

Supplementary Reading # 11

The Tale of Genji

"The Paulownia Pavillion"

MFL/ENGL 205

THE
TALE OF
Genji

KIRITSUBO
The Paulownia Pavilion

Kiri means "paulownia tree" and *tsubo* "a small garden between palace buildings." Kiritsubo is therefore the name for the palace pavilion that has a paulownia in its garden. The Emperor installs Genji's mother there, so that readers have always called her Kiritsubo no Kōi (the Kiritsubo Intimate), although the text does not.

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In a certain reign (whose can it have been?) someone of no very great rank, among all His Majesty's Consorts and Intimates, enjoyed exceptional favor. Those others who had always assumed that pride of place was properly theirs despised her as a dreadful woman, while the lesser Intimates were unhappier still. The way she waited on him day after day only stirred up feeling against her, and perhaps this growing burden of resentment was what affected her health and obliged her often to withdraw in misery to her home, but His Majesty, who could less and less do without her, ignored his critics until his behavior seemed bound to be the talk of all.

From this sad spectacle the senior nobles and privy gentlemen could only avert their eyes. Such things had led to disorder and ruin even in China, they said, and as discontent spread through the realm, the example of Yōkihi¹ came more and more to mind, with many a painful consequence for the lady herself; yet she trusted in his gracious and unexampled affection and remained at court.

The Grand Counselor, her father, was gone, and it was her mother, a lady from an old family, who saw to it that she should give no less to court events than others whose parents were both alive and who enjoyed general esteem; but lacking anyone influential to support her, she often had reason when the time came to lament the weakness of her position.²

His Majesty must have had a deep bond with her in past lives as well, for she gave him a wonderfully handsome son. He had the child brought in straightaway,³ for he was desperate to see him, and he was astonished by his beauty. His elder son, born to his Consort the daughter of the Minister of the Right, enjoyed powerful backing and was feted by all as the undoubted future Heir Apparent, but he could not rival his brother in looks, and His Majesty, who still accorded him all due respect, therefore lavished his private affection on the new arrival.

1. The beauty Yōkihi (Chinese Yang Guifei) so infatuated the Chinese Emperor Xuanzong (685-762) that his neglect of the state provoked a rebellion, and his army forced him to have her executed. Bai Juyi (772-846) told the story in a long poem, "The Song of Unending Sorrow" (Chinese "Changheng," Japanese "Chōgonka," *Hakushi manjū* 0596), which was extremely popular in Heian Japan.

2. She had no influential male relative on her mother's side and was often pushed aside when an event took place.

3. Such a birth took place not in the palace but at the mother's home.

Her rank had never permitted her to enter His Majesty's common service.⁴ His insistence on keeping her with him despite her fine reputation and her noble bearing meant that whenever there was to be music or any other sort of occasion, his first thought was to send for her. Sometimes, after oversleeping a little, he would command her to stay on with him, and this refusal to let her go made her seem to deserve contempt;⁵ but after the birth he was so attentive that the mother of his firstborn feared that he might appoint his new son Heir Apparent over her own. This Consort, for whom he had high regard, had been the first to come to him, and it was she whose reproaches most troubled him and whom he could least bear to hurt, for she had given him other children as well.

Despite her faith in His Majesty's sovereign protection, so many belittled her and sought to find fault with her that, far from flourishing, she began in her distress to waste away. She lived in the Kiritsubo. His Majesty had to pass many others on his constant visits to her, and no wonder they took offense. On the far too frequent occasions when she went to him, there might be a nasty surprise awaiting her along the crossbridges and bridgeways, one that horribly fouled the skirts of the gentlewomen who accompanied her or who came forward to receive her; or, the victim of a conspiracy between those on either side, she might find herself locked in a passageway between two doors that she could not avoid, and be unable to go either forward or back. Seeing how she suffered from such humiliations, endlessly multiplied as circumstances favored her enemies' designs, His Majesty had the Intimate long resident in the Kōrōden move elsewhere and gave it to her instead, for when he wanted to have her nearby.⁶ The one evicted nursed a particularly implacable grudge.

In the child's third year his father gave him a donning of the trousers just as impressive as his firstborn's, marshaling for the purpose all the treasures in the Court Repository and the Imperial Stores. This only provoked more complaints, but as the boy grew, he revealed such marvels of beauty and character that no one could resent him. The discerning could hardly believe their eyes, and they wondered that such a child should have ever been born.

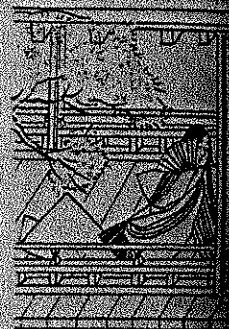
In the summer of that year His Majesty's Haven⁷ became unwell, but he refused her leave to withdraw. He felt no alarm, since her health had long been fragile, and he only urged her to be patient a little longer. However, she worsened daily, until just five or six days later she was so weak that her mother's tearful entreaties at last persuaded him to release her. In fear of suffering some cruel humiliation even now, she left the child behind and stole away.

4. Her standing was too high to allow her to wait on the Emperor routinely, like a servant. She should have come to him only when summoned and for a limited time.

5. Because the Emperor himself seems to treat her like a servant.

6. The Kōrōden (*den* means approximately "half") was very near the Emperor's residence. He gives it to her not to replace the Kiritsubo but as a nearby apartment (*utsubone*) to stay in when he requires her company often.

7. Genji's mother. Her unofficial title (Haven, Miyasudokoro) seems to have designated a woman, especially one of Intimate or Consort rank, who had borne an Emperor or an Heir Apparent a child.



His Majesty, who could not even see her, was so thin now and unable to tell whether he was in a state of semiconsciousness of time past or to come and how long a way he knew how much he loved her.

When she still failed to recover, he issued a decree to allow her the privilege of leaving the palace. He could not bring himself to let her go, but he said, "and you cannot stay here," he said, "and you cannot stay here."

She was so touched that she wept.

"Now the end has come, and I will follow the path I would have chosen."

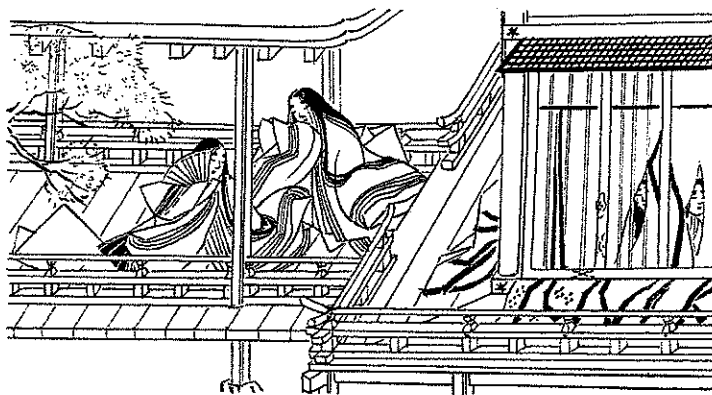
If only I had known . . .

She seemed to have more strength than he decided him, despite her condition. He consented only unwillingly, and the excellent healers were to start praying for her.

With his heart too full for words, he showed deep concern even before his mother. Meanwhile, the messenger heard that she had breathed her last, and he found His Majesty in such a state that he could not speak.

He still longed to see his child.

8. She was too ill to stay in the palace and had to be carried to the Emperor to see her off.



Bridgeway

His Majesty, who could no longer keep her by him, suffered acutely to think that he could not even see her off.⁸ There she lay, lovely and ever so dear, but terribly thin now and unable to tell him of her deep trouble and sorrow because she lingered in a state of semiconsciousness—a sight that drove from his mind all notion of time past or to come and reduced him simply to assuring her tearfully, in every way he knew, how much he loved her.

When she still failed to respond but only lay limp and apparently fainting, with the light dying from her eyes, he had no idea what to do. Even after issuing a decree to allow her the privilege of a hand carriage, he went in to her again and could not bring himself to let her go. "You promised never to leave me, not even at the end," he said, "and you cannot abandon me now! I will not let you!"

She was so touched that she managed to breathe:

*"Now the end has come, and I am filled with sorrow that our ways must part:
the path I would rather take is the one that leads to life.*

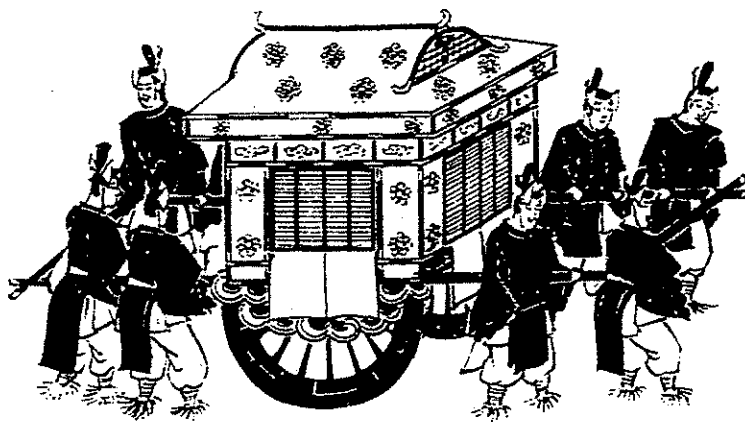
If only I had known . . ."

She seemed to have more to say but to be too exhausted to go on, which only decided him, despite her condition, to see her through to whatever might follow. He consented only unwillingly to her departure when urgently reminded that excellent healers were to start prayers for her that evening at her own home.

With his heart too full for sleep, he anxiously awaited dawn. He expressed deep concern even before his messenger had time to come back from her house. Meanwhile, the messenger heard lamenting and learned that just past midnight she had breathed her last, and he therefore returned in sorrow. This news put His Majesty in such a state that he shut himself away, wholly lost to all around him.

He still longed to see his son, but the child was soon to withdraw, for no

8. She was too ill to stay in the palace, lest it be polluted by death, and imperial etiquette forbade the Emperor to see her off.



Hand carriage

precedent authorized one in mourning to wait upon the Emperor.⁹ The boy did not understand what the matter was, and he gazed in wonder at the sobbing gentlewomen who had served his mother and at His Majesty's streaming tears. Such partings¹⁰ are sad at the best of times, and his very innocence made this one moving beyond words.

Now it was time to proceed with the customary funeral. Her mother longed with many tears to rise with her daughter's smoke into the sky, and she insisted on joining the gentlewomen in their carriage in the funeral cortège. What grief she must have known on reaching Otagi, where the most imposing rite was under way!

"With her body plain to see before me," she said, "I feel that she is still alive even though she is not, and I will therefore watch her turn to ash to learn that she is really gone."

She spoke composedly enough, but a moment later she was racked by such a paroxysm of grief that she nearly fell from the carriage. "Oh, I knew it!" the gentlewomen cried to each other, not knowing how to console her.

A messenger came from the palace, followed by an imperial envoy who read a proclamation granting the deceased the third rank.¹¹ It was very sad. His Majesty had never even named her a Consort, but it pained him not to have done so, and he had wished at least to raise her a step in dignity. Even this made many resent her further, but the wiser ones at last understood that her loveliness in looks and bearing, and her sweet gentleness of temper, had made her impossible actually to dislike. It was His Majesty's unbecoming penchant for her, so his gentlewomen¹² now understood, that had made some treat her with cold disdain, and they remembered her fondly for the

9. After the year 905, children not yet in their seventh year no longer went into mourning for a parent, and the present of the story therefore seems to be earlier.

10. The death of a parent.

11. Appropriate to a Consort.

12. These gentlewomen, who rank below the ladies just referred to, would have known the deceased personally because they waited on the Emperor routinely.

warmth and kindness of her perfect example of "Now she is g

As the dreary days slipped Majesty saw carefully to each ing memorial service.¹⁴ The sage of time did so little to relieve his sorrow that he called none of his ladies to wait on him after dark but instead passed day and night in weeping, and even those who merely witnessed his state for the autumn very dewy indeed

"She meant so much to summed up the sentiments of subject. The mere sight of him he preferred the younger, and to find out how he was getting

At dusk one blustery air more than ever by memory Myōbu¹⁸ to his love's home moon,¹⁹ he lapsed again into ways been on evenings like that on her instrument, or her leave he would have preferred even

Myōbu had no sooner touched her. The mother had lived nicely enough out of life grief had laid her low, the winds, until only moonlight

She had Myōbu alight speak. "I keep wishing that I

13. *Genji monogatari kochūshakusho in gone I miss her so!*

14. A rite was performed every seven days to send the spirit of the deceased toward peace for it generously.

15. The mother of the Emperor's (the "Hall of Great Light") is the Consorts and Empresses lived there.

16. A woman who had nursed the Emperor was normally intimate and lasting.

17. A typhoon (*nowaki*) wind is bl

18. A gentlewoman of middle rank

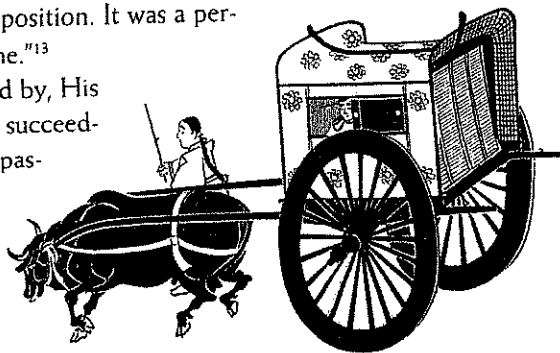
19. *Yūzukuyo*, the "evening moon"

20. An ironic reference to *Kokin Wakashū* bright dream."

21. Out of respect for the Emperor

warmth and kindness of her disposition. It was a perfect example of "Now she is gone."¹³

As the dreary days slipped by, His Majesty saw carefully to each succeeding memorial service.¹⁴ The passage of time did so little to relieve his sorrow that he called none of his ladies to wait on him after dark but instead passed day and night in weeping, and even those who merely witnessed his state found the autumn very dewy indeed.



Carriage

"She meant so much to him that even dead she is a blight on one's existence" summed up the sentiments of the Kokiden Consort,¹⁵ as merciless as ever, on the subject. The mere sight of his elder son would only remind His Majesty how much he preferred the younger, and he would then send a trusted gentlewoman or nurse¹⁶ to find out how he was getting on.

At dusk one blustery and suddenly chilly autumn day,¹⁷ His Majesty, assailed more than ever by memories, dispatched the gentlewoman dubbed Yugei no Myōbu¹⁸ to his love's home; then, after she had left under a beautiful evening moon,¹⁹ he lapsed again into reverie. He felt her there beside him, just as she had always been on evenings like this when he had called for music, and when her touch on her instrument, or her least word to him, had been so much her own; except that he would have preferred even to this vivid dream her simple reality in the dark.²⁰

Myōbu had no sooner arrived and gone in through the gate than desolation touched her. The mother had kept the place up, despite being a widow, and she had lived nicely enough out of fond concern for her only daughter, but alas, now that grief had laid her low, the weeds grew tall and looked cruelly blown about by the winds, until only moonlight slipped smoothly through their tangles.

She had Myōbu alight on the south side of the house.²¹ At first she could not speak. "I keep wishing that I had not lived so long," she said at last, "and I am so

13. *Genji monogatari kochūshakusho in'yō waka* 1: "When she was alive her presence was a trial, but now she is gone I miss her so!"

14. A rite was performed every seven days for the first forty-nine days after the death, in order to guide the spirit of the deceased toward peace. The Emperor probably sent a representative to each and provided for it generously.

15. The mother of the Emperor's first son, the future Heir Apparent. Kokiden (a Chinese-style name that means "Hall of Great Light") is the name of her residence within the palace compound. Many historical Consorts and Empresses lived there.

16. A woman who had nursed the Emperor in place of his natural mother. The relationship with a nurse was normally intimate and lasting.

17. A typhoon (*nowaki*) wind is blowing, and the season is early autumn by the lunar calendar.

18. A gentlewoman of middle rank (Myōbu) with a male relative in the Gate Watch (Yugei).

19. *Yūzukuyo*, the "evening moon" that lingers in the twilight sky up to the tenth day of the lunar month.

20. An ironic reference to *Kokinshū* 647: "Her reality in the dark of night is not worth more than a clear, bright dream."

21. Out of respect for the Emperor, who has sent Myōbu. The south side is the front.

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ashamed now to see someone from His Majesty struggle all the way to me through these weeds!" She wept as though it were truly more than she could bear.

"The Dame of Staff told His Majesty how desperately sorry for you she felt after her visit here, and how heartbroken she was," Myōbu replied, "and even I, who pretend to no delicacy of feeling,²² understand what she meant all too well." Then, after composing herself a little, she delivered His Majesty's message.²³

"For a time I was sure that I must be dreaming, but now that the turmoil in my mind has subsided, what I still find acutely painful is to have no one with whom to talk over what needs to be done. Would you be kind enough to visit me privately? I am anxious about my son and disturbed that he should be surrounded every day by such grieving. Please come soon."

"He kept breaking into tears and never really managed to finish, but he knew all too well, as I could see, that to another he might not be looking very brave, and I felt so much for him that I hurried off to you before I had actually heard all he had to say." Then Myōbu gave her His Majesty's letter.

"Though tears darken my eyes," the lady said, "by the light of his most wise and gracious words . . ." And she began to read.

"I had thought that time might bring consolations to begin lightening my sorrow, but as the passing days and months continue to disappoint me, I hardly know how to bear my grief. Again and again my thoughts go to the little boy, and it troubles me greatly that I cannot look after him with you. Do come and see me in memory of days now gone . . ." He had written with deep feeling and had added the poem:

*"Hearing the wind sigh, burdening with drops of dew all Miyagi Moor,
my heart helplessly goes out to the little hagi frond."²⁴*

But she could not read it to the end.

"Now that I know how painful it is to live long," she said, "I am ashamed to imagine what that pine must think of me,²⁵ and for that reason especially I would not dare to frequent His Majesty's Seat.²⁶ It is very good indeed of him to favor me with these repeated invitations, but I am afraid that I could not possibly bring myself to go. His son, on the other hand, seems eager to do so, although I am not sure just how much he understands, and while it saddens me that he should feel that way, I cannot blame him. Please let His Majesty know these, my inmost thoughts. I fear

22. A conventionally modest statement. Myōbu ranks too low to claim finer feelings as a matter of course.

23. She speaks in the Emperor's own words, although she uses honorifics when the Emperor refers to himself.

24. "As the sad winds of change sweep through the palace, they bring tears to my eyes, and my heart goes out to my little boy." *Hagi*, an autumn-flowering plant, has long, graceful fronds that are easily tossed and tangled by the wind. Miyagino, east of present Sendai, is often associated with *hagi* in poetry, and here, the *miya* of Miyagino also suggests the palace (*miya*). The poem refers to *Kokinshū* 694.

25. *Kokin rokujū* 3057, in which the poet laments feeling even older than the pine of Takasago, a common poetic exemplar of longevity: "No, I shall let no one know that I live on: I am ashamed to imagine what the Takasago pine must think of me."

26. *Momoshiki*, a poetic term for the palace, particularly used by women.

that the child's dignity will suffer tune, and it would be wrong for h

The little boy was asleep." him to His Majesty," Myōbu said back. It must be very late by now

"I would so like to talk to y from my heart,"²⁷ she replied. "Pl you wish. You always used to vis on so sad an errand reminds one from the time she was born, and ing me almost until his last breath His Majesty. 'Do not lose heart did send her, although I felt tha to support her properly, it migh was to honor his last wishes. Un was right of someone who did have borne the disgraceful trea him until the growing burden o to which she was subjected, led that His Majesty had not cared because her loss has plunged r off and she wept.

"By now it was very late." "I now understand," he says, "how way I insisted despite my bette meant that it could not have g and yet because of her I prov hurt, only to lose her in the e now than I ever made of myse have brought all this upon me. so, he is never far from weepin

Myōbu talked on and at let the night go by without bri to return to the palace.

The moon was setting in cold, and the crickets crying weep with them, until she cou

*"Bell crickets may c
for all through t*

she said. She could not get in

27. *Gosenshū* 1102 (also *Kokin rokujū* ent's heart, although not in darkness, most proverbial, and the tale alludes t

that the child's dignity will suffer if he remains here, for I am a creature of misfortune, and it would be wrong for him to stay."

The little boy was asleep. "I had wanted to see him so that I could report on him to His Majesty," Myōbu said as she prepared to hasten away, "but I am expected back. It must be very late by now."

"I would so like to talk to you longer, to lift a little of the unbearable darkness from my heart,"²⁷ she replied. "Please come to see me on your own, too, whenever you wish. You always used to visit at happy, festive times, and seeing you here now on so sad an errand reminds one how very painful life is. We had such hopes for her from the time she was born, and my husband, the late Grand Counselor, kept urging me almost until his last breath to achieve his ambition for her and have her serve His Majesty. 'Do not lose heart and give up,' he said, 'just because I am gone.' So I did send her, although I felt that if she had to enter palace service without anyone to support her properly, it might be wiser to refrain; because what mattered to me was to honor his last wishes. Unfortunately, His Majesty became far more fond than was right of someone who did not deserve that degree of favor, but she seems to have borne the disgraceful treatment she received and to have continued serving him until the growing burden of others' jealousy, and the increasing unpleasantness to which she was subjected, led her to break down as she did; and that is why I wish that His Majesty had not cared for her so much. I suppose I only say that, though, because her loss has plunged me into such terrible shadows . . ." Her voice trailed off and she wept.

"By now it was very late. "His Majesty feels as you do," Myōbu assured her. "I now understand," he says, "how damaging my love for her really was, because the way I insisted despite my better judgment on favoring her to the point of scandal meant that it could not have gone on very long. I had no wish to offend anyone, and yet because of her I provoked resentment in those whom I should not have hurt, only to lose her in the end and to linger on inconsolable, a sorer spectacle now than I ever made of myself before. I wish I knew what in my past lives could have brought all this upon me." This is what he says again and again, and as he does so, he is never far from weeping."

Myōbu talked on and at last said tearfully, "It is now very late, and I must not let the night go by without bringing His Majesty your answer." She hastily prepared to return to the palace.

The moon was setting in a beautifully clear sky, the wind had turned distinctly cold, and the crickets crying from among the grasses seemed to be calling her to weep with them, until she could hardly bear to leave this house of humble misery.

*"Bell crickets may cry until they can cry no more, but not so for me,
for all through the endless night my tears will fall on and on."*

she said. She could not get into her carriage.

27. *Gosenshū* 1102 (also *Kokin rokujō* 1412) by Murasaki Shikibu's ancestor Fujiwara no Kanesuke: "A parent's heart, although not in darkness, may yet wander, lost, for love of a child." The sentiment became almost proverbial, and the tale alludes to the poem so frequently that further occurrences will not be noted.

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than she could bear.

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lyōbu replied, "and even I, who
she meant all too well." Then,
jesty's message.²³

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men.

*"Here where crickets cry more and more unhappily in thinning grasses
you who live above the clouds bring still heavier falls of dew.*

I would soon have been blaming you," the answer came.²⁸

This was no time for pretty parting gifts, and she gave Myōbu instead, in her daughter's memory, some things that she had saved for just such an occasion: a set of gowns and some accessories that her daughter had used to put up her hair.

The young gentlewomen who had served her daughter were of course saddened by the loss of their mistress, but they missed the palace now they were used to it, and memories of His Majesty moved them to urge that his son should move there as quickly as possible, but she felt sure that people would disapprove if one as ill-fated as herself were to accompany him, and since she also knew how much she worried whenever he was out of sight, she could not bring herself to let him go.

Myōbu felt a pang of sympathy when she found that His Majesty had not yet retired for the night. The garden court was in its autumn glory, and on the pretext of admiring it he had quietly called into attendance four or five of his most engaging gentlewomen, with whom he was now conversing. Lately he had been spending all his time examining illustrations of "The Song of Unending Sorrow" commissioned by Emperor Uda, with poems by Ise and Tsurayuki,²⁹ and other poems as well, in native speech or in Chinese, as long as they were on that theme, which was the constant topic of his conversation.

He questioned Myōbu carefully about her visit, and she told him in private how sad it had been. Then he read the lady's reply. She had written, "Your Majesty's words inspire such awe that I am unworthy to receive them; confusion overwhelms me in the presence of sentiments so gracious.

*"Ever since that tree whose boughs took the cruel winds withered and was lost
my heart is sorely troubled for the little hagi frond,"*

and so on—a rather distracted letter, although His Majesty understood how upset she still was and no doubt forgave her.³⁰ He struggled in vain to control himself, despite his resolve to betray no strong emotion. A rush of memories even brought back the days when he had first known his love, and he was shocked to realize how long he had already been without her, when once he had so disliked her briefest absence.

28. "Blaming you, instead of all that has happened, for my tears." These poems are carried by an intermediary, for the lady is still in the house. "You who live above the clouds" (*kumo no uebito*) is Myōbu, the Emperor's emissary, whose visit has started fresh tears.

29. The paintings were probably on screens, with poems set in cartouches as comments on each scene. Ise was a distinguished poet and gentlewoman in the entourage of Emperor Uda (reigned 887–97), while Ki no Tsurayuki (died 946) was the most influential poet at the early-tenth-century court.

30. Her poem neglects the Emperor's protection of the boy in favor of that provided by the boy's mother; it could even be taken to suggest that the Emperor cannot protect him.

"I had wanted her mother vice," he said, "as the late Crane a shame!" He felt very sorry. "A son, as long as he grows up pro-
Myōbu showed him the
that she sent back from beyond,

*"O that I might find
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A superb artist had done only so much, and her picture in the Taieki Lake or the willow tiful in its Chinese way, but w been, he found himself unable evening he had assured her th branches as trees,³¹ but then s filled him with unending sorro

The sound of the wind : choly, and meanwhile he hea long now to wait on him after music far into the night. He d women and privy gentlemen ears. The offender, willful an nothing had happened.

The moon set.

*"When above the clou
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His Majesty murmured, his tl left, and he stayed up until th
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31. In "The Song of Unending S world (the fabulous island of Hōrai [from her.

32. These similes of the Taieki (C "The Song of Unending Sorrow."

33. In the "Song" the Emperor pro fly and if reborn on earth they will st

34. "When even I am weeping, he no ue) refers to the palace, and the as The Emperor's poem also hints at the

35. Another touch from "The Sor

36. Roughly 2:00 to 4:00 A.M.

"I had wanted her mother to feel it was worthwhile to have her enter my service," he said, "as the late Grand Counselor at his death had urged her to do. What a shame!" He felt very sorry. "At any rate, I should be able to do something for my son, as long as he grows up properly. She must take care that she lives to see it."

Myōbu showed him the gifts she had received. If only this were the hairpin that she sent back from beyond, he thought;³¹ but, alas, it was not. He murmured,

*"O that I might find a wizard to seek her out, that I might then know
at least from distant report where her dear spirit has gone."*

A superb artist had done the paintings of Yōkihi, but the brush can convey only so much, and her picture lacked the breath of life. The face, so like the lotuses in the Taieki Lake or the willows by the Miō Palace,³² was no doubt strikingly beautiful in its Chinese way, but when he remembered how sweet and dear his love had been, he found himself unable to compare her to flowers or birdsong. Morning and evening he had assured her that they would share a wing in flight as birds or their branches as trees,³³ but then she had died, and the resulting vanity of his promises filled him with unending sorrow.

The sound of the wind and the calling of crickets only deepened his melancholy, and meanwhile he heard the Kokiden Consort, who had not come for so long now to wait on him after dark, making the best of a beautiful moon by playing music far into the night. He did not like it and wished it would stop. Those gentlewomen and privy gentlemen who knew his mood found that it grated upon their ears. The offender, willful and abrasive, seemed determined to behave as though nothing had happened.

The moon set.

*"When above the clouds tears in a veil of darkness hide the autumn moon,
how could there be light below among the humble grasses?"³⁴*

His Majesty murmured, his thoughts going to the lady whom Myōbu had recently left, and he stayed up until the lamp wicks had burned out.³⁵

It must have been the hour of the Ox,³⁶ because he heard the Right Gate Watch

31. In "The Song of Unending Sorrow," the Emperor sends a wizard to find his beloved in the after-world (the fabulous island of Hōrai [Chinese Penglai]), and the wizard brings back an ornamental hairpin from her.

32. These similes of the Taieki (Chinese Taiye) Lake and the Miō (Chinese Weiyang) Palace are from "The Song of Unending Sorrow."

33. In the "Song" the Emperor promises Yang Guifei that if reborn as birds they will share a wing as they fly and if reborn on earth they will share their branches as trees.

34. "When even I am weeping, how could a bereaved mother not weep, too?" "Above the clouds" (*kumo no ue*) refers to the palace, and the *asaji* grasses are those already mentioned by the lady in an earlier poem. The Emperor's poem also hints at the meaning "How can I go on living?"

35. Another touch from "The Song of Unending Sorrow."

36. Roughly 2:00 to 4:00 A.M.

*spily in thinning grasses
heavier falls of dew.*

ame.²⁸

she gave Myōbu instead, in her
d for just such an occasion: a set
ad used to put up her hair.

er daughter were of course sad-
ssed the palace now they were
tem to urge that his son should
that people would disapprove if
, and since she also knew how
e could not bring herself to let

nd that His Majesty had not yet
turnn glory, and on the pretext
four or five of his most engaging
Lately he had been spending all
ending Sorrow" commissioned
,²⁹ and other poems as well, in
on that theme, which was the

it, and she told him in private
he had written, "Your Majesty's
e them, confusion overwhelms

*ids withered and was lost
hagi frond,"*

Majesty understood how upset
led in vain to control himself,
ish of memories even brought
he was shocked to realize how
e had so disliked her briefest

²⁸ These poems are carried by an inter-
uds" (*kumo no uebito*) is Myōbu, the Em-

rtouches as comments on each scene.
peror Uda (reigned 887-97), while Ki
ith-century court.

favor of that provided by the boy's
otect him.

reporting for duty. He then retired to his curtained bed, for he did not wish to make himself conspicuous, but still he could not sleep. He remembered when morning came, and it was time to rise, how once he had not even known that daybreak was upon him,³⁷ and again he seemed likely to miss his morning session in council.

He only went through the motions of breaking his fast and took no greater interest in his midday meal, until all who served him grieved to see his state. Those in close attendance upon him, ladies and gentlemen alike, murmured anxiously about how disturbing it all was. Perhaps he had been fated to love her, but for him to have ignored the reproofs and the anger of so many, to have flouted for her sake the standards of proper conduct, and even now to ignore public affairs as he was doing—this, they all whispered, was most unfortunate, and they cited in this connection events in the land beyond the sea.³⁸

In time the little boy went to join his father in the palace. He was turning out to be so handsome that he hardly seemed of this world at all, and for His Majesty this aroused a certain dread.³⁹ The next spring, when His Majesty was to designate the Heir Apparent, he longed to pass over his elder son in favor of his younger, but since the younger lacked support,⁴⁰ and since in any case the world at large would never accept such a choice, he desisted for the boy's sake and kept his desire to himself. "He could hardly go that far," people assured one another, "no matter how devoted to him he may be." The Kokiden Consort was relieved.⁴¹

As for the grandmother, she remained inconsolable and wished only to join her daughter, which no doubt is why she, too, to His Majesty's boundless sorrow, at last passed away. The boy was then entering his sixth year. This time he understood what had happened, and he cried. Toward the end, she who had been close to him for so long spoke again and again of how sad she was to leave him.

Now the boy was permanently in attendance at the palace. When he reached his seventh year, His Majesty had him perform his first reading, which he carried off with such unheard-of brilliance that his father was frankly alarmed. "Surely none of you can dislike him now," he said; "after all, he no longer has a mother. Please be nice to him." When he took him to the Kokiden, the Consort there let him straight through her blinds and would not release him, for the sight of him would have brought smiles to the fiercest warrior, even an enemy one. She had given His Majesty two daughters, but by no stretch of the imagination could either be compared with him. Nor did any other imperial lady hide from him, because he was already so charmingly distinguished in manner that they found him a delightful and challenging playmate. Naturally he applied himself to formal scholarship,⁴² but he also set the heavens

37. The Emperor had once slept through dawn in his love's arms. The expression is from *Ise sbū* 55, by Ise, written to go on a screen illustrating "The Song of Unending Sorrow." The poem is based on two lines of Bai Juyi's original.

38. The catastrophe caused by Xuanzong's infatuation with Yang Guifei.

39. People believed that supernatural powers coveted unusually beautiful people and stole them. The tale often alludes to this fear.

40. He had no influential male relative on his mother's side to support him.

41. Her own son has now been formally appointed Heir Apparent.

42. Chinese studies, mainly in political philosophy, law, history, poetry, and court usage.

ringing with the music of string and flute. In fact, if I were to list all the things at which he excelled, would only succeed in making him sound absurd.

During this time His Majesty learned that a delegation from Koma⁴³ included an expert physiognomist, and since it would have contravened Emperor Uda's solemn admonition to call him to the palace, he instead sent his son secretly to the Kōrokan.⁴⁴ The Right Grand Controller, charged with taking him there, presented him as his own.

The astonished physiognomist said, "He has the signs of one destined to be the Sovereign's supreme emine order and suffering. But when I report of all the realm, there again."

The Controller himself was the visitor was most interesting. The mist, who was soon to leave, presented an extraordinary boy, together posed some moving lines of his. Presenting him with handsomeness conveyed to him from His Majesty's will, and although His Majesty was the Heir Apparent's grandfather, was

His Majesty was greatly pleased with one that he had obtained in his first visit to Japan, and on the strength of this. He therefore decided that rather than supported by any maternal relatives (since, after all, his own reign was commoner; and in this spirit I

43. The ancient Korean kingdom of Koma.

44. When Uda abdicated, he wrote and one of these advised against appointing the emperor in the tale corresponds to Daijū, and other visitors were received, near the palace.

45. An imperial son was not a Prince of the ranks, and the appointee received a court rank. The imperial family was "unranked" (*unranked*).



Blinds

ringing with the music of strings and flute. In fact, if I were to list all the things at which he excelled, I would only succeed in making him sound absurd.

During this time His Majesty learned that a delegation from Koma⁴³ included an expert physiognomist, and since it would have contravened Emperor Uda's solemn admonition to call him to the palace, he instead sent his son secretly to the Kōrokan.⁴⁴ The Right Grand Controller, charged with taking him there, presented him as his own.

The astonished physiognomist nodded his head again and again in perplexity. "He has the signs of one destined to become the father of his people and to achieve the Sovereign's supreme eminence," he said, "and yet when I see him so, I fear disorder and suffering. But when I see him as the future pillar of the court and the support of all the realm, there again appears to be a mismatch."

The Controller himself was a man of deep learning, and his conversation with the visitor was most interesting. They exchanged poems, and when the physiognomist, who was soon to leave, made a very fine one expressing joy at having met so extraordinary a boy, together with sorrow upon parting from him, the boy composed some moving lines of his own, which the visitor admired extravagantly before presenting him with handsome gifts. The visitor, too, received many gifts, conveyed to him from His Majesty. News of this encounter got about, as such news will, and although His Majesty never mentioned it, the Minister of the Right, the Heir Apparent's grandfather, wondered suspiciously what it might mean.

His Majesty was greatly impressed to find that the visitor's reading tallied with one that he had obtained in his wisdom through the art of physiognomy as practiced in Japan, and on the strength of which he had refrained from naming his son a Prince. He therefore decided that rather than set the boy adrift as an unranked Prince,⁴⁵ unsupported by any maternal relative, he would assure him a more promising future (since, after all, his own reign might be brief) by having him serve the realm as a commoner; and in this spirit he had him apply himself more diligently than ever to

43. The ancient Korean kingdom of Koguryō.

44. When Uda abdicated, he wrote down articles of advice for his successor, Daigo (reigned 897-930), and one of these advised against admitting any outsider to the palace. Judging from this passage, the Emperor in the tale corresponds to Daigo. The Kōrokan was the building where foreign ambassadors and other visitors were received, near the crossing of Suzaku Avenue and Shichijō ("Seventh Avenue").

45. An imperial son was not a Prince until appointed by his father. The appointment was to one of four ranks, and the appointee received a corresponding stipend. One not so appointed but still retained in the imperial family was "unranked" (*mubon*).

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ing his fast and took no greater ingrieved to see his state. Those in alike, murmured anxiously about d to love her, but for him to have ave flouted for her sake the stan-public affairs as he was doing—id they cited in this connection

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41. The expression is from *Ise shū* 55, by Ōtomo no Yakamochi, "The dawn is a sorrow." The poem is based on two lines

42. Guifei. The beautiful people and stole them. The

43. Support him. The poetry, and court usage.

his studies. It was a shame to make a subject of him, considering his gifts, but he was bound to draw suspicion as a Prince, and when consultation with an eminent astrologer only confirmed this prediction, His Majesty resolved to make him a Genji.⁴⁶

Month after month, year after year, His Majesty never forgot his lost Haven. After summoning several likely prospects, he sorrowfully concluded that he would never find her like again in this world, but then he heard from a Dame of Staff about another possibility: the fourth child of a former Emperor, a girl known for her beauty and brought up by her mother, the Empress, with the greatest care. Owing that Emperor her office as she did, the Dame had served the young lady's mother intimately as well, and so she had known her, too, from infancy; in fact, she saw her from time to time even now. "In all my three reigns of service at court,⁴⁷ I have seen no one like Your Majesty's late Haven," she said, "but the Princess I refer to has grown to be very like her. She is a pleasure to look at."

His Majesty approached the mother with great circumspection, eager to discover the truth of this report. She received his proposal with alarm, because she knew how unpleasant the Heir Apparent's mother could be, and she shrank from exposing her daughter to the blatant contempt with which this Consort had treated her Kiritsubo rival. So it was that she passed away before she could bring herself to consent. Once the daughter was alone, His Majesty pressed his suit earnestly, assuring her that she would be to him as a daughter of his own.⁴⁸ Her gentlewomen, those properly concerned with her interests,⁴⁹ and her elder brother, His Highness of War, all agreed that she would be far better off at the palace than forlorn at home, and they therefore insisted that she should go.

She was called Fujitsubo. She resembled that other lady to a truly astonishing degree, but since she was of far higher standing, commanded willing respect, and could not possibly be treated lightly, she had no need to defer to anyone on any matter. His Majesty had clung all too fondly to his old love, despite universal disapproval, and he did not forget her now, but in a touching way his affection turned to this new arrival, who was a great consolation to him.

None of His Majesty's ladies could remain shy with the young Genji, especially the one he now saw so often, because he hardly ever left his father's side. All of them took pride in their looks, no doubt with good reason, but they were no longer in the first blush of youth, whereas the new Princess was both young and charming, and Genji naturally caught glimpses of her, although she did what she could to keep out of his sight. He had no memory of his mother, but his youthful interest was aroused when the Dame of Staff told him how much the Princess resembled her, and he wanted always to be with her so as to contemplate her to his heart's content.

46. Members of the imperial family had no surname, but after the early ninth century some excess imperial sons were made commoners (*tadabito*) with the surname Minamoto. "Genji" means simply "a Minamoto."

47. Since the present Emperor's reign is her third, she must have been appointed by his grandfather. The word *sendai* ("previous Emperor") means an Emperor who did not abdicate but died in office, and Kōkō (reigned 884-87), who preceded Uda (Daigo's predecessor), did just this.

48. That he would provide for her himself and not count on her mother's family.

49. The principal men in her mother's family.

His Majesty, who cared so deeply for both of them, asked her not to maintain her reserve. "I am not sure why," he said, "but it seems right to me that he should take you for his mother. Do not think him uncivil. Just be kind to him. His face and eyes are so like hers that your own resemblance to her makes it look quite natural." Genji therefore lost no chance offered by the least flower or autumn leaf to let her know in his childish way how much he liked Kokiden Consort to fall out with old animosity returned and she to

Genji's looks had an indeed Highness's celebrated and, to His Majesty, to call him the Shining Lord. Since he loved them both, they called her

His Majesty was reluctant. In the twelfth year he gave him his court preparations and adding new elements less imposing than the one for Shishinden, and lest anything quiet to be offered by the various provided by the Court Repository perfection in all they supplied.

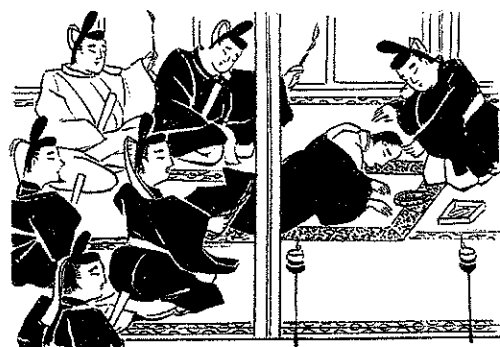
He had his throne face with the seats for the young man appeared at the hour of the moon would never look again as he did radiant with the freshness of the rain⁵² did their duty. The Lord of the beautiful hair, and His Majesty, who was there to see it, needed the great

All present shed tears within the anteroom, Genji then reached the garden to salute his Sovereign

50. He sits on a chair in the aisle residence, the Seiryōden, Genji and the (magobisashi), an open, floored space

51. Mizura, hair bunches that divide they came of age.

52. The Emperor's hair was normally



Coming-of-age ceremony

His Majesty, who cared so deeply for both of them, asked her not to maintain her reserve. "I am not sure why," he said, "but it seems right to me that he should take you for his mother. Do not think him uncivil. Just be kind to him. His face and eyes are so like hers that your own resemblance to her makes it look quite natural." Genji therefore lost no chance offered by the least flower or autumn leaf to let her know in his

childish way how much he liked her. His Majesty's fondness for her prompted the Kokiden Consort to fall out with her as she had done with Genji's mother, until her old animosity returned and she took an aversion to Genji as well.

Genji's looks had an indescribably fresh sweetness, one beyond even Her Highness's celebrated and, to His Majesty, peerless beauty, and this moved people to call him the Shining Lord. Since Fujitsubo made a pair with him, and His Majesty loved them both, they called her the Sunlight Princess.

His Majesty was reluctant to spoil Genji's boyish charm, but in Genji's twelfth year he gave him his coming of age, busying himself personally with the preparations and adding new embellishments to the ceremony. Lest the event seem less imposing than the one for the Heir Apparent, done some years ago in the Shishinden, and lest anything go amiss, he issued minute instructions for the banquets to be offered by the various government offices and for the things normally provided by the Court Repository and Imperial Granary, eliciting from them perfection in all they supplied.

He had his throne face east from the outer, eastern chamber of his residence, with the seats for the young man and his sponsor, the Minister, before him.⁵⁰ Genji appeared at the hour of the Monkey. His Majesty appeared to regret that Genji would never look again as he did now, with his hair tied in twin tresses⁵¹ and his face radiant with the freshness of youth. The Lord of the Treasury and the Chamberlain⁵² did their duty. The Lord of the Treasury was plainly sorry to cut off such beautiful hair, and His Majesty, who wished desperately that his Haven might have been there to see it, needed the greatest self-mastery not to weep.

All present shed tears when, after donning the headdress and withdrawing to the anteroom, Genji then reappeared in the robes of a man and stepped down into the garden to salute his Sovereign. His Majesty, of course, was still more deeply

50. He sits on a chair in the aisle room (*bisashi*)—his day room (*biru no omashi*)—on the east side of his residence, the Seiryōden, Genji and the Minister of the Left are a beam width below him in the second aisle (*magobisashi*), an open, floored space not found in ordinary dwellings.

51. *Mizura*, hair bunches that divided the hair evenly on either side of the head. Boys wore *mizura* until they came of age.

52. The Emperor's hair was normally cut by a Chamberlain.

91
n, considering his gifts, but he was consultation with an eminent as- Majesty resolved to make him a

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47. In the ninth century some excess impe- "Genji" means simply "a Minamoto." n appointed by his grandfather. The licate but died in office, and Kōkō s.

48. Her family.



Twin tresses

moved, and in his mind he sadly reviewed the past, when the boy's mother had been such a comfort to him. He had feared that Genji's looks might suffer once his hair was put up, at least while he remained so young, but not at all: he only looked more devastatingly handsome than ever.

By Her Highness⁵³ his wife the sponsoring Minister had a beloved only daughter in whom the Heir Apparent had expressed interest, but whom after long hesitation he felt more inclined to offer to Genji instead. When he had sounded out the Emperor's own feelings on the matter, His Majesty replied, "Very well, she may be just the companion for him,⁵⁴ now that he seems no

longer to have anyone looking after him"; and this had encouraged His Excellency to proceed.

Genji withdrew to the anteroom and then took the very last seat among the Princes,⁵⁵ while the assembled company enjoyed their wine. His Excellency dropped hints to him about this marriage, but Genji was at a bashful age and gave him no real response. Then a lady from the Office of Staff sent His Excellency a message from His Majesty, requiring his presence, and His Excellency obeyed forthwith.⁵⁶

One of His Majesty's gentlewomen took the gifts from his own hands to bestow them on His Excellency. They included, according to custom, a white, over-size woman's gown⁵⁷ and a set of women's robes. On handing him the wine cup, His Majesty gave pointed expression to his feelings:

*"Into that first knot to bind up his boyish hair did you tie the wish
that enduring happiness be theirs through ages to come?"⁵⁸*

*"In that very mood I tied his hair with great prayers bound henceforth to last,
just as long as the dark hue of the purple does not fade,"*

His Excellency replied before stepping down from the long bridge⁵⁹ to perform his obeisance. There he received a horse from the Left Imperial Stables and a perched

53. Genji's aunt and the Emperor's sister. Genji is about to marry a first cousin.

54. After coming of age, Genji would normally receive material support from his wife's family. The wife to so young a man was called a "companion in bed" (*soibushi*).

55. The imperial sons, who were seated in order of rank. Genji sat next to his future father-in-law, for the Minister of the Left occupied the highest seat among the nonimperial nobles.

56. The woman (a *Naishi no Jō*, a third-level official in the Office of Staff) probably communicated the Emperor's message through a Chamberlain. The Minister is to receive the gifts customarily awarded to the "sponsor."

57. This *uchiki*, made for presentation, would have been reduced in size for actual use.

58. This poem, like the Minister's reply, plays on the verb *musubu*, "bind up" the hair and "make" a vow (of conjugal fidelity). The cord used was purple (*murasaki*), the color of close relationship.

59. *Nagabashi*, a plank bridge between the *Seiryōden* and the *Shishinden*.

falcon from the Chamberlains' below the steps,⁶⁰ each to rece

The delicacies in cypress the Emperor that day by the mand. There were so many ric more than when the Heir App them all. It was in fact Genji's

That evening His Majesty's Excellency welcomed him and his family found Genji preternatural. His Excellency's daughter, so ashamed that he should suit her

His Excellency enjoyed had borne him his daughter before of supreme distinction, and Genji had joined them, too, and grandfather of the Heir App ladies. By Her Highness he had been named Chamberlain Lieutenant⁶¹ as a son-in-law, even though together, and whom he had then treated the young man just as if two sons-in-law got on perfectly

Genji was not free to often. In his heart he saw only the kind of woman I want. His Excellency's daughter was no doubt very because he had lost his boy at the point of pain.

Now that Genji was at the jitsubo's curtains to be with his company her koto on his floor blinds⁶² were his consolation palace. Only after waiting until again put in two or three at he did not really mind, and he selected the least ordinary a These entered with him into

His residence at the p

60. *Mibasbi*, the steps down from

61. Gifts for the lower servants.

62. The wedding rite for Genji's

63. Hereafter Genji's great friend

64. At his father-in-law's residence

65. Fujitsubo joined in the music

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falcon from the Chamberlains' Office. The Princes and senior nobles then lined up below the steps,⁶⁰ each to receive his gift.

The delicacies in cypress boxes and the fruit baskets had been prepared for the Emperor that day by the Right Grand Controller, at His Majesty's own command. There were so many rice dumplings and so many chests of cloth,⁶¹ certainly more than when the Heir Apparent came of age, that there was hardly any room for them all. It was in fact Genji's ceremony that displayed truly magnificent liberality.

That evening His Majesty sent Genji to the Minister's residence, where His Excellency welcomed him and gave the ensuing rite⁶² a dazzling brilliance. The family found Genji preternaturally attractive, despite his still being such a child, but His Excellency's daughter, somewhat older, thought him much too young and was ashamed that he should suit her so poorly.

His Excellency enjoyed His Majesty's highest regard, and the Princess who had borne him his daughter was moreover His Majesty's full sister. Both were therefore of supreme distinction, and the Minister of the Right cut a poor figure now that Genji had joined them, too, despite being destined one day to rule the realm as the grandfather of the Heir Apparent. His Excellency had many children by various ladies. By Her Highness he had, apart from his daughter, a very young and promising Chamberlain Lieutenant⁶³ whom the Minister of the Right had wished to secure as a son-in-law, even though he was hardly on good terms with the young man's father, and whom he had therefore matched with his beloved fourth daughter. He treated the young man just as well as Genji's father-in-law treated Genji, and the two sons-in-law got on perfectly together.

Genji was not free to live at home,⁶⁴ for His Majesty summoned him too often. In his heart he saw only Fujitsubo's peerless beauty. Ah, he thought, she is the kind of woman I want to marry; there is no one like her! His Excellency's daughter was no doubt very pretty and well brought up, but he felt little for her because he had lost his boyish heart to someone else; indeed, he had done so to the point of pain.

Now that Genji was an adult, His Majesty no longer allowed him through Fujitsubo's curtains to be with her as before. Whenever there was music, he would accompany her koto on his flute; this and the faint sound of her voice through the blinds⁶⁵ were his consolations, and he wanted never to live anywhere but in the palace. Only after waiting upon His Majesty for five or six days might he now and again put in two or three at His Excellency's, but he was so young that the Minister did not really mind, and he treated his son-in-law generously. His Excellency selected the least ordinary among the available gentlewomen for Genji's service. These entered with him into his favorite pastimes and looked after him very well.

His residence at the palace was the Kiritsubo, as before, and His Majesty kept

60. *Mibashi*, the steps down from the Seiryōden to the garden just east of it.

61. Gifts for the lower servants.

62. The wedding rite for Genji and the Minister's daughter, known to readers as Aoi.

63. Hereafter Genji's great friend, known to readers as Tō no Chūjō.

64. At his father-in-law's residence.

65. Fujitsubo joined in the music (*asobi*) but remained invisible.

his mother's gentlewomen together so as to have them serve him in turn. He also decreed that the Office of Upkeep and the Office of Artisans should rebuild his mother's home, which they did beautifully. The layout of the trees and garden hills was already very pleasant, but with much bustle and noise they handsomely enlarged the lake. Genji kept wishing with many sighs that he had a true love to come and live with him there.

They say that his nickname, the Shining Lord, was given him in praise by the man from Koma.

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