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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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The Tale of Genji: The Broom-tree (2/9)

Genji the Shining One.... He knew that the bearer of such a name could not escape much scrutiny and jealous censure and that his lightest dallings would be proclaimed to posterity. Fearing then lest he should appear to after ages as a mere good-for-nothing and trifler, and knowing that (so accursed is the blabbing of gossips' tongues) his most secret acts might come to light, he was obliged always to act with great prudence and to preserve at least the outward appearance of respectability. Thus nothing really romantic ever happened to him and Katano no Shōshō would have scoffed at his story.

While he was still a Captain of the Guard and was spending most of his time at the Palace, his infrequent visits to the Great Hall were taken as a sign that some secret passion had made its imprint on his heart. But in reality the frivolous, commonplace, straight-ahead amours of his companions did not in the least interest him, and it was a curious trait in his character that when on rare occasions, despite all resistance, love did gain a hold upon him, it was always in the most improbable and hopeless entanglement that he became involved.

It was the season of the long rains. For many days there had not been a fine moment and the Court was keeping a strict fast. The people at the Great Hall were becoming very impatient of Genji's long residence at the Palace, but the young lords, who were Court pages, liked waiting upon Genji better than upon anyone else, always managing to put out his clothes and decorations in some marvellous new way. Among these brothers his greatest friend was the Equerry, *Tō no Chūjō*, with whom above all other companions of his playtime he found himself familiar and at ease. This lord too found the house which his father-in-law, the Minister of the Right, had been at pains to build for him, somewhat oppressive, while at his father's house he, like Genji, found the splendours somewhat dazzling, so that he ended by becoming Genji's constant companion at Court. They shared both studies and play and were inseparable companions on every sort of occasion, so that soon all formalities were dispensed with between them and the inmost secrets of their hearts freely exchanged.

It was on a night when the rain never ceased its dismal downpour. There were not many people about in the palace and Genji's rooms seemed even quieter than usual. He was sitting by the lamp, looking at various books and papers. Suddenly he began pulling some letters out of the drawers of a desk which stood near by. This aroused *Tō no Chūjō's* curiosity. 'Some of them I can show to you' said Genji, 'but there are others which I had rather....' 'It is just those which I want to see. Ordinary, commonplace letters are very much alike and

I do not suppose that yours differ much from mine. What I want to see are passionate letters written in moments of resentment, letters hinting consent, letters written at dusk....'

He begged so eagerly that Genji let him examine the drawers. It was not indeed likely that he had put any very important or secret documents in the ordinary desk; he would have hidden them away much further from sight. So he felt sure that the letters in these drawers would be nothing to worry about. After turning over a few of them, 'What an astonishing variety!' Tō no Chūjō exclaimed and began guessing at the writers' names, and made one or two good hits. More often he was wrong and Genji, amused by his puzzled air, said very little but generally managed to lead him astray. At last he took the letters back, saying 'But you too must have a large collection. Show me some of yours, and my desk will open to you with better will.' 'I have none that you would care to see,' said Tō no Chūjō, and he continued: 'I have at last discovered that there exists no woman of whom one can say "Here is perfection. This is indeed she." There are many who have the superficial art of writing a good running hand, or if occasion requires of making a quick repartee. But there are few who will stand the ordeal of any further test. Usually their minds are entirely occupied by admiration for their own accomplishments, and their abuse of all rivals creates a most unpleasant impression. Some again are adored by over-fond parents. These have been since childhood guarded behind lattice windows and no

knowledge of them is allowed to reach the outer-world, save that of their excellence in some accomplishment or art; and this may indeed sometimes arouse our interest. She is pretty and graceful and has not yet mixed at all with the world. Such a girl by closely copying some model and applying herself with great industry will often succeed in really mastering one of the minor and ephemeral arts. Her friends are careful to say nothing of her defects and to exaggerate her accomplishments, and while we cannot altogether trust their praise we cannot believe that their judgment is entirely astray. But when we take steps to test their statements we are invariably disappointed.'

He paused, seeming to be slightly ashamed of the cynical tone which he had adopted, and added 'I know my experience is not large, but that is the conclusion I have come to so far.' Then Genji, smiling: 'And are there any who lack even one accomplishment?' 'No doubt, but in such a case it is unlikely that anyone would be successfully decoyed. The number of those who have nothing to recommend them and of those in whom nothing but good can be found is probably equal. I divide women into three classes. Those of high rank and birth are made such a fuss of and their weak points are so completely concealed that we are certain to be told that they are paragons. About those of the middle class everyone is allowed to express his own opinion, and we shall have much conflicting evidence to sift. As for the lower classes, they do not concern us.'

The completeness with which Tō no Chūjō disposed of the question amused Genji, who said 'It will not always be so easy to know into which of the three classes a woman ought to be put. For sometimes people of high rank sink to the most abject positions; while others of common birth rise to be high officers, wear self-important faces, redecorate the inside of their houses and think themselves as good as anyone. How are we to deal with such cases?'

At this moment they were joined by Hidari no Uma no Kami and Tō Shikibu no Jō, who said they had also come to the Palace to keep the fast. As both of them were great lovers and good talkers, Tō no Chūjō handed over to them the decision of Genji's question, and in the discussion which followed many unflattering things were said. Uma no Kami spoke first. 'However high a lady may rise, if she does not come of an adequate stock, the world will think very differently of her from what it would of one born to such honours; but if through adverse fortune a lady of highest rank finds herself in friendless misery, the noble breeding of her mind is soon forgotten and she becomes an object of contempt. I think then that taking all things into account, we must put such ladies too into the "middle class." But when we come to classify the daughters of Zuryō, who are sent to labour at the affairs of distant provinces,—they have such ups and downs that we may reasonably put them too into the middle class.

'Then there are Ministers of the third and fourth classes without Cabinet rank. These are generally

thought less of even than the humdrum, ordinary officials. They are usually of quite good birth, but have much less responsibility than Ministers of State and consequently much greater peace of mind. Girls born into such households are brought up in complete security from want or deprivation of any kind, and indeed often amid surroundings of the utmost luxury and splendour. Many of them grow up into women whom it would be folly to despise; some have been admitted at Court, where they have enjoyed a quite unexpected success. And of this I could cite many, many instances.' 'Their success has generally been due to their having a lot of money,' said Genji smiling. 'You should have known better than to say that,' said Tō no Chūjō, reproving him, and Uma no Kami went on: 'There are some whose lineage and reputation are so high that it never occurs to one that their education could possibly be at fault; yet when we meet them, we find ourselves exclaiming in despair "How can they have contrived to grow up like this?"'

'No doubt the perfect woman in whom none of those essentials is lacking must somewhere exist and it would not startle me to find her. But she would certainly be beyond the reach of a humble person like myself, and for that reason I should like to put her in a category of her own and not to count her in our present classification.

'But suppose that behind some gateway overgrown with vine-weed, in a place where no one knows there is a house at all, there should be locked away some

creature of unimagined beauty—with what excitement should we discover her! The complete surprise of it, the upsetting of all our wise theories and classifications, would be likely, I think, to lay a strange and sudden enchantment upon us. I imagine her father rather large and gruff; her brother, a surly, ill-looking fellow. Locked away in an utterly blank and uninteresting bed-room she will be subject to odd flights of fancy, so that in her hands the arts that others learn as trivial accomplishments will seem strangely full of meaning and importance; or perhaps in some particular art she will thrill us by her delightful and unexpected mastery. Such a one may perhaps be beneath the attention of those of you who are of flawless lineage. But for my part I find it hard to banish her ...’ and here he looked at Shikibu no Jō, who wondered whether the description had been meant to apply to his own sisters, but said nothing. ‘If it is difficult to choose even out of the top class ...’ thought Genji, and began to doze. He was dressed in a suit of soft white silk, with a rough cloak carelessly slung over his shoulders, with belt and fastenings untied. In the light of the lamp against which he was leaning he looked so lovely that one might have wished he were a girl; and they thought that even Uma no Kami’s ‘perfect woman,’ whom he had placed in a category of her own, would not be worthy of such a prince as Genji. The conversation went on. Many persons and things were discussed. Uma no Kami contended that perfection is equally difficult to find in other spheres. The

sovereign is hard put to it to choose his ministers. But he at least has an easier task than the husband, for he does not entrust the affairs of his kingdom to one, two or three persons alone, but sets up a whole system of superiors and subordinates.

But when the mistress of a house is to be selected, a single individual must be found who will combine in her person many diverse qualities. It will not do to be too exacting. Let us be sure that the lady of our choice possesses certain tangible qualities which we admire; and if in other ways she falls short of our ideal, we must be patient and call to mind those qualities which first induced us to begin our courting.

But even here we must beware; for there are some who in the selfishness of youth and flawless beauty are determined that not a dust-flick shall fall upon them. In their letters they choose the most harmless topics, but yet contrive to colour the very texture of the written signs with a tenderness that vaguely disquiets us. But such a one, when we have at last secured a meeting, will speak so low that she can scarcely be heard, and the few faint sentences that she murmurs beneath her breath serve only to make her more mysterious than before. All this may seem to be the pretty shrinking of girlish modesty; but we may later find that what held her back was the very violence of her passions.

Or again, where all seems plain sailing, the perfect companion will turn out to be too impressionable and will upon the most inappropriate occasions display her affections in so ludicrous a way that we begin to wish ourselves rid of her.

Then there is the zealous house-wife, who regardless of her appearance twists her hair behind her ears and devotes herself entirely to the details of our domestic welfare. The husband, in his comings and goings about the world, is certain to see and hear many things which he cannot discuss with strangers, but would gladly talk over with an intimate who could listen with sympathy and understanding, someone who could laugh with him or weep if need be. It often happens too that some political event will greatly perturb or amuse him, and he sits apart longing to tell someone about it. He suddenly laughs at some secret recollection or sighs audibly. But the wife only says lightly 'What is the matter?' and shows no interest.

This is apt to be very trying.

Uma no Kami considered several other cases. But he reached no definite conclusion and sighing deeply he continued: 'We will then, as I have suggested, let birth and beauty go by the board. Let her be the simplest and most guileless of creatures so long as she is honest and of a peaceable disposition, that in the end we may not lack a place of trust. And if some other virtue chances to be hers we shall treasure it as a godsend. But if we discover in her some small defect, it shall not be too closely scrutinized. And we may be sure that if she is strong in the virtues of tolerance and amiability her outward appearance will not be beyond measure harsh.

'There are those who carry forbearance too far, and affecting not to notice wrongs which cry out for redress seem to be paragons of misused fidelity. But

suddenly a time comes when such a one can restrain herself no longer, and leaving behind her a poem couched in pitiful language and calculated to rouse the most painful sentiments of remorse, she flies to some remote village in the mountains or some desolate seashore, and for a long while all trace of her is lost. 'When I was a boy the ladies-in-waiting used to tell me sad tales of this kind. I never doubted that the sentiments expressed in them were real, and I wept profusely. But now I am beginning to suspect that such sorrows are for the most part affectation. She has left behind her (this lady whom we are imagining) a husband who is probably still fond of her; she is making herself very unhappy, and by disappearing in this way is causing him unspeakable anxiety, perhaps only for the ridiculous purpose of putting his affection to the test. Then comes along some admiring friend crying "What a heart! What depth of feeling!" She becomes more lugubrious than ever, and finally enters a nunnery. When she decided on this step she was perfectly sincere and had not the slightest intention of ever returning to the world. Then some female friend hears of it and "Poor thing" she cries; "in what an agony of mind must she have been to do this!" and visits her in her cell. When the husband, who has never ceased to mourn for her, hears what she has become, he bursts into tears, and some servant or old nurse, seeing this, bustles off to the nunnery with tales of the husband's despair, and "Oh Madam, what a shame, what a shame!" Then the nun, forgetting where and what she is, raises her hand to her head to straighten her hair, and finds

that it has been shorn away. In helpless misery she sinks to the floor, and do what she will, the tears begin to flow. Now all is lost; for since she cannot at every moment be praying for strength, there creeps into her mind the sinful thought that she did ill to become a nun and so often does she commit this sin that even Buddha must think her wickeder now than she was before she took her vows; and she feels certain that these terrible thoughts are leading her soul to the blackest Hell. But if the karma of their past lives should chance to be strongly weighted against a parting, she will be found and captured before she has taken her final vows. In such a case their life will be beyond endurance unless she be fully determined, come good or ill, this time to close her eyes to all that goes amiss.

`Again there are others who must needs be forever mounting guard over their own and their husband's affections. Such a one, if she sees in him not a fault indeed but even the slightest inclination to stray, makes a foolish scene, declaring with indignation that she will have no more to do with him.

`But even if a man's fancy should chance indeed to have gone somewhat astray, yet his earlier affection may still be strong and in the end will return to its old haunts. Now by her tantrums she has made a rift that cannot be joined. Whereas she who when some small wrong calls for silent rebuke, shows by a glance that she is not unaware; but when some large offence demands admonishment knows how to hint without severity, will end by standing in her master's affections

better than ever she stood before. For often the sight of our own forbearance will give our neighbour strength to rule his mutinous affections.

'But she whose tolerance and forgiveness know no bounds, though this may seem to proceed from the beauty and amiability of her disposition, is in fact displaying the shallowness of her feeling: "The unmoored boat must needs drift with the stream." Are you not of this mind?'

Tō no Chūjō nodded. 'Some' he said 'have imagined that by arousing a baseless suspicion in the mind of the beloved we can revive a waning devotion. But this experiment is very dangerous. Those who recommend it are confident that so long as resentment is groundless one need only suffer it in silence and all will soon be well. I have observed however that this is by no means the case.

'But when all is said and done, there can be no greater virtue in woman than this: that she should with gentleness and forbearance meet every wrong whatsoever that falls to her share.' He thought as he said this of his own sister, Princess Aoi; but was disappointed and piqued to discover that Genji, whose comments he awaited, was fast asleep.

Uma no Kami was an expert in such discussions and now stood preening his feathers. Tō no Chūjō was disposed to hear what more he had to say and was now at pains to humour and encourage him.

'It is with women' said Uma no Kami 'as it is with the works of craftsmen. The wood-carver can fashion

whatever he will. Yet his products are but toys of the moment, to be glanced at in jest, not fashioned according to any precept or law. When times change, the carver too will change his style and make new trifles to hit the fancy of the passing day. But there is another kind of artist, who sets more soberly about his work, striving to give real beauty to the things which men actually use and to give to them the shapes which tradition has ordained. This maker of real things must not for a moment be confused with the carver of idle toys.

'In the Painters' Workshop too there are many excellent artists chosen for their proficiency in ink-drawing; and indeed they are all so clever it is hard to set one above the other. But all of them are at work on subjects intended to impress and surprise. One paints the Mountain of Hōrai; another a raging sea-monster riding a storm; another, ferocious animals from the Land beyond the sea, or faces of imaginary demons. Letting their fancy run wildly riot they have no thought of beauty, but only of how best they may astonish the beholder's eye. And though nothing in their pictures is real, all is probable. But ordinary hills and rivers, just as they are, houses such as you may see anywhere, with all their real beauty and harmony of form—quietly to draw such scenes as this, or to show what lies behind some intimate hedge that is folded away far from the world, and thick trees upon some unheroic hill, and all this with befitting care for composition, proportion, and the like,—such works demand the highest master's

utmost skill and must needs draw the common craftsman into a thousand blunders. So too in handwriting, we see some who aimlessly prolong their cursive strokes this way or that, and hope their flourishes will be mistaken for genius. But true penmanship preserves in every letter its balance and form, and though at first some letters may seem but half-formed, yet when we compare them with the copy-books we find that there is nothing at all amiss. 'So it is in these trifling matters. And how much the more in judging of the human heart should we distrust all fashionable airs and graces, all tricks and smartness, learnt only to please the outward gaze! This I first understood some while ago, and if you will have patience with me I will tell you the story.'

So saying, he came and sat a little closer to them, and Genji woke up. *Tō no Chūjō*, in wrapt attention, was sitting with his cheek propped upon his hand. *Uma no Kami*'s whole speech that night was indeed very much like a chaplain's sermon about the ways of the world, and was rather absurd. But upon such occasions as this we are easily led on into discussing our own ideas and most private secrets without the least reserve.

'It happened when I was young, and in an even more humble position than I am to-day' *Uma no Kami* continued. 'I was in love with a girl who (like the drudging, faithful wife of whom I spoke a little while ago) was not a full-sail beauty; and I in my youthful vanity thought she was all very well for the moment, but would never do for the wife of so fine a fellow as I.

She made an excellent companion in times when I was at a loose end; but she was of a disposition so violently jealous, that I could have put up with a little less devotion if only she had been somewhat less fiercely ardent and exacting.

`Thus I kept thinking, vexed by her unrelenting suspicions. But then I would remember her ceaseless devotion to the interests of one who was after all a person of no account, and full of remorse I made sure that with a little patience on my part she would one day learn to school her jealousy.

`It was her habit to minister to my smallest wants even before I was myself aware of them; whatever she felt was lacking in her she strove to acquire, and where she knew that in some quality of mind she still fell behind my desires, she was at pains never to show her deficiency in such a way as might vex me. Thus in one way or another she was always busy in forwarding my affairs, and she hoped that if all down to the last dew drop (as they say) were conducted as I should wish, this would be set down to her credit and help to balance the defects in her person which meek and obliging as she might be could not (she fondly imagined) fail to offend me; and at this time she even hid herself from strangers lest their poor opinion of her looks should put me out of countenance.

`I meanwhile, becoming used to her homely looks, was well content with her character, save for this one article of jealousy; and here she showed no amendment. Then I began to think to myself "Surely, since she seems so anxious to please, so timid, there must be

some way of giving her a fright which will teach her a lesson, so that for a while at least we may have a respite from this accursed business." And though I knew it would cost me dear, I determined to make a pretence of giving her up, thinking that since she was so fond of me this would be the best way to teach her a lesson. Accordingly I behaved with the greatest coldness to her, and she as usual began her jealous fit and behaved with such folly that in the end I said to her, "If you want to be rid for ever of one who loves you dearly, you are going the right way about it by all these endless poutings over nothing at all. But if you want to go on with me, you must give up suspecting some deep intrigue each time you fancy that I am treating you unkindly. Do this, and you may be sure I shall continue to love you dearly. It may well be that as time goes on, I shall rise a little higher in the world and then...."

'I thought I had managed matters very cleverly, though perhaps in the heat of the moment I might have spoken somewhat too roughly. She smiled faintly and answered that if it were only a matter of bearing for a while with my failures and disappointments, that did not trouble her at all, and she would gladly wait till I became a person of consequence. "But it is a hard task" she said "to go on year after year enduring your coldness and waiting the time when you will at last learn to behave to me with some decency; and therefore I agree with you that the time has come when we had better go each his own way." Then in a fit of wild and uncontrollable jealousy she began to pour upon me a torrent of bitter reproaches, and with a

woman's savagery she suddenly seized my little finger and bit deep into it. The unexpected pain was difficult to bear, but composing myself I said tragically "Now you have put this mark upon me I shall get on worse than ever in polite society; as for promotion, I shall be considered a disgrace to the meanest public office and unable to cut a genteel figure in any capacity, I shall be obliged to withdraw myself completely from the world. You and I at any rate shall certainly not meet again," and bending my injured finger as I turned to go, I recited the verse "As on bent hand I count the times that we have met, it is not one finger only that bears witness to my pain." And she, all of a sudden bursting into tears ... "If still in your heart only you look for pains to count, then were our hands best employed in parting." After a few more words I left her, not for a moment thinking that all was over.

Days went by, and no news. I began to be restless. One night when I had been at the Palace for the rehearsal of the Festival music, heavy sleet was falling; and I stood at the spot where those of us who came from the Palace had dispersed, unable to make up my mind which way to go. For in no direction had I anything which could properly be called a home. I might of course take a room in the Palace precincts; but I shivered to think of the cheerless grandeur that would surround me. Suddenly I began to wonder what she was thinking, how she was looking; and brushing the snow off my shoulders, I set out for her house. I own I felt uneasy; but I thought that after so long a time her anger must surely have somewhat abated. Inside the

room a lamp showed dimly, turned to the wall. Some undergarments were hung out upon a large, warmly-quilted couch, the bed-hangings were drawn up, and I made sure that she was for some reason actually expecting me. I was priding myself on having made so lucky a hit, when suddenly, "Not at home!"; and on questioning the maid I learnt that she had but that very night gone to her parents' home, leaving only a few necessary servants behind. The fact that she had till now sent no poem or conciliatory message seemed to show some hardening of heart, and had already disquieted me. Now I began to fear that her accursed suspiciousness and jealousy had but been a stratagem to make me grow weary of her, and though I could recall no further proof of this I fell into great despair. And to show her that, though we no longer met, I still thought of her and planned for her, I got her some stuff for a dress, choosing a most delightful and unusual shade of colour, and a material that I knew she would be glad to have. "For after all" I thought "she cannot want to put me altogether out of her head." When I informed her of this purchase she did not rebuff me nor make any attempt to hide from me, but to all my questions she answered quietly and composedly, without any sign that she was ashamed of herself.

'At last she told me that if I went on as before, she could never forgive me; but if I would promise to live more quietly she would take me back again. Seeing that she still hankered after me I determined to school her a little further yet, and said that I could make no

conditions and must be free to live as I chose. So the tug of war went on; but it seems that it hurt her far more than I knew, for in a little while she fell into a decline and died, leaving me aghast at the upshot of my wanton game. And now I felt that, whatever faults she might have had, her devotion alone would have made her a fit wife for me. I remembered how both in trivial talk and in consideration of important matters she had never once shown herself at a loss, how in the dyeing of brocades she rivalled the Goddess of Tatsuta who tints the autumn leaves, and how in needlework and the like she was not less skilful than Tanabata, the Weaving-lady of the sky.'

Here he stopped, greatly distressed at the recollection of the lady's many talents and virtues.

'The Weaving-lady and the Herd boy' said Tō no Chūjō 'enjoy a love that is eternal. Had she but resembled the Divine Sempstress in this, you would not, I think, have minded her being a little less skilful with her needle. I wonder that with this rare creature in mind you pronounce the world to be so blank a place.'

'Listen' replied Uma no Kami 'About the same time there was another lady whom I used to visit. She was of higher birth than the first; her skill in poetry, cursive writing, and lute-playing, her readiness of hand and tongue were all marked enough to show that she was not a woman of trivial nature; and this indeed was allowed by those who knew her. To add to this she was not ill-looking and sometimes, when I needed a rest from my unhappy persecutress, I used to visit her

secretly. In the end I found that I had fallen completely in love with her. After the death of the other I was in great distress. But it was no use brooding over the past and I began to visit my new lady more and more often. I soon came to the conclusion that she was frivolous and I had no confidence that I should have liked what went on when I was not there to see. I now visited her only at long intervals and at last decided that she had another lover.

It was during the Godless Month, on a beautiful moonlight night. As I was leaving the Palace I met a certain young courtier, who, when I told him that I was driving out to spend the night at the Dainagon's, said that my way was his and joined me. The road passed my lady's house and here it was that he alighted, saying that he had an engagement which he should have been very sorry not to fulfil. The wall was half in ruins and through its gaps I saw the shadowy waters of the lake. It would not have been easy (for even the moonbeams seemed to loiter here!) to hasten past so lovely a place, and when he left his coach I too left mine.

At once this man (whom I now knew to be that other lover whose existence I had guessed) went and sat unconcernedly on the bamboo skirting of the portico and began to gaze at the moon. The chrysanthemums were just in full bloom, the bright fallen leaves were tumbling and tussling in the wind. It was indeed a scene of wonderful beauty that met our eyes. Presently he took a flute out of the folds of his dress and began to play upon it. Then putting the flute aside, he began

to murmur "Sweet is the shade" and other catches. Soon a pleasant-sounding native zithern began to tune up somewhere within the house and an ingenious accompaniment was fitted to his careless warblings. Her zithern was tuned to the autumn-mode, and she played with so much tenderness and feeling that though the music came from behind closed shutters it sounded quite modern and passionate, and well accorded with the soft beauty of the moonlight. The courtier was ravished, and as he stepped forward to place himself right under her window he turned to me and remarked in a self-satisfied way that among the fallen leaves no other footstep had left its mark. Then plucking a chrysanthemum, he sang:

Strange that the music of your lute,
These matchless flowers and all the beauty of the
night,

Have lured no other feet to linger at your door!

and then, beseeching her pardon for his halting verses, he begged her to play again while one was still near who longed so passionately to hear her. When he had paid her many other compliments, the lady answered in an affected voice with the verse:

Would that I had some song that might detain

The flute that blends its note

With the low rustling of the autumn leaves.

and after these blandishments, still unsuspecting, she took up the thirteen-stringed lute, and tuning it to the Banjiki mode she clattered at the strings with all the frenzy that fashion now demands. It was a fine

performance no doubt, but I cannot say that it made a very agreeable impression upon me.

'A man may amuse himself well enough by trifling from time to time with some lady at the Court; will get what pleasure he can out of it while he is with her and not trouble his head about what goes on when he is not there.

This lady too I only saw from time to time, but such was her situation that I had once fondly imagined myself the only occupant of her thoughts. However that night's work dissolved the last shred of my confidence, and I never saw her again.

'These two experiences, falling to my lot while I was still so young, early deprived me of any hope from women. And since that time my view of them has but grown the blacker. No doubt to you at your age they seem very entrancing, these "dew-drops on the grass that fall if they are touched," these "glittering hailstones that melt if gathered in the hand." But when you are a little older you will think as I do. Take my advice in this at least; beware of caressing manners and soft, entangling ways. For if you are so rash as to let them lead you astray, you will soon find yourselves cutting a very silly figure in the world.'



Tō no Chūjō as usual nodded his assent, and Genji's smile seemed such as to show that he too accepted Uma no Kami's advice. 'Your two stories were certainly very dismal' he said, laughing. And here Tō no Chūjō interposed: 'I will tell you a story about myself. There was a lady whose acquaintance I was obliged to make with great secrecy. But her beauty well rewarded my pains, and though I had no thought of making her my wife I grew so fond of her that I soon found I could not put her out of my head and she seemed to have complete confidence in me. Such confidence indeed that when from time to time I was obliged to behave in such a way as might well have aroused her resentment, she seemed not to notice that anything was amiss, and even when I neglected her for many weeks, she treated me as though I were still coming every day. In the end indeed I found this readiness to receive me whenever and however I came very painful, and determined for the future to merit her strange confidence.

'Her parents were dead and this was perhaps why, since I was all she had in the world, she treated me with such loving meekness, despite the many wrongs I did her. I must own that my resolution did not last long, and I was soon neglecting her worse than before.

During this time (I did not hear of it till afterwards) someone who had discovered our friendship began to send her veiled messages which cruelly frightened and distressed her. Knowing nothing of the trouble she was in, although I often thought of her I neither came nor wrote to her for a long while. Just when she was in her

worst despair a child was born, and at last in her distress she plucked a blossom of the flower that is called "Child of my Heart" and sent it to me.'

And here Tō no Chūjō's eyes filled with tears.

'Well' said Genji 'and did she write a message to go with it?' 'Oh nothing very out-of-the-ordinary' said Tō no Chūjō. 'She wrote: "Though tattered be the hillman's hedge, deign sometimes to look with kindness upon the Child-flower that grows so sweetly there." This brought me to her side. As usual she did not reproach me, but she looked sad enough, and when I considered the dreary desolation of this home where every object wore an aspect no less depressing than the wailing voices of the crickets in the grass, she seemed to me like some unhappy princess in an ancient story, and wishing her to feel that it was for the mother's sake and not the child's that I had come, I answered with a poem in which I called the Child-flower by its other name "Bed-flower," and she replied with a poem that darkly hinted at the cruel tempest which had attended this Bed-flower's birth. She spoke lightly and did not seem to be downright angry with me; and when a few tears fell she was at great pains to hide them, and seemed more distressed at the thought that I might imagine her to be unhappy than actually resentful of my conduct towards her. So I went away with an easy mind and it was some while before I came again. When at last I returned she had utterly disappeared, and if she is alive she must be living a wretched vagrant life. If while I still loved her she had but shown some

outward sign of her resentment, she would not have ended thus as an outcast and wanderer; for I should never have dared to leave her so long neglected, and might in the end have acknowledged her and made her mine forever. The child too was a sweet creature, and I have spent much time in searching for them, but still without success.

'It is, I fear, as sorrowful a tale as that which Uma no Kami has told you. I, unfaithful, thought that I was not missed; and she, still loved, was in no better case than one whose love is not returned. I indeed am fast forgetting her; but she, it may be, cannot put me out of her mind and I fear there may be nights when thoughts that she would gladly banish burn fiercely in her breast; for now I fancy she must be living a comfortless and unprotected life.'

'When all is said and done' said Uma no Kami 'my friend, though I pine for her now that she is gone, was a sad plague to me while I had her, and we must own that such a one will in the end be sure to make us wish ourselves well rid of her. The zithern-player had much talent to her credit, but was a great deal too light-headed. And your diffident lady, Tō no Chūjō, seems to me to be a very suspicious case. The world appears to be so constructed that we shall in the end be always at a loss to make a reasoned choice; despite all our picking, sifting and comparing we shall never succeed in finding this in all ways and to all lengths adorable and impeccable female.'

'I can only suggest the Goddess Kichijō' said Tō no Chūjō 'and I fear that intimacy with so holy and majestic a being might prove to be impracticable.' At this they all laughed and Tō no Chūjō continued: 'But now it is Shikibu's turn and he is sure to give us something entertaining. Come Shikibu, keep the ball rolling!' 'Nothing of interest ever happens to humble folk like myself' said Shikibu; but Tō no Chūjō scolded him for keeping them waiting and after reflecting for a while which anecdote would best suit the company, he began: 'While I was still a student at the University, I came across a woman who was truly a prodigy of intelligence. One of Uma no Kami's demands she certainly fulfilled, for it was possible to discuss with her to advantage both public matters and the proper handling of one's private affairs. But not only was her mind capable of grappling with any problems of this kind; she was also so learned that ordinary scholars found themselves, to their humiliation, quite unable to hold their own against her.

'I was taking lessons from her father, who was a Professor. I had heard that he had several daughters, and some accidental circumstance made it necessary for me to exchange a word or two with one of them who turned out to be the learned prodigy of whom I have spoken. The father, hearing that we had been seen together, came up to me with a wine-cup in his hand and made an allusion to the poem of The Two Wives. Unfortunately I did not feel the least inclination towards the lady. However I was very civil to her; upon

which she began to take an affectionate interest in me and lost no opportunity of displaying her talents by giving me the most elaborate advice how best I might advance my position in the world. She sent me marvellous letters written in a very far-fetched epistolary style and entirely in Chinese characters; in return for which I felt bound to visit her, and by making her my teacher I managed to learn how to write Chinese poems. They were wretched, knock-kneed affairs, but I am still grateful to her for it. She was not however at all the sort of woman whom I should have cared to have as a wife, for though there may be certain disadvantages in marrying a complete dolt, it is even worse to marry a blue-stocking. Still less do princes like you and Genji require so huge a stock of intellect and erudition for your support! Let her but be one to whom the karma of our past lives draws us in natural sympathy, what matter if now and again her ignorance distresses us? Come to that, even men seem to me to get along very well without much learning.' Here he stopped, but Genji and the rest, wishing to hear the end of the story, cried out that for their part they found her a most interesting woman. Shikibu protested that he did not wish to go on with the story, but at last after much coaxing, pulling a comical wry face he continued: 'I had not seen her for a long time. When at last some accident took me to the house, she did not receive me with her usual informality but spoke to me from behind a tiresome screen. Ha, Ha, thought I foolishly, she is sulking; now is the time to have a scene and break with her. I might have known that she was

not so little of a philosopher as to sulk about trifles; she prided herself on knowing the ways of the world and my inconstancy did not in the least disturb her. 'She told me (speaking without the slightest tremor) that having had a bad cold for some weeks she had taken a strong garlic-cordial, which had made her breath smell rather unpleasant and that for this reason she could not come very close to me. But if I had any matter of special importance to discuss with her she was quite prepared to give me her attention. All this she had expressed with solemn literary perfection. I could think of no suitable reply, and with an "at your service" I rose to go. Then, feeling that the interview had not been quite a success, she added, raising her voice "Please come again when my breath has lost its smell." I could not pretend I had not heard. I had however no intention of prolonging my visit, particularly as the odour was now becoming definitely unpleasant, and looking cross I recited the acrostic "On this night marked by the strange behaviour of the spider, how foolish to bid me come back to-morrow" and calling over my shoulder "There is no excuse for you"! I ran out of the room. But she, following me "If night by night and every night we met, in daytime too I should grow bold to meet you face to face." Here in the second sentence she had cleverly concealed the meaning "If I had had any reason to expect you, I should not have eaten garlic."

'What a revolting story' cried the young princes, and then, laughing, 'He must have invented it.' 'Such a woman is quite incredible; it must have been some sort

of ogress. You have shocked us, Shikibu!' and they looked at him with disapproval. 'You must try to tell us a better story than that.' 'I do not see how any story could be better' said Shikibu, and left the room.

'There is a tendency among men as well as women' said Uma no Kami 'so soon as they have acquired a little knowledge of some kind, to want to display it to the best advantage. To have mastered all the difficulties in the Three Histories and Five Classics is no road to amiability. But even a woman cannot afford to lack all knowledge of public and private affairs. Her best way will be without regular study to pick up a little here and a little there, merely by keeping her eyes and ears open. Then, if she has her wits at all about her, she will soon find that she has amassed a surprising store of information. Let her be content with this and not insist upon cramming her letters with Chinese characters which do not at all accord with her feminine style of composition, and will make the recipient exclaim in despair "If only she could contrive to be a little less mannish!" And many of these characters, to which she intended the colloquial pronunciation to be given, are certain to be read as Chinese, and this will give the whole composition an even more pedantic sound than it deserves. Even among our ladies of rank and fashion there are many of this sort, and there are others who, wishing to master the art of verse-making, in the end allow it to master them, and, slaves to poetry, cannot resist the temptation, however urgent the business they are about or however inappropriate the time, to make use of some happy allusion which has occurred to them,

but must needs fly to their desks and work it up into a poem. On festival days such a woman is very troublesome. For example on the morning of the Iris Festival, when everyone is busy making ready to go to the temple, she will worry them by stringing together all the old tags about the "matchless root" or on the 9th day of the 9th month, when everyone is busy thinking out some difficult Chinese poem to fit the rhymes which have been prescribed, she begins making metaphors about the "dew on the chrysanthemums," thus diverting our attention from the far more important business which is in hand. At another time we might have found these compositions quite delightful; but by thrusting them upon our notice at inconvenient moments, when we cannot give them proper attention, she makes them seem worse than they really are. For in all matters we shall best commend ourselves if we study men's faces to read in them the "Why so?" or the "As you will" and do not, regardless of times and circumstances, demand an interest and sympathy that they have not leisure to give.

'Sometimes indeed a woman should even pretend to know less than she knows, or say only a part of what she would like to say...'

All this while Genji, though he had sometimes joined in the conversation, had in his heart of hearts been thinking of one person only, and the more he thought the less could he find a single trace of those shortcomings and excesses which, so his friends had declared, were common to all women. 'There is no one like her' he thought, and his heart was very full. The

conversation indeed had not brought them to a definite conclusion, but it had led to many curious anecdotes and reflections. So they passed the night, and at last, for a wonder, the weather had improved. After this long residence at the Palace Genji knew he would be expected at the Great Hall and set out at once. There was in Princess Aoi's air and dress a dignified precision which had something in it even of stiffness; and in the very act of reflecting that she, above all women, was the type of that single-hearted and devoted wife whom (as his friends had said last night) no sensible man would lightly offend, he found himself oppressed by the very perfection of her beauty, which seemed only to make all intimacy with her the more impossible.

He turned to Lady Chūnagon, to Nakatsukasa and other attendants of the common sort who were standing near and began to jest with them. The day was now very hot, but they thought that flushed cheeks became Prince Genji very well. Aoi's father came, and standing behind the curtain, began to converse very amiably. Genji, who considered the weather too hot for visits, frowned, at which the ladies-in-waiting tittered. Genji, making furious signs at them to be quiet, flung himself on to a divan. In fact, he behaved far from well.

It was now growing dark. Someone said that the position of the Earth Star would make it unlucky for the Prince to go back to the Palace that night; and another: 'You are right. It is now set dead against him.' 'But my own palace is in the same direction!' cried Genji. 'How vexing! where then shall I go?' and promptly

fell asleep. The ladies-in-waiting however, agreed that it was a very serious matter and began discussing what could be done. 'There is Ki no Kami's house' said one. This Ki no Kami was one of Genji's gentlemen in waiting. 'It is in the Middle River' she went on; 'and delightfully cool and shady, for they have lately dammed the river and made it flow right through the garden.' 'That sounds very pleasant' said Genji, waking up, 'besides they are the sort of people who would not mind one's driving right in at the front gate, if one had a mind to.' He had many friends whose houses lay out of the unlucky direction. But he feared that if he went to one of them, Aoi would think that, after absenting himself so long, he was now merely using the Earth Star as an excuse for returning to more congenial company. He therefore broached the matter to Ki no Kami, who accepted the proposal, but stepping aside whispered to his companions that his father Iyo no Kami, who was absent on service, had asked him to look after his young wife. 'I am afraid we have not sufficient room in the house to entertain him as I could wish.' Genji overhearing this, strove to reassure him, saying 'It will be a pleasure to me to be near the lady. A visit is much more agreeable when there is a hostess to welcome us. Find me some corner behind her partition...!' 'Even then, I fear you may not find ...' but breaking off Ki no Kami sent a runner to his house, with orders to make ready an apartment for the Prince. Treating a visit to so humble a house as a matter of no importance, he started at once, without even informing the Minister, and taking with him only a few trusted body-servants.

Ki no Kami protested against the precipitation, but in vain.

The servants dusted and aired the eastern side-chamber of the Central Hall and here made temporary quarters for the Prince. They were at pains to improve the view from his windows, for example by altering the course of certain rivulets. They set up a rustic wattled hedge and filled the borders with the choicest plants. The low humming of insects floated on the cool breeze; numberless fireflies wove inextricable mazes in the air. The whole party settled down near where the moat flowed under the covered bridge and began to drink wine.

Ki no Kami went off in a great bustle, saying that he must find them something to eat. Genji, quietly surveying the scene, decided this was one of those middle-class families which in last night's conversation had been so highly commended. He remembered that he had heard the lady who was staying in the house well spoken of and was curious to see her. He listened and thought that there seemed to be people in the western wing. There was a soft rustling of skirts, and from time to time the sound of young and by no means disagreeable voices. They did not seem to be much in earnest in their efforts to make their whispering and laughter unheard, for soon one of them opened the sliding window. But Ki no Kami crying 'What are you thinking of?' crossly closed it again. The light of a candle in the room filtered through a crack in the paper-window. Genji edged slightly closer to the window in the hope of being able to see through the

crack, but found that he could see nothing. He listened for a while, and came to the conclusion that they were sitting in the main women's apartments, out of which the little front room opened. They were speaking very low, but he could catch enough of it to make out that they were talking about him.

'What a shame that a fine young Prince should be taken so young and settled down for ever with a lady that was none of his choosing!'

'I understand that marriage does not weigh very heavily upon him' said another. This probably meant nothing in particular, but Genji, who imagined they were talking about what was uppermost in his own mind, was appalled at the idea that his relations with Lady Fujitsubo were about to be discussed. How could they have found out? But the subsequent conversation of the ladies soon showed that they knew nothing of the matter at all, and Genji stopped listening. Presently he heard them trying to repeat the poem which he had sent with a nose-gay of morning-glory to Princess Asagao, daughter of Prince Momozono. But they got the lines rather mixed up, and Genji began to wonder whether the lady's appearance would turn out to be on a level with her knowledge of prosody.

At this moment Ki no Kami came in with a lamp which he hung on the wall. Having carefully trimmed it, he offered Genji a tray of fruit. This was all rather dull and Genji by a quotation from an old folk-song hinted that he would like to meet Ki no Kami's other guests. The hint was not taken. Genji began to doze, and his attendants sat silent and motionless.

There were in the room several charming boys, sons of Ki no Kami, some of whom Genji already knew as pages at the Palace. There were also numerous sons of Iyo no Kami; with them was a boy of twelve or thirteen who particularly caught Genji's fancy. He began asking whose sons the boys were, and when he came to this one Ki no Kami replied 'he is the youngest son of the late Chūnagon, who loved him dearly, but died while this boy was still a child. His sister married my father and that is why he is living here. He is quick at his books, and we hope one day to send him to Court, but I fear that his lack of influence....'

'Poor child!' said Genji. 'His sister, then, is your step-mother, is that not so? How strange that you should stand in this relationship with so young a girl! And now I come to think of it there was some talk once of her being presented at Court, and I once heard the Emperor asking what had become of her. How changeable are the fortunes of the world.' He was trying to talk in a very grown-up way.

'Indeed, Sir' answered Ki no Kami, 'her subsequent state was humbler than she had reason to expect. But such is our mortal life. Yes, yes, and such has it always been. We have our ups and downs—and the women even more than the men.'

Genji: 'But your father no doubt makes much of her?'

Ki no Kami: 'Makes much of her indeed! You may well say so. She rules his house, and he dotes on her in so wholesale and extravagant a fashion that all of us (and

I among the foremost) have had occasion before now to call him to order, but he does not listen.'

Genji: 'How comes it then that he has left her behind in the house of a fashionable young Courtier? For he looks like a man of prudence and good sense. But pray, where is she now?'

Ki no Kami: 'The ladies have been ordered to retire to the common room, but they have not yet finished all their preparations.'

Genji's followers, who had drunk heavily, were now all lying fast asleep on the verandah. He was alone in his room, but could not get to sleep. Having at last dozed for a moment, he woke suddenly and noticed that someone was moving behind the paper-window of the back wall. This, he thought, must be where she is hiding, and faintly curious he sauntered in that direction and stood listening. 'Where are you?' I say 'Where are you?' whispered someone in a quaint, hoarse voice, which seemed to be that of the boy whom Genji had noticed earlier in the evening. 'I am lying over here' another voice answered. 'Has the stranger gone to sleep yet? His room must be quite close to this; but all the same how far off he seems!' Her sleepy voice was so like the boy's, that Genji concluded this must be his sister.

'He is sleeping in the wing, I saw him to-night. All that we have heard of him is true enough. He is as handsome as can be' whispered the boy. 'I wish it were to-morrow; I want to see him properly' she answered drowsily, her voice seeming to come from under the bed clothes. Genji was rather disappointed that she did not ask more questions about him. Presently he heard the

boy saying 'I am going to sleep over in the corner-room. How bad the light is' and he seemed to be trimming the lamp. His sister's bed appeared to be in the corner opposite the paper-window. 'Where is Chūjō?' she called. 'I am frightened, I like to have someone close to me.' 'Madam' answered several voices from the servants' room, 'she is taking her bath in the lower house. She will be back presently.' When all was quiet again, Genji slipped back the bolt and tried the door. It was not fastened on the other side. He found himself in an ante-room with a screen at the end, beyond which a light glimmered. In the half-darkness he could see clothes boxes and trunks strewn about in great disorder. Quietly threading his way among them, he entered the inner room from which the voices had proceeded. One very minute figure was couched there who, to Genji's slight embarrassment, on hearing his approach pushed aside the cloak which covered her, thinking that he was the maid for whom she had sent. 'Madam, hearing you call for Chūjō I thought that I might now put at your service the esteem in which I have long secretly held you.' The lady could make nothing of all this, and terrified out of her wits tried hard to scream. But no sound came, for she had buried her face in the bed clothes.

'Please listen' said Genji. 'This sudden intrusion must of course seem to you very impertinent. You do not know that for years I have waited for an occasion to tell you how much I like and admire you, and if to-night I could not resist the temptation of paying this secret visit, pray

take the strangeness of my behaviour as proof of my impatience to pay a homage that has long been due.' He spoke so courteously and gently and looked so kind that not the devil himself would have taken umbrage at his presence. But feeling that the situation was not at all a proper one for a married lady she said (without much conviction) 'I think you have made a mistake.' She spoke very low. Her bewildered air made her all the more attractive, and Genji, enchanted by her appearance, hastened to answer: 'Indeed I have made no mistake; rather, with no guide but a long-felt deference and esteem, I have found my way unerringly to your side. But I see that the suddenness of my visit has made you distrust my purpose. Let me tell you then that I have no evil intentions and seek only for someone to talk with me for a while about a matter which perplexes me.' So saying he took her up in his arms (for she was very small) and was carrying her through the ante-room when suddenly *Chūjō*, the servant for whom she had sent before, entered the bedroom. Genji gave an astonished cry and the maid, wondering who could have entered the ante-room, began groping her way towards them. But coming closer she recognized by the rich perfume of his dress that this could be none other than the Prince. And though she was sorely puzzled to know what was afoot, she dared not say a word. Had he been an ordinary person, she would soon have had him by the ears. 'Nay' she thought 'even if he were not a Prince I should do best to keep my hands off him; for the more stir one makes, the more tongues

wag. But if I should touch this fine gentleman ...,' and all in a flutter she found herself obediently following Genji to his room. Here he calmly closed the door upon her, saying as he did so 'You will come back to fetch your mistress in the morning.' Utsusemi herself was vexed beyond measure at being thus disposed of in the presence of her own waiting-maid, who could indeed draw but one conclusion from what she had seen. But to all her misgivings and anxieties Genji, who had the art of improvising a convincing reply to almost any question, answered with such a wealth of ingenuity and tender concern, that for awhile she was content. But soon becoming again uneasy, 'This must all be a dream—that you, so great a Prince, should stoop to consider so humble a creature as I, and I am overwhelmed by so much kindness. But I think you have forgotten what I am. A Zuryō's wife! there is no altering that, and you...!' Genji now began to realize how deeply he had distressed and disquieted her by his wild behaviour, and feeling thoroughly ashamed of himself he answered: 'I am afraid I know very little about these questions of rank and precedence. Such things are too confusing to carry in one's head. And whatever you may have heard of me I want to tell you for some reason or other I have till this day cared nothing for gallantry nor ever practised it, and that even you cannot be more astonished at what I have done to-night than I myself am.' With this and a score of other speeches he sought to win her confidence. But she, knowing that if once their talk became a jot less formal, she would be hard

put to it to withstand his singular charm, was determined, even at the risk of seeming stiff and awkward, to show him that in trying so hard to put her at her ease he was only wasting his time, with the result that she behaved very boorishly indeed. She was by nature singularly gentle and yielding, so that the effort of steeling her heart and despite her feelings, playing all the while the part of the young bamboo-shoot which though so green and tender cannot be broken, was very painful to her; and finding that she could not longer think of arguments with which to withstand his importunity, she burst into tears; and though he was very sorry for her, it occurred to him that he would not gladly have missed that sight. He longed however to console her, but could not think of a way to do so, and said at last, 'Why do you treat me so unkindly? It is true that the manner of our meeting was strange, yet I think that Fate meant us to meet. It is harsh that you should shrink from me as though the World and you had never met.' So he chided her, and she: 'If this had happened long ago before my troubles, before my lot was cast, perhaps I should have been glad to take your kindness while it lasted, knowing that you would soon think better of your strange condescension. But now that my course is fixed, what can such meetings bring me save misery and regret? Tell none that you have seen my home' she ended, quoting the old song. 'Small wonder that she is sad' thought Genji, and he found many a tender way to comfort her. And now the cock began to crow. Out in the courtyard Genji's men were staggering to their feet,

one crying drowsily 'How I should like to go to sleep again,' and another 'Make haste there, bring out his Honour's coach.' Ki no Kami came out into the yard, 'What's all this hurry? It is only when there are women in his party that a man need hasten from a refuge to which the Earth star has sent him. Why is his Highness setting off in the middle of the night?' Genji was wondering whether such an opportunity would ever occur again. How would he be able even to send her letters? And thinking of all the difficulties that awaited him, he became very despondent. Chūjō arrived to fetch her mistress. For a long while he would not let her go, and when at last he handed her over, he drew her back to him saying 'How can I send news to you? For, Madam,' he said raising his voice that the maid Chūjō might hear 'such love as mine, and such pitiless cruelty as yours have never been seen in the world before.' Already the birds were singing in good earnest. She could not forget that she was no one and he a Prince. And even now, while he was tenderly entreating her, there came unbidden to her mind the image of her husband Iyo no Suke, about whom she generally thought either not at all or with disdain. To think that even in a dream he might see her now, filled her with shame and terror.

It was daylight. Genji went with her to the partition door. Indoors and out there was a bustle of feet. As he closed the door upon her, it seemed to him a barrier that shut him out from all happiness. He dressed, and went out on to the balcony. A blind in the western wing

was hastily raised. There seemed to be people behind who were looking at him. They could only see him indistinctly across the top of a partition in the verandah. Among them was one, perhaps, whose heart beat wildly as she looked...?

The moon had not set, and though with dwindled light still shone crisp and clear in the dawn. It was a daybreak of marvellous beauty. But in the passionless visage of the sky men read only their own comfort or despair; and Genji, as with many backward glances he went upon his way, paid little heed to the beauty of the dawn. He would send her a message? No, even that was utterly impossible. And so, in great unhappiness he returned to his wife's house.

He would gladly have slept a little, but could not stop trying to invent some way of seeing her again; or when that seemed hopeless, imagining to himself all that must now be going on in her mind. She was no great beauty, Genji reflected, and yet one could not say that she was ugly. Yes, she was in every sense a member of that Middle Class upon which Uma no Kami had given them so complete a dissertation.

He stayed for some while at the Great Hall, and finding that, try as he might, he could not stop thinking about her and longing for her, at last in despair he sent for Ki no Kami and said to him 'Why do you not let me have that boy in my service,—the Chūnagon's son, whom I saw at your house? He is a likely looking boy, and I might make him my body-servant, or even recommend him to the Emperor.' 'I am sensible of your kindness' said Ki no

Kami, 'I will mention what you have said to the boy's sister.' This answer irritated Genji, but he continued: 'And has this lady given you step-brothers my lord?' 'Sir, she has been married these two years, but has had no child. It seems that in making this marriage she disobeyed her father's last injunctions, and this has set her against her husband.'

Genji: 'That is sad indeed. I am told that she is not ill-looking. Is that so?'

Ki no Kami: 'I believe she is considered quite passable. But I have had very little to do with her. Intimacy between step-children and step-parents is indeed proverbially difficult.'

Five or six days afterwards Ki no Kami brought the boy. He was not exactly handsome, but he had great charm and (thought Genji) an air of distinction. The Prince spoke very kindly to him and soon completely won his heart. To Genji's many questions about his sister he made such answers as he could, and when he seemed embarrassed or tongue-tied Genji found some less direct way of finding out what he wanted to know, and soon put the boy at his ease. For though he vaguely realized what was going on and thought it rather odd, he was so young that he made no effort to understand it, and without further question carried back a letter from Genji to his sister.

She was so much agitated by the sight of it that she burst into tears and, lest her brother should perceive them, held the letter in front of her face while she read it. It was very long. Among much else it contained the verse 'Would that I might dream that dream again!

Alas, since first this wish was mine, not once have my eye-lids closed in sleep.'

She had never seen such beautiful writing, and as she read, a haze clouded her eyes. What incomprehensible fate had first dragged her down to be the wife of a Zuryō, and then for a moment raised her so high? Still pondering, she went to her room.

Next day, Genji again sent for the boy, who went to his sister saying 'I am going to Prince Genji. Where is your answer to his letter?' 'Tell him' she answered 'that there is no one here who reads such letters.' The boy burst out laughing. 'Why, you silly, how could I say such a thing to him. He told me himself to be sure to bring an answer.' It infuriated her to think that Genji should have thus taken the boy into his confidence and she answered angrily, 'He has no business to talk to you about such things at your age. If that is what you talk about you had better not go to him any more.' 'But he sent for me' said the boy, and started off.

'I was waiting for you all yesterday' said Genji when the boy returned. 'Did you forget to bring the answer? Did you forget to come?' The child blushed and made no reply. 'And now?' 'She said there is no one at home who reads such letters.' 'How silly, what can be the use of saying such things?', and he wrote another letter and gave it to the boy, saying: 'I expect you do not know that I used to meet your sister before her marriage. She treats me in this scornful fashion because she looks upon me as a poor-spirited, defenceless creature. Whereas she has now a mighty Deputy Governor to

look after her. But I hope that you will promise to be my child not his. For he is very old, and will not be able to take care of you for long.'

The boy was quite content with this explanation, and admired Genji more than ever. The prince kept him always at his side, even taking him to the Palace. And he ordered his Chamberlain to see to it that he was provided with a little Court suit. Indeed he treated him just as though he were his own child.

Genji continued to send letters; but she, thinking that the boy, young as he was, might easily allow a message to fall into the wrong hands and that then she would lose her fair name to no purpose, feeling too (that however much he desired it) between persons so far removed in rank there could be no lasting union, she answered his letters only in the most formal terms.

Dark though it had been during most of the time they were together, she yet had a clear recollection of his appearance, and could not deny to herself that she thought him uncommonly handsome. But she very much doubted if he on his side really knew what she was like; indeed she felt sure that the next time they met he would think her very plain and all would be over.

Genji meanwhile thought about her continually. He was for ever calling back to memory each incident of that one meeting, and every recollection filled him with longing and despair. He remembered how sad she had looked when she spoke to him of herself, and he longed to make her happier. He thought of visiting her in secret. But the risk of discovery was too great, and the

consequences likely to be more fatal to her even than to himself.

He had been many days at the Palace, when at last the Earth Star again barred the road to his home. He set out at once, but on the way pretended that he had just remembered the unfavourable posture of the stars.

There was nothing to do but seek shelter again in the house on the Middle River. Ki no Kami was surprised but by no means ill-pleased, for he attributed Genji's visit to the amenity of the little pools and fountains which he had constructed in his garden.

Genji had told the boy in the morning that he intended to visit the Middle River, and since he had now become the Prince's constant companion, he was sent for at once to wait upon him in his room. He had already given a message to his sister, in which Genji told her of his plan. She could not but feel flattered at the knowledge that it was on her account he had contrived this ingenious excuse for coming to the house. Yet she had, as we have seen, for some reason got it into her head that at a leisurely meeting she would not please him as she had done at that first fleeting and dreamlike encounter, and she dreaded adding a new sorrow to the burden of her thwarted and unhappy existence. Too proud to let him think that she had posted herself in waiting for him, she said to her servants (while the boy was busy in Genji's room) 'I do not care to be at such close quarters with our guest, besides I am stiff, and would like to be massaged; I must go where there is

more room,' and so saying she made them carry her things to the maid Chūjō's bedroom in the cross-wing. Genji had purposely sent his attendants early to bed, and now that all was quiet, he hastened to send her a message. But the boy could not find her. At last when he had looked in every corner of the house, he tried the cross-wing, and succeeded in tracking her down to Chūjō's room. It was too bad of her to hide like this, and half in tears he gasped out 'Oh how can you be so horrid? What will he think of you?' 'You have no business to run after me like this' she answered angrily, 'It is very wicked for children to carry such messages. But' she added, 'you may tell him I am not well, that my ladies are with me, and I am going to be massaged....' So she dismissed him; but in her heart of hearts she was thinking that if such an adventure had happened to her while she was still a person of consequence, before her father died and left her to shift for herself in the world, she would have known how to enjoy it. But now she must force herself to look askance at all his kindness. How tiresome he must think her! And she fretted so much at not being free to fall in love with him, that in the end she was more in love than ever. But then she remembered suddenly that her lot had long ago been cast. She was a wife. There was no sense in thinking of such things, and she made up her mind once and for all never again to let foolish ideas enter her head.

Genji lay on his bed, anxiously waiting to see with what success so young a messenger would execute his

delicate mission. When at last the answer came, astonished at this sudden exhibition of coldness, he exclaimed in deep mortification 'This is a disgrace, a hideous disgrace,' and he looked very rueful indeed. For a while he said no more, but lay sighing deeply, in great distress. At last he recited the poem 'I knew not the nature of the strange tree that stands on Sono plain, and when I sought the comfort of its shade, I did but lose my road,' and sent it to her. She was still awake, and answered with the poem 'Too like am I in these my outcast years to the dim tree that dwindles from the traveller's approaching gaze.' The boy was terribly sorry for Genji and did not feel sleepy at all, but he was afraid people would think his continual excursions very strange. By this time, however, everyone else in the house was sound asleep. Genji alone lay plunged in the blackest melancholy. But even while he was raging at the inhuman stubbornness of her new-found and incomprehensible resolve, he found that he could not but admire her the more for this invincible tenacity. At last he grew tired of lying awake; there was no more to be done. A moment later he had changed his mind again, and suddenly whispered to the boy 'Take me to where she is hiding!' 'It is too difficult' he said, 'she is locked in and there are so many people there. I am afraid to go with you.' 'So be it' said Genji, 'but you at least must not abandon me' and he laid the boy beside him on his bed. He was well content to find himself lying by this handsome young Prince's side, and Genji, we must record, found the boy no bad substitute for his ungracious sister.

