

(HANA opens a jar of chiles and puts them on a plate. She serves them and gets out her mending basket and walks to MASAKO. MASAKO makes room for her.)

OKA: (helping himself) Ah, chiles.

(MURATA waits for an answer.)

OKA: (continuing) Well, I want to see him about my horse. I'm thinking of selling my horse.

MURATA: Sell your horse?

OKA: (scratching his head) The fact is, I need some money. Nagata-san's the only one around made money this year, and I'm thinking he might want another horse.

MURATA: Yeah, he made a little this year. And he's talking big . . . big! Says he's leasing twenty more acres this fall.

OKA: Twenty acres?

MURATA: Yeah. He might want another horse.

OKA: Twenty acres, eh?

MURATA: That's what he says. But you know his old woman makes all the decisions at that house.

(OKA scratches his head.)

HANA: They're doing all right.

MURATA: Heh. Nagata-kun's so henpecked, it's pathetic. Peko-peko. (He makes henpecking motions.)

OKA: (feeling the strain) I better get over there.

MURATA: Why the hell you selling your horse?

OKA: Well . . . a . . . I need cash.

MURATA: Oh yeah. I could use some too. Seems like everyone's getting out of the depression but the poor farmers. Nothing changes for us. We go on and on planting our tomatoes and summer squash and eating them. Well, at least it's healthy.

HANA: Papa, do you have lumber?

MURATA: Lumber? For what?

HANA: The bath . . .

MURATA: (impatiently) Don't worry about that. We need more sake now.

(HANA rises wearily.)

OKA: You sure Nagata-kun's working twenty more?

MURATA: Last I heard. What the hell, if you need a few bucks, I can loan (you) . . .

OKA: A few hundred. I need a few hundred dollars.

MURATA: Oh, a few hundred. But what the hell you going to do without a horse? Out here a man's horse is as important as his wife.

OKA: (seriously) I don't think Nagata will buy my wife.

(The men laugh, but HANA doesn't find it so funny. MURATA glances at her. She fills the cups again. OKA makes a half-hearted gesture to stop her. MASAKO watches the pantomime carefully. OKA finishes his drink.)

OKA: (continuing) I better get moving.

MURATA: What's the big hurry?

OKA: Like to get the horse business done.

MURATA: Eh . . . relax. Do it tomorrow. He's not going to die, is he?

OKA: (laughing) Hey, he's a good horse. I want to get it settled today. If Nagata-kun won't buy, I got to find someone else.

OKA: (continuing) You think maybe Kawaguchi-kun . . .?

MURATA: No-no. Not Kawaguchi. Maybe Yamamoto.

HANA: What is all the money for, Oka-san? Does Emiko-san need an operation?

OKA: No-no. Nothing like that.

HANA: Sounds very mysterious.

OKA: No mystery, Missus. No mystery. No sale, no money, no story.

MURATA: (laughing) That's a good one. "No sale, no money, no . . ." Eh, Mama . . . (He points to the empty cups.)

HANA: (filling the cups, muttering) I see we won't be getting any work done today. (to MASAKO) Are you reading again? Maybe we'd still have a bath if you . . .

MASAKO: I didn't do it on purpose.

MURATA: (loudly) I sure hope you know what you're doing, Oka-kun. What'd you do without a horse?

OKA: I was hoping you'd lend me yours now and then. (He looks at HANA.) I'll pay for some of the feed.

MURATA: Sure! Sure!

OKA: The fact is, I need that money. I got a daughter in Japan, and I just got to send for her this year.

(HANA leaves her mending and sits at the table.)

HANA: A daughter? You have a daughter in Japan? Why, I didn't know you had children. Emiko-san and you . . . I thought you were childless.

OKA: (scratching his head) We are. I was married before.

MURATA: You son-of-a-gun!

HANA: (overlapping) Is that so? How old is your daughter?

OKA: Kiyoko must be . . . fifteen now. Yeah, fifteen.

HANA: Fifteen! Oh, that *would* be too old for Emiko-san's child. Is Kiyoko's-san living with relatives in Japan?

OKA: (reluctantly) With grandparents. Shizue's parents. (pause) Well, the fact is, Shizue—that's my first wife—Shizue and Emiko were sisters. They come from a family with no sons. I was a boy when I went to work for them . . . as an apprentice. They're blacksmiths. Later I married Shizue and took on the family name—you know, *yoshi*—because they had no sons. My real name is Sakakihara.

MURATA: Sakakihara! That's a great name!

HANA: A magnificent name!

OKA: No one knows me by that here.

MURATA: Should have kept that—Sakakihara.

OKA: (muttering) I don't even know myself by that name.

HANA: And Shizue-san passed away and you married Emiko-san?

OKA: Oh. Well, Shizue and I lived with the family for a while, and we had the baby—you know, Kiyoko. (He gets looser with the liquor.) Well, while I was serving apprentice with the family, they always looked down their noses at me. After I married, it got worse.

HANA: (distressed) Worse!

OKA: That old man . . . (unnnnh!) Always pushing me around, making me look bad in front of my wife and kid. That old man was the meanest . . . ugliest . . .

MURATA: Yeah, I heard about that apprentice work—*detchi-boko*. Heard it was damned humiliating.

OKA: That's the God's truth!

MURATA: Never had to do it myself. I came to America instead. They say *detchi-boko* is blood work.

OKA: The work's all right. I'm not afraid of work. It's the humiliation! I hated them! Pushing me around like I was still a boy. Me, a grown man! And married to their daughter!

(MURATA and HANA groan in sympathy.)

OKA: (continuing) Well, Shizue and I talked it over, and we decided the best thing was to get away. We thought if I came to America and made some money . . . you know, send her money until we had enough, and I'd go back and we'd leave the family . . . you know, move to another province . . . start a small business, maybe in the city . . . a noodle shop or something.

MURATA: That's everyone's dream. Make money, go home, and live like a king.

OKA: I worked like a dog. Sent every penny to Shizue. And then she dies. She died on me!

(HANA and MURATA observe a moment of silence in respect for OKA's anguish.)

HANA: And you married Emiko-san.

OKA: I didn't marry her. They married her to me! Right after Shizue died.

HANA: But Oka-san, you were lu(cky) . . .