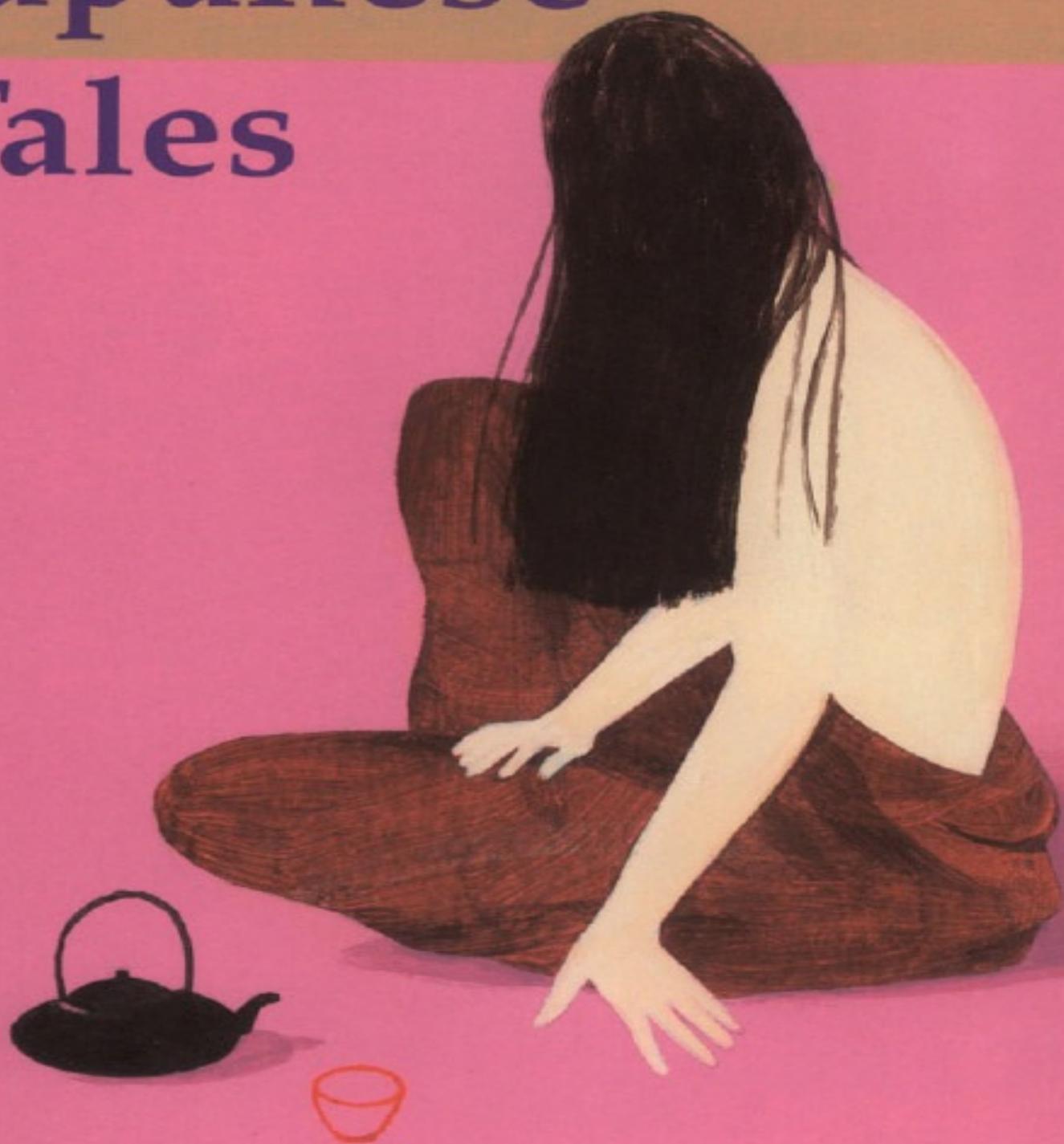


Junichirō Tanizaki
**Seven
Japanese
Tales**



Translated by Howard Hibbett

Seven Japanese Tales

Junichirō Tanizaki (1886-1965) is one of the major figures of 20th-century Japanese literature. Born in the heart of downtown Tokyo, he studied literature and led a bohemian existence at Tokyo Imperial University. His youthful experiences are reflected in his writings, as are the influences of such Western contemporaries as Poe, Baudelaire and Wilde. Following the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, Tanizaki left Tokyo for the Kyoto-Osaka region, and this is where he wrote his finest works. As a young, cosmopolitan Tokyo rake he abandoned the superficial Westernization of his student days and immersed himself in Japanese tradition and history. The emotional and intellectual crisis sparked by Tanizaki's transition turned a very good writer into one of Japan's greatest and most-loved novelists. Junichiro Tanizaki received the Imperial Prize in Literature in 1949.

Junichirō Tanizaki

Seven Japanese Tales

Translated from the Japanese by
Howard Hibbett

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INTRODUCTION

The seven tales collected in this volume span half a century in the extraordinary literary career of Junichiro Tanizaki, a career which has outlasted more than one edition of his "Complete Works." Among his many distinctions have been an Imperial Award for Cultural Merit in 1949, after he had published the whole of his great novel *The Makioka Sisters*, and, in 1943, the suppression of that work as a menace to the national war effort.

Tanizaki continues to alarm or delight the Japanese reading public with the audacious vigor of his recent novels. One of these is *The Bridge of Dreams* (first published in October 1959), the confessional narrative of a young man who has grown up in the shadow of a guilt-laden obsession with the memory of his mother, and with the beauty of the girl who took her place. Here the exploration of erotic mysteries leads into a tangle of relationships as bizarre and unhealthy as those of Tanizaki's earlier novel *The Key*, in which a middle-aged professor attempts, with gratifying success, to corrupt his demure wife. *The Bridge of Dreams*, in the form of a memoir rather than a pair of diaries as in *The Key*, has a similarly tantalizing blend of candor and deviousness. Again the reticences of an old-fashioned Kyoto household provide a hushed setting for scandal.

But there is also a subtle nostalgic flavor to *The Bridge of Dreams* and a hint of thematic reference to Lady Murasaki's eleventh-century *Tale of Genji*, that towering masterpiece which few were able to translate (except in the lucid English version by Arthur Waley) until Tanizaki made his long, loving translation of it into modern Japanese. The moving coda of *Genji* describes a young man's frustrated pursuit of a girl whom he identifies with the obsessive memory of her dead sister; and its last chapter is entitled "The Bridge of Dreams"—an image symbolizing the insubstantial beauty of life itself, once poetically alluded to by Prince Genji as "a bridge linking dream to dream."

Dreams, daydreams, elaborate fantasies—often dramatizing the secret affinity of love and cruelty—have had a significant place in Tanizaki's fiction ever since he began writing short stories in the twenties. The first and most famous of these is *The Tattooer* (1910), an elegant little sadomasochistic fable of an artist who fulfills his wish to tattoo the skin of the Perfect Woman. The time is late Tokugawa (around the 1840's), the place Edo, and the style lush *fin de siècle*. Aside from being "representative," in the Japanese sense of being an obligatory anthology piece, *The Tattooer* illustrates at once Tanizaki's fascination with the Japanese past and with the seductively evil blossoms of exotic decadence. *Terror* (1913), a highly colored fragment of the case history of a man with "morbidly excitable nerves," is set in a modern urban milieu of streetcars and jostling crowds, as disturbing in their way as the phantoms of the past. It is another of the early stories which depict abnormal psychological states in a prose of great sensuous beauty.

The Thief (1921) is in a plainer style and exposes a different sort of aberration, one which the narrator confessed ("I have not written a single dishonest word here") in the equivocal manner of the narrator of *The Bridge of Dreams*. But the predominant tone is rational. In *Aguri* (1922), however, Tanizaki indulges in a vein of almost surrealist fantasy: Okada, drained of health by a vam-pirish young mistress, is a prey to terrifying hallucinations. Aguri herself is merely a pleasure-loving, acquisitive young waitress or bar girl, a mannequin requiring adornment in order to become the idolized fat woman who appears in so many guises in Tanizaki's fiction. Her metamorphosis is to be accomplished, not by actual tattooing, but by dressing her in those alluring Western garments which

seem to give the female body a fresh, vividly tattooed skin, and yet which, unlike the constricting trousers, coat, and tie (with stickpin) of fashionable Western-style gentlemen, release its vital power.

Another of Tanizaki's cruel beauties is the gifted blind heroine of *A Portrait of Shunkin* (1933), perhaps the finest in a series of short novels which reflect both in style and in subject his deepening appreciation of the traditional culture of Japan. This time the narrator is a scholarly man with antiquarian tastes who has come into the possession of a curious biography of Shunkin, a few anecdotes and reminiscences about her, and a single faded photograph—apparently the only one ever taken—of her bland, lovely face. Shunkin grew up in the still-feudal merchant society of the late Tokugawa period and lost her sight before the arrival of Perry and the upheaval of the Meiji Restoration, events which (though unmentioned) doubtless would not have made such a strong impression on her as the death of one of her prized larks or nightingales. Indeed, as her servant remarks, she has more affection for her birds than for any human companions, even her long-suffering guide and pupil, the devoted Sasuke.

The theme of blindness—so often associated with love in Tanizaki's world—occurs also in a slightly earlier novel centered on a servant and his mistress: *A Blind Man's Tale* (1931). But here the setting is one of the most confused and violent ages of Japanese history: the century of civil war which ended with the decisive victory of Tokugawa Ieyasu at the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600. Among Tanizaki's characters are two conquering generals—the ruthless, vindictive Oda Nobunaga and his cleverer and even more ambitious successor, Hideyoshi—who imposed a harsh order on the chaotic pattern of relations among the warlords of sixteenth-century Japan. Yet the alliances and treacheries, the battles and sieges, the incessant movement of forces, are seen only obliquely in his narrative through a mist which is not dispersed by the false sunlight of the popular costume novel. The nightmarish facts of history compose a fitfully lighted background to the story of the servant Yaichi's devotion to Lady Oichi and her daughters, a devotion which is at last rewarded by cruelty.

All the characters of *A Blind Man's Tale* (except the narrator) figure in the historical records of the time. Familiar heroes such as Hideyoshi reveal new qualities to the novelist's imaginative perception, and there is even something enigmatic about the lovely women whose superficial calm is the mask for strange and complex emotions. A portrait of Lady Oichi, commissioned by her dutiful eldest daughter, has been preserved in a temple on Mount Koya. She sits in a serene formal pose, holding a sutra in her right hand. Her bland, expressionless face recalls the "face of classic oval outline and features so delicately modeled that they seem almost ethereal" in the faded photograph of Shunkin.

HOWARD HIBBERT

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Seven Japanese Tales



A PORTRAIT OF SHUNKIN

Shunkin (born as Mozuya Koto, but better known by her professional name) was the daughter of an Osaka drug merchant. She died on the fourteenth of October in 1886—the nineteenth year of the Meiji era—and was buried in the grounds of a certain Buddhist temple of the Pure Land sect in the Shitadera district of Osaka.

Some days ago I happened to pass the temple, and stopped in to visit her grave. When I asked the caretaker how to find the Mozuya plot, he said "It's over this way, sir" and led me around the main hall. There, in the shade of a cluster of old camellias, stood the gravestones of generation after generation of the Mozuya family—but none of them seemed to belong to Shunkin.

I told the caretaker about her, and suggested that she must have a grave somewhere. He considered this for a moment. "Well," he said at last, "maybe it's the one on the hill." And he took me to a flight of steps leading up a steep slope on the eastern side of the grounds.

As you may know, the Ikutama Shrine stands on a height overlooking Shitadera: the slope mentioned rises from the temple grounds toward the shrine and is densely wooded, quite unusual for Osaka. We found Shunkin's gravestone in a little clearing about halfway up. It bore this inscription:

MOZUYA KOTO, also called SHUNKIN
Died October fourteenth
In the nineteenth year of Meiji
At the age of fifty-seven

On one side were carved the words: "Erected by her pupil, Nukui Sasuke." Perhaps the reason why Shunkin was buried apart from her family was that, although never legally married, she had lived with her "pupil," the celebrated samisen master Nukui Sasuke, as man and wife.

According to the caretaker, the Mozuya family was ruined long ago. The relatives hardly ever came to visit the graves any more, certainly not to Shunkin's. "I didn't think she belonged to the same family," he told me.

"So the grave is neglected, is it?" I asked.

"No," he said, "not really. An old lady from Haginochaya who looks to be about seventy comes here once or twice a year. She prays and offers flowers and incense, and then—" He paused, pointing to another grave at the left of Shunkin's. "You see that little stone next to it? As soon as she's finished she goes over and does the same thing there. She pays the temple to look after both graves, too."

I went to examine the other stone. It was about half the size of Shunkin's, and had this inscription

NUKUI SASUKE, also called KINDAI
Pupil of Mozuya Shunkin
Died October fourteenth in the fortieth year of Meiji
At the age of eighty-two

So this was the grave of the famous virtuoso. The fact that his monument is smaller than Shunkin's and that he is described on it as her pupil shows that he wished to remain humble toward her even at death. As I stood there on the hillside, near the two stones glowing in the late-afternoon sun, I looked down at the city spread out below me. No doubt this hilly terrain, which stretches westward as far as the Tenno Temple, has had the same contour throughout the long history of Osaka. Today the grass and foliage are soot-stained, dead-looking; the great trees are withered and dusty, giving an air of drabness to the scene. But when these graves were dug it must have been a luxuriant setting; even now this is surely the most tranquil burial place in Osaka, and the one with the finest view. Here, high over the busiest industrial city of the Orient, over the innumerable tall buildings that pierce the evening haze, teacher and pupil lie together in their eternal sleep, bound by a mysterious fate. Osaka has changed almost beyond recognition since Sasuke's day, but these two stones still testify to his love for Shunkin.

The Nukui family belonged to the Nichiren sect of Buddhism, and all of the family tombs except Sasuke's are at a temple in Hino, his own birthplace, in the province of Omi. Yet because of his ardent wish to be buried beside Shunkin, Sasuke abandoned the faith of his ancestors and joined the Pure Land sect. They say that all arrangements for the two graves—including the size and position of the stones—were made while Shunkin was still alive. Shunkin's gravestone appeared to be about six feet high, and Sasuke's less than four. The two were side by side on low flagstone-covered bases, and a pine tree, planted to the right of Shunkin, stretched its green limbs protectingly over her. Sasuke's gravestone stood a few feet to the left of hers, like a humble servant, just beyond the tip of the pine branches. As I looked, I was reminded how faithfully Sasuke had served his teacher, following her like a shadow and attending to all her needs. It seemed to me as if the stones had souls, and even now they took pleasure in her happiness.

After kneeling at Shunkin's grave for a moment, I ran my hand affectionately along the top of Sasuke's stone. Then I wandered about on the hill until the sun had dropped out of sight beyond the city.

Not long ago I acquired a slim volume called *The Life of Mozuya Shunkin*, which awakened my interest in her. The book has sixty pages, bound in the Japanese style, and is printed in large characters on pure handmade paper. I gathered that Sasuke had asked someone to compile his teacher's biography for private distribution on the second anniversary of her death. Although the text is written in the old-fashioned literary style and Sasuke himself is referred to in the third person, he undoubtedly supplied all the material and may well be regarded as the real author.

To quote from the *Life*:

For generations the Mozuya family has kept a pharmaceutical house in Dosho-machi in Osaka under the name of Mozuya Yasuzaemon. Shunkin's father was the seventh in that line. Her mother, Shige, came from the Atobé family of Kyoto, and bore her husband two sons and four daughters. Shunkin was the second daughter, and was born on the twenty-fourth of May, 1829, the twelfth year of the Bunsei era. . . . Even as a child, Shunkin was not only remarkably intelligent but gifted

with an aristocratic grace and beauty quite beyond comparison. When she began learning to dance at about the age of three the correct movements seemed to come to her effortlessly; her gestures were more charming than those of any young professional dancing girl. They say that her teacher was astonished at her skill. "What a marvelous child!" he would murmur. "With her looks and ability she could become one of the most famous geisha in the country. It's a pity she was born into a respectable family!" Shunkin began to read and write at an early age too, and her progress was so extraordinary that she soon surpassed her older brothers.

Supposing that the source of this information was Sasuke, who seems to have idolized her, one hardly knows how much of it to believe. Still, there is a good deal of other evidence to suggest that she was indeed blessed with "aristocratic grace and beauty."

In those days most women were short in stature, and Shunkin is said to have been less than five feet tall, exquisitely formed, with very fine features and slender wrists and ankles. There is a photograph of her at thirty-six which shows a face of classic oval outline and features so delicately modeled that they seem almost ethereal. However, since it dates from the eighteen-sixties, the picture is speckled with age and as faded as an old memory. Possibly that is why it makes such a faint impression on me. In that misty photograph I can detect nothing more than the usual refinement of a lady from a well-to-do Osaka merchant family—beautiful, to be sure, but without any real individuality. She looks as if she might be thirty-six—or then again she might be ten years younger.

Although this picture was taken more than two decades after Shunkin lost her sight, she merely looks like a woman who has closed her eyes. It has been said that the deaf look like fools and the blind like sages: the deaf, in their effort to catch what others are saying, knit their brows, gape their mouths, and goggle their eyes, or cock their heads this way and that, all of which gives them an air of stupidity; while the blind, because they sit calmly with their heads bowed a trifle as if in meditation, appear to be extremely thoughtful. However that may be, we are so accustomed to seeing the half-closed "merciful eyes" with which Buddha and the Bodhisattvas gaze on all living things that closed eyes seem more benevolent to us than open ones—may even seem awe-inspiring. And Shunkin is such a meek, gentle-looking woman that one feels a sense of compassion in her veiled eyes, as one would feel those of the merciful goddess Kannon.

As far as I know, this is the only photograph ever made of Shunkin. When she was younger she had not yet been introduced to Japan, and in the same year that this one was made she suffered a calamity, after which she would certainly not have allowed herself to be photographed. Thus we have only one dim reflection of her to help us imagine her appearance. No doubt I have given a vaguely inadequate impression of how she looked. Yet the photograph itself is perhaps even vaguer than the impression which my words convey.

It occurs to me that in the year Shunkin's picture was taken—when she was thirty-six—Sasuke himself became blind; the last time he saw her she must have looked rather like this. Was the picture of her which he carried in his memory in old age as faded as this photograph? Or did his imagination make up for a gradually failing memory? Did he create an image of another lovely woman, of one altogether different from the woman in the photograph?

The *Life of Shunkin* goes on with this passage:

Consequently, her parents regarded her as their precious jewel, and favored her over all of her five brothers and sisters. However, when Shunkin was eight years old she had the misfortune of contracting an eye disease; soon she lost her sight completely. Her parents were heartbroken: her

mother seemed almost insane with grief, full of bitterness toward the whole world because of the misery of her child. From that time on Shunkin gave up dancing and devoted all her energy to the study of the koto and the samisen, and the allied art of singing. She dedicated her life to music.

It is not clear what sort of eye disease Shunkin had, and there is no further mention of it in *Life*. But Sasuke once made this remark: "A tall tree is envied by the wind, as the saying goes. Just because she was more beautiful and more talented than the others, my teacher was the victim of jealousy twice in her life. All her troubles came from those two attacks." His words suggest that peculiar circumstances lay behind Shunkin's affliction.

Another time, Sasuke said that his teacher was blinded by purulent ophthalmia. Now, Shunkin has been more than a little spoiled by her pampered upbringing, but as a child she was so gay and charming and vivacious, so considerate to those who served her, that she got along very well with people. She was on the best of terms with her brothers and sisters, and seemed to be the darling of the household. However, her youngest sister's nurse is said to have secretly hated her out of resentment at the favoritism shown by her parents. Since purulent ophthalmia is a venereal infection of the mucous membranes of the eyes, Sasuke must have been hinting—whether or not he had any better grounds for thinking so—that the nurse had somehow managed to rob Shunkin of her sight. The later violence of Shunkin's temper does make one wonder if some such incident helped to shape her character; still, Sasuke's opinions are by no means to be trusted implicitly—this was not the only time that his gripe over Shunkin seemed to poison his mind toward others. His suspicion of the nurse was probably quite unfounded.

In any case, rather than attempting to solve that problem, I need only record here that she lost her sight at the age of eight. And then: "From that time on Shunkin gave up dancing and devoted all her energy to the study of the koto and the samisen, and the allied art of singing. She dedicated her life to music." In other words, it was because of blindness that Shunkin turned to music. Sasuke said that she often told him her real talent was for dancing: those who praised her voice or her ability at the koto and samisen didn't know her true self—if only she could see, she would be a dancer. This sounds a little arrogant, as if she is pointing out how much she has achieved even in an art to which she is not really suited. But perhaps Sasuke exaggerated her words. At least, it seems possible that a chance remark of hers, uttered on a momentary impulse, made such a strong impression on him that he kept harking back to it as evidence of what a superior person she was.

The old woman from Haginochaya who still comes to tend the two graves is Shigizawa Teru, a high-ranking member of the Ikuta school of koto players. To Shunkin in her late years, and then to Sasuke, she had given devoted service. "I've heard that my teacher was good at dancing," she told me referring to Shunkin; "but she began studying the koto and samisen when she was only four or five and practiced regularly from then on. She didn't just take up music because she went blind. In those days all proper young ladies started music lessons early. They say that when she was nine years old she memorized a long koto piece at a single hearing, and picked it out on the samisen all by herself. You can see she was a born genius—no ordinary person could do a thing like that! Once she was blind I expect she studied harder than ever. She must have really put heart and soul into it."

Probably Teru is right, and Shunkin's true talent was for music. I am inclined to be dubious about her ability as a dancer.

Even if Shunkin "put heart and soul into it," she may not have intended to become a professional musician; there was no need for her to worry about making a living. It was for a different reason that she later opened her own establishment as a music teacher, and teaching was never her sole means of

support. Her monthly allowance from her parents, though not enough to satisfy her luxurious taste, was far greater than the income which she herself earned.

In the beginning, then, she must have practiced as hard as she did simply for her own pleasure with no thought of the future, developing her natural talent by this passion for music. It is probably true, as the *Life* tells us, that "by the time Shunkin was fourteen she had made such great progress that not one of her fellow pupils could compare with her."

According to Shigizawa Teru: "My teacher used to boast that her master Shunsho, who was very strict with his pupils, never gave her a real scolding. In fact, he often praised her. She told me he took a personal interest in her work, and was wonderfully kind and gentle—she couldn't imagine why people were afraid of him. I expect it was on account of her talent that he treated her so well. She didn't have to suffer for her training the way you usually do."

Since Shunkin was a daughter of the wealthy Mozuya family, no teacher, however strict, would have been as severe with her as with the children of professional musicians; besides, Shunsho must have felt a desire to protect the pitiful little girl whose happy childhood had so unexpectedly ended in blindness. Yet I suppose it was her ability, more than anything else, that won his admiration and his affection.

He worried about her more than about his own children: whenever she happened to miss a lesson because of illness he immediately sent someone to her house to ask how she was, or else set out to call on her himself. It was no secret that he took great pride in having Shunkin as his pupil. To the other children he taught, the children of professionals, he would say: "Model yourselves after the little Mozuya girl, all of you! Soon you'll be making your living at it—and yet you're no match for the child." (He always spoke of Shunkin in intimate terms, possibly because he had also taught her elder sister and was a friend of the family.)

Once, when he was criticized for being entirely too kind to Shunkin, he told his pupils to stop talking nonsense. "The stricter a teacher is, the better," he said. "I'd have been kindest to that child if I'd scolded her. But she's so brilliant, she has so much natural ability, that she'd go right on learning even without any help from me. If I really drubbed it into her, she'd be so amazingly good that the rest of you would hang your heads in shame. But her family is well off, she'll never have to earn a living, so instead of giving her a thorough training I put all my energy into trying to make decent performers out of a bunch of blockheads. What are *you* complaining about?"

Shunsho's house was in Utsubo, over half a mile from the Mozuya establishment in Dosho-machi, but Shunkin went there for a lesson every day, led by the hand by her father's shopboy. The boy was Sasuke, and that was how his relationship with Shunkin began.

As I mentioned earlier, Sasuke was born in the village of Hino, in Omi. His parents kept a drugstore there, and both his father and his grandfather had learned their trade by working at the Mozuya house in Osaka. To Sasuke, therefore, serving the Mozuya family meant serving his hereditary master.

Since he began his apprenticeship at twelve, and was four years older than Shunkin, Sasuke came to the Mozuya house when she was eight—the age at which she lost her sight. By the time he arrived Shunkin's lovely eyes had been dimmed forever. Yet as long as he lived Sasuke considered himself fortunate that he had not once seen the light of her eyes. Had he known her before her blindness, his face might later have seemed imperfect to him, but happily he was never conscious of the least flaw in her beauty. From the very first her features seemed ideal.

Today, Osaka families of means are eagerly moving to the suburbs, and their sports-loving

daughters are used to sunshine and open air. The old-fashioned sort of sheltered beauty, the girl brought up in hothouse seclusion, has quite disappeared. But even now, city children are usually pale and delicate, compared with boys and girls who grow up in the country. They are more refined—or, you like, more sickly. In particular, Osaka and Kyoto people have traditionally prized a fair complexion and have been noted for the whiteness of their skins. The sons of old Osaka families are slender and girlish-looking as their counterparts on the stage; only when they are about thirty do their faces become ruddy, their bodies plump, as they suddenly acquire the portly dignity befitting a prosperous gentleman. Until then they are as fair-skinned as women, and their taste in dress is rather effeminate too. And how much more extraordinary the gleaming whiteness, the translucent purity of the complexion of girls born into well-to-do merchant families before the Meiji era, girls brought up in the shadows of dark inner rooms! What strange, fascinating creatures they must have seemed to a boy like Sasuke!

At that time Shunkin's elder sister was eleven, and the next-younger was five. To Sasuke, fresh from the country, the little Mozuya girls seemed incredibly lovely. Most of all, he was struck by the mysterious charm of the blind Shunkin. Her closed eyes seemed to him more alive and beautiful than the open ones of her sisters; he felt that her face was perfectly natural, that it ought not to be any different.

Even if Shunkin was indeed the most beautiful of the four sisters, as everyone said, it may well be that pity had something to do with the general admiration for her. But Sasuke would have denied that. In later years, nothing offended him more than being told that his love for Shunkin sprang from pity. "That's ridiculous!" he would answer roughly. "When I look into my teacher's face I never dream of feeling sorry for her, or thinking of her as pitiful. We ordinary people are the wretched ones. Why would a lady so beautiful and so talented need anybody's sympathy? The fact is, she pities *me*, and calls me her 'poor Sasuke.' You and I have all our faculties, but she's far superior to us in every other way. *We're* the handicapped ones, in my opinion."

But that was later. At the beginning Sasuke was merely her faithful servant, though no doubt a secret flame of devotion was already burning in his heart. Perhaps he had not yet realized that he was in love with her—this innocent young girl who was the daughter of his hereditary master. He must have been overjoyed to become her companion, and to be able to go walking with her every day. It seems odd that a new shopboy was given the task of guiding the Mozuyas' precious daughter, but at first he was not the only one to be so entrusted. Sometimes one of the maidservants went along with her, and sometimes an older apprentice. But one day Shunkin said: "Let Sasuke take me," and thereafter it was his duty alone. He was thirteen at the time.

Beaming with pride at this great honor, Sasuke would walk along beside her, the palm of her little hand nestled in his, all the way to Shunsho's house. Then, after waiting until she had finished her lesson, he would escort her home again. Shunkin hardly ever spoke to him, and Sasuke kept silent as long as she did, devoting all his attention to guiding her safely along the street. Once, when Shunkin was asked why she had chosen him, she replied: "Because he's so well-behaved, and doesn't keep chattering away."

It is true, as I have said, that Shunkin originally had a great deal of charm and got along very well with people. But after losing her sight she became moody: she seemed almost taciturn, and seldom laughed. So perhaps what pleased her about Sasuke was that he fulfilled his duty faithfully and unobtrusively, without superfluous talk. (They say that Sasuke disliked seeing her laugh. I suppose he found it painful, since there is something poignant about a blind person's laughter.)

But was it really because Sasuke never bothered her that Shunkin chose him? Had she not become

vaguely aware of his adoration and, young as she was, taken pleasure in it? Such a thing may seem odd of the question in a little girl of nine; but when you consider that Shunkin, besides being such a clever precocious child, had developed a kind of sixth sense as a result of her blindness, you cannot dismiss it as inconceivable. Even later, when Shunkin knew that she was in love, she was too proud to confess her feelings: it was a long time before she gave herself to him. Thus there is some doubt as to what she actually thought of him at the beginning. In any case she behaved as if she scarcely knew he existed—or so at least it seemed to Sasuke.

To guide her, Sasuke would raise his left hand as high as her shoulder, and Shunkin would rest the palm of her right hand in his upturned palm. He seemed to be no more than a hand to her. When she wanted him to do something she never told him plainly what it was; instead, she indicated it by gesture, or by frowning, or by murmuring a hint as if she were talking to herself. Should one of the subtle hints escape his notice, she was certain to be very annoyed, and so Sasuke had to keep alert for her every movement and expression. He felt that she was testing him to see how attentive he was. Spoiled from infancy and warped by blindness, Shunkin never gave him a moment's rest.

Once, at her teacher's house, while they were waiting for her turn to take a lesson, Sasuke suddenly noticed that Shunkin had disappeared. Much alarmed, he began looking everywhere for her—and found that she had slipped out to the lavatory. Whenever she wanted to go there she would silently rise and leave the room, and Sasuke would hurry after her to lead her to the door of the lavatory; when she had finished, he would pour water over her hands at the washbasin. That day, however, Sasuke had been caught off guard and she had groped her way there alone. He came running up to her just as she was reaching for the ladle at the washbasin. "I'm awfully sorry!" he said, his voice trembling.

"Never mind," said Shunkin, shaking her head. But Sasuke knew that if he let her have her way she would be so much the worse for him later. Under the circumstances the best thing was to take the ladle from her, no matter how much she objected, and pour the water over her hands.

Again, one summer afternoon when they were awaiting her turn, with Sasuke sitting in his usual respectful attitude a little behind her, Shunkin murmured to herself: "It's hot."

"Yes, isn't it?" he agreed politely.

She was silent a few moments, and then repeated: "It's hot." Realizing what she wanted, Sasuke picked up a fan and began fanning her back. That seemed to satisfy her, but as soon as his fanning became a little less vigorous she repeated: "It's hot."

But it was chiefly to Sasuke, rather than to the other servants, that Shunkin displayed her stubbornness and willfulness. Since he did his best to cater to these tendencies in her, it was only with him that she could give full vent to such inclinations. That is one reason why she found him so useful. Sasuke, for his part, far from thinking himself abused, was pleased by the demands she made on him. Perhaps he took her extraordinary waywardness as a form of coquetry, interpreting it as a special favor.

The room in which Shunsho taught his pupils was on a mezzanine floor at the rear of the house up a short flight of stairs; when Shunkin's turn came, Sasuke would guide her up the steps and into the room to a seat facing her teacher. Then he would place her koto or samisen before her and go back downstairs to wait until the lesson was over. But while waiting he would remain alert, straining his ears to follow the music so that he could hurry back to get her as soon as the lesson ended. Naturally he became familiar with the pieces which Shunkin was learning to play and sing, and it was in this way that his own musical tastes were formed.

Of course Sasuke must have been born with a gift for music, since he eventually became a leading

virtuoso. Still, except for his opportunity to serve Shunkin, except for the passionate love that made him share all her interests, he would no doubt have spent the rest of his life as an ordinary druggist. Even in his later years, when he was officially recognized as a master, he always maintained that his skill did not begin to compare with Shunkin's. "She taught me everything I know," he used to say. Such remarks cannot be taken at face value, since he was accustomed to humbling himself while praising her to the skies. But whatever their relative merits as artists, it seems undeniable that Shunkin had a touch of genius, and Sasuke a capacity for hard work.

Before the end of the year, while he was still thirteen, Sasuke secretly made up his mind to buy a samisen and began to save the small allowance his master gave him as well as the tips he got when he was out on errands. By the next summer he was at last able to buy a cheap practice-instrument, which he took apart, smuggling the neck and body separately up to his attic bedroom in order to escape the notice of the head clerk. Night after night, when the other apprentices were fast asleep, he practiced on his samisen.

At the beginning he had no confidence in his ability, nor did he intend to become a professional musician: it was only that he felt drawn to anything Shunkin liked, out of sheer loyalty. The fact that he did his best to conceal his interest in music from her shows that he was not learning to play the samisen as a means to win her love.

Sasuke shared a cramped, low-ceilinged attic room with five or six other clerks and apprentices. He asked them not to tell anyone about his practicing, and promised not to disturb them by it. They were all young enough to fall asleep as soon as their heads touched the pillow, and none of them ever complained. Even so, Sasuke would wait until he was sure they were sound asleep, then get up and practice in the closet where the bedding was kept. The attic room itself must have been hot and stuffy, and the heat inside that closet on a summer night almost unbearable. But by shutting himself up in the closet he could muffle the twang of the strings and at the same time avoid the distraction of outside noises such as the snoring of his roommates. Of course he had to sing the vocal parts softly and pluck the strings with his fingers, instead of with a plectrum: sitting there in the pitch-dark closet, he played by his sense of touch alone.

But Sasuke never felt inconvenienced by the darkness. Blind people live in the dark like this all the time, he thought, and Shunkin has to play the samisen the same way. He was delighted to have found a place for himself in that dark world of hers. Even afterward, when he could practice freely, he was in the habit of closing his eyes whenever he took up the instrument, explaining that he felt he had to do exactly as Shunkin did. In short, he wanted to suffer the same handicap as Shunkin, to share all the joys and sorrows of the life of the blind. At times he obviously envied them. And these attitudes in which he persisted since boyhood help to account for his own later blindness. It was something that had to happen.

I suppose that all musical instruments are equally difficult when it comes to mastering their most profound secrets. However, the violin and the samisen offer special problems to the beginner, since they lack frets and must always be tuned before playing. They are the least suitable of instruments for self-teaching—and in those days there was no musical notation for the samisen. People say that with a good teacher it takes three months to learn to play the koto and three years for the samisen. But Sasuke could not afford to buy an instrument as expensive as a koto, nor could he possibly have smuggled in such a bulky object. He had to begin with the samisen. From the very first, though, he was able to tune it by himself, which not only suggests what a good ear for music he had, but how assiduously he listened while waiting at Shunsho's house. Everything he learned—the various modes and the words and melodies of the songs, the phrasing—he had to learn by remembering what he heard.

There was no other way.

He went on practicing in secret for about half a year, managing to conceal it from everyone except his fellow roommates. Then early one winter morning (it was around four and as black as midnight) Shunkin's mother happened to get up to go to the lavatory, and heard the faint sound of a samisen filtering in from somewhere. In those days it was the custom for musicians to perform "midwinter exercises": that is, to get up before dawn during the cold season, bare themselves to the icy wind, and practice. But Dosho-machi was a commercial quarter, with staid business establishments lined up side by side, not the sort of place where you would find professional musicians or entertainers, or hear any gaiety at such an hour. In fact, it was still really night, much too early even for midwinter exercises and the samisen was being played very softly, with the fingers, instead of loudly and energetically with a plectrum as one might have expected. And yet whoever it was seemed to be repeating the same passage over and over again, as if to perfect it. She could tell that he was a zealous student.

Shunkin's mother, though surprised to hear the music, paid no great attention to it and went back to bed. But she heard it again several times after that when she got up in the night; and others in the family said they had heard it too, and wondered where the sound could be coming from—surely there was no ghost! Thus the discussion went on, quite unknown to the clerks and apprentices.

All would have been well if Sasuke had continued to practice in the closet, but the fact that no one seemed to know what he was doing had made him bolder. Since he stole the night hours for his music he was bothered by loss of sleep, and being shut up in that airless closet soon made him drowsy. Toward the end of autumn, therefore, he had begun slipping out to the rooftop drying-platform to continue his nightly practice in the open air. He always went to bed at ten o'clock along with the other shop employees, and would wake up at about three a.m., tuck his samisen under his arm, and go out on the platform, where, in the exhilarating cold, he would play on and on until the eastern sky began turning gray. It was during these hours of practice that Shunkin's mother heard him. Since the drying-platform was on the shop roof, directly over the attic where the apprentices slept, the sound carried over to the family quarters across the inner garden.

All the employees were questioned, and at last Sasuke's secret was out. The head clerk summoned him, scolded him severely, warning him never to do such a thing again, and took away his samisen. But then a helping hand was extended to him, most unexpectedly: Shunkin suggested that it might be interesting to hear what he could do.

Sasuke had felt sure that Shunkin would be offended if she learned of his practicing. She would think it presumptuous of him, a mere apprentice who ought to be contented fulfilling his duty as her guide. Whether she pitied or scorned him, he would be in for trouble. And he became all the more alarmed when he was told that she wished to hear him perform. I'd be so happy if she really cared, he thought. But he could only suppose that she was trying to make a laughingstock of him. Besides, he lacked the confidence to play and sing for others.

However, Shunkin insisted on hearing him, and by now her mother and sisters were curious too. Finally Sasuke was summoned to the family's private quarters and had to demonstrate how much he had managed to teach himself. It was a painfully formal debut.

By that time he could get through five or six pieces fairly well. Asked to play everything he knew he screwed up his courage and did what he was told, playing and singing as if his life depended on it. Of course he had picked up all the tunes by ear, from the elementary "Black Hair" to the difficult "Teapickers' Song," and had learned his jumbled repertoire in a completely unsystematic way. Perhaps Shunkin and her family intended to make a laughingstock of him, as he suspected; but when they heard him perform they realized that for someone who had studied without a teacher, and only such

short time, both his instrumental technique and his voice were excellent. All of them were filled with admiration.

The *Life of Shunkin* says:

Thereupon, Shunkin began to sympathize with Sasuke in his ambition, and said to him: "In reward for your hard work I shall teach you myself from now on. Regard me as your teacher, and practice all you can in your spare time." At length Shunkin's father, Yasuzaemon, gave his consent to this arrangement, and Sasuke felt as if he had soared up to Heaven. Every day a fixed time was set aside during which he was freed from his duties as an apprentice and allowed to receive instruction. Thus there was the happy result that the ten-year-old girl and fourteen-year-old boy, besides being mistress and servant, formed the new and closer relationship of teacher and pupil.

But why did a difficult, temperamental girl like Shunkin suddenly begin to show such consideration for Sasuke? Some said that it was not really her idea, that those around her had persuaded her to act as she did. I suppose the blind little girl was often so lonely and melancholy, in spite of her happy home life, that even the maidservants (to say nothing of her parents) were at their wits' end, racking their brains to think of some way to amuse or divert her. And then they learned that Sasuke shared her taste for music. No doubt the servants, who had suffered bitterly from Shunkin's waywardness, wanted to lighten their own duties by having Sasuke spend more time with her. Might they not have appealed to her vanity by praising Sasuke and saying how wonderful it would be if she went to the trouble of teaching him, how gratefully he would receive such a favor? But since clumsy flattery only annoyed Shunkin it is not at all certain that she was responding to the influence of others. Perhaps she had at last begun to care for him, and to feel a strange new emotion stirring in her heart.

In any case, everyone was delighted when she proposed to take Sasuke as her pupil. No one asked whether a ten-year-old girl, however great a prodigy, was actually qualified to teach: it was enough that her boredom could be relieved in this way, and those around her spared. And so she was given the new game of "playing school," and Sasuke was ordered to be her pupil. Thus, the plan was intended for Shunkin's benefit, rather than Sasuke's; but as things turned out it was he who profited most.

According to the *Life*: "Every day a fixed time was set aside during which he was freed from his duties as an apprentice." But he was already spending at least several hours a day as her guide, so that being called regularly to her room for music lessons must have left him scarcely time to think of his work in the shop. Probably Yasuzaemon felt guilty toward Sasuke's parents for having made their son, whom he was supposed to be training to become a merchant, into a companion for his daughter. By keeping Shunkin in a good humor would have meant more to him than the future of one of his apprentices, and Sasuke himself was eager to do it. Apparently Yasuzaemon gave his tacit approval to the arrangement, feeling that it would do no harm to let matters take their course for the present.

This was when Sasuke began to call Shunkin "Madam," one of the formalities which she required of him during his lessons. She began to speak to him more brusquely, treating him precisely as his master Shunsho treated his own pupils and exacting the strictest obedience and respect. Thus they went on with their innocent "playing school," just as the adults had planned, and Shunkin found it highly diverting. But as the months went by the two showed no sign of abandoning their game. After two or three years had passed, both teacher and pupil had become so serious about it that there was no question of its being merely an amusement.

It was Shunkin's daily routine to set out for her teacher's house in Utsubo at about two o'clock in the afternoon, take a lesson which lasted half an hour to an hour, and then go home to spend the rest

the day practicing. After supper, if she happened to feel so inclined, she would summon Sasuke up to her room and give him a lesson. Eventually she taught him every day, without fail, sometimes not excusing him until nine or ten o'clock at night. Often the servants below were startled to hear the violent scoldings she would give him: "Sasuke! Is that what I taught you?" or "No, that won't do! Come over it till you can play it, even if it takes all night!" It was not unusual for the little girl to drive her pupil to tears, rapping him on the head with her plectrum and shouting: "Idiot! Why can't you learn?"

As is well known, teachers of the arts used to drill their pupils with brutal harshness, often inflicting physical punishment on them. For example, the famous chanter of puppet dramas Koshiji-dayu II had a large crescent-shaped scar between his eyebrows—a memento, so they say, of the time when his teacher cried "When will you ever learn?" and knocked him down with a blow of his heavy plectrum. Then there is the case of Yoshida Tamajiro of the Bunraku Theater. Once, during his apprenticeship, while he was helping his master Tamazo manipulate a puppet hero in rehearsing a climactic capture scene, he was unable to perfect a certain movement of the legs for which he was responsible. Suddenly his angry teacher shouted "Fool!" and, snatching up a puppet sword (one with a real blade), gave him a sharp blow on the back of the head. To this day he bears the scar of it. Another Tamazo himself, who struck Tamajiro, once had his head split open when his own teacher struck him with a puppet. He begged his teacher for the broken-off, splintered legs of the puppet, which were crimson with his blood, and then wrapped them in silk floss and stored them away in a plain wooden box, such as is used for the ashes of the dead. Now and then he took the legs out and paid obeisance to them, as if he were worshipping the spirit of his dead mother. "Except for that beating," he would say with tears in his eyes, "I might have spent my whole life as a run-of-the-mill performer."

In his youth the late Osumi-dayu used to be called a plodder, since he often seemed slow to learn. His teacher was Toyozawa Dambei, known as "the Great Dambei." One sweltering night in the middle of midsummer while Osumi was taking a lesson at Dambei's house he stumbled over a few lines in the scene he was chanting. Again and again he repeated the passage, but as hard as he tried he could not satisfy Dambei, who prudently put up a mosquito net and retired within it to listen. While the mosquitoes fed on him, Osumi went on repeating it, hundreds and hundreds of times, till the early summer dawn began to light up the room, and even his teacher seemed to have tired and fallen asleep. Nevertheless, with the persistence of a true plodder, Osumi kept on chanting the passage as vigorously as ever, determined not to stop until it had been approved. Finally Dambei's voice came from the mosquito net: "You have it." He had listened intently all night long.

Anecdotes of this kind are not uncommon, nor are they confined to stories of puppet-theater chanters and manipulators. Similar incidents occurred in the teaching of the samisen and the koto. Moreover, these masters were usually blind men, many of whom had the stubbornness—and the streak of cruelty—so often found among persons with a physical handicap. Shunkin's master Shunsho was such a man.

Shunsho had long been known for the severity of his teaching methods. He often shouted curses at his pupils (many of whom were also blind) or even laid hands on them: whenever he scolded or lashed out at them they would back away a little—until sometimes a blind child, still clutching his samisen, would tumble over backward and fall clattering down the stairs. In later years, when Shunkin became a professional teacher, she was notorious for her strictness, which of course reflected Shunsho's influence. But she was already behaving that way as a child. What began as a little girl's game with Sasuke had gradually developed into the real thing.

One often hears of cruel teachers, but there can have been few women like Shunkin who went so far as to strike their male pupils. It has been suggested that she had sadistic tendencies, and that her teaching was only a pretext for enjoying a kind of perverse sexual pleasure. After all these years, v

can hardly say whether that was true or not. Still, when children play house they always imitate grownups. Though Shunkin was her master's favorite and was never punished, she was aware of his usual method, and must have felt in her childish mind that that was how a master ought to behave. Inevitably she began to imitate him when she was playing with Sasuke. And the habit grew on her until it became second nature.

Perhaps Sasuke cried easily, but they say that whenever Shunkin struck him he began to sob. And he sounded so wretched that everyone who heard him frowned, thinking: Shunkin is punishing him again! Her parents, who had only wanted to provide her with a new diversion, were extremely troubled by this state of affairs. Disturbing as it was to hear the samisen or the koto until far into the night, it was still worse when Shunkin gave him an angry scolding, as she often did, and when Sasuke's crying rang painfully in one's ears. Sometimes the maids felt so sorry for him—and so worried about the effect on Shunkin herself—that they would rush in to interrupt the lesson.

"What on earth are you doing?" they would say, trying to pacify Shunkin. "You're being terribly hard on the poor boy, and not at all ladylike!"

But Shunkin would draw herself up haughtily and retort: "Go away! You don't know anything about this. I'm not just playing a game. I'm really teaching him—it's all for his own good. Teaching is teaching, no matter how mad I get or how hard I treat him. Can't you understand that?"

This is how the *Life of Shunkin* puts it:

"Do you look down on me because of my youth?" Shunkin would ask. "And do you dare violate the sanctity of art? Young or old, anyone who sets out to teach ought to behave like a teacher. Giving lessons to Sasuke has never been merely a game with me. I think it is too bad that in spite of his love of music he has no chance to study under an expert; that is why I am doing my best to substitute for a teacher. I want to do all I can to help him fulfill his ambition. You couldn't possibly understand. Leave the room at once!" This firm declaration was delivered with such startling eloquence and such an awesome air of dignity that the intruders, much chastened, would make a hasty retreat.

One can easily imagine how spirited Shunkin's manner must have been. Although Sasuke was often brought to tears by her, he felt immense gratitude whenever he heard her talk like that. His tears were in part tears of gratitude for being spurred on so vehemently by the girl who was at once his mistress and his teacher. That is why he never fled from her maltreatment: even while weeping, he kept on with his lesson until she told him he could stop.

Shunkin's moods varied dramatically from day to day. When she burst out with a noisy scolding she was in one of her relatively good moods; but sometimes she only frowned and gave the third string of her samisen a loud twang, or had Sasuke go on playing as she sat listening without a word of criticism. It was on her silent days that he cried most.

One evening, when he was working on a samisen interlude from the "Teapickers' Song," Sasuke was being unusually dull-witted. Time and again he repeated the same mistake. Losing patience with him, Shunkin put her own instrument down and began beating time by slapping her knee briskly with her right hand as she sang out the notes: *Chiri-chiri-gan, chiri-gan . . .* Finally she gave up and sat there in stony silence.

Sasuke was helpless. Yet he had to go on somehow or other, doing his best to get through it. But as hard as he tried, Shunkin would not relent. Flushed and dizzy, he began making more mistakes than ever; his whole body was bathed in a cold sweat as he played on and on, quite at random. Shunkin remained silent, only tightening her lips a little more and deepening her frown. After some two hours of this Shunkin's mother came upstairs in her night kimono and stopped the lesson. "You mustn't be too eager," she told her daughter soothingly. "Going to extremes is bad for your health."

The next day Shunkin was summoned by her parents. "It's good of you to want to teach Sasuke how to play," they told her; "but shouting at pupils, or striking them, is only for an acknowledged master. After all, you're still taking lessons yourself. If you go on behaving like this it's bound to make you conceited—and conceited people don't become great artists. Furthermore, it's unladylike to hit a boy, or call him an idiot. Please don't do anything of that sort again! And from now on, set a time and stop at a decent hour. Sasuke's wailing gets on our nerves and none of us can sleep."

All this was put in such a gentle, kindly way by her parents, who had never been known to scold her, that even Shunkin seemed ready to listen to reason. But that was only on the surface. Actually, their words had no real effect on her.

"You're such a weakling!" she told Sasuke scornfully. "You're a boy, and yet you can't stand the least thing. It's all because of your crying that they blame me and think I'm being cruel to you. If you really want to become an artist you've got to grit your teeth and bear it, no matter how much it hurts. If you can't, I won't be your teacher."

After that, however badly she abused him, Sasuke never cried.

It seems to have worried Shunkin's parents that their daughter, whose blindness had already warped her character, had come to behave quite rudely now that she was teaching Sasuke. Having him as her companion was a mixed blessing. As grateful as they were to him for keeping her in a good humor, it distressed them to think that his habit of yielding to her every whim might gradually make her even more of a problem.

When Sasuke was seventeen his master arranged for him to take lessons from Shunsho himself instead of from Shunkin; no doubt her parents felt that imitating her teacher had had an unhealthy influence on her. And the change decided Sasuke's future career. From then on he was freed from all his shop duties and went to Shunsho's house regularly both as Shunkin's guide and as a fellow pupil.

Nothing could have pleased Sasuke more; and it may be gathered that Yasuzaemon, on his part, worked very hard to persuade Sasuke's parents to consent to the arrangement, assuring them that having caused their son to abandon his trade, he would guarantee the boy's future. I suppose Yasuzaemon and his wife were already beginning to think that Sasuke would make a good husband for Shunkin. In view of her handicap, they could scarcely hope to marry her to someone of equal social position. Sasuke might be the best possible match for her.

Two years later (when Shunkin was fifteen and Sasuke nineteen) her parents suggested that she consider such a marriage. To their surprise, she flatly refused. "I don't intend to marry as long as I live," she announced, looking much displeased; "and I wouldn't dream of having a man like Sasuke."

However, about another year later her mother noticed a curious change in Shunkin's figure. Sure not! she told herself; but the longer she watched, the more her suspicions seemed to be confirmed. The servants will begin to talk, she thought; we must act quickly if we are to save the situation. But when she asked her daughter about it one day as discreetly as possible, the girl told her she hadn't the faintest idea what she was talking about. Finding it awkward to pursue the matter further, Shunkin's mother let it go for a month or two. By then her daughter's condition was obvious.

Now, Shunkin frankly admitted to her parents that she was pregnant, but refused to name her lover. Pressed for an answer, she declared: "We promised each other to keep it a secret."

When they asked if the man was Sasuke she denied it indignantly. "Don't be absurd!" she said. "A apprentice like that?"

Naturally anyone would have suspected Sasuke, but Shunkin's parents, remembering what she had said last year, thought it most unlikely. Then too, a relationship of that kind could scarcely have been such a well-kept secret: an inexperienced boy and girl would have given themselves away. Furthermore, ever since Sasuke began studying under her teacher he had no reason to stay up late with her as he used to. Sometimes Shunkin would help him review his lessons; except for that, she was always the haughty young lady, treating him merely as her guide. None of the employees had the slightest suspicion of any misconduct between them—indeed, they felt that Shunkin was too distant and too cold toward him.

But surely Sasuke will know *something* about it, her parents thought. The man must have been one of the other pupils. Sasuke, however, denied any knowledge of the matter. "I can't imagine who it could be," he said. Still, he seemed so nervous and guilty-looking that they became increasingly suspicious. As they questioned him more closely he began to contradict himself. At last he said: "If I tell you, she'll be angry with me!" And he burst into tears.

"No, no!" they insisted. "It's kind of you to want to protect her, but why do you disobey our orders? If you keep it secret you'll only make things worse. Do tell us the man's name!" Despite their urging he refused to answer. Finally they realized that the man in question was Sasuke. He talked as if he had promised Shunkin never to confess, and yet wanted them to know that he was guilty.

Troubled as they were, Shunkin's parents felt relieved. What's done is done, they thought; at least we can be glad that it's Sasuke. But in that case why had she tried to deceive them last year, when they were encouraging her to marry him? Young girls were certainly unpredictable! Now that things had gone this far it would be best for her to marry as soon as possible, before people began to talk. But when they brought the subject up with Shunkin once more, she again refused. "I don't want to hear another word about it," she said, coloring. "As I told you last year, I wouldn't have a man like Sasuke. I'm grateful to you for taking pity on me, but even if I *am* handicapped I won't stoop so low as to marry a servant. Besides, it would be an insult to the father of my child."

"Well then, who *is* the father?"

"Please don't ask me that," she replied. "Anyway, I don't intend to marry him."

By now Sasuke's words seemed more baffling than ever. What were they to believe? Still, they could hardly think that she had been involved with anyone else; she must have denied it out of sheer embarrassment. Feeling sure that she would confess before long, Shunkin's parents decided to give up any further attempt at questioning her and sent her off immediately to the hot-spring resort at Arima to have her baby.

That was in May of Shunkin's sixteenth year. Sasuke stayed behind in Osaka; and she left with two maids for Arima, where she remained until her safe delivery of a baby boy in October. Since the baby's face was the very image of Sasuke's, it seemed that at last the mystery had been solved. But still Shunkin refused to listen to any talk of marriage—and denied that Sasuke was the father. When the two were forced to confront each other before her parents, she drew herself up stiffly and demanded: "Sasuke, what have you said to create suspicion? It's causing me a lot of trouble, and I wish you'd make it perfectly clear that you're innocent."

At this warning, Sasuke shrank back in alarm, and exclaimed: "How could I be involved with my master's daughter? From the time I was a child I've owed everything to the Mozuya family—"

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