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INCENSE ALBUM

A Visitor's Guide to the Exhibition
In Search of Prince Genji – Japan in Words and Images
Ferenc Hopp Museum of Asiatic Arts, Budapest



This incense album aids the orientation in the first three rooms of the exhibition. Its use is not vital for the reception of the aesthetic values that we aim to convey; however, its inspection will yield further information not to be found in the showrooms.

In the middle of the volume, you will find Prince Genji's family tree, representing the kinships and romantic relations woven throughout the novel's nearly 1,200 pages. On the 54 numbered pages, you may read short summaries of the novel's 54 chapters. This guide will be particularly helpful in the first room containing the painted album (where scenes mounted to the supporting surface do not follow the novel's order), as well as in the third room including the separate woodblock print series. The quotations found in the short summaries derive from Murasaki Shikibu's *The Tale of Genji* (translated by Edward Seidensticker, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985).

Practically every page contains a poem. These are English translations of the *waka* (also from Seidensticker's *The Tale of Genji*), cited in classical Japanese language on the walls of the exhibition's second room. Understanding the poems' contents will assist visitors to associate the displayed objects with the emotions conveyed in the poems written beside the artworks.

In the third room, visitors encounter geometric symbols made up of five orthogonal and a varying number of horizontal lines. These constitute the system of so-called *Genji-mon*. Each of these 54 signs represents a different chapter of the novel – the contents of which appear next to the appropriate symbol on each page – and they are linked through the aid of fragrant harmonies. During the Japanese incense game, the leader would distribute an incense album among the players. On each page, there was a *mon*, the title of the *Genji* chapter associated with it, a five-line poem (*waka*), as well as a miniature drawing that helped to place the episode within the monumental novel. We hope that this incense album will prove to be a trustworthy guide in the course of visiting the exhibition.

*"Your promise not to change was my companion.
I added my sighs to those of the wind in the pines."
(326)*



1 THE PAULOWNIA COURT

A child is born to the emperor and his concubine, Kiritsubo. The bright child is named Genji. Since his mother dies at a young age, the emperor brings a new lady to the palace, the beautiful Fujitsubo, who becomes his son's stepmother. Genji falls in love with Fujitsubo when still very young and will compare all of his later lovers to her. As Genji has no influential supporters in the court due to his mother's low rank, the emperor demotes him to a commoner to spare him from intrigues. Later on, Genji lives his life as a courtier.

Illustration of the first chapter depicts the adult initiation ceremony of the twelve-year-old Genji:

"The ritual cutting of the boy's hair was performed by the secretary of the treasury." (16–17) "The ceremony over, the boy withdrew to change to adult trousers and descended into the courtyard for ceremonial thanksgiving. There was not a person in the assembly who did not feel his eyes misting over." (17) "The minister descended from a long garden bridge to give formal thanks. He received a horse from the imperial stables and a falcon from the secretariat. In the courtyard below the emperor, princes and high courtiers received gifts in keeping with their stations." (18)

The picture accompanying the first chapter shows Genji bowing before the emperor after his initiation into adulthood, together with other courtiers and the gifts intended for them. The emperor, whose presence is suggested by the direction in which Genji bows and by the position of the courtiers, is hidden, in line with Japanese pictorial tradition. According to the Shinto religion, the emperor is also *kami* – i.e., a Shinto deity. Therefore, depiction of his visage is avoided.

After the episode depicted here, Genji marries the daughter of the Minister of the Left, called Aoi, whose name means "heartvine". Genji and Aoi had an arranged marriage; they had never met before. Their marriage was not to be a happy one.

*"A purposeful breeze wafts forth the scent of our plum.
Will not the warbler be first to heed the summons?"
(747)*



2 THE BROOM TREE

On a rainy summer night, seventeen-year-old Genji and his friend To no Chujo are discussing women and their love affairs in a pavilion of the Imperial Palace. *"It is with women as it is with everything else: the flawless ones are very few indeed. This is a sad fact which I have learned over the years. All manner of women seem presentable enough at first. Little notes, replies to this and that, they all suggest sensibility and cultivation. But when you begin sorting out the really superior ones, you find that there are not many who have to be on your list. Each has her little tricks ..."* (21) *"So you begin keeping company, and it is always the same. The fact is not up to the advance notices."* (22)

The next day, Genji is resting in a cool place with a large company, in the beautiful garden of the governor of Kii. The water of the river has been recently channelled into the garden, providing a cool and pleasant sight for Genji and his retinue. During the night, Genji unsuccessfully tries to conquer the young stepmother of the host, Utsusemi, "the lady of the locust shell". Utsusemi spurns Genji's advances, so in the end he finds himself in a romantic encounter with the lady's young brother.



3 THE SHELL OF THE LOCUST

Utsusemi's younger brother steals Genji into the house of the governor of Kii while the host is away in the countryside. Genji finds Utsusemi immersed playing a game of go with the lady of the west wing. Utsusemi suspects Genji's presence and hides in time. By mistake, Genji spends the night with the guest instead of the lady of his heart, and he prepares to leave.

"He took as a keepsake a summer robe the other lady seemed to have thrown off." (54)

Utsusemi's name, Shell of the Locust, is a reference to this robe: the prince compares the emptiness of the lady's thrown-off robe to the shell of a locust in his poem addressed to her. As shown in this album leaf, Genji has to sneak out of the villa, completely closed by sliding doors, in the middle of the night.

*"In thirty hundreds of years it blooms but once.
My eyes have seen it, and spurn these mountain cherries."
(94)*



4 EVENING FACES

Genji sets off to the capital to visit his ill nurse. Clinging upon the sagging eaves of this poor neighbourhood are 'evening faces' – that is, white flowers of the gourd that only assume their funnel shape in the evening – which makes him halt. At his request, a servant plucks the flowers. Meanwhile, a young girl steps out of a sliding door and gives him a perfumed fan on which to place the blossoms. On this page, our protagonist is studying the white flowers placed on the fan, musing about the identity of the lady.

*"I think I need not ask whose face it is,
So bright, this evening face, in the shining dew." (59)*

Although Genji conquers the lady's heart, their happiness will be short-lived. At the end of the chapter, Yugao falls victim to spirit possession and dies. Genji only later realizes that his friend, To no Chujo, was earlier romantically involved with the lady, who even bore him a child. Genji ensures that the child is hidden and brought up in safety.

*"I have not forgotten the depths into which I plunged,
And now these waves of wisteria seek to engulf me."*
(562)



5 LAVENDER

"Genji was suffering from repeated attacks of malaria. All manner of religious services were commissioned, but they did no good. ... In a certain temple in the northern hills, someone reported, there lived a sage who was a most accomplished worker of cures. ... The temple was fairly deep in the northern hills." (84)
"Genji walked a few steps from the cave and surveyed the scene. The temple was on a height with other temples spread out below it. Down a winding path he saw a wattled fence of better workmanship than similar fences nearby. The halls and galleries within were nicely disposed and there were fine trees in the garden." (85)
The child Murasaki, Fujitsubo's niece, lives in the house with her nurses. The girl, whose features remind Genji of Fujitsubo, enchants him at first sight. After beseeching for a long time, he receives permission from the girl's guardian, the high priest, to take the young Murasaki under his wing and continue to raise her. As the novel progresses, the girl becomes the prince's true companion for the rest of their lives.

*"The sea grass, hidden among the rocks, unchanging,
Competes this day for attention with the iris."*
(277)



6 THE SAFFLOWER

Genji sets off to visit the princess Hitachi in her lonely abode.

"Wondering if he might come upon something of interest in the main hall, he took cover behind a mouldering, leaning section of bamboo fence. Someone had arrived there before him. Who might it be? A young gallant who had come courting the lady, no doubt. He fell back into the shadows. ... In fact, it was his friend To no Chujo. They had left the palace together that evening. ... Genji was annoyed and at the same time amused. 'This is a surprise.'" (115)

To no Chujo reproaches Genji for irresponsibly venturing out alone into the night.

"They were too fond of each other to say goodbye on the spot. Getting into the same carriage, they played on their flutes as they made their way under a pleasantly misted moon to the Sanjo mansion." (116)

Still, in this chapter Genji, catches sight of the Princess Hitachi stepping out from behind the curtains on a winter morning. Because of her big, red nose, the princess is referred to in the *monogatari* as Suetsumuhana, or "the lady of the safflower".

*"I do not forget the morning glory I saw.
Will the years, I wonder, have taken it past its bloom?"*
(351)



7 AN AUTUMN EXCURSION

During the secret love affair between Genji and his stepmother, Fujitsubo becomes pregnant and gives birth to Genji's illegitimate child. The child is believed to be the emperor's son, but his association with Genji is undeniable due to his radiant beauty. However, no one is to recognize the secret, especially the emperor. Therefore, Fujitsubo pretends to be ill, keeps away from Genji and avoids being seen in public.

The celebration called Autumn Excursion is held in the tenth month in Suzaku Palace. At the event, Genji and To no Chujo dance the *bugaku* piece called "Waves of the Blue Ocean".

"Music came from boats rowed out over the lake, and there was an infinite variety of Chinese and Korean dancing. Reed and string and drum echoed through the grounds. ... The forty men in the flutists' circle played most marvellously. The sound of their flutes, mingled with the sighing of the pines, was like a wind coming down from deep mountains. 'Waves of the Blue Ocean', among falling leaves of countless hues, had about it an almost frightening beauty." (133)

During the festival, other *bugaku* dances are also performed by the court nobilities. In the evening, the emperor rewards the participants. In this picture, the emperor and his courtiers are observing the dance of Genji and To no Chujo.

*"It is a life in which we cannot be sure
Of lasting as long as the dew upon the lotus."*
(621)



8 THE FESTIVAL OF THE CHERRY BLOSSOMS

Genji conquers the sixth daughter of the Minister of the Right, Oborozukiyo, "the lady of the misty moon", whose family intended to make her wed Genji's half-brother, the heir to the throne. After the romantic night, they exchange their fans, but because of the misty moon, Genji cannot see the face of his lady. He later finds it difficult to recognise her among the minister's daughters. *"Late in the Fourth Month the princes and high courtiers gathered at the mansion of the Minister of the Right, Kokiden's father, for an archery meet. It was as followed immediately by a wisteria banquet. Though the cherry blossoms had for the most part fallen, two trees, perhaps having learned that mountain cherries do well to bloom late, were at their belated best."* (155) *"The shutters were raised and women were gathered at the southwest corner, where the wisteria was in bloom. Their sleeves were pushed somewhat ostentatiously out from under blinds..."* (156) *"The time and place were hardly appropriate for a flirtation, and yet his interest was aroused. Which would be the lady of the misty moon?"* (157) In the end, he manages to recognise the lady of his heart with the help of a cleverly composed poem.

*"A world of dew before the autumn winds.
Not only theirs, these fragile leaves of grass."
(717)*



9 HEARTVINE

"At about this time, the high priestess of Kamo resigned. She was replaced by the old emperor's third daughter, whose mother was Kokiden. ... The installation ceremonies, in the austere Shinto tradition, were of great dignity and solemnity." (159)
"Courtiers and ladies had readied their carriages far in advance, and Ichijo was a frightening crush, without space for another vehicle." (160)

In the last moment, Genji's expecting wife, Aoi, decides to take part in the ceremony.

"The waysides were by now too crowded to admit the elegant Sanjo procession. Coming upon several fine carriages not attended by grooms and footmen, the Sanjo men commenced clearing a space." (160)

In the big hustle, Aoi's footmen break the carriage-beam of one of Genji's former mistresses, Lady Rokujo, creating a rather humiliating situation for her. Out of her jealousy for Genji and as a reaction to the insult that she had to endure, the spirit of Lady Rokujo possesses the pregnant Aoi, who, amongst her pains, barely survives to give birth to Genji's son, Yugiri, and then dies. Genji retreats into deep mourning.

*"Did you suspect by so much as a mist of dew
That the azure bloom would one day be a deep purple?"
(532)*



10 THE SACRED TREE

In this sad chapter, Lady Rokujo, who lost control over her spirit, decides in her shame to leave the capital with her daughter, the high priestess of Ise. Genji bids a tearful farewell to his mistress with an aching heart and a letter accompanied by a *sakaki* twig. After the death of the old emperor, Fujitsubo takes the vows. Thus, Genji has to bid farewell to his most beloved one. The consort Kokiden's son, Genji's half-brother, becomes the new emperor. Genji and Fujitsubo's illegitimate son becomes the heir to the throne.

Genji continues his secret love affair with Oborozukiyo. After their affair is shamefully exposed, Genji's reputation is quickly ruined, and the prince temporarily retreats to the Urin-in temple north of the town, where he spends his days meditating and fasting. The album leaf accompanying this chapter depicts a scene that takes place after Genji's return.

"He had brought back autumn leaves more deeply tinted by the dews than the leaves in his garden. Fearing that people might be remarking upon his neglect of Fujitsubo, he sent a few branches as a routine gift ... Looking more closely, Fujitsubo saw hidden in them a tightly folded bit of paper. She flushed, for her women were watching. The same thing all over again!" (202)

*"Spring went off with the blossoms that left the trees.
I wander lost under trees in mournful leaf."
(763)*



11 THE ORANGE BLOSSOMS

Genji sets off to visit Reikeiden, a favourite concubine of his father's, and her sister Hanachirusato, "the lady of the orange blossoms". On the way, he wants to enter a house he thinks he once visited before. However, the hosts of the house, who are entertaining themselves by playing music, do not let him in, saying they do not know him.

The cuckoo, seen in this picture, loyally follows Genji, who was previously refused by the unknown ladies, to his original destination – i.e., the house of the two ladies-in-waiting. During his days burdened by court intrigues, Genji finds consolation in the stories told by the older lady about the happy time she once spent with Genji's father, as well as in the caresses of the younger lady.

*"Deep in the night the frost has added strands
To the sacred branches with which we make obeisance."
(595)*



12 SUMA

After Genji's scandalous love affair with Oborozukiyo is exposed, he is disgraced at court and opts for a self-imposed exile to Suma by the sea. He bids farewell to his mistresses and occupies himself with his favourite books of poetry while waiting for the day when he is allowed to return to the court.

To no Chujo "...decided that he did not care what rumours might arise and what misdeeds he might be accused of and hurried off to Suma. The sight of Genji brought tears of joy and sadness. He brightened their lives with clothes and other gifts. The stables being nearby, fodder was brought from a granary or something of the sort beyond, and the feeding process was as novel and interesting as everything else. To no Chujo hummed the passage from 'The Well of Asuka' about the well-fed horses. Weeping and laughing, they talked of all that had happened over the months." (244)

After the visit paid by his friend, Genji longs to return to the town, but he is not yet welcome because of the court's deprecatory opinion. A fierce storm by the sea closes the chapter, during which the deus ex machina of the sea god orders Genji to leave Suma.

*"Warm though it be in the radiant morning sun,
Let the jewelled bamboo not forget the frost beneath."*
(490)



13 AKASHI

Genji is undecided about what to do. He has been commanded by the sea god to leave Suma, but the gates of Heian are still closed to him. His deceased father, the former emperor, visits him in a dream, advising him to join the messenger who is soon to arrive. The Buddhist monk, once the governor of Harima province, invites Genji to Akashi. The novice and his illustrious guest spend their time conversing and playing music.

The illustration to this chapter is a genre-like depiction of the evening that the two men spend together. The novice and Genji are playing the lute and koto in the light of the full moon by the rippling waves of the sea.

During his stay in Akashi, Genji meets the monk's daughter, who is referred to in the *monogatari* as the Akashi lady. Not long afterwards, she bears him a daughter. At the end of the chapter, Emperor Suzaku pardons Genji, who can now return to the court. With a heavy heart, the prince bids farewell to the coast at Akashi and the loved ones he has to leave behind, who are equally saddened by the prince's departure.

*"The willow shoots this spring, not knowing where
The petals may have fallen, are wet with dew."*
(653)



14 CHANNEL BUOYS

After Emperor Suzaku abdicates, the son of Fujitsubo and Genji occupies the throne under the name of Reizei, while Genji is appointed minister. He regains his previous power in the court. Returning to Heian-kyo, he visits his mistresses one by one, and comes up with the idea of having a mansion built where he can entertain and look after all his mistresses. The scene depicted in the album shows his visit to Hanachirusato:

"It was sad that his preoccupation with Murasaki had left him no time for the lady of the orange blossoms." (278) "Long neglected, her house now wore a weirdly ruinous aspect. As usual, he first looked in on her sister, and late in the night moved on to the lady's own rooms. He was himself weirdly beautiful in the misty moonlight. She felt very inadequate, but she was waiting for him out near the veranda, in meditative contemplation of the night. Her refusal to let anything upset her was remarkable. ... From nearby there came the metallic cry of a water rail. 'Did not this bird come knocking at my door, What pretext would I find to admit the moon?'" (279)

Around this time the Akashi lady bears Genji's daughter. Coincidentally, the two parents go on a pilgrimage to the Sumiyoshi Grand Shrine at the same time, and although they do not meet, Genji ensures the lady of the strong bond between them.

In this chapter, Lady Rokujo dies, and her daughter, Akikonomu, the former high priestess of Ise, is entrusted to Genji's care. Genji's plan is to place her in the service of his son, Emperor Reizei, when the time comes.

*"Memories of nights beneath the ivy
Bring comfort to the traveller's lonely sleep."
(921)*



15 THE WORMWOOD PATCH

Genji neglects Suetsumuhana, or "the lady of the safflower", not only during his exile, but also after his return. The woman has sunk into poverty and many of her servants have left her, but she does not move from her place, fearing that then Genji might not find her. Her garden and house have grown completely wild, as seen in the illustration for chapter 15. After trudging through the garden during one of his visits to Suetsumuhana, Genji has her house renovated, forever obliging Princess Hitachi.

*"I might have met the first lily of spring, he says.
I look upon a flower no less pleasing."
(210)*



16 THE GATEHOUSE

The governor of Kii was appointed vice-governor of Hitachi at the same time when Genji went into exile. Therefore, he and his wife, Utsusemi, called "the lady of the locust shell", left the capital. Upon their return, they meet Genji at the Osaka gatehouse. He is setting off to the Ishiyama dera with his retinue. *"The vice-governor pulled his carriages in under the cedars at the top of the barrier rise. Unhitching the oxen, the coachmen knelt respectfully for Genji to pass. Though spaced at intervals along the road, the Hitachi procession was impressive." (303-304)* *"It being the end of the Ninth Month, the autumn leaves, some crimson and some but gently tinted, and the grasses and flowers touched lightly by the frost were very beautiful indeed; and Genji's men, pouring past the gatehouse in travel livery, damasks and dappled prints, added yet more colour." (304)* Genji again makes an attempt to court Utsusemi. He sends her a letter through her brother, who previously helped Genji in his advances to his sister, but the woman continues to spurn Genji's affections. Soon afterwards, Utsusemi loses her elderly husband and becomes a nun to avoid new suitors.

*"Ah, the fickleness! It summoned me
To a meeting, the heartvine now worn by another."
(164)*



17 A PICTURE CONTEST

"The emperor loved art more than anything else. He loved to look at paintings and he painted beautifully." (310)

In this chapter, the emperor holds a painting contest, and Genji's friend, who is also his main rival, To no Chujo, does his utmost to win. He commissions numerous works from court painters. Genji certainly also participates in the contest. *"All the chests and bookcases at Nijo were ransacked for old paintings and new, and Genji and Murasaki sorted out the ones that best suited current fancies. Thinking this a good occasion to show them to Murasaki, he took out the sketchbooks and journals of his exile. Any moderately sensitive lady would have found tears coming to her eyes. For Murasaki, those days had been unrelieved pain, not easily forgotten. Why, she asked, had he not let her see them before?" (310)*

Two teams compete in the picture contest in the presence of the emperor. The teams are led by Akikonomu, daughter of the deceased Lady Rokujo who in the meantime has become the consort of Emperor Reizei, and by Kokiden, the mother of the abdicated emperor. Picture competes against picture, and upon the request of the emperor, Prince Hotaru announces his aesthetic evaluation of each. At the peak of the contest, Akikonomu's team presents Genji's Suma scrolls, which bring him easy victory, as Genji's talent is beyond any doubt.

*"I think I need not ask whose face it is,
So bright, this evening face, in the shining dew."
(59)*



18 THE WIND IN THE PINES

The construction of Genji's vast mansion in Rokujo is close to completion, so he wants the Akashi lady and her newborn daughter to move to the capital. However, the lady is afraid of the humiliation that might befall her for her low social rank, and she rejects Genji's request. The shining prince convinces the woman to at least move closer to the capital for her child to be able to have a better education.

"The lady was begging her father to go with them as far as Oi, if only by way of escort. ... He counted over once more his reasons for refusing, but he seemed very apprehensive." (321) "The party set sail at perhaps seven or eight in the morning. The lady's boat disappeared among the mists that had so saddened the poet. The old man feared that his enlightened serenity had left him forever. As if in a trance, he gazed off into the mists." (322)

Although Genji visits his own chapel in Oi twice a month, during which he has the chance to see his daughter and the Akashi lady, he finds this situation unsatisfactory. Therefore, he decides to become the little girl's guardian and have Murasaki bring her up.

*"Look down upon me, cranes who skim the clouds,
And see me unsullied as this cloudless day."
(245)*



19 A RACK OF CLOUD

The chapter's main scene is depicted here. Genji takes his daughter to the mansion in Nijo, leaving the Akashi lady alone in Oi.

"Genji could imagine the lady's anguish at sending her child off to a distant foster mother. Over and over again, he sought to persuade her that it was the only thing to do.

'Please, you needn't. I will be happy if you see that she becomes something more than I have been myself.' But for all her valiant efforts at composure, she was in tears." (333) "The little girl jumped innocently into the waiting carriage, the lady having brought her as far as the veranda to which it had been drawn up. She tugged at her mother's sleeves and in charming baby talk urged her to climb in too. 'It is taken away, the seedling pine, so young.

When shall I see it grandly shading the earth?" (333-334)

The little girl and Murasaki immediately become attached to each other. At the same time, however, dramatic events are gathering like clouds. Genji's father-in-law, the former Minister of the Left, dies, followed by Fujiitsubo, the prince's beloved step-mother. Emperor Reizei only learns about the identity of his real father [Genji] after his mother's death.

*"Deep in the snows of this Mount Oshio
Are ancient pheasant tracks. Would you might see them."
(470)*



20 THE MORNING GLORY

Genji courts several women, including his niece, Asagao (Morning Glory), who rejects him. He confides in Murasaki, telling her about each and every one of his flirtations, which fills the girl's heart with anger, jealousy and sadness. His "confession" is depicted on this leaf.

"There was a heavy fall of snow. In the evening there were new flurries. The contrast between the snow on the bamboo and the snow on the pines was very beautiful. Genji's good looks seemed to shine more brightly in the evening light. 'People make a great deal of the flowers of spring and the leaves of autumn, but for me a night like this, with a clear moon shining on snow, is the best – and there is not a trace of colour in it. I cannot describe the effect it has on me, weird and unearthly somehow. I do not understand people who find a winter evening forbidding.' He had the blinds raised." (357)

*"The firefly but burns and makes no comment.
Silence sometimes tells of deeper thoughts."
(432)*



21 THE MAIDEN

Genji's son Yugiri falls in love with To no Chujo's daughter, called Kumoi no Kari, with whom he was raised, but Kumoi no Kari was intended for court service and thus the two were separated from each other.

The new garden of the Rokujo mansion, symbolising the four seasons, is completed. The most spectacular plants of a season are planted in the area where Genji's mistress who loves that particular season lives. Thus, there is a spring garden in front of Murasaki's pavilion, a summer garden for Hanachirusato, "the lady of the orange blossoms", an autumnal garden in front of Empress Akikonomu's pavilion, while winter flowers are planted in front of the Akashi lady's quarters.

The illustration to this chapter depicts a scene showing the preparations for the *gosechi* dance, and Genji and his companions admiring the dancers.

"Genji was this year to provide a dancer for the Gosechi dances." (374) "As his own dancer, Genji had chosen one of Koremitsu's daughters, said to be among the prettiest and most talented girls in the city. ... She practiced diligently at home, her retinue was chosen with great care, and on the appointed day he escorted her to Nijo." (375)

*"I see the drake fly, take it up in my hand.
Ah, here it is, I say--and it is gone."
(1042)*



22 THE JEWELLED CHAPLET

Tamakazura (her name means "the jewelled chaplet"), who is the daughter of To no Chujo and the deceased Yugao, is travelling from Kyushu to the capital. During her journey, she stops to pray with her retinue at Tsubaichi, below Hatsuse. At the same time, Ukon, Genji's servant who previously served Yugao, also sets off on a pilgrimage. Not having met for many years, the members of the two groups happily recognise one another when they arrive at their accommodations.

Genji takes the girl with him and decides that for the time being he will not reveal her identity to her father, To no Chujo.

*"Beneath a tree, a locust's empty shell.
Sadly I muse upon the shell of a lady."
(55)*



23 THE FIRST WARBLER

This chapter recounts the New Year's greetings exchanged between the residents of the Rokujo mansion. Genji pays a visit to his mistresses and greets each of them differently. The most touching is the New Year's gift that the Akashi lady presents to Genji. She sends him a warbler figure pinned to a pine twig and a letter telling of her loneliness.

"The carollers were out this year. They went from the main palace to the Suzaku Palace of the retired emperor and thence to Rokujo. ... Genji had invited all his ladies to watch, and there they all were along the east and west wings and galleries." (416)

"We must arrange a day of music for ourselves. Our own private recessional.' He carefully undid the fine cloths in which the instruments had been stored away and dusted and tuned them; and it would seem that the ladies were already hard at practice." (417)

*"I saw the duckling hatch and disappear.
Sadly I ask who may have taken it."
(509)*



24 BUTTERFLIES

Genji organises spring celebrations with water music, decked boats and *bugaku* dances in his Rokujo mansion. The chapter is named after the *bugaku* danced by the young girls. Genji tries repeatedly to win the confidence of To no Chujo's daughter, Tamakazura, with less and less success.

"Well, as they say, a foster parent sometimes does better than a real parent. You will find me an unusually devoted foster parent.' He preferred not to say what he was really thinking. Though he had dropped a hint or two, she had pretended not to notice. He sighed and went out.

He paused to admire a luxuriant new growth of Chinese bamboo swaying in the breeze.

*'The bamboo so firmly rooted within our hedges
Will send out distant shoots to please its convenience?'*

He raised the blind. She slipped away, but not before she had given him an answer:

*'Why should the young bamboo at this late date
Go forth in search of roots it has left behind,
and make trouble for itself?'*

He had to feel sorry for her." (426)

*"Sere and withered though these grasses be,
They are ready for your pony, should you come."
(144)*



25 FIREFLIES

The chapter title refers to the scene in which Genji lets fireflies free when Tamakazura and Prince Hotaru have a romantic meeting, so the visitor can glance at the girl's face. Instead of the title scene, this plate depicts the episode when Genji quite arbitrarily criticises the literary genre of *monogatari* which is loved so dearly by the ladies of Rokujo.

"The rains of early summer continued without a break, even gloomier than in most years. The ladies at Rokujo amused themselves with illustrated romances." (436)
"What a nuisance this all is, [Genji] said one day. 'Women seem to have been born to be cheerfully deceived. They know perfectly well that in all these old stories there is scarcely a shred of truth, and yet they are captured and made sport of by the whole range of trivialities and go on scribbling them down, quite unaware that in these warm rains their hair is all dank and knotted.' He smiled. 'What would we do if there were not these old romances to relieve our boredom? ... I think that these yarns must come from people much practiced in lying. But perhaps that is not the whole of the story?'

[Tamakazura] pushed away her inkstone. 'I can see that that would be the view of someone much given to lying himself. For my part, I am convinced of their truthfulness.'
He laughed." (437)

*"I weep in my longing to follow your butterflies.
You put up fences of yamabuki between us."
(423)*

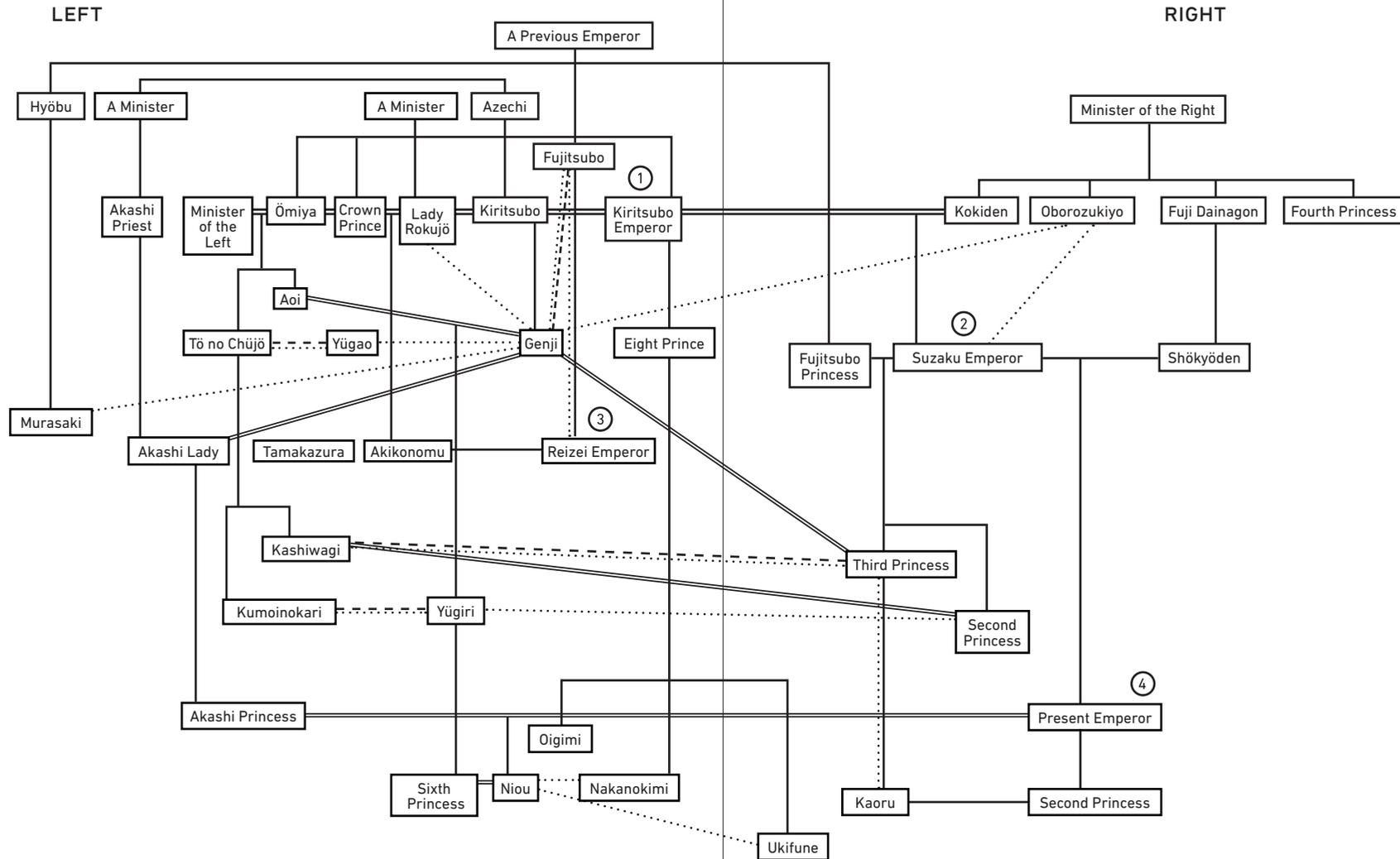


26 WILD CARNATIONS

This chapter makes a mockery of the demeanour of Omi no Kimi, one of To no Chujo's daughters who was raised in the countryside.

"[To no Chujo] thought he would look in on her, since her room was not far away. He found her, blinds raised high, at a contest of backgammon." (448) *"Her hands at her forehead in earnest supplication, she was rattling off her prayer at a most wondrous speed. 'Give her a deuce, give her a deuce.' Over and over again. 'Give her a deuce, give her a deuce.' This really was rather dreadful. Motioning his attendants to silence, he slipped behind a hinged door from which the view was unobstructed through sliding doors beyond. ... If either of them had anything at all in her empty mind, she was not showing it. The Omi daughter was small and pretty and had beautiful hair, and could by no means have been described as an unrelied scandal – though a narrow forehead and a too exuberant and indeed a torrential way of speaking cancelled out her good points. No beauty, certainly, and yet it was impossible not to recognize immediately whose daughter she was." (449)*
The girl's unpolished demeanour contrasts with Tamakazura's refined manner. The latter asks Genji to teach her how to play the koto, and the two thus spend some pleasant time together.

GENEALOGY OF EMPERORS



LEGEND

Numbers indicate emperors in order of succession

- ===== FORMAL MARRIAGE
- SEXUAL RELATION WITHOUT ISSUE
- - - - - SEXUAL RELATION WITH ISSUE
- CHILD OF DOUBTFUL PARENTAGE

*"The spider must have told you I would come.
Then why am I asked to keep company with garlic?"*
(36)



27 FLARES

"It was autumn. ... Genji was always going off to Tamakazura's northeast quarter and spending whole days there, large parts of them in music lessons." (454)
"Noticing that the flares in the garden were low, he sent a guards officer to stir and refuel them. They had been set out, not too brightly, under a spindle tree that arched gracefully over the cool waters of the brook, far enough from the house so that they too seemed cool and gentle. ...
'You should always have flares', he said. 'An unlighted garden on a moonless summer night can almost be frightening.
*'They burn, these flares and my heart, and send off smoke.
The smoke from my heart refuses to be dispersed.'" (455)*
Tamakazura refuses Genji's continued advances.
"'You wish me to go?' But someone in the other wing had taken up a flute, someone who knew how to play, and there was a Chinese koto too. 'Yugiri is at it again with those inseparable companions of his.'" (456) The evening ends with a concert given by Yugiri, Kashiwagi and their friends.

*"Dew-drenched wisteria robes in autumn mountains.
Sobs to join the baying of the stag."*
(698)



28 THE TYPHOON

"But then came a typhoon, more savage than in most years. ... The storm raged into the night, dark and terrible." (457)
Genji is not staying at home, so his son, Yugiri, takes on the role of the hospitable host and pays a visit to Genji's mistresses.
"Approaching along the east gallery, Yugiri saw over a low screen that a door was open at a corner of the main hall. He stopped to look at the women inside. The screens having been folded and put away, the view was unobstructed. The lady at the veranda – it would be Murasaki. Her noble beauty made him think of a fine birch cherry blooming through the hazes of spring. ... Her women were all very pretty too, but he did not really look at them. It almost frightened him to think why Genji had so kept him at a distance. Such beauty was irresistible, and just such inadvertencies as this were to be avoided at all costs." (458–459)
Later on, Yugiri is secretly watching Genji and Tamakazura. He is shocked by the scene not only because of the large difference in the age of the man and the girl, but because he believes his father is romantically engaged with his own daughter.

*"I know now, as I see it leave the nest,
How uncertain is the lot of the waterfowl."
(778)*



29 THE ROYAL OUTING

"In the Twelfth Month, there was a royal outing to Oharano. ... Carriages lined the streets all the way to the River Katsura. ... the higher ranks dressed uniformly in yellow- green robes and lavender singlets. Even the skies seemed intent on favouring the occasion, for there were flurries of snow. The princes and high courtiers in charge of the falcons were in fine hunting dress. The falconers from the guards were even more interesting, all in printed robes of most fanciful design." (467-468) "The procession reached Oharano, where awnings had been put out. The high courtiers changed to informal court dress and hunting dress. Refreshments were brought from Genji's Rokujo mansion. The emperor had invited Genji to join the hunt, but Genji had replied that a defilement made it impossible for him to go out." (469)

*"The tide recedes along the coast of Ise.
No hope, no promise in the empty shells."
(182)*



30 PURPLE TROUSERS

The children of Genji and To no Chujo are mourning the death of their grandmother.

"Yugiri came calling, very handsome in informal court robes of a somewhat deeper grey. The ribbons of his cap were tied up in sign of mourning. She had been friendly enough in the days when he had thought her his sister, and it did not seem right to be suddenly cool and distant. She received him at her curtains as before and dispensed with the services of an intermediary. ... Perhaps thinking that there would not be another occasion to let her know of his interest, he had come provided with a fine bouquet of 'purple trousers.'" (483) "... she pretended that she did not understand and withdrew a little deeper into the room.

'It grew, if you ask, in the dews of a distant moor.

That purple is false which tells of anything nearer.'

'I think perhaps this conversation will mark our nearest approach.'" (484-485)

Never before was Yugiri rejected so blatantly.

*"The warblers are today as long ago,
But we in the shade of the blossoms are utterly changed."*
(380)



31 THE CYPRESS PILLAR

The main event of the chapter is Commander Higekuro marrying Tamakazura. In order to break up his ruined marriage, he sends his ex-wife and children away from his house. When leaving Higekuro's house, his daughter addresses a moving farewell poem to the cypress pillar of the eastern room, hence the title of the chapter. Tamakazura moves from the Rokujo house to the commander's place.

"Genji went to the northeast quarter, where Tamakazura had lived. A clump of yamabuki grew untrimmed in a hedge of Chinese bamboo, very beautiful indeed. 'Robes of gardenia, the silent hue', he said to himself, for there was no one to hear him.

*'The yamabuki wears the hue of silence,
So sudden was the parting at Ide road.
I still can see her there.'*" (508–509)

"He seemed to know for the first time – how strange! – that she had left him." (509)
This picture, void of movement, features the musing Genji and the *yamabuki* bush, symbolising the absence of Tamakazura.

*"As I gaze at an autumn sky closed off by mists,
Why must these birds proclaim that the world is fleeting?"*
(813)



32 A BRANCH OF PLUM

The day is set for Genji's daughter, the princess of Akashi, to move to the royal court, so feverish preparations begin in the Rokujo mansion. Genji organises a perfume contest to decide which shall be used by the new empress. Prince Hotaru helps him to make the right decision.

"And there was her library, which Genji hoped would be a model for later generations." (516–517) "Letting his mind run quietly through the anthologies, he tried several styles with fine results, formal and cursive Chinese and the more radically cursive Japanese 'ladies' hand'. ... Having raised the blinds to let the breezes pass, he sat out near the veranda with a booklet spread before him, and as he took a brush meditatively between his teeth, the women thought that they could gaze at him for ages on end and not tire. His brush poised over papers of clear, plain reds and whites, he would collect himself for the effort of writing, and no one of reasonable sensitivity could have failed to admire the picture of serene concentration which he presented." (517–518)

*"I wish to be as the cloud that darkens the peak.
Better so than aimlessly drifting through life."
(996)*



33 WISTERIA LEAVES

The friendship between To no Chujo, already minister of central affairs, and Genji has been restored when the former consents to the latter's son, Yugiri, marrying his daughter, Kumoi no Kari.

"The emperor paid a state visit to Rokujo late in the Tenth Month. Since the colours were at their best and it promised to be a grand occasion, the Suzaku emperor accepted the invitation of his brother, the present emperor, to join him. It was a most extraordinary event, the talk of the whole court. ... There were brocades spread along the galleries and arched bridges and awnings over the open places when, in early afternoon, the party moved to the southeast quarter. The royal cormorants had been turned out with the Rokujo cormorants on the east lake, where there was a handsome take of small fish. Genji hoped that he was not being a fussy and overzealous host, but he did not want a single moment of the royal progress to be dull." (534–535)

*"The moon comes forth from the mountain upon a world
That offers no home. It goes again to the mountain."
(882)*



34 NEW HERBS I

To celebrate Genji's fortieth birthday, Tamakazura performs the ceremony of new herbs, ensuring a long life. Nearing the end of his life, Suzaku, the retired emperor (Genji's half-brother) asks Genji to marry his daughter, the very young Third Princess. To Murasaki's great sorrow Genji agrees; moreover, he also starts seeing Oborozukiyo, "The Lady of the Misty Moon", again. The illustration shows Genji returning from one of these visits. Despite the many years spent with Genji, Murasaki is still tormented by jealousy because of Genji's love affairs, and she is devoured by worries.

*"All should now be peace. Then lost in clouds
The moon sends forth again its radiance."
(329)*



35 NEW HERBS II

Murasaki falls ill at the age of thirty-seven. Therefore, her whole household moves to Nijo to provide a peaceful environment for her care. Genji is beside her all the time. Taking the opportunity that the lord of the house is away, Kashiwagi, To no Chujo's son, starts an affair with the Third Princess, Genji's recently wedded wife, and the princess becomes pregnant. This leaf shows the moment when Genji discovers a letter revealing the secret of his wife and Kashiwagi. His wife's servant watches this in horror, foreseeing the complications that Genji's discovery will result in.

"He was up early, thinking to be on his way while it was still cool.

'I left my fan somewhere. This one is not much good.' He searched through her sitting room, where he had had his nap the day before. He saw a corner of pale-green tissue paper at the edge of a slightly disarranged quilt. Casually he took it up. It was a note in a man's hand. Delicately perfumed, it somehow had the look of a rather significant document. There were two sheets of paper covered with very small writing. The hand was without question Kashiwagi's." (624)

For the first time in his life, Genji experiences the pain of being cheated upon and suffers greatly.

*"Only one who does not know deep waters
Can still be bobbing, dancing on those waves."
(347)*



36 THE OAK TREE

Kashiwagi (whose name means "oak tree") falls ill with guilt.

"To no Chujo and the ascetic were conferring in subdued tones. ... He told the holy man how it had all begun and how a respite always seemed to be followed by a relapse.

'Do please make her go away, whoever she might be,' he said entreatingly.

A hollow shell of his old self, Kashiwagi was meanwhile addressing Kojiju in a faltering voice sometimes interrupted by a suggestion of a laugh.

'Listen to them. They seem to have no notion that I might be ill because I misbehaved. ... I can say that others have done much the same thing, made mistakes in their longing for ladies beyond their reach and ruined their prospects. I can tell myself all this, but the torment goes on. I cannot face the world knowing that he knows. His radiance dazzles and blinds me. I would not have thought the misdeed so appalling, but since the evening when he set upon me, I have so lost control of myself that it has been as if my soul were wandering loose. If it is still around the house somewhere, please lay a trap for it.'" (638)

Kaoru, the child of the Third Princess and Kashiwagi, is born and is to be raised by Genji as his own child. The Third Princess is tormented by guilt and becomes a nun, while Kashiwagi dies of guilt not soon afterwards. As his last wish, he asks Yugiri to intervene for Genji's forgiveness for his sin (without telling the boy what sin he committed) and asks him to take care of his wife, the Second Princess.

*"Did not the mists intercede to dim the moonlight?
The birds on these branches might burst into joyous blossom."
(515)*



37 THE FLUTE

A year after Kashiwagi's death, Kaoru has already grown a toddler. Complying with Kashiwagi's request before his death, Yugiri asks Genji to forgive his friend. He also fulfils the deceased's wish to take care of his wife.

"On a sad autumn evening he visited the Second Princess. She had apparently been having a quiet evening with her music. He was shown to a south room where instruments and music still lay scattered about." (660) "She gave him a flute as he left. ...

'Far too valuable an addition to my retinue.'

It did indeed have a rich past. It had been Kashiwagi's favorite." (662)

Yugiri meets Kashiwagi's spirit in a dream. The spirit reminds him that he wanted his children to have his much loved flute, not Yugiri. The puzzled Yugiri tells Genji about his dream, since he was unaware of Kashiwagi having any children. Genji keeps the secret.

*"You drink at the mountain stream, your thoughts turn elsewhere.
Do you hope to see the image you thus disturb?"
(98)*



38 THE BELL CRICKET

The Third Princess, who took the vows, has her quarters converted into a chapel. All the inhabitants of the Rokujo mansion hasten to give her gifts for the decoration. Since the princess withdrew, Genji has been paying visits to her more happily. They spend much time together talking and enjoying the music of the crickets.

"He called for a koto and treated her to a rare concert. She quite forgot her beads. The moon having come forth in all its radiance, he sat gazing up at it, lost in thoughts of his own. 'What a changeable, uncertain world it is,' he was thinking. His koto seemed to plead in sadder tones than usual." (673)

*"Upon the cloudless mirror of this lake,
Clear is the image, for ten thousand years."
(409)*



39 EVENING MIST

Yugiri does his utmost to conquer the now widowed Second Princess. He plans a visit, which eventually does not take place because of the sudden illness of the princess's mother. The ill woman writes a letter of apology for not being able to receive Yugiri.

"Kumoinokari [Yugiri's wife] came lurching through her curtains and snatched it from over his shoulder. 'And why did you do that? It is a note from the lady at Rokujo. She was coming down with a cold this morning and feeling wretched. ... Read it, if you are so curious. Does it look like a love letter?'" (687–688)

Being jealous, his wife, Kumoi no Kari, tears the letter out of Yugiri's hand.

"He did not try to recover the note, nor could she quite bring herself to read it." (688)

Yugiri falls between two stools: the Second Princess rejects his courtship, while his jealous wife leaves his house with their children and moves back to the residence of her father, To no Chujo.

*"You walk a road you have chosen for yourself,
While helplessly we stumble on in darkness."
(841)*



40 THE RITES

Murasaki is dying. To prepare herself for the next world, Sutra readings and other religious rites are held in the Nijo mansion with the participation of large crowds.

"As the first touches of dawn came over the sky, the scene was as if made especially for her who so loved the spring. All across the garden cherries were a delicate veil through spring mists, and bird songs rose numberless, as if to outdo the flutes. One would have thought that the possibilities of beauty were here exhausted, and then the dancer on the stage became the handsome General Ling, and as the dance gathered momentum and the delighted onlookers stripped off multi-coloured robes and showered them upon him, the season and the occasion brought a yet higher access of beauty. All the finest performers among the princes and grandees had quite outdone themselves. Looking out upon all this joy and beauty, Murasaki thought how little time she had left." (714–715)

In his pain felt over losing his most beloved companion, Genji retreats from worldly life.

*"On drifted moors I shall gather early shoots.
May years of your life add to years, as snow upon snow."
(1076)*



41 THE WIZARD

Genji is in deep mourning. His only consolation is his grandson, Niou, the son of the Akashi empress. After a year has passed, preparations are made for the New Year's celebrations.

"In the Twelfth Month the clanging of croziers as the holy name was invoked was more moving than in other years, for Genji knew that he would not again be present at the ceremony." (734)

After bidding farewell to his loved ones and fulfilling all his worldly obligations, Genji "vanishes into the clouds" in the fifty-second year of his life.

*"A wind strays down from the hills to end my dream,
And tears well forth at these voices upon the waters."
(93)*



42 HIS PERFUMED HIGHNESS

Eight years have passed since Genji died. The rest of the tale recounts the adventures of Genji's grandson, Prince Niou, and Genji's adopted son, Kaoru. Both of their names are linked to fragrances: Kaoru is "the fragrant captain", who is surrounded by a natural, splendid scent; Niou, referred to as "his perfumed highness", makes great effort to have perfumes made for himself.

"The victory banquet following the New Year's archery meet was to be at Rokujo this year. ... The Left Guards won easily, as usual, and the meet was over early in the day. Starting back for Rokujo, Yugiri invited Niou, Hitachi and the Fifth Prince, as well as a son of the empress, to ride with him. Kaoru, who had been on the losing side, was making a quiet departure when Yugiri asked him to join them. It was a large procession, including numbers of high courtiers and several of Yugiri's sons – a guards officer, a councillor of the middle order, a moderator of the first order – that set off for Rokujo." (741–742)

*"More remote, I fear, my place of exile
Than storied ones in lands beyond the seas."
(230)*



43 THE ROSE PLUM

Kobai, the younger brother of the deceased Kashiwagi, is looking for suitors for his daughters, and he chooses Prince Niou for his second daughter.

"His son came in, wearing casual court dress, more becoming, Kobai thought, than full regalia. ...He set the boy to a strain in the sojo mode, which he managed very commendably.

'Good, very good. I can see that you have profited from our little musicales. And now you must join him,' he said to the princess. ... He looked out at a rose plum in full bloom just below this east veranda.

'Magnificent. Am I right in thinking that Prince Niou is living in the palace these days? Take him a branch – the one who knows best knows best.'" (746)

To Kobai's disappointment, Niou's attention is captured by his step-daughter and not by his daughter whom he intended for Niou.

*"Better to see these strands where the fishermen dwell
Than far away to weep, all, all alone."
(311)*



44 BAMBOO RIVER

The widowed Tamakazura (To no Chujo's daughter) is looking for suitors for her two daughters. She intends her older daughter to be the wife of the retired emperor, and the younger one to marry the reigning emperor. Kaoru sets off to secretly watch the ladies making music.

"No, Kaoru did not really like being Lord Proper. Late in the month, the plum blossoms were at their best. Thinking it a good time to show them all that they had misjudged him, he went off to visit the apartments of the young chamberlain, Tamakazura's son. Coming in through the garden gate, he saw that another young gentleman had preceded him. Also in casual court dress, the other did not want to be seen, but Kaoru recognized and hailed him. It was Yugiri's son, the lieutenant, very frequently to be found on the premises. Exciting sounds of lute and Chinese koto were coming from the west rooms. Kaoru was feeling somewhat uncomfortable and somewhat guilty as well. The uninvited guest was not his favourite role." (756)

*"I have returned alone, a nun, to a mountain village,
And hear the wind in the pines of long ago."
(323)*



45 THE LADY AT THE BRIDGE

Kaoru, always leaning toward a life devoted to faith, is informed that one of his father's (Genji's) brothers, the Eighth Prince, leads a monastic, sequestered life in Uji. He decides to visit him. Arriving in Uji, Kaoru secretly listens to the concert performed by the prince's daughters: Oigimi, the older one, and Nakanokimi, the younger one. He takes a fancy to the older sister and courts her by sending letters. This chapter was given its title after one of Kaoru's poems, in which he addresses amorous words to "The Lady at the Bridge". This lady is Oigimi, and the bridge refers to the wide, arched wooden bridge Uji was famous for in the Heian period. The elderly lady is Ben no Kimi, the nurse of the deceased Kashiwagi. She reveals to Kaoru that his real father was Kashiwagi, not Genji.

*"This pious one shall lead us on our way
As we plight our troth for all the lives to come."
(68)*



46 BENEATH THE OAK

Kaoru's accounts of the ladies in Uji arouse Niou's attention, and he seeks an excuse to visit the prince and his family. During one of his journeys back from a pilgrimage, he takes a rest at Yugiri's Uji estate, where he is introduced to the prince and his household. The prince feels that his life is nearing its end, so he entrusts Kaoru with the guardianship of his daughters. A few months later the Eighth Prince dies. His daughters fall into deep mourning.

"Day by day the Uji villa was lonelier. It was the way of the world, but they were sad all the same. Occasionally one or two of the village rustics would look in on them. Such visits, beneath their notice while their father was alive, became breaks in the monotony. Mountain people would bring in firewood and nuts, and the abbot sent charcoal and other provisions." (814)

Niou and Kaoru both hope that the princesses will soon end their mourning, so they can let their feelings show.

*"It is the lavender of all such flowers,
And yet it is not as I wish it were."
(766)*



47 TREFOIL KNOTS

Prince Niou is passionately courting Nakanokimi, while Kaoru her sister Oigimi. However, while Niou succeeds, the older sister envisions her future spent in religious seclusion, so she spurns Karou's advances. Oigimi is deeply affected by Kaoru's courtship and by the sadness of her younger sister, who is in love with Prince Niou although he devotes less and less attention to her. The reason for his neglect is that Yugiri has decided to give his daughter, Roku no Kimi, in marriage to the prince. Oigimi's profound sadness and her continuous worrying eventually lead to her death.

*"Our boats row out into the bright spring sun,
And water drops from the oars like scattering petals."
(419)*



48 EARLY FERNS

Kaoru cannot recover from the pain he feels over Oigimi's death. Alone in Uji, Nakanokimi is also in deep mourning. Niou decides to move Nakanokimi into his Nijo mansion and marry her. After losing Oigimi, Kaoru finds himself developing feelings for the younger sister. The conversation in verse accompanying the scene depicted in the album reveals that Niou has noticed the change in his friend's feelings.

*"This branch seems much in accord with him who breaks it.
I catch a secret scent beneath the surface." (874)*

Nakanokimi is concerned about moving to the town. The upcoming wedding of Niou and Roku no Kimi worries her, and she fears that it will lead to never-ending rivalry between the two wives.

*"It does not forget, the moon of the autumn night,
A corner remote from that realm above the clouds."
(673)*



49 THE IVY

The reigning emperor intends to marry one of his daughters to Kaoru. Although Karou is not so enthusiastic about the marriage, the date for the wedding is set. Preparations are also being made for Niou and Roku no Kimi's wedding. Nakanokimi, Niou's wife living in Uji, is already pregnant and is becoming more and more unhappy and jealous. Kaoru's love for Nakanokimi is deepening, and he is ever more desperate that she cannot be his lady. All his hopes vanish after she bears a child to prince Niou. He must forget her somehow. Fulfilling his obligation, Kaoru marries the emperor's daughter, the Second Princess, but his heart is left in Uji. During one of his visits, he sees Ukifune, who is the half-sister of Oigimi and Nakanokimi.

*"'Return', you say – ah, 'turn' I thought you mean,
Your Chinese robe, prepared for lonely slumber."
(408)*



50 THE EASTERN COTTAGE

Ukifune, Nakanokimi's half-sister, moves to her sister's house in Heian. Kaoru expresses his intent interest to the girl's mother about her daughter, but she does not take his proposition seriously, since she believes her daughter has too low a rank to marry such a noble aristocrat. Moreover, Ukifune has hardly settled in her sister's house when Niou is already trying to insinuate himself into favour with her. Frightened by Niou's persistent courtship, Ukifune's mother sends her daughter to a house in Sanjo, but Kaoru finds the modest abode, referred to as the Eastern Cottage, with ease:

"Though it would soon be morning, no cocks were crowing. From the main street, very near at hand, came the sleepy voices of peddlers offering wares with which he was quite unfamiliar. The women among them, he had heard, could look like veritable demons as they strode about in the dawn with their wares balanced on their heads. It was a new experience, passing the night in a tangle of wormwood, and he was not at all bored. At length he heard the guards going off duty. Ordering his carriage brought to a hinged door at a corner of the house, he took the girl up in his arms and carried her out." (967)

Kaoru and the girl secretly return to Uji together.

"If when we part an image yet remains,
Then will I find some comfort in my sorrow."
(224)



51 A BOAT UPON THE WATERS

Niou is troubled by Ukifune's disappearance (the lady's name literally means "Boat upon the Waters"), so he discovers her whereabouts and sets off to visit her. He pretends to be Kaoru and conquers her. Ukifune is unable to decide which man to choose: the charming Niou or the sensitive and serious Kaoru? *"Niou had his own worries. ... Impulsively, as always, he rushed off to Uji."* (1007) *"Still on his horse, Niou waited some distance away. Numbers of dogs had come bounding up and were barking most inelegantly. His men were in the cruellest apprehension."* (1007–1008) *"Tokikata spread a saddle blanket at a spot backed by a woodcutter's fence and protected by brambles and matted grasses. Niou dismounted."* (1008)

He engages in a confidential conversation with the servant Jiju about why Ukifune is unwilling to receive him. After Niou's visit, Ukifune falls into irreconcilable despair and decides to solve the impossible situation by disappearing from both men's lives for good.

"I gave you combs and sent you far away.
The god now sends me far away from you?"
(307)



52 THE DRAKE FLY

Ukifune has disappeared. Everybody supposes she committed suicide, but her body is not found. It is believed she threw herself into the river. A fake funeral is held for Ukifune to avoid malicious gossip. The princes are in mourning in the capital, and they try to comfort each other, neither of them admitting the real nature of the relationship they had with Ukifune. Not long afterwards, Niou gets over his grief and restarts his amorous exploits in the royal court. Kaoru, on the other hand, becomes introspective and thinks continuously about the ephemeral nature of life. The most characteristic sentiment of the Heian period, called *mono no aware*, the sweet and sad thought of life fleeting by, is expressed the most intensely in this chapter of the novel: humans are merely drake flies.

*"Uncommonly fine this house, for moon, for koto.
Does it bring to itself indifferent callers as well?"*
(31)



53 THE WRITING PRACTICE

Returning from a pilgrimage, the superior of monks at Yokawa and his retinue come across the fleeing, half-dead Ukifune. The girl is taken to the Buddhist high priest's house, where she regains her strength and decides to become a nun. The high priest's sister, who is also a nun, thinks of Ukifune as her adopted daughter.

"In the Ninth Month, the nun made a pilgrimage to Hatsuse." (1062) "Fearing that the girl would be lonely, she left three attendants behind: the sensitive and cultivated Shosho, an elderly woman called Saemon, and a little girl. Gazing moodily after the pilgrims, Ukifune felt the loneliness close in upon her even more threateningly. ...

'Come, now. This gloom is getting to be contagious. Let's see if I can best you at Go.'
'Of course you can. I always lose.' The girl seemed not unhappy at the suggestion, however, and the board was brought out. Expecting an easy victory, Shosho let her have the first play. But the girl was no weakling, and in the next match, Shosho was easily persuaded to play first." (1062–1063)

Kaoru finds out from the Akashi empress where Ukifune might be hiding. He makes a plan to visit her.

*"The bridge has gaps, one crosses gingerly.
Can one be sure it will not rot away?"*
(990)



54 THE FLOATING BRIDGE OF DREAMS

Kaoru pays a visit to Yokawa's Buddhist high priest to obtain information about Ukifune's whereabouts. The monk admits that the girl is hiding in his house, but he does not place his retinue at Kaoru's disposal and even asks him not to disturb the lady, who has already retreated from the world. In the end, respecting Ukifune's decision to live in seclusion, Kaoru decides to have her younger brother deliver his letter to her. Affected by the contents of the letter, a profound lethargy overcomes Ukifune and she dismisses her brother without an answer. She continues her sequestered life and never again meets Kaoru. This is the closing scene of *The Tale of Genji*.

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