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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

Ririro

## The Tale of Genji: Yūgao (4/9)

It was at the time when he was secretly visiting the lady of the Sixth Ward. One day on his way back from the Palace he thought that he would call upon his foster-mother who, having for a long while been very ill, had become a nun. She lived in the Fifth Ward. After many enquiries he managed to find the house; but the front gate was locked and he could not drive in. He sent one of his servants for Koremitsu, his foster-nurse's son, and while he was waiting began to examine the rather wretched looking by-street. The house next door was fenced with a new paling, above which at one place were four or five panels of open trellis-work, screened by blinds which were very white and bare. Through chinks in these blinds a number of foreheads could be seen. They seemed to belong to a group of ladies who must be peeping with interest into the street below. At first he thought they had merely peeped out as they passed; but he soon realized that if they were standing on the floor they must be giants. No, evidently they had taken the trouble to climb on to some table or bed; which was surely rather odd!

He had come in a plain coach with no outriders. No one could possibly guess who he was, and feeling quite at his ease he leant forward and deliberately examined the house. The gate, also made of a kind of trellis-work, stood ajar, and he could see enough of the interior to

realize that it was a very humble and poorly furnished dwelling. For a moment he pitied those who lived in such a place, but then he remembered the song 'Seek not in the wide world to find a home; but where you chance to rest, call that your house'; and again, 'Monarchs may keep their palaces of jade, for in a leafy cottage two can sleep.'

There was a wattled fence over which some ivy-like creeper spread its cool green leaves, and among the leaves were white flowers with petals half unfolded like the lips of people smiling at their own thoughts. 'They are called Yūgao, "Evening Faces,"' one of his servants told him; 'how strange to find so lovely a crowd clustering on this deserted wall!' And indeed it was a most strange and delightful thing to see how on the narrow tenement in a poor quarter of the town they had clambered over rickety eaves and gables and spread wherever there was room for them to grow. He sent one of his servants to pick some. The man entered at the half-opened door, and had begun to pluck the flowers, when a little girl in a long yellow tunic came through a quite genteel sliding door, and holding out towards Genji's servant a white fan heavily perfumed with incense, she said to him 'Would you like something to put them on? I am afraid you have chosen a wretched-looking bunch,' and she handed him the fan. Just as he was opening the gate on his way back, the old nurse's son Koremitsu came out of the other house full of apologies for having kept Genji waiting so long—'I could not find the key of the gate' he said. 'Fortunately

the people of this humble quarter were not likely to recognize you and press or stare; but I am afraid you must have been very much bored waiting in this hugger-mugger back street,' and he conducted Genji into the house. Koremitsu's brother, the deacon, his brother-in-law Mikawa no Kami and his sister all assembled to greet the Prince, delighted by a visit with which they had not thought he was ever likely to honour them again.

The nun too rose from her couch: 'For a long time I had been waiting to give up the world, but one thing held me back: I wanted you to see your old nurse just once again as you used to know her. You never came to see me, and at last I gave up waiting and took my vows. Now, in reward for the penances which my Order enjoins, I have got back a little of my health, and having seen my dear young master again, I can wait with a quiet mind for the Lord Amida's Light,' and in her weakness she shed a few tears.

'I heard some days ago' said Genji 'that you were very dangerously ill, and was in great anxiety. It is sad now to find you in this penitential garb. You must live longer yet, and see me rise in the world, that you may be born again high in the ninth sphere of Amida's Paradise. For they say that those who died with longings unfulfilled are burdened with an evil Karma in their life to come.' People such as old nurses regard even the most blackguardly and ill-favoured foster-children as prodigies of beauty and virtue. Small wonder then if Genji's nurse, who had played so great a part in his early life, always regarded her office as immensely

honourable and important, and tears of pride came into her eyes while he spoke to her.

The old lady's children thought it very improper that their mother, having taken holy orders, should show so lively an interest in a human career. Certain that Genji himself would be very much shocked, they exchanged uneasy glances. He was on the contrary deeply touched. 'When I was a child' he said 'those who were dearest to me were early taken away, and although there were many who gave a hand to my upbringing, it was to you only, dear nurse, that I was deeply and tenderly attached. When I grew up I could not any longer be often in your company. I have not even been able to come here and see you as often as I wanted to. But in all the long time which has passed since I was last here, I have thought a great deal about you and wished that life did not force so many bitter partings upon us.'

So he spoke tenderly. The princely scent of the sleeve which he had raised to brush away his tears filled the low and narrow room, and even the young people, who had till now been irritated by their mother's obvious pride at having been the nurse of so splendid a prince, found themselves in tears.

Having arranged for continual masses to be said on the sick woman's behalf, he took his leave, ordering Koremitsu to light him with a candle. As they left the house he looked at the fan upon which the white flowers had been laid. He now saw that there was writing on it, a poem carelessly but elegantly scribbled:

'The flower that puzzled you was but the Yūgao, strange beyond knowing in its dress of shining dew.' It was written with a deliberate negligence which seemed to aim at concealing the writer's status and identity. But for all that the hand showed a breeding and distinction which agreeably surprised him. 'Who lives in the house on the left?' he asked. Koremitsu, who did not at all want to act as a go-between, replied that he had only been at his mother's for five or six days and had been so much occupied by her illness that he had not asked any questions about the neighbours. 'I want to know for a quite harmless reason' said Genji. 'There is something about this fan which raises a rather important point. I positively must settle it. You would oblige me by making enquiries from someone who knows the neighbourhood.' Koremitsu went at once to the house next door and sent for the steward. 'This house' the man said 'belongs to a certain Titular-Prefect. He is living in the country, but my lady is still here; and as she is young and loves company, her brothers who are in service at the Court often come here to visit her.' 'And that is about all one can expect a servant to know' said Koremitsu when he repeated this information. It occurred at once to Genji that it was one of these Courtiers who had written the poem. Yes, there was certainly a self-confident air in the writing. It was by someone whose rank entitled him to have a good opinion of himself. But he was romantically disposed; it was too painful to dismiss altogether the idea that, after all, the verses might really have been meant for him, and on a

folded paper he wrote: 'Could I but get a closer view, no longer would they puzzle me—the flowers that all too dimly in the gathering dusk I saw.' This he wrote in a disguised hand and gave to his servant. The man reflected that though the senders of the fan had never seen Genji before, yet so well known were his features, that even the glimpse they had got from the window might easily have revealed to them his identity. He could imagine the excitement with which the fan had been despatched and the disappointment when for so long a time no answer came. His somewhat rudely belated arrival would seem to them to have been purposely contrived. They would all be agog to know what was in the reply, and he felt very nervous as he approached the house.

Meanwhile, lighted only by a dim torch, Genji quietly left his nurse's home. The blinds of the other house were now drawn and only the fire-fly glimmer of a candle shone through the gap between them.

When he reached his destination a very different scene met his eyes. A handsome park, a well-kept garden; how spacious and comfortable it all was! And soon the magnificent owner of these splendours had driven from his head all thought of the wooden paling, the shutters and the flowers.

He stayed longer than he intended, and the sun was already up when he set out for home. Again he passed the house with the shutters. He had driven through the quarter countless times without taking the slightest interest in it; but that one small episode of the fan had suddenly made his daily passage through these streets

an event of great importance. He looked about him eagerly, and would have liked to know who lived in all the houses.

For several days Koremitsu did not present himself at Genji's palace. When at last he came, he explained that his mother was growing much weaker and it was very difficult for him to get away. Then drawing nearer, he said in a low voice 'I made some further enquiries, but could not find out much. It seems that someone came very secretly in June and has been living there ever since; but who she really is not even her own servants know. I have once or twice peeped through a hole in the hedge and caught a glimpse of some young women; but their skirts were rolled back and tucked in at their belts, so I think they must have been waiting-maids. Yesterday some while after sunset I saw a lady writing a letter. Her face was calm, but she looked very unhappy, and I noticed that some of her women were secretly weeping.' Genji was more curious than ever. Though his master was of a rank which brought with it great responsibilities, Koremitsu knew that in view of his youth and popularity the young prince would be thought to be positively neglecting his duty if he did not indulge in a few escapades, and that everyone would regard his conduct as perfectly natural and proper even when it was such as they would not have dreamed of permitting to ordinary people.

'Hoping to get a little further information,' he said, 'I found an excuse for communicating with her, and received in reply a very well-worded answer in a cultivated hand. She must be a girl of quite good



position.' 'You must find out more' said Genji; 'I shall not be happy till I know all about her.'

Here perhaps was just such a case as they had imagined on that rainy night: a lady whose outward circumstances seemed to place her in that 'Lowest Class' which they had agreed to dismiss as of no interest; but who in her own person showed qualities by no means despicable.

But to return for a moment to Utsusemi. Her unkindness had not affected him as it would have affected most people. If she had encouraged him he would soon have regarded the affair as an appalling indiscretion which he must put an end to at all costs; whereas now he brooded continually upon his defeat and was forever plotting new ways to shake her resolution.

He had never, till the day of his visit to the foster-nurse, been interested in anyone of quite the common classes. But now, since that rainy night's conversation, he had explored (so it seemed to him) every corner of society, including in his survey even those categories which his friends had passed over as utterly remote and improbable. He thought of the lady who had, so to speak, been thrown into his life as an extra. With how confiding an air she had promised that she would wait! He was very sorry about her, but he was afraid that if he wrote to her Utsusemi might find out and that would prejudice his chances. He would write to her afterwards....

Suddenly at this point Iyo no Suke himself was announced. He had just returned from his province, and had lost no time in paying his respects to the prince.

The long journey by boat had made him look rather swarthy and haggard. 'Really' thought Genji 'he is not at all an attractive man!' Still it was possible to talk to him; for if a man is of decent birth and breeding, however broken he may be by age or misfortune, he will always retain a certain refinement of mind and manners which prevent him from becoming merely repulsive. They were beginning to discuss the affairs of Iyo's province and Genji was even joking with him, when a sudden feeling of embarrassment came over him. Why should those recollections make him feel so awkward? Iyo no Suke was quite an old man, it had done him no harm. 'These scruples are absurd' thought Genji. However, she was right in thinking it was too queer, too ill-assorted a match; and remembering Uma no Kami's warnings, he felt that he had behaved badly. Though her unkindness still deeply wounded him, he was almost glad for Iyo's sake that she had not relented. 'My daughter is to be married' Iyo was saying 'And I am going to take my wife back with me to my province.' Here was a double surprise. At all costs he must see Utsusemi once again. He spoke with her brother and the boy discussed the matter with her. It would have been difficult enough for anyone to have carried on an intrigue with the prince under such circumstances as these. But for her, so far below him in rank and beset by new restrictions, it had now become unthinkable. She could not however bear to lose all contact with him, and not only did she answer his letters much more kindly than before, but took pains, though they were written with apparent negligence, to add little touches that

would give him pleasure and make him see that she still cared for him. All this he noticed, and though he was vexed that she would not relent towards him, he found it impossible to put her out of his mind.

As for the other girl, he did not think that she was at all the kind of person to go on pining for him once she was properly settled with a husband; and he now felt quite happy about her.

It was autumn. Genji had brought so many complications into his life that he had for some while been very irregular in his visits to the Great Hall, and was in great disgrace there. The lady in the grand mansion was very difficult to get on with; but he had surmounted so many obstacles in his courtship of her that to give her up the moment he had won her seemed absurd. Yet he could not deny that the blind intoxicating passion which possessed him while she was still unattainable, had almost disappeared. To begin with, she was far too sensitive; then there was the disparity of their ages, and the constant dread of discovery which haunted him during those painful partings at small hours of the morning. In fact, there were too many disadvantages.

It was a morning when mist lay heavy over the garden. After being many times roused Genji at last came out of Rokujō's room, looking very cross and sleepy. One of the maids lifted part of the folding-shutter, seeming to invite her mistress to watch the prince's departure. Rokujō pulled aside the bed-curtains and tossing her hair back over her shoulders looked out into the

garden. So many lovely flowers were growing in the borders that Genji halted for a while to enjoy them. How beautiful he looked standing there, she thought. As he was nearing the portico the maid who had opened the shutters came and walked by his side. She wore a light green skirt exquisitely matched to the season and place; it was so hung as to show to great advantage the grace and suppleness of her stride. Genji looked round at her. 'Let us sit down for a minute on the railing here in the corner,' he said. 'She seems very shy' he thought, 'but how charmingly her hair falls about her shoulders,' and he recited the poem: 'Though I would not be thought to wander heedlessly from flower to flower, yet this morning's pale convolvulus I fain would pluck!' As he said the lines he took her hand and she answered with practised ease: 'You hasten, I observe, to admire the morning flowers while the mist still lies about them,' thus parrying the compliment by a verse which might be understood either in a personal or general sense. At this moment a very elegant page wearing the most bewitching baggy trousers came among the flowers brushing the dew as he walked, and began to pick a bunch of the convolvuli. Genji longed to paint the scene.

No one could see him without pleasure. He was like the flowering tree under whose shade even the rude mountain peasant delights to rest. And so great was the fascination he exercised that those who knew him longed to offer him whatever was dearest to them. One who had a favourite daughter would ask for nothing better than to make her Genji's handmaiden. Another

who had an exquisite sister was ready for her to serve in his household, though it were at the most menial tasks. Still less could these ladies who on such occasions as this were privileged to converse with him and stare at him as much as they pleased, and were moreover young people of much sensibility—how could they fail to delight in his company and note with much uneasiness that his visits were becoming far less frequent than before?

But where have I got to? Ah, yes. Koremitsu had patiently continued the enquiry with which Genji entrusted him. 'Who the mistress is' he said, 'I have not been able to discover; and for the most part she is at great pains not to show herself. But more than once in the general confusion, when there was the sound of a carriage coming along past that great row of tenement houses, and all the maid-servants were peering out into the road, the young lady whom I suppose to be the mistress of the house slipped out along with them. I could not see her clearly, but she seemed to be very pretty.

'One day, seeing a carriage with outriders coming towards the house, one of the maids rushed off calling out "Ukon, Ukon, come quickly and look. The Captain's carriage is coming this way." At once a pleasant-faced lady no longer young, came bustling out. "Quietly, quietly" she said holding up a warning finger; "how do you know it is the Captain? I shall have to go and look," and she slipped out. A sort of rough drawbridge leads from the garden into the lane. In her excitement the good lady caught her skirt in it and falling flat on her

face almost tumbled into the ditch: "A bad piece of work His Holiness of Katsuragi made here!" she grumbled; but her curiosity did not seem to be at all damped and she stared harder than ever at the approaching carriage. The visitor was dressed in a plain, wide cloak. He had attendants with him, whose names the excited servant-girls called out as one after another they came near enough to be recognized; and the odd thing is that the names were certainly those of Tō no Chūjō's grooms and pages.'

'I must see that carriage for myself' said Genji. What if this should be the very lady whom Chūjō, at the time of that rainy night's conversation, despaired of rediscovering? Koremitsu, noting that Genji was listening with particular attention continued: 'I must tell you that I too have reason to be interested in this house, and while making enquiries on my own account I discovered that the young lady always addresses the other girls in the house as though they were her equals. But when, pretending to be taken in by this comedy, I began visiting there, I noticed that though the older ladies played their part very well, the young girls would every now and then curtsey or slip in a "My Lady" without thinking; whereupon the others would hasten to cover up the mistake as best they might, saying anything they could think of to make it appear that there was no mistress among them,' and Koremitsu laughed as he recollected it.

'Next time I come to visit your mother' said Genji, 'you must let me have a chance of peeping at them.' He

pictured to himself the queer, tumbled-down house. She was only living there for the time being; but all the same she must surely belong to that 'bottom class' which they had dismissed as having no possible bearing on the discussion. How amusing it would be to show that they were wrong and that after all something of interest might be discovered in such a place!

Koremitsu, anxious to carry out his master's every wish and intent also on his own intrigue, contrived at last by a series of ingenious stratagems to effect a secret meeting between Genji and the mysterious lady. The details of the plan by which he brought this about would make a tedious story, and as is my rule in such cases I have thought it better to omit them.

Genji never asked her by what name he was to call her, nor did he reveal his own identity. He came very poorly dressed and—what was most unusual for him—on foot. But Koremitsu regarded this as too great a tribute to so unimportant a lady, and insisted upon Genji riding his horse, while he walked by his side. In doing so he sacrificed his own feelings; for he too had reasons for wishing to create a good impression in the house, and he knew that by arriving in this rather undignified way he would sink in the estimation of the inhabitants.

Fortunately his discomfiture was almost unwitnessed, for Genji took with him only the one attendant who had on the first occasion plucked the flowers—a boy whom no one was likely to recognize; and lest suspicions should be aroused, he did not even take advantage of his presence in the neighbourhood to call at his foster-nurse's house.

The lady was very much mystified by all these precautions and made great efforts to discover something more about him. She even sent someone after him to see where he went to when he left her at day-break; but he succeeded in throwing his pursuer off the scent and she was no wiser than before. He was now growing far too fond of her. He was miserable if anything interfered with his visits; and though he utterly disapproved of his own conduct and worried a great deal about it, he soon found that he was spending most of his time at her house.

He knew that at some time or another in their lives even the soberest people lose their heads in this way; but hitherto he had never really lost his, or done anything which could possibly have been considered very wrong. Now to his astonishment and dismay he discovered that even the few morning hours during which he was separated from her were becoming unendurable. 'What is it in her that makes me behave like a madman?' he kept on asking himself. She was astonishingly gentle and unassuming, to the point even of seeming rather apathetic, rather deficient perhaps in depth of character and emotion; and though she had a certain air of girlish inexperience, it was clear that he was not by any means her first lover; and certainly she was rather plebeian. What was it exactly that so fascinated him? He asked himself the question again and again, but found no answer.

She for her part was very uneasy to see him come to her thus in shabby old hunting-clothes, trying always to hide his face, leaving while it was still dark and



everyone was asleep. He seemed like some demon-lover in an old ghost-tale, and she was half-afraid. But his smallest gesture showed that he was someone out of the ordinary, and she began to suspect that he was a person of high rank, who had used Koremitsu as his go-between. But Koremitsu obstinately pretended to know nothing at all about his companion, and continued to amuse himself by frequenting the house on his own account.

What could it mean? She was dismayed at this strange love-making with—she knew not whom. But about her too there was something fugitive, insubstantial. Genji was obsessed by the idea that, just as she had hidden herself in this place, so one day she would once more vanish and hide, and he would never be able to find her again. There was every sign that her residence here was quite temporary. He was sure that when the time came to move she would not tell him where she was going. Of course her running away would be proof that she was not worth bothering about any more, and he ought, thankful for the pleasure they had had together, simply to leave the matter at that. But he knew that this was the last thing he would be likely to do.

People were already beginning to be suspicious, and often for several nights running he was unable to visit her. This became so intolerable that in his impatience he determined to bring her secretly to the Nijō-in. There would be an appalling outcry if she were discovered; but that must be risked.

'I am going to take you somewhere very nice where no one will disturb us' he said at last. 'No, No' she cried; 'your ways are so strange, I should be frightened to go with you.' She spoke in a tone of childish terror, and Genji answered smiling: 'One or the other of us must be a fox-in-disguise. Here is a chance to find out which it is!' He spoke very kindly, and suddenly, in a tone of absolute submission, she consented to do whatever he thought best. He could not but be touched at her willingness to follow him in what must appear to her to be the most hazardous and bizarre adventure. Again he thought of Tō no Chūjō's story on that rainy night, and could not doubt that this must indeed be Chūjō's fugitive lady. But he saw that she had some reason for wishing to avoid all questions about her past, and he restrained his curiosity. So far as he could see she showed no signs of running away; nor did he believe that she would do so as long as he was faithful. Tō no Chūjō, after all, had for months on end left her to her own devices. But he felt that if for an instant she suspected him of the slightest leaning in any other direction it would be a bad business.

It was the fifteenth night of the eighth month. The light of an unclouded full-moon shone between the ill-fitting planks of the roof and flooded the room. What a queer place to be lying in! thought Genji, as he gazed round the garret, so different from any room he had ever known before. It must be almost day. In the neighbouring houses people were beginning to stir, and there was an uncouth sound of peasant voices: 'Eh! how

cold it is! I can't believe we shall do much with the crops this year.' 'I don't know what's going to happen about my carrying-trade' said another; 'things look very bad.' Then (banging on the wall of another house) 'Wake up, neighbour. Time to start. Did he hear, d'you think?' and they rose and went off each to the wretched task by which he earned his bread.

All this clatter and bustle going on so near her made the lady very uncomfortable, and indeed so dainty and fastidious a person must often in this miserable lodging have suffered things which would make her long to sink through the floor. But however painful, disagreeable or provoking were the things that happened, she gave no sign of noticing them. That being herself so shrinking and delicate in her ways she could yet endure without a murmur the exasperating banging and bumping that was going on in every direction, aroused his admiration, and he felt that this was much nicer of her than if she had shuddered with horror at each sound. But now, louder than thunder, came the noise of the threshing-mills, seeming so near that they could hardly believe it did not come from out of the pillow itself. Genji thought that his ears would burst. What many of the noises were he could not at all make out; but they were very peculiar and startling. The whole air seemed to be full of crashings and bangings. Now from one side, now from another, came too the faint thud of the bleacher's mallet, and the scream of wild geese passing overhead. It was all too distracting.

Their room was in the front of the house. Genji got up and opened the long, sliding shutters. They stood

together looking out. In the courtyard near them was a clump of fine Chinese bamboos; dew lay thick on the borders, glittering here no less brightly than in the great gardens to which Genji was better accustomed. There was a confused buzzing of insects. Crickets were chirping in the wall. He had often listened to them, but always at a distance; now, singing so close to him, they made a music which was unfamiliar and indeed seemed far lovelier than that with which he was acquainted. But then, everything in this place where one thing was so much to his liking, seemed despite all drawbacks to take on a new tinge of interest and beauty. She was wearing a white bodice with a soft, grey cloak over it. It was a poor dress, but she looked charming and almost distinguished; even so, there was nothing very striking in her appearance—only a certain fragile grace and elegance. It was when she was speaking that she looked really beautiful, there was such pathos, such earnestness in her manner. If only she had a little more spirit! But even as she was he found her irresistible and longed to take her to some place where no one could disturb them: 'I am going to take you somewhere not at all far away where we shall be able to pass the rest of the night in peace. We cannot go on like this, parting always at break of day.' 'Why have you suddenly come to that conclusion?' she asked, but she spoke submissively. He vowed to her that she should be his love in this and in all future lives and she answered so passionately that she seemed utterly transformed from the listless creature he had known, and it was hard to believe that such vows were no novelty to her.

Discarding all prudence he sent for the maid Ukon and bade her order his servants to fetch a coach. The affair was soon known to all the household, and the ladies were at first somewhat uneasy at seeing their mistress carried off in this fashion; but on the whole they did not think he looked the sort of person who would do her any harm. It was now almost daylight. The cocks had stopped crowing. The voice of an old man (a pilgrim preparing for the ascent of the Holy Mountain) sounded somewhere not far away; and, as at each prayer he bent forward to touch the ground with his head, they could hear with what pain and difficulty he moved. What could he be asking for in his prayers, this old man whose life seemed fragile as the morning dew? *Namu tōrai no dōshi* 'Glory be to the Saviour that shall come': now they could hear the words. 'Listen' said Genji tenderly, 'is not that an omen that our love shall last through many lives to come?' And he recited the poem: 'Do not prove false this omen of the pilgrim's chant: that even in lives to come our love shall last unchanged.'

Then unlike the lovers in the 'Everlasting Wrong' who prayed that they might be as the 'twin birds that share a wing' (for they remembered that this story had ended very sadly) they prayed 'May our love last till Maitreya comes as a Buddha into the World.' But she, still distrustful, answered his poem with the verse: 'Such sorrow have I known in this world that I have small hope of worlds to come.' Her versification was still a little tentative.

She was thinking with pleasure that the setting moon would light them on their way, and Genji was just saying so when suddenly the moon disappeared behind a bank of clouds. But there was still great beauty in the dawning sky. Anxious to be gone before it was quite light, he hurried her away to the coach and put Ukon by her side.

They drove to an untenanted mansion which was not far off. While he waited for the steward to come out Genji noticed that the gates were crumbling away; dense shinobu-grass grew around them. So sombre an entrance he had never seen. There was a thick mist and the dew was so heavy that when he raised the carriage-blind his sleeve was drenched. 'Never yet has such an adventure as this befallen me' said Genji; 'so I am, as you may imagine, rather excited,' and he made a poem in which he said that though love's folly had existed since the beginning of the world, never could man have set out more rashly at the break of day into a land unknown. 'But to you this is no great novelty?' She blushed and in her turn made a poem: 'I am as the moon that walks the sky not knowing what menace the cruel hills may hold in store; high though she sweeps, her light may suddenly be blotted out.'

She seemed very depressed and nervous. But this he attributed to the fact that she had probably always lived in small houses where everything was huddled together, and he was amused at the idea that this large mansion should overawe her. They drove in, and while a room was being got ready they remained in the carriage which had been drawn up alongside of the

balustrade. Ukon, looking very innocent all the while, was inwardly comparing this excursion with her mistress's previous adventures. She had noticed the tone of extreme deference with which this latest lover had been received by the steward, and had begun to draw her own conclusions.

The mist was gradually clearing away. They left the coach and went into the room which had been prepared for them. Though so quickly improvised, their quarters were admirably clean and well-provided, for the steward's son had previously been a trusted house-servant of Genji's and had also worked at the Great Hall. Coming now to their room he offered to send for some of Genji's gentlemen, 'For' he said 'I cannot bear to see you going unattended.' 'Do nothing of the kind' said Genji; 'I have come here because I do not wish to be disturbed. No one but yourself is to know that I have used this house,' and he exacted a promise of absolute secrecy. No regular meal had been prepared, but the steward brought them a little rice porridge. Then they lay down again to sleep together for the first time in this unfamiliar and so strangely different place.

The sun was high when they woke. Genji went and opened the shutters himself. How deserted the garden looked! Certainly here there was no one to spy upon them. He looked out into the distance: dense woods fast turning to jungle. And nearer the house not a flower or bush, but only unkempt, autumn grasslands, and a pond choked with weeds. It was a wild and desolate place. It seemed that the steward and his men must live in some

outbuilding or lodge at a distance from the house; for here there was no sign or sound of life. 'It is, I must own, a strange and forsaken place to which we have come. But no ghost or evil fairy will dare molest you while I am here.'

It pained her very much that he still was masked; and indeed such a precaution was quite out of keeping with the stage at which they had now arrived. So at last, reciting a poem in which he reminded her that all their love down to this moment when 'the flower opened its petals to the evening dew' had come from a chance vision seen casually from the street, half-turning his face away, for a moment he let her see him unmasked. 'What of the "shining dew"' he asked using the words that she had written on the fan. 'How little knew I of its beauty who had but in the twilight doubted and guessed...!'; so she answered his poem in a low and halting voice. She need not have feared, for to him, poor as the verses were, they seemed delightful. And indeed the beauty of his uncovered face, suddenly revealed to her in this black wilderness of dereliction and decay, surpassed all loveliness that she had ever dreamed of or imagined. 'I cannot wonder that while I still set this barrier between us, you did not choose to tell me all that I longed to know. But now it would be very unkind of you not to tell me your name.' 'I am like the fisherman's daughter in the song' she said, "'I have no name or home.'" But for all that she would not tell him who she was, she seemed much comforted that he had let her see him. 'Do as you please about it' said Genji at last; but for a while he was out of temper.



Soon they had made it up again; and so the day passed. Presently Koremitsu came to their quarters, bringing fruit and other viands. He would not come in, for he was frightened that Ukon would rate him mercilessly for the part he had played in arranging the abduction of her mistress. He had now come to the conclusion that the Lady must possess charms which he had wholly overlooked, or Genji would certainly never have taken all this trouble about her, and he was touched at his own magnanimity in surrendering to his master a prize which he might well have kept for himself. It was an evening of marvellous stillness. Genji sat watching the sky. The lady found the inner room where she was sitting depressingly dark and gloomy. He raised the blinds of the front room, and came to sit with her. They watched the light of the sunset glowing in each other's eyes, and in her wonder at his adorable beauty and tenderness she forgot all her fears. At last she was shy with him no longer, and he thought that the new-found boldness and merriment became her very well. She lay by his side till night. He saw that she was again wearing the plaintive expression of a frightened child; so quickly closing the partition-door he brought in the great lamp, saying: 'Outwardly you are no longer shy with me; but I can see that deep down in your heart there is still some sediment of rancour and distrust. It is not kind to use me so,' and again he was cross with her.

What were the people at the Palace thinking? Would he have been sent for? How far would the messengers pursue their search? He became quite agitated. Then

there was the great lady in the Sixth Ward. What a frenzy she must be in! This time, however, she really had good cause to be jealous. These and other unpleasant considerations were crowding into his head, when looking at the girl who lay beside him so trustfully, unconscious of all that was going on in his mind, he was suddenly filled with an overwhelming tenderness towards her. How tiresome the other was, with her eternal susceptibilities, jealousies and suspicions! For a while at any rate he would stop seeing her. As the night wore on they began sometimes to doze. Suddenly Genji saw standing over him the figure of a woman, tall and majestic: 'You who think yourself so fine, how comes it that you have brought to toy with you here this worthless common creature, picked up at random in the streets? I am astonished and displeased,' and with this she made as though to drag the lady from his side. Thinking that this was some nightmare or hallucination, he roused himself and sat up. The lamp had gone out. Somewhat agitated he drew his sword and laid it beside him, calling as he did so for Ukon. She came at once, looking a good deal scared herself. 'Please wake the watchman in the cross-wing,' he said, 'and tell him to bring a candle.' 'All in the dark like this? How can I?' she answered. 'Don't be childish,' said Genji laughing and clapped his hands. The sound echoed desolately through the empty house. He could not make anyone hear; and meanwhile he noticed that his mistress was trembling from head to foot. What should he do? He was still undecided, when suddenly she burst out into a cold sweat. She seemed to be losing

consciousness. 'Do not fear, Sir' said Ukon 'all her life she has been subject to these nightmare fits.' He remembered now how tired she had seemed in the morning and how she had lain with her eyes turned upwards as though in pain. 'I will go myself and wake someone' he said; 'I am tired of clapping with only echoes to answer me. Do not leave her!' and drawing Ukon towards the bed he went in the direction of the main western door. But when he opened it, he found that the lamp in the cross-wing had also gone out. A wind had risen. The few attendants he had brought with him were already in bed. There was indeed only the steward's son (the young man who had once been Genji's body-servant), and the one young courtier who had attended him on all his visits. They answered when he called and sprang to their feet. 'Come with a candle,' he said to the steward's son, 'and tell my man to get his bow and keep on twanging the string as loud as he can. I wonder anyone should sleep so soundly in such a deserted place. What has happened to Koremitsu?' 'He waited for some time, but as you seemed to have no need of him, he went home, saying he would be back at day-break.'

Genji's man had been an Imperial Bowman, and making a tremendous din with his bow he strode towards the steward's lodge crying 'Fire, Fire' at the top of his voice. The twanging of the bow reminded Genji of the Palace. The roll-call of night courtiers must be over; the Bowman's roll-call must be actually going on. It was not so very late.

He groped his way back into the room. She was lying just as he had left her, with Ukon face downwards beside her. 'What are you doing there' he cried? 'Have you gone mad with fright? You have heard no doubt that in such lonely places as this, fox-spirits sometimes try to cast a spell upon men. But, dear people, you need not fear. I have come back, and will not let such creatures harm you.' And so saying he dragged Ukon from the bed. 'Oh, Sir' she said 'I felt so queer and frightened that I fell flat down upon my face; and what my poor lady must be going through I dare not think.' 'Then try not to add to her fright' said Genji, and pushing her aside bent over the prostrate form. The girl was scarcely breathing. He touched her; she was quite limp. She did not know him.

Perhaps some accursed thing, some demon had tried to snatch her spirit away; she was so timid, so childishly helpless. The man came with the candle. Ukon was still too frightened to move. Genji placed a screen so as to hide the bed and called the man to him. It was of course contrary to etiquette that he should serve Genji himself and he hesitated in embarrassment, not venturing even to ascend the dais. 'Come here' said Genji impatiently; 'use your common-sense.' Reluctantly the man gave him the light, and as he held it towards the bed, he saw for a moment the figure which had stood there in his dream still hovering beside the pillow; suddenly it vanished. He had read in old tales of such apparitions and of their power, and was in great alarm. But for the moment he was so full of concern for the lady who now lay motionless on the bed, that he gave

no thought to that menacing vision, and lying down beside her, began gently to move her limbs. Already they were growing cold. Her breathing had quite stopped. What could he do? To whom could he turn for help? He ought to send for a priest. He tried to control himself, but he was very young, and seeing her lying there all still and pale, he could contain himself no longer and crying 'Come back to me, my own darling, come back to life. Do not look at me so strangely!' he flung his arms about her. But now she was quite cold. Her face was set in a dull, senseless stare.

Suddenly Ukon, who had been so busy with her own fears, came to herself again, and set up the most dismal weeping. He disregarded her. Something had occurred to him. There was a story of how a certain minister was waylaid by a demon as he passed through the Southern Hall. The man, Genji remembered, had been prostrate with fear; but in the end he revived and escaped. No, she could not really be dead, and turning to Ukon he said firmly: 'Come now, we cannot have you making such a hideous noise in the middle of the night.' But he himself was stunned with grief, and though he gave Ukon distracted orders scarce knew what he was doing. Presently he sent for the steward's son and said to him: 'Someone here has had a fright and is in a very bad way. I want you to go to Koremitsu's house and tell him to come as quickly as he can. If his brother the priest is there too, take him aside and tell him quietly that I should like to see him at once. But do not speak loud enough for the nun their mother to hear; for I would not have her know of this excursion.' But though

he managed to say the words, his brain was all the while in a hideous turmoil. For added to the ghastly thought that he himself had caused her death there was the dread and horror with which the whole place now inspired him.

It was past midnight. A violent storm began to rise, sighing dismally as it swept the pine-trees that clustered round the house. And all the while some strange bird—an owl, he supposed—kept screeching hoarsely. Utter desolation on all sides. No human voice; no friendly sound. Why, why had he chosen this hideous place?

Ukon had fainted and was lying by her mistress's side. Was she too going to die of fright? No, no. He must not give way to such thoughts. He was now the only person left who was capable of action. Was there nothing he could do? The candle was burning badly. He lit it again. Over by the screen in the corner of the main room something was moving. There it was again, but in another corner now. There was a sound of footsteps treading cautiously. It still went on. Now they were coming up behind him....

If only Koremitsu would return! But Koremitsu was a rover and a long time was wasted in looking for him. Would it never be day? It seemed to him that this night was lasting a thousand years. But now, somewhere a long way off, a cock crowed.

Why had fate seen fit to treat him thus? He felt that it must be as a punishment for all the strange and forbidden amours into which in these last years he had despite himself been drawn, that now this unheard of

horror had befallen him. And such things, though one may keep them secret for a time, always come out in the end. He minded most that the Emperor would be certain to discover sooner or later about this and all his other affairs. Then there was the general scandal. Everyone would know. The very gutter boys would make merry over him. Never, never must he do such things again, or his reputation would utterly collapse....

At last Koremitsu arrived. He prided himself on being always ready to carry out his master's wishes immediately at whatever hour of the night or day, and he thought it very provoking of Genji to have sent for him just on the one occasion when he was not to hand. And now that he had come his master did not seem able to give him any orders, but stood speechless in front of him.

Ukon, hearing Koremitsu's voice, suddenly came to herself and remembering what had happened, burst into tears. And now Genji, who while he alone was there had supported and encouraged the weeping maid-servant, relieved at last by Koremitsu could contain himself no longer, and suddenly realizing again the terrible thing that had befallen him he burst into uncontrollable weeping. 'Something horrible has happened here,' he managed to say at last, 'too dreadful to explain. I have heard that when such things as this suddenly befall, certain scriptures should be read. I would have this done, and prayers said. That is why I asked you to bring your brother....'

'He went up to the mountain yesterday' said Koremitsu. 'But I see that there has been terrible work

here afoot. Was it in some sudden fit of madness that you did this thing?' Genji shook his head. So moved was Koremitsu at the sight of his master weeping, that he too began to sob. Had he been an older man, versed in the ways of the world, he might have been of some use in such a crisis, but both of them were young and both were equally perplexed. At last Koremitsu said: 'One thing at least is clear. The steward's son must not know. For though he himself can be depended upon, he is the sort of person who is sure to tell all his relatives, and they might meddle disastrously in the affair. We had best get clear of this house as quietly as we can.' 'Perhaps' said Genji; 'but it would be hard to find a less frequented place than this.' 'At any rate' Koremitsu continued, 'we cannot take her to her own house; for there her gentlewomen, who loved her dearly, would raise such a weeping and wailing as would soon bring a pack of neighbours swarming around, and all would quickly be known. If only I knew of some mountain-temple—for there such things are customary and pass almost unnoticed.' He paused and reflected. 'There is a lady I once knew who has become a nun and now lives on the Higashi Yama. She was my father's wet-nurse and is now very old and bent. She does not of course live alone; but no outside people come there.' A faint light was already showing in the sky when Koremitsu brought the carriage in. Thinking that Genji would not wish to move the body himself, he wrapt it in a rush-mat and carried it towards the carriage. How small she was to hold! Her face was calm and beautiful. He felt no repulsion. He could find no way



to secure her hair, and when he began to carry her it overflowed and hung towards the ground. Genji saw, and his eyes darkened. A hideous anguish possessed him.

He tried to follow the body, but Koremitsu dissuaded him, saying 'You must ride back to your palace as quickly as you can; you have just time to get there before the stir begins,' and putting Ukon into the carriage, he gave Genji his horse. Then pulling up his silk trousers to the knee, he accompanied the carriage on foot. It was a very singular procession; but Koremitsu, seeing his master's terrible distress, forgot for the moment his own dignity and walked stolidly on. Genji, hardly conscious of what went on around him arrived at last in ghostly pallor at his house. 'Where do you come from, my Lord?' 'How ill you look.' ... Questions assailed him, but he hurried to his room and lay behind his curtain. He tried to calm himself, but hideous thoughts tormented him. Why had he not insisted upon going with her? What if after all she were not dead and waking up should find that he had thus abandoned her? While these wild thoughts chased through his brain a terrible sensation of choking began to torment him. His head ached, his body seemed to be on fire. Indeed he felt so strange that he thought he too was about to die suddenly and inexplicably as she had done. The sun was now high, but he did not get up. His gentlemen, with murmurs of astonishment, tried every means to rouse him. He sent away the dainties they brought, and lay hour after hour plunged in the darkest thoughts. A messenger arrived from the Emperor: 'His

Majesty has been uneasy since yesterday when his envoys sought everywhere for your Highness in vain.' The young lords too came from the Great Hall. He would see none of them but Tō no Chūjō, and even him he made stand outside his curtain while he spoke to him: 'My foster-mother has been very ill since the fifth month. She shaved her head and performed other penances, in consequence of which (or so it seems) she recovered a little and got up, but is very much enfeebled. She sent word that she desired to see me once more before she died, and as I was very fond of her when I was a child, I could not refuse. While I was there a servant in the house fell ill and died quite suddenly. Out of consideration for me they removed the body at nightfall. But as soon as I was told of what had happened I remembered that the Fast of the Ninth Month was at hand and for this reason I have not thought it right to present myself to the Emperor my father. Moreover, since early morning I have had a cough and very bad headache, so you will forgive me for treating you in this way.'

'I will give the Emperor your message. But I must tell you that last night when you were out he sent messengers to look for you and seemed, if I may venture to say so, to be in a very ill humour.' Tō no Chūjō turned to go, but pausing a moment came back to Genji's couch and said quietly: 'What really happened to you last night? What you told me just now cannot possibly be true.' 'You need not go into details,' answered Genji impatiently. 'Simply tell him that

unintentionally I became exposed to a pollution, and apologize to him for me as best you can.' He spoke sharply, but in his heart there was only an unspeakable sadness; and he was very tired.

All day he lay hidden from sight. Once he sent for Tō no Chūjō's brother Kurōdo no Ben and gave him a formal message for the Emperor. The same excuse would serve for the Great Hall, and he sent a similar message there and to other houses where he might be expected.

At dusk Koremitsu came. The story of Genji's pollution had turned all visitors from the door, and Koremitsu found his palace utterly deserted. 'What happened?' said Genji, summoning him, 'you are sure that she is dead?' and holding his sleeve before his face he wept. 'All is over; of that there is no doubt,' said Koremitsu, also in tears; 'and since it is not possible for them to keep the body long, I have arranged with a very respectable aged priest who is my friend that the ceremony shall take place to-morrow, since to-morrow chances to be a good calendar day.' 'And what of her gentlewoman?' asked Genji. 'I fear she will not live,' said Koremitsu. 'She cries out that she must follow her mistress and this morning, had I not held her, she would have cast herself from a high rock. She threatened to tell the servants at my lady's house, but I prevailed upon her to think the matter over quietly before she did this.' 'Poor thing,' said Genji, 'small wonder that she should be thus distracted. I too am feeling strangely disordered and do not know what will become of me.' 'Torment yourself no more,' said

Koremitsu. 'All things happen as they must. Here is one who will handle this matter very prudently for you, and none shall be the wiser.' 'Happen as they must. You are right' said Genji 'and so I try to persuade myself. But in the pursuit of one's own wanton pleasures to have done harm and to have caused someone's death—that is a hideous crime; a terrible load of sin to bear with me through the world. Do not tell even your sister; much less your mother the nun, for I am ashamed that she should even know I have ever done that kind of thing.' 'Do not fear' answered Koremitsu. 'Even to the priests, who must to a certain extent be let into the secret, I have told a long made-up tale' and Genji felt a little easier in his mind.

The waiting-women of his palace were sorely puzzled; 'First he says he has been defiled and cannot go to Court, and now he sits whispering and sighing.' What could it all mean? 'Again I beg you' said Genji at last 'to see that everything is done as it should be.' He was thinking all the time of the elaborate Court funerals which he had witnessed (he had, indeed, seen no others) and imagined Koremitsu directing a complicated succession of rituals. 'I will do what I can; it will be no such great matter,' he answered and turned to go. Suddenly Genji could bear no longer the thought that he should never see her again. 'You will think it very foolish of me,' he said, 'but I am coming with you. I shall ride on horseback.' 'If your heart is set upon it,' said Koremitsu, 'it is not for me to reason with you. Let us start soon, so that we may be back before the night is over.' So putting on the hunting-dress and other

garments in which he had disguised himself before, he left his room.

Already the most hideous anguish possessed him, and now, as he set out upon this strange journey, to the dark thoughts that filled his mind was added a dread lest his visit might rouse to some fresh fury the mysterious power which had destroyed her. Should he go? He hesitated; but though he knew that this way lay no cure for his sadness, yet if he did not see her now, never again perhaps in any life to come would he meet the face and form that he had loved so well. So with Koremitsu and the one same groom to bear him company he set out upon the road.

The way seemed endless. The moon of the seventeenth night had risen and lit up the whole space of the Kamo plain, and in the light of the outrunners' torches the countryside towards Toribeno now came dimly into sight. But Genji in his sickness and despair saw none of this, and suddenly waking from the stupor into which he had fallen found that they had arrived.

The nun's cell was in a chapel built against the wall of a wooden house. It was a desolate spot, but the chapel itself was very beautiful. The light of the visitors' torches flickered through the open door. In the inner room there was no sound but that of a woman weeping by herself; in the outer room were several priests talking together (or was it praying?) in hushed voices. In the neighbouring temples vespers were over and there was absolute stillness; only towards the Kiyomizu were lights visible and many figures seemed to throng the hill-side.

A senior priest, son of the aged nun, now began to recite the Scriptures in an impressive voice, and Genji as he listened felt the tears come into his eyes. He went in. Ukon was lying behind a screen; when she heard him enter, she turned the lamp to the wall. What terrible thing was she trying to hide from him? But when he came nearer he saw to his joy that the dead lady was not changed in any way whatsoever, but lay there very calm and beautiful; and feeling no horror or fear at all he took her hand and said, 'Speak to me once again; tell me why for so short a while you came to me and filled my heart with gladness, and then so soon forsook me, who loved you so well?' and he wept long and bitterly by her side.

The priests did not know who he was, but they were touched by his evident misery and themselves shed tears. He asked Ukon to come back with him, but she answered: 'I have served this lady since she was a little child and never once for so much as an hour have I left her. How can I suddenly part from one who was so dear to me and serve in another's house? And I must now go and tell her people what has become of her; for (such is the manner of her death) if I do not speak soon, there will be an outcry that it was I who was to blame, and that would be a terrible thing for me, Sir,' and she burst into tears, wailing 'I will lie with her upon the pyre; my smoke shall mingle with hers!'

'Poor soul' said Genji, 'I do not wonder at your despair. But this is the way of the world. Late or soon we must all go where she has gone. Take comfort and trust in me.' So he sought to console her, but in a

moment he added: 'Those, I know, are but hollow words. I too care no longer for life and would gladly follow her.' So he spoke, giving her in the end but little comfort.

'The night is far spent' said Koremitsu; 'we must now be on our way.' And so with many backward looks and a heart full to bursting he left the house. A heavy dew had fallen and the mist was so thick that it was hard to see the road. On the way it occurred to him that she was still wearing his scarlet cloak, which he had lent her when they lay down together on the last evening. How closely their lives had been entwined!

Noting that he sat very unsteadily in his saddle, Koremitsu walked beside him and gave him a hand. But when they came to a dyke, he lost hold and his master fell to the ground. Here he lay in great pain and bewilderment. 'I shall not live to finish the journey' he said; 'I have not strength to go so far.' Koremitsu too was sorely troubled, for he felt that despite all Genji's insistence, he ought never to have allowed him, fever-stricken as he was, to embark upon this disastrous journey. In great agitation he plunged his hands in the river and prayed to Our Lady Kwannon of Kiyomizu. Genji too roused himself at last and forced himself to pray inwardly to the Buddha. And so they managed to start upon their journey again and in the end with Koremitsu's help he reached his palace.

This sudden journey undertaken so late at night had seemed to all his household the height of imprudence. They had noted for some while past his nightly wanderings grow more and more frequent; but though

often agitated and pre-occupied, never had he returned so haggard as that morning. What could be the object of these continual excursions? And they shook their heads in great concern. Genji flung himself upon his bed and lay there in fever and pain for several days. He was growing very weak. The news was brought to the Emperor who was greatly distressed and ordered continual prayers to be said for him in all the great temples; and indeed there were more special services and purification-ceremonies and incantations than I have room to rehearse. When it became known that this prince so famous for his great charm and beauty, was likely soon to die, there was a great stir in all the kingdom.

Sick though he was he did not forget to send for Ukon and have her enrolled among his gentlewomen.

Koremitsu, who was beside himself with anxiety concerning his master, yet managed on her arrival to calm himself and give to Ukon friendly instruction in her new duties; for he was touched by the helpless plight in which she had been left. And Genji, whenever he felt a little better, would use her to carry messages and letters, so that she soon grew used to waiting upon him. She was dressed in deep black and though not at all handsome was a pleasant enough looking woman.

'It seems that the same fate which so early stayed your lady's course has willed that I too should be but little longer for this world. I know in what sore distress you are left by the loss of one who was for so many years your mistress and friend; and it was my purpose to have comforted you in your bereavement by every



care and kindness I could devise. For this reason, indeed, it grieves me that I shall survive her for so short a time.' So, somewhat stiltedly, he whispered to Ukon, and being now very weak he could not refrain from tears. Apart from the fact that his death would leave her utterly without resource, she had now quite taken to him and would have been very sorry indeed if he had died.

His gentlemen ran hither and thither, distracted; the Emperor's envoys thronged thick as the feet of the raindrops. Hearing of his father's distress and anxiety, Genji strove hard to reassure him by pretending to some slight respite or improvement. His father-in-law too showed great concern, calling every day for news and ordering the performance of various rites and potent liturgies; and it was perhaps as a result of this, that having been dangerously ill for more than twenty days, he took a turn for the better, and soon all his symptoms began to disappear. On the night of his recovery the term of his defilement also ended and hearing that the Emperor was still extremely uneasy about him, he determined to reassure the Court by returning to his official residence at the Palace. His father-in-law came to fetch him in his own carriage and rather irritatingly urged upon him all sorts of remedies and precautions.

For some while everything in the world to which he had now returned seemed strange to him and he indeed scarce knew himself; but by the twentieth day of the ninth month his recovery was complete, nor did the

pallor and thinness of his face become him by any means ill.

At times he would stare vacantly before him and burst into loud weeping, and seeing this there were not wanting those who said that he was surely possessed. Often he would send for Ukon, and once when they had been talking in the still of the evening he said to her 'There is one thing which still puzzles me. Why would she never tell me who she was? For even if she was indeed, as she once said, "a fisherman's child," it was a strange perversity to use such reticence with one who loved her so well.'

'You ask why she hid her name from you?' said Ukon. 'Can you wonder at it? When could she have been expected to tell you her name (not that it would have meant much to you if you had heard it)? For from the beginning you treated her with a strange mistrust, coming with such secrecy and mystery as might well make her doubt whether you were indeed a creature of the waking world. But though you never told her she knew well enough who you were, and the thought that you would not be thus secret had you regarded her as more than a mere plaything or idle distraction was very painful to her.'

'What a wretched series of misunderstandings' said Genji. 'For my part I had no mind to put a distance between us. But I had no experience in such affairs as this. There are many difficulties in the path of such people as I. First and foremost I feared the anger of my father the Emperor; and then, the foolish jesting of the world. I felt myself hedged in by courtly rules and

restrictions. But for all the tiresome concealments that my rank forced upon me, from that first evening I had so strangely set my heart upon her that though reason counselled me I could not hold back; and indeed it seems sometimes to me that an irresistible fate drove me to do the thing of which I now so bitterly and continually repent. But tell me more about her. For there can now be no reason for concealment. When on each seventh day I cause the names of the Buddhas to be written for her comfort and salvation, whom am I to name in my inward prayer?’

‘There can be no harm in my telling you that’ said Ukon, ‘and I should have done so before, did I not somehow feel it a shame to be prating to you now about things she would not have me speak of while she was alive. Her parents died when she was quite small. Her father, Sammi Chūjō, loved her very dearly, but felt always that he could not give her all the advantages to which her great beauty entitled her; and still perplexed about her future and how best to do his duty by her, he died. Soon afterwards some accident brought her into the company of Tō no Chūjō who was at that time still a lieutenant and for three years he made her very happy. But in the autumn of last year disquieting letters began to arrive from the Great Hall of the Right, and being by nature prone to fits of unreasoning fear she now fell into a wild panic and fled to the western part of the town where she hid herself in the house of her old wet-nurse. Here she was very uncomfortable, and had planned to move to a certain village in the hills, when

she discovered that it would be unlucky, owing to the position of the stars since the beginning of the year, to make a journey in that direction; and (though she never told me so) I think, Sir, it troubled her sorely that you should have come upon her when she was living in so wretched a place. But there was never anyone in the world like my lady for keeping things to herself; she could never bear that other people should know what was on her mind. I have no doubt, Sir, that she sometimes behaved very oddly to you and that you have seen all this for yourself.'

Yes, this was all just as Tō no Chūjō had described. 'I think there was some mention of a child that Chūjō was vexed to have lost sight of' said Genji more interested than ever; 'am I right?' 'Yes, indeed,' she answered 'it was born in the spring of last year, a girl, and a fine child it was.' 'Where is it now?' asked Genji. 'Could you get hold of it and bring it to me here without letting anyone know where you were taking it? It would be a great comfort to me in my present misery to have some remembrance of her near me;' and he added, 'I ought of course to tell Chūjō, but that would lead to useless and painful discussions about what has happened. Somehow or other I will manage to bring her up here in my palace. I think there can be no harm in that. And you will easily enough find some story to tell to whatever people are now looking after her.' 'I am very glad that this has entered your head,' said Ukon, 'it would be a poor look-out for her to grow up in the quarter where she is now living. With no one

properly belonging to her and in such a part of the town....'

In the stillness of the evening, under a sky of exquisite beauty, here and there along the borders in front of his palace some insect croaked its song; the leaves were just beginning to turn. And as he looked upon this pleasant picture he felt ashamed at the contrast between his surroundings and the little house where Yūgao had lived. Suddenly somewhere among the bamboo groves the bird called iyebato uttered its sharp note. He remembered just how she had looked when in the gardens of that fatal house the same bird had startled her by its cry, and turning to Ukon, 'How old was she?' he suddenly asked; 'for though she seemed childlike in her diffidence and helplessness, that may only have been a sign that she was not long for this world.' 'She must have been nineteen' said Ukon. 'When my mother, who was her first wet-nurse, died and left me an orphan, my lady's father was pleased to notice me and reared me at my lady's side. Ah Sir, when I think of it, I do not know how I shall live without her; for kind as people here may be I do not seem to get used to them. I suppose it is that I knew her ways, poor lady, she having been my mistress for so many years.'

To Genji even the din of the cloth-beaters' mallets had become dear through recollection, and as he lay in bed he repeated those verses of Po Chū-i.

In the eighth month and ninth month when the nights are growing long

A thousand times, ten thousand times the fuller's stick beats.

The young brother still waited upon him, but he no longer brought with him the letters which he had been used to bring. Utsusemi thought he had at last decided that her treatment of him was too unfriendly to be borne, and was vexed that he should feel so. Then suddenly she heard of his illness, and all her vexation turned to consternation and anxiety. She was soon to set out upon her long journey, but this did not much interest her; and to see whether Genji had quite forgotten her she sent him a message saying that she had been able to find no words in which to express her grief at hearing the news of his illness. With it she sent the poem: 'I did not ask for news and you did not ask why I was silent; so the days wore on and I remained in sorrow and dismay.' He had not forgotten her, no, not in all his trouble; and his answer came: 'Of this life, fragile as the utsusemi's shell, already I was weary, when your word came, and gave me strength to live anew.' The poem was written in a very tremulous and confused hand; but she thought the writing very beautiful and it delighted her that he had not forgotten how, cicada-like, she had shed her scarf. There could be no harm in this interchange of notes, but she had no intention of arranging a meeting. She thought that at last even he had seen that there could be no sense in that.

As for Utsusemi's companion, she was not yet married, and Genji heard that she had become the mistress of

Tō no Chūjō's brother Kurōdo no Shōshō; and though he feared that Shōshō might already have taken very ill the discovery that he was not first in the field, and did not at all wish to offend him, yet he had a certain curiosity about the girl and sent Utsusemi's little brother with a message asking if she had heard of his illness and the poem: 'Had I not once gathered for my pillow a handful of the sedge that grows upon the eaves, not a dewdrop of pretext could my present message find.' It was an acrostic with many hidden meanings. He tied the letter to a tall reed and bade him deliver it secretly; but was afterwards very uneasy at the thought that it might go astray. 'If it falls into Shōshō's hands' he thought 'he will at once guess that it was I who was before him.' But after all Shōshō would probably not take that so very hard, Genji had vanity enough to think.

The boy delivered the message when Shōshō was at a safe distance. She could not help feeling a little hurt; but it was something that he had remembered her at all, and justifying it to herself with the excuse that she had had no time to do anything better, she sent the boy straight back with the verse: 'The faint wind of your favour, that but for a moment blew, with grief has part befrosted the small sedge of the eaves.' It was very ill-written, with all sorts of ornamental but misleading strokes and flourishes; indeed with a complete lack of style. However, it served to remind him of the face he had first seen that evening by the lamplight. As for the other who on that occasion had sat

so stiffly facing her, what determination there had been in her face, what a steady resolution to give no quarter! The affair with the lady of the sedge was so unintentional and so insignificant that though he regarded it as rather frivolous and indiscreet, he saw no great harm in it. But if he did not take himself in hand before it was too late he would soon again be involved in some entanglement which might finally ruin his reputation.

On the forty-ninth day after Yūgao's death a service in her memory was by his orders secretly held in the Hokedō on Mount Hiyei. The ritual

performed was of the most elaborate kind, everything that was required being supplied from the Prince's own store; and even the decoration of the service books and images was carried out with the utmost attention.

Koremitsu's brother, a man of great piety, was entrusted with the direction of the ceremony, and all went well. Next Genji sent for his old writing-master, a doctor of letters for whom he had a great liking and bade him write the prayer for the dead. 'Say that I commit to Amida the Buddha one not named whom I loved, but lost disastrously,' and he wrote out a rough draft for the learned man to amend. 'There is nothing to add or alter,' said the master, deeply moved. Who could it be, he wondered, at whose death the prince was so





distressed? (For Genji, try as he might, could not hide his tears.)

When he was secretly looking through his store for largesse to give to the Hokedō priests, he came upon a certain dress and as he folded it made the poem: 'The girdle that to-day with tears I knot, shall we ever in some new life untie?'

Till now her spirit had wandered in the void.

But already she must be setting out on her new life-path, and in great solicitude, he prayed continually for her safety.

He met Tō no Chūjō and his heart beat violently, for he had longed to tell him about Yūgao's child and how it was to be reared. But he feared that the rest of the story would needlessly anger and distress him, and he did not mention the matter. Meanwhile the servants of Yūgao's house were surprised that they had had no news from her nor even from Ukon, and had begun to be seriously disquieted. They had still no proof that it was Genji who was her lover, but several of them thought that they had recognized him and his name was whispered among them. They would have it that Koremitsu knew the secret, but he pretended to know nothing whatever about Yūgao's lover and found a way to put off all their questions; and as he was still frequenting the house for his own purposes, it was easy for them to believe that he was not really concerned in their mistress's affairs. Perhaps after all it was some

blackguard of a Zuryō's son who, frightened of Tō no Chūjō's interference, had carried her off to his province. The real owner of the house was a daughter of Yūgao's second wet-nurse, who had three children of her own. Ukon had been brought up with them, but they thought that it was perhaps because she was not their own sister that Ukon sent them no news of their mistress, and they were in great distress.

Ukon who knew that they would assail her with questions which her promise to Genji forbade her to answer, dared not go to the house, not even to get news of her lady's child. It had been put out somewhere to nurse, but to her great sorrow she had quite lost sight of it.

Longing all the while to see her face once more though only in a dream, upon the night after the ceremony on Mount Hiyei, he had a vision very different from that for which he prayed. There appeared to him once more, just as on that fatal night, the figure of a woman in menacing posture, and he was dismayed at the thought that some demon which haunted the desolate spot might on the occasion when it did that terrible thing, also have entered into him and possessed him.

Iyo no Suke was to start early in the Godless Month and had announced that his wife would go with him. Genji sent very handsome parting presents and among them with special intent he put many very exquisite combs and fans. With them were silk strips to offer to the God of Journeys and, above all, the scarf which she had dropped, and, tied to it, a poem in which he said

that he had kept it in remembrance of her while there was still hope of their meeting, but now returned it wet with tears shed in vain. There was a long letter with the poem, but this was of no particular interest and is here omitted. She sent no answer by the man who had brought the presents, but gave her brother the poem: 'That to the changed cicada you should return her summer dress shows that you too have changed and fills an insect heart with woe.'

He thought long about her. Though she had with so strange and inexplicable a resolution steeled her heart against him to the end, yet each time he remembered that she had gone forever it filled him with depression. It was the first day of the tenth month, and as though in sign that winter had indeed begun heavy rain fell. All day long Genji watched the stormy sky. Autumn had hideously bereaved him and winter already was taking from him one whom he dearly loved:

Now like a traveller who has tried two ways in vain  
I stand perplexed where these sad seasons meet.

Now at least we must suppose he was convinced that such secret adventures led only to misery.

I should indeed be very loth to recount in all their detail matters which he took so much trouble to conceal, did I not know that if you found I had omitted anything you would at once ask why, just because he was supposed to be an Emperor's son, I must needs put a favourable showing on his conduct by leaving out all his indiscretions; and you would soon be saying that this was no history but a mere made-up tale designed to

influence the judgment of posterity. As it is I shall be called a scandal-monger; but that I cannot help.