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NATSUME SÔSEKI'S HIGAN SUGI MADE:
A CRITICAL STUDY AND COMPLETE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.
IN ASIAN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE (JAPANESE)

DECEMBER, 1985

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Acknowledgements

I wish to express gratitude to the following people in Japan for helping me to find materials necessary to my dissertation, and for sending these items to me in Hawaii, along with their advice and encouragement: Professors Mieko Ishibash and Luli Teshima, of Fukuoka, both of whom were classmates with me at Kyushu University; Professor Shigemitsu Yasao, and Professor Ebii Eiji, both of Kyushu University.

Equally important in a different way was the help given me by my colleagues and associates on the staff of Chaminade University: Mrs. Eileen Sarber, my department chairman, for her sympathy and encouragement, Mr. Michael Fassiotto for enabling me to find a letter quality printer at Chaminade, and helping with computer problems, and Ms. Jannette Crane for her help in setting up the maps that appear in the appendix.

My dissertation committee without protest read over 550 pages of dissertation in the middle of a busy semester, and offered many helpful suggestions from which I have profited. I wish to thank Professors James T. Araki, Gerald Mathias, Dixon Morris and Bruce
Stillians for their interest and frequent assistance.

In addition, I especially want to thank Professor Valdo H. Viglielmo, who wrote his own dissertation on Soseki thirty years ago, for his unflagging interest, helpfulness and occasional insistence without which I would never have finished. He generously offered the resources of his private library of Soseki materials to me. When checking the translation, Professor Viglielmo often kept his eyes on the Japanese text while his wife or daughter read aloud from my English version, so my debt of gratitude to Professor Viglielmo should, I think, be properly apportioned among the members of his family. Judicious criticism, discriminating praise, and a courteous tolerance of occasional wrong-headedness were unfailingly available from Professor Viglielmo.

Finally, I should thank the many friends and associates who over the years of my labors excused me for a certain conversational monotony if I talked too much of my teaching and my studies. I hadn't much time for anything else.
ABSTRACT

Four-fifths of this thesis consists of an exact translation of Natsume Soseki's novel, *Higan sugi made* (Until After the Spring Equinox). The other fifth, consisting of about one hundred pages, is a critical analysis of the novel. I demonstrate that Soseki, at this critical juncture of his life and career, altered his stylistic aims and methods in order to depict a more somber and agonized view of human life than that seen in the early novels. The esthetic basis for the new mode of narration is found in his enthusiasm at the time of writing for William James's lectures on *The Pluralistic Universe*, particularly those sections which discuss Henri Bergson's *élan vital*. The structure of interrelated short stories, the fluid and changing characterizations, the deliberate irrelevancies are experiments justified by his reliance on James's ideas. Keitaro's importance, largely ignored hitherto, is stressed; his development and his study of the human condition make him the author's substitute and representative. The influence on structure of Robert Louis Stevenson's *The New Arabian Nights* is also examined. The novel is treated as the necessary experiment, partly successful in itself, without which works such as *Kokoro* and *Kojin* could not have been written.
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The Place of Natsume Sōseki in Japanese Literature

Among Japanese writers of the modern period, from the mid-nineteenth century to the present, none ranks higher in Japanese critical esteem than Natsume Sōseki. Westerners may be somewhat awed to note that the picture of the Meiji statesman responsible for the annexation of Korea, one Itō Hirobumi, has recently been removed from the thousand-yen bill and replaced by that of Japan's favorite novelist. The substitution may be indicative not only of a long-standing Japanese reverence for the arts, but of a desire to make clear the vigor and worth of Japanese literature for all the world to see.

In 1983, according to the Yomiuri Shimbun of January 9, 1983, the Japanese Ministry of Education asked a committee of ten highly regarded literary critics, including Nakamura Mitsuo, Yamamoto Kenkichi,
Toyama Shigehiko and Takenishi Hiroko among others, to select the most esteemed writers from the Meiji Period (1868-1912) to the present day, special emphasis on the first half of the twentieth century. The statistical summary of their votes is revealing:

Natsume Sōseki . 38
Tanizaki Junichirō 26
Tokuda Shūsei 25
Nagai Kafū 24
Shiga Naoya 23
Kawabata Yasunari 23
Shimazaki Tōson 20
Mori Ōgai 18
Kodō Rohan 17
Izumi Kyōka 15

The vote for Sōseki is a comfortable twelve points above the next most esteemed author, Tanizaki Junichirō, and fifteen points above the Nobel prize-winner, Kawabata Yasunari. A third author much admired in the West, Mishima Yukio, is not even included in the list. Such a quantification of worth is, of course, a rough and dogmatic mode of evaluating authors, but it is convincing evidence of the fact that Japanese assessments of their authors are often at variance with the opinions of Western readers (relying, presumably, on the availability of suitable translations), as well as of the high place commonly assigned to Sōseki by the Japanese reading public. Further evidence of the value ascribed to his works is
seen in the fact that the publishers of a whole series of modern Japanese works give his novels special weight by allotting two volumes to each rather than the usual one assigned to other writers.

This imposing balance on the very pinnacle of reputation is a relatively recent placement for Soseki. Nakamura Mitsuo indicates that, during his lifetime, and throughout the Meiji and Taishō eras, his worth was less highly regarded by the literary figures of the day. Only after the beginning of the Shōwa Period in 1926, according to Nakamura's estimate, did critics begin to praise him somewhat as they do today; before that time his works were generally thought of rather casually as good popular novels depending heavily on the naturalist movement and Shishōsetsu, the major literary influences of his time. The fact is, however, that Sōseki had relatively little to do with the Japanese literary movements in vogue during his lifetime. Perhaps it is for this reason that derogatory criticism labeled him a mere "amateur." He had been a university teacher up to the age of forty, and approached his creative work with a profound knowledge of both Chinese and western literature, in addition to a thorough grounding in traditional Japanese forms. It is this ability to draw
on many different traditions, integrating them completely and effectively into his own method that gives him his unique power of expression in novel after novel. With his great knowledge of European and Chinese culture, as well as his understanding of the resources of the Japanese tradition, he was well ahead of his time in his experimentalism and in the goals he set for himself. Like most great writers, he never ceased trying to improve upon, amplify and develop techniques which had already proved their worth. He was inescapably a product of his time, and keenly aware of current problems, artistic and political. He understood the literary movements of his day, but, with his broader perspective, he could not be restricted and hedged in by naturalist theorizing. His analysis of the constricted world of the late Meiji and the Taishō Periods, as expressed by his protagonists, transcends that time, giving him a permanence and relevance for any age, and especially for our own. As with most great authors, he was "not of an age, but for all time."

Fukae Hiroshi has compared the two contemporaries, Sōseki and Ozaki Kōyō. These authors were born in the same year, 1867, and yet the two seem to have lived generations apart. To many Japanese readers,
Kōyō was closer to the spirit of Edo and Sōseki to the contemporary world.

Sōseki's writing survives in many forms: novels, diaries, essays, commentaries, research papers, and correspondence. Most of his works have been studied many times over by scholars in Japan, and Sōseki's bibliographer, Kumasaka Atsuko, has difficulties in compiling her huge biennial listing of works on Sōseki in the scholarly journal, Kokubungaku. As a result of his interest in English and Chinese literature and his proficiency in the languages involved, his work is a treasure trove for the student of comparative literature. It is somewhat ironic, therefore, that he is not as well-known outside Japan as some other writers perhaps less fully involved in the techniques of western literature, such as Kawabata or Tanizaki.

In addition to his quantitative tables proving Sōseki's pre-eminence with the critics, Nakamura Mitsuo gives more subjective data from his own experience concerning a pond at Tokyo University, made famous in Sōseki's novel, Sanshirō:

The present Tokyo University used to be the old Edo mansion of the family of Maeda, the richest daimyō of the time. The pond was part of the garden in the Maeda estate, and must have had a name. But no one knows the original name, and now everyone refers to it after the name of Sōseki's student hero, Sanshirō, who frequented its borders. When I was attending Tokyo University in the early Shōwa years, the name of Sanshirō Pond was not commonly used. It was around the
start of World War II that the name became firmly established. This fact is indicative of the process by which Sōseki's reputation began to rise and establish itself in the hearts of Japan's young intellectuals.

Except for Wagakai wa Neko de aru (I am a Cat), and Botchan, Sōseki's novels are not primarily aimed at the popular audience. They tend to be understated, subtle in their effects, and directed at the discriminating reader. Sanshirō, clearly, is such a work. If one seeks novels with many vicissitudes and the stimulating depiction of extraordinary events, one is bound to be frustrated by the quiet suggestiveness of Sanshirō. Yet this portrait of a youth, painted by Sōseki in the most delicate colors, has succeeded over the years in evoking the sympathetic understanding of young readers, themselves, perhaps, students and habitués of the pond named for the hero of the novel. They saw the truth of the novel because it touched their own lives. Surely this is one test of fictional success. There is no more severe a critic of the arts than the university intellectual passing judgment with his classmates. And this discriminating arbiter has certified the genuineness and reality of the fiction. This is the sort of affectionate tribute one comes to expect of Sōseki's many admirers.
Major works preceding *Higan Sugi Made*

Sōseki's literary career is commonly divided into three periods: early, middle and late. His first major work, published from January, 1905 to September, 1906, when he was in his late thirties, and teaching at Tokyo University, was *Wagakai wa neko de aru* (I am a Cat). It is a brilliant satirical novel aimed at the people and society of his time as seen through the eyes of a house cat. It was a deliberate and striking departure from the naturalism in vogue with Japanese authors of the time. Its special style is the result of an odd combination of elements from the sharply perceived world of the haiku poets and the humor of English satirists of the eighteenth century, such as Jonathan Swift and Laurence Sterne.

Throughout most of his early period, Sōseki had a difficult time of it, both financially and emotionally. He described this part of his life ten years later in his only autobiographical novel, *Michikusa* (Grass by the Wayside, 1915).

*Neko* was at once a great success, and established Sōseki as a writer to be reckoned with. While writing it, he had also composed a series of seven smaller pieces, fantasies which he wrote in part to keep harsh reality at a distance. 1906 was a very productive
year: he produced *Botchan* in April, and in September, *Kusamakura (The Three-cornered World)*. This last work is often regarded as a repository of all the poetic escapist elements which go to make up his fantasies. Relying on the sensory acuteness of the *haiku* poets, he sought out artistic perfection by means of painstaking observation and perceptiveness. The dirt of the naturalists he avoided. He himself remarked at this time, "On the one hand, I associate myself with the world of cool *haiku* literature; but, on the other, I would like to convey in literature the passionate intensity of the patriotic samurai of the Meiji Restoration."

This preoccupation with passionate intensity as a way toward a moral ideal is expressed in all the novels of 1906 and 1907 (*Botchan, Niyaku Tōka, Nowaki*). Especially in *Botchan* he exemplified his interest in passionate intensity in pursuit of a moral order. Here he exposed the barren ugliness of stupidity and hypocrisy in society, all the while retaining the saving sense of the comic absurdity involved in the pretensions of the stupid and hypocritical. It was a hard balance to maintain. At the end of the novel, his hero disappointed readers by suddenly ending his all-out campaign against hypocrisy and returning to Tokyo. But the novel is still
deservedly popular with Japanese readers and, in English translation, with Westerners because of its vigorous delineation of youthful idealism.

A man who began serious writing at the age of thirty-eight had no time for a literary apprenticeship. From his first publication on, he was a thoroughly confident, mature writer with enormous reserves of talent. He was recognized as such within two years of his first publication by the editor of the Tokyo Asahi Shimbun, Ikebe Sanzan, who invited him to write for his newspaper. At that time Sōseki was teaching an awe-inspiring twenty hours a week; an extremely conscientious teacher, he nevertheless detested the work involved in preparing his courses and wanted only to be free to do justice to his writing. It is not surprising, therefore, that he decided to accept the newspaper assignment and give up his academic career. He was forty years old. Readers have constantly noted that Sōseki's early works, produced at about this time (c1906-1907) have about them the fresh, spirited quality of the youthful amateur, along with the settled wisdom and certitude of the mature master. Sōseki himself later regretted that he had had to bid farewell to that sparkling liveliness and spontaneity when he submitted to the routine of the professional.
His newspaper job required that he write one full-length novel (plus some smaller pieces) a year, an ambitious, even formidable, program for any author. The pay was two hundred yen a month, at that time a substantial income. He took his newspaper work quite seriously and during the years of his association with the Asahi (1907-1916), he wrote ten major novels in addition to numerous shorter pieces. These constitute the work of his middle period.

The first of these was Gubijinso (The Poppy). To please his newspaper readers, Sōseki made his narrative as contemporaneous as possible, locating its main action at the scene of the Tokyo World's Fair of 1907, which had just closed a few days prior to publication of the first installment. Obviously the setting would have been recognizable and familiar to the large number of readers who had attended the Fair. Apart from that concession to popular taste, however, Gubijinso was not easy for most Japanese readers. The heroine, Fujio, a fashionable, independent young lady, may have been the sort of person female readers dreamed of being, without, however, furnishing a recognizable pattern of Japanese feminine behavior. This is a continuing problem with Sōseki: his heroines are often so independent, so thoroughly the equals of their male counterparts, that they may appear less
Japanese than Western in behavior and manner of speech. More difficult for the Japanese reader would be the fact that in *Gubijinsō* Sōseki has embarked on a novel of ideas, dependent for its effect on careful balancing of conceptualized characters against each other. Structural balance and rhetorical elegance contribute to an initial impression of artificiality.

The difficulty may well be, as Yamauchi Hisaaki has pointed out in his article on "Sōseki and English Literature," that the Japanese writer has in this instance been following a somewhat intractable English model, George Meredith's *The Egoist*, a comic novel of ideas constructed with elaborate patterning and balancing of characters to which present-day English and American readers more often than not fail to respond. So Henry James rather harshly says of Meredith's work, "Not a figure presented, not a scene constituted—not a dim shadow condensing once into audible or visible reality—making you hear for an instant the tap of its feet on the earth."

Almost the same idea is conveyed in Masamune Hakuchō's words describing Fujio, the heroine of *Gubijinsō*: "She wears beautiful kimono, but she has no real body." Soseki himself acknowledged that it was his least-favored work. Experiments sometimes fail, to be sure; yet we need to see *Gubijinsō* as a significant
step away from fantasy-satire in Sōseki's development. With his setting, he moves into the world of actuality in deference, perhaps, to the tastes of his newspaper-readers. His next work, Köfu (The Miner, 1908) has neither kimono nor body. It is all mind and emotion. Reality has turned inward, to its psychological source-springs. And, in experimental fashion, Sōseki has staked out the territory of his greatest novels. The reasons for the great gap between Gubijinso and Köfu need to be explored. For the present, however, it will suffice to say that the experience on which the later novel was based was told to Sōseki by the young man to whom it had happened. Sōseki recorded the incident in a lengthy note, and the events of the novel coincide with that summary even in matters of considerable detail. In his preface to Gubijinso, Sōseki had said that, "fiction is carved out and polished from the raw material of nature," and he added, "Untreated nature by itself cannot be the stuff of fiction." By the time he had finished Köfu, however, he had changed his mind:

I am writing unsorted facts, as they occurred. Since these are not carved and polished, as customary in fiction, the result is not as exciting as a novel. But it is much more mysterious than fiction. All the natural events
are arranged in order by Fate, and hence are much more digressive and lacking in apparent purpose than is the case with fiction, which is crafted by the human mind." 16

This change in attitude might suggest, as some critics assert, that he had after all succumbed to the influence of naturalism. But, as I shall try to explain later on, it seems to me that we have here a logical development of his creative tendencies rather than a sudden shift in compliance to a popular literary doctrine.

Three other works normally included in Sōseki's middle period are Sanshirō (1908), Sorekara (And Then, 1909), and Mon (The Gate, 1910).

In his advance notice on Sanshirō in the Asahi, Sōseki wrote:

After graduating from a high school in the country, Sanshirō entered the University in Tokyo. Because he is now exposed for the first time to a new world, with new classmates, senior students and young ladies, he becomes involved in a variety of situations and activities. All I have to do is to release these characters into this new world.18

The novel depicts the life of a happy, lively young man who grew up in a well-to-do family during the late Meiji Period. Unlike Gubijunsō, there is no
careful symmetry of plot, or elaborate contrasting of characters typifying different attitudes and ideas. The author's view is carefully objective as he delicately explores the psychological conflicts of Sanshirō and Mineko, the hero and heroine of the novel. A number of Japanese literary critics have decided that the young lady is, without intending to be, a "hypocrite," even though the pretense to be what one is not that is involved in hypocrisy is usually thought to be deliberate and conscious. Whatever the analysis, however, all would agree that with Sanshirō Sōseki begins the painstaking analysis of feminine emotions that is a prominent feature of such later works as Higan sugi made, Kōjin, Michikusa and Meian. The study of female psychology is also a prominent aspect of Mon (The Gate), a middle period novel dealing with a love triangle, and is evident also in Sorekara (And Then), a dark and gloomy picture of late Meiji society following the Russo-Japanese War that is in sharp contrast to the high-spirited youthfulness of Sanshirō. Daisuke, the protagonist, gives up all claim to social status, and becomes the first of Sōseki's kōtō yūmin or high-class vagabonds. The apparent virtues of seriousness and sincerity are old-fashioned and dangerous in this society, resulting not in an intended good, but in unintended mischief.
To trust in them is to be guilty of unconscious hypocrisy. So Daisuke yields Michiyo, whom he sincerely loves, to his friend, Hiraoka, under the impression that friendship requires the sacrifice. But thereafter he watches as Hiraoka's love fades, and then has to struggle to rescue her. He has, in other words, committed the moral crime of unconscious hypocrisy in the name of friendship, and now has to expiate his sin. In saving Michiyo, Daisuke is, in the world's view, engaging in adultery. Sōseki, through Daisuke, broods over the question of right and wrong in this situation, tending, of course, to find all values the reverse of the labels society has attached to them.

Sōseki's thought has travelled from the conventionally Oriental and somewhat feudalistic conception to one that is, for better or worse, recognizably modern and individualized. Morality becomes something that one achieves painfully by one's own actions and thoughts as applied to particular situations. Daisuke turns his back on time-honored but empty moral codes and lives true to his nature with Michiko. As a result, he loses all the privileges of his social status; his tie with his family is severed, ending a comfortable way of life for him. He now has to support himself and Michiyo with the work of his
own hands, and stand up to the world that has condemned his behavior.

The trials that such a couple would face make up the subject of Mon. The protagonist, Sōsuke, like Daisuke, has stolen away with the wife of his friend. He and O-yone live modestly, but, as he sees it, honorably. Sōseki pursues the question of how they would fare in such a situation, acting in steady defiance of the conventional moral dicta of society. The theme of the book concerns their struggle to maintain self-respect in the face of society's condemnation. Sōsuke tries meditation in a Zen temple without clear results, and the story ends inconclusively, becoming almost as gloomy toward the end as many of the naturalist works that Sōseki disparaged.

3

Higan sugi made: its Production and Reception

From the beginning of his career, Sōseki had suffered from chronic stomach trouble. While he was writing Mon (The Gate) in 1910, he suffered an attack of ulcers, for which he was hospitalized. In August of that year, he went to the Shuzenji Hot Spring to recuperate, but had a relapse so serious that family and friends were notified to expect his death. But he
gradually recovered, and was transferred to a Tokyo hospital. While there, he wrote an essay about his brush with death, "Omoidasu koto nado" ("Random Thoughts," 1911).

Komiya Toyotaka and other critics regard this great illness (taikan) as the reason for the change in Sōseki's later works, which are, all agree, far more concerned with psychological drama, much more intense, and, finally, more pessimistic, than his earlier novels. Sōseki coined the phrase Sokuten kyozen when characterizing his later years. It is a Chinese phrase, meaning literally, "Modeling oneself on heaven and escaping from self." Komiya thought the phrase indicative of the ultimate enlightenment, or satori, achieved by Sōseki after his illness. Others, including Natsume Shinroku (Sōseki's son), Etō Jun and Masamune Hakuchō, did not agree. The son saw the change as "an inevitable, natural development," and Etō argued that "To wrap up Sōseki's whole work with this one term is ridiculous, even though this magical phrase has indeed bewitched many able scholars to write books about it."

Hakuchō points out that the notion of the author's enlightenment ill accords with a view of life that became progressively darker and more skeptical in the later novels.
Another event affecting his later years was the death of Sōseki's fifth daughter, Hinako. The circumstances of this sudden and mysterious death are recorded in detail in his diary, an account later transferred with little adjustment to the fourth chapter of Higan sugi made, entitled, "A Rainy Day." The impact of this event on him is suggested by his diary comment that he felt as though both his stomach and his spirit had been broken.

For one-and-a-half years after writing Mon, he rested. Not till almost the beginning of 1912 did Sōseki resume the novelist's trade. On December 15, 1911, he writes in his diary,

Though I had decided to start writing a novel today, I have done nothing so far. In others' eyes, I must seem a lazy man, since I have done nothing all day. From my own point of view, I worried so much about its design, etc. that I could not do anything else.27

His prefatory essay sufficiently indicates the experimental nature of the new work. Higan sugi made is to be made up of "several short stories [combined] in such a way that together they form a long novel." The six short stories are held together by Keitarō, the university graduate, who, in the process

18
of observing the various events, progresses from the attitude of a naive romanticist to that of trusted and mature confidant. He is not the hero in the conventional sense, but is more like the waki in a Noh play who observes and listens. By listening, he serves as a catalyst, helping the various speakers to realize themselves.

The work does not lend itself to facile interpretation and so has been most commonly dismissed as the least important of Sōseki's novels, or else, less frequently, pulverized with great industry and ingenuity by critics determined to bend it to their will. When it first came out in daily installments in the Asahi, it occasioned little comment or interest. The earliest critical comment was made in 1917, the year after Sōseki's death, by Akagi Gyōkei, who said that the work was devoid of any significant artistic value except for three episodes, "Sunaga's Story," "Matsumoto's Story," and "A Rainy Day." The first two of these he praises for their psychological profundity, but, in common with most of Sōseki's contemporaries, he fails to see any unifying theme or conception in the novel.

Komiya Toyotaka was the most important critic during the pre-World War II years of Sōseki study. In
1936, he wondered in print why it was that, if Keitarō were merely the thread on which six stories had been strung, Sōseki should have emphasized him so much in the action of the first half of the novel. For the first time, too, he raised the interesting question of why an author who, by the evidence of his earlier works, despised detective fiction, should have utilized the arts of spying, detection and surveillance so extensively in this particular novel. His not completely satisfying answer was that Sōseki was trying to appeal to the daily newspaper readers by injecting the suspense and anticipation of detective fiction into his work, with Keitarō, of course, as the quixotic detective. If this was the intent, it seems not to have succeeded very well [pp.203-204]. Furthermore, Komiya observes that Keitarō's assignment is not quite that of a real detective: while he spies and eavesdrops, he does so not to expose criminal behavior, but simply to observe and report to his employer as to what he has seen. He had, for that matter, been given clearcut time limits to his act of surveillance: he was to have stopped at 5 p.m. That he did not shows that he himself could not be sure what precisely it was that he was to detect; it is his curiosity, his romantic zeal in pursuit of the mysterious unknown that Sōseki stresses. But Komiya
makes further, more important, distinctions. Sōseki's conception of the detective has changed significantly from his earlier attitude. Perhaps this is so because the analyst of human nature perceives that, in his constant probing of the mystery of the human personality, he is himself a subtle detective of motive, hope, frustration and despair. It is in *Higan sugi made* that Sōseki, like Dostoevski before him, looks deep into the human soul to see vice aborning in the modest and natural impulses common to all. Komiya sees this change in the author's attitude as related to the grave illness (*taikan*) that Sōseki had recently experienced. Having passed through the threshold of life-and-death, Sōseki plumbed the depths of his own nature to observe the vices there ready for the hatching; and he may have looked on these, not with the self-indulgent eyes of the criminal, but with the sternly analytic gaze of the law-enforcer. It is precisely in this way that Sunaga examines himself. Komiya sees *Higan sugi made* as essentially the history of Sunaga's frustrated love for Chiyoko [p. 208]. In a 1971 follow-up comment, Komiya stressed his opinion that the novel would have been far more tightly organized had Sōseki selected details related specifically to Sunaga's story, omitting much else as essentially irrelevant to structure and theme.
In a 1937 article in Bungaku, "Higan sugi made no igi," Kataoka Yoshikazu makes the point that in this novel for the first time Sōseki uses certain characters to typify attitudes toward the society of his time. In the first trilogy, to be sure, the various personalities created exist as part of a social world, but their relation to it is casual and to a considerable extent taken for granted. In Kataoka's words:

In the society depicted thus far, even the sinners, such as Sōsuke and Oyone in Mon, were at least able to love and depend on each other, and to continue living their modest, lonely lives together. But in the ego-oriented world of Sunaga, he and Chiyoko have no hope of being united. 34

Kataoka goes on to say that Sōseki depicts Sunaga as representative of the disorientation of many intelligent people in the constricted society of the Meiji 40's, and that many of his own feelings are reflected in the strongly individualized portrait of Sunaga, whereas Morimoto and Keitarō are treated rather superficially, without any special relevance to the dominant intellectual and emotional currents of
the time.

This conception of effective characterization as an aspect of social symbolism is challenged in 1943 by Takizawa Katsumi in his work, Natsume Sōseki, who asserts that Sunaga's suffering is not properly related to the stresses on Japanese society resulting from rapid modernization. He is not a bourgeois unable to wake up from the idle sleep of feudalism; he is simply unhappy because he lacks the strength to reason his way to ultimate truth, yet cannot depend entirely on someone else's reasoning.

Ara Masahito centers attention on the felicitous use of the cane as a structural device. He cautions against hastily judging Higan sugi made and, granting that it is one of the most puzzling and difficult of Soseki's works, does not regard it as a failure.

The view that "Sunaga's Story" and "Matsumoto's Story" are the core of the novel seems to have become established, and Yoshida Seiichi, in his 1961 comment on Higan develops the thesis that the analysis of spiritual aloneness in these two stories forms the key motif that runs through the trilogy of Higan sugi made, Kōjin, and Kokoro. Despite this conclusion, however, he finds Higan poorly unified.
Western Scholars on *Higan sugi made*

Discussion in English or in any Western language of *Higan sugi made* has not been extensive, probably at least in part because there has been no translation in English to which a critic might refer. The fact remains, however, that the non-translation of the novel is in itself a tacit value-judgment as to its merit and importance. Valdo H. Viglielmo wrote in 1964 an article published in *Monumenta Nipponica* entitled "An Introduction to the Later Novels of Natsume Sōseki," which the editors describe as "the first time that *Higan sugi made* has been treated in detail by any Western literary critic." Not much in English has been added since, and Viglielmo's article remains the essential starting point for the study of the novel. He considers Keitarō's fascination with the investigative activity of the detective, and sees it as a kind of metaphor for a drastic "change in his [Sōseki's] artistic outlook." By this time, the author's seriousness had reached such a point that an incident which he would have treated satirically, or humorously, or both, ten years earlier, was by then considered too significant for such light treatment. He could not see man as he really is and laugh at him or caricature him. He could only indict him and in so
doing have great compassion for him.

His protagonist, Keitarō, begins, therefore, to spy on the actions of Matsumoto and Chiyoko only to find that he has been the victim of a practical joke, and his observations, superficial and wrong-headed as they are, are totally useless. Hence

it is not the first half of Higan sugi made that is the true detective story, but the latter. For if Sōseki makes Keitarō engage in investigation of Matsumoto and Chiyoko which is part of a practical joke, his own activity in investigating Sunaga...is definitely not....

Having made this important point, the Viglielmo analysis discusses the realism and the superb restraint of "The Rainy Day" sequence dealing with the death of a small child and based on the death of Sōseki's own daughter. It then goes on with a lengthy discussion of Sōseki's psychological analysis of Sunaga, finding in this the storm center of the novel.

While this analysis of Higan sugi made forms part of a larger discussion of the significance of Sōseki's later works, it contributes to an enlarged understanding of this particular novel in a number of ways. In his consideration of the detective motif,
Viglielmo makes clear the contrast between vulgar clue-hunting and surveillance in the first part of the novel, and the discriminating detection of the subtlest psychological and spiritual states in the second. Both are modes of detection, but the deliberate contrast established in the course of the narrative is certainly meaningful. Viglielmo sees the meaning in the contrast between Keitarō's romanticized way of seeing the world and Sōseki's more spiritual demand, emergent through his examination of Sunaga's inner torment. He sees here for the first time the psychological intensity evident in the later masterpieces, along with some of the later techniques (such as long letters, and lengthy analytical dialogues with a minimum of action).

None of these, and, indeed, not one specific reference to Higan sugi made, is included in Edwin McClellan's book, Two Japanese Novelists: Sōseki and Tōson (1969). Beongcheon Yu in his Natsume Sōseki (Twayne World Authors Series), published in the same year, is more complete in his reading, and discusses Sōseki's total production. He comments on our author's interest in the possibility of structural experiment" as indicated in the preface to Higan sugi made. He picks up the suggestion in the text of the novel that "the narrative structure of the novel
[probably] was inspired by R.L. Stevenson's *New Arabian Nights,* but soon drops the matter, noting that "they are as different as two works can be."  

Tagawa Keitarō, he observes, is, like Stevenson's Prince Florizel, the person who appears in all the episodes; but he is a mere university graduate seeking a job rather than an all-knowing *deus ex machina* capable almost at will of bringing the plot to a satisfactory close. Held together by Keitarō's interest in events,

the novel is a series of six episodes loosely strung together; consequently, its center of interest blurs. Although we vainly wait for Tagawa's involvement, the author does not want it. The result is that while the novel develops from the physical into the psychological sphere, there is little appreciable change on the part of Tagawa....The most probable reason [that the novel is an artistic failure]...is that...Sōseki by chance struck a supposedly central situation far richer than he could foresee; but it was a bit too late when Sōseki found himself drawn irresistibly to his character Sunaga, and his complicated relationship with Chiyoko....Indeed, it is "Sunaga's Story" that dominates the entire novel, so much so that one may suggest that it is the only story Sōseki really cared to write, the rest being simply to build up a sense of suspense around it. The result is that the novel falls apart, dividing our attention between two characters, Tagawa and Sunaga....It is Sunaga who commands our attention; it is his predicament that saves the novel from being a complete failure.45

One quotes, of course in a scholarly paper either to buttress a frail insistence or to demolish one
still frailer. In this instance my motive is divided:
I respect the author's sensitive response to key
situations in the novel, without, however, agreeing
with him as to the reasons for them, a stance which
subsequent discussion will substantiate and justify.

William James's Pluralism and Bergson's Elan Vital
The conclusion of the Viglielmo article may be
cited as a useful coda to this survey of historical
criticism of our novel:

Higan sugi made, then, is a milestone in both
Natsume Sōseki's art and thought. Whatever flaws
this novel possesses—and certainly its loose, and
most unnovel-like, construction can be considered a
great one—it represents a tremendous deepening, in
his art, of his psychological perception, and a
turning in his thought, to the purely religious
problem of man and his relation to the Absolute. 46

The structure of Higan sugi made has been a source
of critical distress ever since it was first
published. There are, however, three considerations
which I think go far to explain that structure. The
first and probably the most important of these is the
philosophical justification for structural
multiplicity provided by William James's book, The
Pluralistic Universe, which, from his notebooks and diary, we know that Sōseki had been studying and admiring before and during the time of writing the novel.

A second factor of significance in determining the organization of the novel is one that Sōseki pointedly calls our attention to in the first chapter of Higan sugi made when he has Keitarō's teacher of English at higher school praise the mysterious atmosphere of Robert Louis Stevenson's The New Arabian Nights. In a novel concerning clues and detection, one hesitates a little over the labored obviousness of this clue: could it be, perhaps, a red herring, planted in amusement across the path of future interpreters? The third major element in dealing with the structure of this novel is the role played in it by Keitarō. Let us discuss these.

Viglielmo has perceptively remarked, "If we seek for a definition of his [Sōseki's] philosophy apart from the novels, we seek for the non-existent." A work of literature exists for the experience it creates and conveys. The great novel or poem assimilates philosophic principle into the stuff of life, from the contemplation of which, to be sure, the reader may ultimately draw forth philosophic conclusions, just as the viewer of a great painting
may, by contemplating lines, colors, and interrelationships, find philosophic truth in a work of art. But the work of art is not for philosophy, but for art: it is not a can of sardines to be opened, the meaning extracted, and the rest to be thrown away. It is a totality, and, if it is to succeed as art, it must be assessed in terms of its total impact. Herein is the problem of Higan sugi made: critics have been so anxious to find good work in their esteemed author that they have compromised and said, "Sunaga's Story is fine, but Keitarō's experiences are largely superfluous." This, for example, is essentially the position of Beongcheon Yu. It is, of course, possible that Sōseki may have been sick or tired or careless in writing the novel, and, if so, we have no alternative but to ascribe its imperfections to his shaky hand. Everything indicates, however, that Sōseki was a remarkably painstaking writer who worked out his intentions carefully in advance. This being the case, we must in fairness to the intellect and capability of the author assume that he knew what he was about in organizing his novel as he did. I do not mean to insist that he was infallible: the work was admittedly experimental. But he had good reason to hope that the experiment would be a success, and that the stories would interrelate with each other to achieve
continually enlarged perspectives. A major help in understanding Sōseki's fictional experiment is to be found in his great interest at the time of writing it in the philosophy of William James.

James, following Bergson and anticipating the existentialists, argues forcefully against conceptualization as a mode of apprehending reality. The concept, he makes clear, is the logician's short-cut by means of which he is able to organize and unify his world. To achieve the effectiveness of concepts, he must ignore the uniqueness of each sensory experience:

What makes you call real life confusion is that it presents, as if they were dissolved in one another, a lot of differents which conception breaks life's flow by keeping apart. But are not differents actually dissolved in one another? Hasn't every bit of experience its quality, its duration, its extension, its intensity, its urgency, its clearness, and many aspects besides, no one of which can exist in the isolation in which our verbalized logic keeps it? They exist only durcheinander. Reality always is, in M. Bergson's phrase, an endosmosis or conflux of the same with the different: they compenetrare and telescope. For conceptual logic, the same is nothing but the same, and all sames, with a third thing are the same with each other. Not so in concrete experience. Two spots on our skin, each of which feels the same as a third spot when touched along with it, are felt as different from each other. Two tones, neither distinguishable from a third tone, are perfectly distinct from each other. The whole process of life is due to life's violation of our logical axioms. 49
James's (and Bergson's) empiricist thought is pluralistic, relativistic, and based on sensory perception. One can see the attraction such a concept of reality would have for a creative writer: it would suggest that he be free to present the confusions of real life, intending all the while to stress the hidden, non-logical interrelationships that must exist in things or beings juxtaposed with each other in spatial or temporal association. Let us take one more illustration from The Pluralistic Universe, and apply it directly to Higan sugi made. Here is James's discussion of continuity, or order-within-diversity:

Real life laughs at logic's veto. Imagine a heavy log which takes two men to carry it. First A and B take it. Then C takes hold and A drops off; then D takes hold and B drops off, so that C and D now bear it; and so on. The log meanwhile never drops, and keeps its sameness throughout the journey. Even so it is with all our experiences. Their changes are not complete annihilations followed by complete creations of something absolutely novel. There is partial decay and partial growth, and all the while a nucleus of relative constancy from which what decays drops off, and which takes into itself whatever is grafted on, until at length something wholly different has taken its place. In such a process we are...sure...that it is the same nucleus which is able now to make connexion with what goes and again with what comes.... Without being one throughout, such a universe is continuous. Its members interdigitate with their next neighbors in manifold directions.... 50
Keitarō and Morimoto first pick up the heavy log of thematic significance in Higan sugi made. Perhaps one should stress that, weighty as may be the significance, the log itself is not terribly heavy, and has, in fact, shrunk to the dimensions of a cane in Sōseki's treatment. Morimoto disappears from the story, but his influence on Keitarō lingers on in the form of romantic yearnings for adventure. These callow desires motivate his behavior in his dealings with Taguchi, and the unknown man and woman who turn out to be Matsumoto and Chiyoko. The "partial decay" of childish romanticism in Keitarō's makeup, along with the "partial growth" into Taguchi's world of maturity is, of course, strongly marked in the novel by Keitarō's rejection of the whole principle of wrestling knowledge from unwilling donors, as the detective does, in favor of mutual exchange based on understanding and fellow-feeling. Once he has grown into this awareness, he is no longer a bumptious, somewhat ridiculous spy, but a person of gradually increasing wisdom and understanding in whom people of the stature of Sunaga, Chiyoko and Matsumoto are eager to confide. Beongcheon Yu maintains that "we vainly wait for Tagawa's involvement, [and]...there is little appreciable change on the part of Tagawa." But
Keitaro's involvement is clearly indicated by the many confidences that are entrusted to his hearing. His function, however, has changed greatly. He is no longer a curious seeker uncertain of his own identity, and so no longer the protagonist of the novel; he is the observer, the one who listens on behalf of the reader, as well, of course, as on behalf of the person confiding in him. Had he received more careful treatment toward the end of the novel, perhaps much of the negative criticism concerning its structure might have been silenced. Sōseki's conclusion, however, in this particular instance is huddled and almost careless in an expository summary that stops without concluding.

That James's empiricist log should be transformed into Morimoto's magical cane is not entirely a whimsy of convenient association. Jirō in Köjin decorates his room with a kakemono showing an ink-drawing of a stick, above which is inscribed, "The stick doesn't move of itself; touched, however, it moves." Jirō's father, more habituated to Zen riddles than Westerners might be, asks, "Now what do you suppose the stick means?" As so often with such conundrums, the precise answer must be left in doubt, but the fact remains that the stick does have some esoteric significance.
It hints at something indefinable, either as a consequence of its aesthetic rendering or, more philosophically, asserting by virtue of its apparent inconsequentiality, the magnificence of the whole universe from its own lowly simplicity. The cane, in consequence of the romantic associationalism attributed to it by Keitarō, is midway between James's log and Jirō's Zen symbol. Sōseki is no mere borrower; he assimilates, integrates, and transforms his acquisitions so that they conform to an Oriental perspective peculiarly his own.

In any case, we have seen the log of import carried by different people all the way through the novel. Its meaning is their meaning, and it varies as the characters vary and interrelate. It is tempting, certainly, to reach through the confusion of life's flow for a solid conceptualization, and say in the Tolstoyan phrase that these characters seek to know what men live by. And they seek without preconceptions, evaluating multi-faceted experience as best they are able. One more quotation from James may help crystallize our concept for us:

So it is with every concrete thing, however complicated. Our intellectual handling of it is a retrospective patchwork, a post-mortem dissection, and
can follow any order we find most expedient. But place yourself at the point of view of the thing's interior doing, and all these back-looking and conflicting conceptions lie harmoniously in your hand. Get at the expanding centre of a human character, the elan vital of a man, as Bergson calls it, by living sympathy, and at a stroke you see how it makes those who see it from without interpret it in such diverse ways. It is something that breaks into both honesty and dishonesty, courage and cowardice, stupidity and insight, at the touch of varying circumstances, and you feel exactly why and how it does this, and never seek to identify it stably with any of these single abstractions. Only your intellectualist does that....What really exists is not things made but things in the making. 53

This Jamesian explication of the intellectual mode of perception as contrasted with the use of "living sympathy" to comprehend "the thing's interior doing," or its elan vital, may serve to differentiate the initial attitude of Keitarō, as a would-be detective, who sees "from without," and achieves only "a retrospective patch-work, a post-mortem dissection, from the later Keitarō to whom the most complex characters in the novel confide with complete trust, secure, we must assume from the fact of their confiding, in their reliance on one who now seeks only to know, to be enlightened. From this, too, we may see that the one significant failure in this experimental novel was in leaving Keitarō in a narrative limbo, and in not making him the center of our attention so that we might absorb the impact upon
him of the involved, sad events that he observes and hears. It was a mistake Sōseki did not repeat. Henceforward the one who lives the experience is, so to speak, co-star with him who, midway between reader and tragic happening, hears of the event and so learns profoundly from it, as in Kōjin and in Kokoro.

It would be absurd, however, to insist that Soseki, conforming to the Western stereotype of the Japanese intellectual, was a convert to the philosophy of James or Bergson and immediately exemplified it in his writing. Quite the contrary. His way of thinking and theirs simply intersected in rare agreement. His interest in character and modes of characterization was given philosophical justification by James. He had, to be sure, studied James's Principles of Psychology and The Varieties of Religious Experience, and the influence of the former is to be seen in Kōfu (1908). As early as 1907, we see him theorizing as to the importance of psychology in literature:

When you read old tales such as Taketori monogatari, Taihōki, all the characters look pretty much alike. Even as recently as Saikaku, the same thing is still apparent. In short, to these authors, all human beings must have looked more or less the same. In the world of today, well-differentiated and developed as it is, the writer cannot be so vague in viewing humanity. He
should be able to analyze character down to the smallest detail, and be able to make vivid and clear the exactitude of that smallest detail... The writer who fails to use his eyes is like a color-blind artist trying to paint a picture. 54

In "Random Thoughts," the essay written concerning his illness, he indicates that he read *The Pluralistic Universe*, James's second series of lectures to a London audience, given in 1908 and published in the following year, while convalescing in the summer of 1910. Illness delayed his reading; on August 26, learning that the American philosopher had just died, Sōseki resumed his reading. [Komiya, ed., *Sōseki Zenshu*, xvii, 9-10.] Even though he was familiar with James's earlier works, the impact of *The Pluralistic Universe* was special:

I finished the last half of the book (over two hundred pages) with delight in three days....It was especially interesting to me from my vantage-point as a novelist. I don't necessarily abhor dialectic or intellectualism; but I was hugely delighted to find that what I had long felt concerning literature fits beautifully with what he was writing about his philosophy. In particular, the section in which he introduced the opinions of the French scholar, Bergson, was so marvelous that I sped through it like a rolling wagon headed downhill! 56
The thrill was one of recognition. Two years earlier, he had discussed in his notebook the relationship of the general and the particular in a way thoroughly consonant with the thinking of the American philosopher:

If you bundle together the single, isolated instances and extract the common denominator, you are able to generalize them. (science).... However, if you try to look for a particular case to fit the generalized truth, you will fail. e.g. Take the case of characterization. If you have an original conception in your mind and try to mold the character to fit the conception, you'll end up with just an empty shell. It is a particular instance of a universal truth, but it is dead. Therefore [one must] throw away the original conception. Start with a particular [scene or action]....A character is not derived from a conception....A character should be alive rather than consistent. We see many dead consistent characters....If you start forming a character on the basis of a preconception, it is likely to be dead. [Rather,] just develop the instances of what (or how) he spoke, what he did and what he thought and then, if the individual picture is alive, you will have a very vital character, even though he may be inconsistent. For an actual human being is very much an inconsistent creature! 57

Moreover, in his novel, Kôfu, written in 1908, Soseki had used words which might have fitted harmoniously into the idea-patterns of The Pluralistic Universe:

The only "neatly complete thing" any human being possesses is his body. Since his body is "neatly complete," a man may assume that his mind is
likewise neatly framed. How many of us assume that we are the same old self all the time, even though what we did and thought yesterday is exactly the opposite of what we do and think today! Moreover, when some one is required to describe his thought and conduct up to the present time as responsible behavior, why is it, I wonder, that he does not admit that he has only random memories and that his thought and conduct from one minute to the next are utterly inconsistent?

At the same time, I observe the way my scattered brain moves haphazardly around—and, analyzing myself objectively as though I were a third person, I conclude that nothing else is as completely unreliable as a human being is. 58

Kōfu, unlike the highly moralistic, heavily rhetorical Gubijinso, the novel which preceded it, is almost plotless, and demonstrates the theme, dear, perhaps, to the psychologist's heart but not to those of less professional humanists, that "the insincerity, disloyalty and changeableness of heart of others constitutes just the normal pattern of human behavior. You should not be so naive as to blame them for their way of doing." 59

This stress on the changeableness of the human heart is, of course, faintly reminiscent of Proust's astonishing and tremendously effective application of Bergsonism to characterization. James had with his usual clarity shown that the élan vital, applied to human character, "breaks into both honesty and
dishonesty, courage and cowardice, stupidity and insight, at the touch of varying circumstances." And so we may conclude that the James-Bergson way of seeing reality affected both the total organization of the episodes in *Higan sugi made* and, even more profoundly, the way of looking into major characters. Taguchi is either clown, businessman, or homespun philosopher, depending on which present instant Sōseki happens to have under his lens. The Matsumoto of the restaurant scene does not help to explain the bereaved father of the "Rainy Day" episode, nor does either of these presentations prepare us for the benevolent counselor of the last narrative sequence. Chiyoko likewise is many-faceted in her qualities. But the most fascinating because most unpredictable personality in the novel is, of course, Sunaga. Before discussing his characterization in detail, however, I should like to stress the importance of the immediate present as Sōseki's chosen mode for presenting all his characters in *Higan sugi made*. We almost break in upon these people. We see them in action or in the psychic action of conversation; we make our evaluations and estimates of them from what they do and say, but, apart from presenting them fully to us, Sōseki studiously
refrains from partisanship of any sort. He is the most non-judgmental of authors: the reader must, as any good reader should wish to do, decide for himself. But Sōseki's heroes in his later works present the reader no easy task.

Sunaga is our starting point. He is Sōseki's first detailed study of a new breed of introverted Japanese intellectual that made its appearance during the westernizing process of the Meiji and Taisho eras. The protagonists in each novel of the trilogy, Higan sugi made, Kōjin, and Kokoro, portray variations of this sort of person. All three of them, Sunaga, Ichirō, and Sensei are closely related to academia, and yet none of them has to concern himself with the necessities of earning a living. Nagai Ichirō lectures at the university, but he appears to have a very light schedule and pays little attention to his duties. Sunaga and Sensei, rather like the heroes of Henry James novels, are unimpeded in their thinking by the crass activities of day-to-day work at the office. All three condemn their fathers as insensitive philistines. All three find love, that most intense experience in human life, a devastating illusion: the gap between pure love and their own self-gratifying sexuality is too great for them to bridge, and they
move hesitantly but definitely toward the final
negation of suicide. Sunaga, the youngest, is
unmarried and expects to remain so, although in love
with Chiyoko; Jirō's brother is married, but
spiritually and intellectually far apart from his
wife; Sensei, although in love with his wife, is
remote from her in a wasteland of guilt and secrecy.
All three remind somewhat of Dostoevski's tortured
heroes, although the connection is probably distant
and perhaps non-existent, if only because Sōseki's
protagonists exemplify specifically Japanese ways of
reacting to the life's problems. Like Sōseki himself,
the three protagonists are highly sophisticated,
capable of bringing in appropriate parallels to their
situations from the writings of western authors.

Their intellectuality keeps them moving toward
what William James regarded as barren conceptualism,
and, locked into the solitary confinement of their own
thoughts, they tend to lose touch with the external
world. In both *Higan sugi made* and *Kōjin*, therefore, a
vacation excursion that brings the protagonist into
renewed contact with the specific living details of
the empiricist's "multiverse," (a word James
prefers to the more usual "universe") forms the
climactic conclusion of the novel: in the first
instance, with a promise of renewal; in the second, with no affirmation of any sort. Nevertheless, for these supersensitive individuals, isolated by the tortured subjectivity of their inward-spiralling thoughts, the most routine externals—the conversation of a servant-maid, the random events of a fishing expedition—produce abnormally strong reactions, almost as though, for them as for Antaeus, renewed contact with the earth had brought with it renewed vitality and awareness. It is worth noting that Sunaga makes his peace with Matsumoto largely as a result of his travels following graduation, which by allowing him to contemplate the many details of external reality, have freed him from the grip of his pessimism. Having said this, however, it is, of course, necessary to note that the issue remains unsettled at the close of the novel: what happens at that time consists of events that have just preceded its beginning. Keitarō, as the story opens, has just been graduated, along with Sunaga. And, at that opening, after the totality of his spiritual pilgrimage, Sunaga is as enigmatic as ever.

Sōseki agrees wholeheartedly with William James's dictum that "What really exists is not things made, but things in the making," and for this reason very little is ever finally settled in Higan.
sugi made. Keitarō at the opening of the novel is completely at sixes and sevens, looking frantically for a job. His search for a position occupies almost half the book; yet, when he finally gets a job, the whole matter is dismissed in a single sentence. We learn nothing about the work or about Keitarō's attitude toward his new position. What is settled is done and dead.

So too with the relationship of Sunaga and Chiyoko. Do they marry? We are not told, even though the whole novel has been building toward a resolution of this problem. The issue is left permanently unsettled. Matsumoto views them as "a pitiful couple who unite only to part, and part only to unite once more." The same uncertainty accompanies the fragile if affectionate attitude of Sunaga toward his mother. The stress on the permanence of change is evident in all Sōseki's later works. Perhaps it comes to us most sharply in the concluding dialogue of Kenzō with his wife concerning the unwelcome visits of his adoptive father in Michikusa (1915):

"What a relief," she said with feeling. "At least this affair is settled."
"Settled? What do you mean?"
"Well, we have his signed statement now, so
there's nothing to worry about anymore. He
won't come here again. And even if he does, all
you have to do is tell him to go away."
"But that's how it's always been...."
"But we didn't have anything in writing
before. We do now, and that makes a big
difference.
"So you're relieved, eh?"
"Certainly. It's all settled now."
"But it isn't, you know."
"Why?"
"It just seems so on the surface, that's
all. Of course, women like you who take
formalities very seriously would think
otherwise."
There was anger and skepticism in her
eyes. All right then, what else has to be done
before it really is?
"Hardly anything in this life is settled.
Things that happen once will go on
happening. But they come back in different
guises, and that's what fools us." He spoke
bitterly, almost with venom.
His wife gave no answer. She picked up
the baby and kissed its red cheeks many times.
"Nice baby, nice baby, we don't know what
Daddy is talking about, do we?" 65

When William James thinks of change, he views
it affirmatively in images of creation: "it buds and
burgeons, changes and creates!" Sōseki sees it
more often in terms of decay. The baby, which to James
would have been the main thing, to Sōseki furnishes
an ironic emphasis on the impermanence of all being
and all values: "they come back in different guises,
and that's what fools us." James, following a long
western tradition sees the enormous variety in the
"multiverse" as delightful evidence of God's plenitude; Sōseki's heroes find change frightening and corrosive of all concepts. And to give up their faith in conceptualism would be to give up pride of intellect. Sunaga, observing the servant-maid in her simplicity, almost comes to this conclusion.

One final comment on William James's log before we drop it with a thud: it is carried now by A and B, now by C and D. The same is true of the essential theme of Higan sugi made and of all Sōseki's later novels. In the words of Valdo Viglielmo,

The main character [in Botchan] dominates the novel. Without Botchan there simply would be no novel, whereas in the case of Higan sugi made and Meian, the removal of Sunaga and Tsuda would still leave a considerable portion of both novels intact. 68

Beginning with Higan sugi made, Sōseki varies the emphasis that he gives to the various characters of his novels so that from time to time we may feel uncertainty as to the identity of the protagonist. Often the characters do not interact with each other so much as pursue parallel courses. Morimoto, with the rough certainty of the uneducated adventurer, claims to have figured out how life should be lived.
With steadily increasing intensity and inwardness, all other major characters in the novel are involved in the same problem. In Kōjin, numerous episodes and characters prefigure or recapitulate the torment of Jirō's brother, Ichirō (as, for example, Misawa in his love for a demented girl, or the utai-singer, rejected by the blind woman). It is worth tangential notice, I think, that Sōseki in Kōjin has drawn together his main characters by a semblance of plot centering around Ichiro's suspicion that his wife may be unfaithful with his brother, Jirō. Such a unifying element is lacking between Keitarō and Sunaga; and, if one finds the plot less satisfying on that account, one can only suggest that the characterization of Keitarō is the more absorbing as he dispassionately and sympathetically, without involvement, comes to an understanding of the human condition. Like Keitarō, Jiro can assert indignantly, "I am no detective!" but he is nevertheless drawn into the tawdry plotting of his brother, while Keitarō is free.

It is important, I think, to see that, between 1907 and 1910, Sōseki's extremely experimental years and the years when he was most interested in the writings of William James, he was trying to work out a
new conception of the structure of a novel in relation to its characters. The following is a 1907 entry in his notebook:

X Flowers—they are [like] the content of a novel; flower arrangement is the structure. As the arrangement is interesting, so the structure itself may have its esthetic value. When the flowers are enhanced by their arrangement, the structure serves as a kind of augmentation. To combine this flower and that flower effectively is the aim of structure. If Flower A and Flower B enhance each other's beauty, then attention to structural organization becomes a technique worth using. If Flower A is a thing of esthetic interest by itself, and Flower B is also interesting in its own right, then the structural arrangement itself must be interesting. If Flower A is uninteresting, but becomes so when combined with Flower B, then there is also an excellent structural arrangement. Conversely, if Flower A is esthetically interesting by itself and Flower B is similarly interesting on its own, yet, when arranged together, they detract from each other, then the arrangement is a poor one. Therefore, value of and by itself, value in relationship to others. Contrast, etc.—Proportion, Change, Unity.71

The emphasis is always on the flower, on the character (= the "content"), in Sōseki's experimental novels. He brings out those characters by forcing them into tight, almost suffocating relationships, and in the above passage, the words arrangement, structure, and relationship signify much the same thing. These
relationships are intense, usually between two people, sometimes confessional in nature, and often abrasive. Key relationships are usually of the hate-love variety. Soseki's theorizing is quickly applied. These are the meditations of a very careful craftsman.

The Stevenson Connection

_Higan sugi made_ in many respects is a deeply personal narrative. One of the two major narrative sequences very clearly derives from the death of Söseki's infant daughter. The novel begins almost comically with a quixotic young man's romantic misconception of the world he lives in. But it grows steadily more serious and more introspective, moving away from external action to the quiet tensions of inner conflict. It is, therefore, pivotal in the development of Söseki, and is a tentative and experimental reach toward a far more intense, even tortuous, study of the human condition than anything he had attempted heretofore.

There are many technical influences determining the quality of experimentation that went into _Higan sugi made_. For one thing, it was a serial narrative,
written against deadlines, to be fitted into a newspaper format. Certainly such limitations as those necessitated by serial production would inevitably encourage a certain fragmentation of the narrative line. In addition, the impact of grief must have made the temptation to indulge in personalized emotion difficult to resist, and yet one finishes the novel feeling that Sōseki's resistance to the temptation has been of the highest order, and the author reigns severely over the world of his art rather than becoming the subject of it. The resultant novel may almost be seen as allegorical pilgrimage, a spiraling inward away from romantic external action to the drama of the soul. That it does not always succeed is a measure of the greatness of the experimental leap into untrodden ways.

An additional factor influencing Sōseki's way of presenting his material at this time was Robert Louis Stevenson's collection of stories, The New Arabian Nights. Early in Higan sugi made Sōseki indicates that his questing hero, Keitarō, is powerfully influenced by Stevenson's imposition, in the first two stories of The New Arabian Nights, of Gothic romance upon the world of contemporaneous
London. Keitarō has read the Stevenson work in his English class in higher school:

At one point, because of the vigor of his imagination, he became confused as to where reality ended and fiction began, and he earnestly asked his teacher, "Did events like this really happen in nineteenth century London?" His instructor, who had just recently returned from London, ...said, "This sort of thing might happen, not only in the nineteenth century, but even now! London is indeed a mysterious city!" Keitarō's eyes gleamed with fascination. The teacher then added..., "Of course, Stevenson was no commonplace writer, and his way of interpreting events was quite different from the ordinary mode of seeing, a fact which might have some bearing on the resultant narration. Indeed Stevenson could dream up an elaborate romance just from seeing a waiting carriage at the corner."

Keitarō...began for the first time to comprehend the complex relationship between fact and fiction. From that time on, whenever he caught sight of a waiting ricksha, such as were routine and abundant at any corner of the city of Tokyo, he would imagine that precisely this ricksha last night might have been careening madly down the street, carrying a murderer and his stiletto in its confines—or perhaps it might have been flying toward a railroad station with a beautiful woman behind the hood intent on catching a train bound in a direction opposite to what the pursuers would guess. Dreaming of such suspenseful, terrifying adventures, he laughed to himself, perfectly happy. 73

Stevenson superimposes on the London of his day a world of Gothic melodrama that looks back to Mary
Shelley's Frankenstein and forward to the precision of that greatest of detectives, Sherlock Holmes. Sōseki's gullible student seeks to understand the Japan of his day by equating it with Stevenson's fantasy world. It is not surprising that he has some difficulty. Unlike his creator and unlike Stevenson too, he mistakes the playful fiction for reality. Sōseki, interestingly, uses the confusion in his protagonist's mind to draw out implications both aesthetic and philosophical on the deeps of psychological reality existing within the heart of man, as contrasted with the world of outward appearance.

Stevenson's experiment was of a different order. It never became entirely serious. At the end of his second major story, "The Rajah's Diamond," he says of his mysterious detective-protagonist and part-time deus ex machina, Prince Florizel:

As for the Prince, that sublime person, having now served his turn, may go, along with the Arabian Author, topsy-turvy into space. But if the reader insists on more specific information, I am happy to say that a recent revolution hurled him from the throne of Bohemia, in consequence of his continued absence and edifying neglect of public business; and that his Highness now keeps a cigar store in Rupert Street, much frequented by other foreign refugees. I go there from time to time to smoke and have a chat, and find him as great a creature as in the days of his prosperity; he has an Olympian air behind the counter; and,
although a sedentary life is beginning to tell upon his waistcoat, he is probably, take him for all in all, the handsomest tobacconist in London. 74

Stevenson's light touch enables him to wriggle with practised ease from the debris of unsuccessful experiment. The New Arabian Nights survives in critical esteem mainly on the basis of the later tales, "Sire de Maletroit's Door," and "A Lodging for the Night," stories which have little in common with the far-fetched melodramas of the first two experimental tales which Stevenson attributes to his "Arabian Author."

The first of these tales is the one that interested Sōseki most. It is called, "The Suicide Club," and consists of three interrelated episodes, each incomplete in itself, leading to a final melodramatic conclusion. In the first of these, the reader goes with Prince Florizel of Bohemia and his trusty aide, Colonel Geraldine, to a club of aristocratic young men who have experienced such reversals that they wish to commit suicide. The President of the club accommodates them in this desire. They draw lots; the winner of the draw is the man scheduled to be murdered by whoever receives the ace of clubs. After one such murder has taken place,
Prince Florizel, ignoring Scotland Yard and using his private constabulary, arrests all members of the club, scolds them, and sends them on their ways. The president of the club, for reasons not very clear, he orders to go to the continent to fight a duel with an opponent to be selected by Florizel.

The second episode of "The Suicide Club," is seen through the unsophisticated eyes of one Silas Q. Scuddamore, a shy and very curious American visiting Paris. Like Florizel, he is possessed of "the cat-like spirit of eavesdropping," and enjoys listening in on private conversations, all of which he finds of mysterious and even criminal import. Silas one night is unnerved to find a corpse in his bed: it is the duellist who had been appointed to fight the President of the Suicide Club. In panic, he bundles the corpse into his Saratoga trunk. Then this innocent abroad, whom Stevenson unconcernedly describes as "indubitably a lost New Englander," attaches himself to the entourage of Prince Florizel, en route to London. His trunk, as part of the royal luggage, is not inspected by the customs officials. But the Prince discovers the deception, Silas tells all he knows, the trunk is opened, and Florizel recognizes the dead man as his appointed agent.
In the third of "The Suicide Club" stories, we are introduced to another improbably named individual, one Lieutenant Brackenbury Rich, who is fresh from India after distinguished service there:

Swinging his cane, he took his way westward... The succession of faces in the lamplight stirred the Lieutenant's imagination; and it seemed to him as if he could walk forever in that stimulating city atmosphere and surrounded by the mystery of four million private lives. He glanced at the houses, and marvelled what was passing behind those warmly-lighted windows; he looked into face after face, and saw them each intent upon some unknown interest, criminal or kindly.

Clearly, the lieutenant is of the tribe of Keitarō, ever-curious, and insatiably romantic!

He paused under some trees, and as he did so he caught sight of a hansom cabman making him a sign that he was disengaged. The circumstance fell in so happily to the occasion that he at once raised his cane in answer, and had soon ensconced himself in the London gondola.

This, one may suppose, is the "elaborate romance" that Keitarō's teacher tells his student Stevenson "could dream up... just from seeing a waiting carriage at the corner," even though the lieutenant's cane has none of the magical propensities of that which Keitarō
acquired from Morimoto, the magician of tall tales. The cab propels Lieutenant Rich into the world of Prince Florizel, where he assists that worthy in apprehending and executing (in a duel) the unpleasant President of the Suicide Club.

Stevenson's story is weakly plotted and its melodrama verges on escapist fantasy as acted out by the smug stereotypes of good and evil that nineteenth century British fiction abounds in. Its interest for us today, were it not for Sōseki, would probably inhere only in what it taught Conan Doyle in creating those romances of London that center around Sherlock Homes and his aide, Dr. Watson. Atmospherically, the stories are successful, and Stevenson by his usual deftness of style and wit wafts us over narrative voids with an almost miraculous sureness. The stereotypes jostle each other in their profusion: virtuous, inexperienced young men, maidens in distress, mature tutors of unvarying infallibility, unexplained villains who are either too coarse or too clever. Keitarō's attraction to these stories is easy to understand. Like Lieutenant Rich or Silas Q. Scuddamore, he is filled with the devouring curiosity of youth, and he reacts so strongly to the Stevensonian atmosphere that he imagines rickshas to
be the vehicles of romance that hansom cabs were in The New Arabian Nights.

Keitarō's imagination is captured by Stevensonian romance. At the beginning of Higan sugi made Soseki shows his hero in the toils of quixotic imagination with great effectiveness. But the yearning for high adventure, while in part a vestige of childlike fantasy, is accentuated by Keitarō's inability to find a job following graduation from the University. In this he may be seen as symptomatic of the Japanese spirit, seeking to adjust to the mundane world of the Meiji Restoration, but yearning nonetheless for the days when adventure and an easy choice between right and wrong were available to all would-be Quixotes. Stevenson's heroes effortlessly and with impeccable taste, ferret out adventure in the streets of contemporaneous London. Sōseki's hero, committed to a romantic world view, finds the whole noble concept collapsing in his face like a punctured balloon. Tangled in all the complications of streetcar routes, he pursues his suspect with a diligence made absurd by its very sincerity, and ultimately what he discovers is himself as the self-deceived victim of a practical joke. And yet there is a point to this bizarre and inept detective
work: Keitarō's revulsion against mere spying marks his graduation into the world of mature persons. From now on he can be trusted to probe deeply and compassionately into human motive. He has become a detective of the human spirit. As such, he is entrusted with Chiyoko's tale of sorrow at death in the family; as such, he is confessor to Sunaga as he tells his story of love and frustration. His education is marked by his progress from Morimoto, the magician of the tall tale and surface adventure, to the summation of Matsumoto, grieving father and responsive kinsman.

Sōseki's use of Stevenson's *New Arabian Nights* is quite complex. He is not satirizing it, since the satirist assumes the reader's prior knowledge of the work satirized, and in no sense is comprehension of *Higan sugi made* dependent on any awareness of the Stevenson work. In effect, what he does is to study the effect of the extreme, even excessive, romanticism of *The New Arabian Nights* on a credulous, well-intentioned reader. His emphasis is on characterization; he stresses not the romantic melodrama, but the escapist yearnings that make Keitarō the willing victim of this sort of unreality. It may well be that, to the extent that Keitarō moves
from the febrile excitement of external action to the understanding of the human heart, Sōseki is symbolizing his own development and changed course as an artist, in which case, the novel may be seen in some sense as a symbolic manifesto and declaration of intent as to future literary efforts.

In addition, of course, the odd structure of The New Arabian Nights is adapted by Sōseki to his purposes. Stevenson's interrelated episodes, which come to a plot resolution only with the very last episode, give Sōseki the concept of interdependent short stories moving toward a specific thematic goal which he uses as a mode of organizing his world in Higan sugi made. His use of this structure, as we have seen, is considerably more complex in its objectives and execution than the Stevenson work. Instead of melodramatic juxtapositions of stock villains and heroes drawn from all the countries of the earth, Sōseki deals with the very individualistic members of a family group and one close friend of the people in that group. He studies their relationships to each other in the course of a number of encounters in which they search for understanding of themselves and the human lot. The refusal to imitate is far more significant than any surface likenesses.
Time and the Nature of Reality in *Higan sugi made*

William James, following Bergson, was intrigued by the philosophic problems arising from the differentiating of time (and, to a lesser extent, space) from infinity. His starting point as he begins a discussion of this matter in *The Pluralistic Universe* is a summary of Zeno's paradoxical explication of the theory of limits as applied to time. (228-229) But he quickly turns to his own characteristically picturesque distinction between what he calls felt time and conceptual time:

The conceptual method is a transformation which the flux of life undergoes in the interests of practice....We live forward, we understand backward, ... and to understand life by concepts is to arrest its movement, cutting it up into bits as if with scissors, and immobilizing these in our logical herbarium....This treatment supposes life to have already accomplished itself, for the concepts, being so many views taken after the fact, are retrospective and post mortem.

In vivid images he distinguishes the intellectual perception of time from the emotional awareness of its duration:
All these abstract concepts are but as flowers gathered, they are only moments dipped out from the stream of time, snap-shots taken, as by a kinetoscopic camera, at a life that in its original coming is continuous. Useful as they are as samples of the garden, or to re-enter the stream with, or to insert in our revolving lantern, they have no value but these practical values. You cannot explain by them what makes any single phenomenon be or go--you merely dot out the path of appearances which it traverses....The stages into which you analyze a change are states, the change itself goes on between them, it lies along their intervals, inhabits what your definition fails to gather up, and thus eludes conceptual explanation altogether. 81

In distinguishing between felt time and conceptual time, then, James makes a number of points concerning ways of seeing and understanding reality, and these are matters which creative artists would naturally find of special interest. Any intellectualized classification of the flux of time requires that we must "cut it up into bits as if with scissors," "dot out" its course by "snap-shots," or "views taken after the fact [that, therefore, necessarily] are retrospective and post mortem." We sort out these static snapshots of what is in fact an on-going, ceaseless process, group and categorize them, string them together, and so create a logical concept of a fixed and immutable reality that is consistent "with the platonic and aristotelian belief that fixity is a
nobler and worthier thing than change." The dichotomy James pursues here is, I assume, as old as philosophy. In earlier nineteenth century thought we see the same contrast applied on the one hand to deism (which sees the universe as a great machine with God as its mechanic to keep it from changing, since machines break) and pantheism (which sees it as organic, ever-changing in its growth and becoming).

But the James-Bergson way of seeing reality is especially useful to the creative artist, who, by adopting it, may suddenly find himself freed from sequential narration, and able to move back and forth in time, relating his incidents by psychological association, by thematic parallels, and by importance in the eye of the beholder. An artist so motivated is free to concentrate on character in a state of constant change, justifying this emphasis by insisting that only in fiction, and second-rate fiction at that, are characters consistent and thoroughly predictable in their actions and thoughts. Freedom in the handling of time, therefore, is an essential pre-condition to an effective working out of inward-looking, stream-of-consciousness techniques. If the course of the river of life can only be "dotted out" conceptually, then an artist may find himself moving
toward a kind of pointillism, a desire to move from one specific image and description to another, with little concern for sequential transition, any such sequence being necessarily a later addition provided by the intellect's demand for logical interrelationship. The "dots" constitute the arrested images, the snapshots, of felt time; stringing them together into logical patterns results in the conceptualization. Moreover, the writer more concerned with contrast, juxtaposition and ironic parallels than with logical connectivity might also be inclined to stress the mysterious, chance-like nature of existence. One recalls Keats's scolding of Coleridge for being incapable "of being in uncertainties Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason," with the result that he "would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetrailum of the mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half-knowledge."

The time-structure of Higan sugi made needs to be understood if the novel is to make sense. The action begins where it ends: just after the graduation from the University (an event which in the Meiji Period occurred in late June or early July) of Keitarō.
and Sunaga, the two young men who are, each in a different way, the protagonists of the novel. This time just after graduation, then, constitutes the novel's present. But relatively little of the total work is concerned with that present time, which serves mainly as a jumping-off place for reminiscence about the past, as well as for some planning or hoping about the future. This relative unimportance of the present moment is justified by James's conception of time:

Past and future...conceptually separated by the cut to which we give the name of present, and defined as being the opposite sides of that cut, are to some extent, however brief, co-present with each other throughout experience. The literally present moment is a purely verbal supposition, not a position; the only present ever realized concretely being the 'passing moment' in which the dying rearward of time and its dawning future forever mix their lights. Say 'now' and it was even while you say it.85

The passing moment James refers to is, of course, a passing moment as it appears to particular human beings. Whether it is joyous or melancholy depends entirely upon their point of view as they interpret "the cut to which we give the name of present." The emphasis upon felt time makes the feelings of the person interpreting that time, be it a moment or a year, of the greatest importance. Hence the enormous

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importance of point of view in a novel which, like *Higan sugi made*, moves about freely in time. The movement of the mind as it ransacks the past for explanations and meanings takes the place of chronological and spatial movement in developing the plot. The "now" of *Higan sugi made* is the present as interpreted by Keitarō and it is given the first four chapters. Even so, it is a rather precarious "now". The hero looks desperately toward the future as he hunts for a job. Much of his leisure time he passes listening to tall tales of reminiscence spoken by the picturesque, rough-and-ready adventurer, Morimoto, who lives in the same lodging house and whose tawdry present circumstances contrast considerably with the adventurous past he describes. Morimoto's present state is embarrassingly meager. His past, we assume with Keitarō, is much embroidered and elaborated by his uneducated, egoistic imagination, while his possible future is morally bleak (he flees without paying half a year's rent, later writing Keitarō an odd note saying that he now has a job in Manchuria) and novelistically nothing (we hear no more of his life from then on).

Humanly beneath serious consideration, Morimoto is nevertheless an important person in the novel. With
him we see Sōseki's experimental method in operation for the first time. As Keitarō gradually comes to an awareness of the man's quality, so do we. Depressed at his joblessness, the young graduate has spent an evening trying to escape reality by drinking all alone in his room large quantities of beer. Next morning when, hung over, he meets Morimoto in the public bath, he finds him initially a stimulating encouragement to rebellion against the rules of a society that thus far has ignored him. Morimoto is, in fact, the first of several self-centered philosophic idlers (and, indeed, with his ludicrous attempts at intellectuality, is almost a caricature of the others) for whom time is too precious a commodity to waste in drab routine activities. Keitarō finds him initially mysterious ("Everything about him was an 'x,' a mathematical unknown ... trailing behind him was an aura of 86 romance"). Morimoto's appeal is largely from the fact that, more than any other character in the novel, he refuses to be impeded by the restrictions that time and space impose on the lives of most people. Where, for example, the life of Sunaga, hero of the latter part of the novel, is described as inward-spiraling, and so cramped in movement that even a walk in the country or an overnight visit to Kamakura seems a
great event, Morimoto escapes reality and responsibility by going anywhere and everywhere. He inspires dreams of romantic escape in Keitarō. Sōseki is dryly objective in his portrayal of this wonderfully real-seeming character; even the romantic young man gradually senses the fraudulence and essential vulgarity involved in Morimoto's conception of life. But he is nevertheless attracted to Morimoto's belief that "all sorts of strange and incredible events [are] taking place in the world every day" in which venturesome people should get involved. This is a major theme of the novel: it is a proposition which Keitarō must test. Hence, Morimoto is superbly realistic in his rough and adventurous approach to living, as well as being a symbol of conceivable romantic freedom and rebellion to a young man who has not yet made up his mind in what direction he will move.

The emphasis on investigation or detective activity begins with Keitarō's fascination with Morimoto and his past. This investigatory tendency holds the novel together: what starts as simple detective work becomes very quickly the study of past events for the purpose of understanding present psychological or spiritual states. All major
characters in *Higan sugi* made participate in this search. Tantalizing bits of Morimoto's past are constantly appearing in the form of slightly drunken reminiscences and anecdotes that he passes on to the younger man on the assumption that these experiences may have some message that will help Keitarō's future.

The point of view, of course, is of the greatest importance here: as Keitarō reacts to Morimoto, so we understand his nature. A fine brief instance of Sōseki's skill in manipulating the point of view is afforded by a small comic episode involving Keitaro's landlord, who, cheated of his rent by Morimoto, now seeks to draw Keitarō into the awkwardness of the situation:

Stunned for a moment by the unexpectedness of the request, Keitarō did not reply immediately. Then he looked sharply into the landlord's eyes and said, "Suppose you tell me about this mix-up of yours." At that point, however, the landlord's pipe seemed to have clogged, and, using a metal probe from the hibachi, he poked at the pipe-stem energetically.

This done, he blew a few times into the pipe before starting slowly to explain. 87

Throughout the ensuing conversation, the landlord continues to pay at least as much attention to his
pipe as to Keitarō. The brief scene is a good example of Sōseki's use of realistic irrelevance. Why does the landlord engage in this extended repair session on his clogged tobacco pipe before explaining? Is he delaying in order to figure Keitarō out? Is he confused? Or is the pipe really his major concern? We do not know. With Keitarō, we view him entirely from the outside. This restrained objectivity, this ironic counterpoint of external action and scene with the accompanying thought, thoroughly characteristic of Sōseki's method, is both vivid and comic, giving us a clear awareness of both characters, inviting us to make our own judgments, without, however, one word of interpretation from the author. The landlord is, of course, acting as detective, a role that Keitarō has already begun to play in relation to the mystery of Morimoto, and which is important to the development and meaning of the whole novel.

Other initially irrelevant-seeming incidents abound in this first section. So, for example, the two friends walk through muddy streets to the store, while "the water vapor from the rains seemed to hover steamily close to the ground."

"I wish," said Morimoto, "I could evoke for
your eyes the way everything looked to me this morning when I came out. The sun was shining, but the air was hazy. In the passing streetcars the passengers appeared like silhouettes in a shadow play, each one a grey ghost outlined by the sun behind him. It was quite a sight: mysterious." 88

The walk through the mud is necessary to emphasize the recent rain and the humidity, and these are needed to explain why the passengers "looked like silhouettes" on the streetcar. But the streetcar reference is more than a passing bit of poetic decoration. A little later in the same chapter, Keitarō, on the streetcar one rainy day, studies a woman with a baby who reminds him of the wife that Morimoto has spoken of. The woman disappears into the rain and we see her no more. These episodes or "snap-shots" which are (in James's words) "dotted out" to mark the flow of time, lead us toward the big streetcar scene in Chapter Four, where Keitarō for the first and last time exercises his skills as detective. Why this emphasis on streetcars? It surely is reasonable to assume that Sōseki, writing in the daily newspaper, felt an obligation to describe the realities of the Tokyo of his day for the benefit of the newspaper reader who, presumably, was also a likely streetcar passenger. But there is more to it than that: in this homely, commonplace
event, Morimoto senses a shadow play that is a visual image of the whole mysterious drama of mortality, and it is to this unforced, quiet symbolism that Sōseki returns inconspicuously but diligently again and again, as he describes not merely particular people, but the whole of the human comedy. The apparent discontinuity of his method, justified by the philosophy of James and Bergson, gives him the amplitude he needs for bringing together particular personalities with universally symbolic implications. The first section of the novel, rooted in the present, yet moves easily toward past reminiscence and future hope. And these are the directions in which the rest of the novel moves.

In addition to the interest of specific characterization, and the added thrust of symbolism, a third possible mode of interpretation suggests itself when we recall Sōseki's opposition to the naturalists' ways of depicting reality. Higan sugi made shows a hero who begins investigating his world with the sharp scientific eye of the naturalist, observing external signs and actions. While he never stops studying the mystery of human motivation, his method is transformed from aggressive spying and eavesdropping on external behavior to a sympathy and fellow-feeling so great that he invites confidences from complex and deeply
troubled people who, in confiding their problems to him, show that they rely upon him as an almost priestly confessor.

Keitarō starts as detective, but ends as priest. His detective work shows him on the trail of his own identity. His metamorphosis from bumptious, frustrated young man to mature, kindly listener is executed almost too quietly. A greater stress on this change might have heightened the reader's perception of the direction in which Ōe is moving in the novel. Not only is Keitarō an individual well characterized; his development as a person is congruent with, parallel to, Ōe's development as a novelist: both find true reality not in externals, but in the labyrinth of the human spirit. Ōe permits us to intuit from the action of the novel the changed character of his hero. Whereas, in the first four chapters we hear much of his reactions and behavior, in the latter part, we learn about him only from the attitudes of the people confiding in him, and from their specific comments about him.

Significantly, in the early section, he compares himself to a man he had met at the University who

had been obsessed with a sense of the mysterious
and the unknowable which by himself he had been unable to penetrate or understand. Although he saw clearly the trees, the houses, the passersby, he felt separated from them as though confined in a glass box, unable to make contact with the world outside. When he heard this story, Keitarō...sensed that the emptiness at the center of his being, the absence of any joy of accomplishment, the lack of perseverance might somehow resemble the state of mind of this man before he had become a priest.

The final clause of the quotation in effect foreshadows Keitarō's own transformation in function and in character in the novel. We may recall, too, that Sōseki was familiar with another of William James's works, the famous Varieties of Religious Experience, in which numerous individuals are described as making the transition from emptiness and lostness to fulfillment of a religious kind. The objection to this analysis of character as applied to Keitarō is that it is too extreme and the evidence too shadowy. But Sōseki rarely describes character in so many words; he prefers to show it operative in action and dialogue. Not only do we have the significant fact that the three most sophisticated, complex, sensitive persons in the novel (Sunaga, Chiyoko and Matsumoto) confide fully and at great length their most troubled thoughts to this trusted friend, but they show their confidence in him in specific words.
Initially, Sunaga (a little like his uncle, Taguchi) is skeptical and ironical in his attitude toward his classmate:

Ultimately Keitarō felt that Sunaga must be making fun of him, as though to say, "But how could you expect to be capable of the vision needed to explore the world's inward romantic essence using your binoculars from the third floor of a lodging house in Hongōdai-machi?" 93

But, by the time they go for their walk in the country, he acknowledges, "You seem to have settled down quite a bit these days." Shortly afterward, he acknowledges that what he is about to say even his mother would find astonishing, and he goes on to add, "And even my friend and contemporary—he may not understand. But...I shall make a confession here." Matsumoto, when he talks with Keitarō toward the end of the novel about Sunaga, says, "This is a family matter....I was not planning to confide in you, and perhaps would not have, had I not been feeling grateful to you all this while for your concern for Ichizō." And again, he addresses him as "You, who are so close to him."

In other words, the change that occurs in Keitarō
is significant character development central to the novel's theme and meaning, and not an inconsistency forced upon the writer by the need to impose an additional narrative function on a character unsuited to it. It is only with Keitarō that we find ourselves in the present of the novel. After the first four chapters, his story is largely finished, and he concerns himself with listening to others. To some extent this shift of focus is a defect in the novel. In Kōjin, and in Kokoro, where there are also two widely different characters sharing honors as protagonists, the relationship between the members of each pair is worked out more carefully than in Higan sugi made. But the relative independence of Keitarō from Sunaga contributes to a balance between two ways of seeing: these two are equals, and what they represent is of equal worth. They are not interdependent, but separate in their ways of organizing their lives. Any comparison of them as individuals is largely useless, since the mode of characterization used for each is quite different. Sunaga is what he speaks; the confessional narration stresses his neuroticism. Keitarō, at first conventionally described in terms of his acts and words by the omniscient author, is later more
interestingly conveyed to us through the esteem of those troubled people who trust him with their most intimate secrets.

The maturation of Keitarō occurs in connection with his investigation of the mysterious stranger on the streetcar as ordered by Taguchi. The result of his detective work in terms of his character is made clear in his interview with Taguchi, a session forthright enough to require little comment. But the streetcar episode is preceded by a visit to a fortune-teller, and the six pages devoted to the fortune-teller cry out for interpretation. This woman, in her mystery and commonplaceness, may remind us a little of Morimoto in basic purpose, and, indeed, she is midway between that somewhat mysterious adventurer and the hardheaded Taguchi in essential function. Like so many episodes in Higan sugi made, this one has overtones of mystery and the supernatural, but they proceed from normalcy and the everyday. The episode is nicely crafted. Sōseki starts by having Keitarō, in his search for a fortune-teller, try to eliminate all the swindlers and fakes from consideration. Then he gives us a woman absolutely without the flim-flammetry that might be expected to distinguish such a profession. Her simplicity rings true. At times her prophecies
verge on bland generality, but—with Keitarō's insistent help—they become relevant and applicable. Keitarō's initial response to her stresses the dichotomy:

Even in his wildest imagination he would never have supposed that this completely domesticated woman could be the prophet to explore the unknown fate lying in wait for him in the future. "Besides," he thought, "there are none of the usual props around: the bamboo stick, the crystal ball, the jackstraws. All these should be on her table." 99

The fortune-teller's most mysterious utterance comes after she tells him, "I see now, in general terms, how it will be:"

You own something which seems to be both yours and someone else's; it seems to be long or at the same time short; it seems also to be coming out or going in. Should any trouble occur, don't ever forget, first of all, to take it with you. If you do, all will turn out well. 100

Keitarō, in the purer air of the Meiji Period, takes this to be a reference to the snake's head on the cane Morimoto gave him, and certainly the cane has fateful powers imputed to it. In our post-Freudian world, however, most readers would probably interpret this as
an image of sexual activity. Somehow a phallic image at this point in the novel seems just about the last symbol we might expect of Sōseki, or of his fortune-teller. Alert as Keitarō is to sexual suggestions, we might expect him to elucidate the implications of the image fully for us. But he, after a day's meditation, thinks of the snake's head, and goes no further with the matter. Is Sōseki obliquely suggesting (whether intentionally or subconsciously) the motivational magic of sexuality in human affairs? Certainly all the situations dealt with in the various stories have an elemental quality and may be said to hark back to sexual origins if we regard birth, death, and physical attraction as derivations of that basic impulse. And Higan sugi made can easily be seen as a study of involved and often delicate human relationships and their motivations. The fortune-teller is an oracle, a representative of chance and mystery, just as Taguchi is representative of hardheaded and practical common sense. Ultimately, although the sexual interpretation is not at variance with the general trends of the novel, I confess that it seems to me quite inconsistent with Sōseki's outlook and method. Having noted the problem, perhaps the better part of valor is to stress once more the
functional importance of the episode in keeping before us the two variant ways of seeing reality that run through the novel: the supernatural, mysterious, or romantic and, for lack of a better term, the "realistic" or scientifically observable.

Keitarō, although he exists in a specific present, is constantly fantasizing romantically about his future, and recalling past events. When his own life is insufficiently provocative, he explores those of others, and this tendency is responsible for the novel's organization around recollections of the past as told to him by others.

The fortune-teller episode, which Sōseki clearly feels to be important as a portent of the future, requires some justification in psychological probability, and so Sōseki has his hero recollect what his grandfather had told him of the exotic and unusual shops in the neighborhood of Asakusa Kannon:

Grandfather told me a lot about the old eating establishments," Keitarō remembered. "For instance, a little gourmet restaurant called the Sumiya, that served (and still does!) nameshi and dengaku, or the tidy restaurant serving only dojō, that has an attractive curtain of woven ropes across its doorway. It is opposite the little temple by Komakata Bridge...." 102
The description follows the movement of his mind, veering delightfully from past to present. The author is playing his now-familiar little game of making (to his Tokyo newspaper-reader) the familiar still more familiar, and at the same time, seen as it is through the vista of memory, venerable and a bit mysterious. The parenthetical "And still does!" has the ring almost of a free advertisement for a favorite restaurant. Despite the aura imparted by tradition and the past, it is very real, very much of the present moment, completely appropriate as a setting for the fortune-teller herself.

The way of seeing, then, the point of view, is inextricably tied in with sudden shifts in time. Proust's Monsieur Swann, whom Marcel in his childhood, knows only as a friend of his grandparents, is a totally different man from the cultured art-collector he knows later, who in turn is utterly different from the Swann who is enslaved by his passion for Odette. Keitaro's way of seeing is similarly variable, although the principle of variability is not worked so hard or constantly as in Proust. Furthermore, with Keitarō, his varying interpretations are signs of his own uncertainty and immaturity. At one point he is not certain but that Chiyoko, initially a figure seen
vaguely from behind at Sunaga's gate, may be Sunaga's secret love; then, not even realizing that it is the same person, he follows her when she goes with her unknown escort to a restaurant thinking that she may be a prostitute. But even at this juncture, she is described in terms that make her seem stately and refined. She is "not wearing the standard silk gloves that every Japanese woman wore," he notes. And he admits that "Earlier, he had been pleasantly excited by her tall, upright posture, relaxed, lithe and natural." How un-Japanese Chiyoko is here! She seems almost to have escaped from the pages of Jane Austen! Later, upon coming to know her, he is impressed with her great purity. She has moments of melancholy, of vivacious wit, and finally of stormy anger when she rebukes Sunaga. Whereas with Proust we are convinced that Swann is multi-faceted, with Soseki we realize that Keitarō's and Sunaga's ways of seeing Chiyoko are partial, and, to a considerable degree ignorant of the total personality. So it is with the other main characters in the novel. With Keitarō or Sunaga or Matsumoto, we study the events of their past to account for their ways in the present.

Moreover, Sōseki's method is peculiarly associational. When Sunaga wants to distinguish
Chiyoko from all other women he knows, he uses an anecdote about a proud Italian girl who, on being given a handkerchief she has picked up and tried to return it to D'Annunzio at a party in his honor, takes it to the fireplace and tosses it in. So he characterizes Chiyoko's proud spirit. Again, when Sunaga wishes to make clear his jealousy of Takagi, he summarizes the plot of a Russian novel in which a lover rationally and cold-bloodedly murders his rival in the presence of the lady they both love. Gorki's poor reception in America illustrates Matsumoto's liberalism in matters of love. These somewhat literary anecdotes are intended to make clear the present reality as understood by Sunaga or Matsumoto. That too is why the various stories of the past are told. Chiyoko, for example, tells her story of Yoiko's death specifically to explain why it is that Matsumoto will not receive visitors on rainy days. There are numerous puzzles or conundrums of this sort in *Higan sugi made*, presumably to stress the non-logical, mysterious, chance-like nature of existence. The real theme in Chiyoko's tale of Yoiko's death goes well beyond her announced intention, of course. With an almost scientific detachment the author narrates the facts of the child's death, and
the parents' inadequate attempts to revive her. But his emphasis is on the enduring tension of the internalized drama, as each person, in his or her way, struggles to adapt to and understand the blank mystery of this sudden death. It is this unspoken inner drama that signifies. All else is subordinate, even in the harrowing cremation scene, when the ashes of the child are drawn from the furnace, and Chiyoko recognizes the shape of Yoiko's head. But what she sees is mere dust and ash, not the reality, which is in her mind. And what the mind broods over is change: the source of narrative interest is in "these people who had been drawn into a world entirely different from that of two hours before."

Chiyoko's role in telling the story, I might add, is quickly lost sight of. The manner of the telling, that is, is not the logical outcome of her personality or philosophy, as in the case later on of Sunaga or, to a lesser degree, of Matsumoto. She simply provides the voice. In one essential way, that voice is not consonant with what we know of Chiyoko: she was deeply grieved by the death of her favorite cousin, yet the narration is distinguished chiefly by its restraint and meditative calmness, so that this particularly affecting little tragedy takes on some of
the inevitability of all natural change, whether the death of a season, the roll of the sea, or the moulting of an insect. Such an exercise in philosophic acceptance would in all probability have been beyond the capacity of a young, inexperienced girl, though fitting enough for a bereft author delving with the cautious certitude of art into the terrible moments stored in the past in an attempt to understand and make understood the human condition.

Yoiko's death occurred, as we shall see, about a year or year-and-a-half before the graduation of Keitarō and Sunaga. Immediately after it follows the lengthiest and most complex flashback in the novel. It concerns Sunaga's life history and his feelings for Chiyoko. Keitarō tells us that he went to visit Sunaga "two or three days before he learned from Chiyoko about the tragedy [of Yoiko]." This visit, he says, came "after a long absence." There is no opportunity at that time for the long talk he wishes to have with Sunaga, so, "on the next Sunday," he goes again, and this time succeeds in luring his friend out for a walk in the country. More assistance in placing this episode in time is provided when Sunaga remarks, "Ever since I was graduated from school last year, I've not troubled about getting a job."
From this evidence, it seems clear that Sunaga's long confession was told to his friend shortly after he had heard the tale of Yoiko's death. Both stories were given Keitarō a year or so after his graduation from the University, by which time he had obtained some sort of unspecified position with Taguchi's firm, and had been accepted into the family as a friend.

Chiyoko's story concerned a single major event that had occurred about a year before. But Sunaga's narration is filled with flashbacks and reminiscences dating from his early childhood. It is roughly in three parts: (1) the family history as it relates to him and his excessive love for his mother, (2) his feelings for Chiyoko in general and in specific instances, and (3) the Kamakura excursion and its aftermath. The Kamakura interlude, Sunaga says, occurred in the summer between his third and fourth year at the University. His realization of the depth of his feelings for Chiyoko, he tells us, came during his third year at the University (113).

Matsumoto, who, by his commentary on it, brings Sunaga's story to a tentative conclusion, is speaking after Sunaga's and Keitarō's graduation ("About a year ago it was..."), but he talks of Sunaga just after graduation, when he took his trip through the
Kansai District.

Various interpretations of the chapter dealing with Matsumoto's story are possible. It is at very least an attempt by the author to pull his novel together at the end, allowing the most philosophic and respected person in it to comment compassionately and perceptively on the much-troubled Sunaga. While it is certainly so brief as to seem a bit hurried, it may indicate, particularly in the letters of Sunaga to his uncle while on his trip, the direction and total intention of the author.

Sunaga's letters are full of information about the various sights and people he has seen on his trip. He visits a certain villa, called Minoo; it is a showplace, owned by the Asahi Press as a clubhouse for its employees. There he sees (and describes in detail) two aged ladies, one of whom is engaged in shaving the head of the other. He visits a seaside resort, and describes the people, the atmosphere, and the activities there. Much of this precisely observed material has the quality of travel notes about it, and, indeed, it is reworked from Soseki's own 115 diary. A similar mining of the diary occurs with the detailed narrative of the fishing trip at Kamakura.

It is possible, of course, to dismiss these
exactly described episodes as so much padding, tossed in when the author needed to meet his daily quota of words, but such an interpretation is demeaning to Sōseki's reputation as a careful organizer of his materials. A creative experiment is usually not less, but more ambitious than normal. It may demonstrably be on the way to failure, in which case the author may lose interest, and, admittedly, such an analysis seems to me the only explanation for the drab summary of the Epilogue with which Sōseki concludes the novel.

But these carefully observed episodes have another and important function. One bothers to observe with exactitude only scenes which impinge strongly on one's consciousness, and these scenes are vivid parts of Higan sugi made. They constitute strong remembrances: what we might call remembered present moments for the persons narrating past events. At such times, the narrator is saying, he came very close to reality, and studied its texture and quality with care. Sunaga, in his letters to his uncle, presents his observations as proof that his trip has cured him—at least temporarily—of his sick thoughts:

When I report such mundane details to you as though there were some novelty in them, you no doubt would be inclined to smile skeptically. But this is my proof that I have improved myself by taking this trip. I learned for the first time to move about
freely and on my own. Now I don't mind writing
to you about such boring, trivial matters,
perhaps because I simply looked at things
without analyzing, saw them without thinking.
This sort of thing is, I think, the best
medicine for me now. 116

Matsumoto, commenting on the trip, analyzes the kind
of medicine his nephew needs:

Ichizō is the sort of man whose being
coils itself inward whenever he faces the
world. Hence, when he receives a certain
stimulus, it winds itself deeper and
deeper into the recesses of his heart. At
such times, its continuous thrust never
stops, and it torments him.... To change
this heavy burden to good fortune, he
would have to redirect that life cord of
his so that it spirals in the opposite
direction, allowing him to wind the
stresses outward. Instead of using his
eyes to transfer outside events into his
own being, he ought to use them as a means
of observing and assessing those events
dispassionately. He must find
something--even if only once!--that is
captivatingly wonderful or beautiful or
gentle. 117

In a word, Sōseki is showing his tormented hero coming
to terms, uncritically and submissively, with the
beauty of external reality, with the day-to-day world
of the commonplace which, as Sōseki ceaselessly tries
to demonstrate throughout the novel is, properly seen,
also a world of mystery, beauty and suggestion.
Sunaga's last words in the novel are significantly,
"If I can find the time." To find the time in
this novel is to find oneself. Sunaga would, along
with Keitarō and Matsumoto, be inclined to conceive of
the good life as Dryden, following Horace, described
it:

Happy the man, and happy he alone,
He who can call today his own:
He who, secure within, can say,
Tomorrow, do thy worst, for I have
liv'd today.
Be fair, or foul, or rain, or shine,
The joys I have possesst, in spight
of fate, are mine.
Not Heav'n itself upon the past has
pow'r;
But what has been, has been, and I
have had my hour. 118

Whether such bracing optimism is appropriate to
Sunaga or, for that matter, to the author of Kōjin and
Kokoro, only the reader can decide. Once back at home
after his vacation, Sunaga shows no interest in the
working of the world around him, and his later recital
to Keitaro of his love for Chiyoko seems just as
pessimistic as anything that has transpired earlier.
At least one reader would side with Taguchi in
thinking that Sunaga might be a very unsatisfactory
husband for his daughter, Chiyoko. The trip is
important to the novel's meaning, it seems to me, in
that it shows Sunaga making his peace with the world
of commonplace reality that surrounds him. The
epilogue with which the novel ends, however, is the
tired summarizing of an author who knows he has
finished but for some newspaperish reason, cannot
stop. Perhaps he was busy thinking about the
organization of his next novel and anxious to be done
with the partially successful experiment that this one
represents.

In conclusion, what are we to make of Higan sugi
made in relation to Sōseki's total output? Powerful as
much of it is, we should not overlook the fact that it
was written at a time when Sōseki was enfeebled by
illness. It is tempting and, I think, valid to see the
profusion of largely unsolved conundrums and puzzles
in the novel as a manifestation of the James-Bergson
conception of reality as endless change and a
continuing process of becoming that never ends; or
with equal validity, it may be a novelistic
application of Zen riddles meant to shock one into
wakeupfulness. But what are we to make of Sunaga's
peculiar behavior, commented on by Ara Masahito, at
the crematorium in "A Rainy Day," when, on seeing a
blind man enter the waiting room, he abruptly stands
up and goes outside for no reason that the author ever
gives. Why, too, does the adopted Sunaga appear to
have a younger sister, who dies of diphtheria, even
though the mother adopted Sunaga at least in part
because she was childless? (This is the sister who never calls Sunaga by the standard sobriquet of "Big Brother," since, one is free to suppose in the absence of a better explanation, she was not taught to do so by a mother painfully aware of the lack of biological relationship.) There are many puzzlements of this sort in *Higan sugi made*. Is not Taguchi's trick in having his own daughter meet his brother at a streetcar stop on a cold winter's night labored and unconvincing, as Sasaki Mitsuru points out? And should he not have focused more overtly on Keitaro's changed way of behaving following the streetcar surveillance, since that change is essential to our comprehension of the rest of the novel? Despite these flaws of detail, however, Soseki succeeded in applying a new concept to Japanese literature, acquired in large part from western philosophic thought. It was a concept extremely practical and useful in application, and, moreover, one that Soseki was delighted to recognize, since it was completely in harmony with ideas he had long been cultivating. Hence, *Higan sugi made* represents in his development the beginning of a new approach to art and to life, an approach which was to result in yet greater works in the same vein.
Notes
on
Critical Study

In my compilation of these notes on Higan sugi made, I have been greatly aided by the notes of (1) Furukawa Hisashi (pp. 292-303) in Volume X of Sōseki Zenshū (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1956-1957, 1980) 35 vols. (hereafter to be referred to simply as Zenshū); and (2) those of Ara Masahito in Volume VI of Sōseki Bungaku Zenshū (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1971), 11 vols. (hereafter referred to by the initials, SBZ).

[Numbers in parentheses following footnote numbers refer to the page of text on which the footnote originates.]

1

2
(3) Nakamura Mitsuo, Sōseki to Hakuchō (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1979), p. 35.

3
(3) Shishōsetsu: were private confessional stories that were popular in Sōseki's time. See Nakamura, Sōseki to Hakuchō, p. 63.

4
(4) Fukae Hiroshi, Sōseki chōhen shōsetsu no sekai (Tokyo: Ōfusha, 1982), pp. 5-6.

5
(6) Nakamura, p. 63.

6

7

8
(9) SBZ, p. 270.

9
(9) Eguchi Kan, "Sōseki sanbo yawa yori," Natsume Sōseki Kenkyū, ed. Itō Sei (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 93


14 (12) Zenshū, XXIV, 221-230.

15 (12) Zenshū, V, 23.

16 (13) Zenshū, VI, 88.

17 (13) See Komiya Toyotaka's comment on Kōfu in Zenshū, VI, 207.

18 (13) Zenshū, XXI, 185.


20 (17) The kanji for sokuten kyoshi is

則天去私

21 (17) Komiya, p. 292.


24 (18) Eto, p. 15.

25 (18) Zenshū, XXVI, 75-80.

26 (18) Zenshū, XXVI, 80

27 (18) Zenshū, XXVI, 86

28 (18) Zenshū, X, 7.

29 (19) Yoshida Seiichi ed., Natsume Sōseki
(19) Yoshida, p. 201.

(21) Komiya, p. 206.

(21) Zenshū, X, 282.

(23) SBZ, XI, 671-693.

(23) Zenshū, IX, 285-289.

(24) Viglielmo, XIX, 22.
(25) Viglielmo, XIX, 23.
(26) Viglielmo, XIX, 24-29.
(27) Yu, pp. 110-111.
(28) Viglielmo, XIX, 45.
(29) Viglielmo, XIX, 5.

(32) James, 257-258.
(33) Yu, 110.
(36) James, 262-263.
(38) Zenshū, XX, 41-42. The quotation is from Soseki's essay, "Philosophical Base of Creative Writers."
(38) Zenshū, XVII, 5-85.
(38) Zenshū, XVII, 10.
(39) Zenshū, XXV, 183-184.
(40) Zenshū, VI, 22.
(40) Zenshū, VI, 22.
(41) James, p. 262.
(43) Two of Valdo Viglielmo's students, Setsuko Aihara and Tomoko Fujii, have suggested that Leonid Andreyev's novel given in Higan sugi made the title of Gedanke (or Thought) foreshadows the destructive development of jealousy in Kōjin and Kokoro.
(43) James, p.325.
(44) James, 263.
(45) Translation, p. 338. Ch. 6, Sect. 1; Cf. Zenshū, X, 246.
(46) James, p. 264.
(47) James, p. 325.
In traditional plots the paths of the major characters intersect and conflict or significant change results. If, as here maintained, the paths of the major characters are generally parallel, then there can be no hero, and the behavior of each major character reflects on and intensifies the meaning of what happens in the lives of other major characters. These characters reach out for each other. They seek not parallel courses, but to intersect. Reality and value are to be sought in character interrelationships. Yet the lot of all the major figures is ultimately isolation and separateness. Morimoto's most meaningful act is to go away; love is insufficient to unite two such different people as Chiyoko and Sunaga; Matsumoto has turned his back on the world of action, as he admits and his sister-in-law acknowledges. The dilemmas of this microcosmic family are depicted not for purposes of easy, novelistic solution, but as indicative of the human condition in any time or place.

The idea of the pluralistic existence of individuals is taken up also by Ogura Yuzo as a dominant theme in Higan sugi made in his article, "Soseki no William James juyo ni tsuite," Kindai bungaku, XXVIII, (1981), 61.

Izu Toshihiko in Higan sugi made ron jōsetsu," Koza Natsume Soseki, ed. Miyoshi Yukio et al. 1982 also suggests that Soseki juxtaposes all characters against each other as separate individuals, each with his own life to disentangle, so that no one individual dominates the others.


Zenshu, XXV, 8-9.


Zenshu, X, 18.

See Translation, Ch. I, Sect. 5; cf. Zenshu, X, 18.

(55) Stevenson, IV, 41.

(55) Stevenson, IV, 60.

(56) Stevenson, IV, 65-66.

(56) Stevenson, IV, 66.

(56) See Translation, p. 14, Ch I, Sect. 5; cf. Zenshū, X, 18.

(61) James, 244.

(62) James, 235-236.

(63) James, 237.

(63) Shigematsu Yasuo, writing in Sakuhinron: Natsume Sōseki (Tokyo: Sō bunsha, 1976), p.7, about stream-of-consciousness in Sōseki's novels, says that the author's inclination changed from a "positive selection" of the elements of conscious perception to an more tentative, passive acceptance of what crossed the screen of his mind, beginning with Kōfu, and continuing in subsequent novels. He attributes this change to James's Varieties of Religious Experience. Ogura Yūzō, however, ("Sōseki no William James jyūyō ni tsuite," Nihonkindai bungaku, XXVIII (1981) 64) suggests that James's Principles of Psychology had already pointed out to Sōseki the importance of the hazy outer edge of consciousness, and so he disagrees with Shigematsu's belief that "The Varieties of Religious Experience should be attributed Sōseki's change in attitude observable in Kōfu and later works.


(65) James, p. 254.

(67) Translation, pp. 7-8, Ch.I, Sect. 7; cf. Zenshū, X, 13-14.


(71) Translation, p. 6, Ch. I, Sect. 2; cf. Zenshū, X, 12.

(71) Streetcars figure very prominently in the action of HSM. The following information concerning their importance in the city of Tokyo during Sōseki's lifetime comes from the section, "Ogawa-machi teiryūjo" in Takagi Fumio, Sōseki no Meikon (Tokyo: Ōfū-sha, 1977), pp. 116-117.

The streetcars were a great novelty in Tokyo just after the turn of the century. They began operation in 1903 as a private enterprise backed by three companies, the largest of which was the Gaitetsu Company. In 1906, a merger made the three companies one, and in 1911, just before Sōseki began writing Higan sugi made, the company was taken over by the city in an effort to serve more people in farflung areas. At the time of merger, in 1906, the streetcar lines covered seventy kilometers; when the city assumed control, they were expanded to one hundred kilometers, and, in the next five years, to one hundred and thirty kilometers. Suda-chō and Ogawa-machi, streetcar stops mentioned often in HSM, were at the very center of the whole system (see appendix for map).

Sōseki's interest in this modern conveyance is further indicated by the fact that he makes the hero of Botchan an engineer working for Gaitetsu Company upon his return from Shikoku. Another of his characters, Meitei in Wagakai wa neko de aru (I am a Cat), half-jokingly remarks, "I had eight hundred and eighty-eight shares of stock in the Gai-tetsu Streetcar Company, but unfortunately they have mostly been eaten by now, so that only about half my shares are left." In Sanshirō, Nonomiya Sōhachi, the scholarly researcher at the University laments, "I can't get a transfer easily on the streetcar without asking the conductor. In two or three years the number of cars has increased too much. This "convenience" just gives me more trouble!" And Ogawa Sanshirō himself as he tried to get to Hitotsubashi, had trouble transferring and was carried out of his way. Also, Sanshirō read in the newspaper before coming to Tokyo that "the line which was supposed to pass in front of Tokyo University had been re-routed via Koishikawa" when University authorities protested that the streetcars were adversely affecting the readings of their seismometers.

93 (75) Translation, p. 52, Ch. II, Sect. 5; cf. Zenshū, X, 44.

94 (75) Translation, p. 232, Ch. V, Sect. 2; cf. Zenshū, X, 169.


96 (75) Translation, p. 350, Ch. VI, Sect. 5; cf. Zenshū, X, 255.

97 (75) Translation, p. 351, Ch. VI, Sect. 5; cf. Zenshū, X, 255.

98 (77) Translation, pp 93-100, Ch. II, Sect. 17-19; cf. Zenshū, X, 68-76.

99 (78) Translation, p. 94, Ch. II, Sect. 17; cf. Zenshū, X, 72.

100 (78) Translation, pp. 99-100, Ch. II, Sect. 19; cf. Zenshū, X, 76.

101 (79) See the quotation of Masamune Hakuchō (Natsume Sōseki Kenkyū, ed. Itō Sei, p. 181) from Sōseki's Sore kara (And Then): "Daisuke usually frowned upon the direct, unsubtle sexual allusions in the talk between the man and the woman in the Western novels that he read. If one were to read in the original language, the thought might at least be tolerable, but it was impossible to translate into Japanese. And so, in cultivating the love between Michiyo and himself, he never thought about using an imported line of words."

Concerned though he always is with human relationships, Sōseki nevertheless tends to observe the proprieties of his day when dealing with sexuality.

102 (80) Translation, p. 90, Ch. II, Sect. 16 Zenshū, X, 69.

103 (82) Translation, 124, Ch. II, Sect. 27; cf. Zenshū, X, 93.

104 (82) Translation, p. 127, Ch. II, Sect. 28; cf. Zenshū, X, 95-96.

(83) Translation, pp. 308-311, Ch V, Sect. 27; cf. Zenshū, X, 225-227.

(83) Translation, pp. 187-188, Ch. III, Sect. 11; cf. Zenshū, X, 139.

(84) Translation, p. 224, Ch. IV, Sect. 8; cf. Zenshū, X 164.

(84) Translation, p. 213, Ch. IV, Sect. 5; cf. Zenshū, X, 157.


(85) Translation, p. 240, Ch. V, Sect. 5; cf. Zenshū, X, 175.


(86) Translation, p. 266, Ch V, Sect. 13; cf. Zenshū, X, 194.

(87) Translation, p. 341, Ch VI, Sect. 2; cf. Zenshū, X, 249.

(87) Zenshū, XVI, 65-66.

(89) Translation, p. 371, Ch. VI, Sect. 12; cf. Zenshū, X, 273.

(89) Translation, p. 339, Ch.VI, Sect. 1; cf. Zenshū, X, 247.

Concerning the Forthcoming Novel
(The Author's Preface)

I must confess to my readers that I was supposed to have been ready with the first installment of this new novel for the newspaper of August of last year. But someone here at Asahi kindly spoke out in my defense, excusing me on the grounds of ill health. Following my serious illness of last summer, he could not bring himself to urge me to work during hot weather. I took full advantage of this considerateness, and not only rested throughout a postponement of two months, but did not even pick up my pen in October! Soon November and December had passed without leaving any trace in the newspaper of my novel. Like a breaking wave my unresolved intention moves ever forward, to produce only another breaking wave behind it, and another behind that. I am not happy in this predicament.

It was finally decided that I should start with the first installment of the new novel at the beginning of the new year. This decision satisfied me completely: I could now give free rein to my imagination, so long restrained, at the same time repaying the great debt of obligation that had weighed
me down. Yet, as soon as I tried to think how I might perform with maximum rapidity and effectiveness what had been too long postponed, I again found myself distressed and uncertain. I felt that, in partial compensation for my long neglectfulness, I should create an absorbing narrative. Moreover, I wanted to repay my tolerant friends at the Asahi for their concern over my health (as well as for other matters) and to reward the expectations of my faithful readers who had become accustomed to reading some of my writing in daily installments. I very much hope that I may come up with work that is satisfying to all readers.
Keitarō had begun to get a little tired of running around looking for a job without much result. He knew that he could take the physical strain alone without difficulty, because he was healthy and fit. But, as he again and again encountered closed doors and blind alleys in his search, or, worse still, found himself, as had happened several times, rejected for a position that had seemed all but certain, his job-hunting enthusiasm gradually faded away. So tonight, reacting against a certain exasperation, he sought to convince himself that he was, in fact, in good spirits; with great deliberateness, he opened a bottle of beer which he did not particularly want, drank its contents, and then opened another and another. But he had never really enjoyed drinking very much, and it served little purpose now. Unable to shake off his gloomy mood in this mechanical fashion, he finally summoned the maid to tidy up his room.
As soon as she saw his flushed countenance, she exclaimed, "Oh, my! Mr. Tagawa! Gracious! Really!"

He rubbed his flaming cheeks in some embarrassment, and said, "My face is red, isn't it? It's a shame to waste such fine coloration on a light bulb, so I'm going to bed. Would you please make up my bed for me?"

Avoiding the maid's further reaction, he escaped into the corridor. When he returned from the lavatory, she had gone. He crawled muzzily into his blankets, and mumbled confusedly to himself, "Now I'll rest for a while!"

During the night he woke up twice: once because he was thirsty, and again because of a dream. When he opened his eyes a third time, it was already daylight. The realization that the rest of the world had already turned to its daily tasks made him shut his eyes again and mumble to himself, "Rest, rest, rest..." But then his ear caught the insistent, stupid loudness of the wall clock as it chimed the hour, and, after that, he could not sleep no matter how hard he tried. Finally, he gave up the effort, and smoked a cigarette as he lay in bed. When he was halfway through, the ashes from the tip of the Shikishima fell and scattered on the white
pillowcase. He was determined not to get up, but a strong ray of sunlight from the east windows fell full on his face, giving him a slight headache. He surrendered. Once out of bed, he picked up his towel, settled a toothpick in his mouth, and headed for the neighborhood bath.

The clock in the bath house was already a little past ten, but the tile floor was all tidied up, without the usual scattering of little wooden buckets. Only one other customer was there, a man sitting sideways in the huge tub, splashing water lazily on himself, and watching the sunlight that shone through the glass panels. Keitaro realized that it was Morimoto, who lived in the same boarding house.

"Good morning," he said politely.

Morimoto returned the greeting. Then, seeing the toothpick, he added, "My goodness! Just getting up and cleaning your teeth at this late hour? But, come to think of it, your room was dark and empty last night, wasn't it?"

"Not a bit of it!" answered Keitarō, "The light was on from early evening. Unlike you, my friend, I lead an exemplary life: very rarely do I go prowling in the night."
"Oh, yes, I know! Pure and wholesome as can be! So much so, that I envy you! Yes, indeed I do!"

Keitarō was a little amused at his neighbor, still at this late hour soaking himself in hot water up to his chest, and, with a rather self-absorbed expression, splashing the surface again and again with his hand. Gazing at this utterly relaxed man, each hair of whose unkempt moustache glistened with waterdrops, Keitarō said, "My affairs are of no importance. But what about you? Won't you be missed at your office?"

"Oh. It's a holiday at my office." His arms were folded languidly on the edge of the tiled pool. He rested his forehead on his arms as though he had a headache.

"Really? What holiday?"

"Oh, nothing special. I needed one, so I invented it for myself."

Keitarō felt as though he had unexpectedly come upon a kindred spirit.

"So you too are taking time off?"

"Time off. Yes, yes, you might call it that."

His head still rested on his arms.

While Keitarō sat on a small wooden stool to
allow the bath attendant to scrub his back, Morimoto at last raised his steaming red body from the hot bath water. With a completely peaceful expression on his face, he sat down on the tile floor opposite Keitarō, and began to compliment him on his splendid physique.

"How lucky you are, with your fine, healthy body."

"It's not in very good condition these days,"
replied Keitarō.

"Good condition? Hah! Look at mine!" Morimoto slapped his stomach with his hand. It was not flat; it was hollow, receding to such an extent that Keitarō half expected to see the outline of the backbone in it.

"Since I have an unhealthy, sedentary sort of occupation, my physical condition gets worse and worse," said Morimoto. "And, of course, I confess to having had my share of good, unhealthy times." He laughed abruptly as though remembering something.

"Tell me about them," said Keitarō, attuning himself to the other's mood. "I have all the time in the world today, and it has been a long while since last we talked together."

"By all means, let's do that," said Morimoto immediately. The words were enthusiastic, but the speaker's appearance was that of a person barely
conscious. He had lingered so long in the hot water that all his muscles seemed for the time to have stopped functioning.

While Keitarō busied himself, now with vigorously shampooing his hair, now with scrubbing the hard skin on the soles of his feet and between the toes, Morimoto remained as before, seated on the floor, legs crossed, quiet and motionless, making no effort to scrub himself. Finally, he dropped his thin body once more into the hot pool. He came out at about the same time that Keitarō did. As he dried himself with the towel, he said, "A morning bath once in a while is a great luxury. I feel so clean and alive. You too?"

"Of course," replied Keitarō. It seems especially so to you because all you do is sit there and cook yourself. No scrubbing at all. It's not a practical necessity for you, but almost a sensual indulgence."

"Mmmm, true, I have no special method. But, on a fine morning like this, scrubbing is a nuisance. I submit to a lazy soaking and, when I'm done, just get out. But you're three times as diligent! You scour yourself from head to toe! Nothing is left unscrubbed! And then with your toothpick, you pick your teeth. Such thoroughness is most impressive!"
The two left the bath house together. Morimoto wished to buy a roll of writing paper, and Keitarō accompanied him to the store. As they proceeded along the alley and turned to the east, the road suddenly became muddy. The previous night's rain had softened the dirt, and the horses and wagons as well as the pedestrians had trodden it into a viscous soup. They picked their steps along the muddy road with an almost disgusted care. The sun was already high in the sky, but the water vapor from the rains seemed to hover steamily close to the ground.

"I wish," said Morimoto, "I could evoke for your eyes the way everything looked to me this morning when I came out. The sun was shining, but the air was hazy. In the passing streetcars the passengers appeared like silhouettes in a shadow play, each one a grey ghost outlined by the sun behind him. It was quite a sight: mysterious!"

As he spoke in this way, they came to the stationery store. He left Keitarō outside, and came out holding his kimono where it bulged with the roll of writing paper and the envelopes he had bought. They walked back on the same muddy road, soon arriving at their lodging house. As soon as they had climbed the two flights to his room, noisily slapping their slippers on the steps, Keitarō courteously opened his

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shōji panel, waved his hand inward, and said, "Please!" inviting his companion to enter.

"Isn't it too close to lunchtime?" asked Morimoto hesitantly. But then, to Keitarō's faint surprise, he followed him right in, as naturally as though it were his own room.

"The view from here is always so fine," he said as he opened the window himself and spread his wet towel on the board by the wooden railing.

Keitarō had for some time been curious about his thin fellow lodger, who, though emaciated, seemed free of any serious illness. He had noticed him every morning heading toward Shimbashi Station. How was it, he wondered, that this single man, already past thirty, lived in a boarding house and walked every day to work? Everything about him was an "X," a mathematical unknown, to Keitarō. What exactly did he do at the station? Curious as he was, Keitarō never asked and Morimoto never volunteered the information. At times the unemployed ex-student went to the station to see someone off, but, enveloped in all its crowded confusion, he never thought to associate his solitary neighbor with the place, nor did Morimoto ever happen
to appear in front of him there to remind him of his existence. Somehow, he had gradually come to know Morimoto well enough to greet him or chat briefly with him in passing, sensing in him, perhaps, a fellow sufferer in the drab boarding house routine.

It may be appropriate, therefore, to say that Keitaro was more fascinated by his thin neighbor's past than by his present existence. Morimoto had mentioned to him the days when he had been a respectable family man. He had referred to his wife. And he also had told him of the death of their child. Keitaro couldn't forget the way he spoke of it: "Sometimes I think that her little errant spirit did me a favor by dying when she did. Until then, I had been under the spell of my loudspeaker, the braying nay-sayer." He recalled particularly the man's strident laugh when he asked him, "What braying nay-sayer? I don't understand." And he had replied, "Don't you know that that is the Chinese character for one's wife?"

Even from the few bits of information which he let fall, the man's past had the scent of mystery; trailing behind him was an aura of romance, like the tail of a comet.

Quite apart from amorous involvements, he had been the hero of all kinds of adventures. He had not
yet, it seemed, shot seals at Azarashi Island, but his yarn about making money salmon-fishing off Hokkaido sounded accurate enough. So too did the admission that his claim of discovering precious antimony in a certain mountain of Shikoku was essentially a tall tale. Inasmuch as he confessed to the deception, there was no reason to doubt it.

But his most incredible venture was a project for the manufacturing of spigots for wooden sake kegs. Morimoto had observed that there were very few craftsmen in Tokyo capable of making the traditional spigot. Even now he regretted the failure of the enterprise because of conflicts he had had with the craftsmen he had brought up from Osaka.

When he came to discuss his non-business activities, he demonstrated once again that he had had an abundance of fascinating experiences: he described vividly, for example, the sight of several bears taking a nap on the rocks across the Chikuma River when he was hiking near its sources. This was colorful enough. More colorful still was his yarn of the blind man who climbed to the innermost temple at the top of Mount Togakushi in Shinshū, a feat of great difficulty even for a man without handicaps. To get there, even the experienced climber has to spend a night on the mountain. Morimoto had stopped when
about halfway up, and was warming himself over a fire against the chill of night. When, to his surprise, he heard the sound of a bell coming up the mountain. It grew louder. Finally a blind man appeared. Not stopping, the sightless climber bade him good evening and went on. Keitarō, commenting on this anecdote of Morimoto's later, remarked, "It didn't seem very credible, and, upon my pressing him further, he conceded that there was a guide with the blind man. The story became more plausible when he told me that the guide had a bell at his belt, and the blind man followed its sound. Even so, it seems a bit far-fetched."

When his mood grew more intense, his tales developed almost like ghost stories, formed most courteously by that mouth under the unkempt moustache. When he was passing through the steep Yabakei Ravine in Kyushū, he went (so he told Keitarō) to visit the Rakanji Temple. As he climbed down the narrow mountain trail between tall cedar trees just after sundown, he unexpectedly passed a young woman going upward. She was made up formally, with rouge and powder, her hair done up as though for a wedding; she was in a very formal, custom-designed kimono with stiff, brocaded obi. Clearly, she could have had no business at the temple at that late hour.
The temple gates were already closed. Yet there she was, walking all by herself in the gathering darkness, in full formal costume, toward the Rakanji Temple.

Whenever Keitarō heard this sort of yarn, he merely smiled, unconvinced, and said only, "Really?" And yet unfailingly he listened with great interest and anticipation.

On this day too, he had quite deliberately gone out of his way, accompanying Morimoto on his errand and returning home with him, in hope of hearing more of his characteristic yarns. Even though not far advanced in age, Morimoto's was the life story of one who had been through the many vicissitudes of this world, and so, to Keitarō, freshly out of school as of the previous summer, it was not only absorbing, but potentially very useful.

Moreover, by nature, Keitarō was a romanticist who loathed the workaday routine. Some time earlier, when the Asahi of Tokyo had published serially the adventure stories of one Kodama Otomatsu, Keitarō had awaited each installment with the eagerness of a junior high school student not yet old enough for conscription. In particular, the episode in which Otomatsu fought with a huge octopus as it lunged out
Of a cave at him so excited him that he described it to a university classmate with great earnestness: how Otomatsu had shot many times with his pistol at the head of the monster, even though the bullets had, because of the slippery surface of its slimy head, just slid on past or perhaps not hit at all. So claimed Otomatsu. And then a horde of smaller octopuses came out from behind their leader, and surrounded Otomatsu and his antagonist. The hero stared curiously at them, and realized that they were interested spectators, watching to see who would win!

Keitarō's friend responded mockingly: "A character like you wouldn't be content with taking the civil service examination and pursuing a routine career. Why don't you go off to the South Seas or some such place, and start up a career as an octopus hunter once you've graduated?" And from then on the phrase "Tagawa's octopus hunt" was often heard on the lips of his friends. After graduation, whenever they chanced to meet him as he searched desperately for a job, they would say, "How's the octopus hunt going these days?"

Even Keitarō could not take seriously the idea of octopus-hunting in the South Seas; but he had toyed while a student with the idea of setting up a rubber plantation in Singapore. From morning to the fall of
night he would visualize himself as manager of a vast establishment, living alone in a one-story bungalow in the midst of a sea of rubber trees. His imagination took note of a bare wooden floor, and forthwith placed a huge tiger skin rug on it. On the wall were mounted the horns of a water buffalo, from one of which a gun was slung, and under which was placed an ancient Japanese sword in a brocaded sheath. With a spotless white turban wound many times around his head, he lounged on a wicker chair on his spacious verandah, smoking pungent Havana cigars in lordly fashion. In addition, his daydreams supplied him with a mysterious black cat from Sumatra that had beautiful silky hair, golden eyes and a tail longer than her body, which curled up luxuriously at his feet. Only after his imagination had run wild in this fashion did he settle down to realistic planning concerning the business. It would take much work and time, he discovered, merely to lease the acreage needed to plant the rubber trees. Then it was enormously difficult to clear the land, and far more expensive than he had thought to prepare the soil and plant the trees. Not only would he have to keep a work force on hand to clear away the weeds; he would also just have to sit and wait, with his finger in his mouth, for six long years, for the young plants to mature. Finally, as doubts about the
project were increasing in his mind, the specialist in rubber production who had been coaching him made him lose all hope by saying that rubber tree growers would soon be in financial trouble because the supply of rubber was getting larger than the world demand. At that point he gave up so completely that he no longer even tried to pronounce the "r" of "rubber"!

But his appetite for exotic adventure seemed not to diminish at all. As he walked amidst the bustle of the city, he dreamt not only about far-away countries and people, but fancied that the ordinary men and women he saw every day in the streetcar concealed something extraordinary under their coats or inside their sleeves, and might well turn out to be remarkable heroes. And he felt a terrible urge to lift up cape or coat and spy into the heart of their mystery before just moving on as though nothing at all had happened.

Keitarō's tendency toward romantic speculativeness seemed to have developed gradually from the time in higher school when his English teacher had assigned to the class Robert Louis Stevenson's *New Arabian Nights* as textbook. Before
that time, he had hated English. But once started on
Stevenson, he never neglected his homework, and,
whenever he was called upon, he stood up and
translated the passage correctly. This showed how
fascinated he was with the story. At one point,
because of the vigor of his imagination, he became
confused as to where reality ended and fiction began,
and he earnestly asked his teacher, "Did events like
this really happen in nineteenth-century London?" His
instructor, who had just recently returned from
London, pulled out a linen handkerchief from the back
pocket of his black melton morning coat, and, dabbing
at his nose, said, "This sort of thing might happen,
not only in the nineteenth century, but even now!
London is indeed a mysterious city!" Keitarō's eyes
gleamed with fascination. The teacher had then added,
in words something like this as he walked away from
his chair, "Of course, Stevenson was no commonplace
writer, and his way of interpreting events was quite
different from the ordinary mode of seeing, a fact
which might have some bearing on the resultant
narration. Indeed, Stevenson could dream up an
elaborate romance just from seeing a waiting carriage
at the corner." Keitarō didn't see the relationship
between the waiting carriage and the romance, but,
upon venturing a question and receiving a kindly
explanation, he began for the first time to comprehend the complex interrelationship between fact and fiction. From that time on, whenever he caught sight of a waiting ricksha, such as were routine and abundant at any corner of the city of Tokyo, he would imagine that precisely this ricksha last night might have been careening madly down the street, carrying a murderer and his stiletto in its confines—or perhaps it might have been flying toward a railroad station with a beautiful woman behind the hood intent on catching a train bound in a direction opposite to what the pursuers would guess. Dreaming of such suspenseful, terrifying adventures, he laughed to himself, perfectly happy.

As he got more and more into the habit of drifting off into such imaginary worlds, he naturally looked at the reality around him and wondered why, since the world was so complicated, even though it might be different from his imaginings, he shouldn't at least once in his life, come upon some rare and unusual adventure that would sound out to his spirit a rich and vibrant chord. But, since his graduation from the university, his daily routine had been limited to the repetition of riding the streetcars and visiting strange people to show letters of recommendation. There had not been a single exciting episode so far.
He was bored to death with the face of the maid whom he saw every day when she tidied his room, and with the meals he ate each day at the boarding house. It seemed to him that, if only his application for a job on the Manchurian Railroad or the opening in Korea were finally settled, he would, quite apart from financial betterment, get some excitement. But when, several days before, he had been told in no uncertain terms that there was no hope for either of these prospects at present, he had become quite despondent, somehow feeling that the boring reality confronting him was the inevitable result of his own inability. And so he lost the will to seek not only a means of livelihood, but even to explore the many varieties of human existence while nonchalantly riding the street cars here and there, as though looking for a coin dropped on the streets. It was because of this that the night before he had furiously drunk beer, which he had never much liked, before falling into bed.

In such a mood, Keitarō found it most stimulating to meet Morimoto, a person who could only be classified as an ordinary being of extraordinary experience. For this very reason he had gone out of his way with him to buy the roll of paper, and then had invited him into his room.
Morimoto sat by the window and looked outside for a while. "The view from your window is always very fine, don't you think? It's especially beautiful today. Below that well-scrubbed blue sky, the green of the shrubbery stands out. The vista of those red roofs closed in by the clumps of warm green surely would make a fine painting!"

"I suppose so," Keitarō felt compelled to reply.

Morimoto inspected the board about one foot in width at the base of the window, on which he was resting his elbows. "You must place a bonsai or two here."

"Possibly, possibly!" thought Keitarō. But, since he was not inclined to go on repeating, "I suppose so," he asked instead, "Does your interest extend even to paintings and bonsai?"

"Oh, thanks for your high opinion! I don't, of course, blame you for asking the question. I don't look the type, do I? But, excuse me, you may not believe it, to be sure, yet the fact is that I have worked with bonsai and kept goldfish, and at one time I used to do some painting myself, quite often."

"You're involved in just about everything,
aren't you?"

"Good at everything, good for nothing, as they say. I'm a result of that logic," he replied mildly to Keitarō with no hint of irritation. Keitarō could detect no trace of regret concerning his past, no sadness about his present situation.

"I've often thought--I've wished that I could taste just a little of the varied and exciting life you have led...." But, as Keitarō began to speak in this serious fashion, Morimoto waved his right hand wildly in front of his face almost as though he were drunk.

"That's no good! no good at all! While you're young--I don't think I'm a great deal older than you?--anyway, while you're young, I say, you naturally want to try anything that is different. But, after you've tried out all the different things, you look back and only then realize--it's all so stupid, they are all, these experiences, not worth going through, not one bit! You have your whole future ahead of you. If only you sit still, a splendid future will fall into your lap without any striving on your part. You mustn't become impatient or rebellious at this stage. To do so would not be a kindness to your parents.--But, anyway--I have been thinking about asking you many times: tell me, if I may ask, how is the job-hunt
Keitarō, candid as usual, told him gloomily how the situation stood, and added, "I'm going to stop running around uselessly for a while, because I've exhausted all the real possibilities." Morimoto looked a little surprised.

"Really? Nowadays you can't find a position with any ease even after having graduated from the university? I find it hard to believe! This depression is worse than I had thought. Of course, we're already more than forty years into the Meiji reign, and I suppose it may be expected, but still--."

Morimoto tilted his head as though savoring the profundity of his thoughts. Watching his friend, Keitaro did not find him absurd, but did wonder to himself, "Is he using those words because he really understands, or because, with his lack of education, that's the only thing he knows how to say?"

Suddenly Morimoto sat up straight. "How about this, my friend? Would you like to work at the Railroad, do you think? Would you like me to speak to someone?"

Even such an extreme romanticist as Keitarō could not imagine that this fellow could be of any help in getting him a job. But he wasn't so discourteous as to take Morimoto's optimistic offer as
a joke. He forced himself to smile, and called the maid, told her to bring Morimoto's tray also to his room, and ordered some sake.

While announcing that he was keeping away from alcohol because of his health, Morimoto emptied his sake cup every time his host filled it. Finally while telling Keitarō that one had to know when it was time to quit, he had picked up the bottle and was pouring his own.

He had always been mild with an amiable disposition, but, as he emptied his cups, his mildness seemed to be heating up, and his amiability expanded enormously. He began to brag.

"Now, I can swallow anything! It wouldn't make the slightest difference, even if I got fired tomorrow!"

He watched Keitarō, who was just moistening his lips from time to time with the sake cup, and snorted, "Tagawa-san! Really, now, can't you drink? How strange! How can you love adventure without loving to drink? I don't understand. Every adventure begins with a drink, don't you know? Just as it ends with a woman!"

Shortly before he had been making scornful remarks about his own past, but now, comfortably under the influence of liquor, he changed completely, and
vapored forth many high-flown fancies mostly about his own failures. Furthermore, with the young man as his audience, he intoned, "You must excuse me for saying so, but you're freshly out of school and don't know what the real world is like. Even if you waved your diploma--a B.A or a Ph.D.even--I wouldn't be intimidated!"

Boisterously, he slapped Keitarō on the back, apparently having completely forgotten that a minute before he had been earnestly insisting on the importance of an education. But the next instant he gave a sigh that was half-belch, and lamented dolefully his own lack of educated polish.

"Yet, to sum up, I've roamed around this world like a monkey, you know. I'm not bragging, but I've had ten times as much experience as you've had. And yet, it has led to no smidgeon of enlightenment, as you see, because I have no education. To be sure, now, if I were educated, I might not be able to change myself around every second like this...."

Keitarō had been regarding him as a pioneer, a hardy man ahead of his time, and had been listening to him with a certain respect. But he wished he had not offered him sake, for today his talk was adulterated so much with bragging and grumbling that it lacked its usual charm and fascination. He ceased proferring the
sake bottle, but the damage was done. He poured some freshly prepared tea, and took a different approach to the conversation.

"Your varied experiences never cease to fascinate me. To a person like me, who hasn't been around very much, they're very instructive. I greatly appreciate your telling me these things. But tell me, of all your many adventures, which was the most exciting to you?"

Morimoto, blowing on the hot tea to cool it, blinked his slightly reddened eyes several times and remained silent. Then, after draining the tea from the deep cup, he said, "Well, let me see--. Looking back on it now, everything was fine, but at the same time not all of them were exciting. --I can not say--. You did say "exciting." Do you mean affairs concerning the ladies?"

"Why, no, I hadn't that particularly in mind. But, of course, that too is of great interest."

"Ah, so that's what you'd really like to hear, isn't it? But, joking aside, I don't know if this will seem really exciting or not to you, but there is one experience in my life which might be called the most carefree of them all. May I tell you about this as a sort of dessert after tea?"

Keitarō acquiesced immediately.

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"In that case-- but excuse me for a moment. I must use the toilet.." As he was getting up, he said as though trying to avoid any misunderstanding, "But remember, there are no women involved. All right? Not only no women, but hardly any human beings at all!"

He went out into the corridor. Keitarō waited with mounting curiosity.

He waited for five minutes, and then for ten; but the adventurer did not return. Keitarō could wait no longer. He went downstairs and looked in the lavatory. There was no trace of Morimoto. Just to be sure, he climbed upstairs again, this time to Morimoto's room. The sliding door was open five or six inches--and there was the man he sought, sleeping like a log with his arm for a pillow.

"Morimoto-san! Morimoto-san!" he called repeatedly, but the sleeper didn't move. Exasperated at the sight, Keitarō entered the room, seized his shoulder and shook him vigorously. Morimoto exclaimed, "Hah?!" and started up as though he had been stung by a bee. But as soon as he recognized Keitarō, his eyes took on a dull, sleepy look, and he said, "Ah, so you see. You very kindly offered me sake, a little too
much perhaps. I felt a bit peculiar, so I came up here to lie down for a time, and fell asleep. I am sorry." He spoke apologetically without any trace of self-justification, and Keitarō forfeited his chance to be angry. And so, assuming that the hoped-for adventure yarn was not to be heard now given its teller's condition, the young man started to go back to his room. To his surprise, however, Morimoto again followed after him. "I am sorry for your trouble," he said. "Please excuse me." He sat down neatly on the cushion he had used earlier, and continued, "Well, now then, let me tell you about the most carefree time that I have ever experienced."

This memorable event had happened to Morimoto when, fifteen or sixteen years before, he had been employed as a technician, surveying inland areas of Hokkaidō. They would set up their tent in a remote, uninhabited area, and, as soon as they had completed their task, move on to another spot. It was only natural, therefore, that there were no women there, as he had warned earlier. "But just keep in mind that we had to clear away bamboo trees over twenty feet in height in order to make a trail, you know...." Raising his right hand above his forehead, he demonstrated how tall the bamboo grove had been. On either side of the trail they were clearing, they might find, on any
given day, a snake lying in a coil, with the sunlight reflecting off its scales. One of them would pin it down from a distance with the tip of a stick, and the other would get close to hit and kill it. Then they would barbecue the meat and eat it, so he said. Keitarō asked how it tasted. Morimoto could not quite remember, but guessed that it was something between fish and meat.

Inside the tent, they would heap twigs and bamboo leaves into a pile, and lie down to rest, almost buried in them. Sometimes outside they would build a bonfire and by its light see a large bear right before their eyes. They hung mosquito netting all the time because there were many insects. Once, he took the net down to a stream and caught thus-and-such a kind of fish, and, from that night on, they had to go to sleep to their annoyance, under a fishy-smelling net. These constituted a part of Morimoto's vaunted carefree experience.

He had also hunted for various kinds of mushrooms in the mountains. The one called masudake was as large as a tray. When sliced and used in miso soup, it tasted rather like high-grade fishcake. Another, called the moonviewing mushroom, was so huge that he could not put his arms around it. But, alas! it was inedible. Still another, the nezumidake
mushroom, was both delicate and beautiful in appearance. He enumerated each of them with great care.

In addition, he mentioned in passing that he had picked a large hatful of wild grapes, and, as a result of eating them constantly, had given his tongue a painful coating so that he could not eat a regular meal. Not all his stories were about eating; one was a pathetic tale of not eating for a whole week. When their food supply was getting short, they sent a man to the village to get another supply of rice. While he was gone, there was a sudden rainstorm which caused a flood in the valley. Since the only way to get to the village was along the stream, once the valley was flooded, it was just about impossible to carry the rice back. Morimoto's hunger was so great that he could only lie on his back and watch the sky. At the end of the weeklong fast, he said, everything became blurred to him, and he could no longer distinguish between day and night.

"If you weren't drinking and eating for so long, " Keitarō said, "I suppose elimination of both sorts would cease, isn't that so?"

"No, no, they still continued," replied Morimoto casually.
Keitarō could not help but smile at these fanciful exaggerations. But Morimoto's description of an enormous windstorm he found still more entertaining. As the people of his company worked at their surveying task, they encountered a sudden fierce cyclone in the middle of a prairie. They fell flat on the ground and then on hands and knees crawled into the nearby forest. But the force of the wind was so great that it shook even the trunks of the huge trees and tore branches as big as a man's arm with a terrible sound. The movement of the trees was transmitted even to the the roots, and the ground on which they stood shook as in an earthquake.

"So, even in the forest, you couldn't stand up?" asked Keitarō. He answered that he had, of course, been lying flat on his back. But Keitarō found what he said quite incredible, for, no matter how strong the wind, he could not believe that it would uproot large trees firmly set in the ground; and, in spite of himself, he began to laugh. Morimoto joined in, as though it were a matter that concerned some other person. But, as the waves of laughter receded, his new friend turned suddenly serious and, signaling with his hands to Keitarō to keep quiet, he said, "I know it sounds ridiculous, but it's true! To an
educated person like you, I realize that it sounds like a fantasy. But listen here, Tagawa-san, quite apart from that windstorm, there are all sorts of strange and incredible events taking place in the world every day. You seem to be desperately in search of just such adventures, and yet, once you've earned your university degree, you become hopelessly unventuresome, it seems to me. When you're cornered and have to make a choice, you start to fuss about your position in society. Even if you should decide to forfeit some of your status and settle for less, it wouldn't be any heart-wrenching decision—not as though you had to give up everything to avenge a father's murder, the way they always do in the Kabuki plays. Nowadays nobody with any common sense goes wandering around sacrificing social status in favor of a higher duty. Besides your folks wouldn't let you do such a thing anyway; you're perfectly safe! "

Morimoto's words seemed to Keitarō to be suffused with gloom as well as a certain stubborn pride, and, indeed, he had to admit to himself that it was an unusual university graduate who could look forward to leading a life as adventurous as Morimoto's sounded. Nonetheless, feeling a bit rebellious at submitting so easily to the accusation, he replied defiantly, "But I've obviously been graduated from the
university, and still don't have a job. You keep talking about my position in life. But actually I'm bored to death running around trying to find this invisible position." He spoke almost in despair. Morimoto looked thoughtfully at him; finally he said, "You have no job now, but you do have a position in the world's social order; on the other hand, I have a job, but no position whatever in society's scheme of things. That's a basic difference, isn't it?"

He spoke softly as though tutoring a child. But these oracular pronouncements had no effect on Keitaro. The two of them sat silent, drawing from time to time on their cigarettes. Morimoto finally broke the silence.

"I too!" he exclaimed. "I'm getting bored too. For three years I've been working for the railroad. It's really very dull work, and I've been thinking of quitting. Even if I don't resign, sooner or later they would decide to fire me, and... Why wait? Three years is quite a long time by my standard, you know."

Keitaro could think of nothing to say. He had never experienced the sensations involved in quitting or being fired, and so could not enter into the other man's dilemma. It seemed to him that the conversation was getting abstract and dull. Morimoto seemed to sense intuitively his listener's lack of interest,
and, after chatting entertainingly for another ten minutes or so, said, "Many thanks for treating me here. And please remember, Tagawa-san, if there's anything you want to do, do it while you're young. That is all that counts."

He spoke solemnly, as though he were an old man of fifty.

Then he took his leave and went back to his room.

Following the "little party," Keitarō had scant opportunity for any further conversation with his neighbor. Inhabitants of the same boarding house, they saw each other on occasion in the morning or evening. Sometimes he saw him at the bathroom, wearing a padded bathrobe with a black collar. On other occasions he observed him going out after work, wearing a dashing new suit, and carrying an odd-looking cane. As he went in and out of the boarding house, his eye sought the ceramic umbrella stand, and, whenever he saw the cane there, he assumed that its owner was in his room. One day, however, although the cane remained in the umbrella stand, he suddenly realized that he hadn't seen Morimoto for some time.

For several days Keitarō did not know that his
neighbor had departed. When five days had passed during which he had still not seen him, Keitaro began to suspect something strange had happened. He inquired about him from the maid who served him his food in his room; she reported that he was supposed to have gone somewhere on a business trip. As a public employee, of course, he could have been sent on some such assignment. But Keitarō had sized him up as nothing more than a shipping clerk in charge of sending parcels, so the notion of a business trip was a little surprising. Still, since he had on leaving specified a trip of five or six days, and since the maid seemed sure that he would be back within a day or two, Keitaro supposed that the information was probably correct. But the days of the scheduled return passed, and there was still no padded bathrobe with black collar to be seen in the morning in the bathroom. The strange cane remained undisturbed in its stand with the umbrellas.

Eventually, the landlady came to ask if he had received any letter from the missing lodger. Keitarō said that he had just been on the verge of coming down to ask her the same question. She left his room with an air of apprehension in her round, owl-like eyes. Another week passed, and there was still no sign of Morimoto. Keitarō's puzzlement increased. One day he
stopped off at the proprietor's office as he was on his way back to his room to inquire about his missing friend. But, since he had just begun to search once more for a position with renewed vigor, he was largely preoccupied with his own affairs, and so, neglected to ask about the missing man after that. In fact, just as Morimoto had predicted, he gave up pursuing what might have been an intriguing mystery in favor of trying to make a living.

One evening the landlord knocked at his door and came in, saying, "Please excuse me for bothering you for just a short time." He then pulled out his tobacco-case from his obi. When he opened the cylindrical case containing his pipe, it made a sharp sound. He loaded the silver pipe with tobacco and puffed on it, skillfully exhaling the thick smoke through his nostrils. Keitarō was mystified. Behind the landlord's deliberate and casual manner was some definite purpose. He waited for him to speak.

"To tell the truth ... I have come to ask a favor of you, if I may.... I wonder... perhaps you might tell me the address of your friend, Mr. Morimoto?" He began speaking in a low, uncertain voice, but continued more bluntly, "I assure you that I'll not involve you in any trouble that may result from all this...mix-up...."
Stunned for a moment by the unexpectedness of the request, Keitarō did not reply immediately. Then he looked sharply into the landlord's eyes and said, "Suppose you tell me about this mix-up of yours." At that point, however, the landlord's pipe seemed to have clogged, and, using a metal probe from the hibachi, he poked at the pipe-stem energetically.

This done, he blew a few times into the pipe before starting slowly to explain. Morimoto, he said, had not paid for room and board for the past six months. Since he had lodged with them for three years, and since he had a steady job, the landlord had naturally accepted his excuses and his promise to pay off his indebtedness by the end of the year. But now this trip had come up. Naturally, they believed that he was indeed going to make a business trip. But when he had not returned on schedule, and when, furthermore, there had been no communication of any sort, they naturally became suspicious. So they took two steps: they searched his room, and they inquired after him at his place of work, Shimbashi Station.

The room contained his possessions and gave no indication of planned flight, but they were surprised by the information received at the station. They learned to their shocked surprise that Morimoto had resigned from his job a month before.

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"And so you see," concluded the landlord, "since we knew you were especially close to Mr. Morimoto, it occurred to us that you might know his whereabouts. Please understand, I haven't the slightest intention of holding you to account for his debt to me. I just would like you to tell me where I can at least get in touch with this— with your friend. Could you?"

Keitarō was appalled at being regarded as a close friend, perhaps an accomplice, of a shady fly-by-night. Thinking about it later, he granted Morimoto's venturesome way of life, so different from his own, had had a strong attraction for him. But now he felt himself dirtied and dishonored when, instead of being considered a young person with a promising future, he was regarded almost as an accomplice in a low scheme to escape a legitimate indebtedness.

In the direct fashion of most young people, Keitarō was vexed by the landlord's crass assumption, although he kept his feelings to himself. He felt not only indignant, but weird and unreal, as though he had been forced to pick up a great snake. Meanwhile the landlord in his peculiarly unhurried way, continued to
tamp tobacco into the bowl of his pipe. He tinkered with it so skillfully that it seemed almost a kind of artful accompaniment to the business under discussion. The man's misconception was just as disturbing to his young lodger as a legitimate accusation would have been. Keitarō watched him in silence, and resigned himself to the realization that there was unfortunately no way to clear up his visitor's suspicion beyond insisting on his own total ignorance of the missing man's affairs. As he had expected, his landlord did not quickly put his pipe and tobacco case away under his obi. He kept slipping the pipe first into the case and then out again. With each movement it made a hollow sound. After a time Keitarō could hardly stand listening to the repeated noise.

"You know, of course, that I have just been graduated from the university," he said. "I have no job yet, and not much money. But I nevertheless do have some education. If you think me some kind of fly-by-nighter like Morimoto, you are being deliberately insulting. I have told you and your wife repeatedly that I don't know where the man is, and it's outrageous for you to persist in your suspicion of me. If you continue to do so to one who has been your lodger for over two years, very well, then, I
shall have to make my plans accordingly. Have I ever, during my two years here, been behind in the rent--even once?"

The landlord hastily apologized and said he had not intended to appear to suspect him of anything improper. With great politeness, he then asked Keitarō, if, should he receive any letters from Morimoto, he would please let him know the return address, adding contritely, "If my questions about Mr. Morimoto have offended you, I wish to apologize many times over in the hope that you will see fit to excuse my clumsiness." Keitarō could hardly wait for the much-handled tobacco case to be settled once again back in the landlord's stiff obi, and so he accepted the apology. That theatrical prop, the tobacco case, finally disappeared into the stiff contour of the obi. As his visitor left the room, Keitarō could detect no vestige of suspicion in his face. He thought to himself, "It's good to blow up like that once in a while!"

Some time after this incident he realized that a new tenant was already living in Morimoto's old room. He had his doubts as to how the landlord had disposed of Morimoto's belongings, but ever since the visit with that tobacco case, he had resolved not to get any further involved in the problem of the missing
So, at least on the surface, he played ignorant. At this juncture in his life, his main objective was to find a decent job, although he was no longer as desperate in his search as before, and he patiently went for interviews to places promising and unpromising alike.

One evening the man he was to be interviewed by at Uchisaiwai-chō was not at home and so he had no choice but to take a streetcar back to his lodging once more. While on the streetcar, he noticed a woman wearing a haori woven of yellow hachijō silk carrying a baby on her back. Her eyebrows were thin and clearly defined; the line of her neck was long and graceful. Fashionably dressed as she was, she hardly seemed the sort to be carrying a baby on her back. Yet Keitarō decided that the baby must be her own. On looking more carefully, he noted the elegance of the cross-striped o-meshi silk kimono under her apron. He became even more curious. Since it was raining outside, several of the passengers were holding, cane-fashion, their umbrellas in front of them. Hers was the old-fashioned kind, with ribs of black lacquer. Apparently she did not wish to hold onto the cold, wet object, so she rested it on the seat beside her. At its tip he noticed the name, "Karuta," painted in red lacquer.
Clearly, she was a woman of the demi-monde, midway between respectability and a prostitute's calling. He summed up her appearance to himself: the baby that looked like any baby (though probably illegitimate, he supposed), her face with its dark eyebrows set against her light complexion, a faint crease of a frown between them, the fashionable o-meshi kimono, the umbrella with its black-lacquered ribs, and the name painted in red—as these impressions began to coalesce along his nerves, he recalled suddenly the woman whom Morimoto had loved and by whom he had had a child.

What was it he had said? "It sounds absurd, perhaps—as though I were still in love with her—but still, she was not at all a bad-looking woman. She had dark, well-defined eyebrows, and a habit of frowning, with little creases appearing between the brows as she talked...."

While trying to recall the words, Keitarō glanced again at the owner of the umbrella labelled Ka-ru-ta. But just then the woman got off the streetcar, and vanished into the rain. Left behind with his thoughts, on his way home alone, Keitaro recalled Morimoto's expressions and manners vividly once more, and wondered where fate might have carried him off to this time.
Upon arriving back at his boarding house, he found, to his amazement, a letter without any return address on his desk.

Overwhelmed by curiosity, he tore open the envelope. The first line — "Dear Mr. Tagawa," and the last two words — "from Morimoto" jumped to his eyes before anything else. Keitarō picked up the envelope again and tried to read the postmark from various angles, but it was so faint that he could not interpret it. Of necessity, then, he returned to the letter to learn what he could. It read:

You must have been surprised when I vanished so suddenly. Even if you weren't, the Thunder-Beast and his Hornool (Morimoto's verbal evocation of a horned owl, Keitarō recalled) must have been a bit startled. As one man to another, I confess that I was a little behind in paying for room and board, and I knew that if I told them the two of them would have made a great fuss. So I slipped away without a word. I assume that all my personal belongings in the wicker trunk in my room—clothing, most of it—would bring in some money if sold. So please tell them to do whatever they want with those things: either sell them or use them. To be sure, Old Thunder-Beast is such a scoundrel that he may have gone ahead and done it already. Besides, if you tell him this politely, he might even ask you to assume responsibility for the rest of my indebtedness. Don't you ever let him take
advantage of you like that! Turn a deaf ear to his nonsense. People like you, green, straight from the university, are exactly the type old Thunder-beast would like to make his prey. So please be very, very careful.

Uneducated as I am, I know, of course, that one must not cheat in paying one's debts. I firmly intend to pay back what I owe by the New Year. If, because of my rather colorful past, you should doubt my word on this matter, then I would be losing a valued friend and would be most unhappy. Please, therefore, do not misunderstand me, regardless of what the Thunder-beast may say.

Morimoto went on to say that he was working in an electric amusement park in Dairen, and that he planned to return to Tokyo in the spring to buy some movie films, "At which time," he wrote, "I look forward to seeing you once again." And then, with characteristic exuberance, he listed one after another the exciting activities he had been involved in during his travels around Manchuria. The most exotic of these to Keitarō involved a gambling casino in a city called Ch'ang-ch'un that was, he claimed, run by a Japanese who at one time had been the leader of a gang of mounted Manchurian bandits. The place was always packed with hundreds of filthy Chinese underworld characters, foul-smelling and with bloodshot eyes. Into this evil atmosphere even some of the richest men in Ch'ang-ch'un would occasionally come in dirty clothes for the excitement and
diversion. One never could be certain with a fellow like Morimoto how much he had really been involved in, Keitarō reflected.

Toward the end of his letter, Morimoto made mention of a bonsai he had left behind:

The potted plum tree is not aged and valuable; I bought it at the nursery in Dozaka, but it's just the thing for the window-ledge in your room, where you may enjoy looking at it in the mornings and evenings. As a token of my respect, I would like you to have it. Please take it to your room. Neither the Thunder-beast nor the Horned-owl is capable of appreciating it, and may, by this time, have let it die of neglect in their dingy tokonoma. Also, there is my cane in the umbrella stand at the entryway. Like the bonsai, it has no monetary value whatever, but it was a favorite possession of mine, and I would like to give it to you to remember me by. Even Thunder-beast and his Horned-owl wouldn't make a fuss if they were to notice that you had taken it. So don't hesitate: just grab it. It's yours. You would like Manchuria, and especially this city of Dairen. It's a very nice place. I can't think of a better place just at the present time for a young, promising fellow like you to realize fully all his potentialities. Why don't you come out and visit me? I have made some friends connected with the Manchurian Railway Company, so if you have any appetite for a visit, I could be of great service to you. Should you decide to come, please let me know.

The letter was signed, simply, "From Morimoto."

Keitarō folded the letter and put it away in
his desk drawer. He said nothing about it to the landlord and his wife. The cane, he noticed, was still in the umbrella stand, as always. Whenever he passed through the entryway, he looked at it, and felt somehow from it the exoticism and strange charm of its former owner.
Notes

Chapter I, "After the Bath"

1  (113) "The Chinese character for one's wife": 丸神

2  (114) "The project for the manufacturing of spigots": Sōseki's diary entry for November 11, 1911 records that a friend of his had been told of a man who "set up a factory for making spigots. Only fifteen or sixteen such experts in this specialty can be found in Tokyo. The rest are in Osaka. So the man assembled them, and brought them from Osaka to start his spigot factory. Within a year, however, the workmen had a strike, and the whole scheme came to nothing." (Zenshu, XXVI, 69.)

3  (114) Mount Togakushi is located in Gifu Prefecture and is famous as a difficult mountain to climb. Since medieval times it has been a mountain held sacred by ascetic monks. (SBZ, VI, 730.)

4  (115) Rakanji Temple is a Sōtō-zen temple in Kyūshū founded by the priest, Hōdō, in 1361. It has five hundred statues of Buddha's disciples (or rakan) and it catered especially to people of the Samurai class. It still functions prosperously and has forty branch temples. (Daijiten, 1953 ed.)

5  (116) Kodama Otomatsu: his obituary, quoted from the Tokyo Asahi Shimbun of May 27, 1912 in Zenshū, X, 202, tells us that he "was the pioneer of the South Sea explorers. He roamed around the South Sea region for more than ten years, and contributed several articles on his exciting and dangerous expeditions to our newspaper. He had been ill in Fukuoka since last year, but finally passed away at 6 p.m. on May 24." (Zenshū, X, 292). One of his articles was entitled, "The Barbaric Islands of the South Seas": the battle with the great octopus is said to
have occurred on June 17-18, 1909 (DBZ, X, 292).

6

(130) Morimoto's story of 'exploration and surveying on Hokkaidō is taken from a diary entry of June 15, 1911 (Zenshū, XXVI, 49-50): "[Suzuki Harukichi] came this evening and told me the story of the time he went to Hokkaidō on a surveying expedition (about 1899)." Many of the details are copied exactly: when describing the taste of the snake the surveyors ate, for example, Suzuki is quoted as saying, "I remember the taste as being somewhere between that of meat and fish." Again, the exact details occur first in the diary in this instance: "We took our mosquito net down to the stream to catch fish. The net had a fishy smell as a result." So too with the description of mushrooms, the deprivation of supplies because of a flash flood, and the uprooting of trees by a hurricane. Sōseki apparently felt that such unusual descriptions exactly fitted the exotic imagination of the far-traveled Morimoto.

7

(146) "The electric amusement park" (where Morimoto has a job) first appears in Sōseki's article on his travels in Manchuria, "Mankan Tokoro dokoro," which appeared in 1909 in the Asahi Shimbun. The pertinent extract is as follows: "I asked him [Nakamura Zekō, President of the Manchurian Railways], "What is it?" He explained that it was called an electric amusement park, and added, "You've never seen its like in Mainland Japan! There are all sorts of facilities for amusement; they are electrically powered, and are sponsored by the Railway Company for the recreation of the citizens of Dairen." The diary for May 9, 1911 also refers briefly to the electric amusement park (Zenshū, XXIV, 15).

8

(146) A gambling casino in Ch'ang-ch'un was seen by Sōseki on his trip to Manchuria, and is mentioned in a diary entry of September 24, 1909: "[They] ushered me to a gambling casino. There are twelve or thirteen houses of this kind: each has several gambling casinos. It was indescribably noisy." (Zenshū, XXV, 133).

9

(146) "A gang of mounted Manchurian bandits": Sōseki in his diary for September 24, 1910,
writes about the mounted bandits, noting that they flourished in the late Ch'ing dynasty (1625-1912). During his trip to Manchuria at this time he visited the regions where the bandits were strong. In "Mankan tokoro dokoro" (Zenshū, X), he describes farms with defense facilities and guards prepared against bandit attacks (SBZ, VI, 734).
Chapter II
Streetcar Stop

1

Keitarō had a friend called Sunaga. Despite the fact that he was the son of a professional soldier, he detested all things military. He had studied law, but, being of a very retiring disposition, he had no wish to be either a government bureaucrat or an employee in a corporation. So at any rate he appeared to Keitarō. His father had presumably died long before, and now he and his mother, just the two of them, led a somewhat withdrawn if refined existence. His father had been a high-ranking officer in the Quartermaster Corps, and, knowledgeable about financial matters, he had left the mother and son comfortably well off without any worry about money. His son's diffidence may well have resulted from this security and the lack of any need to compete. Not only had the young man had a father in a rather important position; he was also fortunate in having relatives who were not only respectable, but useful and even eager to help him get started on a distinguished career. But he was still living in a state of idleness, making all manner of excuses.

Keitarō sometimes only half-jokingly would say, "If you don't want a good job, just turn it over to
me!"

But Sunaga would smile sadly and regretfully, saying, "It can't be helped: you wouldn't do. They want me."

Being turned down, even in light-hearted conversation, depressed Keitarō. "I'll take care of my own affairs!" he therefore resolved vigorously to himself. But, since he lacked by nature the tenacity which would have been required to hold a grudge, the impulse to rebellion against his friend did not last long. Besides, having no job to think about, he did not know how to pass his time, and, unable to endure the boredom of sitting in his room from morning till night, he had to go out for at least half the day, even without any special reason; and at such times he often visited Sunaga. For one thing, he could nearly always count on his being at home, so that the trip was always worth the trouble.

"A job is, of course, important to me," he would tell his friend, "but what I really yearn for is suddenly to be involved in some really exciting event. I've been roaming around all over town in the streetcars and absolutely nothing of interest ever happens. I haven't even come across a pickpocket!"

Or again he would complain, "I used to think education was a very special privilege, but actually
it just restricts one's activities, doesn't it? If you've graduated from the university and even so can't earn your living, what kind of an idiotic privilege is that, pray? And, if you then decide to forget about a suitable position and want just to do as you please, your damnable education won't let you!"

And he would sigh bitterly. Sunaga did not seem very sympathetic to these complaints. He apparently was unable to determine whether or not Keitarō was really serious or just making noises to hear himself talk. On one occasion, when his visitor had kept on chattering exuberantly about his romantic fantasies for a long time, Sunaga asked, "But, tell me, what do you really want to do, then, apart from the necessity of earning your living?"

Keitarō replied, "I'd love to do something like the work of a police detective."

"Then, why don't you do it? Surely there is no insurmountable difficulty?"

"Ah, but it's not that easy!"

And Keitarō explained in all seriousness why it was that he could not be a detective.

"Basically, a detective is like a diver: he dives in under the smooth surface of appearance that society presents. It seems to me that there is no other occupation that deals so unremittingly with the
mystery of human behavior. His job demands that he observe mainly the dark side of human activity without, however, succumbing to the treacherous lure of it himself. A man must be naturally suited to such a calling. Yet, since his purpose is to expose crime, the essential objective of the detective's art is to ensnare his suspect. I am not suited to such malicious, nasty work. I want to be a researcher of human motivation, or rather, I want to be the absorbed observer of the strange mechanisms constantly active in the human mind, even in the dark of the night..."

This was Keitarō's main point. Sunaga listened without opposing, but without making any comment at all. Such a response, viewed one way, might seem rather sophisticated, but to Keitarō it seemed, instead, lacking in sensitivity. Indeed, he left displeased at Sunaga's calm unwillingness to participate in what he felt most intensely. But before five days had passed, he could not restrain his desire to visit Sunaga once more, and as soon as he emerged from his house, he boarded a streetcar headed for Kanda.

Sunaga's house was on a narrow lane very difficult
to find. If you were to proceed toward the tall building in the Kanda District called Tenkado 2 (formerly the Ogawa-tei), while coming from the direction of Sudacho, you would have to turn right at a certain point onto a small, uphill road. After making two or three more turns on small, irregularly bending lanes, you would come upon the house of Sunaga. It was in a crowded back alley, not at all like the spacious suburbs. There was not enough space for a decent-sized garden. Even so, it had a quiet distinction about it. From the entrance gate you had to walk some twelve feet on a path paved with granite slabs in order to reach the bell by the latticed door. Formerly, it had been their rental property and a relative had been their longtime tenant. When Sunaga's father died, however, his mother thought both its location and size might be more suited to the needs of their diminished household. So they sold their main residence in Surugadai, and moved to the smaller place. Of course, they redecorated the house. Keitaro remembered when Sunaga had told him that they were practically rebuilding the whole house. Looking at it when completed, he could see the result, and had examined appreciatively the careful selection of materials, such as the decorative post of the tokonoma or the ceiling of the upstairs rooms. The second
floor had been added at the time of the rebuilding to accommodate Sunaga's study. It was a suite consisting of one room six mats in size and another of four mats. On windy days, it did perhaps shake a little; but otherwise it was so beautiful and airy that one would search in vain for any defect. While sitting in that upstairs room, you could see the topmost branches of the pine tree in the garden, the upper level of the wooden fence, its panels hand-textured by an axe, its top extended to keep out intruders by wooden pieces carefully cross-hatched. Looking down from the little balcony fronting the window, he could see fringed orchids in profusion under the pine tree. Recalling this first viewing of the house, he remembered he had asked Sunaga the name of those white flowers.

Whenever he called on Sunaga and was ushered into the room, he could not help being aware of the distinction between a student and a young master. Although he felt some scorn for this Sunaga who lived as an Edo-style connoisseur, he was nevertheless envious of his quietude and security. He felt that a young man should not really be like that even as he wished to be just like that. Today again he visited his friend with those two contradictory attitudes concealed within himself.

After turning two or three times into the little
lanes and coming to the corner of the street where his friend lived, Keitarō saw a woman going through the Sunagas' front gate ahead of him. He chanced only to catch a rear view of her, but youthful impulse along with his own romantic imagination impelled him to hurry toward the gate. Quickly, he looked into the yard; she had already disappeared inside. He noticed that the familiar shōji door, with its maple leaf design pasted on the catch, was securely shut, and he was a little puzzled and dissatisfied. Just then he saw through the lattice the geta on the cement floor of the entryway. They were, of course, a woman's; although facing outward, in proper fashion, they did not look as though they had been arranged with exactness in that position by the maid of the house. Making the connection between the rather casual positioning of the geta and the rapidity of her disappearance, Keitarō assumed that she must be someone intimate enough with the family to open the shōji door by herself and go right in without waiting for anyone to greet her at the entryway. But how could that be? Keitarō knew very well that the Sunaga household consisted only of four people: Sunaga himself, his mother, the maid, and the cook.

He stood at the gate for a while. He was not trying to spy on the woman's movements from outside;
rather, he speculated on the rich fabric of romantic love that the two might be weaving. He was, to be sure, alert for any sound. But inside all was as quiet as usual. He could not catch the sound of the mysterious lady's voice or even the sound of a cough. "It could be his fiancee?" he thought. But his imagination was too unfettered for such an easy solution. Sunaga's mother, he knew, was not at home; she had gone to visit a relative accompanied by her maid. The cook would have retired to her room. So Sunaga and the lady must be sitting, quite alone, whispering to each other! That being the case, it would not be very bright of him to open the front door abruptly and call out in his usual fashion at the entryway, "Hello! Hello! You have a visitor at the door if it is not inconvenient!" Come to think of it, perhaps Sunaga, his mother and the chambermaid are all out together, and O-san, the cook, might very well be taking a nap? In that case, the lady must be a burglar! He could hardly just turn around and go away! And so he stood undecided, vacantly staring as though possessed by the proverbial fox-demon.

Just then the upstairs shōji slid open and to
Keitarō's surprise, Sunaga appeared, holding a light blue medicine bottle.

"What are you doing? Did you lose something?" he called down in some puzzlement from the balcony. His neck was wrapped in white flannel. The bottle apparently contained a mouth wash. Keitarō asked the natural questions concerning his health, beginning with, "Do you have a cold?" But he kept standing outside and did not enter. Sunaga finally said, "Do come in." Keitarō, to make absolutely certain, looked at him fixedly and asked, "You're sure it will be all right?" But Sunaga, apparently not attaching any special meaning to the question, simply nodded and went inside. While climbing the stairs, it seemed to Keitarō that he heard the rustle of clothing. In the upstairs room he saw nothing unusual except Sunaga's padded bathrobe with black hachijō collar on the floor. He must just now have taken it off, thought Keitaro. In view both of his character and his long friendship with Sunaga, there was no reason why he should not frankly ask him about the woman whose presence in the house had so interested him. But by now he was embarrassed at the wild surmises of a illicit passion in which his imagination had involved his friend, and, burdened with the awareness of how gross and unjustifiable his suspicions had been, he
found it impossible just to ask innocently, "Who was that woman who came in a short time ago?" Instead, to conceal his fanciful nature, which always was trying to run well in advance of the facts, he said to himself, "I'm going to quit all this day-dreaming. Getting a job is much more important." And, frowning earnestly, he asked Sunaga to introduce him to his uncle, who lived in Uchisaiwai-chō, thinking that he might help him get started in business. He had heard many times about this uncle: he was the husband of Sunaga's mother's younger sister, and had changed from a government career to business. Now he was holding important positions in four or five companies. Sunaga himself seemed to have no desire to seek his uncle's help in getting established. Keitarō had heard him say once, "My uncle tells me of all kinds of possibilities, but I'm not really interested in them...."

Sunaga had been scheduled to meet with his uncle that morning, but, because of his sore throat, he had postponed the visit. He suggested to Keitarō that in four or five days he probably would be able to go, and then he would recommend his friend to his uncle's attention. Having said this, he added, with his usual caution, "I can't guarantee that it will work out, you know. My uncle is a very busy person, and besides he
is always getting requests of various kinds. But you
should see him in any case."

Keitarō took this statement to mean that he should
not count on the uncle too much. But he thought it
better than doing nothing, and so, contrary to his
usual impulse, he decided to accept Sunaga's
assistance. He realized that, in his own mind, he was
not nearly as worried or as distressed as he might
have made Sunaga think.

It was true, just as he had originally told his
friend, he had worked diligently ever since graduation
to obtain a decent position. But, when he complained
of being hard up, he exaggerated at least by half. He
was not an only child, like Sunaga, but, now that his
sister was married, there was only his mother still
living at home to worry about, and in this respect his
situation was comparable to Sunaga's. Unlike him, he
owned no rental properties, but he did have title to
some rice fields back home. To be sure, they did not
amount to much, but from them he received a regular
income each year proportionate to the size of the rice
crop. Hence, he had no need to worry about the twenty
or thirty yen a month needed for his room and board.
Moreover, he had, not once or twice but many times,
taken advantage of his mother's indulgent nature to
ask for and receive special sums large enough for him
to ruin himself in pursuit of youthful foolishness. Hence, although all the talk he had made about his diligence in looking for a position was not necessarily empty rhetoric, it had certainly been influenced considerably by a desire to seem in his own eyes, as well as in those of his friends and hometown acquaintances, diligent and industrious. Had he been all along so determined, he would have studied harder in order to have a better academic record. Romantic daydreamer that he was, however, his only effort had been to make no effort at his studies, at which he succeeded so well that he graduated with embarrassingly undistinguished grades.

Hence, while chatting with Sunaga for an hour or so, even though Keitarō solemnly discussed the necessity of everyone's earning a living and the need of obtaining a good position, his mind was really on the woman of whom he had chanced to catch a glimpse a short time before, and he was far from being as intense about his career as he sounded. When at one point he heard the laughter of a young woman from the room downstairs, he was tempted to say casually, "It sounds as though you have guests downstairs." But he
thought so long about how to phrase it that the flow of conversation slackened, and he ended by saying nothing at all.

Sunaga, for his part, happened to bring up a subject that catered to his friend's great curiosity. He began to talk of the people on the back lane at the end of the streetcar line where he lived. As a result of the many small houses and the narrow road, Sunaga's lane was segmented into a multitude of tiny plots, forming nests for many middle class people unknown to him, and yet, he maintained, in almost every one of these little units, one could be sure that a little drama was being played which would not surface now or perhaps ever to the upper stratum of society.

He mentioned first of all a woman living in a place five or six houses beyond his: she is the mistress of a retired hardware merchant in the Nihonbashi District. She also has a lover who is an actor in the Miyato theatre. Her patron, although aware of the competition, makes no fuss about it. Across the lane from her is a modish house with a latticed front. It has the appearance of a real estate office or an employment agency. From time to time they hang up a blackboard on which is scrawled a hasty want ad for, say, a cook or a female reporter. Once there had come to the house a beautiful woman of
twenty-six or so in a long, blue cape with pleated skirt, resembling a western nurse. She sought, and turned out to be the daughter of a family for whom the head of the agency had once worked as a student houseboy. The agency head and his wife had been equally amazed. In the next house on the lane, back to back with the agency (by Sunaga's report), lives a silver-haired loan shark with a young wife about twenty years old. Local gossip has it that the old fellow took her as collateral for a loan. Nextdoor is a professional gambler. He and his associates are perpetually in the throes of a game, staring at each other with red eyes. The wife of one such addict sometimes comes with baby on back trying to take her husband home. She pleads with him, "Please come away with us now!" And he replies, "Of course I will--in another hour, after I've recovered what I've lost." The wife replies, "The longer you stay, the more you lose! Please, please, come home for my sake." She holds his sleeve. He shouts, "I will not!"

"Please, please!"

On the icy lane in the small hours of the night, they wake up all the neighbors with their quarreling.

As he listened to Sunaga's narration, Keitarô became more and more convinced that his friend too
might have a secret drama of his own, though feigning innocence with complete ease. In support of his guess, of course, was the recollection of the woman he had seen while walking behind her a short time ago.

"By the way, let's hear your story as well!"
Keitaro dared to blurt out. But Sunaga merely smiled slightly as he said," Hah!" and then added simply, "I have a sore throat today, so--." He all but said "Indeed I do have an interesting story, but I'm not going to tell you about it."

When Keitaro went downstairs, he did not see the woman's geta at the entryway any more. Had she left? Had the maid put them away or at least had the good sense to hide them? He could not tell.

Once outside, responding to a sudden whim, he stopped by at a tobacco store and emerged with a cigar in his mouth. As he smoked, he walked to the Sudacho streetcar stop. Here, just as he was about to board a streetcar, he remembered the no smoking rule, and so resumed walking, this time toward the Mansei Bridge. Intending to make his cigar last until he reached his lodging in the Hongo District, he walked at a leisurely pace, still thinking about his friend. But it was not Sunaga alone who appeared in his mind's eye: each time, the mental image of his friend was accompanied by the woman, who never, alas, turned to
face her observer. Ultimately, Keitarō felt that Sunaga must be making fun of him, as though to say, "But how could you expect to be capable of the vision needed to explore the world's inward romantic essence, using your binoculars from the third floor of a lodging house in Hongōdai-machi?"

Until recently, he had never had either partiality toward or familiarity with the Edo way of life, vestiges of which were still evident in downtown Tokyo. Sometimes, when walking through the narrow lanes of Nihonbashi, he would see such relics of a bygone day as a latticed door so narrow one had to go through it shoulder first, an iron lantern hanging unused above the front entrance, shining bamboo slats facing the side of the step upward at the entryway, or the thin panels of cedar that gleamed a rich red on the shōji doors as the sun shone through them. To his unaccustomed eye, these things had seemed merely cramped and shoddy. Where everything had to be so compact and neat and shiny, he felt cramped and uncomfortable. People living in such a snug and carefully measured environment must, he thought, have to be careful even of how a toothpick used after a meal should be sharpened. Then too, everything must be
governed by their ancient traditions, and, as with utensils on a tobacco tray, diligently polished generation after generation, so all else in the house must shine brightly from too much polishing. When he went to the Sunaga house, and saw such lovingly tended objects as their useless pine tree carefully wrapped in an ornate straw umbrella, or the tiny garden painstakingly covered with pine needles for esthetic effect, he could not help but associate such useless labors with a spoiled young master nurtured in that delicate old Edo culture. Even Sunaga's formal and correct way of sitting, even his wearing of the stiff, traditional obi seemed alien to Keitarō. And his mother, who loved to sing and hear nagauta, the old, time-honored Edo ballads, occasionally came upstairs to besprinkle Keitarō with polite small-talk, couched in pebble-smooth, yet strongly accented words. He was very much aware in all that she said of her treasured fund of courtesy, propriety and tact, almost as though she brought out for exhibition the very essence of family good manners from where they had been kept on the second floor of a family storehouse. To be sure, he did not regard it as mere formality, but yet he could not help sensing in the amiable civilities the long tradition of polishing and practising that was needed to produce such perfection.
What he sought was, rather, spontaneity and a less restricted freedom. Had he lived there, he would have done it differently, so he thought, giving his imagination free rein. He wished that he had inherited from his parents the house in the back lane, lined with walls of black stucco and filled with the humid atmosphere of the old Edo Period. He visualized himself growing up there, playing the game of "Thief and General" with his well-bred little friends who came to the house calling out, "Kei-chan! Kei-chan! Can you play?" He dreamed of worshipping at the Suitengu and Fudō Shrines, and burning joss sticks there in prayer. (Even now, he knew, Sunaga joined his mother in such stale observances as though they were normal and routine.) And he imagined himself strolling without a care in the world, a hero in an iron-blue haori, through the shaded outlines of a romantic town such as could have existed only in an old kabuki play. Would it not be fine, in such a place, to come upon and help some poor tragic twosome desperately struggling to free themselves, through love's magic, from the dead hand of an outmoded tradition?

At just that moment the two characters of Morimoto's name came to his mind, gleaming against a background of mysteriously changing colors. As a result of having befriended this shady fellow, acting
with his eyes open, yielding to a foolish whim, he had put himself in an odd dilemma. His landlord, luckily, still believed in his integrity. But as a likely accomplice in a case of fraudulence, he might yet have to undergo police interrogation should the landlord so decide. The thought of this real possibility suddenly cooled the ardor of his soaring romantic imagination; like a looming head of cloud, it vanished. At the very center of the lost daydream remained the thin face of Morimoto, with its damp, unkempt moustache and heavy eyelids. It would not go away. He felt for it a mixture of affection, scorn and pity. In those weary eyes he sensed the power of something intangible, mysterious, and suddenly he remembered the strange walking stick that his friend had conferred upon him.

It was a simple, ordinary bamboo cane, with the root end fashioned into a handle. Its sole uniqueness was a snake that had been carved into the handle. It was not a gaudy, made-for-export affair, with the snake wound round and round the bamboo stem. Only the head of the creature was carved, its mouth slightly distended as though it were about to swallow something. The rounded object in its carved throat at the end of the handle invited speculation: it could have been an egg; it could have been a frog. Morimoto had told him that he had cut the bamboo cane himself.
and had done all the carving.

Whenever he passed through the entryway of his rooming house, the cane was the first thing that caught his eye. Or, rather, his thoughts converged on the ceramic umbrella stand, and directed his eyes toward it as soon as he opened the glass door. But, after receiving Morimoto's letter, he felt an inexplicably odd sensation whenever he looked at the cane, and so began to train his eyes away from it as he went in and out the house. Soon, however, pretending not to see the cane became more of a nuisance than seeing it, and he began to feel slightly haunted by the thing. To himself he admitted that this reaction was a bit peculiar. He felt sensitive and raw because he was unable to give out the missing lodger's address freely lest, as a result of his past association with Morimoto, he be charged with complicity in defrauding the landlord. He had, however, no qualms of conscience. He did not, indeed, have the nerve to take with pleasure the gift that Morimoto had offered to him; yet, although annoyed with himself for lacking the moral strength to take openly this small memento of friendship, he did not magnify the matter unduly in his thoughts.
That carved head of a snake atop the cane, without body or tail, with its mouth open as it tried desperately and forever to swallow something that would not go down, and at the same time to disgorge an object doomed forever to lodge in its throat—was it, could it be, the visible sign of a pitiful end of life for the vanished Morimoto? So his imagination elaborated on that object distending the throat of the snake until it became nothing less than the death of his friend, who very probably might die while on the road. And, if one assumed that he was destined to perish while traveling about, might he not be entreat ing him silently to carry with him always the cane as his symbol, his way of life? This flight of imagination left Keitarō feeling disoriented and upset. With the impulsive exaggeration characteristic of him, he decided that fate must have decreed that neither he nor the landlord could remove it from its place in the umbrella stand. But the whimsicality of his unpredictable imagination had little influence on the prosaic realities of his daily life: his feelings about the mysterious cane were not strong enough to make him leave his boarding house to settle elsewhere.

That day, too, as he came in and headed toward his room, Keitarō could see the cane out of the corner of his eye, its snake staring beadily at the geta shelf.
So he sat down and began to write a letter to Morimoto. After thanking him for writing, he tried to compose a few lines of apology for the delayed reply. Had he said what he felt, he would have had to write something like, "I found it difficult to write; in all honesty, I feel humiliated by your flight." Instead, he concocted excuses about "my usual state of mix-up as I scramble about job-hunting." He congratulated his erstwhile friend for having obtained a good position in Dairen, adding sympathetically, "As Tokyo grows colder, I think the frost and wind of Manchuria must be fearful. When I consider the state of your health, I realize that such weather must be very hard on you. Please take good care of yourself and keep from getting sick...." Given his gloomy imaginings, this was the main point for Keitarō to stress. He wanted to write lengthily and gracefully in order to convey his camaraderie. On reading it over, however, he realized that it sounded as completely routine as any other letter written out of constricted necessity. He was a little disappointed. He realized, of course, that he had not put his heart into the message, the way one would to one's lover. He told himself, "I'm no good at writing. No matter how many times I rewrote it, it still wouldn't get any better!" And so he left it as it was and went on with other matters.
Keitarō felt that the disposition of the belongings Morimoto had left behind in the boarding house had to be mentioned if only for the sake of courtesy. Still, he didn't wish to ask the landlord about the matter, and, if he did not, he had few details to give. Holding his writing brush in mid-air, he thought about the problem. Finally, he continued,

I know you asked me to tell our landlord to dispose of your possessions as he saw fit, but, as your letter uncannily predicts, Thunder-beast seems already to have taken matters into his own hands. How right you were! As for your prized plum bonsai, it appears somehow to have vanished into thin air, so I am afraid I cannot accept that gift. Thank you, though, for thinking of me. Then--.

Keitarō had finally come to the matter of the cane. As a naturally honest person, he found it impossible to make an easy lie, and say, "Since you have been so thoughtful as to give me your cane, I accept it thankfully; already I have become accustomed to using it every day when I take a walk." He would have found it even more difficult to say, "I cannot accept it, even though I appreciate your generosity." So in desperation he finally wrote, "The cane is still in the umbrella stand, as though awaiting its owner's
return each morning and night. Even Thunder-Beast
hasn't dared to touch it. Every time I look at that
snake's head on the handle, I have renewed respect for
your skill as a sculptor." He hoped that these
complimentary words might conceal the awkward
actuality of his embarrassment.

As he started to fill out the envelope, he found
himself unable to recall Morimoto's given name no
matter how hard he tried; he finally addressed his
letter to

Mr. Morimoto
Entertainment Section
Dairen Electric Amusement Park

Since he had to take into account the suspicious
nature of his landlord, aroused as it had been by
their earlier interview, he could not simply summon
the maid to mail his letter. Instead, he hid it in his
sleeve. After dinner, just as he had come downstairs
on his way out to mail the letter during the course of
a walk, there was a call from Sunaga. "My cousin who
came today from Uchisaiwai-chō tells me that my uncle
may be going to Osaka on business in four or five
days. I'm afraid that, if you have to wait for his
return, it may be too late for you, so I have phoned
to ask him if he would see you before he leaves, and
he has agreed. If you still want to go see him,
perhaps the sooner you do so, the better. With my sore throat, and over the telephone, unfortunately, I could not talk over all the details. But please do give the matter your attention—." Keitarō thanked him and, after indicating that he would go as soon as possible, hung up the phone.

It seemed to him that, since he had to present himself, it might as well be this very evening, and so he went back to his third floor room and put on his brand new serge hakama before setting off.

On his way, at the corner, he did not forget to mail the letter, but the concern for Morimoto which had blazed up in his mind just a short time ago had now diminished to a few flickering ashes of warmth and good feeling for his former neighbor. Even so, when the envelope fell with a thud inside the mailbox, he visualized its recipient opening it within a week, and thought with some satisfaction that, were he himself to receive such a letter, he would certainly not find it unwelcome.

He walked straight ahead toward the streetcar stop, and his thoughts marched straight ahead before him toward Uchisaiwai-chō. But just as the streetcar was slowing to a stop at Myōjin-shita, something rang a bell in his head as he thought over his telephone conversation with Sunaga. Surely he had said, "My
cousin from Uchisaiwai-chō came today!" Obviously this cousin was the uncle's child? But, alas! the imperfect Japanese language makes no distinction between a he and a she! Which was it? The problem loomed large before him. If a man, this cousin offered no explanation concerning the young woman he had seen entering the Sunaga house. In that case, his curiosity, no nearer a definitive answer than before, would have to continue circling the problem indefinitely. If a woman, however, everything --the date, the time of day, the easy way in which she had let herself into the house--all these things confirmed that it must be Sunaga's cousin. Adroit as he was in adding up speculation and guesswork along with the facts, he decided without further evidence that it was certainly so. Having arrived at this conclusion, he felt pleased with himself, as though he had poured cold water over that glowing curiosity of his. At the same time he felt a twinge of disappointment that his clues all pointed in a commonplace direction he had not anticipated.

As the streetcar came to Ogawa-machi, he felt an urge to get off for a while and make a quick visit
with Sunaga to ask questions and test the truth of his hypothesis. But he could come up with no rational excuse for delving so openly into someone else's private affairs. Overpowering curiosity was not a sufficient reason, he was quite aware, so he went on his way, transferring to the Mita Line. As the streetcar rattled through Kandabashi and Marunouchi, he did not forget that he was headed toward Sunaga's cousin's house. But, not knowing the neighborhood, he went well past Kangyō Bank, where he should have got off, to Sakurada-Hongō-chō. Surprised by his mistake, he walked back toward the less well-lit residential section. Although there were few people about, it was easy to find the house he was looking for. A round gas lamp over the gate illuminated the name of Taguchi that he was looking for. The house seemed surprisingly far back from the main gate. When he actually went inside the gate, he observed a gravel walkway paved with pebbles that went off at an angle from the street, hiding the entryway from prying eyes. The silhouettes of some bushes also protected privacy between gate and entrance hall. These imparted a quiet dignity to the entrance on this dark night, but it was not as spacious a mansion as at first it had appeared. Two glass doors in imitation of western style fronted the entrance hall. He called out to announce his
presence and pushed the bell, but no one appeared. Of necessity, he stood quietly, watchfully waiting for activity inside. After a minute or so, he heard footsteps approaching over tatami mats; the frosted glass doors suddenly turned bright; wooden geta scraped across the cement floor of the entryway. One of the doors opened. Keitarō had stood there with no special interest as to what sort of servant might answer the door, expecting either the usual student houseboy in cotton kasuri haori or a maid in futago-woven cotton kimono to come out and receive his calling card with a bow. But to his surprise, the one who opened the door was a well-dressed elderly gentleman. Since the light was shining from behind him, Keitarō could not see his face very well, but he observed the white, heavy silk obi right away. It flashed through his mind that this must be the Taguchi uncle. Since, however, the young visitor was totally unprepared for such a reception, he became flustered, and stood there for an instant without giving any of the customary greetings. Besides, weighed down with the uncertainties of youth, he did not know how to behave with his elders. All of them, whether in their forties, fifties or even sixties looked very much alike to him. He had never been sufficiently conscious of older men to make any distinction between
a man of forty-five and one of fifty-five. Moreover, until he had become thoroughly acquainted with them, he normally felt quite uncomfortable with older people. It was as though they were of a different race with which he was unfamiliar. Hence at this moment, he found himself greatly confused. The person he faced, however, seemed in easy command of the situation. "Can I help you?" he asked, the casualness of his speech sounding neither too polite nor too abrupt. His ease helped Keitarō recover his self-confidence a little, and he finally had a chance to introduce himself and explain briefly the reason for his visit.

His host looked as though he had suddenly recalled something, and said, "Oh, yes! Ichižo called me about you a while ago. But I never thought you would be here tonight." Keitarō interpreted this to mean, "You shouldn't have come here so suddenly!" so he felt he had to explain as well as he could. The elderly man stood quietly through the explanation with no indication that he either heard or did not hear. Then he said, "Very well. You may come again. I'll be taking a trip in four or five days. If I have the time, perhaps I may be able to squeeze you in before then."

Keitarō thanked him profusely, and escaped to the street outside the gate once more. Standing in the
darkness of the night, he tasted humiliation as he recalled the excessive politeness with which he had thanked the uncle.

Sunaga later gave Keitarō his uncle's version of the incident. He had been deep in thought in his parlor, studying a go-board, and lining up the white and black stones on it. He was trying to find an answer to a certain move that had come up in a game he had just finished with a friend. Just at the critical moment, Keitarō, like a country bumpkin, had made a great commotion at the entrance hall. The uncle decided that he wanted to straighten out the nuisance before finishing his go problem, so he had gone to the door himself.

Hearing the uncle's reaction to his visit from Sunaga made Keitarō all the more certain that he had been overly polite.

Several days later Keitarō coolly and without apology called the Taguchi house and requested an appointment. The man answering the phone seemed to find his aristocratic manner a sign of worth, and said to him politely, "Would you please wait a moment while I consult Mr. Taguchi?" Upon returning, he said, much
less courteously, "Hello, hello, there! Well, Mr. Taguchi is busy with a visitor now and can't see you. But if you care to come by at around one o'clock he said it would be all right with him." Keitarō replied, "I see. One o'clock will do nicely. I'll come at that time. Please convey my good wishes to Mr. Taguchi." He hung up—and felt a kind of disgust within himself.

Lunch on the day of the appointment was late, although he had told the maid that he must eat precisely at twelve. He complained irritably, as though he were being hurried along by the sound of the noisy bell at the university, and finished his meal as hastily as he could. On the streetcar, he thought of the meeting at night two days before and wondered if the man would treat him in the same contemptuous fashion today or be more civil since this time he had specifically indicated his willingness to see him. To obtain a respected position in the business world, with the help of the old gentleman, Keitarō knew that he would be as humble and respectful as the situation might require. But then he thought about the secretary who had answered the phone and who had, after conferring with his boss for less than five minutes, reduced the level of politeness in his speech. Again he felt disgust, and wished that someone else had
answered the phone. And yet it was a measure of his youth that he could not realize at all that his manner on the telephone had been a little too haughty for a humble job-seeker.

At the corner of Ogawa-machi, he saw the crooked little lane that twisted toward Sunaga's house. Suddenly he recalled vividly the view from behind he had had of the mysterious lady, and his inner world changed almost miraculously from one of shade to sunlight. It was much more delightful for Keitarō to tell himself that he was on his way to see the beautiful cousin of Sunaga than to face the fact that he was about to make a ridiculously pathetic appeal to a disagreeable old man in an effort to gain his help in getting a job. He had, to be sure, decided that Taguchi and Sunaga's cousin were father and daughter, but, even so, his imagination placed them in completely separate categories.

When the other evening he had stood face to face with Taguchi at the entryway, he couldn't see his features very clearly because of the angle of the light. But, judging by the rough outline of his features that could be seen, his face was not very impressive. He was sure of the accuracy of this first impression of the old man, received even at night. Yet it never occurred to him, quite apart from the young
lady's relationship with Sunaga, that this man's daughter could be less than beautiful. The two Taguchis in his head were a fusion of sunlight and shadow, separate and yet combined. By the time he had studied and compared the two concepts several times, he was already at the Taguchi gate. A large automobile with a chauffeur was waiting there, and it made him uneasy.

He presented his calling card at the entryway, and a young houseboy in kokura cotton hakama received it. Saying, "Just a minute, please!" he retreated inside. Clearly, the voice was the same as the one on the phone. Following him with his eyes, Keitarō thought, "What a horror that fellow is!" He returned almost immediately still holding the card, and said tonelessly, "I am sorry, but we have a visitor just now. Would you please come back later on?" Then he stood silently, looking at Keitarō, who was a trifle annoyed.

"I called earlier and was told that he had a visitor and that I should come at about one."

"Yes, I know. But the visitor stayed on. There was some mix-up. Anyway, he stayed for lunch."

Listened to calmly, the excuse was perfectly understandable. But, angry with the houseboy ever since the phone call, Keitarō found his explanation
intolerable. Trying for ascendancy over him, he replied sardonically, "Thank you for all your effort in scheduling and rescheduling my visit. Please convey my best wishes to your master."

He turned and left. As he passed the parked automobile he restrained an impulse to curse. "So the man has a great big car: what of it!" he muttered.

He had planned that day, after finishing his interview properly, to drop in at the house of an old friend who had married and settled down in Tsukiji recently, in order to chat with him till evening, telling him the whole curious story of Sunaga, his cousin and Taguchi, as it had been skillfully joined together by the thread of his imagination. As he left the gate in front of the Taguchi house, and stood indecisively looking at Hibiya Park, there was no room in his mind for any such recreation. He no longer felt the slightest satisfaction that he had finally found out where the woman he had seen from behind visiting Sunaga came from and that he had, without knowing it, even visited her house. It no longer concerned him that he had gone there job-hunting. Quite simply, he felt insulted and was very angry. It was Sunaga who was to blame, he felt, and should be held responsible
for his humiliation, since he had introduced him to such a contemptible person as Taguchi. He decided that, on the way back, he should stop off at Sunaga's place, and complain bitterly after giving him a full account of what had happened. Whereupon, he got on the streetcar once more, and returned directly to Ogawa-machi. It was twenty minutes before two. Upon arriving in front of Sunaga's house, he quite deliberately called out, "Sunaga! Sunaga!" Whether or not his friend was at home, the shōji panels upstairs remained shut. Of course, as a person who paid particular attention to good manners, Sunaga had always deplored people who shouted for one when coming to visit. He thought such behavior provincial, and, even if he had heard him, might have seen fit to ignore such an uncouth summons. So eventually Keitarō went dutifully to the entryway, and announced himself through the latticed door. But the maid who appeared in response to his summons told him, "The master went out a little after noon, sir." He found himself a little disappointed, and stood for a time at the door in silence. "But--didn't he--I thought he had a cold?"

"Yes, sir, he did. But he said he felt much better today, and so he went out, sir."

Keitarō decided to forget about it and go home. But then the maid said, "Just a minute, sir. Let me
speak to the lady of the house." And with that she went inside, while Keitarō waited uneasily just inside the door. Sunaga's mother quickly appeared from behind the fusuma. She was tall, her face oval, her hairdo and attire that of an elegant Edo-style lady.

"Please come in," she said. "My son will come back very soon."

Once she had started in this manner, Keitarō, totally unaccustomed to the elegant Edo behavior, found himself utterly unable to deal with it knowledgeably, so that he could, as he wished, escape. Her delightful phrases, one after another, fell soothingly on his ears. She invited, and declining was out of the question. Nor was it mere formality. As she urged him to stay, she somehow erased his hesitation and uncertainty about troubling her, and soon he felt that he would like to stay and keep her company.

Eventually, then, at her insistence, he sat down in the study. The lady busied herself with closing the inner shōji door. "Aren't you cold?" she asked; and motioned to him to move closer to the hibachi with its red charcoal half buried in white ash. Under this treatment, his earlier nervousness was gradually soothed away. He looked at the white silk panels of the fusuma (on them were printed the large leaf designs of the akitabuki plant), and at the yellowish
hibachi, which appeared to be formed from a block of
Chinese mulberry tree. As he chatted with this
graceful, eloquent and very attentive mother, he
learned that her son had gone to visit an uncle who
lived in Yarai.

"I told him that he should go to Kobinata and pay
his respects at our family grave! But he answered,
"Mother, nothing is easier nowadays than to go there.
Just the other day you delegated someone to do it for
you. Maybe because of your age--?" And, scolding me
that way, out he went! He has a cold with a sore
throat, you know, so I told him, "Better not go out
today!' But young people are so stubborn, are they
not? Even when they seem to be careful, they never pay
any attention to what we older folks say, now, do
they?"

Whenever he went there in Sunaga's absence, the
mother chattered on like this about her son, as though
talking of him were her only pleasure in life. If
Keitarō himself touched on Sunaga's doings, she would
cling to the topic endlessly and never change the
subject. He didn't mind. This time too he listened
amiably, nodding his head in agreement from time to
time, and waited for a pause.
After a time, the conversational thread led from the son to the uncle who lived in Yarai. Sunaga had told him that this uncle, unlike the one he had met at Uchisaiwai-chō, was his mother's younger brother. Keitarō still remembered the stories about him. He said things like, "I can't possibly wear an overcoat unless the lining is satin!" and he collected a rare gem called antique batik that looked either like a precious stone or coral.

"It's certainly a wonderful life if there's no necessity to work, isn't it?" he remarked.

She picked up the new thread of conversation immediately, rejecting his observation. "Ah, no, Mr. Tagawa. The truth of the matter is that my brother is far from wealthy: he can barely manage to keep up his way of life. It's not a good situation."

Keitarō said nothing, feeling that the financial concerns of Sunaga's relatives were not his affair. Sunaga's mother, reacting almost as though the silence were her impoliteness, continued hastily, "To be sure, my Uchisaiwai-chō brother-in-law, the one you visited, is indeed fortunate. He is connected with a number of companies, and all of them seem to be doing well. But as for us and my brother in Yarai, we are like the old
masterless samurai: compared to what we were used to in former times, we lead a very constricted, difficult life. I often laugh with my brother about it--."  

In view of his own origins, Keitarō felt a little embarrassed by the frankness of Šunaga's mother. But, since she kept on talking, he at least did not have to think of a response and could just go on listening.  

"Besides, as you well know, Ichizō is such a shy, introverted sort that just getting him graduated from the university doesn't really ease my worry about him. I'm greatly concerned. I tell him, 'Why don't you marry someone you like and ease your old mother's mind?' But then he says, 'The world doesn't always move the way you want it to, Mother.' And he won't listen to me. Or even if only he were interested in getting a position through our family connections so that he could start on a career, I would feel a little happier--. But he has shown no interest whatever--."  

In his own mind Keitarō agreed that on this one point Šunaga had been carelessly unconcerned for his mother, and he replied sympathetically. "I am not in a position to say this, but would it not help to get some older person he respects to talk with him about it? The uncle in Yarai, for instance?"  

"He? Ah, unfortunately, he is even worse! My brother is an unsociable eccentric. Far from advising
him to get to work, he'd tell him, "You're a fool to work in some bank spending your days poking at an abacus!" No, no! I can't count on his help one bit! To complicate matters, his uncle's way of life has hit Ichizo's fancy, and he says he finds his Yarai relative more congenial than his other uncle. So he visits him quite often. Today is Sunday and a fine time for him to see his uncle in Uchisaiwai-chō before he leaves for Osaka. But instead he goes to his Yarai uncle because he likes him better!"

At this point, Keitarō was going over again in his mind his reasons for having rushed to visit this house just now. He had expected, as soon as he saw his friend, to scold him severely for carelessly giving him a recommendation that had led only to humiliation. He had intended to tell him, "Never again will I pass through your gate to see you! You are to blame, and I hope you realize it!" Then he would have gone home. But the target of his rage was not there and, as the mother, unaware of his situation, talked to him of all manner of things, naturally his anger subsided. Having come this far, however, he thought he should tell Sunaga's mother at least the bare account of his non-meetings with Taguchi. Now would be an appropriate time, since she was talking of going or not going to Uchisaiwai-chō.
"To tell the truth," he began, "I went to Uchisaiwai-chō myself today."

"Oh, is that so?" The mother at last realized that she had been preoccupied entirely by her son. She looked apologetic. From Sunaga she had heard of Keitarō's frantic job-hunting efforts. She knew that in his desperation, he had asked her son to introduce him to the Uchisaiwai-chō uncle, and that he had agreed and had arranged for an interview. She realized that, had she been attentive, she would have asked encouragingly about his job-hunting before he found it necessary to bring the subject up. On seeing her interest, Keitarō was ready to tell her the whole story. But since she kept commenting sympathetically at every point with such phrases as, "Oh, my! How true!" and "Ah! Bad luck never picks the right time to visit, does it?" he neatly omitted all the angry portions, such as his desire to curse when leaving the Taguchi home a second time. After repeating many Oh-what-a-shame's and I-am-so-sorry's, Sunaga's mother said, in polite defense of Taguchi, "He is indeed a busy man. Even living under the same roof--how shall I put it?--my sister finds hardly one day in the week when she can talk to him in a leisurely fashion. Once, unable to stand by and see this go on, I said to him,
'Yōsaku-san, no matter how much money you may make, you shouldn't work so hard that you ruin your health! You should take it easy,' I told him. 'Your health is important!' So he said to me. 'I think so too but good opportunities are always coming up, and, unless I scoop them up right away, I'm in a mess. It just can't be helped.' So he laughed off my warning. Sometimes, though, he'll announce suddenly to his wife and daughter, 'Come on: let's go to Kamakura today! Get ready!'--and he would hurry us on--.

"He has a daughter?"

"Yes indeed! Two daughters. They are getting near that age, don't you know, and soon he'll have to marry them off or else take an adopted son-in-law--."

"Isn't one of them going to marry your son?"

Sunaga's mother hesitated ever so slightly, and Keitarō realized that he had gone too far in satisfying his curiosity. As he sought for a way to change the subject, she said, "I can't say how that may turn out. I haven't heard her parents' opinion, and I have yet to find out exactly how they feel about each other. My wishes in this matter signify very little. I can do nothing." She sounded as though this were a very special problem for her. Her response to his question revived his already waning interest in full force. But common sense required that he control
his curiosity at once.

The mother continued defending Taguchi. "Since he is such a busy man, it is possible that, now and then, he may forget an appointment. But once he decides to take upon himself the responsibility for helping someone, you'll find that he is not the sort of person to forget it. So I hope you'll just wait until he returns from his trip and then see him when he has some free time." She went on seeking to console him with good advice. "Our Yarai brother wouldn't see you even if he were at home, but the one in Uchisaiwai-chō, even if absent from home, will rush back to keep an appointment for an interview. You can be sure that after his trip he'll send word to Ichizō, even if you don't try to contact him. So just wait and be patient."

From her words, he began to sense the character of the man. "His help would depend on my behaving myself," he thought. "If I get angry, as I did a bit ago, he wouldn't lift a finger for me." He was fairly sure that this was right, but he could not very well say so to the mother, so he remained silent.

"In spite of his formidable appearance," she said, "He is quite a joker, don't you know." And she laughed to herself.
"Jokester"? Keitarō wondered: the word did not seem quite the appropriate description for him, as he recollected his bearing and appearance. Yet, when he heard specific details, he had to admit that it did sometimes ring a bell. So, for example, Sunaga's mother described how, a long time ago, Taguchi during a visit to a teahouse, had said to the maid, "Miss, this light is too bright. Please dim it a little."

Uncertainly, the maid asked, "Should I change to a smaller bulb?" And he had answered, with complete seriousness, "No, no. You just twist the bulb to make it dimmer." The maid supposed that he must be straight from the countryside where there was no electric light, and, tittering in amusement said, "Sir, an electric light isn't like an oil lamp: you do not just twist it to make it burn lower. It will just go off if you do, sir. Like this: see?" And she turned the light off with a click, making the room dark before turning it on again with a loud cry of "There!" Taguchi, without the slightest embarrassment, answered, "Gracious! What outdated equipment you're using! It is most unbecoming to this fine establishment! You really must demand that the company get to work and bring you into the modern world at once! They are fairly efficient and will do it on a first-come-first-served
basis." He spoke so earnestly that the maid began to believe him, and said, "Ah, how right you are, sir! This old way is inconvenient. Besides, when anyone wants to sleep, the light is too bright for their comfort." She was greatly impressed with his advice.

"Another time, he had to go to Moji and the Bakan area on business. This joke is even more elaborate than the other!" continued Mrs. Sunaga. Because of some complication, she explained, a man called A____, who was to accompany him, had been delayed, and so Taguchi had had to wait for him at the inn for a couple of days. To help pass the time, he worked out an intricate scheme to delude his business partner. It first occurred to him as he was passing in front of a photographer's studio while walking around the town. He purchased a photograph of the local geisha. On the back of it, he wrote, "To Mr. A____." This, he thought needed to be accompanied by a letter. So he hired a woman, and gave her plenty of time to write delicate, curvaceous, feminine lines such as might stir A____'s heart. Any man worth his salt ought to be in ecstasy at receiving such a letter, he thought. In addition to sweet nothings it went on to say, "I saw in today's newspaper that you, sir, were expected to arrive tomorrow. It has been a long time since I've written you, so as soon as you
arrive here, please meet me at such-and-such a place." Altogether, it was quite an enchanting letter. That night when alone, he dropped this letter addressed to A____ in the mailbox, and next morning, received it at his hotel as he awaited A___'s arrival. Even after A____ had come, Taguchi did not rush to give him the letter. He discussed their business transaction at great length, and only when they were at dinner together did he give it to A____ abruptly, as though he had just remembered it. Curious because the words, "Urgent!" and "Personal" had been written on the envelope, A____ rested his chopsticks on the table and opened the letter immediately. After quickly looking it over, he took the photograph from the envelope, turned it over, and hastily put it into his pocket. "Nothing urgent, I hope?" asked Taguchi casually. "No, nothing at all," mumbled A____ awkwardly, and picked up his chopsticks again. But from then on he was restless, and, before all aspects of their business venture had been settled, excused himself, pleading indigestion, and went to his room.

Taguchi then hastily called the maid to summon a ricksha, since A--- was leaving in fifteen minutes. She was to tell the driver to help A____ into his vehicle when he left the inn just as though he had been waiting for him especially, and then go to
such-and-such an address without waiting for directions from A___. This done, he rushed to the house he had spoken of, and summoned the proprietress to give her instructions. "When a certain person arrives in a lantern-lit ricksha," he said, "you are to usher him respectfully into one of your best rooms, and, before he can say anything, you must tell him that his friend has been waiting for him here for several hours. Then come back and tell me how it's going." Like a stage manager he awaited the scene, smoking cigarettes and folding his arms across his chest. Everything went as planned. It was time, therefore, for the climax: he must appear. So he went to A__'s room, slid open the door, and said, "What a fast man you are! Very, very fast indeed--to get here so quickly!" His partner grew pale and incoherent. Taguchi sat and confessed his scheme, concluding, "Since I've amused myself at your expense, this evening will be at my expense. That's only fair."

Sunaga's mother continued laughing after finishing her story. "Well, that's my brother-in-law!" she said. "A man with a totally unpredictable sense of humor, don't you see?

Keitarō saw only partly. On the way home he thought suddenly, "That parked automobile with the chauffeur: could that have been some trick or other?"
After that automobile episode, Keitarō gave up on the possibility of using Taguchi to help with his future. Moreover, he realized that his pursuit of the identity and significance of the woman, presumably Sunaga's cousin, whom he had seen only from the back, had stalled on the verge of awareness, leaving him with an unpleasant feeling of incompleteness. He felt frustrated. Never, as far as he could recall, had he ever resolved a problem by his own effort. Whether in study or sports or any other area of endeavor, he had always, he thought despairingly, started with great vigor, only to end up leaving the project unfinished, incomplete, half-done. The only thing he had done, really, from the time of his birth until the present moment was to graduate from the university. And even with that, he had been inclined toward laziness, and had only finished because they had coddled him, up to the very moment of graduation.... And so he had never experienced any particular shame or regret at not finishing something he had started, and also had never experienced the exhilarating sense of achievement that comes with the success of, let us say, digging a well with much strain and sweat.

He spent the next four or five days in a state of
confused irresolution.

There passed through his mind a recollection of a talk he had had with a priest at the university when he was a student there. He had of his own free will entered his religious order despite a distinguished family and social position. Why had he elected to become a priest? Because, he said, he had been obsessed with a sense of the mysterious and the unknowable which by himself he had been unable to penetrate or understand. Even when out under the clear blue sky the priest had felt constricted and uncomfortable, blocked from moving in any direction. Although he saw clearly the trees, the houses, the passersby, he felt separated from them as though confined in a glass box, unable to make contact with the world outside, and finally he was so cramped and constricted that he thought he must be choking to death.

When he heard this story, Keitarō had suspected that the priest's strange state had been merely a form of neurosis and he had paid little attention to it. But now in his four or five days of confusion he sensed that the emptiness at the center of his being, the absence of any joy of accomplishment, the lack of perseverance might somehow resemble the state of mind of this man before he had become a priest. To be
sure, his own was an incomparably milder crisis, and a problem of different dimension; there was no need to make any absolute decision such as the priest had faced. If only he could learn to focus his resources better to deal with the problems that confronted him, quite apart from ultimate success or failure in solving them, his life would, he felt convinced, take on a meaning it now lacked. Never before had he thought such thoughts.

Brooding by himself in this way, Keitarō decided on the one hand that he could proceed in any direction whatever, and, on the other, that it was simply too late to do anything. Caught between the two extremes, he proceeded to idle away his time for three or four days, passing the hours by going to Yūrakuza Theatre, listening to a popular comic story-teller, chatting with friends or just walking along the street.

But always, as though one should try to grab a man by the hair only to find the head bald, he seemed unable to seize effectively on the world of actuality. He felt as though he had been shown a go-game in progress, when he was anxious to play. If he was to be shown a match of this sort, then he wanted to see a slightly more interesting and exciting game!

This train of thought led him back right away to considering once more the relationship between Sunaga.
and the woman he had seen from behind entering the house. Of course, he had to acknowledge that, whatever the relationship, it could hardly be crafted and polished by his thoughts to give it more depth of meaning than it really had. Even if there were something there, he thought, he would only be intruding in another's private affairs. And yet, while deciding himself, his intense curiosity kept telling him, "There must be some meaning, some insight of importance to be found there!" He began to think that if he probed patiently along this line a little further, he might encounter something romantic, such as he had never before experienced. Moreover, he realized that his short temper, which had flared up at the abortive Taguchi interview, making it difficult for him to pursue his investigation of the lady, would be a considerable handicap to his curiosity.

Nor, of course, had it helped in his job-hunting. He should not have shown his irritation for such a minor misunderstanding. By doing so, he had only alienated someone who could have hired him, and so had cut off, right at the start, the hope of any favorable outcome in the future. And this had left him in a state of near-frustration. Sunaga's mother had assured him that old Taguchi was more considerate than he looked, so that he might conceivably reschedule the
interview when he returned from his trip. "But I don't want to go and ask again, only to be looked down upon as though I were a fool, utterly lacking in common sense!" thought Keitarō. "And yet--to really get at the problem, one has to pursue it vigorously even at the risk of being called a fool!" In his desperation, he kept weighing the alternatives.

But he could not see this as a moment for deciding resolutely about his whole future; Keitarō's feelings of concern were moderated by his easy-going nature. Should he, he wondered, continue to seek out Taguchi or forget about him and try some new mode of job-hunting? The problem was essentially simple and clearcut. It was not a choice so important that a mistake would ruin his life; quite the opposite. Either way it made very little difference, and his relaxed spirit, secretly convinced that either choice would do very well, told him not to worry. He was like a sleepy person reading a book with no great effort to control his drowsiness. The meaning of the words before him registered less and less on his mind. Or, to put it another way, the unhatched egg of his future well-being he lazily incubated in his pocket,
and then worried that it might not hatch successfully.

Convinced, however, that he must break away from indecision, Keitarô moved subconsciously toward gratifying his considerable curiosity. For this reason he felt the urge to place his future in the hands of a fortune-teller. It was not that he had been educated unscientifically: he was no believer in faith healing, exorcism, charms, spirit mediums and the like. But he grew up curious about all of these. His father had been a devout believer in extra-sensory perception, astrology, physiognomy, and other forms of reading the future. Keitarô still remembered one Sunday when he was in elementary school, he had noticed his father tucking up the hem of his kimono and dashing out into the garden. A little concerned, the child had tried to follow, but his father had told him to remain in the house and keep his eye on the clock: when it began to chime the hour of twelve, he was to yell out so that at just the right moment his father might start digging at the root of the plum tree located at the northwestern side of the house. In his childish mind, he realized dimly that it was his father's usual way of reading the fortune of the house. When the clock struck twelve, he had sounded out very loudly, just as he had been told to do: "It's twelve o'clock!" That seemed sufficient for the occasion, yet in
retrospect Keitarō found his father's carelessness in research very entertaining: if so exact as to the time for starting to dig, he should at least have set the clock properly beforehand! It was, the child knew, about twenty minutes off from the correct time as given by the school clock.

"Later on, of course," Keitarō mused, "there was the time when, returning from gathering edible greens in the field, I was kicked by a horse and fell from a river bank, amazingly without getting hurt at all, without even a scratch. My grandmother thought that the guardian Jizō must have sacrificed himself for my sake, and she gratefully took me to the stone Jizō located near the spot where the horse was tied, and said, "Look!" He had no head, although his little cloth bib was tidy around the stump of his neck. It was from that time that Keitarō began to see in his mind's eye beautiful colored clouds, dense or patchy depending on his physical condition. He experienced them even now, when he was fully grown.

He had of late been looking at the paper lanterns of the roadside fortune-tellers. There were many of these seers practicing their trade during the present Meiji era. To be sure, he wasn't serious enough to pay a fee in order to hear the sound of the divining sticks. During his walks, he would occasionally see a
woman forlornly standing in front of a fortune-teller's establishment, her cold face illuminated by the lantern, worried, depressed, a dark shadow across her future. At such times Keitarō, drawn by curiosity, would linger in the near-darkness to hear what hope or anxiety, fear or confidence the fortune-teller would have to offer his client.

When one of his classmates became depressed and uncertain as to his scholarly worth, and was in such low spirits that he could not decide whether to take the university entrance examinations or quit school forever, a friend had sought for him a message from the sacred oracle at Zenchōji Temple while on a trip to Nagano, and had sent it to him. On the outside was written, "Good fortune to you, Number Fifty-five!" And inside the uncertain scholar found the words, "The clouds will soon disperse and the moon shine brightly!" along with another message, "The flower will bloom to its utmost capacity!" Thus encouraged, the boy took the entrance examination just to test his luck, and passed. Keitarō had been greatly impressed, and had enthusiastically visited many shrines thereafter, collecting the sacred oracles. Since he had no special problem to be solved, these visits seem indicative of a special talent and inclination to consult and to believe in seers and fortune-tellers.
Yet, even at an early age, his seriousness in approaching the occult was mixed with a healthy appetite for the curious and amusing adventure.

Keitarō wondered where he could find a reputable fortune-teller. Unfortunately, he hadn't the vaguest notion. He had heard certain names mentioned in such places as a back alley of Hakusan, and inside Shiba Park, or in a certain section of the Ginza, but he had no wish to go to those who were well-known and fashionable because they tended to be swindlers. Worst of all were those who chanted trumped-up prophecies as though they were divinely ordained and true. He thought it would be nice if he could only find a quiet, sparsely bearded old man in tranquil surroundings, who could give him penetrating, epigramatic, witty and yet simple pronouncements.

While thinking thus, he recalled just such a person, a retired priest at Ipponji Temple back home whom his father had often consulted.

Of a sudden it occurred to him that he was stupidly indulging in daydreams as usual. So he put his hat on his head in the vague hope that it would somehow brush against the sign of the fortune-teller
fate had assigned to him.

For the first time in many days, he walked to Kurumazaka in Shitaya, and moved deliberately along in an easterly direction, through the Asakusa Higashi Honganji grounds, looking on both sides of the lane at such antiquated sights as the temple gates, a Buddhist altar accessories shop, a quaint medicinal herb store, a dusty curio shop with relics of the Tokugawa Period, and, at the corner, a restaurant specializing in eel dishes.

When a little boy, he had heard from his grandfather, who knew the Edo Period Asakusa very well, all about the bustling activity of Asakusa Kannon. He recalled hearing those musical street-names: Nakamise, Okuyama, the tree-lined Namiki, Komagata, along with others, some of them no longer heard nowadays. "Grandfather told me a lot about the old eating establishments," Keitarō remembered. "For instance, a little gourmet restaurant called the Sumiya, that served (and still does!) nameshi and dengaku, or the tidy restaurant serving only dojō, that has an attractive curtain of woven ropes across its doorway. It is opposite the little temple by Komakata Bridge, and has been there for many generations...." Most intriguing of all to him were the street vendors: one fellow advertised Nagai
Hyōsuke's lightning sword trick; another was the magician, Mamezō, who was a sword-swallower; also on exhibit was a large dried toad from Mt. Ibuki in Ōmi with four forepaws and six hind legs. The old children's picture books still kept in the chest upstairs in the family storage house had given him ample fantasy for his childish imagination to feed on: a man squatting on a small wooden platform, with sleeves tucked up with sash for work or fighting, wearing the crude geta of another era, who is about to draw a sword longer than he is tall; Jiraiya, sitting cross-legged on the back of a ten-legged toad, casting spells; an old sage with a white beard holding a magnifying glass larger than his face at a Chinese desk, looking down at the topknot of a man kow-towing respectfully before him--most of these mysterious beings had escaped from children's picture books to join the world of Asakusa. Hence, in the compound of Asakusa Kannon, to Keitarō, there were always the enchanting and dazzling colors of familiar legends, once more real than actuality to him. These endearing hues of fantasy had encompassed the hundred-foot-long Main Hall of the temple since his early childhood. After he came to Tokyo, of course, the enchanting dream-world of Asakusa crumbled miserably:
but even now he would occasionally daydream of the legendary Japanese stork reputed to have its nest under the roof of the Temple of Kannon. It was not unnatural, therefore, that today, as his feet automatically turned in the direction of Asakusa, he should adapt his mood subconsciously to the exotic and unusual. But when on coming out from Luna Park he came upon a movie theatre and was overwhelmed by crowds of people, he realized that this was not the proper place for fortune-tellers. He wanted to pat the statue of O-Binzuru on the head at least, but could not recall where it was located; he went into the Main Hall of the Temple and looked at the enormous paper lantern donated by the people of Uogashi Fishmarket and at the gold-framed picture of Yorimasa killing the mysterious night bird. Then he turned abruptly and left through the Thundergate. He looked toward the Asakusa Bridge and thought, "Between here and there I might find a fortune-teller or two. If so I'll just go right in, no matter what kind he seems--. Or I could make a turn just after the Engineering College and go toward Yanagi Bridge--." He sauntered on, like a man looking for a pleasant restaurant at mealtime. Usually when he took a walk he saw the hanging signs of fortune-tellers everywhere, but now, when he looked for one, he could not find it anywhere along the wide
main street. He began to think that this little expedition, like so many others, was not going to come to anything, but simply evaporate midway along, as usual, and, as he reached Kuramae, he was feeling slightly disappointed. Just then, however, he spotted what he had been looking for. On a long, narrow slab of wood was written, in two lines, "Fortune Telling." Below it, carved in white were the words, "Bunsen-Coin Readings." And beneath that was a bright red pepper painted in lacquer. This was the strange sign that caught his eye.

The herb medicine shop was divided into two parts: the smaller section was an enclosed verandah. It was stocked with many sacks of multi-colored dried peppers lined up along the wall. As the sign outside suggested, in addition to selling the peppers, they also apparently told fortunes. Having reached this conclusion, Keitarō looked beyond the verandah, which resembled an ankoro-mochi store, and saw a small old woman sewing alone in the room behind the store.

Though the place was obviously a one-room shop and residence, he saw no trace of any fortune teller. He decided that the husband might be working somewhere else while his wife tended the shop during his
absence. But the verandah was partitioned, he realized, and beyond the flimsy wall was the herb shop. Perhaps the husband was there. So he moved a few steps and looked into the area containing the herb store. But there were no eight-eyed dried eels, no large turtle shells hanging from the ceiling, and on the shelves no quaint dolls with exposed body cavities where five colored organs were to be fitted in. Nor was there any old man sitting there resembling the priest at the Ipponji Temple. So he walked to the entrance to the main house, which had a small sign, "Bunsen Fortune-Telling" over it, and brushed through the entrance curtain. The old woman stopped sewing, her needle in mid-air, and stared at Keitarō over her large spectacles, finally asking simply, "Would you like to have your fortune read?"

"Yes, I want to have my fortune interpreted. But it seems the man to do it is out."

The old woman moved the soft material from her lap, placed it in the corner of the room, and said, "Please. Come up here." He stepped up from the entryway as he was told to do, and found a tiny room fairly neat and not uncomfortably dirty. Indeed, the tatami mats seemed to have just been replaced, and smelled fresh. The old woman poured the hot water into a teacup from an iron kettle, and offered him **kōsen**.
From a shelf behind her which appeared once to have been used for storing boxes of dried medicine, she brought down a small table, covered with a solid woolen cloth, and placed it directly in front of Keitarō before sitting down where she had been when he first came in.

"I am the one who does the fortune-telling."

Keitarō was surprised. She was wearing the small chignon of a married woman, and a kimono with a black satin collar. Over it was a subdued haori coat. She was absorbed in her sewing. Even in his wildest imagination he would never have supposed that this completely domesticated woman could be the prophet to explore the unknown fate lying in wait for him in the future. "Besides, " he thought, "there are none of the usual props around: the bamboo stick, the crystal ball, the jackstraws. All these should be on her table." The old woman picked up a long bag on the table, and, shaking it so that the coins jingled, she fished out nine coins, each with a hole at the center. Then he realized, suddenly, that these must be the bunsen coins referred to on the signboard. But, of course, he had no notion how these nine coins were used to disentangle the threads of fate which controlled his life in the darkness of the future, and he simply looked at the design on the coins and at the
The bag appeared to be very old, and made of a remnant of a Noh costume or from the brocaded material used in mounting a scroll. Threads of gold shone here and there, but the bag had completely lost its glitter by being handled over many generations.

The old woman lined up the coins in three rows of three with fingers very white and delicate for someone her age. She raised her eyes abruptly and asked, "You wish to see your future?"

"Well, let me see. It would be useful, certainly to ask you about my whole future, but just now I think it's more important to find out how I should react to a particularly pressing problem that I have. Perhaps you can find out for me the answer to that."

The old lady said, "Is that so?" She asked his age, his exact birthdate, and, after that, as though she were calculating something in her head, she folded her fingers in and pondered. Soon, she rearranged the coins with her delicate fingers. Keitarō silently watched her organize them in various three-by-three arrangements, sometimes with the wave design uppermost, sometimes with the characters showing. To her there seemed to be some deep, mysterious significance in all of this.
For some time the old woman sat silently gazing at the coins with her hands in her lap. Finally, she looked up as though she had focussed her mind on an essential point, and said with an air of quiet certainty, "At present you're troubled about something." Keitarō continued looking at her, carefully saying nothing.

"You can't quite make up your mind whether to proceed or just forget about it. It would not be to your benefit to ignore the matter. For your own good, you should go on with it, even though you may not be able to see any clear result right away. Ultimately, it will be to your advantage."

After saying this, she closed her lips firmly and watched Keitarō closely. At the beginning of the session, he had resolved to say nothing and let her say what she had to say. But her statement gave him a vague sense of relief; her voice somehow seemed full of a pleasant sense of revelation. Almost playfully, he pursued the implications of what she had said.

"You're telling me that I won't fail if I keep at it, is that it?"

"Exactly! You must work at it with patience, and not lose your temper."
Keitarō realized that if this were not prophecy, it was eminently good common sense. Since there was nothing pretentious or false in the old woman's attitude, he continued to ask questions.

"Go ahead, you say. But which way?"

"That you know more clearly than I. The fates instruct you not to stop, to keep on a little further. Only so will you do yourself good. That's the sum of it."

By now he was deeply involved and could not just accept what she had said and leave.

"But you see there are two possible paths to take, and so I'm asking you, which should it be?

The old woman looked silently for a time at the coins. Finally, with pronounced solemnity and deliberateness, she said, "Either will do." From among the scattered materials of her sewing, she selected some rather long red and blue threads, and began twisting them together. Keitarō assumed that she was just fidgeting as she thought, and paid little attention. But when she had completed twisting five or six inches of thread, she placed the resultant combination on the coins.

"Look at this: when I twist them together, one becomes two, and two become as one. See the bright red and the subdued blue? Ah, when one is young, one
tends to be attracted to the brighter threads and ignore the other; but in your case the two are entwined securely and well. Consider yourself fortunate."

The symbolism of her image was arresting, but, when she labelled him fortunate, he felt strange rather than delighted.

"In other words, if I follow the subdued blue track," he asked, trying to guess what she had in mind, "sooner or later the bright red will appear in my path?"

"Yes, yes. That is the way it is supposed to be," she answered.

He had never expected to make serious decisions for good or ill on the word of a fortune-teller, but he nevertheless was not satisfied to hear just this much and go home. Had she made predictions entirely out of this world, then naturally he could have left and gone home without a second thought. The difficulty was precisely that he could make use of what she had said if it were made clearer, and for that reason he did not just want to get up and leave quite yet.

"Is there nothing more you can say?" he asked.

"Well, let me see. There is apparently something that may happen to you in the near future--."

"Some catastrophe, you mean?"
"Oh, no, not a catastrophe, I don't think. Still, you must be careful or you won't be able to repair what has gone wrong."

Keitarō's curiosity became somewhat more intense. Can't you tell what kind of event it will be?"
"Ah, one can't know until it happens. But it's nothing like burglary or drowning--."
"But then, how should I be careful? I suppose you wouldn't be able to say that either?
"Possibly I could find it out. If you wish--Shall I do it over again for you?"
He felt compelled by his anxiety to say, "Please!"
The old woman darted her delicate fingers about skillfully, rearranging the coins once more. To Keitarō's eyes, the new pattern seemed very much the same as the last one. But to the old woman there seemed to be a great difference. She did nothing without the utmost care, even when it came to flipping one coin. After painstakingly rearranging the nine coins, she finally turned to Keitarō and said, "I see now, in general terms how it will be."
"And what should I do?"
"You ask me that? But in reading the fates, we
see only the basic general conception according to the logic of \textbf{yin} and \textbf{yang}; hence, when anyone faces a specific problem, he can only adapt the particulars to the basic idea. In your case, the basic idea is more or less this: you own something which seems to be both yours and someone else's; it seems to be long or at the same time short; it seems also to be coming out or going in. Should any trouble occur, don't ever forget, first of all, to take it with you. If you do, all will turn out well."

Keitarō was spellbound in spite of himself.

The logic of the \textbf{Yin-Yang} school of philosophy, however attractive, had always seemed to him large and airy, but, like mist, without form or direction. He wanted to say to her, "Never mind whether it's exactly true or false: won't you please say something more specific and adaptable to my situation!" He wanted to engage her in vigorous argument. But nothing happened. Keitarō finally was forced to wrap up as though in a towel her crazy riddle resembling the muttering of a zen priest and carry it off like a pocket heater in his pocket. And he stored away in his mind her words, and left. On his way out he even bought two bags of the multi-colored dried peppers, and put them into his pocket.

Next morning he faced his low table at breakfast,
and, when he removed the lid of the steaming container of *miso* soup, he suddenly remembered the peppers and fished the bag out of his pocket. He sprinkled them generously into the pot, and finished his breakfast with inexpressibly hot soup. When he recalled the larger forms of *yin* and *yang*, they were still there in his head, vague and gaseous. But, since he had never been such a convinced believer in the art of fortune-telling as to worry over messages that did not fit in with actuality, he suffered from no special anxiety to solve the riddle given him. Still the mysteriousness of what the old woman had said so intrigued him that he put it down on a sheet of paper exactly as she had spoken it, and he put the paper in the drawer of his desk.

As to the question of whether or not he should make the effort to see Taguchi once again, Keitarō knew that he had reached a firm decision in accordance with the old fortune-teller's advice of the previous day. But he felt that he had not made up his mind because of belief in her fortune-telling powers; she had merely come at the opportune moment when he was about to move in that direction anyway. He thought he might go to Sunaga and find out if his uncle had returned from Osaka yet. But he was still embarrassed by the memory of the automobile incident, so he did
not quite have the courage to go there. Nor did he feel easy about calling him on this occasion either. Hence, of necessity, he decided to write him. First, he gave an account, more or less as he had earlier given it to Sunaga's mother, of his other attempted interviews, and then he asked him if his uncle were back from his trip. "If so, would he mind setting a time for seeing me again, even though he is, I know, very busy? For my part, I have plenty of time, and so will come at any time convenient to him." The letter sounded as though he had completely forgotten about his angry behavior at the earlier interview. Once he had mailed the letter, he expected Sunaga's reply on the following day. But even after three days, there was no answer. He grew increasingly anxious, and began to regret that he had ever been influenced by the words of the fortune-teller, which now might be productive of a humiliating result. Then, on the morning of the fourth day, quite suddenly, he received a telephone call from Taguchi.

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He was amazed, when he picked up the phone, to hear the voice of Taguchi himself, asking very simply if Keitarō could come over right away.
Keitarō stammered, "Yes, right away, sir!" But, since it seemed unsociable just to hang up, he asked, in an attempt at amiability, if he had heard anything from Sunaga.

"Yes, Ichizō told me of your wish, but it's too complicated to go through him to you, so I called you directly. I'll be waiting for you, then. Please come over right away." He hung up. While putting on his new hakama, Keitarō thought, "Certainly it looks hopeful this time!" And he picked up from the hatrack the hat he had bought recently, and went out with a cheerful expression, full of hope for his future. Outside, the sun, which had quickly melted the early morning hoarfrost, still was shining warmly on the peaceful street in the absence of any wintry gales. In the streetcar, clattering on its way in the sun, Keitarō felt as though he were slicing through the sun's rays.

Taguchi's entrance hall was completely quiet, unlike last time. When the houseboy appeared, Keitarō felt a little awkward in his fine hakama trousers. But he could not very well say, "Please excuse me for my discourtesy the other day!" Instead, he acted as though nothing had happened, and politely gave him the reason for his visit. Whether the houseboy remembered Keitarō or not was hard to tell. He said, "All right," accepted his name card, and went inside. Soon he
reappeared and ushered him into the parlor. Keitarō donned the slippers that the houseboy set before him, and followed along to the parlor as a well-mannered guest should do. There were four or five chairs there and for a moment he could not decide which to take. The smallest would be safest, he thought, and picked a tall chair without armrests or ornament, much the frailest of all, and waited nervously in this most modest seat.

After a short interval, the master appeared. Keitarō, using various polite phrases he was not accustomed to, introduced himself and thanked Taguchi for his kindness in making time to see him. The master took it lightly, nodding without paying too much attention. Even when the introductory civilities were finished, he made little attempt to carry his part of the conversation. Keitarō was not exactly disappointed by his host's attitude, but he became more and more frustrated by his own inability to talk easily and well. He felt at length that he had used all the words that he had had stored in his head, and, even though he realized the silence was awkward, he could not continue. Taguchi picked up a Shikishima cigarette from a box, and pushed the rest toward his guest. "I've heard a little about you from Ichizō," he said. "What sort of work are you interested in?"
In truth, he did not have anything particular in mind: he just wanted a respectable position. Hence, when bluntly asked in this fashion, he could only answer in general terms, "I'm interested in every field."

Taguchi started to laugh; with kindly amiability he explained that nowadays, in view of the great increase in university graduates, it was impossible, even with good connections, to find a good job right from the beginning. This, of course, Keitarō knew very well from long, grim experience.

"I'll do anything, sir."

"You say anything, but you wouldn't work as ticket puncher on the railroad, now, would you?"

"Yes, sir, I would," replied Keitarō. "It's better than doing nothing. If a job has any future prospect, I'll take it. The tedium of not doing anything at all is almost unendurable."

"Well, if you feel that way about it, I'll keep you in mind," said Taguchi. "It may take some time, though, before something turns up."

"I realize that, sir. Just give me a chance, if you will. Upkeep around the house, perhaps—or even small errands that you need to have taken care of. I'll do a good job."

"You really want to try even that sort of thing?"
asked Taguchi.

"Yes, sir. Anything."

"In that case, I may be able to use you. Are you free at any time?"

"At any time, sir. The sooner, the better."

His interview concluded, Keitarō left the house feeling optimistic.

During the next several days unusually warm weather continued postponing the harshness of mid-winter. In his third-floor room, looking out at sky, trees and roofs of houses, he felt as though the sun shone in all its warmth and benevolence on this landscape just for him. As a result of the recent interviews, he was sure that good luck would come his way in the near future. He spent his time pleasantly speculating on what guise his change of fortune would appear in. He had given Taguchi carte blanche as to the kind of work he would be willing to perform. Although he hoped for a regular position, he had offered also to do temporary chores as needed. Once he showed his capability in this manner, he thought in his characteristic fashion, exciting assignments, far beyond dull, everyday office work, would suddenly be
thrown in his path. With such hopes, he daydreamed peaceably, staring out every day on the sunlit view.

Some four days later, Taguchi called him by phone once more.

"I have a small job for you," he said. "I didn't want to bother having you come here, so I'm writing a letter to you and will send it special delivery. The letter will give all the details. If you have any questions, just call me."

Keitarō felt as though, by turning the adjustment on a pair of binoculars, the hazy, unfocused vision of his future had pleasantly firmed up into sharp definiteness. He waited at his desk without intermission for the special delivery letter to come. His vivid imagination played with the mystery of his new job, trying to determine the content of Taguchi's proposed assignment. Into his waking dream the woman he had seen at Sunaga's gate would sometimes intrude without any logical reason, always seen only in rear view.... And then he would realize the absurdity of his daydreams, and scold himself for not being more realistic.

Soon, the letter he had been eagerly awaiting arrived. He noisily ripped it open. After reading it from beginning to end without pause, he was stunned. The assignment he had been given was not less but more
romantic than even he had dreamed. To be sure, the wording of the letter was very simple and exact, and nothing beyond a bare description of the job to be done was given:

Today, between the hours of four and five p.m., a man in his forties will be in the streetcar from the Mita area, and he will get off at the Ogawa-machi stop. He will be wearing a soft, black hat and a salt-and-pepper overcoat. He is a tall, slim gentleman with a longish face. He has a large mole between the eyebrows. Identify your man from these characteristics, and observe his conduct during the two hours after he gets off the streetcar. When you are finished, give me a report.

For the first time in his life, Keitaro found himself playing in a most dangerous game, as in a detective story. At the same time, he was a little suspicious of Taguchi: why was he conducting such a clandestine operation, spying on someone's private affairs for later use in protecting his own interests? As he considered the problem, the possibility of being used as someone's bloodhound in some immoral and dishonorable affair caused him to sweat under his arms. Holding the letter, his eyes fixed in the distance, he stiffened. But yet, when he weighed the description of Taguchi's character as given him by Sunaga's mother along with his own impressions during the meeting, he certainly could not think of him as a
person quick to engage in shady ventures. Even if he were spying on someone's private life, his motives would not necessarily be objectionable. As Keitarō deliberated in this fashion, the stiffness in his muscles waned, the warm blood of youth began again to circulate freely, and, relieved of the fear that he might be violating the standards of proper ethical behavior, he began to study his assignment comfortably and with great interest. By this sequence of ideas he came to feel that in doing the task assigned him by Taguchi, he would make his first meaningful contact with the real world. He read the letter once more with full attention, trying to decide if under the conditions specified he could achieve the desired result.

Among the identifying marks that Taguchi had listed, only one, the mole between the eyebrows, was permanent. In the short days of winter, the dim light at four or five o'clock might make it quite difficult to spot this man with absolute certainty on the basis of that mark alone among the busy passengers getting on and off the streetcars. The hour between four and five is the time for all government offices to close, and so government workers would constitute the bulk of passengers using the only streetcar from Marunouchi to Kanda Bridge. Moreover, the designated stop was none
other than Ogawa-machi, which, unlike some others, had rows of shops on both sides which attracted sizeable crowds by means of decorative shop-curtains, and the music of bands and phonographs to liven up the busy season at the end of the year. These crowds had to be taken into consideration too. Thinking about all these matters, he grew doubtful of his ability to accomplish his mission unaided. On the other hand, if the man he was looking for was in fact wearing a salt-and-pepper overcoat and a soft black hat, then there would be some hope. By itself the salt-and-pepper overcoat would not be sufficient identification, but the soft black hat would be conspicuous, since hardly anyone wore such hats nowadays. The hat surely was the key object: if he kept his eye out for it, he ought to find his man.

Then it occurred to him that he should at any rate go to the streetcar stop and look things over. Upon looking at his watch, he saw that it was only a little after one now. For the job, he would have to be there half an hour before four o'clock, but, if he got there around three, he would have almost two hours to size up the situation. He sat motionless trying to think how best to use those two hours. In his mind's eye, the image of crowded Mitoshiro-chō and Ogawa-machi, with its three corners at the T-shaped crossroads came
vigorously to life, without, however, any good idea as to how to handle his job in that confusion. The more he thought about it, the less progress he made. The fear that he might miss the person he sought made him uneasy. He finally decided he might as well walk around outside until the scheduled time approached.

Once he had made that decision, he put both his hands on the edge of his desk and was about to spring up when he remembered the advice of the old lady fortune-teller in Asakusa: "You will encounter a significant event in the near future. At that time, do not forget...such-and-such a thing." Though he had shaken the old woman's words out of his head as meaningless, he had written them down and put them in his desk drawer. Now, he took the sheet of paper out and studied the words over and over. They concerned "something that was both his own and someone else's at the same time, something that appears both long and short, and that is coming out and going in at the same time." At first, just as before, they made no sense to him. But, as he repeated the mysterious phrases over and over again, he became convinced that if he concentrated on them patiently, he might find the object they described. Had not the old woman said, "Don't forget to take it with you when the critical moment is at hand"? So he ransacked his mind for that
which, among his belongings, could be considered "his and someone else's, both long and short, coming out and going in."

In view of the small number of his possessions, he thought that he ought to be able to solve the problem in a fairly short time, and he decided to spend two hours concentrating on the riddle. He ran over a mental inventory of items nearby: his desk, books, towels, seat cushions, wicker trunk, bookbag, socks. Thus he wasted an hour without coming upon anything remotely resembling the description. He became confused and impatient. His imagination whirled about the room and took its leave, flitting wildly from place to place outside. Soon, on the screen of his mind flashed a picture of a tall, thin gentleman, wearing a salt-and-pepper overcoat and a soft, black hat; quite obviously this dignified figure was the person he was to find. But suddenly that face became the face of Morimoto, far off in Dairen! As he recognized with the eye of his imagination the familiar features of Morimoto with the unkempt beard, he suddenly cried out, "Aaah!" as though experiencing an electric shock.
The two characters, mori and moto were sounds which, echoing and re-echoing in the chambers of his mind, had long fascinated Keitarō. Now they changed completely into a kind of mysterious suggestion.

Always, Keitarō had associated the name of his one-time neighbor with the bamboo cane. Always heretofore, whether he regarded the cane as a connecting rod between the two of them or, with equal probability, an obstacle, poking them apart, still, Morimoto and this bamboo cane were two quite separate entities. But now in the swirling imaginativeness of Keitarō's thinking, the cane was the man, the man the cane. When to his fevered mind came once more the phrase describing something that was "both his own and someone else's," he recalled this object that was both his and Morimoto's, and shouted, "Ah, that's it! Now I have it!" And he reached mentally for the cane, clutching it firmly to prevent its melting into the fleeting black shadows of his mind. Keitarō was delighted with himself, satisfied that he had solved the old woman's riddle of "both his own and someone else's." But there were two more parts of the riddle to be dealt with: the mysterious object was "long and yet short," as well as "coming out and going in."

At first he was inclined to think that the cane
could be either long or short depending on the perspective from which it was seen. But this piece of the picture puzzle was so commonplace that it did not seem to drop neatly into place. He started over once more, but no probable solution could he find, even though he kept earnestly repeating "long and short" over and over. He looked at the clock, and realized that, of the two hours of usable time, only thirty minutes were left. He began to doubt his own judgment. Had he not, perhaps, been running around in a circle just when he thought he was on a shortcut to a good answer? Ought he not to admit that he had reached a dead end, and would therefore have to start all over again? But he had not enough time to start over again, and, since thus far he had made good progress, he felt he had no alternative but to press on with his thinking about the cane. While moving uncertainly among a variety of possibilities, his imagination suddenly focussed on the carved head of the snake on the handle, as distinct from the cane as a whole. Then he visualized the long body of an actual snake, with its glistening scales and spoon-like head, and suddenly the piece of the picture puzzle fell into place with a click: the snake head on the cane had no body; it was short when it should have been long. The answer flashed like lightning through his head, and he
could scarcely control himself for sheer delight. The last part of the riddle ("going out and coming in") was easily solved in about five minutes: he recalled the lump of something, an egg or a frog, that the snake was swallowing or coughing up. It was either going out or coming in. This is it, he realized.

Sure that he had now thought his way neatly through the entire problem, Keitarō jumped up from his desk, and wound his watch-chain around his obi. He did not wear the hakama today, but did pick up his hat and started out. But then he hesitated: removing the cane from the umbrella stand might be an awkward business. Still, Morimoto had long since left it behind. Picking it up or taking it from the stand need not call for the landlord's permission. No one would raise a fuss and suspect or condemn him. Just the same, to walk off with it when no one was around or to take it unobserved even if they were around called for some care. Keitarō had grown up in a household where superstition was rife; and his mother had dinned into his ears many times the rule that any talisman worthy of the name had to be obtained when no one was watching if its magic powers were to function effectively. With this injunction in mind, Keitarō went to the stairway and went halfway down: he pretended to be checking the time at the clock hanging
He saw the landlord as usual hunched over the large, round earthenware hibachi in the center of the six-mat living-room. There was no sign of the wife. As Keitarō, standing midway down the stairs, crouched to look through the glass shōji door, one of the room-bells lined up above the landlord's head rang shrilly. The old man looked up at the number of the bell and called into the next room, "Hey! Is there anyone around?" Slowly, Keitarō climbed back up the stairs to his third-floor room.

He opened the closet, and took out his serge hakama, thrown on the wicker foot locker. He tied the front segment around his waist, and wandered about the room, the back segment trailing behind him. Then he removed his tabi and put on a pair of socks. Once he had finished dressing, he again went down the two flights of stairs from his third floor room. On looking once more into the living-room, he saw that the wife was still absent. Nor was the maid in sight either. The bell did not ring this time; the whole house was very quiet. But the landlord was in his
usual spot, leaning over the big round hibachi as he sat quietly facing the entryway. As Keitarō moved down the stairway toward the ground floor, he looked diagonally down on the rounded figure of the landlord and realized that this was not the right time for taking the cane. So he went straight toward the entrance. As he expected, the landlord greeted him; "Going out, sir?" and, as always, he called the maid to get his footgear for him from the storage shelf. Just to get rid of the landlord's prying eyes was enough to do, he thought, without having to deal with the maid as well. So he exclaimed, "Oh, never mind! I'll do it." And he lifted the lid of the storage cabinet and quickly took out his geta. Fortunately, the maid did not appear by the time he was ready to leave. But the landlord was still facing him.

"I wonder--would you mind doing me a favor?" he asked. "This month's issue of The Journal of the Legal Association is on the desk in my room. I've put on my shoes already, and it's a nuisance to take them off to go back again. Could you please get it for me?"

Keitarō knew that the landlord fancied himself an expert on legal matters, and he deliberately asked him in this way to suggest that he relied on his legal knowledge to locate the magazine. Willingly he
replied, "Certainly! Certainly!" rose, and disappeared up the stairs. Once he had gone, Keitarō seized the cane quickly from the umbrella stand, and, holding it under his coat, left before the landlord's return. He could feel the convoluted surfaces of the carved snake's head under his right arm as he hastened toward Hongo Boulevard. Here he took it out, and gazed fixedly at the snakehead. He took out his handkerchief from his pocket and wiped the cane from top to bottom carefully. Then, holding it by its handle, he walked briskly, swinging it in his right hand. In the streetcar, he sat with both his hands clasped over the snake head, and on them he rested his chin. He took a deep breath of relief as he reviewed his actions and felt that he had completed the first part of his adventure. But almost immediately he began to worry about the next task to be accomplished at the designated streetcar stop. How might the cane, which he had almost stolen with so much effort, be useful in helping him to spot that identifying mark of the mole between the eyebrows? The answer was completely beyond the range of his imagination. Thus far his only accomplishment had been, really, to solve the riddle of the object that was "his and someone else's, both long and short, and coming in and going out," so that he had it with him on his quest as the old woman had
instructed him to do. Still and all, how could this unbelievably light, quite ordinary-looking bamboo stick possibly help him to spot a stranger whether he put it on the ground, picked it up, held it in his hand or hid it up his sleeve? Suddenly the whole thing appeared ridiculous to him. He looked feverishly around the streetcar as though just wakened from a trance, and was so embarrassed by the silliness of his great effort in stealing the cane a short time ago that he felt almost as though steam were being emitted at all the pores of his head. To conceal the oddity of his behavior, he grasped the cane once more with deliberateness, and tapped it lightly on the floor. When he reached the district he was concerned with, he got off, and walked back a little from this side of the Y.M.C.A. Building, so that he came out on Ogawa-machi Street. Since about fifteen minutes remained before the four o'clock deadline, he crossed to the other side of the street through the flow of the crowd and the sounds of the streetcars, to a place where there was a police box. Like the policeman in front of his station, Keitarō took up a position in front of the red mail box and sharply studied the spacious boulevard that stretched off to the north and south at its intersection with two wide, curving avenues on either side. He began to study the location
of the streetcar stop with care: it was the stage on which he was soon to perform.

Thirty or more feet from his post at the red mail box, he saw the characters, "Ogawa-machi Streetcar Stop," painted in white on an iron post. Even if he should lose sight of the suspect in the crowd, he reflected with satisfaction, at least he had arrived on the scene of the chase at the proper time. The thought relaxed him. He moved around the vicinity of the iron post, looking over the whole area. Just behind him was a china-ware store built in the traditional white plaster style of storehouses. A box containing a variety of small sake cups was framed like an artwork and hung under the eaves, along with a large metal birdcage with many ceramic feeding cups attached to it from outside. Next to the chinaware store was a fur shop. A large tiger skin, complete with head, eyes, and claws, looking almost as intact as a live beast, though edged with red wool, was the main decorative feature at this shop. Keitarō stood looking deeply into the amber eyes. Near the tiger skin was a long, white stole-like fur-piece with a badger-like head which he thought looked very
peculiar. He took out his pocket watch to see the time, and moved on to the next store front. Behind the glassed enclosure of a jeweler's shop were a carved rabbit of translucent agate, a jade hair ornament, and amalachite accessory for tobacco pouches, all beautifully arranged.

Window shopping in this fashion from store to store, he had already progressed past Tenkadō and was in front of a Chinese furniture store. At just that moment a streetcar coming along from behind him stopped suddenly on the opposite side of the road; he wondered suddenly, "Could this be it?" and he crossed the street near a Chinese import store at a corner formed by a narrow alley intersecting the boulevard. At this point he saw another iron post marked once again, "Ogawa-machi Streetcar Stop" in white paint. To get properly oriented, he waited to observe the routes of two or three streetcars. First, there came a car from Aoyama, then another from Kudan Shinjuku. But he was relieved to note that both came straight from the direction of Mansei Bridge. Just as, his anxiety allayed, he was about to return to the old spot by the mail box, a streetcar coming from the south turned the corner of Mitoshiro-chō, and came to a stop near where Keitarō was standing. Upon glancing at the destination marker above the motorman's head, he
recognized the characters Su gamo, and he then realized for the first time his carelessness in planning. If a person were coming from the Mita area through Marunouchi, intending to get off at Ogawa-machi, it would be possible for him either to take the Kanda Bridge streetcar, which turned left and let out passengers where Keitarō stood, or go by another streetcar that turned right, in which case he would get off at the first marker in front of the chinaware shop. Both places, though separated, had the same "Ogawa-machi Streetcar Stop" sign painted on them.

Hence the man in the black hat he was planning to follow might get off at either stop, depending on which streetcar he took. He looked at the two red iron posts and assessed the distance between them: about a hundred yards, he supposed. He had earlier realized that watching at the one stop gave him no certainty of spotting his man, and now, even with the short distance between the posts, it was clearly impossible to watch both places with any precision at the same time, no matter how confident he might be. Because of the location of his boarding house, he had always used the streetcars connecting Hongo and Mita; he had not even realized the existence of another line going from Sugamo through Suidōbashi and also heading toward
Mita. He bitterly regretted his stupidity in not realizing this possibility till now.

He thought in his desperation of running to Sunaga for assistance. But his watch showed that it was already seven minutes to four, and, even though Sunaga lived just a short distance behind this street, running to his house and explaining the situation coherently to him would take more time than he had. Even if he succeeded in getting his friend's help in covering one of the streetcar stops, Sunaga would not be able to let him know quickly should the man in the black hat get off at his station. What with the many people around, waving his hand or a handkerchief would not serve as a signal; to be certain of informing him, Sunaga would have to shout loudly at him, and that would startle all the people in the vicinity. It was hard to imagine his very proper friend engaging in such bizarre behavior even in what amounted to an emergency! Even if he did, the man in the black felt hat probably would disappear before Keitarō arrived on the scene. Once he had thought through the matter in this fashion, Keitarō decided to trust to luck, leave the matter to chance, and guard by himself only one of the two stops.
This unavoidable decision, however, simply meant that he do nothing but continue standing where he was. The inactivity was frustrating, and he feared a bad outcome. He kept craning his neck and looking as best he could over at the other stop to the east. Because of his familiarity with it, or because of its distance from him, that stop seemed to him more cheerful, and so he felt that the person he was looking for would be more likely to get off there. He almost decided to change to that other stop, but hesitated. At just that moment the car heading toward Edogawa came slowly to a stop in front of him. The conductor, seeing that no one got off, after a brief interval gave the signal to start again. Keitarō, deliberating as to whether or not he should go over to the other side, was almost oblivious of the streetcar in front of him. Directly behind him was a narrow alley emerging on Nishiki-chō; suddenly from it a man came running. He pushed by Keitarō and jumped onto the steps at the front entrance, where the motorman stood, ready to start. Before Keitarō recovered from his surprise, the car had noisily jolted into motion. The man who had jostled him to jump aboard stood half inside the glass doors. His eye caught Keitarō's and he said, "Excuse me, please." Keitarō noticed that his glance went
quickly to Keitarō’s feet: on jostling him, the stranger had knocked the cane out of his hands onto the ground. Keitarō immediately stooped to pick it up. Just then he noted that the snake head on the ground was, as chance would have it, pointing toward the east, like a finger pointing in a certain direction.

"Ah! The stop on the east is the better after all!" he thought.

So he hastily returned to the spot in front of the chinaware store, and stood there, inspecting carefully every passenger getting off from the trolleys with the sign, "Hongō Sanchōme" on them. The first two or three cars he stared at severely, as though he were looking for the murderer of his father. Gradually his tensions eased and he felt more self-assured. He began to think of what he was looking at as a scene on a stage, and promptly realized that there were three other men watching the scene, just as he was doing. One was the policeman, who was standing just as he was, and looking in the same direction. Another was the signal man in front of Tenkadō; and the last was a middle-aged man who was waving a green and red flag like some sacred symbol in the middle of the square. Of them all, only he and the policeman were standing in seemingly bored observation, but in
actuality, he thought, hoping for exciting events.

The cars came and went in unending procession in front of him. Those trying to get on jammed themselves into the already overcrowded compartments, and those getting off tried austerely to push their way through the mob. Keitarō watched these men and women, totally unrelated to him, swirling into impromptu meetings and dispersals, as they engaged in many coarse maneuvers in front of him.

But the target on which he concentrated, the man with the soft black hat, did not appear, however long he waited. Could he have already got off at the western stop? But to think so, and just to stand watching these blank faces that could shed no light on his problem until his own eyes were dulled seemed so stupid to him--! It would have made much more sense if that frantic and feverish two hours at the desk in the boarding house had been spent instead consulting with Sunaga, obtaining his help. As he disconsolately savored the bitter taste of what-might-have-been, the sky gradually lost its brightness and the scene before him was increasingly tinged with the blue shades of twilight. Gas lamps and electric bulbs were beginning to illuminate the display windows, relieving the gloom of a winter's evening. Just then Keitarō became aware of a young woman with hair done up in a low pompadour,
standing about six feet away from him. He had thought that he was keeping a fairly careful watch over the general scene as he concentrated his attention on the passengers getting on and off the streetcars, and so was surprised at her being so close to him without his having noticed her approach.

She was wearing a long, almost trailing outer garment of a color rather too subdued for her age. Keitarō imagined her youthful figure and the alluring colors of her kimono that would be under the coat. She stood in a way that deliberately concealed her appearance. A white silk scarf hid any view of fashionably colored clothing inside the coat. Apart from the white scarf, which stood out as the twilight deepened, she wore nothing that might be thought conspicuous. Yet her choice of color, ignoring as it did the current fashions, seemed to be the very thing that caught his eye. He did not feel it alien or out of harmony with the increasing coldness of the wintry sky; as he looked at the scarf around her neck, it seemed a central focus of fresh beauty set off against the background of this grimy street.

As she became aware of his gaze, she turned away
slightly, and, as though she did not feel quite comfortable yet, she raised her right hand to her ear, and ran her fingers through her hair as if to smooth it back. Since her hair was perfectly arranged, Keitarō thought the gesture without specific function. But the sight of her hands forced him to consider her anew. She was not wearing the standard silk gloves that every Japanese woman wore. Instead, her slim fingers were encased in tight-fitting goatskin gloves. They looked as though a colored wax had been poured lightly over them. When she raised her hand, Keitarō could see that the cuff of the glove was hiding almost three inches of her wrist. He turned his attention to the streetcars once again. When the confusion of passengers getting on and off was over without sight of his quarry, he had two or three moments of relaxation before the next car. Even though he was not obsessed by her enough to wait anxiously for those intervals, he still kept watching the woman inconspicuously.

At first he assumed that she would get on the car for Hongō or for Kamezawa-chō. But, when the trolleys for these destinations came to a stop in front of them, she paid them no attention. He found this a little odd, but reasoned that she was one of those people who preferred to wait rather than be squeezed
forcibly into standing room in the motorman's area
where she would have to endure the discomforts of
being pushed about. But even when a car came along
without the sign, FULL, on it, and with numerous empty
seats, she showed no inclination at all to get on. He
was even more puzzled. She seemed to sense from even
his slightest movement that she was receiving more
than ordinary attention from him, and with calm
deliberateness she prepared to avoid any further close
observation: like one who opens the umbrella even
before the rain starts to fall, she stared coolly away
from him, and walked off a few steps. Keitarō
consequently felt some embarrassment, and tried not to
look too openly in her direction. Gradually it
occurred to him that, if she were unfamiliar with the
area, she might have chosen this stop from ignorance
and be waiting for a streetcar that would never come.
If this were so, should he not speak to her out of
pure kindliness? He felt a sudden surge of courage,
and turned toward her decisively. But she, as though
oblivious of his presence, abruptly walked five or six
yards to the jeweller's window, and, almost touching
her forehead to the glass, began to study the rings,
the ornaments for the obi, and the coral objects.
Keitarō felt foolish at having nearly offered a total
stranger a kindness she did not need.
Her appearance, he reflected, was nothing unusual. Seen from the front, it was not so noticeable, but in profile her nose, to anyone's eyes, was a little snubbed. Her complexion was fair, and her eyes he found sparkling and lively. The electric light of the jeweller's window shone through the glass, illuminating her nose and part of the round, full cheek and forehead, giving a rather exotic outline of light and shade to the eyes of Keitarō, who stood behind and to one side of her. He stored the image of that facial line and the graceful figure covered by the long coat in his heart, and turned again to study the streetcars.

Two or three more cars came to a stop and then disappeared toward the east, leaving behind a disappointed Keitarō. Like a man who has given up all hope, he drew his watch from his obi. It was well past five o'clock. He looked up at the night sky and clicked his tongue bitterly as the realization of failure overwhelmed him. The bird he had not trapped in the net he had prepared so laboriously must have escaped very easily at the western stop. Then the prophecy of the old woman, deliberately made to
deceive him, the cane he was holding so carefully, the mysterious hint of direction it had seemed to give—all these became a source of bitter irritation. When he looked around at the twinkling electric lights that concealed the darkness of the night, and saw himself standing amidst their brilliance, it seemed to him that these shining lights were all that was left of the bright dream in which he had been ensnared. He stood there for a moment, trying to wake himself up to reality, yet still feeling half asleep. He decided that he ought to go back to his boarding house to return to his senses. The cane, he thought, he would break in half when no one was around and throw it over the Mansei Bridge into the Ochanomizu River, snake head, metal band, and all! It was a reminder of his idiotic search.

As he was on the very verge of taking his first step homeward, he became aware yet again of the young woman's presence. At some point, she had left the jeweller's window and was back at her former stand, some six feet away from him. Earlier, he had been pleasantly excited by her tall, upright posture, relaxed, lithe and natural. This time, though, it was her right hand that fascinated him: she held it down at her side quite naturally, quite unconcerned with the gaze of others. In the fading light of evening he
looked at the rhythmic fivefold repetition of those long, lithe fingers, smoothly enfolded by the soft supple leather glove, the delicate color of her skin just showing between sleeve and cuff of glove. Although there was little wind that night, the cold was penetrating for those who had to stand at the same spot a long time without moving about. The woman stood quietly, by a slight movement burrowing down into the scarf so that her neck was more fully protected against the cold. He somehow felt sure that, had he been able to read her eyes aright, he would find that, far from ignoring him, as they seemed to do, they would reveal her considerable awareness of him despite her efforts at concealment. While he had desperately sought out the man in the black hat, had she not with equal curiosity been observing him carefully? While he had stood here for more than an hour trying to spy on a man, had she not been spying on him? Just as he had no idea as to the identity of that man, and had no notion where he was from, what desperate act he was about to commit, or, indeed, why he was spying on him, so he could not for the life of him imagine why he should in his turn be spied on by a totally unknown woman as though he too were about to commit some wrongful act!

Perhaps if he were to walk away a little—? Maybe
then he would be able to find out more clearly what she intended. So he started to walk slowly to the west behind the police booth. But this sudden plan had a flaw in it: since he did not wish her to detect his intention, he could not look back to see if she were following. Still, if he kept walking straight ahead in this fashion, he would accomplish nothing. Hence, after going fifty feet or so, he pretended to look into a shop window at a girl's velvet cape, and, while doing so, he stealthily looked over his shoulder. Not only did he not see the lady following close behind him; he could not see her white scarf and long coat at all, even when he stood on tiptoe, so impeded was his line of vision by the steady flow of passersby. It was very discouraging. He doubted that he could keep moving ahead without losing sight of her.

The search for the man in the black hat he could give up without much regret; it was past five, and he had done his best. But he wanted to continue observing the mysterious lady a little more, even if the surveillance should end, as well it might, in some absurd and embarrassing situation. He abandoned the melodramatic notion that she was spying on him, but felt committed to the idea of observing her conduct for yet a little while. With the hurried behavior of a man returning to pick up what he has lost, he went
back toward the police booth. After he had stationed himself in the dark corner and looked toward the lady, he saw that she was still standing there, motionless as before, facing the street. She seemed totally unaware of his return.

A question nagged insistently at his mind: was she married or single? The low pompadour coiffure was fashionable among both married and single Japanese women, and signified nothing. A further question occurred to him as he stood diagonally behind her in the shadow of the police box: to what class did she belong? He studied her before deciding.

Outward appearance suggested at first glance that she might be married. Yet, although well developed, and mature in manner, she might well be younger than at first he had thought. But, if so, why did she insist on wearing such subdued colors? Keitarō was no expert on the colors and designs of women's kimono, but he did know that, as a young woman, she should be wearing brighter and livelier clothing to keep the biting December air from her delicate skin. It seemed strange and unorthodox of her not to display any of the lively colors that girls traditionally wore to
warm their young blood. Of all her clothing the only remotely conspicuous item was the white silk scarf. Even it was merely clean and cold, devoid of color. All the rest was covered by the long, winter coat. This detailed study of her clothing from his watch-station behind her convinced him that she had too severely discarded youthful colors that would have brought out to advantage her youthful charm; perhaps, he thought, the change toward severity resulted from her having had sexual experience? Moreover, there was in her manner a quality of maturity, the calm certitude of age. Surely this fine poise was in-bred, and not merely the result of her up-bringing and education? She might, perhaps, when exposed to the world outside her home, have lost her maidenly shyness just as the fragrance of perfume, sprinkled on a handkerchief, inevitably disappears in the course of time. But that was not all. This was no settled matron: he had noticed earlier that even when she seemed most poised, the unpredictable rebelliousness of unsettled young muscles showed itself in sudden movements of her legs or even of her eyebrows. The quickest of her movements, he already recognized, was in her eyes, even though he could see that there was in her attitude a clear effort to suppress and control the lively movement of those eyes. Her poise, in
short, was her response to the awareness that her nerves were volatile, and required subjugating. Still, from where he stood, both her physical presence and her emotional being seemed controlled and harmonious. No longer restive, as she had been earlier, she stood now gracefully, almost indolently, at the end of the streetcar platform, without altering her pose, or starting to walk, or leaning against the jeweller's window or appearing bothered by the cold. Two or three people were scattered nearby waiting for the next streetcar. They were tensely watching the approaching car as though to urge it on more quickly to the stop. The lady seemed much relaxed now that she believed Keitarō had left, and was very attentive as though expecting something to happen among the people waiting for the streetcar. She was watching the corner diagonally opposite with great care. Keitarō went around the police booth and went out to the roadway. The painted police box was his shield: from behind it, and past the policeman standing by it, he watched her face with concentration. Once again he was surprised by a radical change in her expression. Until now, as he studied the visible ingredients of which she was constituted--the coat of subdued color that covered her so completely, the tall, athletic figure, the pompadour coiffure--his imagination had run riot among
a variety of hypotheses. But now as he looked unobserved and carefully at her face, he seemed to be seeing a totally different person: she appeared much younger than before. Those eyes, those lips (parted surely in anticipation?) were vivid and took on a kind of brilliance. He saw in her a lovely virginal innocence.

Shortly, from the direction in which she was gazing, a streetcar approached, slowly rounding the curve. When it slid to a stop in front of the young woman, two men emerged. One, carrying a box wrapped in brown paper, walked to the right, passing in front of the policeman and jumping onto the sidewalk. But the other went straight to the woman and stopped.

Keitarō saw her face transformed by a smile for the first time. He had earlier noticed that, although her lips were thin, she had quite a large mouth, and now, when she smiled, she revealed her fine, even teeth, and, closing her sparkling black eyes, her long upper lashes merged with those underneath. Keitarō was fascinated, even stunned, by the vision of this smiling face, and he averted his eyes to the man.
Suddenly, he saw: the head of her companion was covered by a black felt hat! In the poor light he was unable to tell whether or not the coat was the specified salt-and-pepper; to his eyes it was almost as dark as the hat. But its wearer was tall and thin. Keitarō was unable to estimate his age exactly, but felt certain that this man was much older than he: he was sure that he was at least in his forties. As soon as he had checked off in his head the various characteristics given in the letter for identification, he was forced to the conclusion that the suspect he had been looking for with almost ridiculous diligence had just this minute come out of the streetcar. He felt astonishingly lucky, even grateful, in that his foolish curiosity about and attraction for the young lady had kept him at the streetcar stop long after the designated time of five o'clock. A fair share of his good luck, he realized, came from the fact that that young lady had waited with much more patience and confidence than he was capable of for the very person he was after, and only through her had he succeeded. He felt confident now that he would be able to present significant data concerning the "Man X" in the black hat in his report to Taguchi, and at the same time satisfy his own raging curiosity concerning "the Young Woman Y".
The man and woman, as they chatted freely and easily with each other, unconcerned about the people around them, apparently had no notion of Keitarō's presence or interest in them. The woman never stopped smiling, and the man too laughed occasionally. The warm manner of their initial greeting was enough to make clear that they were friends of long standing. He did not see in either of them the elaborate forms of courtesy between man and woman that, although meant to attract, often alienate in actuality. The man, for example, did not bother to raise his hat in greeting. Keitarō wished he had, so that he might see if the large black mole which, according to the letter, should be between his eyebrows, was, in fact, concealed by the hat. Had it not been for the presence of the woman, he might have gone right up to the man, and asked him some question or other, or in some other fashion have come close to the suspect to get a good look at his face just to be sure. But the woman standing there in front of him, of course, prevented any such attempt. Perhaps she had not suspected him of any wrongdoing, but she had nevertheless been sorely puzzled by someone standing so long without any apparent reason at one spot as he had done. Crudely pushing his way into her presence now would not only be rather ungentlemanly, but, by raising her
suspicions, probably ruinous to his mission.

Thinking in this fashion, Keitarō came to the conclusion that it would be sensible to put off finding out about the mole until an unsought opportunity offered itself. Instead, he made up his mind that he should follow the two and listen to their conversation to the extent possible. This was his duty; he felt no need to consult with his conscience as to the propriety of spying on the actions and talk of these two. That man Taguchi, experienced as he was in the ways of the world, could make the moral discriminations when he utilized the facts that were reported to him. So Keitarō in his simplicity believed.

But something was happening. The man appeared to have made some sort of invitation, and she was smilingly declining. The two of them, who had been standing face to face, now walked side by side, their shoulders and arms touching, towards the chinaware store. From there they began to walk almost arm in arm in an easterly direction. Keitarō quickly moved so that he was about fifteen feet behind them, and then adjusted his speed to theirs. To avoid suspicion lest the woman turn around, he avoided looking at them. It was a public road; people followed each other along quite by chance. So Keitarō walked in the same
direction, his eyes deliberately not fixed on anything, apparently ignoring them.

"Oh, but that's just too much! After having kept me waiting all this time, too!"

These were the first words of hers that he overheard; he could not catch at all what the man's answer was. After they had walked a short distance, they suddenly slowed down so that Keitarō almost caught up with the two shadowy figures standing side by side ahead of him. Not to have overtaken and passed them would have seemed strange. Had he continued walking ahead, he might actually have bumped into them from behind. Fearful that they might turn around, he abruptly turned out of the way and entered a candy store nearby. He pretended to examine the biscuits in a large glass jar as he waited for them to move once more. The man was reaching into his pocket, then turned toward the light of the store to look at something he had taken out: it was, Keitarō could see, a gold pocket-watch he held up to his eyes.

"It's only six o'clock. That isn't very late, surely."

"Six o'clock is very late. I've waited a long time
and am just about ready to go home. I'm sorry I couldn't manage it better."

The two began to walk once more. Abandoning his jar of biscuits, Keitarō continued following them. They reached Awaji-chō, and then turned into a narrow lane connecting with Surugadai-shita. Just as he too was about to turn as he followed them, they went into a western-style restaurant at the corner. When they left the streetcar stop, he had had, of course, no idea where they were headed, but, when he saw them suddenly enter that establishment, a place completely ordinary, and undistinguished, he was astounded. It was called the Takara-tei. The university crowd had frequented it for a long time. He had noticed when passing by that the restaurant had been rebuilt and expanded recently; part of a painted facade was exposed to the weather, and the diagonally shaped ridge of the roof, facing south, was not yet finished. He even recalled his own past visits, during which he had struggled grimly with knife and fork in the dining room shining with light blue paint. When he looked up, he saw a Munich beer poster framed on the wall. To be sure, he had had no specific expectation or definite hope as to their destination as he had followed them; subconsciously, of course, he fantasized that they would lead him into some mysterious maze with an
atmosphere of pale lavender. The western restaurant, filled with the oily smell of fried potatoes and beef sizzling in the kitchen seemed just too prosaic.

Still, he reflected, it was much better to have them go here than to have them disappear into some darkly elegant den of mystery where he could not follow; at least his quarry were approachable in the interior of this commonplace, completely ordinary, down-at-the-heels restaurant, smelling of paint.

Fortunately, he had enough money with him to satisfy his appetite, even if stimulated by the cold wintry air, at a restaurant of this sort. He started to follow them upstairs, but on second thought as he reached the entrance where the bright light was shining into the street, he realized that, since she could not help but remember him if he were to go up at the same time, she would certainly be convinced that he was deliberately pursuing them.

So he walked carelessly past the brightly lit entrance and down the dark alley for the length of a short block. Then, from foot of the hill at the end of the lane, the dark shadow that was Keitarō walked back quietly into the substance and color of his reality as he once more approached the lighted entrance. He went through the gate. Having been there many times before, he was for the most part acquainted with the layout of
the place. There was no room for eating downstairs: the second and third floors were the dining areas. Unless very crowded, they did not open the third floor to customers. Normally, the second floor sufficed for their clientele. He knew, therefore, that, once he had climbed the stairs, he would be able to see, either in the large room far to the right or in the one at the left, the table to which his two people had been ushered. If he could not see them there, he would have to look into the narrow room in the front. With this plan of action in mind, he started to climb the stairs, and was guided by a white-uniformed waiter who stood waiting for him.

At the top of the stairs he handed his cane over to the waiter, who, saying, "Please, sir, this way!" ushered him to the right side of the diningroom. He watched from behind to see where the waiter placed his cane among the hats and coats hanging on the wall. The soft black hat was there, along with the salt-and-pepper overcoat and the long coat the woman had been wearing. When the waiter put the cane away, he touched the edge of her coat, and a bright, colorful silk lining caught Keitarō's eye. He turned
his gaze from coat to owner. By a fortunate chance, the woman had her back to the stairway as she sat facing her companion. After settling down in her seat, she could not turn around to view new arrivals without being guilty of bad manners, Keitarō realized, and women usually tended to avoid such conduct unless necessary. Seeing her so situated, therefore, he felt at least temporarily relieved. And, just as he had expected, the woman did not, in fact, look back. So he risked going very close to her to sit down, back to back, at the table directly behind hers.

As he did so, her companion raised his head and looked directly at him while he was still standing and facing him. On the table in front of the man was an apparently Chinese-style bonsai of pine and plum. A bowl of soup was before him, and, while looking at Keitarō, he rested his large soup spoon. There was no more than six feet between them under the bright light that lit up the entire room. The white tablecloth contributed to the glare. Under these optimum conditions, Keitarō studied the man's face thoroughly, and recognized the large mole between his eyebrows just as Taguchi had described it.

Aside from this mark, his features had no especially distinctive characteristics. The eyes, the nose and mouth were quite undistinguished. Yet these
commonplace features, assembled on that longish countenance, resulted to anyone's eyes in an appearance of more than usual refinement. As he rested his spoon in the soup bowl and paused for an instant to look at Keitarō, his bearing was dignified, almost noble.

As Keitarō sat down at the table, with his back to his suspects, he thought about the standard connotations of words like "detective," and "investigation," and found them totally inappropriate as related to the man he had just seen. One does not harbor dreadful secrets behind eyes, nose and mouth as regular as those! As he sat there, he felt that at least one-third of his enthusiasm for the task of that evening, given him by Taguchi, had evaporated, to be replaced by disappointment. Most important of all, he questioned the moral sanction for undertaking such a mission.

After placing his order, he sat lost in thought, without even touching his bread. The man and woman had stopped talking for a time, apparently a little inhibited by the new guest who sat close by. But, by the time a hot white plate had appeared before Keitarō, they seemed to have regained their sociability, and Keitarō heard the voices of the two in vigorous conversation.
"Not tonight. I have work to do."

"Oh? What work?"

"What work? Why--important work. It's hard to explain."

"All right, all right. I know what it is! --And this, after all the time you kept me waiting in the cold!" the woman said irritably.

The man laughed softly, as though out of deference to others around them. The flow of talk ceased for a time. Then Keitarō heard the man say, as though it had just occurred to him, "Let's skip tonight. It's already too late."

"Not a bit of it! By streetcar it is close by!"

Keitarō understood very well that the woman was urging that they go somewhere, and that the man was reluctant to do so. But he had no idea as to their destination or objective.

He stared at his knife and at a piece of reddish carrot left on the plate, thinking that if he listened to them a little more, he might perhaps be able to get some clue. The woman seemed insistent and the man was creating all sorts of excuses to turn away her suggestion. But he was always gentle and considerate;
obviously he did not wish to offend her. By the time Keitarō's second course of meat and green peas was brought in, she had begun to give in. Keitarō was hoping that she would either win the argument or that he would gracefully concede it to her, and, when he perceived that she was weakening, he was more than a trifle disappointed. At very least he wanted to hear the name of the proposed destination, a name both of them knew without mentioning it. But, inasmuch as her suggestion had not been adopted, the conversation headed naturally toward other subjects, and his hope of finding out the destination was frustrated at least for the time.

"All right. We don't have to go. But please give me that instead."

"That? What's that? I don't understand."

"That thing, you know! Don't you remember the other day? Now do you know?"

"I'm sorry. Not at all."

"Oh, you are so difficult! You're simply pretending not to know!"

Keitarō would have liked, had he dared, to turn around to see. But just at that moment three guests came in all at once with considerable noise. One was a soldier in khaki uniform and boots. He rattled the saber on his hip with a great clatter. The three
went off into the dining area on the left. But the sound had disrupted the conversation, so Keitarō's curiosity was forced to rest until the clanking of the flashing saber diminished.

"Don't you remember? The one you showed me the other day."

The man said neither yes nor no. Keitarō, unable to fathom the mystery, felt somewhat reproachful that she wouldn't come right out and name the thing she wanted more clearly. He was consumed with curiosity.

Finally the man replied, "But I wouldn't have such a thing with me now."

"I'm not suggesting that you have it here. I'm just saying I would like to have it. Not now: next time will do very well."

"If you want it that much, I'll give it to you. But--."

"Oh? That's fine!"

Again Keitarō felt an urge to turn around and look at the woman, and in the process observe the man again. But, in view of his position, facing away from them, he could not indulge in such irrational behavior, so he stared straight ahead, not knowing what to do next.

The waiter now came from the kitchen bearing two white plates which he placed in front of the them, at
the same time clearing away dishes from the earlier courses.

"That is squab. Why don't you try it?"

"I've had more than enough already."

She apparently did not touch the food, but instead busied her mouth with speaking rather than eating. As nearly as Keitarō could make out from what was said, what she wanted from the man was something on the order of coral beads. With the precision of a connoisseur, her escort discussed various aspects of the desired object, but it was the sort of knowledge that would interest only specialists, and Keitarō made little of it. The man explained to her at considerable length that some very cleverly made imitations of the genuine article could be made by hand, but that these were easily to be distinguished from the real thing because the imitations were somewhat rough to the touch. Keitarō assumed from this that the woman had made him promise to give her some valuable antique jewelry not otherwise easily obtainable.

"Well, you're welcome to it, but what use will you put it to?" came the man's voice.

"Ah, never fear!" she replied. "What can you, a man, do with it?"

After a brief silence he heard the man ask, "Would
you care for some dessert? Or maybe some fruit?"

"Either one would be nice," she answered.

This question and answer indicated that their dinner would be finished soon, and Keitarō was brought back to the problem of how to execute his mission from here on. Perhaps until that moment he had been a little too fascinated by the overheard conversation. He was there mainly because he intended to keep an eye on his two suspects after they left the restaurant. He fully understood that it would be folly to leave by going downstairs at the same time they did. If he left after their departure, he ran the risk of losing them in the darkness or in the crowded street before he had had time even to finish his cigarette and follow them. Proper surveillance, he felt sure, required that he leave in advance of the suspects, and wait for them outside in the shadows or wherever they would not notice him. He thought best to pay the bill, and so he quickly summoned the waiter.

His suspects at the next table were still chatting casually, but since they did not stick to any particular subject for long, there was little exchange of significant feeling or opinion and the talk went on in random fashion, like a floating cloud, simply
drifting now to this, now to that. So they began to talk about the man's distinguishing feature, the mole between his eyebrows.

"I don't see why it developed at such a place."

"It didn't grow there suddenly. I was born with it."

"Doesn't it seem to you ugly to have it in such a conspicuous spot?"

"No matter how ugly it is, there's nothing to be done. I was born with it."

"You should go right away to the University Hospital and have it removed."

At this point, Keitarō bowed his head so low that his face was reflected in the fingerbowl; he held his temples and laughed quietly to himself. At that moment the waiter brought the change on a tray.

When Keitarō stood up quietly and walked inconspicuously toward the stairway, the waiter standing there chanted to the people downstairs, "One guest departing!" At just that instant he realized he had forgotten the cane which he had entrusted to the waiter upon entering. It was in the corner umbrella stand in back of the woman's long coat. Very quietly, Keitarō went back, trying not to disturb the couple still at their table, and he took it out gently. When he seized the snakehead, he felt on his
wrist the soft, habutae-silk lining of the coat. He almost tiptoed to the top of the stairs; from there, he changed his tempo and clattered, rat-a-tat-tat, down the stairs.

Once out in the street, he quickly crossed the streetcar track to the other side. In front of a large clothier's store (perhaps a second-hand clothing store) toward the end of the street, he positioned himself with the light from the store at his back. This way, when they left the restaurant, whether they turned left or walked by the corner of the Nakagawa Restaurant toward Renjaku-chō or even through the narrow alley to Surugadai-shita, he would not lose them. Satisfied that he would not miss them no matter which direction they went, he held his cane and kept his eye on the entrance of the restaurant.

After about a ten-minute wait, he began to be impatient since he could not yet detect the slightest shadow emerging into the lighted entrance area he was watching. He stared resentfully at the lighted window on the second floor, and prayed that they would leave their table soon. From time to time, tired of staring so concentratedly at the entrance, he looked up into the dark sky over the housetops. Solely occupied by earthbound sights revealed in man-made light, Keitarō had utterly neglected to study the sky. It seemed to
be preparing a cold, unpleasant drizzle in the
darkness overhead his head. The very prospect made him
desolate.

It suddenly occurred to him that those two,
talking routine nonsense while he was there, precisely
because they were aware of his presence, might, now
that he had left, have lingered to talk over matters
of far greater import, matters which, in the
performance of his assigned task, he should by all
means have heard. The suspicion festered within him,
and, looking up into the dark sky, he vividly saw
against the clouds, the two of them, facing each
other, at their table.

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He cursed himself for having been overly prudent
in leaving the restaurant too soon. But he reminded
himself once more that, as long as they sensed his
presence, it would have made no difference how long he
stayed, for he would have caught only small talk of no
import. Whether he left early or late, the result
would have been the same. Hence there was nothing for
it but to endure the cold and keep on watching the
circle of light at the entrance.

Since he thought he felt one or two drops of rain
striking the brim of his hat, he looked up again at the dark sky. If the road, with its streetcars, was noisy, the dark impenetrable expanse above his head seemed extraordinarily quiet. With his face turned upward as he awaited more drops of rain on his cheek, and stared into the dark formlessness of the heavens, he lost his anxiety about the imminence of rain. The question came to him quite suddenly under that tranquil sky: why was he of his own free will becoming involved in such disquieting problems? It seemed to him at that moment that the cane that he then held was the cause of all this confusion. While he gripped the snakehead handle as usual, he swung the cane violently around two or three times, as though giving vent to his irritation at the cold and the delay.

And at just that moment the shadowy figures he had been waiting for materialized together in the circle of light in front of the restaurant. Before anything else, he looked for the white scarf encircling the woman's slender neck. His two suspects came out to the wide boulevard, across the street from where he stood, and began to go back the way they had come. Keitarō at once crossed the street to the other side. They walked at a leisurely pace, looking into each of the gaily decorated shop windows as they went. Their pursuer had to adjust his pace to theirs, and he was greatly
put off by their slow progress. The cigar the man
smoked left behind it the pungence of good tobacco in
the night as they walked on. Keitarō enjoyed its
fragrance and color as he patiently followed along
behind. The man was so tall that, from behind, he
looked like a Westerner, and the strong cigar somehow
augmented the illusion. Keitarō switched this mental
association of foreignness to the woman as well: she
seemed almost a rashamen, as a Japanese mistress to a
foreigner is called, wearing the exotic kid gloves
which he had bestowed upon her. Even though he knew
that it was ridiculous, he continued to develop the
ramifications of his fantasy until they halted once
more for a time at the streetcar stop where they had
first met. Soon, however, they crossed the tracks to
the other side as did Keitarō. Then they moved over to
the corner of Mitoshiro-chō across from the place
where Keitaro stood. He followed. They began walking
south. Half a block from the corner was a red-painted
steel pillar. The two stopped beside it. Finally
Keitarō realized that they were about to board a
trolley on the Mita-Line, headed south where they had
come from, either to return to their place or go on
ahead; and that he, therefore, would have to board the
same car.

Suddenly both of them turned in his direction. He
realized, of course that they were looking beyond him toward the streetcar coming up from the north behind him, but he felt nonetheless uncomfortable. Until the streetcar arrived, he waited awkwardly, pulling down the brim of his hat, touching his face with his hand, pulling himself back under the eave as much as possible.

Soon the trolley arrived. Keitarō planned, when it stopped, to get in after the two to avoid arousing their suspicion. So he stood at the rear of the crowd boarding the car, taking his time. The woman, meanwhile, boarded the streetcar at the door where the conductor stood, the hem of her coat almost trailing on the steps. But the man Keitarō expected to follow gave no indication of joining her; he just stood on the platform, his feet together and both hands in his coat pockets. At last the amateur detective understood that the man had escorted her purposely to the streetcar stop to see her off.

All along, of course, Keitarō had been far more interested in the woman than in the man. Since the two were parting here, he would certainly have preferred to abandon the man and follow the lady. But he had no choice since Taguchi's assignment required him to report on the conduct of the man in the black hat alone, and made no mention at all of the woman.
Reluctantly, he restrained himself from jumping onto the streetcar.

Once she had got aboard at the conductor's entrance, she nodded goodbye quickly to her friend, and went immediately into the car. In the cold winter's night, all the windows were closed. She did not try to open a window to wave amiably at him. But the man continued to stand there, impassively, waiting for the car to start. Finally the streetcar started to move, as though it knew that there was no need for an exchange of civilities. With a surge of power, it carried away those reflecting windows and the people behind them toward the south. At that point, the man threw the cigar he had been smoking to the ground, turned around, and walked off. When he came to the three-way intersection, he turned left, and stopped in front of a Chinese import store. He was standing, Keitarō realized, at the stop where someone had bumped into him and made him drop his cane. He followed after his man at a safe distance. He watched him looking in shopwindows at neckties, silk hats, checkered Afghans, and he thought dispiritedly, if he had to be this discreet and restrained, his notion of detective work,
now that the woman was out of the picture, even though he did not want to admit it, had become boring, so that he certainly now felt constrained in spite of himself. Since his assignment called only for a report on the black-hatted man's conduct for two hours, he was inclined to call it quits and go back to his boarding house for much-needed sleep.

Just then, the man's streetcar arrived, and, grabbing the iron handrail by the door, he neatly hoisted his thin body into the still-moving car. Keitaro hesitated for an instant, then, realizing that this was a precious chance that he should not lose, he hastily climbed aboard. The streetcar was not crowded, and the passengers had space enough to see each other without difficulty. As he entered the main passenger compartment, he found himself observed at once by the five or six seated passengers. The man in the black hat, who had just sat down, was among them. A slight surprise showed in his eyes, but Keitarō did not think there was any manifestation of suspicion that he had been spied upon. Finally Keitarō, in relaxed fashion, sat down next to the man he pursued. Wondering where his suspect was going to take him, he looked at the black sign near the motorman and read, "Destination: Edogawa-chō." In the event that the man in the black hat should make a transfer, Keitarō was prepared to
follow, and he watched him carefully at every stop. The man was either staring vacantly ahead of him or down at his own lap, with his hands in his pockets. He appeared to be turning over some thoughts lightly in his mind. After passing Kudanshita, he began to stretch his long neck at times, and to look occasionally out the window as if to check on something. Keitarō, profiting from the example, did likewise, straining his eyes to look outside through the window. Suddenly, above the loud rattle of the moving streetcar, he began to hear raindrops hitting the window pane at the level of his ears. Looking at the cane he was holding, he thought ruefully, "It should have been an umbrella!" Ever since he had observed the trustful eyes of this man at the restaurant, and had, as a consequence, come to a respectful opinion of his character, he had vaguely wondered if, instead of spying on him in this sneaky fashion, he would not be wiser to approach him directly and request what information he desired so that it could be reported to Taguchi. He tried to figure out just how he might introduce himself to the man for this purpose. Finally, the streetcar reached the end of the line. It seemed to be raining harder, and, when the car stopped, suddenly, his ears were assailed by the sound of the downpour. The man in the
black hat put up the collar of his overcoat, and rolled up the cuff of his trousers, muttering to himself, "What a mess! " Keitarō stood up and leaned on his cane. The man he wished to follow went out into the rain, and immediately caught a passing ricksha. Without delay Keitarō signalled one also. Lifting the shaft, the ricksha man asked, "Where to, sir?" Keitarō ordered him to follow the ricksha ahead, and the man agreed and began to run rapidly. By the police station at Yarai, he slowed down to a stop and turned to his passenger, asking, "Which way did he go?" There was no trace of the other ricksha, even though Keitarō craned his neck in the rain out from under the hood to look for it. Leaning on his cane amidst the downpour, he had no idea which way to go.
Notes

Chapter II, "Streetcar Stop"

1. (153) Valdo Viglielmo in "Later novels of Natsume Sōseki (Monumenta Nipponica XIX, 21-22) notes that Ara Masahito as well as Komiya have commented on the fact that throughout his early works Sōseki evinces great dislike for detectives and their activities. Viglielmo, following Komiya (who modified his point later), sees Keitarō's activity as "not actually that of a detective but simply that of a romantic curiosity."

2. (155) The Ogawa-tei was a vaudeville theatre located in the Kanda District at that time (Zenshū, XXVII, 10).

3. (156) "An Edo-style connoisseur": the urbane, fashionable, sophisticated way of living aimed at by upper class Tokyo citizens during the Edo Period. The Sharebon genre of Edo literature is devoted to the praise of this well-mannered ideal of the upper class merchants. Keitarō later (pp. 52-54) comments in some detail on Edo culture and its artifacts. Clearly, to this thoroughly modern young man of the Meiji Restoration, these things seem old-fashioned, if esthetically pleasing. Edward Seidenstecker in Low City, High City, after commenting that "good taste itself [in the Edo Period] may have been more important than the products of good taste," goes on to suggest that the tea ceremony is well suited to Edo culture in that "it brought together the best in handicrafts, in painting, and in architecture, and the "ceremony" itself was a sort of dance punctuated by ritualized conversation...but, whatever may have been the effect on the minds and spirits of the participants, the occasion itself was an amalgam of beautiful elements put together for a few moments, and dispersed (pp. 17-18)."

4. (158) "...and call out in his usual fashion at the entryway, "Hello! Hello!" This mode of the visitor's announcing himself is fairly routine among the Japanese--as among Hawaiians.
Sunaga's lane was segmented into a multitude of tiny plots, forming nests of people unknown to him: This section (pp. 49-51) in which many different stories are hinted at, serves the function of extending and universalizing Sunaga's circle and the stories about its members which Keitarō learns. It is perhaps the best justification that Sōseki could have given for his interlinked stories: the interrelationships extend outward, in concentric circles, to all humanity. Not only here, but throughout the novel, our attention is being directed to those other circles: now an unknown woman with a baby in a streetcar, now a maidservant, hitherto taken for granted, suddenly seen as a person of considerable interest. This tendency gives the novel a spaciousness and breadth of vision that serves as a counterbalance to the "inward" quality of much of the action and analysis in HSM. These are, in some sense, the two poles of Keitarō's interest and development: he moves from the one to the other.

"Kei-chan! Kei-chan!: "-chan" is the intimate diminutive form of address used between school-children and intimate friends instead of the more formal "-san," used in polite address to persons of roughly equal status in the adult world.

Suitengu and Fudosō Shrines: The first of these was located in Nihonbashi, Kakigara-cho. It was a temple to the god of water safety and easy childbirth. Fudosō Shrine was located in Fukagawa Park. It was a branch shrine of the Narita Shrine, which was revered throughout Japan. (Zenshū X, 295)

The Bakan area: present day Shimonoseki. Though renamed in 1902, the older name is still familiar to the Japanese. (Zenshū X, 295)

The trick played on Mr. A--- is taken from an episode recorded in Sōseki's Diary, July 21, 1911. It was a practical joke that Sōseki's close friend, Nakamura Zeko, played on an associate of his (Zenshū, XXVI, pp. 60-61).

Keitarō's father was trying to read the fortune of his house. Whatever the exact recipe,
the procedure was based on a long traditional belief that the lives of people living in a house must be very much affected by the placement of that house in relation to the stars and the spirit world.

11 (205) Zenkoji Temple: founded around 602 in the era of the Empress Suiko.

12 (207) Asakusa Higashi Honganji (in Soseki's text, it is referred to by its nickname of "Monzeki"): a Tokyo branch of the Buddhist Higashi Honganji Temple in Kyoto. (Zenshu, X, 296)

13 (207) "He had heard from his grandfather all about the bustling activity of Asakusa Kannon": in Low City, High City (New York, Alfred Knopf, 1983) pp. 206-207, Edward Seidensticker quotes W.E Griffis (The Mikado's Empire, p. 373): "The temple of Kuanon at Asakusa is to Tokio what St. Paul's is to London or Notre Dame to Paris" and at another point (pp. 158-159) quotes Basil Hall Chamberlain and W.B. Mason in the 1891 edition of Murray's Guide: Japan, pp. 85 and 87, as follows:

The grounds of Asakusa are the quaintest and liveliest place in Tokyo. Here are raree shows, penny gaffs, performing monkeys, cheap photographers, street artists, jugglers, wrestlers, life-sized figures in clay, venders of toys and lollipops of every sort, and, circulating amidst all these cheap attractions, a seething crowd of busy holiday-makers.

14 (207) "The tidy restaurant serving only dojo": was the Echigoya, well-known in Soseki's time. (Zenshu, X, 296). The foods served are (1) nameshi: flavored rice with spring greens; (2) dengaku: vegetable with miso sauce; (3) dojo: loach, a small fish grown in rice paddies.

15 (208) Nagai Hyosuke's lightning sword trick: Many generations of Nagai Hyosuke's family knew the lightning sword trick and the secret formula for the all-healing medicine (made from the oil of toads) that they sold after performing the sword trick. Mention of him is found in haiku of the Meiji Period. (Zenshu, X, 296)

16 (208) Mamezo the sword-swallow: like
Nagai Hyōsuke, Mamezō practiced his art through many generations in Asakusa, each new generation of sword-swallowers using the same name. Like Nagai too, he was a man-of-all-tricks: magic, acrobatics, the recital of comic tales in order to attract crowds and sell his wares. (Zenshū, X, 296)

(208) "A large dried toad... with four forepaws and six hind legs": Even ordinary toads with just two forepaws and hind legs were deemed of great medicinal value. (Zenshū, X, 296)

(208) Jiraiya: a thief who often appeared in the comic books and kabuki plays in the Edo Period. He was supposed to practice black magic. (Zenshū, X, 296)

(209) O-Binzuru: was one of Buddha's sixteen disciples or Rakan. His Sanskrit name was "Pindora." Keitarō wanted to pat his head to ensure continued good health.

(209) Minamoto Yorimasa: in 1180, acting on orders of Prince Mochihito, he was the first to attack the Taira Clan, but he lost the battle, and killed himself at the Byōdō-in Temple at Uji. The painting of him described in the text was made in 1787. (Zenshū, X, 296-297)

(210) Bunsen: are coins minted during the Bunkyu Period (1861-1864). A wavy design is on one side. They were used for fortune-telling. (Zenshū, X, 297)

(231) The kanji characters for Morimoto are 森本.

(231) "He reached mentally for the cane... to prevent its melting into the fleeting black shadows of his mind": an image akin to James's flowing river of consciousness.

(235) The Journal of the Legal
Association: begun by the Faculty of Law, Tokyo University, 1884, and still being published. (Zenshu, X, 297)

25

"I've put on my shoes." Keitaro, after the fashion of his age, mixed Oriental and Western dress. He is wearing serge hakama with Western socks and shoes. (Zenshu X, 297)

26

"Ogawa-machi Streetcar Stop" painted in white on an iron post: a detailed map of the vicinity of Ogawa-machi Streetcar Stop, as reconstructed by Takaqi Fumio, (Soseki no Meikon, Ofusha, 1977), is provided in the Appendix. The iron post reappears in Soseki's Sorekara (And Then). All such posts were painted red with the name of the stop in white. (Zenshu, XXIII, 92).

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The signal man in front of Tenkado: Before automatic signals had been invented, there was a traffic policeman who operated the signal mechanism by hand. Before that, however, a signal man who was also an experienced motorman gave the signals to approaching cars with red and green flags in his hands.

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The Takara-tei, to which Keitaro followed the unknown couple, was located in Awaji-cho in the Kanda District of Tokyo in the early 1900's. Since its undistinguished quality is stressed, it cannot have been included as a means of graceful advertisement. But it contributes, along with other local references, to verisimilitude and a sense of actuality. Soseki works hard in this novel to stir a sense of recognition in the average Tokyo newspaper reader.

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"The soldier who "rattled the saber on his hip with a great clatter" is a fine instance of the apparently irrelevant detail often supplied by the author as part of the helter-skelter background of everyday activity. In his Notebook he writes that "Nature is surprisingly disorganized and extremely untidy. It is the human tendency to organize, and, to the extent that one satisfies this impulse, the result is unnatural." There is nothing "unnatural" in
Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice* losing all his ships at once, and it contributes to the appropriate background for the action (*Zenshū*, XXV, 6). This thoroughly Jamesian comment would apply just as well to the memorable sentence or two it takes to describe the noisy soldier as he passes through the scene at the restaurant. (*Zenshū*, 297–298)
When Keitarō woke up, he was thoroughly puzzled to find himself sleeping as usual in his own six-mat room. The events of yesterday all seemed actual enough, and yet were like the events in a rambling dream. More precisely, it was as if it were a "realistic dream." By his recollection, he might have worked on his mission in town in a half-intoxicated state. Or, rather, he felt more strongly that the world around him had been itself intoxicated. The streetcar stop and all the streetcars had been filled with a sense of inebriation. The jewelry store, the clothing shop, the policeman swirling his red and green flags—all were enveloped in this same intoxication. So too with the upstairs room of the blue-painted western restaurant, and its customers, the fair-complexioned woman and her companion, the gentleman with the mole between his eyebrows. The remarkable place names which appeared in their conversation, the coral beads the man had promised—these were tokens of a more rarefied
world. The magic wand for entrance to that world was
the bamboo cane. His sitting miserably in the ricksha,
leaning on the cane and staring into the rain, not
knowing where to go next was the climactic scene of
this dream-drama, just before the curtain closed on
its strangeness. He felt almost like one who has been
spellbound by a fox-spirit. He had looked at the wet
pavement reflecting the lights of a store and a police
station visible through the rain at the top of the
hill, and at the dark shapes of trees to their left,
and had thought in despair, "Is this all I have to
show for this day's work?" And finally, he recalled,
bowing to necessity, he had told the ricksha to take
him to Hongō.

Still in bed, he stared at the ceiling and ran
over in his mind the strange new world of yesterday.
With the throbbing eyes and head of a man still ever
so slightly intoxicated, he examined the pictures of
his memory, which came in steady succession, just as a
silkworm spins its thread. But the dreams appearing
continuously became bothersome at last. How could he
turn off this steady stream of images? Was he, in
sober actuality, under some kind of spell? Cast
by--what? In his state of casual speculativeness, he
could not help recalling the cane's influence on him.

The sight of the man and woman as they had
appeared the day before came vividly back to him: not only their features, but their clothing and even the way they walked were images etched clearly on the mirror of his mind. And yet he felt these two existed in some far-off land. However far-distant, they still appeared in his mind's eye with the utmost clarity of color and shape, as though he were seeing them close at hand. This unnaturally keen visual awareness might very well, he thought, result from the cane. When the previous night he had finally returned to the boarding house and come through its gates (after paying the ricksha man an exorbitant fee for his labors), he had taken the cane with him to his room. After considering the matter with some seriousness, he decided that it should not be exposed to the eyes of others, and had thrown it into the closet behind his wicker hamper before going to bed.

But this morning the snake-head did not seem to have as much significance to him, the more so as he contemplated the very real interview with Taguchi that was necessary if he were to make his report on his night's work. Certainly he had functioned all the afternoon and into the evening in a state of excitement approaching a kind of delirium; but, were he to try to write up the results of his activities as a coherent, practical report for the eyes of Taguchi,
could he be entirely sure that it would come through as a successful endeavor or not? And, if not, how could he say that the cane had helped him? As he thought over yesterday's events, he knew that the cane had been a psychic prop to him, and yet, in another sense, he had not received any help at all.

Deciding that he should wash away the lingering effects of his intoxication, he kicked off the bedding, jumped up, and went to the washstand, where he bathed his head thoroughly under the ice-cold water. When finished, he felt as though he had washed himself clean of yesterday's illusions, even down to the very roots of his hair, and braced by the conviction that he had become again his common-sensical self, he climbed energetically back up to his third-floor room. Cheerfully, he opened his window wide, and, standing in the aperture, he warmed himself in the sun shining high above the trees of Ueno, and inhaled the air deeply into his lungs some ten times or more. After this stimulation, he felt himself a thoroughly normal human being once again, and, as he smoked a cigarette, he thought about the content and organization of the report he was to present to Taguchi as efficiently as possible.
Still, he had to admit that, when he summed up the whole matter, there was not much information that Taguchi would find of use. Realizing this, he was a little crestfallen. He knew, however, that his employer might be anxiously awaiting the report, so he phoned to ask if it would be convenient for him to come now. The affirmative response was given him, after an interminable delay, by the same houseboy he had earlier had to deal with. So he headed for Uchisaiwai-chō immediately after hanging up the phone.

There were two cars waiting in front of the Taguchi house. Inside the gate, at the entryway, he saw one pair of shoes and one pair of geta. He was ushered this time into a Japanese-style room. It was a spacious, ten-mat room, and in the wide tokonoma hung two scrolls. The houseboy offered him in a large cup a very ordinary tea, and then carried in the charcoal brazier, carved from a solid block of paulownia wood. A moment later, he brought in a soft cushion. No maid-servant appeared.

Sitting in a straight, respectful posture in the center of the room, he awaited the approach of the master of the house. But, perhaps because of prolonged business talks, Taguchi did not appear for the longest time. Keitarō had no choice but to pass time guessing
the value of the scrolls, apparently brown with age, stroking the rim of the wooden charcoal brazier, and trying to re-settle himself in formal posture, placing both his hands on the hakama covering his legs. Everything around him was so neat, clean and new that he could not easily relax. At one point in his vigil, he wanted to take up what appeared to be an art book placed on the shelf of the tokonoma, but the splendid cover was shining in spotless purity as though warning him not to touch, and so he desisted.

In this way the master of the house kept Keitarō's nerves taut and uncomfortable for nearly an hour before he finally came in.

"I am sorry to have kept you waiting so long. My visitor simply would not leave, and so--." Keitarō made the suitable response to his excuse, along with a polite bow.

Then as he was about to begin telling his employer the events of the day before, he suddenly became confused as to how he should begin and in what order tell it, and so lost his chance to start effectively. Although Taguchi was both verbally and physically a very busy man, always talking and doing, he was quite clearly in no hurry to interrogate Keitarō concerning the results of his surveillance. He seemed to have stored up, somewhere within him, a comfortable surplus

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of time and energy. He asked unimportant questions: was it freezing in Hongo, did the wind blow hard in his third-floor room, was there a telephone at the boarding house? He kept sounding as though the conversation were of great importance to him, but in actuality nothing of interest was said. Keitarō dutifully answered the questions so that his host's curiosity would be satisfied. All the while, however, he had the impression that his opponent in this verbal fencing match was secretly watching him and evaluating something about him during the casual, even trivial, conversation. He sensed this attitude vaguely, but found it totally incomprehensible that Taguchi was observing him in this careful way.

Suddenly Taguchi asked, "But how was yesterday? Did it work out all right?"

Keitarō had realized the question would come, but had not found a satisfactory answer. If he replied, "Well, that depends on how you look at it!" he might sound arrogant or supercilious, so, after hesitating a little, he replied, "Yes, sir. It went very well. At least, I found the person you described in your letter."

"The man had a mole between the eyebrows?"

Keitarō answered that he had indeed recognized a small, protruding black spot.
"And the clothes were as I described them: black hat and salt-and-pepper overcoat?"

"Just as you described them, sir."

"Good! Then you prob'ly didn't make a mistake. He got off the streetcar at Ogawa-machi between four and five, did he?"

"He was a little behind schedule, sir."

"Ah? Was he, now? By how many minutes?"

"I don't recall exactly, but it was long past five."

"Long past, was it? But why did you wait for him? The assignment called for you to locate him between the hours of four and five. You didn't have to wait for him after that, right? At five you had done what I asked you to do, isn't that so? Why didn't you just go on home and give me a negative report, just as it happened?"

Keitarō would never have dreamed that the older man, who had been talking to him so amiably, would suddenly lash out at him so severely.

He had been building a conception of a man clever, urbane and sociable in his business dealings, and, when his boss suddenly launched this slashing verbal
attack, cutting him down with cold logic and exactitude, he lost his self-assurance entirely. To a friend one could say, "I did it for your sake!" But that would be utterly inappropriate in this case.

"I guess I just--it was my whim at the time not to leave."

Even before Keitarō had finished his answer, Taguchi gave up his severe attitude, and said amiably, "Well, that certainly was very convenient for me!" And then went on, "But tell me about this whim of yours that made you stay."

Keitarō hesitated slightly, and his boss said, "It really doesn't matter. It's your own affair. If you'd prefer not to discuss it, please don't."

Then Taguchi pulled the tray containing his tobacco materials. He opened a drawer, and took out a small ivory ear pick, which he put into his ear and began to scratch with it as though something were bothering him there. Nervously, Keitarō watched his face, frowning in abstract contemplation and seemingly paying no attention to him, interested only in his ear, and yet--still watching him closely.

"Well, actually, there was a woman standing at the streetcar stop," he finally managed to say.

"Ah? Young or old?"

"She was a young person."
"I see."

He said just that with no intonation whatever. Certainly there seemed in his words no invitation to continue, and Keitarō remained silent and puzzled. For a short time the two sat looking at each other silently.

"It was bad of me to ask you whether she was young or old. Again, that is your own affair. I shouldn't have asked. My only concern is to get your report on the hunt for the man with the mole."

"But, you see, sir, the woman was very much involved with the doings of the man with the mole. First of all, she was waiting for him."

"Really so?" Taguchi looked puzzled for a moment, then asked, "Was she someone you knew?"

Keitarō was not sufficiently bold or deceptive to claim a previous acquaintance. Awkward though it was, he had to admit honestly that he had never seen or talked with her before.

Taguchi did not pursue the matter, but just listened quietly to Keitarō and said, "I see" once more, this time quite amicably. He then went on in relaxed fashion, "And what sort of person was she, that young woman? What did you make of her appearance?" He leaned forward with an expression of great interest over the tobacco kit toward Keitarō.
"Oh, she was—oh, just an ordinary woman, I would say, sir."

He felt compelled to answer in this fashion, and, at the moment, felt in his heart that he was telling the exact truth. Vaguely, he understood that what he might say about the young lady depended on the listener and the circumstances of the conversation. In another context, he might well have said, "She was extremely attractive, unlike all the others!"

But when Taguchi heard his judgment that the lady was "just an ordinary woman," he abruptly burst into hearty laughter. Although Keitarō did not quite understand the reason for it, he felt somehow as though a great wave had broken over his head harmlessly. He felt his cheek reddening.

"All right: what happened after that? The man finally came to this 'ordinary woman' as she waited for him, is that it?"

Taguchi had reverted to his earlier, even conversational tone, and paid close attention to the account as his agent gave it. Keitarō had wanted, indeed, to tell him in detail all the difficulties he had had in obtaining the data he was about to present, as, for example, the many problems that resulted from the fact that the same streetcar stop had actually two separate physical locations. He had even thought of
explaining how he had obtained and used the mysterious and potent cane, embellishing his achievement as much as possible. But, since he had been severely mauled by Taguchi concerning his failure to stick to the assigned four-to-five-o'clock limits of the mission, and since, moreover, his decision to extend the watch for the man had resulted from his interest in a totally strange woman unrelated to him or to his task, he lacked the self-assurance needed to glorify his exploit. Hence he gave without elaboration a simple and direct account of the man and the woman and their visit to the restaurant. Even to his ears it sounded empty, vague and insubstantial, a handful of gray cloud shoved in Taguchi's face, just as he had feared when leaving the boarding house.

But Taguchi did not seem particularly displeased. He kept his arms folded across his chest, and now and again spurred Keitarō's account along by saying, "Indeed?" or "Hmmm!" or "And then?" Even when Keitarō reached the end of his report, Taguchi sat on in the same attitude, as though expecting still more.

Keitarō felt it necessary to apologize by adding, "That is all. I am sorry it couldn't be more
interesting."

"No, no, no! It was very interesting to me. Thank you for your effort; it must have been a very strenuous assignment for you!"

Taguchi's routine courtesy was not, to be sure, indicative of any special gratitude, but, to Keitarō, whose self-esteem had been ebbing at an alarming rate, these sociable comments were prized compliments. With relief, he realized at last that he had barely managed to discharge his mission creditably, and he relaxed, asking immediately, "That gentleman I followed: who is he, anyway?"

But Taguchi asked in turn, "What do you make of him? How do you size him up, eh?"

In his mind's eye Keitarō saw vividly the man wearing the salt-and-pepper overcoat with the long lapels. He saw clearly how he conducted himself, his way of talking, his characteristic walk. But he could give no answer at all to the question Taguchi had asked.

"I found him hard to figure out."

"Did you get any impression of his disposition?"

If it was a matter of his disposition, Keitarō thought he had a rough idea of it.

"I thought him calm and easy-going." He answered in accordance with what he had seen of the man.
"But aren't you calling him calm and easy-going because that was the way he appeared when he was talking with a young lady?"

Keitarō opened his mouth to answer, but, detecting a faint, ironic smile flickering at the corner of Taguchi's lips, he closed it again without replying.

"Anyone would talk calmly and politely to a young woman!" pursued Taguchi. "Don't tell me you have never been in that situation? And this fellow might be a little calmer and more easy-going than most...."

He laughed heartily, but, even as he laughed, he was watching the young man carefully. How stupid he must appear to this man of the world, thought Keitarō. But despite his embarrassment, he could not help joining in the laughter.

"Who do you think the woman was?" Taguchi suddenly shifted his attention to the other person.

Keitarō without any pretense of weighing pros and cons, answered candidly right away. "She seemed to me even more mysterious than the man, I'm afraid."

"Well, but give me your estimate at least: do you think she was a professional, so to speak?"

"Let me see, now--." Keitarō paused and thought about the question. The kid gloves, the white scarf, the engaging smile, the longish coat and many other recollections concerning her passed through his mind.
But all of these together gave him no significant clue concerning her.

"She wore a rather subdued coat and kid gloves...." he said.

But these two aspects of her dress did not seem to signify anything whatsoever to Taguchi. With a serious expression he asked, "Did you form any opinion as to the relationship of this man and woman?

Keitarō had received, "Thanks for your effort!" a short time ago, as an indication that his assigned task had been completed without trouble; he was totally unprepared for this subsequent barrage of difficult questions, one after another. Constantly uncertain and at his wit's end, he could not help but sense that the questions escalated to harder and harder levels.

Taguchi perceived that Keitarō was at a dead end, and he rephrased his question. "For example, they might be a married couple; or brother and sister, perhaps; or just good friends; or, of course, lovers. Of these various relationships, which seems to you the correct one?"

"Well, when I first saw her, I wondered whether she were a married woman or still a virgin. I think, somehow, that they are not a married couple, though."

"But even if they are not married, do you think
they had a physical relationship?

The question raised a nagging uncertainty that had been hovering in Keitarō's head from the time when he first saw them together. Had he been guided by his own feelings, the supposition that they were lovers might have sharpened his effectiveness as an observer, and his duty in spying on them might have become an elemental pleasure. He was not theorist enough to insist that the only man-woman relationship worthy of investigation is the sexual relationship, but, as a young man with his normal share of human passion, he felt that observing a man and a woman made sense only if one perceived the physical magnetism drawing them together; it was only this aura, this interrelationship, that truly defined a man or a woman for Keitarō. This was an article of faith; he wanted to see the world from this standpoint as much as possible. Although in his youthful inexperience he had not yet grasped fully the large and limitless possibilities of all human behavior, his eyes focussed vividly on the microcosm of man-and-woman. Hence in his observations of people and the way they behaved, he had tended wherever possible to view them from this one perspective. The two he had seen at the streetcar stop also seemed bound together from the outset, to his partial eyes, in just such a relationship. He was
no stern moralist, afraid to face the illicit and even
criminal aspects of these associations. Rather, he was
an unexceptionable individual, equipped with a very
ordinary moral code. But where his imagination had
always been lively, even adventurous, his moral sense
lagged far behind, not much in evidence until a crisis
arose. He felt no special distress as he re-aligned
the two he had seen at the streetcar stop to fit the
relationship he was most interested in.

The problem of the considerable difference in
their ages troubled him, and yet it seemed ultimately
quite symptomatic of the strangeness of the "world of
the male-female relationship." His real perception of
the two, then, had slackened without his being aware
of it. But, when asked formally by Taguchi concerning
this aspect, a clear answer simply did not form easily
in his head, quite apart from any moral approval or
disapproval.

So he said, "Possibly they may have a physical
relationship; but, perhaps not."

Taguchi merely smiled.

Just then the houseboy in hakama came in and
presented a tray with a name card on it to Taguchi.

As he picked it up, Taguchi replied, "It's natural
enough, really, that you should not understand." And,
turning to the houseboy, he said, "Ask him to wait in
the parlor."

Since he had grown increasingly nervous under the close questioning, Keitarō tried to take this opportunity of a guest's arrival to excuse himself, but Taguchi ignoring his plight, deliberately stopped him before he could stand up to leave, and continued asking questions. Not one question could he answer clearly; such a grilling was more agonizing than his oral examination at the University.

"I can't go on much longer," said Taguchi. "But there is one more question: have you found out the name of the man and woman?"

Even to this, the last question, Keitarō could, of course, give no satisfactory answer. As he had listened to the conversation of the two at the restaurant, he had hoped that he would overhear their names, but, almost as though they had some reason to conceal the information, they had never mentioned their own names nor did they refer to anyone else by name.

"I'm sorry. I was completely unable to learn their names, either." Keitarō replied.

Upon hearing this, Taguchi stopped warming his hands on the side of the hibachi, and began tapping its edge rhythmically with his fingertips. After continuing this for a time, he said, "All in all, your
efforts were not very productive, were they?" He went on immediately, "Still, you are honest. That's your strong point. It's far better to tell the truth than to report what you didn't see as if you had. I'll give you credit for that." And he began to laugh.

Keitarō could see by now that his observations had indeed been of little use, and was somewhat depressed at his ineffectiveness. And yet he was quite convinced that, had Taguchi assigned the task to someone many times more experienced and painstaking, and still given him only two or three hours' notice along with very little information, expecting him to endure long hours of waiting in the cold, the result would have been no more satisfactory. He felt little personal responsibility for the failure of the mission. On the other hand, the praise for being honest did not make him very happy either, since this degree of honesty seemed to him perfectly commonplace.

Feeling obscurely that somehow he had been made a fool of, Keitarō had an urge to say what he felt to Taguchi, even at the risk of seeming too free. This, he thought, would probably be his only chance to speak his mind.

"I am extremely sorry to give you a report which
doesn't make much sense, but it seems to me that the close and intimate information you seek could not possibly be obtained by a casual observer like myself, operating so suddenly in such a short space of time. Please excuse me if this sounds impudent, but I think we might obtain more accurate information simply by meeting the gentleman openly and asking him in so many words what you want to know. It would be quicker and less dishonorable than the pettiness of following him around secretly and spying on him as I have done."

Finished with his speech of justification, Keitarō waited for this worldly-wise host to laugh or begin to tease him. But Taguchi looked at him with unexpected seriousness, and said, "So you feel that way, do you? I am glad to hear it." Keitarō deliberately refrained from replying, and Taguchi added, "The direct way often seems the dull, uninteresting way. But you're perfectly right: it is the only way. I am glad that we agree. If you are aware of that, it is an admirable human trait."

After this response from his employer, Keitarō was even more at a loss as to how to answer.

"I beg your pardon for asking you to do such stupid work when all the time you had such a sensible understanding of human interrelationships. I made a mistake; I failed to read your true character. I was
misled, I suppose, when Ichizō first told me about you. He stressed that you were much interested in detective work. And because of that I gave you that foolish assignment. I should not have done it."

"Oh, no, I--" stammered Keitarō awkwardly, "But, yes, I remember telling Sunaga something like that."

"Really?"

With the one word, Taguchi cut off Keitarō's confused comments, and went on to re-examine their problem once more. "How about this: instead of following secretly after your man, how about going right to his house and putting it to him as you say? Do you have the nerve to do that?"

"I think I could do it."

"Even after following him so audaciously as you have?"

"Audaciously? Well, perhaps so, but certainly I did nothing dishonorable in my observing them."

"To be sure! Then why don't you try? I'll introduce you to him."

Taguchi was laughing heartily as he said this, but his essential proposition did not seem to be a joke, and Keitarō felt that he would like to visit and talk face to face with the man with the mole between his eyebrows, provided he were given a letter of introduction.
He said so: "Please do write a note introducing me, if you will. I would like very much to meet him and have a talk."

"Very good. This will be yet another experience for you, won't it? You'll meet him and be able to study him directly. I suppose you'll tell him first off that you followed him around the other night, as I ordered. That is all right. You have my full permission. Don't worry about me. And then there's the relationship he had with that young woman. Try asking him about that too. Do you have the nerve?"

Taguchi paused for an instant and looked appraisingly at Keitarō. Without waiting for a reply, he continued talking. "I would suggest, however, that you do not mention either matter until it comes up naturally in the conversation. It isn't a matter of courage, but of common sense, and, if you do mention it, he'll simply think you deficient in that quality. Not only that! He is not overly partial to strange visitors in any case, and, if you speak such things carelessly, he may just tell you to leave outright. I shall be glad to introduce you, but you must be very careful not to offend, right?"

Keitarō politely agreed, but in his heart he simply did not agree with Taguchi's description of the man in the black felt hat.
Taguchi took an ink stone box and a roll of paper and began to write with a brush. He took only a short time to write a brief message and the addressee's name. As he held it over the hibachi to dry, he said, "Just a routine introduction should be sufficient." Then he read it to Keitaro, who found, as the writer himself had acknowledged, little of special interest in the letter. It said only that the bearer of the letter had just graduated this year from the University, had majored in law, and was a person Taguchi might have to place somewhere. It concluded by asking the addressee to "please see him and chat with him." Once sure that Keitaro found nothing objectionable in the letter, he rolled the paper back and put it into the envelope. Then he wrote "Mr. Matsumoto Tsunezo" in large characters on the envelope and, without sealing it, handed it to Keitaro. The young man carefully examined the five characters, matsu, moto, Tsune, zo, sama. They were written in a thick, slovenly style and seemed unbecomingly clumsy for such a man as Taguchi.

"You don't have to admire it so much!"

"But there is no address on it--."
"Oh? It slipped my mind. Sorry."
He took back the envelope and added the address.
"Well, that will do the trick: large and unskillful, just like the large sushi in Dobashi Sushi Shop. But this will serve your purpose. It will do."
"It looks fine to me, sir."
"Shall I write one to the woman too?"
"Do you know her, sir?"
"I think it very likely." Taguchi had the smile of one who nurtures a secret.
"In that case, by all means please do write me an introduction!" Keitarō replied lightly.
"On second thought, maybe not. If I introduce a lively young fellow like you, and she gets into trouble, then I'm responsible! Don't they call a man like you 'romantical,' or something like that? I'm short on education, so I forget these fashionable big words right away. But you know the word, don't you? The one novelists are always using?"

Keitarō saw no way he could gracefully teach Taguchi what the correct word might be. He laughed the request away, feeling like a fool, and thinking at the same time that the longer he stayed, the more he was made the butt of jokes. He decided to leave as soon as the conversation lagged a bit. As he put the letter into his pocket, he said, "Very well, I will
see him in two or three days with this introduction. After I see how things turn out, I'll visit you once again." He rose from his cushion. Taguchi said politely, "Thank you very much for all your efforts." He too stood up, apparently having completely forgotten about big foreign words, like romantic or cosmetic.

Taguchi, whom he had just seen, Matsumoto, whom he was about to meet, and that stylish woman—considering them both as a group and as separate individuals, Keitarō repeatedly speculated over their relationship on his way back home. The more he considered them, the more they fascinated him. He felt as though he were being drawn into the depths of a maze, step by step. His only reward at Taguchi’s today had consisted in his learning the name, Matsumoto: to him less a proper noun than a mysterious receptacle, brimming with complex and fascinating details. His insistent curiosity was all the greater in that he had no idea as to what might come out of the container. Taguchi’s description suggested a Matsumoto difficult of access, and yet Keitarō’s own impression had been of a person far more approachable than Taguchi himself. Although his employer was obviously highly sophisticated and very experienced in dealing with people, and was moreover a very remarkable individual, not merely as a
business executive, but as a human being, nevertheless, sitting in front of him today, Keitarō had felt constantly oppressed and manipulated. He felt certain that this sense of being sharply observed by one accustomed to dominate was not something transitory that would fade away, even after many visits. Despite Taguchi's words, therefore, he went on imagining Matsumoto as very different from the insistent, dominating personality of Taguchi, as one who could be counted on to listen without annoyance and respond with words of wisdom and sympathy.

The next morning, by the time he had dressed and was about to make his visit to Matsumoto, unfortunately a cold rain began to fall. By the time he had opened his third floor window narrowly to look out, the downpour had already saturated the landscape. Staring at the drab spectacle of the rainswept tile roofs, Keitarō tried to decide whether or not he should go to deliver Taguchi's letter of introduction that was on his desk. His desire to meet Matsumoto finally won out, and he rose from his desk and went down to where the tofu vendor's horn blared into the gloomy atmosphere of the street.

Matsumoto's address was in Yarai, so Keitarō
headed there, remembering as he went that it was on this hill just before the Yarai Police Station that he lost the ricksha of the man he was following, and felt as though he had been ensnared by a fox. As he came nearer, he saw that the road divided into two forks at its top and again at its foot, and that there was a large bump. Paying no attention to the rain that was soaking the lower part of his *hakama*, he stopped and looked at the approximate place where the ricksha man the other night had become mired down as he pulled at the shaft. The downpour was just as heavy now as it had been then. Water pipes under that wet mud must fast be rusting away! Since it was daytime, however, the blackness of the other night was replaced by a gloomy half-light and gave him a totally different feeling from the previous occasion. He climbed the hill, and looked back at the grove of tall, dark trees of Mejiro-dai and at the dim, far-off outline toward the right of the Mizu-inari Shrine woods. Then he walked here and there around the Yarai District only to discover that many houses had the same number. At first, he turned into a narrow lane and inspected houses on the right side and left, peering through the wet leaves of the mock orange hedges and passing by an empty lot lined with old camellia trees that gave it the appearance of a graveyard. But he could not easily
discover Matsumoto's house. Finally, tired out by his efforts, he stopped at a corner where there was a ricksha stand, and the young man in charge easily pointed out his destination to him.

The house he sought was at the end of a short lane diagonally opposite the ricksha stand, a pleasant cottage surrounded by a bamboo fence. As he went through the gate, he heard a child beating a drum. Even after he came to the entryway and announced himself, the drumming did not diminish. Otherwise, all was quiet, with no suggestion of life within. Finally the silence was interrupted by the appearance of a maid, fifteen or sixteen years old, from inside the house all closed tightly against the driving rain. She knelt to receive the letter, and then went quietly inside. A few minute later she returned.

"I am very sorry to have to ask it, sir, but would you please come back at a time when it is not raining?" she asked.

Keitarō in his job-hunting had become accustomed to being turned away, but this manner of refusal to see him seemed almost preposterous. "Why," he felt like asking, "should the rain interfere with the master of the house seeing me?" But, of course, it was impossible to argue the matter with a maid-servant. Still, to make sure that he understood
correctly, he asked, "Am I to understand that, although the master can't see me on a rainy day, he will see me on a fine day?"

The maid replied simply, "Yes, sir."

Having no alternative, Keitarō walked out into the rain. The slashing downpour seemed to have increased in intensity. As he walked down the hill of Yarai, he heard the child still beating the drum. "How utterly incredible this is!" he thought to himself. Perhaps it was of something like this that Taguchi had been thinking when he said that Matsumoto was not easily approachable. Even after returning home, his mood was one of anxious uncertainty at having been pointlessly delayed in his visit, and he was pained at not knowing in which direction to move. He thought of going to see Sunaga to tell him what he had been doing since last talking with him, but finally decided that, if he should go, he ought to be able to provide a complete story of his adventures. And so he ended up not going.

The next day dawned clear and beautiful, quite unlike the day before. The cloudless blue sky, which appeared by means of the rain to have washed off all the dirt and stains of the world, dazzled Keitarō. With some satisfaction he told himself that today Matsumoto would surely see him. Today, he decided, he would take along the cane which was hidden behind the
wicker hamper. Gripping the cane as he climbed the hill of Yarai once more, he asked himself what he would do if the maid of yesterday appeared once more and said, "I'm very sorry, sir, but today is too fine a day. Would you please come again on a cloudy day?"

Unlike yesterday, there was no sound, as he approached, of the child's drumming. In the entryway, there was a screen he hadn't noticed earlier. On it, was painted in water-color a single crane, standing forlornly. The screen was so narrow that it looked almost like a door mirror, and this unusual shape attracted his attention. The maid who appeared was the same one he had seen on yesterday's futile visit, but behind her two children came along noisily and observed Keitarō with curiosity from behind the screen. This much change he noticed on his second visit. Finally he was ushered into a tatami-matted room, the sliding glass panels of which were closed. At its center was a ceramic hibachi, so big that it looked like a goldfish bowl. The maid placed cushions on either side of the hibachi, and with courteous gesture invited Keitarō to take one of them. The cushion was round in shape, not square as dictated by
tradition, and decorated with a batik design. Keitarō sat down, feeling somewhat bewildered. In the tokonoma was a scroll depicting a landscape, done in bold and spontaneous fashion with large brush strokes. He looked at the painting, which did not differentiate trees from rocks, as though it were a decorative object worthy of contempt. Beside it was a round metal gong, and the mallet needed to produce the sound, which made the room appear even stranger to him.

Just as that moment the master of the house, who had the distinguishing mole, opened the papered sliding door and came in.

"Glad to meet you!" he said perfunctorily, and sat down directly in front of him. His mien was not at all sociable. Although his manner was easily graceful, he seemed through it to be showing that he placed no particular importance on this visitor. As a result, Keitarō felt suddenly relaxed and comfortable. He did not have to feel constrained, even though sitting face to face, looking across the hibachi at his host. Moreover, Keitarō was sure the gentleman remembered his face from the other night, and yet, as they actually met now, there was no trace in his expression or his words as to whether he did or did not remember; hence, Keitarō felt no need whatever for pretending to be other than what he was. And, finally, the gentleman
did not give even a word of explanation as to why he
had refused because of the rain to see him yesterday.
Whether he did not want to tell him or felt no need to
do so Keitarō was quite unable to decide.

Inevitably, the conversation began with Taguchi,
the introducer. His host said, "You are hoping to be
employed by Taguchi, is that it?" and then discussed
with him such problems as his ultimate objectives, his
grades at graduation and similar subjects.

But then he began to box Keitarō in by bringing up
more complex matters, such as his views on society, or
the world, or his own aspirations, about which he had
never come to any clear conclusions. From time to
time Matsumoto flashed out with theories so exotic
that his listener wondered if he might not be one of
those undiscovered scholars whose time has not yet
come. In addition, Matsumoto made quite derogatory
remarks about Taguchi, to the effect that he was a
useful member of society, but without any redeeming
brainpower.

"In the first place, anyone that busy is by
definition hopeless since he hasn't enough time to
construct a meaningful thought in his busy head. His
brain is just like a miso paste, ground up all year
round in a mortar, too busy and active to take on any
form at all."
Keitarō was totally at a loss to understand why he made such fun of Taguchi. But what he found strangest about him was that, while he was aiming his critical shots at Taguchi, he did so without a trace of malice. His abusive words reached Keitarō's ears in the calm, composed voice of a man totally inexperienced in the art of sneering at others, and Keitarō felt no inclination to argue with him. He simply confirmed once more his opinion of him as an eccentric.

"And this business man for relaxation plays go and chants from classic Noh texts, and does a lot of other things of that sort. Of course, he is not very good at any of them."

"That shows an ample disposition, though, doesn't it?"

"An ample disposition? Yesterday I sent you away because it was raining and told you to come again on a fine day. I shan't tell you the reason now, but can you conceive of such a one-sided, willful, illogical excuse in all the world? Now, if it were Taguchi, he would never be able to turn away a person in that arbitrary fashion. Just tell me: why, why is he so willing to meet people? I'll tell you why: because he wants so much from the world, that's why! He is not a high-class idler, like me. He doesn't have that extra marginal room, that ample disposition, which
"To tell the truth," said Keitarō, "I came here without being told anything about you by Mr. Taguchi. Concerning that phrase, "high-class idler," that you have used, --are you thinking of it in its straight, denotative sense?"

"Yes, indeed! I am exactly, as you would say, a high-class idler: a do-nothing, one who doesn't need to do anything he doesn't want to do."

Matsumoto leaned his elbow on the edge of the large ceramic hibachi, resting his chin on his fist as he looked at Keitarō. In his offhand manner, which refused to regard the first-time visitor as a guest, Keitarō vaguely guessed that this must be the essence of high-class idling. He was apparently fond of tobacco, and held a western pipe with a large bowl carved from a block of wood. Intermittently he exhaled a heavy cloud of smoke, like that from a smoldering brush fire showing that it is not yet extinguished. The way in which the smoke thinned out and evaporated around his face, along with features very relaxed, as though scorning the need to put on an imposing
appearance, made Keitarō himself feel quite at ease, a rare state for him in any social situation.
Matsumoto's thinning hair was parted in the middle, and this plus perhaps the rather flat contour of his head, imparted an appearance of tranquillity to his countenance. He wore a solid brown haori of unusual texture and his slippers were of the same color. Keitarō recognized it as the subdued hue of a Buddhist priest's robe, and this no doubt deliberate resemblance made him appear all the more eccentric. It was the first time he had ever met someone who defined himself as a high-class idler, but it was certainly evident that Matsumoto's whole attitude and appearance conveyed to his rather startled visitor that he was indeed a representative of this rare species.

"Excuse me for asking, but do you have a large family?"

For some strange reason, Keitarō wished to pose such a question to the self-designated high-class idler.

"Yes. Quite a number of children," he replied, exhaling a great cloud of smoke from his pipe, which Keitarō had almost forgotten.

"And you--I mean, your wife?"

"I have one, if that's what you mean! Why do you ask?"
Keitarō regretted having asked such a stupid question. How could he escape the consequences? Matsumoto, to be sure, did not seem to mind particularly, but, since he continued to look at him with a slightly puzzled expression, some answer had to be made.

"I guess I was a little puzzled as to how anyone like you, a member of the leisure class, could have a normal existence, you know,-- with a family, for example, like people who must earn their living. That was why I asked."

"I don't understand. Why shouldn't I have a family? Why should my status as leisure class idler interfere with that?"

"No reason at all. I just wondered."

"I maintain that a high-class idler will be much more a family man than someone like Taguchi!"

Keitarō felt himself at an impasse. The three interrelated problems he had to deal with were getting confused in his head: namely, getting into a situation from which he could find no escape, trying to change the subject, and wanting to find out about Matsumoto's involvement with the woman with the kid gloves. Since his thought processes were never very clear and systematic to begin with, his efforts to deal simultaneously with his three problems were certain to

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end in confusion. But Matsumoto seemed completely unperturbed, and watched Keitarō's evident distress with complete detachment. If he were Taguchi, thought Keitarō, he would have skillfully cut off the flow of his words to avoid putting him into an embarrassing situation, and then would have altered the direction of the conversation with all the practised ease of long worldly experience. This was the difference between the two, Keitarō realized: Matsumoto, quite unlike Taguchi, was comfortable to be with, but totally unconcerned with the social art of handling other people with tact and courtesy.

Then, Matsumoto by chance impelled the conversation on, past the awkwardness, to Keitarō's great relief.

"You have never given thought to such matters before, have you?"

"I'm afraid I never have."

"You have no need to think about these things yet if you are still living in a boarding house as a single person. But, even if you are still a bachelor, you have certainly thought about the relationship of man and woman in the broad sense, I suppose?"

"I've done more than just think about it from time to time. To be more exact, I think about it all the time. I am hugely interested."
The two of them discussed for a time this subject of general fascination to all members of the human race. Yet somehow, either because of the difference in age or in experience, Matsumoto seemed to be laying out only the bare bones of the subject without the fleshly covering; he totally lacked the urgency and passion needed to participate in Keitarō's youthful feelings. And yet the younger man realized that his own haphazard and unsystematic words, as soon as they left his mouth, utterly lost the stress and urgency they needed if they were to penetrate Matsumoto's heart and mind.

As the two discussed these recondite matters, Matsumoto recalled an episode he had once read concerning the Russian writer, Gorki. He told Keitarō how Gorki had gone to America to raise money to aid the cause of socialism he advocated for his country. At that time, he was at the peak of his fame, and was at first enormously busy attending receptions and parties, with the result that he was without much difficulty fast achieving his financial goal. But someone revealed the fact that the woman who accompanied him on his travels was not, in fact, his wife, but his mistress. His reputation fell with a
with a great thud, and he found no one in the spacious new world even to shake his hand. He had no choice but to leave America in his humiliated state. Such was the essence of the story.

Matsumoto concluded his anecdote by saying, "So you see the relationship of men and women is something that is interpreted quite differently in different places: America was quite the opposite of Russia, where no one raised an eyebrow at the unimportant fact that their great author had a mistress. How utterly ridiculous!"

He looked quite disgusted.

"Where would you place Japan in all this?" asked Keitarō.

"Surely with the Russian school!" said Matsumoto, blowing a great cloud of smoke out of his mouth, "And that's fine with me."

Keitarō now began to feel sufficiently comfortable to consider asking about the woman at the streetcar stop.

"I think I saw you the other day at a western-style restaurant in Kanda," he began cautiously.

"Why, yes, of course. I remember you very well. I saw you again on the streetcar on the way back. You must have got off at Edogawa. Are you living in that
neighborhood? In all the rain that night, you must have had a terrible time?"

So he had, very decidedly, noticed him. That he had not mentioned it earlier was puzzling: he did not seem to be pretending to recall the event, and whether he talked about it or not did not matter a bit to him, as far as Keitarō could see. Was it his essential simplicity, his disregard for the way the world functioned? Or, rather, was it his innate magnanimity, his amplitude of vision? Keitarō could not be sure.

"You appeared to have company that night...."

"Indeed I did! A very charming young lady. You were all alone, as I recall?"

"Yes, I was. And you went home by yourself."

"I did, yes."

The conversation that had been moving along very easily of its own momentum suddenly halted abruptly. Keitarō waited for Matsumoto to continue with comments about the woman, but he changed the subject to ask something unrelated to women.

"Is your boarding house in Ushigome or in Koishikawa?"

"It is in Hongō."

Puzzled, Matsumoto studied the face of his visitor. Clearly, he sought some explanation as to why this young man, who lived in Hongō, should not have
got off the streetcar till he arrived at the final stop at Edogawa. Keitarō realized that the time had come to confess. "If he gets angry," he thought, "I can just apologize. If he refuses to accept my apology, then I'll bow respectfully, and go home."

"I must confess," he said aloud, "that I followed you deliberately to Edogawa." He studied Matsumoto's face, but, contrary to his expectation, he could see very little change. He felt some slight relief.

"Why did you do that?" Matsumoto asked in turn, speaking in his normal casual fashion.

"I was asked to do so by someone."

"Asked by someone? By whom?" For the first time with a touch of surprise in his voice, Matsumoto spoke with an emphasis somewhat stronger than usual.

"To be perfectly frank, --it was Mr. Taguchi who asked me."

"Taguchi? You mean Taguchi Yōsaku?"

"Yes."

"But you came here expressly carrying a letter of introduction from Mr. Taguchi, didn't you?"

It would be easier to tell the whole story all at once, Keitarō thought, rather than being interrogated bit by bit in this fashion. So he gave him the entire
account without reservation, starting with the special delivery letter he had received from Taguchi, going on to the vigil at Ogawa-machi, and ending with sitting in the ricksha in the rain after getting off at Edogawa. Since his purpose was to give a coherent general outline of what had happened, he avoided emphasizing any particular part of the sequence, and refrained from going into details as much as possible. Hence, his confession did not take long. Perhaps for this reason Matsumoto did not interrupt at all during the account. Even after the story was finished, he did not immediately comment on it. Keitarō thought the silence an indication of displeasure, and he readied himself to present his apology in advance of the justifiable anger. Before he could do so, however, Matsumoto said abruptly, "What an impertinent fellow that man, Taguchi, is! And you too, letting yourself be used by him in that way! What a fool you are!"

As he watched Matsumoto's expressive face, he saw there the signs of great amazement, but no flush of anger. His relief steadily increased. Being called a fool at this point did not bother him at all.

"I owe you my sincere apology, sir. I'm afraid I did a terrible thing."

"You needn't apologize to me at all. I spoke as I did only because I felt sorry for you, being taken in
in that way by such a fellow!"

"Surely he's not that bad, is he?"

"Why did you ever consent to such a stupid assignment?"

The damning words, "It suited my whim" simply would not come out of Keitarō's mouth. Having no other choice, he patched one together, saying that, given the necessity of bread and butter, he had to depend on Taguchi, and so, even though he did not like the assignment, he had agreed to carry it out.

"If it is a matter of bread and butter, it is not your fault. But you had better not do such things any more. It serves no purpose. It is demeaning, isn't it, this following after someone, getting drenched by rain in wintry weather!"

"I've come to the same conclusion myself. Once was more than enough," replied Keitarō.

Upon hearing this confirmation of his thought, Matsumoto smiled thinly in a way that Keitarō took either for contempt or pity; whichever it was, it made him feel very, very small.

"Your apology made it seem that you had acted harmfully toward me. Do you really see it that way?"

Were he to have consulted his real feelings, he might have said that he had no special awareness of harm done, but to stand behind the genuineness of his
apology, it seemed necessary to affirm his sense of guilt, and so he did.

"In that case, I want you to go back to Taguchi," said Matsumoto, "and tell him that the young lady I was with the other day was a high class prostitute. Tell him I swore to that."

"Is she really that sort of woman?" Keitarō asked with a somewhat surprised expression.

"Never mind. Just tell him she is a high class prostitute."

"I see."

"Whether she is or not at the moment is not important. You must assuredly tell him so. Can you?"

As a young man with thoroughly modern views, he was not one to hesitate at pronouncing such words in front of his elders. But he felt apprehensive that, behind Matsumoto's strong desire to aim just those four characters at Taguchi's ears, there might be some exceedingly unpleasant intention. Until he understood what it was, he was reluctant to take on the mission so casually.

Seeing Keitarō standing there, looking glum and not knowing how to answer, Matsumoto said, "Oh, come now, you mustn't worry. It's only Taguchi you're dealing with." Then, as though it had just occurred to him, he added, "But, of course! You don't know our relationship, do you? He and I are related, you know."
"I don't know anything at all about it," Keitaro answered.

"I'm afraid that if I tell you our relationship, you'll just have a harder time mustering the courage to give him my message about that woman being a high-class prostitute. In short, it's not a good thing for me to do. But I'll tell you anyway, because I feel sorry to see that man forever making you the butt of his tasteless jokes!"

With this prefatory comment, Matsumoto explained just how he was related to Taguchi. Keitaro was thunderstruck by the simplicity of the explanation. The relation was close: Matsumoto had two older sisters, one of whom was the mother of Sunaga; the second was Taguchi's wife. That (as Matsumoto explained it) he, in his capacity of uncle should meet Taguchi's daughter at the streetcar stop and go to dinner with her seemed to Keitaro now one of the most routine events imaginable. But he had followed them as though in pursuit of some complex romance, allowing a feverish imagination to generate a shimmering illusion, dancing in the air above his credulous head. Never had he felt so disgusted with himself.

"But why was the young lady keeping watch at such
a place? Was she a decoy intended to deceive me?"

"No, no. She was on her way back home from Sunaga's. She phoned me while I was visiting her father: said she wanted to see me and asked me to get off at that streetcar stop at about 4:30. I thought it a nuisance and wanted to skip it, but she insisted for one reason or another, and I went. As soon as I got off the streetcar, she said, 'This morning my father told me that you were going to give me a ring as a New Year's present. He told me to wait for you here and help you in selecting the ring, and said I shouldn't let you get away without buying it. So I've been waiting for you.' I knew nothing about the thing she was asking for, and she had her heart set on it. I didn't have much choice, but I thought I might sidestep the issue by taking her to the Takara-tei Restaurant. --What a terrible fellow that father of hers is! Why would he go to so much trouble to produce such a stupid mix-up? As trickster, he comes off as far more ridiculous than do you, the person tricked."

But Keitarō judged himself much more severely as a naive and stupid dupe. His face was red with embarrassment as he thought regretfully that, if only he had known about it earlier, he could have conducted himself with dignity when he gave the report on his spying to Taguchi.
"But you were not aware of this affair at all?" he asked.

"But how could I be? Even if I am a high class idler, how could I have the time to get involved in such a complete absurdity?"

"And the young lady? Surely, she must have known about it, don't you think?"

"Let me think a minute..." Matsumoto pondered for a while and then said, decisively, "No. She knew nothing about it, I'm sure. My absurd brother-in-law has one good trait: no matter how elaborate the practical joke he constructs, he always stops it abruptly before the victim is disgraced. If necessary, he'll reveal his responsibility for the prank just before the victim is about to lose face, and at that point will straighten out all the confusions. Absurd as he is in these tricks, he has a good heart. Diabolical as some of the tricks may appear, he always shows a strangely warm, considerate and humane attitude at the end. Even in this contrivance, he devised it without telling others. If you had not come to see me, I would not have known anything about it, you see. He is not a malicious person who would trumpet your gullibility even to his own daughter. He ought to quit these absurd tricks, but he is addicted to them. And the addiction makes him ridiculous."
While listening quietly to Matsumoto's analysis of Taguchi's character, instead ofsmarting at his own foolish behavior or resenting the man who had made a fool of him, Keitarō became convinced that Taguchi, although given to practical jokes, was by and large a trustworthy man who could be relied upon. Even so, he could not help but wonder why it was that this honest man always made him feel so ill at ease when they were talking together.

He tried to put his feeling into words. "Your comments help me a great deal in understanding Mr. Taguchi. And yet, when I am face to face with him, I never feel comfortable."

"I think that is because he is always on guard, studying your every reaction."

Now that Matsumoto had mentioned it, he recalled vividly Taguchi's alert and watchful behavior toward him. He was utterly at a loss to understand why a man of the world should have to be that watchful and suspicious of someone like Keitarō, who was green, inexperienced, just out of school. He had always thought that he could be his natural self in front of anyone. He had never taken himself too seriously, the more especially since he had no job, and he could not
imagine anyone feeling inhibited or ill at ease
because of his presence. Hence, he found it strange
and unsettling to be treated by an elderly man of wide
experience in such a guarded, cautious fashion.

"Do I look or act like the sort of person one
ought to be suspicious of?" he asked.

"I don't know," replied Matsumoto. "I couldn't make
such a clear judgment after meeting you only once. But
whether you do or don't, it doesn't much matter; my
attitude toward you would be no accurate indication."

"But if Mr. Taguchi thinks of me in that way--."

"Taguchi doesn't think of you so personally. He
regards everyone that way. He has been a businessman
for a long time, and, while hiring and dealing with
people, he must have been cheated quite often. Even
when he sees a finely natural, beautiful personality,
he is still watchful and cautious. That's the karma of
that sort of person: you might call it that. Since
he's my brother-in-law, I shouldn't say it, but the
truth is that he is essentially a very decent sort.
Not a touch of deceitfulness in him. He has been
fighting the world so long, thinking of nothing but
the success of his business. It's only natural that
his way of seeing people is oddly biased as he worries
about whether this man is useful or that man is
trustworthy. With a man like that, when a woman falls
in love with him, he is bound to speculate whether she loves him or only his money. So, if a beautiful woman in love gets such treatment, you must not feel offended when you are subjected to his cautious, watchful gaze. That is Taguchi's special way."

Guided by Matsumoto's insight, Keitarō felt that he understood Taguchi more clearly. But what kind of a man was this Matsumoto who had just been systematically pounding new ideas into his head with all the force and subtlety of a hammer? To define him was to measure the shape and texture of a boundless cloud. Even Taguchi prior to the critical analysis to which he had been subjected had seemed more of a real, live human being than this man.

And yet this Matsumoto was the very same who had seemed so kindly, human and vivacious as he chatted about some coral gem at the restaurant to Taguchi's daughter, whereas the man seated in front of Keitarō now seemed almost like a wooden statue holding a pipe in its mouth, through whom a supernatural spirit had seen fit to speak. To plumb the depths of this mysterious being was no easy task. While Keitarō was dazzled by the wisdom of the analysis of Taguchi, he wished he could really understand what it was that made Matsumoto tick. As he began to downgrade his own ability to understand people to a very low level,
Matsumoto the indefinable began once more to speak.

"Since Taguchi played such a crazy trick on you, things will surely turn out to your advantage."

"Why do you say so?"

"He'll certainly find a position for you. Take my word for it: just to forget about the matter at this juncture would not be Taguchi's way of doing things at all. Not you, but I am the one to be pitied. I have been spied on for nothing!"

The two looked at each other, and suddenly broke into laughter. When Keitarō finally stood up from the rounded batik cushion to leave, his host hospitably walked with him to the entryway. He held his tall figure very erect as he stood before the screen-painting of the black-and-white crane, watching the rounded back of Keitarō as he sat putting on his shoes.

Suddenly he said, "You have a very strange cane. May I see it?"

He took it from Keitarō's hand.

"Gracious! It's a carved snake's head, is it not? And very skillfully carved, too. Did you buy it?"

"No. An amateur carved it, and gave it to me," replied Keitarō.

Swinging his cane, he walked down the hill of Yarai once again toward the Edogawa streetcar stop.
Notes
Chapter III, "The Report"

1 (284) "But Taguchi asked in turn, "What do you make of him?" Taguchi functions here almost as a Zen Buddhist priest setting a kōan for a disciple to resolve. Shortly after this he asks Keitarō if the woman (his own daughter, as we later discover) is, in his opinion, married or a virgin, and then asks if possibly she might not be a prostitute. In this connection consider the following passage from G.M. Kubose's *Zen Kōans*:

In Zen, the truth of reality, the essence of life is communicated dynamically. There are kōans, "Khats" (deep sudden cries), and blows, all aimed at awakening the student. Negative methods are often more effective than the ordinary affirmative ways of teaching. There is no room for sentimentality....The kōan is never solved by reason or by the intellect...[but] only through living experience or by intuitive understanding. Today, many people intellectualize or conceptualize life and so become victims of concepts and intellect. Concepts create trouble in life because conceptualizations become confused with real things (xi-xii)."

The point is important. We can see clearly from this striking parallel how compatible the thought of James and Bergson must have been to Sōseki's strongly Oriental way of seeing the world. Moreover, HSM is filled with problematic situations, of which Taguchi's practical joke is the most obvious instance.

2 (296) Mizu-inari Shrine: A nickname for Takada Inari Myōjin, a shrine to the fox-god. Mizu (water or spring) is indicative of the belief that washing one's eyes with water from the shrine would heal eye diseases. (Zenshū, X, 298.)

3 (302) High-class idler: This concept first appeared in Sōseki's *Wagakai wa neko de aru* (*I am a Cat*) (Zenshū, I, 68), and serves to characterize many important characters in subsequent novels (e.g. Kushami, Kangetsu, and Meitei of *Wagakai wa neko de aru*, Daisuke of *Sorekara*, and Sensei of *Kokoro*).
Chapter IV
1
A Rainy Day

Not for a long time did he happen to find out from Matsumoto the reason for his refusal to see a visitor on a rainy day. Keitarō himself forgot about it while attending to more important matters. It was after he had obtained a position by the help of Taguchi and had become a frequent visitor at the Taguchi household that he chanced to hear the story. By that time the memory of the streetcar-stop episode was beginning to lose its freshness. When, from time to time, Sunaga reminded him of the incident, he would just smile wryly. His friend often questioned him as to why he had not come to him to talk the matter over before embarking on the episode. He reprimanded him: "You ought to have remembered that my Uchisaiwai-chō uncle was a practical joker since my mother had told you." And Sunaga persisted in teasing him. "You are just too susceptible in matters of the heart!" Each time Keitarō would answer, "Oh, stop your nonsense!"

Nevertheless, he recalled the impression made on him by the woman he had seen from behind at Sunaga's gate, and, remembering too that she had turned out to
be the same woman he had seen at the streetcar stop, he felt, somewhere in a remote corner of his heart, embarrassed. To Keitarō now, the knowledge that her name was Chiyoko or that her sister's name was Momoyoko was not a mystery or a novelty any more.

Once he had met Matsumoto and heard a full explanation of the situation, Keitarō felt a little embarrassed at the prospect of visiting Taguchi. But, since he could not very well leave the matter up in the air, he went back to him expecting to be laughed at. And, as he expected, Taguchi did indeed laugh heartily. But in his laughter Keitarō saw the exhilaration of one who has helped a stray find his way out of a maze to security rather than a note of pride at the success of clever tricks. At their meeting he never used such phrases as "for your own good," or "for the sake of your education," (words which demanded a return of gratitude). Instead, he simply apologized, saying, "Don't be angry with me; I didn't do it with any malicious intent." And he immediately promised to find him a worthwhile position. Then, clapping his hands, he called his elder daughter, the one who had been waiting for Matsumoto at the streetcar stop, and introduced her to him. "This gentleman is a friend of Issan," he told her. She seemed puzzled as to why she was being
introduced, and greeted him very formally. It was at
this time that Keitarō learned that her name was
Chiyoko.

This was his first opportunity for getting to know
the Taguchi family and thenceforth Keitarō often
visited them, occasionally on business, but sometimes
just to be sociable. He even on occasion stopped by to
see the houseboy, with whom he had talked on the phone
at the time of his first interview, for the sake of
casual conversation. Now and then he went to the
family's private livingroom: sometimes he did an
errand for the lady of the house; once in a while the
eldest son, a middle school boy, put him on his mettle
by asking him some questions about his English
language homework. With the increasing number of
visits, he naturally had more opportunity to become
acquainted with the two daughters. Nevertheless,
Keitarō's rather slow and easygoing manner ill
 accorded with the rather frenetic rhythms of the
Taguchi family, and the consequent scarcity of
opportunities for sitting together informally left
them uncomfortably apart. They no longer addressed
each other in an empty, formal way, but most of their
talk was on matters which take only five minutes, and
so there was no time to become more intimate. It was
at the Poem Card Party during the New Year's holidays,
when, as they sat close together, chatting easily with each other, that Chiyoko said to him, "Oh, but you are so very slow, aren't you?" And her sister, Momoyoko, added, "I don't want to be your partner, Tagawa-san, because I'd have no chance to win."

About a month later, when the appearance of plum blossoms began to be announced in the newspapers, Keitaro went to make a Sunday afternoon visit to Sunaga in his upstairs room. He had not been there for a long time. By chance he came when Chiyoko was also visiting the Sunagas. As the three of them discussed now one thing, now another, the conversation somehow came, through the words of Chiyoko, to the subject of Matsumoto: "That uncle of ours is such a strange man, isn't he? He used to refuse to see any visitors on rainy days. I wonder if he still is like that?"

Well, I'm actually one of those who went to see him on a rainy day, and was turned away." As Keitaro began to tell about it, Sunaga and Chiyoko began to laugh together.

Sunaga began to tease him. "What an unfortunate man you are! I'll bet you didn't take that cane of yours with you!"
"But of course not!" Chiyoko replied. "Who would take a cane on a rainy day? Don't you agree, Tagawa-san?"

Keitarō smiled wryly at this very logical defense.

"But what does the famous Tagawa cane look like?" she asked. "I would like to see it. May I take a look at it, Tagawa-san? Could I go downstairs and have a look?"

"But I didn't bring it today."

"Why not? It's such a fine day today, don't you think?"

"Oh, but it's a very special cane!" said Sunaga. "He wouldn't dare to use it on just any old day!"

"Oh? Is that so?" she asked him.

"Yes, it's just about the truth, I'd say."

"You use it only on very special days, then?"

He grew tired of parrying their thrusts, and finally accommodated himself to Chiyoko's request by agreeing to bring his cane with him the next time he visited her home at Uchisaiwai-chō. In return, he asked Chiyoko to explain the reason why Matsumoto refused to see any visitor who came to his house on a rainy day.

It was an unusually cloudy autumn afternoon in November. Chiyoko had come to Yarai to bring some of Matsumoto's favorite delicacy, uni (or sea urchin...
caviar) to him as her mother had requested.

"Maybe I'll stay for a while," she said, and, dismissing the ricksha driver, she settled down for a visit.

The Matsumotos had four children; from the oldest, a twelve-year-old girl, on down, there was a boy, a girl, and a boy in orderly sequence. They had been born at two-year intervals, and had thereafter grown quite normally. In addition to these lithe, graceful creatures to give liveliness to the household, the Matsumotos had had Yoiko, at this time an infant twenty months old. She was their special treasure, the pearl ring on their finger; they never let her out of their sight. Born to the Matsumotos the night before Girls' Day a year earlier, she had large, jetblack eyes, and a pearl-white, lustrous skin. Of the five children, Chiyoko loved her best. Whenever she visited them, she brought some little toy for her. At times her aunt scolded her for giving the child too many sweets. Chiyoko would often carry the child protectively in her arms out to the verandah, whispering little secrets to her and ostentatiously showing how intimate they were. The aunt would say laughingly, "My gracious! It looks as though we are on bad terms!" And Matsumoto would add teasingly, "If you like her that much, Chiyoko, you may take her with
you as a wedding gift when you marry."

On that day, as soon as Chiyoko sat down, she started to play with Yoiko. The child's hair had never been touched with either scissors or razor since her birth, and was as a result very soft and long. Perhaps because of the lustrous, pale white skin, the sun on her hair caused it to shimmer and gleam in waves of a purple hue.

"Yoiko, I'll make your hair pretty-pretty!"

Chiyoko gently combed the wavy hair and, separating a small clump from the side, tied a red ribbon around it. Yoiko's head was round and flat, shaped like a New Year's rice cake offering. Her short hands could barely reach her hairline. Holding the end of the ribbon, she tottered to her mother, saying, "'ibbon, 'ibbon!" Her mother praised her, "Oh, what pretty hair you have!" Chiyoko was delighted and laughingly said, from behind Yoiko, "Go show it to your daddy too." Yoiko, in uncertain steps, obliged. Upon reaching the door of Matsumoto's study, she went down on all fours. Whenever she wanted to bow to her father, she went down on hands and knees. Then she elevated her little buttocks as high as she could, and lowered the rice-cake head as low as two or three inches from the floor, and repeated, "'ibbon, 'ibbon!" Looking up from his book, Matsumoto said,
"Oh, what beautiful hair! Who did it for you?" With head still down, Yoiko answered, "Chii-chii." This was her usual baby word for Chiyoko's name. Watching her while standing behind, Chiyoko heard her name coming from those tiny lips and laughed heartily once more in delight.

In the meantime, the other children had come back from school, and the household which till then had centered its attention on a single red ribbon suddenly became multicolored and gay. The six-year-old kindergartner brought with him a little war-drum with a Tomoe crest on it, and said, "Come with me, Yoiko. I'll let you beat the drum!" And off he went with her. Chiyoko watched the baggy red wool tabi pattering down the corridor. As the small feet moved, the little pom-pom attached to the laces bobbed in every direction.

"You knitted the tabi for her, didn't you, Chiyoko?" asked Matsumoto.

"Yes. They look cute on her, don't you think?"

She sat for a time chatting with her uncle. Suddenly they noticed a few drops of rain falling forlornly from the cloudy sky; the sound of rain grew
louder and louder and in no time the rain had wet down
the trunk of the leafless phoenix tree. In near-unison
Matsumoto and Chiyoko stretched their hands over the
hibachi as they looked at the rain through the glass
doors.

"The leaves of the banana plant make the sound of
the raindrops much noisier, don't they?" she remarked.

"That banana tree survives beautifully!" he
answered. "I've been watching it every day, but it
never seems to wither away. The Sazanqua flowers have
fallen, and the phoenix tree is bare, but the banana
tree stays green, you see."

"My, but you are impressed by peculiar things,
Uncle! No wonder they say, "Tsunezō is a gentleman of
leisure."

"But your father will never--not as long as he
lives!--be able to do such things as really to study
the nature of a banana tree."

"Well, I shouldn't want to try to do so even if
asked! But you are a real philosopher as compared to
my father. I have the greatest respect for you."

"That's enough from you, young lady!"

"No, no! I really mean it! Every time I ask about
something, you have the right answer ready."

As the two talked in this fashion, the maid came
and handed Matsumoto something that looked like a
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letter of introduction. As he got up, her uncle said to her, "Chiyoko, wait here a bit. I'll tell you about some more interesting things."

"Ah, thank you, no, Uncle! On my visit here the other day I ended up being forced to memorize many of the names of western cigarettes!"

Before replying, Matsumoto had left the parlor. Chiyoko went back to the family room. Because of the darkness caused by the rain, the light was already on. In the kitchen, they appeared already to have started to prepare for dinner, and both gas burners hissed busily, emitting blue flames. In a short time the children sat at the huge table two by two at opposite sides. Yoiko was usually fed separately by a maid, but Chiyoko took over the task that night. She picked up a tray containing a small red lacquered rice bowl and a small dish of fish fillet, and with Yoiko went into the six-matted room adjoining the kitchen that normally was used as a dressing room. There were two large chests of drawers in it and a long mirror on the wall. Chiyoko placed the tray with its toy-like bowl and plate of fish in front of the big mirror.

"Come, Yoiko. Here's your dinner. I'm sorry we kept you waiting!"

Each time Chiyoko scooped the soft rice into her mouth, Yoiko was coaxed to say, "Good, good!" or
"More, more!" Toward the end of the process, when the child, wanting to feed herself, picked up the spoon, Chiyoko patiently taught her how to hold it properly. Yoiko, of course, could speak only simple words. When gently told, "No, not that way," she tilted her rice-cake head and said, "This way? This way?" As Chiyoko was contentedly playing this little game with her charge, the little girl started to say, "Like this, I--." Without finishing the sentence, she looked up in a sidewise glance from her big eyes, suddenly dropped the spoon held in her right hand, and fell face down on Chiyoko's lap.

"What's the matter, Yoiko?"

Chiyoko tried to lift her up, not realizing yet that anything was wrong. The child was completely limp, as though sleeping. Anxiously, Chiyoko cried out, "Yoiko? Yoiko!"

She held her on her lap; the little girl's eyes were closed as though she were sleeping, and her mouth was half open. Chiyoko slapped her a couple of times on the back, but without result.

"Auntie! Auntie! Quick! Help! Something terrible has happened!"
Startled, the mother rushed into the room, dropping her ricebowl and chopsticks as she came. "What's the matter?" she asked. She held Yoiko close to the electric light and studied her face. The lips were already beginning to change to a purple color. She placed her palm close to Yoiko's mouth and felt no breath. With a frenzied, painful cry, she shouted to the maid to bring a wet towel and, when it came, placed it on Yoiko's forehead. "Is there any pulse?" she asked. But Chiyoko, holding the small wrist, could not locate the slightest throb of life.

"What shall we do, Auntie?" She began to cry in desperation. The mother ordered the children standing around in awed silence, "Go get your father, quickly!" All four of them rushed away to the study. As the sound of wild footsteps ceased before his door, Matsumoto came out with a puzzled look. "What's the matter?" he asked.

As soon as he looked at Yoiko, standing over his wife and Chiyoko, he frowned in great concern. "Have you called the doctor?" But the doctor, who came right away, said only, "It's very strange!" He quickly gave her an injection, but there was no change.

"Is there any hope?" The strained, agonized question came through the tightly clenched mouth of the father. The desperate and frightened eyes of three
people were centered on the doctor's face. He studied the pupil of her eyes with the aid of a mirror. Then he pulled up the hem of her kimono and examined her anus.

"I am afraid I can do nothing more. Both the eye-pupil and anus are already completely open. There is nothing to be done. I am sorry."

Even while saying this, the doctor tried one more injection close to the heart. But it did no good. When the doctor plunged the needle into Yoiko's almost translucent skin, Matsumoto's eyebrows became distorted with strain.

"But what was the cause of this?" Chiyoko asked, the tears streaming down her face.

"It is very strange," replied the doctor, cocking his head. "I can't answer in any other way. No matter how hard I try--."

"How about trying a hot mustard bath?" Matsumoto suggested amateurishly.

"Certainly!" the doctor replied instantly. But there was no trace of hopefulness on his face.

Quickly they poured hot water into a wooden tub. Into the thickly rising steam they sprinkled a packetful of mustard powder. The mother and Chiyoko silently removed Yoiko's kimono. The doctor dipped his hand into the hot water and cautioned, "Better add
some cold water. She might get scalded."

This done, he held Yoiko firmly with both his hands and held her in the not water for five or six minutes. The three gazed down at the soft skin of the child, holding their breaths.

"That is long enough. If we overdo it--." The doctor took her out of the tub. Her mother received her and quickly dried her with the towel before putting the same kimono back on her. But Yoiko remained as limp as before. Her mother looked with a heart-broken expression at her husband and said, "Let's let her rest as she is now."

"Yes, let's--." Matsumoto returned to the parlor and ushered the visitor out at the entrance.

A tiny comforter and pillow were taken out from the closet. When Chiyoko stared at Yoiko, who looked as though she had just fallen asleep for her afternoon nap on the bedding, she collapsed on the floor and cried out, "I've done a terrible thing to you, Auntie--."

"You were not in any way responsible, Chiyo-chan," replied her aunt.

"But it happened when I was giving her supper--. I am so very, very sorry--for both of you."

Chiyoko told them over and over in fragmentary snatches how lively Yoiko had been when she had been
helping her eat her supper.

Matsumoto crossed his arms and said, "It's so incomprehensible! I still can't understand--." At length he turned to his wife and said, "O-sen, it's too sad to keep her in this room. Let's take her to the parlor."

Chiyoko helped them in moving her to the parlor.

They gently laid her out at a suitable spot on the tatami mats with her head pointed north. They had nothing approximating a funeral screen and made do without one. O-sen brought the balloon that Yoiko had been playing with just that morning, placed it by her pillow, and covered her face with a white cotton cloth. Every few minutes Chiyoko removed the cloth and sobbed. O-sen turned to Matsumoto and said, "Look, my dear: see how lovely she looks!—like a little Kannon-sama." And she too sobbed. "Does she so?" said Matsumoto, looking at Yoiko from his seat. A short time passed while they placed anise, an incense burner and some tiny rice cakes on a small unpainted table, and set up a candle that gave off a faint glimmer of light. Suddenly their loneliness dawned upon them for the first time as they realized that
Yoiko was never again to wake up before them and had indeed departed to a distant land. Taking turns, they burned incense continually. Its fragrance hit the nostrils of these people who had been drawn into a world entirely different from that of two hours before. The other children were put to bed as usual except for twelve-year-old Sakiko. She stayed close to the incense burner.

"Why don't you go to bed?" asked her mother.

"Aren't they coming from Uchisaiwai-cho and Kanda yet?"

"They'll be here soon. Don't worry and get some sleep. All right?"

Sakiko stood up, went out into the corridor, and from there turned and beckoned to her cousin. When Chiyoko followed her out, the child asked in a low voice if she would accompany her to the lavatory. The bathroom light was off. Chiyoko struck a match and, after lighting one of the paper lanterns, accompanied her along the corridor, turning at the corner. On her way back she looked into the maids' room. The cook was deep in hushed conversation over the hibachi with her friend, the ricksha man. Chiyoko assumed that she was telling him in minute detail of Yoiko's tragedy. The other maid was busily wiping trays and setting out the tea cups in readiness for visitors.

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After a short interval, several of the relatives who had been notified arrived. One showed up only to return home saying that she would come back later on. Chiyoko told over again to each of them her story of Yoiko's last hours before her sudden death. After midnight, O-sen set up a kotatsu warmer for those attending the wake, but no one availed himself of it. The bereaved father and mother were urged by the relatives to get some rest, and they retired to their bedroom. Chiyoko kept lighting new incense sticks whenever the old ones grew too short. The rains had not stopped yet. She no longer could hear the sound of raindrops on the banana leaves that she had heard earlier in the evening. Instead, the rain on the aluminum awning made a continuous noise that was profoundly sad and lonely to her ears. The dawn arrived while she was still from time to time removing the white cloth, and sobbing.

The next day all the women helped in sewing Yoiko's white shroud. Momoyoko came from Uchisaiwai-chō and two of the wives of close friends accompanied her. The little pieces of sleeve and shirt were passed from hand to hand. Chiyoko also distributed writing paper along with brush and inkstone, and asked each to write down the six characters, na-mu-a-mi-da butsu, for the repose of
Yoiko's spirit.

Chiyoko went to Sunaga and asked, "Issan, you write too, won't you, please?"

Mystified, Sunaga took the brush and paper.

"Please write it as many times as possible in small characters," she told him. "Later, we're going to cut the paper into small rectangles, each with six characters, and scatter them inside the casket."

Everyone respectfully wrote the six characters over and over. Sakiko shielded her hands with the sleeve of her kimono, saying, "Please don't look at it!" And she wrote down many characters shaped like bent nails. Her ten-year-old brother excused himself by saying, "I'll write in katakana." And he wrote NA-MU-A-MI-DA-BU-TSU as though he were writing a telegram many times over.

In the afternoon, when they were about to place Yoiko in the casket, Matsumoto said to her, "Chiyoko, why don't you change Yoiko's kimono?" Tearfully, without saying "yes" to him, she raised the cold body of the child and removed the kimono. Purple spots were appearing all over. Once Chiyoko had finished with the changing, O-sen placed a small Buddhist rosary in Yoiko's fingers. She also put a small hat and straw sandals in the casket, along with the red woolen
tabi her small cousin had been wearing until yesterday evening. And right away, the image of the pom-pom attached to the end of the laces danced in her head. All the toys she had received from ever so many people were also placed in the casket, either between her legs or in the open space around her head. Finally, they sprinkled the numerous small strips of paper on which na-mu-a-mi-da-butsu had been written all over the body like snow before they closed the lid and covered the casket with a white satin cloth.

They put off the day of the funeral at O-sen's insistence, since the one scheduled was a day of bad omen. Within the sad and melancholy atmosphere there was also an energetic hustle and bustle. Six-year-old Kakichi was scolded when he began to pound on his war-drum as usual. After this happened, he came quietly over to Chiyoko and asked, "Isn't Yoiko really ever coming back again?" Sunaga teased him, saying, "I'm going to take this boy to the crematorium!! I think I'll burn him up along with Yoiko!" Kakichi stared at him, wide-eyed. "I don't like your plan!" he told him. Sakiko asked her mother if she could go to the funeral tomorrow. "Me too!" pleaded eight-year-old
Shigeko.

O-sen, as though she had just remembered the event, asked her husband, who was talking to Taguchi and his wife in the inner room, "Do you intend to go to the funeral tomorrow?"

"Yes, of course. And you go too."

"I've already decided to attend. What do you think I should put on the children?"

"The crested formal kimono, perhaps?"

"Wouldn't they be too colorful?"

"They'll be all right if you put the hakama over the kimono. But the sailor suit would be fine for the boys. I suppose you'll wear the crested black formal kimono, won't you? Do you have a black obi?"

"Yes, I do," his wife replied.

Turning to his niece, Matsumoto said, "Chiyoko, I hope you'll go too if you have a mourning kimono."

After discussing matters of this sort, he returned to the inner room. Chiyoko went to look after the incense sticks once more. Atop the casket, she noticed for the first time a lovely bouquet of flowers.

"When did it come?" she asked Momoyoko, who was standing beside her.

"A short time ago," she replied in a low voice. "Auntie asked especially that it be mixed with red flowers, since it is for a little girl."
The two sisters sat together for a while. After
ten minutes or so, Chiyoko whispered in Momoyoko's
ear, "Have you looked at Yoiko's face?"
Momoyoko nodded.
"When was that?"
"We both saw her when they put her into the
coffin. Don't you remember?"
But it had slipped Chiyoko's mind. She would have
wanted to open the coffin once more had her younger
sister said she hadn't seen her.
But at the suggestion Momoyoko shook her head, and
said, "Don't. It's scary."
In the evening the priest who was to conduct the
wake arrived, and recited the sutra. While she was
sitting nearby, Chiyoko listened to Matsumoto as he
discussed with the priest such odd topics as the
three-part sutra and Buddhist hymns. She heard him
make frequent reference to Shinran and Rennyo in
the discussion. Shortly after ten o'clock, Matsumoto
had food given to the priest and then gave him some
money, suggesting that he had recited enough and
might, if he wished, stop. After the priest left,
O-sen asked why he had let him go so soon.
Matsumoto answered nonchalantly, "Well, even a
priest wants to get to bed at a decent hour. Besides,
Yoiko wouldn't want to listen to all those sutras."
Chiyoko and Momoyoko looked at each other, and smiled.

Next day, under a windless, clear sky, the little coffin moved along quietly. Passersby followed it with their eyes as though it were some incomprehensible phenomenon. Matsumoto complained that he did not like the conventional unpainted hearse with unpainted lanterns, and hired instead a black funeral car to carry Yoiko's coffin.

Each time the black curtain around the car swung, the wreath on the tiny casket covered with white satin was visible. The children playing in the neighborhood came running, and peeped into the car curiously. Some people took their hats off as the car passed by.

At the temple, the chanting of the sutras and the burning of incense were performed as prescribed. As she sat in the spacious main hall, Chiyoko was unaccountably dry-eyed. Neither her uncle's face nor that of her aunt seemed to her at all contorted with grief. When Shigeko's turn to burn incense came, she by mistake took a quantity of ashes and put it into the incense box, instead of taking a pinch of incense and sprinkling it into the burner. Chiyoko could not restrain a burst of laughter. When the funeral was over, Matsumoto, Sunaga, and several others followed the casket to the crematorium, while Chiyoko returned
to Yarai with the others. As they drove home in the hired car, she realized that the intense grief and sorrow of yesterday and the day before were vibrant and fruitful with a kind of purity and beauty—much more than now, when sorrowful emotions had already begun to diminish. She even felt nostalgic yearnings for those terrible moments of sorrow she had experienced.

The four of them, O-sen, Sunaga, Chiyoko and Kiyo, the maid who had been Yoiko's regular attendant, went for the gathering of the ashes. Their destination was only a few blocks from Kashiwagi Station, but, not realizing that, they hired a taxi for the trip, which turned out to be slower than the streetcar. This for Chiyoko was the first experience with a crematory. The beauty of the countryside exhilarated her so that she had the feeling of having found again something she had lost. The vista before her was of a green field of barley and turnips, and, beyond it, the red, yellow and brown colors of the forest. Sunaga, who sat in the front seat, turned around and identified for her such places as Ana-Hachiman and the Suwa Forest. As the car crested a gentle, shady hill, he pointed out a narrow,
tall tower standing in the center of a grove of tall Japanese cedars. A stone marker on its side was carved to indicate that it "commemorated the one thousand and fiftieth year after the death of Father Kôbô, the 14 Great Teacher." At the base of the tower there was a little tea stand next to an artesian well, the sides of which had been covered with striped bamboo leaves. This scene at the foot of a bridge looked indeed as though it were in the heart of the country. Now and again from the almost bare trees the small leaves fell one by one. Their way of twirling rapidly in mid-air caught Chiyoko's eye. She became absorbed, as if it were a new phenomenon, in watching them spin and glide lightly for a long time before touching the ground.

The crematory was situated on a sunny level spot facing the south, and, when the car pulled inside the gate, she was struck by its cheerful appearance. At the office, O-Sen announced, "We are the Matsumoto family." A man behind the post-office-like counter replied, "I hope you brought your key with you?" With an uneasy look, she began to search through her pockets and between the layers of the obi.

"How stupid of me!" she exclaimed, "I must have left it on the chest of drawers in the family room."

"You mean you don't have it with you?" asked Chiyoko.
"Oh, it's too bad! Let's ask Issan to go get it quickly," she suggested. "We still have lots of time.

Sunaga, who was standing behind them, listened coolly to their conversation, and then said, "If it's the key you want, I brought it with me." He fished something cold and heavy from his pocket and gave it to his aunt. While O-sen was showing it to the man at the counter, Chiyoko scolded Sunaga.

"Issan, you're so mean! If you had it, why didn't you give it to Aunt O-Sen right away? Poor Auntie is so confused because of what happened to Yoiko! That's why she has forgotten it. Don't you see?"

Sunaga just stood there smiling.

"A cold, unfeeling person like you shouldn't come to a place like this," she added. "You didn't even shed a tear when Yoiko died."

"I'm not unfeeling," he replied. "I don't quite understand the love of parent and child, because I've never had a child myself."

"How can you say such heartless things in front of our aunt? For that matter, what about me? I've never had a child of my own either."

"I don't know whether you've ever had one or not! But just possibly because you're a woman you may have a more sensitive disposition than a man. It could be."

O-Sen, after finishing her business, ignored their
argument and went toward the waiting room. She sat
down and beckoned to Chiyoko, standing nearby. The
girl came right away and sat down beside her. Sunaga
followed, and sat on a bench across from the two
women.

He moved over to make room for the maid: "You sit
here too, Kiyo."

As the four of them waited, occasionally sipping
tea, two or three groups of people came in to gather
ashes. First there was an old peasant woman, all by
herself; she appeared overawed by the upper class
appearance of O-sen and Chiyoko, and said little.
Next came a father and a son dressed in kimono the
hems of which were tucked up high, asking in loud,
lively fashion, "Let's have an urn!" before buying the
cheapest for sixteen sen. The third party to enter was
a long-haired blind person with a stiff, narrow obi,
who might have been either a man or a woman, escorted
by a girl wearing a purple hakama. This blind person
asked the man at the counter about his turn, then
fished a cigarette from his sleeve to smoke. Sunaga,
glancing at the blind one, stood up and went outside.
He did not return for a time. When the clerk came to
notify O-sen that it was their turn, Chiyoko went
toward the back door to call her cousin.
Nervously, she walked through a dreary room lined on either side with crematory ovens of the economy class. From each hung a brass tag with the family name on it. Behind this room was a large meadow at one corner of which was the steep embankment of a mountain covered with pines. The rest of the meadow was surrounded by a flourishing, green bamboo grove. Under the grove was the barley field; beyond it were layers of hills. This northern view was very fine. Sunaga stood at the edge of this open area vaguely contemplating the sweeping vista before him.

"Issan, they say they're ready for us--." He heard Chiyoko's voice and walked back silently to where she stood before remarking, "Isn't the bamboo grove splendid? It would seem that the rich remains of the dead have been feeding that grove to make it grow so luxuriantly! The bamboo shoots here must be delicious!"

"Ugh! How morbid...!" But she didn't finish the sentence, and hurried back past the economy class ovens. Yoiko's oven was, so they said, the Number 1 of the first class section of the crematorium. It was decorated with purple drapes over the door. On the table in front of it lay the wreath of flowers from
yesterday, now half withered. Its blasted appearance seemed almost a reminder of the heat which had seared Yoiko's mortal remains last night. Suddenly Chiyoko felt suffocated.

Three functionaries of the crematory appeared; the oldest said, "Please take off the seal, sir."

Sunaga asked, "Could you open it? I don't mind."

Respectfully one of the cremators cut the seal himself and opened the lock with a loud click. The black iron doors opened on both sides. They saw vaguely a variety of shapes, gray, black and white, merging into the darkness inside the oven.

"And now I will bring them out!" warned the cremator. He added two supporting rails to the front, and, as soon as he had hooked a sort of iron ring to the edge of the coffin stand, with a great metallic clang, the formless remains came out of the oven right under the noses of the four. Chiyoko recognized immediately the shape of Yoiko's small scalp, plump still like the New Year's rice cake. Abruptly, she put her handkerchief to her mouth. The cremator selected two or three other large fragments along with that one, and said, "I shall strain these through a sieve and bring them back."

Each of them was given a wooden chopstick and a
bamboo stick with which to pick up the white bones and deposit them into the white urn. Each performed the rite in his own way. They wept at their task. Only Sunaga, with his pale, white face did not say anything, and did not even sniffle.

"Would you like to keep the teeth separate?" the cremator asked, skillfully crushing the jaw, and sorting out the teeth for them from the mound.

Looking at it, Sunaga said, almost to himself, "At this point, they are not like parts of a human being at all. It is almost as if they were picking pebbles from the sand."

The maid wept heavy tears onto the cement floor. O-sen and Chiyoko rested the chopsticks and covered their faces with the handkerchief.

In the car, Chiyoko held the white urn in a cedar box on her lap. As the car began to pick up speed, the cold wind blew between her kimono and the box. Tall keyaki trees displayed their mottled white-and-tan trunks in a row on both sides of the road. She thought, "As we pass, they shake their delicate branches as though they were waving farewell or welcoming us back." The tops of the narrow branches were weaving together high up in the air, but the space they were in was surprisingly bright. Chiyoko was puzzled and looked up at the distant sky from time
to time.

After their return, as she placed the urn containing the ashes in the front of the altar, the children gathered around, wanting to see the inside. But Chiyoko firmly said no.

Soon the whole family sat around the table for lunch.

"It seems crowded here: lots of children. But one is already gone...." said Sunaga.

"While she was with us, I guess I wasn't especially conscious of her presence. But, now that she is gone, I seem to miss her most! I almost feel as though I'd like to replace her with one of the crowd here!" Matsumoto said.

"What a terrible thing to say!" Shigeko whispered to Sakiko.

"Auntie, exert yourself once more, and have another baby just like Yoiko! I shall love her," said Chiyoko.

"Another child just like Yoiko won't do. It has to be Yoiko. It's not like a tea cup or a hat. Even if you got a replacement, you'd find that we couldn't forget what we've lost...."

"From now on," said Matsumoto, "Anyone who comes on a rainy day with a letter of introduction will be offensive to me. I simply will not see him."
Notes
Chapter IV, "A Rainy Day"

1 (200) In a letter to his friend, Nakamura Kokyō on March 21, 1912 (Zenshū, XXX, 81), Sōseki writes:

"A Rainy Day" led me to deep, solitary reflection. I began writing it on March 2, the birthday of Hinako [his fifth daughter, who died suddenly in infancy of no known cause], and I finished it on the seventh [her one-hundredth-day memorial]. I am satisfied that it has contributed to the repose of her soul.

2 (201) Issan: the intimate form of address used instead of the more formal "Ichizō-san."

3 (210) Concerning the sudden death of Yoiko-Hinako: On November 29, 1911, Sōseki writes in his diary as follows:

In the evening, Nakamura Shigeru (his pen name is Kokyō) came over. As we were talking, three of the children came running in, laughing, and told me to come quickly. I thought Hinako must be having her usual upset. But when I got to the living-room, I found my wife holding her while she placed a wet towel over her forehead. Her lips were pale. I thought it would soon go away, since it has happened like that many times before. Just then the maid returned from Dr. Nakamura, who lives across the street. My wife had felt this attack was different from the others, and had sent for the doctor... The maid had met the doctor just as he was about to go out. He said he would come here right away, and came promptly, just as he said he would. He gave her an injection, saying as he did so, "How strange!" It had no effect. The anus was open, and, when he examined the pupil of her eye, it was dilated. Right then, he said, "It's no good!" I felt so unreal! Dr. Nakayama too remarked, "It is so strange!" (Zenshū, XXVI, 75).
The experience was described in similar terms in a letter Sōseki wrote to Sugimura Sōji on December 1, 1911 (XXX, 70). In his notebook, he wrote cryptically:

X Strange death of Hinako X Child's death, reconciliation of the couple.
X Death of a child: freethinker became superstitious. (Zenshū, XXVI, 91.)


5 (212) "They...laid her out...with her head pointed north." Gautama Buddha died with his head toward the north. Hence in Japan the dead are traditionally placed in the same way. Conversely, the living avoid sleeping with their heads toward the north.

6 (214) "...All the women helped in sewing Yoiko's white shroud": The Diary for November 30, 1911 notes: "Everyone helped sewing the white shroud. Since there are many girls, the sleeves and hems are handed out in many different directions."

7 (214) The kanji for na-mu a-mi-da-butsu is 南無阿彌陀佛

8 (215) Katakana: the ten-year-old writes in the easy phonetic script: ナムアミダブツ

9 (215) "A small hat and straw sandals in the casket": These would be useful for the dead soul in its traveling to reach the land of the dead.

10 (216) "Do you intend to go to the funeral tomorrow?" A traditional custom in Japan would keep parents out of the funerals of their children because the dead children did them a disfavor by dying sooner than the parents. Matsumoto, a thorough non-traditionalist, disregards this tradition.
11  (218) Shinran and Rennyo: Shinran was the founder of Pureland Buddhism. He studied under Hōnen, and died in 1262 (Daijiten, XV,34); Rennyo was the eighth Bishop of the Honganji Branch of Buddhism. He reconstructed Honganji in Yamashina and died in 1480 (Daijiten, XXV,637).

12  (218) "A black funeral car to carry Yoiko's coffin": Sōseki's Diary for December 2, 1911 has the following entry:

Mrs. Yamada came and asked to see Hinako's face...and peeped inside the coffin. Soon it was closed and nailed and covered with satin cloth. I placed a bouquet of flowers upon it. The car was pulled by a black horse, and, under the black curtain, we saw a bit of the bouquet." (Zenshū, XXVI, 77)

13  (219) The Diary for December 2 and 3, 1911 describes in detail the scene at the crematorium. Much of that description is used in HSM (Zenshū, XXVI, 77-80).

14  (220) The tower commemorated to Father Kōbō: Its full name was the Takada Hachiman Shrine. It was for the guardian deity of the Ushigome District.
Chapter V
Sunaga's Story

From the time that he had seen from behind the woman at the gate of Sunaga's house, Keitarō had constantly and vigorously exercised his imagination in speculating about the thread of fate which tied the two together. This bond between them was a little like a mirage: when he actually saw Sunaga and Chiyoko together in front of him, the tie between them was often not evident. But when they were not the immediate stimuli to his eyes, physically present before him, the missing connection would reappear, tying them together inextricably, like some karmic fate.

During all the time he had been frequenting the Taguchi home, no one had said a word to him concerning this relationship between Sunaga and Chiyoko. And even when he was observing their behavior, he could discern nothing worth noting beyond the normal responses of cousins to each other. Yet, because of his earlier assumptions about them, he inclined still to regard them in one part of his mind as a couple. To his way of thinking, a young man without female companionship or a young woman who had never held a man's hand was nothing other than an abnormal, unnatural phenomenon. So his reason for tying these
two acquaintances together in his head might have been a moralistic urge to rescue them from abnormality and help them settle in as normal human beings.

This was a theory concocted on the spur of the moment, of course, so there is no need to defend Keitarō's reasoning, no matter what strict justice might require of us.

Still, upon hearing some rumors of marriage relating to Chiyoko one day, he was decidedly puzzled over the discrepancy between two worlds: the one in his mind, and the one outside it. This news came to him from Saeki, the houseboy. Obviously, a person of Saeki's status could not be expected to know the intimate details of affairs in his employer's family. With his uncommunicative features more solemn than usual, he indicated merely that he had heard such a report. He did not know the name of the groom, but it seemed clear that he was a prosperous businessman of good family.

"I had always assumed that she would marry Sunaga-kun," said Keitarō. "Was I wrong?"

"It cannot be, I'm afraid."

"But why is that?"

"I can't give any clear answer to your question," replied the houseboy. "But somehow or other, there seem to be obstacles."
"Really? I thought them just right for each other," replied Keitarō. "Not only are they related, but the age difference—five or six years—isn’t bad either."

"That might be the way an outsider would see it, but there are various complicating circumstances to be considered in the family—."

Keitarō wanted to go on asking about these "complicating circumstances," but was irritated by Saeki’s labeling him "an outsider," and he did not wish to lower himself by picking up gossip about the family from a mere student houseboy. Also, he was sure that Saeki knew nothing beyond what he had spoken. So he ended the discussion at that point, and while he was there, went to the family living quarters, where he greeted Mrs. Taguchi, and talked with her for a time. Since he could detect nothing at all unusual in the domestic situation, he did not dare risk offering his congratulations to her.

Two or three days before he learned from Chiyoko at Sunaga’s about the tragedy that had taken place at her Yarai uncle’s house, he visited Sunaga after a long absence. His reason for doing so was to find out definitely Sunaga’s attitude concerning the marriage. The person Sunaga or Chiyoko decided to marry was none of his affair, but other questions remained: how could
the fate of these two diverge so easily, and apparently without regret, in opposite directions? Or was it possible that, as he had imagined earlier, a miraculous thread might tie them together without ever having been felt by either of them? Or, rather, was it possible that this image, the brocade woven by dream, sensed though at times it might be by each of them, would be torn asunder and shredded completely away from them, isolating them from each other? These were the questions Keitarō wanted answered. Of course, it was only his curiosity acting up again, as he clearly realized. But he also knew that Sunaga would not view it as improper nor would he mind his friend trying to satisfy his curiosity. And Keitarō felt, moreover, that he had the right to do so.

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On that day, even though he stayed on for quite a time, Keitarō had little opportunity to start any serious talk: not only was he interrupted by the appearance of Chiyoko, but Sunaga's mother later also came up to join the group. Suddenly, he chanced to see the three people in front of him in such a way that they unconsciously succeeded in appearing just like a genuine married couple and mother-in-law, and
so they would have seemed to anyone. He thought it would be an easy matter to unite them in accordance with the conventional formality. And he returned home.

On the next Sunday, all working men were blessed with a delightfully warm, sunny day. Very early in the morning, Keitarō went to see Sunaga to lure him out to the countryside. Lazy and willful, Sunaga came to the entryway, but was not easily persuaded to go further. His mother strongly urged and finally ordered him to put on his shoes. Once he had done so, he was willing to go wherever Keitarō wanted to go. No matter how much the latter sought to consult over definite destination or direction, Sunaga was not one to indicate any specific preference of his own. When he and Matsumoto of Yarai went out together, they would keep walking without any concern for destination, and together they would often end up in the most unthinkable places. Keitarō had, in fact, heard about these incidents from his friend's mother.

On that day, they took a train at Ryōgoku and got off at the foot of Kōnodai Hill. Then they walked in leisurely fashion along the bank of the broad, scenic river. Keitarō felt fine for the first time in many days, and looked at the water, the hill, and the sailing boats. Sunaga, although he praised the view
grudgingly, grumbled over the chill in the air, complained that this was not yet the season for walking along such windy banks, and reproached Keitarō for bringing him. Keitarō insisted that, if he walked fast, he would warm up, and, with that, began to walk briskly. With a look of incredulity, Sunaga followed after. When they had arrived at the statue of *Sakra devanam Indra* at Shibamata, they entered a restaurant called "Kawajin," and had lunch. Again Sunaga complained, maintaining that the barbecued eel they had ordered was so sweet that he could not touch it. Keitarō was greatly distressed, perceiving that the mood of the two had not yet mellowed sufficiently for any intimate talk.

So he said, "Tokyo-ites are indeed very demanding. Would you be so choosy when it came to selecting a wife?"

"Anyone would insist on being choosy in such a matter as that, if he is able. It's not limited to Tokyo-ites. Even such a country bumpkin as you would agree with that, now, wouldn't you?" Sunaga responded offhandedly.

"It's a fact: Tokyo-ites have no taste at all," said Keitarō, laughing.

Sunaga also seemed suddenly to be amused, and laughed as well. From then on, as the mood of the two
thawed, conversation went smoothly. When Sunaga remarked, "You seem to have settled down quite a bit these days!" he answered, "So you think I'm getting to be a sobersides, is that it?" And when he in turn teased Sunaga by saying, "You are getting much too neurotic!" Sunaga candidly admitted his failing: "True. I am getting bored with it myself."

The two were at ease with each other, man-to-man fashion, and had no hesitation in looking each other straight in the eye. It was fortunate for Keitarō, whose aim all along had been to find out about the matter, that the issue of Chiyoko should arise as though by chance at such a moment. He began his attack by mentioning the rumor he had heard about a week earlier concerning the prospect of Chiyoko's marriage. Sunaga seemed quite unruffled.

"Yes, there does seem to be another marriage prospect for her," he answered, more quietly than usual for him, "I hope this time it may work out...." Then, abruptly changing his tone, he added, "Of course, you don't know, but there have been many such proposals in the past." He explained it in a way that was rather nonchalant.

"But don't you want to marry her?" asked Keitarō. "Does it seem as if I do?" asked his friend.

The conversation proceeded in this fashion, each
pulling the other forward bit by bit; finally it reached the point where Sunaga had to choose between telling him everything or changing the subject altogether. At that moment he smiled wryly, and said, "You brought that cane of yours again, didn't you?"

With a laugh, Keitarō went out to the verandah, picked up the cane, and showed the snake-head to Sunaga with a flourish. "Here it is!"

The story that Sunaga then told was far longer than Keitarō had expected.

My father died a long time ago, when I was a mere child. Before I could experience the love that exists between father and child, he died quite suddenly. I have no child, of course. But it seems quite possible that I may be incapable of any deep feeling for my own offspring, the child with whom I share my own blood__. Since the time of his death, however, my feelings toward my parents have developed more fully. I have wished many times that I had had that emotional capacity before my father died. I was, in sum, very cool toward him. Of course, he on his side was not at all indulgent. The image of my father that I retain
in my heart is merely the portrait of a strange man with a craggy face, unhealthy complexion, and an unfriendly, stern expression. Whenever I see my face in the mirror, I feel disgust because it resembles very closely the face of my father that is stored in my heart.

I worry that I may convey to others the unpleasant impression that my father made upon me. Moreover, since I know that I have a much better, far warmer disposition in my blood than what these gloomy brows and forehead would lead one to expect, I begin to comprehend that the father who had appeared to me so unfeeling might also have stored in his heart tears warmer than my own. When I realize this, I feel wretched as a son, since I have preserved only the bad exterior of my father's nature as my remembrance of him. Two or three days before he died, he called me to his side, and said, "Ichizō, you must be under the care of your mother after I die. Do you understand this?" Since she had taken care of me ever since I was born, I was puzzled to hear such an obvious matter. I sat without saying anything. As though forced to move the muscles of his bony face, he added, "If you continue to be as willful as you have been, your mother won't know how to take care of you. You must settle down a little more." But my mother
had been taking care of me all along, and so I assumed that she would continue to do so. Hence I thought my father's lecture totally unnecessary, and left the sickroom.

When he died, my mother cried very hard. Just before the funeral procession began, I was changed into an appropriate kimono. Since I had nothing much to do, I was staring at the blue sky alone on the verandah. Suddenly, Mother in a pure white mourning garment came over to me. Taguchi, Matsumoto, and all the others who were to follow the procession were busy in the other part of the house. There was no one around. Abruptly, my mother put her hands on my closely trimmed head, and gazed at me through her swollen, red eyes.

In a soft voice, she said, "Don't worry. I'll take good care of you, just as I have in the past, even though your father is gone now."

I didn't say anything. I didn't even let one tear fall. The incident passed without any complications at the time. But, as I grew older, a cloud off in one corner of my mind dimmed my recollection of my parents: it consisted of these things they had said. This conviction grew stronger and clearer with the passage of time. Why did I have to attach such a dense aura of suspicion to their seemingly innocent
remarks? I questioned myself, but could find no answer at all. Sometimes I had an urge to ask my mother directly about the matter, but, once I saw her face, my courage immediately crumbled. And somewhere in my heart something whispered to me that once I confided my secret thoughts to her, the warm and strong affection of mother for son would be forever gone, and there would be no chance of repairing the damage. Still another possibility was that she might look into my serious face and laugh away the difficulty, remarking. "Did anything like that happen?" Just imagining such a cruel consequence was enough to prevent me from speaking up, and I remained silent.

I was never an obedient son to my mother. As you can see from the fact that I was lectured to by my father when he was on his deathbed, I was often, from my earliest years, rebellious toward my mother. Even after I became mature enough to wish to be gentle with her, I didn't pay much attention to what she said. Especially during these last two or three years I have been a constant source of worry for her. Yet, however much I argued with her, our precious mother-and-son relationship had never been harmed to any extent by my behavior. If ever I should mention the matter of my youthful hostility to my father, and to my bitter regret hurt both of us, then I feared the consequence
might be irreversible tragedy. Also, I explored the possibility that my fears might be no more than the creation of my neurotic temperament. Yet more and more the possibility of a future tragedy became clearer and more definite to me. That is why I could not, regrettably, forget the remarks of my father and mother at that time. I feel wretched about this inability to forget even now.

I have no idea how affectionate the relationship between my father and mother was. Perhaps I haven't the qualifications to discuss such matters since I am not yet married. Yet even the most happily married couple may have rainy days once in a while, and, during a long married life, they may inflict deep scars on each other's hearts, enduring frustration and discontent in silence, without telling anyone. My father, of course, because of his acute sensitivity, was a rather quiet and gloomy sort, and Mother was the kind of person who could say nothing in a loud voice unless practicing the nagauta ballads. Hence, I never witnessed a scene of quarreling up to the very day of his death. To sum up, our family, as seen by others, was completely serene and happy. Even my
Uncle Matsumoto, who is very free with criticism, believes this to be so without any speck of a doubt even now.

Whenever my mother referred to my late father, she would describe him as though he were the most perfect husband in all the world. She must have done this with the intent of purifying the dark image of my father which had settled deep inside me. Or perhaps she was trying to beautify that image gradually with the polishing cloth called "Time." Yet, when she discussed my father as a loving parent, her attitude changed remarkably. At such times, my usually gentle and sweet mother would turn surprisingly stern and austere, so much so that she cut me to the heart. That indeed was about the time when I moved up from middle school to higher school. Now, even if I were to persuade my mother to repeat her words, I could not conceivably participate in such noble moods. From then on to the time of my graduation from the University, my emotional life must have gone through great turmoil and lost its purity, just as happens with the heroes in novels these days. When I look back, I think I must have been addicted to the very atmosphere of that time; and I felt damned by it. Even now there are moments when I yearn to be sitting in just such a serene environment in front of my
mother once again; and yet, at the same time I know with sadness such a desire is nothing but a dream of a past that cannot be recalled. My mother's major characteristic can be fully described in the phrase, "loving mother." In my opinion, she was born to exemplify those words, and she would die for them. This is so pitiful! And yet, since she focusses the whole purpose of her existence entirely on this one point, if I could only be a devoted son, it would give her the greatest happiness. And, on the other hand, should I oppose her wishes, it would be for her enormous misery. When I think of this, I often become deeply distressed.

I might add, by the way, that I was not born an only child. I remember I played every day with a younger sister called Tae-chan when I was young. My sister used to wear a colorful outer kimono of large pattern, and her hair was cut off as with Japanese dolls. She called me, "Ichizō-chan, Ichizō-chan!" and never addressed me as "Big Brother." This sister died of diphtheria a few years before my father died. In those days there was no serum injection, and it must have been very difficult to treat such a disease. I, of course, did not even know the term, "diphtheria." I remember even now the time when Uncle Matsumoto came over to see the sick child, and teased me by asking,
"Are you a diphtheria patient too?" I replied, "No! I am a soldier!"

A little while after my sister's death, it seemed to me that the stern face of my father was considerably softened.

"I'm so sorry for what has happened," he said to my mother. His expression when he said this was so gentle that, young as I was, I inscribed each word in my memory. I've completely forgotten how my mother responded to it. No matter how hard I tried to recall her reaction, I could not. So at the time I must have ignored it. It is very strange that I had such sharp critical perceptiveness toward my father only to have it totally lacking from early childhood toward Mother. If one is inclined to be curious about "others," Father must have seemed more one of the "others" that Mother was. Or, to put it the other way around, Mother was so close to me that she was not worth observing--.

Anyway, my little sister died. From that time on, I was an only son to my father and mother, and, after my father's death, the only child for my mother.

And so I have a duty to take very good care of my
mother. But the same reason, to tell the truth, has made me extremely willful. Ever since I was graduated from school last year, I've not bothered to trouble my mind about getting a job. At graduation I had grades that were quite presentable. Had I wished to take advantage of the present custom of hiring according to grades, I had opportunities to place myself in a position such as my friends would have greatly envied. In fact, I even remember that on one occasion I was summoned by a certain professor who had been asked to pick the best candidate. He asked my intentions, but I was not swayed. Please understand, I am not bragging in telling you this kind of thing. To tell the truth, the impulse is quite the opposite: it comes from my total lack of confidence. And this too makes me unhappy. Even so, I was almost impudent when I declined the offer, thinking it wouldn't amount to anything if I had to maneuver people from morning to night in order to become successful. I doubt that I was born to be a prospective success. Had I studied such a field as botany or astronomy, instead of law, I think heaven might have given me a suitable profession. I think so because I am so ineffective in dealing with other people. And yet I am very patient and hardworking when left alone.

The reason this willfulness can go on, of course,
is the modest inheritance I have from my father. Without that, I would have to face the world and use my law degree, no matter how unpleasant I might find it. Realizing this, I am most grateful to my father. At the same time, I am aware that my reluctance to face life is barely allowed to continue because of the inheritance. So you see I am in a very vulnerable and shaky situation. And I feel yet again very sorry for my mother.

As usual among traditionally educated women, Mother is convinced that keeping up the family name is the first duty of a son. But she has no clear idea as to what is involved in "keeping up the family name." Does it signify fame? financial or political power? virtuous conduct? She has no notion at all. She just vaguely assumes that if ever I fall on my head, everyone will rush to my gate. I have none of the fortitude needed to make her see these things realistically. Indeed, unless I succeed in "keeping up the family name" on my own terms, I have no right to tutor her about such matters. And I know that I am not the man needed to keep the family reputation high. I merely try to keep in mind that I must not disgrace it. Such an attitude contributes not at all toward pleasing my mother, but it wasn't devised with her in mind. She very likely is feeling helpless. I
too am quite depressed about it.

Of the varied worries that she has about me, the first is the weakness I have just mentioned. Yet she cares for me enough simply to go on, without forcing me to correct it. As long as I continue to feel gratitude at her forbearance, I could let things go on as they are. But what I secretly fear is that I may disappoint her greatly in the matter of my marriage—or, to be more exact, in the welfare of our whole family to the extent that it depends on my interest in Chiyoko.

To explain the situation, I must go back to the time before she was born. Taguchi was by no means the man of wealth and power that he is now. Because he showed promise for the future, my father recommended to him that he marry my father's sister-in-law, my aunt. Of course, Taguchi respected my father as his senior, and consulted with him and received help from him at every turn. As the two families became increasingly close, Chiyoko was born. How my mother ever got the idea I simply do not know, but I am told that she asked the Taguchis to give her as a bride for me when she grew up. According to Mother, the Taguchis consented readily at the time. After that, Momoyo was born, and the son, Goichi, followed, so they are free to give Chiyoko to anyone, because she
isn't needed to perpetuate the family name. Still, I
could not be sure they really wanted to give her to me
or whether they simply felt under an obligation to do
so.

6

However that may be, even before we began to be
aware of such matters, there was already a bond
between me and Chiyoko. But it was quite a fragile
thread for really making the two of us one. To be
sure, we grew up together in complete freedom, happy
as skylarks. Even the spinner of the thread would not
have intended to pull tightly on it from the
beginning. I am saddened for my mother's sake that
this insubstantial bond can be thought of as nothing
more than a special push or impulse toward a
particular desired ending.

At about the time I entered higher school, Mother
made veiled allusions to me about Chiyoko. Of course,
I was very much interested in girls at that time, but
I had not the slightest idea as yet about my future
wife. I wasn't settled enough to be concerned with
such matters. Moreover, since she was the one I had
played and quarreled with from childhood, she now
struck me as too plain because of her very proximity.
I hardly thought of her as one of the opposite sex. And this attitude may not have been on my side alone: Chiyoko must, I imagine, have felt the same way. The fact that I cannot recall ever being looked upon as a man during our long association proves it. In her eyes, I was just the same old cousin, whether she was angry or crying or using coquettish manners or even making eyes at me. To be sure, her behavior was the result of a temperament that was freer than usual. As to this point, I am sure that no one knows her better than I. But this freedom of behavior was not sufficient to break down the wall that exists between a man and woman. Only once--but I had better tell you about that later on.

When Mother saw that I was not paying attention to her suggestion, she assumed that I was shy, and kept the matter in abeyance in her inmost mind, as though waiting to see what chances the future might bring. I don't even have the gall to deny my shyness. My mother assumed that, under my diffidence, I was interested in Chiyoko, but what she recognized was, in a way, exactly opposite to the truth. To sum the matter up because she thought to prepare the way for our future, she tried hard to bring us together; and this very effort gradually moved us far apart from each other as man and woman. At the time she wasn't aware of what
she had done—until I was cruel enough to face her with it and force her to recognize the error. It is very painful to describe that incident.

All to herself Mother seemed to have kept that project that she had hinted at in my early years, and warmed it in her heart until I was in the second year of higher school. One evening—it was a night of spring vacation when the cherry blossoms were supposed to have bloomed—she gently brought it forth once again. Since I was quite mature by then, I had sufficient forbearance to take the matter in hand and look it over carefully from front to back. Mother, for her part, did not just hint from a distance, but at the same time did not forget to frame her wish with a certain formality. I replied without much thought, "I am not for it because cousins are related by blood." Mother surprised me by saying that she had asked Chiyoko's hand for me at the time of my cousin's birth, and so, I should marry her. When I inquired, "Why did you suggest such a thing?" she replied that she liked her and I had no reason to dislike her. This answer did not fit the situation as it had existed in Chiyoko's babyhood, and it puzzled me a great deal. When I pointed this out to her, she confessed tearfully, "It's not really for you that I ask, but entirely for myself." It would, she
maintained, be beneficial to her, but she never told me the reason, no matter how much I asked her. Finally, she asked me if I disliked Chiyoko, no matter what the circumstances. I answered that I had never disliked her, but that, in view of the fact that she herself had evinced no desire to marry me, and that, moreover, neither Uncle nor Aunt Taguchi seemed keen about giving her to me, she had better give up pushing the idea of our marriage, because it would only embarrass them. Mother persisted in saying that they had promised, and, therefore, it didn't matter if they were embarrassed, or, at least, they had no right to be embarrassed. And she went on to stress the occasions when Taguchi had been indebted to my father, who had taken care of him in various ways. In desperation, I suggested to Mother that she hold off on this matter until my graduation. She asked me to think it over again, and, from her expression, I knew she was clinging to her last hope.

In this situation, I too became entrapped in the problem that Mother alone had been concerned with until then. The Taguchis may have been examining the same problem from their own point of view. Even if they should make plans to marry her off somewhere, the prospect of having to obtain our consent would surely be worrisome to my uncle.
I became uneasy. Whenever I saw my mother's face, I felt guilty, wasting one day after another in temporizing, and so, in a way, deceiving my mother. At times I thought about marrying her just to please Mother. With that in mind, I visited the Taguchis without any particular reason, and casually observed the attitude of my aunt and uncle. They never showed any trace of coolness toward me by word or manner as a start in responding to my mother's campaign. They were not such shallow, unkind people. But I had long since figured out what a pitiable person they thought me when considered as a possible husband for their daughter.

This attitude not only has not changed, but even seems to be getting worse of late. In the first place, they wouldn't approve of my weak and delicate physical condition and my pale, unhealthy complexion. Of course, it is true that I tend to exaggerate and assume the worst because of my nervous disposition, and I should not bother you with all the detailed observations of my aunt and uncle which I keep locked in my heart. In essence, though, it is clear that they had promised to give Chiyoko to me as my bride, or at very least they at one time must have thought it
would be all right to give her. But let's put it this way: as their social status moved upward, my character went down in the opposite direction, and so the situation changed in these two ways, making the possibility of fulfilling their promise doubly difficult; they, in short, are left with the empty shell of an old obligation in the back of their minds.

I never had much chance to discuss the marriage problem with them. Only on one occasion did my aunt and I exchange the following words:

"Issan, you are already of an age when you must find a wife, aren't you? My sister seems to have been quite worried about the matter for a long time past."

"By all means, let her know if you come across a suitable candidate!"

"For you, Issan, someone very gentle and patient, say, like a kind nurse, would be good."

"If I look for a nurse-like bride, I rather think there would be few applicants!"

As I said these words, with a strained smile, laughing at myself, Chiyoko, who was doing something at the corner of the room, suddenly looked up and said, "Maybe I should be your bride?"

I looked deep into her eyes as she gazed at me.
But neither of us could recognize any special significance in the exchange.

My aunt did not even look back at her, but said, "A girl like you, so blunt and bare-knuckled, how would you ever suit Issan's taste?"

In her voice I recognized a kind of reproof and frightened echo. Chiyoko just laughed heartily. Momoyo was nearby at that moment; hearing her sister's words, she stood up smiling and left the room. I sensed that I was being rejected in an indirect fashion. I soon stood up and left.

After this episode, I found it increasingly difficult to try to keep my mother happy in this matter of the marriage. The son of a proud father, my nerves in such a situation were surprisingly sensitive. I was not, certainly, at all offended by the behavior of my aunt at that time. Since they had not received any formal proposal from me, how otherwise could she act to express her feelings about the prospect? As for Chiyoko, whether in her laughter or anger, she is always exactly what she is; she had merely expressed what she felt at that moment without hesitation. From her words and behavior, I realized for certain from what I had observed that she was not keen about coming to me, but, at the same time, I secretly feared that if Mother pleaded quietly with
her in private conversation, heart to heart, she might bow to her wishes then and there, because I always knew with absolute certainty that, so very pure as she was, she would willingly sacrifice her own interests or those of her parents in such a situation.

Egoist that I am, I wished more not to hurt myself than to satisfy my mother's wish. Hence, since I was afraid Chiyoko might be talked into marrying me by my mother, I plotted a scheme to prevent it. Mother loved her especially of all her nieces and nephews since she had when she was born asked for her on my behalf. Chiyoko, too, from early childhood, regarded our house just as her own, and would come to spend a night whenever she wished. As a result, even though the Taguchis and my family grew less intimate as compared with the old days, Chiyoko alone, who was very much attached to my mother, would happily come to visit her very often, as though she were her real mother. Since she was direct and uncomplicated, Chiyoko would confide in her, and mentioned without any hesitation even the marriage proposals that came to her every so often. Mother goodheartedly would listen to her and never show the slightest reproach or
anxiety to her.

What I feared now was that between these very intimate two ladies, the "deep talk" I mentioned earlier might take place at any moment. My scheme was intended merely to keep Mother's mouth closed about the matter for a little while. Yet, when I tried to carry out my intention, I felt as though I were trying to deprive my poor mother of her freedom, loading upon her my own egotistic purposes. Hence, most of the time I ended up saying nothing. Admittedly, I can't say I gave it up just because I didn't want to make her unhappy. I also figured (since she had not, thus far, actually brought up with Chiyoko this crucial matter) that nothing would happen for a while, even if I left everything just as it was; and that thought restrained me somewhat from taking any further steps.

So the matter drifted on, without any particular action toward Chiyoko. Of course, even though everything was in an unstable equilibrium, our association went on as usual. I recall that, just to make my mother happy, I even hopped on the streetcar headed for Uchisaiwai-chō occasionally. Toward the end of one such visit, Chiyoko urged me to stay for dinner, because she wanted to try out on me an interesting dish she had just learned about, and so I sat down with them for dinner. My uncle, who was
usually absent, happened to be there, and kept talking in his usual lively fashion; the place was young with happy laughter almost shaking the paper of the shoji panels. Following the meal, for whatever reason, my uncle suddenly suggested, "Issan, let's have a game of "go"! We haven't had a match for a long time." I wasn't very enthusiastic, but, just to be polite, replied, "Let's!" and we retreated to another room. The two of us played several games there. Of course, these were the games of beginners, which don't take long, so, by the time we had put away the go stones, it was not very late. We started talking while we smoked our cigarettes. Seizing an opportune moment, I quite deliberately asked my uncle, "How are Chiyoko's marriage prospects coming along?" I wanted, of course, to make clear where I stood on the matter. At the same time, I thought that if this problem could be settled, I would be relieved, and Chiyoko would be happy.

My uncle, every inch a man's man, said without hesitation, "No, no, it doesn't look as though it were going at all smoothly. We get proposals from time to time, but it's not an easy business. I'm really stumped! Besides, the more you investigate, the more complicated it becomes. We're just going to have to decide if it generally looks favorable--. Such things
as marriage offers are very strange! I guess now I can tell you--since it happened a long time ago--but the fact is that, when Chiyoko was born, your mother asked her hand for you: a new-born baby, you know!"

My uncle looked at me, laughing.

"Mother was serious when she said it, I'm told."

"Oh, absolutely! She's an honest person! a really good person! I hear she talks in all seriousness about it to your aunt even now."

Uncle laughed loudly once more. It seemed to me that, if he really looked upon it so casually, I ought to speak up a little in defense of Mother's good sense. But I knew full well that trying to discuss delicate matters with worldly-wise persons is stupid, a waste of time to speak even one word! And so I remained silent. My uncle is a kindly man and knows the ways of the world. Even today I don't know which view I should take about what he said. The only certainty was that from that time on, I inclined more and more to feel that I ought not to marry Chiyoko.

For several months after that visit, I did not go near the Taguchi house. If only my mother had not been worried about it, I might have quit visiting
Uchisaiwai-chō entirely. Even if Mother had been upset, had that been the only aspect of the problem, I might have pushed my courage to the sticking point to the extent possible. I was born to act in such a fashion. Nevertheless, after two months, I suddenly realized that, unless I gave up my stubbornness, it would do me a disservice. The truth was that the more I stayed away from the Taguchi household, the more Mother tried to associate with Chiyoko, seizing every chance she could get. Moreover, she was gradually maneuvering the situation closer and closer to the moment when she might hold a parley with Chiyoko, which was the thing I feared most. I decided to postpone my next phase of action in this crisis, and with that resolution began once more to frequent the Taguchi home.

Their attitude toward me, naturally, was the same as ever, and my behavior toward them was just as it had been two months before. We laughed, did silly things together, and cavilled at each other's faults as we had always done. In short, the hours spent at the Taguchi house were cheerful and noisy. In fact, it was too cheerful and lively for me. Deep within, I felt exhausted by my hollow efforts at sociability. I think anyone with perceptive eyes could have detected the ugly shadow of my pretense. Only once during that
time did I feel genuinely elated to see that my words
and feelings agreed with each other just as the back
side of a piece of paper goes with the front side.

This occurred when the whole Taguchi household had
gone off on an excursion, as they did once or twice a
year. Not knowing of this, I walked into the house,
and, to my surprise, found Chiyoko sitting quietly
alone. She appeared to have caught cold and had
wrapped a poultice around her neck. Her unusually
pale face made her look forlorn. Only when she said
with a smile, "I am looking after the house today,"
did I notice for the first time that the rest of the
family was out.

Maybe it was because of her cold that day that she
was more subdued and intimate than usual. Normally,
when she saw me, she would without fail shout teasing
expressions at me, and end up provoking an exchange of
insults. On that day, however, seeing her so
unusually quiet, I sensed suddenly how sweet she
seemed. So, as I was sitting by her, gentle,
affectionate words came naturally from my mouth almost
in spite of myself. With a quizzical look at me, she
said, "You seem so thoughtful today! When you're
married, you must behave like this to your wife."

I had always been close to Chiyoko, without any
reservations. Now, for the first time, I realized
that I had been taking her so much for granted that unintentionally I had let myself be rough with her all these years. Seeing the hint of delight in her eyes, I regretted my past attitude.

Together we reminisced about the past we had shared. The words of remembrance tumbled from our lips, revivifying past events. I was amazed to observe that Chiyoko’s memory of events was far fuller and more accurate than mine, including many exact details. She even recalled that four years ago, I had let her mend the open seam of my hakama while I stood at the entryway of her house. She even recalled that the thread she used on that occasion was silk rather than cotton. To my amazement, she said, "I still have the painting you did for me." When I came to think of it, I vaguely remembered, now that she mentioned it, I had painted some pictures for her. But it was when she was eleven or twelve years old, and they had been done with paper and paints that she had had her father buy for her. She forced me, willy-nilly, to paint those pictures. My talent can be estimated from the fact that I have never picked up a brush from that time to this moment. The paintings were such that, once the shock of the bright reds and greens had been absorbed, they ought to have had no further interest to her. Upon hearing that she still kept them, I had
no choice but to smile a little in embarrassment.

"Shall I show them to you?" she asked.

I told her not to bother, but, ignoring my words, she stood up and went to her room to get the box containing my paintings.

Chiyoko picked out five or six watercolors and showed them to me. They were simple sketches of flowers in vases: a red camellia, a purple chrysanthemum, a dahlia of an unusual shade, all unnecessarily deliberate. They were finished neatly in elaborate detail without concern for the amount of time required. Looking back, I was much impressed by my astonishing patience in those bygone days.

Suddenly she said, "You were much kinder to me when you painted those pictures than now, you know."

I didn't see at all what she meant. When I looked at her face (I had been studying the pictures), her large black eyes were centered on me.

"Why do you say things like that?" I asked her.

She kept looking at me, saying nothing.

A little later, in a soft voice, she said, "If I asked you now, you wouldn't draw pictures so painstakingly like that any more, would you?"
I couldn't say whether I would or wouldn't. But in my heart I of course knew she was right.

"How careful you are in keeping all these kinds of things," I said.

"I'm planning to take them with me when I get married."

On hearing these words, I felt unaccountably sad and I very much worried that my melancholy might quickly affect Chiyoko's mood. I visualized her large black eyes filling with tears right before my eyes.

"You had better not take such worthless things with you."

"Oh, I can take them; they are mine!" As she spoke, she put the paintings of the red camellia and the purple chrysanthemums back in the small casket.

To shake off my dark mood, I asked her deliberately, "When are you planning to marry?"

"Very soon!"

"But it hasn't been settled yet, has it?"

"Oh, yes, it's all settled," she calmly asserted.

I had all along been hoping that her marriage prospects would be decided quickly in order to settle my own feelings. But with her words my heart thumped violently, and suddenly I felt a cold sweat on my back, my armpits, and coming out of every pore.

Chiyoko stood up, holding the small casket, and,
as she opened the *shoji* and walked toward her room, she looked at me up and down, and said clearly, "It is a lie!"

I sat motionless where I was. There was no vexation at my heart. For the first time I perceived how Chiyoko's marriage would affect me, and I was grateful that the trick Chiyoko had played upon me had made me realize it. I might have been in love with her without being aware of it. Or she perhaps had loved me without knowing it. I was stunned for a while, wondering why it is so difficult and fearsome to know the truth about one's own character. Just then I heard the telephone ringing. Chiyoko hurried back along the corridor to me and said, "Please answer the phone with me." I didn't understand what "answering the phone with me" meant, but nevertheless stood up instantly to hurry with her to the phone.

"The other party is on the line already. But I can't talk because my throat hurts and I have a hoarse voice. Please answer for me. I'll take care of the listening."

I leaned over and got ready to speak into the mouthpiece. I did not know the name of the caller or what was being said. Chiyoko already had the receiver at her ear. Only she heard whatever was coming through the phone, so I merely repeated more
distinctly to the unknown party the civilities she whispered to me. At the beginning of the conversation, no matter how ridiculous it sounded or how long it took, I was doing my duty unconcerned. But as bit by bit curiosity-provoking questions and responses began to come from Chiyoko's mouth, I stretched my arm, toward her while she was still bent over the mouthpiece of the phone, and said, "Come on, Chiyoko, give it to me!" Laughing, she shook her head no. I stood up straight then and tried to take the earpiece. But she would not let go, and we scuffled laughingly with each other as I reached in vain for the earpiece. She quickly hung up and then laughed long and heartily.

Afterward, I thought about that incident again and again, wishing only that it had occurred a year earlier--and each time I felt as though I were being sentenced by Fate: "Your chance is gone forever!" Yet on some days this same Fate would whisper, "Perhaps other chances of the same kind may occur henceforward, don't you see!" And indeed, had I not exercised restraint in keeping our eyes separated so that they could not reflect our mutual love, Chiyoko and I might
have proceeded to fall so much in love that no human consideration would have been able to separate us, even if we had waited to start until that very day.

But I went in the opposite direction.

Even if we ignore Taguchi's attitude along with my mother's wishes, thinking these to be the unimportant interference of busybodies, still, if I balance the nature I was born with against hers, I am left with the firm conviction that we have no hope of being united in marriage. If you ask why, I'm not sure I can answer adequately. This belief is not intended for explanations to others.

Once I heard a story from a literary friend about D'Annunzio and a young girl. D'Annunzio, so I'm told, is the most popular novelist now in Italy, so my friend's intention was to demonstrate his popularity to me. But I was much more interested in the young girl who figures in the story. Here is the episode:

One day D'Annunzio was invited to a certain gathering. Since, in the West, they regard writers as the ornaments of a nation, he was treated by everyone with the utmost respect and admiration, as befitted a great man. In the midst of this adulation from the people attending the party, while D'Annunzio was circulating among the crowd, he by chance dropped his handkerchief by his foot. Because of the bustle of the
crowd, no one, including D'Annuzio himself, noticed it. Then a young, beautiful girl picked it up from the floor and brought it to him. Intending to give it back to him, she asked, "Isn't this yours, sir?" He thanked her, but, on observing her charming face, he felt that he ought to be more sociable to her. He said, taking for granted the girl's delighted reaction, "Keep it; it is yours. I present it to you, charming lady!" Silently, holding the handkerchief between the tips of her two fingers, she proceeded to the fireplace. Suddenly, she threw it into the fire. No one in the assemblage could hold back a smile,--except D'Annunzio.

When I heard that story, instead of a young Italian beauty with maroon-colored hair, Chiyoko's brows and eyes flashed into my head; I thought to myself that, if she were like her sister, Momoyoko, whatever her inner response to D'Annunzio, she would have accepted the handkerchief with apparent gratitude. Only Chiyoko would not have been able to accept it.

Bad-mouthed Uncle Matsumoto gave nicknames to the Taguchi sisters, and called them, "Big Froggie" and "Little Froggie." He both amuses and angers them by saying that the shape of their mouths is too long for the thinness of the lips, just like the mouth of a
frog. This concerns their features, not their character. But Uncle says habitually, "Little Froggie is good and placid, but Big Froggie is a bit too violent." Whenever I hear him saying so, I wonder how he sees Chiyoko and am tempted to question his powers of observation. I am firmly convinced that the reason her words and behavior appear violent at times is not that she is concealing any unfeminine rough quality in her makeup, but rather that, because of her extraordinarily pure, feminine, tender emotion, she plunges into situations regardless of everything around her. Her value system of good and bad is quite separate from her academic knowledge or experience. She intuitively becomes flame aimed at a target, so that at times her target feels as though he had been struck by a lightning bolt. Her forcefulness results not from negative qualities, but from that pure, strong emotion flashing out at one all at once. For proof, I maintain that no matter how violently I have been accused by her, I have often felt thoroughly cleansed, inside and out by contact with her purity. I have even sensed at times that I have encountered by chance something especially noble. And so I even feel that I wouldn't hesitate to defend and proclaim that she is the most feminine woman in the whole world.
Why, then, is Chiyoko, whom I admire enormously, not suited to be my wife? Certainly, I have asked this of myself. Even before beginning to look for the reason, I felt horror. I could not for any length of time stand it even to imagine us as man and wife. How astonished my mother would be were I to tell her such a thing! And even my friend and contemporary--he may not understand. But, there being no reason to bury my existence in silence, I shall make a confession here. In brief, Chiyoko is a woman who doesn't know the meaning of the word, "fear," while I, at the opposite extreme, know only "fear." So we would not merely be unsuited to each other if married: we would be standing at entirely opposite poles.

I am convinced that there is nothing more beautiful than pure emotion, and there is nothing stronger than beauty. So it is natural that those possessed of this strength should not fear. Were I to marry her, I could not stand those intense rays flashing from the eyes of my wife--not necessarily rays of anger: they could just as well be emanations of sympathy or affection or admiration. It doesn't matter which. I would certainly be blinded. Such a weakling in human emotions as I am would never be able to pay back to her rewards of at least equal worth,
much less even stronger ones. So, for example, if I were given a keg of the finest, richest sake, how could I, brought up by circumstance as a teetotaller, be able to appreciate it? Were Chiyoko to marry me, she would inevitably experience a cruel disappointment. She would lavish her natural abundance of beautiful emotion on her husband, but, in turn, she would surely have a right to expect that he would absorb this spiritual nourishment and take a fully active part in the world's affairs as her appropriate reward. Since she is young and lacking in education, she has, unfortunately, a limited range of understanding in the world's affairs. She assumes that a man should strive for tangible rewards, in terms of money or power, with all his mind and skill--and, if not, he's not really a man. If she came to me as a bride, with that direct nature of hers, she is simple enough to expect the same meritorious treatment from me; or, more concretely, if she wants something, she will assume that I can get it for her. It seems to me almost indisputable that the basic discrepancy between us lies at just this point. As I've said, I am the sort of lackluster nobody who could not fully take in the beauty of her emotions were she my wife. Even if I should absorb its heat
the way water is warmed by a hot rock, I would still be incapable of putting it to good use in the way she would expect. If the effect of her purity should ever be evident in me, it would be only unexpectedly and in a place that she could not see, a form that she could not touch. Even if she noticed it, it would mean less to her than my head reeking with scent or my feet adorned in silken tabi. In other words, she would squander her beautiful nature on me forever, and gradually end up a mere frustrated wife, grumbling over her unhappy marriage.

Whenever I compare myself with Chiyoko, I feel inclined to use the words, "fearful man, fearless woman." Ultimately, of course, it sounds like a cliche of a western novelist rather than my own thought. The other day, Uncle Matsumoto, who loves to give lectures, explained the difference between poetry and philosophy. Ever since, I have associated my "fearless woman, fearful man" concepts with his unfamiliar definitions of poetry and philosophy. Since as an amateur he is much interested in these fields, he told me all sorts of fascinating things. He referred to me critically with the phrase, "an emotional man such as you," and implicitly regards me as the poetic type, but in my opinion it is the fearless ones who are poets and the fearful who are
fated to be philosophers. The reason for my lackluster behavior and my inability ever to make decisions is that I look always to the future and brood too much over consequences. The reason Chiyoko behaves as freely as the wind is that her strong emotive force, heedless of what lies ahead, surges up in her heart all at once. She is the most fearless person I have ever known. And that would be her reason for despising such a fearful person as I am. She, burdened with the sheer weight of her emotions, is always on the verge of stumbling. I feel great pity for her: she is like a blind poet who cannot see the irony of fate. Indeed, I find myself trembling for her at times.

13

Toward the end of Sunaga's story, Keitarō had some trouble understanding it. The truth was that Sunaga might have been in his own fashion both poet and philosopher. This was the opinion of others who had observed him, but Keitarō himself certainly never thought of him as either one. So he preferred to ignore such words as poetry or philosophy as not worth bothering about, dreams usable only on the moon. Besides, he detested abstractions. Mere theorizing,
no matter how cleverly contrived, was powerless to move his body to the right side or left, and seemed as useless as counterfeit money to him. Hence, he did not silently accept such phrases as "fearful man, fearless woman": it reminded him of a slogan on a fortune-telling card. Yet the phrase came in actuality at a point of rest in Sunaga's quiet, romantic life story, and Keitarō felt sympathetic even though he wasn't quite sure how it all fitted together, he had to listen to it anyway.

Sunaga realized it too.

"I'm getting a bit over-theoretical. I was carried away by my thoughts."

"Never mind! It is very interesting!"

"The cane is demonstrating its magical powers, don't you think?"

"Yes, indeed. And very strangely. Let's continue a bit further."

"There's nothing more to be said. I have finished."

After speaking thus definitively, Sunaga turned his eyes toward the quiet surface of the water. Keitarō too remained silent for a while. In an odd fashion, the story which Sunaga had just told him, which had echoes of both poetry and philosophy, massed like some shapeless peak of cloud high in Keitarō's
head, and would not dissipate itself. Sunaga, who sat in front of him without saying anything, seemed a mysterious creature quite different from the fairly conventional person he knew.

Having decided that he must by all means hear the rest of the story, Keitarō asked him, "When did the last episode occur?"

He replied that the incident had happened during his third year at the University.

"But how did your relationship with her continue during the past year or so? What direction did it take? And how has the matter been settled?" Keitarō continued.

Sunaga smiled absently, and replied, "Let's go outside first and look around."

The two paid the bill and went out. As he watched Keitarō swinging the cane exultantly ahead of him, Sunaga gave another melancholy smile. Upon reaching the temple compound of *Sakra devanam Indra* in Shibemata, they performed the ritual prayer at the statue, and left quickly through the gate. Both of them felt it about time to take the train back to Tokyo. Upon arriving at the station, however, there was still a long wait before the infrequent country train. So they went into a little tea shop very near the station to rest. There, Keitarō managed to hear
the remainder of the story, as Sunaga had promised. Here it is.

It happened in the summer between my third and fourth year. While I was trying to figure out in my upstairs room how I could spend the hot season, Mother came up and suggested that we go to Kamakura for a vacation once my school work was finished. The Taguchi family had been staying there for about a week already to avoid the seasonal heat. My uncle is actually not overly fond of the seashore, so usually they go to their summer home in Karuizawa. But that year, in view of their daughters' wish to swim, they rented a villa belonging to a businessman in Zaimoku-za. Before leaving, Chiyoko had come over to say goodbye. I overheard her when she was telling Mother about the place: that she hadn't been there, but that it was supposed to be a fine, cool house located on a cliff in the shadow of a mountain, and that, since it was roomy, with two or three stories, she wanted us to come and visit with them. So I in turn urged Mother to go visit them, since it would be a good diversion. She took out a letter from Chiyoko and showed it to me. It was written both by Chiyoko and Momoyoko, passing along their mother's hope that Mother and I would come together.

Should she wish to go, I now saw that I couldn't
very well let my aged mother go by herself on the train. I would surely have to go with her. Set in my ways as I was, I wasn't keen about the two of us plunging into the midst of their confusion. We might not be much of a burden to them, but I didn't want them to go to any trouble at all for us. But Mother seemed eager to go. I hated it all the more because she sounded as though she wanted to go for my sake. At the end of considerable argument, however, we finally decided to go. You may not quite fathom it, but, although in some respects I am stubborn, in other ways I am easily persuaded.

Mother was shy, and usually didn't like traveling very much. My father, very stern and traditional as he was, could not tolerate anything other than a dignified and conventional manner of life. When he was alive, my mother seemed unable to go out very often. In fact, I've not seen any occasion on which Mother and Father went away together on vacation. Even after his death, when she had complete freedom to go, she unfortunately hadn't the opportunities to travel as she pleased. Without the chance to go alone to distant places or stay out visiting for long, she had
grown old in this household of mother and son.

On the day we started for Kamakura, I boarded the direct express, carryng a suitcase for her. When the train jolted to a start, Mother, sitting beside me all smiles, said, "It has been such a long time since I've ridden on a train!" Actually, it hadn't been a frequent experience for me, either. Elated as we were by the novelty of our situation, our conversation was livelier than usual. While I asked or was being asked now and again about matters the nature of which I don't now even recall, the train reached the end of its journey. Since we hadn't previously told them that we were coming, no one was at the station to meet us. When we signaled a ricksha and told the driver of such-and-such a villa, he knew right away where it was, and started off with us. As we rode along the sandy road, I noticed that there were many new houses since the last time I had visited there some years before. I saw in the distance, through pine branches, a beautiful patch of yellow field. At first glance, the plants seemed new to me, looking somewhat like common rape flowers. From the ricksha I tried hard to guess what these commonplace yellow splotches might be, and suddenly realized that they were just ordinary squash plants. At this realization, I laughed to myself.
When the ricksha reached the gate of the villa, we could see some people moving in the open livingroom from which the sliding doors had been removed. One man was in a white *yukata*, and I guessed that my uncle must have come from Tokyo a few days before, and was staying on. Yet, when all of them came out to greet us, only that one man was missing. I knew, of course, that my uncle might well act that way, and I went right into the *tatami*-matted room. But I didn't find him there either.

While I was looking around curiously, my aunt and mother began exchanging the long, wordy greetings customary with elderly women: chitchat like, "Oh, how suffocating it must have been for you in the train!" or "I am so pleased for you! You have found a lovely place with a beautiful view! Chiyoko and Momoyoko were busy presenting a *yukata* to Mother and then airing her kimono. I allowed the maid to show me the way to the bathroom, where I washed my face and hair. Though the house was well away from the ocean, the water was surprisingly dirty. After I had wrung out the washcloth, I noticed a sandy residue sinking to the bottom of the metal basin.

"Why don't you use this?" Surprised by Chiyoko's voice from behind me, I turned, and saw a dry white towel at my shoulder. I took it and stood up. She
picked up a comb from the drawer of the nearby dressing table, and handed it to me. While I sat at the table, combing my wet hair, she leaned against the doorpost, watching me.

As I said nothing, she spoke up: "How terrible the water is here! Don't you think so?"

Keeping my eyes toward the mirror, I asked, "Why is the water colored as it is, I wonder?"

When we had used up the water as subject for our talk, I stood up with the towel on my shoulder leaving the comb on the dressing table. Chiyoko left the doorway ahead of me, and was starting toward the main room.

All of a sudden, I called to her from behind, and asked, "Where is my uncle?"

She stopped to turn and say, "Father came here a few days ago, but he left the day before yesterday to take care of some business. He's still in Tokyo."

"So he isn't here, then?"

"That's right. Why? I suppose he might come back this evening with Goichi."

She explained that, if the weather were fine the next day, they were planning to try a fishing trip. But Uncle would have to come somehow by this evening, she said. And she urged me to join them. But more than about fish, I wanted to know where the man in the
"I saw a man in the livingroom a little while ago."

"Oh, that's Takagi-san, Akiko's older brother. Don't you remember?"

I didn't say whether I did or didn't remember. But my thoughts centered on the man called Takagi right away. Momoyoko had, I knew, a friend called Takagi Akiko. Her brother's face was familiar, because I had seen his photograph, taken with Akiko. I remembered seeing a postcard she had sent. I had overheard someone saying that her brother had been in America, and had just come back at about that time. Since they were very well off, it was natural that he might be taking a vacation in Kamakura. It wouldn't be surprising if they had a summer place there. I had the urge to find out from Chiyoko where he lived.

"Oh, just down the hill." That was all she said.

"A summer villa?" I asked again.

"Yes."

The two of us returned to the livingroom without any further discussion. There, my mother and aunt were continuing still their question-and-answer
session over such trivia as the color of the ocean, or where the Great Buddha statue was located from here, as though these were matters of the greatest importance. Momoyoko informed Chiyoko that their father had especially sent word that he was coming by that evening. The two talked and imagined the fun of the fishing trip on the following day as though they already had it in hand.

"Takagi-san is coming, isn't that so?"

"Issan, please, you come too."

I answered, "No." For my reason, I concocted some minor business back home, and added that I would have to return to Tokyo that evening. But within my mind I was in a state of confusion. Perhaps, I thought, if Taguchi brought Goichi with him, then there wouldn't be enough room for me to sleep in. But also I just did not want to meet Takagi, whom the sisters knew well. I had heard from Momoyoko that he and the girls had been talking about me until a short time ago, but, on seeing us arrive, he felt uncomfortable and so had left by the back door. I was very glad that I had escaped the need for formality; fearing strangers in this way has been my nature.

When I mentioned my plan of returning, the two girls were astounded and tried to stop me. Chiyoko especially grew desperate. She called me an
"You just can't go back and leave your mother alone like this!" she declared. "I won't let you!"

Somehow, she had acquired the privilege of using much freer words toward me than her brother and sister. I had often thought that if I could behave to others as uncompromisingly, directly, and strongly (often from the best motives possible) as she behaved to me, what a delight it would be to live in this world, even with my weaknesses. I felt so envious of the little tyrant!

"How angry you are!" I said.

"But you are not very considerate of your mother," answered Chiyoko.

"Very well," suggested Momoyoko, "I'll go and ask my aunt, and if she says you should stay, please do stay! Is that all right?"

She was trying in her way to calm us down, and went immediately to the livingroom where the elders were talking. It is quite needless to say what Mother thought, nor need I report the verdict that Momoyoko brought. In a word, I became a prisoner of Chiyoko.

Soon thereafter, making an excuse to take a walk to town, I roamed around the vacation houses, carrying a western-style umbrella to shade myself from the hot
afternoon sun. Possibly you might think I wanted to see the places where I had been a long time ago, but, even if I had had such a refined sensibility as to become entranced by fantasies of past elegance, I had neither the calmness nor the leisure to indulge my sentiments at that time. I just roamed about, glancing at the nameplates at each villa, and, when I found the two characters for the name, "Taka-gi," on the gate of a rather splendid one-story house, I realized that this must be the one, and stood there by the gate for a time. Then, without any real purpose, I continued my slow walk for about fifteen minutes. It was as though I were trying to tell myself that I hadn't taken this walk deliberately just to find Takagi's house. I returned quickly.

To be perfectly truthful, I hardly knew anything about this man called Takagi. Only I had on one occasion heard from Momoyoko that he was looking for a suitable mate. And at that time, I remember, as though to consult with me about it, she looked at me, and said, "What would you think of him for my sister?"

I replied coolly, as usual, I recall, "He might do. Ask your mother and father for their opinion."
From that time on, although I visited the Taguchis I don't know how many times, no one ever mentioned his name, at least not in my presence. Why was I so interested to go out and see the villa of a man I had not even met, in spite of the hot, sandy road? I've never confessed the reason to anyone until now. I couldn't explain it clearly to myself either, at that time. I just felt a kind of distant anxiety that forced me to move about. When, later on, I saw the result of this anxiety in a certain crystal-clear incident that took place during my two days in Kamakura, I understood that the force which had lured me to take a walk must be the very same impulse.

Within an hour or so of returning to the summer house, the man with the same name as that on the nameplate I had been interested in appeared. Right away, my Aunt Taguchi introduced him to me politely. "This is Mr Takagi." He was a lean young man with a healthy complexion. As for age, he might have been older than I was, but he was so full of vitality that to describe his energetic qualities, you really needed only the word, "Youth"! When I met this fellow for the first time, I almost had a suspicion that Fate had moved us two into the same room for the purpose of making the perfect contrast. I, of course, represented the one at a disadvantage when I was
introduced in formal fashion. I could regard the whole situation only as a bad joke.

The looks of the two of us immediately gave an unkind contrast. But in our behavior and our ability to socialize with others, I could not but see a great differences. Those in the room with me were all my intimate kinfolk: my mother, my aunt, my cousins,—all blood relatives--, but, compared to Takagi, I was the one who from a distance looked like a strange guest. Takagi, on the other hand, knew how to behave himself freely and without reserve, and yet, with no risk of losing his gracefulness. To me, fearful of all strangers, he looked like someone who had been catapulted into the midst of the social vortex, and had grown up there until now. In less than ten minutes he appropriated every last grain of sociability from my hand, and managed to become the center of the conversation. Being careful not to exclude me, however, he courteously gave me a chance to put in a word or two. But, since they always had to do with something remote from my interests, I was unable to hold the attention of Takagi or anyone else. My aunt he called, often, "Mother Taguchi"! Chiyoko he spoke to, as I do, as "Chiyo-chan."

"Chiyo-chan"! A mode of address permitted only to intimates he used as though the Goddess Nature had
required it of him. For example, he told me, "When you arrived, I was talking about you with Chiyo-chan." I was envious of the man from the moment I saw his face. As I listened to his talk, I realized that I had no hope of matching him. That in itself was enough to make me unhappy. But, as I observed him, I began to suspect that he was showing off his charming manner triumphantly to me, the loser. And suddenly I began to hate him. I kept silent deliberately, even when it was expected of me to speak. When I look back on it now, after the dust has settled, I can see that my inferiority complex might have been to blame. I tend to be suspicious of other people, and, at the same time, I cannot help doubting myself. Hence, when I have difficulty talking to others, I cannot decide which of these two causes (my suspicions of others or my doubts of myself) is responsible. Still, if the fault were clearly my inferiority complex, its reverse aspect was an as yet unformed jealousy.

I do not know whether I could be thought an exceptionally jealous man or not. As an only child, having no one to vie with, I was raised rather
carefully. There was no need to be jealous, at least not in my home. I went through the elementary and intermediate levels of school very peacefully, maybe because there weren't many students in a higher grade than I. In both the higher school and the University, it was generally a tradition not to place too much emphasis on grades. Besides, each year I acquired a more adult view of myself, so the grade standard didn't bother me very much. Aside from these matters, I had never fallen seriously in love, not to mention competing with another man for a woman's affections. I must admit that I am capable of paying far more than customary attention to a young and especially beautiful woman. While walking down the street, whenever I see a beautiful face and kimono, I become as cheerful as though the sun had begun to shine through a break in the clouds. Once in a while I feel that I want to possess that beautiful face. But almost immediately, foreseeing that the face and kimono will drastically change in a short time, I think of one who, after waking from a dream, suddenly is confronted with the grimness of reality. The reason I don't go after beautiful girls is that I remember the loneliness that follows the intoxicating dream. When ensnared by this mood, I feel as though in the full flower of youth I were suddenly transformed into
an old man or a priest, and I become disgusted with myself. But because of this, you might say, I have been spared the jealousy that often goes with being in love.

Since I always wish to be a normal person, I do not want to brag of never having been jealous. But for the reasons I've just given you, I have never been caught strongly by jealousy until I met this man, Takagi. I remember very clearly what an unpleasant feeling it was. As soon as I thought that this emotion had begun to bother me because of Chiyoko, whom I did not possess nor intend to possess, I felt that, to preserve my own dignity, I had by all means to control this tendency toward jealousy. Trapped by an emotion which had no right to be there, I began to suffer secretly inside myself.

At just that time, Chiyoko and Momoyoko spoke up about going to the beach since the sun was coming out. Because I supposed Tagaki would be going with them, I wanted suddenly to remain behind. As I had expected, they did invite him. But to my surprise, he hesitated about going, and made all kinds of excuses. I suppose it must have been the result of his difference toward me, and I felt even worse. Then they asked me, and I, of course, said no too. I would have reached out to grab a chance to get away from Takagi.
if it were not freely given. But right at this moment I didn't even want to make the effort to join the girls at the beach. Disappointedly, Mother said, "Why don't you go along with them?" I watched silently the distant sea. Laughingly the sisters stood up.

"You're being difficult as usual! Just like a spoiled child!"

When Chiyoko made fun of me, I must have looked like a real misfit to anyone. In fact, I felt rather like a naughty child myself. The suave Takagi came out on the open verandah and handed a large straw hat to the girls, saying, "Have a good time!"

After the two of them had disappeared through the gate, Takagi was talking with the older ladies.

"It's so relaxing to have a summer vacation like this! But how to pass the time gets to be a big problem--so much so that it even gives me a headache." And he really seemed to have trouble in figuring out what to do with his lively body in all the heat and boredom. He muttered, as though talking to himself, "How can I kill the time from now till evening?--and, as though it had just occurred to him, he asked me, "How about playing pool?" Fortunately, I had never tried the game, so I promptly declined. "Too bad!" he said, "I thought I had found a good partner." And with that, he left. Watching the
muscular movement of his back as he left, I thought he might be going to the beach where the sisters were. But I stayed where I was.

After he left, Mother and Aunt talked about him for a while. Mother seemed much impressed with him, the more so since she had met him for only the first time. She praised him, saying he was such an easy-going and attentive person, and my aunt appeared to be supplementing Mother's observations, confirming them, one after the other, with ample documentation. I then discovered that I had to readjust most of the skimpy knowledge about Takagi that I had begun to accumulate. Originally, according to Momoyoko, I had understood that he was a returnee from America. But from what Aunt said, that was not so; rather, he had been educated entirely in England. Aunt had learned the phrase, "English-style gentleman," which she must have heard someone using, and she threw the words into the conversation several times to Mother's amazement. She was quite ignorant in such matters. Aunt went on to explain to her that, because of his British background, he looked somehow distinguished. Mother was much impressed, and said, "Oh, my, yes, indeed!"
While the two were chatting in this fashion, I hardly opened my mouth. But, though Mother saw as usual only the surface, I wondered if she were not busily comparing me with Takagi. I felt sorry for her, but, at the same time, resentful. I wondered, in view of her long-held notions concerning the relationship of Chiyoko and me, whether she were perceiving the new possibility of Chiyoko and Takagi, and, if so, how was she feeling about it? I could have kept her from anxiety, however slight, but I deliberately pushed it on her. This awareness of poor conduct toward my aged mother doubled my unhappiness.

This, of course, is only my assumption based on my observation of a situation that did not become explicitly clear after all, so I cannot state it as a fact. But my aunt might have been intending to confide in my mother under the pretext of consulting or questioning us about her hope of marrying Chiyoko to Takagi should the opportunity arise. My mother is observant in all matters save things of this sort. But I awaited expectantly my aunt's first sentence on the subject, which would tell me that Chiyoko and I would have to part from one another forever. Luckily or unluckily, the sisters returned from the beach at that moment, flapping the edges of their straw hats before Aunt could get started. I was pleased for
Mother's sake that my expectations had not yet proved true. This apart, however, I must confess that the whole episode made me very impatient.

That evening, I left the house at my mother's suggestion with the sisters to meet Uncle at the station. The girls were wearing matching yukata and white tabi. To my mother this threesome must have appeared promising. The sight of me walking side by side with Chiyoko must have been in her eyes a richly satisfying picture. I felt guilty at being used by circumstance in this way to deceive Mother, and I looked back upon passing through the gate. Both she and my aunt were still watching us.

Midway along on our walk to the station, Chiyoko stopped suddenly as though she had just remembered something, and exclaimed, "Oh, my! I forgot to call Takagi-san!" Momoyoko looked quickly at my face. I stopped walking, but said nothing.

"Oh, never mind! We're nearly there by now," Momoyoko said.

"But he specifically asked me to stop by," Chiyoko said. "Issan, do you have a watch? What time is it?"

I took out my watch and showed it to Momoyoko.

"You still have time enough. If you want, go ahead. I'll go on and wait for you at the station," I said.
Ah, it's too late," said Momoyoko. "If Takagi-san wants to see you, he'll come by himself, I'm sure. You can apologize to him later on by saying you simply forgot."

The two sisters argued back and forth for a time and decided finally not to go back. As Momoyoko predicted, Takagi joined us hurriedly before the train arrived, and said to the sisters reproachfully, "How terrible you are! How many times have I asked you to stop in?" Then he asked after their mother, and, finally, looking at me, greeted me in a cordial fashion.

That night, in addition to the uncle and cousin who had just arrived, Mother and I had been added to the company. So the usual mealtime was not only delayed considerably, as I had feared, but there was a busy transferral of chopsticks and ricebowls amid considerable confusion.

Uncle apologized laughingly. "Issan, it's like a bouse on fire, isn't it? But it's great fun to eat this way in big confusion once in a while."

Mother, who was used to very quiet mealtimes, was indeed having a wonderful time, just as Uncle had
explained, in this lively and noisy suppertime, and she enjoyed and praised over and over the lightly salted broiled mackerel that was served up as the main course.

"If you place your order with the fisherman, he'll get them for you when you want them. Why don't you take some home with you? I've wanted to send them to you," said my aunt, "but I couldn't ever find a convenient means. Besides, they spoil so easily."

"I ordered them in Ōiso some time ago to take back to Tokyo," said Mother, "but you have to be so careful with them. Otherwise, on the way--."

"—they spoil?" finished Chiyoko.

"Auntie, what about Okitsu snappers?" shouted Momoyoko. "I like them better than these."

"Yes, indeed, Okitsu snappers are also very tasty," Mother replied gently.

The reason I remember such mundane, trivial matters is that I was, for one thing, carefully watching the happy, relaxed expression on Mother's face,—but also, I must confess, I was just as fond of those lightly salted mackerels as she was.

I suppose I should say, while we are at it, incidentally, that, in my tastes and disposition I have aspects which both resemble my mother a great deal and yet are entirely different I haven't yet
mentioned it to anyone, but unobtrusively I have these past few years been observing in some detail how I differ from or resemble her. If she were to inquire as to my reason for such an odd investigation, I could not answer, for I've asked the same thing myself, and could come up with no clear explanation. Yet surely the answer is this: that, assuming I have a certain weakness, if I share it with Mother, then I'm very happy about it, and, should I note one of my virtues not present in Mother, then I am unhappy. The most bothersome difficulty for me is that my facial resemblance is to my father only; I have no trace of Mother's features. Whenever I look in a mirror, I find myself wishing I looked like my mother; even if I looked uglier because of it, I would be completely happy if my lineaments followed hers.

Since we dallied at the supper table, bedtime was late. Moreover, since we had suddenly increased the size of the family, it was a considerable problem for my aunt to figure out the sleeping arrangements. The three men, Uncle, Goichi and I, were billeted in one room inside a mosquito net. My uncle, with his rotund physique, was restless and kept busily fluttering a paper fan.

Finally he said, "Issan, what do you think of this? It's so hot! Even Tokyo is more comfortable than
Goichi, lying next to me, agreed with his father. Why, then, had we come all this way to Kamakura to experience such inconvenience? Neither Uncle nor Goichi nor I could explain it.

“But this is sort of fun, too!” Uncle's verdict settled the matter right away. Even so, the heat didn't go away so easily, and we had trouble falling asleep. In his youthful way, Goichi kept asking Uncle one question after another about the next day's fishing trip. Whether seriously or in jest, I could not tell, but Uncle spun a fine yarn for him to the effect that the fish would willingly jump into his net. He spoke not only to his son, but also asked me for corroboration, oddly managing now and again to include me in his audience. Although I was not interested in the excursion, since I was obligated to respond to my uncle's tale, by the time he had finished, I was reacting as though I were a member of the forthcoming expedition. Since I had no intention, certainly, of going on the trip, this peculiar reversal was somehow unexpected. After a time, my placid uncle began to snore strenuously. Goichi fell comfortably into a deep sleep. Only I, even though my eyes were closed, reflected with great deliberation on the events of the day and those to come until late at
Next morning, on waking, I noticed that Goichi, who had slept next to me, was gone. Awake, but with head still on the pillow, trying to go back over the path of faint dreams, I glanced at Uncle's face occasionally, spying stealthily on him with the intense curiosity of aliens secretly watching a creature of another tribe. I wondered if I looked so peaceful to others when asleep. Just then, Goichi came in to ask me about the weather. Urged on by him, I rose and went on the verandah. The sea was veiled in a soft mist so that I could not see the grove of trees on the nearby cape in their usual color.

"Is it raining?" I asked.

Goichi quickly jumped into the yard and looked up. "Raining a little," he reported.

He was much bothered at the possible cancellation of the fishing trip, and he even brought his sisters out to ask them repeatedly what they thought the chances were. At last, he seemed to have felt that only his father could decide the matter, and he woke up my uncle, who looked, with his sleep-dulled eyes as though he had very little interest in the weather. But he looked over the sky and the sea and announced that
it would surely clear off soon and be fine. Goichi appeared much relieved. But Chiyoko looked at me and said, "That weather forecast doesn't sound very reliable to me. What do you think?"

I could say nothing.

Uncle added, "It'll be all right. Don't worry about it." And he walked off toward the bathroom. Just at about the time that we finished breakfast, a spraylike, soft rain started. But there was no wind, and the surface of the sea was calmer than usual. Seeing the bad weather, my kindhearted mother was sorry for everyone, and my aunt cautioned, "It's certainly going to come down harder soon. You'd better put off your trip for today, I think."

But the young people were in favor of going still.

Uncle said, "Well, then, all of us youngsters, let's go! We'll leave the old ladies behind!"

Aunt chimed in, "What about the old gentlemen?"

And everyone laughed.

"Today I cast my lot with the younger generation!"

Perhaps to prove his words, he rose quickly and, tucking up the skirt of his yukata, stepped into the yard. The three young people followed him.

"You must hitch up your yukata just as I do!" he said to them.

"Ah, how silly we'd look! Chiyoko replied.
Uncle's hairy legs showed beneath the shortened *yukata* like those of a bandit; the two women wore straw rain-hats, like Lady Shizuka in the old ballad; and the younger brother wore a black *obi* tied at his back. From the verandah, they looked like a totally countrified, strange group of people.

"Issan is studying us, getting ready to make some comment!" Momoyoko looked at me with a half-smile.

"Come down here, quickly! scolded Chiyoko.

"A pair of old *geta* for Issan!" Uncle suggested to Chiyoko.

I climbed down without protest. But the absence of Takagi, who had promised to join us, caused another problem. Everyone thought he might have given up the idea of coming because of the weather. We decided that, while we walked slowly on, Goichi should run to get him.

As usual, Uncle tried to talk to me incessantly. I was attentive and replied to his comments. Meanwhile, the two of us with our faster male pace, walked well ahead of the sisters without realizing it. I turned back once, but, far from worrying about being left behind, they didn't appear even to try to catch up with us. To me, they appeared deliberately slow, as though waiting for Takagi, whom they expected to come along soon. Certainly, it was only routine.
courtesy toward a guest on their part. But at that
time, I didn't take it that way. Even though I had
common sense enough to understand their motive, I
simply could not bow to it. I turned once more with
the intention of shouting at them to hurry, but then
changed my mind and continued walking with my uncle.

Soon we reached the cape near Kotsubo Village. We
were at the foot of a steep mountain. Uncle stopped
when he got to the highest point.

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Unexpectedly, Uncle looked back and shouted at the
sisters with a volume appropriate to his great size.
I had been tempted to turn back to them a number of
times, I admit, but each time, whether from uneasy
conscience or pride, I was too stiff-necked to go back
to them.

I saw the two of them about one hundred yards
below us, and right behind them Goichi and Takagi were
following. When Uncle sounded off, "Hey! Yaaa! Hooo!"
the two sisters looked up at us and then back at
Takagi. He took off his straw hat with his right hand
and waved it many times in our direction. But Goichi
was the only one who yelled back. He must have
practiced command drill at school. Raising both hands
above his head at once, he yelled back so loudly that
the cliff and ocean gave off an echo.

Uncle and I stood at an angle of the cliff, waiting for them to catch up. They proceeded at the same slow pace as they had prior to my uncle's summons, talking vigorously about something. To me, they appeared to be joking and amusing themselves, more concerned with having a good time than with making progress. Takagi was wearing a large brown cape that looked rather like a coat, and he put his hands into its pockets sometimes. As I watched him, I was puzzled at first as to why anyone would wear a coat in this heat. When they came gradually closer, I saw that it was a thin raincoat.

Just then Uncle said, "Issan, wouldn't it be fun to cruise around in a sailboat? What do you think?"

As though awakened for the first time to the external world, I gave up observing Takagi and, looking downwards, saw an empty white sailboat floating on the calm water by the rocky shore. It was still drizzling, the sea looked misty all over, and the cliff, trees, and rocks on the other side of the cape, which normally were visible, appeared all one vague mass. As we waited, the four stragglers caught up with us.
"I'm sorry to have kept you waiting," Takagi explained as soon as he saw my uncle. "I was in the midst of shaving, so I couldn't very well stop only half-finished."

"Aren't you hot, wearing that peculiar outfit?" Uncle asked.

Chiyoko laughed. "He can't take it off: the outer garment is quite stylish. But the inside is decidedly not!"

Under his raincoat, Takagi was wearing a light, short-sleeved shirt, and, beneath a pair of strange-looking short pants, his legs were exposed. He was wearing black tabi and wooden geta.

He exhibited his outfit to us, and said, "Since coming back to Japan, I find things so relaxing. I dress fairly casually even when in ladies' company."

Our group hiked into a nondescript fishing village. Its main street was a narrow road six feet in width. Suddenly we were overwhelmed by an unpleasant odor. Takagi dug out a white handkerchief and covered his neatly trimmed, short moustache. There was a child watching us.

"Where is the house of the adopted husband in the western sector who came from the south?" My uncle abruptly asked him this peculiar question, but the child didn't know the answer.
I inquired of Chiyoko why he put his question in such a strange way. She explained that last night they had sent a servant to a nearby house to ascertain the name of the fisherman, and the man of the house had said that, although he had forgotten the name, we would have no trouble finding him if we asked around for him using this odd question.

"What an easy way to find something out, compared to my demanding method!" I thought to myself, "How envious I am of them!"

"Do you think it will do the trick?" asked Takagi.

"It would be ridiculous if it works!" Chiyoko laughed.

"Of course it will work," Uncle assured us.

Goichi playfully asked everyone he met, "Where is the house of the adopted husband in the western sector who came from the south?" Each time he said it, it made us laugh. At last, we saw a dirty tea-shop run by an old woman in which a young girl, a moon-guitarist in traveling clothes with white half gloves and a moon-guitar, was having a tea break. Goichi put his question to the old woman. To our amazement, she knew the answer immediately, and showed the man's house to him, saying, "It's right over there." All of us clapped our hands and laughed. The house she pointed out was a small, thatched-roof
affair on a low hill with three sets of stone stairs ascending it.

It must have been a very strange sight to see a party of six people, each wearing a rather unusual outfit, trooping up those narrow stone steps. Moreover, they were all so carefree that none of the six quite knew what they were going to do. Even Uncle, our supposed leader, didn't seem to have any plan except to get into the boat. He seemed to know nothing about fish or fishing or how to row out into the open sea. I just followed along behind Momoyoko, stepping on the worn center of the steps, eroded by the soles of countless feet. As I climbed, I thought to myself that this entrusting oneself to such meaningless activities must be what we call "the charm of summer vacationing"—and yet I pondered, half-wondering if a very important act of an interesting drama mightn't be being played secretly between a certain man and woman. If I had a role in the act, I had no choice but to play the part of one who is made a fool of by a seemingly gentle Fate. And it occurred to me at last that, if my uncle, who does things casually without calculating effects should
bring this drama to its climax before anyone realized it, then he must indeed be a great dramatist of incomparable talent.

As this notion flashed through my mind, Takagi, who was right behind me, said, "Oh, I can't stand this heat! Will you excuse me if I take off this raincoat?"

The house was much smaller and dirtier than it had appeared from down below. On the door hung a large wooden spoon for making wishes with the inscription, "From the family of Yoshino Heikichi, the whooping cough victim." In this way we finally found out the name of the head of this household. It was to clever Goichi's credit that we ascribed the finding of this item and the reading of it aloud. We looked inside and saw that both the walls and ceiling were black and shiny. The only human being we found there was an old woman. She apologized, saying that, because of the weather, the fisherman had thought we were not coming; and so he had put out to sea before we arrived. She offered to go down to the shore and call him back.

"Did he go out by boat?" Uncle asked.

The old woman answered, "Probably that boat." And she pointed off into the ocean. The mist had not yet cleared, but the sky was becoming much bluer than before, and we saw the small boat floating way out in
the distance in a rather clear, open sea.

"My gracious! What an optimist the old woman is!" said Takagi, looking through his binoculars. "How could she possibly go and get him at such a distance?"

Chiyoko laughingly took the binoculars from his hands.

"Oh, the boat will be in in just a few minutes," the old woman replied, and, still wearing her zori, she hurried down the stone steps.

My uncle smiled, and said, "These country folks are so carefree! I envy her."

Goichi followed after the fisherman's wife.

Momoyoko blankly sat down in the dirty verandah. I looked around the garden. "Garden" was really too elaborate a word for this place. It was hardly two hundred feet square. There was a fig tree at one corner, and, in the fishy air, it showed some green leaves. A few green figs were on the branches, as an excuse for its existence, and, at the fork of a branch hung an empty insect cage. Beneath it, two or three skinny chickens were madly scratching at the earth with eager beaks. I saw what appeared to be a wire birdcage by the tree, and amused myself by thinking that the irregular shape of it resembled a kind of grapefruit I had once had.

"This place smells terrible!" Uncle said abruptly.
"I don't want to go fishing any more. I'd rather go home right away," said Momoyoko disconsolately in a soft voice.

Takagi, who was studying the sea through his binoculars again, and, until that instant, talking constantly to Chiyoko, looked around suddenly, and said, "What are they up to? I'll run over and find out."

He turned and looked at the verandah for a place to leave his raincoat and binoculars. Chiyoko stretched out her arms before he had made a move, and said, "Give them to me. I'll hold them for you."

When she had received the two items from him, she looked at him in his short sleeves, and jokingly remarked, "Now you have become a bumpkin!" Takagi gave only a fleeting smile, and walked rapidly down toward the shore. I watched him carefully in silence, his well-developed sportsman's shoulder muscle moving smoothly as he swung his arms.

It was about an hour later when we went together down to the shore to get in the boat. Apparently a festival of some kind was either coming or had just ended. There were two tall sticks planted deep in the
sand with banners on them, advertising the event. Goichi seized a dried-up stick that had washed ashore, and drew many big characters and faces on the smooth sand.

"Get in, everyone!" said the fisherman with the closely shaven head. Each of the six of us crawled over the side of the boat. By chance, Chiyoko and I were pushed ahead, and ended up sitting at the bow, separated from the rest, sitting knee to knee. My uncle, as head of the family, had climbed in first, and had sat down cross-legged in the spacious central section. Perhaps because he regarded Takagi as the honored guest of the day, he motioned to him to sit there too. So the young fellow was obliged to sit beside Uncle. In the adjoining section, Momoyoko and Goichi took seats on either side of the boatman.

"Wouldn't you like to come over here?" said Takagi promptly, looking back at Momoyo. "There's plenty of room here."

She thanked him, but did not move. Right from the start I wasn't keen about sharing a single goza-mat with Chiyoko. As I've admitted to you, I was jealous of Takagi. The intensity of feeling was perhaps just the same on this day as on the day before, but I never felt the slightest impulse to compete with him. In accordance with my man's nature, I may yet fall
passionately in love with some woman in the future. But I swear that, if, upon falling in love, I have to engage in intense competition in order to win the lady, I'll give her up as stoically as possible, hands in pockets, even if it costs me enormous pain to make the sacrifice. People may criticize me for lack of manliness or courage or will-power. But, if she could be won only through such a fierce competition, or if she were unable to make up her mind without that sort of contest among her suitors, then to me she would not be worth the effort to win her. Instead of the joy of clasping to me in triumph one who would not give up her heart without the competitive struggle, I would rather tend my wounds in solitude, stoically allowing the other heart to seek its happiness. How much better this would be for me, as I see it!

I said to Chiyoko, "Chiyo-chan! Wouldn't you like to sit over there? It's more roomy and comfortable."

"Why? Am I in your way if I stay here?" she replied.

She simply would not budge. Either I had been too obvious or she thought I was teasing her. Whatever the reason, I hadn't the audacity to say that I spoke so that she could be near Takagi. Yet, when she refused to move, I felt obscurely a kind of joy which only proved to me that my words did not always
coincide with the inclinations of my heart. The realization was painful to me: I had not quite realized the weakness of my character.

Takagi today seemed to me more reserved than yesterday. While he listened to the dialogue between Chiyoko and me, he pretended not to hear. When the boat pulled out from the rocky shore, he said to my uncle something like, "The weather is now getting much better, sir. We are lucky: this hazy weather is much better than a glaring, hot day. It's a perfect day for boating."

Abruptly, my uncle asked, "Captain! What the devil are you going to catch?"

Like the rest of us, my uncle hadn't the faintest idea what we were to fish for. The shaven-headed boatman answered casually that we were going to catch octopus. This was so extraordinary to Chiyoko and Momoyoko that they both burst into laughter at the same time.

"And where are the octopuses?" asked Uncle.

"Oh, all around here!" And he clapped his eyes to a little wooden box, a larger version of which with a similar glass bottom we had seen at the bath house. The boatman called his strange instrument a "mirror," and he had several spares in his equipment, which he immediately lent to us. Goichi and Momoyoko, sitting

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When it was Uncle's turn, he exclaimed, "So! Isn't it marvelous! I can see everything down there!"

Well versed in human behavior, he knew his way around in all worldly matters, but, when it came to natural wonders, he was easily impressed. I took the "mirror" from Chiyoko at last, and looked down into the bottom of the ocean through the glass. But all I saw was a perfectly routine scene of a sandy ocean floor. It was just exactly what I had expected to see. On a ridge of rock that stretched away under the water, there were many bumps and hollows in which dark green seaweed grew luxuriantly. It swayed back and forth silently and constantly, with the movement of the waves, as though being caressed by a warm wind.

"Issan!" Chiyoko called, "Can you see any octopuses?"

"No, not a one."

I raised my eyes from the "mirror." She put her face to it. The floppy edge of her straw hat dipped into the water, and, when it reacted to the motion of the boat, made tiny ripples of its own. I watched her black hair and white neck, and thought them even
lovelier than her face.

"Have you found one yet, Chiyo-chan?"

"No. Not a sign of anything that looks like an octopus is swimming by."

"I'm told that it's very difficult to see them unless you're very experienced." This was Takagi's explanation to Chiyoko. Holding down the wooden bucket with both hands, she twisted her stretched-out form toward Takagi and replied, "No wonder I can't see anything!" And she moved the bucket she was holding up and down playfully in the water. Momoyoko called her sister from the other side of the boat. Goichi was wildly trying to spear an octopus he didn't even see. Octopus fishers use a strange, long, narrow bamboo pole with a kind of hook attached to it. The boatman held the wooden bucket with his teeth while maneuvering the boat with one hand used as an oar. As soon as he located an octopus, he speared the slimy creature.

Many octopuses were caught and hauled up to the boat. But it was entirely the work of the boatman. They were all about the same size, with no spectacular ones. At first all of us were very excited and gave out cheers each time one was caught. But as the day went on, even my jovial uncle seemed bored, and said, "We can't just go on catching the same old octopus
over and over!" Drawing from time to time on his cigarette, Takagi began to study the catch in a tank on the floor of the boat.

"Chiyo-chan, have you seen the way they swim? Come over here. It is very strange." After speaking to her, he looked past her to me, and added, "Sunaga-san, how about you? Come see the octopus swimming!"

"Ah, yes, it must be very interesting," I said, not even trying to stand up initially.

"Let me see," Chiyoko said, going to Takagi's side and sitting down.

"Is it still swimming?" I called to her from where I sat.

"My, yes! How fascinating! Come quickly!"

With all eight tentacles stretched straight behind it, the octopus's long form moved in rhythmic pulsations straight ahead until it bumped into the side of the container. Some of them emitted a black ink, just like a cuttlefish. Leaning over, I glanced at them briefly, and came right back to my accustomed spot. Chiyoko remained with Takagi.

Uncle told the boatman we had had enough of octopus fishing. The fisherman asked if we wished to go back. Uncle had noticed some basket-like objects floating on the surface, and, convinced that octopuses alone were monotonous, he had the boat move closer to
one of the floating receptacles. All of us then stood up to look into the basket. Many fish seven or eight inches long were swimming vigorously in the tightly confined space. Some had luminous blue scales close to the color of the ocean. As they swam, they created small waves, and glistened as though the wavelet had cut through their bodies.

Takagi turned to Chiyoko: "Why don't you scoop one up?" He held the handle of a large net out to her. Tentatively, she tried moving it under water, but it didn't move, so Takagi added his strength, and, together, they stirred the water inside the basket with unsteady hands. But they were far from being able to net any of the fish. Chiyoko thereupon returned the net to the boatman, who, with the same net, scooped up any number of them, on Uncle's order. In this way we had a pleasant time, adding grunt, sea bass and black porgy to our catch, thus achieving some variety after the monotony of the many weird octopuses.

And so we returned to the shore.

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I returned alone to Tokyo that night. Mother was persuaded by everyone to stay on. She agreed to
remain there for two or three more days provided someone, perhaps Goichi, would accompany her when she returned. I could not understand why my mother was so good-natured and placid, while I was so nervous and ill at ease. I felt impatient with her for being so easy-going.

I haven't chanced to meet Takagi since that time. The triangular tension had no chance to develop after that, and I, the loser, dropped out of the whirlpool at the midpoint, a prophet foreseeing future events. You, as listener, must find this narrative very inconclusive. Probably I was too hasty in putting away the sign of the fire-fighters before the fire was really out. When I say so, though, you may think perhaps that I had some special scheme in mind from the very beginning when I went to Kamakura. How, you ask, can I be jealous but not competitive? I grant that the flame of egoism was flickering in some corner of my dark, gloomy heart. I examined minutely my contradictory nature. In order not to let my conceit take unfair advantage of Chiyoko, a deluge of other thoughts and emotions, one after another, flooded my mind, tormenting me.

She seemed at times to love me, only me in all the world. Even so, I could not honestly proceed. And,
while I was making up my mind to close my eyes toward the future, and plunge on, she would suddenly slip away from me and become almost a stranger. During the two days at Kamakura, I had noticed two or three times this sort of change in the tide of her affections. At times I even had a faint suspicion that she might consciously be controlling this alteration, coming now very close to me, and then retreating deliberately. Moreover, I often found that right after I had interpreted her words and behavior one way, I was forced to see them in an entirely contrary light, and so was vexed by not knowing what the truth might be.

During those two days, I was almost overwhelmed by desire for this woman I had no intention of marrying. And, as long as that social butterfly called Takagi was flitting around, I might really have got caught in the end. You've heard me say I have no competitiveness in relation to him, but, just to prevent misunderstanding, let me repeat myself: should Chiyoko, Takagi, and I, all three, ever get caught up in a crazy whirlwind of desire, the force which would motivate me is, I insist, not an impulse to beat Takagi at the battle for love. It is, rather, the physical nerve-twitch that scares you and at the same time impels you to jump when you look down from the top of a high tower. Superficially, if you think
in terms of the result that comes from my winning or losing against Takagi, I suppose it might seem competitive; but the source of action is an entirely unrelated impulse—one, moreover, that would never possess me in the absence of that fellow. During those two days I was very much aware of this power upon me. For that reason, using the utmost determination, I immediately left Kamakura.

You see, I'm such a weak man that I can't stand even to read a moving novel. To live through an emotional saga would be utterly impossible for me. The minute I realized that my disposition was becoming emotion-charged as in a romantic novel, I became terrified, and fled back to Tokyo. And so, in the train heading back toward Tokyo, I was half-winner and half-loser. In that relatively uncrowded second class railroad car, I imagined the various developments in the novel which I seemed to have started, and could tear up as I saw fit. There was the sea, the moon, and the rocky shore. There were the shadows of a young woman and a young man. At first the man flew into a great rage, and the woman cried. Later on, the woman was very emotional and the man soothed her. Finally, hand in hand, they walked along the quiet beach. Or, there was a picture frame, a tatami-matted room, a nice breeze. Then the two young men
get into an argument over an inconsequential matter. The argument gets more heated, and finally they exchange abusive words and hurt each other seriously. Finally, they jump up and shake their fists at each other—. Or—. Many play-like scenes such as these unfolded in front of my eyes, and I was happy for myself that I had lost the chance of actually participating in those scenes. People may laugh at me and say that I am like an old man. If an old man escapes living the life of a romantic novel, I shall be happy to accept their scorn. But if an old man is supposed to have lost all ability to appreciate the poetic spirit of literature, I cannot accept the criticism. For in fact, I am always the very spirit of poetry.

26

I was afraid that, after returning to Tokyo, I might become even more irritable and depressed than I had been in Kamakura, when the many provocations were present right before my eyes. I anticipated a great torment resulting from anger or impatience nursed in solitude, without anyone to share it with. As luck would have it, however, it happened otherwise. I was able, as I had hoped, to summon up rather easily once
more my normal calmness, objectivity, and even nonchalance. I hung up a fresh-smelling mosquito net, enclosing the whole tatami-matted room, and slept, savoring the sound of the wind bell hanging under the eaves. In the evening, I went out and brought in some potted plants. Since Mother was away, our maid, Saku, took care of everything. When I sat at the dining table for the first time after returning from Kamakura, there was Saku respectfully sitting in front of me, holding a round, black tray upon her lap, and, all of a sudden I realized how different she was compared with the sisters in Kamakura. She was, of course, neither beautiful nor out of the ordinary in any way. She knew nothing much except how to sit respectfully. Yet, how quietly reserved, how appealingly defenseless in her womanliness she seemed to me! She just sat there dutifully as though she knew it to be above her station in life even to think about the meaning of love. I addressed her gently, with unaccustomed attentiveness, and asked her how old she was. She said she was nineteen. Abruptly, I asked if she didn't want to get married. She reddened and kept looking down, making me regret my impertinent question. As a reaction to the stirring memories I had brought with me from Kamakura, I perceived for the first time the feminine loveliness of the serving
maid! Please understand, no one could confuse this awareness with love. But still, I appreciated the atmosphere of serenity, calmness, and ease that she created around herself.

To tell you that I obtained solace from Saku's presence would perhaps sound ridiculous. But, looking back on it now, I can think of nothing else so effective in soothing and healing my bruised heart. In all honesty, then, I must admit that she—or perhaps more accurately, that special, gentle way peculiar to all women, of which she happened to be the special representative,—calmed and soothed my frayed and irritated nerves. Even my own imaginings have the power to set my nerves on edge, and I must confess that the Kamakura episode, and all the people who acted in it, of course, came vividly to my mind's eye from time to time. Fortunately, however, this visual recollection seemed quite unrelated to me as far as I could then see.

I went upstairs and began reorganizing my bookcase. Although my mother, in her fastidious way, had been attentive in keeping it clean, yet, when I began rearranging the books, I often found dust not usually visible, and it took a long time to complete the task. Since this was a good way of passing a hot summer's day, I deliberately took a long time. If I
happened to come across interesting passages, I would become absorbed in them. Hence with all the speed of a snail, I comfortably proceeded with my task. Saku, hearing quite unexpectedly the sound of my dusting, showed her carefully arranged coiffure above the top of the staircase. I suggested that she wipe a portion of the bookcase with a damp cloth. But, soon repenting of involving her in a project that would take a very long time, I let her go downstairs. I moved the books this way and that for about an hour, then felt tired, and so rested while I smoked a cigarette. Saku again showed her face above the stairwell, and asked, "Is there anything I can do for you, sir?" I wished I could let her help with something, but, since she unfortunately could not read western languages, she could not move my books about. I was sorry to do so, but told her, "Never mind!" and sent her downstairs once more.

Perhaps I need not discuss Saku in such detail, but, since I remember her actions in relation to this early experience, I've told you about her.

After I had finished my cigarette, I continued with my task. This time, without fear of being interrupted by either Saku or my private thoughts, I finished the second shelf all in one sweep. Then I found a strange book that I had borrowed from a friend.
a long time ago and had forgotten to return. It was behind the bookcase: since it was rather thin, it had fallen behind, and, hidden for a long time, was covered with dust.

27

A friend who loved literature had lent the book to me. I had once talked about literature with him. I maintained that an introspective person, because he thinks too much, would lack courage to perform any significant act, and so it would be very boring to write about such a man in a novel. I assumed that the reason I myself did not read literature must be that, as one who tends to think too much, lacking the ability for decisive action, I would not be a good candidate for hero in a novel. I wanted to ask him about that. But at that juncture, he pointed to this book on his desk.

"The hero in this book is distinguished by extraordinarily prudent thinking and fearfully drastic, irrevocable action!"

"What sort of plot does it have?" I asked.

"Why don't you read it?" he replied. He picked up the book and handed it to me. The title, in German, was Gedanke. He told me it was translated from the
Russian.

Taking the thin volume, I asked him again, "What sort of plot is it?"

"Never mind about the plot!" he replied. "I don't know whether it's a revenge, an intended joke, a drunken scheme, the imaginings of a madman, or the calculating of an ordinary mind. In any case, extraordinary thinking and spectacular action are combined there, so read it!"

And so I borrowed the book, but had no wish to read it. I have never read extensively, and was contemptuous of all novelists. Moreover, what my friend had said did not sufficiently arouse my curiosity.

I had forgotten all about this incident; casually I picked up the book from behind the shelf and brushed off the thick dust. When the German title, which I barely recollected, appeared, I recalled my friend and his remarks. I felt myself suddenly impelled by a strange sense of curiosity, and, opening the book at the first page, began to read from the beginning. It was an unbelievably harrowing story.

A certain person was in love with a woman. Not only did she show no interest in him, but she married an acquaintance of his. Hence, he decided to murder the bridegroom. But just killing her husband was not
sufficient: it would only be satisfactory if he killed him in full view of the wife. Not only that! He had to devise such an intricate method of murder that the wife would be unable to do anything but look on in full awareness of what was taking place as he expunged her husband. To accomplish this, he worked out a scheme. Using for his purpose a dinner party to which he had been invited, he pretended he had suddenly had a violent seizure. He acted the part of a madman so vividly that everyone present at the party believed firmly that he had gone totally mad. Observing the success of his scheme, he congratulated himself. He repeated this mad act two or three times at conspicuous social functions, and so managed to acquire the reputation of a dangerous man who went mad whenever the fit was upon him. Upon such a carefully labored foundation, he planned to build a most impressive murder case. His frequent attacks often ruined colorful social events, and very quickly it came about that his many close friends began to close their doors firmly against him. But he did not mind being excluded at all. He still had one place to which he could count on being invited. It was the very home of the woman and his friend whom he was about to hunt down even to the borders of death's kingdom. One day, quite casually, he knocked at their door. As he
pretended to pass the time with them in small talk, he looked about, searching for the right opportunity to pounce upon the man in front of him. He picked up a heavy paper weight, and asked him whether one might kill a man with it. The friend naturally did not take the question seriously. Disregarding what he was saying, the murderer, wielding the paperweight with all the strength that he could muster, killed the beloved husband right in front of his wife's eyes. Then he was sent to an asylum as a madman. With all the capacity of an incredible prudence, judgment, discretion and imagination operating on his remembrance of the murder, he tried to explain why it was that he was not a madman. But in the next instant, he would doubt his own explanation. In the instant after that, he would try to explain that doubt. Was he in fact sane or mad? Holding the book in my hands, I shuddered with fright.

My head is made in order to control my heart. When I consider the consequences of my decisions in my past actions, and see that they were productive of no special sense of regret, I suppose that that head-over-heart control must be the way it usually is with human beings. Still, as everyone knows, it is a great pain: the burning heart gets forcibly subdued by
the solemn power of mind. When I consider the case of my own desires, I conclude that, since I'm of a quiet, negative temperament, I have never had to experience the rending pain that comes to one who, just as he is about to abandon himself to the onslaught of rage, finds his mind suddenly interfering—exactly like the terrible screech that comes from a speeding automobile when the driver slams on the brakes suddenly and hard. Even so, I have felt sometimes at my very heart's core as though I were totally burned out or as though the driveshaft of my life had been forcibly bent by the unending contest between mind and passion. Whenever the two struggle within me for dominance, it is the head that always wins. At times I have thought that is because my head is stronger and controls the heart. But sometimes I decide it is because the heart is merely weak. And I cannot help feeling that, even though this dispute is necessary for normal living, it wears away in constant abrasiveness at my very life.

That is why I was startled to encounter the hero of Gedanke. This man—who could view the life of his best friend as no more than the breath of an insect—he saw no conflict or difference between logic and emotion. Every ounce of intellect he possessed became fuel for revenge, methodology for neat performance of a cruel crime—and, when it was done, he didn't have
the slightest regret. He was a great actor who, by virtue of his meticulous planning and care, opened fountains of blood over his target. Or was he, rather, a madman possessed of extraordinary reserves of intellect and emotion? When I compared him with my usual self, I was very envious of this hero of Gedanke who acted so decisively, purposefully, without the slightest hesitation. At the same time, I was horrified, and broke into a cold sweat. I felt that if I were able to accomplish what he had done, it would indeed be thrilling, yet, following that deed, I would be quite unable to stand up under the unbearable punishment meted out to me by my conscience.

What would happen, I wondered, if my jealousy of Takagi by some strange twist of events should grow to be hundreds of times stronger than now? But I couldn't really imagine such a condition, and so I tried at first to dismiss the possibility: given my nature, I could not possibly commit such an act of violence. Yet after a time, I felt that I might indeed have the capacity for executing such a revenge. And ultimately I began to come round to the opinion that only someone like me--someone forever brooding over the conflict between heart and head--would be able to plan such a dreadful crime coolly, calculatingly, systematically.
I don't know how I myself arrived at this conclusion. As I reached this idea, I was overcome with a feeling of strangeness. It was not simple fear or anxiety or discomfort, but something apparently more involuted and abnormal. Maybe it was in essence, like this: like, let us say, a very mild fellow who becomes very obstreperous once he is drunk. He feels he can tackle anything at all, even though he knows at the same time that, as a human being, he has fallen in the world's esteem since he has succumbed to alcohol. He gives up on himself sadly, reasoning that his degradation is caused by his drinking, and he cannot escape from the effect, no matter how he tries to free himself. In such a strange state, with my eyes wide open, I saw myself in a vision smashing a heavy paperweight into Takagi's head while Chiyoko looked on. As I realized what I had envisioned, I was much upset, and stood up. I went downstairs and immediately ran to the bathroom and splashed water many times into my face. The clock in the family room indicated that it was already past noon, so I decided I might as well sit down and get over the task of eating lunch. Saku as usual was there to serve the meal. After I had swallowed two or three mouthfuls of rice, I asked her abruptly. "Does my face look all right, do you think?" Saku was startled. With eyes widened, she said, "There is nothing wrong, sir."
Once the awkwardness was resolved, she asked, "Has anything happened to you, sir?"

"No. Nothing special has happened," I replied.

"In any case...it has suddenly become so hot, sir."

In silence I finished chewing my way through two bowls of rice. I asked for tea, and just before drinking said abruptly, "It's so nice and quiet! Much better to be home than in crowded Kamakura! Don't you think so?"

Saku said, "But isn't it much cooler there, sir?"

"Not a bit! It seemed hotter than Tokyo!" I explained to her. "It isn't good to be in such a place. I found myself getting very impatient there!"

She asked, "And is your mother, staying there for a while, sir?"

"She will be back soon, I should imagine," I answered.

As I watched Saku sitting before me, her figure seemed the very picture of a morning glory executed in a single stroke--not, unfortunately, the work of a famed artist, and yet within her being was all the freshness and simplicity that great art would strive
for, or so it seemed to me.

You may well ask why it is I try to relate her character to the qualities of great art. Perhaps it is a matter of no significance. And yet, while I watched her serving me as I ate, I compared myself, just done with reading Gedanke, to this young woman respectfully sitting before me, holding a black tray --and I felt thoroughly disgusted with myself. Why should my inner world be so thickly encrusted and elaborated, like one of those heavy Western oil paintings? Until now, I confess, I had been proud of an intellect more capable of fathoming complex problems than those of other people. But now I was growing tired of the effort. I felt miserable, and asked myself why I could not live without analyzing everything so minutely. As I put the teacup down on the tray, I seemed to see something of inestimable worth in Saku's features.

"Saku, tell me: do you sometimes find yourself thinking about--about all sorts of things?"

"No, sir. I don't have very much to think about.

"You don't, do you? That's fine. It's best not to have such things to think about."

"And, even if I did, I don't have brain enough to think sensibly. I am no good in such matters, sir."

"How lucky you are!"

Without intending it, I had astonished Saku. She
may have decided that I was making fun of her. I should not have spoken in this fashion to her.

That evening my mother surprised me by returning from Kamakura. At the time I was sitting in the wicker chair I had brought out on the upstairs verandah, watching the sun as it sank toward the horizon and hearing Saku as she walked barefoot in the garden, watering the plants. When I went down to the entryway, I found to my great surprise Chiyoko coming in through the door behind Mother. I hadn't given her the slightest thought as I rested in the wicker chair. If I had thought of her, it would only have been in relation to Takagi; I had been absolutely certain that neither of them would find it possible to depart from the scene in Kamakura. My mother seemed to have acquired a slight tan. Even before I had exchanged greetings with them I was anxious to ask Chiyoko why she had come, and, in fact, I did just that.

"I was acting as an escort for Aunt. Why? Are you surprised?"

"Thank you for helping out," I answered. I found my feelings toward Chiyoko now were different from what they had been before going to Kamakura, and, indeed, my feelings after returning home were much different from what they had been during my stay in Kamakura. Facing her alone as I was doing was quite a
different matter from dealing with her while she stood alongside Takagi. She indicated that she had volunteered to accompany my elderly mother because she had been uneasy about letting Goichi do it. While Saku washed her feet after the yard work, Chiyoko was attentive in helping Mother as much as was needful, taking her summer kimono from the dresser drawer and helping her change from her traveling clothes.

"Did anything of interest happen after I left?" I asked Mother.

Contentedly she replied that there had been nothing unusual, adding, "But I had such a fine vacation—for the first time in long while. I am so grateful to everyone!" She sounded as though she were trying to express her appreciation to her niece for her help.

I asked Chiyoko, "Are you going back to Kamakura today?"

"No, I think I'll stay."

"Where—?"

"Well, let me see. I could go back to Uchisaiwai-chō, but it's so big and empty—. Could I stay here overnight, Auntie? I haven't for a long time."

It was my guess that Chiyoko had made the trip intending from the beginning to spend the night here.
And I must admit that not ten minutes had passed after our sitting down before I found myself compelled to observe, analyze and interpret every word and gesture of Chiyoko as she sat in front of me. When I realized what I was doing, I was disgusted with myself, and my nerves were stretched to the point of weariness by the effort. Was my mind working like this in spite of my best intentions? Or was Chiyoko somehow requiring me to function in this fashion despite my own reluctance? Whichever way it was, I found myself considerably annoyed.

"You didn't have to bother, Chiyo-chan. Goichi would have done very well."

"Ah, but I had the responsibility. I was the one who invited Auntie, you know."

"In that case, I should have invited you to chaperone me on my return trip, since you invited me too!"

"For that reason, you should have stayed longer!"

"No, no: I mean, I needed you as escort when I left Kamakura."

"But in that case, I would have been a sort of nurse! Still, I would have come along with you, even
as your nurse. Why didn't you ask for me?"

"I was afraid you might refuse."

"Ah, but I was the one almost rejected, not you! Don't you agree, Auntie? You accepted the invitation after much hesitation, and then, put on a sour face all through the visit. I really think there must be something wrong with your health!"

Mother laughed. "And because of that ailment, you needed Chiyoko to accompany you! Is that it?" she said.

One hour earlier, I could not have imagined that Chiyoko would have come. Moreover, though it may be unnecessary to say it again, I was expecting some news concerning Takagi, brought by my mother, which would have the force of unchangeable future law. I had been expecting Mother's gentle face to be overcast with anxiety and disappointment, and I was prepared to feel great sorrow for her grief. But what I now saw in front of me was a completely opposite situation. Both aunt and niece were as usual very intimate; each of them showered her own special brand of freshness and warmth upon the other and upon me.

That evening I gave up my customary hour's walk, and remained chatting with the two ladies in the cool upstairs verandah. At Mother's request, I hung up the large Gifu paper lantern painted with cool nanakusa
flowers, and placed a lighted candle in it. Chiyoko suggested turning off the electric light because it added to the heat, and then quickly flipped the switch. It was dark on the tatami; the moon was high and the night windless. Mother, leaning against a pillar, said that it reminded her of Kamakura. Chiyoko, by now accustomed to living near the ocean, remarked, "It seems a little strange to view the moon to the accompaniment of streetcar noises, don't you think?" I sat as usual in the wicker chair, using the paper fan. Saku came up several times: once, to tend to the lighted charcoal in the tobacco burner, which she placed at my feet; and a second time, to bring a tray with ice cream that she had obtained at the store nearby. At each of her appearances, I was compelled to compare Saku, who as a matter of course accepted the lowly position of servant as her proper level as if born in the rigid feudal period, and Chiyoko, who possessed the dignity of a proud young lady high in the social order, adaptable and capable in any situation. Chiyoko regarded her as she would any other maid. But, whenever Saku walked toward the stairs, just before starting to go down, she would look up and gaze at the back of Chiyoko.

I recalled those miserable two days at Kamakura with Takagi around, and I felt a certain partnership
in affliction with Saku. She had said she had nothing to think about, and now this fashionable and dangerous person called Chiyoko was given her to think about.

"What happened to Takagi-san?" The question almost escaped from my mouth several times. But, along with routine curiosity in asking about Takagi, there was also a certain impure, self-serving intention added to my motivation, and, each time I wanted to ask, my conscience, standing off at a distance, would sneer at me. I felt ashamed at daring to ask. Also, it occurred to me that, following Chiyoko's departure, when Mother was alone, I could ask without hesitation. But, to tell the truth, I wanted to ask Chiyoko herself about Takagi to find out exactly how she felt about him so that I might impress this knowledge clearly on my mind. Was this the prompting of jealousy, I wonder? If anyone diagnoses it so, I shall bow to the judgment. Even if the meaning is limited to today's definition, I can come up with no other name for my feelings. Do I, then, love Chiyoko that much? If the question is aimed in that direction, I have no answer, because, to be perfectly honest, my feelings toward her were not expressed passionately on my pulse. For that very reason, then, I must be rated as two or three times as jealous as any other man. It
may be more appropriate, however, to attribute my feelings toward her to my upbringing as a spoiled child. Just one last word, however: if I was still burning with jealousy even after Takagi had gone, Chiyoko bears a heavy responsibility, quite apart from my own weakness. I must insist without equivocation that it was because of Chiyoko's nature that my weakness manifested itself so fully. And (you will ask) what sort of characteristic in Chiyoko corrupted me? I am totally at a loss for the answer. But I suspect that it might be her natural kindliness.

Chiyoko was, as always, free-spirited and candid. She expressed herself freely on any subject. This conversational ease proved, it seemed to me, that she was not, within herself, concocting any devious schemes. She told me that she had started all by herself to learn how to swim while at Kamakura, and so she now enjoyed venturing out further than ever before, going to depths where she could no longer stand. She had been hugely amused when cautious Momoyoko had become frightened and had desperately begged her to go no further. On hearing this, my mother, half worried, half amazed, commented, "How reckless you are! You must be more ladylike, don't you think? For the sake of your auntie, please stop
playing this dangerous sort of prank, Chiyoko, please!"

Laughing hard, Chiyoko answered merely, "Don't worry!" But she looked carelessly back at me in my chair on the verandah, and said, "Issan, perhaps doesn't approve of women who act like tom-boys?" I said merely that it didn't make much difference to me one way or the other. My eyes were fixed on the facade of the house, bright under the moonlight. If I could have dispensed with my dignity, I would surely have added, "--But I'll bet Takagi would approve!" I'm glad that I was not dragged down that much. One still has one's honor to consider.

Chiyoko was completely open-hearted, as I have said. But she never mentioned Takagi throughout the evening. And finally Mother suggested that it was time to go to bed. In this abstention, I recognized a definite intent. It was as though a drop of black ink had fallen on a white sheet of paper. Until I went to Kamakura, I firmly believed that Chiyoko was one of the purest women in the whole world. But in a mere two days at Kamakura, I began to suspect her of duplicity, and now that suspicion was about to settle down at the roots of my heart.

Why would she not mention Takagi? Lying in my bed, I was tormented. Yet I knew the foolishness of losing
sleep over such a matter. The stupidity of suffering made me even more vexed. I was sleeping upstairs as usual. Mother and Chiyoko spread futon side by side in the room downstairs, and then they lay down inside the same mosquito net. I thought of Chiyoko sleeping soundly downstairs, and could not help but see myself, agonizing and losing sleep, as the loser. I even hated to turn over, because I was ashamed to let her know by the slightest noise that I was being tormented by a sleepless night while she was, everything considered, completely triumphant.

As I turned the matter over in my mind, it began to appear to me in various ways. Conceivably, she did not speak Takagi's name out of mere thoughtfulness to me: by omitting the mention of it, she did not stir up my sense of anguish. Supposing this to be true, I must have been extraordinarily sullen in behavior to have eroded her courage so much that she would not dare to mention his name. If so, what a grouch I must be, associating with people with the deliberate intent of displeasing them! That being the case, I ought to stay at home at all times and not socialize. That would solve my problem. But, then, if craftiness without kindliness were her motivation—what then? I tried to analyze the two Chinese characters of artifice in detail. Could she be trying to destroy me, using
Takagi as a decoy? Was she trying to achieve a transient pleasure, stimulating my affection for her, even though she had no intention of marrying me? Or did she want me to become a Takagi? If I did, would she love me? Or did she want to show me her enjoyment in watching me and Takagi competing angrily for her? Or was she telling me by presenting Takagi to me that I should give her up because of his existence? I thought of every possible aspect of the meaning of her artifice. If it were artifice, then we would have to contend, and if we did so, I would have to see it through to the end, win or lose.

I was irritated with myself for not being able to sleep, thus losing the first skirmish. I had turned off the light after hanging the mosquito netting, and I felt suffocated by the thick darkness permeating every corner of the room. I couldn't stand the labor of exercising my brain without seeing a thing, even though my eyes were wide open. I could no longer keep myself still, without even turning over, and so, abruptly got up and turned on the light. Under the new moon, there was not a trace of wind. I felt the cool air on my skin and throat.

The next day, I woke up an hour and a half earlier.
than I normally do, when there are no guests in the house. I got up right away and went downstairs. Saku was up: she was wearing a white cloth over her young woman's hairdo, and was sifting ashes in the wooden hibachi.

"Oh, you are up so early, sir!" she said, and hastened to set out my shaving gear and towel in the bathroom. On the way back to my room, I tiptoed along the hall past the family room, dusty now with ash from the hibachi. In passing I looked into the tatami-matted room where the two women were still indulging in quiet sleep under the mosquito net. Even my mother, although normally a light sleeper, was still peacefully asleep, perhaps as a result of yesterday's train ride. Chiyoko, of course, was sound asleep, her head buried in the pillow, as though deep in a dream. I went outside for no special reason. I had for a long time forgotten how it felt to take a morning walk: the familiar layout of the town seemed as peaceful as on a Sabbath day, as yet undisturbed by heat and crowds. The polished and gleaming streetcar rails, stretching off into the distance along the ground, seemed somehow orderly and right. But I hadn't come out with the intention of taking a walk. It was merely that, since I had got up too early, I felt obliged to fill in the scrap of leftover time with
some exercise. Even so, I could find nothing of particular interest in the sky, on the ground, in the town.

After about an hour, I returned home with my rather haggard face to be inspected by Mother and Chiyoko. Mother asked me where I had gone, and later on she said, "Your complexion doesn't seem quite right: what's the matter?"

"You didn't sleep well last night, did you?" asked Chiyoko.

I didn't know how to answer her question. What I actually wanted was to say blithely, "Never slept better!" But I am not, unfortunately, that skilled an artist. And I was too proud to admit that I had spent a sleepless night. So I didn't answer at all.

Just after the three of us had finished eating breakfast at the table, the hairdresser came over. Mother had requested an appointment before the weather grew too hot. The hairdresser, wearing a freshly laundered apron, knelt with her hands at the threshold and gave a courteous greeting to my mother. "Welcome back, ma'am!" She had the unctuous, flattering manner of speech common to her profession. Using her conversational skill effectively with her every phrase, she managed to elicit from my quiet mother comments, tinged with family pride, about her summer
vacation. Although Mother seemed to enjoy the talk, she was not sufficiently loquacious. So the hairdresser switched to Chiyoko as a more appropriate conversational target. This cousin of mine, of course, has no difficulty in handling any social situation, and so, every time the hairdresser addressed her with a "Don't-you-think-so-miss?" she responded in lively fashion. When the topic turned to Chiyoko's swimming, the hairdresser exuded mindless flattery: "Ah, the young ladies nowadays! They all practice this swimming! So wonderful to be healthy and high-spirited!"

Although it's an absurd thing to noise about, I must admit that I enjoy watching women having their hair done up. When my mother, with her sparse hair, was managing to get a marumage coiffure, the spectacle, even in the hands of a skilled hairdresser, could not be called enthralling. But, when I have nothing else to do, it is a welcome diversion. And so on this occasion I watched while the hairdresser's fingers worked nimbly to form a small chignon. I thought to myself how splendid it would be if Chiyoko's hair were dressed in traditional fashion. It was straight, long, and very full. In any normal situation, I would have urged her to have it done. But at this time it was too difficult for me to throw out
such a request. By coincidence, however, Chiyoko herself spoke out: "I would like to try it myself!"

Mother tried to encourage her. "Why don't you? It's been a long time since you've had it done."

The hairdresser joined in: "By all means! When I first saw you, I thought, 'What a shame that she is in that plain, swept-back style!'" She spoke almost pleadingly, as though she badly wanted to do it.

Chiyoko sat down before the dressing table. "Which style would be best?"

The hairdresser recommended "Shimada," the style popular with unmarried girls. Mother agreed with her. With her hair hanging straight down, Chiyoko suddenly called out, "Issan! What would you like?"

"Surely, the young master would like Shimada style?" the hairdresser urged.

My pulse seemed to have suspended its beat. Chiyoko seemed unnerved. Deliberately, she turned, looked at me smilingly, and said, "Very well, then, I'll show you how I look in Shimada-style."

"That would be nice," I mumbled. My answer sounded utterly stupid.

Before Chiyoko's Shimada hairdo was finished, I
went upstairs. There are times when my excessive sensibility gets me very confused, and I do things which to the eyes of outsiders seem utterly childish. I left the side of the dressing table because I wished to avoid the tribute of admiration that the beautiful woman in the Shimada coiffure might have forced me to give. At just that moment I hadn't enough human kindliness in me to flatter her vanity.

I don't like to talk about myself, patching up here and there to make myself look better. I know that even I am capable of using my head for something nobler than the contemptible little scene acted out by the wooden hibachi in the family room. But, when I was brought down to that level, my weakness would never permit me to deviate. Afterward, well aware of my stupidity, I hated and scourged myself for behaving in such a fashion.

I despise bluster just as much as cowardly sneaking. I wish to present myself honestly, as I am, no matter how base or trivial. And so I try not to hide anything about myself. But is it true that all great or noble men really are above the lowly? The discords of daily life can occur at any level: beside the hibachi, in the kitchen, anywhere, can they not? I am completely green and inexperienced, just out of school. I wonder, though: if they had my qualities of
intellect and imagination, could those great and noble men ever have existed as such, in any time?

I respect Uncle Matsumoto. But to be perfectly frank, a person like him can only be described as one who appears to be great and noble. I hate to be prejudiced or impolite to the extent of calling him a sybarite. He seems to be unconcerned with the world, but in actuality, deep within, he is very much concerned. With his hands folded, he may seem occupied only with trivial affairs, whereas in actuality he is terribly worried in his heart of hearts. I incline to esteem him because he keeps his troubled spirit to himself, and, as a result, looks like a sophisticate. He can do this because of his financial security, his age, education, intelligence and training, and, moreover, his harmonious family relationships serve to give him poise and balance. At first sight, he seems stand-offish from society, but in actuality he gets along with it very well. ----I did not mean to digress like this--. It may be the result of my being too defensive for too long about my too gloomy character.

Anyway, as I said earlier, I went upstairs. Now the upstairs area is not as comfortable and cool as downstairs, because it gets the direct sun on it, but, since I am accustomed to it, I spend most of my time there. So, on this occasion as on others, I sat
vacantly at my desk, my chin resting on both my hands, my elbows on the desk. My glance fell on the clean majolica ashtray that I had used this morning at my elbow. I looked at its decorative picture of two lovebirds. I envisioned Saku's hands emptying the ashes. Just then I heard the sound of someone coming up the stairs. As soon as I heard it, I knew it was not Saku. I was embarrassed to be seen by Chiyoko at a time when I was lost in reverie. On the other hand, I did not want to take refuge in a clever trick and open a book to pretend that I was reading.

"It's done now. How do you like it?"

I watched her sit down in front of me.

"It looks odd, doesn't it?" she said. "I haven't worn it this way in such a long time!"

"It is very beautiful! Why don't you wear a Shimada coiffure all the time?"

"Oh, I would have to take it apart and have it done up again a few times until the hair was thoroughly trained, you see."

While we were engaged in this inconsequential conversation, I began to feel, without quite realizing it myself, peaceful and happy, as though looking once more at the beautiful, pure, and gentle Chiyoko of the old days in front of me. It would be hard to say whether my feeling for her had become more gentle or
her attitude toward me had altered at some point. I do remember, though, that I could find nothing very specific or definable in the behavior of either of us to explain the mood. Had this peaceful, trusting, domestic atmosphere continued for a few hours, I would have erased completely all the weird doubts and suspicions of her that had accumulated in my mind: erased them with one dark, black line of the eraser, as misunderstandings. Inevitably, however, in spite of my best intentions, I made a terrible mistake.

It came to no more than this: as I chatted with Chiyoko, I learned that she came up not only to show me her hair, but also to say goodbye, since she was about to return to Kamakura. When I realized this, I was quite unprepared.

"Why are you going back? It's so soon."

"Oh, no it isn't. I've been here overnight. But I can't go back with my hair like this! It's as though I were getting married," Chiyoko said.

"Is everyone at Kamakura still there?" I blurted out.

"Yes. Why do you ask?" she replied.

"Takagi-san too?"

All this time Chiyoko had never referred to him, and I had refrained from bringing up the subject with
great care. But since quite unpredictably we had resumed our old relationship, and I had been drawn into an affectionate mood, I had ended up speaking of him without intending to do so. Watching her face, I regretted my blunder at once. I've said before, she had a tentative feeling of contempt at my indecisive and unsociable nature. Our relationship had continued only because she had held this judgment in abeyance. But the fact was that I possessed a characteristic she greatly feared. It was my reticence. In the opinion of someone like Chiyoko, who prided herself on showing her feelings and attitudes without reservation, my invariably silent and reserved behavior could never be satisfactory. But, since from time to time through my silence there were emitted occasional indications of a profundity of existence inscrutable, unknowable even to myself, she had, while tentatively disapproving, nevertheless managed to respect me in a way as a complex person hard to figure out fully, but possessed of fearful problems. Although I haven't said it in so many words, she has understood clearly that I have been demanding without actually saying so her special attention as my rightful privilege over the years.

But as soon as I mentioned Takagi's name, I sensed that my special privileges with Chiyoko were forever
revoked. Once she had heard me ask, "Takagi-san too?" her expression abruptly changed. I wouldn't like to interpret it as an expression of victory. But there is no doubt that I saw in her eyes a gleam of a kind of contempt that I had never seen before. I froze like a person who has been slapped unexpectedly.

"But why are you so concerned about Takagi-san?" she said, laughing so loud that I wanted to cover my ears with both hands. I felt terribly humiliated. For an instant I could say nothing.

"What a coward you are!" she said next.

I was astounded by the unexpectedly strong word she used. I wanted to say, "But you are the one to invite me deliberately to a place where I could not fit in!" But I restrained myself, thinking, "She's too young to be told off in such violent words."

Chiyoko too swallowed her words.

Finally I asked her briefly, "Why?"

Her dark eyebrows flexed. She seemed to assume that, though I knew completely how cowardly I was, still, when it was pointed out, I would try to hide my weakness, cover it up, and refuse to acknowledge it.

"You know very well why yourself!"

"Please tell me! I really do not understand," I said.

Mother was waiting expectantly downstairs, and
anyway I was supposed to understand the emotional intensity of a young girl. To calm her down and help her make her explanation coherent, I carefully spoke in a soft, measured tone. But that too seemed to provoke her.

"If you don't understand, then you're a fool!"

Perhaps I turned quite pale. I only remember that I stared hard at her, and her fearless eyes met mine, hard in mid-air. We stared in silence at each other for some time.

"In the eyes of an out-going person like you, Chiyo-chan," I said finally, "a retiring person like me would of course seem a coward. I am not decisive; I can't formulate my thoughts and feelings in either words or deeds very effectively. If for that reason you call me coward, I cannot help it...."

"No one would call such a person cowardly!" she said sullenly.

"But you do despise me for that behavior, don't you? I'm quite aware of that."

You are the one who does the despising: you despise me! I know it better than you do!"

Carefully, I said nothing. I saw no need to.
"Secretly, you have always looked down upon me as uneducated, illogical, beneath contempt!"

"But that is tantamount to saying that you look down upon me as a laggard. I don't object to being called a coward for that reason. But if you label me as morally a coward, you are wrong, no matter how slight your emphasis. Where you have been concerned, I've never been guilty of moral cowardice. If you insist that I am a coward rather than a procrastinator or a hesitater, you're suggesting that I lack integrity—or, rather, that I'm a drifter with no moral values. Such an opinion from you is very distressing. So I want you to correct it. And, if I have ever done something to you that you regard as inexcusable, I wish you would tell me about it, flat out."

"To do that, I should have to explain why I call you a coward!" She began to weep. I had thought Chiyoko a woman of greater strength of character than mine. But this sturdiness I saw in a concentrated femininity resulting from her essential thoughtfulness. The Chiyoko facing me now seemed no more than a headstrong, commonplace and unexceptional woman. Suspending judgment, I awaited eagerly for the explanation that would emerge between her tears. For I was firmly of the opinion that what came from her
lips would be little more than passionate argument to prevent her losing face. She blinked her wet eyelashes several times.

"You've always condescended toward me as though I were a minx and a fool! You don't--love me! In a nutshell, you have no wish to marry me!"

"But--! That is--! You too--."

"Listen to me! Yes, you may say that the attitude is mutual. All right, that's fine with me. Certainly I am not begging you to marry me. But, why, since you have no love for me and no intention of marrying me--, why are you so--?"

She hesitated, and I was so slow-witted that I could not yet figure out what would follow.

"So--what?" I pressed.

Suddenly she burst out, "Why are you so jealous?"

She began sobbing uncontrollably. I felt the blood rising in my cheeks. She seemed not to notice it.

"No. You're a coward. A moral coward. You were even suspicious as to why I invited you and your mother. Even that is cowardly, but that's not the main point. Once you have gone so far as to accept someone's invitation, why can't you be congenial and cheerful as usual? It seems that my invitation brought me only humiliation. You insulted our guest, and that in turn insulted me also!"
"I don't remember doing anything to insult you."

"But certainly you did! The words and actions don't matter. It was your whole attitude that was humiliating. If it was not a passing attitude, then it was your heart."

"I don't see that I must submit to such gratuitous criticism!" I said.

"Only if a man is a coward is he capable of such behavior! Takagi-san is a gentleman, and he tried to get along with you many times over. But you wouldn't go along. Because you're low and positively contemptible!"
Notes
Chapter V, "Sunaga's Story"

1  (372) Sunaga-kun: "-kun" is a suffix used between male friends in place of the more formal "-san".

2  (376) The statue of Sakra devanam Indra at Shibamata: was the main image in the Daikeiji Temple of the Nichiren Sect of Buddhism. It is supposed to have been carved by Nichiren himself (Zenshū, X, 299).

3  "(412) Uncle Matsumoto...explained the difference between poetry and philosophy": Sōseki's comment in his Notebook, written between May and December, 1911, is as follows:

   Art contains philosophy---/ Philosophy is the residue that remains when the content has been extracted from a life./ Therefore, art and philosophy are much alike, but philosophy is not productive of any living power.... / Academic theory has no precise distinction [to make between art and philosophy]..., but in actuality there are subtle differences...The reactions [of the two are] never the same. Art senses the fine distinctions [that make for individuality and uniqueness] in its method. Therefore, an artist is essentially a more delicate philosopher [than the philosopher].

   Zenshū, X, 300

4  (440) Lady Shizuka: The beautiful and courageous mistress of Minamoto no Yoshitsune, the great general of the Medieval era. She is mentioned often in ballads, noh plays and kabuki plays.

5  (441) Kotsubo Village: is located in a scenic area of Kanagawa Prefecture (Zenshū, X, 300).

6  (443) The scene corresponds to Sōseki's
diarized account of July 22, 1911. Some of the correspondences:

We arrived in Kotsubo, but we didn't know the name of the family. We were told that we should look for "a man in the west who came from the south as an adopted husband." It sounded almost like something from an old tale.

[We saw] a traveling moon guitarist wearing a straw hat.... [Moon guitars were thought to have been brought from China in mid-Edo Period. They suddenly became popular at about 1880 in tea-houses and vaudeville theaters. After 1885, their popularity diminished and they were used only by traveling musicians. Cf. SBZ, VI, 755.]

The old woman said, "I told him beforehand [that he should wait for us], but he went out in the boat because of the uncertain weather."

The house was all blackened inside, with a front yard of hardly a hundred feet square.... There were two or three fig trees at the corner, with green figs. An insect basket hung on one of them. Under the trees were four skinny chickens.

These plus many smaller correspondences make it clear that Soseki was reworking the material he had incorporated in his diary of a hiking-and-fishing expedition he had made in July of 1911. (Zenshū, XXVI, 61)

(454) The novel, Gedanke: is a German translation of the novel by Leonid Nikolayevich Andreyev (1871-1919), entitled Mysl, or Thought.

His morbid interest in pathological states--insanity,...sexual obsession,...and suicide represented one aspect of Russian thought and feeling at the beginning of the century (A.K.Thorby, ed., The Penguin Companion to European Literature, p. 54).
Chapter 6
Matsumoto's Story

I don't know what has happened between Ichizō and Chiyoko since then. Perhaps nothing. At any rate, to the eyes of those around them the relationship between the two of them appears to be just the same now as it was in the old days.

If I were to ask, they would have all sorts of things to say. But it is safe to assume that they would tell me every kind of falsified, contradictory, far-fetched yarn, just to satisfy the impulse of the moment, making themselves out to be perfect through all eternity! I'm convinced of it.

Yes, I have also heard that incident. Moreover, at the time, I heard it from both sides. It was not a misunderstanding at all. Both of them felt that it was not, and, since it was so natural for them to think that way, it was, in my opinion, a legitimate clash of views. And so, whether they become man and wife or continue as friends, they could not have avoided that disagreement. We have no choice but to look upon it as the fate to which the two were born.
Yet it was their misfortune, in a way, that the each of them was strongly attracted to the other. Moreover, the way in which they were attracted was grimly regulated by the will of the Fates. As the saying goes, "They constitute a pitiful couple who unite only to part, and part only to unite once more." I'm not sure you see what I'm driving at or not, but, if they marry, they'll end up doing so only to bring unhappiness upon themselves, and, if they do not marry, they will feel the frustration of being unhappily separated. So their destiny had best be left to work out its natural course. It won't help them if you or I try to meddle in their affair. I am, as you know, related to both Ichizō and Chiyoko. My sister, Sunaga's mother, has been especially urgent in consulting with me and asking me, not once, but many times to act on behalf of the two. But, if the power of heaven can do nothing for them, how can I bring them together? In other words, my sister is herself dreaming an impossible dream.

Both my sisters, Sunaga's mother and Taguchi's wife, were struck by the fact that my temperament and Ichizō's were so alike. I myself have wondered why there should have to be two of this particular brand of eccentric in one family. My sister, Sunaga's mother, seems convinced that Ichizō as he is at
present is all the result of my influence. The most undesirable of my many undesirable traits, as far as she is concerned, is the bad effect I've had on my nephew.

When I look back on my attitude toward Ichizō over the years, I acknowledge and accept her rebuke. Nor would I hesitate to admit also the validity of her charge that it was my doing that caused Ichizō's alienation from the Taguchi family. Still, if the two sisters equate Ichizō with me as the same sort of peculiar personality, and wrinkle their brows at both of us in like fashion, they are quite wrong.

Ichizō is the sort of man whose being coils itself inward whenever he faces the world. Hence, when he receives a certain stimulus, it winds itself deeper and deeper into the recesses of his heart. At such times, its continuous thrust never stops, and it torments him. Ultimately, he prays and struggles to free himself from this inward torture. But he gets involved in it as though by a curse over which he has no control. And so he begins to worry that he may one day when all alone collapse under the weight of this torment. Then he becomes exhausted and acts crazily. This is the sole difficulty, the unfortunate dilemma, that lies at the center of his being. To alter this heavy burden to good fortune, he will have to redirect
that life cord of his so that it spirals in the opposite direction, allowing him to wind the stresses outward. Instead of using his eyes to transfer outside events into his own being, he ought to use them as a means of observing and assessing those events dispassionately. He must find something—even if only once!—that is captivatingly wonderful or beautiful or gentle. In a word, he must become a wanton. Initially, he was contemptuous of passionate experience; now he is yearning for it. For the sake of his own happiness, he trustfully prays to God that he may become a genuine experimentalist. He knew even before I warned him that there is no other way of salvation than to become the most frivolous sensualist. But he has not yet put this knowledge into practice, and still is struggling.

I have been tacitly blamed as the one responsible for making Ichizō the person he is today. And I cannot ignore the accusation, because I am in fact guilty as charged. The essence of the difficulty was that I did not know how to take into account his special temperament in guiding him. It was my stupidity that made me want to foist my own tastes on Ichizō, and so
I influenced this young, tender soul constantly, as much as I was able. My teaching seems to have planted the seeds of disaster. It was two or three years ago when I realized my mistake. But it was then too late. All I could do was fold my arms and sigh for the grief I felt within me.

To sum up the whole matter, the kind of life I am leading now is very well suited to me, but it would never do for Ichizō. Basically, I was capricious, a born dilettante, as they say. My inclinations were constantly toward the outside world. I can be moved in whatever manner the outside stimulus may direct. What I am saying may not be completely clear to you, but the fact is that Ichizō was born to teach the present generation, whereas I am a man perpetually learning—from the world of popular culture. At this mature age, I am very young in spirit; but Ichizō was already grave and mature even in his higher school days. He draws upon society for the materials to be analyzed; whereas I merely join in with the current thought of society myself. Therein is his strong point as well as his weakness, and therein too resides my weakness as well as my happiness. When I join in the tea ceremony, my heart easily becomes tranquil; when I poke about among old curios, I participate in their elegant simplicity. Yose, kabuki plays, sumo...
wrestling—I can enter into the mood of anything and enjoy it. Hence my mind is always being busily involved in various transient concerns, and so I can't help feeling empty in not having a self of my own. That is why I lead this philosophic life of non-participation: to persist, and so preserve myself. Ichizō, on the other hand, is from the beginning nothing but self. The only way for him to conceal his weakness, or rather to minimize his misfortune is to stand up to the outside world instead of coiling up inwardly. But without quite intending to, I deprived him of this one means he had of achieving happiness. Certainly I do deserve the resentment of our relatives. I think I am lucky at least not to have incurred the hatred of Ichizō himself.

About a year ago, it was.... Ichizō was still in school. One day he happened to stop by to see me, but, after some small talk, he wandered off somewhere. I was absorbed in some research on the history of flower arrangement, done at the request of a friend. When he came, I just looked up and said, "Hello." But I saw that his complexion was very pale, and, as soon as I had finished the section I was working on, I left the study to find him. Since he got along just as well with my wife as with me, I thought he might be in the
family room chatting with her, but he wasn't there. I asked my wife where he might be, and she said he must be in the children's room. I went down the corridor and opened the door to find him sitting at Sakiko's desk, staring at the photograph of a beautiful young lady that constituted the frontispiece of a woman's magazine. He returned my glance, remarking that he had just discovered this particular beauty, and had been communing with her for about the last ten minutes.

"As long as that face is in front of me," he said, "I feel perfectly happy and can forget all the troubles circulating in my head."

I asked him who the young lady was and where she came from. Oddly, however, he had not even read the name printed below the picture. I suggested to him that he was daydreaming, and asked him why, if he found her face that attractive, he had not taken the trouble to find out her name—because it seemed to me that it was not altogether impossible for him to ask her hand in marriage if time and opportunity permitted. Conceivably, she might have been the daughter of some friend of a friend. But he looked at me skeptically, as though to inquire why he should need to know her name or where she came from.

In other words, while I was looking at the picture
as a representation of a real person, he was enjoying it as a thing of beauty in and of itself. Had anyone tried to enliven the picture by noting her social status, her educational background and her characteristic behavior, he might just have thrown it away, giving up the beauty of that face he liked so much. That shows the fundamental difference between Ichizō and me.

3

It was, I should suppose, two or three months before Ichizō's graduation—perhaps about April of last year. His mother had an unusually long talk with me about his getting married. Her wish in the matter was, of course, simple, clear, and unchanging: she wanted Taguchi's elder daughter to be his bride. I've always held the opinion that it's a disgrace for a man to talk abstract logic to a woman, and so I tried as much as possible to avoid any complicated argument. But I did explain clearly and patiently to my very traditional sister that to deprive the actual person concerned of his freedom in such a vital matter is the same as violating one's sacred trust as a parent. As you know, my sister is a very gentle person, but she possesses even more than her share of that very common
characteristic of women: namely, that, when cornered in argument, she will stubbornly and repeatedly insist on the same opinion. Far from scorning her tenacity, I felt an unwonted sympathy for this single-minded insistence. And so I willingly agreed to her request that I make an appointment with Ichizo and have a thorough talk with him about the matter--because, you see, there was no one except me among the relatives whom he respected.

I remember it was a Sunday morning four days later when I carried out my promise and held a meeting with him in this room in an effort to achieve my sister's objective. With the onset of the busy time just before the graduation examinations in mind, he sat down with me, a thin smile on his face, saying, "Heaven help me with my exams!" As he explained it, he had heard from his mother a great many times about the matter and always had put off a definite answer. Despite the commonplace nature of the problem, he seemed much distressed. He appealed to my better judgment when he said that the last time his mother had complained to him about his non-marriage, he had asked her to wait till after graduation, and then he would try to work out some solution to the problem. He appeared rather unhappy at having been summoned here even before the last examination, and sought my sympathy, saying that
older people were very impatient and annoying. I found myself in agreement with his attitude.

His reason for postponing the decision until after graduation, I assumed, probably was to delay in order to await a change in circumstances that might prompt his mother to give up her ambition in the natural course of things instead of his disappointing her by directly refusing. He counted on Chiyoko's marriage prospects by that time developing with more suitable candidates than he. I asked him if that were not the case, and he said yes.

"Do you have no intention of pleasing your mother?" I asked.

"I'm sincerely anxious to make her happy in every way," he replied. But he never said he would marry Chiyoko.

"Are you avoiding your cousin out of stubborn pride?" I asked.

"It could be," he dared to say.

"Tell me, furthermore," I persisted, "What would you do if both Taguchi and Chiyoko consented to her marrying you?"

He looked into my face silently and did not answer the question. I was quite unable to proceed further, looking at that face. To say that I felt awe would be to exaggerate too much; and the word, compassion,
sounds too much like pity. I don't quite know how to describe my feelings at his expression: it was a sharp look of despair, half-grim, half-gentle, reflecting his perception that he would have to give up relying on me from now on.

After an interval, he said quite unexpectedly, "Oh, why is it that I earn dislike from others in this way?"

I was taken by surprise: it was very abrupt, and not at all like the Ichizō I knew. I replied by scolding him for complaining so.

"I'm not complaining. It's a fact."

"Then who dislikes you?"

"In point of fact, you at this moment hate me, do you not?"

Again I was astounded. It was completely inconceivable. After rolling it around for a bit in my mind I figured it out: he seemed to have interpreted my attitude when, affected by his saddened expression, I had stopped talking, as generated by hatred toward him. I tried hard to break up his misunderstanding.

"Why should I hate you? My interest in you is very obvious and has been from our relationship ever since you were a child! Don't be so ridiculous!"

Showing no trace of emotion from his scolding, he
gazed into my face, his own growing still paler. I felt a chill as though sitting in front of a phosphorescent light.

"I'm your uncle, have you forgotten? Where do you find a country in which uncles hate nephews?"

On hearing this, Ichizō curled his thin lips and smiled forlornly. In that isolation I detected a carefully concealed sign of contempt. I readily admit that he possesses an intellect far superior to mine in perceiving and evaluating intricate matters. I am thoroughly aware of it. And so, whenever I've been face to face with him, I've been as careful as possible not to reveal my foolishness to his critical judgment. Still, there were occasions when I had subjected him to meaningless preachments, pretending that what I said was of great value, while I looked down on that familiar face with all the arrogance of an elder, knowing the whole time that my words were unimportant. Intelligent as he was, he would not have dared conduct himself ungracefully, using his superior perceptions to humiliate me. Nevertheless, on each such occasion, I felt embarrassment, as though the net worth of my stock had declined. And so, right away on
this occasion I tried to improve my words.

"Of course, in this great world of ours there may be fathers and sons who don't see eye to eye or husbands and wives who try to kill each other. But by and large as long as people are related—as an uncle and nephew are related—there must be a certain intimacy and trust in the relationship. Although you have a very respectable education and brain, you have a persecution complex somehow. That's your failing, and you must correct it. It's very unpleasant for the people around you to see it."

"That is precisely why I said even you dislike me."

I could think of no response. It seemed to me that Ichizō had pointed out a contradiction in my argument that I hadn't been conscious of.

"If you just get rid of the notion that people dislike you, you'll have nothing to worry about," I said, as though it were a simple matter.

"Do you really think I suffer from paranoia?" he asked calmly.

"Yes, I do!" I replied without reflection.

"In what way am I paranoid? Tell me exactly."

"In what way? Why, you just are! I say you are because you are!"

"All right. Let us suppose I have this weakness.
But what is causing it?"

"It is your own nature that causes it. Why don't you try to find out for yourself?"

"You lack human understanding!" he dared to say, in a very gloomy tone. I was astounded by his despair. Then I looked into his eyes, and flinched. They were boring into my being with a look of keen reproach. I could not stir up enough courage to utter a word of response.

"I have thought about it before you ever mentioned it. I've thought about it because, as you say, it's my own concern. I've thought about it myself because no one has been kind enough to tell me the truth. I've thought about it day and night. I've thought about it so much that my mind and body could no longer tolerate it. Even so, I could find no solution. That is why I asked you. You have declared that you are my uncle, and because of the relationship, you are more kindly disposed than others. Yet, what you said just now, despite the fact that the words came from my uncle's mouth, sounded colder than anything a stranger might say."

I saw the tears winding down his cheeks. Please believe me: we had never had any such scene between us; we have been closely attached to each other ever since he was a little child. And so I must admit,
while I am at it, that I did not know how to handle this deeply disturbed young man. I stood, arms folded, puzzled and astonished. Ichizō was not calm enough to observe my attitude or to control his words.

"Do I have a persecution mania? Of course I do. I knew it before you told me. Indeed, yes! I am a true paranoid. I'm well aware of it without any reminder from you. I just want to know how I have become so. I know it, my mother knows it, Aunt Taguchi knows it, and now you—everyone knows it, but I am not supposed to. They hide what they know from me. I've dared to ask you because I trust you more than all the others. But you have very coldly refused to answer. My curse be upon you, now and forever! May you remain my enemy for the rest of my life!"

Ichizō stood up. Instantly I made up my mind and called him back.

I once listened to a lecture by a certain scholar who analyzed the modernization of Japan and expounded boldly to the audience on the reason that we will, all of us, have no choice but to become either shallow human beings or neurotic people under the impact of modernization. He maintained that we always
yearn to know the truth, but, once we have learned it, we regret the knowledge and realize we were happier before knowing the truth. And my conclusions might be close to that. When the lecturer stepped down from the podium with a sardonic smile, he reminded me of Ichizō, and I thought to myself, "We Japanese, who must hear such bitter truths are indeed a pitiful lot, but a young man like Ichizō, who desperately tries to find the secret of his own existence, and yet at the same time is afraid of what he will learn, must feel even more wretched!" And in my heart I shed tears of sympathy for him.

To be sure, this is a family matter, and you have no reason to get involved. I was not planning to confide in you, and perhaps would not have, had I not been feeling grateful to you all this while for your concern for Ichizō. But the truth is that his destiny was clouded over even on the day of his birth.

I have occasionally explained my belief that only if all secrets are laid bare can they be resolved in a natural settlement or conclusion. Hence, hushing up a matter for the sake of peace or the maintenance of the status quo is, to me, not as important as it is to other people. Hence I feel that it was my peculiar error not to have gone back and cleared up the circumstance of his birth for him in all these years.
When I look back on it, I simply do not understand why I kept the matter secret for so long—until, in fact, I almost was cursed and hated by Ichizō. In any case, I never dreamt of interfering in the intimate relationship of my nephew and his mother, even if I did bring his secret into the light of day.

I have told you that Ichizō's sun was clouded over already on the day he was born. You, who are so close to him, may already have understood exactly what the facts were behind the words I have used. In sum, they were not biological mother and son. To avoid any misunderstanding, let me say that they are adoptive mother and son: a tie even closer than that of natural parent and child. They were bound so naturally to each other by the thread of love and concern that we can almost ignore the more common biological relationship of mother and son. Even the ax of the deepest devil will not sever that thread, so we need not fear exposing this dark secret. But alas! my sister has worried terribly. Ichizō also has been frightened without knowing why. My sister, holding the secret in her hands, and Ichizō, waiting for the day when she'll hand it over to him, both were terribly afraid. Eventually, I took up the secret they feared, and spread it out in front of them for all to see.

I haven't the audacity to repeat our discussion in
detail to you. To be sure, I never from the beginning felt the incident to be quite as significant as they made it, and, moreover, I had to appear disinterested. So I talked about it casually, but Ichizō listened with strained attention as though considering a matter of life and death. To go back to the beginning and sum up the facts of the situation, he was not the actual son of my sister, but had been born to a chambermaid. Since it didn't happen in my immediate family, and furthermore, since more than twenty-five years have elapsed, I simply don't know the detailed history. But I was told that, when the servant girl became pregnant by my brother-in-law, my sister dismissed her after giving her a large sum as severance pay. Then, when she heard that the woman had borne a son, my sister decided to adopt him and raise him as her own. Presumably she did this in part from a sense of obligation toward her husband, but also, saddened by her own inability to have a child, she wanted to cherish and tend the boy as her own. And so you may feel, just as we did, that, because they became a most devoted mother and son, and would ultimately share the secret with each other, nothing bad could follow. In my opinion, they have reason to feel greater pride than those many natural mothers and sons who do not get along with each other. For both of them, to look
back over their affectionate relationship after having shared the true story would be a joyful experience. At least, if I were in Sunaga's place, it would be so for me. And I tried very hard to stress and emphasize this positive point for his benefit.

"That's the way I see it!" I told him. "And so I see no need for concealment. If you have a healthy mind, you'll think just as I do. But if you're unable to see it that way, then you really do have a persecution complex! Do you understand?"

"I do. I understand very well," answered Ichizō.

"If so, all is well. Let's not talk about it any more, shall we?"

"I agree: I'll stop and never badger you with this matter from now on. You're quite right in saying that I took too jaundiced a view of my situation. But I was terribly uncertain until I heard your explanation. I was so afraid that the very muscles of my chest shrank. But once I heard your view of the adoption, everything became clear to me, and I am both relieved and peaceful. No longer will I be fearful or uneasy. Instead, I confess I suddenly feel isolated--as though I were cut off and completely alone."
"But your mother is just the same loving mother as before," I insisted. "And I am the same old fellow you know. No one has changed toward you. You mustn't be so quick to sense trouble."

"I'm not searching out trouble, but I do feel alone, separated. I can't help it. When I get home and see Mother's face, I know I'll begin to weep. Just thinking about that scene makes me feel more alone."

"Perhaps you had best not discuss the matter with your mother."

"Of course I shan't. If I did, she would be terribly upset."

The two of us just sat there in silence, looking at each other. I tapped the ash-container on the tobacco tray; Ichizō stared down at his hakama where it covered his knee. After a time he raised his bleak face to me and said, "May I ask one further question?"

"I'll tell you anything I know."

"Where is my actual mother?"

"She died just after you were born." I had heard that she had died of complications following his birth or perhaps from some other sickness, but I had no detailed knowledge with which to sate the thirst that showed in his eyes. It took only two or three minutes for me to tell what little I knew of his mother's fate. With a dissatisfied expression, he asked what
she was called. Fortunately I still remembered the quaint name, "Oyumi." He asked how old she was when she died, but I didn't know with any certainty.

"Did you see her when she was a maid at our old house?" he asked finally.

"Yes."

"Tell me what she looked like," he asked. But unfortunately my recollection was very vague. At that time I was a mere boy of fourteen or fifteen.

"Her hair was done up in Shimada style, I remember." But I regretted my inability to give him even one clearcut answer. Ichizō's eyes finally seemed to have given up on the matter.

But he had one further question: "Could you please tell me, at least, in what temple is she buried?"

But I had no reason to know where she was buried. With a groan I said, "If you really want this information, the only way we can find it out is to ask your mother."

"Would anyone other than she know about it?"

"I would say no."

"Then never mind. I don't have to know."

I felt great pity for this young man. He was facing the garden, and he stared for a while at a large camellia in bloom under the warm, beautiful sunlight. Suddenly he looked back at me. "Mother's
reason for urging me to marry Chiyoko must have been that she wanted me to marry a girl from her own family. Isn't that right?"

"Just so. No other reason."

Even so, he gave no indication that he would marry her. Actually, I didn't even ask him, "Well, would you?"

That meeting with Ichizō was one of the most beautiful experiences in my life. It added to my scanty store of experience an event in which two people were able to communicate everything they felt to each other quite freely, from the depths of one heart to the other. I suppose that for Ichizō it was his first experience with solace offered for grief. In any case, after he left, my thoughts and feelings remained elevated from the awareness that I had acted correctly for my nephew, out of concern for his well-being.

As he turned to depart at the entryway, I shouted affectionately after him, "I'll take care of everything! Don't you worry!"

On the other hand, I had quite an awkward time of it when I went to report the results of my interview
to my sister. I had few alternatives. So I told her just to ease her mind that Ichizo was willing to think about the possibility of marriage after he had graduated and had time to think; for the present, therefore, it would be best to be patient and not disturb his studies for the final examinations. With arguments of this sort, I calmed her down for the time being.

Meanwhile, I talked about the situation to Taguchi and urged him to get Chiyoko's prospects settled prior to Ichizo's graduation. After hearing me out, Taguchi was as usual genial and sensible. He assured me that he had understood the problem even before I had approached him.

"But," he added, "I am, after all, trying to arrange a marriage that will make her happy, and, to be perfectly honest, I cannot very well hasten or postpone Chiyoko's future happiness for the convenience of my sister or Ichizo, don't you see."

"Of course!" I had no choice but to agree.

In the first place, I was a constant visitor at the Taguchis' and a close relative. And, truth to tell, I had never concerned myself about their daughter's marriage or ever been consulted by them about it. I had hardly heard anything, therefore, about her marital situation, even indirectly. I
recalled only Takagi whom Ichizō was supposed to have met and by whom, according to the story as I heard it from both Ichizō and Chiyoko, he had been irritated.

"Excuse me for asking abruptly, but what happened to Takagi-san?" I said to Taguchi.

He answered, "Takagi didn't ever present himself as a candidate, for one thing--." He laughed amiably and continued, "Of course, any bachelor who has a certain social standing and education has a right to be a suitor, so I can't certainly declare that he is not in the running."

I questioned further about this puzzling young man, and learned that he was now living in Shanghai; they did not know when he was coming back. I ascertained that there was no greater intimacy between him and Chiyoko since the Kamakura vacation, but they were still corresponding regularly, albeit with the restriction that the letters be read first by her parents before being placed in her hands.

I said, without hesitation, "He looks like a good prospect."

Taguchi might have expected more, or at any rate may have had other ideas, for he did not say "Yes" with any clarity. Since I had no knowledge of Takagi as a person, I had no right to pursue the matter and left it as it was.
After that I didn't see Ichizō for a long time. But, although I say it was "a long time," it was actually no more than a month or so; yet, during that period, I was much concerned about him, for he had to cope with his graduation examinations at almost the same time he was involved in this serious domestic problem. I visited my sister secretly and tried to find out in roundabout fashion what his situation was. She seemed unconcerned and said merely, "He keeps very busy. It's perfectly natural, since he is going to graduate soon."

But I continued to feel uneasy. So I made an appointment with him to take off an hour some evening to dine with me at a western restaurant nearby. As we ate dinner together, I tried to figure him out. As usual, he was calm.

"I'll do all right on the exam somehow or other," he said. In his way of assuring me he would pass, I did not detect any bluff.

"Are you really all right?" I asked

But just as I tried for complete assurance, he suddenly looked miserable, and said, "The human head is made of more solid stuff than I had thought for. To be perfectly honest, I'm as scared as can be, but my headgear is still holding together. If this is the way of it, it can be used yet more for a while."
These words, sounding like a joke with, however, serious undertones at the same time, came across to me as strangely pitiable.

The season of green, new leaves came and went, and one day, when everybody wanted to flutter the paper fan toward his cotton-robed chest after taking a hot bath, Ichizō unexpectedly appeared. As soon as I saw his face, I asked him, "How was the exam?" He replied that it was finally over yesterday and added that he had come to say goodbye because he was planning to leave on a trip the next day. I somehow felt uneasy about his psychological state: what could prompt him to go away even before finding out the results of the exam? But he said that he wanted to go to the Kyoto area and along the Suma-Akashi route as far as Hiroshima— if everything worked out. I was surprised to find the trip planned on rather a grand scale. Indirectly I hinted my doubts, saying that it would be nice if only he knew the results of the exam.

But he reacted coolly to such concerns as the results of an examination: "Worrying over such matters?! Why, you don't sound at all like my uncle!" As we talked, I discovered that his trip was prompted
by incentives quite unrelated to the results of the examination.

"To be quite honest, ever since that talk with you, my mind has been strangely obsessed with the matter. It became difficult for me just to sit in my study. That's why taking this trip is necessary for me. Please give me at least some credit for not abandoning the final examinations in the middle--and give me your good wishes for my trip."

"Of course, of course! You can go where you want with your own money, and there's no reason why you shouldn't. Come to think of it, a diversion might be very good for you. By all means, go ahead, and have a good time!"

"Yes, Uncle," Ichizō said with a pleased expression, and added, "To be frank, Uncle, I ought not talk about it aloud, but ever since hearing the story from you, whenever I see Mother's face, I feel very--peculiar. I can't stand it."

"Are you feeling sorry for yourself?" I asked rather sternly.

"No. I feel sorry for her. At first I felt very much alone and isolated, but gradually that feeling changed to sympathy for her. Between the two of us, it's painful for me to see her face each morning and
night in truth. And this trip too: I've long wanted to show her Kyoto-Osaka region and Miyajima after graduation, and, if I were innocent of the knowledge, I would have taken her with me and asked you to keep an eye on the house. But for the reasons I've just told you, the relationship has altered so greatly that I more and more feel the necessity of leaving her side, at least for a while."

"You are making things very difficult for me when you take the matter so seriously," I told him.

"If I leave her, I'll miss her a great deal, I suppose. What is your opinion? Do you think it may not work out very smoothly?" he asked apprehensively.

Confident as I was in my greater maturity, I yet could not fathom at this point what might be his future attitude. I felt only pity for one who lacked certitude and desperately needed to ask advice about his own heart to achieve peace of mind. He was on the surface very gentle, yet in actuality extremely strong-minded. He almost never yielded to self-pity. I tried to reassure him as best I could.

"Don't worry. I'll take care of it. You'll be all right. Go ahead: have a good time. Your mother is my sister. But yet she is not (like me!) stained by education. She is simple and beautiful, a lady who is loved by everyone. How could that sister and a loving

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son like you separate and cut the family tie for good? 
Everything will be all right, so you mustn't worry."

Ichizō seemed greatly relieved on hearing my words. I felt some relief too. On the other hand, I was worried: if such simple words of consolation could calm this sharp-minded student, it must be because his nerves were somehow badly jangled. Suddenly, anticipating some dreadful incident, I began to worry over his solitary trip.

"Shall I go with you?"

"You, Uncle?" he said with a crooked smile.

"Don't you want me to?"

"Under ordinary circumstances, I would be begging you to join me. But this time, well, this trip is regulated according to my whim, so you would never know what the schedule would be. I would not want to put you into this kind of situation. As for me too, with you around, I could not be as free as otherwise I would be--."

"Then, never mind." I retracted my proposal on the spot.

Even after Ichizō left, my mind was busy worrying about him for a time. Now that I had placed the mark
of that dark secret on his head, I felt that I had to bear responsibility for its consequences. I wanted to visit my sister and see how she was bearing up, and at the same time find out how Ichizo was making out. I called my wife to my study from the family room to talk over the problem. My wife, who is not by nature easy to upset, didn't at first think it serious, and said, "Well, it's all because you don't know when to hold your tongue!" Later on, however, she remained confident of Ichizo and was sure of his good judgment.

"How could he possibly cause such a mix-up?" she asked. "Young as he is, Issan is still much more discreet than you are!"

"That view would seem to suggest that Ichizo should be worrying about me!"

"Of course! Anyone who sees you folding your arms with your imported pipe in your mouth would worry about you. Don't you know that?"

At that point our children returned from school and the house suddenly became noisy. I let Ichizo's affairs slip to the back of my mind and had no chance to think about him till evening, when my sister suddenly appeared. I was astounded.

She began as usual to busy herself with my family by exchanging greetings, apologizing for not having seen us for a long time, and talking about the
weather. Once I had sat down with her, I couldn't very well leave.

I waited until the small talk diminished, then asked, "Ichizō is leaving tomorrow for a trip, I hear?"

"Oh, yes." Her expression became a little grave as she looked at me. "About that matter--"

Without waiting for her to find the right words, "Let him go if he wants to!" I said, taking his part. "He has just finished those demanding examinations and he needs a rest. It is good for his health."

She seemed inclined to agree. "Of course. But I worry that his health may not be strong enough for the hardships of traveling about!" She turned to me at last and asked, "Do you think it will be all right?"

"Of course it will!" I assured her. My wife said the same. But my sister looked distressed rather than relieved. I concluded that, when she spoke of "health," she must be referring to its mental rather than physical import, and I felt a kind of pang within me. She must have noticed my face, involuntarily expressive of my helplessness and depression, for she asked, "Tsune-san, when Ichizō came to visit you some time ago, was there anything unusual about him?"

"No, no. He was just as always. Don't you think so, O-sen?"
"Oh, yes. Just as always."

"I suppose so," she said, "But there has been something a little strange of late."

"How so?" I asked.

"When you ask me, I really don't know how to describe it."

"It must be the effect of the examination on him," I suggested.

"It's your nerves acting up, Sister," my wife chimed in.

Both of us tried to ease her mind. Gradually she looked less upset, and we conversed pleasantly until well into the dinner time. When she went home, I saw her to the streetcar stop, taking the children along for the walk. I was still much concerned, however, and, letting the children find their way home by themselves, I got into the streetcar with her and sat beside her in spite of her protests, going finally all the way to her house.

I called to Ichizō, who was fortunately upstairs, to join us, and, when he did so, told him bluntly, "Your mother is very worried about you and came to Yarai especially because of that. I talked over many matters with her and ultimately gave her some peace of mind. But, since I am, in a way, responsible for your taking this trip, I hope that you will be willing, in
order to keep her happy, to write her at every place you arrive at, leave from or stay at. You must not neglect this duty of writing and keeping us posted as to your whereabouts at any point in your trip, so that we may make contact with you at any time if we need you. Do you agree?"

Ichizō replied that he had understood his responsibility to do that much even before I had brought the matter up, and he looked at his mother's face and smiled.

Satisfied that I had succeeded completely in erasing my sister's apprehensions, I returned to Yarai by streetcar at around eleven o'clock.

My wife hurried to meet me at the entrance and asked eagerly, "How did it go?"

"It will be all right now," I replied. In truth, I felt completely at ease about the matter—so much so that the next day I did not even go to Shimbashi Station to see him off.

The promised letters came from every place. It amounted to more or less one letter a day. But most of them were short, or, more often, a postcard with a few lines written alongside the picture. Every time I
received a postcard, I showed such obvious signs of relief on my face that my wife laughed teasingly. When I said, "Your forecast seems to have been correct," my wife common-sensically answered, "Well, it's perfectly obvious that the events you read about in the more sensational newspapers or in a novel don't very often happen in real life, now, do they?" My wife is the sort of woman who makes no distinction between the third page of the newspapers (in which all the sensational news reports are printed), and the events of fiction. She firmly believes both to be a pack of lies; she has no taste for the world of fantasy and romance.

I rested content with each postcard, and, when I received an envelope containing a letter, I was further relieved, for I could find no tinge of oppressive gloom on the rolled sheets. The words inscribed on the letter-rolls showed his improved state of mind much more clearly than the postcards. It is hard to understand this without actually reading what he wrote, and I have here a few of his letters. The medicine which was the most effective in improving the mood of Tokyo-born Ichizō seemed to be the way they speak in the Kamigata region. He noted too the air in Kyoto and the water of Uji. This may seem stupid for those who have been there often, but I
suspect the smooth, quiet, and mellow tones of the region must have had upon him a soothing effect far more effective than any medicine. What? Young women? I can't say. Of course, if those sounds emanate from the mouths of young women, the effect must be just that much better, I suppose. Since Ichizō is young and susceptible, he very well may have experienced such. But the episode he writes about in this letter concerns old women.

When I hear the people around here talking, I feel as though I had indulged myself to the point of slight intoxication. Some might say the dialect is sticky-sweet and unpleasant, but I do not find it so. It is the Tokyo speech that is unpleasant: it sounds as angular and prickly and thorny as the shell of a sea-urchin; such accents arrogantly lacerate the heart of a listener.

Yesterday I came from Kyoto to Osaka. Today I visited a friend at the Asahi Press, and he took me to a show-place called Minoo, which is famous for its beautiful vistas under the maple leaves. Since it is out of season, I of course could see no maple leaves, but there were a stream and a hill, and, at the end of the hill, a waterfall: a lovely, delightful spot! My friend led me to a two-story building that serves as a clubhouse for his company. When I entered, I was in a wide corridor that went straight through the building: its entire length was paved with ceramic roof tiles. Its quiet atmosphere made me feel subdued, as though I were at a temple in China. The house, I was told, was originally built as a villa for someone and was bought by the Asahi Press as its clubhouse. It may have been someone's villa, but why the wide corridor paved with roof tiles? I was curious and asked my friend, but he didn't know. Of course, this is nothing important. It's just that you, Uncle, are well acquainted with such matters and I thought you might know about it.

But what I really wanted to write you about wasn't the corridor, but the two old ladies who
were in the corridor. One was standing, the other sitting in a chair. The heads of both were shaven clean. The one standing saw my friend and greeted him as we came in.

"Excuse me, sir!" she said, "I am shaving the head of this eighty-five-year-old lady--. Now, now, my lady, sit still a little while longer. I've shaved so clean that there isn't a single hair left. So don't be worried."

The old lady sitting in the chair felt her head with her hand and said feebly, "Thank you." My friend looked at me and laughed, saying, "How completely rustic a scene this is!" I laughed too. Not only did I laugh, but I felt as warm and peaceful as if I had been born into the world of a hundred years past.

I wished that Ichizō might bring this peaceful feeling back to my sister as a souvenir!

The next letter came from Akashi. This one was more complex and so, as might be expected, it showed Ichizō's temperament vividly.

I arrived here tonight. The moon is out and the garden is clearly visible, but, on the other hand my room is in the shade, and this is depressing. After eating dinner and smoking a cigarette, I looked out over the ocean: it is right at our back door. The sea tonight is completely calm, without even a ripple, and the adjoining land looks more like the shore of a river or pond than the beach of an ocean. A boat came floating by, its occupants enjoying the cool air. I couldn't make out its details clearly in the darkness, but it was wide and flat-bottomed, a shape not usually seen in an ocean-going boat. I recall it had a roof and many brightly colored lanterns hanging from the eaves. Inside the circle of pale light, of course, people were sitting. I heard the sound of samisen strings. But the whole
spectacle was calm, placid, serene, sliding peacefully by in front of me. I watched the image gliding quietly past me, and recalled the story my grandfather had told me of his youthful days. You know it, of course: that story of how my grandfather actually tried the moon-viewing excursion the way the rich connoisseurs used to do it. Mother told it to me several times. He had a roofed boat row up the Sumida River as far as its junction with the Ayase River, and, in the midst of the calm reflection of the moon and the shining ripples, he threw an open, silver-surfaced paper fan far into the moon-bright night. As it circled in the air, the silver surface gleamed and sparkled until it floated down into the water. It must have been a lovely sight! Then too, it wasn't just a single fan: when I imagine what a spectacle it must have been at the instant everyone in the boat was competing to launch as many of the fans at once as they could, I am almost overcome with delight. Grandfather was such a spendthrift that he used to pour sake instead of hot water into the outer container of the copper double boiler just to warm the sake bottles—and then threw out this warming fluid later on. So throwing away a hundred silver fans at once into the river would mean nothing to him. And, come to think of it, whether inherited or otherwise, (excuse me for saying so!) but you have a certain extravagant tendency in your blood, considering your modest means, and Mother too, in spite of her quiet ways, has a taste for expensive gaiety. Only I—but if I say this, you may right away associate my remark with that special matter that we discussed. But please rest easy, because I've come to terms with the situation and am not disturbed by it to the extent that you fear. When I wrote "Only I—" I was not thinking in any bitter sense, but simply saying here and now that I do not share in the heredity of either you or Mother. I grew up in a relatively affluent environment surrounded by material comforts; I took all the luxury for granted. Things like clothes were selected carefully by my mother to make sure that I was always dressed as befits people of quality, although I was unaware of it. My ignorance was the result of long years in a certain way of living. Once I realized the distinction, it made me suddenly uneasy.

Let us not concern ourselves about my expenses for clothing or meals; yet recently I was harrowed when I heard a tale of the foolish extravagance of a certain rich man. This fellow, I
am told, gathered together a crowd of geisha, and male entertainers, and then brought out a huge bundle of paper money, pulled it apart, and gave the bills as tips. Then he went into the hot water of the furo in full, elegant clothing, and gave the whole wet outfit to the bath boy. There are other episodes concerning his profligacy, but they all show the same incredible arrogance and insolence toward Heaven. On hearing such stories, I wanted to hate him, but I lack the courage, and so feared him instead. He seemed to me like a burglar who has placed an unsheathed sword on the tatami mat, and glares defiance at the god-fearing good people. I fear this rich squanderer indeed in an almost religious sense since he has committed inexcusable sins against heaven, humanity and God. I am indeed a coward. Even before meeting with such arrogant insolence, as I envision the end to which such a wastrel will come, dancing his wild dance at the very height of his insolence, I am endlessly frightened.--It was while the boat was floating by on quiet ripples that I contemplated such matters,--and thought too that such quiet meditation might furnish just the right amount of diversion for us human beings. So you see, just as you suggested, I am slowly turning into a frivolous creature. You should praise me for it. The guests in the room upstairs, which has a good view of the moon, are supposed to be from Kobe, but they talk in Tokyo dialect, which I detest; sometimes they recite Chinese poems. A coquettish woman's voice that I kept hearing from their group suddenly became quiet about twenty or thirty minutes ago. The maid told me that they had already gone back to Kobe. But it is now very late at night, and I must go to bed. Good night.

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I wrote you last night, but I am going to report to you my small accumulation of morning thoughts. Because I am writing you one letter after another like this, you may think--with a skeptical smile--"Since this young fellow has no one else to write to except my sister and me, he must be passing his time by writing us continuously!" Some such thought occurred even to me as I wrote with my brush. If I were to fall in love with someone, though, I'll wager you would be very pleased, even if you no longer received letters from me. I think myself that I would be much happier that way, even if I failed to keep up my letters to you. In fact, after getting up this 535
morning, I went upstairs and, while looking down at the ocean, I saw a very happy couple walking along the rocky shore toward the west. They may be staying at this very inn. The woman was holding an ivory-colored parasol, and, as she walked barefoot beside the man at the water's edge, she tucked up the hem of her kimono a little. I was envious, watching them. Looking down from above as I did, I found the rippling water quite clear in the area close to shore, and I could see through it as well as through the air. I could even see the jellyfish swimming. A couple of guests from the inn were splashing around. I could see their every movement in the water, and my estimate of their skill declined accordingly. (7 a.m.)

When I next looked, a foreigner was in the water. A young woman followed him soon after. She stood in the waves and called upstairs to another foreigner. "You, come here!" she said in English, "The water is very nice." Her English was easy and quite fluent. I felt a little envious. I couldn't compete with her, and I was most impressed with her use of English. But the foreigner to whom she called showed no sign of coming down. Whether she didn't know how to swim or simply didn't want to, she just stood in the waves, under the water from her breast down. Then the westerner who was already with her in the water took her hand and attempted to guide her into deep water. But the girl shrank back from him and refused. Finally, he held her up in the water as she tried to swim. The sound of kicking and the splash of water mingled with her loud shouts and laughter could be heard all over the neighborhood. (10 a.m.).

At this hour, the guest staying in a downstairs room, accompanied by two geisha, came out to row a boat. I don't know where they got the boat, but it looked small and insubstantial. The guest offered to row, and urged the two geisha to get in, but they appeared frightened and wouldn't budge. Finally, he forced them to climb aboard. When the younger one squealed and fluttered about deliberately, her coquettishness seemed utterly affected and ridiculous. The boat circled about, and, when it returned to shore, the older geisha saw a Japanese boat tied up just back of the inn, and she asked in a loud voice, "Captain, is it available?" This time they were planning on taking along lots of supplies and going well out
on the ocean. I watched them as the geisha sent a maid from the inn to carry to the boat such items as beer, sweets, goodies, and a samisen. When their supplies were packed, they got in. But the main guest, who appeared to be a very energetic person, was still rowing out in the distance. Since no one was willing to accompany him now, he picked up a very deeply tanned, naked local child, and placed him in the boat. The geisha watched from a distance, quite astonished for a time. But then one of them yelled at him as loud as she could, "Hey, you idiot!" The man labelled "idiot" began to return. I thought her an interesting geisha, just as he was an interesting guest. (11 a.m.).

When I report such mundane details to you as though there were some novelty in them, you no doubt would be inclined to smile skeptically. But this is my proof that I have improved myself by taking this trip. I learned for the first time to move about freely and on my own. Now I don't mind writing to you about such boring, trivial matters, perhaps because I simply looked at things without analyzing, saw them without thinking. This sort of thing is, I think, the best medicine for me now. If I assert that this little trip cured my nerves or flighty temperament, I become a little embarrassed because the cure is so uncomplicated. Nevertheless, I still wish, melodramatically, perhaps, ten times more than before, that I had been born of her whom I call Mother.

White sails in a cluster, like a cloud are passing in front of Awaji Island. In the pine grove opposite, there is, so I'm told, the shrine of Hitomaru. 4 I don't know much about him, but, since I am in the vicinity, I want to go visit there if I can find the time.
Notes
Chapter VI, "Matsumoto's Story"

1 (512) "I once listened to a lecture by a certain scholar...." The scholar in question was Sōseki himself; the lecture ("The Modernization of Contemporary Japan") was given in Wakayama on August 15, 1911 (Zenshū, XXI, 32-53).

2 (533) The two old ladies at the clubhouse in Mino-o, one of whom shaved the head of the other: This scene is based on Sōseki's similar experience as recorded in his diary:

After nine, we went to Mino-o by means of the Mino-o Electric Railway through the ravine. The Asahi clubhouse is located on the cliff to the left side of the temple. (Zenshū, XXVI, 65)

The description goes on to mention the two old ladies. Mino-o is a scenic spot along the Mino-o River in Osaka.

3 (534) "He threw an open, silver-surfaced paper fan far into the moon-bright night": This poetic if wasteful action had been described in Sōseki's earlier novel, Nowake. See Zenshū, IV, 320 and X, 302.

4 (537) The shrine of Hitomaru": Kakinomoto no Hitomaro was the greatest poet at the time of the Man'yōshū (the early Eighth Century); he served the Emperors Jitō and Mommu (690-707) as court poet.
Epilogue

Keitarō's adventures had begun and ended by his listening to stories. The world he wished to explore was in the first instance far removed from his experience, but in the last case, much closer. But he was always the outsider, never able to enter in and assume an important role. His function was like that of a mere interviewer, who only listens in on the world with receiver in hand.

From Morimoto, he heard episodes of a vagabond's life. But the bits and pieces of adventurous anecdote that he received were all very superficial, consisting only of surface and plot outline. Therefore, Morimoto by fascinating Keitarō with harmless, simple adventure tales, only filled his head full of wild curiosity. Yet, deep inside his own innermost self, sensitized considerably by the amazing adventure stories, Keitarō perceived, dimly as in a dream, the significance of Morimoto as a human being. As a living actuality, he aroused in Keitarō's heart both a feeling of empathy and of revulsion for something that went beyond mere knowledge.

Again, from the pragmatist, Taguchi, he learned a
way of viewing the world as it is. At the same time, he derived yet another way of seeing life from Matsumoto, the (as he called himself) "high class vagabond." By contrasting these two kinsmen, entirely different from each other, Keitarō felt that he had to some degree enlarged his understanding of the world. But this experience was quantitative rather than qualitative.

From the lips of the lady called Chiyoko, he was told of the death of a young child. The calamity she described was quite different from what he would have expected in such circumstances. He even felt some of the joy he might have experienced from seeing a beautiful painting. But this joy was mingled with tears,--tears not as escape from pain, but as regret at his inability to hold to the fruitful sorrow longer. He was a single man, and so hadn't much feeling for children, but he observed with full sympathy that a much-loved child had died beautifully, and that it had been mourned with equal beauty. He listened to the fate of the young girl, born on Doll's Day, as though it were the story of a charming, spritely princess doll.

After that, he was amazed when he listened to the unusual account of Sunaga's relationship with his mother. Keitarō too had a mother back home. He and
his mother were not as close as the Sunagas, nor was their relationship as intricately embroidered as that of the Sunagas. Throughout his childhood he had never had any doubts as to the genuineness of the relationship; so he dismissed it as a routine matter. Even if he had intellectually figured out such a relationship as Sunaga's, it would have meant nothing to his heart. His friend's experience, as he had learned of it, had enriched his comprehension.

Not only that: he had also heard from Sunaga the story of Chiyoko, and he puzzled within his own mind as to whether they were really fated to be man and wife, or friendly adversaries, opposed on many things. Half curious, half concerned, his uncertainty led him to Matsumoto. To his surprise, he found him no mere observer with folded arms, smoking an imported pipe. He heard in detail how Matsumoto had turned Sunaga's problem over and over in his mind and handled the crisis capably in order to help his nephew. He understood perfectly the measures Matsumoto had taken.

As Keitarō looked back, the only experience he had had since his graduation, when he decided to become involved in the real world, until now, consisted of stories told him at second hand, picked up as he ran around here and there. The only experience that came to him any other way than through his ears was his
adventure of following the man in the salt-and-pepper coat while he tightly held his snake's-head cane, as his victim left the streetcar at the Ogawa-machi stop, and went with the young lady into a restaurant. Even that, he realized as he looked back on it, had been only a childish snooping rather than anything that might be called a genuine adventure or exploration. He had, to be sure, obtained a position as a result of the investigation; but, as an activity of a grown man, it could be labeled only an amusing mix-up. It was a meaningful endeavor only to himself.

In sum, then, all his recent knowledge and emotional experience had reached him only by means of his ears. Those long stories, beginning with Morimoto's and ending with Matsumoto's, affected him at first broadly but shallowly; gradually their impact became more particular and profound, before ending abruptly. Yet he was still an outsider, unable to enter in. This inability to participate was at once the most unsatisfactory aspect of his experiences, and yet also fortunate. He cursed the snake-head for his dissatisfaction and congratulated it on his luck. Finally, as he looked up into the large, boundless sky, he wondered how the drama which he had observed, and which had been arrested so suddenly, would develop and perpetuate itself in the future.
Doll's Day: Also called "Girls' Day." It is on March 3, and is paired with May 5, Boys' Day. On Dolls' Day, or Hinamatsuri (from which the name Hinako, given to Soseki's unfortunate fifth daughter, came) families with girls decorate a set of dolls dressed as courtly figures, and celebrate with traditional sake and a little rice cake.
GLOSSARY

[Japanese words listed in webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language: Unabridged, 2d ed. are not included in this tabulation.]

ankoromochi: sweet beanjam rice dumpling

akita-buke: a large edible plant of the chrisanthemum family with long leaves often used for decorative design by rub-on techniques for screens and paper panels

dengaku: bean curd broiled and coated with herb-flavored miso.

dojō: loach (a fresh-water fish). Often made into soup, flavored with miso.

fusuma: sliding screen (door)

geta: wooden clogs

gifujōchin: an elegant, egg-shaped paper lantern produced in the area of Gifu.
go: a game comparable to chess or checkers

goza: a woven mat

hachijō: a kind of silk produced in Hachijō Island

haori: a Japanese half-coat, worn over the kimono

ichōgaeshi: "butterfly" coiffure

karuta: playing cards

kasuri: woven cloth with splashed pattern

kōsen: ground roasted rice with various spices,
    usually sprinkled over hot tea

Kannon: the goddess of mercy in Buddhist doctrine

kamaboko: fish cake

marumage: a married woman's coiffure

masudake: mushroom with no stem and with salmon pink
    meat inside. Hence its name (masu = salmon).
miso: bean paste

nagauta: a long epic song often used in kabuki plays to tell the story

nameshi: rice cooked with hashed rape

nanakusa: seven autumn flowers or seven spring herbs

omeshi: silk crape

onna gidayū: a form of ballad drama recited by women

shimada: a hair arrangement for ladies

shōji: latticed and papered sliding panels

tatami: straw matting for rooms

tokonoma: recess in a Japanese room where scrolls are hung and flower arrangements placed

tōfu: bean curd
tomoe: a circular design containing two commas, the one inverted over the other

uni: sea urchin

yukata: an unlined cotton garment with a bold design, commonly worn in summer months
APPENDIX A.

MAP OF STREET CAR SYSTEM:

OGAWA-MACHI STOP AREA
APPENDIX B.

MAP OF STREET CAR SYSTEM:

EXPANSION PHASES IN TOKYO AROUND SÖSEKI'S TIME

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