

were accommodated. Hatsune showed no preferences.

"Tonight I am really tired and sleepy," she said. "Any small room will do." Then she went off to do her toilet.

Curious Kinzacmon followed her into the kitchen and found her gargling her throat industriously. She patted her hair into place, perfumed the sleeves of her night robe with two different burning scents, and then soaked the hem in the fumes of an incense she picked out of a box bearing the sign Muro-no-Yashima. Critically she examined her own profile in a bronze mirror.

As she approached the small room in which she was to sleep that night, Hatsune asked the elderly chambermaids to draw apart the sliding doors that shut off the adjoining room. Yonosuke was already in bed in that room. Then she dismissed the maids and called for her little girl attendant. A lighted paper lantern stood at the head of her bed.

"Spider!" she cried, as if in alarm. "What a strange spider!"

That awakened Yonosuke in the adjoining room.

"Oh, bother!" he muttered. He was about to get up to help her chase the spider out of her room when Hatsune hurried over, seized him and said: "*I* am the spider!"

Baffled by her trickery, Yonosuke tried brazenly to embrace her, but she pushed him off. "Don't be rude," she said, laughing. "And don't misunderstand me."

Early the next morning, as she walked past the foot of his bed, Yonosuke thought she deliberately kicked his blanket.

From The Life of An Amorous Man
by Ihara Saikaku
trans. by Kengi Hamada
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PRIDE FINDS A WAY

DRAWN like a moth to a flame, Yonosuke was back again in Edo, the shogunal capital, to look over the upper bracket of the Yoshiwara gay quarters. If he had not yet heard, he was soon to learn and bitterly that the courtesans of Edo differed markedly from their refined contemporaries of Kyoto or those of uninhibited Osaka. They possessed an ingrained quality typical of the city that could not be so easily trifled with. Verily the pride of the Edo courtesans was an amazing trait. Yet it was kept well under control, as exemplified by the rising star Yoshida, known for her skill in the art of *kuzetsu*, or what was popularly called "lovers' quarrels" in gay circles.

Not that her behavior was any the less circumspect than that of the gentle Kindayu of Osaka. She wrote just as beautiful a hand as the artistic Nokaze of Kyoto. But she also had a talent for composing verses, and in this she had no peer. What gave distinction to her talent was a quality of challenge, subtle and facile.

Once a poet called Hinyu paid tribute to her charms by composing only the first half of a *waka* verse:

Cool is the evening as
Along the festive board
Lovely Yoshida reigns . . .

and promptly Yoshida responded by adding the daring second half:

Then lo, the wandering firefly
Leaps into her warm bedding.

好色一代男

It showed she had her wits about her. And when the dormant pride of such a woman is assailed, then alas for the assailant!

Inevitably it remained for Yonosuke to explode that smouldering inner fire. Her reputation as a daring wit represented, to him, a very pleasant challenge, and he finally secured an appointment. He was no longer young—well along in his prime, as a matter of fact—but one appointment led to another, and this was a tribute to her. He became so persistent and so generous with his money that Yoshida could hardly frown upon his visits. She even had to refuse appointments requested by other men. Believing Yonosuke's attentions were sincere, she soon became seriously attached to him. Thereafter she thought of him as a lover, not a mere patron.

But intimacies rarely call for the exercise of one's wits and, as usual, the moment he had secured what he wanted, Yonosuke's interest in her palled. Ever seeking new faces, he found the charms of another Yoshiwara courtesan much more appealing. This meant that he had to sever his relations with the unsuspecting Yoshida.

Out of consideration for her feelings, he hesitated to declare his change of heart openly. He gave her hints instead: fairly obvious and brusque indications that his mind was already roving elsewhere. But she failed to take the hints, seemingly with sublime innocence. She showed no distress, no resentment.

So then one evening Yonosuke took Shohei of the Kozukaya along with him to the house of Ichizaemon. "Today," Yonosuke told Shohei, "it must be final. I am going to be very rude to Yoshida, so rude that she will never want to see me again. I can then visit the other courtesan freely. So you must bear witness and help me along. Let's hurry."

There was indeed company among intimates, and the impertinent behavior of the two men at last seemed to

convince Yoshida that she was going to be jilted. Yet she betrayed no anger, made no recriminative remark. She drank no more, no less than she had always done. She was imperturbably cool.

That confounded the two men. They gulped down their saké, cup after cup. In their nervous excitement they began to feign drunkenness, the better to infuriate her. Shohei overdid it, knocking down the wine flask and spilling its contents. He tried to stop the flow of the sake on the mat with his paper handkerchief, but to no avail. There was altogether too much of it. Just as it was about to soil the courtesan's immaculate robe, one of her girl attendants mopped it away with her own brown-and-black robe, soaking it up clean. The robe had to be discarded.

And then, just as the flowers in the garden were being lighted up by lanterns, Yoshida excused herself in order to go to the kitchen. Halfway down the exposed corridor, as she stepped firmly on an apparently loose floor board, there was a curious explosion of sound about her, loud enough for the two men watching her in the room to hear. Without any show of embarrassment, however, she proceeded on her way.

"What an interesting sound!" Shohei exclaimed. Yonosuke nodded, laughing. "That gives us a splendid chance to make her really angry with you. When she comes back here we shall hold our noses, and if she does not take the hint . . . well?"

The courtesan took a very long time.

"She must be embarrassed," Shohei surmised.

Before the two men got through laughing, however, they saw her coming back up the corridor. She had changed her robe and she carried a sprig of cherry blossoms. She paused, sidestepped the spot where the sound had occurred, and frowned at it. Then she re-entered the room.

Her singular coolness awed the two men. Shohci hesitated to hold his nose. Yonosuke stood up and went out for an elaborate inspection of the corridor. He stepped vigorously on the floor boards, but no explosion resembling the previous sound could be heard. Just a small squeak. He, too, re-entered the room, silent, with a significant nod at Shohei.

It was the courtesan's voice that now exploded, with cold fury. "For some time now," Yoshida said, glaring at Yonosuke, "you have been acting very rudely. I have known your intentions right along. It was understood that we would keep up our relationship until one of us got tired of the other. Well, let me tell you now that I am fed up with you. Absolutely. I never want to see you again, ever!"

Without giving Yonosuke a chance to reply, she marched out of the room and down the corridor toward the front of the establishment. There, just as cool as ever, she began to play with a little dog. Totally taken aback by this unexpected reversal of the jilting process, the two men left forlornly by a side door.

Worse, the true account of this incident soon spread through the Yoshiwara district, and there was general condemnation of Yonosuke's behavior. The upshot was that the other courtesan for whose charms Yonosuke had tried to desert Yoshida refused to see him.

Later Yoshida called together the mistress of the establishment, the head man Shigeichi, the matron Oman, and all the courtesans to explain her action without equivocation. She said: "I purposely had the floor board loosened just a little at one spot so as to produce a sound when one stepped on it. If the two men were to assume—as I expected they would—that the explosion was of human origin, I would have confessed that such was my contempt for them. But when, upon returning to the room, I sidestepped the spot on the corridor floor, they

were completely fooled. It was very, very funny. So I had the last word. Of course the sound did not come from the floor board."

DEFIANT HEART

IN THOSE days there was one courtesan in Kyoto whom all men admired. Her professional name, Takahashi, was derived from that of an ancient practitioner illustrious in her own time.

"She has a fine figure, a charming face, and bright sparkling eyes," said one of her admirers. "She has something else besides."

Whatever that "something else" might have been, it was the way she comported herself that drew men to her. Graceful and mild-mannered, with hair done up in alluring style, she became the model of all aspiring Kyoto courtesans. But there was fire too behind that gentle spirit, intractable and firm.

One morning, as the first snow of the year turned the garden trees into a silvery fairyland, Takahashi's fancy turned importunately to thoughts of tea. She decided the day was much too beautiful to be spent in idleness. The tea ceremony with its refined trimmings should be just the thing to match the white loveliness outside. So thinking, she had the upstairs rooms of the Hachimonjiya prepared for a party. Her only invited male guest would be Yonosuke, lately returned unsatisfied from Edo. Three young courtesans from the Kambayashi completed the group of five. This was to be holiday relaxation, not business.

Yonosuke, curious and interested, saw suspended on the wall a number of blank picture mountings. "There

The pages of the Kambayashi came out with a huge package of copper coins, scooped up handfuls, and threw them into the crowd. The coins came down like scattered showers. But no one stooped to pick them up. All interest continued to be centered on the jesters' jokes. The pages threw bigger handfuls.

"Stop it, you fools!" someone in the crowd demanded.

Chilled by this rebuke, the pages withdrew into the Kambayashi.

Later, as Yonosuke watched with an amused smile from the balcony of the Hachimonjiya, hordes of rubbish pickers came creeping up among the laughing crowd, picked up the coins, and returned like runaway thieves to their miserable hovels.

DISTANT ENCHANTMENT

DEEP autumn was the season of the year when the courtesans of Edo paraded through the Yoshiwara district in the most gorgeous robes. Above all, it would be a treat to see the peerless Takao and her train of attendants in this setting.

So deciding, Yonosuke set out from Kyoto, some 120 *ri* away, with his retinue of five jester-henchmen. Fittingly for such a journey, he was attired in a traveling outfit of shimmering maple design. His huge palanquin, borne by eight husky men, moved tirelessly over the mountainous route, night and day, ever eastward toward Edo.

It was a picturesque sight, this spectacle of the most celebrated amorist of the day riding in style and hurrying up the hazardous trails to see a pretty wench in a distant city-so dandyish indeed that one might have thought

the god of love himself was nestled inside the swaying palanquin.

Soon the vehicle reached the village of Utsu in the hilly district of Suruga Province. Yonosuke was thinking of negotiating for a courier who might take a message back to Shimabara when he descried his friend Seiroku, master of the Kameya on Kyoto's Sanjo-dori, heading homeward from Edo astride a pack horse. No sooner had the man dismounted than there was a swift exchange of greetings and information.

"Well, well, how is your Chinese goods shop doing?"

"How have you fared in your makeshift meeting with Komurasaki in Edo?"

"If you have a toast for the pretty women of Kyoto or Osaka, I shall be glad to convey it back for you."

"Yes, one moment," said Yonosuke and forthwith scribbled a note on a paper handkerchief, indicating that though his heart was now set on Edo, he still felt the lure of Kyoto.

"I have just met Seiroku in this country lane," he wrote. "He has seen how gaunt and weary I have become from continuous traveling. Nevertheless I long for you in the deepest way. If our lives, meantime, do not vanish like the dew, we must see each other again. This hurried note is being written as proof of my assurances."

Yonosuke handed the note to Seiroku. "Give this to Kindayu, please."

His five jester-henchmen also wrote sad messages to their loved ones back in Kyoto. One of them called out: "Oh yes, I almost forgot. Remind the matron Oman at the Kambayashi, if you please, not to forget to wash her neck." And so they parted at last with shouts of resounding laughter.

As the palanquin worked its way precariously down the moss-covered, ivy-bordered trail, the austere, primitive beauty of the reed-thatched huts on the slope seemed to

Yonosuke singularly restful. Even the mountain wenches peddling home-made dumplings looked charming to him. He waved to them as his palanquin trotted past. At length he arrived at a place called Tegoshi where a wineshop and the home of a man he once knew stood amid a cluster of quaint decorative pines.

Crossing the River Abe, he heard someone beating time, palm on palm, and singing, "... He doesn't come, making me wait—the bitter feeling."

"Well, well, the gay quarters, even here," Yonosuke cried to his companions, slipping out of the palanquin. "This we must see."

They saw, and Yonosuke said acidly: "It was like a bouquet-before we saw it."

At a place called Mishima, Yonosuke inspected the ruins of what was once a brothel, then crossed the Hakone barrier, where even women were inspected closely. Finally he arrived safely at Heikichi's dyeshop, which boasted some connection with the "amorous flower of Musashi plain," the courtesan Komurasaki.

"What is the latest from the Yoshiwara?" Yonosuke asked.

Heikichi showed him a newly published album of beauties. Yonosuke read: "The maples are for the courtesans of the Miuraya," and his five companions, gazing at the alluring forms, cried: "Let's go before a pitiless storm scatters the critson leaves."

And so they went, skirting Mt. Kinryu and down along the banks of the River Asakusa in puffing double-quick time. Passing the Komagata Hall, the palanquin swept past Asaji-ga-hara and Kozuka-hara and finally entered the flat land of the Yoshiwara.

In a teashop at the Great Gate that led into the gay district, Yonosuke and his companions changed from traveling robes to fresh town outfits. Then they went straight to Seijuro's establishment.

"Guests from Kyoto!" the porter cried, and the master himself came out to greet them.

Seijuro said unctuously: "The name Yonosuke-sama I have often heard, and knowing that sooner or later I should be playing host to you, I have awaited your coming with these preparations," and forthwith opened sliding doors that led into an eight-mat room bearing the sign, "Reserved for Yonosuke-sama of Kyoto."

Yonosuke was even more agreeably surprised when he saw that the wine cups, wine jugs, and lacquered soup bowls all bore the scattered carnation design patterned after his own family crest. "I certainly appreciate your thoughtfulness," said Yonosuke. "Now, what about the courtesan?"

Seijuro rubbed his hands apologetically. "I . . . I regret to say that Takao is booked full for the rest of this year. She has already promised the ninth and tenth months to patrons at the house of Ichizaemon and the eleventh month to others at the Ryuemon teahouse. In the twelfth month she is engaged to entertain still other groups here in my establishment. She has even promised New Year's Day to someone else. I am grieved to say that she cannot spare a single day until the second day of the new year."

Yonosuke and his jester-companions stared aghast at him. "Who are those men?" Yonosuke demanded.

"Oh, they are men of no particular account, I assure you. They are all strangers whose occupations and social position are unknown to me," Seijuro said with a sniff, indicating that for all he knew they might be newly rich riffraff. "Why don't you rest here at leisure until the new year opens?"

"That's wasting time," Yonosuke said, irritation and disappointment showing on his pale handsome face. "I have brought a thousand ryō with me to spend on Takao, and I cannot wait."

In the end Seijuro, together with Heikichi, one of Yonosuke's jester-henchmen, went to see Takao herself to beg for a special appointment. They managed by sheer persuasion and persistence to have her spare just one night, the second of the tenth month. But it would have to be a secret backdoor rendezvous, for she had already committed herself to her promised patrons that she would entertain no other man during the period of their contracts.

At sundown on the appointed day Yonosuke went out into the street with Heikichi to steal a look at Takao returning from a day's work at Ichizaemon's. It had to be a stolen look because he must avoid recognition for fear that a meeting in a public lane witnessed by others might lead to suspicion and therefore to the anger of Takao's promised patrons,

And there she came: a brilliant figure in soft fawn-colored silks, with crests of flaming maple on her robe. Her obi was worn high above her hips, and she walked with firm steps, proud and straight. Silent like a statue on parade, she acknowledged the greetings of her friends and intimates with only a nod or two.

Trailing her were two girl attendants robed in the same flashing colors. Then came her matron, followed by her palanquin bearers. All wore her crest on their robes, so that as the courtesan and her entourage swung down the lane it looked as though little autumn hills crimson with maples were moving in unison.

That night, at Seijuro's, Yonosuke waited impatiently for her coming. He waited until the temple bells tolled the hour of midnight, and still there was no sign of Takao. Bitter musings over her possible default on her promise rankled in Yonosuke's breast.

Then all stirrings ceased on the streets outside. Lights went off. Silence, deep and thick as doom, brooded over the sleeping world. . . .



M. K. W. 1/1/15

"I am going to bed," Yonosuke said angrily.

"It does not seem as though she is coming after all," Seijuro said, nodding sympathetically.

"Any courtesan who does not keep her word is not worth even a single *mon*. And to think I've brought a thousand *ryo* for her! Even prostitutes are mindful of their honor. I have come 120 *ri* to see Takao and waited for her a whole month while she . . . she cannot even walk a few blocks nor spare me a minute. Likely as not she is drunk and sprawled shamelessly on the floor with her clothes half off. Who said Takao was a peerless woman? I am going right back to Kyoto."

Suddenly there was light, just a pinpoint of fire on the street at first, as a ghostly palanquin approached. Quietly the palanquin swung off the street and moved up to the kitchen doorway at Seijuro's. A woman, faultlessly robed even at that late hour, stole into the kitchen. Takao had kept her word.

CONFESSION IN A DIARY

YONOSUKE decided to part from his one-night companion early that murky morning to catch the scheduled boat back to Osaka. He had come to this seaport town called Tokonai, in Dewa province, mainly on business: to order a huge supply of rice for his wholesale shop. The woman was glad to be rid of him quickly, and the matron fidgeted nervously in the hallway. Yonosuke was equally impatient, but for another reason. The boat had failed to arrive on time.

While he was thus nursing an irascible mood a thick letter was delivered to him by courier. Breaking the seal and unrolling the scroll, he found it was from the

courtesan Washu of Osaka. This was in response to his own letters, and she had composed it in the form of a diary beginning with the first day of the third month. She wrote :

"*1st day:* I had guests at the Takashimaya teahouse from early in the morning yesterday: the manager of Uemon's salt house in Naka-no-Shima and his party. This was my first meeting with them. At night, with writing brush in hand, I started to reply to your letters, but I was so exhausted from my daytime work that I lay down to rest on the mat, with my arm for a pillow. I must have fallen asleep. I had a vivid dream about you, a very pleasant dream. I was still dreaming when someone rattling my sliding door jolted me into wakefulness.

" 'Get up !' a harsh voice said.

"I was so angry at this shattering of my dream that for some time I refused to answer the summons. The yelling continued, and even Yachiyo, the sleepyhead in the bed next to mine, awoke and called me. I told her to get up and take her morning bath first.

"The man outside my door heard our voices.

" 'I cannot wait that long!' he shouted angrily and left.

'Soon I heard the palanquin bearer's black dog barking at him and chasing him into a side lane. Good riddance, I thought.

"And that set me to thinking further. How different indeed is this attitude from one's feeling for a man one likes ! Having felt the difference, I realized how desperate is my love for you. There seems to be no limit-dreadful extremes, I fear-to what the human heart can feel.

"At this point a messenger arrived from the teahouse with an appointment for me, and I left as soon as I could.

"A poor start, I must say, on the first day of the month, making a fuss over trifles.

"*2nd day:* I entertained for the first time a group of men from Yatsushiro, in Higo Province, at the Kawaguchiya.

ranged behind her, the first sitting down at the left, the second at the right. All wore colored robes with no designs signifying their special function for the evening's rites. Finally the main *hikifune* and girl *knmuro* attendants sat down beside Yoshizaki, like guardians of a temple goddess.

Thereupon the five principal guests, still more or less drunk, moved in, followed by the mistress of the house. Then, for the first time, a voice was raised: the voice of the mistress of the house greeting the courtesan. The formal introductions followed.

Yonosuke and his friend from Osaka were well acquainted with the courtesan, but still it was necessary upon an occasion such as this for all those present to exclaim in unison: "This is indeed a pleasant meeting."

Next the sacramental *shimadai* stand-trays, big golden plates with choice sea foods symbolizing felicitations, slender pottery jugs containing amber-colored sake, and lacquered wine cups were brought in by waitresses to initiate the rites. The wine cups were passed from guests to courtesan, from courtesan to guests, and toasts ritualistically sipped.

The courtesan's gifts to the house were next formally presented. This was followed by lively samisen music by her attendants and the showering of silver coins in the garden below. There was a merry scrambling of men and women servants, matrons, even prostitutes, for the coins. The commotion, a celebration shared by the lower strata, shook the house, and there was great rejoicing. Back in the upstairs reception room the formalities of the staid festive table were discarded, and the atmosphere turned to one of unrestrained conviviality.

Thus, what had begun earlier in the day as a humble feast of abstinence-without meat-in the temple courtyard ended up in a magnificent-with meat-display of unholy carousal. "As the sun rises and sets, so does human life. None may escape this law."

When his Osaka guest reminded him of the daytime session, Yonosuke said laughingly: "But there is no law against one's making the best of it before one's 'setting' time comes. There will be no tomorrows for us!"

FRIGHTFUL BET

A **MEDIOCRE** man, to all appearances a sedentary shopkeeper, dismounted from his pack horse at the edge of Sanjo Bridge in Kyoto and told his servant holding the reins: "See to it that my money bag is tied securely to the saddle. I shall be right back."

There was haste in his voice, and his legs carried him uncertainly to the front door of Yonosuke's mansion. Yonosuke saw that the caller was Juzo, master of a tailoring shop whom he had frequently helped along in securing business favors from the Shimabara courtesans.

Juzo said: "I have all of a sudden decided to go to Edo. It will be just a short trip, and I came to say good-bye."

"Well, that's fine. Take good care of yourself on the way," said Yonosuke and presented him with the usual parting gift of money.

But as Juzo started to leave, Yonosuke called him back. "What are you going to Edo for this time?"

"Well, I . . . have made a bet. While exchanging blandishments with a certain man, I happened to make a careless remark. Come to think of it, he maneuvered the talk in such a teasing way as to goad me on to make that slip. Anyhow, I boasted lightheartedly that if I were to go to Edo and ask the courtesan Komurasaki for an evening's appointment, she would never turn me down.

'She would,' he retorted seriously. 'You're a nobody. I'll make a bet with you.' Well, I could hardly go back on my word and be damned as a coward, so I found myself compelled to say: 'You're on.' He said he would have his friend Uhei the 'Rat' of Edo be his witness. So you see, I am now obliged to go."

"What whimsical men you are!" Yonosuke said. "It is not so simple as that. He might win. Can't you denounce the bet?"

"I am afraid he would kill me if I dared."

"Why let him? Hit him back."

"Besides, my honor is involved, don't you see?"

"What did you bet?"

The tailor replied in a roundabout way: "A bad, scheming man, that. He insisted on naming the bet. If he lost, he said, he would give me his town house on Kiya-machi. I felt the stake was too high, for I had nothing comparable to offer-not for such a bet anyway. But he pinned me down to my promise. If I lost, he said . . . he said . . ." Juzo's voice trembled and ceased, and his face turned pale.

"Tell me the truth. Don't hide anything."

"I . . . won't. The truth is . . . if I lose, I must surrender to him something of myself. . . something which would not, perhaps, take my life but which is . . . at least **vital** to me. Allow me the dignity of not mentioning what it is. You probably have already guessed it. I suspect he demanded it with some vicious intention. Maybe to cripple me. I don't remember that I have, at any time, insulted him so seriously as to deserve such underhanded revenge. Oh, he is a devil!"

"What fools they are!" Yonosuke thought. "These men who stake their possessions and even their honor so recklessly on trifles. And how cruel!"

"Who is the man that imposed this frightful bet on you?"

"I promised not to reveal his name."

"This is a serious matter, perhaps the most serious in your lifetime. But since you have been caught in his trap, you might as well face it with all of your wits and resources. Komurasaki is the hardest of all Edo courtesans to get. Keep your rosary constantly in your hand. Don't hesitate about using all your money. You have no one to leave it to anyhow."

That seemed to fill Juzo the tailor with overwhelming doubts about his ability to stave off defeat and misfortune. He said goodbye again, but the tears came to his eyes and he stood there forlornly, unable to move.

"Wait!" said Yonosuke. "I'll go with you. I'll help you win the bet."

And so, to Juzo's immense relief and delight, Yonosuke ordered his own pack horse, and the two set out together for Edo.

Upon arrival in Edo, at Yonosuke's branch shop in Yonchome, Nihombashi, Yonosuke gave Juzo the necessary instructions and urged him to go immediately to the Yoshiwara gay quarters and negotiate with Komurasaki for an appointment. They got in touch with Uhei, and the "Rat" went along as witness.

But Yonosuke, knowing that the famed courtesans of Edo were available only to men of great wealth and great names coupled with generous, agreeable, continued patronage, felt grave misgivings for Juzo. The tailor was just another man from another city, unknown and of no particular accomplishment or reputation. Yes . . . a nobody. Besides, Komurasaki might be booked full for months ahead. So he decided to appeal to Ryuemon, the master of the establishment where Komurasaki reigned.

Showing his own credentials as a privileged patron of the Shimabara courtesans of Kyoto, Yonosuke built up Juzo as a man of immense wealth and a fellow patron. The visitor, he said, could not tarry long in Edo, so

would he, Ryuemon-sama, use his kind influence in securing a favorable answer from Komurasaki?

Juzo meanwhile returned crestfallen. Komurasaki had looked him over curiously but put him off indefinitely. "I am booked full now," she said, "and I cannot promise you anything. Come and see me again in a month or so."

But somehow Yonosuke's intercession seemed to have worked marvelously. Within four or five days a messenger arrived from Ryuemon. Komurasaki had consented after all to give Juzo an appointment. Overwhelmed with joy but still incredulous, Juzo exclaimed: "This is almost unbelievable!"

"Go and see Ryuemon and have them decide on a day," Yonosuke told him. Uhei the Rat suspected trickery and now *insisted* on going along. The appointment was duly confirmed and made.

As Juzo was about to take leave of Ryuemon, he presented the master with a gift.

Uhei was greatly offended. "You have no right to resort to bribery. If you want to reward the master, it should be done after everything is over. The appointment is still to be consummated. A promise can be broken. It is not fair at this stage."

Juzo laughed. "I know. But that package does not contain any money. Will you open it, please, Ryuemon-sama, to satisfy this man?"

The package was opened. It contained a rivet for making bamboo fans, a bamboo staple for holding together the skeleton of a fan, a needle, silk thread, glucose paste, and an ear scratcher to boot. In terms of money, they were worth no more than three skimpy *mon*.

"I just thought, Ryuemon-sama," said Juzo, "that you might be glad to make use of these articles as a pastime. Most people would. You can make a fan now."

Uhei, who least suspected that the setup was a joke on

him, frowned with disgust, as if to say: "Oh, you cheap-skate!"

On the appointed evening Juzo was very agreeably received by Komurasaki. A lavish table was spread before him, with many lesser courtesans and attendants present. Rice wine flowed freely. Juzo drank freely. And as if to drown out eagerly some fear that had not yet altogether left him, he offered with unsteady hands to pour Komurasaki a drink.

The courtesan accepted graciously, and he poured clumsily. The wine spilled over, soiling her robe from sleeve to waist. Juzo's face reddened and contorted almost comically with mingled chagrin and pain. He apologized hastily, but Komurasaki, taking no offense, stood up smilingly and said: "I shall wash up and change" and left for the bathroom.

Soon she returned to the *zashiki* parlor in a fresh outfit of precisely the same material and design: white undergarment, scarlet midgarment, and yellow robe. This custom of keeping on hand reserve replicas of outfits for just such an emergency was a luxury which only the courtesans of Edo boasted.

It was likewise the custom of courtesans here never to offer beds *except* to a lover. But as bedtime came, Komurasaki ordered a bed for Juzo and invited him into her boudoir.

The next morning Komurasaki took up her writing brush, spread out her short inner sash, and wrote on it:

"I spent the night with Juzo-sama.

This is the naked truth."

She signed it "Komurasaki" and affixed her seal. Then she offered the certified document to Juzo.

Uhei, upon seeing the incontestable proof, was greatly astonished. Juzo had won his bet. "There never, never has been a case like this," the Rat complained.

Even Yonosuke was mystified. He sought out Komurasaki. "Just to satisfy my own curiosity, why did you do it?" he asked.

And Komurasaki replied: "From Juzo-sama's uneasy attitude throughout the evening I sensed he was under some heartbraking pressure or fear. Sometimes one comes across a case like that. I suspected that someone seeking sly revenge, perhaps for some trifling offense that Juzo-sama had already forgotten, had sent him to me on a dare and a bet, believing him to be an easy victim, with the stakes high or precious. Precious, no doubt, for money is hardly an inducement to such people for this sort of mischief. So suspecting, I felt pity for Juzo-sama and hatred for the other man-whomever he happened to be-for taking advantage of him. I hated the evil character behind the scenes so much that I willingly went out of my way to help Juzo-sama. I want to see evil punished thoroughly. Was I right in my guess?"

"You were," said Yonosuke, "and your heart is in the right place."

HOW WOMEN SHOULD AND SHOULD NOT BEHAVE

IT WAS a cold winter's night. Snow fell so heavily that the pine trees in the garden of Nizaemon's Kyoya teahouse in the Shimmachi gay district of Osaka-the garden in which he had taken great pride-cracked under its weight. All the guests at the party that night at the Kyoya drank heartily to endure the bitter cold and went to bed early, soon snoring heartily too.

In one room the courtesan Kindayu of the Atarashiya snored so loudly that the man sleeping near her, Mansaku

of the mallet shop, was awakened from his sleep. Not knowing, of course, that he was laughing at her, Kindayu was already dreaming sweet dreams.

Meanwhile, in another room, the courtesan Mifune frowned and swore aloud in her sleep: "Prepare yourself for battle, Shichiza-sama. I won't let you go this time!" The next instant she bit the shoulder of Yonosuke, who was asleep beside her. The surprised Yonosuke sat bolt upright on his bed.

"You're chewing up the wrong man," he shouted. "I am Yonosuke. Remember?"

Mifune came out of her dream and opened her eyes wide. "Oh, I beg your pardon," she said. "I was dreaming that I met Shichizaemon-sama of the Maruya, with whom frankly I have been having an affair that gossip has made the most of. Abruptly he told me in the dream: 'Out of consideration for the public at large and the patrons of my establishment in particular, our love affair-you and me-must come to an end as of today.' I felt so angry-in the dream, of course-that I talked back to him and threatened to hurt him. That is why I behaved the way I did in my sleep. I am really ashamed of what I did to you."

She seemed so downhearted that Yonosuke had to use all his wits to soothe her. When she felt better, she told him without equivocation the story of her hard luck-an amazing story revealing a woman so good and true that her kind, he thought, would never be duplicated on this earth.

As Yonosuke prepared to take his leave, Mifune shared drinks with him, tending to his last needs and speaking gently to her departing guest in a manner that made the mistress of the establishment and even the maidservants happy. Accompanying him to the vestibule, she slipped on her own footwear noiselessly. Then she spread out a parasol for Yonosuke in the snow outside and saw him

And surprised indeed was Yonosuke when he discovered their extraordinary versatility. Themselves planning, supervising, and erecting the Noh stage precisely according to pattern, the courtesans chanted, handled the percussion instruments, acted, and danced all the parts of three of Zeami's celebrated two-act plays, *Sada-ie*, *Matsukaze*, and *Miidera*.

"You did very well," he praised the courtesans after the performance. "Properly cadenced, beautiful and graceful. A happy talent indeed."

"Just for that, Yonosuke-sama, we shall honor you with a grand party. We'll show you that, though some of us have drifted away from Kyoto, for one reason and another, to this exotic southern port city, we have not forgotten the true art of entertaining. You shall see!"

And what he saw was a thing of sheer sumptuous delight. Great golden plates tilled with strange delicacies were placed before him, and thirty-seven courtesans robed in varying shades of reddening autumn leaves put on a show based on the ancient Chinese wine-and-drinking poem called "Chiu Ko-sun." They wore scarlet net aprons, their sleeves girded up with golden sashes, sprigs of flowers in hand. They danced in wild abandon:

Under the shade of pines ever green,
Shall flow the wines of Iwai
For ages eternal.

The food was luxurious. "I once paid 35 *ryo* for quail broiled over a charcoal fire, just to please a Kyoto courtesan," Yonosuke reminisced, very apropos. "But here . . . these foreign-looking delicacies cooked or baked in wonderful tasting condiments . . . everything is so . . . so amazing. And so delicious."

Some of the native Nagasaki courtesans said: "Speaking of Kyoto courtesans, we wish we could see how they look today. We are curious, and we may have a lot to learn."

"You shall," Yonosuke replied. "I knew you would, so I brought with me the very things which will satisfy you . . . at least from this great distance."

He ordered the 12 boxes he had brought with him as extra luggage from Kyoto be brought into the room. Opening them one by one, he produced 44 huge full-robed dolls: 17 likenesses of noted Kyoto courtesans, 8 of Edo, and 19 of Osaka. These he arranged on the Noh stage, attaching the names of the courtesans on whom each was painstakingly and accurately modeled. Each face, each posture, each colorful robe was different from the other. Collectively they gave the impression of the height of female grandeur and beauty. There was not a single hint or suggestion of vulgarity.

"Oh . . . oh! This is too beautiful for us alone to see!" was the general exclamation.

And so the huge dolls were placed on public view, and almost everyone in Nagasaki came to see and sigh over these wondrous things of beauty. They satisfied, even if vicariously, the secret yearning of every normal man.

NO RETURN

AT LAST the time of reckoning came for Yonosuke. For twenty-seven years, with his patrimony, he had ceaselessly devoted his mind and body to adventures among the gay quarters of the country, playing the part of the amorist for all it was worth. Now he was a gaunt figure, emaciated and fast deteriorating.

Yet he had no regrets. He had seen everything and done everything he wanted to do with the 25,000 gold *kan* bequeathed to him by his mother to spend as he pleased. Both of his parents were dead. He had no wife,

no heir, no legitimate children of his own, no family cares or obligations whatsoever. But how much longer, he wondered, could he continue wandering and losing himself in this mundane hell of the flesh, to be finally burned out by its all-consuming flames?

Ah, but he would soon, next year perhaps, enter into a state of second childhood. He was already hard of hearing. His legs were weak and wobbly, and he leaned heavily on a mulberry staff as he walked.

His once handsome face had gradually become withered and ugly. But he was not alone in this creeping decrepitude. All the women he had known intimately were now crowned with snow-white hair. Their once lovely faces were shriveled and wrinkled with age. Young girls whom he had gallantly helped into palanquins, parasol in hand on rainy nights, had turned into prosaic housewives-the sort that hold the affection of unexciting men.

Verily the times had changed irretrievably since his youth. That, perhaps was to be expected. "Even so, how could the world have changed so radically?" he mused.

He had never prayed consistently for salvation in the nest world, accepting resignedly the incontestable belief that, after death, he would willy-nilly be torn by the punishing demons of hell. Even if he were to embark on a change of heart now, it would not be easy, he knew, to be saved by Buddha's mercy. Yes . . . yes he would have to accept whatever punishment awaited him for his ignoble life upon this earth. He gave away most of his remaining property.

Then, in a final ineluctable Aight of fancy, he buried 6,000 *ryo* of gold coins deep in the woods of Higashiyama, with the following epitaph engraved on a small stone monument:

Here lies the glitter of 6,000 *ryo*,
Hidden under morning-glories
That bloom in the shade of the setting sun.

And he planted morning-glories over the "grave."

Quickly the story of this strange, whimsical burial symbolizing his own life spread through the city of Kyoto. But no one has ever been able to discover its location.

Later Yonosuke gathered together six of his cronies who had from time to time shared his unbridled life of pleasure. Then he had a ship built on a tiny delta island near Osaka. He named it *Yoshiiro-maru* and hoisted a white sail made from the silken inner garments that had once been those of Yoshino, the courtesan who had at one time been his lawful mate.

Curtains for the ship's cabins and decks were fashioned from the robes given to him as keepsakes by other courtesans with whom he had dallied and whom he had abandoned. Sitting rooms were papered with the written mementos of still other courtesans. And the great ropes for the ship were braided from the thick strands of hair that had been presented to him by yet other women, in years past, as pledges of undying love.

Tubs filled with fresh-water fish were placed in the ship's kitchen. Fresh supplies of burdock, yam, and eggs were buried in boxed soil. Into the hold went other foods, household drugs including rejuvenating stimulants and painkillers, bedside pictures, copies of *The Tale of Ise*, paper handkerchiefs, loincloths, and numerous other articles that gratified men's needs and desires, such as leather strips, tin plates, clove oil, and pepper. Even swaddling clothes-signifying second childhood-were taken on board.

"We may never return," said Yonosuke, "so let us drink to our departure."



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"Not coming back here?" His six bosom friends were amazed, baffled. "To what distant land, then, are we to accompany you on this ship?"

Yonosuke replied in an even tone: "All of you pleasure-seeking men have spent your lives in seeing and experiencing all there was to see and experience among dancing girls and wanton women. There is nothing else for you, or for me, to get excited about here. We shall leave with no regrets. From now on, we are going to cross the sea, in search of the isle of Nyogo, an isolated body of land inhabited solely by women. There I shall introduce you to a different type of female: the aggressive sort who will come to seize you and sweep you off your feet."

"Well, that's different!" his cronies responded gladly. "Even if we might turn to ashes there, we should feel content, for are we not destined for the amorous life forever?"

And so, with fanciful sighs, Yonosuke and his six companions lifted anchor and set sail, first for the Izu Peninsula. Then, on a clear day at the end of the tenth month in the year Tenwa 2 (1682), the ship with its human cargo of forever gay adventurers embarked on an ocean voyage, steadily toward the limitless horizon, from which there was to be no return.