

From The Great Mirror of Male Love
by Ihara Saikaku, Trans. by Paul Schalow
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= 5:5 =

Votive Picture of Kichiya Riding a Horse

A man selling wolf meat before winter gives his life for love.
Tamamura Kichiya, unsurpassed in the knowledge of love.
Lack of forelocks turns to society's advantage.

A certain craftsman began selling toothpicks carefully engraved with actor's crests, and soon they were the rage of the capital. There was one crest, unmatched by any other, that used the word "world" of "floating world." It belonged to Tamamura Kichiya,¹ an actor in the troupe of Ebisuya.² He was the cause of unfulfilled desires not only for the men of the capital in those days but also for their wives and daughters. Many of them ended up turning to smoke on the funeral biers at Funaoka and Mt. Toribe. When Kichiya appeared as Yang Kuei Fei with a sprig of blossoms decorating his hair, he surpassed even the beautiful Chinese women depicted in paintings, although that may be because no one has been to China to see the real thing. It would have been wonderful indeed if he could have remained a boy forever. Enshū, a connoisseur in such matters, said it best: "I only wish that handsome youths and trees in gardens never grew old."

There is no reason to bemoan change, however. Such is the way of the world.

One year, there was a riot among samurai guards at a theater in Naniwa over a certain actor's affections.⁴ As a result, kabuki came under legal restriction. All boy actors were required to shave off their forelocks in the manner of adult men. It was like seeing unopened blossoms being torn from the branch. Theater proprietors and the boys' managers alike were upset at the effect it might have on business, but looking back on it now the law was probably the best thing that ever happened to them. It used to be that no matter how splendid the boy, it was impossible for him to keep his fore-

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locks and take on patrons beyond the age of twenty. Now, since everyone wore the hairstyle of adult men, it was still possible at age 34 or 35 for youthful-looking actors to get under a man's robe. How strange are the ways of love!

These actors hid their years from others and reduced the number of beans they ate at the Setsubun Festival, rectifying the discrepancy later in private.⁵ The more observant theater-goers, however, realized to their great shock that actors whose stage debuts had come at the same time were now playing villains and old hags opposite them. If skill is what the audience is looking for, there should be no problem in having a 70-year-old perform as a youth in long-sleeved robes. So long as he can continue to find patrons willing to spend the night with him, he can then enter the New Year without pawning his belongings.

Tamamura Kichiya was on his way to rehearse the first play of the year. As he crossed the crumbling bridge at Shijō,⁶ he was spotted by a most unusual-looking man who could not have been more unmistakably from the north country if he had worn a sign around his neck announcing the fact. He wore a crude cotton robe and hemp cap and carried a heavy lumberman's sword with a rucksack on his back. He had come to the capital selling charred wolf meat for people to fortify themselves against the cold winter months ahead. The moment he saw this unbelievably lovely youth, he stood stock still in amazement. Kichiya noticed the man staring at him and, thinking to give the fellow a bit of innocent pleasure, tossed a toothpick he was holding into a sleeve of the man's robe as he passed. The man seemed to lose his senses; he abandoned the goods he was selling in front of Kinai's puppet theater⁷ and immediately returned to his homeland, Sado island. Night and day, he worked to save money. Interestingly, he seemed to believe that money was the only means for him to consummate his love for the boy.

"Faith can move mountains," they say. Well, the man located a mountain containing gold and began mining it, and he was soon an unexpectedly wealthy man. A little over five years later he returned to the capital and went immediately to the dry riverbed where he halted his pack horse and asked for Tamamura Kichiya.



He was told that, as actors often do, the boy had gone to Edo four years earlier.

Undaunted, the man immediately set out again on the road east without spending a single night in Kyoto. There were no gatekeepers at Osaka Pass to stay his lovelorn rush, and he proceeded on his way unhindered. In the past he used to linger with the made-up ladies at way stations like Goyu, Akasaka, and Kanagawa, but this time he paid them no heed and hurried on his way from Shinagawa to the heart of Edo. He went straight to Sakai-chō to enquire about Kichiya. He was told that, after displaying his beauty on the stages of Edo, the boy had shaved off his forelocks and become an adult at a fairly early age. When the man heard this, he was overcome with nostalgia for the boy.

He asked for a guide and was led to the studio of Bandō Mata-



kurō.⁸ Inside, actors were still making up. Even without powder on their faces, they looked uniformly lovely. The stars Yoshida Iori,⁹ Nogawa Kichijūrō,¹⁰ and Kagawa Ukon¹¹ were all boys famed for their beauty, but none could compare to the boy from the capital, Kichiya, for whom he yearned. Trying to recall the boy's image in his mind, he looked around at all the lovely youths. He was irritated that he could not distinguish him from the rest. Finally, a big man pointed the boy out to him.

"This is the way Tamamura looks now," he said.

Startled, the man took a closer look. He had seen the boy only once before, but sure enough, his figure, the beauty of the nape of his neck, was just as he remembered it. Even now he found the boy irresistible.

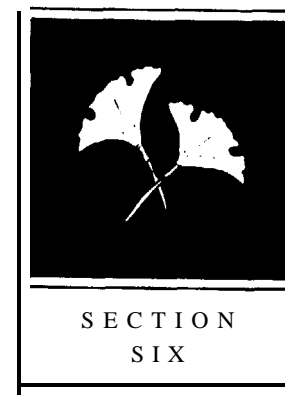
Later, in private, they talked about their first meeting in Kyoto.

Kichiya once again thought with nostalgia of the capital. "In those days, I would gladly have satisfied your love for me," he said, reflecting in words the sincerity in his heart.

The man was overjoyed, grateful that the boy had spoken from the heart rather than treating him like a customer. He then told Kichiya the entire story of his good fortune and presented him with enough money to live comfortably for the rest of his life. With that, the man returned to Sado, the land of his birth.

This whole affair stemmed from a single toothpick. All boy actors should learn from this to be friendly and let men hold their hands whenever they wish. After all, hands do not wear away with use.

No one knows how many men gave up their lives for the sake of Tamamura Kichiya's love. He appeared on many votive pictures" offered to temples and shrines throughout Edo. In one, he appeared riding a horse led by a horse driver, played by Bōzu Kohei.¹³ It is said that one man fell in love with Kichiya just by looking at the picture. People are still talking about it to this day.



== 6:1 ==

A Huge Winecup Overflowing with Love

Itō Kodayū, exactly like a girl.

The secret go-between of boy love.

Yesterday's robe becomes today's memento.

They say that Buddhist priests are "scraps of wood" purged of all feeling, but there is no occupation more pleasant in the world. They can hold parties in their temples whenever they please, their only duties to intone the sutras of their sects and don robes when meeting parishioners. Rather than waste the offerings of the faithful on things without meaning, they use the money to buy the love of young actors, entertainment well suited to the priest's lot.

Even when entertaining boys in their rooms, they never once forget the gravity of their vows and adhere religiously to their vegetarian diet of stewed dumplings and mushrooms, chilled chestnuts with silvervine pickled in miso, and clear soup of sweet seaweed and salted plums. With these delicacies they extend their drinking bouts through the long nights. (How they can drink!) Such sincere devotion to their vows is highly commendable. Just because they do not suffer Buddha's immediate divine punishment

= 6:2 =

Kozakura's Figure: Grafted Branches of a
Cherry Tree

Sennosuke's love revealed in a prayer petition.
The words that bind husband and wife.
A secret night of love at Sasanoya.

In India the lotus, in China the peony, and in Japan the cherry are considered the most beautiful of flowers, the source of both viewing pleasure and poetic inspiration. Cherry trees do not speak, however; neither can they walk with their limbs. When storms strike the blossoms at Yoshino or it rains at **Hatsuse**, the falling petals shock us into a realization of spring's passing and serve to impress us with the impermanence of our lives. In contrast, the blossom-like figure of a youth in full flower is something one can gaze at forever without tiring.

One such figure belonged to Kozakura Sennosuke,⁷ who stood out as the finest among a thousand lovely actors. Onstage he was so like a woman that women themselves were overwhelmed by his beauty. No one could gaze at his face and remain unaffected. He spoke his lines distinctly but hardly moved his lips, something rare in modern times. His words were full of warm emotion. His smile was irresistible. Theatergoers let smoke rise unnoticed from their sleeves where tobacco embers fell, just like the empress of long ago for whose sake fires were kindled,⁸ giving further proof of his ability to captivate an audience.

He was particularly strict about his personal conduct. He never stepped out at night unless to entertain a patron and was careful never to show his disheveled face to anyone in the morning, not even to lowly servants in the house where he lived. Unless one met him in person, it was hard to imagine his many attractive qualities. Kozakura's natural charm and courtesy extended to everyone, re-

gardless of rank, due no doubt to the benefits of praying regularly to Aizen **Myō-ō**,³ deified at the Great Temple in Naniwa and worshipped by all actors. They presented lighted lanterns bearing their actor's crests in hopes that the Buddha's gentle light might likewise illuminate their lives. Only full-fledged actors were allowed to do so. The paulownia-head crest belonged to Matsumoto **Kodayū**,⁴ the double-cap crest to Sodeoka **Ima-Masanosuke**,⁵ and the crest with overlapping oak leaves and three commas to Suzuki **Heishichi**.⁶ Each actor hung his hopes for success together with his lantern before the image of the Buddha.

A certain priest who specialized in purification rituals and the driving-out of evil spirits was tidying the temple's central sanctuary where the Buddha image was kept and discovered a sealed letter of petition placed there. Sadly, it had been chewed to shreds by rats. (What troublesome creatures they are!) The petitioner was none other than Kozakura Sennosuke. Piecing the letter together, he was able to read the contents.

"It is my prayer to be united with the man I love. I swear to deny myself certain pleasures and keep myself pure until my wish is granted."

After reading it, the priest quickly disposed of the torn pieces. A worshiper came to the sanctuary just then and, learning of the petition's contents, was deeply impressed with Sennosuke's sincerity. From that moment, the worshiper was overcome with fascination for the young man.

It happened to be the first day of the second month, when the New Year's play was to be replaced with a new one, so the man went immediately to the theater of Araki **Yojibei**⁷ to get a glimpse of the youth. Matsumoto **Bunzacmon**⁸ came out to announce the three-act play, and after reading the title from the theater bill he rattled off the names of those appearing in each role.

"Well spoken!" someone shouted in praise.

At that instant, the curtain parted to reveal the young *onnagata*, his face as lovely and fragrant as a cherry blossom.

"At last!"

"Master Sen!"

"Master Sennosuke!"



"There will never be another like you!"

"You mankiller!"

"You'll send me to my grave alive!"

Immediately, the cheers of his fans echoed to the farthest corners of the stage. The musical accompanist finally had to lift his half-closed fan to quiet the crowd. Sennosuke approached center stage walking on bird-like stilts. He wore a paper patchwork robe of varied colors in an eye-catching pattern.

("Only he could wear such an outfit. The other actors of female roles would look terrible in it." A group of theater sophisticates in the second tier of the west gallery had already begun discoursing about him.)

Even the sound of the bell hanging from his neck seemed in character. He faced forward and smiled slightly to quiet the crowd.



Then, summoning all the charm at his disposal, he began speaking his lines; the words flowed from his lovely lips.

("Listen to him!" "Be quiet!")

"I, who stand before you now, am a wandering priestess making temple membership solicitations. Having abandoned the world of love, I now bring men and women together to make them husband and wife. Since the gods enshrined at Ashigara, Hakone. Tama-tsushima, Kibune, and Miwa are all gods who protect the bond of love between husband and wife, I am spending a whole night every other night at each of these shrines in fervent prayer for the fulfillment of my heartfelt wish. The desire to do so came about in this manner: I once loved someone deeply, but, just as the moon is sometimes blocked from view by clouds, our love was never con-

summated. How cruel is this world! Though I never tired of him, nor he of me, we were forced to part. The grief I felt was enough to make me die.

"To be sure, it was my misdeeds in a previous existence that doomed me to suffer such sadness, but I decided that I could at least act as a guardian for those in this world who enjoy love's fulfillment. Thus I have dedicated myself body and soul to praying to the great gods of these five shrines for the sake of people throughout all generations who have loved.

"The gods have graciously heard my prayer and granted me a divine revelation by bestowing this grafted cherry branch' on me. This was the august revelation of the gods: 'Encourage many to love, and when their numbers reach one thousand, hold a service for them. May those who make the marriage vow, men and women alike, be pleasing to behold, of refined and comely figure. Above all may they be good-hearted, living their entire lives without bickering. We will guard over their love in this world, in the world to come, and again in the world following.'

"Ladies and gentlemen, if you desire in your hearts a good husband or wife, then tie your hopes to this cherry branch. No matter who the object of your love may be, your desires will surely be fulfilled."

He finished his long speech without any difficulty, and immediately hordes of excited men came up to tie their wishes to the branch. Among them was one who appeared to be 24 or 25 years old. He removed his large sedge hat as he came up, but his cheeks were covered with a purple face mask so it was impossible to identify him. He calmly tied his letter to the branch, and though no one knew the contents, on the outside were the words, "My feelings lie herein." The way he looked at the boy's figure made it obvious that his feelings were far deeper than anyone else's.

When Sennosuke returned to the dressing room, everyone surrounded him to read the notes tied to the branch. Most of the letters read "I'm in love" or "My life is yours," nothing more. But as soon as they opened the letter mentioned earlier, they realized that this one would have to be taken seriously. It was written in the Kōzei style of calligraphy, and this is what it said:

"Love is mere vanity, so I need not go into the story of Izanagi and Izanami ¹⁰ in detail. In spring, everything in this land of Japan looks lovely, even the figures of spiritless grasses and trees. Time passes and returns each year to this month and this day, and the buds emerge once again. Those actors who carry this spirit of spring in their hearts are lovely as young leaves, but those who lack it find it impossible to perform their feats onstage. Some say that the theater is nothing more than entertainment for the masses, but I view it differently. It is a place where spiritual beauty is revealed to the audience through the grafted cherry branch and Kozakura's own youthful beauty.

"Since the path of religious discipline makes no distinction between prince and pauper, how could the sincere request of any man be denied? I have prayed single-mindedly, convinced that you, oh living Buddha, would not refuse me. Though many people collapse in laughter at my foolishness, I bear the shame gladly for your sake.

"I express myself clumsily, but if you would show me your true beauty and let me roost featherless in the branches of your grafted cherry tree or allow me to approach as close to you as the one-winged Hiyoku,¹¹ I would gladly receive your love for seven generations. If, however, you should refuse me, my vengeful spirit will surely haunt you through seven rebirths.

"On the tenth day of this month, I will return wearing the same robes to receive your reply. Please, please favor me with an answer."

People drew near to read the letter and were greatly impressed with the depth of the man's feelings. Just then Kitahōgaku no Kurōsuke, who also had designs on the boy, took the letter and slipped it into his sleeve. Sennosuke walked up to him, however, and took the letter back with a stern look on his face.

"I do not intend to ignore this love letter," he said.

Kurōsuke was disappointed but produced some ink and managed at least to copy the letter before going home.

Later, Sennosuke asked where the man was living and learned that he lodged at the Sasanoya in Uemachi. He came from Rizen where he had been a man of no mean rank, but certain circumstances made it necessary for him to now live incognito. Without

looking further into details, Sennosuke secretly invited him to his quarters for a visit.⁴

Darkness on a moonless night in spring is always disappointing because you cannot see the cherry blossoms, but the man far preferred scattering Kozakura's petals in bed than viewing his blossom-like beauty in daylight. Sennosuke allowed the man to have his pleasure with him over and over again.

"How I hate the sound of crows at daybreak," the man said when it came time to leave.

Sennosuke went out to see him off and handed him something as a memento of his love.

"Do not make this the last time. Come again," he said.

The man was so overjoyed, he drew his sword and said, "It may seem old-fashioned, but this is the least I can do to prove my love for you." Immediately, he drew the blade twice, then three times, across his hand. It was as if autumn leaves had appeared out of season.

Then the man went home.

Sennosuke later inquired about the man, but he had disappeared. The boy spoke of it to no one, however, for he knew love's ways all too well.

Some time later, a group of men including Kurōsuke held a party early one evening at the house of Tanakaya Jiei.¹³ By good fortune, Kozakura's attendant, a man named Kagonosaku, happened to be there. After getting him drunk, Kurōsuke asked, "Whatever happened about that letter a while back?"

Kagonosaku told the entire story from beginning to end. Those who heard it were amazed. This young man, deeply rooted in the way of boy love, was a mountain cherry at its peak of bloom growing on the mountaintop of love. There were none who did not regret the thought that its petals would soon fall.

= 6:3 =

The Man Who Resented Another's Shouts

A smoldering in his breast led him to sell tobacco pouches.

Cut by his words, a masterless samurai slew him.

Sanzaburō: Love's confusion like threads of a waterfall.

Although they say that the priest of Murasakino¹ considered paintings on fans among the deceptions forbidden by Buddhist law, some paintings are so life-like that crows fly off the page and crabs (if painted with ten legs) edge into the water. Takuma's² water buffaloes and Tong P'o's³ snow-covered bamboo and banana palms turned deceptions into reality.

A volume of life-like prints of the lovely figures of kabuki actors carved onto blocks of cherry wood made it possible for a certain man to enjoy the pleasures of these lovely boys all day in the privacy of his own home. All of them surpassed the peony and lotus in beauty. Among the exquisitely painted figures was one he particularly loved. Like the peaks of Tsukubane where the waterfalls flow, his name was Takii Sanzaburō.⁴ Surely the special beauty with which he alone was depicted was real, and not the result of a bribe. (Chao Chun herself said, "Gold cannot buy the face of a Han Empress."⁵ But what an unspeakable shock the resulting picture must have been!)

The man had once seen a woman holding a lovely fan and fallen in love with her. It was on his way home from Tadasu, intrigued by the sound of a lute, he had peered over the earthen wall surrounding a certain house, curious who might be living there. He saw a woman sitting all alone, weeping. Her figure looked like the bending branches of a willow at twilight. In comparison to her, prints seemed not so interesting after all. He felt something for her he had never felt before.

It was a different form of love, but this yearning for Sanzaburō somehow seemed to him more attainable. And yet, because he suf-

lost all interest in the work he did for a living. Eventually, he gave it all up for the masterless samurai.

Nothing is as unpredictable as human life. The man was a native of Hamada in Iwami where his widowed mother still lived. One day he received a letter written in another person's hand saying that she was near death. The minute he read it, he spoke to Sanzaburō and convinced the boy that, under the circumstances, he had no choice but to go visit her. They bid each other a tearful farewell.

Sanzaburō never heard from him again.

The boy grieved and grew despondent. During the day he yearned for the man, and at night he merely tried to survive his loneliness until morning. His face grew thin and his figure lost its former beauty. Soon, he took to bed. As so often happens in this floating world, like a blossom in full bloom pummeled by cruel rain, or the moon blocked from view by clouds and mist, he parted this life at the age of nineteen.

"His healthy complexion grew gaunt on his sickbed; his lovely hotly, as if in slumber, became the figure of one now dead. The pallor of his lovely flesh darkened, like petals falling in the wind."

Those who saw it wrung the tears from their sleeves, while those who heard shout it wept into their cuffs. "Weeds will grow in Kobiki,¹⁰ and the forests turn white with grief." Negi-chō¹² will become a den for wild boars." Thus they were left, bereft, to grieve.

== 6:4 ==

A Secret Visit Leads to the Wrong Bed

An actor opens a face-powder shop.
Modern ladies imitate the actor Kichiya.
Her elder brother's unexpected pleasure.

"High-Quality Kichiya Face-Powder at Honest Prices." This sign appeared outside a new shop near the bridge where Shijō-dōri crosses the Takase River, and women of the capital with even the slightest blemish lined up to buy some on their way home.

"How does that shop manage to attract all of you lovely women without advertising?" someone asked.

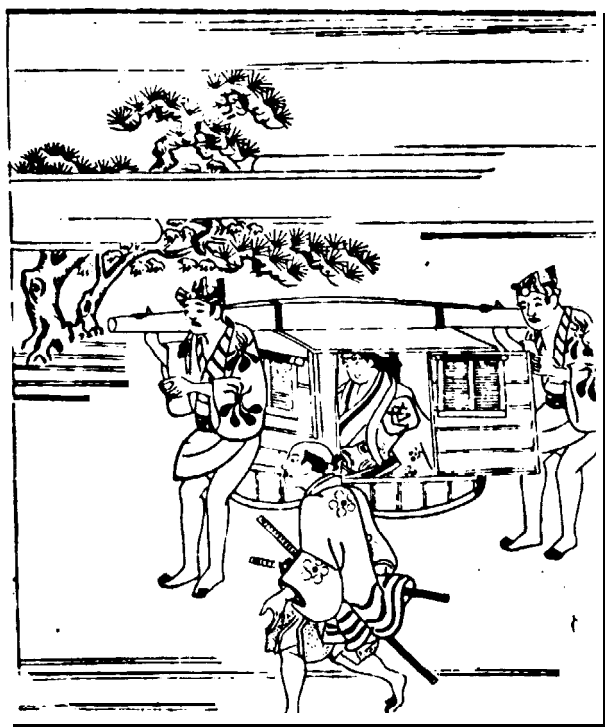
"Why, that's the home of the Great Kichiya,' father of all actors of female roles. Business is flourishing because he is perfectly suited to such a job," they explained.

(Actually, it was because the only way that women can attain beauty is by painting their plain faces!)

Male actors of female roles in the old days of Ukon² and Sakon³ were not particularly concerned about looking like women. They simply placed towels on their heads and applied some rough makeup, and theater-goers used their imaginations to fill in the rest. The scenarios, too, were terrible by today's standards.

Nowadays, provincial ladies try to imitate women of the capital in their manner and hide their natural defects by means of careful grooming. Only the mirrors they use every day from morning to dusk are aware of the truth.

Kichiya had been stunningly beautiful as a boy. Then, as a young actor, he polished his natural beauty with all the good things money could buy and effortlessly reached the rank of *tayū*. His skin seemed to cast off the sheen of a silver piece. There was no use in hunting on the dry riverbed at Shijō anymore, for everyone had grown bored with cheap thrills and went instead to spend time with this lovely youth.



As a result, Kichiya began to pay even more attention to his appearance. On the eighteenth day of the month when cherries bloom, he went to a certain house in *Gion-machi* where he sat behind a bamboo blind to observe in secret how real women of the capital dressed, hoping to find something interesting he could introduce into his own wardrobe. He was enthralled with the dappled robes and free-falling hair that women let show from the windows of their palanquins as they passed. His spirit all but leapt out at them. Perhaps not all were great beauties, but he doubted that any were truly ugly. (The rich have an advantage over the poor because they can afford such tantalizing displays. Thank goodness for Yang Kuei Fei face-powder!)

He spotted one woman who seemed very attractive from a distance, but on closer inspection her face looked as if it were the

repository for all the pockmarks in the world. Of all the ugly faces he had ever seen, hers was remarkable in that it lacked a single redeeming feature. Her figure, however, and the style of her knotted sash, were incomparable.

"Who is she?" he asked.

There was a man who regularly went outside the capital selling salt door-to-door, and he recalled having seen her once before.

"She's the daughter of a popular dye-works merchant in *Higashi-no-tōin*. She's famous for her figure; they call her 'Shapely Oshun,' " he said.

Kichiya, in imitation, took an eight-foot sash and sewed lead weights into the corners, thus introducing to the world the "*Kichiya knot*," a style that remains popular to this day.

One time, Kichiya received word from the house of a certain noble personage to come dressed in his stage costume. Work was work, he told himself, and when it grew dark he secretly boarded a palanquin sent to take him there. When they neared the main gate of the house, the palanquin bearers extinguished the lamps they carried, emblazoned with the house's crest.

Security was strict. A lady whose love-making days were obviously long since past came out to meet him. She took Kichiya's hand to show him the way. He felt uneasy at first but realized that love took many guises and so allowed her to lead him inside. To the gatekeeper's drowsy question, the old lady replied, "One woman," and her answer was duly noted in the ledger. Once past the gate, they walked about a hundred *ken* on a sand path lined with trees until they reached the middle gate. Colorful pebbles covered the banks of a man-made stream to the left and glistened like a seashore of jewels in the light of stone lanterns placed between the trees. Several birds were kept there in cages, and though it was night, some were singing. Kichiya looked closely and could see a white Chinese pheasant sleeping under a dead tree, an owl puffed up wide awake on a branch, and a parrot perched asleep nearby.

Quietly, they climbed a stairway and came to a pair of doors made of precious wood. The doors were painted with bush clover so realistic that it looked as if *Miyagino*⁴ had been transported there. They opened the doors and proceeded on tip-toe down a

long hallway. Kichiya could hear the laughter of female voices, sounds of a *sugoroku* game,⁵ and in the distance the gentle echo of koto and flute. His excitement mounted uncontrollably as they walked quietly through an unlighted reception hall and came out onto a plank-board veranda. They passed through several curtained doorways and finally came to a sliding door covered with silk. Nearby hung a red tassled cord. The old lady tugged at it. Kichiya could hear the pretty ringing of a bell on the other side.

Suddenly, there was a clatter of many footsteps, along with the crash of a folding screen and the sound of an incense box being kicked over.

"He's here!"

"It's Kichiya!"

The ladies rushed forward, curious, to look at him. It had been a long time since most of them had seen a man, and they seemed to go suddenly and uncontrollably mad. Some of them were so excited that they turned pale with desire. It was truly vulgar behavior. A lady-in-waiting who seemed to be in charge managed to calm them and then led Kichiya into the innermost room, where he found a stunningly lovely princess sitting all by herself. It was impossible for him to think of words to describe her beauty.

Cups made of gold and silver were brought out, and the princess excitedly began entertaining him with sake. Just then, a female servant came rushing in.

"Look out! He has just returned!" she cried, extinguishing the candles and darkening the room. There was nowhere for Kichiya to hide, so they tried to smuggle him out with a group of women, but the nobleman noticed him.

"Who is she?"

"My dance and singing teacher," the princess said.

"She is unusually attractive for a commoner." He decided to make her his own for the night.

He did not hesitate to begin love-making immediately. Kichiya, unable to reject his advances, was in a quandary. Having no other recourse, he removed his lady's wig and showed himself to the nobleman.

"Why, this is even better!" the gentleman said when he saw him, and proceeded to give Kichiya the full measure of his affection. The boy remained in the gentleman's bed until dawn the next morning, much to the chagrin (one would suspect) of his younger sister, the princess.

= 8:5 =

Who Wears the Incense Graph Dyed in Her Heart?

The crest of Yamatoya Jimbei.

A boy actor in his prime, a patron in decline.

To a lover of boys, even a beautiful woman is ugly.

They say that when mandarin orange trees from south of the Yangtze are transplanted to north of the Yangtze, they immediately change to trifoliate orange trees. Such a transformation certainly sounds plausible, for we have a similar phenomenon in Japan. If you put a rusty-haired youngster from north of the river in the hands of a theater attendant south of the river, his hair will shortly turn black and shiny like that of a *tayū*. The change is so dramatic, it makes one wonder if the boys are not really two different people. Appearances can certainly be improved with careful grooming.

Some say, "Kabuki boy actors are uniformly good-looking these days." Others counter, "There are few truly beautiful ones among them." I have observed the outcome of several such boys who were picked up by theater proprietors and actors. Those capable of acting on the present-day stage were perhaps one in a thousand. The others were either good-looking and stupid, or smart and incapable of entertaining people. No one knows how many proprietors suffered huge financial loss when it turned out that the boy they groomed for stardom could not keep a simple beat, or when the boy on whom they pinned their hopes for success suddenly took sick. Surely, there is nothing more risky than trying to create a star for the theater.

He that as it may, how could any man regret spending money on boy actors? Actors' fees should be regarded as the cost of medicine to extend one's lifespan. Such boys provide a unique remedy. They may look like ordinary boys, but emotionally they are exactly

like upper-class courtesans, with two exceptions: they have overcome their stiffness, and one never tires of their conversation.

In the old days, boy love was something rough and brawny. Men swaggered when they spoke. They preferred big, husky boys, and bore cuts on their bodies as a sign of male love. This spirit reached even to boy actors, all of whom brandished swords. It goes without saying that such behavior is no longer appreciated. Even the portable shrine of the San-ō Festival makes its rounds without drawing blood nowadays.* In an age when even warriors need no armor, clearly it is best not to show knives while entertaining at parties. Watermelon ought to be cut in the kitchen and brought out served on plates. Boys these days are expected to be delicate, nothing more. In Edo, a boy actor is called "Little Murasaki" or in Kyoto is given the name "Kaoru," soft-sounding like the names of courtesans and pleasing to the ear.

Sodeshima Ichiya,⁴ Kawashima Kazuma,⁵ Sakurayama Rinno-suke,⁶ Sodeoka Ima-Masanosuke,⁷ Mitsue Kasen,⁸ and others accentuate their natural beauty by wearing women's red undershirts, a habit men find very erotic. Hordes of men stop and stare, though they have no intention of spending any money, just to memorize the actors' crests and learn their names as they set out for the theater in the morning or head back home at dusk.

When Suzuki Heizaemon,⁹ Yamashita Hanzaemon,¹⁰ Naiki Hikozaemon,¹¹ and Kōzaemon¹² are on their way home, no one takes much notice of them, despite the fact that they are excellent actors. Instead, men already have their eyes on the apprentice boy actors wearing wide-sleeved cotton robes with medicine pouches hanging at their hips and sporting double-folded topknots. In addition, the young brides and older wives of these men stand in noisy groups in the vicinity of Sennichi Temple,¹³ their excitement all the more intense because they know their desires for the boys are doomed to frustration.

Once, I invited Yamatoya Jimbei¹⁴ to go and worship with me at Kachiō-ji on the occasion of the unveiling of the holy image there.¹⁵ We crossed the Nakatsu River by ferry and parked our palanquins by the shrine woods at Kita-nakajima.

"Tobacco and tea," we said, and rested for a while. Shortly after



us came a beautiful girl who looked about sixteen but was probably fifteen. She wore a long-sleeved black satin robe appliquéd with assorted precious treasures. Her sash was an unusual affair of white-figured satin embroidered with swallows caught in a net of purple threads, and tied in the back. She wore light-blue silk stockings and straw sandals with toe-cords of several slender threads. With each step she took we caught a glimpse of her red diamond-patterned underskirt. Her hair was tied low in a flaired chignon and decorated with an open-work comb and a bodkin inlaid with gold and silver. Her sedge hat was lined in light-blue material woven with threads of gold and tied by a cord made of twisted letter paper. Everything she wore, her whole manner in fact, reflected impeccable good taste. Moreover, she wore no makeup. There was absolutely nothing one could say in complaint about her.



Accompanying the girl on her left was a nun dressed in a black robe, and on her right was a woman who looked like her nursemaid. She had a personal attendant with her, and a servant girl, both of whom were also beautifully attired. A palanquin was being carried behind them. An old man over 50 years old, who seemed to be in charge, and a younger man wearing a large sword walked in advance. It was obvious that they were from a wealthy merchant family.

The girl approached us innocently, but as soon as she saw Jimbei she became extremely agitated. She lifted her sleeve for him to see. His incense-graph crest¹⁶ was clearly visible, dyed into her robe. Her feelings for him were no sudden impulse, then.

Afterwards she began to quiver with excitement and her legs could no longer support her. At the village where the Ebisu Shrine

is found she finally boarded her palanquin. We then lost sight of her lovely figure and continued on our way.

Perhaps because of a karmic bond, we met her again later at the temple. She came up from behind us with a lovelorn look in her eyes. A priest was expertly explaining the history of each of the treasures in the temple, but she showed interest only in Jimbei. Her expression seemed to say. "What's so great about a wasp stinging your unicorn's horn? I don't care if your stupid buffalo stone breaks into a million pieces. Even your precious Buddha statue that miraculously came down from heaven means nothing to me."¹⁷ Just give me Jimbei!" We could not but feel sorry for her, knowing that her passion was doomed to frustration. (I pity the fellow who gets this girl for a wife!) If she had been a boy none of us would have thought twice about sacrificing our lives for her, but we were fashionable men, a group of woman-haters, so we ignored her and left for home.

That night we entertained ourselves with some serious composition of comic linked verse at the Sinking Moon Hermitage in Sakurazuka,¹⁸ where we went to see fall colors. We were treated to fine Itami and Kōnoike sake by the host.

"Now and then, we get wandering street boys in this town," the host said.

Our pleasure destroyed by this comment," we headed home. On the way, we felt uneasy about having rubbed sleeves with that girl who had taken a liking to Jimbei. so we purified ourselves in the Temma River and rinsed out our eyes, sullied by the sight of her. We then returned to Dōtombori. At the theater the next day, from the opening love scene to the play's conclusion, we talked about nothing but boy love.

This way of love is not exclusive to us; it is practiced throughout the known world. In India, strangely enough, it is called the Mistaken Way.¹⁹ In China, it is enjoyed as *hsia chuan*.²¹ And here in Japan, it flourishes as boy love. Because there is female love, the foolish human race continues to thrive. Would that the love of boys became the common form of love in the world, and that women would die out and Japan become an Isle of Men.²² Quarrels between husband and wife would cease, jealousy disappear, and the world enter at last into an era of peace.

