

## Sanshirō – Chapter 4

Natsume Sōseki – 1908

Sanshirō's spirit grew restless. When he attended lectures, they sounded distant. Sometimes he failed to make note of crucial points. On his worst days, he felt like his ears were someone else's, and he had them on loan. The whole situation struck him as hopelessly ludicrous. Having no other recourse, he confided in Yojirō that he was losing interest. Yojirō gave his typical reply.

“Of course you find no interest in these lectures. You're a country bumpkin, and you've persevered thus far in expectation of great things to come. That's the height of idiocy. Their lectures have never been anything more than what you've heard. No point in letting it bring you down.”

Sanshirō became defensive. “It's not that. It's just that ...” Yojirō's flippant tone and Sanshirō's heavy words were so mismatched that their discourse was almost comical.

This same exchange recurred several times over the course of the next weeks. During this time, Sanshirō gradually regained possession of his own ears. Then Yojirō said to him, “You're not looking well.” He offered his diagnosis. “It shows in your face that you're weary of life. That ‘fin de siècle’ look.”

Sanshirō replied as before in response to Yojirō's diagnosis. “It's not that. It's just that ...” Sanshirō was not yet cultured enough to appreciate the term “fin de siècle.” And he was too far removed from the society that had coined it to wield it deftly. He did find the phrase “weary of life” to his liking. He had been feeling run down, and he thought there was more to it than his bout of diarrhea. However, he was by no means affected to the point of tactically sporting a façade of weariness, so these conversations with Yojirō progressed no further.

By and by, autumn reached its peak. Sanshirō's appetite increased. The season had arrived in which no 23-year-old young man could possibly find himself “weary of life.” Sanshirō ventured out often. He strolled the perimeter of the university pond frequently, but there was nothing remarkable to see. He passed by the hospital repeatedly, but he saw only ordinary people. He visited Nonomiya in the cellar of the college of science and learned that his sister had left the hospital. He thought of mentioning the young lady he'd met in the entryway, but Nonomiya seemed occupied with his work, so he held off. They could talk at leisure during his next visit to Ōkubo, and he would learn her name and something of her background. Not wanting to appear impatient, he withdrew. After leaving, he wandered where his feet took him. To Tabata, to Dōkanyama, to the Somei cemetery, past the Sugamo prison, to the Gokokuji temple -- he even went as far as the Arai no Yakushi temple. On his way back from Arai no Yakushi he tried to stop by Nonomiya's house in Ōkubo, but he took a wrong turn by the Ochiai crematorium and ended up back in Takata, so he caught a train home from Mejiro. On the ride back he ate some of the chestnuts he'd bought for Nonomiya. Yojirō came by the next day and they polished off the rest.

As he continued to take things easier, Sanshirō found himself appreciating life. He'd initially taken his lectures too seriously. His ears had rebelled, and he'd struggled to listen and take notes. Now that his ears were relaxed, there was nothing to it. He entertained various thoughts as he listened. It didn't bother him

when he occasionally tuned out. Careful observation revealed that all of his fellow students, Yojirō included, were doing the same. He was convinced he'd found his proper tempo.

Sanshirō considered various things, and sometimes his thoughts returned to the ribbon. He became anxious and dissatisfied when he thought of it. He wanted to rush off to Ōkubo. However, his train of thought would take a turn, or something would divert his attention, and soon it would be gone from his mind. He was dreaming dreams. He didn't make it to Ōkubo.

One afternoon, Sanshirō's customary wanderings led him to the top of Dangozaka, where he turned left onto the broad avenue that runs through Hayashichō in Sendagi. It was the season of crisp autumn days, and recently the skies of Tōkyō had grown deep like those of the countryside. Just the awareness of one's existence under such skies was enough to refresh the mind, and the day was perfect for strolling into open spaces. The senses were enhanced, with the spirit expanding to match the breadth of the sky. The body felt tight from head to toe. Autumn's character differed from the lax serenity of springtime. As he walked, Sanshirō looked at the hedges to his left and right and drank in the fragrances of his first autumn in Tōkyō.

At the bottom of Dangozaka, the chrysanthemum doll show had just opened several days earlier. He'd seen its banners as he rounded the hill. Even now he could still hear the distant sounds of voices and flutes and drums beating time. The sounds floated up slowly from below and dissipated to faint vibrations in the crystal clear autumn air. Their remnants touched Sanshirō's eardrums and met their end. Their effect was more of invigoration than intrusion.

Two figures suddenly emerged from a street to the left. One of them noticed Sanshirō and called out to him.

Yojirō's voice on this day was uncharacteristically succinct. He was with a companion. When Sanshirō saw this companion, it confirmed his long-held suspicion that the man drinking tea in Aokidō had in fact been Professor Hirota. Ever since the peaches, he'd had a curious connection to this gentleman. After watching the man drinking his tea and smoking in Aokidō, a sight that had set Sanshirō running back to the library, the man's face had become etched in his memory. He always wore the face of a Shinto priest on which a Westerner's nose was superimposed. He was still in his summer attire, but he didn't appear to be cold.

Sanshirō thought to return the greeting, but the chance eluded him as he struggled for proper words. All he could manage was to remove his hat and bow modestly. This was too formal for Yojirō, and it was lacking in deference toward Professor Hirota. He'd split the difference and addressed neither party appropriately.

Yojirō intervened immediately. "This fellow is one of my classmates. He went to high school in Kumamoto, and it's his first time here in Tōkyō." He seemed all too eager to divulge Sanshirō's provincial background. Then, turning to Sanshirō, "This is Professor Hirota. He's a high school ..." In his easy manner he concluded his introductions.

At this point Professor Hirota told him, "We know each other. We know each other."

Yojirō took on a puzzled expression as the professor repeated this twice. However, rather than ask after mundane details, he charged ahead with his business at hand. “Say, do you know of any houses for rent nearby? We need something spacious, attractive, and with an extra room for a lodging student.”

“A house for rent ... actually, yes.”

“Whereabouts? Are you sure it’s nice enough?”

“It’s quite nice. There’s a large stone gate out front.”

Yojirō jumped at the thought of this. “Sounds good. How ‘bout it Professor? A stone gate would be impressive. Maybe that’s our house.”

“I don’t want a stone gate,” said the Professor.

“You don’t want one? Why not?”

“Because I just don’t.”

“But stone gates are imposing. You’ll look like a modern-day baron.”

Yojirō was earnest. The professor was grinning. In the end, earnest won the day, and it was decided to go have a look. Sanshirō led the way.

They retraced their path and emerged onto a backstreet. From there they walked about fifty meters north to a narrow lane that appeared to have no outlet at its other end. Sanshirō led them into this lane. Continuing past its end, one would walk straight into the garden of a botanical nursery. The three of them stopped about ten meters short of the nursery, and there on their right stood two large granite columns with an iron gate between them. Sanshirō told them this was the place. There was, indeed, a sign soliciting for renters.

“This looks marvelous,” exclaimed Yojirō, as he pushed at the iron gate, which was locked. “Wait here. I’ll go ask.” No sooner had he spoken, than he went dashing off into the nursery. Professor Hirota and Sanshirō, left behind to wait, began a conversation.

“What do you think of Tōkyō?”

“Well ...”

“It’s vast, but unsightly, don’t you think?”

“Well ...”

“There’s nothing here to compare to Mount Fuji, is there?”

Sanshirō had completely forgotten Mount Fuji. At Professor Hirota’s suggestion, he’d watched for the mountain from the train and gazed on it for the first time as they’d steamed past. The grandeur of the scene

came back to him now. The worldly thoughts that had crowded his mind of late paled in comparison. He felt bad that the impression of that moment had entirely slipped from his consciousness.

“Have you ever tried to translate Mount Fuji?” Suddenly the professor hit him with this unusual question.

“By translate ...”

“It’s interesting to translate nature. We can’t help but personify it. We use words like sublime and mighty and heroic ...”

Sanshirō grasped the professor’s meaning of translation.

“All these words refer to human character. If one doesn’t translate nature into human character, it’s because one’s own character has never been touched by nature.”

Sanshirō waited silently in anticipation of more to follow. However, Professor Hirota had finished. He gazed into the nursery and said as if to himself, “What on earth is Sasaki doing that takes so long?”

“Shall I go and see?” Sanshirō offered.

“Going and seeing won’t bring him out any sooner. Best to save yourself the trouble and just wait here.” So saying, he crouched by the base of a hedge, picked up a pebble, and began drawing something in the dirt. His manner was carefree. He and Yojirō behaved as exact opposites, but when it came to carefree demeanor they were two of a kind.

Yojirō called out in a loud voice from the far side of a thicket of pines. “Professor! Professor!”

The professor continued unperturbed with his drawing. It seemed he was drawing a lighthouse. Since he hadn’t replied, Yojirō had no choice but to come back.

“Professor, come and take a look. It’s a nice place. The nursery owns it. I can ask them to open the gate, but it’s faster if we just go in from the back.”

The three of them circled around to the back side. They slid open the storm shutters and walked through room by room. It was a very respectable middle-class house. The rent was forty yen, with three months’ security deposit. They re-emerged out front.

“Why bother looking at something so lavish?” remarked the professor.

“We’re looking because there’s no harm in just looking,” replied Yojirō.

“When you know we can’t rent it ...”

“I thought maybe we could. But they won’t accept twenty-five yen ...”

“Of course they won’t.” The professor cut short the conversation. Then Yojirō started telling them about the stone gate. Until recently it had stood at the entrance to an estate with which the nursery did business. When the estate buildings were reconstructed, the gate had been moved here and installed in its present location. Yojirō could never resist an interesting side story.

From there the three of them returned to the main road and followed it down from Dōzaka toward Tabata. They walked quietly, as though no longer interested in finding a place to rent. Except that Yojirō kept on about the stone gate. He told them it had cost five yen to have it carried from Kōjimachi all the way to Sendagi. Landscaping, it seemed, was a lucrative business. Then he went on about their forty-yen rental house, and who did they think could afford it. He was convinced they wouldn’t find a renter, and then they’d have to drop their price. He’d come back again and negotiate for it.

Professor Hirota, who was unimpressed with Yojirō’s scheme, told him, “You took so long because you talk too much. Just get the information you need and be back on your way.”

“Did I really take that long? Weren’t you drawing something? You’re pretty easygoing yourself.”

“Hard to say who’s the more easygoing.”

“What were you drawing?”

The professor didn’t answer. “Wasn’t it a lighthouse?” Sanshirō asked with a serious expression. Both Yojirō and the artist himself laughed.

“Drawing lighthouses is rather eccentric. Maybe the professor was depicting Nonomiya Sōhachi.”

“How so?”

“Nonomiya shines on the international stage, but in Japan he toils in the dark. -- No one knows him. And he’s confined to his cellar on a meager salary. -- His field of work really doesn’t pay. I feel bad for him every time we meet.”

“Then you yourself are a little round lantern, casting a dim light within a small radius of where you sit.”

Smarting from the comparison to a little round lantern, Yojirō turned his attention to Sanshirō. “When were you born, Ogawa?”

Sanshirō simply answered, “I’m twenty three.”

“About what I’d figured. -- Professor, I really can’t warm to things like round lanterns and goose neck pipes. Maybe it’s because I was born fifteen years into the Meiji reign. These things seem outdated and alien to me. What about you?” Again he addressed Sanshirō.

“I don’t necessarily dislike them,” Sanshirō replied.

“Probably because you’re fresh in from the Kyūshū countryside. Your head’s still back in the first year of Meiji.”

Neither Sanshirō nor the professor responded. A little further on, a grove of cedars next to an old temple had been cleared and the ground leveled. A Western-style building, painted blue, had been constructed on the site. Professor Hirota surveyed the temple and the painted building.

“It’s an anachronism. Japan’s physical and spiritual realms are no different. I assume you two are familiar with the Kudan lighthouse.” The conversation was back to lighthouses. “It’s very old. It even appears in the Illustrated Guide to Edo Sights.”

“You’re pulling our legs. The Kudan lighthouse may be old, but it’s not old enough to appear in the Edo Guide.”

Professor Hirota laughed. He realized he’d confused the Edo Guide with a nishiki-e print entitled Sights of Tōkyō. According to the professor, a modern brick building, housing an army officers’ club, had been erected next to this long-standing lighthouse. The two structures side by side looked ridiculous. However, no one seemed to notice or mind. This epitomized the state of Japanese society.

Yojirō and Sanshirō nodded at the professor’s remarks. About half a kilometer past the temple, they came to a large black gate. Yojirō suggested they enter and cut through to Dōkanyama. When they pressed him on whether it was really okay, he told them it was the Satake family suburban residence, and they allowed anyone to traverse the grounds. Reassured, they followed him through the gate. After they’d passed through a grove of trees and arrived at the edge of a pond, a caretaker appeared and scolded them severely. Yojirō apologized profusely in return.

From there, Sanshirō went on to Yanaka, traversed Nezu, and returned to his Hongō lodgings in the evening. He decided that this half day had been his most enjoyable in a long while.

The next day there was no sign of Yojirō at the university. Sanshirō thought he might show after lunch, but he didn’t. He tried the library, but no luck there either. From five to six there was a lecture assembly for the entire literature department. Sanshirō attended. It was too dark to take notes. And it was too early for the electric lighting. At this hour of the day, the branches of the zelkova tree outside, visible through the tall and narrow windows, gradually wrapped their surroundings in darkness. Within the hall, the face of the lecturer and the faces of the listeners faded to gray in a similar fashion. The effect was intriguingly mysterious, akin to eating a bean-jam bun in the dark. Sanshirō realized with amusement that he wasn’t following the lecture. Listening with his chin propped on his hand, he felt his senses dull and his attention drift away. It was worth attending just to achieve this state. Then the lighting came on and all reverted to clarity. This triggered a sudden urge to go home and eat dinner. The professor, sensing the mood of the room, concluded his lecture punctually. Sanshirō hurried back to Oiwake.

Changing out of his kimono and sitting down to dinner, Sanshirō found that a letter had been placed on his tray alongside a bowl of egg custard stew. From the outer seal, he could see that it was from his mother. He had to admit that he hadn’t thought of her at all over the past several weeks. From the day prior, with

anachronisms, the personality of Mount Fuji, and his intriguing lecture experience, even the image of the young lady had not entered his thoughts. Sanshirō found this satisfying. He decided to read his mother's letter later at leisure. In the meantime, he finished his dinner and smoked a cigarette. As he watched the smoke rise, he thought back on the evening's lecture.

At this point, Yojirō happened by. Sanshirō asked why he'd skipped lectures, and Yojirō replied that house hunting took utmost precedence.

“Are you really in such a hurry to move?”

“Actually, we were supposed to be out last month. I received an extension until the Emperor's Birthday holiday, which is only two days away now, so I have to find a place by tomorrow. Do you know of anything?”

How could he be so pressed? Their time spent together the previous day had been more like a leisurely stroll than a house hunt. Sanshirō was flabbergasted. Yojirō went on to explain that that was because the professor was with him. “The professor is not cut out for house hunting. He's probably never done it in his life, and he seemed all out of sorts yesterday. That's why we ended up in trouble on the Satake grounds. Serves him right we got yelled at. -- You don't know of anything?” Yojirō suddenly queried him again. This was the real motivation for his visit.

On probing further, Sanshirō finally learned the full story. According to Yojirō, their current landlord was an extortionist who kept arbitrarily raising their rent. To spite him, Yojirō had declared they were moving out. Now he was responsible for finding a new place.

“Today I searched all the way to Ōkubo, to no avail. -- Speaking of Ōkubo, I took the opportunity to drop by Nonomiya's house and see Yoshiko. The poor girl still has a sickly complexion. -- A pallid beauty. -- Her mother asked me to give you her regards. Everything's been quiet there since that night. They say there've been no further incidents down on the tracks.”

Yojirō rambled on from one topic to the next. Never one to measure his words, he was particularly flustered after his day of house hunting. Every time there was a lull in the conversation, he would ask again, as if repeating a chorus, if Sanshirō knew of any place. In the end, Sanshirō could no longer keep from laughing.

Yojirō gradually calmed down and made himself comfortable. He even amused himself by throwing a phrase from Chinese poetry, about the merits of reading under lamplight on long and cool autumn evenings, into his conversation. After a while, their talk came to touch on Professor Hirota.

“What's the first name of that professor of yours?”

“It's Chō.” Yojirō traced out the character with his finger. “The ‘grass’ radical over the top makes it unusual. I'm not sure it's even in the dictionary. It's an odd name they gave him.”

“He's a professor at the high school?”

“He’s been a high school professor for a long time now. Impressive how he keeps at it. He says ‘ten years pass like a day,’ but it must be twelve or thirteen years.”

“Does he have any children?”

“How could he? He’s still single.”

Sanshirō was a bit surprised. It never occurred to him that a person could remain single that long. “Why doesn’t he take a wife?”

“It’s the academic in him, a theoretician through and through. He’s never been married, but he’s reasoned out why marriage wouldn’t suit him. Utter nonsense. In the end, he always contradicts himself. He insists that Tōkyō is the filthiest of cities. Then he frets over a stone gate, saying it won’t do because it’s too lavish.”

“Maybe he could take a wife on a trial basis.”

“He might well discover that marriage suits him fine.”

“The professor said that Tōkyō is filthy and Japanese are ugly. Has he traveled abroad?”

“What do you think? That’s the type he is. He gets that way because in his mind he’s extrapolated everything far beyond reality. To his credit, he does study the Occident. He has lots of photographs; things like the Arc de Triomphe in Paris and places like the Houses of Parliament in London. It gets me how he compares Japan to these photographs and judges it filthy. And the real puzzler is that he’s utterly indifferent to the untidy condition of his own house.”

“He travels in 3rd class.”

“Was he griping about the filth?”

“No, he never complained.”

“Anyway, the professor’s a philosopher.”

“Does he teach philosophy at the school?”

“No, he only teaches English at the school. He’s the type who gravitates toward philosophy as a matter of course. That’s what makes him interesting.”

“Has he published anything?”

“Nothing. He writes an essay on occasion, but to no effect. He’s getting nowhere. The world is oblivious to his ideas. He compared me to a little round lantern, but the professor himself is a great dark void.”

“Sounds like he needs to engage more with his peers.”



“Speaking of engagement -- The professor never takes initiative in anything. If it weren’t for me he couldn’t manage three meals a day.”

Sanshirō laughed incredulously.

“I kid you not. His lack of initiative borders on pathetic. It always falls on me to direct the maidservant till everything’s handled to the professor’s satisfaction. -- But trivial matters aside, I’m preparing a major campaign to get him instated at the university as a full professor.”

Yojirō was serious. Sanshirō was surprised by his bluster. Indifferent to Sanshirō’s reaction, Yojirō went on. “When we move, will you come and help us?” He spoke as though he already had a place.

By the time Yojirō left it was already close to ten. As he sat there alone, Sanshirō felt a chill of autumn. Suddenly, he realized that he hadn’t closed the window opposite his desk. As he opened the shōji he was greeted by moonlight. The dark edges on the shadows cast by the hinoki cypress, a tree he had always disliked, took on a smoky look in the pale rays of the moon. Thinking it curious that autumn could express its arrival in an evergreen, he slid the outside panes shut.

Sanshirō immediately got into bed. He was much more of a dabbler than a serious student, and he didn’t spend much time in his books. On the other hand, when something struck him as significant he took great satisfaction in replaying it over and over in his mind. He felt that doing so brought an added dimension to life. Following his usual routine, he would begin now to replay that moment of intrigue, in the middle of the evening’s lecture, just before the lights had popped on. However, there was the letter from his mother, to which he first directed his attention.

According to the letter, Shinzō had given her honey, which she had mixed with shōchū liquor, and she was drinking a cupful each evening. Shinzō was a tenant farmer on their property, and every winter he delivered twenty bags of rice to them as payment. He was an honest man, but he also had a quick temper and would sometimes drub his wife with a length of firewood. -- Lying in his bed, Sanshirō thought back to the days when Shinzō had started beekeeping. It had been about five years ago. He’d discovered a honeybee hive, with several hundred bees, hanging from the oak tree out back. He’d immediately sprayed saké over a rice de-hulling funnel and managed to capture the whole lot of bees alive. Then he’d placed them in a box, opened holes so they could come and go, and installed the box over a stone base in a sunny location. His colony had gradually increased. When one box no longer sufficed, he’d added a second. When that was full, he’d added a third. Continuing in this manner, he was up to six or seven boxes at present. Once a year, for the sake of his bees, he would remove each box from its stone base and cleave out the honey. Each summer, as Sanshirō had returned home for his holiday, Shinzō had never failed to promise a share of his honey. In the end, though, he’d never once brought them any. This year, it seemed, his memory was serving him well, and he’d indeed made good on his long-standing promise.

Heitarō had erected a grave marker in honor of his father, and he’d stopped by to ask her to come see it. She went with him. It was made of granite and stood in the middle of a bare patch of red soil in the yard. She wrote how Heitarō took great pride in his stone. It had taken him some days to hew it out of the mountainside. Then he’d taken it to the stone shop and paid ten yen to have it finished. He thought the farmers and other

locals might not appreciate it, but young master Sanshirō, who was studying at the university, would surely understand the value of quality stonework. Next time she wrote him, could she ask for a favorable word on this ten-yen stone marker that he'd put up in honor of his father. -- Sanshirō chuckled to himself. This was an even bigger deal than the stone gate in Sendagi.

She wanted a photograph of him in his university dress. Thinking he should go and have one taken, he continued reading. Not unexpectedly, Omitsu Miwata was mentioned. -- Omitsu's mother had come calling the other day. Sanshirō would be graduating from the university before long. After he graduated, she wondered if he would consider taking their daughter as his bride. Sanshirō's mother was all for this. Omitsu was a fine looking girl with a gentle temperament. Their family owned a good number of fields, and the two houses had had a close relationship for some time. It would work out in the best interest of both families. She added several side notes -- Omitsu would certainly be overjoyed. -- Tōkyō people were shift. She wanted nothing to do with them.

Sanshirō re-rolled the letter, placed it back in its envelope, set it next to his pillow, and closed his eyes. Mice scurried about in the ceiling then finally fell quiet.

Sanshirō knew three worlds. One was far away. It had the scent of what Yojirō referred to as "prior to the 15th year of Meiji." All in this world was peaceful and still, but it was only half awake. It was easy enough to go back. If he wanted, he could return at any time. But unless something compelled him, he had no desire to do so. It was only a place of last refuge. Everything from his past that he'd outgrown and discarded he'd confined within this place. He suddenly felt what a pity it was that his mother, who was still so dear to him, had also been set aside in this place. Only occasionally, when letters arrived from home, did he wander briefly through this world and rekindle old affections.

In the second world there were moss-covered brick buildings. There were reading rooms so large that faces were indistinguishable when looking from one end to the other. There were books piled so high that they couldn't be reached without a ladder. They were worn from handling and darkened from the grime of fingers. They sparkled with gold lettering. Paper two hundred years old was bound in sheepskin or cowhide. Then settled over everything was a fine dust. It was a sacred dust, the work of decades of quiet accumulation. It was patient, persevering, ready to last through quiet tomorrows.

Observing the people who moved in this second world, unkempt mustaches were typical. Some of them walked with their gaze turned skyward. Some of them looked to the ground as they passed. Without exception they were poorly dressed. They were certainly far from wealthy. There was a calmness in their manner. Even when surrounded by electric trains, their steady breathing of a pure and quiet air was not disturbed. Members of this world had the misfortune of missing out on the present age, but in return they were spared the torment of chasing after transient pleasures. Professor Hirota belonged to this group. So too did Nonomiya. Sanshirō himself was growing to appreciate its allure. He could still let it go if he wanted. However, it would be a shame to turn his back on something he had endeavored so to understand and appreciate.

The third world was dazzling and vibrant like springtime. There was electric lighting. There were silver spoons. There were witty anecdotes. There were glasses of bubbling champagne. Finally, to crown it all, there were beautiful women. Sanshirō had spoken to one of these women. He'd seen one of them on two occasions. This world, to Sanshirō, was the most tangible of the three worlds. It was right before his eyes, yet it remained aloof. It was akin to a bolt of lightning in the upper heavens. From his position as an outsider, Sanshirō gazed into this world with a sense of wonder. He felt that it was somehow incomplete without him. He believed himself capable of playing a pivotal role there. Yet this world, which should be embracing him for its own sake, seemed to draw back and close off against him. This left Sanshirō puzzled.

Lying in his bed, Sanshirō lined up these three worlds and compared them against each other. Next he stirred them together and reached a conclusion. -- In short, there was no better option than to summon his mother from the countryside, take a beautiful wife, and devote himself wholeheartedly to his own erudition.

This was a rather ordinary conclusion. However, it had been arrived at through extensive consideration. From the perspective of the thinker himself, who is always apt to judge the merit of a conclusion by the effort expended to reach it, it did not feel ordinary.

The only problem was that it placed his simple and inconsequential wife at the center of this extensive world number three. There were lots of beautiful women. Beautiful women could be translated in many ways. -- Sanshirō followed Professor Hirota's lead here in applying the word "translate." -- If one were to translate women into terms of human character, then one should maximize the impact arising from the effort. This meant interacting as much as possible with many beautiful women. And in doing so he could also perfect his own personal growth. It seemed to him that to find contentment in just his wife would be to willfully forego this growth and render himself incomplete.

After reasoning thus far, Sanshirō decided maybe he'd been affected by Professor Hirota. In actuality, he hadn't felt any keen deficiency in his initial conclusion.

The following day, his lectures at the university were dull as always. However, the air in the room was still different from that of the outside world, and by three o'clock he was fully immersed in world number two. He was walking past the police box in Oiwake, fancying himself a great scholar, when Yojirō found him.

"A ha ha ha! A ha ha ha!"

His feeling of greatness crumbled in an instant. Even the officer in the police box floated a grin.

"What?"

"What do you mean 'What?' Try walking like a normal human being. You look like some romantic ironist."

Sanshirō wasn't sure what this term meant, so he changed the subject. "Did you find a house?"

"I was just at your place for that very reason. -- We move tomorrow. Come and help."

"Where is it?"

“Nishikatamachi 10-3. Be there by nine and clean it out. Then wait for me. I’ll arrive shortly. Okay? By nine. Number 10-3. Later.”

Yojirō hurried away. Sanshirō hurried home to his lodgings. That evening he made his way back to the library to learn about romantic irony. It was a term introduced by Schlegel, a German intellectual. From what he read, it was related to the idea that a man of genius should wander through life at will, without purpose and expending no effort. Relieved that he now knew the term, Sanshirō returned home again and went to bed.

The next day was the Emperor’s Birthday holiday, but he awoke at his usual time to honor his commitment. He set off toward the university, as always, but then turned into Nishikatamachi 10. He found house number 3 in the middle of a surprisingly narrow lane. It was an old house.

A Western-style room stuck out where the entry hall should have been, and at a right angle to this was the main living room. Behind the living room was a hearth room, and beyond the hearth room the kitchen and maidservant’s quarters, in that order. There was also a second floor, but he couldn’t yet judge its size.

Sanshirō had been asked to clean the house, but in his opinion there was no need for it. While the place wasn’t clean, there was nothing in particular to haul out and dispose of. If something had to go, then replacing the tatami mats and fixtures would be first priority. He opened the storm shutters, seated himself on the living room veranda, and surveyed the garden.

There was a large crape myrtle. However, its roots were in the neighboring yard. It was leaning through the cedar fence, with the greater portion of its trunk invading adjacent territory. There was a large cherry tree. The tree was clearly on this side of the fence, but half its branches had broken out toward the street, threatening the phone lines. There was a single chrysanthemum plant. It must have been the winter variety, as there was no sign of a blossom. Apart from these there was nothing else. It was a pitiful garden, but the soil, flat and finely textured, struck him as beautiful. He studied the soil. It was a garden built to showcase its soil.

After a while the bell rang out at the high school. It was signaling the start of ceremonies to honor the holiday. On hearing the bell, Sanshirō reckoned that it must be nine o’clock. He felt bad sitting and doing nothing, so he thought he would sweep up the fallen cherry leaves. After finally deciding on a task, it occurred to him that he didn’t have a broom. He sat back down on the veranda. Before two minutes more had passed, he heard the garden gate open. To his surprise, the young lady from the pond appeared in the garden.

The square garden was bordered by hedges on two sides, and it was small, only thirty or so square meters. As soon as he saw the young lady from the pond framed off by this narrow space, Sanshirō had an insight. -- Flowers are best when cut and viewed in a vase.

Sanshirō rose from his place on the veranda. The young lady moved from her place by the gate.

“Excuse me, but ...” She bowed as she addressed him with these initial words. As before, her upper body floated forward, but her face did not turn down. While bowing, she gazed at Sanshirō. Viewed from the front, her throat extended. At the same time, her eyes locked onto his own.

Several days before, an aesthetics instructor had shown paintings by Greuze. At that time, he’d explained how the females in Greuze’s portraits were endowed with the most voluptuous of countenances. Voluptuous! That was the word to describe the look of this young lady’s eyes at this moment. They were somehow irresistible. They were irresistibly charming. They could even be called irresistibly sensuous. They were not superficially sensuous, but sensuous to the core of sensuality. Like something so sweet that it overloads the senses. The sensation shifts from sweetness to agony. In no way was this a vulgar form of fawning. In fact, it was the recipient of her gaze who was mercilessly coerced toward flattery. Curiously, she bore no resemblance to Greuze’s females. Her eyes were not half as large.

“Is this Professor Hirota’s new residence?”

“Yes. This is it.”

Compared to the young lady’s voice and manner, Sanshirō’s reply was far too blunt. Sanshirō sensed this, but he hadn’t known how else to respond.

“I take it he hasn’t arrived yet.” She expressed herself clearly. She didn’t equivocate as young ladies are apt to do.

“Not yet. He should be here soon.”

The young lady hesitated for a moment. She was holding a large basket in her hand. As usual, the pattern of her kimono was unfamiliar. Sanshirō was struck by its subtlety, which seemed in keeping with her style. The fabric had a dimpled sort of texture, over which ran lines in some sort of design. The design was wholly irregular.

A leaf would fall from time to time from the cherry branches above. One settled on the lid of the young lady’s basket. No sooner had it settled than it was blown away. A gust of wind enclapsed her. She stood there, immersed in autumn.

“And you are ...” She spoke to Sanshirō as the gust moved on to the neighboring yard.

“I was asked to come and clean.” He realized his reply was somewhat silly, as she’d seen him, in fact, sitting vacantly on the veranda.

She smiled and said, “Then perhaps I can wait with you for a bit.”

She spoke as though seeking his consent, and this pleased Sanshirō greatly. “Yes,” he answered. What he’d meant to convey was, “Yes, please wait with me.” But the young lady remained standing, so Sanshirō followed with, “And you are ...” inquiring of her in the exact same way she’d inquired of him. At this she

placed her basked on the veranda, took out a calling card from the pocket of her sash, and presented it to him.

On the card was “Mineko Satomi.” Her address was the Masago section of Hongō, so she must live just across the way on the next hillside. As Sanshirō was studying her card, she took a seat on the veranda.

“We’ve met before.” Sanshirō looked up at her after placing the card in his sleeve pocket.

“Yes, once at the hospital ...” She turned toward him as she spoke.

“And?”

“And by the edge of the pond.” She answered immediately. She remembered it readily.

Sanshirō had run out of things to say. The young lady finally closed with a perfunctory, “Forgive me if I was untoward.”

“No, not at all.”

It was a markedly simple conversation. The two of them looked up at the cherry tree branches. On the branch ends hung a few last bug-eaten leaves. The moving party was late to arrive with its wares.

“Are you here to see the professor?” Sanshirō asked abruptly.

The young lady, who had been gazing up at the withered cherry branches lost in thought, quickly turned back to face him. From the expression on her face, it was apparent that the sudden question had startled her. However, she answered in an ordinary manner. “I was asked to help out too.”

Sanshirō noticed now for the first time that the veranda on which she sat was gritty with sand. “There’s an awful lot of sand here. Your kimono will get soiled.”

“It is dirty.” She looked about but didn’t get up. After surveying the veranda she looked back at Sanshirō and asked, “Were you done with your cleaning?” She was smiling. Sanshirō found something comfortably familiar in her smile.

“Not yet.”

“I’ll help you. Let’s start on it.”

Sanshirō was immediately on his feet. The young lady didn’t move. Still seated, she asked if he had a broom and a duster. Sanshirō didn’t have anything. He’d arrived empty-handed. He offered to go out to the main road and buy supplies. She suggested it would be better to borrow what they needed from a neighbor. Sanshirō immediately went next door. Before long, he came hurrying back with a broom, a duster, and even a bucket and cleaning rag. The young lady was still seated in the same spot, looking up at the high cherry branches.

“Got them?” She asked simply.

Sanshirō had a broom over his shoulder and a bucket hanging from his right hand. “I did.” He stated the obvious.

The young lady stepped up onto the gritty veranda in her white socks. She left a trail of slender footprints as she moved. She took out a white apron from her sleeve pocket and secured it above her kimono sash. The edges of the apron were stitched in a lace-like fashion. It’s vivid color seemed far too fine for cleaning. She took the broom from him.

“I’ll give it a sweeping first.” As she spoke, she freed her right arm through her sleeve opening and tossed the loose sleeve over her shoulder. Her delicate arm was bare past the elbow. Through the open edge of the empty sleeve on her shoulder, the inner sleeve of lovely under-fabric was visible. Sanshirō, who had been standing transfixed, finally broke himself free and headed round to the kitchen door with bucket clanging.

Mineko swept, and Sanshirō followed with a wet rag. While Sanshirō beat the dirt from the tatami mats, Mineko dusted the shōji. By the time they finished a once-through cleaning, they were working comfortably together.

Sanshirō went to the kitchen to put fresh water in his bucket. Mineko took the duster and broom and headed upstairs.

“Come up,” she called to Sanshirō from above.

“What is it?” Sanshirō appeared at the bottom of the stairs with his bucket. She was standing up on the dark landing. All he could see was the bright white of her apron. Still holding his bucket, he climbed up several steps. She didn’t move. He climbed two more steps. On the dimly lit stairs, their faces were now quite close.

“What is it?”

“It’s too dark. I can’t go up.”

“Why not?”

“I just can’t.”

Sanshirō saw no reason to press the matter further. He slipped past her and stepped up onto the floor. He set his bucket down in the dark balcony corridor and tried to open a storm shutter. He couldn’t find the bolt to unlatch it. Mineko came up after him.

“Won’t open yet?” She went to the opposite side. “Here it is.”

Without speaking, Sanshirō moved toward her. As their hands were almost touching, he stumbled over his bucket and kicked up a racket. When they finally succeeded in opening the shutter, bright sunlight flooded the room. It was almost blinding. They looked at each other and couldn’t refrain from laughing.

They opened a rear window too. They could see the landlord's yard, including his chickens. Mineko swept out as before, and Sanshirō crawled after on his hands and knees wiping. Holding her broom in both hands, Mineko watched Sanshirō work. "My!" she exclaimed.

Finally, she set her broom aside on the tatami mats and went over to the rear window. She stood and gazed out. Sanshirō finished wiping. He plopped his wet rag into the bucket and joined Mineko.

"What are you looking at?"

"Take a guess."

"The chickens?"

"Nope."

"That big tree?"

"Nope"

"What is it then? I give up."

"I've been watching those white clouds."

Sanshirō saw the white clouds crossing the wide sky. The fabric of the sky was pure blue and endlessly deep, and a succession of solid white clouds, like shiny wads of cotton, was blowing by in front of it. The edges of the clouds, buffeted by a furious wind, thinned to reveal the blue behind them. Other clouds, ruffled by the same wind, clumped together and then split apart finely, forming a collection of soft white needles. These were the clouds to which Mineko pointed as she spoke.

"They look like an ostrich boa, don't you think?"

Sanshirō was not familiar with the word "boa." He confessed that he didn't know what she meant.

Mineko said "My!" again, but she patiently explained to him what a boa was.

"Ah, I do know what those are," he replied. Then he told her how those white clouds were really snow crystals. And given how they appeared to move from down here, their actual speed up there must be faster than even typhoon winds. He told her everything he had learned from Nonomiya.

"Is that a fact?" Mineko turned to look at him. Then she said with a firm tone, "We shouldn't think of clouds as snow crystals."

"Why not?"

"We just shouldn't. Clouds are clouds. Otherwise, what's the point of gazing at them?"



“You really think so?”

“I do. Would you trade those clouds for snow?”

“You seem to prefer the heights to the ground.”

“Yes.”

Mineko continued gazing skyward from within the bamboo lattice. The white clouds floated on, one after another.

In the distance, the sound of a wagon could be heard. Now it was turning into the quiet lane, and from its rumbling they could feel it drawing near. “They’re here,” Sanshirō said. “So soon,” Mineko remarked, not moving. She listened intently, as though the movement of the wagon’s sound were connected with the movement of her clouds. Through the autumn stillness, the wagon continued its relentless approach. Finally, it drew to a stop in front of the gate.

Leaving Mineko behind, Sanshirō raced downstairs. He emerged from the entryway just as Yojirō was coming through the gate.

“You’re here early,” Yojirō called out.

“And you’re late,” Sanshirō replied, the opposite of Mineko’s reaction.

“Late? I brought everything in one trip, so it took some time. And it was just me, along with the maidservant and the driver.”

“Where’s the professor?”

“At the school.”

While the two of them were talking, the driver had started to unload. The maidservant appeared too. The driver and maidservant were set to work on the kitchen. Yojirō and Sanshirō set about moving books into the Western-style room. There were a lot of books, and organizing them was no small task.

“Miss Satomi’s not here yet?”

“She’s here.”

“Where?”

“Upstairs.”

“What’s she doing upstairs?”

“Whatever she’s doing, she’s upstairs.”

“You’ve got to be kidding me.”

A book still in his hand, Yojirō followed the corridor to the bottom of the staircase and yelled up in his usual manner. “Satomi-san, Satomi-san. We’re working on the books. Come and help.”

“Be right there.”

Mineko started calmly down the stairs with broom and duster in hand.

“What were you doing?” Yojirō asked impatiently from below.

“Cleaning the upstairs,” she answered back down to him.

Hardly waiting for her to come down, Yojirō rushed Mineko to the doorway of the Western-style room. The books that the driver had unloaded were piled high. Sanshirō was hunched down by the pile, his back to the two of them, reading intently.

“Look at all this! What are we going to do?”

At the sound of Mineko’s voice, Sanshirō turned, still hunched on the floor with his book, and grinned.

“I’ll tell you what we’re going to do. We’re going to move all these books in and get them organized. The professor will be here soon and help us. There’s nothing to it. -- And you - this is no time to be reading. Borrow it later and read it at your leisure.” Yojirō was in a testy mood.

They settled into a routine, with Mineko and Sanshirō sorting books at the doorway. Yojirō took the sorted books and arranged them on the shelves in the room.

“Don’t get careless. This one has a companion.” Yojirō waved a thin blue book.

“But there isn’t one,” Mineko protested.

“Don’t tell me there isn’t when there is.”

“Found it, found it,” Sanshirō intervened.

“Where? Let me see.” Mineko leaned in closer. “History of Intellectual Development. That’s it!”

“Enough with ‘That’s it!’ Hurry up and hand it here.”

The three of them worked diligently for the next half hour. To no one’s surprise, Yojirō was the first to run out of steam. He sat down on the floor, legs crossed, silently regarding the bookshelves. Mineko tapped Sanshirō on the shoulder. Sanshirō called out with a grin, “Hey, what gives?”

“Ahh. What on earth is the professor thinking? This collection of useless books is nothing but a nuisance. He should sell them all and invest in stocks. If he had more sense he’d at least make some money.” Yojirō sighed as he lamented, still seated on the floor with his face to the wall.

Sanshirō and Mineko looked at each other and laughed. Their all-important leader was out of commission, so the two of them paused their book sorting. Sanshirō wrested a volume of poetry from the heap. Mineko opened a large picture book across her lap. In the kitchen, the hired driver and the maidservant were stirring up a racket with their non-stop bickering.

“Take a look at this,” Mineko called in a low voice. Sanshirō leaned over her picture book. He caught a scent of perfume from her hair.

She was looking at an illustration of a mermaid, a naked woman with the body of a fish from the waist down. Her fish body was wrapped around behind her hips, and just her tail protruded out the opposite side. She was combing her long hair, holding the overflowing locks in one hand, and facing out of the page. Behind her was the vast ocean.

“A mermaid.”

“A mermaid.”

The two of them, heads brushing, whispered the word. Yojirō, wondering what was up, emerged from his stupor on the floor and came out into the corridor. “What’s that? What are you looking at?”

The three of them drew their heads together and flipped through the pictures page by page, amusing themselves with unapologetic and uninformed critique.

After a while, Professor Hirota, dressed in his frock coat, returned from the Emperor’s Birthday ceremonies. The three of them turned over the picture book and greeted him. The professor told them the books were highest priority, so they began again in earnest to sort and shelve. This time, with the head of the household present, they were on their best behavior and didn’t dawdle. An hour later, they had somehow cleared the corridor and fit every book onto the shelves. The four of them stood and surveyed the finished work.

“We can organize things better tomorrow,” Yojirō declared. He was appealing to the professor for a respite.

“It’s quite a collection,” Mineko remarked.

“Professor, have you read all these?” Sanshirō finally asked. This question was of great importance to him as reference in his own endeavors.

“Who could read all these? Other than maybe Sasaki.”

Yojirō scratched his head. Becoming serious, Sanshirō explained how he’d been borrowing books at the university library, a few at a time, and always found evidence of prior use. As a test, he’d borrowed a novel

by someone named Aphra Behn, and even there he'd seen markings from a previous reader. He'd asked his question because he was curious about the scope of people's reading.

"I have read Aphra Behn." These words caught Sanshirō by surprise.

Yojirō joined in. "I'm impressed. You must be drawn to obscure works that no one else reads."

Professor Hirota laughed and headed toward the living room, presumably to change his kimono. Mineko followed him out.

Yojirō remarked to Sanshirō, "That's why he's a great man in the darkness. He's read everything, but nobody knows it. He should read more contemporary works, and he should try harder to promote himself."

Yojirō's criticism was in no way spiteful. Sanshirō remained silent and gazed over the bookcases. After a time, Mineko called to them from the living room. "Come and get some lunch, you two."

They followed the corridor from the study and entered the living room. In the middle of the room was the basket that Mineko had brought. The lid was off, and there were sandwiches piled high inside. Mineko was sitting next to it, serving up lunch on small plates. Yojirō began conversing with her as she served.

"I'm glad you didn't forget the food."

"How could I? You were quite clear in your request."

"Did you go and buy that basket?"

"Certainly not."

"You had that at home?"

"Of course."

"It's a big one. Did you bring your rickshaw man? You should have kept him here for a while to help out."

"He was away on errands. A woman can handle a basket like this by herself."

"You can handle it. Any other young lady would have refused."

"Is that so? Then maybe I should have left it at home."

Mineko dealt with Yojirō while dishing up their lunch. She spoke clearly and calmly, and without hesitation. She hardly glanced at him the whole time. Sanshirō admired her composure.

The maidservant brought tea from the kitchen. Gathered round the basket, they all dug into their sandwiches. It was quiet for a while until Yojirō, as if suddenly remembering, spoke to Professor Hirota. "Professor, I'd been meaning to ask you about that author you mentioned. Something Behn, wasn't it?"

“You mean Aphra Behn?”

“Who, actually, is Aphra Behn?”

“An acclaimed English female writer. From the 17th century.”

“17th century is too old. No journal would be interested.”

“It is old. However, she’s famous as the first woman to earn her living as a novelist.”

“Then I take that back. Tell us more about her. What did she write?”

“I’ve only read her novel called Oroonoko. Ogawa-san, you probably saw it listed in the collection of her works.”

Sanshirō had no idea, so he asked what it was about. The professor told them it was about a dark-skinned African of noble birth who was tricked by an English captain and sold into slavery. As a slave he endured unspeakable hardships. Historians now believed that the story was based on events that the author witnessed first-hand.

“Interesting. Satomi-san, how about it? You could write something like Oroonoko.” Yojirō turned his attention back to Mineko.

“I could write, but I don’t have any such experience to draw on.”

“If you need a dark-skinned hero then how about Ogawa? He’s a dark fellow from Kyūshū.”

“You’re terrible!” Mineko jumped to Sanshirō’s defense, but then she turned to him and asked, “Can I write about you?”

When he saw her eyes, Sanshirō remembered the moment that morning when she’d appeared at the garden gate with her basket. He felt spellbound in spite of himself. However, he also found his courage sapped. He was incapable, of course, of saying to her, “Yes, please do.”

Professor Hirota enjoyed a smoke in his usual manner. Yojirō observed that he smoked like a true philosopher. It was, in fact, a different kind of smoke. Two thick and sturdy pillars rose calmly from his nostrils. Yojirō, his back propped against the shōji, watched in silence as the columns drifted upward. Sanshirō surveyed the garden dreamily. No longer much of a move-in party, it now felt like an intimate gathering. The conversation was accordingly relaxed. Only Mineko, who was seated by the professor, busied herself with folding up the Western clothes he’d left on the floor. No doubt she’d also laid out for him the Japanese clothes he’d changed into.

“You’re careless and prone to confusing things, so let me give you one more important fact about Oroonoko.” The professor interrupted his smoking for a moment.

“Your counsel is always welcome.” Yojirō didn’t miss a beat in responding.

“Following the publication of the novel, a man named Southerne arranged the story into a script for the stage. His play opened under the same name, but it’s a distinct work. Be careful you don’t confuse the two.”

“I’ll be certain not to.”

Mineko glanced at Yojirō as she was folding.

“There’s a famous line from the play. It reads, ‘Pity’s akin to love.’... ” The line was punctuated with an abundance of philosophical smoke.

“There must be an equivalent expression in Japanese.” This time Sanshirō joined in. The others all voiced their agreement, but none could think what it would be. They decided they should try and translate it. The four of them proposed various lines, but none were deemed satisfactory.

Finally Yojirō, being Yojirō, suggested a different approach. “I think this wants to be a line of popular song. It has that kind of tenor to it.”

The other three entrusted the translation to Yojirō. He pondered the problem for a while and then said, “It might sound a little contrived, but how’s this? ‘Your wretchedness, my love.’”

“Absolutely not! You’ve debased it entirely.” The professor immediately shot him a look of disapproval. Yojirō’s translation had clearly offended the professor’s sensibilities. Sanshirō and Mineko couldn’t refrain from laughing. They were still laughing when the garden gate creaked open and Nonomiya appeared.

“Is the work mostly done?” As he spoke, he approached the front of the veranda and looked in at the four of them in the room.

“We were just about to start.” Yojirō replied without hesitation.

“Can you help?” Mineko played along with Yojirō.

Nonomiya grinned. “Looks like a good time. What was so funny?” He turned and seated himself on the edge of the veranda.

“The professor took offense at my translation.”

“Translation? What did you translate?”

“It was nothing really. Just ‘Your wretchedness, my love.’”

“Hmm.” Nonomiya shifted his position to look their way. “What would that be about? I can’t follow it.”

“Neither can we,” said the professor.

“Okay, I tried to shorten it too much. Here’s what it’s really saying. ‘Your wretchedness moves me; I must be in love.’”

“Ah. And what was the original text?”

“Pity’s akin to love.” Mineko repeated it. Her pronunciation was clear and her voice lovely.

Nonomiya got up from the veranda and took several steps toward the garden. Finally, he turned and stopped, facing the room. “I see. That’s not a bad translation.”

Sanshirō couldn’t help but notice Nonomiya’s demeanor and the direction of his gaze.

Mineko stood up and went to the kitchen. She washed a cup, poured fresh tea, and brought it out to the edge of the veranda. “Have some tea,” she said, taking a seat there herself. “How is Yoshiko doing?”

“She’s pretty well recovered.” Nonomiya sat back down and took a sip of tea. Then he turned toward the professor. “Professor, after moving all the way to Ōkubo, it looks like I may have to come back.”

“Why is that?”

“My sister doesn’t like walking past the Toyama Academy training fields on her way to school and back. And she says she’s lonely waiting up for me while I run my experiments in the evenings. It’s okay for now with my mother there, but she’ll be going back to the country soon, and then it will just be my sister and the maidservant. Two faint-hearted women can’t manage on their own. -- It puts me in a bind.” Half for show, he let out a long sigh. Then he turned to Mineko. “Satomi-san, any chance you could take a house guest at your place?”

“I’m sure we’d be happy to.”

“Who’s the guest? Sōhachi or Yoshiko?” Yojirō interjected himself.

“Either is welcome.”

Only Sanshirō remained silent. Professor Hirota asked, in a more serious tone, “Then what will you do?”

“Once my sister’s taken care of I can lodge somewhere for a while. Otherwise I’ll have to move all over again. I’d like to put her in the school dormitory, but she’s still really a child. We need an arrangement where I can go to her, or she can come to me, at any time.”

“Then Satomi’s place is your only option.” Yojirō offered his verdict.

The professor paid no heed to Yojirō. “She could stay here in the upstairs room, but I’ve got Sasaki to deal with as well.”

“Professor, please let Sasaki have the upstairs room.” Yojirō appealed on his own behalf.

Nonomiya laughed and replied, “I’ll think of something. -- She looks grown up, but she’s really a foolish child. Quite a handful. And she insists I should take her to see the chrysanthemum dolls at Dangozaka.”

“Why don’t you take her? I’d love to see them too.”

“You’ll come with us, then?”

“Absolutely. Ogawa-san, you should come too.”

“I’d be happy to.”

“And Sasaki-san.”

“I’ll pass on the chrysanthemum dolls. I’d rather go see a moving picture.”

“Go and see the chrysanthemum dolls.” Professor Hirota joined the conversation. “There’s nothing like them when it comes to handiwork, even outside of Japan. They’re an unparalleled example of human ingenuity that shouldn’t be missed. If they’d used actual people in their display, not a single visitor would go and see. There are four or five actual people in every house, so there’d be no point in venturing so far as Dangozaka.”

“Impeccable Hirota logic.” Yojirō rated the professor’s remark.

“It worked on us every time in my student days,” Nonomiya commented.

“Come with us then,” Mineko finally added.

The professor was suddenly speechless. His silence was followed by a round of laughter.

“Need a little help here,” the maidservant called from the kitchen.

“Coming!” Yojirō shouted back as he jumped to his feet.

Sanshirō remained seated.

“Well, I guess I should be going.” Nonomiya stood up.

“Do you have to go already? You just got here,” Mineko replied.

Professor Hirota asked in parting if Nonomiya could wait a bit longer on the business they’d discussed. Nonomiya agreed and headed out through the garden. As soon as he’d disappeared through the gate, Mineko called out as though suddenly remembering something, hurried into the sandals she’d left at the edge of the garden, and followed after him. They talked out in the street.



Sanshirō remained quietly seated.