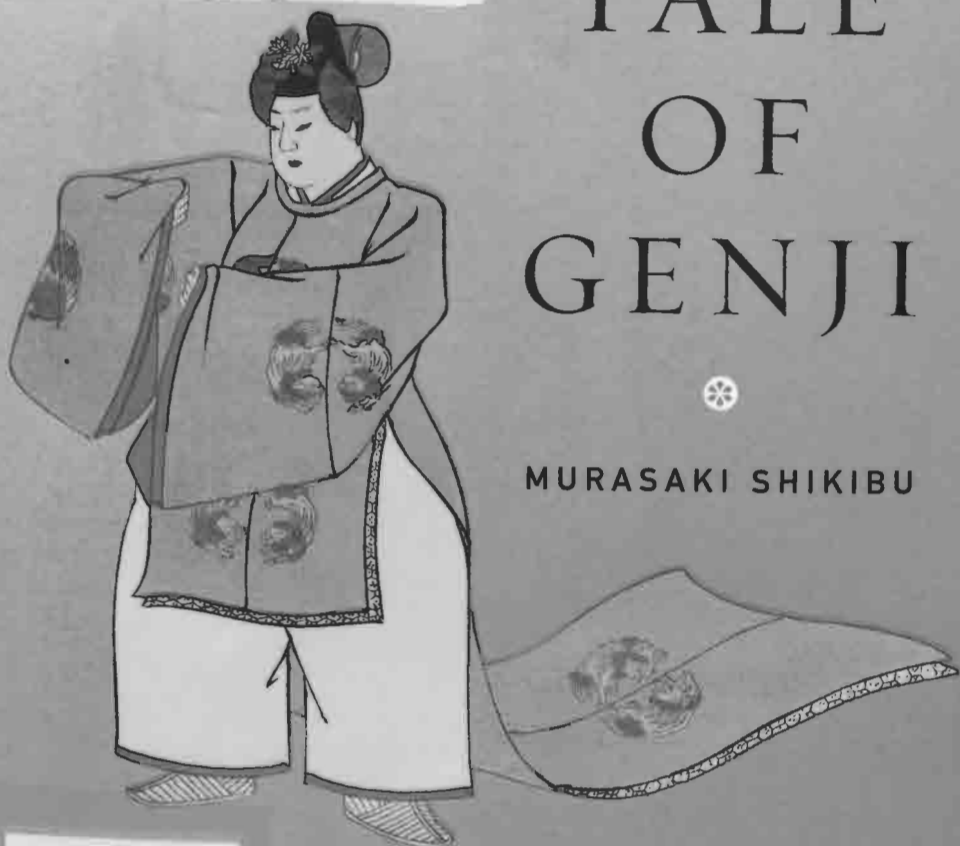


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THE TALE OF GENJI



MURASAKI SHIKIBU

Japan Books

"SUPERBLY WRITTEN AND GENUINELY ENGAGING . . . ONE OF
THOSE WORKS THAT CAN BE READ AND REREAD THROUGHOUT
ONE'S LIFE" —LIZA DALBY, *LOS ANGELES TIMES BOOK REVIEW*

PENGUIN CLASSICS



DELUXE EDITION

Translated by ROYALL TYLER

YŪGAO

The Twilight Beauty



The *yūgao* ("twilight beauty"; more literally, "evening face") is a vine that the chapter introduces this way: "A bright green vine, its white flowers smiling to themselves, was clambering merrily over what looked like a board fence." Near the start of the chapter a mysterious woman sends Genji a fan to go with some *yūgao* flowers that he has just had picked. Written on the fan he finds a poem:

*"At a guess I see that you may indeed be he: the light silver dew
brings to clothe in loveliness a twilight beauty flower."*

He answers:

*"Let me then draw near and see whether you are she, whom glimmering dusk
gave me faintly to discern in twilight beauty flowers."*

RELATIONSHIP TO EARLIER CHAPTERS

The story in "The Twilight Beauty" begins in the summer when Genji is seventeen and continues up to the tenth month. Genji seems to have been inspired to pursue both Utsusemi and Yūgao by the "rating women on a rainy night" conversation in "The Broom Tree."

PERSONS

Genji, a Captain in the Palace Guards, age 17

Genji's nurse, the Dazalfu Deputy's wife, now a nun (Daini no Menoto)

Koremitsu, Genji's foster brother and confidant

The Adept, Koremitsu's elder brother

A young woman, about 19 (Yūgao)

The lady of the cicada shell (Utsusemi)

The daughter of the Iyo Deputy (Nokiba no Ogi)

The Iyo Deputy (Iyo no Suke)

The Rokujō Haven, widow of a former Heir Apparent
(Rokujō no Miyasudokoro)

Chūjō, a gentlewoman in the Rokujō Haven's service

Ukon, Yūgao's nurse

The steward

His son, a member of the Palace Guards

The Secretary Captain, Genji's friend and brother-in-law (Tō no Chūjō)

His wife, daughter of the Minister of the Right (Shi no Kimi)

His daughter with Yūgao, the "pink," 3 (Tamakazura)

A Doctor, Genji's former teacher

In the days when Genji was calling secretly at Rokujō, he decided to visit his old nurse, the Dazaifu Deputy's wife, on the way there, since she was seriously ill and had become a nun. Her house was on Gojō.¹

When he found the gate that should have admitted his carriage locked, he sent for Koremitsu,² and while he waited he examined the unprepossessing spectacle of the avenue. Next door stood a house with new walls of woven cypress, surmounted by a line of half-panel shutters. Four or five of these were open, and through very pale, cool-looking blinds he saw the pretty foreheads of several young women who were peering out at him.³ They seemed oddly tall, judging from where the floor they were standing on ought to be. He wondered who they were, to be gathered there like that.

Having kept his carriage very modest and sent no escort ahead, he was confident of remaining unrecognized, and he therefore peered out a little.⁴ The gate, propped open like a shutter panel,⁵ gave onto a very small space. It was a poor little place, really. Touched, he recalled "What home is ours forever?"⁶ and saw that the house might just as well be a palace.⁷

A bright green vine, its white flowers smiling to themselves, was clambering merrily over what looked like a board fence. "A word I would have with you, O you

1. "Fifth Avenue," between the palace and Rokujō, "Sixth Avenue."

2. This use of his personal name suggests his intimate, subordinate relationship with Genji.

3. The house is an *itaya*, a modest dwelling roofed with boards rather than cypress bark thatch or tiles. To about chest height it has *bigaki*—walls faced with thin, crisscrossed slats of cypress (*binoki*) wood; these are then extended upward by half-panel shutters (*bajitomi*) that can be swung up and secured open in a horizontal position. Each panel covers the full space (*ken*) between two structural pillars. The "four or five" panels probably cover the full width of the house. The paleness of the blinds (*sudare*) shows them to be new.

4. Presumably through his carriage's side window (*monomi*) or past the edge of the blind that covered the carriage's rear entrance.

5. The gate was attached to a horizontal crosspiece and swung open vertically. It was propped open with a pole.

6. *Kokinshū* 987: "In all this world, what home is ours forever? Mine shall be the lodging I come upon tonight."

7. *Kokin rokujō* 3874: "What need have I for a palace? Rather to lie with you where the weeds grow thick."

from afar,"⁸ he murmured absently, at which a man of his went down on one knee and declared, "My lord, they call that white flower 'twilight beauty.'⁹ The name makes it sound like a lord or lady, but here it is blooming on this pitiful fence!"

The neighborhood houses were certainly cramped and shabby, leaning miserably in every direction and fringed with snaggle-toothed eaves, but the vine was climbing all over them. "Poor flowers!" Genji said. "Go and pick me some."

His man went in the open gate and did so, whereupon a pretty little servant girl in long trousers of sheer yellow raw silk stepped out through a plain but handsome sliding door and beckoned to him. "Here," she said, "give them to him on this—their stems are so hopeless." She handed him a white, intensely perfumed fan.

The other gate opened just then, and out came Lord Koremitsu. The man had him give Genji the flowers. "My lord," Koremitsu apologized, "we had unfortunately mislaid the key, and so we have caused you a great deal of trouble. No one in this neighborhood could possibly know you, but still, the way your carriage is standing out here in this grubby avenue . . ." He brought the carriage in, and Genji alighted.¹⁰

Koremitsu's elder brother the Adept, his brother-in-law the Governor of Mikawa, and his sister were all gathered in the house. Genji's arrival pleased them and made them very grateful.

The nun sat up. "For me it no longer matters," she said tearfully, "but what made it difficult to renounce the world was the thought that you would then have to see me in so strange a guise. I feel much better, though, now that I have received the Precepts and have had the joy of this visit from you, and I can look forward in peace to the light of Lord Amida."¹¹

"It has worried and saddened me that your illness has continued so long unrelieved, but I deeply regret that you have now visibly renounced the world. Please live on to see me rise higher still. Once I have done so, you may achieve as swiftly as you wish the loftiest of the nine births in Paradise. They say one should retain no attachment to the world." Genji, too, spoke in tears.

The eyes of one as fond as a nurse will see implausible perfection even in the least gifted child; no wonder, then, that she felt honored to have been in his intimate service and wished to avoid causing him the pain of her loss. This was why she could not keep from weeping. Her acutely embarrassed children darted each other sidelong glances before so unbecoming a show of emotion in Genji's presence, as though their mother could not after all give up the world that she was supposed to have renounced.

8. *Kokinshū* 1007 (a *sedōka*): "A word I would have with you, O you from afar who gaze into the distance: that white flower blooming yonder—what is its name?"

9. *Yūgao* (more literally, "evening face"). Genji's attendant observes that this name makes the flower sound like a "person" (*bito*), meaning someone who "is someone," that is, socially distinguished. In this context *yūgao* refers either to Genji himself or to the woman for whom the chapter is named, and "beauty" is therefore meant as an allusion to both.

10. Genji enters this gate in his carriage, as he did at the Governor of Kii's, because the people are below him in rank.

11. She has vowed to uphold the Buddhist rules of conduct (the Precepts) and looks forward to going to the paradise of the Buddha Amida. There were nine possible grades of birth into this paradise. The lowest of these required a more or less long wait before the soul could fully witness Amida's glory.

He was very moved. "When I was little, everyone who should have loved me left me.¹² Of course I had people to look after me, but you were then the one to whom I felt especially close. Now that I am grown up and can no longer always be with you or visit you as I please, I still miss you when I have been away from you too long. How I wish that there were no final parting!"¹³ He talked on tenderly, and the scent of the sleeves with which he wiped his eyes meanwhile perfumed the whole room, until the children, who just now had deplored their mother's behavior, willingly granted that she had indeed enjoyed great good fortune in her life, and they all dissolved in tears.



Hand torch

After ordering further rites for her, he had Koremitsu bring in a hand torch in preparation for leaving. On inspecting the fan presented to him earlier, he found it to be deeply impregnated with the scent favored by its owner and delightfully inscribed with this poem:

*"At a guess I see that you may indeed be he: the light silver dew
brings to clothe in loveliness a twilight beauty flower."¹⁴*

The writing was disguised, but its grace and distinction pleasantly surprised him.

"Who lives in that house to the west?" he asked Koremitsu. "Have you inquired?"

Here he goes again! thought Koremitsu, but he kept his peace and only answered a little curtly, "My lord, I have been here five or six days, it is true, but I have been too occupied caring for my mother to learn anything about next door."

"You dislike my asking, don't you. Still, I believe I have reason to look further into this fan, and I want you to call in someone acquainted with the neighborhood and find out."

Koremitsu went inside and questioned the caretaker. "The place apparently belongs to an Honorary Deputy Governor," he eventually reported. "He says the husband has gone to the country and that the wife, who is young and likes pretty things, often has her sister visiting her, since the sister is in service elsewhere. That is probably all a servant like him can be expected to know."

I see, Genji thought, it must be the young woman in service. She certainly gave me that poem of hers as though she knew her way about! She cannot be anyone in particular, though.

12. Probably his mother, who died in his third year, and his grandmother, who died in his sixth.

13. *Kokinshū* 901 (also *Ise monogatari* 154, section 84), by Ariwara no Narihira: "Would that in this world there were no final parting, for a son who wishes his mother a thousand years!"

14. "You are Genji, are you not?" He is the dew, she the flower.

Still, he rather liked the way she had accosted him, and he had no wish to miss this chance, since in such matters it was clearly his way to be impulsive. On a piece of folding paper he wrote in a hand unlike his own,

*"Let me then draw near and see whether you are she, whom glimmering dusk
gave me faintly to discern in twilight beauty flowers."*



Folding paper

He had it delivered by the man who had received the fan.

She had known his profile instantly, despite never having seen him before, and she had not let pass this chance to approach him, but his prolonged silence upset her, and she was thrilled when his reply arrived. She then took so long discussing her answer with her women that Genji's messenger was offended and returned to his lord.

Genji set off very discreetly. His escort carried only weak torches. The house next door had its half-panel shutters down. The lamplight filtering through the cracks was more muted by far, and more moving, than the glow of fireflies.

There was nothing common about the groves or the garden at the residence where Genji was bound, and the lady there lived a life of supreme elegance and ease. Her distant manner, never more marked than now, obliterated for him all memory of the vine-covered fence he had just left. He slept quite late the next morning and left at sunrise, his looks in the early light making it clear why everyone sang his praises.

Today again he passed those shutters. No doubt he had come that way before, but now, with that little encounter lingering in his mind, he wondered whenever he went by just who it was who lived there.

Koremitsu appeared a few days later and came straight up to Genji. "My mother is weaker than ever, and I have been doing what I can for her. After you last spoke to me, I called in someone who knows the house next door and questioned him, but he told me nothing clear. Someone seems to have come in the fifth month to live there incognito, but he said the household has been told nothing about her. Now and again I have a look through the fence, and I have indeed seen young women wearing a sort of apron, which suggests they are serving a lady. Yesterday the late afternoon sun was shining into the house, and I clearly saw a pretty woman sitting down to write a letter. She looked sad, and the others around her were quietly weeping." Genji smiled and thought how much he would like to know who she was.

Koremitsu felt that despite the weight of Genji's exalted station it would be a shame if he did not take some liberties, considering his age and the admiring response he received from women; after all, those too low to be granted such freedom by the world at large fancied attractive women nonetheless. "I thought up a little pretext and sent over a note in case I might discover anything," he continued. "I got an answer straight back, written in a practiced hand. As far as I can tell, there are some quite nice young women there."

"Keep at it, then. It would be very disappointing not to find out who she is." This

was the sort of house Genji had heard dismissed as inhabited by "the lowborn," but it excited him to imagine himself finding an unexpected treasure of a woman there.

Genji's astonishing rejection by the lady of the cicada shell had led him to think her hardly human, but if only she had given him a better hearing he might have contented himself with that one unfortunate misdeed, whereas under the circumstances he dwelled incessantly and with keen irritation on his dislike for giving up in defeat. He had never before set his heart on anyone so ordinary, but after that rainy night spent talking over the different levels of women, curiosity seemed to have inspired in him an inclusive interest in them all. He certainly felt sorry for that other girl, the one who was so innocently expecting him back, but it embarrassed him to imagine the first one listening quite coolly to what had passed between them, and he preferred to know *her* real intentions first.

Meanwhile the Iyo Deputy returned to the City and hastened to present Genji his respects. Naturally somewhat tanned from his sea voyage, he cut a thoroughly distasteful figure in Genji's eyes. Still, he was of quite good birth and handsome enough, though he looked his age, and he certainly carried himself well. Genji wanted to ask him when he spoke of his province how many hot-spring tubs he had found there, but he felt strangely awkward instead, and many memories came to him. It was odd and foolish of him to feel this way before a staid, mature man, and he remembered the Chief Equerry's warning, apt enough in his own case, about getting in too deep with a woman. Guilt toward the Iyo Deputy taught him that from her husband's standpoint her rejection of him had been admirable, however annoying it might have been to *him*.

On learning that the Iyo Deputy now meant to give his daughter to a suitable husband and then to go down again to his province, this time with his wife, Genji lost his head and enlisted her little brother in a plot against all odds to bring off one more meeting with her. Alas, considering who he was, he was unlikely even with her help to reach her undetected, and in reality she objected to the mismatch between them and found the very idea so demeaning as to be out of the question. Still, she knew how painfully disappointing it would be if he simply forgot her. She therefore answered him warmly whenever he wrote to her, adorning the poems she put in the least of her messages with ingeniously appealing expressions for him to remember her by and presenting herself to him as someone worthy of his love, until despite anger over her rejection he found her impossible to forget after all. As to the other girl, he took it for granted that she would welcome him even if she acquired a stalwart lord and master in the meantime, and various rumors on that topic therefore failed to upset him.

It was autumn now. Troubles for which he had only himself to blame weighed upon him and discouraged all but the most sporadic visits to His Excellency's, inviting further resentment from the lady there.

Meanwhile, after successfully overcoming the reserve of the great lady on Rokujō,¹⁵ he had changed and taken most unfortunately to treating her like any

15. The way this lady, the Rokujō Haven, slips into the narrative as though the reader already knew her is intriguing enough to have prompted reflections on how these early chapters may have been composed.

other woman. One wonders why there lived on in him nothing of the reckless passion that had possessed him when he first began courting her. She herself, who suffered excessively from melancholy, feared at the same time that rumors of an affair already embarrassing because of their difference in age would soon be in circulation, and she spent many a bitter night, when he failed to come, despairing over her troubles.

One very misty morning when the still-sleepy Genji was at last taking his leave in response to insistent urging, though with many sighs, the gentlewoman Chūjō raised a lattice shutter and moved her mistress's curtain aside as though to say, "My lady, do see him off!" She lifted her head and looked out: there he was, standing before all the colors of the garden as though he did not wish to miss their beauty. No, there was no one like him.

Chūjō accompanied him toward the gallery.¹⁶ Silk gauze train neatly tied at her waist, over an aster layering¹⁷ perfect for the season, she carried herself with delicious grace. He glanced back and sat her down by the railing at the corner of the building. Her comely deference toward him, the length of her sidelocks¹⁸—all seemed to him a miracle.

*"I would not be known for flitting lightheartedly to every flower
but this bluebell this morning I would be sad not to pick.*

What do you suggest?" he said, taking her hand, but she replied with practiced wit,

*"Your haste to be off before morning mists are gone makes it all too plain,
so I should say, that your heart cares little for your flower,"*

so turning his poem to refer to her mistress. A pretty page boy, handsome in trousers that might have been made for this very moment and that now were wet with dew, wandered out among the flowers and brought him a bluebell. One would have liked to paint the scene.

Whoever chanced to lay eyes on Genji was smitten by him. After one glimpse of the radiance that attended him, men of every degree (for the crudest woodcutter may yet aspire to pause in his labors beneath a blossoming tree)¹⁹ wished to offer him a beloved daughter, while the least menial with a sister he thought worthy entertained the ambition to place her in Genji's service. It was therefore all but impossible for a cultivated woman like Chūjō, one who had had occasion to receive poems from him and to bask in the warmth of his beauty, not to be drawn to him. She, too, must have regretted that he did not come more often.

Oh, yes, it must also be said that Koremitsu gave Genji a fine account of what

16. Probably the gallery leading to the middle gate where Genji will enter his carriage.

17. The aster (*sbion*) layering presumably achieved the blue-violet of the simple *sbion* color, close to that of the bluebell.

18. *Kami no sagariba*, locks cut short above the ears to frame the face.

19. The Japanese preface to the *Kokinshū* criticizes the "uncouthness" of Ōtomo no Kuronushi's poetry: "It is, so to speak, like a woodcutter pausing with his load of firewood beneath a blossoming tree."

he had learned from spying as ordered through the neighbors' fence. "I have no idea who she is," he reported. "As far as I can tell, she is hiding from everyone. Her women have little to keep them occupied. They seem now and again to cross over to the southern part of the house—the one with the half-panel shutters—and the younger ones go to look whenever they hear a carriage. The one I take to be their mistress is brave enough to do the same.²⁰ What I have seen of her face suggests that she is lovely. The other day a carriage passed with an escort, and a little page girl who was watching it cried, 'Look, Ukon, look! It's his lordship going by!' A rather older grown-up then came out, calling 'Hush, hush' and motioning her to be quiet. 'How do you know?' she asked, and she added, 'Come, I'll look myself.' She was hurrying across what I suppose was the crossbridge when her skirts caught, and she stumbled and almost fell. 'Goodness,' she exclaimed, 'the God of Kazuraki certainly didn't make *that* one very well!'²¹ I think they gave up watching after that. The girl said the gentleman in the carriage had been in a dress cloak, and to prove it had been the Secretary Captain²² she named several of the attendants and pages she had seen with him."

"I wish I had seen his carriage myself." Genji wondered whether she might be the one the Secretary Captain could not forget.

"I am doing well at courting one of the women there," Koremitsu went on, smiling at Genji's obvious eagerness to learn more, "and I know the house by now, but the young women still talk to each other as though they were there by themselves, and I go about pretending to believe them. They think their secret is safe, and whenever a child threatens to blurt out something,²³ they talk their way past the difficulty and keep up their show of being alone."

"Give me a look through that fence next time I call on your mother." Judging from where she was living, at least for now, she must belong to that lower grade that his friend had so curtly dismissed. Yes, Genji thought, what if there really were a surprisingly pleasant discovery to be made there?

Koremitsu, who could not bear to disappoint his lord, marshaled his own wide experience of courtship to devise a way at last to introduce him into the house. All that makes a long story, though, so as usual I have left it out.

Having failed to discover who she was, Genji withheld his identity from her and pursued her in deep disguise,²⁴ with such patient ardor that Koremitsu let him have his own horse and walked beside his lord. "I should be sorry to have the great lover seen approaching the house on foot, like a menial," he complained, but Genji, who trusted no one else with his secret, had himself accompanied otherwise only by the man who had passed him the twilight beauty flowers and by a single page whose face no one in the house would know. He even avoided calling at the house next door, lest they guess after all who he was.

20. The bridge between the buildings seems to consist only of planks, and the word in the original, *bai-wataru* ("crawl across"), suggests that she crosses it in trepidation.

21. The god of the Kazuraki Mountains, ordered by a wizard to build a stone bridge from one mountain range to another, refused to work in daylight and so never quite finished.

22. *Tō no Chūjō*.

23. They talk to their mistress as equals, but the children sometimes begin to address her in honorific language.

24. Dressed so as to conceal his rank, and in this case apparently also his face.

In her bewilderment she had Genji's letter-bearer followed and tried to discover where Genji himself went after he left her at dawn, all in the hope of finding out where he lived, but he and his men always managed to evade hers, even as the thought of her so filled his mind that he could not be without her and was constantly appearing at her side, tormented by his unseemly folly.

An affair of this kind may lead the most staid man astray, but so far Genji had always managed to control himself, and he had done nothing to merit censure. It was extraordinary, though, how leaving her in the morning or being away from her only for the day made him miserable enough to wonder whether he had lost his senses, and to struggle to remind himself that nothing about her required this degree of passion. In manner she seemed very young, for she was remarkably sweet and yielding, and hardly given to deep reflection; yet she knew something of worldly ways, and she could not be of very high birth. Again and again he asked himself what it was that he saw in her.

He made a show of dressing modestly in a hunting cloak, of changing his costume, and of giving her no look at his face, and he never came to her until everyone in the house was asleep. He was so like a shape-changing creature of old²⁵ that he caused her acute anguish, although his manner with her, and her own sense of touch, made her wonder how great a lord he might be. It must be that great lover I have to thank for this, she reflected, her suspicion falling on Koremitsu; but Koremitsu only feigned ignorance and went on lightheartedly visiting the house as though he knew nothing, until confusion overcame her and she sank into a strange melancholy.

Genji assumed that she was in hiding only for the time being, and he wondered where he would seek her if she were to vanish after snaring him so artlessly. It worried him that he would never know on what day she might go, or where. She would have been just a passing distraction if he then failed to find her and accepted her loss, but he did not believe for a moment that he could forget her that easily. Every night when discretion kept him from her was such a trial that he thought of bringing her to Nijō, whoever she might be, and if the resulting gossip embarrassed him, so be it. Despite himself he wondered what bond from the past could have aroused a passion so consuming and so unfamiliar.

"Come," he said, "I want to talk quietly somewhere where we can be alone."

"But that would be so strange," she protested naively. "I understand your feeling, but that sort of thing is not done. The idea upsets me."

No doubt it does, Genji reflected with a smile. "Yes," he said gently, "one or the other of us must be a fox: so just let *me* bewitch *you*."

She let him have his way and yielded completely. Her utter submissiveness, however curious, was extremely engaging. She *must* be the "gillyflower" described, as he now remembered, by the Secretary Captain, but if she was in hiding she must have her reasons, and he refrained from pressing her. He saw no sign that she might suddenly flare up at him and vanish—he foresaw no such change unless he ne-

25. In the myth of Mount Miwa, for example, a young woman is visited every night by an invisible lover. At last she ties a thread to his clothing, follows it, and finds that he is the serpent deity of the mountain.

glected her badly—and he even fancied despite himself that a little coolness from him might add to her appeal.

On the fifteenth night of the eighth month,²⁶ bright moonlight poured through every crack into the board-roofed house, to his astonishment, since he had never seen a dwelling like this before. Dawn must have been near, because he heard uncouth men in the neighboring houses hailing one another as they awoke.

"Goodness, it's cold!"

"Not much hope for business this year—I'll never get out to the country!²⁷ What a life! Say, neighbor, you on the north, d'you hear me?"

She was deeply embarrassed by this chatter and clatter all around them of people rising and preparing to go about their pitiful tasks. The place would have made anyone with any pretensions want to sink through the floor, but she remained serene and betrayed no response to any sound, however painful, offensive, or distressing, and her manner retained so naive a grace that the dismal commotion might just as well have meant nothing to her at all. Genji therefore forgave her more readily than if she had been openly ashamed. Thud, thud, a treadle mortar thundered almost at their pillow,²⁸ until he understood at last what "detestable racket" means. Having no idea what was making it, he only was aware that it was new and that it was awful. The assortment of noises was no more than a jumble to him.

The sound of snowy robes being pounded on the fulling block reached him faintly from all sides, and wild geese were crying in the heavens. These and many other sounds roused him to painfully keen emotion.²⁹ He slid the nearby door open, and together they looked outside. The tiny garden boasted a pretty clump of bamboo on which dew gleamed as brightly as elsewhere. Insects of all kinds were singing, and to Genji, who seldom heard even a cricket in the wall, this concert of cries almost in his ears was a bizarre novelty, although his love for her must have inclined him to be forgiving. She was engagingly frail in the modesty of her soft, pale gray-violet gown over layers of white, and although she had nothing striking about her, her slender grace and her manner of speaking moved him deeply. She could perhaps do with a touch of pride, but he still wanted very much to be with her in less constricting surroundings.



Fulling block

26. The great full moon night of the year. In the lunar calendar this date is in autumn.

27. Perhaps the speaker would normally be buying rice in the country to sell in town.

28. It is probably polishing rice.

29. These sounds, unlike the earlier noises, are poetically evocative. *Shirotae no* ("snowy") is a noble epithet for *koromo* ("robe"). The sound of a robe being beaten on a fulling block (*kinuta*), to clean it and restore its luster, meant autumn and the waning of the year, and perhaps a woman under the moon calling to her lost love; the motif is originally Chinese. The cries of migrating geese, too, told of autumn and farewell.

"Come, let us spend the rest of the night comfortably in a place nearby. It has been so difficult, meeting nowhere but here."

"But I do not see how . . . This is so sudden . . ." she protested innocently. Never mind his promises that their love would outlast this life; her meek trust was inexplicably gone, and he could hardly believe that she knew worldly ways. He therefore threw caution to the winds, had Ukon call his man, and got his carriage brought up. This demonstration of ardor gave her anxious gentlewomen faith in him after all.

It would soon be dawn. No cocks were crowing. All they heard was an old man's voice as he prostrated himself full-length, no doubt for a pilgrimage to the Holy Mountain.³⁰ The labor of throwing himself down and rising again sounded painful. Genji wondered what in this dewlike world he so desired that he insisted on such strenuous prayers.

"Hail to the Guide who is to come!"³¹ the old man chanted. Genji was moved. "Listen to him: he, too, is thinking beyond just this life.

*Let your own steps take the path this good man follows so devotedly
and in that age yet to come still uphold the bond we share."*

He had avoided the old lines about the "Hall of Long Life" and turned "sharing a wing"³² into a prayer that they should greet the Age of Miroku together. It was a grand leap into the future.

*"Such are the sorrows that make plain what fate past lives require me to bear
that I have no faith at all in better from times to come."*

Her reply, such as it was, was forlorn.

While he sought to persuade her, since she could not make up her mind to launch forth so boldly under the slowly sinking moon, the moon suddenly slid behind clouds and the dawn sky took on great beauty. He hurried out as always, lest day betray his doings to the world, and lifted her easily into the carriage. Ukon got in, too.

They soon reached a certain estate,³³ and while waiting for the steward they gazed at the ferns along the old gate's ruinous eaves. All was darkness under the trees. The fog hung wet and heavy, and Genji's sleeves were soaked merely because

30. He is "touching his forehead to the ground," that is, doing repeated, full-length prostrations. The pilgrimage to Mitake (now Sanjō-ga-take, 5,676 feet, in the Ōmine range) required strict purification and attracted both nobles and commoners. The mountain was then particularly sacred to Miroku, the future Buddha.

31. *Namo tōrai dōsbi*, the invocation to Miroku, who will descend into a transfigured world many eons from now. The pilgrim prayed to be born into his age and to hear his teaching.

32. Excessively obvious allusions to "The Song of Unending Sorrow," where, in the Hall of Long Life, the lovers swear that in the hereafter they will be like trees with shared branches or birds that share a wing.

33. Reminiscent of Kawara no In ("Riverside"), built by Minamoto no Tōru (822-95) and later imperial property. Kawara no In was the scene of a famous ghost story, and its location matches the tale's description.

he had put up the carriage's blinds. "I have never done anything like this," he said. "It is nerve-racking, isn't it?"

*Once upon a time could it be that others, too, lost their way like this?
I myself have never known such strange wanderings at dawn.*

Have you ever done this before?"

She answered shyly,

*"The wayfaring moon uncertain what to expect from the mountains' rim,
may easily fade away and disappear in mid-sky."³⁴*

I am afraid."

It amused him to see her so tremulous and fearful. He assumed that she just missed the crowd always around her at home.

He had the carriage brought in and its shafts propped on the railing³⁵ while their room was made ready in the west wing. The excited Ukon thought back over the past, because the way the steward rushed officiously about showed what sort of man her mistress's lover was.

They left the carriage as day was beginning to restore shape and color to the world. The place was nicely arranged for them, despite their sudden arrival.

"I see you have no one else with you, my lord," said the steward, a close lower-level retainer in service also at His Excellency's. "This makes things rather difficult." He approached and asked through Ukon whether he should summon a suitable entourage.³⁶

Genji quickly silenced him. "I came here purposely to hide. Say not a word about this to anyone." The man hastened to provide a morning meal, although he did indeed lack staff to serve it.

Genji had never slept away from home quite like this before, and he assured her over and over that he would love her even longer than the Okinaga River would flow.³⁷ The sun was high when they rose, and he lifted the shutters himself. The unkempt and deserted garden stretched into the distance, its ancient groves towering in massive gloom. The near garden and shrubbery lacked any charm, the wider expanse resembled an autumn moor, and the lake was choked with water weeds. The place was strangely disturbing and quite isolated, although there seemed to be an inhabited outbuilding some distance off.

"The place is eerie," he said, "but never mind: the demons will not trouble me."

34. The "mountains' rim" (where the moon sets) is Genji, the moon is the woman, who does not know how far Genji's intentions toward her go.

35. Around the veranda: a makeshift arrangement, since carriage shafts normally rested on a "shaft bench" (*sbiji*).

36. The steward ranks too low to address Genji directly; his earlier speech, too, must be indirect.

37. In *Man'yōshū* 4482, by Umanofuhito Kunihito, the poet assures his lady that he will love her even if the Okinaga River stops flowing. This name, which can be taken to mean "long breath," is linked in the poem to the grebe (*nio*), which holds its breath to feed underwater.

She was thoroughly offended that he still had his face covered, and he agreed that this was unnatural by now.

*"The flower you see disclosing now its secrets in the evening dew
glimmered first before your eyes in a letter long ago,"*

he said. "Does the gleam of the dew please you?"

With a sidelong glance she murmured,

*"The light I saw fill the dewdrops adorning then a twilight beauty
was nothing more than a trick of the day's last fading gleam!"*

He was delighted. When at his ease he really was extraordinarily beautiful—in this setting, in fact, alarmingly so. "The way you kept your distance hurt me so much that I meant never to show you my face. Do tell me your name now. You frighten me, you know."³⁸

"But you see, I am only a diver's daughter,"³⁹ she answered mildly, as always refusing to tell him more.

"All right, I suppose the fault is mine."⁴⁰ He spent the rest of the day now reproving her, now whispering sweet nothings in her ear.

Koremitsu managed to find them, and he brought refreshments. He avoided waiting on Genji in person because he did not want to hear what Ukon would say to him. It amused him that Genji had resorted to bringing her here, and, assuming that her looks deserved this much trouble, he congratulated himself rather bitterly (since he could quite well have had her himself) on his generosity in ceding her to his lord.

While gazing at the ineffably peaceful sunset sky, Genji remembered that she disliked the gloom inside the house. He raised the outer blinds⁴¹ and lay down beside her. They looked at each other in the twilight glow, and despite her anxiety she forgot her cares and charmingly yielded to him a little. She had now lain by him all day, piercingly young and sweet in her shy terror.

He lowered the lattice shutters early and had the lamp lit. "Here we are," he complained, "as close as we could possibly be, but at heart you are still keeping yourself from me. I cannot bear it."

He knew how anxiously His Majesty now must be seeking him, though he could not imagine where his men might be looking. How strange a love this is! And on Rokujō, what a state she must be in! She above all stirred his guilt, and he understood her anger, however painful it might be. The more fondly he dwelled on the artless innocence before him, the more he longed to rid *her* a little of the pride that so unsettled him.

38. Genji plays at being afraid that she is a fox.

39. *Wakan rōei sbū* 722 (also *Shinkokinshū* 1703), a reply to a gentleman's advances: "No home have I of my own, for I, a diver's daughter, live beside white-breaking waves upon the ocean shore."

40. Genji's reply acknowledges "I am a diver's daughter" with a wordplay on *warekara*: "my fault" but also the name of a creature alleged to live in seaweed.

41. Those between the aisle and the veranda.

Late in the evening he dozed off to see a beautiful woman seated by his pillow. She said, "You are a wonder to me, but you do not care to visit me: no, you bring a tedious creature here and lavish yourself upon her. It is hateful of you and very wrong." She began shaking the woman beside him awake.

He woke up, aware of a heavy, menacing presence. The lamp was out. In alarm he drew his sword and laid it beside her, then roused Ukon. She came to him, clearly frightened, too.

"Go," he commanded, "wake the guard on the bridgeway and have him bring a hand torch."

"But how can I, my lord, in the dark?"

"Don't be silly!" Genji laughed and clapped his hands. Eldritch echoes answered.

No one could hear him, no one was coming. She was shivering violently, helplessly. Soaked with perspiration, she seemed to be unconscious.

"She is always so timid anyway," Ukon said. "What she must be going through now!"

Genji pitied her, frail as she was and so given to spending her days gazing up at the sky. "I shall wake him myself. Tiresome echoes are all I get for my clapping. Wait here, stay with her."

He dragged Ukon to her, then went to the western double doors and pushed them open. The light on the bridgeway was out, too. A breeze had sprung up, and the few men at his service—just the steward's son (a young man he used on private errands), the privy chamber page,⁴² and his usual man—were asleep. The steward's son answered his call.

"Bring a hand torch. Have my man twang his bowstring⁴³ and keep crying warnings. What do you mean by going to sleep in a lonely place like this? I thought Lord Koremitsu was here. Where is he?"

"He was at your service, my lord, but he left when you had no orders for him. He said he would be back for you at dawn." The young man disappeared toward the steward's quarters, expertly twanging his bowstring (he belonged to the Palace Guards) and crying over and over again, "Beware of fire!"⁴⁴

Genji thought of the palace, where the privy gentlemen must have reported for duty and where the watch must even now be being announced.⁴⁵ It was not yet really so very late.

He went back in and felt his way to her. She still lay with Ukon prostrate beside her. "What is this? Fear like yours is folly!" he scolded Ukon. "In empty houses, foxes and whatnot shock people by giving them a good fright—yes, that is it. We will not have the likes of them threatening us as long as I am here." He made her sit up.

42. A youth described earlier as "a single page whose face those in the house could not know."

43. To repel the baleful spirit.

44. An all-purpose warning cry.

45. At the hour of the Boar (circa 9 P.M.), the privy gentlemen, reporting for duty in the privy chamber, announced their names to the official in charge. Then the guards reporting for the watch likewise announced their names.

"My lord, I was only lying that way because I feel so ill. My poor lady must be quite terrified."

"Yes, but why should she . . . ?" He felt her: she was not breathing. He shook her, but she was limp and obviously unconscious, and he saw helplessly that, child-like as she was, a spirit had taken her.

The hand torch came. Ukon was in no condition to move, and Genji drew up the curtain that stood nearby.⁴⁶

"Bring it closer!" he ordered. Reluctant to approach his lord further in this crisis, the man had stopped short of entering the room. "Bring it here, I tell you! Have some sense!"

Now in the torchlight Genji saw at her pillow, before the apparition vanished, the woman in his dream. Despite surprise and terror, for he had heard of such things at least in old tales, he was frantic to know what had become of her, until he shed all dignity and lay down beside her, calling on her to wake up; but she was growing cold and was no longer breathing.

He was speechless. There was no one to tell him what to do. He should have recalled that at such times one particularly needs a monk,⁴⁷ but despite his wish to be strong he was too young, and seeing her lost completely undid him. "Oh, my love," he cried, throwing his arms around her, "come back to life! Don't do this terrible thing to me!" But she was quite cold by now and unpleasant to touch. Ukon's earlier terror yielded to a pathetic storm of weeping.

He gathered his courage, remembering how a demon had threatened a Minister in the Shishinden.⁴⁸ "No, no," he scolded Ukon, "she cannot really be gone! How loud a voice sounds at night! Quiet, quiet!" The sudden calamity had him completely confused.

He called for the steward's son. "Someone here has been strangely attacked by a spirit and appears to be gravely ill. Send my man straight for Lord Koremitsu and have him come immediately. If the Adept happens to be there, tell him privately to come, too. He is to be discreet and keep this from their mother. She disapproves of such escapades."

He got this out well enough, but he was in torment, and the awful thought that he might cause her death⁴⁹ gave the place terrors beyond words. Midnight must have passed, and the wind had picked up. The pines were roaring like a whole forest, and an eerie bird uttered raucous cries; he wondered whether it was an owl. The house was so dreary, so lonely, so silent. Oh, why, he bitterly asked himself in vain regret, why had he chosen to spend the night in this dreadful place? The frantic Ukon clung to him, shaking as though she would die. He held her and wondered miserably what was to become of her. He alone had remained lucid, and now he, too, was at his wits' end.

The lamp guttered, while from shadowy recesses over the screen between him

46. To conceal himself and the lady from the man with the light.

47. As an exorcist.

48. In legend the Chancellor Tadahira was passing the Emperor's seat in the Shishinden late one night when a demon seized the tip of his scabbard and threatened him. Tadahira drew his sword and cried, "How dare you interfere with His Majesty's emissary?" The demon fled.

49. He still seems to believe that she is somehow alive.

and the chamber⁵⁰ came the thump and scuff of *things* walking; he felt them coming up behind him. If only Koremitsu would come soon! But Koremitsu was hard to track down, and the eternities that passed while Genji's man hunted for him made that one night seem a thousand.

At last a distant cockcrow set thoughts whirling through his head. What could really have led him here to risk his life in such a catastrophe? His recklessness in these affairs now seemed to have made him an example forever. Never mind trying to hush this up—the truth will always out. His Majesty would hear of it, it would be on everyone's lips, and the ruffraff of the town would be hawking it everywhere. All and sundry would know him only as a fool.

At last Koremitsu arrived. He had always been at Genji's service, midnight or dawn, yet tonight of all nights he had been delinquent and failed to answer his lord's call. Genji had him come in, despite his displeasure, and he had so much to tell that words failed him at first. Ukon gathered that Koremitsu was there, and she wept to remember all that had happened. Genji, too, broke down. While alone he had borne up as well as he could and held his love in his arms, but Koremitsu's arrival had brought him the respite to know his grief, and for some time he could only weep and weep.

At length his tears let up. "Something very, very strange has happened here, something horrible beyond words. In a moment so dire I believe one chants the scriptures, so I have sent for your brother to do that and to offer prayers."

"He returned to the Mountain⁵¹ yesterday," Koremitsu replied. "But all this is quite extraordinary. Could it be that my lady was feeling unwell?"

"No, no, not at all."

Genji, weeping once more, looked so perfectly beautiful that Koremitsu, too, was overcome and dissolved in tears. After all, in this crisis their need was for someone mature, someone with rich experience of the world. They were too young really to know what to do.

"The steward here must not find out; that would be a disaster," Koremitsu said. "He can perhaps be trusted himself, but the retainers around him will spread the story. My lord, you must leave this house immediately."

"But how could anywhere else be less populated?"

"Yes, that is true. At her house the grieving women would weep and wail, and there are so many houses around that the neighbors would all notice. Everyone would soon know. At a mountain temple, though, this sort of thing is not unknown, and in a place like that it might be possible to evade attention."

Koremitsu then had an idea. "I will take her to the Eastern Hills, to where a gentlewoman I once knew is living as a nun. She was my father's nurse, and she is very old. The neighborhood looks crowded, but the place is actually very quiet and sheltered." He had Genji's carriage brought up, now that full day had returned the people on the estate to their occupations.

Genji did not have the strength to lift her in his arms, and it was Koremitsu

50. Genji, Ukon, and the lady seem to be in the aisle with a folding screen between them and the chamber.

51. Mount Hiei.

who wrapped her in a padded mat and laid her in the carriage. She was so slight that he was more drawn than repelled. He had not wrapped her securely, and her hair came tumbling out. The sight blinded Genji with tears and drove him to such a pitch of grief that he resolved to stay with her to the end.

However, Koremitsu would not have it. "My lord, you must ride back to Nijō before too many people are out." He had Ukon get in the carriage as well, then gave Genji his horse and set off on foot with his gathered trousers hitched up.⁵² It was a strange cortège, but Genji's desperate condition had driven from Koremitsu's mind any thought of himself.⁵³ Genji reached home oblivious to his surroundings and barely conscious.

"Where have you been, my lord?" his women wanted to know. "You do not look at all well." But he went straight into his curtained bed, pressed his hand to his heart, and gave himself up to his anguish.

How can I not have gone in the carriage with her? he asked himself in agony. How will she feel if she revives? She will probably assume that I just took this chance to abscond, and she will hate me. He felt sick. His head ached, he seemed to have a fever, and all in all he felt so very ill that he thought he might soon be done for himself.

His gentlewomen wondered why he did not rise even though the sun was high. Despite their offer of a morning meal he just lay there, suffering and sick at heart. Meanwhile, messengers—the young gentlemen from His Excellency's⁵⁴—came from His Majesty, whose failure to find Genji yesterday had worried him greatly. From within his blinds Genji invited the Secretary Captain alone to "Come in, but remain standing."⁵⁵

"In the fifth month a former nurse of mine became so ill that she cut off her hair and took the Precepts," he explained, "and that seemed to make her better, but recently her illness flared up again, and in her weakened condition she asked to see me a last time. I went to her because, after all, she has been close to me since I was a baby, and I thought she would be hurt if I did not. Unfortunately, a servant of hers, one already unwell, died before they could remove her from the house. In fear of what this would mean for me, they let the day go by before they took her away, but I found out, and so now, in a month filled with holy rites, this tiresome difficulty means that I cannot in good conscience go to the palace.⁵⁶ I apologize for talking to you like this, but I have had a headache ever since daybreak. I must have a cold."

52. The legs of the gathered trousers were usually tied at the ankles with a cord, but for ease of movement Koremitsu brings the cord up to just below his knees.

53. He has accepted the inconvenience of contact with death and the embarrassment of being seen to walk when a man of his standing should ride.

54. Genji's brothers-in-law.

55. Genji is in the chamber, where the blinds are still down. *Tō no Chūjō*, if Genji had allowed him to sit, would have incurred the same pollution (from contact with death) as Genji, and he would have passed it on to his family, the palace, and so on.

56. This (fictitious) death means that both Genji and the household are defiled. Genji must stay at home in a sort of quarantine for thirty days until halfway through the ninth month, one particularly busy with Shinto rites. Moreover, the imperial envoy to an important rite at Ise (the *Kaname-sai*) left on the eleventh of the month, and for the occasion Buddhist priests and persons in mourning were banned from the palace.

"I shall report this to His Majesty," the Secretary Captain answered. "There was music last night, and he looked for you everywhere. He did not seem at all pleased."

He spoke now for himself. "What really is this defilement you have incurred? I am afraid I find your story difficult to believe."

Genji felt a twinge of alarm. "Spare His Majesty the details. Just tell him I have been affected by an unforeseen defilement. It is all very unpleasant." His reply sounded casual, but at heart he was desperate with grief. In his distress he refused to see anyone. Summoning the Chamberlain Controller,⁵⁷ he had him convey formally to His Majesty a report on his condition. To His Excellency's he wrote that, for the reason he mentioned, he could not present himself at court.

Koremitsu came at dark. There were few people about because all Genji's visitors had left without sitting down once he warned them that he was defiled. Genji called him in. "Tell me, did you make quite sure there was no hope?" He pressed his sleeves to his eyes and wept.

"Yes, my lord, I believe that it is all over." Koremitsu, too, was in tears. "I could not stay long. I have arranged with a saintly old monk I know to see tomorrow to what needs to be done, since that is a suitable day."⁵⁸

"What about her gentlewoman?"

"I doubt she will survive this. This morning she looked ready to throw herself from a cliff in her longing to join her mistress. She wanted to let her mistress's household know, but I managed to persuade her to be patient and to think things over first."

Genji was overwhelmed. "I feel very ill myself, and I wonder what is to become of me."

"My lord, you need not brood this way. All things turn out as they must. I will not let anyone know, and I plan to look after everything myself."

"I suppose you are right. I have been trying to convince myself of that, too, but it is so painful to be guilty of having foolishly caused someone's death. Say nothing to Shōshō⁵⁹ or to anyone else," he went on, to make sure Koremitsu's lips were sealed. "Your mother, especially, disapproves strongly of this sort of thing, and I could never face her if she knew." Koremitsu assured him to his immense relief that he had told even the monks of the temple a quite different story.

"How strange! What can be going on?" the women murmured as they caught scraps of this conversation. "He says he is defiled and cannot go to the palace? But why are the two of them whispering and groaning that way?"

"Keep up the good work, then." Genji gave Koremitsu directions for the coming rite.

"But, my lord," Koremitsu answered, rising, "this is no time for ostentation."

Genji could not bear to see him go. "You will not like this, I know, but there will be no peace for me until I see her body again. I shall ride there myself."

57. Kurōdo no Ben, a younger brother of Tō no Chūjō. Genji may suspect Tō no Chūjō, who does not believe him, and want to make sure that his message gets through properly.

58. For a funeral, according to the almanac.

59. A gentlewoman, probably Koremitsu's sister.

Koremitsu thought this risky, but he replied, "So be it, my lord, if that is your wish. You must start immediately, then, and be back before the night is over."

Genji changed into the hunting cloak that he had worn lately on his secret outings and set forth. Oppressed as he was and burdened by sorrow, he wondered after that encounter with danger whether he really should undertake so perilous a journey, but the merciless torments of grief drove him to persevere, for if he did not see her body now, when in all eons to come would he look upon her again as she had once been?

As always he took his man and Koremitsu with him. The way seemed endless. The moon of the seventeenth night⁶⁰ shone so brightly that along the bank of the Kamo River his escort's lights⁶¹ barely showed, and such was his despair that the view toward Toribeno troubled him not at all.⁶² At last he arrived.

The neighborhood had something disturbing about it, and the nun's board-roofed house, beside the chapel where she did her devotions, was desolate. Lamp-light glowed faintly through the cracks, and he heard a woman weeping within. Outside, two or three monks chatted between spells of silently calling Amida's Name.⁶³ The early night office in the nearby temples was over, and deep quiet reigned, while toward Kiyomizu there were lights and signs of dense habitation. A venerable monk, the nun's own son, was chanting scripture in such tones as to arouse holy awe. Genji felt as though he would weep until his tears ran dry.

He went in to find the lamp turned to the wall⁶⁴ and Ukon lying behind a screen, and he understood her piercing sorrow. No fear troubled him. *She* was as lovely as ever; as yet she betrayed no change. He took her hand. "Oh, let me hear your voice again!" he implored, sobbing. "What timeless bond between us can have made me love you so briefly with all my heart, only to have you cruelly abandon me to grief?" The monks, who did not know who he was, wondered at his tears and wept with him.

Genji invited Ukon to come to Nijō, but she only replied, "What home could I have, my lord, now that I have so suddenly lost the lady I have never left in all the years since she and I were children together? But I want to let the others know what has become of her. However dreadful this may be, I could not bear to have them accuse me of having failed to tell them." She went on amid bitter tears, "I only wish I could join her smoke and rise with her into the sky!"

"Of course you do," he said consolingly, "but that is life, you know. There has never been a parting without pain. The time comes for all of us, sooner or later. Cheer up and trust me. Even as I speak, though," he added disconcertingly, "I doubt that I myself have much longer to live."

"My lord," Koremitsu broke in, "it will soon be dawn. You should be starting home."

60. A moon two days past the full.

61. The runners who go before him with torches.

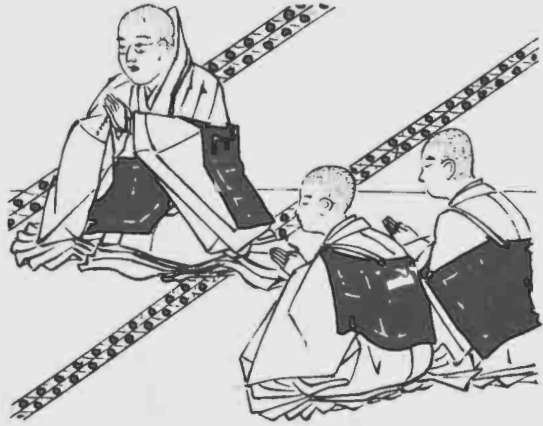
62. Genji is riding south down the Kamo River, bound for the southern end of the Eastern Hills. In the distance, to his left (eastward), he sees the burning ground of Toribeno, where Yūgao will be cremated.

63. The *nenbutsu*, the formula for calling the name of Amida, was usually voiced, but not for a funeral. The Buddha Amida welcomes souls into his paradise.

64. Away from the body, which has been laid out for the wake.

Sick at heart, Genji looked back again and again as he rode away.

The journey was a very dewy one,⁶⁵ and it seemed to him that he was wandering blindly through the dense morning fog. She had lain there looking as she did in life, under that scarlet robe of his, the one he had put over her the night before in exchange for one of her own. What had the tie between them really been? All along the way he



Monks calling on Amida

tried to work it out. Koremitsu was beside him once more to assist him, because in his present condition his seat was none too secure, but even so he slid to the ground as they reached the Kamo embankment.

"You may have to leave me here by the roadside," he said from the depths of his agony. "I do not see how I am to get home."

The worried Koremitsu realized that if he had had his wits about him he would never have let Genji insist on taking this journey. He washed his hands in the river and called in the extremity of his trouble on the Kannon of Kiyomizu,⁶⁶ but this left him no wiser about what to do. Genji took himself resolutely in hand, called in his heart on the buddhas,⁶⁷ and with whatever help Koremitsu could give him managed somehow to return to Nijō.

His gentlewomen deplored this mysterious gadding about in the depths of the night. "This sort of thing does not look well," they complained among themselves. "Lately he has been setting out more restlessly than ever on these secret errands, and yesterday he really looked very ill. Why do you suppose he goes roaming about like this?"

As he lay there, he did indeed seem extremely unwell, and two or three days later he was very weak. His Majesty was deeply disturbed to learn of his condition. Soon the clamor of healers was to be heard everywhere, while rites, litanies, and purifications went forward in numbers beyond counting. The entire realm lamented that Genji, whose perfection of beauty already aroused apprehension, now seemed unlikely to live.

Through his suffering he called Ukon to his side, granted her a nearby room, and took her into his service. Koremitsu managed to calm his fears, despite the anxiety that gripped him, and he helped Ukon to make herself useful, reflecting that

65. "Dew" means tears.

66. Koremitsu can probably still see Kiyomizudera to the east. The temple is dedicated to a form of Kannon, the bodhisattva of compassion and a savior from peril.

67. The buddhas (*hotoke*) invoked by Genji could be one or many. He, too, may have the Kannon of Kiyomizu in mind.

she had after all no other refuge. He called her whenever he felt a little better and gave her things to do, and she was soon acquainted with all his staff. Although no beauty, in her dark mourning⁶⁸ she made a perfectly presentable young woman.

"It is strange how the little time that she and I had together seems in the end to have shortened my life as well," he said to her privately. "If it had been given me to live long, I would have wanted to do all I could for you, so as to heal the pain of losing the mistress you trusted for all those years, but as it is, I shall soon be going to join her. How I wish it were not so!" The sight of his feeble tears made her forget her own woes and long only for him to live.

His household was distraught, while more messengers came from the palace than raindrops from the sky. He was very sorry to know that he was causing His Majesty such concern, and he did his best to rally his own strength. His Excellency visited him daily, and thanks perhaps to his attentive ministrations, Genji's indisposition all but vanished after twenty days and more of grave illness, and he seemed bound for recovery.

That night the seclusion imposed on Genji by his defilement came to an end, and he repaired to his apartment at the palace out of consideration for His Majesty, who had felt such anxiety on his behalf. His Excellency came for him there in his carriage and inquired solicitously about his period of seclusion. Genji felt for a time as though all this were unreal and he had returned to life in an unknown world.

By the twentieth of the ninth month he was quite well. He was extremely thin, it is true, but for that very reason his beauty had acquired a new and special grace. He was also prone to spells of vacant melancholy and of tears, which inspired curiosity and gave rise to the rumor that he must be possessed by a spirit.

Early one quiet evening he had Ukon come to him for a chat. "I still do not understand," he said. "Why did she keep me from knowing who she was? It would have been cruel even of 'a diver's daughter,' if she had really been one, to ignore my obvious love and to keep me so much at a distance."

"Why should she ever have wished to hide who she was from you, my lord? When might she have seen fit to tell you her own, wholly insignificant name? You came to her from the start in a guise so strange that, as she herself said, she could not quite believe you were real. Your very insistence on keeping your identity from her made it clear enough who you were, but it hurt her that you seemed so obviously to be seeking only your own amusement."

"What an unfortunate contest of wills! I had no wish to remain distant from her. But, you see, I still have very little experience of the kind of affair that others might criticize. In my position I must be cautious about a great many things, for fear above all of reproof from His Majesty, and I simply do not have the latitude to go courting any woman I please, because whatever I do could so easily open me to reproach. Still, I was so strangely drawn to her after that first evening's chance exchange that I risked visiting her after all, which I suppose was proof enough that the bond between us was foreordained. How sad it all is, and how bitter! Why did she

68. She would normally have worn light gray, but her intimacy with Yūgao called for a darker shade.

take such complete possession of my heart, if she and I really were destined to be with each other so briefly? Do tell me more about her. Why withhold anything now? I am having images made every seven days for her memorial services: to whom should I silently dedicate them?"⁶⁹

"Very well, my lord, I see no reason not to give you the answers you seek. I had only wished to avoid gossiping after my lady's death about things that she herself had kept hidden while she lived. Her parents died when she was still young. Her father, known as the Third Rank Captain,⁷⁰ was devoted to her, but he seems to have suffered greatly from his failure to advance, and in the end he became too discouraged to live on. After his death it happened that his lordship the Secretary Captain, then a Lieutenant,⁷¹ began coming to see her, and he continued to do so quite faithfully for three years. Last autumn, though, she received terrifying threats from the residence of the Minister of the Right,⁷² and these so frightened her, for she was very timid, that she fled to hide at her nurse's house in the western part of the City. Life there was very trying, and she wanted to move to the hills, but this year that direction became closed for her,⁷³ and she avoided it by making do instead with the poor place where to her dismay, my lord, you at last came upon her. She was so exceptionally shy that she felt embarrassed to be seen looking unhappy, and she pretended to be untroubled whenever she was with you."

So that was it! Genji now understood, and her memory touched him more deeply than ever. "I have heard the Secretary Captain lament losing a child. Was there one?"

"Yes, my lord, born in the spring the year before last: a lovely little girl."

"Where is she? You must not tell anyone else about her—just give her to me. It would be such joy to have her in memory of her mother, who meant so much to me." And he continued, "I should really tell the Secretary Captain, but then I would only have to put up with his pointless reproaches. I see no reason why I should not bring her up. Please make up a story for the nurse who must have her now, and bring her here."

"I shall do so gladly, my lord. I do not like to think of her growing up so far out in the west of the City. My lady left her there only because she had no one else to look after her properly."

69. Rites to guide the soul toward a fortunate rebirth were held every seven days during the first forty-nine days after death and at widening intervals thereafter. New paintings of the Buddhist divinities involved were made for each service during the initial forty-nine-day period.

70. Sanmi no Chūjō. He had held the third court rank (*sanmi*) and the office of Captain in the Palace Guards. This combination was unusual because a Captain normally held only the fourth rank. Still, since a man of the third rank was a senior noble, Yūgao had in theory been born into the upper class discussed by the young men on that rainy night.

71. A Lieutenant in the Palace Guards. He appears briefly with this title in "The Paulownia Pavilion"

72. Tō no Chūjō explains in "The Broom Tree" that these were sent to her by his wife (Shi no Kimi), the fourth daughter of the Minister of the Right, who still lives in her father's residence.

73. Probably a "great obstacle" (*ōfutagari*) resulting from the movements of a deity known as Taishōgun Maō Tennō.

While peaceful twilight dimmed to evening beneath a lovely sky, a cricket sang falteringly from the fading garden, and here and there the autumn colors glowed. Surveying the pleasures of this scene, so like a painting, Ukon wondered to find herself in such delightful surroundings and blushed to recall the house of the twilight beauties.

A dove's throaty call from amid the bamboo brought back to Genji, with an affectionate pang, her look of terror when one had called that night at the old mansion. "How old was she? I suppose it was clear enough from her extraordinary frailty that she was not to live long."

"I believe my lady was nineteen. Her nurse's death left me an orphan, and when I remember now how kind my lady's father was, and how he brought me up with his own daughter, I hardly know how I shall go on living. By now I wish I had not been so close to her. I spent such long years depending on a mistress who was after all so very fragile!"

"It is frailty that gives a woman her charm, though. I do not care for a woman who insists on valuing her own wits. I prefer someone compliant, perhaps because I myself am none too quick or self-assured—someone easy for a man to take advantage of if she is not careful, but still circumspect and happy enough to do as her husband wishes. I know I would like such a woman more, the more I lived with her and formed her to my will."

"I am very, very sorry, my lord," said the weeping Ukon, "when I think how perfectly my mistress matched your ideal."

The sky had clouded over, and the breeze had turned cold. Genji murmured in blank despair,

*"When the clouds to me seem always to be the smoke that rose from her pyre,
how fondly I rest my gaze even on the evening sky!"*

Ukon could give him no answer, and she thought with an aching heart, If only my lady were still alive!

In memory Genji treasured even the noise of the fulling blocks, which he had found so intolerable at the time. "The nights are very long now,"⁷⁴ he sang to himself as he lay down to sleep.

The young boy from the Iyo Deputy's household still went now and again to wait on him, but he no longer brought his sister the same sort of messages, and she decided unhappily that Genji had finally given her up. Still, she was sorry to learn that he was ill. Her impending departure on the long trip to her husband's province was causing her such misery that she tested Genji to find out whether he had really forgotten her.

"I gather that you are not well," she wrote, "yet I cannot properly express my wishes for you.

74. From a poem by Bai Juyi on the grief of a wife who beats a fulling block while longing for her absent husband (*Hakusbi monji* 1287).

*You have failed so long to inquire why I have failed to ask about you,
perhaps you will understand all the turmoil of my thoughts.*

'But I am the one' is perfectly true.⁷⁵

Her letter was a surprise, but he had not forgotten his feeling for her. "Nothing now to live for? Are those your words or mine?"

*Once I learned from you how trying this world can be, this cicada shell,
and see how I again hang upon your every word!*

Mine is a very slender hope!" The meandering writing from his trembling hand was extremely engaging. It both pleased and pained her that he had not forgotten the shell the cicada had left behind in her flight, but she had not meant to draw him closer, despite the warmth of this exchange; her only wish had been to remind him that she was not after all unworthy of his interest.

Genji heard that that other young woman had accepted the Chamberlain Lieutenant, and he wondered uncomfortably what the man could be thinking.⁷⁶ At the same time he wanted to know how she was getting on, and so he wrote to her via the boy: "Do you know how I pine for you?"

*Had I not at least tied that little knot around the reed by the eaves,
what excuse would I have now to voice my dewdrop complaint?"⁷⁷*

He tied the note to a tall reed and cautioned the boy to be careful. Still, as he assured himself with reprehensible self-satisfaction, the Lieutenant will probably be forgiving if the note unfortunately comes to his attention and he sees who sent it.

The Lieutenant was away when the boy gave it to her. Her hurt at Genji's neglect was tempered by pleasure that he had remembered her, and she gave the boy an answer for which her only excuse was that she had composed it in haste:

*"Whispers on the wind murmuring of bygone ties leave the lowly reed
stricken with melancholy and half prisoner of frost."⁷⁸*

She made up for her poor handwriting with elaborate touches that lacked any quality at all. He recalled her face in the lamplight. Ah, that partner of hers, so primly seated across from her, was the one he could not dismiss! Still, this artless creature had carried on so brightly and confidently that she made a pleasant memory, too.

75. *Shūishū* 894, a reproach to a cruel lover: "Not you, who claim to be suffering so, but I am the one who now has nothing to live for."

76. He was presumably surprised to find that he was not his wife's first lover.

77. The "little knot around the reed" is the lovers' single night together, and it may also allude to the knot of the girl's trouser cord, seen in the lamplight. From this poem comes her traditional name of *Nokiba no Ogi* ("reed by the eaves").

78. "I was glad to receive your message after so long a silence, but it cannot relieve my sadness, especially now that I am married and no longer my own mistress."

No, he had not yet learned his lesson, and he seemed as susceptible as ever to the perils of temptation.

On the forty-ninth day⁷⁹ he secretly had the Sutra read for her in the Lotus Hall⁸⁰ on Mount Hiei, providing the vestments and every other accessory that a generous performance of the rite might require. Even the text and altar ornaments were of the finest quality, and Koremitsu's elder brother the Adept, a very saintly man, did it all beautifully.

Genji asked a Doctor, a former teacher he knew well, to come and compose the dedicatory prayer.⁸¹ When he wrote out what he wished to have in it, not naming the deceased but stating that since one dear to him had passed away he now commended her to Amida's mercy, the Doctor said, "It is perfect as it is, my lord, I see nothing to add." Genji's tears flowed despite his effort to control himself, and sorrow overcame him.

"Who can she have been?" the Doctor asked. "Lacking any clue to who she was, I can only wonder at the loftiness of the destiny that led her to inspire such grief in so great a lord."

Genji called for the trousers that he had secretly had made as an offering,⁸² and he murmured,

*"Amid streaming tears today a last time I knot this, her trouser cord—
ah, in what age yet to come will I undo it again?"*

He understood that until now she had been wandering restlessly, and as he called passionately for her on Amida, he wondered what path she might at last have taken.⁸³

His heart beat fast whenever he saw the Secretary Captain, and he wanted to tell him that the "little pink" was growing up, but fear of his friend's reproaches kept him silent. At the house of the twilight beauties the women longed to know where their mistress had gone, but they could discover nothing; they could only lament the strangeness of what had happened, since no word reached them even from Ukon. Among themselves they whispered that judging from his deportment the gentleman must have been you-know-who, though of course no one could be sure, and so they presented their complaint to Koremitsu, but Koremitsu ignored them, claimed complete ignorance, and pursued his affair as before, leaving them more confused than ever. They decided that he had been the amorous son of a provincial Governor who had whisked her off to the provinces for fear of the Secretary Captain.

79. After Yūgao's death.

80. Hokkedō, dedicated to rites centered on the all-important Lotus Sutra.

81. *Ganmon*, a formal document in Chinese, normally composed by a specialist.

82. It was customary to offer clothing and other belongings of the deceased to the temple, but since at her death she had nothing but what she wore, Genji had had a new set of clothes made as an offering.

83. For the first forty-nine days the spirit wandered in a "transitional state" (*cbau*), then went to rebirth according to its karma. "What path" means which of the six realms of transmigration: the realms of celestial beings, humans, warring demons, beasts, starving ghosts, or hell.

The house belonged to a daughter⁸⁴ of the nurse who lived in the west of the City. With vehement tears this nurse's three children all accused Ukon, to them an outsider, of not telling them what had become of their mistress because she did not care about them. Ukon herself well knew the scolding they would give her, and Genji's determination to keep the secret prevented her from even asking after the little girl, of whose fate she therefore remained painfully ignorant.



Cypress-wood fan

Genji always hoped to dream of his lost love, but instead, on the night after the forty-ninth-day rite, he glimpsed the woman who had appeared beside her in the deserted mansion, just as she had been then, and with a shiver of horror he realized that the tragedy must have occurred because she haunted the ruinous old place and had taken a fancy to him.

The Iyo Deputy started down to his province early in the tenth month. Genji sent particularly generous farewell presents, "since the ladies are traveling with you." He also had special gifts—unusually pretty combs, fans in abundance, and elaborate offering-wands⁸⁵—conveyed privately to a certain lady in the party,⁸⁶ together with that gown of hers that he had been keeping.

*"This has been to me a mere token of yourself till we meet again,
but my tears in all that time have crumbled the sleeves away,"*

he wrote, together with many others things too tedious to record.

Genji's official messenger returned without a letter from her, but by her little brother she sent him a reply about the gown:

*"Now cicada wings are cast off and we have changed out of summer clothes,
I cannot help shedding tears, seeing this gown back again."*

Genji kept thinking that it was after all her own extraordinary stubbornness that had distanced him from her.

Today was the first of winter, and of course cold rain was falling from a mournful sky. He spent the day staring despondently before him, murmuring,

84. Earlier described as the wife of one Honorary Deputy Governor.

85. Various colored cloth streamers (*nusa*) to offer the gods of the road (*sae no kami*), who protect travelers.

86. Utsusemi.

*"One of them has died, and today yet another must go her own way,
bound I know not to what end, while an autumn twilight falls."*

No doubt he understood by now how painful a secret love can be.

I had passed over Genji's trials and tribulations in silence, out of respect for his determined efforts to conceal them, and I have written of them now only because certain lords and ladies criticized my story for resembling fiction, wishing to know why even those who knew Genji best should have thought him perfect, just because he was an Emperor's son. No doubt I must now beg everyone's indulgence for my effrontery in painting so wicked a portrait of him.