A Rendition:
The Episodes of Red Beard the Doctor (1)
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The Story of a Madwoman

1.

When he came to the gate, Yasumoto Noboru stood awhile looking absently in the direction of the janitor's box. He was feeling sick. His head was awfully heavy from a hangover.

"This looks like it," he muttered low. "Koishikawa Infirmary, is it?"

He was there all right, but his mind was not. He was thinking of Chigusa. His eyes were looking at the janitor's box while his mind's eye was searching for the image of Chigusa: tall in height, ample figure, body with flowing soft lines, fair-complexioned long face with clearly marked features, —a slight touch anywhere would, in no time, make her cheeks flushed and her eyes teary. All these features came up vividly to

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his mind's eye, as though beckoning him.

"It was only three years, right?" he muttered again. "How come you couldn't wait, Chigusa? How come?"

A young man came and, making for the main entrance, looked back at him. Noboru easily knew him to be a doctor by the way he was clothed and did his hair. This awoke Noboru from his reverie. He followed after the young man and went up to the janitor's box.

While Noboru was reporting to the janitor, the young man turned back to him and asked if he was Mr. Yasumoto. Noboru nodded.

"I know what this gentleman's here for," the young man said to the janitor. "You can go and I'll take care of him." He nodded to greet Noboru, said with affected cordiality, This way, please, and began to walk side by side with him.

"I am Tsugawa Genzo," the young man said amiably. "I've been waiting for your arrival."

Without replying, Noboru looked at him.

"Yes, I have," Tsugawa said and smiled. "Now that you're here, I can get out of here, that is, you'll fill my position here."

Noboru said dubiously, "As I understand, I'm just here because I was called."

"I'm told you've been to Nagasaki to study." Tsugawa changed the subject. "How long have you been there?"

"A little over three years."

He was bothered by his own reply, three years, because Chigusa came back in association with it. He made a pointed grimace.

"It's such a terrible place, here," Tsugawa was saying when Noboru came to. "You won't tell how terrible it is unless you stay here for some time. At any rate, the patients are unlettered poor people. They're swarmed with lice and fleas, swollen with boils, and smell badly. The wages are rock-bottom and you must slave for Red Beard night and day. No wonder you'll want to curse yourself for having hoped to be a doctor. Just terrible, everything's utterly terrible here."

Noboru said nothing in reply.

—I've only been summoned here.

How could it happen? I wouldn't be imprisoned in a dispensary like this one which they designated as an "infirmary," Noboru thought. Because of my experience in Nagasaki, they'd ask me about something for reference. This guy surely misunderstood it.

Within some fifty steps on the frost-melted gravel path of the main entrance, they came to the house in question. It was such a run-down building. The eaves of the entrance were warped, roof tiles dislodged, and the ridges of the rooftops of both wings ran up and down in dents and bumps. Tsugawa Genzo went round to the side entrance and showed Noboru the foot-gear box. They took off their foot-gear there and entered the house.

They proceeded along the corridors, and came to a place. It was crowded with people. They must be waiting to be treated. The crowd was of men and women over the middle age and children. They were all in shabby clothes. The place was filled with a stinging stench as if it were a garbage bin or cluttered with the debris of perished fruits.

"They're outpatients," Tsugawa said, waving his hand over his nose. "They all get free examination and medication. They're the sort of people who'd be better off dead rather than living." Then, he made a hopelessly wry face, opened his arm sideways, and with it pointed, "This way, please."

They crossed the connecting corridor to another building and turned right. Tsugawa stopped in front of the first room and spoke his name. They heard a voice say to come in. It was a resonant, deep voice.

"That's Red Beard," Tsugawa whispered to Noboru, and in a way to sign to him with his eyes, slid open the shoji, or sliding paper mounted lattice-door.

They were there inside a rectangular shoebox-like room, the size of two six-tatami-mat rooms put together, with a high window at the other end of it and three-layered cabinets on either side. The cabinets were solid, made of oak which had grown amber over time. The two upper layers were made for storing things. The one at the bottom on either side was made for drawers. No doubt the drawers contained medicines because they were each labeled with the names of the medicines. —The

window gave onto the north. It was fitted with shoji. The paper, which had turned sooty, was dyed with the cold light coming from outside. The light was projecting the wide and stout shoulders and disheveled gray hair of an old man whose back was toward the visitors.

Tsugawa Genzo sat on the floor, bent himself in a bow to greet the old man, and told him that he had brought Yasumoto Noboru. Without answering it, the old man sat at a small desk writing something. He was robed in a gray lined kimono with cylindrical sleeves and hakama, or loose-legged skirt-like trousers, of the same color. His hakama were oddly shaped, not as formal as you may expect it to be. —It would be better worded as "tattsuke." They did have some pleats around the waist all right like an ordinary hakama, but didn't flare down at the shins. They were as narrow there, and further down at the ends where they came down to the ankles, they were tightly tied with the sewn-in strings.

There was not a brazier to heat the room. Facing north, the room did not get any sun at all. The air that smelt of medicine was freezing cold, and it felt as if the cold would creep up the old man's entire body from under his knees on which he was sitting. In time, the old man put down his writing brush and turned on the visitors. A broad forehead with a receded hair line from bolding and a square jaw were his main features on top of a lush beard that grew from the mouth down to the chin. Under the long and thick eyebrows, commonly called "long-life eyebrows," his strong sharp eyes glared. The lips were firmly set in a stern line. But the lips and the eyes ganged up to show at once cynicism particular to the Cynics and candid curiosity like a child's.

—Now I see. It is indeed Red Beard, thought Noboru.

In actuality, his beard was a pale-brownish gray, but his robust looks gave an impression that it was a "red beard." He looked between forty and sixty. The lustiness of the forties and the composure of the sixties seemed to combine together in a by-all-means natural way.

Noboru bent in a formal bow to greet him and introduced himself.

"I am Niide Kyojo," said Red Beard.

And Red Beard gazed Noboru in the face. He gazed at him piercingly and without reserve. He declared:

"As of today, you are posted here as an intern. Don't worry about your chattels. I'll get them fetched for you."

"B-b-but I, I, er . . . ," Noboru stammered, "but please wait, I believe I've simply been called here . . ."

"That's all," Kyojo stopped him in the middle and, turning to Tsugawa, said, "Take him to his room."

2.

Yasumoto Noboru began to live in the Koishikawa Infirmary as an intern.

He was nothing but discontented. He had studied in Nagasaki with the avowed purpose to be a doctor of the shogunate. Upon return to Edo, he had been supposed to hold the position of a doctor whose duty was to attend on the shogun. His father was called Yasumoto Ryo'an, a practitioner in Fifth Street, Koji-machi. He was acquainted with Dharma Vddhana Amano Gempaku, a doctor in charge of the official quarter of the shogun's residence. Amano had recognized that Noboru had been gifted since a boy. He had facilitated Noburu's study in Nagasaki. He had also promised Noburu to recommend him for a shogun's doctor.

Noboru told this to Tsugawa Genzo.

"You have such a reliable backer, but now that things have turned out the way they have . . . ," Tsugawa began but stopped in the middle and grinned as if implying something. "—Well, you might as well give up on that. We were informed a half month ago that you'd arrive. Well, well, well, as likely as not, Red Beard took fancy to you."

Tsugawa made for the room in which Noboru was to live.

The room was on the right of the corridor. Proceeding along the corridor once they were out of Niide's office and turning it to the left brought them there. There were three rooms in a row, of more or less the same kind. Tsugawa dropped by the first one and introduced Noboru to his fellow intern called Mori Handayu. He was skinny. He appeared twenty-seven or -eight. He looked gloomy and languished as if utterly

exhausted.

"I've heard about you," Handayu said after they had introduced each other. "You may have a tough time here, but if you'll really go in for that, you'll have quite a little to learn, and I'm sure this experience will benefit you in the future."

Handayu's voice was soft as he said so, but in Noboru's perception, it might have been cotton that had wrapped a razor blade in it, and that the depths of his eyes, which were as clear and serene as any, might have hidden another. Noboru noticed that Handayu completely ignored Tsugawa, for he gave no response at all to what Tsugawa said, nor did he turn his eye to Tsugawa.

"They say he's the second son of a well-to-do farmer somewhere in Sagami Province," Tsugawa whispered when they were out in the corridor. "He and I don't get along, but I must admit he's very smart."

Noboru took no note of it.

Next to Mori's room was Tsugawa's, and next to Tsugawa's was Noboru's. All the rooms had an area of six tatami mats. The windows gave onto the north and it was dim in the rooms. The wooden floor in the rooms was bare with no tatami-mats, except that it was spread with usuberi or rush matting bordered with cloth. It looked indeed bleak and cheerless inside. Under the window was a time-worn small desk, which came with a reed-plaited round mat immediately on the floor. On one side of the room was a wall which had cracks, and on the other there was a hefty cabinet fitted with the wooden sliding panels.

"There are no tatami mats at all?"

"Nowhere at all." Tsugawa spread his arms and said, "As you see it, there's none in the interns' rooms, either. Neither is there in the inpatients' wards. There the flooring is wooden with only usuberi laid out on it. They lay out their bedding right on it. You see?"

Noboru lowered his voice almost to a whisper, "It's like a jail."

"Everybody says so in one voice, and above all the inpatients," Tsugawa said sarcastically. "They're all people of no means. I guess they feel all the smaller particularly because they're put in a dispensary. And to cap it all, look at those sick clothes, and you'll see."

Noboru remembered the way Red Beard was clothed and Mori Handayu who was also clothed in the same way. He asked about it and learned that the interns were, summer or winter, clothed in the robe of the same cut and color. He also learned that all the inpatients in the wards wore white straight-sleeved robes. Both men and women were clothed in the same way. Strings were attached to their robes like children's. It was contrived so that the strings, when untied, would make examination easy. But the patients did not like their robes because, when put on, the robes naturally made them feel like they were convicts. And so did the sickrooms. They were furnished with bare wooden flooring and only usuberi was laid out on it. Patients were complaining of them all the time.

"Has this been long practiced?"

"Fine innovation that Red Beard the doctor implemented," Tsugawa said as he shrugged his shoulders. "He's the despot here. Regarding treatment, he's assiduous and well-skilled. There're not a few who place their absolute trust in him, such as domain lords and rich merchants. But here in this infirmary, he's unpopular among patients because he's too dogmatic and despotic."

"It seems they don't use braziers and all, do they?"

"Except in the wards," said Tsugawa. "Red Beard the doctor says, the cold you know in Edo, to the contrary, is good for your health. And there's not enough budget to buy charcoal to burn on except in the wards. —Well, shall we look over the facilities?"

The two went out of the room.

Starting with the accommodations the doctors used when they stayed overnight on duty, they went around the facilities, such as the front room where outpatients were examined, the prescriptions dispensary, the service room for inpatients, and lastly, the dining room for medical staff. Then, Tsugawa put on garden-walking geta or wooden clogs and went out of the building by the south exit.

You find the south exit at the corner of the connecting corridor. Upon exiting, you see a kitchen building right ahead of you. It was a tile-roofed, one-story structure with an area of approximately thirty tsubo, or

a hundred square metres. Beside the kitchen house was a roofed drawing well, where several women were rinsing greens. Probably, they were going to make pickles of them. The green leaves and white stems of the rinsed greens were piled up and they were getting the morning sun. In the sun they were glinting dazzling fresh.

3.

Tsugawa pointed at one of the women and said:

"You see a young woman, the second one from the right, bound with a yellow tasuki band so she could hold her kimono sleeves out of the way. Look, she's now piling the greens. Her name is o-Yuki. She's Doctor Mori's sweetheart."

Noboru looked at the girl nonchalantly.

Just then, a woman of eighteen or nineteen rushed out of the ward building and called Tsugawa. Her features were respectable. The way she was dressed and the way she spoke suggested that she was a maid servant of a merchant of considerable means. She panted and was red in the face because she came in a big hurry or something. She was uptight.

"There's been a spasm of pain again, doctor," she said between her gasps. "The medicine's run out. Will you please prepare it right away, doctor?"

"Try and ask Doctor Niide, will you?" replied Tsugawa. "Nobody else is allowed to do anything about that medicine. He's in his office."

The young woman glanced at Noboru. She may have perceived his eye. She gave him a quick sidelong glance and blushed there and then. She gave a bow to him and trotted in the direction of the south entrance.

Tsugawa urged Noboru and began to walk. As they walked along the south ward building, they came to where there was an oblong open space, more wide than long, of about two hundred tsubo in area. Beyond the open space was a fenced herb garden. This place was originally called "The Koishikawa Shogunal Herb Garden," designated as a garden for growing medicinal herbs and run by the shogunate itself.

Two gardens with an area of approximately ten thousand tsubo, or eight-odd acres, extended in the north and the south. They were bordered by a road running through the center. The infirmary was located in the south garden, on the west end of the heights. Standing in a higher position of the herb garden provided the pleasure of the view that went way beyond in the west.

The garden was monotonous. It was winter and the trees and herbs for medical use were mostly shriveled. Small name plates were planted beside each of the plants which were covered by straw to keep frost off. As they walked along the muddy banked-up path, they saw several gardeners at work spreading soil and changing the straw covering the plants. When the gardeners saw Tsugawa, they all greeted him. He introduced Noboru to them, who, in turn, politely gave him their names. The stout old man of large build was called Gohei. The expressionless young man, tall and slender like a withered tree, was called Yoshitaro. Others followed, such as Tsugisaku, Kyusuke, Tomigoro. These were the names that came into Noboru's memory.

"How's yours, Gohei?" Tsugawa said. "Not ready yet?"

"It's time almost, I guess, doc," said the old man. Rubbing his fat double chin, he narrowed his eyes in rapture and nodded, "Yes, it'll be ready soon."

"I'll leave here at the end of this month, and before I do, I'd like to taste it."

"Let us just wait and see, doc," the old man said prudently. "Most probably it'll be ready by that time, but we've got to wait and see."

"I'll drop by your shed shortly."

Tsugawa left there. "He's brewing liqueur from ficifolia berries," he explained as they walked on. "It's unattractively black and too thick to the taste, but it's a good liqueur. Red Beard gets him to brew it for medical use, though. We'll give it a try sometime."

When they went out of the garden, Tsugawa made for the north ward building.

Was it for the purpose of shutting out winds? There was a stand of gigantic oaks, beeches, camellia bushes, pine trees, and cedars. There

was also a thick bamboo grove. As if embraced by the grove, there was a house which seemed to have been built only recently. Tsugawa meant to approach it, but probably on second thought, he just passed it, shaking his head.

"O-Sugi we ran into a while ago, —I mean the woman we met at the south exit," Tsugawa began as they walked, "she's staying in that house. She's attending on her sick employer."

"Is that house also used for wards?"

"Her father, the sick woman's, had it built here on his own expenses. His daughter has an extraordinary disease."

Tsugawa spoke in a parched voice.

He didn't know her backgrounds because they were kept in a strict confidence, but the rumor had it that she was the daughter of a merchant of some means. She was aged twenty-two or -four. Her name was Yumi and her looks were in an attractive way. She'd had the first fit at sixteen. At first it hadn't been known that the fit came from insanity. She'd had a fiancé, who without warning had broken the engagement and married another woman. For this reason, she'd been depressed for a year or so after that. By the time she'd seemed to have got over it, she'd killed an assistant hired for her father's trade. Her father had employed seventeen or nineteen assistants. In two-year time, she'd done away with three assistants except for one who'd narrowly escaped death. Two young men had fallen dead because of Yumi.

"She didn't just murder them. First, she applied her sensual charm to the victim to deprive him of free movement, and then did away with him." Tsugawa licked his lips and went on, "According to the man who was narrowly saved from the lethal danger, the young woman first cast sheep's eyes at the target man and then seduced him into stealing into her bedroom. Then, in the bedroom, I'm told, she made various advances on him to enhance the atmosphere in a lascivious way. When he completely lost his head and was deprived of his faculty of resistance, she stabbed him to death with her kanzashi or ornamental hairpin."

Noboru grimaced and dropped his voice to a mumble, "I suspect it was because she was betrayed by her fiancé."

"Red Beard's diagnosis is different," Tsugawa said, again licking his lips. "He diagnoses her insanity as a kind of congenital nymphomania. Rather than insanity, it is a predisposition to insanity."

A word meaning murder-oriented carnal pleasure entered Noboru's head. While staying in Nagasaki, he had read about the case in question in a Dutch medical book. He had learned that, since olden times, there had been the same cases in Japan, too, and he had had some similar cases pointed out. He had taken the notes of them, too.

The verdict given was that she was not guilty, maybe partly because of her rich father's influence. The murdered men were assistants employed by her father. They stole into their employer's daughter's bedroom and tried to molest her. Superficially, this was the truth. And the dead were quiet. The authorities let it all go at that. However, only when a third assistant narrowly escaped falling victim to the crime, did he bring the circumstances to light. That was when Niide Kyojo was asked to attend the court. He ordered that they build a room in which to confine the violent woman. Otherwise, it'd be unavoidable that the same crime would be repeated. He emphasized that, unlike other cases, nymphomania had committed the crime, not insanity. She was normal like the next one in other respects, and there was no choice but to confine her in order to prevent more from happening. Her father expressed hesitation. He dreaded that, because his was a big household with his family and a large number of employees, the public would kick up a fuss about what'd be going on in his home what with building a room and confining his daughter in it. Instead, he suggested a confinement house be built in the infirmary, and that the infirmary take on his daughter and give her treatment there. Whether she'd recover from her insanity or die uncured, the father would donate the entire facilities to the infirmary and would not spare whatever it'd cost. This agreed upon, the house was built in the fall of two years ago and the merchant's daughter moved into it, accompanied by a maid servant called o-Sugi.

"That entire building is structured for a jail," said Tsugawa. "It has two bedrooms and a kitchen. O-Sugi does all chores, cooking, laundry, and whatnot. All necessary daily commodities are brought in from her

home every three days. O-Sugi has the key to the house and nobody else is allowed to go in. The daughter herself is not allowed to go out alone, either. Nobody but Red Beard can enter it."

"Are there any cures?"

"I doubt it," Tsugawa said and shook his head. "I'm told what matters is not cures, but fits that seize her once in a while. For this, Red Beard gives her a specially prepared medicine. Oh yes, that's the medicine o-Sugi came for a while ago. Red Beard never allows anybody to prepare it. They say it's extremely effective."

Murder-oriented carnal pleasure, Noboru thought to himself. Supposing it was her predisposition and congenital disease, the crime she committed was not of her guilt. It was just like the ugliness of a wooden Buddha statue which was cut out clumsily. It was not the guilt of the statue per se.

—But it's different with Chigusa.

Chigusa had been as normal as any, thought Noboru and bit his lip.

"It's o-Sugi who's to be pitied," Tsugawa went on. "Her duty is to serve her. That can't be helped. However, she's living in an infirmary like this and in a house which is intended for a jail as she looks after the needs of the insane employer. And besides, nobody ever can tell when it'll come to an end."

"She's an employee, and she can quit any time, can't she?"

"No, she won't quit. She sympathizes with her lady employer from the bottom of her heart. I should say it's affection more than sympathy." Tsugawa shook his head and heaved a big sigh. He added, "I miss nothing when I leave here, but if there's one thing I do, I'll miss o-Sugi a little. I can't see her any more."

The memory came back to Noboru of o-Sugi having blushed only a while before.

4.

It was not because of Tsugawa that o-Sugi blushed. Tsugawa had

hinted that he had been very close to o-Sugi, but it turned out that she had made nothing of it. At the first meeting outside the south entrance, she had blushed and bent in a bow with an ashamed look in her eyes because she had noticed that Noboru was gazing on her. —After they had grown closer to each other, o-Sugi told him all that herself.

Now, Noboru grew to be on good terms with o-Sugi. Soon the relationship developed to the stage at which they would meet where they were seen by nobody. Later when he looked back on it, he had not been pure in heart at that time. The circumstances he had been thrown into had made his high hopes turn sour and driven him to desperation. Rather, he had longed for someone he could complain to. He had also taken interest in how the disease of the young woman called Yumi was developing. That was all, and o-Sugi had been his best company. The relationship grew to a further degree in which Noboru expressed his discontent that he had been placed in an institute like an infirmary. He even told her about Chigusa. He felt such caring warmth and peacefulness in o-Sugi that he felt like telling her about his privacy.

"I'll never let them have their way with me," Noboru said to o-Sugi. "I know this is craftily planned out. I'll become incorrigible and make them beg me to please leave here because they can't stand me any more."

"I doubt it." She looked puzzled, tilting her head in disagreement. "I don't think I see any relations between this young lady and the fact that you've become a member of this infirmary."

Noboru looked at o-Sugi quizzically because he had not known her speak her mind before.

"—What makes you think so?" Noboru asked back.

"If the young lady proved to be the way you say, why then Mr. Amano will surely make amends. If he doesn't, he might at least have kept his promise to get you the position of a shogun's doctor, even though he might have had to go to any lengths to keep his promise. Aren't I right?"

This conversation took place one evening toward the end of February. This was the first time Noboru and o-Sugi spent a good long time talking

to each other.

There was a bench in front of the bamboo grove some ten ken or twenty yards away from the residence of Yumi and her maid. In the infirmary, there were seven benches in sunny places for inpatients. The bench in front of the bamboo grove was roofed like an arbor, exclusively for Yumi to use. People were rarely around in the evenings. —That evening, after Noboru had argued with Niide Kyojo, he told gardener Yoshitaro to go buy sake and was drinking it in his room. But it was unbearably getting nowhere and he came out to this bench. He sat on the bench drinking the sake he had brought in the gourd when o-Sugi turned up. After she had disposed of what was left of o-Yumi's rice porridge, she had the hunch that he was out there and came out to see what he was up to. —Or she said, o-Yumi had had a fit about an hour before, but thanks to the medicine, she was sleeping tight now. So, she put the lock on the door and came here. Noboru took her for it that she could take it easy with him. And, mellow, he began to tell his privacy.

"You're a good person, that's why you say so," said Noboru. "They oughtn't to be that good-hearted. Should they let me out there in society, they'd have trouble with me. Put me here, and they can save troubles. Good riddance. I can see the trick."

"But for all I know, it's Doctor Kyojo who had you here."

Noboru took another swig from the gourd.

"He's been saying for ages," o-Sugi said, "that he wants better doctors here. This infirmary, more than anywhere else, wants real good doctors who'll try in earnest and cure sick people."

"Well then, he oughtn't to have called me here. To be a good doctor, you know, learning alone is not enough. On top of it, you need time and experience. I'm still green, I'll tell you."

There, all of a sudden, he nodded. "Oh yes, he's got one reason to have me here. Over this reason I argued with Lord Red Beard."

"You, too, should call him Red Beard. Well, what do you know!"

"Red Beard is good enough!" Noboru spat.

That day after dinner, Niide Kyojo had called Noboru and told him to turn in the notebooks and pictorial records which he had made while

studying in Nagasaki. Noboru had refused. He had studied every branch of Dutch medicine and, in particular, put a lot of effort into internal medicine and contrived to develop his own diagnosing and treating. They were his own, the achievements which he had attained to by himself. And those notebooks and pictorial records were something which would promise his future, but publicizing them meant the grave loss of their value.

—There's even a doctor who's grown big-league and made a fortune only by his method of treating cataract, isn't there?

Noboru had insisted that his were state-of-the-art techniques and of greater value at large. His own expenses and efforts had won them. He had asserted that he saw neither the reason why nor the obligation that he should show them to another. But Kyojo had not accepted his refusal.

—Let me make this clear, don't talk more than needed.

Kyojo had declared as if it had been written in the book.

—Submit all your notebooks and pictorial records, and that's all.

Noboru told o-Sugi that he had followed his orders and no choice.

"If Red Beard really wanted me here, that *is* the very one reason for crying out loud!" Noboru said, caressing his gourd. "That's why he cared about me none. He took no notice of me, such as when I refused to wear that uniform and when I refused to work, just hanging around."

"You're drunk."

"Am I drunk? No way. I'm just drinking, that's all." Noboru took another swig. "I drink because it's banned. I'll do anything that's banned here."

"Stop it, won't you?" O-Sugi tried to take the gourd away. "I hate a gentleman who gets drunk and says a thing like that."

Noboru, in turn, violently grasped o-Sugi's hand which tried to take the gourd away. It was a chilly but warm, smooth hand. O-Sugi did not avoid the grasp. She stayed quiet, her hand grasped in his. The stars were bright and the night was nice and warm. The fragrance of the daphnes came wafting from the herb garden.

"Do you hate me?" Noboru whispered.

O-Sugi answered calmly, "Yes, I hate you when you're drunk and ask

me such a thing."

Noboru was silent for a few moments and let go of her hand.

"Well then, go."

"Give that gourd to me," said o-Sugi. "I'll keep it till tomorrow."

"Leave me," Noboru said after taking another swig. "You've got enough to do, looking after the needs of that mad young woman, right? Mind your own business."

O-Sugi took the gourd away from his hand. It was such a forceful, nimble action that he missed the moment to dodge it. She stood up from the bench and said as she left for the house that she'd give it back to him the next day. Noboru was quiet, listening to the sound of the steps o-Sugi's sandals made.

5.

Since the meeting on a February night, Noboru's intimate feelings toward o-Sugi had grown.

Noboru was determined never to be an intern in the infirmary. In his bystander's eye, the life here was grimy, lifeless, and boring. This infirmary, which was commonly called a dispensary, was under the control of "kimoiri," a shogunal official, a hereditary status of the Ogawa family, to whom a yoriki or police sergeant was assigned by the shogunate. The Ogawa family had its own residence elsewhere, but there was an office for him in the front house of the infirmary. In the office were the yoriki and other administrators who were responsible for accounts and other office work. At that time, the number of regular doctors on duty was five. Their office rooms were in the back house which was used for wards. The front and back houses were connected by the corridors.

Of the doctors on duty, Niide Kyojo was the head, and under him were Yoshida Itetsu, Iyida Go'an, Ida Gentan, and Hashimoto Genroku. Each of them was in charge of one specialty from among internal medicine, surgery, and gynecology. The Iyidas were father and son,

practitioners in Shitaya, Okachi-machi. There were three to five part-time practitioners commuting to the infirmary. —Interns were two. These two interns together with Niide at the helm, that is, the three of them alone, lived in the infirmary. Naturally, the responsibility of treating inpatients was practically left to the three. The other doctors, on the other hand, who only saw outpatients seemed to not merely lack zeal but treat them perfunctorily and negligently most of the time.

For sickrooms there were two houses in the north and the south. In each house there were three sickrooms with an area of ten tatami-mats or twelve by fifteen feet, two sickrooms with an area of eight tatami-mats or twelve by twelve feet, and another two, exclusively used for serious cases, with an area of six tatami-mats or nine by twelve feet. At that time, there were about thirty inpatients. Most of them were elderly people or else women with a sprinkle of injured stretcher cases and those who had fallen ill on the streets. —Exactly as Tsugawa Genzo had described to Noboru, all the sickrooms had wooden flooring on which was laid out rush matting. On it the bedding was spread out. The rush matting was changed every five days and the bedding every seven days. They were hung in the sun and the wind. All inpatients, young and old, men and women, were provided with a white cotton kimono robe with cylindrical sleeves. The robe was so made that one end came over the other and each end was fastened by tying the strings sewn to it. Even women were not allowed to put on a sash on their robes. Neither were they to wear colored robes.

—We couldn't wish for more if we were allowed to lie on a tatami floor, dispensary though it was here. The patients complained to one another.

—They do have their own kimono at home, and the most we want is, women are allowed to be clothed in color. The way we are here, it's like we were convicts.

Minor quibbles like that were all the time on their lips.

Discontent and complaints were all directed to Niide Kyojo. He had decided all that on his own judgment. When it came to treating patients, his way was rough and his language rude. Because of this, patients were

all nerves. Accordingly, there were apparently quite a few who bore a grudge against him. Furthermore, Niide often went out. They said he was sent for by domain lords and rich merchants and had private patients to go to see, too. On those occasions, the duties were left to the two interns. It was fine with them while full- or part-time doctors were on duty, but at night when there was an emergency case, the interns could do nothing about it because the commuting doctors had already gone home. Which was not rare.

Shortly after Tsugawa Genzo had left the infirmary, for three times or so Mori Handayu called for Noboru to treat inpatients. In compliance with the call Noboru did go to the sickrooms with Mori, but all he did was watch what Mori did, doing nothing, just being there. Nor did Handayu insist that Noboru assist him. But was it on the third time? On exiting the sickroom after having given treatment, Mori stopped Noboru in the corridor and demanded him, gasping audibly, what the heck he was driving at.

"What the heck do you mean?" Handayu scowled at him. "How much longer are you going to continue such stuff and nonsense?"

"Stuff and nonsense? What do you mean?"

"That nonsensical recalcitrance of yours," said Handayu. "How much longer do you intend to continue the sort of senseless resistance which attracts others' attention? Do you happen to expect anyone to sympathize with you, or Doctor Niide to apologize to you?"

Boiling anger rendered Noboru choked.

"Have second thought," Handayu said in a lowered voice. "It's *you*, not anybody else, that have everything to lose and nothing to gain."

Noboru had an impulse to deal a hard blow on him.

Like everybody Noboru had long guessed it out that Mori Handayu admired Kyojo. He'd heard from Tsugawa that Handayu was the second son of a rich farmer in Sagami Province. In the eyes of a rustic, an institute like a shogunate-run dispensary and its head doctor, a position a Niide Kyojo held, were probably something glorious and deferential. Noboru had decided that it was preposterous and seldom spoken to him. Then out of the blue, he got a cutting criticism thrown at him by

Handayu. It was of such a sudden that all Noboru could do was hold down his impulse of attacking Handayu.

Noboru was quiet about this incident even to o-Sugi. Handayu had the kind of conscientiousness particular to rustics which made him seem to be liked by staff members and patients of the infirmary. O-Sugi also said good things about him at times. —Tsugawa had once told Noboru that in the kitchen called the service room, there was a girl named o-Yuki Handayu was in love with. But according to o-Sugi, it was o-Yuki who loved him and one-sidedly. Handayu was keeping his distance.

"Can you get that crazy about someone?" o-Sugi said one night while sitting on the usual bench with Noboru. "In my eye, she's to be pitied. Doctor Mori is cool-headed. That's wonderful. But come to think of o-Yuki, I feel like hating him."

"Oh, knock it off," Noboru interrupted her. "Instead, tell me about o-Yumi. Haven't you always been with her?"

O-Sugi's voice assumed a cautious tone. "What do you ask a thing like that for?"

"Because I am a doctor," said Noboru. "I've studied authentic Dutch medicine, and this makes a difference between Mori and me. Tell you, I know various ways of diagnosing and treating which even Red Beard doesn't know."

"Then, why don't you apply them here?"

"In a cesspool like here?" He waved his hand and said, "I have definitely no aspiration to an intern of a dispensary like this one. I didn't study in Nagasaki because I meant to be a doctor here."

"You're still drunk."

"Don't change the subject," said Noboru. "Absolutely no thanks for an intern or no interest in a disease anyone can deal with, none of them for me. But if there's a rare case, it gets me interested in treating it as a doctor. Here in this place, o-Yumi is one such case."

"I don't believe."

"Don't believe? —Don't believe what?"

"The way everybody feels," o-Sugi said. "When it comes to her, no

doubt the look in their eyes turns lecherous and dirty. Doctor Tsugawa was the worst. Nobody's serious about her, except Doctor Kyojo, and that's that."

6.

Noboru looked at o-Sugi in the dark.

"I didn't know that," Noboru said. "—What did Tsugawa do to her?"

"How can I bring out such a forbidden thing?"

"Listen, Miss o-Sugi," Noboru said in a serious tone. "I'm a doctor and I studied new medicine. If I learn of detailed symptoms, then I may find a different way of treating her than Red Beard. I don't think it useless to tell them to me, to say the least. Don't you think?"

O-Sugi, too, returned a gaze at him. "May I ask, doctor, are you seriously saying so?"

"You should know me well enough."

"Not if you're drunk," o-Sugi said. "Very well, doctor, I promise to tell you from A to Z next time."

"Why not now?"

Noboru tried to grasp o-Sugi by the hand. She avoided it, stood up from the bench, stole a snicker, and said:

"Because you make such an advance."

"Oh, that's just another story."

Noboru swiftly stood up, too, and took her in his arms. She stayed still in his arms. He held her tight, one arm around her back and the other around her shoulders.

"You're fond of me, aren't you?"

"How about you?" o-Sugi returned.

"Yes, I am." Scarcely had he said so before he pressed his lips tightly on hers, covering her mouth. "I'm fond of you."

Noboru felt her strength drain from her body. It was now becoming soft and weighty against him. Noboru tried to pull her back to the bench. Then she slipped from the embrace of his arms and jumped back with a

snicker.

"No, I hate you when you do such a thing," o-Sugi said. "Good night, doctor."

"Do as you like," Noboru spat.

After that, it had been several days before he saw o-Sugi again.

It was well into mid-March by lunar calendar, or was it not? The blossoms on all cherry trees in the infirmary were at their best. In the garden, medicinal trees and herbaceous plants had already put forth tender buds, and so had the latest ones even. Early ones were in bloom. When the winds blew, the strong fragrance of the blooms was borne on them and, it felt, weighed the air. —After lunch, when walking in the direction of the herb garden, Noboru ran into o-Sugi who was on the way back from laundry. He walked keeping a little distance from her and asked, Why didn't she come out to the bench at night? She'd had a cold, she answered, but she was all right now and was thinking about being over there that night. As she said so, she coughed lightly and her voice croaked as she spoke.

"You still have coughs," said Noboru. "You should take care and it doesn't need to be tonight, dear."

She said something as she smiled.

"Sorry, I can't hear you well." He got closer to her and said, "What did you say?"

"I'll be along tonight," o-Sugi replied.

"Don't overdo it. You're taking medicine, aren't you?"

"Yes. I am getting it from Doctor Kyojo."

"You'd do better not to overdo it," said Noboru. "I'll make a medicine that will ease your throat."

O-Sugi nodded with a smile on her face.

On the same day, while having dinner in the dining room, Noboru was informed that he had a visitor at the entrance. Kyojo was out and wasn't back yet. Mori Handayu ignored it. They were banned from leaving their seat during the meal, and Noboru asked back who was waiting for him. He got an answer that the visitor was a young woman who introduced herself as Amano Masawo.

—Amano, Masawo.

Noboru did not clearly remember the name. But soon he guessed it out. Chigusa had a younger sister. She had been only a girl. He was only vaguely familiar with her. And the family name was Amano. She came here to visit him. He gathered she had to be Chigusa's younger sister.

—Most probably it's that girl I used to know.

But what was the purpose of her visit? he was puzzled. He had absolutely no way to guess at whether she came of her own volition or somebody put her up to it. Something told him he should not meet her rashly.

"Tell her I'm not in," he said to the one who came to tell him he had a visitor. "I won't meet her but take a message if she has."

When Noboru finished his meal, the messenger came back, who reported to him that she'd said she'd wait until the meal was over because she'd had to, but that she'd only just left. That she'd had no message to leave but that she'd said she'd come back. Mori Handayu was listening to this from where he was seated. He was listening to it over a sip of tea, though pretending he wasn't. Recognizing it, Noboru kicked violently to his feet and strode out of the dining room.

Noboru ordered gardener Yoshitaro to go and buy sake. The young man, skinny like a bare tall tree and timorous, stuttered and hesitated to go. —It'd be found out soon, and he'd get hell, he had meant to say, but his stutter was so terrible he had difficulty in conveying what he meant. On top of it, exasperated, Noboru shouted at him. The poor young man was nonplused. He had no choice but to go. He went scratching his head.

"What the heck are they intending to do, sending here a chit of a girl like her younger sister?" Noboru muttered to himself. "Do it if you can. I'll never be deceived easily this time, not over my dead body."

Sake arrived. He drank it unwarmed. Considerably fuddled, he went out with what was left in the bottle.

It was a night at a high temperature; probably the sky was overcast for no moon was out and no stars were to be seen. The air was faintly sweet with a mixture of the smell of earth and the fragrance of flowers,

and was heavy with humidity. It smelt all the stronger because it arose intermittently. It might have been because the night was dark and because he was so inebriated he had passed the usual bench before he knew it. Only then was he stopped by o-Sugi from behind.

"Oh, there you are?" he said and turned on his heels.

"My young lady went to sleep," o-Sugi croaked so low she was barely heard. "—What's wrong with you?"

"I just stumbled." He tottered a little and slumped down on the bench with a thud. "Come over here."

O-Sugi seated herself away from him and said something.

"Can't hear you," he shook his head. "That voice doesn't carry anything to me. Come closer."

O-Sugi edged up to him a little.

"Now here you go." Noboru took a bag of medicine out of his kimono sleeve and handed it to o-Sugi, saying, "Boil it with water and take it. How to boil is written there. I'm sure it'll ease your throat."

O-Sugi thanked him and said, "You've brought sake with you?"

"Just one swig. This is what's left over."

"I also brought you some."

"What did you say?" He brought his ear closer to o-Sugi.

"Your gourd," she said and showed it to him. "The gourd I took from you the other day and I've left it as it was. My young lady drinks a good sake and I've brought some of it."

"OK. Isn't that brewed from ficifolia berries?"

"You know it?"

"Red Beard has it brewed for medicine. I tasted it at Gohei's shed once," he said and took the gourd from her. "But you've brought sake to me, o-Sugi. Well, what do you know?"

7.

Noboru drank the liqueur from the bottle. It was a liqueur as thick as thick could be and faintly sweet and smelt of medicine. He had gone

to Gohei to taste it with Tsugawa who had been an intern at the time. A teacupful of it had been enough for him. It had been too thick for him to drink any more than that. Now, maybe because he was intoxicated from the previous drinking and because the taste was different from sake, it tasted much better than the last time he had tasted it. While listening to o-Sugi, he had downed a good deal before he knew it.

She talked about o-Yumi.

"In my opinion, Doctor Kyojo is also wrong in his diagnosis, to be honest with you. She's not insane. This, I know very well," o-Sugi said. "Will you listen to me seriously?"

"I will, if you tell me everything honestly," he said. "But it doesn't have to be tonight."

"Because you're drunk."

"Because you'll have a hard time with that voice."

"I'm fine. I'm better off with this voice, as if someone else was talking." O-Sugi made doubly sure, saying, "I ask you to listen to me seriously."

Noboru's hand reached o-Sugi's and clasped it in his. She began, leaving her hand clasped in his.

—When o-Sugi came to serve her, o-Yumi was fifteen, two years her senior. Of the three daughters, o-Yumi was the eldest, the younger twelve and the youngest seven. She had a different mother from her younger sisters. Her mother hadn't been dead, but she'd been divorced for some reason or other, or had left of her own will. O-Yumi was not quite sure because nobody would tell her about it in more detail if she asked. But all the same, since a little girl she'd been aware that she had a different mother. She wasn't particularly bothered about it.

O-Yumi was better-looking by far than her younger sisters. Sometimes she showed spirit and sometimes pertness. But essentially she had such caring love that she was loved by everybody. She was loved and relied upon by her step-mother, her sisters, relatives, neighbors, and assistants of her household trade. She was relied upon because she was heir to her father's trade. At the age of fourteen, that is to say, a year before o-Sugi arrived as a servant, the engagement had

been consummated.

In this way, o-Yumi grew to be an ordinary but happy girl in her uneventful life. However, this was only superficial. Unlike other girls, since her early childhood she had experienced calamities she couldn't ever bring on her lips. They all concerned behavior between man and woman. The first experience came her way when she was nine.

"You're a doctor. That's why I can tell you stuff like this," o-Sugi croaked in a whisper. "Or else, I can hardly ever, ever come out with such a horrible thing. Please understand."

"I do." Noboru felt a bit woozy in the head. "And mischief is not rare among children, let me tell you."

In my young lady's case, o-Sugi said, it was different.

When o-Yumi was nine, she was molested by a thirty-odd-year old assistant. He threatened her to kill her, should she repeat it to anybody. The strange sensation that awakened in her girl's body seemed criminal to her, still a young girl. The assistant's words: "I'll kill you" if she would tell it to someone, petrified her as if her hand and feet might have been bound and deprived of bodily movement. Until he was dismissed after a half year or so, he repeated the same acts on her and whispered the same threat into her ears every time he did it. This left a deep scar on her mind, apparently. —In something like two years, she was molested again by a young man, twenty-four or -five, who lived next door, in a different way from the assistant this time. The next-door neighbor was also a rich merchant (what he dealt in, o-Sugi didn't mention), who had as many as three plastered earthen storehouses in his home compound. The young man told o-Yumi that he was a cousin of the merchant's wife, and that he was staying with the family for some reason. The merchant had a girl as old as o-Yumi. Both girls often played together, coming by each other's house. At one time, while playing hide-and-seek in that merchant's yard, o-Yumi hid herself in one of the storehouses. It was used for leaving things that weren't used in their daily life. In it were stored in line and pile, things such as time-worn chests of drawers, nagamochi containers, and wicker baskets. There was an open space in the center laid out with four tatami mats. —Shortly after o-Yumi had

squeezed herself into an opening between the wicker baskets and the nagamochi, that young man came in with a lantern covered by a wire-net in his hand. O-Yumi took him for the seeker, but finding she was mistaken, she was relieved and softly spoke to him. He was so taken aback he could have jumped.

—It's me, o-Yumi whispered. I'm playing hide-and-seek. Please keep quiet when the seeker comes for me.

The young man consented. He took out something from an old chest of drawers, and lay on the tatami matting. He drew the lantern close to him and began to read some book on what she couldn't make out. The seeker came once but left right away. Some time had passed before the man called o-Yumi.

—The seeker won't come any more. So come out here, I'll show you something interesting.

O-Yumi came out to the man. He sat her beside him and showed her the pages he had left open. The pages were for illustrations, but o-Yumi couldn't make head or tail of what they stood for. You have no idea about stuff like this? You're such a baby, said the young man. Look at them carefully. Come closer here, he said and nonchalantly enough drew her close to him. O-Yumi's attention was so absorbed in the illustrations she didn't notice what the young man was doing to her. Before she knew it, he was acting on her, in the similar way the assistant had done to her before. The instant o-Yumi had realized it, her heart missed a beat from more terror than surprise.

—Should you repeat it to anyone, I'd kill you.

She thought she had clearly heard the phrase. The voice might have belonged to the assistant or it might to the young man. While the man was engaged in the act, o-Yumi was gazing at the wire-netting that covered the sliding front door. The door was shut. The wire-netting of the door, it seemed to her, closed her in where she was now, blocking her passage of escape. Then the mesh of the net dimmed away and her arms and legs might be withering away, when o-Yumi blurted all but deliriously:

—Are you going to kill me?

The young man sneered. The sneer was much more frightening than being told that he'd kill her, and so bestial she could not forget it. Come again tomorrow, he said. O-Yumi did as she'd been told, otherwise, she'd be killed.

In the time after the young man had left the neighbor and until a marriage arrangement was brought to her, she fell victim to the molestation of the same sort by three more men. Every time the act was forced on her, she saw the mesh of the wire-netting dim away and heard a voice say: I'll kill you. O-Yumi was good-looking, pert but considerate to others. She was loved by everybody on one hand, and on the other she was repeating those horrible experiences where she wasn't to be seen.

"And then, the marriage arrangement came on," o-Sugi continued. "The nuptials were carried out within the families and the contract was concluded that the gloom would marry into o-Yumi's family the next year. But the gloom breached the contract and married into another family. At first we saw no rhyme or reason, but soon a rumor reached our ears."

The reason for the broken engagement lay in o-Yumi's real mother.

—O-Yumi's mother had been well-known for her stunning beauty and skills in performing entertainment arts. The year after she gave birth to o-Yumi, she met a man and ran away with him and was killed by him in Hakone. The couple, the rumor had it, attempted to commit suicide together for love, but the attempt was not quite successful. The man was left alive. Or else, although they had intended to marry, she got married to o-Yumi's father. This evoked the man's resentment that led him to kill her. —Neither reasons mattered much to o-Yumi, for what bothered her was the secret act performed between man and woman. It was a sin and it would necessarily accompany death.

"I'll get killed, I'll get killed," o-Sugi said. "In my mind there's always been this obsession. The time'll come when a woman must share the secrecy with a man, but when I must, I'll be killed. Like my mother was killed, no doubt I'll be killed. This I've always been obsessed with."

Noboru was seized by the sensation as if cold shivers had run down his spine. O-Sugi's voice had changed. This was bothering him awhile as he listened to her. Only at that moment, did he clearly know that her voice was not hoarse any more and that there was something unusual about the way o-Sugi talked. She was not her usual self.

"Now you see it all, don't you?" said the voice which didn't belong to o-Sugi. "When a man begins to do a thing like that on me, the obsession comes back to me, I'll be killed. It's not my fault. I never ask for it, but I do get it and after that I'll be killed for it."

Noboru's head reeled at the thought:

—This is o-Yumi.

He tried to let go of her hand his had clasped, but his hand would not move. The young woman edged up to him and tied her arm around his neck. He cried out. But no voice came out, nor did his tongue have any movement.

—This is not o-Sugi, it's o-Yumi.

He was beset by the horror that would make his hair stand on end. The woman pressed him down. Her arm around his neck, her chest pat on his, and her mouth still forming words, she gradually got him to lie on his back until eventually she mounted softly on him.

"The first time when the assistant stole into my bedroom," she was continuing. "I thought of the same thing. This would be the very moment I'd be killed. This was here and now I'd be killed . . . , —so, I pulled out my kanzashi. Look, this is the very thing."

She showed her hand. In it Noboru saw a hairpin with a flat top give a glint. Was it a silver pin that was held upside down in her hand? The two-pronged pin with sharp points glimmered in the dark.

"I was waiting for him with my breath held," she whispered. Her hot breath and subdued voice, like they were emitted from her intoxication with a secret pleasure, came next to Noboru's face. "The assistant came into my room, lay beside me, and, reaching his hands, held me like this," she continued, tracing the act. "Like this . . . , —do you have any idea what I did with my kanzashi? I might as well kill him as be killed by him. I alone shouldn't be blamed, for I didn't ask for such a thing. If

he's engrossed in an act of a guilty sort, he should also die . . . , —so I thought."

Noboru saw a spasm coming over her face. Her features loosened. He saw her teeth bared between her lips. He tried to push her body off his, but his strength had drained from his entire body and it felt paralyzed. He could not move his fingers, even.

—I'm in a dream. This is a dream.

He was having a nightmare, thought Noboru. The woman held her kanzashi the other way around. Slowly and quietly, she applied it to the back of his left ear.

"I did this," said the woman. "The assistant's hands reached further. He thought he could have me at his disposal. While whimpering to his movements, I began to put strength into my hand, like this."

She was now acting out the scene that had unfolded in her room and what she had done to kill the assistant. Noboru's eyes were blinded. He heard her voice ring in his ears. She cried out in triumph.

"At that moment, I sank these pins into him, right at this point. I plunged them right into this spot with all my might, with all my might—"

Noboru felt a violent shock somewhere in his body, heard the woman's violent screech, and lost his consciousness.

8.

The sight came to Noboru of Red Beard sitting in front of his eyes. Beside him was Mori Handayu. Noboru heard Red Beard talking to him.

—Was I still dreaming? Noboru thought to himself. The two figures right in front of him seemed to him to be very far away and their talking voices also seemed unreal and lacking in resonance as if coming from behind a wall. Thinking that surely he was in a dream, he closed his eyes. And scrupulously he opened them again and saw only Niide Kyojo sitting alone. The figure of Mori Handayu was gone.

"Back to sleep, get more sleep," said Kyojo. "Sleep one more day, and you'll get well. Think nothing and sleep on."

Noboru tried to say something.

"You don't need to worry," Kyojo shook his head. "You were given medicine liqueur. The liqueur was mixed with the medicine I concocted. It's a very unique medicine to alleviate that girl's fits. She'd heard about you from o-Sugi and had been looking for an opportunity to do what she did to you. You were drunk. Fool. If you hadn't been drunk, mind you, you'd have been able to tell right away that she was not o-Sugi."

Noboru shook his head. To be sure, he was drunk, but there was more to it. It was dark outside, and because of it he was bamboozled by that hoarse voice. Although he tried to say so, the most he could do was shake his head. He had no voice and his tongue had no movement.

"Had I returned a teeny-weeny bit later, you'd be dead now," said Red Beard. "O-Sugi was also fast asleep in the house. She'd been given the same medicine liqueur. As soon as I saw that in the house, I rushed to that bench. The girl has her head swathed in bleached cotton cloth now. I had, of necessity, to do so because she was violently excited like a ferocious animal. Look at this arm."

Red Beard rolled up his left sleeve. Noboru saw his arm from the wrist up to the forearm also swathed in bleached cotton cloth.

"She bit me here in as many as five spots," said Kyojo and rolled down the sleeve. "—Nobody knows about this, nor does Handayu, so you don't need to be ashamed, but learn a lesson from this experience when you must. Do you get the hang of it?"

Noboru felt tears roll down from his eyes.

Kyojo took out paper tucked in the chest of his robe. Noboru expected that he'd wipe off his tears with it, but he didn't. He wiped Noboru's mouth. Ah, it was slobbered with saliva. Noboru was annoyed, then, ashamed, closed his eyes tight.

"Helpless fool," Kyojo said. "Forget it and go to sleep. When you get well, I'll have a word with you."

Kyojo stood up and left the room. Following the sound of footsteps with his ears, Noboru thought to himself:

—Red Beard, no, he's not all that bad.

The Direct Appeal

1.

That day was a long busy day. —An old man died around ten o'clock in the morning in the north ward building. Presently after this, a seriously injured case, a woman navvy, was carried in. Yasumoto Noboru attended both the old man's deathbed and the surgical operation of sewing together the woman's wound, as an assistant to Niide Kyojo. —That was the very first job he did as an intern.

Even after the incident of the madwoman, Noboru had not changed his attitude. He had no desire at all to become an intern in the infirmary, and he wrote his father about his intention to leave this dispensary. In spite of this, a change, it seemed, was taking place in his very depths. He had succumbed to Red Beard. He had been rescued from the grip of the lethal danger of o-Yumi the madwoman, by the skin of his teeth. —That was exactly a by-the-skin-of-his-teeth incident and odious matter of humiliation. He could find no excuse whatsoever for that, should it be known to other people. —Red Beard had sorted it out without letting anybody know about the incident. For this Noboru was heavily indebted to him. Funny, but he had a sense of relief, a sense that, by having owed to Red Beard, the wall between them had been removed. This created a close-knit tie that brought them closer where the eyes could not see.

Right after the incident, Noboru had not been aware of the change that had taken place in him. It dawned upon him much later. For he had decided that it was not he but all those who interned him in an infirmary that were to blame for his involvement in such a humiliating imbroglio with the madwoman. Therefore, only if they would get him out of here, he could not wish for more. —Niide Kyojo seemed to be behaving as usual. Or else he did know inside out what was going on in the depths

of Noboru and was patiently waiting for the time to ripen. You were sometimes under those impressions about him, but superficially he was his usual self every inch of him. He rarely spoke to Noboru.

That morning, in the beginning of April, Kyojo called him to the north ward building. He had Mori Handayu run this errand. But Noboru would not budge right away.

"Let me tell you again, North Ward One. Make haste, please."

"Orders?"

"I tell you, Doctor Niide is calling you," Handayu said coldly. "Do you mean to say no?"

Reluctantly Noboru stood up.

"Why not put on the coat?" Handayu said, displaying perseverance. "Your garment will be soiled."

In spite of his suggestion, Noboru left there as he was.

North Ward One was a ward for serious cases. Kyojo was there sitting at the head of the patient's bed. Hearing Noboru enter the room, he beckoned him without looking back over his shoulder. He told him to diagnose the patient's disease. The room was filled with an unpleasant odor. It smelt of astringent, bitter raw greens like mashed mugwort. Obviously the smell was coming from the sick person. Noboru sat at the bedside, grimacing at the unpleasant smell. —At first flush he knew that the patient was dying. But he conformed to the formalities. He took the pulse, listened to the heart and lungs, and opened the eyelids to see the pupils.

"Will last about a half toki, in my opinion, sir," Noboru said. "He has no consciousness. He won't be feeling pain any more. He may not last a half toki."

So saying, he pointed at the purple spots that had come out on either side of the patient's nose.

"This is his medical record," Kyojo said and handed him a piece of paper. "After reading this, make your diagnosis."

Noboru took it and read it.

Patient's name Rokusuke. Age fifty-two. Fifty-two days have passed since he was put here. Initial complaints were nothing but debility all

over the body and light pain in the abdomen, but in about twenty days the pain got worse and vomiting began, lost appetite. The vomit became liquid, sticky brown strands, emitting a peculiar smell. In the center of the abdomen, —below the stomach was found a swelling. After some fiftieth day, the pain spread over the entire abdomen and the frequency of vomiting increased, and the enervation and exhaustion of the whole body became conspicuous . . . Putting all that in a nutshell, Noboru unstrung the patient's robe. His front part was widely exposed. Under the ruffled, bluish-black, dry skin, all the bones looked sticking against the skin, as it were, and the abdomen alone, swollen unnaturally, was smooth and large. Noboru touched the swelling. He confirmed that it was hardened like a rock and lodging firmly in the cradle of the bones as if the entirety was adhering to them. He gave to Kyojo a diagnosis that he was able to think up.

"No, it is not," Kyojo shook his head. "This is one of the rare cases recorded in your notebooks. No doubt it's a cancerous tumor, but this patient has distinctively different symptoms from other cases. Read what's there in that record again."

Noboru read it and came out with another name of disease.

"This is a cancerous tumor generated at the incipient stage in the large *klaire*, that is, the pancreas," said Kyojo. "The pancreas is located below the stomach and cradled between the spleen and the duodenum. It's an immovable internal organ. This means that no pain is felt even though there's a growth of cancer there. By the time one becomes aware, due to the pain, that one has cancer, there've already been metastases to a number of other viscera. Therefore, it consumes the patient so remarkably, he or she takes a rapid turn for the worse and dies. This is a rare case and it'll help you to remember it."

"Does that mean there's no cure, sir?"

"No," Kyojo shook his head derisively. "Not only is there any cure for this particular disease but also there are none for any other disease."

Noboru slowly turned to look at him.

"Advances in medicine may bring about changes, but they won't be able to surpass your own vital force," Kyojo said. "The art of medicine,

so people call it, is hopeless. The longer you practice it, the more certain you feel it is hopeless. When you get ill, some of you conquer it, and others surrender to it and fall. Doctors can confirm the symptoms and progress of your disease and be of some assistance to those of you who have strong vital force. But that's the most they can do for you. The art of medicine has no potency beyond that, to be sure."

In a way to express his self-deprecation and grief, he jerked up one of his stout shoulders. "—The first thing we have to tackle among the things we can do today is fight against poverty and ignorance. Only by conquering poverty and ignorance, can we make good for what the art of medicine fecklessly falls short of. Do you understand?"

Noboru thought to himself if it wasn't a political issue. Thereupon, as if he'd caught up with Noboru, Kyojo said violently, "You may answer back: That's a political issue. Everybody makes do by saying so. But, I ask you: Has politics ever done anything against poverty and ignorance? All right, shall we limit to poverty alone? The Edo shogunate has issued hundreds of, thousands of statutes so far. And has there ever been one among the many which has banned people from being left poor? Has there been one such statute, eh?"

When he came as far as that, Kyojo compressed his lips. He seemed to have realized that his tone of voice had assumed enragement and that it was considerably childish of him. But, induced by his tone, Noboru lifted his eyes from the patient and looked at Kyojo.

"But sir," he retorted. "Wasn't this dispensary . . . I mean this institute called an infirmary, instituted with the shogunal budget for that purpose?"

2.

Kyojo jerked up his shoulder.

"Infirmary, is it?" said Kyojo. Scorn and grief surfaced on his face again. "You'll see if you stay here. It's better than nothing, medication and treatment given here are better than nothing. However, the problem

is more fundamental. If we could manage to do away with poverty and ignorance, most diseases would stay away."

Into this came Mori Handayu and reported that an injured case had only just been carried in.

"A young woman navvy, sir. Something went wrong in the construction site and she was seriously injured in the waist and abdomen," said Handayu. "Doctor Makino has examined her, but he says it's a case he can't deal with by himself and requests you to come help him, sir."

At this Kyojo's expression turned spent, which meant: Why, Makino Shosaku didn't specialize in surgery, did he? Noboru turned to Kyojo.

"I got you," Kyojo said. "I'm coming soon, so tell him to do all he can before I do."

Handayu left right away. Meantime, Kyojo kept his eye on the dying patient. And then he closed his eyes and quietly bent down his head. Did he bend down his head in reverence for the dying person or did he just droop it? Nobody knew which.

"Rokusuke was a craftsman. His trade was drawing maki-e*," Kyojo began in a low voice. "I hear he used to have a great reputation for his skills. The reputation was such that high houses of shogunal successor families, such as the Ki'i House and the Owari House, bought a number of his works like stationery stands and caskets. In spite of his high renown, he seems to have no family or close friends. He was brought here from a flophouse. No one's come to see him. Nor has he ever talked anything about himself. He's just stayed quiet. Even if he's asked anything, he won't answer it. He's continued to clam up and talked nothing to this day."

Kyojo sighed. "This disease comes with excruciating pain," he went on, "but I've never heard him complain of the pain. I don't think he'll bring anything at his lips until the minute he breathes his last. —When a man dies, he should die like this man."

When he finished, Kyojo got to his feet and told Noboru to attend on

* Decorative techniques used for japan, employing sprinkled powders or filings, usually of gold or silver, the powder applied to lacquered designs while the lacquer is still damp.

this old man together with Mori till his end came. He'd send him over here.

"Nothing's more sublime in one's life than one's last moment. Therefore, watch it for all your worth."

In acquiescence, Noboru changed his sitting position.

Noboru gazed intently at the patient's face for the first time. It was ugliness itself. On it death was lingering. The body was completely consumed, so he had lost the mien he had had while in life. His eyes, cheeks, and jaw left no flesh at all as if it had been scraped to the last ounce, and they were complete voids. Only purple-blotched ashen skin which was dried up and crisscrossed with lines clung to the protruding bones. Rather than a living human face, it was all but a skull itself.

"It's a surprise Red Beard should talk that much," Noboru murmured. This was a soliloquy that came out before he knew it. He thought he had heard someone else say it, so he lifted his eyes and looked from left to right. Naturally, he found no one around him. He returned to the patient and for a second time murmured low, "The other day, didn't you say, 'Don't talk more than needed here,' eh? —Aren't you yourself such a big talker?"

The patient's breath was short and acute. Sporadically, he groaned faintly and gasped painfully. He had no consciousness now. What little life left in him was struggling to slip off his body and that was that.

"It's only ugly," Noboru mumbled. "—Sublime? No, a far cry from it. Death *is* ugly."

Shortly, Mori Handayu came. He had a rice bowl and a chopstick whose tip was wrapped with cotton. Probably they were the eating utensils the dying old man had been using. He sat at the top of the patient's bed and said without turning to Noboru, "I'll take care of this man. Please go to Doctor Niide."

Noboru looked at Handayu.

"Front No. 3," Handayu said, his eyes remaining in the direction he was looking in. "They say they're going to sew the wound together, so make haste and off you go."

As Noboru heard Handayu saying so, the words of Tsugawa Genzo

came back to him: Red Beard got them to work at his beck and call, regardless of day or night. Noboru sensed Genzo was giving a sarcastic wink at him somewhere.

The front house was designated for the place to treat outpatients and its No. 3 was exclusively used for surgery. No sooner had Noboru entered it than a naked white body came into view. The room had an area of some eight tatami-mats, and its wooden floor, so scrubbed it was shining, was laid out with rush matting, —the matting was covered with bleached cotton cloth. The woman's naked body was laid with her back on it. As soon as Noboru entered, Makino Shoketsu unfolded a shielding screen. The naked body was now hidden from Noboru. But at Kyojo's call, he went around to the other side of the screen, and now he had to face the very vividness of the naked body much closer to him.

The woman's body was that of a twenty-four- or -five-year old by the look of it. It was well-developed and everything except for her sun-tanned muscular limbs was strikingly white and smooth. It was beautiful, even. Her nipples were ripe in a dark tint on the well-rounded full breasts. Her broad belly, part of which was covered with bleached cotton cloth, was somewhat prominent. The color of her nipples and the prominence of her belly registered the first stage of her pregnancy. —Recognizing this, Noboru promptly averted his eye from her body. While studying in Nagasaki, he had examined and treated quite a few woman patients, but never before had he seen such a sheer naked body, which was, into the bargain, overflowing with youth and strength.

"Press the legs down," Kyojo commanded. "She's medicated but she may kick up, don't get kicked when she does. Take heed."

Only then did Noboru notice that her arms were spread open and that the other ends of the strings tying her wrists were tied to the pillars. Noboru followed Kyojo's directions. He straightened out both her legs and, sitting between them, held her down on the kneecaps with his both hands. His eyes wandered looking for where to settle. He felt his face blush. The very position was incomparably provocative and ridiculously shameful.

"Don't take your eyes off her," Kyojo said. "Study carefully how the

wound will be sewn together."

So saying, Kyojo took off the bleached cotton cloth that was covering part of her. The needle in his right hand was a little hooked at the tip and a two-ply silk thread was pulled through its eye. Taking off the cloth revealed the wound. It was a big wound as long as seven inches. It started from the left flank and, zigzagging, reached under the naval. Obviously, the wound was cleansed for disinfection. The cleansing made the wound look all the more vivid. It had burst open ruggedly due to the thick-layered fat. A little blood exuded from it when Kyojo took off the cloth and the entire belly convulsed. The woman groaned. This caused part of the large intestine to rise out through the gap. The thick, bluish-gray intestine slipped out, wriggling like a living animal, and squirmed outside the wound like a snake. There Noboru passed out. All of a sudden he blanked out, feeling his head float up. He thought, Oops, he'd be kicked. And he had lost his consciousness.

3.

It was only for a short time that Noboru was unconscious. He came to instantly someone slapped him on the cheeks. He felt he had long lost his consciousness, but he found himself in the same old Front No. 3 and in Makino Shoketsu's arm. Presumably it was Makino who slapped his cheeks, because he saw Kyojo at the other end. With a bitter scowl on his face, Kyojo told him to retire to his room. —Noboru stood up, his eyes averted from the scene. He feared reverting to the woman's body would cause him to pass out again, and he lacked the pluck to remain with the doctors despite the pride, if he had any, that would insist that he do.

Noboru threw himself down on the floor of his room. Going back to the memory of the scene would make him feel like throwing up, so he tried hard to think of something else. But the débâcle he'd made today, coming on the heels of that o-Yumi incident, overwhelmed him with the impact that he'd been irreparably humiliated and completely shattered.

"Muddle-headed sap." He put his arm over his eyes as he lay in defeat. "For all those fiascos I've made, how can I boast I studied in Nagasaki?"

He had been on top of the world. He had been and gone and boasted in the face of o-Sugi, o-Yumi's attendant, that he'd studied the authentic Dutch medicine in Nagasaki. And that, thus, he knew ways of treating which doctors of a sort, Kyojo for one, didn't. As he remembered all this, he cringed and let out a bitter groan, shaking his head.

Noboru skipped lunch.

Mori Handayu had dropped by and offered to eat together, but he had turned down the offer without sitting up. He had been still so sick of himself, he had had no appetite at all.

"You might as well fill your stomach," Handayu had said. "Doctor Niide was saying that he'd take you out on his rounds in the afternoon."

"Out on his rounds?"

"To make rounds and give treatment," Handayu had said. "You can only come back at night. It depends though."

Noboru had clammed up.

"Old man Rokusuke passed away," Handayu had said, slid the door shut, and left once and for all.

Red Beard's rounds split into two types. One was to be sent for mostly by domain lords and wealthy people and see them, and the other was to visit poor people and give them treatment. —The original mission of the "Koishikawa Infirmary," commonly called the dispensary, was to examine and treat poor patients free of charge, and, depending on their conditions and circumstances, take them into the infirmary as inpatients to give them medical care there. This is something that has already been mentioned. In spite of their knowledge about the infirmary, repelling all the kind services they could otherwise have got, not a few refused to be in care of the dispensary and would not budge in spite of the kind counsel of their neighbors and landlords. Red Beard went to visit those people where they were. He examined and treated them on the spot, whether they liked it or not. And he was rarely thanked for his services or received with a good will. Noboru heard about this time and time

again.

"For heavens' sake, going together to give unwelcome services," Noboru muttered tiredly. "But can't I help it, especially after such a débâcle I made? Not to mention, Red Beard is not the type of person who'd accept my refusal if I refused."

About a half toki after lunch, Handayu came again to tell Noboru that he was wanted. Noboru went out with Kyojo.

Kyojo caught a glimpse of the plain clothes Noboru had changed into, not the regular uniform. He cast a glance for a split-second and frowned at him but said nothing. —Noboru was not alone to accompany him, but also an errand boy who carried the medicine basket on his back. He was wearing puttees on his bare legs, straw sandals, and a gray hanten the same color of the robe as the one the medical staff were donned in. The hanten had the collar-flaps on which white big letters were bleached as "Koishikawa Infirmary." The errand boy was called Takezo and aged twenty-eight. He had such a heavy stutter that he was called Stuttaké. He had been carrying Kyojo's medicine basket nearly five years. He was short and skinny. His face, small with a dark complexion, was smiling, and his eyes looked like they were too ready to respond amiably when spoken to by someone. —Of course it was impossible for him. He stuttered so much he would have to consume all his nerves and physical strength just to return, Good day, it's a lovely day. This was why it was absolutely impossible to make so amicable a response as to make a good impression on the other.

It had been almost a quarter of a toki since they left the infirmary. When they came to the back precincts of the Denzu-In Temple, they were called from behind and stopped in their tracks. A man about fifty came running up to them, and busily bending to greet Kyojo, he said he was on his way to the infirmary to visit him there.

"If you're talking about Rokusuke, then I say he died," Kyojo said.

The man uttered "Oh?" in an ambiguous tone.

"He passed on about two toki ago, and his body's already been disposed of. Are you here to tell me that somebody has popped up as his blood kin?"

"Yes, doctor, that's . . . what's . . . you know." The man was so wishy-washy as he spoke, it made no sense. Gulping, he continued, "It's a bit complicated, doctor. What we call the man's daughter has been found. That's fine but her kid's sick. A landlord called Tosuke brought the kid with him. But the kid's mom's in even bigger trouble now, doctor."

"I don't see the point. What's the gist of it?"

"That's . . . ," The man looked at Kyojo as if to study his expression and said, "I'm very . . . umph . . . , but may I ask if you could come over to my place?"

"I've got to go as far as Nakatomi-zaka. I have a serious case to see," Kyojo said and abruptly looked back at Noboru over his shoulder. "Yasumoto, go with this man, the proprietor of Kashiwa-ya, and hear about the circumstances. I'll be along in about a half toki."

Noboru turned on Takezo, who in turn shook his head, glancing up at him. By this Stuttaké meant, it seemed Hobson's choice. He took off, accompanied by Kyojo.

Kashiwa-ya was the name of a flophouse located in Nagi-machi in the back of the Denzu-In Temple. Its proprietor was called Kimbei. Powder-picture painter Rokusuke had stayed there for something like two years before he had got worse and been charged into the infirmary. But the story went as far back as nearly twenty years, —that is, when he had been a highly-reputed maki-e painter. Since that time, he had been in and out. He would pop up when most unexpected and stayed awhile. There had been times he would stay only two nights and there also had been times he would stay a fortnight or three even. At first, nobody knew what he did for a living. They guessed he was a traveling gambler. He was decently clad, quiet of his character. While staying there, he was reticent, just drinking a little sake, licking it, over the gossips he would quietly listen to other guests make; and then unexpectedly, he would disappear into thin air. A couple of years would have to pass before he appeared again. Or else, he would come as often as every other month. This was how it had been practiced over the years. —It was only several years ago that he was known to be Rokusuke the maki-e painter. By that time,

nobody in the world talked any more about him as a popular painter that he had been, and he himself did almost nothing in his trade. Some repair work was the most he would do when he felt like working. He had become a much more difficult person. When he came to Flophouse Kashiwa, he would only be cooped up in his guest room. He quit being the audience of his fellow guests' gossips.

"He was a man of absolutely no words," Kimbei said to Noboru. "In the twenty years he had been a guest here, we had not the foggiest if he had a wife or a family, if you can believe me, doctor. When we got the infirmary to take him to, we were really at our wits' end because we had definitely no information about him."

There were four children waiting in Kashiwa-ya.

4.

Kimbei said they were Rokusuke's daughter's children. The first-born called Tomo, eleven years old, was laid up in bed with a high fever. Second came an eight-year old boy called Sukezo, followed by a younger sister named o-Tomi, six, and the youngest three-year old boy Mataji. All of them were in awfully shabby clothes mended here and there with patches covering the wear and tear. They were all skin and bones and so pale as to look sick except for Mataji the youngest. O-Tomi was holding Mataji in her arms, and Sukezo was sitting right next to his younger brother and sister in a way to protect them with his whole self. He was stealthily inspecting the surroundings with his nervous eyes reflecting trepidation and hostility. —They were in a room facing north with four tatami-mats and a half. That was the same room Rokusuke would always stay in when he had been a guest there. The sliding doors, fusuma and shoji, fitted to the room were time-worn and patched all over. The fusuma had the paper torn across. The torn paper was flapping noisily like the big mouth of a papier-mâché animal stupidly opening and shutting as the drafts came into the room. The rush-plaited covers of the tatami-mats were frayed. They were so worn-out, in some spots

the strands of straw per se were sticking out. And plaster flaked off the walls. A usual flophouse, be that as it may, could have gone one better, but this particular one was situated in the back of the Denzu-In Temple, where it was unlikely for many to put up for the night and it presented a scene exactly bleak and deserted.

Noboru examined Tomo as he listened to what Kimbei had to tell. Apparently, she got her cold worsened. She had a high temperature and occasional coughs, but other than that she had nothing further to worry about. Only, she was evidently suffering from malnutrition—and so were her brothers and sister. Were she to be left under this malnutrition, then most probably she would be jeopardized by tuberculosis of the lungs. Noboru gave directions that her forehead be bathed with a cold cloth; that the room be kept warm by keeping out winds; and that her nighties be changed often enough due to perspiration.

"Garbage gathers in a hollow, isn't it well said?" Kimbei said with a sigh. "For years our trade's been downhill. My son's been a day laborer and my wife and daughter have had to do piecework at home. Otherwise we can't make a living. Notwithstanding, we get to shoulder a hassle like this all the time. In many other houses, the business is good. They're laying up what they make. But of all in the world, misery visits us to burden us more when it should take pity on us instead. Why is it, doctor? —Excuse me, doctor, did you say anything?"

"Let us hear the rest of your story," Noboru said.

Kimbei returned where he had left off and continued with it.

It was really complicated. They believed that Rokusuke had no kith or kin. Bright and early this morning, an elderly man brought these here four children, brothers and sisters. This man says, "They're Rokusuke's grandchildren." Kimbei can't believe it there and then, but anyway, he lends his ears to what the elderly man has to say. —According to him, he's a manager of the Gorobei Tenements in Odawara-cho, Kyobashi, and his name is Matsuzo, his age sixty-two. He simply proffers facts about himself, and no more or no less, saying like this: I was born in the year of Yang-Gold and Mouse and I am just sixty-two. My name is Matsuzo and my wife has been dead for three years.

Probably he must put everything shipshape. He persisted with his way. It was a solid five years, three months and fifteen days ago that the family of a man called Tomisaburo moved into the tenement house which he managed.

Tomisaburo introduced himself as a joiner by trade. His wife was called o-Kuni. They had three children. O-Tomi was not weaned yet. Although he had a trade as a joiner, Tomisaburo did almost nothing in his trade. He spent most of the time dilly-dallying. This made the family constantly short of stuff. In no time did they get indebted to all neighbors, their fellow tenants. —O-Kuni was meek of her character, so meek you got driven to the point of exasperation. She'd never been heard complaining. She shut herself up in the tenement room, tirelessly plying at piecework whenever she could spare time for it. Nor did she ever neglect her children. She took loving care of them. She was a docile, obedient wife to her husband as a matter of course. But Tomisaburo didn't cease to treat her unkindly. Above all when drunk, he'd abuse her with violence by beating and kicking her. —As days went by, it came to be suspected there must be something more behind his use of violence than the simple act of giving vent to anger. When, drunk, he yelled, he was heard to repeat to her, "Go to your old man."

—Your old man's salted away tons of dough. You're his only kid.

—Your old man's a cold-blooded son-of-a-bitch. That son-of-a-bitch doesn't care a hair about his only daughter and grandkids. He only does what he likes when they're making a bare living. He's a beast.

O-Kuni did not retort. Beaten and kicked, she simply stayed quiet. Not a sob to escape her. She patiently endured her husband's rage until it calmd down. This was how it had been with them. Matsuzo the manager as well as their fellow tenants had not the least idea who it was that Tomisaburo referred to as "the old man" or what backgrounds the family had behind them. Once Matsuzo called o-Kuni and asked what it was all about. It was on the 19th of October the year before the last. Asked, o-Kuni equivocated and said nothing definite.

—I do have a father, but for reasons we are as good as cut from each other. I can't go see him, no matter what.

This was the only answer he elicited from her.

Tomisaburo began to mix with undesirable company and spoil himself in delinquency. He didn't do a stroke of work. He continually stayed away from home for three, five days in a row. Meantime, Mataji came on, making the family even worse off. Seven days ago, around ten o'clock at night, o-Kuni visited Matsuzo. The manager was already in bed, but as she said she had a very important thing she had to tell him about, he let her in and listened to her.

O-Kuni asked him first:

—An official notice was posted the other day. Is it true what's announced in it?

What she referred to was the notice that announced a prize of "Twenty-five Pieces of Silver" to be given to the person who informed the authorities of the criminals. A band of three burglars had broken into the temple called Nanso-In in Atagoshita, Shiba and stolen several items of the temple treasure. Among the items had been a Buddha statue of gold and bronze, a work of a well-renowned Buddha image sculptor from a thousand years before, one of the sculptor's very few works that could be found in the country. Were the burglars, uneducated, to melt it down to a mere lump of metal, it'd be lost forever. The notice was for the informant to be awarded a prize if he or she notified the authorities of the whereabouts of either the statue or the burglars.

Matsuzo asked back:

—Is there anything that reminds you of it?

O-Kuni nodded. About a half month ago, she saw her husband, on returning home, hide something in the roof-space. But she pretended to notice nothing at all because there was something strange about him and because he mixed with bad company. She took it out carefully while he was away. The parcel was wrapped in a cloth and shibu-strengthened-paper beneath it. When she unwrapped it, she found a Buddha statue inside. It was a metal statue, some one foot two inches tall. It was most likely to be the statue in question that the temple had possessed. With this information o-Kuni came to talk to Matsuzo.

—If I am to receive twenty-five pieces of silver, we'll be able to get

around our money matters and I believe it'll be good for my husband. If he were to be left the way he is, he'd commit more crimes, until finally he'll be sentenced to banishment to a remote island or to head exposure at the prison gate. In my humble opinion, he'd do better to be caught now and go through a hard time in jail, and he'd reform. He'd work like one who makes an honest living.

The point of it was to ask what Matsuzo would think. For she'd steel herself to inform the authorities of her husband's crime.

Matsuzo assured her that it'd certainly work. There and then, he went with o-Kuni to have a look at the Buddha statue. He was convinced that that was it. He took it home and kept it for her. After having talked with the neighborhood association manager, Matsuzo got o-Kuni to take the statue with her and make a direct appeal to the authorities. He made it look like she did it of her own volition, not accompanied by either her landlord or the neighborhood association manager. At the same time Matsuzo and the neighborhood manager also agreed that they'd attest, to o-Kuni's advantage, why it'd had to come about and how, when they were subpoenaed by the town magistrate.

They were summoned presently. Matsuzo appeared at the court together with the neighborhood association manager. They testified that they had no idea at all about o-Kuni's direct appeal. That o-Kuni was hard-working in total penury. That she was a devoted mother raising her four children in that predicament. That she was making a living on her own. That her husband Tomisaburo was good for nothing. And so forth.

"At that, the legal court," Kimbei continued, "well, the North Town Magistrate is on duty this month, he's called Lord Shimada of Echigo, and he, the legal court, has judged her action to be outrageous."

Noboru looked at Kimbei incredulously.

"That's true," Kimbei said nodding at Noboru. "It's outrageous," he stressed, repeating the judgment. "—Matsuzo says even though the husband may have committed burglary, it's not justifiable for his wife to sue him with the prize in mind. She's an outrageous unnatural woman. She was sentenced to imprisonment for further interrogation. This is how it all went."

The judicial decision was what everybody had expected in the least. Matsuzo and his company found no word to say, but when they left the white sand of the court, one of the police sergeants passed o-Kuni's message on to them.

—There is a place called Nagi-machi in the back of the Denzu-In Temple in Koishikawa. You'll find there a flophouse called Kashiwa-ya. It's run by Kimbei. There must be an old man named Rokusuke staying there. Please take my children to this old man and tell him the circumstances. I'll assure you he'll take them on because they are his own grandchildren.

So went o-Kuni's message.

5.

"Then, well . . . Matsuzo, the tenement manager, took off as soon as he finished. Yes, so he did," said Kimbei. "This is how it ended, doctor. I told him about Rokusuke. He's ill. He's in the infirmary now and nothing can be done about the kids, here. But Matsuzo says, he's done all he's so far been able to. He means he'll leave the children to the old man. O-Kuni herself wants it this way. What else could I have done? And what's worse, this girl has an awfully high fever. I'm led into a cul-de-sac, ain't I, doctor? I shouted my grumping wife down and put the girl to bed. At any rate, I thought I'd get Doctor Niide to see her in the first place and then get his advice. So, I was on the way."

One of Kimbei's children came and said, "Mom's asking" what to do about dinner. Kimbei sighed and labored to his feet as if tired out.

"I wish I knew how come we must always host nothing but troubles," Kimbei deplored. "When was it? A fortune-teller stayed with us for ten days or so. He said all the nails in this house were hammered in the wrong way. Reverse nailing. This incurs bad fortune. Nails driven in the wrong way doesn't mean nail-heads are driven the way people commonly think, but that it can't be detected without the insight of fortune-teller's lore. That may be true, but I'll tell you, doctor, by all

means, it's impossible to pull out all the nails of this dilapidated house and do it over." He added, getting to his feet, "—That fortune-teller left without paying the bill for his ten-night stay. By doing so, he showed the evidence of reverse nailing, didn't he, doctor? What good fortune!"

In about a half toki, Kyojo arrived.

As soon as Kyojo began examining Tomo, Noboru told him what he had heard from Kimbei. Wordlessly, Kyojo finished examining her. While sipping the tea Kimbei served, he had the medicine basket fetched, produced ten doses of two medicines (already mixed), and told Kimbei how to care for Tomo and how often she must be medicated.

"Well then, it means, how can I say," Kimbei said embarrassedly. "It follows we'll look after these kids. Do you mean it, doctor?"

"I've no idea yet how it'll be settled," Kyojo said. "I'll go see the town magistrate. It's fine if the tenement in Odawara-cho takes on the children. Or else, until they find a place to settle down, you may be taking care of them. Are you not willing?"

"Well," Kimbei said, gulping the water in his mouth. "As I've just told this doctor, our business has been all along downhill. Invariably, right in the bare living that we all of us have to eke out, a hassle like this lands, and we have to shoulder it . . ."

"Rokusuke died leaving some money," put in Kyojo. "He entrusted me with five ryo and two bu so I could settle things with it after his death. He said he'd cleared his bill for lodging here. Or do you say he did not?"

"That is, you mean, well," Kimbei hemmed and suddenly looked up. "You mean to say that old man Rokusuke died leaving money, doctor?"

"I wouldn't let you lose money if he hadn't," Kyojo said. "But if you don't agree to look after the children, I'll leave them to somebody else."

Kimbei said he'd look after them.

"What's become of the daughter's husband?" Kyojo said. "I mean the man called Tomisaburo or something. Hasn't he been caught yet?"

"Well, let's see, what did I hear? I think I heard he'd been caught. Or rather, it was he hadn't yet. Doctor, I mean, we couldn't give a damn about it. We've been frantically tackling quite another thing."

Kyojo turned to the children and asked their names and ages one by one. He seemed unable to look them straight in the face because he was gripped by pity and wretchedness. The children seemed, on their part, to be scared of Kyojo's grim bearded looks. The three young children huddled together tight and failed to answer satisfactorily.

"Everything's fine, so don't worry," Kyojo said as if angry. "Your mother will be back soon. Your big sister will get well soon, too. Tell me, what do you all want to be when you grow up?"

Apparently, it was to break the ice that Kyojo said so, but it was such an abrupt and stupid question. Clamming up, the children went on staring at him. He was angered at the stupidity of the question he'd just made. He said: Don't worry, your mother will be back soon. Blushing, he stood up.

Kyojo told Takezo to go back to the infirmary, and, left alone with Noboru, walked as far as the Denzu-In Temple and hailed kago or street palanquins. He ordered the bearers to take them to Kodemma-cho. He shouted, Hurry! Noboru saw one of them almost jumped in surprise at the shout.

"What's he up to?" Noboru mumbled in his kago. "What the heck is he going to do?"

On arriving at the jail in Kodemma-cho, Kyojo requested a meeting with the magistrate. He seemed to be well-known there, too. The usher was exceedingly polite, and so was Okano, a police constable. He received Kyojo on behalf of Magistrate Shimada who was out attending the shogun's castle. Once they were in the drawing room, Kyojo came straight to the point. He asked if they had in jail a woman called o-Kuni from the Gorobei Tenements in Odawara-cho. Okano nodded and said, yes, they did.

"I want to examine the woman," Kyojo said. "Of course I've let Lord Shimada of Echigo know about it. She has a rare disease and I've been treating her. I want to check the effect of the medicine I gave to her."

Okano stared him in the face and said, "Will you be long, doctor?"

"A half koku at the most, I guess."

"I am not in the position to decide on my own, but since it is your

request, Doctor Niide, not anyone else's." Okano thought for a few moments and said, "Request approved. Will you please proceed to the medicine room?"

Then Okano stood up to show the room himself.

Turning the corridors led them to where a number of rooms lined facing the courtyard. Okano guided the two to the room at the end. It was about six tatami-mats large: one side of the room was furnished with a built-in cabinet and the other a wall, against which were piled parcels wrapped in shibu-paper. The room was filled with a smell apparently coming from the parcels, the smell of sun, as it were.

"It's lucky that Shimada of Echigo is on duty," Kyojo said to himself under his breath. "Had it been Tsutsui, —I'm sure that pighead wouldn't budge for me, but if it's Shimada . . . Did you say anything?"

"No, sir," Noboru shook his head.

Kyojo gazed at Noboru with the look of his eyes as though he'd just awaken from a dream. He was about to say something, but shut up with an indignant expression on his face. —Shortly, Okano brought o-Kuni, told them to let him know when they were finished, and left.

"Come closer," Kyojo said to o-Kuni. "I am a doctor. Niide Kyojo's my name. I treated Rokusuke, who you claim is your father. I'm here to get you out of here. Come closer and tell me what it's all about."

6.

O-Kuni said she was thirty-two but never looked to be on the right side of forty, if a day. Her hair tied with a rice straw was salt and pepper with no luster at all. Her gaunt boney face was a livid gray. Its skin was dried up and trenched with lines. —She was in a lined kimono with patches of old cloth applied to keep it in one piece, and on top of it wore a half-width sash, another miserable patchwork. These tattered rags would make no beggar look more contemptible and wretched.

In spite of Kyojo's ardor, o-Kuni did nothing but to wear a void expression on her face. She just sat not responding to Kyojo. She's,

Noboru thought, like a tokkuri or a sake container whose bottom was missing. She gave the impression that she was an empty shell. She had a body, a framework, but the contents were missing, drained.

Kyojo talked blue in the face and in vain. He said, "You take my place, Yasumoto. I'll excuse myself for a while and go to see Okano."

Then he went out.

Noboru called to mind Rokusuke who had deceased, then the children who were left waiting in Kashiwa-ya. Grandfather and grandchildren. The grandfather died a lonely death in the dispensary and the children were shivering in a strange flophouse. He thought of the children. And now he began to talk about them. Thereupon, a tremble came on the mother and made her eyes open wide.

"Are they all right?" she said falteringly. "Were they taken on by their grandpa?"

Noboru told her that her father had passed on and how her children were now. Rokusuke had left money. She could be reassured that Kyojo would get her out of jail. She might as well tell him all about the circumstances because he'd also try his best to find a way that'd support her and her children.

"So, my dad's gone?" o-Kuni muttered absently like the words fell off her lips. She lapsed into silence. Stupefied, she continued gazing into the void for a long time. Then she asked softly, "Did he suffer?"

Noboru shook his head, "No. He died in peace."

O-Kuni was looking at Noboru vacantly with her unfocused eyes. Then she began to talk weakly and with languor. Rather than talking to Noboru, she was in a way talking to herself, soliloquizing. Noboru's presence faded away from her consciousness. Here into this, Kyojo came back. Noboru greeted him with his eyes. Kyojo sat wordlessly. O-Kuni didn't even seem to notice what developed in front of her eyes.

O-Kuni was Rokusuke's only daughter, but from three to ten she'd been fostered out at a farmer's in Tamagawa in the suburbs of Edo. When she was ten, her father came to take her home. She'd been living with her father for about two years when her real mother showed up and took o-Kuni away from her father. —This was known later: O-Kuni's

mother had had an affair with a young apprentice of Rokusuke (this young man was Tomisaburo) and made off with him. For this reason o-Kuni was fostered out. But the mother wanted to have o-Kuni back. Secretly she called o-Kuni out, who was twelve at the time, and took her away from her father on the spot.

"I didn't know what it was like to have a mom. I'd come of an age when I craved a mom," o-Kuni said. "She said: I'm your mom, I gave birth to you. I beg you, come and live with me. When she said so, —yes, that was beyond the question of yes and no. I jumped for joy. I might have been dreaming when I went with Mom."

Her mother introduced Tomisaburo to o-Kuni as a relative.

How could o-Kumi have doubted her mother? They lived in Sumiya-kashi, Kyobashi. But next to it was Maki-machi, Nihonbashi. There Rokusuke had his workshop. They moved to the back of Kamiya-cho, where they opened a small sundries store. It was not o-Kuni's mother but Tomisaburo who kept the shop. Her mother went out to work at an inn as a maid. —This again o-Kuni learned later: When Tomisaburo eloped with her mother, he was seventeen. Her mother was seven years older. He was so young she worked to feed him. Tomisaburo had been fed through the years since then and didn't know to work. Now that o-Kuni came to live with them, he got her to attend to the shop. He himself went out all day dawdling or indulged in daytime drinking and drowsed away.

O-Kuni was completely left in the dark about the relationship between her mother and Tomisaburo. She simply believed the man was a relative. Only, it didn't come home to her why he was dawdling and why her mother was only willing to let him do so. Nearly a year had passed. One day when o-Kuni was alone attending to the shop, her father came in without warning. Recognizing him as her father, she tried to flee from him but was too frightened to move.

"Dad said: Shall we go home together? I still have a clear memory from that time. He looks pale. He forces out a smile at me and says: O-Kuni, please come home with me. You're my treasure. You're the only one that I have, —" Now her voice became thin and began to quiver.

"You're my only one and the apple of my eye, he says."

Tears ran down from her eyes. O-Kuni wouldn't wipe them away. She went on, leaving them to run down.

The initial fear left her as she saw her father the way he was. She was thirteen by then. She'd been fostered out at three. She'd lived with her father only two years or so. She'd had as yet almost none of the love there is between father and daughter.

—No, no way. I'll stay with Mom.

O-Kuni flatly refused her father.

Rokusuke kept gazing on her for a while. Then he said: If you insist, then come visit me any time you have trouble. I'd be willing to do anything for you. So saying, he left. O-Kuni kept quiet about it to her mother and Tomisaburo because she didn't think her father would ever come back to her . . . —In fact, it had been a good ten years before Rokusuke returned. Meanwhile, in the summer when she was sixteen, o-Kuni was coerced by her mother into marrying Tomisaburo. If there was one thing she hated the most in the world, it was marrying him. Over tears her mother talked her daughter into it.

—If you don't, there'll be no room for you to live with me.

Her mother implored o-Kuni repeatedly and persuaded her: Understand and say yes for your mom, please. O-Kuni must have been exceedingly behind developing her feelings in a romantic way. She got married to Tomisaburo with little knowledge of what a married couple was.

And then everything ran amok in the family.

This was of course not a once-in-a-blue-moon case. O-Kuni's mother was desperate about continuing the relationship with Tomisaburo by getting him to marry her daughter. She was nearing forty. She didn't expect to meet anyone else she could depend on. The marriage was the only means for her to maintain the relation. As a fully matured woman she was at the best of her womanhood. She was successful in keeping her lover, but then she was severely tormented by intense jealousy.

O-Kuni recounted all that.

7.

One winter night when o-Kuni had been married to Tomisaburo for a solid two years, —she learned for the first time the relationship between him and her mother.

The house they lived in in Kamiya-cho had only one bedroom with the shop space in front. Naturally, the married couple and o-Kuni's mother slept in the same room. A nightly screen was set up to separate the mother and the couple. Although married that long, o-Kuni hadn't really known yet what pleasure was exchanged between man and wife. She only put up with the loathing of it. That night, after the usual act, extraordinarily she couldn't fall asleep right away. She didn't know what to do with her body. It was afire in the core with her senses irritably awake. Shortly, she heard her mother call Tomisaburo. —He was fast asleep. Her mother called him for a second time and then a third. When o-Kuni curled herself tightly and with bated breath, her mother sneaked up to him and shook him awake. He responded half in sleep and, tut-tutting loathsomely, sat up.

O-Kuni stayed put as she kept curled up in bed, breath held and head ducked. In time, it struck her that that was not the first time she'd ever heard that very voice which was now escaping her mother's throat. She remembered hearing it dozens of times between sleeping and waking. She'd heard half in sleep for tens of times her mother gritting her teeth, gasping through her throat, and moaning in agony. She'd think her mother was dreaming and groaning in a bad dream. —But that night explained everything to o-Kuni. She learned the relationship between her mother and her husband. She learned why for the past two years her mother had gone berserk for no reason and taken it all out on her daughter. Because o-Kuni hadn't the least affection for Tomisaburo, she was a total stranger to jealousy. But a sudden violent nausea came on her due to the filthiness and revulsion she felt of that gross imbroglio, and she puked before she could get out of bed.

When she talked this far, o-Kuni let out "Ough" and pressed both hands tight on her mouth. Probably the odious memory came back and

made her feel like throwing up again. She sat still pressing her hands for a long while.

"Let's not hear about it any more," Kyojo said. "What became of your mother?"

Taking her hands off, she looked at Kyojo absently.

"She died," o-Kuni answered languidly. "Soon after that, Mom left us and became a live-in maid at an inn."

O-Kuni gave birth to Tomo when she was twenty-three. Her mother had died a half year before. O-Kuni wasn't with her mother when she died. Tomisaburo, who informed o-Kuni of her mother's impending death, told her that her mother didn't want to see her, and that she'd refuse to see her even though she might come. Oh, that was it, it came home to o-Kuni. —Her mother had never returned since she'd left nearly five years before. Nor had she let her daughter know her whereabouts. But presumably the relationship between her and Tomisaburo was continuing, for he often stayed overnight away from home and sometimes as long as three nights in a row. Back in those days, the small sundries shop her mother had kept had fallen far short of providing daily sustenance. O-Kuni had begun piecework at seventeen or eighteen. This had enabled them to live from hand to mouth when put together with what mother had made. —Therefore, now that her mother had left, they only got worse off. But Tomisaburo didn't particularly sulk. Rather, he'd give some money to o-Kuni.

—Take it. I did a bad thing with my friends last night and I won a little.

That was his stock of lines, but o-Kuni suspected that her husband had seen her mother and that it was the money she'd made. He was all that important to her. That was why she wanted nobody but him at her deathbed. Had she seen her daughter, she'd have been too torn to die between regrets and jealousy. Her mother had known it well herself, thought o-Kuni.

"I didn't go to her funeral, either. And I even don't know where she's buried," o-Kuni said. "Mom wouldn't be happy if I'd offer her memorial services. I didn't get an altar made for her. If I believe in soul, I'm sure

she still hates me in death."

Noboru felt chill in the back of his neck. O-Kuni's obsession that she was hated still by her own mother who had been dead no less than ten years expressed the deep-rooted guilt of philandering and the horrendousness of a deep-seated delusion. These were beyond Noboru's understanding. The more spontaneously o-Kuni expressed them, the more vividly, it seemed to him, they were expressed. O-Kuni went further, recounting her story. But soon Kyojo interrupted.

"I know what followed after," Kyojo said. "Rokusuke came in touch with you, right?"

"Yes," o-Kuni answered. "Shortly after Mom's death, he came to see me in Kamiya-cho.

"Only then," o-Kuni went on, "did he tell me my husband had been Dad's apprentice. That he'd run away with Mom because he'd done a bad thing with Mom. Dad said: Come with me. Trust me, you'd be very unhappy if you lived with such a rogue. It's time. Leave here and live together with me. —I went out of my way to cruelly refuse him. I said: No thanks. Please leave me the way I am."

At that time o-Kuni was pregnant, but she had no affection for Tomisaburo. Only, she knew she didn't deserve to be in her father's care. She felt bad for his father if she'd depend on him. Heaven wouldn't forgive her if she did as he told her.

"That's how I felt then," o-Kuni said. "When Mom ran away from Dad with that man, when Mom came and took me away from Dad, and when Dad came and I refused to go with him, —how did he feel? How sad and bitter did he feel?"

O-Kuni talked Tamisaburo into moving to Kanasugi, where she gave birth to Tomo and Sukezo. Then again her father found her out and called on her. He left some silver and went. He said he'd closed down his workshop in Maki-machi. If there was anything he could do, she should contact him at Flophouse Kashiwa in the back of the Denzu-In Temple.

—I have nothing whatsoever to work for, I find no meaning in anything I do. My whole life has been meaningless.

Rokusuke left those words and was gone.

Noboru recalled what he had heard at Flophouse Kashiwa. Rokusuke had been in and out for about twenty years. He would stay there for nothing in particular and leave. After an interval, he would come to stay again. In conjunction with time, this fact accorded with the fact that he was flatly refused by o-Kuni when he went to see her in Kamiya-cho. —There must have been backgrounds for which he wanted to hide from the world and himself even. The time-worn, gloomy flophouse in the deserted skid row had best suited him in such a mood. Noboru felt as if the picture of it would emerge before his eyes. Rokusuke left behind the reputation as a maki-e painter he'd had all over Edo, and discarded his art so remarkable that the "Three Successor Houses" of the shogun had bought his works. He lodged at a cheap flophouse as an old stranger. There he mixed with other guests who were down-and-out, and drank quietly as he listened to their gossips. —That was it! It came home to Noboru. Rokusuke's agony and grief had been so deep-seated they could only be assuaged in a place like that. He contracted the most painful disease there was among others, but he remained quiet, letting not a groan slip out, until he breathed his last. This must have been because he'd gone through a much deeper and much more intractable pain before. So Noboru clinched in thought and, closing his eyes, sighed.

"No," o-Kuni was saying. "I don't think so."

8.

It was so shrill a voice Noboru, surprised, awoke from meditation.

"I don't think it was unnatural to make a direct appeal, or that my husband is to be pitied," o-Kuni continued in a harsh tone. "He's not human. He's never worked to earn a living, no living to speak of. When his wife and children had to live from hand to mouth, he played around and did bad things. And on top of it, he kept telling me to go to my dad for money. No animals would dare to say stuff like that. —That was the

last thing he must say, 'cause he was the very man that made Dad suffer that much. That was the very last thing he must bring on his lips."

"But didn't you say it? I mean, you said to the manager, didn't you: If he's caught and has a bitter time in jail, he'll mend his ways."

"No, I did not," o-Kuni shook her head. "I was told by the manager to say so. But none of it entered my head. No way. And I said none of it, either, at the interrogation on the white sand of the court. —May I say straight from the shoulder?"

"Sure, go ahead," Kyojo nodded.

"If I can," o-Kuni bit her lip tight and said, "only if I can, I'd as soon kill him with my own hands. Hadn't I thought of my children, I'd have killed him a long, long time back. I'll do it today, I'll do it tonight, I got determined for dozens of times, for umpteen times. This is my, —my true, honest heart."

Only then did o-Kuni wipe her tears away for the first time. The tears she'd shed a while before had dried up. When she wiped them with her hands, the traces smeared her face and made it look as if made up like a kabuki actor's.

"I understand very well," Kyojo said in a while. "I do understand very well, but keep it in your heart. Listen, I hope I can get you out of here tomorrow without fail, but if you tell the officials what you've just said, you'll destroy it all. Hold your head down quietly. If asked anything, you'll only say, I stand corrected, and nothing else. Think of your children, and you can do it. Do you get it?"

O-Kuni mumbled yes and slowly bent herself so low her head might reach her knees.

Once out of the jail house, Kyojo began to walk wordlessly in the north. Noboru had thought it should have grown to be the sunset time by now because he had heard a question asked in Kashiwa-ya: "What to do about dinner?" and for him it'd been a long day replete with new experiences. But it was still light with a slanting sun and the streets were alive with the hustle and bustle of people and kago. —Kyojo hunched forward as if completely consumed. He dragged his feet along as he walked shaking his head and mumbling to himself. Human-

beings are fools, Noboru heard, they are senseless beings. It's good to be a human-being but they're a senseless and foolish tribe. When they came as far as Second Street, Ishi-machi, Kyojo slowed down and asked Noboru:

"What do you think of what that woman said?"

Noboru had no clue to an answer, "—Do you mean she said she'd kill her husband, sir?"

"No, everything she said." Kyojo shook his head again. "Wrong," he said. "It's wrong to blame Tomisaburo alone. I asked Okano about him and he told me he'd already been arrested. But come to think of it, he's only a weak-minded layabout, and that's that, maybe. And besides, Rokusuke's wife, for one, made him what he is. As young as at seventeen he was seduced by her. Since he'd made off with her, he'd formed the habit of depending on her. Once you're bogged down in a lazy life, you'll find it extremely hard to get out of it and, consequently, end in a social deviant. Examples of this abound everywhere. He's merely one such wretched example."

Noboru was about to say something, but suddenly held his tongue and blushed. He had wanted to point out the disparaging odiousness of the man who married a girl while having affairs with the girl's mother. But before he had it out, he remembered the fault of his own, the humiliating fault he had made with madwoman o-Yumi. —Kyojo didn't seem to perceive it. Why, he gradually quickened his steps as he went on talking in the same manner:

"Life is full of lessons. But there is absolutely not one lesson that applies to all people. Even the maxims: Don't kill and Don't steal, are not absolute." Then he lowered his voice and said, "I'll tell this to Shimada of Echigo. No, no, no, I don't want to do so. True there're no conditions to a lowly deed, but when you must do one, you can't help it. Now is the time I must ask those lessons to do an about-face." When they came out on the moats in Ishi-machi, Kyojo turned to Noboru and told him to leave him there and go back to the infirmary.

"I shall go and see the town magistrate now. Naturally, I'll be treated to dinner, so tell them I'll be a little late getting back, will you?"

Noboru said he would and left Kyojo.

The next day, o-Kuni was released from jail. She did not receive the prize silver, but then she did not need to bother about the old tenement. Of course, Kyojo must have instructed her not to. She went straight to join her children waiting in Flophouse Kashiwa.

The next day, Kyojo ordered Noboru to go see Tomo in Kashiwa-ya. He wrapped the silver of five ryo, handed it to Noboru, and said:

"Give this to o-Kuni. I have another ten ryo for her, but I'll keep it until it's needed. Tell her I'll come and talk to her soon."

"But, such a . . ." Noboru said. "Did Rokusuke die leaving such a lot of money, sir?"

"He did leave five-odd ryo, to be sure, but the other ten ryo came from elsewhere," Kyojo said, looking at Noboru with good-humored eyes. "This is something I kind of confiscated from Shimada of Echigo."

The look in Noboru's eyes turned dubious.

Kyojo went on, "The lord of Echigo married into the family of his wife. She married him with a house as an inheritance from her parents. She's a very jealous woman. She's had chronic depression for years. Once a month I am sent for to examine her. She hasn't done without the medicine I concoct. She's been dependent on me for it. For this reason I said it was lucky it was Shimada's turn to be on duty."

His dubious eyes still fixed on Kyojo, Noboru listened without interrupting him.

"Be quiet about this, and I'll double my atrocity. So I'll come out with this: The lord of Echigo has a mistress in his villa. He's hiding her there," said Kyojo, who looked bedazzled. "There's nothing unusual about having a mistress, but his wife's jealousy is unusual. That was it. That is, I hinted it to him, —I don't care, Yasumoto, go ahead, blame me and say I played a dirty trick. I myself know very well I played a dirty trick."

Kyojo's face did not get clouded all the same, but a good-humored look was all there on it. There was not a shade of self-blame there.

"It was natural that o-Kuni was released from jail. And the ten ryo was

the fee that was duly paid for my treatment of his wife. Albeit, true, I played foul," Kyojo confessed. "Now, if I look hoity-toity from now on, come straight to me and remind me of it without reservation. —That's all. Now off you go and see the child at Kashiwa-ya."

Afterword and Acknowledgments

After a ten-year hiatus, I came back to my original workshop, where I used to work on the mechanism and mental working of expressing in written English, whose components are the intention involved in what is going to be expressed and the effect obtained from what has been intended to be expressed. The start and goal coalesce to determine intermediaries: vehicles (lexical choice, syntax, and rhetoric) and style, core components. In translation, who determines those components? Both the author and the translator do because translating is a subtly, thus pleasurably, epistemic process. The translator, in one way or another, interpolates and/or tampers with the original work, and creates anew a work of his/her own, but then again it is joint work with the author in that the translation should retain the original components of expression: the translator's wishful thinking. This proposition is at once exciting and challenging at that.

What made me excited and challenged were the materials produced by the Shōin Shrine in Hagi, Yamaguchi, Japan. They were for the commemoration of the 150th anniversary, in 2009, of Yoshida Shōin's death to which he, an influential educator and activist, was sentenced in the Ansei Purge at the twilight of the Edo Shogunate. While I was working on the materials, curiosity toward Japanology peeped out in me. The hiatus was long enough to whet my appetite for translating something particular to Japan into English. It would be great pleasure if I could share this "something" with people from the rest of the world.

Hence, I owe sincere thanks first to Daijirō Fujii, Dean of the Faculty of Economics, YU, and Toshishige Ueda, Head Priest of the Shrine. They nabbed me and put me back to my original area of Expression, Style and Translation with the Shōin materials. Second, many thanks must go to Takahiko Kondō, Director of the Yoshida Shōin Memorial Museum and his colleagues for providing me information about the times two centuries ago as I worked on the materials. Third, I thank from my heart my English colleagues, Satoshi Masamune, Timothy Takemoto, and Michael Higgins for working together on the Shōin project. And so do I Jim Kable.

The translating of the Yoshida Shōin materials paved me the way to the translation area in Japanology. Last of all, then, I express my sincerest thanks to Tōru Shimizu, the copyrights holder of Shūgorō Yamamoto works, for giving me permission to render into English this current work.

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M.M.