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(COMPLETE)

HAHAKIGI
THE BROOM TREE

Hahakigi ("broom tree") is a plant from which brooms were indeed made and that had the poetic reputation of being visible from afar and of disappearing as one approached. As the chapter title, it alludes to the closing exchange of poems between Genji and Utsusemi, who has frustrated him by making herself inaccessible.

Genji is twelve when he marries Aoi in chapter 1. Chapter 2 starts when he is seventeen. The tale says nothing about the intervening years.

Shining Genji: the name was imposing, but not so its bearer's many deplorable lapses; and considering how quiet he kept his wanton ways, lest in reaching the ears of posterity they earn him unwelcome fame, whoever broadcast his secrets to all the world was a terrible gossip. At any rate, opinion mattered to him, and he put on such a show of seriousness that he started not one racy rumor. The Katano Lieutenant¹ would have laughed at him!

While Genji was still a Captain in the Palace Guards, he felt at home nowhere but in the palace, and he went to the Minister of the Left's only now and then. The household sometimes suspected his thoughts of being "all in a hopeless tangle"² over

1. Katano no Shōshō, an amorous hero whose story has not survived.

2. From *Ise monogatari* 1 (*Tales of Ise*, tenth century), an episode in which the young hero is swept away by a glimpse of two pretty sisters: "Robe dye-patterned with young *murasaki* of the Kasuga meadows, all in a hopeless tangle is my heart as well."

another woman, but actually he had no taste for frivolous, trite, or impromptu affairs. No, his way was the rare amour fraught with difficulty and heartache, for he did sometimes do things he ought not to have done.

The early summer rains were falling and falling, while at the palace seclusion³ went on and on, so that he was there even longer than usual; but although at his father-in-law's there was concern and annoyance, they still sent him clothing of every kind and in the height of fashion, and his brothers-in-law spent all their time at the palace in his rooms.

One, Tō no Chūjō, was Aoi's full brother and, like Genji, a Guards Captain. He was a particularly close friend with whom Genji shared music and other amusements more willingly than with anyone else. The residence of the Minister of the Right,⁴ where the young man was looked after so gladly, thoroughly depressed him, and he had a marked taste for romantic forays elsewhere. Even at home he had his room done up in style, and in Genji's comings and goings he kept him such constant company that the two were together day and night for both study and music, at which he was nearly as quick as Genji himself, until he naturally dropped all reserve with Genji, told him whatever was on his mind, and treated him as a bosom friend.

It had been raining all the dull day long and on into an equally wet evening. There was hardly anyone in the privy chamber, and Genji's own room seemed unusually quiet as the two of them read beside the lamp. When Tō no Chūjō took some letters on paper of various colors from a nearby cabinet shelf and betrayed curiosity about them, Genji demurred. "You may look at the ones that do not matter. Some could be embarrassing, though."

"But it is just the ones you think so personal and compromising that interest me," Tō no Chūjō complained. "Even I get perfectly ordinary letters from ladies of one rank or another, in the course of my correspondence with them. The letters worth

3. *Monoimi*, a time of confinement indoors to avoid evil influences.

4. Tō no Chūjō's father-in-law.

reading are those sent when the writer was angry, or when dusk was falling and she anxiously awaited her lover's coming."

Of course, as he well knew, Genji would hardly leave the important ones, the ones that must be kept secret, lying about on a shelf in plain view; he would have them put away somewhere, out of sight, which meant that these must be of only minor interest. "What a variety!" he exclaimed as he glanced over each, guessing at the sender and getting her now right, now quite wrong. Genji was amused, but with laconic replies he managed in one way or another to put his friend off the track and to hide what he wished to hide.

"You are the one who must have a collection," Genji said. "I should like to see it. Then I would gladly open this whole cabinet to you."

"I cannot imagine that I have any you would wish to read." Tō no Chūjō then took this occasion to observe, "I have finally realized how rarely you will find a flawless woman, one who is simply perfect. No doubt there are many who seem quite promising, write a flowing hand, give you back a perfectly acceptable poem, and all in all do credit enough to the rank they have to uphold, but you know, if you insist on any particular quality, you seldom find one who will do. Each one is all too pleased with her own accomplishments, runs others down, and so on. While a girl is under the eye of her adoring parents and living a sheltered life bright with future promise, it seems men have only to hear of some little talent of hers to be attracted. As long as she is pretty and innocent, and young enough to have nothing else on her mind, she may well put her heart into learning a pastime she has seen others enjoy, and in fact she may become quite good at it. And when those who know her disguise her weaknesses and advertise whatever passable qualities she may have so as to present them in the best light, how could anyone think ill of her, having no reason to suspect her of being other than she seems? But when you look further to see whether it is all true, I am sure you can only end up disappointed."

5. Her gentlewomen.

He sighed portentously, whereupon Genji, who seemed to have reached on his own at least some of the same conclusions, asked with a smile, "But do you suppose any girl could have *nothing* to recommend her?"

"Who would be fool enough to be taken in by one as hopeless as that? I am sure the utter failure with nothing to commend her and the one so superior as to be a wonder are equally rare. When a girl is highborn,⁶ everyone⁷ pampers her and a lot about her remains hidden, so that she naturally seems a paragon. Those of middle birth⁸ are the ones among whom you can see what a girl really has to offer and find ways to distinguish one from another. As for the lowborn,⁹ they hardly matter."

His apparent familiarity with his subject aroused Genji's curiosity. "I wonder about these levels of yours, though—the high, the middle, and the low. How can you tell who belongs to which? Some are born high and yet fall and sink to become nobodies, while common gentlemen¹⁰ rise to become senior nobles, pride themselves on the way they do up their houses, and insist on conceding nothing to anyone. How can you draw the line between these two?"

Just then the Chief Left Equerry and the Fujiwara Aide of Ceremonial came in to join the seclusion. Tō no Chūjō welcomed both as enterprising lovers as well as great talkers, and they went straight into a heated discussion of how to tell women of one level from those of another. They told some astonishing stories.

Tō no Chūjō declared, "On the subject of those who rise high

6. *Shina takaku*, "born to a high standing in society." The notion of *shina* includes both formal rank and the family's general social distinction.

7. As before, the gentlewomen around her: talented gentlewomen devote themselves to developing whatever capacity she may have.

8. *Naka no shina*, including particularly the daughters of privy gentlemen or of provincial Governors, i.e., of gentlemen of the fourth or fifth rank.

9. *Shimo no kizami to iu kiwa*, presumably daughters of men in the lower ranks of the official bureaucracy. Such women were beneath the notice of young men like these.

10. *Naobito*, gentlemen of the fourth or fifth rank.

without being born to it, society does not actually feel quite the same about them, despite their rank, while as for those who once stood high but now lack means, times turn bad, and they decline until they have nothing left but their pride and suffer endless misfortune. Either group, I think, belongs to the middle grade.

“Even among the provincial Governors, whose function it is to administer the provinces and whose grade is certainly fixed, there are actually different levels, and these days you can find considerable figures among them. What is a pleasure to see, more so than any mediocre senior noble, is a man of the fourth rank, qualified for Consultant,¹¹ with a solid reputation, from no unworthy stock, and with an easy and confident manner. His house boasts every luxury, and all those daughters of his, showered with love and dazzling wealth, grow up in grand style. Girls like that often do better in palace service than you might imagine.”

“I suppose the thing is to keep an eye out for a father with means,” Genji said, smiling, and Tō no Chūjō grumbled, “I do not know how you can say that. It does not sound like you at all!”

“When a girl’s rank at birth and her reputation agree,” the Chief Equerry observed, “when she commands general respect but is still disappointing in her person and her behavior, you obviously cannot help wondering sadly why she turned out like that. Of course, when her personal qualities match her rank, you take them for granted and are not surprised. The highest of the high, though, are beyond my ken, and I had better say nothing about them.”

“Anyway, the really fascinating girl is the one of whom no one has ever heard, the strangely appealing one who lives by herself, hidden away in some ruinous, overgrown old house; because, never having expected anyone like her, you wonder what she is doing there and cannot help wanting to know her better. Her father is a miserable, fat old man, her brother’s face is none

11. *Hisangi*, a man of the fourth rank, either a past Consultant (*Sangi*) or qualified for this office. Consultant (there were eight) was a distinguished appointment, below only Counselor and Minister.

too prepossessing either, and there she is in the women’s quarters, far at the back, where you expect nothing unusual: proud, spirited, and giving a touch of distinction to everything she does. Even if she has her limits after all, how could a surprise like that fail to delight anyone? Compared to someone truly flawless, she of course falls short, but for what she is, she is hard to let go.” He glanced at the Aide of Ceremonial, who seemed to take this as a reference to his own well-regarded sisters, since he kept his peace.

Oh, come now, Genji thought, it is rare enough to find anyone like that among the highborn! Over soft, layered white gowns he had on only a dress cloak, unlaced at the neck,¹² and, lying there in the lamplight, against a pillar, he looked so beautiful that one could have wished him a woman. For him, the highest of the high seemed hardly good enough.

They talked on about one woman and another until the Chief Equerry remarked, “Many do very well for an affair, but when you are choosing your own for good, you may not easily find what you want. It is probably just as difficult to find a truly capable man to uphold the realm in His Majesty’s service, but however demanding that sort of post may be, it takes more than one or two to govern, and that is why those above are assisted by those below and why inferiors obey their superiors and defer willingly to them. Think of the one and only who is to run your little household, and you realize how many important things there are to be done right. Even granting that having this she is bound to lack that, and that you have to take the good with the bad, very few can manage honorably, and so even if I do not recommend pursuing women forever in order to compare them all, I can hardly blame the man who is starting out to make his choice and who, to help himself make up his mind, looks around a little to find one he really likes—one who does not need him to tell her how to do every little thing. Things may not always work out perfectly, but the man who cannot bring himself

12. His white, unstarched gowns are probably two, and his summer dress cloak (*nōshi*) is probably thin enough to be nearly transparent. He seems not to have on its normal complement, gathered trousers (*sashinuki*).

to abandon a woman once he has made her his own deserves respect, and his constancy is also a credit to the woman with whom he keeps faith. It is true, though, that my own experience of couples has shown me no especially admirable or inspiring examples. And you young lords¹³ who pick and choose among the most exalted, what height of perfection does it take to gain your approval?

"As long as a girl has looks and youth enough, she avoids anything that might soil her name. Even when composing a letter, she takes her time to choose her words and writes in ink faint enough to leave you bemused and longing for something clearer; then, when at last you get near enough to catch her faint voice, she speaks under her breath, says next to nothing, and proves to be an expert at keeping herself hidden away. Take this for sweetly feminine wiles, and passion will lure you into playing up to her, at which point she turns coy. This, I think, is the worst flaw a girl can have.

"A wife's main duty is to look after her husband, so it seems to me that one can do quite well without her being too sensitive, ever so delicate about the least thing, and all too fond of being amused. On the other hand, with a dutiful, frumpish housewife who keeps her sidelocks tucked behind her ears and does nothing but housework, the husband who leaves in the morning and comes home at night, and who can hardly turn to strangers to chat about how so-and-so is getting on in public or private or about whatever, good or bad, may have happened to strike him and is entitled to expect some understanding from the woman who shares his life, finds instead, when he feels like discussing with her the things that have made him laugh or cry, or perhaps have inflamed him with righteous indignation and are now demanding an outlet, that all he can do is avert his eyes, and that when he then betrays private mirth or heaves a sad sigh, she just looks up at him blankly and asks, 'What is it, dear?' How could he not wish himself elsewhere? It is probably not a bad idea to take a wholly childlike, tractable wife and form her yourself as well as you can. She may not have your full confidence, but you

13. Genji and Tō no Chūjō.

will know your training has made a difference. Certainly, as long as you actually have her with you, you can let her pretty ways persuade you to overlook her lapses; but you will still regret her incompetence if, when you are away, you send her word about something practical or amusing that needs doing, and her response shows that she knows nothing about it and understands nothing either. Sometimes a wife who is not especially sweet or friendly does very well when you actually need her." The Chief Equerry's far-ranging discussion of his topic yielded no conclusion but a deep sigh.

"In the end, I suppose," he went on, "one should settle on someone wholly dependable, quiet, and steady, as long as there is nothing especially wrong with her, and never mind rank or looks. If beyond that she has any wit or accomplishment, simply be grateful, and if she lacks anything in particular, by no means seek to have her acquire it. Provided she is distinctly trustworthy and forgiving, you know, she will gain a more superficially feminine appeal all on her own.

"A woman may behave with comely modesty, put up with things that deserve reproof as though she did not even notice them and, in a word, affect prim detachment, until something is too much for her after all, and off she goes to hide herself away in a mountain village or on a deserted stretch of shore, leaving behind a shattering letter, a heartrending poem, and a token to remember her by. The gentlewomen used to read me stories like that when I was a boy. They upset me a lot—in fact, they seemed so tragic that I cried—but now that sort of thing strikes me as foolish and a bit of an act. Say our heroine *has* a legitimate grievance; she is still abandoning a husband who no doubt is very fond of her and running off as though she knew nothing of his feelings, and all she gains from upsetting him and testing his affection is lifelong regret. It is simply stupid.

"People keep telling her admiringly how right she was to act, until she is swept away, and all at once there she is, a nun. When she makes up her mind to do it, she is perfectly calm and cannot imagine looking back on her old life. 'Oh dear, I am so sorry,' all those who know her say when they come to call, 'I had no idea you felt so deeply about it.' Meanwhile, the husband

she never really disliked bursts into tears when he learns of all this, prompting her staff and her old women to say, "There, your husband cares for you after all, and now look what you have done!" She puts her hand to the hair at her forehead and despairs to find it so short. Self-control fails, she begins to cry, and she breaks down again and again each time she has reason to feel a new pang of regret, until the Buddha himself can only be disappointed with her. As far as I can see, halfhearted refuge in religion is more likely to get you lost in an evil rebirth than staying on in the mire of this world.

"Suppose this couple have strong enough karma between them that the husband finds and claims his wife before she has made herself into a nun: even so, once they are together again each is bound to worry about what the other may be up to next, despite the renewed affection that may come from their having lived through so much. Besides, it is silly for a wife to quarrel with a husband who is inclined to look elsewhere. Even if he is, she can always trust him to remain her husband as long as his first feeling for her still means anything to him, whereas an outburst like that may alienate him for good. She should always be tactful, hinting when she has cause to be angry with him that, yes, she knows, and bringing the issue up gently when she might well quarrel with him instead, because that will only make him like her better. Most of the time it is the wife's attitude that helps her husband's fancies to pass. It might seem endearingly sweet of her to be wholly permissive and to let him get away with everything, but that will only make her seem not to deserve his respect. It is too bad when, as they say, an unmoored boat just drifts away.¹⁴ Do you not agree?"

Tō no Chūjō nodded. "It is bound to be particularly difficult when one of a couple suspects the other, someone otherwise loved and cherished, of infidelity; but although the injured party, being blameless, may well then be quite prepared to overlook the matter, things may not go so easily. At any rate, the best remedy when something comes between a couple is surely

14. An image from a poem on marriage by Bai Juyi.

patience." This remark, he felt, applied particularly well to his own sister, Aoi, and he was therefore both annoyed and disappointed that Genji was dozing and had nothing to add.

Having appointed himself the arbiter in these matters, the Chief Équerry continued his exposition of them while Tō no Chūjō, who was eager to hear him out, chimed in earnestly.

"Think of all this in terms of the arts," the Chief Equerry intoned. "Take, for example, the joiner who makes what he pleases from wood. He may turn out briefly amusing things, according to no set pattern and for only passing, minor uses—strikingly ingenious pieces that he keeps nicely attuned to fashion so that they pleasantly catch the eye; and yet one still distinguishes him easily from the true master who works with success in recognized forms, producing furnishings prized for being exactly right.

"Or take another example. By the time a skilled artist in the Office of Painting is deemed qualified to design a whole work, it is not easy to tell at a glance whether he is better or worse than another. Startling renderings of what no eye can see—things like Mount Hōrai, raging leviathans amid stormy seas, the fierce beasts of China, or the faces of invisible demons¹⁵—do indeed amaze the viewer, because they are convincing even though they resemble nothing real. Yet quite commonplace mountains and streams, the everyday shapes of houses, all looking just as one knows them to be and rendered as peaceful, welcoming forms mingling in harmony with gently sloping hills, thickly wooded, folded range upon wild range, and, in the foreground, a fenced garden: with such subjects as these, and there are many, the greater artist succeeds brilliantly in conception and technique, while the lesser one fails.

"In the same way, handwriting without depth may display a lengthened stroke here and there and generally claim one's attention until at first glance it appears impressively skilled, but although truly fine writing may lack superficial appeal, a second

15. Motifs from Chinese-style painting. Hōrai (Chinese Penglai) is a fabulous island inhabited by immortal beings.

look at the two together will show how much closer it is to what writing should be. That is the way it is in every field of endeavor, however minor. So you see, I have no faith in the obvious show of affection that a woman may sometimes put on. And I shall tell you how I learned this, though I am afraid the story is a little risqué."

He moved closer to Genji, who woke up, while Tō no Chūjō sat reverently facing him, chin in hand. The Chief Equerry might have been a preacher preparing to reveal the truth of existence, which was certainly amusing; but by now these young men were eager to share the most intimate moments of their lives.

"Long ago," he began, "when I was still very young, there was someone who meant a great deal to me. She was no great beauty, as I told you, and I, being young and inclined to explore, had no intention of staying with her forever, because although she was home to me, I felt I could do better, and so now and again I amused myself elsewhere. This drove her to a pitch of jealousy that I did not like at all, and I only wished she would stop and be more patient; but instead her violent suspicions became such a nuisance that I often found myself wondering why she was so intent on keeping me, since I was really no great prize. I felt sorry for her, though, and I began to mend my ways after all.

"It was like her to pour all her limited talent into accomplishing somehow for her husband things that really were beyond her and to be so cautious about betraying her shortcomings to her own disadvantage that she looked after me very well indeed, so as to give me no reason for ever being dissatisfied with her. I had thought her headstrong, but she did as I asked and humored me quite well; and lest her lack of looks offend me, she made herself as presentable as she could and hid shyly from strangers for fear of embarrassing me, meanwhile remaining so attentive that, as we went on living together, I found myself well pleased, except for this one detestable failing of hers, which she could not control.

"Then I thought to myself, She seems desperately eager to please: well, I must teach her a lesson. I shall threaten her, cure

her a little of this failing, and curb her tongue. I assumed that as long as she really was that devoted, she would mend her ways if I put on a show of being fed up and eager to let her go. I purposely acted cold and distant, and when she grew angry and accusing, as she always did, I said, 'If you must carry on this way, never mind the strength of the bond between us, I shall leave and never come back. If you want to get rid of me, by all means keep up these absurd suspicions of yours. If you want me to stay with you forever, you will have to be patient and put up with things that may offend you, and if you change your attitude, I will like you very well. Once I am properly established and carry some weight in the world, you will have no rival.'¹⁶

"I was pleased with my sermon, but when I boldly began to elaborate, she gave me a thin smile and had the effrontery to say, 'I do not in the least mind seeing you through these years when you have little credit or standing, or waiting until you matter. No, that does not bother me at all. But I do hate the thought of spending year after year putting up with your cruelty in the vain hope that you will reform, and so I suppose it is time for us to part.'

"Now I was really angry, and I began saying awful things that she could hardly accept. Instead, she pulled one of my fingers to her and bit it, at which I flew into a rage. 'I can't go out in society wounded like this!' I roared. 'My office, my rank, of which you seem to think so little—just how, my fine lady, do you expect me now to hold my head up at all? As far as I can see, all that is left for me is to leave the world!' and so on.

"'Very well,' I went on, 'as of today you and I are finished,' and I started to leave, hurt finger crooked. I said,

*"Fingers crooked to count the many times you and I have been together
show that this outrage of yours is certainly not the first."*

You can hardly hold it against me!"

16. "I shall acknowledge you as my wife."

17. In Japan one crooks the fingers to count. This poem and the reply rely on several wordplays.

"Sure enough, she burst into tears and retorted,

*"Talk of outrages: when in my most private thoughts I count up your own,
I believe this time at last I must take my hand from yours."*

"She and I had had a good fight, and although I still did not actually mean to leave her, I wandered here and there for several days without sending her a line. It was not until late one miserably sleety night, after the rehearsal for the Special Kamo Festival,¹⁸ as we were all leaving the palace, that I realized I had no other home to go to than hers. The thought of spending the night at the palace did not appeal to me at all, and I knew how cold the company of some coy woman might be; so off I went, by way of just looking in on her to sound out her feelings, brushing away the snow and biting my nails with embarrassment, but still assuming that on a night like this she would welcome me after all.

"Her dimmed lamp was turned to the wall; a thick, comfortable robe was warming over a large censer frame;¹⁹ all the curtains you would expect to find raised were up; and everything looked as though this was the night when she was expecting me back. Well, well! I thought, very pleased, until I noticed that she herself was not there. I saw only her usual women, who answered that at dark she had moved to her parents' house. She had left no touching poem, no encouraging note, nor any evidence whatever of thoughtfulness or consideration. I felt betrayed, and although I could not really believe that her merciless complaining had been meant only to make me hate her, I was annoyed enough to entertain the idea. Still, what she had left for me to wear was even more beautifully made than before, and its colors were even more pleasing. Even after I stormed out of the house, she had still been looking out for my every need.

18. *Kamo no rinji matsuri*, on the last day of the Bird in the eleventh month. Music was performed for the deity by the palace musicians, and the rehearsal was held in the palace.

19. *Fusego*, a cage-like structure placed over a censer. Clothes could be draped over it to be warmed and scented.

"Nonetheless, I could not imagine her to be serious about giving me up, and I did my best to mend things with her, but while she did not exactly reject me, did not pester me by going into hiding, and sent me tactfully worded answers, her attitude amounted to saying, 'I cannot go on with you as you have been. I will not have you back unless you reform.' I still did not believe she would let me go, though, and to teach her a lesson I said nothing about wanting to change. Instead, I put on a show of headstrong independence. She was so hurt that she died. That taught me that these things are no joke.

"I remember her as the model of a dependable wife. It was well worth discussing anything with her, whether a passing fancy or something important. At dyeing cloth she could have been called a Tatsuta Lady, at sewing she ranked with Tanabata,²⁰ and her skill at both made her a wonder." The Chief Equerry remembered her with feeling.

"I would have taken her faithfulness over her wonderful sewing," Tō no Chūjō remarked to lighten the conversation. "I have no doubt her marvelous dyeing was a real prize, though. The simplest blossoms or autumn leaves are dull and dreary when their colors fail to suit the season. That is why choosing a wife is so very hard."

"Anyway," the Chief Equerry went on, "I was visiting at the same time a very gifted woman who made poems with genuine wit and grace, wrote a beautiful running hand, had a lovely touch on the koto, and had a way with everything she did. And since there was nothing wrong with her looks either, I kept my scold to feel at home with and secretly went on seeing this other woman until I was quite attached to her. After the one I told you about had died, I was of course very sorry, but now that was behind me, and I saw the other one often until I noticed, as I had not before, that she was inclined to be vain and flirtatious, and so, to my mind, not to be trusted. After that I visited her

20. Tatsuta Hime, the "Tatsuta Lady," was associated with the beauty of colored autumn leaves and was therefore the patron goddess of dyeing. Tanabata, the Weaver Star who meets the Herdboy Star, her celestial lover, once a year on the night of the Tanabata Festival (the seventh day of the seventh month), was a patron of sewing, among other things.

less often, and meanwhile I discovered that secretly she had another lover.

"One beautifully moonlit night in the tenth month I was withdrawing from the palace when one of the privy gentlemen joined me in my carriage. I myself meant to spend the night at my father's, but the fellow insisted he was concerned about a house where someone was expecting him that very evening, and the place was just on the way to where *she* lived. You could see the lake through a break in the garden wall, and it seemed a shame to go straight past a house favored even by the moon,²¹ so I got out as well.

"He must have arranged it all with her beforehand, because he was excited when he sat down on the veranda, I suppose it was, of the gallery near the gate. For some time he watched the moon. The chrysanthemums had all turned very nicely,²² and the autumn leaves flitting by on the wind were really very pretty. Taking a flute from the fold of his robe, he began to play and to sing snatches of 'You will have shade,'²³ and so on, while she accompanied him expertly on a fine-toned *wagon* that she had all ready and tuned. The two of them were not at all bad. The *richi* mode, softly played by a woman from behind blinds,²⁴ sounded like the height of style, and in the brilliant moonlight the effect was very pleasant indeed.

"The delighted fellow moved right up to her blinds. 'No foot-steps seem to have disturbed the fallen leaves in your garden,' he teased her,²⁵ and then, picking a chrysanthemum,

*"With all the beauty of a house filled with music and a lovely moon,
have you yet successfully played to catch that cruel man?"*

21. The moon is reflected in the garden lake.

22. Frost-withered chrysanthemums were prized.

23. A *saijara* folk song: "You must stop at the Asukai spring, for you will have shade, the water is cool, the grazing is of the best . . ." The singer hints that he hopes to spend the night.

24. The blinds hang between her room and the veranda. The *wagon* ("Japanese koto") has six strings, and the *richi* mode was rather "minor" in feeling.

25. "Dear me, you seem to be all alone this evening."

I would never have thought it of you! Do play on, though. You must not be bashful, now that you have an audience eager for more!"

"To all this shameless banter she replied archly,

*"Why, I have no words to play to keep by my side music of a flute
that joins in such harmonies with the wild and wandering wind."²⁶*

"Little knowing how distasteful a show she was putting on, she next tuned a *sō no koto*²⁷ to the *banshiki* mode and played away in the best modern style, and very nicely, too, but I was thoroughly put off. The come-hither ways of a gentlewoman you meet now and again may have their charm for as long as you continue to see her, but when you are calling on someone you do not mean to forget, even if you do not do so all that often, anything silly or loose about her can put you off, and that is why I made that night my excuse to end it.

"Looking back on those two experiences, I note that even then, young as I was, I found that sort of uncalled-for forwardness strange and upsetting. In the future I will no doubt feel that way even more. Perhaps your lordships take pleasure only in the tender, willing fragility of the dewdrop fated to fall from the plucked flower or in the hail that melts when gathered from the gleaming leaf,²⁸ but I know you will understand me once you have seen seven more years pass by.²⁹ Please take my humble advice and beware of the pliant, easy woman. Any slip of hers can make her husband look a fool."

26. The wind refers with coquettish modesty to her own playing.

27. A thirteen-stringed instrument of the zither-like koto family.

28. Both similes evoke a young woman ready at a touch to swoon into a suitor's arms. The "flower" is the poetic *hagi*, whose long, drooping fronds bloom deep pink, violet, or white in autumn; while the "gleaming leaf" is *tamazasa*, a species of "dwarf bamboo." The mention of *hagi* refers to *Kokinshū* 223.

29. He is apparently seven years older than Genji. Although he started out talking to Tō no Chūjō, he must have begun addressing the higher-ranking Genji when Genji woke up.

Tō no Chūjō nodded as usual, while Genji smiled wryly in seeming agreement. "From what you say, you made a fine spectacle of yourself both times!" he remarked. They all laughed.

"I will tell you a fool's tale," Tō no Chūjō said.³⁰ "I had secretly begun seeing a woman who struck me as well worth the trouble, and although I assumed the affair would not last, the more I knew her, the more attached to her I became. Not that I necessarily visited her often, but I never forgot her, and things went on long enough that I saw she trusted me. There were of course times when even I supposed she might be jealous, but she seemed to notice nothing. She never complained about how seldom I came, even when it had been ages; instead she acted just as though I were setting out from her house every morning and coming home every evening. This touched me so much that I promised never to leave her. She had no parents, which made her life difficult, and it was quite endearing, the way she showed me now and again that for her I was indeed the one.

"Once, when I had not seen her for a long time (she was so quiet that I rather took her for granted), my wife, as I found out only later, managed to send her some veiled but extremely unpleasant threats. I had never imagined anything like that, and at heart I had not forgotten her, but she took it hard because she had had only silence from me so long; and what with her painful circumstances and, you see, the child she had as well, she finally resorted to sending me a pink—" He was almost in tears.

"But what did her letter say?" Genji asked.

"Oh, you know, nothing very much, really:

*"Yes, ruin has come to the mountain rustic's hedge, but now and again
O let your compassion touch this little pink with fresh dew!"³¹*

30. Commentators disagree over whether the "fool" (*shiremono*) is Tō no Chūjō or the woman.

31. "Rustic boor that I am, I know that I hardly deserve your favor, but do at least sometimes remember our dear child." The "little pink" (*Yamato nadeshiko*) is the future *Tamakazura*. *Kokinshū* 695: "Ah, how I miss her, and how I long to see her, the Yamato pink blooming in the rustic hedge!"

"That reminder brought me straight to her. She was as open and trusting with me as ever, but her expression was very sad, and as she sat in her poor house, gazing out over the dewy garden and crying in concert with the crickets' lament, I felt as though I must be living in some old tale. I answered,

*"I could never choose one from the many colors blooming so gaily,
yet the gillyflower I feel is the fairest of them all."³²*

I set aside the 'pink' for the time being, so as first to soothe her mother's feelings with 'No speck of dust' and so on. She replied mildly,

*"To a gillyflower brushing a deserted bed with her dewy sleeves,
autumn has come all too soon, and the sorrows of its storms."³³*

"I saw no sign that she was seriously angry with me, because even when she cried, she shyly hid her tears from me as well as she could, and her keen reluctance to let me see she knew I had neglected her made me so sure all was well that I again stayed away for a long time, during which she vanished without a trace. Life can hardly be treating her kindly if she is still alive. If she had just clung to me in any obvious way, while I loved her, I would never have allowed her to disappear as she did. Instead of neglecting her, I would have looked after her well and gone on seeing her indefinitely. The 'little pink' was very sweet, and I

32. "You are the only one I really care for." The *tokonatsu* ("gillyflower") and the *nadeshiko* ("pink") are the same flower, but the words have different associations. *Nadeshiko* refers to the child, *tokonatsu* to the mother. This is partly because of a play on *toko* (the "sleeping place" of lovers) in *Kokinshū* 167, by Ōshikōchi no Mitsune, to which Tō no Chūjō alludes a line or two later: "No speck of dust will I allow to soil this bed / gillyflower, abloom since you and I first lay down together."

33. The gillyflower's (lady's) sleeves are wet with tears; "brushing a deserted bed" refers to "No speck of dust will I allow . . ." in *Kokinshū* 167, Tō no Chūjō's source poem. The autumn storms are probably Tō no Chūjō's indifference and his wife's threats.

wish I could somehow find her, but so far I have not come across a single clue.

"This is a small illustration of just what you were talking about. She seemed so serene that I never knew she was hurt, and my lasting feeling for her went completely to waste. Even now, when I am beginning to forget her, she probably still thinks of me and has evenings when she burns with regret, although she has no one but herself to blame. She is a perfect example of the woman you cannot keep long and cannot actually depend on.

"All in all, the scold, though not easily forgotten, was so demanding to live with that anyone would probably have tired of her; the ever-so-clever woman with her koto music was guilty of sheer wantonness; and there is every reason, too, to doubt the fragile one I just told you about.³⁴ And so, in the end, it is simply impossible to choose one woman over another. That is how it is with them: each is bound to be trying, one way or another. Where will you find the one who has all the qualities we have been talking about and none of the faults? Set your heart on Kichijōten³⁵ herself, and you will find her so pious and stuffy, you will still be sorry!" They all laughed.

"Come," Tō no Chūjō urged the Aide of Ceremonial, "you must have a good story. Let us hear it!"

"How could your lordships take an interest in anything that a nobody like me might have to say?" But Tō no Chūjō only muttered, "Come, come," and kept at him until after due thought he began. "I was still a student at the Academy³⁶ when I knew a brilliant woman. Like the one the Chief Equerry wanted, you could talk over public affairs with her, her grasp of how to live life was penetrating, and on any topic her daunting learning simply left nothing further to add.

"It all started when I was visiting a certain scholar's home to

34. He surmises that her disappearance might have involved another man.

35. A seductively ample goddess of good fortune, probably Indian in origin. Her image was common in Buddhist temples, where tales were told about monks falling in love with her.

36. *Daigaku*, largely a school for training lower-ranking officials. The students studied Chinese poetry, philosophy, and history.

pursue my studies. Having gathered that he had several daughters, I seized a chance to make this one's acquaintance, which he had no sooner discovered than in he came, bearing wine cups and declaiming insinuatingly, 'Hark while I sing of two roads in life . . .'³⁷ I had no such wish, but I still managed somehow to go on seeing her, in order not to offend him.

"She was very good to me. Even while we lay awake at night, she would pursue my edification or instruct me in matters beneficial to a man in government service, and no note from her was ever marred by a single one of those *kana* letters, being couched in language of exemplary formality.³⁸ What with all this I could not have left her, because it was she who taught me how to piece together broken-backed Chinese poems and such,³⁹ and for that I remain eternally grateful. As to making her my dear wife, however, a dunce like me could only have been embarrassed to have her witness his bumbling efforts. Your lordships undoubtedly need that sort of conjugal tutelage even less than I did.⁴⁰ All this was foolish of me, I agree, and I should have forgone my involvement with her, but sometimes destiny just draws you on. I suppose the men are really the foolish ones."

"But what an extraordinary woman!" Tō no Chūjō wanted to get him to finish. The Aide of Ceremonial knew he would have to, but he still wrinkled up his nose before complying.

"Well, I had not been to see her for a long time when for some reason I went again. She was not in her usual room; instead she spoke to me through an absurd screen. Is she jealous, then? I wondered, at once amused by this nonsense and perfectly conscious that this might be just the chance I was looking for. But no, my paragon of learning was not one to

37. A homily on marriage from a poem by Bai Juyi. The wine cups, too, are in the poem, which stresses the wisdom of taking a bride from a poor home.

38. Women wrote mainly in the phonetic *kana* script, men in more or less accomplished Chinese. This avoidance of *kana* (her letters are entirely in Chinese characters) creates a strangely formal, masculine effect.

39. "Broken-backed" (*koshi ore*) is a term of poetic criticism.

40. Genji and Tō no Chūjō rank so high that they need no accomplishment to get ahead.

indulge in frivolous complaints. She knew the world and its ways too well to be upset with me. Instead she briskly announced, 'Having lately been prostrate with a most vexing indisposition, I have for medicinal purposes been ingesting *Allium sativum*,⁴¹ and my breath, I fear, is too noxious to allow me to entertain you in my normal fashion. However, while I cannot address you face-to-face, I hope that you will communicate to me any services you may wish me to perform on your behalf.'

"It was an imposing oration. What could I possibly answer? I just said, 'Very well,' got up, and started out. I suppose she had been hoping for something better, because she called after me, 'Do return when the odor has abated!' I hated to pretend I had not heard her, but this was no time to waver, and besides, the smell really was rather overpowering, so in desperation I glanced back at her and replied,

*'When the spider's ways this evening gave fair warning I would soon arrive,
how strange of you to tell me, Come after my garlic days!'*⁴²

What kind of excuse is that?"

"I fled once the words were out, only to hear behind me,

*'If I meant to you enough that you came to me each and every night,
why should my garlic days so offend your daintiness?'*

Oh, yes, she was very quick with her tongue," the Aide calmly concluded.

The appalled young gentlemen assumed that he must have made up his story, and they burst into laughter. "There cannot be any such woman!" cried Tō no Chūjō. "You might as well

41. Garlic.

42. His sally and her retort both play on *hiru* ("garlic") and *hiruma* ("daytime"). Poetic lore had it that a woman could tell whether her lover was coming by watching a spider's behavior.

have made friends with a demon. It is too weird!" He snapped his fingers⁴³ and glared at the Aide in mute outrage. "Come," he finally insisted, "you will have to do better!"

However, the Aide stood fast. "How do you expect me to improve on that?" he said.

"I cannot stand the way mediocrities, men or women, so long to show off all the tiny knowledge they may possess," the Chief Equerry put in. "There is nothing at all attractive about having absorbed weighty stuff like the Three Histories and the Five Classics, and besides, why should anyone, just because she is a woman, be completely ignorant of what matters in this world, public or private? A woman with any mind at all is bound to retain many things, even if she does not actually study. So she writes cursive Chinese characters after all and crams her letters more than half full of them, even ones to other women, where they are hopelessly out of place, and you think, Oh no! If only she could be more feminine! She may not have meant it that way, but the letter still ends up being read to her correspondent in a stiff, formal tone, and it sounds as though that was what she had meant all along. A lot of senior gentlewomen do that sort of thing, you know.

"The woman out to make poetry becomes so keen on it that she stuffs her very first line with allusions to great works from the past, until it is a real nuisance to get a poem from her when you have other things on your mind. You cannot very well not reply, and you look bad if circumstances at the moment prevent you from doing so.

"Take the festivals, for example. Say it is the morning of the Sweet Flag Festival. You are off to the palace in such a rush that everything is a blur, and she presents you with one of her efforts, quivering with incredible wordplays;⁴⁴ or it is time for the Chrysanthemum Festival, you are racking your brains to work out a tricky Chinese poem, and here comes a lament from her,

43. A gesture of censure or irritation.

44. Poems for this occasion are full of plays on *ayame* ("sweet flag") and other words associated with the event, and so at this point is the Chief Equerry's own speech.

full of 'chrysanthemum dew'⁴⁵ and, as usual, quite out of place. At other times, too, her way of sending you out of season a poem that afterward you might admit is not actually at all bad, without pausing to think that you may be unable even to give it a glance, can hardly be called very bright. She would do better to refrain from showing off her wit and taste whenever her failure to grasp your circumstances leaves you wondering why she had to do it, or cursing the fix she has put you in. A woman should feign ignorance of what she knows and, when she wants to speak on a subject, leave some things out."

Meanwhile Genji was absorbed in meditation on one lady alone.⁴⁶ By the standard of this evening's discussion she had neither too little nor too much of any quality at all, and this thought filled him with wonder and a desperate longing.

The debate reached no conclusion and lapsed at last into disjointed gossip that the young men kept up until dawn.

The weather today was clear at last. Genji went straight to the Minister of the Left's, fearing that so long a seclusion at the palace might have displeased his father-in-law. Both the look of the place and Aoi's own manner were admirably distinguished, for neither could be faulted in any way, and it seemed to Genji that she should be the ideal wife singled out as a treasure by his friends the evening before, but in fact he found such perfection too oppressive and intimidating for comfort.

He amused himself chatting with such particularly worthwhile young gentlewomen as Chūnagon and Nakatsukasa, who were delighted to see him, loosely clothed as he was in the heat. His father-in-law then appeared and talked with him through a standing curtain, since Genji was not presentable, while Genji reclined on an armrest, making wry faces and muttering, "Isn't it hot enough for him?" "Hush!" he added when the women laughed. He was the picture of carefree ease.

45. Ladies moistened a bit of chrysanthemum-patterned brocade with dew from chrysanthemum flowers, rubbed their cheeks with it to smooth the wrinkles of age (since chrysanthemum dew conferred immortal youth), and composed poems lamenting the sorrows of growing old.

46. Fujitsubo.

At dark a woman remarked to him, "Tonight the Mid-God has closed this direction from the palace."

"That is right, my lord, this is a direction you would normally shun."⁴⁷

"But Nijō⁴⁸ is in the same direction! How am I to avoid it? Besides, I am exhausted." Genji lay down to sleep.

"Oh, no, my lord, you must not!"

"The Governor of Kii, who serves the Minister of the Left, lives in a house by the Nakagawa,⁴⁹ and the place is nice and cool—he recently diverted the stream through his property."

"That should do very well," Genji answered. "I am so tired, I do not care where it is, as long as they will let my ox in through the gate."⁵⁰

There must have been many other houses where he could have gone discreetly to avoid that direction, but having only just arrived at his father-in-law's after a long absence, he did not wish to seek another lady's company in order to do so.

Kii bowed to Genji's command, but he groaned as he withdrew. "A difficulty at the Iyo Deputy's house has obliged all his women to move in with me," he said, "and my little place is so crowded that I am afraid he may suffer some affront to his dignity."

Genji heard him. "I shall be much happier to have them near me. I would be afraid to spend the night away from home without women. Just put me behind their standing curtains."

"That is right. I expect his house will do beautifully," a gentlewoman chimed in, and a runner was sent to announce Genji's

47. The Mid-God (Nakagami), one of the deities of yin-yang lore, moved in a sixty-day cycle. Having spent the first sixteen days in the heavens, the deity descended to earth and circled the compass, spending five or six days in each of the eight directions. One shunned (*imu*) travel in a direction "blocked" (*futa-garu*) by this deity. Genji's planned destination violates this taboo, and he must now "evade" (*tagau*) the "blocked" direction by taking refuge elsewhere, in another direction from his point of departure (the palace).

48. Genji's residence, on "Second Avenue."

49. A stream, now gone, in the northeastern part of the city.

50. Only a great lord could have had his ox carriage driven in through someone's gate.

arrival. Genji hurried off so secretly, to so purposely discreet a destination, that he kept his departure from his father-in-law and took with him only his closest companions.

"This is so sudden!" Kii's household complained, but Genji's entourage ignored them. His men had the eastern aisle of the main house swept, aired, and made ready as well as they could.

The stream was very prettily done in its way.⁵¹ There was a brushwood fence, as in the country, and the garden was carefully planted. The breeze was cool, insects were singing here and there, and fireflies were flitting in all directions. The place was delightful. Genji's companions sat drinking wine and peering down at the stream that emerged from beneath the bridgeway.⁵² While his host went darting about in search of refreshments,⁵³ Genji relaxed and gazed out into the night, remembering what he had heard the evening before about the middle class of women and reflecting that this must be the kind of place where such women lived.

He had noted a rumor that the young woman here, *Utsusemi*, was proud, and he was sufficiently curious about her to listen until he detected telltale sounds to the west: the rustling of silks and the pleasant voices of young women. Yes, he caught stifled laughter that sounded somehow self-conscious.

Their lattice shutters had been up, but when Kii disapprovingly lowered them, Genji stole to where lamplight streamed through a crack over the sliding panel, to see what he could see. There was no gap to give him a view, but he went on listening and realized that they must be gathered nearby in the chamber, because he could hear them whispering to each other, apparently about him.

"He is still so young. It is a shame he is so serious and already so well settled."

"Still, I hear he often calls secretly on suitably promising ladies."

51. It would have run north-south between the main dwelling and its east wing, hence next to where Genji was staying.

52. *Watadono*, between the main dwelling and the east wing.

53. A reference to a folk song in which a host leaves his guests the wine jar and "goes darting about" to fetch edible seaweed from the shore.

Genji, whose every thought was of *her*, was appalled to imagine them next discussing that in the same way, but he heard nothing more of interest and gave up his eavesdropping. They were talking about a poem that he had sent with some bluebells to Princess Asagao,⁵⁴ although they had it slightly wrong. Well, he thought, she simply has time on her hands and a taste for poetry. I do not suppose she is worth looking at anyway.

The Governor of Kii returned with more lanterns, raised the lamp wick, and offered him refreshments.

"What about the curtains, then?" Genji asked. "It is a poor host who does not think of that!"⁵⁵

"My lord, I have been told nothing about what might please you," Kii protested deferentially. Genji lay down as though for a nap near the veranda, and his companions settled down as well.

Genji's host had delightful children, one of whom Genji had already seen as a page in the privy chamber. The Iyo Deputy's children were there, too. One of the boys, a child of twelve or thirteen, had something special about him. While answering Genji's questions about which child was whose, Kii told him that this one was the youngest son of the late Intendant of the Gate Watch. "His father, who was very fond of him, passed away when he was small," Kii explained, "and he is here now under his elder sister's care. I hope to have him serve in the privy chamber, since he shows aptitude for scholarship and is generally bright, but things seem not to be going well."⁵⁶

"I am sorry to hear that: This sister of his—is she your stepmother?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Then you have a most unlikely one! Even His Majesty has heard of her. He was saying some time ago, 'Her father hinted

54. These bluebells (*asagao*) have supplied the lady's traditional name (Asagao). She is Genji's first cousin, since her father is the Emperor's younger brother.

55. "It is a poor host who does not have a woman ready for his guest." Genji alludes to a *saibara* song: "In my house the curtains are all hung; come, my lord, come: my daughter shall be yours..." The song then mentions sea urchin (*kase*), a shell felt to resemble the female genitals.

56. Without his father the boy has no one well placed to back him.

that he was thinking of sending her into palace service—I wonder what became of her.' Ah," he sighed with grown-up gravity, "you never know what life will bring."

"It is a surprise to have her here. No, when it comes to love and marriage, it has always been impossible to divine the future, and unfortunately a woman's fate is especially hard to foresee."

"Does the Iyo Deputy pamper her? He must think the world of her."

"He certainly does, my lord. He seems to adore her, in fact, although, like the others,⁵⁷ I dislike his being so engrossed."

"He is not going to leave her to any of you, though, just because you are up on the latest fashions. There is nothing drab about the Iyo Deputy—he rather fancies a certain chic himself. Where is she anyway?"

"I sent them all off to the servants' hall, my lord, although perhaps not all of them managed actually to go."

Genji's companions, by now quite drunk, were asleep on the veranda. Genji, too, lay down, but in vain. Dislike for sleeping alone kept him awake, listening to the sounds from beyond the sliding panel to the north and fascinated that this must be where the lady they had talked about was now hiding. Silently he arose and stood by the panel to listen.

"Excuse me, where are you?" It was the appealingly husky voice of the boy who had caught his attention earlier.

"Lying over here. Is our guest asleep? I thought I would be next to him, but he is actually quite far away." The speaker's sleepy voice had a languid quality very like the boy's, and Genji realized that she must be his elder sister.

"He's gone to sleep in the aisle," the boy whispered. "Everyone is talking about how he looks, and I actually saw him! It's true, he is ever so handsome!"

"I'd have a peep at him myself if it were daytime," she answered drowsily, her voice sounding as though it came from under the covers.

57. The Iyo Deputy's other children.

Oh, come, he thought impatiently, do ask him a bit more about me than that!

"I'll sleep over here. It's so dark, though!" He seemed to be raising the lamp wick.

Utsusemi must be lying diagonally across from Genji's door. "Where is Chūjō?"⁵⁸ he heard her say. "I am afraid when there is no one nearby."

"She went to the bath in the servants' hall—she said she would be back very soon." The answer came from the women lying a step below her.⁵⁹

When all seemed quiet, he tried the latch. It was not locked from the other side. In the entrance stood a curtain, and by the lamp's dim glow he saw what seemed to be chests scattered about the room. Threading his way among them to where he guessed her to be, he came upon a slight figure lying all alone. The approaching footsteps startled her a little, but until he actually tugged at her bedclothes she took him for the gentlewoman she had wanted.

"You called for a Chūjō, you see,⁶⁰ and I knew my secret yearning for you had inspired its reward."

Utterly confused, she thought she was having a nightmare and cried out, but the covers over her face stifled the sound.

"This is so sudden that you will surely take it for a mere whim of mine, which I quite understand, but actually I only want you to know that my thoughts have been with you for years. Please note how eagerly I have made the best of this chance, and so judge how far I am from failing to be in earnest."

He spoke so gently that she could not very well cry out rudely, "There is a man in here!" because not even a demon would have wished to resist him; but shock and dismay at his

58. One of her women.

59. They are in the aisle room, diagonally across the chamber from Genji. The aisle was a beam width lower.

60. He pretends to take the woman's name to mean himself. Chūjō means "Captain" (she may be the daughter or the wife of a Captain), and Genji is a Chūjō in the Palace Guards.

behavior drew from her, in an anguished whisper, "Surely you mean someone else!"

Nearly fainting, she roused him to pity and tenderness, and he decided that he liked her very much. "If only you would not doubt the unerring desire that has brought me to you!" he said. "I will take no liberties with you, I promise, but I must tell you something of my feelings."

He picked her up, since she was very small, and he had carried her to the sliding door when he came on someone else, presumably the Chūjō she had called for. Chūjō, startled by his exclamation, was groping her way toward him when a breath of his pervasive fragrance enveloped her, and she understood. Although shocked and appalled, she found nothing to say. If he had been anyone ordinary, she would have wrested her mistress bodily from him, but even that would have been a risk, since everyone else would then have known what was going on; so she simply followed with beating heart while he proceeded, unruffled, into the inner room.⁶¹

"Come for your mistress at dawn." He slid the door shut.

The lady could have died to imagine what Chūjō might be thinking. Dripping with perspiration, she was so clearly miserable that Genji felt sorry for her, but he managed as always to draw from some hidden source a flood of tender eloquence to win her over.

"This is not to be believed!" She was indignant. "I may be insignificant, but even I could never mistake your contemptuous conduct toward me for anything more than a passing whim. You have your place in the world and I have mine, and we have nothing in common."

It upset him to find that his forwardness really did repel her, and he saw how justly she was outraged. "I know nothing of your place and mine in the world," he protested earnestly, "because I have never done anything like this before! It is cruel of you to take me for a common adventurer. You must have heard

61. It is not clear which room is meant, but the most plausible possibility is a divided-off section of the chamber itself—perhaps a fully walled-in "retreat" (*nurigome*).

enough about me to know that I do not force my attentions on anyone. I myself am surprised by this madness, which has earned me your wholly understandable disapproval. I can only think that destiny has brought us together."

He gravely tried every approach, but his very peerlessness only stiffened her resistance, and she remained obdurate, resolved that no risk of seeming cold and cruel should discourage her from refusing to respond. Although pliant by nature, she had called up such strength of character that she resembled the supple bamboo, which does not break.

Her genuine horror and revulsion at Genji's willfulness shocked him, and her tears touched him. It pained him to be the culprit, but he knew that he would have been sorry not to have had her. "Why must you dislike me so?" he said accusingly when she refused to be placated. "Do see that the very strangeness of all this confirms the bond we share. I cannot bear your remaining so withdrawn, as though you knew nothing of the ways of the world!"

"If you had shown me such favor when I was as I used to be, before I settled into my present, unhappy condition, I might have entertained giddy hopes and consoled myself with visions of the day when you would think well of me after all, but the very idea of a night with you, when there can be no more, troubles me greatly. No, you must forget that this ever happened."⁶²

No wonder she felt as she did. He undoubtedly did his best to comfort her and to convince her that her fears were misplaced.

A cock crowed, and the household began to stir. "How long we have slept!" a voice exclaimed from among Genji's men, and another, "Advance his lordship's carriage!" The Governor of Kii appeared, too, and one of the women protested, "He is only here to avoid a taboo! There is no reason why he should hurry off again in the middle of the night!"⁶³ Genji suffered to think that such a chance might never come again, that he could

62. "You must not imagine that the liberties you have taken constitute any kind of precedent for the future. What you have done has not established a relationship between you and me."

63. As there would be if he had come for a secret rendezvous.

hardly visit the house on purpose, and that even correspondence with her was probably out of the question.

She was so upset when Genji came in that he let her go, but then he drew her to him again. "How can I keep in touch with you? Both your unheard-of hostility and my feeling for you will leave vivid memories and be a wonder forever." His tears only gave him a new grace.

Cocks were crowing insistently. He said in despair,

*"Dawn may well have come, but when I could still complain of your cruelty,
must the cock crow me awake before I have all I wish?"⁶⁴*

Mortified by the gulf between them, since she was who she was, she remained unmoved by his attentions. Instead her thoughts went to the far province of Iyo and to the husband whom she usually dismissed with such loathing and contempt, and she trembled lest he glimpse this scene in a dream. She answered,

*"Now that dawn at last has broken on the misery that I still bewail,
the cock himself lifts his voice to spread my lament abroad."*

It was quite light by now, and Genji saw her to the door of the room. He kept it shut as he said good-bye, because the house was alive with movement within and without, and he grieved that it should be about to part them, as he supposed, forever. Then he slipped on his dress cloak and gazed out south across the railing. To the west, shutters went up with a clatter: women must have been stealing a look at him. No doubt the more susceptible were thrilled by his dim form, visible over the low screen that divided their stretch of veranda from his. The moon still lingered on high, clear despite the pallor of its light, turning

64. Genji's poem plays on *tori* ("cock") and *tori aenu* ("before I grasp [what I seek]"); hers similarly exploits *tori kasanete* ("again and again [I / the cock lament . . .]").

dull shadows to a lovely dawn. To one viewer the vacant sky intimated romance, while to the other it suggested aloof indifference. He was heartsick to think that he could not even get a note to her, and as he left, he looked back again and again.

At home once more he still could not sleep. What tormented him even more than being unable to see her again was the thought of her own feelings. Not that there was anything remarkable about her, but, as he knew, she nicely represented the middle grade they had discussed, with all its appeal, and he understood how truly the man of broad experience had spoken.

These days he spent all his time at the Minister of the Left's. Forever anxious about her feelings in the absence of any message from him, he called the Governor of Kii and said, "Would you give me that boy I saw the other day—the late Intendant's son? He appealed to me, and I should like to take him into my personal service. I shall present him to His Majesty myself."

"You do him and us too great an honor, my lord. I shall convey your request to his elder sister."

"Has she given you any brothers or sisters?" Genji managed to ask with beating heart.

"No, my lord. It is two years now since she joined our family, but I gather that she regrets not having done as her father wished and that she dislikes her present condition."

"What a shame! People speak well of her. Is it true that she is pretty?"

"I expect so, my lord. She keeps me at such a distance that I am no closer to her than a stepson should be."

Five or six days later Kii brought Genji his young brother-in-law. The boy was not strikingly handsome, but he had grace, and his distinction was plain. Genji called him in for a very friendly talk. The boy was thoroughly pleased and impressed in his childish way. He answered pointed questions about his sister as well as he could, until his daunting composure made it difficult for Genji to go on. Still, Genji managed cleverly to convey his desire.⁶⁵

The boy was surprised when Genji's point dawned on him at

65. That the boy should carry messages for him.

last, but he was too young to understand very well what it implied, and his arrival with Genji's letter brought tears of vexation to Utsusemi's eyes. It horrified her to imagine what he might be thinking, and she opened the letter so that it hid her face. It was very long.

*"Even as I mourn not knowing whether that dream⁶⁶ means another night,
endless time seems to go by while my eyelids never close.*

At night I cannot sleep . . ."⁶⁷ His writing was so extraordinarily beautiful that her eyes misted over, and she lay down to ponder the strange destiny that had broken in upon her otherwise dreary life.

When Genji's summons reached her little brother the next day, he let her know he was going and asked for her answer.

"Tell him there was no one here to receive such a letter."
He only laughed. "How can I say that? He made himself perfectly clear."

She gathered that Genji had told him everything, and she recoiled. "I'll thank you not to be impertinent. Then just don't go."

He went anyway, though, saying, "He wants me—I can't just ignore him."

Kii liked women too much not to think his stepmother's marriage a great shame, and he was always eager to please her, which is why he made much of her little brother and took him about everywhere.

Genji called the boy in. "I waited for you all day yesterday.
X Getting on with me seems to mean nothing to you." The boy reddened.

"Well, where is it?"

The boy explained what had happened. "It is really hopeless, isn't it," Genji said. "She is impossible." He handed him yet another letter.

66. *Yume*, a lovers' meeting.

67. *Shūishū* 735, by Minamoto no Shitagō: "What comfort have I from my longing for you, when at night I cannot sleep and so never dream?"

"You may not realize this," he went on, "but I was seeing her long before that old man the Iyo Deputy. She probably thought me too spindly then to lean on, so she found herself a man of real substance to look after her, and now she is making a fool of me. Be a son to me, though. That fine husband of hers will not last much longer." It amused him to see the boy so gravely credulous and impressed.

He kept her brother with him all the time and took him even to the palace. He had those in charge of his wardrobe make clothes for him, and the boy really did treat him like a father. There was always a note for him to deliver. However, she worried that he was much too young, and that if unfortunately he lost one, she might find added to her present woes a light reputation unbecoming to someone in her position, and she therefore kept her answers formal, reflecting that what constitutes good fortune depends after all on where one stands in the world. Not that she failed to recall his figure and manner, extraordinary as these had been that one time when she had made him out through the gloom, but she concluded that nothing could come of her seeking to please him.

Genji thought of her endlessly, with mingled consternation and longing. He could not keep from dwelling on how much her distress had affected him. He might risk slipping in to see her, but with so many people in the house his misbehavior would be discovered, and that, he saw with alarm, would be disastrous for her.

While he was spending day after day at the palace, as always, a directional taboo favored him once more. Feigning an impromptu departure for His Excellency's, he turned off on the way there toward the house of the Governor of Kii. The surprised Kii took his visit for a gratifying tribute to the stream that he had diverted through his garden.

Genji had brought her little brother into the plot that afternoon. In the evening he immediately called for him again, since he had him at his beck and call day and night. Utsusemi had heard from him as well. She did not underestimate the interest that his scheme revealed, but she still had no wish recklessly to yield him her whole, modest person or to add new troubles to

those already heaped upon her by their first, dreamlike encounter. No, decidedly, she would not fall in with his machinations and receive him; and so, as soon as Genji called her little brother away, she announced that she disliked being so near where he was staying and that anyway she was feeling unwell. "I shall move farther off for a quiet massage," she said, and she went to hide in Chūjō's room along the bridgeway.

Genji, whose plans were laid, had his entourage retire early and sent her a note, but her brother could not find her. Only after hunting high and low did he go down the bridgeway and come across her at last. "He'll think I'm no use at all!" the boy cried, nearly weeping with anger and frustration.

"I will not have you take this awful attitude!" she scolded him. "They say a child should never carry such messages. Tell him that I am not feeling well and that I have kept my women with me for a massage. Everyone will be wondering what you are doing here."

In her heart of hearts, though, she felt that she might receive Genji gladly, however seldom, if only she were not now settled for life but were still at home, where the memory of her late parents and of their ambitions for her lived on. Despite her resolve, she suffered acutely to think that he must find her adamant rejection outrageously impertinent. However, it was too late now for such thoughts, and she made up her mind to remain stubbornly unresponsive to the end.

Genji lay waiting, eager to find out what her little brother might devise and at the same time nervous about his being so young. When he learned that there was no hope, her astonishing obduracy made him so detest his own existence that his distress was painfully obvious. For some time he was silent and only heaved great sighs. He was very hurt.

*"I who never knew what it was the broom tree meant now wonder to find
the road to Sonohara led me so far from my way."⁶⁸*

68. Sonohara (in Shinano Province) is associated with a bush called *hahakigi* ("broom tree"), similar to broom. *Kokin rokujō* 3019 (slightly modified as *Shinkokinshū* 997), by Sakanoue no Korenori, describes *hahakigi* as visible from a distance and yet invisible as one comes nearer.

I have nothing to say," he wrote at last.

She, too, was still awake, and she answered,

*"Stricken with regret to have it known she was born in a humble home,
the broom tree you briefly glimpsed fades and is soon lost to view."⁶⁹*

She did not like to have her brother roaming about like this, too upset over Genji's annoyance to sleep, because she was afraid that he might arouse suspicion.

Genji's men slept soundly, as usual, while he alone gave himself over to vain, outraged ruminations. It infuriated him that her amazing resistance, far from disappearing, had instead risen to this pitch, and he was beside himself with outrage and injury, although he also knew perfectly well that strength of character was what had attracted him to her in the first place.

So be it, he told himself, but he remained so unconvinced that he was soon saying, "All right, then take me to where she is hiding."

"She has shut herself up in a little room and has several women with her—I wouldn't dare," her brother replied, desperately wishing he could do better.

"Very well, then you, at least, shall not leave me." Genji had the boy lie down with him. The boy so appreciated his master's youth and gentleness that they say Genji found him much nicer than his cruel sister.

69. *Fuseya*, associated with the name Sonohara, may be a place name or a word for a low, humble dwelling.