

## Sanshirō – Chapter 9

Natsume Sōseki – 1908

At Yojirō's urging, Sanshirō was finally part of the Seiyōken gathering. For the occasion, he wore a haori of black pongee. This haori, as his mother had explained at length in her letter, was sown by Omitsu Miwata from material that her mother had woven and dyed with his family's crest. When the package arrived he'd tried it on, not cared for it much, and stuck it in his wardrobe. Yojirō insisted it was a shame not to wear it. He was so taken with it that he offered to wear it himself. Sanshirō, after a while, relented. Once he had it on, he decided it wasn't so bad.

Thus attired, Sanshirō stood in the Seiyōken entry hall with Yojirō. According to Yojirō, protocol dictated that they stay out front and welcome the guests. This was not something Sanshirō had anticipated. To begin with, he'd thought that he, himself, was one of the guests. As a greeter, he felt his pongee haori rather garish. He wished he'd worn his school uniform. By and by, the party members trickled in. As each arrived, Yojirō exchanged some words, engaging them all like old familiar friends. The guests checked their hats and coats, passed beyond a broad staircase, and turned down a dimly-lit corridor. After they were gone, Yojirō would turn to Sanshirō and explain who was who. Sanshirō, as a result, was able to match faces to some well-known names.

After a while, the party was more or less assembled. There were close to thirty guests in all. Professor Hirota was there. Nonomiya was there too. -- Though a physicist, Haraguchi had reportedly dragged him along anyway, on grounds that he took interest in painting and literature. Haraguchi, himself, was of course in attendance. He'd arrived before all others. He made himself busy flitting about, effusing charm as he pulled at his French-style whiskers.

It was finally time to be seated. Each was left to choose his place, and all were seated with neither deference nor contention. Professor Hirota, contrary to his leisurely nature, was first to stake out a place. Yojirō and Sanshirō sat together at the foot of the table. The rest of the party mixed themselves accordingly, trusting the choice of neighbors to chance.

Between Nonomiya and Professor Hirota was a critic in a striped haori. Opposite was a scholar named Shōji. This was the doctor, a man of influence in the literature department, of whom Yojirō had spoken. He cut a dignified appearance in his frock coat. His hair was unusually long. Under the light of the electric lamps, it appeared as dark coils. His appearance was in marked contrast to Professor Hirota's close-cropped look. Haraguchi had seated himself at a distance. He was on the far corner, fully opposite Sanshirō. Over his folded collar he'd tied a broad band of black satin. Its loose ends were draped across his chest. Yojirō informed Sanshirō that all French artists wore similar attire. Sanshirō mused, as he sipped his bouillon, that it closely resembled a waistband knot.

The guests began, gradually, to converse. Yojirō drank his beer. He was less talkative than usual. Among this company, even Yojirō seemed restrained by a sense of respect. Sanshirō asked in a quiet voice, "No 'de te fabula' tonight?"

“I’m afraid not tonight,” Yojirō replied.

Yojirō then turned and engaged the man next to him. He remarked that he had seen the other’s essay and learned a great deal from it. He continued to express his appreciation for the work. The essay in question, however, was a work that Yojirō had disparaged thoroughly in Sanshirō’s presence. Sanshirō was left bewildered. Yojirō turned back to him again.

“That really is a nice haori. And it looks good on you.” He seemed particularly taken with the white-colored crest.

Just then, from the far end of the table, Haraguchi addressed Nonomiya. In times like this, engaging from a distance, his loud voice served him well. Professor Hirota and Professor Shōji, who had been talking across the table, suspended their conversation for fear of interfering with Haraguchi and Nonomiya. Other conversations also ceased, bringing the party for the first time to a common focal point.

“Nonomiya-san, have you succeeded in measuring light beam pressure?”

“Not yet. It’s proving harder than we thought.”

“It must be quite an endeavor. Our work, too, takes perseverance, but not on the scale of yours.”

“The advantage of painting is it springs from inspiration. Experimental physics is less obliging.”

“Inspiration, I’m afraid, is greatly overrated. This summer, I happened past a couple of old ladies engaged in dialog. I listened a bit as they discussed the rainy season and whether or not it was ending. One stated that in the old days a roar of thunder had always signaled the end of the rains. Nowadays, regrettably, that no longer held. The other refuted her indignantly, questioning how a mere clap of thunder could possibly presage the seasons. -- Modern painting is just the same. A burst of inspiration, alone, is nowhere near adequate. Isn’t writing the same, Tamura-san?”

A novelist named Tamura was seated next to Haraguchi. He replied that his sole inspiration was his publisher’s deadlines. This sent a wave of laughter through the room. Tamura then redirected the conversation to Nonomiya, asking if light beam pressures were real, and if so then how did one measure them. Nonomiya’s reply was quite interesting. --

According to Nonomiya, a substance like mica is first shaped into a disk, about the size of a “sixteen soldiers” playing piece. Then it’s suspended from a crystal thread in a vacuum. The surface of the disk is hit square on with light from an arc lamp, and the disk is deflected by light pressure.

The party was listening with interest. Among them, Sanshirō was recalling the day, shortly after his arrival in Tōkyō, when he’d peered through Nonomiya’s scope. The described apparatus must be housed in that pickled vegetable can.

“Is there such thing as a crystal thread?” He whispered to Yojirō. Yojirō shook his head.

“Nonomiya-san, is there really such thing as a crystal thread?”

“There is. You melt crystal grains over an oxyhydrogen burner. Then, pulling with both hands, you draw out a fine thread.”

Sanshirō acknowledged the response and queried no further. Next to speak was the critic in the striped haori who was seated next to Nonomiya.

“We’re completely uninitiated in this field. How does one know what to look for in the first place?”

“Maxwell’s theory predicts their existence, and a man named Lebedev first confirmed it through experiment. It’s been conjectured recently that light pressure affects comet tails. These tails, which were expected to bend toward the sun, are always observed to extend, in fact, in the opposite direction.”

The critic seemed duly impressed. “It’s an interesting idea. Best of all, it plays on a grand scale.”

“It’s not just grand,” added Professor Hirota, “it’s also comfortably innocuous.”

“And all the more innocuous if it proves wrong,” laughed Haraguchi.

“It will, I expect, be proven right. Light pressure is proportional to the square of the radius, while gravitational pull is proportional to the cube. The smaller the object, the lesser the gravitational influence in comparison to light pressure. If the comet tail is composed of minute particles, then they’re bound to be blown away from the sun.”

Nonomiya was now expounding earnestly. Haraguchi chimed back in his characteristic manner, “It’s innocuous, but burdensome to compute. There’s always give and take.” His words restored levity to the party.

“It would seem that physics is no longer a naturalist endeavor,” Professor Hirota stated.

The terms “physics” and “naturalist” both piqued the interest of the group.

“How so?” the physicist himself inquired.

Professor Hirota was compelled to explain. “I mean that to measure light beam pressure, one can’t just open one’s eyes and observe the natural world. In the fare of nature’s offerings, light beam pressure is not on the list. You have to contrive an apparatus, of crystal thread, vacuum, mica, and the like. Only then can a physicist observe the phenomenon. The naturalist wouldn’t go there.”

“Nor would the romanticist,” interjected Haraguchi.

“Yes, the romanticist would,” Professor Hirota asserted emphatically. “The situational relationship of light beam and light receiver is foreign to the natural world. Isn’t this the essence of romanticism?”

“But once that situational relationship is established, what follows is simply an observation of light’s inherent properties. From there we’re back to naturalism,” Nonomiya offered.

“Then physicists are romantic naturalists. Their equivalent in literature might be Ibsen.” Dr. Shōji, seated diagonally opposite, proposed this analogy.

“True. The devices of Ibsen’s dramas are much like Nonomiya’s. But the characters who function within, unlike light beams, seem not to adhere to natural laws.” This from the critic in the striped haori.

“I expect you’re right. There’s one thing to remember with regard to humans. -- Namely, that a human being, placed in certain circumstances, has the ability, and reserves the right, to defy expectation. This is a key point. -- Curiously, however, we forget this and assume that human beings, like light beams, are governed by mechanics. Doing so results, oftentimes, in bad ends. You contrive to antagonize another and he laughs. Or you scheme amusement and stir up anger, the exact opposite outcome.” Professor Hirota expanded the scope of the discourse.

“Does that imply, then, that for a given individual, in a given situation, any behavior can pass as natural?” The novelist seated opposite inquired.

Professor Hirota responded immediately. “Yes, precisely. Depict any type of human in any way you like. Wouldn’t you suppose then, that somewhere in the world, one such individual exists? We humans, in fact, cannot imagine deed or manner that fall outside the bounds of humanity. It’s only poor prose, isn’t it, that renders a character inhuman?”

The novelist had no response. Dr. Shōji spoke again next. “Even among physicists, when Galileo noticed that one swing of a cathedral pendant lamp, large or small, took a fixed amount of time, or when Newton attributed falling apples to gravitational force, didn’t it begin as naturalism.”

“If that’s naturalism,” Nonomiya replied, “then I can see how it figures in literature. Haraguchi-san, is it present in painting as well?”

“It is. Courbet is a dreadful example. Espousing ‘*vérité vraie*,’ he acknowledged only stark realism. His following was limited, but they’re rightfully recognized as one distinct school. Isn’t it the same with writers? There must, after all, be the same sort of types as Moreau and Chavannes.”

“There are indeed,” answered the novelist.

There was no table speech to follow dinner. Haraguchi, though, railed incessantly against the bronze bust on Kudan. That kind of work, so thoughtlessly erected, was an affront to the citizenry of Tōkyō. It would have been far more sensible, in his view, to produce the bust of a beautiful geisha. Yojirō informed Sanshirō that Haraguchi was at odds with the artist who crafted the Kudan bust.

When the party ended and they stepped outside, a beautiful moon was out. Yojirō asked Sanshirō if he thought Professor Hirota had impressed Dr. Shōji favorably. Sanshirō replied that he thought he had. Yojirō

stopped by a public faucet and related a story from the past summer. He'd come up on his evening walk, and it was so hot and sticky that he'd doused himself under the water. A policeman had spotted him, so he'd run off up Suribachiyama. The moon was bright this night as they topped that same hill.

They continued on, and Yojirō started in suddenly on the borrowed money. On this cold night, under the clear moon, money was far from Sanshirō's mind. He listened only passively to Yojirō's excuses. He'd already written it off. Yojirō, in fact, made no commitment to settle his debt. He merely listed reasons why he couldn't. Yojirō's approach, though, did interest Sanshirō -- A particular acquaintance of Yojirō's had experienced heartbreak, lost his will to live, and resolved to end it all. He wasn't ready to throw himself into the sea, nor a river, nor worse yet the mouth of a volcano. Death by hanging was worst of all. His final recourse was to procure a pistol. Before he could use his pistol, though, a friend came to him for money. Having none, he refused his friend. The friend however, appealed so desperately that, in the end, he relinquished his cherished pistol. The friend got by by pawning the pistol. Later, when the friend redeemed the pistol and returned it, the pistol's owner had changed his mind. Being hit up for money had, in effect, saved his life.

"You never know what will happen," Yojirō concluded.

Sanshirō found this all quite amusing, and nothing more than amusing. He looked up at the moon, high above, and laughed loudly. Repaid or not, he was feeling good.

"Don't laugh," Yojirō cautioned.

Sanshirō's mirth continued.

"Stop laughing and give it some thought. After all, wasn't it on my account, my failure to pay you back, that you borrowed from Mineko?"

"What of it?"

"Isn't that something in itself? -- You are in love with her, aren't you?"

Yojirō was a keen observer. Sanshirō grunted vaguely and looked back up at the moon. A white cloud was now skirting it.

"Have you paid her back?"

"Not yet."

"Don't. Keep the money."

Spoken with hardly a care. Sanshirō didn't reply. He had no intention of keeping the money. In fact, after paying the twenty for his room and board, he'd thought to call again at the Satomi residence that very next day to return the extra ten. In consideration of the lender, though, he'd decided against too prompt a repayment. He'd held off, foregoing for now the chance for another visit. Then, on some impulse, he'd

dropped his guard and indulged himself. The fee for this evening's party, in fact, had come from that ten yen. Not just his own, but Yojirō's too. At this point, two or three yen remained. He thought to buy himself a winter shirt.

With little prospect of repayment from Yojirō, Sanshirō had bitten the bullet and written home for an extra thirty yen. His monthly allowance was adequate to cover expenses, so he couldn't just state that he needed more money. Not being wont to tell lies, he struggled with words to explain his request. Finding no other recourse, he simply wrote that a friend had lost money and landed in a bind. Feeling pity for the fellow, he'd helped him out. As a result, he was now himself in a bind. He very much needed these funds.

The reply, if sent in a timely manner, should have arrived by now. Thinking it might be there this evening, he returned home to his lodgings. Sure enough, an envelope with his mother's writing was waiting on his desk. Curiously, though, it had not come by registered courier. It had merely been mailed with a three-sen stamp. He opened it and took out a terse, business-like note. Coming from his mother, it struck him as cold and impersonal. He was instructed to go see Nonomiya, to whose care the requested funds had been sent. Sanshirō laid out his bedding and retired for the night.

Sanshirō did not call on Nonomiya the next day, nor the day after. Nonomiya, for his part, did not initiate contact. An entire week went by. Finally, Nonomiya sent his maidservant over with a note. He had something for Sanshirō from his mother, and Sanshirō should come for it. During a break between lectures, Sanshirō went back to the cellar in the college of science. He was hoping to settle the matter with a hallway conversation. This plan, however, proved impractical. Nonomiya, in the room he had occupied alone last summer, was now surrounded by mustached men and students in uniform. All were intent and silent in pursuing their work, oblivious to the sunlit world above them. Nonomiya seemed most engaged of all. He noticed Sanshirō at the door and approached without words.

“Your money from home has arrived. You'll need to come by and get it - I don't have it here with me now. Also, there's a matter we need to discuss.”

Sanshirō nodded agreement and asked if that evening would work. Nonomiya hesitated a moment, then finally replied that that would be fine. Sanshirō left the cellar, impressed again by the perseverance of scientists. The pickled vegetable can and scope were still in place, exactly as he'd seen them that summer.

Sanshirō saw Yojirō at his next lecture and updated him on events. Yojirō gazed at him in an almost disdainful way. “That's why I told you to keep the money. You've stirred up trouble and worried your mother. And now you'll get lectured by Nonomiya. It's all idiotic.” In his censure was no recognition of himself as the cause of it all.

Sanshirō seemed also to have forgotten Yojirō's role. There was no hint of blame in his answer. “I don't like keeping someone else's money. I had to write home.”

“You may not like it, but the lender is pleased.”

“Why?”

Sanshirō himself sensed a lack of sincerity in his question. Yojirō, however, appeared not to notice.

“Isn’t it obvious? If I were the lender, I’d feel the same. Suppose I have extra money. In that case, I prefer helping out to being repaid. All people, as long as it’s within their means, take pleasure in helping others.”

Sanshirō, without answering, began taking notes. He’d written several lines when Yojirō leaned close and added, “When I’ve had money, I’ve often lent to others. Not a one has paid me back. That’s the key to my sunny disposition.”

Sanshirō found this hard to swallow. He smiled lightly and continued with his notes. Yojirō left it at this and was silent through the rest of the lecture.

The bell sounded, and the two of them left the room together. Yojirō asked abruptly, “Do you think she’s in love with you?”

Other students from the lecture were filing past. Sanshirō descended the stairs in silence, turned out the side entrance, and emerged onto the open field by the library. Only then did he turn back to Yojirō. “I’m not sure.”

Yojirō studied him for a moment. “Maybe not. But suppose you were sure. Do you think you could be her husband?”

Sanshirō had never considered this question. He’d assumed Mineko’s affection to be the sole and sufficient qualification. Now that the question was raised, he wasn’t so sure. He tilted his head in thought.

“Nonomiya could be,” Yojirō stated.

“Is there a connection between them?” Sanshirō’s expression was hard and serious.

“Who knows?” replied Yojirō lightly. “Anyway, go see Nonomiya and get your lecture.” With that, he headed off toward the pond.

Sanshirō stood rooted in place, a blank expression etched on his face.

Yojirō stopped himself after five or six paces, then circled back with a grin. “Hey, how ‘bout taking Yoshiko instead?” So saying, he pulled Sanshirō along toward the pond. As they walked, he repeated his suggestion. By and by, the bell sounded again.

Sanshirō set out for Nonomiya’s that evening. It was too early yet to call, so he strolled to Yonchōme and entered the large import store to look for a shirt. The clerk brought various shirts from the back. Sanshirō, in no hurry to buy and feeling somewhat indulgent, ran his hand over each shirt’s fabric and held it out to view. As he was doing so, Mineko and Yoshiko happened by. They’d come in together for perfume.

They expressed surprise and greeted each other. “That was kind of you, the other day,” Mineko thanked him. Sanshirō understood her immediately. The day after he’d borrowed the money, he’d thought to call on

her again to return the extra. He'd decided to hold off for the time being, and instead, several days later, had penned a thoughtful letter of appreciation and mailed it to her.

The words of the letter, excessive though they were, candidly reflected the feelings of the author at the time of writing. Sanshirō had laid it on thickly, with line after line of heart-felt gratitude. The emotion was such that, to an outside observer, it could hardly be seen as "thank-you" for a loan. Content-wise, however, there was nothing more than gratitude. Even so, gratitude with such vigor was also something more. Sanshirō, from the moment he'd mailed his letter, had looked forward to Mineko's reply. His effort, however, went unanswered, and until today he'd had no chance to see her. In the face of her lukewarm "That was kind of you, the other day" response, Sanshirō's nerves faltered. He held up a large shirt before him in both hands. He wondered if her indifference might possibly be for Yoshiko's sake. He also considered that he was buying a shirt with her money. The clerk pressed him for his choice.

The two young ladies, smiling, came over to help him look at shirts. "Take this one," Yoshiko finally said. Sanshirō took her advice. Next they enlisted Sanshirō in choosing perfume. Having no idea, he picked up a bottle labeled "Heliotrope" and, only half earnestly, asked what they thought. Much to his consternation, Mineko agreed on the spot to buy it.

Back out front, the young ladies began taking leave of each other. Yoshiko led with, "See you later," and Mineko replied with, "Don't be too late." As it turned out, Yoshiko was off to visit her brother. Sanshirō once again, on this evening, was obliged to accompany an attractive young lady to Oiwake. The sun had not yet fully set.

Sanshirō didn't mind walking with Yoshiko, but he was mildly perturbed that she'd be there at Nonomiya's. He considered going home and trying again another night. However, if he were to be lectured as Yojirō surmised, then Yoshiko's presence might prove advantageous. Surely Nonomiya, with a third party present, would refrain from dishing out admonishment as a proxy for Sanshirō's mother. Sanshirō might, if it went well, just receive his money and leave. -- Scheming to himself, Sanshirō made up his mind.

"I was going myself to see Nonomiya."

"Really? Just to visit?"

"No, for a bit of business. Are you just visiting?"

"No, I have some business there too."

Both asked similar questions, and both received similar replies. Neither, however, seemed in the least put out. Sanshirō, to make sure, asked if he would not be intruding. Yoshiko assured him he would not be in the least. Her face reflected, rather, surprise at the question. Sanshirō, by the gaslight of a storefront, glanced into her dark eyes and was sure he detected a look of surprise. Her eyes, in truth, were merely large and dark.

"Did you get your violin?"

“How did you know?”

Sanshirō struggled for an answer. Unconcerned, she continued on. “I pestered my brother, and he kept saying he’d buy me one, but he never did for the longest time.”

In Sanshirō’s mind, the blame for this fell on Yojirō, not on Nonomiya or Professor Hirota.

The two of them turned from the Oiwake thoroughfare and entered a small lane. Lining the lane were numerous houses. The lamps by each door cast light over the dark ground. They stopped in front of one. Nonomiya lived in the back.

It was a block or so from Sanshirō’s lodgings. He’d been by several times since Nonomiya’s move. Nonomiya had two detached rooms, at the end of a wide hallway, up several steps, and off to the left. A large neighboring garden tightly skirted his veranda from the south side. Day or night, it was exceedingly quiet. Sanshirō, from his first visit, had been impressed with the comfort of the place. Seeing Nonomiya settled in these private rooms, Sanshirō appreciated the wisdom in exchanging his prior household for lodgings. Nonomiya had accompanied him once into the hallway, looked up at the eaves of his room, and pointed out the thatch cover. It was, indeed, a rare untilted roof.

It was night this time, and the roof was too dark to see, but an electric light burned in the room. At first sight of the electric lighting, Sanshirō, to his amusement, recalled the thatchwork.

“A curious pair of guests. I take it you met outside?” Nonomiya addressed his sister.

She corrected his supposition, and went on to suggest that he buy a shirt like Sanshirō’s. She told him her Japanese-made violin, recently purchased, was poorly crafted. She’d been patient in waiting, so the least he could do was exchange it for something nicer, something at least on par with Mineko’s. After that came a prolonged venting of similar such grievances. Nonomiya did not get cross with her, but he also offered no sympathy. He merely nodded in acknowledgment.

Sanshirō stood by silently. Yoshiko’s issues were all of a trifling nature. Once she let loose, she didn’t hold back. Yet he didn’t regard her as foolish, and he couldn’t judge her as selfish. This engagement with her brother, as he stood and listened, felt refreshing, like an outing through a sunlit meadow. He even forgot the impending lecture. Suddenly, in this moment, she caught him off guard.

“Oh, I almost forgot. Mineko gave me a message.”

“She did, huh?”

“You don’t have to hide your joy. You are glad, aren’t you?”

Nonomiya looked bashful. He turned to Sanshirō. “See what a fool my sister is?”

All Sanshirō could do was grin.

“I’m not a fool in the least, am I?”

Sanshirō grinned again. Deep down, he was tired of grinning.

“There’s a performance at the Literary Society. Mineko requests your company.”

“Why doesn’t her brother take her?”

“He said he had a prior engagement.”

“And you’re going too?”

“Of course.”

Nonomiya didn’t commit one way or the other. He turned back to Sanshirō and complained how his sister, with whom he had serious business, carried on so over trifling matters. True to his scholarly demeanor, he was unexpectedly candid when asked what was up. Yoshiko had a pending marriage proposal. Their parents, when informed, had voiced no objection. The next step now was to carefully consider Yoshiko’s feelings.

Sanshirō merely replied that this was splendid. He thought he should wrap up his own business quickly and be on his way. “It seems my mother requested your assistance,” he broached the subject.

“It hardly qualifies as assistance.” Nonomiya promptly produced the entrusted object from his desk drawer and handed it to Sanshirō.

“Your mother wrote a long letter expressing her concern. It’s her understanding that unavoidable circumstances compelled you to lend your monthly remittance to a friend. A friend, no matter how close, should refrain from such reckless borrowing. And once having borrowed, he should certainly honor his debt. Country folk are down to earth, so you can’t fault her for thinking thus. There was more. If you’re going to lend, do so in moderation. For a fellow supported month-to-month from home, doling out twenty or thirty yen at a stroke is thoughtless excess. -- I almost felt admonished myself just reading it.”

Nonomiya looked at Sanshirō with a grin.

“I’m sorry to have put you out,” Sanshirō replied earnestly.

Nonomiya, it seemed, had not intended to take the younger man to task. Changing his tone, he added, “Really, it’s nothing to fret over. It’s no big deal. To your mother, though, from her country perspective, thirty yen is an awful lot. According to her letter, a family of four could live half a year on thirty yen. Is that really true?”

Yoshiko laughed out loud. Sanshirō, too, found the absurdity amusing. His mother’s point, though, was not entirely off base. Seeing it in this light, he felt sorry now for his own imprudence.

“That would be 5 yen per month, or 1 yen and 25 sen per person. Over 30 days, that’s only 4 sen per person per day. -- That can’t be enough, even for the countryside.” Nonomiya performed the calculations.

“What can one get for 4 sen?” Yoshiko asked in earnest.

With no chance to dwell further on his regrets, Sanshirō told them of life in the country. Among his stories, he told about supplication day. Once each year, Sanshirō’s family would contribute ten yen to the village as a whole. One man would come forward from each of sixty households. These sixty men would forego their work for the day and gather at the village shrine. Saké flowed freely from morning to night, and they feasted to their hearts’ content.

“For ten yen?” Yoshiko questioned in surprise.

The lecture seemed forgotten. They continued their idle talk for a while. Then, at a lull in the conversation, Nonomiya returned to topic. “Anyway, back to your mother. I was to check into the circumstances and see that nothing is amiss. Then, at my discretion, I was to hand over the money. I was also requested to report back my findings. Without even probing, I’ve already given you your money. -- What should I say? If I understand right, you lent to Sasaki.”

Sanshirō guessed that Nonomiya had learned this from Yoshiko, who in turn had heard it from Mineko. It was strange to think, though, that neither brother nor sister had connected this money to Yoshiko’s violin. He simply answered, “That’s right.”

“Because Sasaki lost his own money at the horse track?”

“Yes.”

Yoshiko laughed out loud again.

“I’ll find some way to convey all this to your mother. But next time be more careful. No more lending.”

Sanshirō promised no more lending. As he thanked Nonomiya and rose to leave, Yoshiko declared that she’d be going too.

“We have to have our talk,” her brother cautioned her.

“No we don’t,” she pushed back.

“Yes we do.”

“No we don’t. There’s nothing to say.”

Nonomiya looked at his sister in silence. She continued. “What’s there to talk about? You want my opinion on someone I don’t even know, someone I neither like nor dislike. There’s nothing to say.”

Sanshirō could see her point. He left them to their talk and hastily stepped outside.

He walked back up the deserted lane, dark save the glow of door lamps. Stepping out of the lane, he was met by a stiff wind. After turning north, he fought against gusts to return to his lodgings. He imagined Nonomiya, in this same wind, walking his sister back to Mineko's place.

Sanshirō climbed the stairs and entered his second-floor room. Inside, he could still hear the roar of the wind. Each time it roared, the word "fate" came to mind. When it roared loudly, he wanted to shrink and hide. He knew he was neither bold nor courageous. When he thought about it, his fate in Tōkyō had largely been shaped by Yojirō. And to some extent he'd been trifled with, albeit in a good-natured way. Yojirō was a lovable mischief-maker. Hereafter, too, this lovable mischief-maker would take a role in shaping his fate. The wind outside continued to roar, with a force that bested even Yojirō.

Sanshirō set the thirty yen from his mother by his pillow and retired for the night. This thirty yen was part of fate's trifling. He had no idea where it would take him next. He'd go to Mineko and repay her. Her reaction, when he did so, was certain to fan the flames of fate. Sanshirō hoped for a roaring blaze.

With that, he drifted off to sleep. He slumbered soundly, far beyond the reaches of fate or Yojirō. He was awakened by the sound of fire bells. Voices carried from the distance. This was the second fire since his arrival in Tōkyō. He pulled on a haori over his pajamas and opened the window. The wind had subsided somewhat. The two-story house across the way stood pitch black. It's blackness was accentuated by a red glow in the sky behind it.

Braving the cold, Sanshirō gazed for a while at the fiery glow. In his mind, fate too was tinged in vivid red. He slipped back into the warmth of his futon. Once there, the plights of the many, running amok through the red glow of fate, were forgotten.

At daybreak, he was back to his usual self. He dressed in his school uniform and headed for class with notebook in hand. He didn't fail though, to place the thirty yen in his pocket. Unfortunately, his schedule that day was not good. He was booked tight till three. If he went after three, Yoshiko would be back from school. Mineko's older brother, Kyōsuke, might be there as well. He didn't see himself able to repay Mineko in the presence of others.

Yojirō found him again.

"Did you get your lecture last night?"

"It was hardly worth calling a lecture."

"I'm not surprised. Nonomiya's a sensible man." With that he was off to somewhere.

Two hours later they met again in class. "The Hirota initiative's going well," Yojirō reported.

Sanshirō asked how far it had progressed.

“There’s no need to worry. I’ll fill you in when we have more time. The professor was asking after you. It’s been a while since you’ve been over. You should go more often. He’s a bachelor, so we have to look after him. Buy something and take it to him.” With that, Yojirō disappeared.

He appeared again next hour. For whatever reason, he suddenly wrote “Money received?” in telegram-like fashion on a blank piece of paper and passed it to Sanshirō in the middle of lecture. Sanshirō thought to write a reply, but when he looked toward the instructor, the instructor was looking right at him. He wadded the note and dropped it at his feet. He waited until lecture was over.

“I got the money. I have it with me.”

“That’s good to hear. You’re planning to repay her?”

“Of course.”

“Good. Then go right away.”

“I’m going today.”

“She should be home by late afternoon.”

“She goes out?”

“She’s been going each day to be painted. They must be just about done by now.”

“Haraguchi’s place?”

“Yes.”

Sanshirō got directions from Yojirō.