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Wandering in the Realm of the Seventh Sense

Osaki Midori

Translated by Kyoko Selden and Alisa Freedman

Born in Tottori Prefecture (where her last name is pronounced Osaki rather than Ozaki¹), Osaki Midori (1896-1971) was the fourth of seven children in a middle-class, intellectual family. Her mother was the daughter of the head priest of a Buddhist temple; her father was a teacher, who died while Osaki was a teenager. Osaki graduated from the Tottori Girls' School (Tottori Jogakko), and, at age eighteen, became an elementary school teacher. Aspiring to a literary career, she wrote poetry, essays, and fiction and sold a novel for schoolgirls (*shōjo shōsetsu*) to *Shōjo sekai* (Girls' World) magazine in 1917.

In 1919, Osaki moved to Tokyo to study at Japan Women's University. Her three older brothers had earlier pursued higher educations, attending the naval academy, Tottori University, and University of Tokyo, respectively. Osaki's story "From the Doldrums" (*Mifutai kara*) appeared in the general interest literary magazine *Shinchō* (New Currents) in 1919, making her name known. However, running up against the university's policy prohibiting students from publishing literature in commercial venues, she withdrew from school in 1920 to be a fulltime writer.

Osaki strove to make a life for herself in Tokyo and to be part of the literary world centered there, for which acceptance often required the support of established writers and editors and the sale of works to magazines and newspapers. In the 1920s and 1930s, Tokyo was the epicenter of the intensification of historical and literary trends that had begun earlier, including rapid urbanization, the rise of new social groups and changing gender roles, diversification of mass media, development of popular entertainments, as well as increasing control of the police state and imperialist ventures. Tokyo was a magnet, then as now, drawing people from other parts of Japan and throughout the empire, seeking employment, education, and excitement. But, for women, a move to the capital often meant leaving behind the protective space of the family, breaking with the patriarchal system that was the basis of society. In *Wandering in the Realm of the*

Seventh Sense (Dainana kankai hōkō, 1931), as in her other works, Osaki expresses the alienation individuals experienced in the capital. She portrays unconventional familial relationships formed among youth seeking to establish themselves in Tokyo. Her female protagonists endured difficult living conditions, as Osaki herself did.

Osaki associated with authors representing diverse ideological and aesthetic goals who sought to expand the scope of Japanese literature. Most scholars have classified Osaki with the Tokyo “modernists” (then more commonly referred to by the factions to which they belonged) who were experimenting with unorthodox techniques to respond to their modern moment, which they saw as marking a break with the past, and who sought to convey the allure and contradictions of Tokyo. Many modernist writers were critical of the proletarian literature about Tokyo being written at the time, which they saw as advancing political ideologies at the expense of aesthetics and as focusing solely on despair. Yet they shared a similar concern with Marxist writers in capturing the details of daily life under capitalism as part of a larger critique. So-called modernists and Marxist writers contributed to periodicals and books sponsored by the same publishers (for example, *Shinchō* and *Kaizō*) in the 1920s, suggesting that their rivalries might not have been as fierce as contemporary scholars believe them to be and that editors had their eyes on the market and knew both literary forms could sell.

Unskilled at social interactions and unable to find enough work, Osaki lived in abject poverty. Hayashi Fumiko, aspiring author and contributor to *Nyonin geijūtsu* (Women’s Arts) magazine to which Osaki sold many works, appreciated Osaki’s talent and respected her as a person, but Osaki lacked the perseverance and social skills that enabled Hayashi to overcome an impoverished, anonymous, and degrading life. She was able to continue writing thanks to financial support from her mother in Tottori to supplement income received from her part-time work, as well as assistance from author Matsushita Fumiko, whom she had met at Japan Women’s University. In 1932, Osaki—who had lost her emotional balance due to the side effects of medications used to treat migraine headaches and was perhaps suffering from the end of her brief cohabitation with Takeo Takeshi, a writer ten years her junior—was forced by her oldest brother to return to Tottori; there she was hospitalized for a mental breakdown. Although she regained her health, Midori abandoned her literary career and publically announced in 1941 that she was finished writing. Withdrawing to her remote hometown, she ceased contact with the Tokyo literary establishment, stopped publishing, and took care of her nieces and nephews amidst the social upheaval of the war. For years, her writings were forgotten by authors and critics.

Wandering in the Realm of the Seventh Sense, often viewed as the culmination of Osaki’s modernism and her signature work, was published in two parts in the March and April 1931 issues of the literary magazine *Bungaku tōin* (Literary Members) and a revised complete version appeared in the June 1931 issue of *Shinkō geijutsu kenkyū* (New Arts Research). The book version was released in 1933, and Osaki attended the launch in Tottori. The story is told in a light, humorous tone by Ono Machiko, a young woman

who has left behind a quiet rural life with her grandmother to live with her brothers and former childhood crush in Tokyo. The male characters' perspectives are communicated through letters, treatises, and conversations interspersed through Machiko's narration. All four members of this "odd household" are devoted to their studies, unusual versions of fields developing at the time and which inspired Osaki's literature—science, psychology, music, and poetry. Machiko desires to write poems that capture the "seventh sense" but is unable to define this elusive sense at the interface of consciousness and unconsciousness that arises from but transcends everyday reality. She perceives inklings of it through trancelike moments. The five ordinary senses are heightened to the point of discomfort—smells are disgusting, sounds are discordant, tastes are bitter, touches cause shivers, and sights are blurred or painful to behold. Sensory perceptions are conveyed through strange combinations of words (for example, voices grow moist). None of the characters have the intuition of the sixth sense (*dairokkan*).

Names are important to the relationships, themes, and motifs of the story. The given names of the narrator's brothers contain the numbers one (Ichisuke) and two (Nisuke), and her cousin's name (Sangorō) is comprised of the numbers three and five. (Four is skipped perhaps because it is an unlucky homophone for death.) The name of the character Yanagi Kōroku who appears later in the story contains the number six. The sequence perhaps counts up to the seventh sense. Throughout the story, precise measurements are given, furthering numerical motifs. The narrator often deliberately uses first and last names when referring to her brothers and cousin, which causes an odd distancing effect for the reader; the men, in turn, refer to her as the "girl" (*onnanoko*). The name Ono Machiko playfully echoes the name of Ono no Komachi, the legendary early Heian court poet renowned for her exceeding beauty. Long, straight hair, one standard for feminine beauty in the Heian era (around 794-1185), is an ironic contrast to the narrator's reddish, frizzy hair and furthers the main theme of failure in love.

All characters are obsessed with romantic love—past, present, and future. They become embroiled in love triangles and suffer from the heartbreak of unrequited love. Machiko defines the psychological disorder of schizophrenia in terms of love triangles; and love triangles are the topic of the comic operas Sangorō sings. *Wandering in the Realm of the Seventh Sense* can be read parodying the romantic film comedies popular at the time, in which misunderstandings were resolved into happy endings, and a history of Japanese sentimental literature, from confessional writings to stories for schoolgirls, in which they often were not. Only the moss that Nisuke cultivates with manure succeeds in falling in love.

Love is also expressed as a main symptom of the various forms of "schizophrenia" (*bunretsu shinrigaku*) that Ichisuke studies. Scholar of Japanese literature and film Livia Monnet notes that Osaki made up the name of this psychological disorder, that, according to the afterword of the complete version of the novel published in *Shinkō geijutsu kenkyū*, parodies Freudian psychoanalysis about which Osaki was well-read.²

This love-initiated schizophrenia also reflects Osaki's interest in the motif of doubles and doppelgängers—as thematized by the likes of Edgar Allen Poe and the Surrealists—as a screen upon which to project unconscious anxieties. In the January 1930 issue of *Nyonin geijutsu*, Osaki published a translation of Edgar Allen Poe's horror story *Morella* (Morera), which is narrated by a woman who studies philosophies of identity and gives birth to a daughter that uncannily resembles the narrator's mother.³ Doppelgängers are hinted in the fragment of the title of the book Ichisuke asks Sangorō to buy. Machiko is said to look like a minor foreign poet.

In addition to her training in classical Japanese literature and her forays into foreign literature, theories, and music, *Wandering in the Realm of the Seventh Sense* reflects Osaki's knowledge of film. Osaki was the first woman to try her hand at film criticism, and starting in 1930, she wrote a monthly column of "Random Jottings about Film" (Eiga mansō) for *Nyonin geijutsu*. Her film writings included analyses of Charlie Chaplin comedies, the physical humor and pathos of which she injected into her stories, and observations of female filmgoers.⁴ Indeed, Osaki's works impart the sensibility of a viewer in a theater engrossed in a silent movie. Osaki deployed cinematic techniques in her writing, including rapid scene shifts, physical gags, pans, close-ups, and montage. Montage puts images together in ways that condense the narrative and draws attention to symbolic meanings of individual sights and sounds. Almost in the manner of Freudian free association, objects, particularly food (from salty local specialties and unripe oranges to the pungent greens grown by Nisuke) illuminate the disconnect between the characters. Machiko is responsible for kitchen duty, a job commonly assigned to women, but she is often unable to prepare meals. Instead, characters mostly snack. As in the case of books and clothing, both Japanese and foreign foods appear in the story. Machiko's bobbed hair might be a reference to foreign film actresses, as well as marking a break between her past life in the countryside and efforts to integrate herself into Tokyo.

In the 1960s, Osaki's stories were rediscovered by literary critic Hanada Kiyoteru. Thanks to Hanada, *Wandering in the Realm of the Seventh Sense* was included in a volume of *Black Humor* (Kuroi ūmoa) in a series on *Discovery of Modern Literature: Collected Works* (Zenshū—gendai bungaku no hakken) in 1969. The reevaluation of her work began with Hanada's comparison of *Wandering in the Realm of the Seventh Sense* to the literary impact of works by such 1960s authors as Abe Kōbō and Ōe Kenzaburō. Hanada deemed Osaki's unconventional style and humor as "urban modernist," firmly establishing the basis of her subsequent reevaluation. For example, Abe and Osaki similarly create a world of grotesque literature arising from the decadence of the city following its destruction in the 1945 firebombings. Their work is filled with discordant notes, and at the same time, represents an absurd world in which tragedy and comedy intermingle. In 1971, while delighting in her rediscovery and in the news of the reissue of her works, Osaki died of pneumonia. A single-volume of her collected works (*Osaki Midori zenshū*) was edited by author and literary critic Inagaki Masami and published in 1979 (Tokyo: Sōjusha).

Osaki displayed a writer's individuality within a social milieu that restricted the expressive practice of women. As exemplified by *Wandering in the Realm of the Seventh Sense*, Osaki's literature is marked by an anti-realist, anti-worldly imagination, which conjures a fantastic realm beyond the everyday. Postwar authors, such as Mori Mari, Yagawa Sumiko, Yū Miri, and Tawada Yōko have extended the perspective of Midori's modernism. These women skillfully utilize the subjectivity of a young girl who rejects maturity and the feminine interiority promoted by patriarchal society. Osaki's literature, as well as her life, continues to attract the attention of writers, filmmakers, and scholars. The 1998 film *In Search of a Lost Writer: Wandering in the Realm of the Seventh Sense* (Dainana kankai hōkō: Osaki Midori o sagashite, written by Yamazaki Kuninori, directed by Hamano Sachi) was financed in part through donations from women's groups throughout Japan.⁵ The film combines interviews about Osaki and dramatization of her life with a staging of *Wandering in the Realm of the Seventh Sense*. As noted in Mizuta Noriko's preface to this special issue, among Kyoko Selden's last unfinished projects was an edited volume of translations of Osaki Midori's literature, which was to include *Miss Cricket* (Kōrogiō, 1932, translated by Seiji M. Lippit, published in *More Stories By Japanese Women Writers* [Kyoko Selden and Noriko Mizuta, editors]) and the play *Apple Pie in the Afternoon* (Appurupai no goro, 1929).

Some time in the distant past, I spent a brief period from autumn to winter as a member of an odd family. And I seem to have had a certain experience of love.

In this family, every member, including me, who occupied the maid's room with its northern exposure, was an assiduous learner, and we all desired to make some contribution to a corner of life. In my eyes, everyone's study seemed meaningful. I was at an age when I was apt to think of things in that way. I was merely a girl with frizzy, terribly reddish hair, and my official work in the household was kitchen duty, as my status as resident of the north-facing room would suggest. But unbeknownst to the others, I had the following objective of my study: I would write poems that would reverberate in the human seventh sense. After they filled a thick notebook...Ah, I would wrap the notebook brimming with poems penned in small characters and send it by registered mail to a teacher with the most developed seventh sense. Then, all he would need to do would be to read my poems, and I would not have to expose my frizzy hair to him. (I used to feel restrained by my hair.)

Such was the objective of my study. But I only had a vague notion of what it entailed. Besides, I had no idea what form the human seventh sense took. So, in order for me to write poems, I had to first find a definition of the seventh sense. Because this was a hard task replete with indecision, my poetry notebook tended to be blank.

Ono Ichisuke was the one who appointed me to kitchen duty, and Sada Sangorō

was probably the one who enthusiastically supported the idea. The reason is that Sada Sangorō had worked three weeks as the cook prior to my joining the family. Those three weeks were miserable for him in many ways, and I heard that he was such a bad cook that he had even burnt miso soup. The household also included Ono Nisuke. I was the cook for all three men. While I am on the subject of names, let me add a few things about my name. I am Ono Ichisuke and Ono Nisuke's younger sister and Sada Sangorō's younger cousin. My full name is Ono Machiko, but because this is the kind of name that behooves a woman of great beauty, it made me uncomfortable to ponder it. Nobody would imagine that a name like this would belong to a skinny, red-haired girl. So I thought that I should come up with a name better suited to my poetry and to myself once my thick notebook was filled with poems.

My grandmother had bought my basket for me when I was about to leave home to take up kitchen duty. The first items that she packed in it were medicines: *gomisin*, or dried *kazura japonica* berries, and finely chopped mulberry root. She firmly believed that these were special remedies for reddish, frizzy hair.

After she finished packing, my grandmother sighed deeply, facing the still open basket, and said to me:

“Seven parts *gomisin* and three parts mulberry strips. Don't forget the proportion. Patiently boil them thoroughly in a ceramic pot. When the water boils down to half, soak a hand towel in it, just like Grandma has always done for you. Wring it while it is still hot and apply it to your hair to stretch the frizz. Don't forget to smooth the unwanted curls every morning. Do it carefully. Soak and wring the towel repeatedly. Do it many times.”

As her voice grew moist, I had to whistle louder. But my whistling did not seem to have much effect. My grandmother sighed again, looking toward the basket:

“Ah, you were born lazy, through and through. I doubt you will straighten your hair every morning. You won't care about your appearance. But I hear girls in the city are stylish and pretty.”

I could do nothing about my whistling growing weaker. I stood up and went to the kitchen for a drink of water. And in fact, I drank two large teacups of water, which helped me to whistle loudly again.

After whistling loudly in the kitchen for a while, I returned to find my grandmother, having wiped away her tears, removing the hair-care medicines from the basket. She then made individual packets, each containing the proper dosage of the two medicines. Making packet after packet wrapped in the paper from the sliding doors cut into squares, she added:

“Still, no matter how stylish and pretty city girls may be, the most important thing is one's disposition. I hear that, as far as the ancient gods were concerned, the frizzier a woman's hair, the more kind-hearted she was. The Sun Goddess, too, must have had

curly hair. Listen carefully to what your brothers have to say and try to get along with Sangorō as you lead your life. . . .

My grandmother's tears fell into my hair-care packets.

My basket, too new for the above reason, made Sada Sangorō's dark-blue kimono and kimono jacket with white splash patterns look old and worn as he held them in his hand. Because he was preparing to take the entrance examinations for music school a second time the following spring, he looked somewhat sad to me, even with his back turned. But seeing him like this, I sympathized with his difficulties. He had sent me a number of letters, written in his clumsy handwriting and writing style, about how crestfallen a student preparing for entrance examinations feels.

As Sangorō and I approached the house, I could see mandarin oranges a little over one centimeter in diameter growing on the trees that formed a hedge around it, shining in the sun and looking almost the same color as the leaves. I then realized that a net containing mandarin oranges still hung from my hand. Unaware, I still held the oranges I had not finished eating on the train. Anyway, how underdeveloped the mandarin oranges on the hedge were—they later turned into homegrown fruit, imperfect and shockingly behind the season, with bumpy skin and many pips and not much larger than two centimeters. They were sour. But they looked beautiful under the stars on a late autumn night, and, despite their sourness, they were later to help with Sada Sangorō's love. He ate half of one of these two-centimeter oranges and gave the remaining half to the object of his affection. Partly because I need to tell my story in order, I will have to save the episode of Sangorō's love for a later time.

The single-story house surrounded by the hedge looked so old that the three name cards posted at the entrance appeared strikingly bright. Of the three cards for Ono Ichisuke, Ono Nisuke, and Sada Sangorō, only the first two were printed. Sangorō's name was inked in thick brushstrokes on a piece of cardboard. As he had written in one of his letters: "A student preparing for examinations is lonely. And a student who has to take examinations twice is even lonelier. Both Ono Ichisuke and Ono Nisuke must have long forgotten this feeling. You, Ono Machiko, alone will understand it." At the very least, perhaps writing his name in thick brushstrokes on the card kept his spirits up.

Because Sangorō entered the house through the window by the *genkan* and opened the door right away,⁶ I stopped looking at the name cards and went into his room. But incidentally, that letter from Sada Sangorō continued:

As proof of the fact that Ono Nisuke has long forgotten how I must feel, he boils fertilizer almost every night, and the odor from his room, separated from mine only by a corridor, is unbearable. So I have to take shelter in the maid's room, which is on the other side of the house. Because boiling fertilizer is the basis of his graduation thesis, the odor comes often. Well, even if this escape helps me to tolerate the odor, I am forced to pull out the bedding from the closet and go to

sleep early in the evening because the maid's room has no electricity. When I have things to do, I need to use candlelight. Tonight, too, I am writing this letter on the tatami of the maid's room. I feel sad. The odor, which is particularly intense tonight, diagonally crosses the corridor, streams toward the genkan, moves into the dining room, cuts across the kitchen, and leaks into the maid's room. On such a night, I am so sad that I feel like banging on the piano.

Suppose I decide to tolerate the stench. It is annoying when someone else occupies the maid's room before I can. Because Ichisuke lives next door to Nisuke in rooms divided only by a row of sliding paper doors, he seems used to the usual amount of odor; but on a night when the fertilizer smell is too intense, he takes shelter in the maid's room before I can and studies in my bedding under my candlelight. He hardly lifts his eyes from his book when he orders me:

"If you have some studying to do, how about lighting another candle and getting under the covers at the bottom end? The odor from boiling a lot of fertilizer gets in the way of studying. Burnt ammonia smells almost the same as sulfur."

I step away from the maid's room and go to the public bathhouse, leaving both of my windows wide open. Then I watch a banana seller at a night stall until all the bananas are sold. Or I carry Ichisuke's bedding into my room and get as close as possible to the open windows for fresh air, while silently mouthing my pitch-training practice.

Because neither Ichisuke nor Nisuke can stand music at night, they tell me to study during the day while they are out. When will I be able to enter music school? I do not even know myself. Tell me what you think, Ono Machiko. May your words lift my spirits.

Because Nisuke is still boiling fertilizer, tonight I will write another important thing. I have been meaning to write this important thing for some time, but I have been unable to do so. It is something I would like to tell only Ono Machiko. Please understand that. This is how it is.

The other day, a teacher at the branch school (the preparatory music school where I commute every afternoon) laughed at my pitch-training practice. Commenting that my semitones were unstable, he let out a nasal laugh that sounded like "boo-hmm." I left school dejected and ended up buying a large sailor's pipe. Rather than having bought it on a whim, I think the teacher who laughed at me instead of scolding me about my pitch is to blame, but I wonder what Ono Machiko thinks. People seem to prefer being yelled at to being laughed at for their failures! In particular, the shorter the laughter the less chance of dejection!

The sailor's pipe I fancied at the pipe shop was three times as expensive as I had expected, and I spent most of the money Ichisuke had entrusted with me to purchase a book titled Doppel-something for him.⁷ Since then, I have been postponing my trip to the Maruzen bookstore. And I tell Ichisuke that I go to Maruzen daily but that Doppel-something has not yet arrived.

Having stowed the pipe behind the piano without once using it, I showed it to a ragman who happened to pass by in the morning when neither Ichisuke nor Nisuke was at home, and he appraised it at 30 sen.⁸ What nonsense! I envied the ragman

and wished I could buy a copy of Doppel-something for 30 sen. And my last wish is that Ono Machiko could join us as soon as possible and save me from my dire situation. If it seems you will not arrive here on schedule, please ask grandmother for the money right away and send it to me. Doppel-something probably costs 6 yen, the amount Ichisuke gave me.

It is true that I left several days earlier than planned because of this letter. But my early departure was not to save Sangorō from his dilemma. I had already provided for his expenses, and the amount came from the money my grandmother had tucked in the pocket she sewed on the front of my kimono undergarment. She had instructed, “When you go to the capital, it will soon be winter. You will need a new scarf to keep you warm. One from the country will certainly look inferior to those worn by girls in the capital. Use this money to buy one you like. If you don’t know how to choose an appropriate pattern, ask Sangorō to go with you, and together you can select one on a par with those worn by the city girls.”

The money in my undergarment was just too opportune. I secretly changed it into one 5-yen bill and five 1-yen bills, and enclosed the amount Sangorō had requested in his letter. Then I put the remaining four 1-yen bills back into the pocket and fastened the hook. My grandmother had attached a hook-and-eye to the pocket. Saying that hooks and eyes are very convenient, she kept a number of them, which she had removed from my worn-out summer clothes, in her sewing box.

My departure had been hastened by a vague feeling.

Sangorō lived with his piano in a 1.5-*tsubo* room by the *genkan*.⁹ The piano looked so old that, had it been placed in a parlor or a similar place in a newly built house, it would have required a fine cloth cover. I was told that Sangorō had rented it from the landlord along with the old house. By the piano was a revolving stool, whose seat was more exposed cotton padding than velvet upholstery cover. Sangorō sat on the *furoshiki* he had spread on top,¹⁰ and talked to me while eating a mandarin orange from my net sack. I listened, sitting beside my basket. Behind him was the piano, its lid open, and the sailor’s pipe, still holding ashes, was perched on top of the keyboard. This is what Sangorō explained: “I rented this old, single-story house because it came with a piano, but after three weeks, I realized that it was the worst possible place for us. As long as we live with Ono Nisuke, we need a two-story house. Fine if there is no piano. Why don’t we find a slightly newer place with two rooms on the second floor for Nisuke and Ichisuke, and you and I can stay on the first floor.” (Sangorō put the peel on the piano keyboard and took another orange.)

“If the two of us look together, we will soon find a nice house. Nisuke can boil as much fertilizer as he likes upstairs. Odor tends to rise, so it won’t bother us on the first floor. On evenings when Ichisuke takes shelter downstairs—when Nisuke heats fertilizer

in test tubes, the smell is not so bad, but when he uses a big ceramic pot, it is unbearable. So Ichisuke will naturally take shelter on the first floor from time to time—then, I will let him use my room, and I will take shelter in your room. If we live on separate floors, I can sing my pitch-training pieces at night. Under the present circumstances, I go to the branch school in the afternoon, and at night Ichisuke and Nisuke keep me from practicing, so I do not have time to study. In the morning, after Ichisuke and Nisuke go out, I am very sleepy. You see, I have been the one to wake early every morning and fix breakfast. Our initial understanding was that Nisuke would help with the cooking until you arrived, but he never once did. His excuse is that he stays up until late researching his graduation thesis, but you never saw a late riser like him. Besides, he asks me too often to collect fertilizer for him. Anyway, if the present situation continues, I am bound to fail again. I do not want to fail the examinations for music school twice in a row. So let's, the two of us, find a two-story house as soon as possible. We will quickly move while Ichisuke and Nisuke are out. We will need to rent a cart to carry our belongings, but I suppose you have the money for the fee. It does not cost much at all. Everyone has some extra pocket money when they first arrive in Tokyo. Let's go ahead without saying a word to Ichisuke or Nisuke. Once we move all our belongings and fix up the second floor, we can send letters by special delivery to Ichisuke's hospital and Nisuke's school. Or it might be enough to post our new address at the entrance of this house. They will be content if they have rooms where they can study. They are so that they do not even complain about meals unless the rice gets badly burned. Nisuke's belongings like test tubes, seedbeds, and ceramic pots are tricky to move, but you and I will just have to carry a few items at a time by hand. That means we cannot move too far, and the moving expenses will be modest."

After a few orange peels sat in a row on the piano and the net was empty, Sangorō started smoking his sailor's pipe. He moved on to a new topic. His pipe was not as large as he had described in his letter: "That money put my mind to rest. Right away, I bought a copy of that book at Maruzen and handed it to Ichisuke, and he is now studying it. The title of the book, *Doppel-something*, translates into Japanese as 'schizophrenic psychology.' The hospital where Ichisuke works accepts only abnormal patients with this 'schizophrenic psychology,' and the doctors there make it their mission to change them to have a single state of mind. The fine points of this psychology is difficult for us to understand, but it helps that Ichisuke does not do his experiments at home the way Nisuke does. And as for the money, I will repay you when my father sends my allowance at the end of the month."

I had opened the lid of my basket and was eating caramels and leftover Tanba's famous chestnut *yōkan*.¹¹ It was already past noon, and I was hungry. Sangorō took *yōkan* out of my hand and started to eat it. He removed from the basket the preserved persimmons that had been hung under the eaves to dry and shared them with me. My grandmother had put the persimmons in the basket for me to enjoy on the way, but I had

held back because I felt some compunction about eating on the train things so rich with the flavor of the mountain country.

Sangorō also seemed hungry. Placing the sailor's pipe on the piano, he stood up from the stool and began searching the basket. Regardless, wasn't he too rough with the piano? One glance at the keys was enough to detect their miserable, trashy hue, somewhere between grey and brown. Still, it was a piano, a musical instrument. On the keyboard sat a line of orange peels, followed by a row of persimmon pits, followed again by the pipe still emitting smoke.

Sangorō took out the four boxes made of thin wood that I had bought at Hamamatsu and unsealed one. Fully packed inside were small dark brown beans. Sangorō plucked a few out of the box and tried them.

"Too salty," he remarked. "Tastes bad. Don't you have anything better?"

I, too, tasted these Hamamatsu fermented soybeans, called *hamanattō* for short. I agreed with Sangorō. Ono Ichisuke had made me promise to buy some at Hamamatsu Station. His postcard had ended: "Please get a few boxes. It is my favorite food. It would be safer for you to choose a train that passes Hamamatsu during the day. At night, I fear you might be asleep when the train stops at the station."

Sangorō finally opened one of the hair-care packets from the very bottom of my basket. In response to his question about what it was, I explained its use. He replied: "You do not need to go through all that. These days curly hair is thought to be more beautiful. Wouldn't it be better to cut your hair short and apply hot curling irons?"

I reached into my undergarment pocket and slowly pulled out the four one-yen bills. I asked Sangorō if, instead of returning the money I had sent him, he could add these bills to the total and buy me a scarf.

"I see. Then I will keep this money for now. You mean a scarf that costs ten yen? Soon, by the end of the month, I will take you to buy one with a nice pattern. But we are hungry right now, so let's go out and eat some lunch. I have been hungry for a while, but I didn't want to go to the trouble of fixing anything and didn't have any money. This month I have had a terrible time because of that pipe."

Sangorō went to lock the door, picked up my sandals, and threw them out the window. He then threw me out the window after them.

My life as the kitchen help began. Because each family member ate breakfast at a different time, I left what I had prepared in the middle of the empty dining room so that everyone could eat regardless of when they awoke. After preparing breakfast, I returned to the maid's room, my living quarters, and slept if I felt I lacked sleep, or, if I felt well rested, I made it a habit to curl up in the bedding and absorb myself in reading poetry. Before I left home, I packed all my poetry books into the bedding I sent to Tokyo. Because my collection had only a handful of volumes, I had to circle amid these books and pick up the same book any number of times.

Ichisuke, who worked at a hospital for schizophrenics, was the only one who awoke at the same time each morning. The others kept varying hours. Nisuke never went to school at a fixed time, but instead he slept until ten minutes before he needed to head out in his school uniform, and he did everything in those ten minutes, including washing his face, reading newspapers, and eating breakfast. Sangorō stayed home the longest. He slept late, despite the fact that he said he only found time to study in the morning. When he had his breakfast nearly at noon, he made it a rule to invite me out of the maid's room so that we could eat together.

I did the housework after Sada Sangorō left for music preparatory school, but I never could feel enthusiastic about cleaning this old house. In particular, I could do almost nothing about Ono Nisuke's room. He occupied the largest room in the house, which had an alcove the size of a tatami mat. He used the entire alcove as a radish patch, where various planters stood from left to right in the order of radish growth. This space reeked like a radish farm, the stench penetrating the room. Above the radishes was a light fixture with seven small bulbs that was lit at night.

Nisuke had an unusually large old desk, which also served as a botanical garden. Amid the wastepaper, notebooks, pencils, books, a small bottle of perfume, and other mess, an unfamiliar plant that resembled thistle grew in wet soil in a number of shallow containers, and these wetlands also gave off a complex smell.

Describing the disorder of Nisuke's room vexes me. Scattered heaps of fertilizer wrapped in newspaper with bottles of yellow liquid fertilizer among them lay on the tatami. The ceramic pot that was the source of Sangorō's annoyance moved from the desktop to the alcove to a chair, depending upon the day. There were also tweezers, cotton swabs, a set of farming tools that included toy-like spades and shovels, a camera, a microscope, and so on and so forth.

How could I clean up this messy farmer's room? This was surely a problem beyond solution. Once, when trying to dust the alcove, I knocked over a stand that held a row of several test tubes. I had handled this farmer's quarters too much like an ordinary room. Since then, I had no choice but to limit my cleaning to picking up the dust accumulating in the empty spaces.

The test tubes I had knocked down held the twin seed leaves of radishes taking root and flourishing in the yellow liquid. Nisuke had succeeded this far as a cultivator. But my duster overturned the row of radishes from their roots, pulverizing the test tubes, and my feet were spattered with yellow liquid. And the radishes that had lost their fertilizer lay on the tatami, looking like small bundles of freshly picked greens for soups or salads.

When Nisuke returned from school in the late afternoon, I had to bring him to where these freshly picked greens lay. According to my usual schedule, I should have finished preparing dinner. But that day I was too upset to even think of cooking, and traces

of tears remained on my face. With a heavy heart, I heard Nisuke's despair. "Mmmm," he heaved a low sigh that resembled the rumbling of the earth. Then he recovered his conversational voice and said,

"It is too risky to use a duster in this room. Fortunately, I took a photo of these test tubes last night. That was just lucky. (Soliloquizing with his back toward me.) Girls cry so easily. I don't know what to do when a girl cries. I don't know how to console her. (Turning around.) Why don't you boil these leaves to make *ohitashi* for dinner.¹² I'm sure they will taste good."

Hardly able to contain my laughter, I quickly retreated to Sangorō's room, but once there my emotions came full circle. With my tears, I unintentionally stained the kimono sleeve, dark blue with white splash patterns, of Sangorō, who had just returned from the music preparatory school. After wiping both my nose and his dark-blue sleeve with a piece of newspaper, he went to Nisuke's room.

In Nisuke's room, just across the corridor, the following conversation ensued.

"What happened to these greens?"

"I don't know what to do when a girl cries. I wonder if I should go and buy some chocolate balls."

"Chocolate balls aren't bad, but I would rather have dinner soon. I'm very hungry."

"I'm hungry, too, but the chocolate balls are not for you. They are for the girl. Why don't you quickly gather the leaves and make *ohitashi*. My greens should be delicious. They have been grown with plenty of fertilizer."

"But they were up to their stems in the fertilizer—"

"How sad. You people always need to be enlightened. There is nothing as sacred as fertilizer. And human excrement is the most sacred kind. Try comparing the sacredness of excrement and that of music."

"How can one ever compare music and excrement?"

"Look, between excrement and music—"

"That's not what I mean. Between music and excrement—"

"Tolstoy, among others, said that music stimulates obscene passions. And he sprinkled fertilizer over his farm."

"But Beethoven said —"

Controlling my tears, I listened to their conversation. But eventually I withdrew to the kitchen.

Ichisuke's room, next to Nisuke's room, was quite tidy. It was a normal room with books and a desk and a padded kimono hanging on the wall. Here I was able to sweep without worry. I decided, when I felt tired of reading my poetry books, to come here to study what was called "schizophrenia," his area of research.

"Schizophrenia refers to the presence of two conflicting psyches within the same

person's consciousness. These two psyches are in constant conflict with, and are hostile to, each other."

I used an arbitrary example to interpret this statement—This must be when a man is thinking of two women at once. He is in love with A and B alike, but they always fight in his mind.

This idea made me happy, so I continued.

"Schizophrenia comes with a further complicated state of mind. The primary psyche is within the patient's realm of consciousness so that he is aware of it, but the secondary, subliminal psyche sinks deep beneath so that he never knows it is there. Thus the primary psyche in his awareness and the secondary psyche beyond his awareness are also in conflict and hostile toward each other. The fight above and beneath the realm of consciousness creates boundless agony for the patient, and, when left untreated, he may lose his self identity."

This passage also encouraged me to enjoy my own interpretation—This must be when a woman is thinking of two men, except that she is only aware of being in love with A and does not realize she is also in love with B. That must be why she is hospitalized.

Such a fanciful inquiry broadened my vista of human psychology, and I thought that this kind of vast, foggy psychological world could perhaps be the realm of the seventh sense. If so, I would need to study more of Ichisuke's research and compose poems as foggy and intricate as the schizophrenic mentality.

But what I was writing in my poetry collection were two banal love poems. I meant to send them to someone I loved, but I still kept the notebook in a drawer of the desk in the maid's room. Sada Sangorō had bought me the desk with the four bills I gave him. He kneaded clay to make an electric lamp stand for it. He used the remainder of the clay to make an identical one for his piano. He stayed home from music preparatory school for two days, absorbed in molding clay. While he worked in the maid's room, I made two clumsy wire lampshades laced with thread.

Sada Sangorō tended to exaggerate everything. The odor from Ono Nisuke's room when he mixed and boiled fertilizer was actually not that intense, nor was it true that Sangorō was not allowed to play the piano at night. When he didn't go to sleep early, he took shelter in the maid's room, saying the fertilizer stench was unbearable, or he played the piano while loudly singing pitch-training passages. He then sang comic operas not on the entrance examinations or just played the piano as he wished. Sangorō's piano produced a pitiful sound. The aged piano's muffled melody sounded as if it were made solely of half-tones and aroused a deep sense of sorrow in me, as I listened while writing a poem near the clay lamp stand. The faint fertilizer smell that wafted from Nisuke's room made the piano sound even sadder. And the music and odor made me think—the seventh sense may perhaps be the pathos that two or more overlapping senses evoke. I then wrote a sorrowful verse.

But I did not adhere only to pathos. When Sangorō started singing comic opera, I put my poetry notebook in the desk drawer and went to his room to sing with him. It was only when our voices were too loud that Nisuke warned about music at night.

“Why don’t the two of you sing in the maid’s room? That kind of music is unclean.”

Sangorō and I moved to the maid’s room with the opera score only to find that Ichisuke had taken shelter there and was reading at my desk. Seeing us, Ichisuke returned to his room with his research book. But Sangorō and I no longer had the desire to sing comic opera.

“The teacher at the branch school laughs at me because of that piano. It is that old piano’s fault.”

Having expressed his frustration by loudly singing the comic opera, he sank into melancholy that made him want quiet conversation. I fell into the same melancholy and quietly replied,

“You’re right. It’s because of that old piano.”

“How can I pass the music school examinations if I practice pitch training on a crazy, out-of-tune piano? The more I practice, the more off pitch I become. It is almost better to be in love than to be practicing.”

“How about not playing the piano—”

“If there is a piano, I will play. It is like having a girl nearby.”

Sangorō and I remained silent awhile and then changed the topic.

“Somehow that piano is inauspicious,” Sangorō said. “It makes me feel pessimistic when I play it. That piano is even more depressing than one found in a movie theater in a seedy part of town. Once I suggested that the landlord have a piano tuner check it. ‘Absolutely not!’ He answered. ‘I have no intention of spending even one *sen* on that ramshackle piano! A rag collector wouldn’t take it! I had enough problems with that musician! He never paid a *sen* of rent. And then he ran off leaving his awful piano! Because it costs money to cart it away, it stays in its old place! If you don’t like the way it sounds, then I beg of you, don’t play it! Ever!’

“I gave up on piano repair and instead asked him to fix a hole in the roof. That was because rain fell on my neck while I played the piano. The landlord came right away, fixed the roof, and, before leaving, checked how ripe the oranges in the hedge were. He is very stingy.

“That piano must have been left by a student who repeatedly failed the music school entrance examinations. He probably returned to his hometown to be a farmer. I am thinking of doing the same.”

I slowly exhaled through my nostrils and secretly thought: If Sangorō goes home to farm, I will do the same.

“But you had better not feel pessimistic,” he said. “I become disappointed in myself when a girl loses faith in me. I only think about going into farming when I sing too much opera. I will stop singing comic opera and instead study seriously. As proof, I will give

you all my opera music, Machiko. I won't keep a single sheet with me."

Sangorō fetched the opera sheet music he had left in his room and gave it all to me. I tucked it far inside a drawer of my desk, believing that he and I were putting an end to our laziness.

Feeling renewed hope, I said to Sangorō: "You should lock your piano. I'll keep the key."

"Not even the landlord has the key. But I am fine now. I will never play the piano. From now on, I will only do healthy music practice."

It was one of those evenings that I confided with him about something that I had never told anyone. I told him that I had a secret wish to become a poet. Bursting with unexpected joy, Sangorō embraced my frizzy hair as if my head was a ball, picked me up, and lifted me high toward the ceiling. Then, we pledged to each other that we would study music and poetry assiduously, staying away from singing impure things like comic opera.

However, our promise was soon broken. We sang our opera chorus a number of times.

At the end of the month, Sangorō bought me a pair of sewing scissors instead of a scarf.

My grandmother's prediction was right. I never used the hair-care packets at the bottom of my basket. My hair, reddish brown and frizzy, hung over my forehead, so that I had to shake my head from time to time to swing the bangs from my eyes. My hair looked worthy of my grandmother's tears. This, in part, probably inspired Sangorō to give me scissors.

That night, Sangorō carried into my room something wrapped in department store paper. He unwrapped the scissors and a jet-black Bohemian necktie and apologized.

"I wasn't able to buy you a scarf. Can you wait until next month? Today after a teacher at the branch school laughed at me, I went to buy a necktie. When a teacher laughs at you, you are bound to feel like buying something. Of course, I don't have a suit that goes well with a Bohemian necktie. But when a teacher laughs at me, I have the urge to buy something that looks cheerful. At the department store, I happened to be on the same elevator with someone wearing a Bohemian necktie. So I bought one myself. I assume you're not in a hurry to have a scarf."

I completely sympathized with him. It was not yet cold enough for a scarf, and there was a grey wool muffler in my wicker trunk.

"I can do nothing with this necktie, so let's use it to decorate this room."

Sangorō hung the necktie on a nail in the maid's room. Because the room had been devoid of any ornamentation, the black Bohemian necktie seemed a fanciful decoration.

"A red necktie might have been better for a girl's room. But we have to make do with what we have. Let me cut your hair. Curly reddish hair will look good in a bob. It will be comfortable, without strands falling over your face. I bet you will be beautiful."

I thought this was a terrible idea. And I resolved for the first time to use the hair-care packets and tie up my hair everyday.

I quickly lit a fire in the kitchen stove and placed a metal washbasin to mix the medicines on top.

While I let down my hair to stretch the curls in preparation, Sangorō expounded on a theory of cultural exchange between East and West, and in the end, he persuaded me to let him cut my hair. According to his theory, it could not be helped that Eastern *happi* coats moved to the West and turned into suit jackets and that Western bobbed hair arrived in the East and became the Japanese *okappa* style.¹³ This was because of ships and airplanes, and it was the trend of the times. He added that, while straightening curly hair with *katsura* tree extracts was favored in my grandmother's age, granddaughters could not continue this preference.

Sangorō took so much time convincing me of his theory that I smelled something burning in the kitchen. All the hair-care medicine in the basin had evaporated. While pouring water over the basin, I decided to have a haircut.

I closed my eyes because I did not want to see the mirror stand Sangorō had placed on my desk.

"I think the style called 'boy's up' will suit a slender girl like you," he said.

I did not answer. I only thought about how my grandmother might be doing.

I closed my eyes tighter as the first snap sent a sound of the thick scissors to the depth of my throat, and my heart almost stopped beating. I felt my face turn pale and then blush deeply.

"Don't snifle," Sangorō ordered. He repeatedly corrected my posture, as I tended to look down, and he seemed carried away with this preposterous task. Tears fell from my closed eyes and rolled down to my chin, but I was not able to wipe them for a long while.

The moment the scissors made their last sound by my left ear, I sprang up and ran into Sangorō's room, which was still dark. My neck was suddenly so cold that I felt as if I had been stripped of all my clothing. A dark room was the only place for such a cold neck—One cold breeze after another blew past my neck.

"Grandmother is crying." I identified with her feeling as I cried in the dark of Sangorō's room. "Grandmother is crying."

Nisuke came out of his room and finding Sangorō in the corridor, asked: "What happened?"

"She suddenly ran away while I was giving her a bob. It is not finished yet. I'm in trouble."

"That is because you are trying something too fancy. Anyhow, turn on the light in your room."

Sangorō turned on the light. I was hiding the back of my neck behind the corner of the piano leg.

"I want to check your hair so come where I can see you better," Nisuke said.

He wore a smudged white smock over his uniform and smelled of perfume. He had the habit of putting a bottle of perfume to his nose from time to time while handling fertilizer.

After circling once around my head, he commented: "You're fine. It is about right. A girl's head should look neat. Don't cry like that."

Nisuke poured perfume from his bottle over my head.

Ichisuke, who had been standing at the entrance of the room without our noticing, also offered his opinion: "A bob is not a good thing. But your hair will grow back in no time. Just be patient."

With that he went back to his room.

Standing behind me, Nisuke instructed Sangorō: "You should fix this uneven part, but do that in my room because there isn't enough light here."

Nikuske's room reeked of fertilizer, but a bright bulb hung in the center making it an appropriate place for fixing the haircut. He turned on the light fixture above the radishes and moved the charcoal brazier with the ceramic pot, from which he removed a few heaps of fertilizer on newspaper. All this was in preparation for Sangorō to demonstrate his skills. While rearranging the room, Nisuke muttered a couple of times that unevenly cropped hair was unattractive. The back of my neck must have been a striking sight of stripes.

Sangorō made me sit in the center of the room, directly under the lamp, and resumed cutting my hair. Nisuke removed the towel hanging from the pocket of his smock and wrapped my neck with it, and he placed the perfume bottle by my side. Then he said to Sangorō: "Tonight the smell will be a bit strong, so use the perfume from time to time. Apply it to her, too."

Sangorō put his comb upside down against my neck and started making sounds with the scissors. Each time he sharply exhaled through his nose to blow away the odor, his breath hit the back of my neck like a gust of cold wind. But I was no longer crying. Having completed one round of tears, my heart was calm, and my body felt comfortably fatigued. I was, however, hemmed in by a variety of smells—the scent of the towel over my shoulder, the rich aroma of the perfume descending from my head, and the air that filled the room—the combination of which kept me from falling asleep.

Nisuke was extremely busy, stirring the ceramic pot, holding the test tubes against the light of the alcohol lamp, adding fertilizer to the powder in the ceramic pot, adding manure from a bottle, sprinkling the mossy soil with the fertilizer he had cooled with a fan, peeking into the microscope, and writing in a notebook.

I breathed deeply when I felt on the verge of falling asleep. I stayed awake for a brief moment by deeply inhaling the intricately mixed air through my nose. Then I deeply inhaled again. While repeating this breathing pattern, I was living in a foggy world. There my senses were incoherent—functioning separately, merging into one, and

then coming loose again. Nisuke repeatedly rubbed the top of the moss with a cotton swab. His smock blurred into a cloud, which then transformed into various kinds of clouds I had seen before. The puffs of the liquid gradually boiling down and thickening in the ceramic pot were similar to the sound of the sweet red bean paste my grandmother used to make. This took me back to when I was a child of six or seven, when I gazed, holding on to her sleeve, at the paste in the pot—Just then, Nisuke approached, and I tried to open my eyes. He wanted to use the towel draped over my shoulders as a rag and quickly left after carefully wiping his hands. As he returned to his desk, in my eyes, the mossy wetlands on his desk spread as large as a forest. He picked up another cotton swab, which appeared to be the size of a broom, and swept the forest with it and dusted it over his notebook.

I do not know what Nisuke did after that—my eyes saw nothing, and only the puffing of the boiling bean paste reached my ears. I next opened my eyes when the cold scissors grazed the back of my neck because of Sangorō's carelessness. Nisuke was intently looking into the microscope. "What is the shape of moss pollen?" I posed a question to myself as a way to deliberately think about something difficult and academic so as not to let my psychological state recede into the distance: "Does it look like a snail's antennae?" But my mind soon fled to a remote place, and my ears clearly heard only the sound of Nisuke's pen.

"Don't look down. I hope you're not crying again," Sangorō demanded, his hands pushing my cheeks from behind. He did so to correct my posture as I gradually bent further forward. The scissors he still held in his right hand pressed against my cheek with their cold width, and the tip looked, in my left eye, like a dreadful knife. I got up right away and walked over to Nisuke. But by the time I stood by his side, I was already drowsy. I was simply sleepy. So I fell half asleep resting on Nisuke's back as he was still taking notes. He continued to work without changing his posture.

"What's wrong with you? Don't act like a spoiled brat." Sangorō instructed. "Only a little unevenness is left. Be patient for five more minutes."

"She looks sleepy. Maybe she was dreaming," Nisuke said, still making sounds with his pen.

"The slight unevenness will grow out by the day after tomorrow. Anyway, get her off my back. I can't work like this. Why don't you take her with you and put her to sleep?"

Sliding from Nisuke's back down to his feet, I felt as if I were about to fall fast asleep, face down on my arms on the floor.

"Just one more uneven line to fix. Let me take care of it." With this intention, Sangorō reached down toward Nisuke's feet.

That was when I last felt the passage of time, but at some point Sangorō carried me in his arms to the maid's room. Back in the cold room, I awoke from my drowsiness.

Sangorō seated me on the quilt that had already been spread on the floor to serve as the bottom layer of bedding. He sat in a chair in front of my desk. With an elbow on

his crossed leg, he rested his head on his palm. A lazy voice came from his pursed lips.

"You look neat. Just right. You no longer look as if you're carrying a weight on your head. Your hair is rather cute around your neck. I will bring Ichisuke's mirror tomorrow and let you see your back using the two mirrors. Good night."

Sangorō got up from the desk and sat in the same posture as before and spoke in the same tone of voice, "Tonight Nisuke will probably stay up all night. For one thing, he has told me to get two bottles of manure, and, for another, his moss has started to fall in love tonight. I am sure I will have to work as his assistant until morning. Good night."

Still, Sangorō kept his face on a palm, with no intention of getting up.

After remaining silent awhile, he stopped propping his chin on a hand and instead crossed his arms and mumbled incoherently as follows:

"On a night like this, it is, well. . . Being an assistant for plants' love is, you see. . . . In other words, it is not fun. But the fact is this—moss's love is an odd thing. Good night."

He suddenly kissed the nape of my neck. He then sat on the desk holding me in his arms and whispered into my ear.

"You shouldn't cry. Nisuke is very busy tonight, and, besides, more than anyone else, he is afraid of a girl crying. He was once disappointed in love by a girl who did nothing but cry. Since then, he has only been studying plants' love. He dreads seeing girls cry. He sprinkled perfume and wrapped a towel around you tonight. That is because he just doesn't want to see a girl cry. So, you shouldn't."

Because I did not feel about to cry, I nodded while being held close to his chest.

"But I wonder if, on such a night, a girl would cry for a while, later when she's alone. (I shook my head in his arms because I was not worried that I would cry later.) Then it is all right, but if you cry, Nisuke will be terrified and ask me what happened. If he asks, I don't want to explain why. It is definitely pleasanter not to tell the reason to either Ichisuke or Nisuke."

Because I nodded in his arms, Sangorō moved slightly away from my ear.

"Anyway, Nisuke is about to finish a pot's worth of his research into moss's love. The moss on his desk began to fall in love tonight. You know, it is the moss in the pot on the far right. He always gave it steaming fertilizer. Warm fertilizer works better. Suddenly tonight that moss was covered with pollen. When moss falls in love, it is, well—never mind, anyway, tonight is that kind of night. I have accidentally inhaled much moss pollen."

"At any rate, Nisuke discovered that the warmest fertilizer was the fastest to inspire moss's sweet feelings. The remaining three pots of moss, fed with fertilizers that were not hot, tepid, and cold, Nisuke says, show no signs of falling in love. Have you read Nisuke's research papers, Machiko? (To this question, I responded with a slight, hesitant shake of my head.) I see. But I think you should read one. You know there are two notebooks on his desk. One is a research paper on radish, and the other is on moss. The one on radish starts with an interesting preface, but the text itself is not

so intriguing. I make a habit of reading the one on moss now and then because it is fascinating. Plants' love, against expectations, inspires people. Nisuke is very romantic in his graduation thesis. I am only annoyed that he makes me get manure. When he needs manure, I always have to get it. Because I can't avoid the task, I first eat two acid, unripe oranges from the hedge before doing the job."

I had told one lie in Sangorō's arms. I had been reading both of Nisuke's notebooks for quite some time. "On Utilizing Soil from the Foot of Mount Wasteland" was the title of the study of radishes.¹⁴ Its introduction drew my heart because it had something that resembled a lyric poem of his own. *Changes in the Loving Feelings of Plants Induced by Fertilizer Temperatures* (this was the title of his study of moss) had become my secret favorite.

But somehow I could not confide in Sangorō that I had been reading these research papers. The one on moss happened to be the kind I wished to keep quiet about having read because it was entirely comprised of passages like "a plant's loving sentiment is something that can be ignited artificially by adjusting the temperature of fertilizer," "even the moss that has the coldest appearance of all vegetation can thus finally demonstrate its love's passion," and "the situation of the propagation of moss in this fertile soil is. . ."

The preface to the section on radish was indeed a lyric poem born of Nisuke's broken heart. It began with the confession: "I once fell in love with a particularly lovely girl." It continued:

She was a girl of many tears. She responded to any expression on my face with tears. She never showed me anything but tears. How sad that was. I interpreted her tears as an emotion pouring out from her eyes toward me. Yet she was profoundly in love with another young man. Thus her tears were shed on my unrequited love. I did not like these tears of hers. I left on a journey with no specific destination in mind.

I stayed at a desolate temple a third of the way up Mount Wasteland. I was despondent, and the vegetarian food served at the mountain temple was tasteless. I lost almost four kilograms.

One day, an old man from a village at the foot of the mountain came to see me. Apparently, he was the former village master, the third most recent, of a wilderness village. Misconstruing me, a man whose face was not sunburned, as an outstanding academic, he pulled a pouch from the front of his kimono and placed it before me and entreated with utmost politeness. Inside the pouch was yellow-colored soil. The old man said: This is a sample of the barren soil at the foot of Mount Wasteland. I hear you are a scholar devoted to the research of fertilizers. I beg of you to please use your judgment to enrich this infertile area at the foot of the mountains. Our home has been spacious wasteland since our ancestry, producing no radish, no burdock, no millet, not to mention mulberry. Some years ago, after consultation with the villagers, we decided to try planting millet seeds. The expectation was that if they grew, they would lure crows, sparrows, and other birds, and their droppings would

turn the wilderness into fertile soil. Thus we began by planting bushels of millet seeds, but, alas, they neither sprouted nor did birds gather. Those bushels of seeds had gone to sterile soil in vain. How happy I would be if, with your professional knowledge, you instructed me as to which fertilizers to use. What joy it would bring to the villagers. Please share your good wisdom with us. I also beg you to lecture to the villagers. Although you must be busy with your research, if you agree, I will hasten back and spread the news throughout the village, and I will send a young man to fetch you. Please give me your consent.

At a loss as to what to do, for a long time, I stared blankly at the old man who was wearing formal kimono bearing a family crest.

That day I departed from the shabby temple under cover of evening darkness. The head priest lent me a straw cloak, concerned that I might be spotted by the villagers. I cut across the community, my head and body covered with this precious cloak, and I left it hanging from a pear tree on the outskirts of the village.

When I reached my Tokyo lodgings, I found that my older brother Ono Ichisuke had just arrived from his lodgings and was waiting for me. He pressed me to stay at his hospital for one week. Indignant, I pulled the bag of soil from my pocket. I was determined to turn the wasteland into fertile soil. Even though I had been disappointed in love, I felt no need whatsoever for treatment for schizophrenia.

Later, Ichisuke asked our cousin Sada Sangorō to rent a house, which was no better than a hovel, for the three of us to move to from our separate lodgings. I turned the alcove of my room into a radish-growing patch and began cultivating plants on the sterile soil I had brought from the village at the foot of Mount Wasteland and experimenting with a variety of fertilizers. I will discuss this process in the text that follows. End of preface.”

Having talked for some time about Nisuke's thesis, I should now return to the earlier scene in the maid's room.

On the desk were Sangorō and myself. Seated on his lap, I felt I should keep silent about having already read both Nisuke's lyric poem and his thesis on moss. This was the psychology a young woman should feel toward her grandmothers, older brothers, and cousins, and so forth. I wished to keep from Sangorō what I already knew about moss pollen as my own secret knowledge.

The odor wafted from Nisuke's room to the corridor, crossed the dining room, reached the kitchen, and then thinly cloaked the two of us in the maid's room. It was a quiet evening.

Sangorō said calmly, “But the oranges on the hedge are almost ripe. Good night.”

He kissed me again. Then he put me on the bedding and went to Nisuke's room.

This was the first time Sangorō had kissed me since I had assumed kitchen duty. With my elbows on the desk, hands holding my head that had become unrealistically light, I thought about kisses—Was a kiss so natural that it was like breathing air? Wasn't a real kiss something that left a clear feeling like joy or bitterness?

Sangorō's kisses were not much different from those he had given me when he was fourteen and I was eleven. Because the fourteen-year-old Sangorō and eleven-year-old me wanted some of the persimmons that our grandmother had hung to dry, Sangorō put me on his shoulders so that I could reach the fruit. Overjoyed, he lowered me to the ground, my arms full of persimmons, and gave me a kiss. Later, when the seventeen-year-old Sangorō kissed fourteen-year-old me in front of our grandmother, she had said, "Ah, as close as brother and sister. Be this close always." Since childhood, we had this habit of kissing.

The day after Sada Sangorō bobbed my hair, new neighbors arrived. That morning I awoke with a feeling of sadness. The burnt smell of the hair-care packet faintly lingered from the kitchen to the maid's room, making me sad. If my grandmother had been here, she would have shed endless tears at the chilly sight of my neck. She would have searched for an especially effective medicine for growing hair long and would have covered my head with it ten times a day.

I needed to whistle in the morning in order to forget how my grandmother might feel. While whistling, I lifted the *furoshiki* used for vegetables from the nail on the wall, and, facing the mirror stand on the desk, I attempted to find a simple way to use it to hide my hair. Sangorō, however, seemed to hear my whistling as a sign of merriment. He accompanied my comic opera tune from his room. In order to make his miserable piano sound as cheerful as possible, he complemented the out-of-tune keys with his own voice. Because of this mixed accompaniment, our music sounded much happier than usual and stirred an unexpected response—We could hear Ono Nisuke singing in his room. His joining our early morning comic opera was an entirely unforeseen event, this being the first time ever that I heard him sing. What a talented brother I had, I thought. I could not help but quit whistling and stop putting a safety pin through the vegetable cloth on my head and listen to his voice. His comic opera was much more mournfully out of tune than the old piano that had come with the house, and it was as sad as a funeral march. But Nisuke continued cheerfully. Even when Sangorō suddenly stopped singing, Nisuke remained in solo. When all accompaniment ceased, I could tell that Nisuke's lines were his own improvisation. Instead of "When a silk tree blossoms, Jack is sad," he sang "When moss blossoms, I'm happy. Happy am I."

I also understood how Sangorō felt when he stopped playing along with Nisuke. I thought he must be waiting, one elbow on the piano, for Nisuke to quit soiling the music. In the maid's room, I shared his psychology.

When he finished his solo, Nisuke spoke to Sangorō from his room.

"Morning music is a pleasure after staying up all night watching plants in love. It makes me forget my fatigue and multiplies my joy. I had no idea that music had such power. I think I will practice music from time to time. How many days does it take to learn to read musical notes? In the two weeks before the second pot starts to fall in love, I will study musical notes."

In lieu of a reply, Sangorō passionately improvised on the piano and then started to play a song from another opera. Despite the fact that he chose a song that Nisuke probably did not know, Nisuke did not keep quiet. He followed the piano with a very nasal voice. I soon forgot all about my grandmother's grief and joined in.

In the end, our early morning music awoke Ono Ichisuke. He coughed twice in his room to show us he was awake and muttered, "Morning music is stupid." Then he coughed a few times again.

"Is today a holiday? I'll send all of you to my hospital. My sleep was cut short by one hour and fifteen minutes."

Because none of us stopped singing, he raised his voice, "I would like to hospitalize all three of you. Sangorō, stop playing the piano and bring me a glass of water with a lot of salt in it. Morning music is bad for the stomach. Your music has done no good."

While Sangorō was preparing salt water in the kitchen, Ichisuke and Nisuke began talking to each other from their rooms. Both seemed to be in bed. So Sangorō stopped by my room with a glass in hand. He drank half the water at the entrance, walked in, and sat on my desk. Looking exhausted, apparently from staying up all night, he angrily occupied almost the entire desk and said nothing. Because I had stopped fixing the cloth on my head after two safety pins, one edge hung clumsily over my shoulder. A few other pins on the desk were hidden under Sangorō's hips. Although I wanted to retrieve the pins as soon as possible, he seemed to be unaware that he was sitting on them. He stared at the glass on his lap, and, from time to time, licked the salt water in it, looking as if it tasted awful. His expression suggested that he might again be thinking about returning home to farm. I sighed quietly at this thought. Sangorō then sighed heavily into the glass, from which he was about to take another sip.

All the while, Ichisuke and Nisuke continued their discussion. Apparently having forgotten about the bad influence of music and his desire for salt water, Ichisuke pontificated:

"Since humans fall in love, there is no reason that moss can't. One could almost say that human love is inherited from moss. According to the theory of evolution, moss is mankind's remote ancestor. That is correct. As proof, for example, when about to wake up from a nap, humans sometimes find themselves feeling like moss. It is a strange psychological state like feeling stuck to a damp, marshy place, unable to move at all. That is certainly evidence that mankind still retains a moss-like sensation. Mankind can return to the psychological state of its ancestor from tens of millions of years ago only in dreams. Thus the world of dreams is truly precious. The reason that psychoanalysis of schizophrenia does not treat dreams carelessly is that. . . ."

Ichisuke became so carried away that Nisuke interrupted him with a yawn: "As for me, I often dream about being moss. It is not that unusual. But my case doesn't seem to fit the rules of schizophrenic psychoanalysis."

"What is your psychological state when you turn into moss?" Ichisuke asked. "That may serve as a reference. Tell me the details."

“As I said, I don’t think I have abnormal dreams that would serve as a reference for a doctor of schizophrenia. More importantly, I am very sleepy now after staying up all night.”

“I’m asking you despite a lack of sleep myself. In psychoanalysis, every human case provides valuable reference. Nobody dislikes serving as a reference for schizophrenia studies as much as you. This must also be a kind of schizophrenia.”

“Your way of looking at things is precisely schizophrenic,” Nisuke argued. “It is a bad habit to view every human being as mentally ill.”

“Look, your way of thinking is precisely schizophrenic. Instead of trying to answer a serious question, you only thirst for sleep. I see many such patients at my hospital. And this is called persistence syndrome.”

“Try as you may to attach a disease to me, I am not ill. As proof, I will answer any question. What do you want me to answer?”

“As I have asked already, just tell me with no exaggeration or omission your psychological state when you are having a dream about turning into moss.”

“A psychologist tends to complicate things more than anyone else does. I find it annoying to live in such a household. The girl at my former boarding house was always crying in front of me, but she did not torment me like a psychologist does. I wonder if I should pack and go back to that house.”

“Don’t overindulge yourself in a memory. I have been waiting with a notebook and a pen ready. Tell me, and do not speak too quickly.”

“I just feel like going back to the boarding house. That was where my. . . .”

“If you still have such a longing, you should be hospitalized right away. I will be in charge and will make sure that you forget the girl from the boarding house in one week. Room 4 of Ward 4 happens to be unoccupied. A patient with persistence syndrome like you was there until yesterday.”

“I am not ill. Think what would happen if I were lax enough to go into the hospital and leave my moss and radishes behind. The fertilizers would ferment, and all the plants would wither.”

“If you were healthy, you would describe your dreams without hesitation.”

“Okay. I will tell you. It is like this—the relevant dream I often have, as a perfectly healthy man, is simply that I have turned into the moss on my desk. Not once in my dreams have I returned to the mental state of worthy pre-human moss that is the ancestor of mankind. That’s all. Now let me sleep.”

“Tell me more. Tell all you have to say. The vices of omission and concealment must be lurking in your subconscious.”

“I can’t take responsibility for my subconscious. That’s too much of a bother.”

“Then let me take care of your subconscious. What I want to know now, as I have been asking repeatedly, is your psychological state in your dream of being moss. Tell me about it without concealing anything. There is even a shared room for patients with

concealment syndrome. It holds sixteen patients and is as spacious as a grassy field. I think two beds are unoccupied.”

“To show you that I do not belong in one of those beds, I will tell you my mental state in my dreams. Now listen. I am the moss in a pot on my desk. So a man by the name of Ono Nisuke exists elsewhere. My only desire is that Ono Nisuke give me plenty of warm fertilizer and let me start falling in love. I need nothing more than that. I just want to fall in love as soon as possible.”

“And?”

“And when I wake up, I’m Nisuke as before, and the pots of moss are lined up on my desk as existences separate from mine. Because I have nothing more to tell you about my dreams, I am going to sleep. I trust you have no more questions.”

“Oh yes, I do. My next question is even more important.”

“I would rather take shelter in the maid’s room. My patience has limits. There is a one o’clock lecture on fertilizers today that I cannot miss. I don’t want there to be a blank space in my fertilizer notebook.”

“In fact, this is the situation. At my hospital. . . .”

“No matter which room is unoccupied, I do not need to stay at your hospital.”

“Don’t worry. This is not about your hospitalization. In fact, this is how it is—a very good-looking—(Ichisuke halted awhile)—person has been admitted to my hospital.”

“Not a man, right?”

Ichisuke did not respond.

At this point, in the maid’s room, after taking a gulp of salt water from the glass, Sada Sangorō said to me, “I’m really hungry. Is there anything good to eat?”

It dawned on me for the first time—his bad mood earlier this morning was because of hunger.

I slid open the screen covering the window of the maid’s room and stretched my arm through the lattice. When my hand finally reached an orange in the hedge, Sangorō said, “I ate my fill of oranges last night. I feel there is too much citrus in my stomach. Nisuke and I are certain to develop food poisoning from oranges. From now on, if Nisuke involves me in his all-night work, I want you, our cook, to stay up, too. Nothing causes more hunger than staying up all night. Is there something good to eat?”

Remembering that a few boiled tulle potatoes were left, I went to the kitchen but did not find their pot.

“Isn’t there anything in the kitchen?” Sangorō asked.

As a cook, I was at a loss. Even the lidded wooden container that should have held some leftover rice from last night had disappeared.

“Of course, we finished that last night. You can’t use that container until you let it breathe for a while to get rid of the air inside. This goes for everything that has stayed in Nisuke’s room even for the shortest amount of time. Isn’t there anything good to eat?”

I searched the cupboard and finally came up with a sugar-cube container and a tea canister. What else could there have been in my kitchen? Inside the tea canister were two sheets of dried seaweed.

Sangorō ate sugar and drank salt water. He ate seaweed and drank salt water. He alternated repeatedly, looking as if he found his food unappetizing.

Meanwhile, Ichisuke and Nisuke resumed their conversation.

"I don't want you to fall asleep at this point," Ichisuke said. "I have a question I very much want to ask before the morning ends. Be patient just a bit longer."

Nisuke did not reply.

"Have you fallen asleep?" Ichisuke raised his voice.

"Far from it. Let me ask you again. The person is not male, right?"

"Stop wondering about such a thing. It is a bad habit. I find it annoying to be asked a question in the middle of a story."

"You are the one who seems to have concealment syndrome. I'm going to sleep."

"Don't. In fact, this is the situation. The person is a non-male patient, quiet like moss, who never responds to my questions."

"I want to know what those questions are."

"Various questions related to treatment that would, of course, concern a doctor. I have never asked a patient an irrelevant question. Nisuke, you are resorting to prying about schizophrenia. Questions and answers between doctor and patient are strictly a matter of privacy, and your prying is annoying."

"Your story bores me. I'm going to asleep."

"In fact, this is how it goes," Ichisuke suddenly started to hurry. "That patient keeps complete silence around me with exactly the propensity for concealment-type schizophrenia. It must be that the patient inherited a large amount of moss's disposition. The patient must be a typical descendant of moss."

"Not to worry. It is a case of backward evolution. I don't know much about animal and human reverse-course evolution, but I hear a human being with a tail was born somewhere some time ago. The doctor who examined the tail found it to be none other than that of a fox. I hear this indicated that a human retraced the course of evolution to a fox. This is quite persuasive. As long as humankind evolves backward to foxes, there is no need to worry if human psychology regresses to that of moss."

"I do worry. The reason is—Think about it. The doctor in charge enters the room, and the patient neither smiles at nor resents him. It makes me lose all confidence."

"The patient doesn't even cry?"

While Nisuke's question was extremely eager, Ichisuke's answer was disheartened.

"If the patient did so much as cry, I would have maintained some of my confidence."

"But it is better from the start not to be concerned with a girl who cries. Once you are, it takes many days before you can forget her, and the passage of that sort of time seems very slow. In my case—"

Nisuke's talk turned into a soliloquy, the nearly inaudible droning of which continued for a while.

Ichisuke seemed to be listening to Nisuke, but he soon interrupted his muttering.

"Such conjecture isn't necessary for me. Never. I merely find it inconvenient as a doctor if a patient is silent. In our clinical practice, we gradually unravel illnesses through conversations between the doctor and the patient. It is a big setback for the doctor if the patient doesn't talk. Try to guess what it is like. There is no means by which to learn what the patient subconsciously craves. In one such situation, a member of the medical staff, not the one in charge, exclaimed: 'Oh, typical concealment-type schizophrenia! I am going to research this case, too!' But this must be an excuse. The proof is that he repeats the same question to my patient. He has been doing this for a long time. It is a question that is not necessary for treatment, and one that torments the patient. And I—I don't want him to meddle like this. If the patient opened her mouth just once and rejected him, I would be very relieved."

"Girls don't hasten to reject people. They usually lengthen the days as much as possible before their rejection. I wonder what mentality that is. I find it extremely difficult to understand."

"In my case, the subject is a sick person. Don't confuse a patient with a healthy girl. Direct your criticism toward the staff member. He enters the patient's room only when the doctor in charge is not there. It is depravity. Eventually, I will have to treat his schizophrenia, too.

"A doctor in charge cannot trust his patient with a slipshod staff member. So, each time a patient enters the room, the doctor in charge also enters. Then the staff member pretends to be moistening his pencil, his eyes on his notebook. The notebook is well worthy of the interest of the doctor in charge, and the doctor always seems to want to read it. But the man always carries the notebook in his pocket, never leaving it behind. And yet he takes the clinical diary from the hand of the doctor and examines it seriously. This is so he can check the psychological development between the doctor and the patient." Ichisuke added, "This routine is repeated every day at the hospital. My days are unbearable."

"At times like these," Nisuke responded, "one wants to take an aimless journey."

"I feel like doing that."

"But I don't want a member of our family to go on such a trip. If so, none of us left behind will be able to study."

"I wasn't able to read a page of a book during your journey, Nisuke. I couldn't even keep my clinical diary. But I persevered. Now it is your turn to persevere."

"Anyway, let's see if you can make the female patient speak just once. If the girl's answer is in the affirmative, you won't have to take an aimless journey."

"I couldn't imagine such happiness. I will take that trip."

"Quit that persecution complex. If you fall into that kind of schizophrenia, I will

hospitalize you, Ichisuke. Only go on such a journey after being rejected. If you are rejected, you should go to the temple at Mount Wasteland. I will write you a letter of introduction. That temple only serves vegetarian food, but you can always weigh yourself from the scales hung from the ceiling by the kitchen fireplace. Vegetarian food tends to make you want to routinely weigh yourself, you know.”

“That is because of a broken heart rather than because of the food. The lovelorn silently watches as his body wastes away.”

“When you first clasp one side of the scale with your hands and hang in the air, you feel as if you have turned into a slab of salted salmon, but the monk at the other side manipulates the weights and takes time to accurately measure your weight. While you are hanging, you can enjoy the psychology of a salmon being smoked by the firewood in the fireplace. After, you feel like eating that salmon. This must have happened to me because my psychology split into two—that of the salmon and myself.”

“And the old man will definitely visit from his village at the foot of the mountain,” Nisuke continued. “I will entrust a message with you. I would like you to tell him that the soil at the foot of Mount Wasteland is hopeless.”

“Given the occasion, I don’t think ‘hopeless’ is the best word choice. I would choose a word that sounds a little more encouraging. There is a limit to using a word that brings bad luck.”

“Mincing words is no use. The soil at the foot of that mountain merely covers a portion of the earth’s surface, and it is hopeless for cultivation. The reason that my radishes are doing so well is not because of the soil but because of my fertilizer concoction. I will send a prescription with you for the old man’s reference, one that shows how I have made the right mixture. Then he will realize how expensive my fertilizer is and give up the idea of using the village land for farming.”

“I have changed my mind about going to the mountain temple. The old man loves the land. He loves it so much with a mentality that does not let him stop thinking of cultivating it no matter what. I don’t wish to visit the area where he lives and be moved to the same kind of pathos.”

“If the old man does not seem to give up after reading my prescription, you need to examine him, Ichisuke. Therefore, you must go to that temple. The old man seems to have persistence-type schizophrenia. Anyway, I will put an end to my research on radish. I will clear the radish patch from the alcove and, as one pot of moss after another enters love’s season, I will move them there. I will do this. I will order our girl to clean up the radish patch. My study will become a love chamber nearly choking with moss pollen.”

Nisuke added, “My notes on radish somehow don’t seem worthy of a graduation thesis. Even a graduation thesis would be definitely more interesting when it includes moss’s love. Now, I will go to sleep.”

“There is still a very important question left unanswered since this morning—since early this morning,” Ichisuke replied in haste. “Here’s the situation—It is better to move

such a serious concealment-type patient to a room for sixteen people to expose her to communal living, but the patient never wants to leave her private room. This is, after all, heredity from ancient moss, and a human being inheriting a moss-like disposition craves to be rooted in a single place, immobile. It is very annoying. A private room is convenient for the doctor in charge, but, at the same time, it is too accessible for the other staff member.”

“Somehow, irritatingly, a person in love tends to want to return to that topic alone. You had better release her from the hospital.”

Ichisuke heaved a deep sigh in lieu of a reply. So, Nisuke continued: “I’ll install a penalty box for any time you want to say fond words about a girl. I have a friend who is an extremely solemn man. In his room he keeps a ‘sweet-talk box.’ Once you put money in it, it never comes back to you. Depending upon the nature of a visitor’s talk, the box could even demand two fifty-*sen* coins. My friend makes it a rule to unlock this box and go to a movie theater with the money. As for him, he has been in love with a movie actress all year long.”

“Which box does he put his penalty in for his own sweet talk?”

“He believes it is impure to fall in love with a woman in the flesh. So I am sure there is no fine for loving a movie actress.”

“He seems to have wonderful schizophrenia. By all means I must examine him. Can you bring him to my hospital today?”

“I am always in need of money to pay for fertilizer. I think I will buy fertilizer with the profits from my sweet-talk box.”

“My question is academic, not at all worthy of such a box. I will now ask directly. Here it goes—In which state of love was the moss in the pot you nurtured after staying up all last night? This is what I want to know in great detail. I am the unfortunate doctor in charge of the patient with the disposition exactly like that of moss. I want to use moss’s love for reference in curing my patient. But I wonder if the moss on your desk has experienced silent love of the concealment type or unenlightened love of the schizophrenic type. The latter is when it does not know which of the two parties concerned it loves.”

“My moss does not fall in the kind of love that could serve as a reference for a psychologist. My moss has begun to love in a healthy, single-minded way. Moss is terribly loyal to its own emotions. It is not like a nymphomaniac who does not know which of two people she loves. How far-fetched can your comparison be?”

“Oh, I am perplexed, not being able to plan a course of treatment. I wonder if there isn’t a method to reveal that, between A-suke and B-suke, your moss loves A-suke alone in the end. If there is such a method, I want you to experiment with it. Then I will be able to apply your method to my patient.”

“Look, my room is almost suffocating with moss pollen. This is a sign that my moss is enjoying healthy love, which translates as a sign of having no schizophrenic mentality.”

“Could you, for me, nurture moss’s schizophrenia? If you administer warm and cold fertilizers at the same time, you might be able to come up with moss that could serve as a reference for the treatment of my patient.”

“That is ridiculous. It is outrageous for me to even try to create moss with such a demented mentality. Once such moss is created, its posterity will suffer forever from abnormal psychology. I prefer not to become the initiator of a plant’s tragedy for the sake of you alone, Ichisuke. What a terrible suggestion. I am going to sleep now.”

“If you can sleep under such circumstances, go right ahead. Sleep like a pig. Well, I am afraid I am now wide awake.”

With Ichisuke’s deep sigh, the conversation ended.

I had finished fixing breakfast and even managed to polish the bottom of a washbasin before their long conversation had finished. Sangorō had fallen into a deep sleep in my room a while before.

It was time for Ichisuke’s breakfast, but he showed no sign of getting up. Instead several deep breaths leaked from his room. In the end, he muttered the following, and the entire house grew quiet: “I was unable to find a method of cure. I couldn’t, even taking one whole morning. I will skip work at the hospital today.”

Because my study was being used as Sangorō’s bedroom, I took a book to the dining room and read by the table. Unsure if my head felt light or heavy, I had to keep shaking it. So my reading did not proceed smoothly. My hair was hidden under the many folds of the long black cloth, the ends of which were tied and drooped behind to protect my chilly neck. But how my head felt like a borrowed object—I shook it a number of times, while my book remained at the same page on the dining table. I did not study at all but fell into thoughts about unrequited love.

Wrapping the black cloth around my head was Sada Sangorō’s idea. With the help of sugar cubes and seaweed, he recovered from the fatigue of staying awake all night, and he immediately found the vegetable cloth on my head disgusting. He said that my head looked awkward and that not even savage barbarian girls wrap their heads that way. Muttering this, he undid the two safety pins and removed the cloth from my head.

“Even if you feel like crying, try not to. It is true that women care too much about their hair. It is a pain. If I borrowed Ichisuke’s mirror and arranged the two mirrors at such angles that you could see your entire head, you wouldn’t cry. But look, Ichisuke is on the verge of being broken hearted. (Ichisuke and Nisuke were still in the middle of their conversation.) I don’t want to go to his room to get his mirror. So right now, just imagine that you have already looked in the mirror and calm down. It is not as if you can’t put yourself into that mental state.”

I still wanted something to cover my head. It was already morning outside, and if I went out to draw water from the well, the late autumn morning sun would instantly shine on my neck. I couldn’t bring myself to expose it to that light.

After I retrieved the vegetable cloth and started folding it into a triangle, Sangorō

got up and walked over to the nail on the wall, mumbling to the Bohemian necktie hanging from it:

“Covering such an attractive bob with a cloth must indicate an advanced concealment-type mentality. What a bother. While I completely disagree, I’m unable to disregard a girl’s wish.”

Then he undid the knot, turning the Bohemian necktie into a long black strip, and wrapped it around my head.

“A problem like this,” he said while letting the fringe fall over my cheeks, “means that someone who doesn’t know how she looks feels unhappy or embarrassed, despite the fact that she is quite lovely. It’s annoying that girls waste their emotions. Also, unless breakfast is promptly made and Ichisuke is sent off to the hospital, I will feel even more irritated about not being able to sleep. I wonder if there is a way to get the lovesick to be quiet. At least, I think I can try sleeping in this room.”

Ichisuke and Nisuke were still talking, but Sangorō fell asleep the moment he crawled in bed.

Sada Sangorō fell asleep, Ono Nisuke fell asleep, and Ono Ichisuke fell quiet. Then the house was silent and, having finished preparing breakfast, I found the calm conducive to thinking about unrequited love. My thoughts were not easily exhausted on a morning ripe with my family’s disappointment in love. However, I did not find any clear insights, my neck feeling somehow strange. In the end, I approached the topic in the following way, although with little confidence: Was thwarted love bitter? Did its bitterness teach people anything? Nisuke, who had already been disappointed, had passionately begun to study fertilizers. Would Ichisuke, when he found himself disappointed, begin writing theses on psychology? Did unrequited love motivate people in, oh, such great ways? If so (I continued to think but with a suddenly hushed voice), Sangorō would need to have his heart broken to become a musician, and I, too, would have to experience lost love to write poetry in the seventh sense. Thus disappointment in love seemed something of great worth.

While I sank into these thoughts, Ichisuke began stirring in his room, separated from where I sat by a set of sliding paper doors. He seemed to be tossing left and right, as he talked to himself in a very small voice:

“I didn’t decide to stay home from the hospital today in order to get into this mindset. Nothing is as unwieldy as human psychology. I almost feel like hitting it on the head. When I lie on my heart, its beating bothers me. This must be a premonition, or what is popularly called a ‘bug’s whisper.’ If I try lying on my back, my heart facing up, the center of my body feels too light, and this troubles me. This, too, must be a kind of bug’s whisper. I feel deprived, as if something precious is slipping away. I will try again to lie with my heart facing up, but, look, the bug’s whisper doesn’t stop. This whisper must be related to the situation at the hospital. At this late stage, this experience tells me that people are also equipped with the sixth sense. The human sixth sense may not

always function, but it instantly starts under one particular condition—when a person is in love. I will try lying on my heart. Look, the pulsation that is the sixth sense is still there. Now I feel more deprived. I wonder how my patient is doing. Someone may be in her room. I can't stay like this. (Ichisuke jumped up.) I must go to the hospital and check."

I escaped to the kitchen before Ichisuke appeared in the dining room. I did not want to let him see my head wrapped in a black cloth. I then retreated to the maid's room because he came to the kitchen to quickly wash his face (saving the time to bring his own washbasin to the well, he used a little basin that I had just polished), and soon returned to the dining room. I returned to the kitchen, leaving behind the face of Sangorō, sound asleep.

Sitting in the kitchen corner farthest from Ichisuke, I decided to read a new book from my collection that I had just brought from the maid's room. But I could not focus on reading here, either. This was because one sliding door away, Ichisuke complained about the meal, which was something he had never done.

"This food tastes bad. There's no distinction between *wakame* and *miso* in this *miso* soup. I hate having to drink such a soup when my heart is pounding."

Feeling sad that no sheet of seaweed was left, I opened the cupboard. On the lowest shelf, I found a pack of *hamanattō* that I had long forgotten. It made a scant sound when I shook it. I slid the paper door just wide enough to extend my arm and stretched fifteen centimeters into the dining room to place the pack of soybeans there.

The *hamanattō* suddenly piqued Ichisuke's appetite. He finished his hasty meal thanks to them, and, heaving a sigh of satisfaction, added: "*Hamanattō* is good for a tangled heart. Very good, indeed. It helps the digestion of a person suffering from such an affliction. I will let the kitchen staff at my hospital know of the existence of this item so that it will be on the daily menu of patients with tangled hearts. This is a very good idea, the product of a mental state that surfaces only when the heart is tangled. My heart has been untangled as the result of fully enjoying *hamanattō*. By all means, I will let the kitchen staff know of the existence of this item—I seem to have become suddenly relaxed after the meal. If I am to think of the state of affairs at the hospital, I should not be too relaxed. I shouldn't remain as I am."

And so Ichisuke hurriedly left for work.

The two family members left behind continued to sleep soundly. I returned to the dining room—my house was indeed tranquil. This tranquility obstructed my reading and made me feel unexpectedly drowsy.

In Sangorō's room, his bedding was spread in the cool air. I tried to sleep there, but because of the cold and the penetrating odor from Nisuke's room, I just stared at the ceiling. Just above my head was a crack between the ceiling boards, and a sliver of half-morning light shone through it. The damage to the roof of his room measured about the width of a mandarin orange on the hedge, and I looked awhile at the large autumn sky defined by that size. This calm view naturally led my mind to the following thought:

Did Sangorō gaze at the stars through this damaged space before going to sleep at night? And when waking up in the morning just before noon, did the large sky stir a sense, like the one I was having in my heart, of peering into the bottom of a deep well? Although I lay on my back looking up at the sky, psychologically it felt as if I were casting my eyes downward, peering into a well.

Before long I fell asleep.

That afternoon, Sangorō and I set about cleaning Nisuke's radish garden. Ono Nisuke had demanded that we take on this task, and Sangorō took a day off from the music preparatory school.

I slept longer than I had anticipated in Sangorō's room, and Nisuke seemed to have had a hard time waking me. When I leaped from the threshold between dreams and reality and sat on the futon, Nisuke was standing in front of me. He spoke peremptorily, worried about being late for his lecture on fertilizers (this was evident from how quickly he spoke).

"Clear away my radishes before the day is over. What's important—how irritating that you're still half asleep. Open your eyes all the way. I feel as if I am talking to the wind. There's a limit to how undependable you can be. (But I was not necessarily half asleep; I was embarrassed for Nisuke to see the black fabric on my head. A fair amount of the Bohemian necktie had loosened while I was asleep, and strands of hair seemed to be showing from beneath.) What's important is to dip all radish stems in boiling water, not wasting a single one, to make *oshitashi*. Do you understand? (I nodded.) I need to taste the greens that I have cultivated with my fertilizer prescription. This is an experiment on how my prescription affects human taste, so there will be a problem if you throw out any leaves. Use the minimum amount of sesame seeds and other seasonings to prepare *oshitashi* that brings out the natural taste of the leaves. Ah, I am about to be late for an important lecture. Also, after finishing the radish patch, the alcove will be for moss in its mating season—(here Nisuke stopped short and looked flurried) no, I didn't mean that; somehow, annoyingly, I tend to blurt things out after staying up all night. It is very annoying. Anyway, what I mean is that the alcove in my room will be a salon for moss. Tell Sangorō to move the usual pot—he knows which one—very carefully to the alcove. But I'm now running late. I can't linger here like this."

Then he left for school in a flurry.

Bogged down by a number of chores, I felt the weight of responsibility as I walked to where Sangorō was. Just as I sat at the entrance to the maid's room, near his head, he awoke. I consulted him, "The radish patch has to be removed. But—"

Just as I barely began, Sangorō interrupted, "What are you saying? Do you know what would happen if the radish patch were removed from that farmer's room? If the fertilizers accumulate without the radish patch, only their dirtiness stands out. There's a limit to how dirty a room can be."

"Nisuke said to change the alcove into a moss salon—"

"That is a great idea. Truly great. A great idea, indeed. His room is too much like

that of a peasant. Consider the harmony between the radish patch and artificial lighting. There's a limit to disharmony. Miniature lamps are suited only to a salon of love."

"But is it okay for you to skip school so often?"

"Of course. I always prefer to skip school."

Sangorō sprang up and got dressed. He went to the kitchen and tied around his head the grey towel that I used for wiping my hands. His attitude was stimulating. I thought I would have to tighten my loosened head covering.

When I was trying to quickly untie the knot of the Bohemian necktie, he tore the entire piece from my head in one fell swoop and stretched the wrinkled fabric on the futon still spread in the maid's room.

"Hold that end down firmly. Don't shake your head so much. It's annoying."

Sangorō handed me the comb he had pulled from under my desk, and I was able to arrange my bangs.

Sangorō and I pounded the Bohemian tie on the futon, each of us holding down one end. We tried as much as possible to stretch the wrinkles of my head covering. We pounded enthusiastically.

It was past noon when Sangorō and I had breakfast, both of us wearing head coverings. I did not know what was on his mind, but he fell silent, different from how he had sprung up a moment ago, and he seemed full of thoughts as he ate. Because I disliked such silence, I consulted him about how to handle the radishes, which weighed more heavily on my mind than anything else. In which container should I first wash the greens, when there were so many of them? This was a very puzzling task for a cook.

"Washing fertilized radishes in a drinking-water bucket would be—"

"Don't bring up such a distasteful topic while we are eating," he responded. "At a time like this, instead of thinking about radishes with their legs steeped in fertilizer, quietly ponder moss. The moss pollen is such that—"

Sangorō stopped to drink a cup of tea and suddenly became quiet. I didn't want him to continue this topic, so I left him in silence and went to open the rain doors of the verandah attached to Nisuke's room. To a young woman, it was better that the two men read Nisuke's notebook on their own rather than discuss such topics as moss pollen.

After opening the rain doors and returning from Nisuke's room, I found Sangorō still in a disturbing state. Seated in Nisuke's chair, with his chin on his hands and his elbows against the desktop, he was gazing at the pot of moss. Between his elbows was the thesis, its pages open.

Confronted with this situation, I needed to proceed quickly with my chores, so I stood near the sliding paper doors and looked across the room. Nisuke's study was a mess. Having worked all night, he had left the room in utter confusion, and I had no idea where to begin. As I stood staring vacantly by the rice container, I discovered, within the disorderly landscape of the room, a small scene that stirred my nostalgia. Between the legs of the chair that had held Sangorō and the place where the ceramic pot for the

fertilizer had sat, the cut ends of my hair were scattered, now looking like brownish dust. Where the dust thinned was a jar containing liquid, and where the dust nearly disappeared was a cooking pot. I shook my head wrapped in the Bohemian necktie, remembering my grandmother and her hair-care treatments.

Sangorō remained in the same state, idling away his time, looking at the moss, then at the notebooks, and returning to the moss. But suddenly seeming to notice me, he asked, “Why are you sniffing?”

After watching my face for a while, he noticed the spot on the floor I was examining. He shook his head once, and then once again, his eyes cast on the tatami. He muttered to himself, “I feel a little weird. I wonder if, after staying up all night, the mind doesn’t clear after sleeping from morning until almost noon. I couldn’t interest myself in removing the radish patch, and instead felt like pondering moss. I fell in this state of mind while having breakfast with the girl. But anyway, the hair dust on the tatami is very odd. Try as I might, I can’t merely see it as brown dust. After all, it is alive. I can’t help looking at it as a living thing. A girl’s hair is still alive even when it is separated from her head and turned into fine dust. I think this dust still looks alive. Look, there is dust, and there is dust. Nisuke’s powdered fertilizer is just ordinary dust—dead dust, no different from barley flour or crystal sugar. But hair dust isn’t as simple as that.”

Sangorō shook his head vehemently as if to shed such thoughts and turned again toward the notebook.

Given his state, I had no idea when the radish patch removal would start. I lifted the lid of the rice container. Not a grain of rice was left, but two spoons left inside clearly showed how Nisuke and Sangorō had eaten last night. Then I opened the lid of the cooking pot. Here again, I was able to imagine how hungry the all-nighters had been. Not only the arrowhead bulbs but also the liquid in which they had been cooked was all gone. I put the pot in the rice container and carried them to the kitchen.

When I returned with a rag-rinsing bucket, Sangorō was still at the desk, eagerly reading the thesis on moss. I started taking care of the radish patch by myself. I picked up a radish stem from one test tube with my right hand, put it in the water in the bucket held in my left hand, went on to the next tube, and continued with this task awhile.

Sangorō and I went on with our own tasks, back to back, separated by a distance of one and a half tatami mats. When the surface of the water in the bucket was almost covered with radish, he threw the notebook onto the tatami and said, his back still turned away from me: “Why don’t we move to a new house today? Because the radish patch will be gone, it will be a good opportunity.”

He did not wait for me to respond but continued talking to himself. During his soliloquy, I alternated between looking at his back and not.

“Somehow, my state of mind is like—for instance, I want to pull a heavily loaded moving cart. This is the day after last night, and last night Nisuke’s moss

started to fall in love and have pollen. I gave a haircut to the girl while inhaling a lot of pollen, and. . .

Oh, I see, she doesn't remember what it was like last night. On a day after such a night, maybe girls are expected to fall into evasion-type schizophrenia. I have Nisuke's notebook in my hand, but, instead of trying to read the thesis on moss together, the girl brings out a cleaning bucket. That makes me feel like shattering the radish test tubes. I wouldn't be satisfied even if I shattered that old piano. In other words, I feel like. . . I want to grab something and smash it. So, instead of grabbing and smashing something, I am going to pull a heavy cart."

Sangorō quickly stood up from the chair and picked up the notebook he had thrown. Holding it with pages open in both hands like a music score, he sang a comic opera song louder than he ever had before. But his music was simply a means of dispersing some kind of psychology, and singing so loudly that his voice nearly cracked was an act that replaced pulling a moving cart. He kept his back turned from the radish patch.

It took a while for him to finish singing as much as he wanted, but I continued to watch his back. After he stopped singing, shook his head a few times, and retied the towel on his head, I left the room. I needed to go to the well to transfer the vegetables from the rag-rinsing bucket.

When I returned to the room with the bucket, I found Sangorō standing before the radish patch, waiting for the bucket. To show how inclined he was to remove the radish patch, he lifted me toward the ceiling, and the moment he put me down on the tatami, he started to work with enthusiasm. While he harvested the vegetables he sang his usual pitch-training verses. When dissatisfied with his pitch, he stopped pulling radishes and repeated the phrase, while fingering the already harvested test tubes like piano keys.

I first met our two neighbors as I approached the entrance to our house, my bucket filled with radishes. Had our music bothered the neighbors? The two women stood at the entrance looking as if they had been there awhile. At first, because of their dark clothing, they looked like a black mass. One wore a jet-black Western dress that covered her entire body, while the other, who stood slightly behind her, wore a black *hakama* over her kimono. When I realized they were two separate visitors, I sat on the tatami of the *genkan* and bowed. But the atmosphere of our family and my appearance did not seem to make a positive impression. My head was wrapped in the black necktie, a bucket that reeked of radish sat next to me, and, deep in the house, Sangorō's music continued. One of the visitors (the one in her Western dress who seemed to be a teacher) started telling me that they had just moved in next door but stopped abruptly. At this late point, it occurred to me I should go fetch Sangorō.

Even when Sangorō appeared at the *genkan*, we were unable to make a positive impression on our neighbors. We, each of us wearing a head covering, sat side by side on the tatami facing the entrance. The teacher neighbor, utterly uninterested, uttered one of the shortest greetings possible for a new next door resident, and we bowed wordlessly.

Then the visitor who had stood in back (the one in the black *hakama* who looked like a student) pulled a piece of paper from the front of her kimono and put it down as close as possible to the corner of the *genkan*, near the bucket, half of which showed from behind the sliding door. After our neighbors left, Sangorō and I remained in place, gazing at the coupon for soba noodles.¹⁵

Unlike my home that was always noisy with music, my neighbor's home was quiet. And my relationship with the student neighbor, who had worn the black *hakama*, remained calm and reticent. This was because she and I rarely talked and instead used a different communication method.

She was also the cook of her home and resided in the maid's room. She cooked for the teacher, who had worn the black dress when we first met, and for herself. The black *hakama* was her uniform when she went out to hear lectures between late afternoon and evening. She spent her days as a cook and her evening hours as an auditor in the Japanese literature department at a night school. The other neighbor, who had resembled a teacher at our first meeting, was in fact an English teacher at a missionary girls school. She seemed to have an orderly way of thinking about everything. I gathered that she thought it disorderly, for example, for two young cooks to chat by the side of the well or elsewhere.

Now, the two cooks' exchanges first began beside the well. It was the day after we removed Nisuke's radish patch. As I rinsed the greens in my bucket, my neighbor washed two pairs of black stockings. We passed the time silently, without any conversation, while demonstrating mutual feelings of friendship—When the washed stockings were aligned as four black objects brimming with soap bubbles beside my vegetables, I pushed the bunch of radish leaves to the side away from the faucet. She placed her bucket beneath the faucet, and I drew water for her. This was because I was right near the pump. But my pumping was quite irregular, and water poured in spurts into her bucket. Without my head covering, my hair kept falling over my forehead, and I constantly shook my head while I pumped. Observing my situation, my neighbor removed a small rubber comb from her head and came halfway around the well to fix my hair with it.

From that morning on, I no longer wrapped my head. When I awoke, the wrap was on the tatami in the maid's room, having fallen from my head. And I gave up covering my hair. The Bohemian necktie that Sangorō had bought, now just black fabric, lay in my basket together with my hair-care packets.

When it was time to dry the four stockings on the mandarin orange hedge, I accompanied her, carrying three pairs. The neighbor hung the one she held in her hands, took a second from me, and when I was left holding the last one, I hung it on the fence. We silently stood, gazing at the water dripping from the stockings.

Lastly, she helped me with my vegetables, so that I was able to eliminate the odor from the radish leaves sooner than I had expected. We washed the leaves in my bucket,

moved them to her bucket and then emptied them onto a sieve. Then we took turns pumping the well and pouring water on the radishes for a long while.

When the greens were thoroughly clean, I spoke to my neighbor for the first time and reservedly offered some of the greens. With equal reservation, she declined my offer (because the teacher probably would not eat them) and returned home with the four pairs of stockings that had dripped dry on the orange hedge.

That evening, I sat at the kitchen entrance deep in thought, gazing at the sieve of greens. I was still hesitant about cooking the radishes Nisuke had raised. But Sangorō and Nisuke, who came home around this time, viewed this issue from a variety of angles. Sangorō, who was the first to return, crossed the kitchen looking overjoyed and opened the sliding door to the maid's room. Only then did he notice me seated near the entrance. He held a pair of curling irons in his right hand. Picking up strands of my hair and swinging the irons like a conductor's baton, he spoke, "The teacher at the branch school praised me, so I bought curling irons. Getting a lot of praise makes one feel like buying something. My teacher had me sing three times, and he praised me each time. (Sangorō sang and waved his baton. At this point, Nisuke came to the kitchen and stood behind Sangorō.) Tonight I will make your hair pretty, Machiko, so keep the fire in the charcoal stove alive. Don't forget."

"It would be good to smooth her hair that is going in all different directions," Nisuke added. "But I'm hungry. I will get upset if she doesn't quickly prepare *oshitashi* from my crop."

"I'm not sure if I want to eat that kind of *oshitashi*," Sangorō responded, picking up my sieve and bringing it close to his nose. "See, it smells just like your radish patch."

Nisuke also examined the smell: "This is exactly how radishes smell. No traces of fertilizer remain. Use your nose impartially and forget about the test tubes. Or else I will get upset."

After checking and rechecking the sieve, Sangorō asked me, "Did you really wash the leaves thoroughly?"

I told him in detail the steps by which I washed the radish greens with our neighbor during the day. Sangorō abruptly put down the sieve and asked, "So, you washed the greens in the neighbor's bucket where she had washed two pairs of socks?"

"Yes. Then we took time pouring water over the sieve."

"That makes no difference. It's still unclean. The radish leaves touched the socks of the teacher next door through her bucket. Besides, for some reason, I don't like that teacher. She saw me wearing a dirty cloth on my head when we met, and, on top of that, you see, she looks ready to count my flaws, which makes me uncomfortable in her presence. She is too dignified a neighbor. Today on my way home from the branch school I happened to be on the same train she took from her missionary school. After I got off, I walked behind her all the way home. So I closely observed her jet-black stockings. Her stick-like legs with no roundness only make me uncomfortable. Greens

rinsed in the bucket used to wash such stockings must definitely taste uncomfortable.”

“Don’t worry,” Nisuke responded. “I cultivated these radishes. Going under water for a few minutes in the neighbor’s wash bucket poses absolutely no problem. I haven’t met the teacher, but I think your way of thinking lately has tended to be prejudiced, Sangorō. Judging from your extreme view of fertilizer as unclean and your discomfort about the neighbor’s stockings, a mentality might be surfacing that Ichisuke may need to examine. Try being impartial. Fertilizer and stockings are both sacred.”

“Try being impartial yourself, Nisuke. (Sangorō picked up a bunch of radish leaves with the tips of the curling irons and brought them near Nisuke’s nose.) And I am not contracting any psychological disorders that Ichisuke needs to examine. It’s just that if we must have a neighbor, a less dignified neighbor would—”

Nisuke carefully pinched the radish leaves between his fingers, removed them from the grip of the irons, returned them to the sieve, and asked me: “You washed them carefully, right?”

I repeated the story about taking turns pumping the well with the neighbor.

“You mean, the teacher pumped water?”

“No,” Sangorō answered for me. “Pay more attention. I just told you that the teacher returned about the same time I did. There is another neighbor, a student. She wears a black *hakama*. She must be a Japanese literature student at a night school somewhere. Her hair is black, and her face looks like that of someone who studies Japanese literature. I saw this neighbor, too, a few minutes ago on my way home.”

“A girl in black *hakama*—then I passed her, too,” Nisuke said. “I came home right after you. I see, so she is the girl next door. (After pausing to think.) Well, I will give up on boiled radishes. The girl next door is, you see, the type that might habitually cry. Plump girls tend to have too many tears—(Nisuke seemed to be absorbed in deep reflection.) At any rate, I don’t care for a vegetable that kind of girl washed.”

After a few days, the radishes that Nisuke had cultivated, paled in my kitchen, turned yellow, and then withered white.

The package my grandmother sent me contained three types of chestnuts (boiled, fresh, and dried), along with hair-care packets. But my head had already been tamed by Sangorō’s curling irons, and I was beginning to get used to maneuvering them myself. With a sense of melancholy, I moved the packets into my basket and arranged the boiled chestnuts on the three plates on the desk. The usual smell wafted from Nisuke’s room, and Sangorō’s room was completely quiet without even a rustle. A while earlier he did his pitch practice a few times with the piano, but that was the last sound he made. And as I visited the three rooms one by one, I was able to know how the three family members were.

When I carried a plate of boiled chestnuts to Ono Ichisuke’s room, he was doing nothing. He lay on his back on the tatami under his desk, legs outstretched and eyes on

the ceiling. Under his head were a number of books as a support, some sticking out and others turning in. Resting his head on his hands on this zigzag pillow of books, he was deep in thought. When I placed the chestnuts by his elbow, he kept staring at the ceiling.

Kneeling by the chestnuts, I gazed at his chest for a while. He breathed lightly several times, then inhaled and exhaled deeply, creating a special breathing rhythm. This encouraged me to reflect on when a person breathes in this manner.

The air inside the room was entirely dark brown. Ichisuke's chest and face, his trousers and white shirt that he had not yet changed since coming home from work, his padded cotton kimono outer wear hanging on the wall, the plate of chestnuts—all were drab dark brown. This was because he had covered the lamp on his desk with a dark brown cloth, preferring not to have any bright light.

I knew the mental state that made Ono Ichisuke keep his room dark brown and gaze at the ceiling without even bothering to change his clothes. He had for some time been eating dinners without much enjoyment while still in his white shirt and trousers, losing so much weight that three centimeters of his belt hung loose. I pushed the plate of chestnuts closer to his chest and returned to the maid's room.

When I brought the second plate to Nisuke's room, its interior was so bright that it looked almost white, and, as usual, he was studying hard amid a mess of fertilizer. This room was cleaner the day we removed the radish patch, but once again it had become a disorderly peasant room. The only change was that the radish patch on the alcove had turned into a pot of wetland with yellowish moss, which reduced by one the four swamps on the desk.

As I approached his desk while paying attention to my footsteps and thought about where to put down the plate, Ono Nisuke, tweezers in one hand, seemed to notice the chestnuts. Under his tweezers lay a sample of moss that had been plucked from the wetland. Picking up a chestnut with his hand while still holding the tweezers, he was about to bring it to his mouth, but he put it back on the plate, walked to the alcove, and returned with another sample of moss between his tweezers. After studying the two moss samples on his notebook, he picked up a chestnut and ate it. His study of the two moss samples was rigorous and included laying them side by side to gaze at the top portion of each, comparing the thickness of the legs, and blowing on them. Then he pinched pollen between the forefinger and thumb of his left hand from the two samples, brought one at a time to his nose, and inhaled deeply. This was for comparing the fragrance of the samples, and he quietly closed his eyes when he took that deep, heartfelt breath. But at this point, the smell of the fertilizer that filled the room seemed to have disturbed him. He put down the tweezers in his right hand, and, pulling out the bottle of perfume from the pocket of his smock, pressed it to his nose. All the while, his left hand remained on the notebook as if it were something precious, and Nisuke never brought it near his right hand. He feared his left fingers might touch the perfume.

After dissipating the fertilizer odor with perfume, Nisuke brought his left fingers

to his nose anew, carefully inspected the fragrance, and finally opened his eyes. After concluding this procedure, he picked up that chestnut again. I had not put down the plate yet. Nisuke did not lift his eyes from the moss as he broke the chestnut shell between his teeth; shards of shell spilled and scattered on his notebook. Without thinking, I stretched my neck and gazed at the notebook. Then I realized—the moss pollen and the chestnut powder were the exact same color! They were even the same shape! I felt as if I had gained a vague but great piece of knowledge—Wasn't the realm of poetry I sought precisely a world of this kind of fine powder? Moss flowers and the chestnut innards, both in yellowish powder form, spattered on the notebook. Beside them were the tips of the sharp tweezers and the fine roots of moss. And the perfume bottle under the electric light turned into a yellow beam and stretched toward the cotton swab.

But the still life on the notebook soon crumbled with the sweep of Nisuke's hand. He hastily picked up the two clumps of moss and brushed the chestnut powder off his notebook. While he rearranged the moss on the notebook, I shook my head once, put the plate at the corner of the notebook, and returned to the maid's room.

Back in the maid's room, I pulled out my poetry notebook. I wished to write a poem like the still life I saw on Nisuke's notebook. But what I started writing was a love poem full of pathos: Grandmother sent me *kazura*, but I no longer have the hair for it. / The kiss on the back of my neck while he applied curling irons was, oh, sad like the autumn wind—I tore out the page of this unfinished poem.

When I brought the third plate, Sada Sangorō was seated on the revolving stool with his back against the piano, looking at the rag-rinsing bucket. I had placed the bucket on the tatami in the late afternoon when it started to rain. I put the plate of chestnuts on the keyboard and, standing by his side, looked at the bucket. About three centimeters of rainwater had collected at the bottom. One drop fell through the hole in the roof into the bucket, followed by another. The surface of the water continued to ripple unevenly.

"Aren't you going to eat the chestnuts?"

I shifted the plate to his lap. He returned it to the piano.

"I can't practice with the bucket here," he said. "Whenever I start pitch training, rain drops fall into the bucket, and my pitch falls by a half-tone. The bucket is even more out of tune than the piano."

After I returned to the maid's room and started peeling raw chestnuts, Sangorō suddenly began practicing. He must have reconsidered his laziness caused by the bucket. But he seemed to alternate between eating chestnuts and pitch training, and this intermittent music assumed a very mournful tone. I felt like wearing something cheerful in order to forget the mournful music, so I put one of the loops of dried chestnuts my grandmother had made around my neck. The loops, threaded through with a needle at their center, chestnut by chestnut, seemed like clumsily made necklaces.

It was then that my neighbor and I began a peculiar method of conversation. She, too, occupied the maid's room of the house, with her window facing mine at a distance

short enough to be spanned by a Y-shaped stick used to dry laundry. The only thing that separated our windows was the orange hedge. When she stretched her hand from her window, it reached her side of the hedge. And I could reach from my room for an orange on my side. Just as many chestnut peels had collected on my lap, she knocked on my rain door with the tip of her Y-shaped stick.

A roll of newsprint hung from the end of her stick. The paper surface was slick with rain, and tucked inside was a sheet of music. The attached letter carried a hint of her state of mind:

“I am sending you a sheet of music. I bought this item three days ago, but until today I had felt uncertain about what to do with it. As I returned from school tonight and listened to the music from your home, I felt like sending it to where I had intended when I bought it. Please forgive me for my abruptness. My household tends to dislike abrupt conduct and outlandish things, but recently I have felt like rebelling against this inclination.

On the evening I bought this music, I did not feel like riding the train, and instead I walked home. I arrived half an hour later than usual. Noting my miserable appearance, the teacher asked about my train ride. I intuitively answered that there had been a blackout. I hear that one tends to tell this kind of lie when one feels heartache. Muttering that night school in Japanese literature seems bad for my mental health and that I should instead attend the daytime sports school starting in the spring, she began looking through school brochures and other information. What a wretched night.”

The music from the neighbor was titled “I think of you, but, ah, you are unkind.” Using the same method, I sent a letter along with boiled chestnuts wrapped in my vegetable cloth.

“Thank you for your letter and music. Tonight I, too, feel downhearted as I peel chestnuts. Because all my family members are also depressed, I will sing the song you gave me to cheer them up. Enclosed please find some chestnuts.”

Seemingly in a great hurry, she sent the following questions in a letter wrapped in the vegetable cloth.

“Why does your family member, he who is singing right now, always choose this kind of fragmented, depressing tune? Who were you thinking of while peeling chestnuts? Isn’t it because one keeps thinking of another person that one feels disheartened or depressed? My heart, too, is always heavy these days. I will wait for your reply without closing the rain doors so that I will not awaken the teacher.”

“The ceiling of the room with the piano began leaking late this afternoon,” I wrote back. “The roof fails from time to time, affecting our state of mind. Once while looking at the sky through a crack in the roof, I felt as if I were peering down into a well. Tonight, he who lives in that room grew depressed because of that crack. He said that the sound of the rain falling into a bucket is detrimental to his music. Thus he is singing intermittently, while eating chestnuts. As I peeled chestnuts, I thought about

my grandmother. She, too, must be peeling chestnuts to steam with rice on a rainy night like this. Thinking of these things, my heart sinks.”

“Now that I have learned the reasons why your family member in the room with the piano is depressed and why you are downhearted,” went her reply, “I feel somewhat more at ease. I forgot to acknowledge the chestnuts in my last letter, but thank you for them. I will stay up late, enjoying them and listening to the music from your house. I have always been very fond of singing, but because the teacher dislikes such outlandish things, I restrain myself. Still, I cannot help feeling as if my heart is pressed when I refrain from singing what I want to sing. She believes in rising early in the morning and going to sleep at a fixed time at night. Yet I recently have developed insomnia. Sometimes I stay up late listening to the music from your house. I pray for the time when the bucket is no longer needed in the piano room. Good night.”

“Let me add as a postscript what I neglected to mention earlier. My *hakama* is made out of two skirts that had belonged to the teacher. On being admitted to the night school for studying Japanese literature, I brought a maroon-colored *hakama* from my hometown, but it proved useless.¹⁶ The teacher is fond of wearing black. One of the two skirts she gave me was fairly new, and the other was rather old. Thus the front and back of my *hakama* are different shades. Although I am her distant cousin, I do not share her tastes. I wish that I could wear the *hakama* I brought from my home. Good night.”

After finishing the long conversation, I went to Sangorō’s room with the music. Sangorō sat silently, his elbow on the keyboard near the now empty plate. I put down the music under his face. He looked at the title, opened the cover, and read the poem inside.

“This is a poem about unrequited love. Why?”

“It is a gift from our neighbor.”

After looking into my face awhile, Sangorō said to himself, “Things have become strange these days. Our schedule is such that when I get off the train and start walking up the slope, she walks down. But a slope in the evening is odd. A slope in the evening, you know, makes two neighbors deliberately avoid greeting each other as they pass and instead makes them deliberately look away.”

“Something strange is beginning to weigh on my mind. My mind is beginning to divide into two. When I apply curling irons to the girl’s hair, I feel like kissing her. And when I see another girl on the slope, I feel like turning my eyes away. And what if I look at this kind of music. . . .”

Sangorō suddenly rose and left the room. But he returned right away. He held a book about psychology in one hand and a bunch of chestnuts in the other. He sat again on the revolving stool and said to me in a hushed voice, “Ichisuke is truly depressed. All he does is lie down and stare at the ceiling. He hasn’t eaten a single chestnut. (Moving the chestnuts from his hand to the plate on the keyboard and exhaling deeply) love must be very painful for everybody.”

Then he opened a page of the psychology book. I lowered my eyes toward the book and started reading a passage that began: “Schizophrenia gradually increases in variety with the history of the Earth adding to its depth and complexity. . . .” Without finishing, I walked away from the piano. I felt as if I were nothing more than a person disappointed in love and was in no mood to continue reading such a difficult text. I sat beside the bucket, watching the ripples.

When Sangorō abruptly closed the book, flung it on top of the piano, and started practicing the music about unrequited love, I felt in sympathy with the piece. I stood by him and sang along.

The song also seemed to win Ichisuke’s sympathy. He came to Sangorō’s room, still in his trousers and white shirt. He brought his face close to the score on the piano’s music stand and read the lyrics. The poems printed inside the cover included one that began: “I think of you but you are unkind. / I lie on the grass and look up at you, / but ah, you / are high above and unkind.”

Ichisuke joined us, singing in a small voice. I must refrain from commenting on his musical ability or the quality of his voice (not because it was inferior to Nisuke’s), but the singing was extremely sad. He sang a phrase, fell silent, sang another, sank in deep thought, and thus continued singing the song of unrequited love to no end.

Our music was brought to a close by Ono Nisuke, who talked to himself in his study. It was a modest, quiet monologue:

“Somehow tonight’s music seems bad for my plant’s love. My family’s music has never done any good. The moss was passionately starting to fall in love earlier in the evening, but it has now slowed down. This stagnation must have begun when the music started. It is not good for the moss to hear a song about unrequited love. Ichisuke of all people joining for a chorus of three about unrequited love! Even the girl’s singing sounds sad tonight. If they sing at all they should choose a great piece that encourages plants to love.”

Because the rain had stopped without our noticing, I followed Ichisuke out of Sangorō’s room with the bucket. As he walked from the corridor to his room, Ichisuke kept his head down.

Around the time pollen appeared on Ono Nisuke’s second pot of moss, the oranges on the hedge had turned as bright as could be, and Sada Sangorō and my neighbor were in the habit of eating them.

One night when Nisuke was extremely busy, Sangorō went at his behest to get manure and did not return for a long time. When I carried the rice container to Nisuke’s room (this was in preparation for their all-night work, and on its lid were a pot, a large plate, two rice bowls, and two pairs of chopsticks), Nisuke was pacing among the charcoal brazier, desk, and alcove, tired of waiting for the manure to arrive. He told me to go and see what was happening and asked where his padded jacket was. Unlike usual nights,

he was still in his school uniform. I had forgotten to bring in the jacket I had washed during the day and aired outside.

When I got to the site, Sangorō was not there. Two empty jars stood on the ground, but I could barely see them through the starlight. The place for drying clothes was in a corner diagonally across the garden from where I was. Sangorō and my neighbor stood under Nisuke's jacket, separated by the hedge.

I tried to do the work Nisuke had ordered, as my tears kept falling on the dirt. When Sangorō came near, my tears refused all the more to stop, so I handed him the tool and walked toward the jacket.

When Sangorō entered the maid's room, I was unable to lift my face, which I buried in my kimono sleeves on the desk. After standing in the room for a while, he picked up the jacket from my side, took a breath, and left. Each time he returned, I remained in the same state. Without speaking a word, he only breathed and went to Nisuke's room.

The last time he appeared, I had my back against the desk because the light was too bright for my eyes. A loop of dried chestnuts hung from a nail across from me, the last of those my grandmother had sent. I gazed at this lonely ornament, leaning against the desk, my hands tucked in the sleeves of my kimono jacket.

Sangorō sat on the desk and looked at the dried chestnuts. He started to say something but stopped short because I was again wiping my tears. He took down the loop, hung it around my neck, sat back down on the desk, and exhaled sharply through his nose several times. These breaths seemed to be a means of clearing the odor he had inhaled in Nisuke's room, but while hearing this sound just above my ears, I felt as if my sorrow were fading away. Sangorō broke the loop in front of my chest, took one chestnut, and peeled it noisily. He took another and kept eating chestnuts.

Sangorō's love ended quickly, having lasted only a few days after that event. But I spent this period in sheer misery. Around the time our neighbor would return from the night school, he would take shelter in the maid's room saying the manure was unbearable and what not. Lying on his back, he stared at the ceiling and breathed, stared, and breathed. At these times, I retreated to Ichisuke's room with my poetry notebook. But it was convenient for me that he just stared at the ceiling under the electric lamp shaded by the cloth. I felt I could pass the time without him noticing my tears.

In the dark brown room, I sought tasks that I could do for Ichisuke: wiping clean the collar of his padded jacket and placing it over his legs, brushing his jacket, and pulling out a different necktie and hanging it on the wall. When I no longer had anything to do, I went to his desk and tried to write a poem in my notebook. His legs, outstretched before the desk narrowed the space, but I sat next to those legs. I liked this position that allowed me to turn my back to his face. When I approached this spot, Ichisuke tucked his trousered legs toward the corner as if to share half of his desk with me for my poetry writing. But all I did was sniffle, not able to compose a single poem.

Ono Nisuke was the only one in the family who continued to study. He had completed his research on the second pot of moss and appeared to have moved on to the third pot. Then the smell of the fertilizer and the sound of his pen next door sounded particularly sad to me.

Our neighbors quietly moved away. It must have occurred while I was cleaning our house. Because I had spent a long time in Nisuke's room that afternoon, I gave up my plan to wipe the floor with a wet rag. I stayed so long because I fondly read Nisuke's thesis out loud. Ono Nisuke had commanded me on his way out to school, "Move the pot with the most yellow moss from my desk to the alcove. You can't miss it because the color is self-evident. Thanks to our girl washing my jacket I have become neat and clean, which makes my room look dirty in comparison. Make it as tidy as possible. In other words, all you need do is tidy up my room so that it matches my jacket. But our girl is a little depressed lately. She has not been singing at all, and now she is sewing something black, her eyes cast down. What is she sewing?"

Having finished one black elbow cushion, I was sewing a second. The finished one was for Ono Ichisuke, and the second one for myself. I had wanted to make Ichisuke's room a little more cheerful and had thought of an elbow cushion. The fabric was the Bohemian necktie, the black lump that had stayed in my basket several days. Because the maid's room was too gloomy for me for various reasons, I decided to work by Ichisuke's desk. While ironing the wrinkles and pondering many things about the necktie, I thought of making twin elbow cushions for Ichisuke and myself. The idea was the result of familial compassion for Ichisuke.

In response to Nisuke's question, I showed him the cushion that I had placed under Ichisuke's desk.

"This cushion is very nice," Nisuke commented. "Our girl seems quite skillful. (These were just words meant to comfort me.) Won't you make one for me, too? That reminds me, I have a pair of pretty ribbons. They would be just right for decorating the cushions. Make mine blue and yours red. Instead of being depressed, try resting an elbow on a red cushion and singing loudly. I finished my paper on the second pot last night, so I can relax a while." He added, figuratively referring to musical notations and my singing, "Starting tonight, I will listen to our girl's lectures on tadpoles."¹⁷

And so he went to school.

I cleaned the rooms of my family. After putting Nisuke's room in particularly good order, I moved the pot in question to the designated place and then read his thesis.

I have succeeded in inducing love among the plants in the second pot.

Pot no. 1: experimentation with high-temperature fertilizer

Pot no. 2: use of medium-temperature fertilizer

Pot no. 3: sub-medium temperature fertilizer

Pot no. 4: low-temperature fertilizer

That which proved successful this time was the second pot, which was cultivated with medium-temperature fertilizer as indicated in the above chart.

Here I must explain the bitter psychology that I experienced during this research. Namely, I spent an anxious several days leading to this flowering. The moss was about to flower, but it did not. It was about to fall in love, but it did not. These were indeed apprehensive days. My plant's hesitation and vacillation caused me to harbor a certain suspicion. I suspected: can it be that my plant has fallen ill with schizophrenia? Ah, can it be that it is absorbed in hesitation and vacillation because it is a schizophrenic patient?

Such ideas are worthy of my fright and grief. I am not one who cultivates schizophrenic bryophyta that would be material for Ono Ichisuke's research, but instead I constantly desire to see love's passion in healthy plants. Yet, despite this attitude of mine, my plant simply hesitated and vacillated instead of flowering, just as if it were Ono Ichisuke's patient with whom he is desperately in love.

During this unhappy period of apprehension, one evening I mistook chestnuts from our hometown for chocolate balls. It was when I was examining two samples of moss on my desk that a plate of chocolate balls emerged in the periphery of my vision. These candies had all shed their silver wrappers and exposed their chocolate-colored skin, affording convenient provisions to this busily occupied person. Thankful for such thoughtfulness, I picked one up and brought it to my mouth. But, ah, it proved to be a chestnut.

Nisuke's paper continued at length, explaining in detail that he must keep his mistaking chestnuts for chocolate a secret because, if it were leaked to Ichisuke, the doctor would instantly take him to the hospital; that the moss in the second pot had hesitated for several days while ready to bloom solely because middle-temperature fertilizer was used, not because the moss was suffering schizophrenia; and that in fact it had started to fall in love in a very healthy manner.

As I finished reading his thesis, through the gap between sliding doors, I saw our old landlord picking mandarin oranges. When did the harvest begin? I slid one door further aside, and, seating myself near Nisuke's ceramic pot, I observed the scene in the garden. The old man, his neck wrapped in a wool muffler, plucked an orange not yet three centimeters wide and put it in a small sieve by his feet. He then plucked another, advancing little by little along the hedge. When his sieve was full, he emptied the contents into a large cloth bag and continued to gather oranges. With a wide decorative drawstring just below its opening, the bag sat nicely like a pouch under the orange trees. I had never seen such a large, charmingly shaped pouch. He must have taken pains in designing this piece for this annual late autumn event. When he noticed me, he came over to the veranda with a sieve filled with oranges. He seemed to think that my head looked very strange. Feeling that my hair was in the way while I was reading Nisuke's notebook, I had used a rubber band to put it up and keep my ears and neck cool. He finally emptied the oranges in the sieve onto the veranda, then, asking me for an inkstone and paper,

wrote a notice about a house to rent. Then he added a note in small characters: “Piano next door. Looking for a music lover.”—Most likely, the teacher had used Sangorō’s piano as an excuse to move, blaming it for everything, including her younger cousin’s state of mind. The old man muttered about the piano being inauspicious as he asked for glue. I put a small lump of cooked rice in the palm of his hand.

My neighbor had sent a letter attached to the tip of a Y-shaped stick from the orange tree toward my window. I got it that evening. While continuing to collect oranges, moving along the hedge toward my window, our landlord drew my attention to something he thought looked like a charm.

The letter went: “Late last night, the teacher suggested that, because I seemed to show signs of neurosis, it would be better to move to a quieter place, and one without a piano would be better for my sick heart as well. Suddenly overwhelmed with sadness, I told her despite myself that I had received oranges from a member of your household six times. Each time, he and I split the oranges in half and shared them. I also told her that you and I had conversational exchanges with the use of a Y-shaped stick. The teacher replied that such outlandish conduct and communication were because of my neurosis, and, therefore, I must find a new place to live. We arranged to send in a request to the sports school for a copy of their rules. But I do not think that the conversations we exchanged were as outlandish as the teacher believed. The lovers in my Japanese literature textbooks used a letterbox called a *fubako* when sending poems to each other. Well, I am sorry that I no longer have the time to continue. The teacher is calling me from beside the moving cart.”

It was a late autumn night of no particular significance when I fell in love. Nisuke, Sangorō, and I sat around the table. Ichisuke had not yet come home from work. Only Nisuke and Sangorō ate. I was still thinking of Ichisuke while serving them dinner.

Returning to his study after dinner, Nisuke muttered: “What happened to Ichisuke? I wonder if he has gone on an aimless journey.”

After resting his chin on his hand at the table for a while, Sangorō went to my room and rested his chin on his hand at my desk. With his free hand, he toyed with my elbow cushion, moved my electric light stand, and pinched his hair with my curling irons. Because he left the doors open between the dining room and the kitchen, and the kitchen and the maid’s room, I was able to see what he was doing from near the dining table. Finally Sangorō went to his room and sang a line from a comic opera: “Loitering on his way home, Jack sits deep in thought by the roots of the silk tree.” In the opera, Jack was in love with the red-haired Merry, but he dallied on the way to meet her and had a tryst with the black-haired Marie. In the end, he lost Merry’s love. Sangorō sang listlessly about Jack’s feelings, fell silent, and then left the house. Then, the green grocer’s shop boy came to relay a phone message, “This is for the family of Ono Ichisuke from the home of Yanagi Kōroku.”

After the shop boy read this much, Ono Nisuke came out, took the message, and went back to his room. I followed him. Nisuke read the rest aloud:

“Ono Ichisuke came by this evening accompanied by my master Yanagi Kōroku on their return from the psychiatric hospital, and the two of them had dinner together. Please do not worry. After dinner, Mr. Ono engaged in a conversation with my Mr. Yanagi,¹⁸ but the topic took a complicated turn. The two men yelled loudly at each other and then fell silent. It seems they are fighting about who is better acquainted with a patient at the hospital. One says he became her primary doctor on the thirteenth, and the other claims that he met her on the twelfth in the preliminary examination room. After a difficult discussion, Mr. Ono stated there is a book titled *Revised Dictionary of Schizophrenia* on the bottom shelf of his bookcase. To its left, he says, is a square item wrapped many times with brown paper. He wishes this item to be brought to him as soon as possible. He says it is about twelve by fifteen centimeters. Because this is an urgent matter, it does not matter who brings it. The main thing is that it be delivered as quickly as possible.”

Nisuke searched for the specified item in Ichisuke’s room and then went to Sangorō’s room, but Sangorō had not yet come home. Nisuke returned to his room and handed me the item.

“If I go, it will take very long. I would like you to be the messenger. The old man who phoned is a servant who has worked for the Yanagi family since Kōroku’s father’s time. The moment he sees me, he always develops nostalgic schizophrenia. The reason is because, while he hates the fact that Kōroku and Ichisuke work at a psychiatric hospital, he is very pleased that I study cultivation. So when he sees me, he tells me about Kōroku’s father in as courteous language as his telephone message, taking as much as four hours in a row. I’ll show you how to get there.”

While drawing radishes and forests on newsprint he happened to find nearby, Nisuke gave me directions in a way befitting his academic interests:

“Cut across the road and continue on behind the night stall selling bananas. Soon you will see radish patches on both sides of the street. Then, the smell of the chicken coops will come wafting from afar. (Nisuke drew four or five thin lines representing the warm vapor above the radishes. This represented the smell of the chicken coop I should expect when I approached the radish patches.) Head toward the smell. The smell of chicken droppings will become more pronounced, and you end up at the chicken coops. (Drawing of one chicken coop.) There are several chicken coops in a row, and I make a habit of buying fertilizer at this farmhouse. Their droppings are fresh and extremely effective. (Nisuke turned around from his chair and surveyed the situation of the fertilizer in his room. But didn’t he seem too calm? After all I was about to leave as a messenger on an urgent matter.) Because I am running low on chicken droppings, could you get some tonight? All you need say is that you want a bag of chicken droppings. Ichisuke’s conversation is bound to go on for a while, and I am sure the fertilizer seller

will be asleep by the time Ichisuke leaves. So buy a bag on your way there. After buying the bag, look to your right. There will be a grove of oak trees. The house beyond the grove belongs to Yanagi Kōroku. Do you understand?”

Nisuke put down his pencil and added a few further things to keep in mind: “When you enter the *genkan*, you may sense a faint fragrance, but don’t worry because that is just the lingering trace of Kōroku’s father having been a doctor of Chinese medicine. Try not to look at the old servant, wherever he may be. He is in the habit of sitting in a chair at the entrance or staying in the room with the stove. But even if you find him in the entrance chair with eyes open, do your best to pass by without paying attention. Otherwise he will start talking about the past. He will say that the entrance to the medical office used to be filled with the shoes of patients in Kōroku’s father’s day. I suggest that you wait for Ichisuke and return with him.”

Because some time had passed since the telephone call, I quickly tied my wool muffler around my neck and left. At a street corner on the way, I caught sight of Sangorō from behind. Dressed for going to the public bath, he was looking at bananas at the night stall.

As I approached the radish patches, a cold wind blew at my grey muffler and ruffled my hair. Because I walked with sadness thinking of Sangorō, I nearly forgot to buy what Nisuke had requested. But I retraced my steps and bought a bag of chicken droppings. Holding Ichisuke’s parcel in my left hand and Nisuke’s chicken droppings in my right, I arrived at Yanagi Kōroku’s *genkan*.

The seat there happened to be empty (it was a wooden chair even older than Sangorō’s revolving piano stool), and the old servant was napping in front of the stove inside the room. Upon seeing his face covered with thick whiskers, I sensed for the first time the antiquity that pervaded the area and realized that this building was even older than the one we inhabited.

I crossed the room with the stove and entered the corridor. I saw a few rooms that seemed to have been patient examining rooms, and the room in the furthest corner was Mr. Yanagi’s study. Inside, Yanagi Kōroku and Ono Ichisuke were seated in chairs, and, perhaps tired of waiting for the messenger to arrive, had fallen into deep silence. I propped the bag of fertilizer against the rear legs of Ichisuke’s chair and handed him the item he had requested. Because it was carefully tied with a packing cord, it took Ichisuke a fair amount of time before he could remove his diary from the brown wrapping. Then, his eyes still on his diary, he spoke to Mr. Yanagi.

“Look, here is a written record of my feelings. On the thirteenth, a new patient was admitted. I became her principal doctor. She has symptoms of concealment schizophrenia. I felt drawn to her. Even after coming home—”

“Since the girl is still standing behind you, please refrain from discussing that topic now.”

I shook my head a few times behind Ichisuke and removed my wool muffler. My hair, blown by the wind, covered my forehead and ears in disarray.

Mr. Yanagi brought a chair next to Ichisuke and had me sit.

"I have a strange feeling that I have seen the girl from your place somewhere before."

"Maybe it is because you have seen Ono Nisuke. When he is studying, Nisuke's face looks a bit like the girl's when she is feeling low."

"But that's not the reason."

"Stop talking nonsense. Let's continue our conversation."

"But I don't think we can continue with a girl present. Besides, I'm having trouble trying to recall who the girl from your place resembles. This kind of problem doesn't allow one to pay attention to other topics until one can clearly refresh one's memory."

While Mr. Yanagi paced in front of his bookshelves, occasionally returning to his chair, I began to feel hungry. I had not yet had dinner. At this point, Mr. Yanagi went out to the corridor, called the old servant, and asked him to get something nice for me to eat. The old man agreed but pleaded, "Young master, it is time to quit the psychiatric hospital. You must quit it completely. Subjects like psychology, are medical heresy. Worse, you have been arguing with Ono Ichisuke about a hysterical woman for more than five hours! Oh, this is all because the two of you are lost on the wrong path and have ended up at a schizophrenic hospital. Distance yourself from such a place and tend to this hospital that your father bequeathed...."

"Hurry and get her something good to eat."

As soon as he returned to the room, Yanagi Kōroku pulled a book from the shelf and opened to the page he had in mind.

"The old man's complaints made me remember something. His ideas are ludicrous, but they do strangely help recall forgotten things. I wonder if the thoughts of a reminiscence-type schizophrenic may have the ability to stir someone from oblivion. (This seems to have been an academic question posed to Ichisuke, but Ichisuke simply shook his head once without responding.) Anyway, your girl looks like this photo. This lightens my heart. You see the resemblance, don't you?"

Looking disinterested, Ichisuke took the book in his hand and gazed at a small photograph of a girl. Then he read the text. I could not tell whether it was German or French literature. The girl in the photograph was very beautiful, and I could hardly see that she looked like me.

"You see the resemblance, right?"

Ichisuke responded to Mr. Yanagi, who pressed him to agree, with a view that I more or less shared: "A doctor of schizophrenia who likes foreign literature seems to have an odd ability of association. The only similarity between that female poet and our girl is their hair. If one's looking for such a vague resemblance, one can find it almost anywhere."

Ichisuke closed the book and placed it on the arm of my chair. Picking it up, I left the room. I had to go somewhere else to get away from the conversation between these two doctors.

I chanced to see the old servant right in front of the door of the adjacent room. With a sigh of nostalgia, he carried a tray with saucers, a ceramic teapot, and teacups. Guided by him, I became a guest in the adjacent room. When he turned on the light, I saw it was a tatami room with a small low desk in one corner. He put the tray down on the desk and seemed to want to tell me about his nostalgia. But I shook my head at him to say no and wiped my eyes that were becoming moist. The words he let out through his thick whiskers had been so full of pathos that I could not persuade myself to listen for the second time. He held my face in the palms of his hands and left in silence. After I wiped away my tears, I started to look for a page in the book, while having my dinner of salt *senbei* and *dorayaki*.¹⁹ Could this be a history of the literature of a certain country or was it an anthology of poets from there? Here and there were photographs of men, and occasionally of women. The rest of the pages were buried under writing that I did not understand.

The conversation between Mr. Yanagi and Ichisuke had already resumed in the next room. Just as the old servant had anticipated, it was a debate between two doctors about one patient. Referring to their diaries, they compared the dates when they had become acquainted with the patient and discussed the friendliness she had displayed toward them through her demeanor while remaining completely silent. Their discussion seemed endless.

While the two fell silent for an especially long time, I was able to finally locate the page I sought in this rather thick book. The foreign female poet was not as attractive as I had first thought when I gazed at her from Ichisuke's side. I looked at her photo a number of times as I tilted the page sideways and lengthwise. This poet was, after all, a beautiful person with a calm face. And no matter how long I looked at her, I could not agree with Yanagi Kōroku—I was a young woman far distant from this beautiful person.

Because it was so still around me, I gave up on the *senbei* and started eating *dorayaki*, while remaining transfixed by the photograph. In the end, I lost the distinction between the photograph and myself. Psychologically, my heart went inside the photograph, and the heart of the photograph came inside me. While I was in this mental state, someone in the next room broke the silence. I could not tell who had spoken.

"Oh, I'm beginning to feel a bit troubled. I wonder if such a state of mind surfaces after exhausting all possible debate. I think that I can give up on the girl at the hospital."

In response, the other one said he would be the one to give up. Then the first one proclaimed again that he would do so. Without a rival, they seemed to have lost interest in love. Now I, too, felt drowsy from dinner and hot tea, so I rested my face on the photograph. The two friends in the adjacent room seemed to be quietly talking about something.

"I'll now take leave of this house. The fragrance of Chinese herbal medicine makes human psychology unhealthy. I was drawn to your patient precisely because I have been living in my father's old hospital."

"But the old man will disagree. He thinks he has nowhere else to live but here."

"That is also due to the fragrance of Chinese medicine. The old man will instantly be cured of his nostalgic schizophrenia the moment he leaves here. After all, just as I gave up on your patient I grew sick of this building. I will go to some distant place."

This was the last I heard before I dozed off.

I awoke by the sound I made on the plate. It was tranquil in the next room, and in the entire house, only the antique fragrance filling my surroundings. As I thought of going into the next room, Yanagi Kōroku appeared from the dividing doors. He had probably heard the sound of the plate I had moved around the desk. "Oh, the girl was still waiting," he remarked.

He came over to the desk and, while eating a *senbei*, gazed at the photo and then looked at me.

"Ichisuke left a few minutes ago, so I will walk you home."

The old servant happened to be napping in a chair by the *genkan*. My muffler and the bag of fertilizer were placed at the foot of the chair. With the wool wrapped around my neck and the bag of fertilizer in my hand, I left Mr. Yanagi's living room, which seemed like that of an abandoned house.

While walking through the grove of Japanese oak trees, past the chicken coops and along the path between radish patches, Mr. Yanagi told me about the poet in the book. She had lived her life in a garret and had always written poems about wind, smoke, and air.

"I want to buy something for the girl who resembles my favorite poet. Say, what do you most wish to have?"

And so I had him buy me a scarf.

I never saw Yanagi Kōroku again. This was because he moved far away with his old servant. I heard that he took great pains to move the old man from the building behind the oak grove. I hung the scarf he bought me on the nail of the maid's room. I thought of the poet he liked and fancied living in a garret and writing poems about wind and smoke. But what I wrote in my notebook was a love poem laden with the pathos stirred by the departure of the man who had given me a scarf setting off on a long journey. Collecting two or three Japanese-language books about foreign poets, I tried to learn about Mr. Yanagi's favorite. But none of the books I read seemed to include the right person. She was probably not so famous.

Notes

Originally published in 1931. This translation was taken from *Dainana kankai hōkō* (Tokyo: Kawade Bunkō, 2009) and *Osaki Midori zenshū* (Collected Works of Osaki Midori), vol. 1 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1998). Courtesy of Matsumoto Toshiyuki.

1. William J. Tyler, *Modanizumu: Modernist Fiction from Japan, 1913-1938* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 83.
2. Livia Monnet, "Montage, Cinematic Subjectivity, and Feminism in Ozaki Midori's *Drifting in the World of the Seventh Sense*," *Japan Forum* 11.1 (1999): 60.
3. For analysis of Osaki's translation, see Hitomi Yoshio, *Envisioning Women Writers: Female Authorship and the Cultures of Publishing and Translation in Early 20th Century Japan* (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 2012), 244-47.
4. Miriam Silverberg, *Ero Guro Nansensu: The Mass Culture of Japanese Modern Times* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 200-2. See also Kan Satoko, "Kaisatsu," in *Dainana kankai hōkō* (Tokyo: Kawade Bunkō, 2009), 183.
5. For information about the film,

see "Midori" (English, http://www.h3.dion.ne.jp/~tantan-s/english_ozaki.html [accessed on May 31, 2014].) Hamano later directed a film version of *Miss Cricket*.

6. *Genkan* is an entryway between the front door and main part of a Japanese residence.
7. The reader is expected to think of the word *Doppelgänger*.
8. One hundred *sen* equal one yen. *Sen* were taken out of circulation in 1953.
9. One *tsubo* is approximately 3.3 square meters or six-feet square.
10. *Furoshiki* is a cloth used to wrap packages for transporting them.
11. The Tanba area is located between Kyoto and Hyōgo prefectures. *Yōkan* is a thick jellied sweet.
12. *Ohitashi*, also written *oshitashi* in the text, is a simple, common side dish of leaves (usually spinach) dipped in boiling water and seasoned with soy sauce and bonito flakes.
13. *Okappa* was a form of bobbed hair common among girls prior to their teens and was named for *kappa*, or river sprites, which were depicted with short hair often covering the

indentations in their heads used for collecting water with caps or leaves.

14. Mount Wasteland (Arenoyama or Kōyasan) recalls Mount Kōya (highland), the name of the mountain in Wakayama Prefecture to the south of Osaka and, in particular, Kongōbuji, known as the headquarters of the Kōyasan Shingon sect of Japanese Buddhism.
15. *Soba* buckwheat noodles, or coupons for them, used to be presented by new residents to their nearest neighbors as a form of greeting.
16. In the Meiji and Taishō periods, female students used to wear *hakama* skirts over their kimono. The color, *ebichairo*, or maroon, is associated with both wild grapes and Japanese spiny lobster.
17. Nisuke playfully puns on the word for "tadpoles" (*otamajakushi*) and "musical notes," which also have long tails.
18. Machiko both calls Yangai Kōroku by his full name and refers to him as "Mr. Yanagi" (Yanagi-shi).
19. *Senbei* are crunchy, savory rice crackers, and *dorayaki* a dessert of sweet red-bean paste sandwiched between two small pancakes.