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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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The Tale of Genji: Murasaki (5/9)

He fell sick of an ague, and when numerous charms and spells had been tried in vain, the illness many times returning, someone said that in a certain temple on the Northern Hills there lived a wise and holy man who in the summer of the year before (the ague was then rife and the usual spells were giving no relief) was able to work many signal cures: 'Lose no time in consulting him, for while you try one useless means after another the disease gains greater hold upon you.' At once he sent a messenger to fetch the holy man, who however replied that the infirmities of old age no longer permitted him to go abroad. 'What is to be done?' said Genji; 'I must go secretly to visit him'; and taking only four or five trusted servants he set out long before dawn. The place lay somewhat deep into the hills. It was the last day of the third month and in the Capital the blossoms had all fallen. The hill-cherry was not yet out; but as he approached the open country, the mists began to assume strange and lovely forms, which pleased him the more because, being one whose movements were tethered by many proprieties, he had seldom seen such sights before. The temples too delighted him. The holy man lived in a deep cave hollowed out of a high wall of rock. Genji did not send in his name and was in close disguise, but his face was well known and the priest at once recognized him.

'Forgive me' he said; 'it was you, was it not, who sent for me the other day? Alas, I think no longer of the things of this world and I am afraid I have forgotten how to work my cures. I am very sorry indeed that you have come so far,' and pretending to be very much upset, he looked at Genji, laughing. But it was soon apparent that he was a man of very great piety and learning. He wrote out certain talismans and administered them, and read certain spells. By the time this was over, the sun had risen, and Genji went a little way outside the cave and looked around him. From the high ground where he was standing he looked down on a number of scattered hermitages. A winding track led down to a hut which, though it was hedged with the same small brushwood as the rest, was more spaciously planned, having a pleasant roofed alley running out from it, and there were trim copses set around. He asked whose house it was and was told by one of his men that a certain abbot had been living there in retirement for two years. 'I know him well' said Genji on hearing the abbot's name; 'I should not like to meet him dressed and attended as I am. I hope he will not hear....' Just then a party of nicely dressed children came out of the house and began to pluck such flowers as are used for the decoration of altars and holy images. 'There are some girls with them' said one of Genji's men. 'We cannot suppose that His Reverence keeps them. Who then can they be?' and to satisfy his curiosity he went a little way down the hill and watched them. 'Yes, there are some very pretty girls,

some of them grown up and others quite children,' he came back and reported.

During a great part of the morning Genji was busy with his cure. When at last the ceremony was completed his attendants, dreading the hour at which the fever usually returned, strove to distract his attention by taking him a little way across the mountain to a point from which the Capital could be seen. 'How lovely' cried Genji 'are those distances half lost in haze, and that blur of shimmering woods that stretches out on every side. How could anyone be unhappy for a single instant who lived in such a place?' 'This is nothing,' said one of his men. 'If I could but show you the lakes and mountains of other provinces, you would soon see how far they excel all that you here admire'; and he began to tell him first of Mount Fuji and many another famous peak, and then of the West Country with all its pleasant bays and shores, till he quite forgot that it was the hour of his fever. 'Yonder, nearest to us' the man continued, pointing to the sea 'is the bay of Akashi in Harima. Note it well; for though it is not a very out-of-the-way place, yet the feeling one has there of being shut off from everything save one huge waste of sea makes it the strangest and most desolate spot I know. And there it is that the daughter of a lay priest who was once governor of the province presides over a mansion of quite disproportionate and unexpected magnificence. He is the descendant of a Prime Minister and was expected to cut a great figure in the world. But he is a man of very singular disposition and is averse to all society. For a time he was an officer in

the Palace Guard, but he gave this up and accepted the province of Harima. However he soon quarrelled with the local people and, announcing that he had been badly treated and was going back to the Capital, he did nothing of the sort, but shaved his head and became a lay priest. Then instead of settling, as is usually done, on some secluded hillside, he built himself a house on the seashore, which may seem to you a very strange thing to do; but as a matter of fact, whereas in that province in one place or another a good many recluses have taken up their abode, the mountain-country is far more dull and lonely and would sorely have tried the patience of his young wife and child; and so as a compromise he chose the seashore. Once when I was travelling in the province of Harima I took occasion to visit his house and noted that, though at the Capital he had lived in a very modest style, here he had built on the most magnificent and lavish scale; as though determined in spite of what had happened (now that he was free from the bother of governing the province) to spend the rest of his days in the greatest comfort imaginable. But all the while he was making great preparations for the life to come and no ordained priest could have led a more austere and pious life.'

'But you spoke of his daughter?' said Genji. 'She is passably good-looking,' he answered, 'and not by any means stupid. Several governors and officers of the province have set their hearts upon her and pressed their suit most urgently; but her father has sent them all away. It seems that though in his own person so indifferent to worldly glory, he is determined that this

one child, his only object of care, should make amends for his obscurity, and has sworn that if ever she chooses against his will, and when he is gone flouts his set purpose and injunction to satisfy some idle fancy of her own, his ghost will rise and call upon the sea to cover her.'

Genji listened with great attention. 'Why, she is like the vestal virgin who may know no husband but the King-Dragon of the Sea,' and they laughed at the old ex-Governor's absurd ambitions. The teller of the story was a son of the present Governor of Harima, who from being a clerk in the Treasury had last year been capped an officer of the Fifth Rank. He was famous for his love-adventures and the others whispered to one another that it was with every intention of persuading the lady to disobey her father's injunctions that he had gone out of his way to visit the shore of Akashi.

'I fear her breeding must be somewhat countrified,' said one; 'it cannot well be otherwise, seeing that she has grown up with no other company than that of her old-fashioned parents,—though indeed it appears that her mother was a person of some consequence.' 'Why, yes' said Yoshikiyo, the Governor's son, 'and for this reason she was able to secure little girls and boys from all the best houses in the Capital, persuading them to pay visits to the sea-side and be playmates to her own little girl, who thus acquired the most polished breeding.' 'If an unscrupulous person were to find himself in that quarter,' said another, 'I fear that despite the dead father's curse he might not find it easy to resist her.'

The story made a deep impression upon Genji's imagination. As his gentlemen well knew, whatever was fantastic or grotesque both in people and situations at once strongly attracted him. They were therefore not surprised to see him listen with so much attention. 'It is now well past noon,' said one of them, 'and I think we may reckon that you will get safely through the day without a return of your complaint. So let us soon be starting for home.' But the priest persuaded him to stay a little longer: 'The sinister influences are not yet wholly banished,' he said; 'it would be well that a further ritual should continue quietly during the night. By to-morrow morning, I think you will be able to proceed.' His gentlemen all urged him to stay; nor was he at all unwilling, for the novelty of such a lodging amused him. 'Very well then, at dawn' he said, and having nothing to do till bed-time which was still a long way off, he went out on to the hill-side, and under cover of the heavy evening mist loitered near the brushwood hedge. His attendants had gone back to the hermit's cave and only Koremitsu was with him. In the western wing, opposite which he was standing, was a nun at her devotions. The blind was partly raised. He thought she seemed to be dedicating flowers to an image. Sitting near the middle pillar, a sutra-book propped upon a stool by her side, was another nun. She was reading aloud; there was a look of great unhappiness in her face. She seemed to be about forty; not a woman of the common people. Her skin was white and very fine, and though she was much emaciated, there was a certain roundness and fulness in her

cheeks, and her hair, clipped short on a level with her eyes, hung in so delicate a fringe across her brow that she looked, thought Genji, more elegant and even fashionable in this convent guise, than if her hair had been long. Two very well-conditioned maids waited upon her. Several little girls came running in and out of the room at play. Among them was one who seemed to be about ten years old. She came running into the room dressed in a rather worn white frock lined with stuff of a deep saffron colour. Never had he seen a child like this. What an astonishing creature she would grow into! Her hair, thick and wavy, stood out fan-wise about her head. She was very flushed and her lips were trembling. 'What is it? Have you quarrelled with one of the other little girls?' The nun raised her head as she spoke and Genji fancied that there was some resemblance between her and the child. No doubt she was its mother. 'Inu has let out my sparrow—the little one that I kept in the clothes-basket,' she said, looking very unhappy. 'What a tiresome boy that Inu is!' said one of the two maids. 'He deserves a good scolding for playing such a stupid trick. Where can it have got to? And this after we had taken so much trouble to tame it nicely! I only hope the crows have not found it,' and so saying she left the room. She was a pleasant-looking woman, with very long, wavy hair. The others called her Nurse Shōnagon, and she seemed to be in charge of the child. 'Come,' said the nun to the little girl, 'you must not be such a baby. You are thinking all the time of things that do not matter at all. Just fancy! Even now

when I am so ill that any day I may be taken from you, you do not trouble your head about me, but are grieving about a sparrow. It is very unkind, particularly as I have told you I don't know how many times that it is naughty to shut up live things in cages. Come over here!' and the child sat down beside her. Her features were very exquisite; but it was above all the way her hair grew, in cloudy masses over her temples, but thrust back in childish fashion from her forehead, that struck him as marvellously beautiful. As he watched her and wondered what she would be like when she grew up it suddenly occurred to him that she bore no small resemblance to one whom he had loved with all his being, and at the resemblance he secretly wept.
The nun, stroking the child's hair, now said to her: 'It's a lovely mop, though you are so naughty about having it combed. But it worries me very much that you are still so babyish. Some children of your age are very different. Your dear mother was only twelve when her father died; yet she showed herself quite capable of managing her own affairs. But if I were taken from you now, I do not know what would become of you, I do not indeed,' and she began to weep. Even Genji, peeping at the scene from a distance, found himself becoming quite distressed. The girl, who had been watching the nun's face with a strange unchildish intensity, now dropped her head disconsolately, and as she did so her hair fell forward across her cheeks in two great waves of black. Looking at her fondly the nun recited the poem: 'Not knowing if any will come to nurture the tender leaf whereon it lies, how loath is the dewdrop to vanish in

the sunny air.' To which the waiting-woman replied with a sigh: 'O dewdrop, surely you will linger till the young budding leaf has shown in what fair form it means to grow.'

At this moment the priest to whom the house belonged entered the room from the other side: 'Pray, ladies,' he said, 'are you not unduly exposing yourselves? You have chosen a bad day to take up your stand so close to the window. I have just heard that Prince Genji has come to the hermit yonder to be cured of an ague. But he has disguised himself in so mean a habit that I did not know him, and have been so near all day without going to pay my respects to him.' The nun started back in horror; 'How distressing! He may even have passed and seen us ...' and she hastened to let down the folding blind. 'I am really very glad that I am to have an opportunity of visiting this Prince Genji of whom one hears so much. He is said to be so handsome that even austere old priests like myself forget in his presence the sins and sorrows of the life they have discarded and take heart to live a little longer in a world where so much beauty dwells. But you shall hear all about it....'

Before the old priest had time to leave the house Genji was on his way back to the hermit's cave. What an enchanting creature he had discovered! How right too his friends had been on that rainy night when they told him that on strange excursions such as this beauty might well be found lurking in unexpected quarters! How delightful to have strolled out by chance and at once made so astonishing a find! Whose could this exquisite child be? He would dearly love to have her

always near him, to be able to turn to her at any moment for comfort and distraction, as once he had turned to the lady in the Palace.
He was already lying down in the hermit's cave when (everything being at very close quarters) he heard the voice of the old priest's disciple calling for Koremitsu. 'My master has just learnt' said this disciple, 'that you were lodged so near at hand; and though it grieves him that you did not in passing honour him with a visit, he would at once have paid his respects to the Prince, had he not thought that Lord Genji could not be unaware of his presence in the neighbourhood of this hermitage, and might perhaps have refrained from visiting him only because he did not wish to disclose the motive of his present pilgrimage. But my master would remind you' continued the man, 'that we too in our poor hut could provide you with straw beds to lie on, and should be sorry if you left without honouring us....'
'For ten days,' answered Genji from within, 'I have been suffering from an ague which returned so constantly that I was in despair, when someone advised me to consult the hermit of this mountain, whom I accordingly visited. But thinking that it would be very disagreeable for a sage of his repute if in such a case as mine it became known that his treatment had been unsuccessful, I was at greater pains to conceal myself than I should have been if visiting an ordinary wonder-worker. Pray ask your master to accept this excuse and bid him enter the cave.' Thus encouraged, the priest presented himself. Genji was rather afraid of him, for though an ecclesiastic he was a man of superior genius,

very much respected in the secular world, and Genji felt that it was not at all proper to receive him in the shabby old clothes which he had used for his disguise. After giving some details of his life since he had left the Capital and come to live in retirement on this mountain, the priest begged Genji to come back with him and visit the cold spring which flowed in the garden of his hut. Here was an opportunity to see again the people who had so much interested him. But the thought of all the stories that the old priest might have told them about him made him feel rather uncomfortable. What matter? At all costs he must see that lovely child again and he followed the old priest back to his hut. In the garden the natural vegetation of the hill-side had been turned to skilful use. There was no moon, and torches had been lit along the sides of the moat, while fairy lanterns hung on the trees. The front parlour was very nicely arranged. A heavy perfume of costly and exotic scents stole from hidden incense-burners and filled the room with a delicious fragrance. These perfumes were quite unfamiliar to Genji and he supposed that they must have been prepared by the ladies of the inner room, who would seem to have spent considerable ingenuity in the task. The priest began to tell stories about the uncertainty of this life and the retributions of the life to come. Genji was appalled to think how heavy his own sins had already been. It was bad enough to think that he would have them on his conscience for the rest of his present life. But then there was also the life to come. What terrible punishments he had to look forward to!

And all the while the priest was speaking Genji thought of his own wickedness. What a good idea it would be to turn hermit and live in some such place.... But immediately his thoughts strayed to the lovely face which he had seen that afternoon and longing to know more of her 'Who lives with you here?' he asked. 'It interests me to know, because I once saw this place in a dream and was astonished to recognize it when I came here to-day.' At this the priest laughed: 'Your dream seems to have come rather suddenly into the conversation,' he said, 'but I fear that if you pursue your enquiry, your expectations will be sadly disappointed. You have probably never heard of Azechi no Dainagon, he died so long ago. He married my sister, who after his death turned her back upon the world. Just at that time I myself was in certain difficulties and was unable to visit the Capital; so for company she came to join me here in my retreat.'

'I have heard that Aseji no Dainagon had a daughter. Is that so?' said Genji at a venture; 'I am sure you will not think I ask the question with any indiscreet intention....' 'He had an only daughter who died about ten years ago. Her father had always wanted to present her at Court. But she would not listen, and when he was dead and there was only my sister the nun to look after her, she allowed some wretched go-between to introduce her to Prince Hyōbukyō whose mistress she became. His wife, a proud, relentless woman, from the first pursued her with constant vexations and affronts; day in and day out this obstinate persecution continued,

till at last she died of heartbreak. They say that unkindness cannot kill; but I shall never say so, for from this cause alone I saw my kinswoman fall sick and perish.'

'Then the little girl must be this lady's child,' Genji realized at last. And that accounted for her resemblance to the lady in the Palace. He felt more drawn towards her than ever. She was of good lineage, which is never amiss; and her rather rustic simplicity would be an actual advantage when she became his pupil, as he was now determined she should; for it would make it the easier for him to mould her unformed tastes to the pattern of his own. 'And did the lady whose sad story you have told me leave no remembrance behind her?' asked Genji, still hoping to turn the conversation on to the child herself. 'She died only a short while after her child was born, and it too was a girl. The charge of it fell to my sister who is in failing health and feels herself by no means equal to such a responsibility.' All was now clear. 'You will think it a very strange proposal,' said Genji, 'but I feel that I should like to adopt this child. Perhaps you would mention this to your sister? Though others early involved me in marriage, their choice proved distasteful to me and having, as it seems, very little relish for society, I now live entirely alone. She is, I quite realize, a mere child, and I am not proposing....' Here he paused and the priest answered: 'I am very much obliged to you for this offer; but I am afraid it is clear that you do not at all realize that the child in question is a mere infant. You would not even find her amusing as a casual

distraction. But it is true that a girl as she grows up needs the backing of powerful friends if she is to make her way in the world, and though I cannot promise you that anything will come of it, I ought certainly to mention the matter to her grandmother.' His manner had suddenly become somewhat cool and severe. Genji felt that he had been indiscreet and preserved an embarrassed silence. 'There is something which I ought to be doing in the Hall of Our Lord Amida,' the priest presently continued, 'so I must take leave of you for a while. I must also read my vespers; but I will rejoin you afterwards,' and he set out to climb the hill. Genji felt very disconsolate. It had begun to rain; a cold wind blew across the hill, carrying with it the sound of a waterfall,—audible till then as a gentle intermittent plashing, but now a mighty roar; and with it, somnolently rising and falling, mingled the monotonous chanting of the scriptures. Even the most unimpressionable nature would have been plunged into melancholy by such surroundings. How much the more so Prince Genji, as he lay sleepless on his bed, continually planning and counter-planning! The priest had spoken of 'vespers,' but the hour was indeed very late. It was clear however that the nun was still awake, for though she was making as little noise as possible, every now and then her rosary would knock with a faint click against the praying-stool. There was something alluring in the sound of this low, delicate tapping. It seemed to come from quite close. He opened a small space between the screens which divided the living-room from the inner chamber and rustled his fan. He had the impression

that someone in the inner room after a little hesitation had come towards the screen as though saying to herself 'It cannot be so, yet I could have sworn I heard ...,' and then retreated a little, as though thinking 'Well, it was only my fancy after all!' Now she seemed to be feeling her way in the dark, and Genji said aloud 'Follow the Lord Buddha and though your way lie in darkness yet shall you not go astray.' Suddenly hearing his clear young voice in the darkness, the woman had not at first the courage to reply. But at last she managed to answer: 'In which direction, please, is He leading me? I am afraid I do not quite understand.' 'I am sorry to have startled you,' said Genji. 'I have only this small request to make: that you will carry to your mistress the following poem: 'Since first he saw the green leaf of the tender bush, never for a moment has the dew of longing dried from the traveller's sleeve.' 'Surely you must know that there is no one here who understands messages of that kind,' said the woman; 'I wonder whom you mean?' 'I have a particular reason for wishing your mistress to receive the message,' said Genji, 'and I should be obliged if you would contrive to deliver it.' The nun at once perceived that the poem referred to her grandchild and supposed that Genji, having been wrongly informed about her age, was intending to make love to her. But how had he discovered her grand-daughter's existence? For some while she pondered in great annoyance and perplexity, and at last answered prudently with a poem in which she said that 'he who was but spending a night upon a traveller's dewy bed could know little of those whose

home was forever upon the cold moss of the hill-side.' Thus she turned his poem to a harmless meaning. 'Tell her,' said Genji when the message was brought back, 'that I am not accustomed to carry on conversations in this indirect manner. However shy she may be, I must ask her on this occasion to dispense with formalities and discuss this matter with me seriously!' 'How can he have been thus misinformed?' said the nun, still thinking that Genji imagined her grand-daughter to be a grown-up woman. She was terrified at being suddenly commanded to appear before this illustrious personage and was wondering what excuse she would make. Her maids, however, were convinced that Genji would be grievously offended if she did not appear, and at last, coming out from the women's chamber, she said to him: 'Though I am no longer a young woman, I very much doubt whether I ought to come like this. But since you sent word that you have serious business to discuss with me, I could not refuse....' 'Perhaps' said Genji, 'you will think my proposal both ill-timed and frivolous. I can only assure you that I mean it very seriously. Let Buddha judge....' But here he broke off, intimidated by her age and gravity. 'You have certainly chosen a very strange manner of communicating this proposal to me. But though you have not yet said what it is, I am sure you are quite in earnest about it.' Thus encouraged, Genji continued: 'I was deeply touched by the story of your long widowhood and of your daughter's death. I too, like this poor child, was deprived in earliest infancy of the one being who tenderly loved me, and in my childhood suffered long years of loneliness and misery.

Thus we are both in like case, and this has given me so deep a sympathy for the child that I long to make amends for what she has lost. It was, then, to ask if you would consent to let me play a mother's part that at this strange and inconvenient hour I trespassed so inconsiderately upon your patience.' 'I am sure that you are meaning to be very kind,' said the nun, 'but—forgive me—you have evidently been misinformed. There is indeed a girl living here under my charge; but she is a mere infant and could not be of the slightest interest to you in any way, so that I cannot consent to your proposal.' 'On the contrary,' said Genji, 'I am perfectly conversant with every detail concerning this child; but if you think my sympathy for her exaggerated or misplaced, pray pardon me for having mentioned it.' It was evident that he did not in the least realize the absurdity of what he had proposed, and she saw no use in explaining herself any further. The priest was now returning and Genji, saying that he had not expected she would at once fall in with his idea and was confident that she would soon see the matter in a different light, closed the screen behind her.

The night was almost over. In a chapel near by, the Four Meditations of the Law Flower were being practised. The voices of the ministrants who were now chanting the Litany of Atonement came floating on the gusty mountain-wind, and with this solemn sound was mingled the roar of hurrying waters. 'Startled from my dream by a wandering gust of the mountain gale, I heard the waterfall, and at the beauty of its music wept.' So Genji greeted the priest; and he in turn

replied with the poem 'At the noise of a torrent wherein I daily fill my bowl I am scarce likely to start back in wonder and delight.' 'I get so used to it,' he added apologetically. A heavy mist covered the morning sky, and even the chirruping of the mountain-birds sounded muffled and dim. Such a variety of flowers and blossoming trees (he did not know their names) grew upon the hill-side, that the rocks seemed to be spread with a many-coloured embroidery. Above all he marvelled at the exquisite stepping of the deer who moved across the slope, now treading daintily, now suddenly pausing; and as he watched them the last remnants of his sickness were dispelled by sheer delight. Though the hermit had little use of his limbs, he managed by hook or crook to perform the mystic motions of the Guardian Spell, and though his aged voice was husky and faltering, he read the sacred text with great dignity and fervour. Several of Genji's friends now arrived to congratulate him upon his recovery, among them a messenger from the Palace. The priest from the hut below brought a present of strange-looking roots for which he had gone deep into the ravine. He begged to be excused from accompanying Genji on his way. 'Till the end of the year,' he said, 'I am bound by a vow which must deprive me of what would have been a great pleasure,' and he handed Genji the stirrup-cup. 'Were I but able to follow my own desires,' said Genji taking the cup, 'I would not leave these hills and streams. But I hear that my father the Emperor is making anxious enquiry after me. I will come back before the blossom is over.' And he recited

the verse 'I will go back to the men of the City and tell them to come quickly, lest the wild wind outstripping them should toss these blossoms from the cherry bough.' The old priest, flattered by Genji's politeness and captivated by the charm of his voice, answered with the poem: 'Like one who finds the aloe-tree in bloom, to the flower of the mountain-cherry I no longer turn my gaze.' 'I am not after all quite so great a rarity as the aloe-flower,' said Genji smiling. Next the hermit handed him a parting-cup, with the poem 'Though seldom I open the pine-tree door of my mountain-cell, yet have I now seen face to face the flower few live to see,' and as he looked up at Genji, his eyes filled with tears. He gave him, to keep him safe in future from all harm, a magical wand; and seeing this the nun's brother in his turn presented a rosary brought back from Korea by Prince Shōtoku. It was ornamented with jade and was still in the same Chinese-looking box in which it had been brought from that country. The box was in an open-work bag, and a five-leafed pine-branch was with it. He also gave him some little vases of blue crystal to keep his medicines in, with sprays of cherry-blossom and wistaria along with them, and such other presents as the place could supply. Genji had sent to the Capital for gifts with which to repay his reception in the mountain. First he gave a reward to the hermit, then distributed alms to the priests who had chanted liturgies on his behalf, and finally he gave useful presents to the poor villagers of the neighbourhood. While he was reading a short passage

from the scriptures in preparation for his departure, the old priest went into his house and asked his sister the nun whether she had any message for the Prince. 'It is very hard to say anything at present,' she said. 'Perhaps if he still felt the same inclination four, or five years hence, we might begin to consider it.' 'That is just what I think,' said the priest.

Genji saw to his regret that he had made no progress whatever. In answer to the nun's message he sent a small boy who belonged to the priest's household with the following poem: 'Last night indeed, though in the greyness of twilight only, I saw the lovely flower. But to-day a hateful mist has hidden it utterly from my sight.' The nun replied: 'That I may know whether indeed it pains you so deeply to leave this flower, I shall watch intently the motions of this hazy sky.' It was written in a noteworthy and very aristocratic hand, but quite without the graces of deliberate artistry.

While his carriage was being got ready, a great company of young lords arrived from the Great Hall, saying that they had been hard put to it to discover what had become of him and now desired to give him their escort. Among them were Tō no Chūjō, Sachū Ben, and other lesser lords, who had come out of affection for the Prince. 'We like nothing better than waiting upon you,' they said, rather aggrieved, 'it was not kind of you to leave us behind.' 'But having come so far,' said another, 'it would be a pity to go away without resting for a while under the shadow of these flowering trees'; whereupon they all sat down in a row upon the moss

under a tall rock and passed a rough earthenware wine-jar from hand to hand. Close by them the stream leaped over the rocks in a magnificent cascade. Tō no Chūjō pulled out a flute from the folds of his dress and played a few trills upon it. Sachū Ben, tapping idly with his fan, began to sing 'The Temple of Toyora.' The young lords who had come to fetch him were all persons of great distinction; but so striking was Genji's appearance as he sat leaning disconsolately against the rock that no eye was likely to be turned in any other direction. One of his attendants now performed upon the reed-pipe; someone else turned out to be a skilful shō player. Presently the old priest came out of his house carrying a zithern, and putting it into Genji's hands begged him to play something, 'that the birds of the mountain may rejoice.' He protested that he was not feeling at all in the mood to play; but yielding to the priest's persuasion, he gave what was really not at all a contemptible performance. After that, they all got up and started for home. Everyone on the mountain, down to the humblest priest and youngest neophyte, was bitterly disappointed at the shortness of his stay, and there were many tears shed; while the old nun within doors was sorry to think that she had had but that one brief glimpse of him and might never see him again. The priest declared that for his part he thought the Land of the Rising Sun in her last degenerate days ill-deserved that such a Prince should be born to her, and he wiped his eyes. The little girl too was very much pleased with him and said he was a prettier gentleman than her own father. 'If you

think so, you had better become his little girl instead,' said her nurse. At which the child nodded, thinking that it would be a very good plan indeed; and in future the best-dressed person in the pictures she painted was called 'Prince Genji' and so was her handsomest doll. On his return to the Capital he went straight to the Palace and described to his father the experiences of the last two days. The Emperor thought him looking very haggard and was much concerned. He asked many questions about the hermit's magical powers, to all of which Genji replied in great detail. 'He ought certainly to have been made Master Magician long ago,' said His Majesty. 'His ministrations have repeatedly been attended with great success, but for some reason his services have escaped public acknowledgment,' and he issued a proclamation to this effect. The Minister of the Left came to meet him on his way from the Presence and apologized for not having come with his sons to bring him back from the mountain. 'I thought,' he said, 'that as you had gone there secretly, you would dislike being fetched; but I very much hope that you will now come and spend a few days with us quietly; after which I shall esteem it a privilege to escort you to your palace.' He did not in the least want to go, but there was no escape. His father-in-law drove him to the Great Hall in his own carriage, and when the bullocks had been unyoked dragged it in at the gate with his own hands. Such treatment was certainly meant to be very friendly; but Genji found the Minister's attentions merely irritating.

Aoi's quarters had, in anticipation of Genji's coming, just been put thoroughly to rights. In the long interval since he last visited her many changes had been made; among other improvements, a handsome terrace had been built. Not a thing was out of its right place in this supremely well-ordered house. Aoi, as usual, was nowhere to be seen. It was only after repeated entreaties by her father that she at last consented to appear in her husband's presence. Posed like a princess in a picture she sat almost motionless. Beautiful she certainly was. 'I should like to tell you about my visit to the mountain, if only I thought that it would interest you at all or draw an answer from you. I hate to go on always like this. Why are you so cold and distant and proud? Year after year we fail to reach an understanding and you cut yourself off from me more completely than before. Can we not manage for a little while to be on ordinary terms? It seems rather strange, considering how ill I have been, that you should not attempt to enquire after my health. Or rather, it is exactly what I should expect; but nevertheless I find it extremely painful.' 'Yes,' said Aoi, 'it is extremely painful when people do not care what becomes of one.' She glanced back over her shoulder as she spoke, her face full of scorn and pride, looking uncommonly handsome as she did so. 'You hardly ever speak,' said Genji, 'and when you do, it is only to say unkind things and twist one's harmless words so that they seem to be insults. And when I try to find some way of helping you for a while at least to be a little less disagreeable, you become more hopelessly unapproachable than ever.

Shall I one day succeed in making you understand...?' and so saying he went into their bedroom. She did not follow him. He lay for a while in a state of great annoyance and distress. But, probably because he did not really care about her very much one way or the other, he soon became drowsy and all sorts of quite different matters drifted through his head. He wanted as much as ever to have the little girl in his keeping and watch her grow to womanhood. But the grandmother was right; the child was too absurdly young, and it would be very difficult to broach the matter again. Would it not however be possible to contrive that she should be brought to the Capital? It would be easy then to find excuses for fetching her and she might, even through some such arrangement as that, become a source of constant delight to him. The father, Prince Hyōbukyō, was of course a man of very distinguished manners; but he was not at all handsome. How was it that the child resembled one of her aunts and was so unlike all the rest? He had an idea that Fujitsubo and Prince Hyōbukyō were children of the same mother, while the others were only half-sisters. The fact that the little girl was closely related to the lady whom he had loved for so long made him all the more set upon securing her, and he began again to puzzle his head for some means of bringing this about. Next day he wrote his letter of thanks to the priest. No doubt it contained some allusion to his project. To the nun he wrote: 'Seeing you so resolutely averse to what I had proposed, I refrained from justifying my

intentions so fully as I could have wished. But should it prove that, even by the few words I ventured to speak, I was able to convince you that this is no mere whim or common fancy, how happy would such news make me.'
On a slip of paper folded small and tucked into the letter he wrote the poem: 'Though with all my heart I tried to leave it behind me, never for a moment has it left me,—the fair face of that mountain-flower!' Though she had long passed the zenith of her years the nun could not but be pleased and flattered by the elegance of the note; for it was not only written in an exquisite hand, but was folded with a careless dexterity which she greatly admired. She felt very sorry for him, and would have been glad, had it been in her conscience, to have sent him a more favourable reply. 'We were delighted,' she wrote, 'that being in the neighbourhood you took occasion to pay us a visit. But I fear that when (as I very much hope you will) you come here purposely to visit us, I shall not be able to add anything to what I have said already. As for the poem which you enclose, do not expect her to answer it, for she cannot yet write her "Naniwa Zu" properly, even letter by letter. Let me then answer it for her: "For as long as the cherry-blossoms remain unscattered upon the shore of Onoe where wild storms blow,—so long have you till now been constant!" For my part, I am very uneasy about the matter.'
The priest replied to the same effect. Genji was very much disappointed and after two or three days he sent for Koremitsu and gave him a letter for the nun, telling him at the same time to find out whatever he

could from Shōnagon, the child's nurse. 'What an impressionable character he is,' thought Koremitsu. He had only had a glimpse of the child; but that had sufficed to convince him that she was a mere baby, though he remembered thinking her quite pretty. What trick would his master's heart be playing upon him next?

The old priest was deeply impressed by the arrival of a letter in the hands of so special and confidential a messenger. After delivering it, Koremitsu sought out the nurse. He repeated all that Genji had told him to say and added a great deal of general information about his master. Being a man of many words he talked on and on, continually introducing some new topic which had suddenly occurred to him as relevant. But at the end of it all Shōnagon was just as puzzled as everyone else had been to account for Genji's interest in a child so ridiculously young. His letter was very deferential. In it he said that he longed to see a specimen of her childish writing done letter by letter, as the nun had described. As before, he enclosed a poem: 'Was it the shadows in the mountain well that told you my purpose was but jest?' To which she answered 'Some perhaps that have drawn in that well now bitterly repent. Can the shadows tell me if again it will be so?' and Koremitsu brought a spoken message to the same effect, together with the assurance that so soon as the nun's health improved, she intended to visit the Capital and would then communicate with him again. The prospect of her visit was very exciting.

About this time Lady Fujitsubo fell ill and retired for a while from the Palace. The sight of the Emperor's grief and anxiety moved Genji's pity. But he could not help thinking that this was an opportunity which must not be missed. He spent the whole of that day in a state of great agitation, unable whether in his own house or at the Palace to think of anything else or call upon anyone. When at last the day was over, he succeeded in persuading her maid Ōmyōbu to take a message. The girl, though she regarded any communication between them as most imprudent, seeing a strange look in his face like that of one who walks in a dream, took pity on him and went. The Princess looked back upon their former relationship as something wicked and horrible and the memory of it was a continual torment to her. She had determined that such a thing must never happen again.

She met him with a stern and sorrowful countenance, but this did not disguise her charm, and as though conscious that he was unduly admiring her she began to treat him with great coldness and disdain. He longed to find some blemish in her, to think that he had been mistaken, and be at peace.

I need not tell all that happened. The night passed only too quickly. He whispered in her ear the poem: 'Now that at last we have met, would that we might vanish forever into the dream we dreamed to-night!' But she, still conscience-stricken: 'Though I were to hide in the darkness of eternal sleep, yet would my shame run through the world from tongue to tongue.' And indeed,

as Genji knew, it was not without good cause that she had suddenly fallen into this fit of apprehension and remorse. As he left, Ōmyōbu came running after him with his cloak and other belongings which he had left behind. He lay all day upon his bed in great torment. He sent a letter, but it was returned unopened. This had happened many times in the past, but now it filled him with such consternation that for two or three days he was completely prostrate and kept his room. All this while he was in constant dread lest his father, full of solicitude, should begin enquiring what new trouble had overtaken him. Fujitsubo, convinced that her ruin was accomplished, fell into a profound melancholy and her health grew daily worse. Messengers arrived constantly from the Court begging her to return without delay; but she could not bring herself to go. Her disorder had now taken a turn which filled her with secret foreboding, and she did nothing all day long but sit distractedly wondering what would become of her. When the hot weather set in she ceased to leave her bed at all. Three months had now passed and there was no mistaking her condition. Soon it would be known and everywhere discussed. She was appalled at the calamity which had overtaken her. Not knowing that there was any cause for secrecy, her people were astonished that she had not long ago informed the Emperor of her condition. Speculations were rife, but the question was one which only the Princess herself was in a position definitely to solve. Ōmyōbu and her old nurse's daughter who waited upon her at her toilet and in the bath-

house had at once noted the change and were somewhat taken aback. But Ōmyōbu was unwilling to discuss the matter. She had an uncomfortable suspicion that it was the meeting which she arranged that had now taken effect with cruel promptness and precision. It was announced in the Palace that other disorders had misled those about her and prevented them from recognizing the true nature of her condition. This explanation was accepted by everyone.

The Emperor himself was full of tender concern, and though messengers kept him constantly informed, the gloomiest doubts and fancies passed continually through his mind. Genji was at this time visited by a most terrifying and extraordinary dream. He sent for interpreters, but they could make little of it. There were indeed certain passages to which they could assign no meaning at all; but this much was clear: the dreamer had made a false step and must be on his guard. 'It was not my dream' said Genji, feeling somewhat alarmed. 'I am consulting you on behalf of someone else,' and he was wondering what this 'false step' could have been when news reached him of the Princess's condition. This then was the disaster which his dream had portended! At once he wrote her an immense letter full of passionate self-reproaches and exhortations. But Ōmyōbu, thinking that it would only increase her agitation, refused to deliver it, and he could trust no other messenger. Even the few wretched lines which she had been in the habit of sending to him now and again had for some while utterly ceased.

In her seventh month she again appeared at Court. Overjoyed at her return, the Emperor lavished boundless affection upon her. The added fulness of her figure, the unwonted pallor and thinness of her face gave her, he thought, a new and incomparable charm. As before, all his leisure was spent in her company. During this time several Court festivals took place and Genji's presence was constantly required; sometimes he was called upon to play the koto or flute, sometimes to serve his father in other ways. On such occasions, strive as he might to show no trace of embarrassment or agitation, he feared more than once that he had betrayed himself; while to her such confrontations were one long torment.

The nun had somewhat improved in health and was now living in the Capital. He had enquired where she was lodging and sent messages from time to time, receiving (which indeed was all he expected) as little encouragement as before. In the last months his longing for the child had increased rather than diminished, but day after day went by without his finding any means to change the situation. As the autumn drew to its close, he fell into a state of great despondency. One fine moonlit night when he had decided, against his own inclination, to pay a certain secret visit, a shower came on. As he had started from the Palace and the place to which he was going was in the suburbs of the Sixth Ward, it occurred to him that it would be disagreeable to go so far in the rain. He was considering what he should do when he noticed a tumbled-down house surrounded by very ancient trees. He asked whose this

gloomy and desolate mansion might be, and Koremitsu, who, as usual, was with him replied: 'Why that is the late Azechi no Dainagon's house. A day or two ago I took occasion to call there and was told that my Lady the nun has grown very weak and does not now know what goes on about her.' 'Why did you not tell me this before? 'said Genji deeply concerned; 'I should have called at once to convey my sympathy to her household. Pray go in at once and ask for news.' Koremitsu accordingly sent one of the lesser attendants to the house, instructing him to give the impression that Genji had come on purpose to enquire. When the man announced that Prince Genji had sent him for news and was himself waiting outside, great excitement and consternation prevailed in the house. Their mistress, the servants said, had for several days been lying in a very parlous condition and could not possibly receive a visit. But they dared not simply send so distinguished a visitor away, and hastily tidying the southern parlour, they bustled him into it, saying, 'You must forgive us for showing you into this untidy room. We have done our best to make it presentable. Perhaps, on a surprise visit, you will forgive us for conducting you to such an out-of-the-way closet....' It was indeed not at all the kind of room that he was used to. 'I have been meaning for a long while to visit this house,' said Genji; 'but time after time the proposals which I made in writing concerning a certain project of mine were summarily rejected and this discouraged me. Had I but known that your mistress's health had taken this turn for the worse....' 'Tell him that at this moment my mind is clear,

though it may soon be darkened again. I am deeply sensible of the kindness he has shown in thus visiting my death-bed, and regret that I cannot speak with him face to face. Tell him that if by any chance he has not altered his mind with regard to the matter that he has discussed with me before, by all means let him, when the time has come, number her among the ladies of his household. It is with great anxiety that I leave her behind me and I fear that such a bond with earth may hinder me from reaching the life for which I have prayed.'

Her room was so near and the partition so thin that as she gave Shōnagon her message he could hear now and again the sound of her sad, quavering voice. Presently he heard her saying to someone 'How kind, how very kind of him to come. If only the child were old enough to thank him nicely!' 'It is indeed no question of kindness,' said Genji to Shōnagon. 'Surely it is evident that only some very deep feeling would have driven me to display so zealous a persistency! Since first I saw this child, a feeling of strange tenderness towards her possessed me, and it has grown to such a love as cannot be of this world only. Though it is but an idle fancy, I have a longing to hear her voice. Could you not send for her before I go?' 'Poor little thing,' said Shōnagon. 'She is fast asleep in her room and knows nothing of all our troubles.' But as she spoke there was a sound of someone moving in the women's quarters and a voice suddenly was heard saying 'Grandmother, Grandmother! Prince Genji who came to see us in the

mountains is here, paying a visit. Why do you not let him come and talk to you?' 'Hush, child, hush!' cried all the gentlewomen, scandalized. 'No, no,' said the child; 'Grandmother said that when she saw this prince it made her feel better at once. I was not being silly at all.' This speech delighted Genji; but the gentlewomen of the household thought the child's incursion painful and unseemly, and pretended not to hear her last remark.
Genji gave up the idea of paying a real visit and drove back to his house, thinking as he went that her behaviour was indeed still that of a mere infant. Yet how easy and delightful it would be to teach her!
Next day he paid a proper visit. On his arrival he sent in a poem written on his usual tiny slip of paper: 'Since first I heard the voice of the young crane, my boat shows a strange tendency to stick among the reeds!' It was meant for the little girl and was written in a large, childish hand, but very beautifully, so that the ladies of the house said as soon as they saw it 'This will have to go into the child's copy-book.'
Shōnagon sent him the following note: 'My mistress, feeling that she might not live through the day, asked us to have her moved to the temple in the hills, and she is already on her way. I shall see to it that she learns of your enquiry, if I can but send word to her before it is too late.' The letter touched him deeply.
During these autumn evenings his heart was in a continual ferment. But though all his thoughts were occupied in a different quarter, yet owing to the curious relationship in which the child stood to the being who

thus obsessed his mind, the desire to make the girl his own throughout this stormy time grew daily stronger. He remembered the evening when he had first seen her and the nun's poem, 'Not knowing if any will come to nurture the tender leaf....' She would always be delightful; but in some respects she might not fulfil her early promise. One must take risks. And he made the poem: 'When shall I see it lying in my hand, the young grass of the moor-side that springs from purple roots?' In the tenth month the Emperor was to visit the Suzaku-in for the Festival of Red Leaves. The dancers were all to be sons of the noblest houses. The most accomplished among the princes, courtiers and other great gentlemen had been chosen for their parts by the Emperor himself, and from the Royal Princes and State Ministers downward everyone was busy with continual practices and rehearsals. Genji suddenly realized that for a long while he had not enquired after his friends on the mountain. He at once sent a special messenger who brought back this letter from the priest: 'The end came on the twentieth day of last month. It is the common lot of mankind; yet her loss is very grievous to me!' This and more he wrote, and Genji, reading the letter was filled with a bitter sense of life's briefness and futility. And what of the child concerning whose future the dead woman had shown such anxiety? He could not remember his own mother's death at all distinctly; but some dim recollection still floated in his mind and gave to his letter of condolence an added warmth of feeling. It was answered, not

without a certain self-importance, by the nurse Shōnagon.

After the funeral and mourning were over, the child was brought back to the Capital. Hearing of this he allowed a short while to elapse and then one fine, still night went to the house of his own accord. This gloomy, decaying, half-deserted mansion must, he thought, have a most depressing effect upon the child who lived there. He was shown into the same small room as before. Here Shōnagon told him between her sobs the whole tale of their bereavement, at which he too found himself strangely moved. 'I would send my little mistress to His Highness her father's,' she continued, 'did I not remember how cruelly her poor mother was used in that house. And I would do it still if my little lady were a child in arms who would not know where she had been taken to nor what the people there were feeling towards her. But she is now too big a girl to go among a lot of strange children who might not treat her kindly. So her poor dead grandmother was always saying down to her last day. You, Sir, have been very good to us, and it would be a great weight off my mind to know that she was coming to you even if it were only for a little while; and I would not worry you with asking what was to become of her afterwards. Only for her sake I am sorry indeed that she is not some years older, so that you might make a match of it. But the way she has been brought up has made her young even for her age.' 'You need not so constantly remind me of her childishness,' said Genji. 'Though it is indeed her

youth and helplessness which move my compassion, yet I realize (and why should I hide it from myself or from you?) that a far closer bond unites our souls. Let me tell her myself what we have just now decided,' and he recited a poem in which he asked if 'like the waves that lap the shore where young reeds grow he must advance only to recede again.' 'Will she be too much surprised?' he added. Shōnagon, saying that the little girl should by all means be fetched, answered his poem with another in which she warned him that he must not expect her to 'drift seaweed-like with the waves,' before she understood his intention. 'Now, what made you think I should send you away without letting her see you?' she asked, speaking in an off-hand, familiar tone which he found it easy to pardon. His appearance, which the gentlewomen of the house studied with great care while he sat waiting for the child and singing to himself a verse of the song Why so hard to cross the hill? made a deep impression upon them, and they did not forget that moment for a long while after.

The child was lying on her bed weeping for her grandmother. 'A gentleman in a big cloak has come to play with you,' said one of the women who were waiting upon her; 'I wonder if it is your father.' At this she jumped up and cried out: 'Nurse, where is the gentleman in a cloak? Is he my father?' and she came running into the room. 'No,' said Genji, 'it is not your father; but it is someone else who wants you to be very fond of him. Come....' She had learnt from the way people talked about him that Prince Genji was someone

very important, and feeling that he must really be very angry with her for speaking of him as the 'gentleman in a cloak' she went straight to her nurse and whispered 'Please, I am sleepy.' 'You must not be shy of me any more,' said Genji. 'If you are sleepy, come here and lie on my knee. Will you not even come and talk to me?' 'There,' said Shōnagon, 'you see what a little savage she is,' and pushed the child towards him. She stood listlessly by his side, passing her hand under her hair so that it fell in waves over her soft dress or clasping a great bunch of it where it stuck out thick around her shoulders. Presently he took her hand in his; but at once, in terror of this close contact with someone to whom she was not used, she cried out 'I said I wanted to go to bed,' and snatching her hand away she ran into the women's quarters. He followed her crying 'Dear one, do not run away from me! Now that your granny is gone, you must love me instead.' 'Well!' gasped Shōnagon, deeply shocked. 'No, that is too much! How can you bring yourself to say such a wicked thing to the poor child? And it is not much use telling people to be fond of one, is it?' 'For the moment, it may not be,' said Genji. 'But you will see that strange things happen if one's heart is set upon a thing as mine is now.'

Hail was falling. It was a wild and terrible night. The thought of leaving her to pass it in this gloomy and half-deserted mansion immeasurably depressed him and snatching at this excuse for remaining near her: 'Shut the partition-door!' he cried. 'I will stay for a while and

play the watchman here on this terrible night. Draw near to me, all of you!' and so saying, as though it were the most natural thing in the world, he picked up the child in his arms and carried her to her bed. The gentlewomen were far too astonished and confounded to budge from their seats; while Shōnagon, though his high-handed proceedings greatly agitated and alarmed her, had to confess to herself that there was no real reason to interfere, and could only sit moaning in her corner. The little girl was at first terribly frightened. She did not know what he was going to do with her and shuddered violently. Even the feel of his delicate, cool skin when he drew her to him, gave her goose-flesh. He saw this; but none the less he began gently and carefully to remove her outer garments, and laid her down. Then, though he knew quite well that she was still frightened of him, he began talking to her softly and tenderly: 'How would you like to come with me one day to a place where there are lots of lovely pictures and dolls and toys?' And he went on to speak so feelingly of all the things she was most interested in that soon she felt almost at home with him. But for a long while she was restless and did not go properly to sleep. The storm still raged. 'Whatever should we have done if this gentleman had not been here,' whispered one of the women; 'I know that for my part I should have been in a terrible fright. If only our little lady were nearer to his age!' Shōnagon, still mistrustful, sat quite close to Genji all the while.

At last the wind began to drop. The night was far spent; but his return at such an hour would cause no surprise! 'She has become so dear to me,' said Genji, 'that, above all at this sad time in her life, I am loath to leave her even for a few short hours. I think I shall put her somewhere where I can see her whenever I wish. I wonder that she is not frightened to live in such a place as this.' 'I think her father spoke of coming to fetch her,' said Shōnagon; 'but that is not likely to be till the Forty-nine Days are up.' 'It would of course under ordinary circumstances be natural that her father should look after her,' admitted Genji; 'but as she has been brought up entirely by someone else she has no more reason to care for him than for me. And though I have known her so short a time, I am certainly far fonder of her than her father can possibly be.' So saying he stroked the child's hair and then reluctantly, with many backward glances, left the room. There was now a heavy white fog, and hoar-frost lay thick on the grass. Suddenly he found himself wishing that it were a real love-affair, and he became very depressed. It occurred to him that on his way home he would pass by a certain house which he had once familiarly frequented. He knocked at the door, but no one answered. He then ordered one of his servants who had a strong voice to recite the following lines: 'By my Sister's gate though morning fog makes all the world still dark as night, I could not fail to pause.' When this had been sung twice, the lady sent an impertinent coxcomb of a valet to the door, who having recited the

poem 'If you disliked the hedge of fog that lies about this place, a gate of crazy wicker would not keep you standing in the street,' at once went back again into the house. He waited; but no one else came to the door, and though he was in no mood to go dully home since it was now broad daylight, what else could be done? At his palace he lay for a long while smiling to himself with pleasure as he recollected the child's pretty speeches and ways. Towards noon he rose and began to write a letter to her; but he could not find the right words, and after many times laying his brush aside he determined at last to send her some nice pictures instead.

That day Prince Hyōbukyō paid his long-promised visit to the late nun's house. The place seemed to him even more ruinous, vast and antiquated than he remembered it years ago. How depressing it must be for a handful of persons to live in these decaying halls, and looking about him he said to the nurse: 'No child ought to live in a place like this even for a little while. I must take her away at once; there is plenty of room in my house. You' (turning to Shōnagon) 'shall be found a place as a Lady-in-Waiting there. The child will be very well off, for there are several other young people for her to play with.' He called the little girl to him and noticing the rich perfume that clung to her dress since Genji held her in his arms, the Prince said 'How nicely your dress is scented. But isn't it rather drab?' No sooner had he said this than he remembered that she was in mourning, and felt slightly uncomfortable. 'I used sometimes to tell her grandmother,' he continued, 'that

she ought to let her come to see me and get used to our ways; for indeed it was a strange upbringing for her to live alone year in year out with one whose health and spirits steadily declined. But she for some reason was very unfriendly towards me, and there was in another quarter too a reluctance which I fear even at such a time as this may not be wholly overcome....' 'If that is so,' said Shōnagon, 'dull as it is for her here, I do not think she should be moved till she is a little better able to shift for herself.'

For days on end the child had been in a terrible state of grief, and not having eaten the least bite of anything she was grown very thin, but was none the less lovely for that. He looked at her tenderly and said: 'You must not cry any more now. When people die, there is no help for it and we must bear it bravely. But now all is well, for I have come instead....' But it was getting late and he could not stay any longer. As he turned to go he saw that the child, by no means consoled at the prospect of falling under his care, was again crying bitterly. The Prince, himself shedding a few tears did his best to comfort her: 'Do not grieve so,' he said, 'to-day or to-morrow I will send for you to come and live with me,' and with that he departed. Still the child wept and no way could be found to distract her thoughts. It was not of course that she had any anxiety about her own future, for about such matters she had not yet begun to think at all; but only that she had lost the companion from whom for years on end she had never for a moment been separated. Young as she was, she

suffered so cruelly that all her usual games were quite abandoned, and though sometimes during the day her spirits would a little improve, as night drew on she became so melancholy that Shōnagon began to wonder how much longer things would go on like this, and in despair at not being able to comfort her, would herself burst into tears.

Presently Koremitsu arrived with a message saying that Genji had intended to visit them, but owing to a sudden command from the Palace was unable to do so, and being very much perturbed at the little one's grievous condition had sent for further news. Having delivered this message Koremitsu brought in some of Genji's servants whom he had sent to mount guard over the house that night. 'This kindness is indeed ill-placed,' said Shōnagon. 'It may not seem to him of much consequence that his gentlemen should be installed here; but if the child's father hears of it, we servants shall get all the blame for the little lady's being given away to a married gentleman. It was you who let it all begin, we shall be told. Now be careful,' she said turning to her fellow-servants, 'do not let her even mention these watchmen to her father.' But alas, the child was quite incapable of understanding such a prohibition, and Shōnagon, after pouring out many lamentations to Koremitsu, continued: 'I do not doubt but that in due time she will somehow become his wife, for so their fate seems to decree. But now and for a long while there can be no talk of any such thing, and this, as he has roundly told me, he knows as well as

the rest of us. So what he is after I cannot for the life of me imagine. Only to-day when Prince Hyōbukyō was here he bade me keep a sharp eye upon her and not let her be treated with any indiscretion. I confess when he said it I remembered with vexation certain liberties which I have allowed your master to take, thinking little enough of them at the time.' No sooner had she said this than she began to fear that Koremitsu would put a worse construction on her words than she intended, and shaking her head very dolefully she relapsed into silence. Nor was she far wrong, for Koremitsu was indeed wondering of what sort Genji's misdemeanours could have been.

On hearing Koremitsu's report Genji's heart was filled with pity for the child's state and he would like to have gone to her at once. But he feared that ignorant people would misunderstand these frequent visits and, thinking the girl older than she was, spread foolish scandals abroad. It would be far simpler to fetch her to his Palace and keep her there. All through the day he sent numerous letters, and at dusk Koremitsu again went to the house saying that urgent business had once more prevented Genji from visiting them, for which remissness he tendered his apologies. Shōnagon answered curtly that the girl's father had suddenly decided to fetch her away next day and that they were too busy to receive visits: 'The servants are all in a fluster at leaving this shabby old house where they have lived so long and going to a strange, grand place....' She answered his further questions so briefly and

seemed so intent upon her sewing, that Koremitsu went away.

Genji was at the Great Hall, but as usual he had been unable to get a word out of Aoi and in a gloomy mood he was plucking at his zithern and singing 'Why sped you across field and hill So fast upon this rainy night?' The words of the song were aimed at Aoi and he sang them with much feeling. He was thus employed when Koremitsu arrived at the Great Hall. Genji sent for him at once and bade him tell his story. Koremitsu's news was very disquieting. Once she was in her father's palace it would look very odd that Genji should fetch her away, even if she came willingly. It would inevitably be rumoured abroad that he had made off with her like a child-snatcher, a thief. Far better to anticipate his rival and exacting a promise of silence from the people about her, carry her off to his own palace immediately. 'I shall go there at daybreak,' he said to Koremitsu; 'Order the carriage that I came here in, it can be used just as it is, and see to it that one or two attendants are ready to go with me.' Koremitsu bowed and retired. Genji knew that whichever course he chose, there was bound to be a scandal so soon as the thing became known. Inevitably gossips would spread the report that, young though she was, the child by this time knew well enough why she had been invited to live with Prince Genji in his palace. Let them draw their own conclusions. That did not matter. There was a much worse possibility. What if Hyōbukyō found out where she was? His conduct in abducting another man's child would appear

in the highest degree outrageous and discreditable. He was sorely puzzled, but he knew that if he let this opportunity slip he would afterwards bitterly repent it, and long before daybreak he started on his way. Aoi was cold and sullen as ever. 'I have just remembered something very important which I must see about at home,' he said; 'I shall not be away long,' and he slipped out so quietly that the servants of the house did not know that he was gone. His cloak was brought to him from his own apartments and he drove off attended only by Koremitsu who followed on horseback. After much knocking they succeeded in getting the gate opened, but by a servant who was not in the secret. Koremitsu ordered the man to pull in Genji's carriage as quietly as he could and himself went straight to the front door, which he rattled, coughing as he did so that Shōnagon might know who was there. 'My lord is waiting,' he said when she came to the door. 'But the young lady is fast asleep,' said Shōnagon; 'his Highness has no business to be up and about at this time of night.' She said this thinking that he was returning from some nocturnal escapade and had only called there in passing. 'I hear,' said Genji now coming forward, 'that the child is to be moved to her father's and I have something of importance which I must say to her before she goes.' 'Whatever business you have to transact with her, I am sure she will give the matter her closest attention,' scoffed Shōnagon. Matters of importance indeed, with a child of ten! Genji entered the women's quarters. 'You cannot go in there,' cried

Shōnagon in horror; 'several aged ladies are lying all undressed....' 'They are all fast asleep,' said Genji. 'See, I am only rousing the child,' and bending over her: 'The morning mist is rising,' he cried, 'it is time to wake!' And before Shōnagon had time to utter a sound, he had taken the child in his arms and begun gently to rouse her. Still half-dreaming, she thought it was the prince her father who had come to fetch her. 'Come,' said Genji while he put her hair to rights, 'your father has sent me to bring you back with me to his palace.' For a moment she was dazed to find that it was not her father and shrank from him in fright. 'Never mind whether it is your father or I,' he cried; 'it is all the same,' and so saying he picked her up in his arms and carried her out of the inner room. 'Well!' cried out Koremitsu and Shōnagon in astonishment. What would he do next? 'It seems,' said Genji, 'that you were disquieted at my telling you I could not visit her here as often as I wished and would make arrangements for her to go to a more convenient place. I hear that you are sending her where it will be even more difficult for me to see her. Therefore ... make ready one or the other of you to come with me.'

Shōnagon, who now realized that he was going to make off with the child, fell into a terrible fluster. 'O Sir,' she said, 'you could not have chosen a worse time. To-day her father is coming to fetch her, and whatever shall I say to him? If only you would wait, I am sure it would all come right in the end. But by acting so hastily you will do yourself no good and leave the poor servants

here in a sad pickle.' 'If that is all,' cried Genji, 'let them follow as soon as they choose,' and to Shōnagon's despair he had the carriage brought in. The child stood by weeping and bewildered. There seemed no way of preventing him from carrying out his purpose and gathering together the child's clothes that she had been sewing the night before, the nurse put on her own best dress and stepped into the carriage. Genji's house was not far off and they arrived before daylight. They drew up in front of the western wing and Genji alighted. Taking the child lightly in his arms he set her on the ground. Shōnagon, to whom these strange events seemed like a dream, hesitated as though still uncertain whether she should enter the house or no. 'There is no need for you to come in if you do not want to,' said Genji. 'Now that the child herself is safely here I am quite content. If you had rather go back, you have only to say so and I will escort you.'

Reluctantly she left the carriage. The suddenness of the move was in itself enough to have upset her; but she was also worrying about what Prince Hyōbukyō would think when he found that his child had vanished. And indeed what was going to become of her? One way or another all her mistresses seemed to be taken from her and it was only when she became frightened of having wept for so long on end that she at last dried her eyes and began to pray.

The western wing had long been uninhabited and was not completely furnished; but Koremitsu had soon fitted up screens and curtains where they were required. For

Genji makeshift quarters were soon contrived by letting down the side-wings of his screen-of-honour. He sent to the other part of the house for his night things and went to sleep. The child, who had been put to bed not far off, was still very apprehensive and ill at ease in these new surroundings. Her lips were trembling, but she dared not cry out loud. 'I want to sleep with Shōnagon,' she said at last in a tearful, babyish voice.

'You are getting too big to sleep with a nurse,' said Genji, who had heard her. 'You must try and go to sleep nicely where you are.' She felt very lonely and lay weeping for a long while. The nurse was far too much upset to think of going to bed and sat up for the rest of the night in the servants' quarters crying so bitterly that she was unconscious of all that went on around her.

But when it grew light she began to look about her a little. Not only this great palace with its marvellous pillars and carvings, but the sand in the courtyard outside which seemed to her like a carpet of jewels made so dazzling an impression upon her that at first she felt somewhat overawed. However, the fact that she was now no longer in a household of women gave her an agreeable sense of security.

It was the hour at which business brought various strangers to the house. There were several men walking just outside her window and she heard one of them whisper to another: 'They say that someone new has come to live here. Who can it be, I wonder? A lady of note, I'll warrant you.'

Bath water was brought from the other wing, and steamed rice for breakfast. Genji did not rise till far on into the morning. 'It is not good for the child to be alone,' he said to Shōnagon, 'so last night before I came to you I arranged for some little people to come and stay here,' and so saying he sent a servant to 'fetch the little girls from the eastern wing.' He had given special orders that they were to be as small as possible and now four of the tiniest and prettiest creatures imaginable arrived upon the scene.

Murasaki was still asleep, lying wrapped in Genji's own coat. It was with difficulty that he roused her. 'You must not be sad any more,' he said; 'If I were not very fond of you, should I be looking after you like this? Little girls ought to be very gentle and obedient in their ways.' And thus her education was begun.

She seemed to him, now that he could study her at leisure, even more lovely than he had realized and they were soon engaged in an affectionate conversation. He sent for delightful pictures and toys to show her and set to work to amuse her in every way he could. Gradually he persuaded her to get up and look about her. In her shabby dress made of some dark grey material she looked so charming now that she was laughing and playing, with all her woes forgotten, that

Genji too laughed with pleasure as he watched her. When at last he retired to the eastern wing, she went out of doors to look at the garden. As she picked her way among the trees and along the side of the lake, and gazed with delight upon the frosty flower-beds that glittered gay as a picture, while a many-coloured throng of unknown people passed constantly in and out of the house, she began to think that this was a very nice place indeed. Then she looked at the wonderful pictures that were painted on all the panels and screens and quite lost her heart to them.

For two or three days Genji did not go to the Palace, but spent all his time amusing the little girl. Finally he drew all sorts of pictures for her to put into her copy-book, showing them to her one by one as he did so. She thought them the loveliest set of pictures she had ever seen. Then he wrote part of the Musashi-no poem. She was delighted by the way it was written in bold ink-strokes on a background stained with purple. In a smaller hand was the poem: 'Though the parent-root I cannot see, yet tenderly I love its off-shoot,—the dewy plant that grows upon Musashi Moor.' 'Come' said Genji while she was admiring it, 'you must write something too.' 'I cannot write properly yet' she answered, looking up at him with a witchery so wholly unconscious that Genji laughed. 'Even if you cannot write properly it will never do for us to let you off altogether. Let me give you a lesson.' With many timid glances towards him she began to write. Even the childish manner in which she grasped the brush gave him a thrill of delight which he was at a loss to explain. 'Oh, I have spoiled it' she

suddenly cried out and blushing hid from him what she had written. But he forced her to let him see it and found the poem: 'I do not know what put Musashi into your head and am very puzzled. What plant is it that you say is a relative of mine?' It was written in a large childish hand which was indeed very undeveloped, but was nevertheless full of promise. It showed a strong resemblance to the late nun's writing. He felt certain that if she were given up-to-date copy-books she would soon write very nicely.

Next they built houses for the dolls and played so long at this game together that Genji forgot for a while the great anxiety which was at that time preying upon his mind.

The servants who had been left behind at Murasaki's house were extremely embarrassed when Prince Hyōbukyō came to fetch her. Genji had made them promise for a time at any rate to tell no one of what had happened and Shōnagon had seemed to agree that this was best. Accordingly he could get nothing out of them save that Shōnagon had taken the child away with her without saying anything about where she was going. The Prince felt completely baffled. Perhaps the grandmother had instilled into the nurse's mind the idea that things would not go smoothly for the child at his palace. In that case the nurse with an excess of craftiness might, instead of openly saying that she feared the child would not be well treated under his roof, have thought it wiser to make off with her when opportunity offered. He went home very

depressed, asking them to let him know instantly if they had any news, a request which again embarrassed them. He also made enquiries of the priest at the temple in the hills, but could learn nothing. She had seemed to him to be a most lovable and delightful child; it was very disappointing to lose sight of her in this manner. The princess his wife had long ago got over her dislike of the child's mother and was indignant at the idea that she was not to be trusted to do her duty by the child properly.

Gradually the servants from Murasaki's house assembled at her new home. The little girls who had been brought to play with her were delighted with their new companion and they were soon all playing together very happily.

When her prince was away or busy, on dreary evenings she would still sometimes long for her grandmother the nun and cry a little. But she never thought about her father whom she had never been used to see except at rare intervals. Now indeed she had 'a new father' of whom she was growing every day more fond. When he came back from anywhere she was the first to meet him and then wonderful games and conversations began, she sitting all the while on his lap without the least shyness or restraint. A more charming companion could not have been imagined. It might be that when she grew older, she would not always be so trustful. New aspects of her character might come into play. If she suspected, for example, that he cared for someone else, she might resent it, and in such a case all sorts of unexpected things are apt to happen; but for the

present she was a delightful plaything. Had she really been his daughter, convention would not have allowed him to go on much longer living with her on terms of such complete intimacy; but in a case like this he felt that such scruples were not applicable.