

A Famous Flower in Mountain Seclusion 山間の名花

By Nakajima Shōen Translated and with an introduction by Dawn Lawson

2018 Kyoko Selden Translation Prize Announcement

On the fifth anniversary of the establishment of the Kyoko Selden Memorial Translation Prize through the generosity of her colleagues, students, and friends, the Department of Asian Studies at Cornell University is pleased to announce the winners of the 2018 Prize.

In the category of “Already Published Translator,” the prize has been awarded to Dawn Lawson (Head, Asia Library, University of Michigan), for Nakajima Shōen’s *A Famous Flower in Mountain Seclusion* (*Sankan no meika*, 1889). Lawson’s translation makes available in English for the first time a full translation of the novella by the woman who, under the name Kishida Toshiko, was a powerful orator of the Freedom and People’s Rights Movement and a key figure in early struggles for women’s rights in Japan. The translation renders into delightfully readable English Nakajima’s witty satire of Meiji mores, as well as her depiction of the isolation often endured by women who, like herself, pursued lives that did not entirely conform to patriarchal norms.

This and other prize-winning translations will appear in the *Asia-Pacific Journal*.

Introduction

Nakajima Shōen (1861-1901), also known as Kishida Toshiko, was the leading woman orator of the Freedom and People’s Rights Movement (*Jiyū Minken Undō*). On October 12, 1883, after addressing an audience in Ōtsu on the topic of “daughters in boxes” (*hakoiri musume*), she became the first woman charged with the crimes of “political speech without a permit” and “insulting a government official,” for which she spent eight days in jail and was assessed a substantial fine. Her essay “To My Fellow Sisters” (“*Dōhō shimai ni tsugu*”), published the following year, is a key document of the initial stages of Japanese women’s struggle for equal rights. During her tuberculosis-shortened life, Shōen also had a dynamic teaching career, was wife to a politician-turned-diplomat and stepmother to his three children, composed many Chinese poems, and published several works of fiction, including *Sankan no meika*, the autobiographical novella translated here as *A Famous Flower in Mountain Seclusion*. This text is of interest for many reasons, not least because of its portrayal of a character who, like Shōen, had withdrawn from public life while her husband and even her own followers remained politically active.

Sankan no meika was published in serial form in the literary journal *Miyako no hana* between February and May of 1889, with two chapters each appearing in five issues. In this work Shōen depicts three marriages: one based on her own “love marriage,” in which the partners chose one another freely; that of a former

geisha whose contract her philandering husband purchased after the death of his first wife; and that of a well-educated woman who impulsively made her own choice as a lesser evil compared to the matches her family was pushing. We are able to observe these marriages directly, through dialogues between the spouses, and indirectly, via narratorial asides and discussions of the couples by other characters. In addition to this multidimensional treatment of marriage, Shōen brings in the issue of how political causes can best be advanced—by both men and women. Her skillful intertwining of these themes makes *Sankan no meika* a truly remarkable text.

The closest work to *Sankan no meika* in terms of time and subject matter is Miyake Kaho's (1868-1944) *Yabu no uguisu*, which was published less than one year earlier, in June 1888, and is widely considered to be the first modern Japanese novel produced by a woman. Written at nearly the same moment in Japanese literary history, *Yabu no uguisu* and *Sankan no meika* naturally have some similarities in terms of both style and subject matter. Both use multiple perspectives and include dialogues marked as they would be in a playscript. The issues treated by both works include the Japanese adoption of Western-style balls and dress, women's education, marriage, corrupt bureaucrats, and economic hardship. Central to both are the closely related questions of what kind of life a woman can have and what kind of marriage she can make in Meiji Japan. The titles of the two works are similar, too, connoting the setting apart (in the bush or in the mountains) of a gifted or special individual (a warbler or a famous flower). These allusions to the fact that their works feature characters whose actions set them apart from ordinary women, of course, can be applied to the authors themselves as well.

Despite these similarities, the two works have quite different flavors. Reflecting its author, *Sankan no meika* is bolder and more radical. It

calls into question many aspects of Meiji society, beginning in the first chapter, in which the protagonist, Takazono Yoshiko, criticizes the adoption of Western-style balls as a means of forcing men and women to interact. It challenges the use of servants by having Yoshiko perform the hosting duties when a group of men come to talk politics with her husband. After she has served them, she remains in the room, an action that is shown to make them very ill at ease. When her own former students visit, concerned that the world is criticizing their teacher for compromising her principles by getting married and withdrawing from public life, she explains to them that the time for action by “extraordinary” women has passed; now all women must gain access to education and become able to raise their status themselves. Her engagement with issues like these make *Sankan no meika* an extraordinary work, but it is all the richer because Shōen does not restrict her attention to women and marriage. She also shows, for example, the protagonist's husband counseling male activists and contemplating how to position himself in the political landscape. She even manages to inject a bit of satire along the way.

Sankan no meika features the stylistic diversity typical of its time. Most chapters open, as does the first one, with a highly Sinicized description of their setting. In addition, much of the work consists of dialogues between characters from a variety of stations in life, ranging from the gossip of lowly servants about their master to intellectual exchanges between the protagonist and her husband. Chinese poems composed by Yoshiko to assuage her loneliness when her husband is away are included in the text, as is the transcription of a newspaper article. Attempting to render in English these many shifts in voice and style made this work both challenging and rewarding to translate.

Chapter 1

A host of peach and plum blossoms reflected in silvery candlelight

In his “Ode to Epang Palace,” Du Mu described a scene in which the sunlight that had warmed the dancers on a stage gave way to cold wind and rain buffeting their sleeves. Here at the famous Gathering of Beauties Pavilion, the women are as beautiful as blossoms, and with their every step a breeze wafts up around the high tower, scattering a floral fragrance. When they stand still, gazing coquettishly into the distance, images of spring reflected by the silver candelabras are inscribed on the walls. The sound of rickshaws echoes in the distance, while laughter bubbles up nearby. For drinking there are beautiful goblets; for dancing, a jeweled platform; for conversing, beautiful women and talented men. In the interest of making themselves as lovely as possible, these people can easily spend hundreds of gold pieces on a single ring.

“Outside the temple gate, it is really Japan: The tea leaf pickers are singing,” a haiku poet wrote upon returning home from the Obaku region of Uji, where she had seen architecture so Chinese in style that it was as if she had left the country.¹ Likewise, a person who joins in the festivities at the Gathering of Beauties Pavilion ends up thinking only of the finest vessels, jewels, gold nuggets, and gems. A widow crying out in hunger, an orphan suffering in the cold, an invalid with the tax collector outside his gate, a family torn asunder by a year of misfortunes—pitiful stories like these take place far below, and those who walk on clouds hardly dare sympathize with such beings lest the atmosphere be tainted by them. People who have eyes only for the pleasures of this world envy the occupants of this most delightful separate heaven. Like beautiful flowers—pale cherry blossoms, deep plum blossoms, white roses, and red

crabapple—dressed up for an intimate, convivial gathering in a vase, seven or eight women talk in one corner of the tower, their voices rising and falling with the waves of the conversation. Suddenly someone says, “Well, my goodness! Look over there, everyone, that’s Mrs. Takazono—Yoshiko—is it not?” prompting the cool reply, “No. What would she be doing in a place like this?”

“Look again. Doesn’t she look like Yoshiko from the back? Shall I try calling her?”

“Well, wait a moment. She should be coming over here anyway. . . . But if it is Yoshiko, it’s really strange. Why? Because Yoshiko is a woman with a reputation for absolutely hating balls and Western-style dress.”

“But you never know. We said all kinds of things in the beginning, too, didn’t we, Otsuta?”

“Look! Here she comes. What are we going to do? It is Yoshiko. Her outfit is unbecoming, as you’d expect of someone who hates Western clothes.”

“Be quiet. She’ll hear you.”

“But isn’t it a bit much—her coming to an event like this dressed like a country bumpkin? Isn’t there such a thing as spoiling the dignity of this building?”

The women, whose attractiveness didn’t go beyond their faces, did what women have a habit of doing when they get together, which is to judge other people’s appearances and say nasty things about them. It might sound like an overstatement to say that hearing someone praised was almost as horrible for them as hearing of a dear friend’s death, and that hearing someone criticized was so amusing that it made them forget their aches and pains, but doesn’t it seem a bit like that? Takazono Yoshiko and several other women walked toward the group. “Oh, it’s Torisu Oyu, and

Otsuta is here, too,” Yoshiko began, but without waiting for her to finish her greeting, Oyu half-smiled and said, “Otsuta and I were just talking about you, squabbling about whether it was you or not. . .What a beautiful outfit! And the way the ribbons decorate it is splendid, don't you agree, Otsuta?”

“Absolutely. Western-style clothes are definitely right for Yoshiko.”

“No, I’m not used to them. Do I really look all right?”

“You look marvelous.”

The lengths that each went to in an effort to surpass the others in flattering Yoshiko—and the contrast with how they had been talking earlier—was truly amusing. Yoshiko smiled and said, “There are a number of you I’ve never met before. I’m Yoshiko, Takazono Kan’ichi’s wife. Please don’t let me interrupt you.”

Ever more gleeful, Oyu said, “Yoshiko, we’d be really pleased if you’d keep attending balls from now on.”

Yoshiko: “I’m not used to them, so I’ll need all of you to teach me what to do and let me into your group.”²

Oyu: “We’ll be a nuisance for you, I imagine, but please. . .It’s just that you’re so beautiful—no matter how much we dress up, all eyes will always be on you. We’ll be exactly like withering trees in a garden—no one will tie a strip of paper to us.”³

Yoshiko appeared annoyed by Oyu’s words, but Oyu didn’t notice at all. “Yoshiko, I heard that you had a strong dislike of Western-style clothes, balls, and the like.”

Yoshiko: “I didn’t say I absolutely hated balls. They make the world beautiful and give pleasure to people, so I guess they are something we should have. But I think it’s

extreme when the people who like balls say that men and women wouldn’t socialize if there were no balls, or that they can’t socialize without them, or that if they do it’s boring. Apparently balls are all the rage in the West, where the countries are said to be civilized or something, but I think that when we take another step out of the mud into civilization, this trend will change. After all, the main reason this kind of entertainment became a method of socializing is because there are too few pleasures shared by men and women.”

Otsuta: “That couldn’t ever change, could it?”

Yoshiko: “But old women can only talk with other old women, and children with other children. Otherwise, it’s no fun because their interests aren’t compatible, right?”

Oyu: “That’s right.”

Yoshiko: “You see? In my opinion, saying that men and women can’t socialize without balls is similar to saying that when adults try to play with children, they have to play games that the children are able to play. . .Wouldn’t it be pleasant if we each had more interesting things to talk about with our husbands?”

Otsuta: “No, that can’t happen. Men and women can’t feel at ease if they don’t dance.”

Yoshiko: “Really?” The surprise in her voice was palpable.

Oyu: “Yoshiko, is something wrong? I don’t like it when you don’t answer.”

Yoshiko: “What? I’m sorry. Did you say something to me?”

Oyu: “And they say that dancing is good for one’s health.”

Yoshiko: “I’m sure it’s a good thing, but if all you do is sit around in the same room all day, except for once or twice a month, when you dance. . .”

Otsuta spoke before she was finished. “Putting that aside, what are your thoughts on clothes?”

Yoshiko: “Clothes should be Western-style.”

Oyu: “Really? But you. . .”

Yoshiko: “Yes, and I think that if Japanese clothes are to be improved, they should be replaced with pure Western-style clothes, not a combination of Chinese, Japanese, and Western-style clothes. Some may say that these days people have gone too far in adopting Western-style clothes, which look ugly on them because they don’t suit them, and that they should wear the clothes that Japanese people have always worn, otherwise Western people will laugh, but. . .”

Otsuta: “Is that true?”

Yoshiko: “People say all kinds of things. It isn’t just clothes. There are many things to be laughed at, but we can’t do anything about that.”

Oyu: “Why not?”

Yoshiko: “Because as it stands now, they think they’re better than we are.”

Oyu: “So you are really in favor of Western-style clothes, Yoshiko?”

Yoshiko: “Yes, I am. But people vary in terms of what they can afford, so if someone who usually can only wear an inexpensive double-striped kimono feels that they have to change to Western-style clothes and has a Western-style outfit made this month that renders them unable to buy rice and pay the maid—I mean, I doubt that this would happen, but one hears all manner of rumors. . . One time Mrs. Hayatake of the Women’s Improvement Association came to see me, and she started saying that I hated Western-style clothes based on a misunderstanding of a casual remark of mine. And it seems like the way I’ve been talking now

might start a rumor that Yoshiko likes cotton and hates silk, but I only want our homes and our clothing to be beautiful. I don’t think we should let things get out of balance as we make progress. . . It seems like all I’m doing tonight is making excuses.”

“So that’s how you feel, Yoshiko? It’s really troubling how strange rumors get started.” Oyu and Otsuta spoke in unison.

Chapter 2

Dimples, which can kill people like knives, are to be feared

Like the priests who resent the crows because for making messes on the temple grounds, it is for the most part understandable that servants and maids speak ill of the people who use them, their masters. Given the position they are in, it is quite natural. Standing next to the kitchen brazier, one maid gathers up the unruly strands of hair hanging down her neck and says to the other, “Otake, it’s unbearably cold tonight. . . Let’s build as big a fire as we can. Otake, won’t you come sit over here?”

“Won’t I get in trouble if I don’t work all night?”

“You haven’t been at this mansion long enough to know, but you can’t just be meek all the time. . . You’d be surprised about servants. . . When I lived at home, my mother was a noisy old bag. She complained 365 days a year, saying things like, ‘There’s nothing as burdensome as a daughter; if only you’d been a son. Here it is, time for you to be taking care of your parent, but instead you are costing me a fortune. All you do is sit in front of the mirror all day, even though you are a homely woman.’ But I gave as good as I got.”

Take: “Oh, my. What would you say?”

Tora: "I'd say, 'If I'm homely, what about the person who gave birth to me? . . . From night till morning, morning till night, all you do is use me to do the laundry and scrub the bottom of the pots. Have you ever given me a single thing? Think about it! What with all I do, I'm surprised that you can call me a burden.' . . . If someone is going to complain about you all the time, it's much easier to be a servant. All you have to do is flatter your master a little bit, and it's 'Here, help yourself to this collar,' and 'There, take that apron.' Soon you need a whole extra wicker trunk for your new belongings. I say that, but now I've had it with being a servant. . . But it depends on the mistress. This mistress and her family here seem to think that they can make unlimited use of their servants . . . They fuss about happily when they are going to a banquet or a ball, but those are the days that are bad ones for the servants. It's 'Bathe me, wash my hair, put on my powder,' and they can't even reach things that are right in front of them. . . Otake, do you know about the mistress' past?"

Take: "No. But she is very pretty."

Tora: "She should be. Now they call her Countess, or Lady, or Mistress, but until three years ago she was Kotsune of the pleasure quarters. . ."

Take: "If that's true, she's really come up in the world. . . Hasn't she?"

"She killed the previous mistress," Tora whispered.

Shocked, Take said, "That beautiful woman killed someone? With a razor? A knife? A gun? A sword? With what?"

Tora: "With nothing. Except her dimples."

Take: "I don't know what you mean. Hurry up and tell me."

Tora: "Oh, it looks like the lamp is going to go

out. I guess there's wind coming from somewhere. Yes, yes, it was almost four years ago."

Take: "What was four years ago? . . ."

Tora: "It was a cold night exactly like tonight. I heard the sound of hands clapping inside, and when I went in, I saw the previous mistress."

Take: "And?"

Tora: "I'd heard that she was the daughter of a prominent samurai family. She was sitting in the shadow of a dim lamp darning the master's socks, and she said, 'Is that you, Tora? You're up late night after night—you must be so tired. We can sleep late in the morning, but. . . I think the clock just struck twelve. The later it gets, the colder it seems. As long as there is boiling water for tea when the master gets home, you can tell everyone to go to sleep. Please, you get some sleep, too.'

I felt so sorry for her then. I calmed my racing heart and said, 'I'm sorry. Servants' bodies get tired, but they don't have any troubles weighing on their minds. There must be something bothering you. The master doesn't like to see you sewing, so he wouldn't understand that because you do so on cold winter nights like this, he is better dressed from head to toe than anyone in the crowds of people who come here as guests. . . Mistress, should I put something warm in your bedding? The master probably won't come home tonight either, so why don't you go on to bed?' I said, and when I looked up at the mistress. . . she was tearing up and unable to speak. . . I said, 'I'm sorry. I left the sliding doors open and made you cold. If you need me at any time, just clap your hands. . . Good night.' I went into the kitchen. . . Later I heard that her husband had become infatuated with our current mistress at that time, and the former mistress died after contracting tuberculosis from worrying about it."

The pair spoke in unison. “Someone’s clapping again. They probably want the tobacco tray lit, even though the brazier is right there next to it. Clap, clap. We hear you.”

If you’re wondering whose house this is, it belongs to Torisu Tamotsu, and it has a variety of perfectly furnished rooms with appropriate designations, such as the chair room, the folding screen room, the mirror room, the tea chest room, and the makeup room. The timeless decorations in each room are such as you won’t even see among the rare treasures in a temple—things that are boasted to be from the altar of this or that lord or noble—all out of keeping with the amount of money that the master earns each month in salary.

Tamotsu’s present wife, Oyu, tired from a ball the night before, finally rouses herself sometime after ten in the morning. Without bothering to wash, she puts a black silk crepe jacket with one small crest on it over her nightgown. Her face is pale, and her bangs almost cover her eyes. As she sits leaning against the brazier, one knee bent upward, lighting a pipe, her elegant, sensuous allure—far more enticing than the trembling flirtatiousness of a white garden rose weighed down by rain—might have evoked feelings of love.

Oyu: “Take, is that you over there? My office-hating husband left for work unusually early this morning, but is Tatsu (his chauffeur) back yet?”

Take: “Yes, a little while ago.”

Oyu: “Humpf. He should have told me he was home. . . Ask him if they went straight to the office.”

Take: “Tatsu always says, ‘The master’s side trips are off-limits’ and won’t answer.”

Oyu: “What? If that’s the case, never mind. I’ll ask him myself. I don’t need anything from you

right now.” Her haughty expression complemented her maid’s sullen one.

Oyu’s mother, who had come to live with them two or three months before, now had everything she needed for a comfortable retirement. She addressed her daughter.

“Oyu, you don’t need to worry so much. . . Do you? Did you have a good time last night?”

Oyu: “I really did. I haven’t told you about last night yet. Someone quite unexpected turned up.”

Mother: “Who?”

Oyu: “Mr. and Mrs. Takazono.”

Mother: “Humpf. The world really is in flower, isn’t it?”

Oyu: “That Mr. Takazono is elegant and formal, perfect. . . When I was in the trade, the fact that a man was stylish and parted with his money readily was all that mattered to me, but now that I am living respectably and have my own household, it’s just the opposite. Even if he’s not stylish, it’s most important that a husband is appropriately serious, consults with you on domestic matters, and makes you feel secure. My husband says the first thing that comes into his mind, and when we go to balls, as soon as he sees a pretty wife or an unmarried girl he flatters them, laughing even when nothing is funny. I don’t know whether to call him a fool or what. But if I start to talk to another man, he says right away that I’m flirting. I regret not having married someone like Mr. Takazono.”

Mother: “But you can’t do anything about that. . . A man like Mr. Takazono wouldn’t have come to the quarters to begin with, so there’s no way you could have met him. Only a playboy takes a geisha for his wife. So the wife has to act accordingly.”

Oyu: “If you say so. You’re right.”

Mother: “What’s important for you is to stop crying over spilled milk and be prepared to be divorced at any moment. We discussed the public bond certificate at some point, didn’t we?”

Oyu: “It has already been changed to be in my name. The land in the country is mine, too. . . He still has a lot of gold coins left, and he won’t give them to me. . . When he first got me out, he did anything I asked, but that’s not the case now. The way he acts now, he may have something on the side. . .’

Mother: “You should definitely take everything you can get. But as long as you have that bond certificate, you’ll be all right no matter when he divorces you. That would be. . .”

Oyu: “Of course, that would be better.”

After that, their conversation gradually faded out, and all was still within those four walls, except for the sound of the tea kettle boiling.

Alas, men of the world. If you take a woman like that for your wife, how will there be any pleasure in your home? The life of a couple like that is as if they are climbing a steep rocky road their whole lives—while they’re walking they’re hot, while they’re resting they’re cold, and they are ultimately unable to find the emotion known as tenderness, which is sweeter than honey and softer than cotton. They feel only obligation and pain. It is a pity, because we all know it is the result of not being cautious at the outset.

Surprised by the sound of footsteps in the next room while she was having this confidential talk with her mother, Oyu asked brusquely, “Who’s there?”

“There’s someone here to see the master.” The maid approached her with a card. “They’re asking if he is at home.”

“Who can it be?” Oyu said, reaching for the

card. The maid realized immediately that her mistress couldn’t discern anything other than the fact that there were four square characters on it.

Maid: “It’s someone who hasn’t come much lately, but during the former mistress’ . . .”

Oyu: “What? What’s this about the former mistress?”

Maid: “I believe it’s Mr. Takazono.”

Oyu: “You don’t need to say that. It’s on the card. . . Show him into the sitting room.”

Maid: “But he said ‘If the master is at home.’”

Oyu: “It’s all right.”

Because he was shown in, Takazono Kan’ichi assumed that the master was at home. He sat down and waited and waited, but the master didn’t appear. Kan’ichi privately concluded that government employees were indeed arrogant. While he was muttering to himself that it was no surprise that they had a bad reputation with the public, someone finally entered the room, but it was Tamotsu’s wife, Oyu. Kan’ichi intended to ask about Tamotsu right away, but first they exchanged pleasantries about the night before, and then the small talk continued, as if she intentionally wanted to prevent him from asking about her husband. He felt uncomfortable and was waiting for a break in the conversation when the maid, having brought someone in, spoke from the next room.

Maid: “Madam, there’s someone here to see you.”

Oyu: “Hello, Otsuta. Come on in . . . It’s good. . .” Kan’ichi took this opportunity to break in. “I’m in a bit of a hurry today. Is something keeping your husband? I’m sorry to bother him, but I wanted to ask. . .”

Oyu: “Unfortunately my husband isn’t home from the office yet. But he may be home soon.

Can't you stay, even if he isn't here? Take, bring us some sweets."

Kan'ichi: "Your husband isn't home? If I had been told sooner. . .I'm sorry to have bothered you." Kan'ichi pretended not to hear her suggestion that he stay, and the expression on his face as he left was one of displeasure.

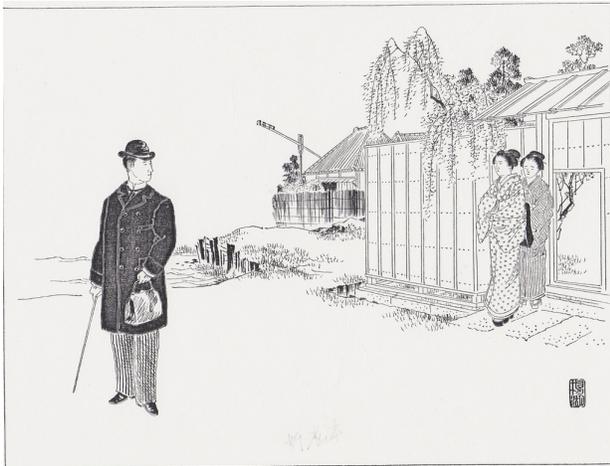


Illustration by Matsumoto Fūko

Otsuta waited for Oyu to return from seeing him off and then said, "Hello. Thank you for last night. . .What did Mr. Takazono want?"

Oyu: "I don't know why he came here."

Otsuta: "You'd think that if your husband wasn't here he could speak to you."

Oyu: "If you hadn't turned up, he might have stayed longer."

Otsuta: "You're blaming me. . ."

Oyu: "What? It's not that, but he certainly is charming."

Otsuta: "I wouldn't want to be his wife. He scowls whenever he sees a woman. . .But they

say he's nice to his wife. . .Last night you couldn't keep your eyes off him, ha ha. Madam, won't you have a new Western-style outfit made?"

Oyu: "That's just it. I talked to Tamotsu about it last night when we got home. . .He said we'd have some money coming in soon."

Otsuta: "Aren't officials confined to their monthly salary?"

Oyu: "There are enough side jobs. If it weren't for those, I wouldn't be able to order any clothes."

Otsuta: "Oh, is that so?"

Chapter 3

Patriots hear the heart-rending sound of a flute when day breaks after a night in which their faithful wives have been chanting their longing for them to the moon

Puffing on a cigarette, Torisu Tamotsu thought, "Considering the status I used to have, I've really come up in the world. Before the Restoration, when loyalist samurai were staging uprisings all over, well, it wasn't exactly the stuff of the chronicles of the rise and fall of the Minamoto and Taira. But it does bring to mind the lament of Third Lieutenant Taira no Koremori's wife when she took hold of his armored sleeve and tried to prevent his departure. 'Don't leave me alone in the capital—what will I do? You shrug me off so coldly. Look at me! I would accompany you as far as the most distant field and into the deepest mountains. No matter what unaccustomed hardships travel might bring, they would be preferable to being abandoned to spend my days and nights pining away with no end in sight.' Receiving the traditional cup of parting water from his beloved wife as she laments, he can barely manage to swallow

through his own tears. He knows that this may be their last meeting and that it is vain even to wish that they might see each other again.”

Many of Tamotsu’s comrades ended up like the Taira, as corpses on a battlefield, exposed to the elements, but not he, for better or worse. Tamotsu was born a younger son, which was tantamount to having the characters meaning “cold rice” stamped on one’s forehead. He had to fill his belly with potatoes and radishes and wasn’t even given enough change to go to the public bath. A break came just when he was hoping for one. He knew that it was his best opportunity, and there was nobody to stop him. Partly out of curiosity he left home and plunged himself into the midst of the patriots. When there was wild merrymaking and heavy drinking, he made sure that no one indulged more than he did. He adroitly managed to avoid involvement in anything life-threatening, and when things finally settled down and it was time for the spoils to be distributed, he couldn’t help admiring himself for the elegance with which he donned the skin of a patriot and made his way to the head of the line. “I was really a smooth operator,” he thought. . . Many of those who had survived by exerting themselves in all directions on behalf of their country didn’t even have heating fuel for their stoves in the winter—they had to crowd around a charcoal brazier in threes and fours with their families, passing the time exchanging stories of their trials and tribulations. But not only did his family not suffer what the poets call a bone-chilling wind, they had a fire burning in every room, and they feasted on the richest of delicacies until the doctor warned them that they had better add some fruit to their diet. “My wife doesn’t look anything like she did long ago when I met her in a small room in the pleasure quarters. If I weren’t so clever, it wouldn’t be possible for me to experience the happiness I do when she wears Western clothes and looks so beautiful that I can’t believe she’s my wife. I am, quite simply, a winner.”

His wife Oyu paused on the threshold as she was about to enter his study. Usually so restless, he appeared to be deep in thought, although he was actually just busy admiring himself. She wondered what was making him look so pensive. She smiled suddenly and went to his side.

Oyu: “Aren’t you bored staying home all day? What was it I wanted to ask you? . . . That’s it, I heard that Matsushita was fired yesterday.”

“That’s right,” Tamotsu said smugly.

Oyu: “It was probably because he was too cheap to take his bosses out and toady up to them.

Tamotsu: “That can’t be. . . Well, partly.”

Oyu: “You’re the same way, so let’s treat everyone someday soon, shall we?”

Tamotsu: “Not for that reason, but it’s a good idea.”

Oyu: “So I need to have a new outfit made by then.”

Tamotsu: “You’re very clever. Your tricks show how serious women really are about clothes. Just when I thought you had suggested a banquet for my benefit, it turns out that clothes. . . But wait a minute. You had one made the other day, so you don’t need one now, do you?”

Oyu: “But everybody’s already seen that one. If I wear the same thing all the time, it will reflect poorly on you.”

Tamotsu: “If I can’t even remember what you’ve worn, how could other people?”

Oyu: “You have a bad memory. We remember what everyone wears, men and women. Shall I recite some for you?”

Tamotsu: “I can’t stand that kind of nonsense.

It doesn't matter whether someone knows what you've worn."

Oyu: "That's not true."

Tamotsu: "Women are such an annoyance. . . Apparently you won't be satisfied unless I say yes."

Oyu: "There's nothing annoying about women. It's just that socializing has become popular, creating these kinds of problems. There's nothing duller than socializing. Some of the wives who spent a lot of time in school memorizing all kinds of trivia ask me bothersome things. . . On top of that we constantly have to have clothes made that are so tight you can't eat anything while you're wearing them. If it weren't for this, I don't know how many times a month I could go to the Shintomiza theater with the money I spend on clothes."

Tamotsu: "Be that as it may—didn't the Hayashi girl come by five or six days ago? You never tell me when we have female visitors."

Oyu: "That's not all. Apparently she is now head of the temptation group."

Tamotsu: "You mean, temperance group."

Oyu: "Whatever you call it, the group prohibits both men and women from drinking. That's not all—you also can't eat Nara pickles or marinated persimmons. Apparently she—a woman!—even gives speeches telling people they have to quit drinking, because where there is sake there naturally are teahouses, where some people fall madly for geisha."

Tamotsu: "Is that so? I should have joined the group early on. Then I wouldn't have been made to fall madly for sake or geisha. Madam?"

Oyu: "There you go, teasing again."

Just then their student lodger spoke outside the sliding doors. "Four students are at the door. If

you're available, they'd like to see you. They say that you'll know them when you see them. What should I do?"

Hearing this, Tamotsu scowled. There's nothing as annoying as students, he thought. They won't comply if I try to chase them away immediately, but if I see them, they'll make the usual requests—that I take them in, give them money to travel, or get them jobs as public servants. Settling the debate in his mind, he said, "Show them in to the sitting room."



Illustration by Matsumoto Fūko

While waiting, the four guests had been exchanging glances and whispering until they were finally ushered into the sitting room, where they lined up on one side. Their faces were tan, but their arm muscles weren't bulging; their kimonos were of the striped cotton kind common in the country, but not ragged. In other words, they didn't appear to be the pretentious type of students. Their host eventually arrived, and each student greeted him briefly in turn, looking calm. Tamotsu didn't recognize a single one of them. After staring at them for some time in suspicious silence, he spoke. "I've never met any of you, but your hometown is the same as mine, isn't it?"

A: "I gave you my card just now. My name is Honda Rokurō. I and these two, Yasuoka Kumazō and Tanaka Ken, are from your hometown. Mononobe Hayama is from Kōchi in Tosa."

Tamotsu: "Yes, I'm familiar with the names of the three of you. Did you come here for school? . . .When?"

Honda: "It's been about three years. I'm at Kanda Law School. I'm beginning to understand the law just a little. . .Yasuoka and Tanaka came to Tōkyō recently. Both had wanted to come for a long time, but their fathers gave them a hard time and wouldn't let them come, so. . ."

The two spoke at the same time. "Our fathers felt that if we came we would surely become lazy. . . They said we should do our studies in the country, even if it is backward. . .And that if we didn't fall into indolence here, we'd start socializing with people who talked about people's rights and freedom and such and be thrown in jail, causing them grief. So we weren't able to come till now."

Tamotsu: "They have a point. A lot of the students who come here to study are violent; in other words, they're actually jealous. If everyone in the world could ride in a four-wheeled rickshaw and build a white castle they'd have no complaints. They seem to be ashamed that these are their complaints, so they don't mention them, they just complain as much as they want to about the conduct of bureaucrats and about politics. It's actually laughable. . . It doesn't matter how much they brag or fume, it won't do any good. . .In terms of knowledge, scholarship, experience, and power, bureaucrats and students are different, so it's natural for the latter to be losing. You'd think they would understand this reasoning, but somehow. . .I shouldn't be saying this around you, but students are really a nuisance. . .The safest thing for you to do is to go back home and follow in your fathers' footsteps."

Tanaka: "You're right. . .But even in the country, you can't be too ignorant."

Tamotsu: "That's right. I'm not arguing in favor of ignorance. But I don't believe you should waste your brain on anything political that won't benefit you."

The face of Mononobe, who had been silent thus far, was burning red when Tamotsu finished talking. Mononobe, a stutterer by nature, was an earnest, serious man who appeared to be very uncomfortable with conflict. But when he saw someone doing something wrong, he admonished them directly, regardless of the consequences. It was a pity for this straightforward fellow that the slightest thing could cause him to spout an extreme argument out of keeping with his habitual modesty. If you could dissect him and see into his true nature, you would have to feel sorry for him.

Honda and his two friends quickly realized that Torisu Tamotsu's face wore an expression that all but told them to hurry up and go home. Uncomfortable, they urged Mononobe to say his farewell, but he was oblivious.

"I know it's inconvenient for you for us to turn up all the time, and I apologize, but what I want to say is that I believe that public servants who work just for the money and not for the good of the people should resign. The loyal warriors who gave their lives for the Restoration and are now white bones beneath the ground surely deplore the situation. As you know, Sir, those loyal warriors walked miles in straw sandals, barely staving off starvation with only the few rice balls they carried. They walked through the rain and slept in the dew; even when they fell over dead from multiple wounds, the word patriotism was always on their lips. In their hometowns, their white-haired mothers waited day and night for dead sons who would never come home. Newlywed wives, their eyes swollen from crying, spent the cold winter nights alone in bed, dreaming of their soldiers."

As for the loyal warriors, being flesh and blood, not stone, they must have felt as if they were being torn apart inside from the morning whistle to the moonlight march. Their pulverized bones and seared spirits brought peace to the entire nation as well as to every particle of dirt in the land and brought every man, woman, and child into the imperial fold. Whose achievement do you think this is?"

The other three addressed him in unison: "Stop it, Mononobe. Let's say our goodbyes." Mononobe's passion seemed to have rendered him deaf to their pleas. He continued.

"Mr. Torisu. Listen. How sad must those countless men be, who accomplished their goals but ended up as white bones in a field, exposed to the elements? The government feels that erecting a monument or building a shrine is sufficient to honor their souls—and these are a partial way to fulfill its obligation to them—but those patriots under the ground cannot possibly be satisfied with such merely superficial trappings. Only if we strive—not to become complacent in a time of peace, not to forget the bitter trials—will they be able to rest in peace. But as long as you ignore the wives who are starving despite a year of abundant harvests and the children who are crying from the cold during a warm winter, while you make your homes in towering castles, travel in jeweled rickshaws wearing brocade robes to protect you from the sun, indulge yourselves endlessly, subject innocent people to hard labor while making bedfellows of cunning wealthy merchants, and engage in corruption, you won't be able to cover your stench, no matter how skillfully you drape it with silk. If you don't stop to think about this now, you will regret it keenly. What have you accomplished that has earned you the right to be in the government for so long? How greedy you are! If you want to amuse yourselves, go off to the mountains, the rivers, do whatever you want, but don't do it while in government office."

At these words, Tamotsu could not contain his anger. "Shut up!

You are only a student. What do you know? Hurry up and get out of here. If you don't. . ."

"You'll have me arrested. Fine, arrest me. But the righteousness of what I say cannot be confined or beaten." It was as if his rhetoric had reached the boiling point, and even when his three companions did everything they could to try to stop him, he wouldn't listen. Both sides were hurling insults at the top of their lungs, which brought a panicky Oyu in from the next room. Something had to be done. She sent a servant to summon the police, one of whom had known Oyu in the past and had told her that she should notify him if anything happened. The policeman came running in, and the fierce debate he heard coming from the next room made him very angry. He must have thought that he had to do something, and when he did appear in the room, everyone was so surprised that the arguing stopped. Bowing briefly to Tamotsu, he turned to the four students, looking and sounding stern. "Even if you are speaking as private citizens, I'm taking you in on charges of willfully slandering the nation and insulting a government official," he proclaimed.

Mononobe asked him to clarify which part of his speech had slandered the government. He was told that a question like that didn't deserve an answer; he was being taken in regardless.

Chapter 4

Newspapers rarely shrink from exposing the dishonorable ways of men to the world

Because they were renting the house, they could walk on the tatami mats with their shoes on. As for the vaunted pillars without joints, said to be made of cedar or cypress, in these people's hands they had become pitifully full of

nail holes. A certain foreigner plucked the samisen in late-Song-dynasty China and sang, as he ceded power to the next ruler, "Let no one among my descendants be born to the imperial house"; there is indeed a bit of that in play here, as the master sits in the living room saying to himself, "We must never become home owners." It was a Japanese-style room, but the placement of the table and chairs and the generous arrangements of flowers in the most modern vases somehow gave the impression that this was a house that had a lot of visitors. In the garden next to the entrance, the tired look on the face of the rickshaw man, whose vehicle is painted black with a small gold crest, lets you know that a successful, well-traveled man lives here. If you are wondering who, it is Kinoshita Kurasa, a popular lawyer of our time. Having gotten up at midday, he is having a meal with his wife Otsuta when something suddenly strikes him. "Oh! I forgot to talk to you about something. As you know, we have to give something to Kagami, but we can't possibly give him money, right?"

"We have to give him something worth how much?"

"Around 50 yen, I guess."

"That would be difficult. Very. Because some of last month's bills were left over."

"Yes, that's it."

"That's what? I don't know what you're talking about."

"How can a teacher who graduated from normal school not understand this? The world is basically like Kagami's name, that is, a mirror. You took him to be a splendid person because he was wearing a splendid outfit, didn't you? If you still don't understand, think about the adage about one's place in the afterworld depending on one's wealth."

"In that case, as far as that goes, there's no way you can win."

"That's why it needs to be merchandise."

"If so, I've got something good. Mrs. Kagami is dying to wear Western-style clothes. And because she has no experience with them, she doesn't know what they cost. If she is given some clothes made by Shirokiya for 35 or 40 yen, she'll think they're very expensive. Although if that wins the lawsuit for us, it will be a pity for the other side."

"That's the way it is. There's nothing strange about one side winning and the other losing. Our good fortune is their bad. No matter how much we may be right, right doesn't necessarily win, and that's how the world turns. Speaking of which, the newspaper's late today. Is it here? If it is, give it to me right now. The People's Rights News, is it? What do they mean by 'Patriots' Misfortune'? Oh, it's about Torisu."

"It can't be about Torisu. He's no patriot."

"It has something to do with patriots. Let me read it."

Patriots' Misfortune

Yesterday around 10 AM, four men whom the radical extremist party always associates with staunch conservatism, Mononobe Hayama, Honda Rokurō, Yasuoka Kumazō, and Tanaka Ken, visited the home of Torisu Tamotsu on unknown business, and the subject of the current political situation happened to arise in the course of a wide-ranging discussion. Although it is true that Mr. Mononobe, the most moderate and straightforward of the group—and one who is not, by nature, an

eloquent orator—reached a patriotic fervor that led him to speak a bit roughly, it is highly suspicious that Mr. Torisu, who had previously alerted the police that such an occurrence might arise, sent to them for help. The officer arrived and said that they were insulting a government official (despite the fact that Mr. Torisu had agreed to meet with them privately). The officer adamantly refused to listen to their side of the story, saying that he was not obligated to do so at the scene, and he took them into custody immediately. At the police station, their names, addresses, and ages were recorded before they were placed in detention. The men said that their innocence would be recognized as soon as someone familiar with their everyday activities was consulted, adding that their having been taken into police custody was highly questionable. It is their misfortune that they have to be locked up for even a day or two, given that they will no doubt be declared completely innocent in open court. Ah! The iron chains of jail. You don't realize that someday the patriots you are persecuting today will sit in judgment on you! You and your ridiculous iron chains! Your iron chains! Unfortunately, we were not able to learn the nature of the criticism that was directed at Mr. Torisu by the aforementioned men. We will report it as soon as we find out.

"This will be censored," Kurasa said with a bitter smile as he finished reading.

"They can stop someone from writing something that actually happened?"

"You think it matters whether it happened or not?"

"Those poor patriots. They won't even have a heater on a cold day like today, will they?"

"You certainly ask the easy questions. They're in hell—a heater is the least of it."

"You know that?"

"Everyone hears things."

"Some of them probably have wives. How sad their wives must be. Mr. Torisu sounds hateful, doesn't he?"

"That's because we've only read about it in this newspaper. If we read another paper, on the other side, we'd say the students are hateful. You never know, because everyone is out for their own cause. But I'm going to go see Torisu," Kurasa said, and he took off in his rickshaw with a light heart.

Although it was not Saturday, Torisu Tamotsu, who liked his monthly pay but hated working, was ensconced in an inner room of his home. He was thinking about nothing in particular, completely forgetting how short life was, when his wife Oyu, who was tapping her tobacco pipe in the adjacent room, spoke through the sliding doors onto which she was leaning. "You have company."

"If it's students, tell them I'm not here."

"It isn't students. Please, come on in."

He realized that the visitor had already come in as far as Oyu's room. Tamotsu and Kurasa, boon drinking companions who had shared many secrets, seemed almost closer than relatives. "Oh, Kinoshita. You've seen the paper?"

“What happened to you yesterday must have been awful. Students are a nuisance for all of us. But what goes around comes around. Today’s teachers made trouble for their teachers as students, so . . . when these students become teachers, they will have to look after the same kind of troublesome students they used to be. But they are a disagreeable bunch. If you push back at one, he gets mad. So what happened with those fellows yesterday?”

“It says they were put in jail.”

“I think that just might make it harder to clean up the mess. But when it’s gotten to this point, the only thing to do is to fight back hard. If they suffer in detention for a while, they’ll probably be more careful next time. It won’t become that much of a problem publicly, because insulting a government official is at the heart of the matter. Their party is the most persistent and has a large membership, and they say that its members don’t engage in any kind of dissipation the way the other students do. Their manifesto says No stealing, no killing, no swindling, no bars. Apparently it also has provisions about their obligations to help their elders and nurture the younger generation. From what someone on the other side told me the other day, Mononobe and company are definitely a strange breed, but as far as their propriety is concerned, no one can come close. They say that organizing hinders their movement, so they don’t establish a formal group, but judging from the way they conspire with one another, they seem to have unbreachable friendships.”

“Do they really have a lot of party members?”

“They’re said to be quite popular. It isn’t just students; there are some financiers, too. And scholars, I hear. Their popularity is really a blot on the nation.” Before he had even finished speaking, Kurasa pulled out his gold-plated pocket watch and said, “Oh, no. We’ll discuss this another time.”

“You’re leaving already? Let’s talk about something. . .”

“I know. I’ll definitely come back soon.”

“You’re as hasty as ever.”

“Yes. . . I mean, no, I have to go.”

Chapter 5

The one who has struck it rich sings of peace,
while the tears of the patriarch moisten the rice
field put up for public auction

Torisu Tamotsu hadn’t been home when Takazono Kan’ichi had called upon him previously, and so Tamotsu decided to repay the call today. When they reached the Takazono house, he had the rickshaw man ask whether he was at home. The very sweet voice that replied to his brusque inquiry was not that of a servant but that of the lady of the house. A bit embarrassed, Tamotsu asked, “Is your husband at home?”

“Yes, he is. Please come in.” She led him into the sitting room. There were two or three servants around, but there wasn’t any need for them if the wife was going to receive him and show him in. Her gestures as she did so were elegant, not like those of a maid, and she acted as though she had been charged with looking after him. The way she tried surreptitiously to help him avoid feeling awkward and put him at ease was nothing like that of an ordinary, uneducated woman. That kind of woman would merely await her husband’s orders and then say in response, here is the ashtray, here is the brazier, here is the tea, and here are the sweets, after which she would sit stiffly in one corner of the room like a decoration whose manner all but said to the guest, hurry up and go home.

If you are wondering what Takazono Yoshiko

looks like, she seems to be about twenty-three or twenty-four. Her hair, which has been pulled back gently, doesn't smell of oil. The way the breeze tries to tease six or seven strands of hair out of her bun evokes the first green buds that appear after a spring rain in the mountains has washed away the red dust. Her crescent-shaped eyebrows remain in their natural state; her nose is neither high nor low. Her coloring is like that of a white peach blossom, but a blush of scarlet crabapple shines through her cheeks. Her lips are firmly closed, but when she speaks, her bright, clear words sound serene, like the flow of a mountain stream in the distance. Her movements are light yet precise, proud but not arrogant, and they emit the pure fragrance of a heavenly orchid while lending her an aura of nobility and charm. Most women this beautiful learn early that there is no one in the world who compares with them. They can do nothing all day but open and close their compacts over and over thinking, "Sadanji, who played Kosan of the teahouse at the Shintomiza the other day, wore his glossy hair in a bun held in place with a very stylish ornament. . . . But then again, Yanagibashi's Tsunehachi was incomparable, coming out of the bath with his hair swept up loosely with a comb and wearing a finely striped kimono of Nishijin weave complemented by two obis, one of black satin and the other, twill. You can't do that with makeup on. I'll have to take off the powder I put on this morning. . . . I wonder why I am so pretty. If I want to look sophisticated, I can do that, and if I want to look stylish, I can do that. It's a waste to keep a face this pretty at home." Women like this spend the prime of their lives vainly parading their faces around town like priceless showpieces or else shut themselves up at home doing their makeup while conversing with their mute mirrors. Not Yoshiko. She seemed not to realize who people were referring to when they spoke of "a beautiful woman," and she always wore exactly the amount of powder appropriate for a modest woman. She didn't know that not wearing anything that called attention to itself was a

way to keep people from tiring of her appearance. Pity those who lose their natural beauty by obsessing about their appearance and in the process create an artificial ugliness.

Tamotsu looked at Kan'ichi and said, "Did you hear what happened the other day, Professor?"

"Did something unusual happen?"

"Yes, something involving me."

"I haven't heard a thing."

As he angrily related the violent rhetoric of Mononobe and his associates, Tamotsu was aware that the views of the head of this household were in conflict with those of some people currently in the administration. Previously Kan'ichi had occupied a high-level post, but because he didn't share the government's beliefs, he felt that remaining in office would be tantamount to being greedy and dishonorable. Since leaving his post, he had changed into someone who dressed and ate simply, lived in a shabby house in the country, and didn't seek the company of others. He made it his business to keep his gate firmly closed and to climb only his own moss-covered steps. He cultivated vegetables from time to time and didn't feel that his household wanted for anything. He had his beloved wife to talk to and piles of books to read. He had no reason to be resentful, having the strong love of his wife Yoshiko, who had enough education to be able to be a comfort to him and enough knowledge to be able to help him in his work. Men and women of the world, how few husbands and wives have a happy life like this, loving and helping one another! Even if there are couples who speak of happy times, it is usually when they are reminiscing wistfully about their courtship. That should suffice to show that few have tasted true happiness.

Although Kan'ichi had taken refuge on land from the sea of bureaucrats because he disagreed with them, neither his actions nor his

words bore any tinges of the tides of dissatisfaction, and so it should have been obvious that he bore no ill will, unlike those who become angry as soon as they leave their posts. Tamotsu's distorted worldview led him to believe that ignorant young patriots went around engaging in violent activities because a dissatisfied Kan'ichi had incited them and directed them to take various measures. With this in mind, Tamotsu pushed aside any thought of their normal friendly interactions and said, officiously, "We know the lengths to which these ignorant, powerless youths will go. Nevertheless, I think that there is definitely an instigator."

Kan'ichi remained silent. Tamotsu turned to Yoshiko. "Don't you agree, Ma'am?"

"It's not that they are incited, exactly, is it? The students don't lie or sugarcoat; they are sincerely angry with you people, aren't they?"

"Why would that be?"

"There's no particularly deep reason behind it. A lot of the students are poor, and it probably isn't very pleasant for them in the winter when, frozen to the skin in a threadbare fifteen-mon jacket, they stick their necks out the windows of the second floor of the boardinghouse where they live three to a cramped room, only to see a government official bundled up in an otterskin overcoat pass by sedately in a two-horse rickshaw, his driver able to clear the road of traffic with a simple command. They probably go on from there to think all kinds of things." Just as she was saying this, the maid brought in five or six calling cards. Appearing to find this annoying, Tamotsu took his leave, arranging to come back another time.

Kan'ichi knew the six guests who came in then, but Yoshiko did not. Two wore Western-style clothes; the rest, Japanese-style.

Yoshiko was seated. Though she had guided them to their places and performed all the

general courtesies flawlessly, the seated guests behaved as though there was no one in the room but Kan'ichi. Not one of them even bowed to her. Some of them looked at her while pretending not to, thinking, so this is Kan'ichi's wife. Her presence there was awkward, but Yoshiko wanted to know what they had come to discuss, and so she sat there, listening and making no move to leave. Each one of the guests looked truly angry. Some maintained a purely dissatisfied expression, while others appeared to affect one out of fear that if they didn't look dissatisfied they would not be recognized as the clever patriots they were. The aggrieved group stared at Kan'ichi in silence for a while. Finally, one of them took out an extremely grimy grey handkerchief and, continuously wiping the sweat off his palms, spoke in a scratchy, uncertain voice.

"Professor, what are your thoughts these days? We'll be in trouble unless someone a bit extraordinary steps forward, but there doesn't seem to be anyone like that, does there?"

"Six or seven years ago the countryside was overflowing with righteously indignant patriots, but the fire seems to have gone out now. Some were probably cajoled by the government's clever methods, while others were probably intimidated by their strong-arming. The way it looks today, the moment is gradually going to pass us by. How can we stop it? Don't you find this to be most deplorable, Professor?" He spoke fervently.

Unruffled, Kan'ichi replied quietly. "Yes, it is completely understandable that you all would deplore the current state of affairs. Especially if you've witnessed the misery in the countryside in recent years and then seen the luxurious ostentation in the capital, I can imagine that you have feelings that even the patriots there don't have. But as long as there are all different kinds of people in the world, young and old, wise and dull, you can't expect everything in society to be in balance, and one can't

automatically censure those who pursue the height of extravagance in everything they do. As far as the masses in the country are concerned, they think of their straw huts, which can barely keep out the rain, as golden pavilions and tall towers. Diligently gathering eulalia by day and weaving it into ropes by night, the women are so engrossed in their looms that they forget the winter cold, and the children believe potato gruel to be the best-tasting food there is. Never in the course of a lifetime will they wear silk, taste fine meat, or sleep on silk bedding. They get up early and go to sleep late, but even though they sweat blood over their farm work, they are still unable to avoid the demands of the tax collector. The land they inherited, which connects them to previous and future generations, is sold at public auction while they cry, heartbroken, and a lot of it also seems to end up back in the hands of the government. At a time like this, many city gentlemen indiscriminately don the trappings of enlightenment and peace, ignoring the fact that they are emptying the national treasury in the process. Those who are out for themselves are rewarded for currying favor and preaching peace, some of them suddenly becoming hugely wealthy, while not a few others unwittingly do the government's work by expressing their love for their country and ending up in jail. This probably contributes to your anger as well. I sincerely respect what you are trying to do, but there is something else I want to say to you. Our nation places its hopes for the future in its youth; that is, in you. It would really be regrettable if our promising youth believed that their life's work was to run around the country vainly spouting vague, restless rage. That is something that can be done in place of chatting over tea by carefree retirees who are already old and coddling their bodies and minds. But vigorous patriots should give maximum effort to their every endeavor, whether it is education or enterprise, cultivating their strengths until the public acclaims them as qualified to stand on their own two feet and they have gathered sufficient

experience. Only when they are truly able to debate what is right and wrong for the future will they benefit both themselves and their country. No matter how compelling their arguments and how upright their spirits, youths lacking in both education and experience will never be able to move the public as long as they have just one argument and one spirit. You can't be like a drunk who sings the same tune over and over in an attempt to raise his spirits. In other words, I think that it will be to your advantage someday if, rather than running around propounding empty theories, you become practical and gradually nurture a promising political climate. I have spoken to you from the depths of my heart, but I will understand if you respond with words of angry disrespect."

The six guests who heard Kan'ichi's warm speech did not all feel the same way. The most radical among them, who would have a tendency to say that Kan'ichi should hoist a flag right then and there and assemble an army of righteous patriots, were surprisingly moderate: their initial displeasure had turned to absolute admiration and the realization that this is what they had expected from someone with a reputation like his. It was very fortunate, because if they hadn't heard his speech today, they would have joined those who run around preaching empty words that benefit no one and perhaps even have destroyed themselves along the way. Others felt that what they had heard today was a great warning that they needed to share with their fellow activists. Everyone expressed their gratitude for what they had received, and they said their goodbyes wearing such mild facial expressions that they seemed to be entirely different people from the rude students who had come in earlier.

Chapter 6

A woman's love thoroughly warms the frozen mist along life's pathways

Withered banana leaves may never find their way into poetry. But the wild chrysanthemums blooming seductively in the gentle breeze and the crimson maple leaves transforming the Ueno and Asuka hills into brocade led great numbers of men and women from all rungs of the class ladder out to promenade in earnest on this mild mid-autumn day. Not Takazono Yoshiko, however. Having finished preparing her husband's winter wardrobe, she was walking alone in her garden, thinking of composing a poem about the charming chrysanthemums that had bloomed along its bamboo fence. "Ah. A noble clothed in white silk might appreciate the sight of chrysanthemums against a background of purple and crimson curtains, but they appear most beautiful here, outside a humble dwelling. Here they proudly announce the season in a rustic garden buried in fallen leaves amid softly floating clouds and wild birds." Such were her thoughts when Kinoshita Kurasa's wife Otsuta arrived. Yoshiko met her at the door herself and ushered her into her study.

Otsuta, a normal school graduate, had had a reputation as a sharp and lively woman since her school days, when she had been a source of anxiety for her elders. If she continued to mature along these lines, what kind of woman would she turn out to be? She may be somewhat literate, they thought, but her manner isn't warm and pliant; she may understand English, but she writes a poor woman's hand; she may be a skilled knitter, but she cannot mend a torn sleeve. This had worried the men in her family tremendously because they knew they had to marry her off. As for Otsuta, not only had she lamented the fact that those men had no understanding of the times they were living in, but occasionally she had confided to her friends that because of their ignorance it would be a big mistake for her to let these relatives take charge of her life. The gossips said that a friend had introduced her to Kurasa and that her family had been against the marriage at first but eventually had

had to come around because Otsuta wouldn't listen to them.

"Your husband isn't home today, Yoshiko?"

"That's right. I'm lonely, so I'm happy you came."

"I really envy you."

"Why?"

"You two get along so well. I have a problem, Yoshiko. My husband was really agreeable at first, but lately he complains about every little thing, and there's nothing I can do about it. I intend to do what I absolutely must to fulfill my obligations as a wife, but it does me no good to go along with every single thing he says. I thought it might help restore his mood if I got a little irritated, but it didn't. Now it seems strange to me that I thought he was such a good person at the beginning. We don't have any children yet, so I'd rather. . ."

"Don't talk like that, Otsuta. Why aren't you able to get along the way you did at first anymore? A husband and wife are one unit, so you and Kurasa are parts of the same thing, and there is no reason that you should find waiting on him to be difficult. There have always been a multitude of doctrines about a woman's obligations to her husband and her manners and such, but a husband will never take comfort in obligations or manners that are performed without sincerity. The best way for you to feel satisfied with one another is to envision a capacious basket labeled "love" and include everything in it. You went to school for a long time and learned a lot of things there, so I'm not just flattering you when I say that anyone who has taken someone as clever as you as his spouse is extremely lucky. So there can't be anything troubling you. If you would just expand the love you have in your heart for Kurasa, you will find that it will cover over all of his complaints."

“Listen to this. There are no differences between men and women. In which case, a woman cannot just tacitly agree with a man’s every whim and complaint, can she?”

“I don’t know whether or not there are really no differences between men and women, but I don’t think a woman has to sit by silently.”

“What’s different between men and women?”

“Everything from their body composition and psychology to the fact that in Japan today most men have a certain amount of wealth, while most women have absolutely nothing. The same goes for their occupations.”

“So you’re saying that because women have no wealth and no occupation they have no choice but to surrender to men?”

“They never have to surrender.”

“Why not?”

“Because women have something more valuable than wealth or an occupation.”

“Really? What do women have?”

“It is something that men want, and if they get it they do not complain, even if they lack wealth or work. It is nothing other than this: the gentle, warm love that is peculiar to women. Love is highly effective and influential. Men get chilled to the skin out in the cold, cruel world, but they are able to warm themselves in the waves of love. They are able to wage a fight for what is right—never wavering, even when their lives are at stake—because of the consolation of women’s love.”

“That may be, but you can’t love when you are being trampled on. Talk like that gets on my nerves.”

“Is that so? All right, I had better stop, because it isn’t right to upset a guest. I got carried away talking and forgot to mention that I heard you

moved the other day.”

“Yes, our former place was too far from the courthouse. . . Moving is really onerous. It just wasn’t enough for our students to petition City Hall the customary one hundred times; it took a full thousand until our request was finally granted.”

“You must be exaggerating.”

“If you don’t believe it, try moving yourself. At first I didn’t know how City Hall works, so I just kept wondering what we would do with all of our baggage. There are no restrictions as long as you pay the shipping fees. City Hall is strange, though—on the one hand they say that these are the rules, but on the other they say something different. Then they say you have to appear on such-and-such a day at such-and-such a time in the morning, and when you show up at that time they make you wait, saying that the relevant person isn’t there yet, and then they say that’s all for today, come back tomorrow. And isn’t this strange? That Mrs. Torisu is always changing her mind and she moves often, so I thought she would be sympathetic to exactly this problem, but when I mentioned it to her the other day, she spoke a bit haughtily. She said that that may be the case for us, but that they have people at City Hall for whom they have done favors, so all they have to do is send a student there and the matter is settled. When you’re in the city, all of your affairs have to be conducted directly at City Hall, but I wish that they would accept the paperwork even if a word or two is spelled wrong, as long as it makes sense. Although you’ll probably say that our love as public citizens just isn’t enough.”

“That’s a rather harsh attack, isn’t it?”

“Perhaps. In any case, everyone has been talking about the fuss Torisu’s students made, but apparently the root cause was something minor. But those students have plenty of enemies as well as friends, so everyone was

talking about it, and not only were the newspapers suspended for publishing articles with ominous headlines like “Patriots’ Misfortune” and “The Selfishness of Bureaucrats,” but suddenly three or four students who live in boardinghouses in Kanda were arrested as well, it seems. My husband says that the newspaper was in cahoots with Mononobe and company. In any case, when they appear in court, Kurasa will probably be dragged into the case, but he says that nothing pays as little as lawyering, so he always makes a sour face about it.”

“But it’s an honor, so it’s a good thing, isn’t it? There is so much mistrust in the world that it’s hard to be found not guilty even if the charges are unfounded, isn’t it?”

They spent time conversing like this. In the past, when two women met, they would only exchange comments about the weather, or their opinions about clothes, or the talents of actors, or how kind or unkind their in-laws were, or how obedient or disobedient their servants were, but listening to Yoshiko and Otsuta’s conversation, you can get an idea of how things have changed for women. They don’t merely imitate men’s noisy political discussions indiscriminately; they also play songs on the koto praising the light of the moon in the autumn wind, or take to the garden with their walking sticks in the spring to study the grasses and trees. Their hearts are filled with the stuff of art. Inhaling the fragrant scent produced by their flowing words, you have to acknowledge the great refinement that women bring to society.

Chapter 7

The woman with red sleeves plying her needle in the light of the spring lantern lends strength to the bearded writer who sits beside her,

wielding his brush

From the time she was very young, Takazono Kan’ichi’s wife, Yoshiko, was very different from ordinary girls in terms of her activities and interests. She liked to read and play the koto, and it seemed that what suited her most was to fantasize about placing her big dreams on a small boat and sailing off with them across a vast expanse of water, or about donning rough straw sandals to ascend into the clouds and from there climb the highest peaks. At other times she would sit sewing by a lamp in the spring, with students and beautiful women, or overwhelm men with her literary talents. And this is why mountain recluses considered Yoshiko a friend of the mist; those who composed Chinese poems considered her a friend of the poet and the calligrapher; and women who sewed and made music considered her a graceful friend of those whose domain was the inner rooms. In this way, Yoshiko did not socialize in just one arena, and as her knowledge expanded naturally, she drew her own conclusions about each and every thing. Her gently graceful manner lacked the slightest trace of arrogance. By the time she was twenty-nine, Yoshiko was so famous that those who had never rubbed elbows with her felt undeserving. But secretly, in her heart, this troubled Yoshiko; she felt that to achieve fame so early in this fickle world could be a source of trouble. In fact, when she really thought about it, she didn’t know why she was famous or even how to find out. Receiving praise for no reason is a precursor to being criticized for no reason. It was truly unbearable, and so she feigned illness and cut her social ties. Her reputation immediately went into a decline, and false rumors about her arose, but this did not bother her in the least; in fact, she acted as though this was as it should be. She avoided gossip wholeheartedly, shutting herself up in her study and looking at books from countries around the world. Yoshiko was especially concerned about the lack of education for women in our country. She believed that as

long as education for women was lacking and women were not valued, society would not advance. Thoughts like these were her main preoccupation, but she was by nature able to endure pain and feel empathy, and not act boastful toward the weak or ingratiating toward the strong. Many people avoided Yoshiko, thinking her arrogant because she confronted people directly when they were disrespectful toward her. In the past Yoshiko had told a close friend, "When people are disrespectful to me, I don't get angry at them to show off, I just can't bear how it makes me feel." She may also have said something along the lines of, "If I am disrespectful to someone else, I will not shrink from the consequences, whatever they may be." Praise and blame tend to be delivered too lightly. It is very rare for a woman to be able to read and discuss current events, so this earns momentary praise, but in a country where men are respected and women reviled, this type of approbation is truly superficial, even insulting, rather than sophisticated or appropriate. Because of this, since ancient times most talented women have taken positions considered appropriate for them, few of which allow them to use their skills. In early spring when the flowers are staging beauty contests, such women act almost like nuns who have abandoned the world, forcing themselves to bury their makeup in the ground, shorten their sleeves, and narrow their sashes. In extreme cases, they live in a valley far from civilization, crying at the rain, grieving over the moon, and pondering the sadness of the shadows of geese flying overhead or the cries of the deer. Always alone at the window composing poems and songs, they envy the flight of the butterfly and resent the falling of the blossoms.

In one respect, you might say these people are foolish because they are so narrow-minded as to experience a world full of pleasures and amusements as a place of acute pain. But insofar as the standard is that men are to be respected and women reviled, no matter what

skills women may have, unless they abandon them and feign ignorance, they won't be able to become wives and keep house. If, on the other hand, they were allowed to use their talents to help their husbands and raise their children, their husbands and children would be unspeakably happy. At a time when such evil customs hold sway, those who tend to stand out must force themselves to act like wooden dolls once they get married, while those who can't bear to abandon their skills have to live lonely, solitary lives.

Yoshiko pitied the women of former times whose lives ended in pain because they were not able to use their talents to please themselves or others, and she hoped that from now on women would be able to get out of that rut and use them to bring happiness to themselves and benefit others.

Yoshiko's husband, Takazono Kan'ichi, was not affected by the vicissitudes of her reputation, because he had always felt sure of her, and now he became even more steadfast in his love for her. For her part, Yoshiko had come to believe that Kan'ichi was the only person who really knew her. Thus when they sat, it was together at the same desk, and when they traveled, it was in the same rickshaw. They studied history together, debating the successes and failures of ancient and modern times, and they shared their innermost feelings, lamenting the present day. There were only three bamboo poles and a few banana leaves in the garden of their poor country home, but they wrote poetry there and did not envy those with a sturdier house and a splendid tower. They rejoiced in their one bookshelf, two kotos, and the southerly breezes that blew as if they constituted the height of elegance, and people envied them keenly, believing that a life like theirs must be what is meant by heaven. They tried to maintain this harmonious existence, but of course it was not enough if only one of them was happy.

One day, before they had been married for two years, Kan'ichi saw Yoshiko lounging in a chair, a newspaper in her hands, reading intently. We don't know what he thought as he stood there. Yoshiko did not notice him. He continued to watch her as she read, then sighed and quietly moved to her side and seemed about to speak. What he said will be revealed next time.

when I'll be back, as long as I explain to her what it's all about. The resilience that would keep her from trying to stop him was what made her so endearing to him. She was his soulmate, which made even one day away from home almost unbearably lonely. Shaking off his worry that when he was away he would feel terribly uneasy every morning when the temple bells rang and every evening when the crows cawed, he spoke.

"Oh, Yoshiko, you are really engrossed in that newspaper."

She nodded. "When did you get here?"

"You always seem to be enjoying yourself."

"Indeed I am. Everyone does."

"That's not so. Very few people enjoy their lives."

"I wonder. Someone once told me that the duller a person is, the happier they are. Because they don't have many sensibilities, they don't feel pain. She said that the people who are a little smarter than that worry about things that aren't their business, and so they may be at a great disadvantage in life. But I think very differently."

"Differently how?"

"How could a person who doesn't feel pain feel pleasure? That's why people who don't worry about things that aren't their business don't have pleasure that's not their business. You see? The wise are the opposite, aren't they? So I'm going to muster my courage and not feel pain as pain, but I'd like to feel pleasure as pleasure. . . It's confusing. I can't put it into words."

"I get the point. So you try to act like the wise."

"There you go again."

"You didn't finish."



Illustration by Mishima Shōsō

Chapter 8

Awakened from her dream of a pair of Mandarin ducks, she sees no sign of spring

Her sleeve is damp with tears of resentment over the long separation

Continuing to gaze at Yoshiko as she sat reading, Takazono Kan'ichi thought about her. Because Yoshiko is so resilient, she won't try to stop me from going on a trip without knowing

“But you. . .”

“Even if one expresses such admirable intentions, one would still find some things painful.”

“Who?”

“Even you would, if you didn’t have all the luxuries and the power that you do.”

Yoshiko, who had been half-joking to this point, suddenly became serious and spoke a little spitefully.

“Well, there you go, saying things I don’t understand. I’ve been your wife for nearly two years, and you still don’t really understand me, do you? There are things that are painful for me, too. . . Well, only one. And that is the thought of something happening that makes it your destiny to leave this world without having accomplished your heart’s desire. That’s all.”

“I understand you very well. I was just teasing you. But what you said just now gave me great satisfaction. Of course, you’ll understand if I leave you to go on a trip and don’t know when I’m coming back, won’t you?”

Not surprisingly, Yoshiko appeared completely taken aback by this. She was silent for a moment and then said, “What are you saying?” Her voice trembled slightly. Then she pulled herself together. “Even married couples who fight and scream at each other all the time because their interests and goals are different still choke on their tears when they part. How much sadder will it be for us to have to say good-bye, with our kindred spirits and our extraordinary love? . . . But as I was just saying, it is still not nearly so sad as it would be if you were to disappear without accomplishing your heart’s desire. Besides, it isn’t as though we’d be saying good-bye forever.”

“That’s right.”

“In that case, what a happy day it will be when we can look back on this sad good-bye as something that was in the past. . . But are you really going somewhere?”

“What you just said makes me feel so relieved. Even though I didn’t mention it just now, as I have always said, I pledged myself, such as I am, to my country to help with the Restoration, and once I did I was prepared to die. To be alive today is more than I had hoped for. Fortunately I didn’t use up all my energy in the past, so I think I have one more fight in me. . . As they say, it’s easy to forget pain once you’ve gotten through it. The way I see it, today both the palace and the people have forgotten the struggles and are complacent in an atmosphere that is peaceful on the surface. However, just studying the extravagances of strong countries indiscriminately is not enough. Neither is establishing a strategy for temporary peace. . . Whether I am part of the imperial court or the people, I think that the only thing that matters is for the wisdom of the people to advance enough to coalesce into a strong nation. That can’t be accomplished if I stay at home all the time, though. But I’m not one to suffer or take action for no reason, so unless it is absolutely unavoidable I definitely will not fan the flames of any meaningless nonsense or incite anyone into excessive violence. Nevertheless, when I really think about it, feeling patriotic and worrying about doing something that no one has asked me to do is self-indulgent, and so these feats of bravery are ultimately things I am asking of myself. So it’s really a shame that someone like you, with such rare talents for a woman, cannot lead a happy life on my account. If you were an ordinary woman, who knows how many complaints you would line up against me, but I’m so happy to have someone like you, who fulfills me and rouses my ambitions—I don’t think there is anyone else in the world who would—but as my partner, you. . .”

Their eyes met as he spoke.

This clumsy brush isn't capable of explaining what Kan'ichi was feeling, torn between carrying the weight of the nation and the difficulty of leaving his love behind. He knew it had been a shock for Yoshiko to hear of his departure, and because he sincerely felt sorry for her, he had been saying to himself, maybe I'll tell her today, maybe tomorrow, and time had slipped away until today. But now that he had her approval, there was nothing else he had to do, so he told her in detail what he hoped to accomplish and finally decided on a departure date.

Yoshiko had known about her husband's ambitions and hadn't expected them to spend their lives together without ever being separated. But now that the date of his departure was so unexpectedly near, hearing his words made her so sad that she felt that the light in her soul was about to be extinguished. Kan'ichi had alluded to the objections she would have raised if she were an ordinary woman; being as superior to others as she was, she did not utter a word, but her sadness at being torn from her husband was greater than it would have been if she were ordinary. Sensitive to how she should act, she labored to hide her sadness so her husband would not become discouraged.

Hearing his words, Yoshiko smiled. "Don't say any more sad things. People don't have the ultimate authority over themselves. In this ephemeral life, not even one minute can be other than how it is ordained to be. Even if we were to live together and never be apart, there's no guarantee that we would have a hundred years together. Don't worry about things at home; leave whenever you need to. I'll be here waiting for you—looking forward to hearing all of the stories you bring back and telling you mine."

Her response pleased Kan'ichi greatly, and he asked her to get his things ready while he went out to say good-bye to one or two like-minded

friends. Later, as Yoshiko was preparing this and that for his trip, she thought, "Ah. Of course I knew this day would come, but knowing that doesn't mean I'm not still sad. No one knows about the sadness that is tearing me apart. He is strong, but he's not a stone, and so my husband must feel even sadder than I do about his leaving, especially not knowing how long it might be until we see each other again. Thinking about him and realizing this, she unwittingly burst into tears but soon regained control of herself. "Ah, this is silly. I really should be ashamed of myself for lamenting something that is a natural part of life. My husband could come home any minute and look at my behavior with disdain." Like a sudden rain shower washing away the sweltering heat, she dispersed the wrinkles of concern from her forehead and promptly finished packing his bag. Kan'ichi arrived just then, and Yoshiko talked to him even more cheerfully than usual, intent on comforting him from the pain of parting. It was getting late, and tomorrow he was to leave. In the light that remained, their conversation was a mixture of past joys and future sadness, never exhausting the expression of their feelings, but the unfeeling clock marched on, and nothing could distract even this strong man and talented woman from the sadness of separation. Yoshiko took down her koto, a solace in good times and bad, and composed poetry that she sang in a voice so penetrating it would make the widow of the lonely boatman weep and the sharks under the haunted valley dance. The song spoke of parting from a husband who was going far away:

Many miles of mountains and
rivers will stretch before you in the
morning

I'll keep count on my fingers until
the year you return

For the homesick traveler, a candle
in my window

Awakened from a dream of your
desolate boat in the rain

I know the day will come when you
gain fame and success

Painful partings and happy
reunions: all that's in heaven's
hands

A piece of this woman's heart goes
along with you

The lonely sleeper has only the
moon and the flowers for company

Left here without you, my sadness
knows no end

Tomorrow before we know it you
will be far, far away

Here spring's red flowers wither
and the apple blossoms are wet
with rain

At sundown the woods are cold,
the willows cloaked in mist

With no one at your pillow, who
can I speak to of love?

By my solitary lamp I amuse myself
with poems

We are no match for the urgency
of the water clock

Day breaks, and our parting
passion is unfulfilled⁴

Chapter 9

The young beauty is a skillful debater of
current events

Because their love always remained fresh, producing ever-new pleasures, they deplored the brevity of the time they were able to spend walking and talking, including even the long nights of winter and long days of summer. After having to see her husband off so suddenly, Yoshiko sat by the cold window. For a while, the house felt as if it belonged to strangers: there was nowhere for her to sit, and no fire was enough to take the chill from any room. The garden felt even lonelier, with no one to talk to there, and she did not feel like going for a walk. Nevertheless, that day she mended the clothes her husband had left behind, wishing that he would be coming home soon and calculating when he might return—despite his having just left—as well as thinking about the last things he had said to her, and so the time passed, painfully. At night she sat alone in the dim lamplight. During the day she heard mice scratching wildly in the walls, and at night the blinds blown by the wind sounded like leaves beating against the windows: all of this only intensified her sadness.

Before her marriage to Kan'ichi, Yoshiko had fostered six or seven female students. All were talented but never boastful—intelligent, well-mannered girls who could only be called ladies. One day, as Yoshiko was leaning out the south window, staring intently at the garden and wondering whether her husband was safe on his trip, she thought, "Here I am feeling sad, but I'm safe at home and can read or play the koto, while my husband is on the road alone, pelted by rain or snow. He is not perfectly healthy even at home—will he actually make it home all right? Although when he left he said he definitely wouldn't be able to let me know how he was doing during his trip, it is so lonely to be here waiting with no way of knowing whether he is all right as he travels here and

there.” As she was murmuring to herself, Yoshiko heard the footsteps of several people in the doorway. When she went to see who might be visiting while her husband was away, she found her former students, Tanaka Mika, Iwasaki Yae, Tanima Ran, and Shimizu Kikue. Yoshiko, who had just been wishing she had a friend to talk to, joyfully led them into the sitting room. First she expressed her pleasure at seeing that they had all been well since they parted. One of the students kept close track of Yoshiko and knew that her husband was the most prominent out-of-office politician from a party that had scattered to the four winds.

Just as people did not expect students in padded jackets and plain obi to come out to the country to discuss current events with a gentleman who had formerly ridden a white horse with a golden saddle, they would probably have thought it odd that his wife served the tea and sweets to these visitors herself. Facing them, Yoshiko said, “It is like a dream to see you all. . . After we parted I traveled all over and wondered how you were doing but wasn’t able to find out. . . Now Kan’ichi is away and I’m unbearably lonely. . . It was so nice of you to come. But it feels odd to be together like this.”

Yoshiko didn’t know how to begin the conversation after their long separation, but her joy was evident on her face. The girls reminisced about how they used to stave off the cold on long winter nights with potato gruel and enjoy poetry contests among the blossoms on spring mornings. The teacher and her students had boundless gratitude and love for each other. The younger students still thought that someone like Yoshiko, who wrote poems and read books, should never marry or take on the troublesome task of managing a household, and they wondered about the fact that Yoshiko not only had become even more like a typical wife than the typical wife, but also was not ashamed to talk about how lonely she’d been recently with her husband away. Even though

she acted like a wife, it was hard to call her “Mrs.,” yet it also felt strange to refer to her as Professor, as they used to do. It was endearing how this awkwardness made them blush and rendered them speechless. Finally Tanaka Mika, the oldest, mustered her resolve and said, “Professor, we came here together today because we’d like to get your advice about something. . . When we first left our homes in the country and came to study with you, you were well known as a member of the weaker sex whose love and concern for her country made her more able-bodied than the sturdiest of men. Even old women far out in the country talked about you over their tea. There were girls so enamored of you that they would give their lives for you, and everyone praised you, whether or not they knew you. But since you became Takazono’s spouse, not one person speaks well of you. ‘Now look at that Yoshiko who used to be so famous—it’s almost as if she thinks that as long as things are fine for her, it doesn’t matter how they are for others. Isn’t that just like a woman—when she has no one to rely on she runs around aimlessly sticking her nose into national affairs, but once she settles in a three-room hut in the country that’s the end of it.’ There are a lot of people slandering you like this. It makes us feel so bitter to hear this kind of talk—it’s like our insides are being torn apart. The other day we got together and talked about how, as your students, we cannot bear for you to be spoken about like this. We want to restore your good name, and we vowed that we would do everything necessary, no matter how painful, to do so.”

On the verge of tears, Yoshiko looked into her eyes. “That you all care so much about me gives me the greatest satisfaction. . . But listen carefully to what I have to say. Social relations have always been extremely superficial in our country. When a person criticizes or praises someone else, it is based on hearsay or gossip rather than sincere feeling. People can easily be misled, and so a reputation is not worth being concerned about. . . In the past, I

couldn't bear the pathetic status of women and I wanted to rescue them, so despite my weak constitution I raced boldly around the country. But thinking about it now, I realize that I was able to do this because I didn't have any experience. There are some extraordinary women in the wider world, but putting them aside, it's going to be extremely difficult unless ordinary women are exposed to education and become able to raise their status themselves. We will not get our way in ten or twenty years. I have given up on anything except gradual progress, but it's not that I've thrown away my old ambitions and seek only to be comfortable. The only difference is that I have not been putting my beliefs into speeches and actions. But I am the same Yoshiko. So, what do you have in mind?"

"You're right. As you know, there are all kinds of pathetic things in the world. We pay condolence calls on the elderly mothers and wives who are living in sadness because their sons and husbands have been imprisoned for their sincere condemnation of the state of the country, and we do everything we can to try to relieve the suffering of those who are freezing or starving because they are physically handicapped. These days there is also a tendency for parents to oppress their daughters by forcing them to marry people they detest. Some of these parents sincerely believe that they are benefiting their children, but there are also some who, seeing a different advantage, use their daughters to feed themselves. Once we know about these things, we don't stand by and watch, nor do we worry about the social class of those involved. We garner the courage to criticize them and make it clear that when it comes to a daughter's marriage, the parents' only obligation is to watch out for her—they do not have the right to prevent her from marrying whomever she prefers. We also intend to relentlessly condemn those who engage in inhumane violence—knowing that, no matter what they do, because of their powerful position, no one will dare say anything, out of

fear. As well, we will condemn their victims, who are not only afraid to express their anger but even toady up to them or resort to other immoral means to get what they want. We intend to argue the following: that instead of merely denouncing geishas and prostitution, concubinage should be outlawed; that insofar as a wife does not violate her marriage vows, her husband should never be able to request a divorce; and that if a husband falls in love with someone else, his wife may request a divorce. We believe that if we risk our lives for these things, it will benefit our sisters, first of all, and it will redeem your reputation as well, Professor. Because the world knows that we were educated by you. What do you think?"

Moved, Yoshiko nodded. "I feel very humbled by your efforts. These arguments must be articulated by women in order to be persuasive, so it's all very well. . . But I worry about your lack of experience. Relationships between the sexes would be mutually beneficial if men and women loved one another as do an elder brother and a younger sister, which would be a fairly positive thing. But that's not what happens. Somehow, when a woman embarks on a plan, men don't take her the least bit seriously—they say she's half-kidding or crazy, or they say to their friends, "Come, get a look at this." And so you young women had better be very careful and not enter into anything lightly lest your good intentions pop like bubbles. Furthermore, any involvement with national affairs should take place quietly, behind the scenes, not out in public. You also spoke about doing something about the bad publicity that has sprung up around me, but that's a losing battle. Honor is not something that has to be sought after: true honor comes inevitably, without being sought. Because honor doesn't belong to people, people belong to it. . . I don't mean to discourage you; what I hope is that you will engage in modest activities that do not put your feminine virtues to shame. Please be careful not to attract the scorn of the intelligentsia by acting excessively

violently, the way crude men do.”

Hearing this exhortation, the sensible students exchanged looks that all but said they knew their elder was right. “We’ll never forget what you have said, but to do nothing once we have gotten the idea. . .” they said in unison.

Sympathetic to their slight bewilderment, Yoshiko said, “There is nothing so unpleasant as having someone obstruct your intentions, so I’m not going to force you to stop. But keep in mind that women’s actions should be different from men’s, whatever else may happen. . .”

Each of the students was encouraged by these words, and the conversation grew lively once more. As the sun set and the lamps were lit, the group of beautiful women exchanged poems and continued to enjoy themselves, oblivious to the deepening of the night. They had the lustrous, serenely attractive elegance of peach, plum, cherry, and daffodil blossoms that had been gathered together and placed in a pearl vase.

Chapter 10

While the faithful wife plays the koto to ease her longing, the patriot rolls up his sleeves and heads home through the mountains

The joy that Yoshiko had felt in reuniting with the women whom she had brought up as if they were her own children turned to sadness the moment they left, and she felt a deep longing for the past. But with nothing to do but settle back into her loneliness, she thought, People are quite strange. They can be changed in any way imaginable by education. Now there are lots of schools for girls, and there must be some students who really like them, but it seems that nothing learned outside their formal education stays with them. I have a feeling that there is a problem with the relationship between their physical selves and their studies.

Doesn’t this mean that there is something lacking in the way their inner strength is nurtured? It’s been said that Chinese studies has a curious way of nurturing inner strength, and in those four girls the Chinese tendency seems to have the upper hand, but that absolutist, black-and-white thinking brings with it inviolable principles. If you put them together with merely mild-mannered women who haven’t had any education, they might very well seem arrogant and unfeminine, but that very arrogance seems a little different from that of the average student—although I may be biased because they were mine. In any case, as far as accomplishing something for the benefit of society is concerned, it would be best if they were able to achieve modest results through mild actions that sow the seeds of happiness in out-of-the-way places.

It seemed windy tonight. Normally she would consider the wind to be mere noise, but tonight she told herself that the beating against the windows made her feel cheerful. After she had gone to bed and finally fallen asleep, she heard a light knocking at the gate, but she decided that it must be the wind. A little later, however, she was surprised to see the bedroom door being opened. Lifting up the lamp beside her pillow to take a look, she was surprised to find that her husband, Kan’ichi, whom she hadn’t been sure she’d ever see again—although she hadn’t let anyone know this—had come home. Paralyzed by a mixture of happiness and surprise, Yoshiko simply said, “Oh, my, it’s you. Oh, my.”

“I’m so happy. I had a lot of worries on the trip, but the hardest thing was wondering how you were doing,” Kan’ichi said, putting down his bag.

His words filled Yoshiko with satisfaction.

“But seeing your dear face tonight is really a relief.”

Hearing this, Yoshiko bowed her head and

smiled with genuine charm. “It feels too good to be true. I worried so much that I began to think you’d never come home. It was truly unbearable. . . . But if we hadn’t had such a sad parting, we wouldn’t be able to be this happy tonight.”

“That’s right. I hope that our meeting tonight doesn’t mark the beginning of another separation.”

“You didn’t write, so I didn’t know how you were. How were things in the country?”

“Pretty good, although I’m concerned that people still don’t have sufficient awareness. But in each area there are two or three people who understand how things are. We have to get so that every person is like that, but we can’t rush. . . . It depends on the place, but some haven’t changed a bit from how they used to be. I’m surprised at how abject people are. Confronted with Western clothes or a beard, they use words like M’lord or Master and kneel with their foreheads on the tatami for no reason. That they act that way in any situation is troubling, isn’t it? And then when someone with a little authority comes around, whether he is entertained lavishly or not depends on how much people toady up to him. Furthermore, there are always disputes about whether someone’s share of the restaurant bill or geisha fees was fair or not. Words can’t describe how vulgar it all is. But not everyone is like that, so someday it should be possible for the winds of freedom to permeate the air. As far as that goes, we had better be prepared to face difficulties for the rest of our lives. There is no guarantee that we won’t have to separate again and sacrifice physical love, but our spiritual intimacy has made us eternal friends, so you needn’t be lonely or sad. That’s right, isn’t it, Yoshiko?”

“I know that. But you should experience being left behind. It isn’t possible to detach oneself as easily as you make it sound. That’s what is so hard about the human condition. But you just

got home, so don’t keep talking about leaving again—settle in a little bit and put my mind at ease.”

Yoshiko tried to stretch out her hand to him, but then she realized that all of this had been just a scene from a dream born out of her deep daily concern for her husband’s well-being. Yet it was as though the dream were true, and her waking reality were false. Looking around, Yoshiko saw her lone shadow reflected in the weak light of the flickering candle. Once asleep, one has no control over joy and sadness or pleasure and pain. Now, the clock continued its ticking, as if to say that its only concern was to dutifully serve its purpose. Once Yoshiko realized that all traces of her husband were completely a figment of her imagination, that she had dreamed him, the feeling of yearning reached its peak, and then her heart became calm. Even though what she had seen of her husband was a dream, the words she had heard still echoed in her ears. If the love I have for my husband were compared to the love my husband has for me, it would be greatly inadequate. My love is merely superficial, and if the surface disappeared, I wouldn’t know what to do. I worry about my husband’s safety because my spirit is weak. It is clear that if I pray to the holy one who is with my husband, He will hear me.

Realizing that she would be ashamed to face her husband having passed the time without doing any of the many things she had to do without him, Yoshiko quickly pulled herself together. Night was already giving way to dawn, and the birds were singing. Suddenly, her spirits brightened and her sadness and loneliness disappeared, buried in hope and joy. It was strange—she had no idea where this sudden happiness was coming from. Before long she got up and dusted the room thoroughly. Opening the sparkling window, she saw that the garden was peaceful, the dawn coloring the trees and the sunlight reflecting off the mountains to the east. There was no way

to describe her joy, so she pulled out her beloved koto and sang some verses by the window.

You in an unknown village at the end of the earth

How many spring flowers and autumn moons must I pass in vain?

The old days linger not in a fleeting dream

As fresh sorrows bring on a stream of tears

Recalling the times we spent leaning on our porch rail

I look at this spring's grass—greener than ever

Swallows fly in pairs around the garden

Geese sail overhead but bear no news

How can you begrudge me a single letter?

I cannot bear the sadness that longs to hear from you

Whatever is this human life about?

Specks of dust in the vast universe

Even a speck, a mote, however wretched

And blown hither and thither, is still ruled by attachment

Wealth and honor are nothing to envy, the poor deserve pity

People like us fill the world like snow

Why should you crave a quiet life of isolation?

I know well what is in your heart

We cannot blame our separation on the mountains and rivers

The old light goes out in the dark and rainy night

The dawn wind is piercing, snow accumulates up to the heavens

Like a small boat with far to go, you must take good care

For now you belong to the nation, not yourself

Why speak of my tear-soaked pillow and robe

I rely on my nightly dreams to bring you back⁵

Signs hanging from eaves flutter proudly in the wind. In colors ranging from pale peach to deep green, they advertise novelties such as Sarashina beef, Western sundries, and while-you-wait photographs. Weaving their way through the wide city street below are gentleman with pencil mustaches; slender-waisted ladies; old, shabbily dressed rubes carrying broken umbrellas; and young men fitted out with silver eyeglass frames and gold teeth. But business isn't as good as it might appear: rickshaw men seeking passengers cry out in hoarse, hopeless voices, while the clerks in the dry goods store struggle to keep their abacuses from gathering dust as they toil through the long day. Here in the Jinbochō section of Kanda, a student is leaning against the railing outside the second floor of a seedy-looking beef restaurant. He is looking all

around with wonder: perhaps he is from the country, and this is his first time in the bustle of the city. Does his dirt-streaked face wear a happy expression because this squat structure with broken windows seems like a majestic castle to him? That same student calls out frantically, “Hey, Honda. Honda, I’m up here.” He was calling Honda Rokurō and Yasuoka Kumazō. Both looked up and said in unison, “Oh, Mononobe.”

“Hurry and come on up,” he said, diving back inside the sliding paper doors, but by the time he got in, the pair had already climbed up the stairs and were standing with their hats in their hands, looking for a place to put them.

“What happened, Mononobe?”

“It’s not a matter of what happened. I had a rough time of it.”

“So did we, thanks to you.”

“What a shame. But just chalk this up to experience. . . When did you. . .? . . . Just now. . .? Oh, that’s right, the same as I did. I don’t know what you think, but jail was not how I expected it would be. Murderers, thieves—everyone is treated the same way. Did they strip you two at the beginning, too, I wonder? . . . I had no choice but to take everything off, but I was wondering what they would do in the case of a woman, so I asked the guard on the way back to the jail from court. He said it was the same as for men. The ones who are jailed for robbery or adultery have no sense of shame, so it’s probably nothing to them, but for ladies, it must be an unbearable indignity. He said it’s because they are suspected of harboring weapons, but I think that would depend on what they are being incarcerated for. They must have a pretty good idea of what types of people they are dealing with. . .”

“It wouldn’t be feasible for them to make their judgments on the spot.”

“You’re right. I can imagine that you two were really upset. I had a pleasant surprise, though. . . As you know, I have many relatives around here, but they aren’t like me. Even if some of them feel sorry for me for being put in jail, they would be afraid to visit lest it rub off on them. The ones who don’t care about me probably think that my usual bad temper got me into trouble, so they wouldn’t lift a finger for me. It’s strange, though. There was probably some mix-up—no, they would never mix people up, would they?—but whenever they were handing out blankets, shirts, and preserved beef, someone had brought some for me. I don’t know who on earth would do that. Apparently they had announced the names of the people who had brought provisions on the first day, but I didn’t dream anyone would bring me some, so I didn’t pay any attention. But don’t you think that’s strange?”

Honda and Yasuoka looked at each other. “It must be the same person who’s taking care of Tanaka. . .”

Mononobe: “Tanaka? Wasn’t Tanaka with you?”

Yasuoka: “Well, something strange happened to Tanaka. He is sickly by nature, but this time he seemed to be in really bad shape. He looked like he was about to pass out when the sentences were announced this morning in court, and we wondered if he would even be able to ride in a rickshaw. But when we went through the courthouse gates. . . She looked about twenty, didn’t she, Honda?”

“Well, yes, she was a bit of a beauty, so she only looked about seventeen or eighteen.”

Mononobe: “A woman, a woman! What about her? Hurry up and tell me.”

“Well, that lovely woman opened her sweet crimson lips and said, ‘Are any of you companions of Mr. Mononobe?’ A crowd gathered. She used her snow-white hands to part the masses and spoke in a crystal-clear

voice as she made her way to Tanaka. ‘Ladies and gentlemen, that man loves the people. One of his brethren is sick and having trouble walking. Can you please calmly make way for him?’”

Mononobe: “Humpf. Then what did she say?”

“She said, ‘You must be tired. If you go to your inn now, you will only get worse. The room I reserved for you at Kaishun Hospital is ready, so you have to go there with me, whether you like it or not.’ She didn’t seem the least bit embarrassed. But Tanaka looked awkward.”

“I bet he did. But, being Tanaka, surely he wasn’t able to remain silent, was he?”

“He said something. ‘It’s very kind of you, but I can’t possibly accept a favor from someone I’ve never seen before in my life.’ He turned her down flat without a hint of kindness, but she seemed quite determined. ‘My name is Tanimura Ran. I studied with Takazono Yoshiko. There’s no reason you would know me, but you’ve heard of Takazono Yoshiko, I assume. In other words, I am taking care of you on her behalf, but here we are in the middle of the road, so, anyway . . .’ She put Tanaka in her rickshaw, and she walked alongside.”

Mononobe: “Takazono? As in Kan’ichi, right?”

“There’s no other.”

“I get it. Takazono’s wife must have been responsible for what was given to me in prison. I admire that. I’ve been hearing about her for a long time, but I’ve never met her. Have you guys?”

Honda: “I haven’t, but Yasuoka has, haven’t you?”

Yasuoka: “Yeah, I know her. She’s a very impressive person. When she first married Takazono, he had a lot of servants in the house, but when she found out that he was planning to

help the patriot movement, she said it was foolish to have so many unnecessary household expenditures, and she decisively scaled back on everything. Not only did Takazono not feel inconvenienced by this, he said that it made life interesting in a way it had never been before. As for her, she got rid of her gold and pearl hair ornaments, and I understand that the only thing to be seen in her glossy black hair nowadays is the occasional flower or twig from her garden. They say that she wants her makeup money to be spent for the good of the people. It is curious to find a person like her in this day and age, when there are people who flaunt their husband’s status and overwork their servants unconscionably. They indulge themselves in that faddish knitting, boasting about it when all they have done is make a child’s bib or a tablecloth while letting their husband’s wardrobe languish in the meantime. Apparently there are quite a few who carry on extramarital affairs while saying that they are at a women’s group meeting or a social club.”

Mononobe: “It doesn’t help their cause to run around shouting ‘The injustice of “Honor the man and revile the woman” must end!’ or ‘Women’s rights must be enforced!’ If all women possessed the pure love and noble thoughts that that man’s wife does, they would be able to make a name for themselves without running around proclaiming that they are an honored member of this group or an approved member of that one. Besides, no matter how much men tried to look down on them, they’d respect them automatically if their brains told them to do so.”

Fortunately there was no one sitting near them, so they were able to lose themselves completely in conversation in the wake of their chance meeting. But the proprietor thought it strange, and she began to worry that they might try to leave via the roof without paying their bill. “Matsu, go check on them,” she said, sending a servant, which brought them to their senses. “Is that the bill?” they asked, pulling

out their wallets. Mononobe spoke urgently. “There’s something I’d like to talk to you about when we have more time. I saw in the morning paper on my way over here that Takazono is going to be traveling around our part of the country toward the end of the month. I think we should talk to him and see what happens. I

decided to leave Tanaka in the hospital for now and go straight home, but you should definitely come with me. We can’t get any talking done here. Let’s go pick up our bags where we left them at the rooming house.”

The three agreed and left the restaurant.

Dawn Lawson is head of the University of Michigan's Asia Library. She received her doctorate from New York University in 2014. Her dissertation examined Nakajima Shōen’s 1887 adaptation of Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s *Eugene Aram* in terms of its place in both the history of translation and Shōen’s body of work. Lawson's published translations include works by Ōshima Nagisa, Ueno Chizuko, Hayashi Mariko, and Saitō Tamaki (the latter with J. Keith Vincent). She is currently at work on an annotated translation of Shōen's diaries.

Notes

¹ By the woman poet Tagami Kikusha (1753-1826). Shōen writes 門出は本に日本か茶摘歌, but the haiku she appears to be referring to is 山門を出れば日本ぞ茶摘唄。

² Works of this time irregularly included the characters’ names before their speeches, as in a playscript. I include them in the translation when they occur.

³ A reference to the Shintō custom in which strips of paper bearing fortunes are read and then tied to trees on the shrine grounds.

⁴ Poem translated by Moss Roberts.

⁵ Poem translated by Moss Roberts, with the assistance of Xiaoxiao Jiao.