetation. Then, making his way through the dew to the hall, he would reach a small outer eavechamber, only one bay wide, with sliding screens at the corner doorway, their paper sooty and ancient-looking. Presently, a black-robed monk would appear on noiseless feet. "Please wait a little while. His Reverence is performing rituals just now." After a short delay, a voice would speak from the interior. "Please enter." Incense smoke would drift out as the visitor opened the sooty sliding door. The Archbishop, clad in a wrinkled robe and a torn surplice, would remain silent, and the visitor would sit opposite him without quite knowing what was happening. Then the Archbishop would fold his arms and lower his eyes. When a short time had elapsed, the visitor would be told, "The prayers you wanted have been said. Please go home right away." He would leave, his message unspoken, and the gate would be locked again. Archbishop Ryūmyō was a man whose religious observances all took place inside his temple.

The Ichijōji Archbishop had twice traversed the Great Peaks. He performed a ritual that made a snake appear, and he could conjure up visions of dragons with horses' legs and other improbable things. The congestion outside his dwelling extended for one or two blocks, *dengaku* and *sarugaku* players assembled in great numbers, and Escorts and Imperial Guardsmen came and went all the time. When someone came to sell a saddle, sword, or other piece of property, the Archbishop always paid whatever price was asked. His grounds turned into a veritable marketplace, and he accumulated all kinds of treasures.

This reverend monk was very fond of a certain young acrobat at the temple, a boy whom he had first seen helping with the field planting at Toba. (At the Archbishop's suggestion, one of the other planters, a man who had performed on stilts earlier, had astonished the spectators by coming out from behind a tent with the boy standing on his shoulders in the modern fashion.)

In an excess of affection, the Archbishop said to the boy, "It's no good this way. Become a monk and stay with me day and night."

"Well, I don't know," said the boy. "I think I'd like to go on as I am for a while." But the infatuated Archbishop insisted, and the boy yielded against his will.

Time passed, and the spring rains began to fall. Bored by the

constant drizzle, the Archbishop called in one of his people. "Do we have the costume the boy used to wear?" he asked.

"Yes, it's still in the storeroom."

"Get it out and bring it here," he said.

When the costume was produced, the Archbishop told the boy to put it on.

The boy demurred. "It wouldn't look right."

"Just put it on," the Archbishop insisted.

The boy retired to a corner, put on the robes and the dance helmet, and came out, looking exactly as he had in the old days. The Archbishop's face puckered up at the sight, and the boy's own face looked different.

"Do you recall the steps?" the Archbishop asked.

"No, I don't—but I remember a little of the 'Katasarawa' because I performed it so often." The boy danced and leaped his way through one of the patterns. Then, helmet in hand, he crossed the room in one-beat time.

The Archbishop sobbed. "Come here," he said, and began to fondle him. "Why did I force you to become a monk?" He wept as he spoke.

"That was why I wanted to wait a while," the boy said.

The Archbishop had the boy remove the costume and took him into an inner room. I can't say what happened after that.

How a Monk Stole and Ate Whitefish in Someone's House

Also in the past, a certain monk went to someone's house. The host offered wine and brought out some whitefish, which had just come into season, as a special treat. Something came up that required the host's presence inside for a while. When he returned, he saw to his surprise that an amazing number of the whitefish had disappeared, but it was awkward to bring the matter up. Then, as the two sat talking, a whitefish suddenly emerged from one of the monk's nostrils.

"What's this?" the astonished host said. "A whitefish has come out of your nose."

"These whitefish nowadays keep falling out of people's eyes and noses all the time," the monk shot back in an instant.

Everyone burst out laughing.

A monk eats whitefish (*A Collection of Tales from Uji*, Sec. 79)

How Yasusuke Robbed People

Also in the past, there was a younger brother of the Tango Governor Yasumasa, Yasusuke by name, who was a Military Guards Lieutenant of Fifth Rank. This Yasusuke was the captain of a band of robbers. Far back in the grounds of his house, which was situated south of Ane-ga-kōji and east of Takakura, he had built a storehouse over a pit as deep as a well. He

would call in all kinds of people with things to sell—swords, saddles, armor, helmets, silk, and ordinary cloth—and would agree to buy their wares at the asking price. Then he would say to his men, "Pay this fellow; take him back to the storehouse." When the seller went, expecting to receive payment, the gang would call him inside the storehouse, push him into the pit, and keep the goods he had brought. Nobody who took things to Yasusuke's house ever returned. Other sellers thought it was odd, but nobody revealed the truth because everyone who knew about it died in the pit.

Furthermore, this Yasusuke went boldly out into the city streets to commit robberies. There were vague rumors about his activities, but somehow he was never caught and arrested.

The Prodigious Strength of Ōi no Mitsutō's Younger Sister

Also in the past, there was a wrestler called Ōi no Mitsutō of Kai Province, a man outstanding in appearance, character, and every other respect—short but solid, tenacious, strong, and fast on his feet. He had a younger sister who was a slender, pretty woman of twenty-six or twenty-seven, with a pleasant disposition and gentle manners. She lived in a house separate from his.

One day, a fellow who was trying to evade pursuers dashed inside the sister's gate, took her hostage at swordpoint, and pressed his weapon against her belly. A member of the household went running to tell the master, Mitsutō, "Someone has taken Her Ladyship hostage."

Mitsutō was not in the least perturbed. "A man would have to be as strong as Ujinaga of Satsuma if he wanted to make her a hostage," he said.

Puzzled, the other went back and peered out from behind something that offered concealment. As befit the time of year, which was the Ninth Month, the sister was wearing a set of lavender robes and an autumn-leaf divided skirt. She had raised her sleeve to hide her face. Her captor, a huge, fearsome fellow, had clamped his legs around her from the rear and was holding a long sword against her belly with a backward grip.

The sister wept with her face hidden by her left hand. But with her right hand, she toyed with a pile of twenty or thirty unfinished bamboo arrow shafts that happened to be lying in front of her. Using a finger to

grind the joints against the wooden floor, she pulverized them as easily as a person might crush soft, rotten wood.

The robber panicked at the sight. "Her brother, the famous strong man, couldn't even do that with a hammer. There's something weird about strength like hers. The next thing I know, she'll be mashing *me* flat. This is terrible; I've got to get away from here," he thought. He waited until the others had relaxed their vigilance for a moment; then he leaped out and fled. People pursued him, seized him, and took him to Mitsutō.

"Why did you run away?" Mitsutō asked.

"I was amazed when Her Ladyship crushed the big joints on those arrow shafts like rotten wood; I got scared and ran away," he said.

Mitsutō burst out laughing. "You'd never have been able to run her through, no matter what you did. If you had tried it, she'd have grabbed your arm and twisted it until the shoulderbone popped out of the socket. Your arm would probably have been torn right off. It must have been karma from a previous existence that saved you. I could kill you with my bare hands myself. Would you still be alive after I twisted off your arm and stamped on your belly and chest? But my sister is as strong as two of me. If I lay a hand on her in fun, she grabs my arm so hard that I lose my grip and she gets away, even though she looks so slim and ladylike. If she were a man, nobody could stand up to her. What a pity she's a woman!"

The robber felt faint. He had taken the sister for an ordinary woman, an ideal hostage, but his plan had been a disastrous failure.

"I ought to kill you, but I'll let you go because my sister was in no real danger," Mitsutō said. "You saved your life when you ran off. She can put a big deer antler across her knee and snap it like a twig from a dead sapling—that's how strong she is!" He let the man go.

Women Memoirists of the Medieval Period

The first of the two selections below is taken from *The Confessions of Lady Nijō* (Towazugatari, ca. 1310?), a memoir covering the period from 1271, when the author was thirteen, to 1306, when she was forty-eight. During thirteen of those years, described in the first three of the work's five books, Lady Nijō acted as a lady-in-waiting and concubine to Retired Emperor Go-Fukakusa (1243–1304; r. 1246–59). In 1283, she was dismissed from the Retired Emperor's palace, and by 1289, the first year recorded in the fourth book, she had become a Buddhist nun. Her life thereafter alternated between travel in the provinces and residence in the capital area, where she met the Retired Emperor on three occasions, and where, in 1306, she attended Buddhist services marking the second anniversary of his death, the last event she discusses.

Unlike most of the authors represented in this volume, Nijō belonged to the highest stratum of the aristocracy. Her paternal grandfather was a Chancellor; her father, Major Counselor Masatada (1228–72), was the head of the Minamoto clan, on the verge of becoming a Minister of State at the time of his death; and her mother was the daughter of a Major Counselor and the niece of both a Chancellor and an Honorary Empress. But she was orphaned at the age of fourteen, and the loss of paternal support, together with the hostility of Go-Fukakusa's principal consort and her own indiscreet conduct, finally made her position at the Retired Emperor's palace untenable.

One of the causes of Nijō's downfall may have been her involvement with Go-Fukakusa's brother, Emperor Kameyama (1249–1305; r. 1259–74). Although the *Confessions* usually depicts the two men as friendly, their relationship was actually far from cordial, as Nijō occasionally hints. In 1259, after having abdicated thirteen years earlier in favor of the three-year-old Go-Fukakusa, their father, Go-Saga (1220–72; r. 1242–46), had forced Go-Fukakusa to cede the throne to Kameyama, who was then ten. Nine years later, in 1268, Go-Saga arranged for Kameyama's son, rather than Go-Fukakusa's, to be named Crown Prince; and in 1272, after Go-Saga's death, the Kamakura shogunate recognized Kameyama, rather than Go-Fukakusa, as the head of the court. In 1274, Kameyama abdicated in favor of his son, Go-Uda (1267–1324; r. 1274–87), and began to reign through a new Retired Emperor's Office. To placate the incensed Go-Fukakusa, the shogunate agreed to make his son Crown Prince. The son, Fushimi (1265–1317; r. 1287–98), acceded in 1287, whereupon Go-Fukakusa angered Kameyama by establishing his own Retired Emperor's Office. Two years later, Fushimi's son, the future Go-Fushimi (1288–1336; r. 1298–1301), became Crown Prince, an event that drove Kameyama to take Buddhist vows. By the last date in the *Confessions*, a son of Go-Uda, Go-Nijō (1285–1308; r. 1301–8), was on the throne and the succession was alternating between Go-Fukakusa's descendants, the so-called Jimyōin line, and Kameyama's, the Daikakuji line.

The first book, translated below, describes Lady Nijō's life at court from the beginning of 1271 to the end of 1274, the year in which the future Emperor Fushimi became the Crown Prince.

The second selection is a complete translation of *The Journal of the Sixteenth-Night Moon* (Izayoi nikki, 1279–80), by the nun Abutsu (ca. 1220–83). Almost nothing is known of Abutsu's early childhood other than that she was the adopted daughter of Taira no Norishige, a provincial Governor. As a young girl, she served in the palace of Princess Ankamon'in (1209–83), a granddaughter of Emperor Takakura (1161–81; r. 1168–80), where she bore the name [Ankamon'in no] Shijō. When she was around eighteen, an unhappy love affair led her to retire from society, but by the middle of the thirteenth century she had met and married the much older Fujiwara no Tameie (1198–1275), after having given birth to two sons and a daughter of unknown paternity. She took the name Abutsu when she became a nun after Tameie's death.

Tameie sired two sons by Abutsu, Tamesuke (1263–1328) and Tamemori (1265–1328), in addition to four by an earlier marriage—Tameuji (1222–86), Tamenori (1227–79), and two who became monks. Himself a man of mediocre literary talent, he had inherited the headship of the Mikohidari, a poetic school made famous by his distinguished grandfather and father, Shunzei (1114–1204) and Teika (1162–1241), to whom Abutsu alludes with pride in her memoir. The school had lost much of its luster in his day and was soon to split into the three lines that dominated the later history of the waka—the Nijō, Kyōgoku, and Reizei, descended, respectively, from Tameuji, Tamenori, and Tamesuke.

As the strong-willed favorite of her husband's old age, Abutsu was able to secure many of the Mikohidari archives for her sons. She also persuaded Tameie to bequeath rights in his Hosokawa estate (a property in Harima Province) to Tamesuke, rather than to Tameuji, to whom the estate had been promised, but a dispute over the property developed after his death, with Tameuji refusing to cede it and Abutsu pressing her son's claim. In the Tenth Month of 1279, Abutsu went to argue the case in Kamakura, where she seems to have died, her mission unaccomplished.

Abutsu is best known for *The Journal of the Sixteenth-Night Moon*, which begins with an account of her fourteen-day trip along the Eastern Sea Road to Kamakura, records poems exchanged with correspondents during her stay there, and ends with a long poem (*chōka*) reiterating the importance of the Mikohidari heritage and the righteousness of her suit, two of the work's recurrent themes. She was also the author of many poems, including forty-eight in imperial anthologies, and of *Dozing* (Utatane, ca. 1240?), a short confessional memoir describing her youthful disappointment in love.

The Confessions of Lady Nijō

[*Eighth Year of Bun'ei: 1271*]

Spring with its seasonal haze arrived overnight, and the ladies-in-waiting sat in rows on the long-awaited morning, each wearing a magnificent costume designed to eclipse all the others. I joined them,

attired, if I remember rightly, in seven budding-plum inner robes, a red outer robe, a green mantle, and a red formal jacket. My two short-sleeved underrobes were woven in a plum-blossom and vine pattern and were embroidered with plum blossoms and Chinese fences.

My father, Major Counselor Masatada, served the imperial medicinal draughts to Retired Emperor Go-Fukakusa. After the end of the formal ceremonies, the Retired Emperor had the participants come inside and summoned ladies-in-waiting from the Table Room for an informal party. The men had already drunk nine rounds during the ceremonies—three from each of three bowls. Father proposed the same number again, but His Majesty said, "This time, it shall be nine threes!"

After everyone was befuddled, the Retired Emperor gave Father the imperial bowl. "Let this spring be the time when the wild goose sheltering on your field comes to me," he told him.[1] Father made a deep bow. Again, His Majesty made a confidential remark as Father was about to withdraw after accepting the final round. I saw it all but had no way of knowing what was going on.

When I returned to my room after the Felicitations, I found a note. "From this day forth, I hope to tread where the snow lay yesterday." It was accompanied by a cloth-wrapped package containing eight lined robes in colors shading from red to white—also a red singlet, a green mantle, a jacket, a divided skirt, a set of three inner robes, and another set of two robes. Startled and disconcerted, I was preparing to return everything when I noticed a poem on a thin piece of paper attached to one of the sleeves:

tsubasa koso
kasanuru koto no
kanawazu to
kite dani nare yo
tsuru no hagoromo

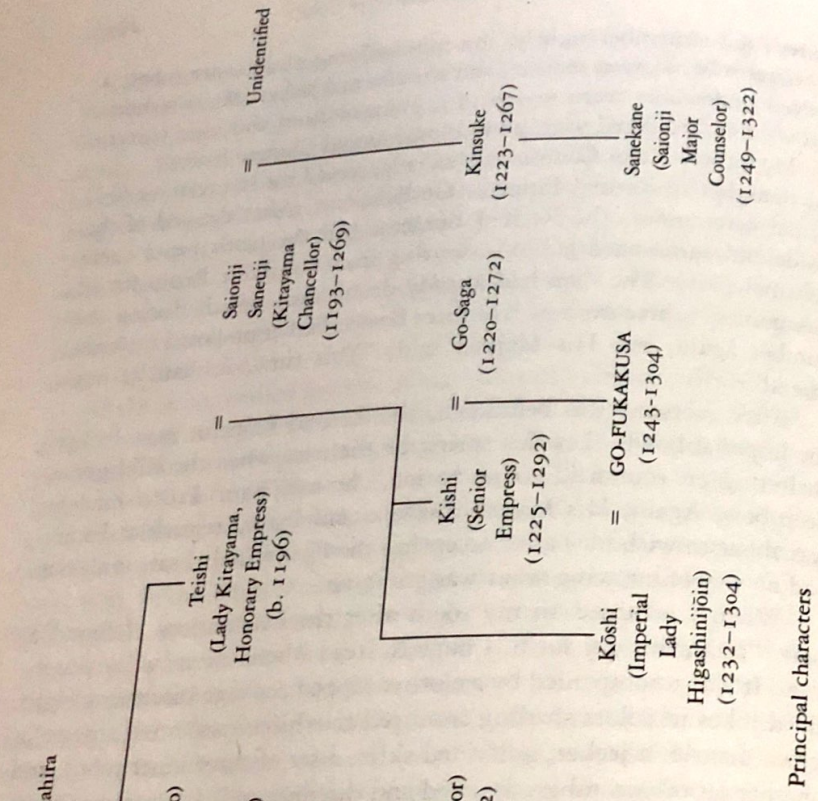
Although we may fail
to emulate birds with wings paired
in conjugal bliss,
accustom yourself, at least,
to wearing these crane-feathered robes.

It seemed unfeeling to reject a gift offered in such a spirit, but I sent it back with a poem and a note:

yoso nagara
narete wa yoshi ya
sayogoromo

Would I do well
to wear these robes at night
all by myself?

1. An allusion to *Tales of Ise*, Sec. 10.



Principal characters

itodo tamoto no
kuchi mo koso sure

Surely the time would come
when tears would rot the sleeves.

"Perhaps if your affection were really to endure . . ."

Someone rapped softly on the rear door toward midnight, while I was away on night duty. The unsuspecting little maid opened it, and an unseen hand thrust something inside. It was the same package with another poem:

chigiriokishi
kokoro no sue no
kawarazuba
hitori katashike
yowa no sagoromo

If in the future
you will be true to the pledge
spoken in the past,
please lie abed at night
with these garments spread alone.

It would have been awkward to send it away again, so I kept the things.

I wore the new robes on the Third, when Priestly Retired Emperor Go-Saga came to visit His Majesty. "The colors and luster of your robes are remarkably beautiful," Father said. "Were they a gift from His Majesty?" It was upsetting, but I managed a show of indifference. "No, they came from Lady Tokiwai," I said.[2]

On the evening of the Fifteenth, someone came from Kawasaki with word that he had been instructed to escort me there.[3] It was inconveniently short notice, but I could not very well demur. To my surprise, everything looked much grander than usual when I reached the mansion. The folding screens, the matting, and even the curtain-stands and room hangings seemed to have been chosen with special care. I supposed that it must have something to do with New Year. So the day ended.

The next morning, people rushed around with talk of a repast of some kind, and there were consultations concerning courtiers' horses and senior nobles' carriages. My step-grandmother, the nun, arrived and engaged in whispered conversations.

"What's going on?" I asked.

Father smiled. "His Majesty has declared that he will come here tonight to avoid a directional taboo, and we're taking special pains because it's the New Year season. I've brought you home to serve his meal."

2. Lady Tokiwai was Nijō's great-aunt.

3. Kawasaki, an area east of Ichijō and Kyōgoku avenues near the west bank of the Kamo River, was the site of one of Masatada's houses.

"This isn't the date of the seasonal change. What kind of taboo is it?" I asked.

Everyone laughed. "Listen to the child!" they said.

For a reason I could not have been expected to divine, some especially splendid folding screens and curtain-stands had been brought to the room where I always stayed. "Why are these decorations so elaborate? Is His Majesty going to see this room too?" I said. People laughed, but nobody gave me a clear answer.

At dusk, someone delivered three white singlets and a deep red divided skirt, which I was instructed to wear. The room was perfumed to an extraordinary degree. After the lamps had been lit, my stepmother brought in a beautiful short-sleeved robe for me to put on.

Father appeared a little later. He fiddled with the robes on display. "Hold yourself in readiness until His Majesty comes; don't go to bed. A lady-in-waiting should never act willful; she must be perfectly obedient," he said. I had no way of understanding what prompted the admonition. Vaguely annoyed, I leaned against a brazier and dozed off.

Just what happened next I cannot say. His Majesty arrived without my knowing it. Father busily supervised the placement of the carriage and the like. When the food came, he said in a flurry, "That worthless girl has gone to sleep. Wake her up."

His Majesty overheard. "It's all right. Let her sleep," he said. So nobody disturbed me.

After having leaned for a while against the brazier just inside the sliding door, I had fallen into a sound sleep with a robe over my head. Some time later, I started awake to find the lamps dim, the curtains apparently drawn, and a man lying near me at his ease, just inside the doorway. In a panic, I tried to rise and flee, but he held me down. "You've haunted my thoughts ever since you were a little girl. I've been waiting for you to turn fourteen." He said other things—so many that I have no words to record them all—but I merely wept without listening. My tears drenched his sleeves, to say nothing of my own. Unable to soothe me, he did not resort to force but said, "I've felt frustrated for so long that I decided to seize this opportunity. Other people must have made assumptions about us by now. Do you think a display of coldness is likely to end the relationship?"

I realized that he was right. It was not a secret tryst but a matter of public knowledge. And would not tonight's brief dream prove a source

of misery tomorrow? Looking back now, I am astonished that I should have been so prescient.

Why couldn't the Retired Emperor have explained what he was going to do? Why didn't he talk it over with Father, I asked myself. "I'll never be able to show my face again," I wailed. His Majesty laughed, amused by my naïveté, and I felt worse than ever. I did not even answer any of his remarks for the rest of the night.

A stir outside indicated that dawn had come. "Isn't His Majesty supposed to go home this morning?" someone said.

"I'll be leaving just as though this had been a real tryst," His Majesty remarked half to himself. As he prepared to rise, he addressed me with mingled annoyance and compassion. "This quite unexpected behavior has made me feel that it was a waste of time to pledge my devotion back in those days when you wore your hair parted in the middle. I advise you to avoid a manner others might consider strange. People are bound to wonder if you shut yourself off from everybody." I made no answer.

"It's hopeless." He got up and put on his informal cloak. His attendants called for the carriage, and I heard Father ask, "Will you have some rice gruel?" It was as though Father were another person; I could not endure the thought of seeing him again. If only I might have recaptured yesterday's innocence!

Even after I heard people saying His Majesty had left, I stayed there with the robe over my head. A letter arrived with disconcerting speed. My step-grandmother and stepmother came in to ask why I was still in bed. Distressed by their questions, I said, "I haven't been feeling well since last night." They seemed to take it for granted that I was merely suffering from bridal nerves, which made me feel still more forlorn. The letter was produced with much fuss, but I was in no mood to read it.

"You're keeping His Majesty's messenger from going back. What about your reply?" people said in consternation.

"We'd better tell the Major Counselor," someone suggested. I found it all unbearable.

Father came in. "They say you're ill."

The others pressed the letter on him. "What kind of nonsense is this? Do you intend to let it go unanswered?" I could hear him opening it as he spoke. It was a poem inscribed on thin purple paper:

amatatoshi
sasuga ni nareshi
sayogoromo
kasanenu sode ni
nokoru utsuriga

For many long years,
you have been as dear to me
as a well-worn robe:
I prize the lingering scent
on the sleeve I spread alone.

When the others saw the poem they all said, "She isn't a modern girl." It was too depressing; I could not bring myself to get up. Father apparently decided in some agitation that a reply by proxy would seem ruder than no answer at all. I gathered that he merely gave the messenger a present and said, "My childish daughter is still asleep; she hasn't read His Majesty's kind letter yet."

A letter from an unexpected quarter arrived around noon:

ima yori ya
omoikienan
hitokata ni
keburi no sue no
nabikihatenaba

If the smoke plume's tip
ends by trailing away
in one direction,
the fire of hopeless longing
must surely snuff out this life.

"Unhappy though my existence has been, I've managed to go on in the hope that we might exchange vows some day, but what am I to do now?" The thin, dark blue paper was decorated with a colored design in which I could make out the words of an old poem, ". . . that I may no longer feel the anguish of love."[4] I tore off the bit where "Mount Concealment" appeared and sent it back with this:

shirareji na
omoimidarete
yūkeburi
nabiki mo yaranu
shita no kokoro wa

You cannot know
the innermost feelings
of the evening smoke,
its heart too uncertain
to drift in one direction.

I could not help realizing that I was being indiscreet.

The day drew to a close. I refused to swallow anything, even hot water, and my attendants told one another that I must truly be ill. At twilight, I heard people announcing His Majesty's arrival. No sooner had I begun to wonder what would happen this time than the door opened and he entered with a nonchalant air. "They say you aren't feeling well. What's the matter?" he asked. I merely lay there, unwilling to answer. He stretched out beside me and murmured all kinds of endearments. There seemed little alternative to saying, "If this were a world . . ."[5] But I also felt that it would be too heartless to disregard the emotions with which someone else would learn that the evening smoke had suddenly trailed off in one direction. At my wits' end, I made no reply at all.

4. Fujiwara no Masatsune (SKKS 1094): kiene tada / shinobu no yama no / mine no kumo / kakaru kokoro no / ato no naki made ("Let me simply die, that I may no longer feel the anguish of love as secret as the name of cloud-veiled Mount Concealment").

His Majesty's behavior that night was callous. I think my thin robes must have ripped rather badly, but he did as he pleased with me. I hated being alive, hated even the dawn moon. The words of a poem kept running through my mind:

kokoro yori
hoka ni tokenuru
shitahibo no
ika naru fushi ni
ukina nagasan

When, in days to come,
might gossip sully the name
of someone whose robes
have had their strings unfastened
though her heart did not consent?

How strange that I should have foreseen the future so clearly at such a time!

The Retired Emperor showered me with reassurances. "The marital bond transcends rebirth. I may not be with you every night, but you will always be in my heart," he said. Meanwhile, the sound of the dawn bells announced the close of the spring night, too short even for dreams. He got up, telling me he did not want to inconvenience the household by lingering in bed.

"Even though you may not be sorry to see me go, won't you at least come out to say good-bye?" he urged. My sleeves were drenched with the tears I had shed all through the night, but I shrugged on a thin singlet and went outside, unable to refuse so small a favor. It was the hour when the Seventeenth-night moon sinks toward the west while horizontal clouds trail in the east. What tutelage might have been responsible for the sudden attraction I felt as I looked at him standing there in a red-lined green-banded hunting robe, a lavender inner robe, and a pair of bound-patterned baggy trousers? I marvel at the complexity of a woman's heart.

My uncle, Major Counselor Takaaki, brought up the carriage. He

5. Anonymous (KKS 712): itsuwari no / naki yo nariseba / ika bakari / hito no koto no ha / ureshikaramashi ("If this were a world in which there were no such things as false promises, how great would be my delight as I listened to your words!").

was wearing a blue hunting robe. The single courtier in attendance was Lord Tamekata, who was an Assistant Chief in the Auditors' Office at the time. There were also two or three junior North Guards and some minor palace functionaries. A rooster heralded the dawn with knowing crows as the carriage arrived, and the sound of the bell from the Kannon Hall seemed to echo in my sleeves. I wondered if Prince Genji might have felt the same way when he composed the poem, ". . . my left sleeve and my right."[6]

His Majesty lingered. "I'm going back all alone; please keep me company awhile," he pleaded. Even though it seemed presumptuous to fret over my inability to probe his mind, I stood there in confusion while the bright late moon gradually lost its color.[7]

"Ah, it worries me to see you looking like that," he said. He swept me into the carriage, and we started away before I could so much as leave word of my departure. It was like an old romance. But what would the future bring? I composed this poem:

kane no oto ni
odoroku to shi mo
naki yume no
nagori mo kanashi
ariake no sora

Dawn moon in the sky:
how grievous the memory
of the dreamlike night
when no temple bell was needed
to arouse one who had not slept!

On the way to the palace, he promised to love me always, quite as though he were a man who had just abducted a woman. A dispassionate observer would probably have found the situation delightfully intriguing, but I felt more and more miserable as the journey progressed. There was nobody to tell me what the future held—not unless it might have been the tears I shed.

We arrived at the palace. The men took the carriage to the middle gate of the Corner Palace,[8] and His Majesty alighted. "She is such a helpless child that I couldn't bring myself to leave her alone; that's why

6. *Ushi to nomi / hitoe ni mono wa / omōede / hidari migi ni mo / nururu sode ka na* ("It is not as though sadness alone fills my heart: my left sleeve and my right have been dampened by tears of two different kinds"). Genji, living in Suma, is moved both by the unhappiness of exile and by fond memories of imperial kindnesses.

7. "Probe his mind" is an allusion to a poem addressed to Genji by Yūgao in *The Tale of Genji*: *yama no ha no / kokoro mo shirade / yuku tsuki wa / uwa no sora nite / kage ya taenamu* ("May its light perhaps vanish in mid-heaven—the journeying moon, unable to probe the mind of the rim of the hills?"). "How do I know you won't desert me?"

8. A building in the southeast corner of the compound at Go-Fukakusa's palace, the Tomi-no-kōji Mansion.

I've brought her with me," he said to Takaaki. "I don't want anyone to know about it for the time being. Look after her." He entered his private apartments.

I felt threatened and ill at ease in the palace, which did not seem at all like the familiar place where I had served since my childhood. If only I had refused to come! I broke down in tears, unable to stop worrying about the future. As I wept, I heard Father's voice and wondered, with a twinge of pity, if he might be feeling anxious about me. Takaaki told him what the Retired Emperor had said. "She's been put in an ambiguous position," Father answered. "It would have been better to let her go on serving him as usual. There will be unpleasant gossip when the truth comes out." I felt trapped and miserable as I listened to him leave. What indeed lay ahead for me? Then His Majesty entered the room and swore over and over that he would never stop loving me. In spite of my misgivings, my spirits gradually rose. Perhaps our relationship was the predestined result of a karmic bond.

His Majesty visited me for ten nights running. Foolishly enough, I could not help worrying about how the author of the smoke-plume poem must be feeling. Meanwhile, Father kept telling His Majesty that I ought not to stay in the palace under such circumstances, and so I went home. Unbearably sensitive to the eyes of others, I kept myself apart on the pretext of a lingering indisposition.

An affectionate letter arrived from His Majesty. "I miss you dreadfully after having seen you so often. Come soon." His poem:

kaku made wa
omoiokoseji
hito shirezu
misebaya sode ni
kakaru namida o

You cannot love me
as much as I love you.
I yearn to show to you,
unknown to others, these sleeves
drenched with the tears I shed in secret.

Although I had found his letters distasteful in the past, I greeted this one eagerly and happily. I am afraid my answering poem may have sounded a bit artificial:

ware yue no
omoi naranedo
sayogoromo
namida no kikeba
nururu sode ka na

I cannot think myself
the one for whom you yearn,
but my sleeves, too, are wet
when I hear of the tears
moistening your robe at night.

Before long, I went to the palace to resume my regular duties.

Already beset by vague misgivings, I soon found myself the object of malicious gossip. "The Major Counselor thinks nothing is too good for her," people said. "He presented her to the Retired Emperor with as much ceremony as if she had been a Junior Consort." And life began to seem bleak indeed when the Imperial Lady Higashinijōin showed herself increasingly displeased. I simply got through the days as best I could.

I was in no position to complain about the Retired Emperor's failure to visit me at night, but it was disappointing to wait in vain time after time. Nor could I very well grumble like my companions about the women who visited him from outside the palace, but I rebelled inwardly against the conventions whenever I had to escort one of them. Was the time likely to come when I would recall this period in my life with nostalgia?[9] The days went by and autumn arrived.

The approach of Higashinijōin's confinement, which was to take place in the Corner Palace, was causing concern because of the Imperial Lady's relatively advanced age and history of difficult births. I believe the time was around the Eighth Month. Every conceivable large ritual and secret ritual had been commissioned—prayers to the Seven Healing Buddhas and the Five Mystic Kings, prayers to Fugen for the prolongation of life, prayers to Kongō Dōji and the Mystic King Aizen, and so on. At Father's special request, he assumed responsibility for the prayers to Kongō Dōji this time, in addition to the ones to Kuṇḍalī, which had always been supported by Owari Province in the past.[10] The exorcist was the Jōjūin Bishop.

Shortly after the Twentieth, there were agitated reports that the birth was impending. There ensued two or three days of breathless waiting, which reduced everyone to a state of frantic anxiety, and then word was sent to the Retired Emperor that there seemed to have been a change for the worse. His Majesty went inside and saw that the Imperial Lady looked alarmingly weak. He told the exorcist to pray just outside the curtain-stand. He also called in His Reverence of Omuro, who had been serving as chief officiant at the Aizen altar. "She doesn't look as though she can survive. What shall we do?" he asked.

"The Buddhas and bodhisattvas have vowed that bad karma-results

9. Fujiwara no Kiyosuke (SKKS 1843): nagaraeba / mata kono goro ya / shinobaremu / ushi to mishi yo zo / ima wa koishiki ("If I live long enough, will I recall these days, too, with nostalgia? I cherish the memory of a time that once seemed hard").

10. Masatada had been granted the revenues from Owari Province.

can be changed into good ones. I'm sure she won't die." The monk began to pray.

The exorcist hung a picture of Fudō in front of the Imperial Lady—possibly the very one that had saved Shōkū's life.[11] Rubbing his beads, he intoned, "An ascetic who serves Fudō is the same as a Buddha; a monk who achieves command of the mantra enjoys Fudō's eternal protection." In a mighty effort to subdue the possessing spirits, he rubbed his beads again. "Long ago, when I was a boy, I devoted my nights to prayer in the hall; now that I am a man, I spend my days in difficult, painful austerities. Can there be no divine response, no divine protection in return?" he said.

There were signs that the Imperial Lady was about to give birth. Encouraged, the monk redoubled his exertions, praying hard enough to raise smoke. All the ladies-in-waiting passed out singlet sets and raw silk robes under the blinds to the presiding official, who handed them over to courtiers. Members of the North Guards presented them to the recitants.

The senior nobles sat below the stairs, looking as though they were hoping for a boy. The yin-yang masters put an eight-legged table in the courtyard and performed the thousandfold purification. Courtiers picked up the ritual articles, and ladies-in-waiting thrust out their sleeves to receive and transmit them. Escorts and junior members of the North Guards led in sacred horses, which His Majesty inspected and dispatched to the Twenty-one Shrines as offerings. How fortunate the Imperial Lady seemed! We felt that anyone born into this world as a human being and a woman would want to be exactly like her.

His Majesty summoned the chief officiant from the Seven Healing Buddhas altar and ordered him to have the *Healing Buddha Sutra* chanted by three junior officiants with especially fine voices. The birth took place just as the three intoned, "The beholders rejoice."

Amid all the congratulations inside and outside the hall, the rice steamer rolled toward the north.[12] It was a disappointment for the Retired Emperor, but the exorcist received the usual series of rewards.

11. Fudō, one of the Five Great Mystic Kings of esoteric Buddhism, was said to have saved Shōkū, a prelate favored by Go-Saga, when the monk offered his own life in exchange for that of his dying teacher.

12. A sign that the baby was a girl. *The Tale of the Heike*: "When an Empress gives birth, it is customary to roll a rice steamer down from the ridgepole of the building she occupies, directing it to the south for a Prince and to the north for a Princess."

Although the baby was a girl, Priestly Retired Emperor Go-Saga made a great fuss over her. The fifth and seventh nights after the birth were observed with particular splendor. On the seventh night, the two former sovereigns chatted in Retired Emperor Go-Fukakusa's apartments after the celebratory banquet. Around the Hour of the Ox [1:00 A.M.–3:00 A.M.], there was a tremendous noise in the Orange Tree Courtyard—a sound like storm-driven waves crashing onto a rocky shore.

"What's happening? Go and look," His Majesty said to me. When I went out, I saw ten ladle-shaped, bluish-white objects streaking through the air, their heads ranging in size from plates to earthen vessels, and their long, slender tails shining with dazzling brilliance. I fled inside, aghast.

"Why are you so upset?" asked the senior nobles in the eavechamber. "They were only meteors."

But then a voice shouted, "Something that looks like seaweed starch is scattered under the big willow tree."

The diviners were put to work at once. They reported that Priestly Retired Emperor Go-Saga's spirit had been wandering, and spirit-summoning rituals were begun that very night, along with prayers to the Taishan deity.

Around the Ninth Month, we heard that the Priestly Retired Emperor had fallen ill. His body swelled and he seemed to fail daily, despite constant frantic applications of moxa. Thus the year ended.

[*Ninth Year of Bun'ei: 1272*]

The New Year season brought no improvement in the patient's condition. It was a far from festive time.

Late in the First Month, when the end seemed near, the Priestly Retired Emperor journeyed to the Saga Detached Palace by palanquin.[13] Retired Emperor Go-Fukakusa also went, and I sat in the rear of his carriage to attend him. The two Imperial Ladies shared a carriage, with Mikushigedono to see to their needs.[14] Medicinal decoctions, meant to be drunk on the way, had been prepared and put into two water flasks in

13. The Saga Detached Palace was Go-Saga's residence west of the capital.

14. The Imperial Ladies were the Senior Empress (Go-Saga's consort) and Higashinijōin (Go-Saga's adopted daughter and Go-Fukakusa's consort). Mikushigedono was one of Go-Fukakusa's mistresses.

the imperial presence by the physicians Tanenari and Moronari; and Nobutomo, a junior member of the North Guards, had been detailed by Tsunetō to carry them.[15] But both flasks turned out to be dry when the imperial attendants sought to administer their contents at Uchino. It was very strange. We heard that the former sovereign seemed worse after the incident, which must have made him feel more despondent than ever.

Retired Emperor Go-Fukakusa took up residence in the Ōidono Palace,[16] whence he dispatched men and women of all degrees by day and by night with anxious inquiries about his father's condition. Cold shivers ran down my spine when I heard the waters of the Ōi River as I traversed the long galleries on such errands.

By the beginning of the Second Month, the end seemed to be merely a matter of time. The two Rokuhara deputies paid a call around the Ninth, with the Saionji Major Counselor Sanekane transmitting their expressions of concern. The reigning sovereign, Emperor Kameyama, came on the Eleventh and stayed through the Twelfth. There was a stir in preparation for his departure on the Thirteenth, but no ceremonial music sounded in the hushed palace. The Emperor and Retired Emperor Go-Fukakusa both shed floods of tears when they met—a sight to make even a casual observer weep.

Around the Hour of the Cock [5:00 P.M.–7:00 P.M.] on the Fifteenth, a huge cloud of smoke rose in the direction of the capital. While we were all wondering whose house was on fire, someone said, "The South Rokuhara Lord Tokisuke has been attacked and killed. The smoke is from the fires that were set."[17] It was beyond words! The man who had paid the sick call on the Ninth had gone before the one whose every day seemed likely to be his last. We know well enough that some people die early in this world and some late, but I was deeply moved nevertheless. This latest manifestation of the law of impermanence remained unknown to the Priestly Retired Emperor, who had scarcely uttered a word since the night of the Thirteenth.

On the morning of the Seventeenth, we heard that the former sovereign's condition was critical. The news caused a great commotion.

15. Tsunetō, a Middle Counselor, was one of Go-Saga's close attendants (*kinshin*).

16. Part of the Saga Detached Palace complex.

17. The Hōjō Regent in Kamakura, Tokimune, had suspected his deputy Hōjō Tokisuke of conspiring against him.

Two spiritual guides, Archbishop Keikai and the Ōjōin Abbot, urged the dying man to call on the name of Amida Buddha. "As one who has occupied the throne and commanded the allegiance of all officialdom in his life on earth, you can feel confident about facing the future on the path of the dead. Go quickly now to your lotus pedestal on the highest level of the Pure Land; then look back and help those who remain behind in this world where you have dwelt," they said, alternating words of comfort with exhortations. But he seemed powerless to rid himself of worldly attachments or confess his sins. He breathed his last at the age of fifty-three, during the Hour of the Cock on the Seventeenth Day of the Second Month in the ninth year of Bun'ei, with no indication that he had heeded the advice of the holy men. The heavens darkened, the nation sorrowed, and flowery sleeves gave way to black garb.

The body was taken to the Yakusōin Hall[18] for cremation on the Eighteenth. A Head Chamberlain–Middle Captain came from the reigning sovereign's palace as an imperial messenger, and all of the dead man's priestly sons accompanied the cortege—the Omuro, Enman'in, Shōgoin, Bodaiin, and Shōren'in Princes. No brush could do justice to the sadness of that night. The Priestly Retired Emperor's special favorite, Tsunetō, had been expected to take religious vows and forsake the world, but he surprised everyone by wearing a soft crepe hunting robe as he carried away the cinerary urn.

Retired Emperor Go-Fukakusa's grief in those days was quite extraordinary. He wept day and night, and the spectacle of his misery moved his attendants to tears of sympathy, mere onlookers though they were. Because the country was in mourning for an imperial parent, we heard no timekeepers announcing the hour, no voices clearing the way for important personages. I wondered if the cherry trees at Kameyama might put forth charcoal-colored blossoms.[19]

Father had received permission to wear especially black robes.[20] He suggested to Retired Emperor Go-Fukakusa that it would be appropriate for me to go into deep mourning too, but His Majesty said, "She's very young. Let her dress like everyone else; there's no need for anything special."

18. A cloister in the Saga Detached Palace complex.

19. Kamusuke no Mineo, composed after the burial of the Horikawa Chancellor at Fukakusa (KKS 832): fukakusa no / nobe no sakura shi / kokoro araba / kotoshi bakari wa / sumizome ni sake ("If you have feelings, flowering cherries in the fields at Fukakusa, will you not just this one year put forth charcoal-colored blooms?"). Kameyama was a mountain near the Saga Detached Palace.

20. A mark of closeness to the deceased.

Father made repeated applications to the Senior Empress and Retired Emperor Go-Fukakusa for permission to take Buddhist vows, but the two replied that they had their reasons for not consenting. He visited the grave daily, perhaps because he felt the loss more than others did. He also renewed his request to the Retired Emperor through an intermediary, Major Counselor Sadazane. "I enjoyed His Majesty's favor on every possible occasion, from the time when I first came to his notice and entered court service at the age of nine. I was especially grateful for his kindness when my stepmother charged me with unfilial conduct after my father's death, and I did my best to repay him with loyal service. Blessed with offices and ranks beyond my deserts, I smiled when I opened official communications on the mornings after appointments ceremonies; I performed my duties with a light heart, free of resentment and envy. I gazed with pleasure at the moon from the palace. Night after night, I joined the Toyo-no-akari drinking and dancing; for many years, I wore purification tunics at Special Festival rehearsals and saw my image reflected in the sacred stream. Now I hold Senior Second Rank, serve as the senior Major Counselor, and head my clan. When His Majesty died, I was just refusing his offer of a ministerial post, giving as my reason a document in which my older brother, Major Captain Michitada, had recommended prior service as a Major Captain in the Bodyguards. But now my patron has gone and I have nobody on whom to rely; I would gain nothing by remaining at court, no matter what office I might occupy. How many years are left to me at fifty? 'It is by severing the bonds of kindness and entering the realm of the eternal that we truly repay kindness.'[21] With your permission, I will become a monk and pray for His Majesty's welfare in the next life."

The Retired Emperor responded to this fervent plea with another refusal. He also discussed the matter with Father directly. So things went along, a day at a time. It was not that anyone ceased to miss the dead, but time slipped by while people worked day and night to arrange for the religious services and so forth. The forty-ninth day came, and everyone returned to the capital after the final rites.

21. From a verse chanted by those taking Buddhist vows.

Thenceforth, it was necessary to send messengers to Kamakura and otherwise deal with increasingly vexatious political problems. Soon the Fifth Month arrived.

Perhaps because the Fifth Month is always a time when dew besprinkles our sleeves, Father seemed more prone to tears than if the season had been autumn. He had never wanted to spend a night without a woman, but now he invariably slept alone. He also gave up drinking parties altogether. People wondered if it was his new way of life that was making him so thin. On the night of the Fourteenth of the Fifth Month, as he was returning in his carriage from listening to Buddha-invocations at Ōtani, one of his attendants said, "Your Lordship's face has turned quite yellow. I wonder why." This impelled him to consult a physician. The problem was diagnosed as jaundice (a disease that afflicted those who tend to brood, he was told), and a series of moxa treatments was begun. I could not help worrying about what might happen.

To my infinite distress, Father's health deteriorated steadily. Then, on top of everything else, I discovered around the Sixth Month that I was pregnant. Miserably ill though I felt, I could not very well say anything to Father in his condition.

Father refused to order prayers for himself. "I feel that I can't recover," he said. "I want to join His Majesty as soon as possible." On the night of the Fourteenth of the Seventh Month, after a brief sojourn in his Rokkaku Kushige house, he left the young children behind and moved to Kawasaki to prepare quietly for the end. I went to Kawasaki alone, considering myself a grown child. When he saw that I looked peaked, he began to comfort me because he thought I had been too worried to eat, but then he seemed to notice something.

"You must be pregnant!" he said. He resolved immediately to try to survive until the baby was born. For the first time, he commissioned all sorts of pious exercises—seven days of formal prayer to the Taishan deity at the Enryakuji Central Hall, seven field-music performances on the grass at the seven Hiyoshi shrines, a one-day summary reading of the *Great Wisdom Sutra* at Yawata, the construction of a stone pagoda on the Kamo riverbed, and so forth. I felt a deep sense of guilt as I witnessed all this activity, for it was motivated not by love of life but by a desire to see what the future held for me.

Since Father appeared to be in no imminent danger, I returned to the

palace around the Twentieth. His Majesty was especially attentive after he learned of my pregnancy. If only there were reason to believe it would always be that way, I kept thinking. Too, it was frightening to remember Mikushigedono's death in childbed in the Sixth Month, a fate I might easily share. Nor did it seem likely that Father would pull through in the end—and what would become of me then? Gloomy thoughts filled my mind as the last days of the Seventh Month approached.

One night, around the Twenty-seventh or thereabouts, there happened to be fewer people in the palace than usual. His Majesty told me to accompany him to the deserted main hall, where he began to chat quietly about the past and the present. After a melancholy comment on the ephemerality of worldly things, he continued with tear-filled eyes. "I don't think there is any hope for the Major Counselor. You will have nowhere to turn if he dies; there will be nobody but me to care about you." His solicitude merely deepened my depression. There was no evening moon at that time of month, only the dim light from the lamps outside. Late at night, as the two of us talked alone in the dark room, we heard an agitated voice asking for me.

"Who is it?" I said.

"I've come from Kawasaki. It looks as though His Lordship may be dying."

I left at once, just as I was, and traveled with desperate speed, afraid that the end might already have come. The distance seemed as long as the road to the eastern provinces. To my great joy, Father was still alive when I reached the mansion. "The dew awaiting the wind has yet to vanish. I don't like to linger this way. But it worries me to leave with you pregnant." He spoke in a faint voice, weeping.

Just as the late night bells began to sound, we heard voices announcing the Retired Emperor. Even Father was excited by the news of the visit, which was completely unexpected. I hurried out when I heard the carriage being drawn up. His Majesty had come incognito, accompanied only by two junior North Guards and a single courtier. The bleak light of the late moon, which had just cleared the rim of the hills, sufficed to show that he had departed on the spur of the moment, clad in a lavender-banded hunting robe with a woven burnet design. It was a great honor.

Father sent out a messenger. "I lack even the strength to pull on a hunting robe, so I can't hope to receive Your Majesty. The news of your

visit will be my most precious memory of this world." The Retired Emperor promptly opened the door and went inside. Father made a futile effort to rise.

"Stay where you are." His Majesty sat down on a cushion near the pillow and burst into tears. "You have been close to me ever since I was a child. When I heard that you were dying, I felt so miserable that I had to see you one last time."

"The happiness of your visit is far more than I deserve. But my heart aches with pity for this child. She lost her mother at the age of two, and I reared her in the knowledge that I was all she had. It's leaving her that upsets me more than all my other worries, especially now that she is pregnant. I can't express my grief and pity." Father wept bitterly as he spoke.

"The parting can't be prevented, but I'll take your place. Don't let anxiety bar you from the true Way." To these kind words, His Majesty added, "You must rest now." Then he left the room.

A little after daybreak, His Majesty said, "I can't let myself be seen looking this way." As he was making hurried preparations to depart, Father sent people out to the carriage with two gifts—an heirloom lute that had belonged to my grandfather, the Koga Chancellor, and a sword that had belonged to Retired Emperor Go-Toba, which I think the former sovereign had given to my grandfather around the time he went into exile. A piece of thin blue paper was attached to the sword cord:

wakarete mo
miyo no chigiri no
ari to kikeba
nao yukusue o
tanomu bakari zo

Although I must go,
I look to what lies ahead:
we are told that the bond
between lord and man endures
through past, present, and future.

"Ah, how sad! Don't worry about anything at all." His Majesty repeated the words over and over as he set out. An answer to the poem arrived very soon, written in his own hand:

kono tabi wa
ukiyo no hoka ni
meguriawan
matsu akatsuki no
ariake no sora

When we meet again,
it will be far away
from this cruel world,
in that long-awaited dawn
when the pale moon hangs in the sky.

It was somehow pitiful and moving to observe the joy with which Father concluded that he had liked the gifts.

Takaaki brought the sash of maternity very early—it was only the Second of the Eighth Month.[22] "When His Majesty gave it to me, he instructed me not to dress in mourning," he said. He wore an informal cloak, and his outriders and attendants were splendidly attired. I guessed that His Majesty had wanted to hasten the presentation so that Father could see it. Delighted, Father gave orders for Takaaki to be offered wine. It was sad to think that this might be his last memorable moment. His present to the envoy was a prized ox, Shiogama, which had been given to him by the Omuro Prince.

Father seemed a little better around that time. I wondered, as I sat with him one night, whether he might recover after all. The hour grew late. I stretched out beside him, intending to rest a minute, and began to doze. Then I started awake, and he said, "What an innocent girl you are! I am too worried about you even to grieve that I must tread an unknown path today or tomorrow, and now you make me feel worse by drifting off to sleep like a child."

He went on to speak at greater length than usual. "After you lost your mother at the age of two, I was the only one who worried about you. I have sired many other children, but I feel that you have received all the love 'due to three thousand.'[23] When I watch you smile, you seem to me to possess 'a hundred charms'; when you look unhappy, I share your sorrow. It's been this way for the springs and autumns of fifteen years, but now we're going to part.

"If His Majesty continues to favor you, take care to serve him faithfully. If his affection wanes and life in society becomes difficult, as may happen in this uncertain world, you must hasten to enter the true Way so that you may improve your lot in the next life, repay the kindnesses of your parents, and pray for our rebirth on the same lotus pedestal. If you should choose to remain in society by serving another master or by seeking protection in somebody's household, no matter

22. The presentation of the sash constituted the Retired Emperor's formal recognition of paternity.

23. An allusion to Bo Juyi's "Song of Everlasting Sorrow": "There were three thousand beauties in the Rear Palace, / But one woman received the imperial affection due to three thousand." "A hundred charms" in the next sentence echoes Bo's description of the same favorite, Yang Guifei.

whose, simply because you feel rejected and helpless, you must consider yourself disinherited, dead though I shall be.

"There's no denying that the conjugal bond outlasts a single life. time. But nothing could be more humiliating than for you to sully the honored name of our house by taking up with a man instead of becoming a nun.[24] Once you have left society, it will make no difference what you do." I thought miserably that these were the last admonitions I would ever receive from him.

When the dawn bell sounded, Nakamitsu came in with the usual steamed plantain leaves to be spread under the patient. "Let me replace the old ones for you," he said.

"It's almost over. There's no use doing anything. Just see that this child gets something to eat—it doesn't matter what," Father said. I wondered how I could force anything down at such a time, but he insisted, "Hurry, while I can still watch her." Ah, I thought, he may be here to see me this one time, but what of the future?

An attendant brought some chopped sweet potato balls in an unglazed pottery dish. "Those are supposed to be bad for pregnant women," Father said, looking annoyed. I picked at the food and got rid of it to avoid trouble.

As dawn was breaking, Father told us to send for a holy man. Earlier, around the Seventh Month, he had summoned the Yasakadera Abbot, who had shaved his head, administered the Five Commandments, and given him the Buddhist name Renshō, and since then he had planned to make that Abbot his spiritual guide on his deathbed, but now, for some reason, my grandmother insisted that we call Shōkōbō, the Kawara-no-in Abbot. We dispatched a messenger with word that Father was in critical condition, but Shōkōbō was slow to appear.

Meanwhile, Father said, "I'm dying. Lift me up." He summoned Nakamitsu to support him from the rear. (Nakamitsu was Nakatsuna's oldest son, a boy Father had reared and kept as a personal attendant.[25]) A lone lady-in-waiting sat to the front, and I sat to one side. "Take hold of my wrist," Father told me. I obeyed. He called for the surplice the holy man had given him, and we draped it over the upper half of a glossed silk *hitatare*, the only garment he wore. "I'm going to invoke the sacred

24. Presumably, such a relationship might stem from a similar one in an earlier life.
25. We learn later that Nakatsuna was the husband of Nijō's nurse.

name. You, too, Nakamitsu," he said. The two chanted for half an hour.

Just as the sunlight began to enter the room, Father dozed off, leaning a little to the left. I jogged his knee, intending to rouse him so that he could go on with the chant. He started awake, his eyes wide open, and the two of us exchanged a long look. "Ah, what will happen?" he said. He died as he spoke, early in the Hour of the Dragon [7:00 A.M.–9:00 A.M.] on the Third Day of the Eighth Month in the ninth year of Bun'ei. His age was fifty.[26]

Alas! There could have been no doubt about his future if he had died intoning Amida's name, but he had gone with other words on his lips because I had been foolish enough to rouse him. My brain felt paralyzed. When I looked up, the sky seemed as dark as if the sun and moon had fallen to earth; when I lay on the ground and wept, it seemed that my tears must bring forth a flowing river.

Although I had lost my mother at the age of two, her death had never preyed on my mind; it was merely something that had happened in the past, before I reached the age of understanding. But Father and I had spent fifteen years together, beginning with the forty-first day of my life, when I had nestled in his lap for the first time. When I consulted my mirror in the morning, it pleased me to see that I looked like him; when I dressed in the evening, I felt gratitude for his generosity. Greater than the height of Mount Sumeru was my obligation for the gift of life; deeper than the four seas was my debt for the care with which he had reared me in a mother's stead! How could I ever repay him? What could I do that would be enough? As I recalled the unforgettable words he had uttered on more than one occasion, it seemed to me that nothing could end the agony of this final parting.

I longed for a way to keep his body and witness its changes, but there is a limit to everything. We took the remains to Kaguraoka on the night of the Fourth. I would not have minded turning into smoke too, if only I might have set forth as his companion on the way. But such thoughts were of no avail, and I went home with the tears on my sleeve as my sole keepsakes. Gazing at the empty apartments, I remembered Father's appearance the day before. Ah, if I were ever to see him again, it would

26. If the text is correct here, Masatada was five years older than he is shown in two generally reliable early sources, *Kugyō bunin* and *Sonpi bunmyaku*, which both indicate 1228 as the probable year of his birth.

have to be in a dream. Even his last worries about my diet came to my mind again and again, evoking feelings that were quite beyond description.

wa ga sode no
namida no umi yo
mitsusegawa ni
nagarete kayoe
kage o dani min

O sea of tears
on my sleeve, please join your flow
to the Three Crossings stream:
let me at least behold
his reflection in the water.

On the evening of the Fifth, Nakatsuna came in wearing a monk's somber robes. I knew he must have counted on becoming a steward of Fourth Rank if Father were made a Minister of State—but now he suddenly appeared in this unexpected garb. "I'm going to visit His Lordship's grave. Do you have any message?" he said. The sight of his drenched black sleeve moved everyone to tears.

On the Ninth, the seventh day after Father's death, my stepmother, two of the ladies-in-waiting, and two samurai took Buddhist vows. The holy man from Yasaka had been summoned to officiate. I watched with inexpressible sorrow, tinged with envy, as the monk intoned, "Transmigrating through the three worlds," and administered the tonsure. The thought of following their example never left my mind, but it was out of the question for someone in my condition. I merely lay prostrate, shedding futile tears.

The rituals marking the twenty-first day were celebrated with special magnificence. We received generous expressions of sympathy from Retired Emperor Go-Fukakusa. I wished sadly that Father might have been there to witness the arrival of His Majesty's messengers, who never missed a day.

The Kyōgoku Imperial Lady was Minister of State Saneo's daughter, Emperor Kameyama's Empress, and the Crown Prince's mother. Neither in status nor in age was she a person whose loss could be viewed with equanimity, but she had fallen ill—apparently, everyone surmised, through a return of the possessing spirits that had plagued her for so long—and now we heard agitated reports of her death. It was all too easy to understand her father's misery and the Emperor's anguish. My heart ached for them both.

When the thirty-fifth day arrived, Retired Emperor Go-Fukakusa sent a crystal rosary attached to a gold-and-silver maidenflower, with

word that it was to serve as a prayer offering. Also attached was a slip of paper bearing a poem:

sarade dani
aki wa tsuyukeki
sode no ue ni
mukashi o kouru
namida souran

Tears of longing
for one who lives no more
must be drenching the sleeves
these autumn dews would dampen
even were it otherwise.

Knowing how much Father would have treasured such a message, I wrote, "I am sure he is overwhelmed with gratitude and happiness under the moss." My poem:

omoe tada
sarade mo nururu
sode no ue ni
kakaru wakare no
aki no shiratsuyu

Please imagine
how the white dew of autumn,
season of parting,
drenches sleeves that would be damp,
even were it otherwise.

Everything seemed a source of grief as I lay sleepless during the long autumn nights. The sleeves spread on my lonely bed were drenched with tears called forth by "a thousand blows, ten thousand blows" on the fulling blocks;[27] the image of the dead never left my mind's eye.

On the morning of Father's death, there were condolatory messages from the reigning and retired sovereigns and other members of the imperial family. The senior nobles and courtiers also called and sent messages. Major Counselor Mototomo was the only one who failed to observe the usual courtesies.[28]

On a moonlit night shortly after the Tenth of the Ninth Month, I received a visit from a person who had sent daily messages of inquiry, the first a solicitous note before dawn on that fateful Third. In mourning like everyone else, he wore a plain black informal robe, which made me feel as though he were expressing sympathy with my own dark attire. It seemed inappropriate to resort to an intermediary; I met him in the south apartment of the main hall.

"What with one thing and another, this has been a sadder year than most. One's sleeves never have a chance to dry," he said. "During a

27. From a poem by Bo Juyi: "Long, indeed, are the nights in the Eighth and Ninth Months; / A thousand blows, ten thousand blows, the fulling hammers never fall silent."

28. Mototomo, who appears to have been a political rival, succeeded Masatada as head of the Minamoto clan.

The Journal of the Sixteenth-Night Moon

Young people nowadays seem to be completely unaware of the connection between themselves and the name of a certain book that is reputed to have been taken from a wall in antiquity.[53] My late husband's written injunctions were as numerous as flutterings of kudzu leaves, and quite beyond dispute, but parental admonitions availed nothing. I came to realize, moreover, that I was the one person who had suffered exclusion from the all-embracing benevolence of the sovereign's rule, the only one who had failed to win the generous sympathy of His Majesty's loyal ministers. I could not reconcile myself to a situation that was a source of inconsolable grief and worry.

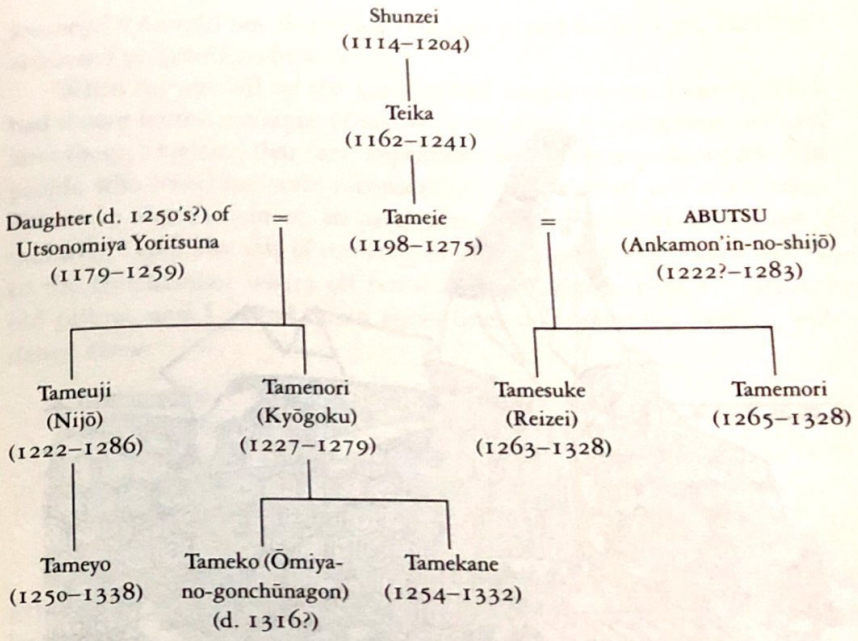
When I thought the matter over, it also seemed to me that there might be people who regarded the art of poetry as lacking in seriousness, as mere frivolous amusement. But our wise men have told us that this art has helped to regulate society, and to calm unrest in the Land of the Rising Sun, ever since the time when the heavenly rock-door opened and the assembled divinities accompanied the dance with song.[54] Furthermore, many individuals have compiled anthologies, but very few, I believe, have received a second imperial command and submitted selections to more than one sovereign.[55] I had formed a connection with remarkable men of the latter kind and, by karmic chance, had become the guardian of three sons and of countless old bits of paper having to do with poetry,[56] but other hands had gratuitously dammed the flow of "Narrow River," the Hosokawa estate bequeathed with the solemn understanding that its revenues should foster the art of poetry, provide care for the children, and support prayers for my husband in the afterlife. I marveled that I had managed to survive so long under those circumstances, sustaining a precarious, miserable existence month after month

53. A thrust at her stepson Tameuji. The Chinese *Classic of Filial Piety* (Xiao jing) was believed to have been hidden in the wall of Confucius's house.

54. According to Japanese myth, the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu, plunged the world into darkness by shutting herself inside the rock-cave of heaven. The other gods enticed her out with a bawdy dance.

55. Teika was one of the compilers of *New Collection of Early and Modern Poetry* (Shinkokinshū) and the sole compiler of the ninth imperial anthology, *New Imperial Collection* (Shinchokusenshū); Tameie was the sole compiler of the tenth, *Later Collection Continued* (Shokugosenshū) and one of the compilers of the eleventh, *Collection of Early and Modern Poetry Continued* (Shokukokinshū).

56. "Three sons" is probably a copyist's error for "two sons."



The Mikohidari house

and year after year, without knowing which would flicker out first, the flames in the memorial lamps or the lives of the parent and children who strove to guard the art and preserve the house. It was easy to think of bidding farewell to my own life, because I held it in no special affection, but I could not bear the darkness of heart that arises from worry about a child,[57] nor could I overcome my feelings of regret when I contemplated the present state of poetry. Obsessed by the thought that the merits of our case must appear as cloudless reflections in the tortoise mirror of the east,[58] I forgot every cause for hesitation, put aside every thought of self, and resolved to set off for Kamakura at once, following the beckoning of the Sixteenth-night moon.

My trip was not inspired by a Fun'ya no Yasuhide, nor was I seeking

57. An allusion to a poem by Fujiwara no Kanesuke (GSS 1103): hito no oya no / kokoro wa yami ni / aranedomo / ko o omou michi ni / madoinuru ka na ("The hearts of parents are not realms where darkness reigns—yet how easily we wander at a loss on the path of love for a child").

58. The tortoise's shell reveals the truth through divination, the mirror through reflection.

The nun Abutsu

a province in which to dwell. The season was early winter, the time of unpredictable skies, and there seemed no end to the showers, "ever falling, ever ceasing."[59] All nature conspired to depress my spirits; the very leaves fell in concert with my tears, scattering before the gale as though vying to go first. But "no one was forcing me to undertake the

59. Anonymous (GSS 445): kannazuki / furimi furazumi / sadame naki / shigure zo fuyu no / hajime narikeru ("The start of winter: we know it by the showers in the Godless Month, the unpredictable rains ever falling, ever ceasing"). Fun'ya no Yasuhide (9th c.) invited a fellow poet, Ono no Komachi, to visit him in his province of Mikawa; Ariwara no Narihira set out toward the east "in search of a province in which to settle" (*Tales of Ise*, Sec. 9).

journey."[60] I could not linger just because it was hard to go, and I set about my preparations briskly.

When my eye fell on the gardens and rough-woven fences, which had shown increasing signs of neglect even while I was present to look after them, I realized that their appearance would soon be far worse. The people who loved me were inconsolable, their sleeves wet with tears. Tamesuke and Tamemori, in particular, seemed crushed with grief. I said what I could by way of comfort, my heart aching. My glance strayed to the bedchamber where all remained unchanged, even to Tameie's old pillow, and I jotted down these lines on something nearby, saddened anew:

todomeoku
furuki makura no
chiri o dani
wa ga tachisaraba
tare ka harawan

If I go away,
will there be any hand
to so much as dust
the old familiar pillow
I must now leave behind?

I wrote colophons for the booklets containing poems by successive generations of authors, selected and ordered the ones that were worth keeping, and added two compositions of my own, with a view to sending them to Tamesuke:

waka no ura ni
kakitodometaru
moshiogusa
kore o mukashi no
katami to mo mi yo

Make it a keepsake,
a memento of the past—
this briny seaweed
raked together on the beach
at Waka-no-ura.[61]

ana kashiko
yokonami kaku na
hamachidori
hitokata naranu
ato o omowaba

If you feel yourself
one of uncommon descent,
take care, beach plover,
that you do not dash crosswaves
onto those illustrious tracks.[62]

60. Minamoto no Sane (KKS 388): hitoyari no / michi naranaku ni / ōkata wa / ikiushi to iite / iza kaerinamu ("No one forces me to undertake this journey. I think on the whole I will call it too trying and turn around and go back").

61. The coastal area in Kii Province known as Waka-no-ura, a name translatable as Poetry Beach or Bay of Poetry, was a common metaphor for the art of poetry. Abutsu uses seaweed as a metaphor for poems.

62. "Don't stray from the Mikohidari teachings."

Tamesuke produced his answers at once:

tsui ni yomo
ada ni wa naraji
moshiogusa
katami o miyo no
ato ni nokoseba

Quite impossible
that it should lead to nothing!
This salty seaweed
has been left as a keepsake
from three generations.

mayowamashi
oshiezariseba
hamachidori
hitokata naranu
ato o sore to mo

The beach plover
might have wandered from the path,
had it not been taught,
"These are the tracks left behind
by illustrious forebears."

Reassured and moved by the maturity of his replies, I wished that I might recite them for Tameie, and my tears flowed again.

Tamemori, accustomed to being always at my side, was distraught when he learned that I was going off without him. I observed that he had written a poem as calligraphy practice:

harubaru to
yukusaki tōku
shitawarete
ika ni sonata no
sora o nagamen

With what emotions
shall I gaze toward those skies,
yearning for the one
who embarks on a journey
to a far-off destination?

Touched as by nothing else, I jotted down some words of consolation on the same piece of paper:

tsukuzuku to
sora na nagame so
koishikuba
michi tōku tomo
haya kaerikon

Do not gaze sadly
at the heavens above.
If you should miss me,
I will return in haste,
no matter how long the road.

Tamesuke's older brother, the Master of Discipline, came down from Mount Hiei to see me off.[63] He was also very sad, but he added these lines when he saw the two poems on the practice sheet:

ada ni nomi
namida wa kakeji
tabigoromo

Let us not be too swift
to shed tears: the travel robe
will be worn merely

63. This monk and the mountain ascetic who appears immediately below were Abutsu's sons by an earlier marriage.

kokoro no yukite
tachikaeru hodo

until she comes back again
with her mission accomplished.

His brusque words were only an attempt to distract our attention from his tears, which overflowed even while he tried to avoid inauspicious behavior. His bluffness and Tamemori's grief were both pathetic, each in its own way.

The Holy Teacher—the mountain ascetic who was the older brother of these other sons—stood ready to escort me on the journey. Declaring that he must not be unrepresented on Tamemori's sheet, he wrote this:

tachisou zo
ureshikarikeru
tabigoromo
katami ni tanomu
oya no mamori wa

How happy I am
to serve as a guardian,
accompanying
the parent in whom we trust
as she journeys on her way!

I did not have a whole bevy of daughters—only the one, an attendant of the Imperial Lady who lived near me. She had recently presented the Retired Emperor with a daughter. She was a person of firm, trustworthy character; thus, when writing to say how much I would miss seeing the Princess, I took the opportunity to speak in detail of my hope that she would look after Tamesuke and Tamemori. I added a poem at the end:

kimi o koso
asahi to tanome
furusato ni
nokoru nadeshiko
shimo ni karasu na

I rely on you
as on the morning sun.
Let not the wild pinks,
flowers left at the old home,
suffer from the blighting frost.

She wrote a moving, equally full response. This was her reply to my poem:

omoioku
kokoro todomeba
furusato no
shimo ni mo kareji
yamatonadeshiko

If your loving heart
remains behind with them,
they will not wither
even in the old home's frosts—
the wild pinks of Yamato.

In a sense, I suppose it has been foolish to record every poem composed by my five children, but I have assembled them here because all of them touched a mother's heart.