The Otherworldly Topography:

Some Aspects of Space and Movement in Izumi Kyōka’s *Yuna no tamashii*

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

Izumi Kyōka’s work has long been seen by the literary critics and historians of Japanese literature as a counter-thesis to modernity. Kyōka has been variously described as opposing, undermining, and countering the idiosyncratic changes of the Japanese society and psyche brought about by the myriad reforms introduced during the Meiji era. In this vein, Izumi Kyōka’s recourse to and use of the themes of the supernatural is seen as a literary tool of countering the onslaught of the modern age. Using my translation of Kyōka’s novel, *Yuna no tamashii* (The Spirit of the Bath Girl), I will argue in this thesis that the prevailing paradigm is somewhat two-dimensional, and that a more complex picture could be gleaned from some aspects of Kyōka’s writing. I will attempt to show that Kyōka’s treatment of space is suggestive of a more complex relationship with modernity, namely, that it is evocative of a symbiotic, rather than adversarial relationship between modernity and the supernatural.
DEDICATION

To My Parents
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INTRODUCTION

The eye travels downward, following the vertical strings of Izumi Kyōka’s text, flowing from top to bottom, while the mind’s eye tracks the narration from right to left, following the direction of the printed narrative. Somewhere between these two directions, at the cross-section of the upper and the lower, the dexter and the sinister, is located a third dimension of Izumi Kyōka's writing – the extra-dimensional literary space of the otherworldly and the supernatural. The purpose of this thesis is to attempt to map out this extra dimension, to give it form, render it visible, albeit temporarily, in order to come to a better understanding of the role of language and image in Izumi Kyōka’s vision of the world of Meiji-era Japan.

In François Lachaud’s words, “…in Japan, as elsewhere, the fantastic has always had a privileged connection with the past. Above all, it is an inventory, a re-reading of it; better still: a constant dialogue with it.” Izumi Kyōka’s stories of the supernatural are no exception: having distinct antecedents in the Japanese literary past, they are inhabited by ghosts and monstrous apparitions, haunted by spectral metamorphoses and transformations, and are a literary space, as some researchers believe, where the old Japan found refuge from the relentless onslaught of Meiji reforms and modernization.

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Even the basic premise of *Yuna no tamashii*’s story is borrowed from the classical Chinese tales of the supernatural, of the kind that describe some promising student’s encounter with the demonic forces, usually far from what is seen as “civilization,” such as an abandoned mansion, the woods, or the mountains. Having employed this form, Kyōka’s vision is engaged in a dialogue with the past, drawing from it, basing itself on it, but at the same time, re-inventing and re-envisioning the physical, spiritual, and literary space of Meiji Japan, in which the story is set. Kyōka’s reinvention of the past, his redefinition of the relationship between the past and the present, can be explored via his handling of such notions as space, movement, and travel. *Yuna no tamashii* provides interesting material for exploring Kyōka’s treatment of those concepts. Kyōka’s use of language in defining and redefining space can in itself be an informative tool in researching his work, especially in the firmly entrenched philological and historical paradigm of seeing his literature as opposing modernity. I believe that an argument could be made that Kyōka’s treatment of space is suggestive of a more complex relationship with modernity, namely, that it is evocative of a symbiotic, rather than adversarial relationship between modernity and the supernatural.

Izumi Kyōka’s work has long been seen as an antithesis, a “counter-discourse” to Meiji modernity. Susan Napier wrote that, “he [Kyōka] offered in place of new order, a return to a magical past.” On the surface at least, *Yuna no tamashii* lends itself particularly well to the reading and interpretation of Kyōka’s work as “undermining” modernity. Indeed, the storyline, if rendered to its structural skeleton, can be seen as “counter-modern”: a certain Komiyama Ryōsuke, a student from Tokyo and a smug and

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shallow character, travels the Japanese countryside, with the specific purpose of meeting a particularly beautiful bath courtesan (yunan) recommended to him by his friend Shinoda back in Tokyo. The reader does not know what kind of a student Komiyama is; no mention is ever made of what it is he is studying, but we can be certain of one thing – he is not perusing old classics in order to become a government official. Though Japan never had the Chinese examination system, the choice of a student for the protagonist may have been a deliberate reference to the classical Chinese tales of the supernatural along Pu Songling’s and Yuan Mei’s lines, and the text of the novel leaves the unequivocal impression that Komiyama is, in fact, an antithesis to the “old” kind of a student in the classical Confucian sense, and represents the “new” kind, modern and enlightened, the kind that the new Meiji elite is made up of. He belongs or will belong, in Kyōka’s words, to “the bearded, those who are wheeled about in rickshaw carts, and those who are wearing overcoats.” Kyōka’s language and treatment of Komiyama is also vaguely suggestive of the author’s “vehement opposition” to modernity: the reader is left with an unmistakable feeling that the student is a suitably smug and self-content fellow, shallow, superficial, and one-dimensional. In short, he is thoroughly “modern” in the worst sense of the word, in the sense that contemporary researchers attribute to Kyōka’s own view of modernity, to his “disdain for the crass, unfeeling world of risshin shusse, the Meiji-period (1868-1912) ethic of ‘success at all costs.’” Komiyama’s image is, at times,

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bordering on comic, which, admittedly, is an unflattering view of someone epitomizing modernity.

Komiyama travels in Etchū (modern-day Toyama Prefecture), and there, in a remote Ogawa mountain hot springs inn, he encounters the purpose of his travels and the object of his curiosity – an exceptionally beautiful bath maid by the name of Oyuki. From the staff of the bath house Komiyama learns that Oyuki has taken to bed with a mysterious illness that no amount of care or medicine can cure; fear of supernatural possession hangs in the air at the inn. Komiyama, the self-styled “Child of Edo,” a term, which came to mean a native of Tokyo, and paragon of urban modernity in the perceived sea of countryside backwardness, is contemptuously dismissive of those notions outright. Meeting Oyuki and seeing how frail, worn out and tormented she is by her condition, Komiyama feels pity for her and agrees to everyone’s unusual request – to spend the night by Oyuki’s side. When the two of them are alone, Oyuki recounts the nature and history of her illness and in the course of the conversation, Komiyama learns that every night Oyuki is visited by a goddess-like supernatural being, who takes her outside and subjects her to excruciating torments in order to rid Oyuki of her love for Shinoda, Komiyama’s friend back in Tokyo. Albeit sympathetic to the girl’s obvious physical suffering and her plight, Komiyama is nonetheless dismissive of any notions of the supernatural; in fact, he attempts to cheer the girl up, attributing her condition to a simple neurological ailment. In line with the modern fad, Komiyama uses the word

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shinkei (神経, nerves), a concept and a word that became fashionable around mid-Meiji.\footnote{Gerald Figal, \textit{Civilization and Monsters: Spirits of Modernity in Meiji Japan} (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 29.}

One cannot help but wonder at this point in the narrative, whether Komiyama is actually a student of Western medicine. However, later that same night, his world is turned upside-down. To his horror, he witnesses the exact scenes Oyuki describes, meets the terrifying entity tormenting Oyuki, and finds himself in the goddess’s otherworldly abode. There, Komiyama is “entrusted” with the girl’s spirit, and told to take it all the way back to Tokyo. Thus, Komiyama (and, ostensibly, the entire Meiji modernity in his person) faces the first shock when he discovers that Oyuki was not delusional at all, and that the realm of the supernatural does exist, since he himself has entered it. However, the modern “subject-citizen” is not to be swayed easily, and on the way back to Tokyo, the reader is given a hint that Komiyama is inclined to treat the whole incident as his own delusion, when he thinks, on the way back in a train, how ludicrous it would be to believe that the deity could really charge him with Oyuki’s spirit. However, upon his arrival in Tokyo, he is stunned to find out from Shinoda that Oyuki, whom he left unconscious back in the Ogawa inn, had just arrived; apparently, Shinoda was convinced Komiyama brought her to Tokyo with him. When the friends enter the room where Oyuki was supposedly sitting “up until now”, it is empty: Oyuki is nowhere to be found. Later, when the two of them write a letter to the Kashiwaya hot springs inn, they receive a reply that Oyuki had passed away. The modern “subject-citizen” receives the second shock; not only does the supernatural exist, but he himself has served as its hapless vehicle in the most direct and physical sense, delivering Oyuki’s spirit from Etchū to Tokyo. Thus, in the eyes of researchers who see Kyōka’s work as an antithesis to Meiji modernity,
modernity suffers defeat at the hands of the old Japan, the Japan of the ghosts, spirits and apparitions. This defeat is all the more poignant since one of the most important Meiji-era’s public education projects was specifically directed at eradicating the populace’s belief in monsters and spirits, and aimed at replacing fear of the supernatural (化物, bakemono, 妖怪, yōkai) with the fear of natural (disease, blindness, madness). In *Yuna no tamashii* the progress is powerless before the very world it attempted to exercise control over. One element of that defeat is Kyōka’s construction of space and movement in the novel, for his treatment of those notions is a tool he employs to reinvent both modernity and old Japan.

It is this physical aspect of movement and space in Kyōka’s *Yuna no tamashii* that I would like to explore. Much of the novel’s narrative consists of movement – movement through both the physical and the metaphysical space. The actual narrative begins with Komiyama’s travel from Tokyo along the Hokuriku Highway in Etchū Province to the Ogawa hot springs inn called Kashiwaya. When Komiyama arrives in the town of Tomari, he has the chance to rest at a teahouse and take in his surroundings, “A fairly prosperous place, the town was along the highway, which was facing the sea, so there was no space for expanding, and the commercial area was cramped.” (668, 23) The poem by Matsuo Bashō, quoted by Kyōka in the text, is instrumental in garnering a mental picture of the place, “Passing through the fragrance of young rice plants, on the road to the border of Kaga, to my right, the Rough Sea.” (668, 24) The palimpsest-like nature of Kyōka’s text is not only in its use of references and allusions to old texts, but in

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8 Ibid., p. 92.

9 The first number in parenthesis refers to the page number in Izumi Kyoka, *Yuna no tamashii*, in vol. 5 of *Izumi Kyoka zenshū* (Tokyo, Iwanami Shoten, 1973). Second number refers to the page number in my translation.
extending to space itself, both physical and literary, for not only Bashō’s poem is used to create a visual image of the place, the fictional Komiyama physically finds himself in the exact same spot where the historical Bashō stood over two hundred years ago.

Komiyama’s travel along the Hokuriku highway in part replicates Bashō’s itinerary of *Oku no hosomichi*, and as Komiyama takes in the surrounding scenery, a curious melding of physical and literary space takes place. A small town, squeezed between the rough sea in the front, and mountains in the back:

Thirty- to fifty-ton ships like “Ichigo-maru” and “Kannon-maru,” passed each other in the offing, their smoke thick as if from exertion of crossing such a violent sea – which darkens the sea and makes the scene seem all the more valiant.

At the rear of the teahouse, mountains upon mountains, like ridges of high waves, waves higher than the surface of the sea itself, which had calmed that day. (669, 24)

In the above description of the scenery, as seen through Komiyama’s eyes, the key elements framing the scene are the ships in the sea to the front and the mountains in the back, with a cramped town squeezed in between. The description is a fitting metaphor for Japan of the early twentieth century: on the one end of the space-time continuum, thirty-to fifty-ton modern steel-clad ships out at sea, epitomizing Meiji’s technological progress and industrial might, and suggestive of future naval expansion. Indeed, only five years after the publication of *Yuna no tamashii* in 1900, that same modernity that put Ichigo-maru and Kannon-maru in the scene above, ensured Japan’s naval supremacy at the battle of Tsushima in 1905, during the Russo-Japanese War. On the opposite end, in the back of the scene, behind the inn where Komiyama is resting are “mountains upon mountains,” long associated in Japanese tradition with the supernatural, the fantastic, and the
transcendental. This second extreme is further elaborated later in the novel, as it is there that the protagonist finds the mysterious woman’s shed, in which one of the climactic moments takes place. Between these two extremes is the “Tokugawa-era designated way station,” where Komiyama’s travels took him during his travel from Tokyo, and from which he is soon to set off into the mountains. The two visual elements framing the scene – the ships on the one hand and the mountain shed, on the other, are chronotopical elements in the Bakhtinian sense: they encapsulate in themselves notions of both time and space, and are reference markers both geographically and historically.

Komiyama’s travels include the towns of Iwase, Yokkaichi, and Uotsu in Toyama Prefecture, followed by the towns of Itoigawa, Seki, Oyashirazu, and Gochi, ending at the town of Tomari. Komiyama’s travel from Tokyo to Etchū has been rectilinear thus far, and therefore, quite modern; the reader can safely assume that he took the train from Tokyo in order to get to the Sea of Japan side of the country, and then, as the novel says, boarded the steamboat at Fushiki. In other words, the linear movement that takes Komiyama from Tokyo to Tomari is representative of modernity: he uses thoroughly modern means of transportation, which carry him along the straightest possible routes between different points of his journey. In fact, it would probably be safe to say, that while Komiyama’s travel remains rectilinear, he remains in the familiar, modern and physical space of Meiji Japan. Here, at Tomari, however, much like in the Hida Mountains in Kōya hijiri, where the protagonist’s map ceases to work, the train from Tokyo and the steamboat that Komiyama takes, can only get him so far. Oyuki, the object and goal of his travels is up in the mountains, and in order to continue along his chosen path, Komiyama must walk. Kyōka’s choice of walking as Komiyama’s mode of
movement towards the Ogawa inn is significant for two reasons. First, as he sets out on his way to the Kashiwaya hot springs inn, the space he traverses is no longer the familiar physical space of Meiji Japan, but is now a metaphysical space; he is now in the supernatural world of the mountains, of the spirits, the ghosts, and the deities. Komiyama’s is now an otherworldly journey; much like Ishtar shedding her clothes on her way to the underworld, Komiyama, approaching his destination, is forced to shed layers of modernity, in this case, not only is he no longer able to use trains or steamboats, to go where he is going, he literally has to give up the most basic form of civilization – the wheel (of the rickshaw cart). Another reason for Komiyama’s having to walk is the nature of the entity he is on his way to meet: the terrifying deity tormenting Oyuki is quite unlike the beautiful female sorceress elsewhere in Kyōka’s stories. Komiyama does indeed find himself in the underworld. If the witch in Kōya hijiri is primarily beautiful, seductive and alluring, with a hint, a promise of danger, the female deity in Yuna no tamashii is outright frightful. No mention is made in the text of her beauty; on the contrary, the word Kyōka uses most frequently to describe her is osoroshii, 可恐し (frightful, terrifying). Not for her the ambiguous seductive advances, unspoken allusions, and psychological tensions that characterize the relationship between the protagonist and the witch in Kōya hijiri; hers is the realm of power and fear, as attested to by both Oyuki and Komiyama. She is the queen of the night, deity of the abject, and as such, she is a chthonic deity, associated with the underworld. Her shape-shifting, turning into a bat, only strengthens this association; not only are bats, being nocturnal creatures, firmly associated with the night, with the cavernous underworld and the mountains, the treatment of the bat in the text is rather peculiar – for the most part, it does not fly high up
in the air, but remains close to the ground, crawling and creeping about Oyuki’s bed. Komiyama’s having to walk from Naoetsu to the Kashiwaya hot springs inn, the resulting physical proximity to the earth puts him firmly within the terrifying deity’s grasp and in her power.

The next description of space that the reader encounters in Yuna no tamashii is that of the Kashiwaya inn. From the Naoetsu tea house owner’s description we learn that the inn at Ogawa consists of four or five two-storey buildings. When Komiyama arrives, he is taken to the inner room, a 160 square feet space with an alcove. Several details stand out in the description of the inn: first, due to the off-season period, it is practically deserted when Komiyama arrives. The stage is set for the forthcoming encounter with the demonic; much like in Pu Songling’s classical Chinese stories of the supernatural, the Kashiwaya inn is characterized by the feeling of abandonment, the sense of desolation.

[T]here were no guests to speak of staying there. Both the first and second floors were empty. It was as if Komiyama had encountered a deserted ship [wreck] huddled in the shadow of the mountain. (673, 28)

The description of the scene leaves the reader wondering whether Komiyama, indeed, may be the only guest at the inn. Another aspect of this description of the Kashiwaya inn is, paradoxically, the people he encounters there, for they are part of that space in ways that are not immediately apparent. From the start, the personnel are enumerated by Kyōka, as follows: “The woman who welcomed him at the reception area when he arrived, the woman who guided him to is room, the woman who brought him the yukata, the woman who offered to wash his back in the bathing pool, each one had been different.” (674, 29) In this sentence, four female servants are thus counted. Later on, in
the following conversation between Komiyama and one of the serving girls, this is confirmed again, when Komiyama asks,

“This is the Kashiwaya then. Are you here alone, young lady?”
“In all, there are four of us here.”
“Four? I see. Four.”
“Yes, Okiyo-san, Omitsu-san, Oyuki-san, and myself” (675, 30)

Again, four female servants are mentioned, including the one Komiyama is speaking with. However, hers is an eerie presence. Discussing aspects of Kyōka’s language, Chiyoko Kawakami makes note of an interesting linguistic peculiarity encountered in Kyōka’s ghost stories: in a conversation between a protagonist and a ghost, there is little meaningful exchange between the two, as in the following example from Yōjutsu,

“And your name?”
“My name? Woman…”
“Woman. Yeah, it makes sense. And your age?”
“My age is… old.”

The ghostly woman in Yōjutsu evades the protagonist’s questions, deflects them and though the two of them seemingly speak the same language, there is little meaningful communication between them, despite it outwardly having the form of a dialogue. As Kawakami notes, “The sign exists, but it never specifies its meaning.” Remarkably, the dialogue between Komiyama and the serving girl in Yuna no tamashii follows the same pattern when Komiyama attempts to learn the girl’s name:

10 Kawakami, p. 571.
11 Ibid., p. 571.
“What did you say your name was?”
“I only greeted you, sir. I’ve got no name. I’m a nobody.” (676, 31)

The communication between them evolves into a ritual, as it continues more or less along the same lines later on:

“What is your name?”
“I’m Kashiwaya.” (676, 31)

Komiyama insists more than once, always with the same result,

“Really, tell me your name, won’t you?”
“Kashiwaya, sir.”
“I am asking you your own name”
“Kashiwaya, sir.” (677, 32)

Indeed, Rosemary Jackson’s notion of “semiotic excess” coupled with “semiotic vacuity” quoted by Kawakami in the context of Yōjutsu, seems equally applicable to Yuna no tamashii. The sign is there, but the meaning is not. What is the reader to make of this bizarre exchange between Komiyama and the girl who wishes to remain unknown to him (and to us) for mysterious reasons? One possibility that could shed some light on this bizarre series of exchanges (especially in the context of our discussion of Kyōka’s language of the otherworldly space) is that the choice to be nameless can be seen as a linguistic equivalent of being faceless; in the context of the Japanese literary tradition of the supernatural, it is the linguistic equivalent of a nopperabō (のっぺら坊), the uniquely

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Japanese ghostly apparition that is known for not having a face. This may be another indication for the reader to treat the Kashiwaya inn as an otherworldly, metaphysical space inhabited by ghosts and apparitions, where the usual laws of reason and logic are not applicable, and where the language itself is warped and the usual linguistic signs do not carry the same meaning as they would in a “normal” world based on what Kawakami terms as “conventions of realism.”³ If we are to treat the Kashiwaya girl as a ghostly presence, then she herself is part of that otherworldly space of the Kashiwaya inn and is not so much a character as a spatial referent. However, the strange maid’s presence is not the only hint to the reader that not everything is as it seems at the Kashiwaya inn. Komiyama is either the only guest at the inn, or one of the few; however, it does not explain the fact that from the moment he arrives, the “treatment accorded him seemed inappropriate to his mean appearance.” Not only is Komiyama pampered and indulged, he appears to be the object of everyone’s unusual attention; there is a distinct impression that, unwittingly, Komiyama is being cast for a role or, on a more chilling note, that once he is inside Kashiwaya, he is wholly in the possession of some unearthly power, watching him, appraising, and calculating... The hunter, who had been hunting Oyuki, has become the hunted. From the inn’s master, who studied Komiyama’s face intently in the course of a conversation, to the mysterious maid who refused to be named (and was probably the one listening in to the conversation from behind the shoji, in the hallway at the end of Chapter VIII), there are hints interspersed throughout the description of Kashiwaya that suggest that something more than simple hospitality is afoot.

³ Kawakami, p. 571.
I mention the hallway outside Komiyama’s room for a reason. Another important
descriptive element in Kyōka’s treatment of space is the use of the hallway/corridor, rōka
(廊下). Every time it appears in the novel, it is suggestive of a passage between worlds
and states, serving as a bridge, either between reality and a dream, or alternatively,
separating one dream from another. There are three distinct instances of hallways
appearing in Yuna no tamashii. First is Komiyama’s description of his acquaintance’s
delirium, which includes a passage along a corridor towards a washroom, the passage at
the end of which, an encounter with the frightful hag awaits. Interestingly, although the
description of Komiyama’s encounter with the spectral woman is presented as a passage
from reality into a nightmare, the two states separated by her passage through the
hallway, the status of the story itself is ambiguous, as the reader does not quite know
where the reality ends, or indeed, if it ever began at all, since the entire story occupying
Chapters XII through XIII is hearsay. We do not know whether the entire story is a
figment of her imagination, whether some of it took place in the physical world… or
indeed, all of it. However, assuming that the story does deal with the physical reality of
the Shitaya daimyo’s mansion, even if to a limited extent, the corridor between the
woman’s sleeping quarters and the washroom does serve to both separate and bridge the
physical world of the Shitaya mansion and the metaphysical reality of the hag’s presence.

The second instance of the corridor’s appearance is the description of the
woman’s ascent towards the Tenmangu Shrine. Although, technically, not a corridor in
the strictest sense of the word, to anyone familiar with the Japanese mountainous paths
towards shrines, the ascent towards the top of the hill “up the steeper of the two paths,”
walled in on both sides by the centuries-old woods, fulfills the role of a corridor and has
the same function of bridging two realities (albeit the same ambiguities and qualifiers apply as before). Assuming that the assent took place in the physical world, yet another encounter with the transcendental was awaiting the protagonist at the top.

The corridor appears for the third time in *Yuna no tamashii* as the hallway outside Komiyama’s sleeping quarters at Kashiwaya, the hallway where his encounter with the bat takes place. This corridor not only links Komiyama’s sleeping quarters with the bat’s presence, but in a larger sense, it bridges Komiyama’s (and his person, modernity’s) entire notion of reality with the “other side”, with the mysterious woman’s dilapidated shed. Komiyama encounters the monstrous bat in this warped netherworld of a space, the bat seeps through to the other side of the wall as though there had been no wall, draws Oyuki out, and with her – Komiyama. Thus begins the last leg of Komiyama’s journey. Kyōka’s obsession with the twilight, the “world of singularly subtle shades” and the “momentary space of moving from good to evil” contributes to the feeling of uncertainty and unsteadiness, tinged with dread in the corridor scene.¹⁴ The description of that corridor is suitably “twilightized”: the dim light of the lanterns, and the flickering of the light inside the room, illuminating the hallway in an eerie light both from within and without, all serve to create what is known as Kyoka’s *chūkan* (中間), the middle world, the world between the worlds. This corridor marks the appearance of the mysterious woman of Oyuki’s story in the shape of a bat, and it is there that Komiyama enters into direct contact with the supernatural and the last part of his voyage begins. The encounter with the bat, begun in the hallway, takes Komiyama to the opposite extreme of the space-time continuum he had been hitherto traveling – the deity’s abode in the netherworld.

¹⁴ Figal, p. 1.
Several images are used for her dwelling. An interesting metaphor used by the author describing the shed through Komiyama’s perspective, is a “snail house.” This comparison is important for it conjures up two images essential to the reader’s visualization of the deity’s otherworldly dwelling: that of a shell, and that of a spiral. Both find descriptive confirmation in the text. The dwelling is shut, offering no entrance for the uninitiated and the uninvited. The comparison with the shell of a snail is also a chilling reminder: not only can the uninvited not enter, but the hapless victim cannot leave. Much like the snail’s shell is twisted in a spiral pattern, so is the inside of the goddess’s shed. Komiyama runs from one room to the next, finding one room a mirror image of the previous one, he runs in circles, crossing the inside space in a manner that is unsupported by its outwardly appearance; it is too small to house all those rooms, the space itself is warped inside the deity’s hut.

Several more details stand out from the description of the goddess’s dwelling: it is linked to the Kashiwaya inn in more ways than one. One of the most obvious indications is that at the end of the encounter, Komiyama instantaneously finds himself back in his sleeping room at Kashiwaya at the end. One gets the feeling that he may not have left at all and the reader is once again left wondering whether we are dealing with the ‘normative’ physical space and movement, a metaphysical world, or a dream. Another mysterious link between the goddess’s space and the Kashiwaya inn is the image of the god of medicine holding medicinal herbs in the alcove, present in both places.

Essentially, Oyuki’s and Komiyama’s descriptions of the woman’s shed match, so the image the reader gets of the outside of the shed in Chapter X and Chapter XV is essentially identical. Dilapidated hut, shut from the outside, without a slit of a window or
However, there is an interesting discrepancy between Oyuki’s description of the inside of the shed, and Komiyama’s. To Oyuki, the inside of the shed appeared “overflowing with mold,” yet to Komiyama’s eyes, it was pristine and spotlessly clean. The image of that space, as seen through Oyuki’s eyes, clearly conveys a sense of decay, it is reminiscent of deathly putrefaction, and is teeming with morbid death-associated artifacts, replete with the smell. Why such divergence of perspectives? It appears that Oyuki’s horror is of a different nature than Komiyama’s: While Komiyama’s reaction is that of an incredulous “modern” man faced with the unexpected and the incomprehensible, Oyuki never questions the world where she is taken by the deity, and she experiences it in a much more painfully vivid way. She herself is part of the deity’s world; she is an insider, while Komiyama is a passer-by. In a curious twist, an exchange of worlds and spaces takes place at the end of *Yuna no tamashii*. While Oyuki’s spirit, which in the novel’s (and ostensibly, Kyōka’s) understanding, is Oyuki herself, is being sent to Shinoda in Tokyo, “she” is physically relocating to and becoming part of the modern world. Conversely, Komiyama, who had previously been living in the thoroughly modern world unconcerned with deities, ghosts and spirits, gleans a part of that mysterious world in the course of his experience at Kashiwaya, and having been allowed inside, is marked by it, thus, albeit temporarily, becoming part of it, as there are indications that he is a changed man in Tokyo. Komiyama’s genuine horror described at the end of the novel when he learns that Shinoda did encounter Oyuki, indicates that Komiyama now carries inside him the supernatural space he had been drawn into and allowed to enter. For how long? Kawakami makes note of a structural technique employed by Kyōka in his ghost stories, whereby the “ghost story characteristically ends
abruptly – while the protagonist is still dumbstruck, the ghost swiftly disappears out of sight.”¹⁵ *Yuna no tamashii* also follows this formula and Oyuki’s spirit disappears after showing up once; we do not know if she reappears later and the reader is left guessing the future development between Shinoda and Oyuki. However, there are linguistic indications that the effects of this excursion into the other world were not permanent. Although Kyōka informs us that the two friends could not forget the anniversary of Oyuki’s death (which, obviously, encapsulates everything else as well) for a long time, *nagaku* (長く), however long it may be, is ultimately, a finite measure of time. It is also a curious indication that Oyuki’s spirit may not have lingered in Tokyo, and one is left wondering in what other space – physical or literary, it eventually found refuge. Kyōka’s work is voluminous, and since ghosts in modern urban space came to occupy Kyōka’s imagination at some point in his literary career, the reader can only hope that somewhere in the 29-volume collection of his works, Oyuki’s spirit may eventually be encountered again, even if under a different name.

Komiyama’s travel to Toyama Prefecture, his visit to the Kashiwaya inn and the subsequent travel by Oyuki and Komiyama from Ogawa back to Tokyo is movement that can be seen as occurring on both the physical and metaphysical planes. They travel between worlds and the way that movement is rendered in the text, the descriptions of the spaces that are traversed in the process, may be suggestive of how Kyōka envisioned the relationship between modernity and the supernatural. *Yuna no tamashii* was published in 1900, the same year as *Kōya hijiri*, yet there is an important structural difference between the two novels in how space and movement are rendered: unlike the protagonist’s travel

¹⁵ Kawakami, p. 572.
in Kōya hijiri, nowhere does Komiyama encounter clear boundaries between the worlds, and the novel’s delineations between spaces are so vague that the reader is left in perplexed bewilderment as to what part of it is physical space, what part of it is supernatural reality, and what part of it, if any, is a dream. The lines between them are not just blurry, they are non-existent. No streams to cross, no snakes to step over, and no forests of leeches to traverse. Space in Yuna no tamashii can be likened to the Moebius’s strip: the protagonist begins his travel in a rectilinear and modern fashion, taking trains and boarding steamboats, and in the end, finds himself on the other side, without ever crossing a boundary, without stepping sideways, and without even noticing. And with him – the reader. Thus, the relationship between the modern and the supernatural worlds in Yuna no tamashii is akin to a gradient, a gradual and imperceptible change of colors, whereby our eye is unable to tell where one ends and the other begins. That gradual shift in space, the uncertainty of boundaries and absence of clearly visible markers between worlds is suggestive of what I had previously called the “symbiotic” rather than “adversarial” relationship between the reality of Meiji Japan and the supernatural world of Kyōka’s conjuring. Kyōka’s world is a multi-layered palimpsest, where the multiple strata overlaying each other are transparent, or perhaps, the fabric of one layer is porous, allowing us to see the layers underneath; hence in the modern world of trains and steamboats, we encounter deities, apparitions, and ghosts. The two worlds do not oppose each other, they are in a symbiotic relationship and are mutually dependent; whereas Komiyama and Oyuki are in the very real power of the deity while they are in her world, the goddess herself is quite helpless without Komiyama and literally needs him to board the train in order to carry Oyuki’s spirit back to Tokyo.
The palimpsest-like quality of space in *Yuna no tamashii*, the smooth transitions between layers and types of reality, and the nature of the characters’ movement between different planes of existence, are indications that the modern and the old, the physical and the metaphysical, the natural and the supernatural of Kyōka’s world are in a relationship whose nature defies a simplistic two-dimensional characterization of “counter-modern”; rather, it may be seen as offering new readings – not only of the “old,” but perhaps, of the “modern” itself.

Izumi Kyōka first read *Yuna no tamashii* to the audience at a meeting of a ghost story club held at Kawakami Bizan's house. It was subsequently published in *Shinshōsetsu*, 5:6 (May 1900). Kyōka was twenty-seven years old at the time of the publication.
I

 Truly, impertinent of me, but I would like to have your attention for just a little while.

 Of the eight sects of Buddhism, they say the secret teaching of Shingon, the “Nine Character Incantation,” is a mysterious thing, and indeed, that sect’s brethren discipline themselves with cold-water ablutions, fasting, and other arduous practices from the beginning of their training. They fix on objects in the distance, and recite secret incantations while focusing on them; they form mudras – hand gestures with magical significance – and it is said they achieve spiritual merit through such disciplined practices.

 It goes without saying that once they attain supreme mastery through their severe spiritual training, they are, of course, able to make themselves invisible and produce balls

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of fire and torrents of water to escape from their enemies. They are also able to transmit the knowledge of their power of transcendence to others.

There once was a Shingon temple’s novice, who, while traveling through a graveyard in the deep of the night, noticed something white swaying among the trees. The darkness being that dark, and the place being that place, the novice was so frightened that his teeth clattered and his body shivered, and, reciting incantations, he fled back to his temple. However, they say that when he went back the next day, all he saw was a yukata, torn to ribbons, and hung out to dry. It is said that the novice, who had reached a certain level of ascetic discipline, could fix a point in the distance with his eyes and split bamboo into splinters, break large staffs, and such.

“What a silly story. Such things do not happen nowadays,” a certain person once said to a priest. This may sound like a comedian’s parody of a Zen priest’s actions, but all the priest did was hold up his thumb in silence. Then, the priest spoke, “Well, just what do you think this thumb can do? For example, a group of apprentices are making a fuss in front of their shop. One apprentice holds up his thumb to signify that the master is coming, and see how quickly they quiet down! Or what will happen, if you hold up your little finger to a young person? They think you know about their lover. And if you raise a hand in the middle of a busy Ginza Avenue, won’t a horse-drawn tram stop? Or at the station, when the stationmaster raises his hand and blows his whistle, does this not cause a powerful locomotive to begin moving? A thumb, a little finger, a hand, depending on how and where they are used, they can cause myriad emotions - happiness, sadness, anger, pleasure, and in extreme situations, it might even be the case that they could affect the state of the nation – all with the simple working of a thumb, a little finger, or a hand!
However, is it not the case that one simply cannot measure the miraculous workings that would be brought about by performing the Nine-Character mudra of the four poles and five directions, accompanied by chanting of the sacred lines from the sutras?

Well, all this has been a digression. I am afraid I must get on with the story. In this tale I’m about to tell, in an isolated house in the mountains, there lived a mysterious woman, who, while reciting magical incantations, would form bat mudras with her fingers. This is what led to my digression.

My story concerns a young student called Komiyama Ryōsuke, who, while on a pleasure trip along the Hokuriku Highway in Etchū Province one summer, was entrusted with the soul of a bath girl at Ogawa Hot Springs and brought it all the way to Tokyo.

Tomari, that’s in Etchū, at only about a thousand households, is a fairly prosperous town. When traveling by steamboat from Fushiki, one passes the towns of Iwase, Yokkaichi, Uotsu, and Tomari in Toyama Prefecture; and then travels through towns of Itoigawa, Seki, Oyashirazu, and Gochi, to arrive at the port of Naoetsu. On the day in question, Komiyama set off from Toyama in the morning and arrived at the town of Tomari at around 3:30. A fairly prosperous place, the town was along the highway, which was facing the sea, so there was no space for expanding, and the commercial area was cramped. Our student, after walking to the center of the town, found a lone teahouse and there, rested his weary feet.
II

While drinking his tea, he looked around. The scenery of the highway was quite exceptional. Though the official bell rung at the Tokugawa-era designated way station could no longer be heard, there was a continuous flow of horses, carts, local citizens, and pilgrims to the temple Honganji, mixed with tofu sellers, fish peddlers, and mailmen.

“Passing through the fragrance of young rice plants, on the road to the border of Kaga, to my right, the Rough Sea.” This poem by Bashō refers to the rough seas in this area. Thirty- to fifty-ton ships like “Ichigo-maru” and “Kannon-maru” passed each other in the offing, their smoke thick as if from exertion of crossing such a violent sea – which darkens the sea and makes the scene seem all the more valiant.

At the rear of the teahouse, mountains upon mountains, like ridges of high waves, waves higher than the surface of the sea itself, which had calmed that day.

Komiyama, who was resting comfortably but looked as though he were deep in thought, called the owner of the teahouse,

“Sir, there is something I would like to ask you.”

“Yes, of course, what can I help you with? I am conversant with anything you wish to know, be it where to dine on the famous salted mackerel caught in the Himi Bay, merits and demerits of cod sold in the Hōjōzu district, the condition of the Itoyogawa stream, the state of the dolphin’s pilgrimage towards the Buddha of five cognitions, the meaning of their cries, and further afield, the fates of Echigo’s eight hundred and eight widows, the length of the Shinanogawa Bridge, ask anything you wish, hahaha!” the one-shoulder bared, nimble-bodied, and chatty owner replied.

Chuckling, Komiyama said, “Pity, but I didn’t intend to ask about such matters.”
“That is most unfortunate”

Why unfortunate?

“What I wanted to ask about is the Ogawa Hot Spring they say is around here. Tell me about it.”

“Ah, yes, I know it. It is up in the mountains and away from pedestrian traffic. The hot spring was discovered when, on a snowy day, a hunter discovered a white heron soaking its wounds in its medicinal waters. The resort was opened some eight or nine years ago. The spring was on the property of a wealthy landowner from Tomari, and as a charitable gesture he had a temporary shed built there. This turned out to be a blessing for the villagers around here. The salutary effects of the water were such that the blind opened their eyes, the crippled stood upright, children were born, and mothers’ milk started flowing. The place seemed blessed by the gods, and people began to gather from faraway and from all directions. The crowds coming to bathe in the water were like the pilgrimages to shrines and temples during the spring and autumn equinox.

Under the current management, the site was expanded to four or five two-story buildings. The tatami rooms are kept clean, snacks are made fresh, and it has become a splendid hot springs resort. I am only an ignorant country person, but from what I understand, geisha in the pleasure quarters at Edo’s Nihonbashi sing about Ogawa hot springs comparing the effects of the water to the healing powers of doctors and to the medicinal water of the Arima hot springs. It’s from them that you heard about Ogawa Hot Springs. Am I right?”

Under the brunt of this last attack, Komiyama was left with his mouth wide open.
“You are to be congratulated for having such a thriving institution here in the countryside. By the way, how long would it take to get to this Ogawa Hot Spring?” he finally asked.

“I see, you are setting off from here? Well, in that case, it would be about eight and a half miles along the mountain road, though should you ask a rickshaw puller, he’d tell you some thirteen and a half or fourteen and a half miles. But that is their guild’s fixed price, and it is not the real distance.”

“Hmm, eight and a half miles, I can walk that. I was also wondering if you knew of an inn called the Kashiwaya at the hot spring?”

“Kashiwaya! Yes, that inn at Ogawa is indeed first-class. They have just changed the tatami, replaced the shoji, and the water is just right”.

And in a way unbecoming of his age, the owner, looked Komiyama full in the face and whispered sordidly in a repulsive voice,

“He, he, he, there are some fine women up there, too.”

“What the hell are you saying?”

“Shall I fetch some more hot water for you?”

“I’ve already had too much tea,” Komiyama said turning away, and emptying the tea remaining in his cup, he started making preparations to leave.

III

Although Komiyama coldly refused to become engaged in the owner’s talk about women, he was in truth secretly quite interested. Indeed, the young man had a schoolmate called Shinoda who repeatedly urged him to make this trip along the
Hokuriku Highway, and, if he had the opportunity, to make it to the Ogawa’s Kashiwaya Inn from Tomari, where he would find the beautiful Oyuki, a country girl superior to the sorts of girls one finds in the pleasure quarters of Nezu and Uguisudani. But a beautiful woman was not the only reason for Komiyama’s coming here. Since he had to spend the night somewhere, his friendship with Shinoda led him to stay at the somewhat more luxurious Kashiwaya Inn rather than spend a night at some dreary working-class lodging.

Leaving a tip of small change on the serving tray, Komiyama set out from the teahouse. He was dressed in an outfit of single-layered navy-blue kimono held by a waistband of white silk crepe and was wearing a straw hat, leggings, and sandals, with his belongings in a knapsack slung jauntily over his shoulder. The shadows lengthening in the late afternoon left little need for his umbrella, which he had folded and carried in his hand. He followed the direction indicated on the road post marked “Ogawa Hot Springs.”

He walked for about five miles when he came to a mild incline in the road gradually turning into a hill. After walking another three miles, Komiyama, with the anxiety of a traveler needing lodging as dusk approached, thought that he must have come more than eight and a half miles. Shortly thereafter he arrived at Ogawa Hot Springs.

When he inquired about the inn of passersby, everyone knew of it, and so he thought, “It’s famous indeed, Kashiwaya Inn.”

Then, he came to the gate of the inn.

“Welcome, welcome!” “Please come in!” “You’ll need to rest.” Maids’ greetings welcomed him at the entrance.
The owner, working his abacus, started issuing orders. “You, wash his feet. You show him to his room!” Such a fuss was made over him that he felt like a prince. You have already heard how Komiyama was dressed. Now his clothes were sweaty and covered in dust, and he still wore his straw sandals when he arrived. The treatment accorded him seemed inappropriate to his mean appearance. The location of the hot springs was some ten or more miles from Tomari. The snow in winter reached two or three feet, and in winter there were no visitors to the hot springs, the baths being given over to such valued guests as the wild boar, wolf, and monkey variety, herons and wild geese. The inn’s inhabitants would all but evacuate back to Tomari. The peak of the hot spring’s season was spring, while flowers, especially cherry blossoms, were in bloom and during the heat of mid-summer. Now it was already mid-September and the onset of autumn. In these northern provinces, cool breezes had already arrived, and there were no guests to speak of staying there. Both the first and second floors were empty. It was as if Komiyama had encountered a deserted ship [wreck] huddled in the shadow of the mountain.

“This way, please!” the maid led him to his room. It was inner room, about 160 square feet, and included an alcove. The tatami was so new, one could glide on them. The fusuma and ceiling were sparkingly clean. The image of the god of medicine holding medicinal herbs was painted on a scroll by an anonymous artist. The flowers in the alcove were of the Japanese garden juniper variety. The owner appeared to favor interiors popular in Tōtomi Province, and whatever the master wanted, the master got, despite his odd tastes.

Komiyama entered the room and sat with some dignity in front of the alcove.
Not waiting for the maid to bring the customary tea, tobacco tray, and make the usual greeting, he asked for a yukata, changed, and went to the baths. On his return, he felt the beauty of this hot spring on his skin and down to his very bones. A light breeze chilled his body, so he borrowed a padded kimono, stretched out his limbs, and relaxed. The delicious sugary tea confectionery that was a famous specialty of this region; no, it wasn’t only that, the warmth of the padded kimono, the autumn breeze, even the kindness accorded him combined with the distant sound of the cool mountain stream to fill him with a sort of warm loneliness.

He was sleepy after his bath, and too lazy to fiddle with his travel diary. The woman who welcomed him at the reception area when he arrived, the woman who guided him to his room, the woman who brought him the yukata, the woman who offered to wash his back in the bathing pool, each one had been different. It appeared that they had time on their hands. But in terms of their looks, there was not one who could even come close to the girls in the pleasure quarters of Nezu and Uguisudani, nor even the girls of Tokyo’s slum district of Yanagibara. What had become of the famous Oyuki? Just the name chilled Komiyama. “Tonight I’ll need some hot sake to warm me up,” he thought.

IV

The size of its freshwater sweetfish is Etchū’s pride, and while this was not the best sweet fish season, even an inferior sweetfish was better than Hōjōzu cod and Himi mackerel. Would he like it skewered and broiled in miso? To the broth for the soup will be added the first mushrooms of the season, followed by fried eggs or something. But first, there will be a bottle of hot sake, then wash the cup and have a drink.
“Hey girl, one for you!”

By the time Komiyama said this, he was slightly tipsy, and the girl serving him, though she was not the Oyuki, the snow beauty he sought, one might compare her to the well formed crystal of the first frost. A girl of about twenty years of age, her make-up applied in a thin layer on the nape of her neck alluringly slender, able to hold her own after two or three drinks, she was so charming that, Komiyama became quite involved in their lively conversation, and, before he knew it, had imbibed about a pint and half of sake.

The flower arrangement behind him being done in the style of Totomi, and the flower seated before him like a beautiful ikebana, Komiyama, an old-fashioned young man, leaned over, maintaining a respectful distance, and placing his cup on the tray, and asked,

"Young lady, though I have asked this before, this is the Kashiwaya Inn, isn’t it?"

"Yes, it is."

"This is the Kashiwaya then. Are you here alone, young lady?"

"In all, there are four of us here."

"Four? I see. Four."

"Yes, Okiyo-san, Omitsu-san, Oyuki-san, and myself"

"What? There is someone called Oyuki here?"
I’ve struck gold, Komiyama thought, believing that his friend’s story might indeed be true. He felt a nervous excitement, and he wanted to pursue the matter further, but as it was not something he could ask outright, he feigned a dignified calm and inquired,

“What did you say your name was?”

“I only greeted you, sir. I’ve got no name. I’m a nobody.”

“Oh, come now, don’t say that… Tell me your name.”

“But since you asked about Oyuki, you must know already! It is so terrible, so pitiful, poor Oyuki, she has been ill for quite some time.”

“What? She’s ill?”

“Yes, indeed. Her illness comes and goes, but since the weather has changed again recently, she has become considerably weaker. Though she is currently indisposed, if you, sir, would like to, we could try calling her to come here for a little while. Shall we?”

“No, no, of course not. It’s not necessary.”

“Well, she would surely come. There is no one else here except you, sir.”

“Hmm, what should we do? I’m not even acquainted with her… It’s just that on the way here I heard that she was such a nice girl. Please, don’t get me wrong …”

“No at all. Please don’t hesitate to ask.”

Silence fell between them. Then Komiyama, as if remembering, asked again,

“What is your name?”

“I’m Kashiwaya.”
Komiyama chuckled wryly, and still chuckling, said,

“Well, Kashiwaya girl, perhaps I should order something.”

“Oh, shall I pour you more sake? I’m adequate to do that, don’t you think?”

“Indeed. After all, Oyuki-san probably can’t drink.”

“Shall I order dinner? Perhaps I should call someone else to serve you?”

“That’s not necessary; your service is quite impressive. Just make certain I’m one of your favorite customers and you give extra helpings.”

“Oh this highway, only the lord’s retainers get extra helpings. The lord himself refrains and eats only small servings. Here’s your dinner tray.”

“You are a witty one, Kashiwaya girl, aren’t you? Really, tell me your name, won’t you?

“Kashiwaya, sir.”

“I am asking you your own name”

“Kashiwaya, sir.”

And having said this, she began serving dinner – her charm apparent in her every motion.

V

Even during dinner, Komiyama thought, almost to the point of saying it out loud,

“Wouldn’t it be nice to go to sleep now,” but already the girl has quietly unfolded his bedding. Not only were his bedclothes silken beyond description, she also put on the teakettle in the hearth next to his head pillow, put a tea tray next to it, and put on fire on his tobacco tray – performing all with attentive care.
Vaguely, Komiyama felt slightly apprehensive. Touching his hand politely, the girl said,

“Well, then, have a nice sleep, sir. Since it is still early, all of us will still be up, so if you need anything, do not hesitate, just clap your hands. Hot water is boiling all evening long, so feel free to use it to your heart’s content as many times as you want. Be it a small thing, or something you body desires, we will strive to do our best!”

Having said this, she obediently bowed with a solemn face, which Komiyama found commendable, and said,

“You have been very helpful. Thanks to you, I was able to stretch my arms and legs quite well. You too, girl, why don’t you get some rest as well?”

“Yes, thank you very much. Well, then,” she said and made as if to leave, but as she suddenly sat down, Komiyama, thought, “Good gracious, this Kashiwaya girl, using her real name around here, isn’t that funny!”

Then, the girl looked around and, slowly edging her way closer, said,

“By the way, please forgive me sir, but since you have traveled everywhere, have you encountered anything frightening?”

Komiyama thought he was hearing something strange, but replied right away,

“No, luckily I was untouched by storms, the sea was calm, and neither did I get on the wrong train. Along the way, not only there were no thieves posing as fellow travelers, thanks to the current government, but I did not even need as much money as I expected I would. My legs are healthy, I can make twenty to twenty-four miles in one day, and nibbling on a sweet dumpling, I made it to Nonomiya Takasago, so no, I have not encountered anything frightening on my way.”
“No, I was not talking about those things. Badgers and foxes turning into things, giant monsters appearing, and the like, those are the things I was talking about!”

“What kind of stupid things are you saying? What kinds of turning can there be nowadays, other than a child turning into an adult, or a bride turning into a mother-in-law?”

And having said this, Komiyama laughed dismissively enthused by his own words, and did not even try to understand what the girl was saying; instead, he laughed so hard that his own spittle got stuck in his eyebrow. The girl, however, said, with the utmost seriousness,

“Truth be told, sir, indeed, I could not bring myself to tell you this, but there is something I would like to request of you. It is none other than what you, yourself, have spoken about just recently; it has to do with Oyuki-san. She is a nice girl, but for some reason, has gotten so weak, hasn’t she! Unlike usual, this time we are so worried, for two or three months already, just since before the tenth, she has been suffering terribly again, and a so-called doctor won’t even visit from just seven miles away. Neither the medication, nor anything else helps; you asked what kind of illness that was, but since no one is able to figure it out, she has been eating barely enough to sustain herself, but recently she has lost so much weight, she won’t even touch the thin rice porridge. Since she is usually a person of mild disposition, first we, and then the master of the house began worrying about her symptoms, but she would not say where it was hurting, nor what was tormenting her, so that all we could do was pity her. Therefore, sir, whatever this illness is called, it is not a cold, and neither is it a stomach ailment; indeed, if it can be called anything, it must either be the beginning of an evil spirit possession, or a fox’s
spell. Suffering from everything is just strange. The evidence of that is that every evening, she is suffering from nightmares at precisely the same time. “

Komiyama too, did not think otherwise.

VI

“How frightful it is during those moments! Oyuki-san moans that it is hurting and tormenting her, even that she wants someone to kill her; she cries pitifully, and then, sir, she appears to be grabbing someone and talking to them, "What? Who is it?" At those moments, none of us dare approach her. Sir, it is as if there are some strange and unnatural apparitions hovering around the sick person. Though rooms are distant from hers, we all put hands over our ears and prostrate ourselves under our bedding in fear.

Therefore, during these episodes, none of us dare go to her bedside to comfort her. As she has repeatedly declared, gasping for breath, that rather than medicine or anything else, what she needs most is just one night of peaceful sleep. She said that if she can’t get well, then she desired one good night’s sleep as a fond memory before she dies. We all want to grant her desire, but when it comes to magical chants and incantations, there are only quack shamans and phoney priests around here, and they can’t be depended on.

Now is the time when she most needs friends, people she can depend on, among her those who once gathered around her. But the customers who once frequented are all afraid of demons and monsters. A bunch of cowardly provincials! Better they not come at all, but instead they make up silly excuses. ‘I was swallowed by a giant snake and I’ve come for hot spring treatments for the resulting baldness.’ ‘A fox spirit tricked me into
eating worms, and I’ve come to treat my stomach pains.’ ‘A tengu demon broke my arm, that’s why I’ve come.’ Their excuses for not visiting her are absurd. We wonder if they can be serious! How can people like that be of any help to a sick person?

I’m sorry to burden you with all of this, but judging from appearances, you don’t seem to be the kind of person who would lend an ear to baseless superstitions. I believe you are a reliable person.

When I told Oyuki about you, she immediately thought that you must be from Tokyo, even if that’s not the case, and she was overjoyed. She asked that I appeal to your compassion and grant her a favor. Indeed we all beg you to grant her request. This is difficult for me say. But please, sir, for mercy’s sake, please fulfill her wish and allow her to sleep next to you tonight.

How grateful we would be if you would condescend to watch over her tonight.”

The emotional, fast-talking woman seemed entirely sincere, and Komiyama, who had been judged to not allow disrepute to come within a hundred miles of himself, had to believe her words.

“This is quite a surprise! I’ve not received training in the martial arts, so I’ll not be able to fight off whatever demons appear, but, fortunately, I’m not a coward, and so if I can be of use, I’ll do it. I’ll nurse her through the night. After hearing your story, I’m certain there will not be anything frightening in letting her sleep next to me.”

There was the fact that the girl was his friend’s former lover, and he had sympathy for the girl’s affliction, and also, as a vigorous young man, he was driven by curiosity. Thus, he agreed to the woman’s proposal without objection.

“But, miss, I am just wondering, it’ll be separate, won’t it?”
“What exactly?”

“Why, our bedding.”

“Ha ha, please ask Oyuki-san.”

“How troublesome! Well, fine.”

“Please fulfill our request!”

“Fine. In exchange, why don’t you tell me your name?”

“I am Kashiwaya,” she replied as she hurriedly left the room.

From this moment on, our bedtime tale of Oyuki and Komiyama becomes truly frightful.

VII

“This is our master,” the young woman said, and she was replaced in the room by the Inn’s manager and treasurer.

“Our unworthy efforts have been inadequate, but we are humbly at your service.” Rubbing his hands together and with an air of unctuous friendliness and familiarity, the master surpassed even his own earlier greeting,

“No, no, I’m grateful for your kind service here. Come now, it looks like you have a sick maid; so you too, must be worried.”

“Yes, about that… it is an incredible hardship that is plaguing us right now. We’re sorry to burden you with this sad story. To tell you the truth, although the request for this favor should have come from me, as unworthy as I am, I am the master of this establishment, and I was afraid you wouldn’t consent to help us. Therefore, I had the
women ask you to make it easier for you to refuse. But since you so kindly agreed, I am all the more sorry for my rudeness.

We immediately reported your response to the young woman, and she was overjoyed, happy for the first time in a long time. This is all thanks to you! She is a good girl of modest and kindly disposition, and so we have taken special notice of her. We can’t regard her as a stranger, just another employee, and to hear moans at night is so painful we can’t bear to look in on her. That said, neither can we merely close our eyes tight and go to sleep. It’s a terrible situation.” As he spoke, he intently studied the nodding Komiyama, and scratched his glistening head.

“I’m definitely not the sharpest scythe in the bag,” he continued, “But even I know that telling ghost stories about possession is no cure for delirium. Actually, I’m just scared! I’m not proud. I’m quite timid. The sky window slams shut or a broom falls over, and I almost jump out of my skin.

Well, you see, when autumn breezes blow, we get far fewer customers, but recently some charlatan from Tomari has started the practice of chanting the nembutsu a million times. Young and old gather at the neighbor’s, form a circle, and their chanting is nosier than mules braying sutras. In addition to the moaning of a possessed woman, a million nembutsu! I want to cry. I guess this is what they mean when they say you want to cry so much you have to laugh. On top of that, all the noise disturbs my customers!”

“With the troubles you have, you needn’t be concerned with my discomfort. The fact that we have met like this must have karmic significance. Please don’t worry about me,” Komiyama replied. While the two of them were thus engaged in conversation, the maids, Okiyo and Omitsu, were cheerfully bringing in a set of bedding, laying it out next
to Komiyama’s, and arranging the sickbed. However, perhaps because they were trying
to impress the guest, the bedding was of far superior quality than its purpose; the folded
futon, unrolled at one hem, was luxuriously thick, and the pillow on top, different from
the rest of the pure, clean bedding, seemed slightly soiled by the sick girl’s disheveled
black hair. It could be the figment of his imagination, but Komiyama thought he also
discerned the traces of tears on the pillow.

Crouched by either side of the pillow, Omitsu and Okyo stretched the bedding
tight, and, then bidding Komiyama good night, they retreated into the hallway.

Her delicate arm resting on the shoulder of the woman Komiyama was first
introduced to, slightly leaning her languid body against the woman, she appeared as she
was, in her stripped night gown, with a yukata underneath and a satin collar, which
served to add a feeling of coldness to her powdered face. Her obi was narrow and tied
tightly. Her hair was done up simply with combs—a hairdresser had not styled it—but
she had taken care, which revealed her gentle feminine grace, with the placement of the
combs, probably because she knew she would appear before a guest. She was about
nineteen or twenty years of age, her complexion so white her skin seemed almost
transparent, the bridge of her nose straight, her face full-cheeked despite exhaustion. To
look on her, one felt she was so frail, even a breeze would cause her pain. She is as
beautiful and delicate as the white fox who has taken the form of the mournful woman
Kuzu no ha.
Having assumed that Oyuki was merely suffering from melancholia, Komiyama was shocked by Oyuki’s frail appearance, and his first impression was that of pity. He exchanged glances with the Master.

Oyuki leaned on a young woman who pulled her into the room. “Here is your betrothed,” the girl announced cheerfully. Oyuki was embarrassed by this remark, and her face reddened. Beautiful, like autumn leaves touched by the first frost, Oyuki sat down by the futon.

“Oyuki-san, aren’t you glad?” Even the owner looked pleased and was smiling brightly.

“You must express your gratitude!”

Please allow me this digression, dear reader. The countrified dialect of the onnagata Ichikawa Metora is said to have harmed the beautifully sad lines written for the main female characters on the kabuki stage. Yanagawa Shunyō was famous for his celebrated dialogue and in four or five pages could skillfully differentiate between characters. It was an admirable talent. I, however, with my unsophisticated voice, cannot do justice to such plaintive emotions. Please overlook, or rather close your ears to my inadequate efforts. Ever so shyly and with such grace, Oyuki bowed, pressed her hands to the tatami, and said simply, in an almost pleading voice, “I feel so thankful! Please…”

Touched by the Master’s words, by the maidservant’s kindness, and by Oyuki’s appearance, Komiyama felt his chest swell, and though instinctively he was moved almost to tears, he just nodded casually.
“Oyuki, look, this is trouble enough. Since we are already done with greetings and introductions, why don’t you hurry up and go to bed; the cold here might be bad for you. Even I am shivering from cold, but it is even worse for you, being sick and all. Our guest here has also gotten sleepy. Otetsu, let’s get busy!”

The Master seemed hurried, as if he wished to flee, as if the mere mention of Oyuki’s name would cause the timid fellow to shiver in fear. Otetsu (the servant girl who was not important enough to warrant a formal introduction) was caring for Oyuki, using her long sleeves to shield Oyuki from the men’s view.

“Come now, quickly, into bed. Even when the couple sleeps on separate futon, on the wedding night it is customary for the woman to retire first, so don’t feel awkward. After all, aren’t you both from Tokyo? You can reminisce about the famous scenes of old Edo and hear the latest gossip about the geisha quarter in Nihonbashi. Cheer up and have a drink of tap water. Your color will improve for your gentleman. Isn’t that right, sir?

“But first…,” was all the Master replied. The Master was fidgety. He seemed more and more concerned with the time, and perhaps it had something to do with ceremony of the one million journeys to pray at the temple. Otetsu cheerfully led the visibly embarrassed Oyuki to the bed and gently laid her down, carefully brushing her sleeves and arranging the hem of her kimono.

“Come, sir…,” Otetsu invited.

But Komiyama was annoyed by this public arranging of pillows side by side and found this last invitation to be too bold and embarrassing.

“In front of all of you…”
“In that case, I beg your leave. I am not the guest who has made it over the Igagoe pass and will be spending the night sleeping in his sweaty underwear, right Oyuki?”

“Master, this is not a matter for a vulgar joke. How rude of you! Begging your pardon, sir,” Otetsu said sternly.

And with that, the two of them said their goodbyes and left the room. Carrying his double tobacco pouch, the conscientious Master, his bald head shining, plodded across the threshold, when, upon entering the hallway, he suddenly bumped into someone.

In the commotion, the Master yelled “Ouch,” as if he were in pain.

From sometime previously, the shadow of one of the maids, crouching shyly, listening in the hallway, was cast against the shoji. In the midst of the noisy shouting and laughter, Otetsu closed the sliding shoji. Oyuki and Komiyama were left alone in silence in the expansive room. The soft light of two lanterns dimly illuminated the figures of the couple and the flowers and the image of the god on the scroll in the alcove.

IX

Before long, stretching out idly, Komiyama pulled the futon over his shoulders, but to anyone looking at Oyuki lying huddling in her bed, she would appear to be a Hina doll wrapped in cotton cloth. A timid girl by nature, she made no attempt to draw her companion into a conversation. Komiyama, who assumed nursing responsibilities for one night, thought it best to play a doctor at first.

“Miss, I am guessing you must be sad, right?”

17 A reference to the Numazu chapter of the Kabuki play Igagoe dōchū sugoroku. Jūbei, smitten by Heisaku’s daughter Oyone and unaware that she is his sister, requests that she be his bride for the night. She indignantly refuses, and he states that he will sleep separately and not remove his underwear, i.e., not have sex with her.
“Yes.”

“How are you feeling, overall? There is a saying that no matter how bad your dreams may be, if you share them, they go up in a whiff of smoke, so speaking to others about your worries will clear your mind; what could be better than that for your health!”

His attempted to comfort her, and his sincerity seemed to affect her. She moved her pillow a little closer, turned to him, and with a sigh, asked, “You said you were from Tokyo, sir, didn’t you?”

“Yes, Tokyo indeed. I am a child of Edo.”

“Well, just by hearing this, I feel nostalgic, as if I met a native of my hometown!”

“So, you are partial to Tokyo? Well, I am thankful for that, since such affinity is unusual around here, but it looks like there are reasons for that, right?”

Komiyama thought he knew the reason without asking, but he desired to prompt the girl to speak from the bottom of her heart with the intention of comforting her.

“Tokyo appears to be such a big place, and I don't even know all the people in Tomari, but I am acquainted with someone called Shinoda-san, who lives where you do.”

Komiyama thought to himself, “Here it comes.”

“I cannot tell you the reason, but that person was constantly on my mind, and because of my preoccupation with him, I was always laughing or crying. And I don’t know why, but I kept feeling anxious. That is probably the cause of my illness.

Unsteady on my feet, in a daze, I was in a constant state of dreaming, unaware of whether it was day or night. I was given medicine for my illness, but after I recovered, I seemed to lack spirit. My body got weaker. As the days passed, it became difficult to get
out of bed, and stricken by lassitude, all I did was spend my time in bed, though I was in no particular pain.”

Let’s boldly state it! This was undoubtedly a case of love sickness. But this is not the sort of thing to be stated outright in these circumstances. Komiyama, having listened respectfully to the details concerning another person’s life, felt that he was observing the symptoms of a patient’s illness. Oyuki, as well, looked upon Komiyama as her physician and spoke without reserve.

“This condition continued for a long time when, something happened in the dead of the night, exactly ten days ago. Unable to fall asleep, I was blinking, staring at the surface of the wall, when suddenly, as if materializing from a picture, there appeared a terrifyingly huge figure of a deity. While I gazed fixedly upon it, unsure if it was a dream, it soundlessly detached itself from the wall and stood next to my bedside, a terrifyingly elderly woman of proud disposition with a stern look on her oval face. Indeed, sir, you could clearly see that her clothes, her face, her arms and legs too, were all bathed in a bluish light as if illuminated by lightning. “

“How extraordinary!”

“It would be perfectly natural to scream out something like, “What?” or “Kyaaa!” but, for some reason, I did not even think it particularly scary, and I reacted like this.” With that, straightening her head on the pillow, she looked at him intently, fixing him with her clear gaze. Komiyama felt a chill of fear.

“Isn’t it mysterious, that deity knew exactly what my name was… ‘Oyuki, you are so pitiful, I will cure your illness, let us go together.’ And still standing beside me, she seemed to stretch out her hand, and before I knew it, my body passed through the
wall and into the open space outside. I was walking toward the mountain in back, which I recognized, and I found myself striding briskly barefoot, among cool meadows, sir.”

X

“I knew this place from the times I had come to gather wild yams, but the house I saw had certainly not been there then, I’m certain. Yet there it was, a single house, so dilapidated, that even the faintest breeze would cause it to disappear. It was probably her dwelling. The goddess drew me inside, but what did I find there sir, a small meal tray with legs on the dirt floor at the entrance. In the house proper, with a cheap, loosely woven straw mat spread over floor. Soot covered the floor here and there, and the dirt floor at the entrance oozed with mold. In the corner, a lantern was lit, flickering with the same blue light as the goddess’s.

“Well? Do you know what is here?” the goddess asked, pointing her finger at the things on that straw mat, and when I glanced fearfully, there were a variety of objects giving off an unpleasant smell.

“These are the ropes used to tie those who are crucified,” she said, unraveling them through her hands. I was already unsettled, frightened, and shaking in fear when, grabbing a nail, the goddess went on,

“This nail was used to hammer the straw doll representing the person to be cursed against the cryptomeria tree at the hour of the Ox. The curse must have rusted itself into the nail. Take a good look. That is, you see, when the carpenter was building this house, he accidentally pierced the lizard’s body, the lizard that was protector of the house. Here
we have the old nails from shipwrecked ships, women’s fallen out hair, lizard’s severed
tails, you see, they’re still moving.” There was nothing I could say in reply.

She said, “Oyuki, you surely must know what these things are for?”

But how should I have known that?

“Yes, you do know, of course you know. What are you going to do?” she said in
such an accusatory tone, that not knowing what I was supposed to do and scared witless, I
could not even hear myself say ‘I don’t know.’

“What is it you don’t know, Oyuki? I will use these things on your body, and
thus, cure your illness,” she told me, glaring so fiercely that I became completely tongue-
tied. Exuding complete calm, the goddess fixed her appearance, and chanting some
incantation, she threw a handful of those fearsome objects—nails and ropes and so on—
against my body.

Shocked, unable to move either my arms or my legs even an inch, what was I to
do, except stand stock still?

The goddess then pulled a red-colored vial down from the shelf, and holding it by
the neck, she continued reciting incantations. Black smoke rose up from it and gradually,
it floated toward the entrance over the dirt floor. In the midst of the smoke there
appeared a prostrate, emaciated woman with bloodshot eyes and a long sharp nose, her
long hair wildly disheveled.

“Oyuki, this is the manifestation of the grudge of someone who died insane from
jealousy. I have summoned her here for no other purpose than to heal you,” the goddess
said, and suddenly, turning up her sleeve, she struck the apparition’s bosom with her
hand and pressed hard. The apparition opened her mouth greedily, and the goddess thrust her fist inside.”

As Oyuki spoke, her voice was full of vigor, but her body seemed even more devoid of strength and her speech was punctuated by frequent sighs. Forgetting himself, Komiyama edged closer.

“Then the goddess did that and pulled out a single pure white rib with a gentle snap,” Oyuki continued.

Turning to the apparition, the goddess said, ‘When you died from jealousy, was your torment something akin to this?

Gritting its teeth, sir, the vengeful ghost only moaned in assent twice.

“Alright, then,” the goddess declared, and the apparition became thick smoke as before and gradually streamed into the vial’s mouth.

“And that was only the beginning,” Oyuki said shivering, and before long, became unable to speak.

**XI**

Then, as Oyuki went on to say, still holding the rib she pulled from the exposed chest of that jealous apparition, the mysterious woman of that house struck the spell-bound, frozen and aching Oyuki with those nails and ropes relentlessly over all parts of her body, all the while chastising her,

“Well? Are you going to give up your feelings for that man? Should you give up your love, wouldn’t that be a fitting cure for your illness? What, you are still not listening to my advice? My medicine still not helping?”
Unable to withstand that torment, gasping, Oyuki begged,

“Please have pity on me! Please have pity! I renounce my love!”

Then, upon being allowed to return, before she knew it, Oyuki found herself back in her sleeping quarters. On the following evening, much like the night before, the same woman appeared, and taking Oyuki by the hand, led her to that house once more, where again, she subjected her flesh to the same agonizing treatment, beating her with nails, ropes, lizard tails, hair, and the rib.

“Wretch! Though you said you were going to relinquish your feelings, you haven’t, have you? Go on, give them up! Say clearly you are giving them up right now! Still refusing my treatment?” – such were her words.

Unable to endure this beyond words, Oyuki promised to renounce her love for sure. After she did, she was taken back to her room.

The following night, as well as the night after that, and every night thereafter, at precisely the same time, the woman, casting off greenish-blue light, arrived and took Oyuki to the same house, where accusing her of making empty promises and not giving up her love, calling her an insolent slut and a lowly wench, and eventually, driven to rage, she continued beating her.

Oyuki looked as though she could not bear to go on talking about this.

“Indeed, sir, why couldn’t I forsake those feelings? As I suffered so much from this chastisement, of course I said I would give up my attachment, yet when the following night I was tormented again for repeating the same thing without true intent, though I myself truly resolved to renounce my desire, the truth is, I could not.
How could I surrender my longing? Is it not what is called karma? No matter how deeply I think of it, whether scolded or soothed, I am unable to break free from it, and I am afraid that soon I will be murdered by this torment.”

Her face drawn from exhaustion, her limbs as thin as toothpicks, and her breathing labored—to Komiyama, she appeared akin to an autumn butterfly, seeming to disappear in the light of the full day.

She went on, “Though I do not mind dying, what I cannot stand is waiting for this awful torment every evening of every day, again and again, day after day. Just imagine that, sir!

Truly, if only I could forget my desires, my future, and sleep in peace for just one night, I would have no qualms about dying right after that, but I am not free to do even that. This had been so awful and I was so distraught, that your kind permission for me to spend the night by your side quelled even my usual chest palpitations, such was my joy. Indeed, you are tired, and as we are about to sleep, with your kind permission, I truly apologize for how noisy it may get.”

All the troubles she had kept pent up inside of her, unspoken to others, how it all weighed on her mind – in her current state she was now telling all of it, seemingly without leaving anything out, from the beginning to the end.

Silent for most of her story, only nodding from time to time, Komiyama suddenly sat up straight and brought his fist down on the edge of the futon, so vigorously, as if to strike a tiger. His face full of courage, he laughed aloud, and declared, “It makes no sense, miss. We’ll do something about this!”


XII

“This is all because of your fever, I am sure it is. Haven’t you as well heard of this before, miss, that when one is feverish, one sees all kinds of things. People often talk about the God of plague, or the God of smallpox, don’t they, but these malevolent deities are what sick people see when they are feverish. Let me tell you this story from the pre-Restoration period I learned from one of my acquaintances. A young girl was apprenticed to learn the dance, and was employed as a maidservant at the estate of one daimyo, near Shitaya. One evening, leaving the presence of her guest and returning to her room, she immediately took off her work clothes, as she had retired later than usual, and she stretched them out, as women are accustomed to do. You do the same miss, don’t you?”

“Yes.”

“Well then, listen. After that, putting on the striped silk crepe nightgown with the lining of purple silk, and tying her plum-colored sash, she knelt, one knee up, on her futon and arranged the stray strands of hair of her traditional hairdo. Wiping off the white face powder that remained here and there with a thicker sort of facial tissue, she also removed the rouge from her lips. Having smoothed out the creases, the lady was gazing at the white paper, when something must have occurred to her. The ornate silver hairpin that was inserted in her hair was engraved with the character “い” in a circle. That was the stage name and family crest of Sawamura Tosshō, whom the lady favored very much. Pulling out the hairpin, and gazing at it with a smile, she wrapped it into the paper still bearing traces of her rouge. We can suppose that she received it from her beloved actor, can’t we?
Having stuck it between the books, she prepared for bed, and transferring the dim flame from bedside lamp to a handheld paper lantern, she quickly stood up and holding the lamp, slipped into her thick sandals with the silk thongs, dragging her sandals with a flipflopping sound, and since she was such a flamboyant woman, even her underrobe rustled like falling snow.

Walking along a long hallway, she went to the washroom. Since it was built to accommodate warriors carrying bows and arrows or bearing muskets or those wearing huge obi, like actors or famous courtesans, the washroom was a huge place, about three feet by twelve. She was about to enter when she had a strong sensation that someone was inside, though she heard nothing like a clearing of the throat or someone singing to themselves. She froze. She waited a bit, and when no one came out, she calmed down, and thought there was probably nobody in there in the first place.

Strange, isn’t it miss, that she felt so uneasy. Putting down the lamp, the young woman slid open the door with a decisive thrust. It was terrible what she saw, but miss, you must not be disturbed by what follows, for this is the cause of illness, and as she was doing that, she thought, “This is unpleasant, but I shouldn’t feel frightened. This is all just because I am not feeling well.”

As she opened the door, inside she beheld a filthy old hag, prostrated on the floor, who silently raised her face and fixed the girl with a malevolent gaze. Her gray hair was not of the normal kind, but stood on end, akin to silver wire, like a bundle of freshly-cut silver grass sticking up in a rough fashion. For the maid, this was the last straw, and she fainted.
The women’s inner chambers were all in an uproar. The girl developed a terrible fever, and since it was feared her illness would spread and she herself was in a daze and could not be relied upon, she was returned to her parents’ home. The doctors could do nothing for her, miss, and yet shortly she recovered.

After she seemed to come to her senses, the girl said that though she was barely conscious, she desired to get well somehow, and she made daily pilgrimages to the Tenmangu Shrine at Yushima, home of the god she had long had faith in. However, from the first day, when she decided to ascend, around half way up the steeper of the two paths, the filthy old hag she had seen at the washroom appeared, lying in wait intent on grabbing and holding her back; so, dispirited, she had to return. The next day, when she went up, the fiend appeared again. This going back and forth lasted for twenty days, and on the morning of the twenty-first, a thought struck her that if she could just make it to the gong hanging in front of the shrine, the god would save her life. But how could she do it with the old hag lurking there to prevent from reaching the top of the hill. How frustrating! She grimly determined that she would make it up that hill or die trying. She gritted her teeth, resolutely tightened the sashes of her underrobes, slipped off her sandals, and set off climbing at a brisk pace. The hag, who had been following her ascent with her malevolent gaze, grabbed her and clenched her throat with her chilly hands. The girl managed to cry out, but her limbs had gone limp and she could not move. Then, as the storytellers say, “At the moment of greatest danger, suddenly . . . .”
XIII

“She managed to reach the threshold of the shrine’s upper *torii* and looking up she saw descending the steep steps a samurai of youthful appearance, his complexion fair, dressed in *haori* of black silk with a triple family crest, and wearing Sendaihira *hakama* with family crests in black *habutai* silk, a hood over his head, the matched pair of his swords inlaid with gold and silver gleaming in the sun, his feet in *seta* sandals and white socks, the splendor of his appearance was such that it defied description., he spoke,

‘Come no further, hideous hag!’ he declared, poised on the stone steps above them. Then miss, he grasped the goddess of pestilence by the scruff of her neck and hurled her down to the bottom of the hill! Isn’t that a happy outcome, miss. Joining her hands in a prayer of gratitude to both Gods and Buddhas, the maidservant girl was about to prostrate herself before that warrior, when she came to herself.

From that moment, her fever lifted, and as if a blindfold had suddenly been removed, she made a full recovery. Depending on the circumstances the illness, if is often the case that one sees this sort of sudden recovery.

Since your being tormented by that woman is all due to nerves, just like in the story I’ve just told you, try to keep your spirits up and wits about you. It’ll work out fine. That thing won’t come to take you away. It may seem that I’m acting like some silly scholar telling you what you already are aware of, but you mustn’t think I’m lying or speaking nonsense. Do you understand what I’m saying, miss.” At times comforting and at times lecturing her, Komiyama felt that he had gotten through to her and she was convinced by his story.
“I suppose what you say might be true,” was all she replied, but he could see that her mind had settled down and her body was more relaxed.

“Indeed, that’s the way it is. It’s alright, no need to worry about it. Once you compose your mind a bit, that evil spirit will disappear far away over the Western Sea.”

“Yes. I am so grateful. Thanks to you sir, I feel at ease, so I feel a bit sleepy.” Oyuki said, seemingly speaking with difficulty.

“Well, well, it’ll be good to sleep, won’t it? What’s most important is to rest your mind! Since I’ll be by your side tonight, there’s no need to fear and you can rest at ease.”

“Yes.” Oyuki said, bowing her head deeply. Silently putting her pillow before her, she did not speak for a while, but then, quietly turning in Komiyama’s direction again, she said,

“Well… when I am facing the wall, that is exactly where the spirit appears, so would you mind letting me face you so I won’t be afraid?”

“Oh, of course.”

“Begging your pardon, but…”

“What is it?”

“I feel so embarrassed…”

Having said this, her eyelids slightly reddened and her eyes closed, and as if yielding, she turned on her side and made as if to bury her face in Komiyama’s chest. Resting her head with its ornate hairstyle on the pillow separating it from the bed, she pulled the hem of the quilt over her chin, and before long, fell soundly asleep.
Even now Komiyama speaks of how happy she appeared sleeping peacefully. Of course, he could not possibly sleep in this situation, and so gazing at Oyuki, he spent his first night as a couple with her.

The hot springs inn in the mountains grew quiet, and from far away, coarse singing of bath maidens, who were cleaning the washrooms, could be heard.

As far as the geisha and others in these parts were concerned, the only attraction of this inn deep in the mountains was the songs of the bath girls. Plaintive and lonesome, and yet at the same time rhythmical, these serene songs with their prolonged pauses was sung in such a way as to act on the listener like a sleeping draught,

“A found hand towel by the pure waters of the Katsura spring,
It is the stream that flows to him through the Ogawa hot springs…”

Whether it was these thoughts, or the water dripping on the rocks and falling into the baths, the effects of the steam, or the pauses in the bath girl’s song, the splash of it all echoed on in his mind.

XIV

My dear readers, you sophisticated ladies and gentlemen raised in the city probably have no knowledge of such superstitions as parading around the foot of a mountain while striking a gong and calling for the lost child Santa, and to speak frankly, I too, have little use for the practice or such rites at the million prayers, which was
mentioned earlier. At this point in our tale, let it suffice to simply call for the protection
of the Amida Buddha, Namu Amida Butsu… Namu Amida Butsu …

The innkeeper must be cowering in his bedding with blankets over his head,
Komiyama thought, finding the idea funny. With the cold mountain air seeping in
through his skin, he felt the need to attend to a call of nature.

What a pity it would be to wake up someone who had finally fallen soundly
asleep after so much trouble. A hero wakes up at the sound of bridle’s bit, and so as not
to awaken the beautiful girl with the sound of a moving coverlet, he silently slipped out
of his bedding and went to take care of his need. Although nothing untoward happened
on his way, on his return, in the corner of the corridor down which he had just come, the
dim flickering light from three lamps, each hung separately on three pillars, was broken
by a mysterious shadow. Black in color, this apparition was floating about one foot below
the ceiling, disappearing and reappearing. Komiyama was frightened, and without
sliding open the door, he froze before the room where Oyuki slept. The moment he
thought that the thing was too dark to be the flame of a departed soul, it came flying
toward him, stirring the air, and land in front of the entrance to the room. The wraith
haunting Oyuki has appeared, he thought, but looking closer, he made out wings on the
black specter and then ears were visible. Now he was certain: it was a giant bat the size
of a kite.

Flopping its wings with dull repetitiveness, the thing was crawling creepily
around, bumping into the sliding door, and the light from inside the room seemed to
flicker in rhythm with its movements, or was that a figment of his imagination?
According to various essays, there are a number of accounts of travelers stopping at inns deep in the mountains of Hida and Shinshū provinces, and, without any symptoms of illness, dying in the middle of the night. That is because there exist terrible monsters, known in the local dialect as *hi no enma*, who resemble bats and have sharp beaks. They dress in kimonos and wear sashes, and to the eyes of the travelers they appear in the guise of seductive women. Nestling close to the bosom of the sleeping person, they open their jaws, and, enclosing the victim’s mouth and nose between the upper and the lower parts of their beaks, kill them by sucking out their breath. Whether it was one of those things or not, in any case it was so bizarre, that not wanting to let such a thing inside the room, Komiyama, upon reflection, opened the corner partition by just about ten inches, jumped inside, and spinning on his heels, slammed the opening shut, forcefully holding it closed with all his strength. After a while, still keeping it shut firmly, he reassessed the situation, but since no more sounds could be heard, he breathed a sigh of relief, and quietly turned to get back to bed, when to his shock, he discovered that the bat was already inside the room, flapping its wings gently.

“Merciful Buddha!” Komiyama was dumbfounded, when suddenly the bat leaped forth and flew in front of his eyes, brushing his cheek as it went past. Komiyama felt akin to a cat rubbed up against an ice-cold object.

While he stood there soundlessly, transfixed by revulsion, the bat changed direction, and circled three times around the figure of the sound asleep and oblivious Oyuki. While she was inside the circle outlined by the bat’s movements, she moaned faintly, “Ahh, ahh, ahh”, but no sooner had she done this, Oyuki, who had just a moment ago appeared like a withered and bent *patrinia* flower ruined by brute force and wind,
jumped up with a start. Speechless and forgetting himself, Komiyama fell onto his behind.

Suddenly the bat flew up and escaped through the narrow crevice in the sliding screens. Oyuki followed it. Let me tell you, dear reader. Walking out of the mosquito net, and without even opening either the sliding screens still lit by the summer moon, or the shutters, her body turning slim instantaneously, as though swallowed up by a willow’s shadowy reflection in the water, she stepped outside through a slit that ordinarily only wind could get through, and disappeared. Obviously, she was being led outside by the bat.

XV

Gnashing his teeth, Komiyama felt as though he had been placed on a chopping board, sliced into pieces, and scattered throughout eight corners of the world. Though armed with neither a rod with sixteen steel rings, nor a sword of Hikoshiro Sadamune’s workmanship, and not sporting a short blade of Mitsuyo Denta of Miike School at his side, he kept telling himself, “I’m a man!”, and moreover, “I’m a child of Edo!” Since the girl he undertook responsibility for seemed to have been taken by a demon with such ease, he would set out in pursuit. Unfortunately, he did not believe in the supernatural, so he opened the sliding screens, then the shutters, and then, still barefoot and in his nightclothes, descended into the garden from the veranda.

Outside, in the beautiful moonlit night, as bright as midday, where one could almost see the insects fluttering in a dance together, and wild grasses were waving in
unison in the wind, leaving a straight trail amidst the pearl-like dew, the figure of Oyuki, dashing away, was rapidly disappearing in the distance.

Spreading his arms like a bat, with so much vigor, he would be unstoppable even if one tried, Komiyama called from afar, “Stop! Come to me! Oyuki-san! Oyuki-san! Oyuki-san!”

Calling thus at the top of his voice, and mumbling to himself, “These things are no joking matter,” trampling the dayflowers underfoot, wading through the eulalia grass, pushing aside the lemon grass, he ran in pursuit, his shape hidden from view in the grass, akin to a rabbit dancing in the moonlit night.

“Oyuki-san! Oyuki-san!”

Perhaps because the distance between them had closed somewhat and his voice reached her, Oyuki suddenly stopped in her tracks, and turning in his direction, joined her hands in supplication. It seemed as though she was pleading, “Please save me!” Pity and compassion urged Komiyama on, but as he ran toward her, Oyuki appeared to be animated by the puppeteer’s strings, staggering left and right, her supple frame conflicted, as if she was fighting with something. Then, she suddenly dashed off again, and her shape soon disappeared from view without a trace.

At that moment, like the famous mirages over the open seas at Uotsu, there appeared dimly in the moonlight a solitary hut without a single lamp light.

In the manner of Sun Wukong after the abduction of Xuanzang, Komiyama looked around apprehensively, but with the mountain peaks being far away and his surroundings naught but an open plain, it was not as though she got on the bat’s wings and soared into the open sky above. Without a doubt, it must be inside that house where
Oyuki had disappeared in the blink of an eye. Scoundrels! Be they the fierce demons from Mount Shōsen, let them come, and he circled the house, first to the right, then to the left. After viewing the situation, Komiyama concluded there was little danger. What kind of a snail-house is that? I’ll storm the place and if things go wrong, I’ll save my hide and flee! Dismissing the threat and building up his courage, he called in a loud and bold voice.

“Hello! Hello?! Anyone there?!!”

He kept calling thus repeatedly, but everything was silent inside and there was no reply. He strained his ears to hear something but there was not a sound. Only, somewhere far off, “Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu,” like frogs croaking. It was the million Buddhist prayers. Komiyama, frowning, his nerves on edge, shouted in irritation,

“Hello! Anyone there?” Without a sound, the wooden door that was right under his nose slid open.

“You are a noisy one, aren’t you!”

The person who looked out of the door had a sharp nose and piercing eyes; she was of terrifyingly tall stature and dressed in a blue kimono. She was a woman of ancient age. Even at a glance, there could be no mistake; this was the woman Oyuki had spoken of.

Unthinkingly, Komiyama stumbled backwards; the woman looked the stunned Komiyama over sharply from head to toe, and sniggered in such a cruel way that he felt a chill of fear.

“Well, enter then. Kashiwaya’s guest, aren’t you?”
Absurdly, the initiative had been stolen from him, and all he managed to reply was, “Yes.” Having uttered this lame response, he just blinked in astonishment.

“Well, thank you for the trouble you took coming here. I thought you’d arrive soon. I’ve been waiting. Well then, come in. I just have a little something to do,” she said.

He did not like her words at all, for the little task she said she had, did not seem to be pleasant.

**XVI**

Having been outmaneuvered and momentarily frightened, Komiyama, in a state of angry abandon, thought that his adversary was only a woman, her castle a snail shell, how much trouble could it possibly be, let her do her worst, and without hesitation, he followed the woman inside. He found himself in a relatively spacious room. Though there was no lamplight, the room appeared only half-dark; one could not even see the number of the tatami mats and, in fact, it seemed as though the light came from what the woman was wearing, emanating from her verdigris-blue kimono, reflecting upon her skin, and illuminating everything around.

“I thought just because I have a little something to attend to, it would be a pity to drive away one who had such a hard time getting here, so I let you in, but you wait quietly! Since I need to prepare, don’t you speak up again or make a noisy fuss. It’ll work against you if you cause trouble!” Thus intimidating him from the start, she disappeared somewhere.
Cowed, Komiyama felt as though he was being digested in the woman’s stomach, and he crouched with his arms over his head. Then, drifting in and out on the wind, at times abating at times growing louder, the chanting, “Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu, O Merciful Amitabha.” It was the rite of the million Buddhist prayers.

How annoying, isn’t it. Wasn’t Yajirobe dismayed by this rite in *Hizakurige*? Komiyama simple could not bear it. Komiyama quietly took in his surroundings, whereupon he saw a spotless room without a single grain of dust to rest one’s eyes upon. The only distraction was the alcove, and there hung a scroll with the solitary image of the god of medicine holding herbs. For reasons Komiyama himself did not understand, it served to calm him down in a way nothing else could, so that gathering his strength, he managed to compose himself. But then once again he heard the incessant rite of the million Buddhist prayers. Becoming aware of it again, Komiyama felt a shiver run down his spine, and tried not to listen, but he was suddenly assailed by the sound of a woman crying hysterically. He became alert. That monster has started her tortures. It’s the rib thing again. Unable to remain still, he stood up. Komiyama was quickly being transformed into one of the protagonists in Oyuki’s story.

With the intent of rescuing Oyuki, he abruptly threw open the partition *fusuma* screens and jumped into the adjacent room. Its width and condition were the same; it too had the same sliding screens. Sliding them open, he saw nothing inside; in fact, there was another room of barely eighteen feet, of identical width and condition, also with sliding screens. Throwing them open with a bang, he saw an indistinguishable room beyond.
Thinking it scary how enormous this house was, larger than the palace built by the first emperor, Qin Shi Huang. Komiyama panicked. One after another, he opened the fusuma one room and then the next and the next. No matter how many times he tried, it was not unlike peeling off the skin from a bamboo shoot, the result was always the same. Dumbfounded, he fell back on his behind. Komiyama looked around in a daze. It was exactly the same room, with the hanging scroll of the god of medicine, which the woman had left a while ago. Oh hell, on top of that, chanting once again reached him, “Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu,” but this time Komiyama too, unthinkingly, was drawn in, and replied with, “Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu.”

At that moment, the sliding screens were suddenly thrust open, and someone said,

“Who is that? Who is it causing all this disturbance?”

“I’m here,” said Komiyama, who seemed as though he were about to utter prayers once more. Fearfully looking up at the woman’s smiling face, he thought for a moment, that one way or another, he might yet avoid getting himself killed.

“I assume that your coming here out of idle curiosity, you were hoping to see something scary? Just a little, right?”

“No, I wouldn’t!” he mumbled.

“Well, come on then!” she proudly ordered in a magisterial tone, and standing with dignity, she led the way.

Feeling he had no choice, he tagged along helplessly. The dirt floor chilled the soles of his feet, and Komiyama’s face was already pale!

Just as he had heard in Oyuki’s story, he saw the blue lamplight, the table, and the rough woven mat, and felt the atmosphere that she had described.
Lying limply, prostrate on the other side of the table, was Oyuki. Leaving the dazed child of Edo, Komiyama, on this side of the table, the woman stood abruptly on the other side, where Oyuki lay, and stretching out her pure-white arm from the sleeve of her short-sleeved kimono, she held a handful of nails over the prone Oyuki.

“How about this, my dear guest?” she asked.

“I’m so sorry,” Komiyama declined politely.

XVII

“You know what this is, don’t you?” she said, bringing both her arms up to the level of her breasts and opening her palms to displays the aforementioned nails.

“I’m very sorry.”

“You don’t know what this is?”

“Yes, I do know.”

“Well, then, how about this?”

“Uhhh”

“This is a woman’s fallen out hair.”

Confused, Komiyama said, “I am sorry.”

“In that case, please look.” she said, and she held it up in mid-air, and the flowing black hair moved with a rustle.

“Yes. I know what it is,” Komiyama said.

“And this?”

“I do know.”

“This, then?”
“I do know.”

“In that case, you must know their purpose and use, don’t you?”

Thinking that if he were careless enough to say he did not know, she would then try to show him the use of these things, and bringing these terrifying implements of magic to life would be just too frightful, Komiyama answered with great care and without delay,

“Yes, of course I know that already.”

Before he could even finish speaking, the ropes and the nails started squirming vigorously. Komiyama only gasped, “Ah!”

Here I’d like to interject and ask all of you, dear readers, to think about your physical movement when you gasp “Ah!” in complete surprise, the movements of your hands, face, and body. In Komiyama’s case, when he cried out, “Ah,” his hands, legs, and face, everything down to his finger nails, became paralyzed.

“So, you do know well the function of these things!” Speaking to him with affected politeness, seemingly mocking him, she cast a sidelong glance at him and sneered, then she turned, went over and placed her white hand on Oyuki’s shoulder.

Damn you! He wanted to leap to Oyuki’s side and rescue her, but he couldn’t move a muscle., Even in these horrible circumstances, people sometimes feel like idiots, and understand the comic side of it all. Komiyama could not restrain himself from laughing at his pitiful situation,

“This sorry thing is called Komiyama! My little comedy isn’t worth the price of admission. Be silent,” he said to himself.
The woman shook Oyuki’s shoulder, and asked, in a mysterious and terrifying voice,

“Yuki, are you suffering?”

Oyuki, whose head was already downcast, hid her face in shame, even more crestfallen.

“It’s alright now. Tonight, I won’t cause you dreadful suffering, so no need to be troubled. Up until now I have used various means and objects, and have tried quite a few, but you are adamant in not giving up your feelings, are you not? If that’s the way things are, I’ll make certain everything turns out for the best!” And while still speaking to Oyuki, she turned in Komiyama’s direction.

“My dear guest, you are an ill-natured person. That is why this girl here is suffering like this. You’re Shinoda’s friend, and you heard about her from him, didn’t you? Despite that, not wanting to get involved in his burden, you didn’t ask if there was a message you could deliver to this poor girl. You just listened and displayed no concern for her.”

Upon hearing this, and under the woman’s piercing gaze, Komiyama Ryōsuke was petrified, felt himself transformed into one of those entirely life-like dolls created by the famed Yasumoto Kamehachi, but a doll whose face was frozen in an expression of fear. Komiyama felt as though he had been covered in ice.

“In place of that burden, I will make you bear just a bit of a heavy burden so take great care of it and carry it all the way back to Tokyo. Here is your task, since Oyuki can’t be saved at all, and since I can’t leave this ship once at sea, I am entrusting you with
this girl’s spirit; you are to carry it gently to wherever Shinoda is. Without doubt, it will be an imposition for him, don’t you think?”

XVIII

Because Komiyama remained frozen standing in place and unable to say a word, the woman could continue her inane chattering as she pleased.

Then, throwing off her one-piece kimono, she became completely naked, without so much as a thread of clothing on her body. Out of resentment at being beaten, Komiyama thought, “Like the whore hot springs’ monster she is, she feels no shame at being naked.” The woman fetched another blue-colored vial, and this time there appeared malice in her action, so it frightened him. But this time was markedly different from what Komiyama had heard before. She put just three drops of the contents into the open palm of her hand, and much like one would apply white liquid make-up, rubbed it vigorously with both palms, and spread it over her arms, from her chest down to her lower belly, the nape of her neck, followed by her thighs and buttocks, calves, and down to her toes. Having covered her entire body, she straightened up.

“I must be quiet now and pay attention,” he told himself.

Having finished, the woman turned directly to the table, and began chanting magical incantations, though he could not make out the actual words. While reciting bizarre spells, she stretched both of her arms to the left and to the right and waved them up and down. Soon, her body was shaking violently, and then, the naked woman disappeared, turning into an enormous bat.
As before, the bat threaded its way around the dirt floor two or three times, and then, abruptly it approached Oyuki, who was lying face down and, joining its snout to Oyuki’s face, it wrapped its wings around her neck, and turning her face up, pressed its maw to Oyuki’s mouth, it began sucking out her breath.

Witnessing it all, Komiyama held his breath in shock, but unable to do anything, he remained in the same stunned state as before.

Again and again, on and on it went, until it looked like what little remained of Oyuki’s breath has been sucked out, when suddenly, looking like a corpse, Oyuki’s body collapsed to the side.

His shock and astonishment was not due to this alone. Coming straight at him, the bat gently entered his chest. Komiyama screamed, “Ahh!” for the second time and, jumping up, he suddenly found himself awake in the same room as before in the Kashiwaya inn.

With a deep sigh, he sat up in his futon. Komiyama did not quite understand whether this was his own body, or someone else’s. He felt as though someone was looking at him from behind, and so he turned around. He saw that one shoji partition was open and the outside shutter was also wide open, so beneath the shining moon, the dew, the grasses, the fields and the mountains, all seemed boundless, while not a sound of chickens or dogs could be heard. Above all, his first concern was for Oyuki, whose lifeless form remained next to him, prostrated in the same position in which she had collapsed as her breath was sucked out of her not a moment ago.
Feeling nothing but cold sweat drenching him, Komiyama became aware of the neighboring rite of the million Buddhist prayers, which continued apace: “Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu, Lord Amitabha, have mercy on me!”

“Miss, miss?”

He tried calling her in a whisper, but as there was no reply, just in case, he shook her lightly through the bedding.

“Oyuki-san?”

When he called her a third time, she opened her eyes slightly, and as soon as she saw Komiyama’s face, as if terrified by something, she practically lunged at him, grabbing his sash and straining to pull her body close, and then she crumpled on his knees. Komiyama wrapped his arm tightly around her shivering back, as seeing her condition, increased his compassion a hundredfold.

His fear now being the same as Oyuki’s, Komiyama touched his forehead to her back, and thinking that even a single moment during the night felt like it would last a thousand years, perhaps because he was tired, he seemed to fall into a light sleep. Awakening, he saw that with the fading of the moonlit night, the mountain peaks were illuminated by the rising sun and the dew on the vegetation was inlaid with the color of gold.

Having gently let her slip down from his knees, he saw that, as before, Oyuki was still sound asleep.

“Good morning!” sounded the voice of the inn master, who came to check on them first thing in the morning and, if it had not been for the million Buddhist
incantations, he would have been in the greatest of good cheer. Otetsu followed and
repeated, “Good morning to you, sir!”

**XIX**

Komiyama rinsed his mouth and washed his hands right away; he felt refreshed,
but in response to questions about what transpired the night before, coming from all
quarters, the master and the maids alike, he simply said that no, Oyuki was only suffering
from nightmares and moaned a little in the night, and he did not go into detail. He took
care not to say anything so that everyone would be able to tend to Oyuki without fear for
what might occur later,

Komiyama understood that curing Oyuki’s illness or defeating the ghostly
apparition would be beyond the abilities of even the ancient Indian physician Jivaka, or
the famed doctor of Chinese medicine Bian Que, or the fierce and heroic Japanese
warriors Musashi Miyamoto or Iwami Jūtarō; only Shinoda’s love could save Oyuki.
Komiyama wanted to stay on for two or three more days to nurse Oyuki back to health.
However, realizing his own powers were not up to the task, before anything else, he
would meet with Shinoda. While not planning a hurried journey, he nonetheless
immediately departed.

As he was leaving Kashiwaya, Oyuki was still sleeping, her condition unchanged
since the night before. The owner and maids protested noisily that it was rude on their
part to not awaken her before he left, but quelling such complaints, Komiyama took his
breakfast in a separate room. Komiyama told everyone that since they had nothing to be
afraid of, the lot of them should tend to her by her bedside, and conveying his best wishes for her, reluctantly, he left.

On that day, Komiyama boarded a steamship at Itoyogawa and arrived in the evening at Naoetsu. He found lodging at an inexpensive inn called Ebisuya in the center of the town. Nothing happened in the early hours of the night, but closer to midnight, he suddenly saw as clear as day Oyuki sleeping next with him in the same bedding. Just as the shock hit him, she turned away from him and he heard her loosely bound hair come loose rustling away from him over the tatami mats.

There was no going back to sleep now, he thought. Such was a woman’s obsession that even though the province had changed from Etchū and Echigo, she had not left him, though he could not bring himself to believe that Oyuki’s soul had been entrusted to him. He heaved a deep sigh.

At daybreak, he got on the first train departing for Tokyo. The next incident occurred in one of the several tunnels after the train passed through the Usui Tunnel. Without any special thought, Komiyama stuck his face out the window, and while the train was going through the pitch-black passage, due to the light from inside the train, his face reflected in the wall of the tunnel, covered with the dripping water from mountain springs. Reflected next to him was the face of a woman. He was certain it was Oyuki’s face.

Without further incident, the train passed Kawanakajima, looked down on the smoke of Asama’s bath houses, and gradually approached the plains of Musashi.

He arrived in Ueno at half past nine in the evening. Autumn breezes had begun sweeping through the capital; gusts of wind descended from the Kumagaya bringing with
them torrential rain of such strength that it ruined bamboo grasses. Since there was no way to hire a ricksha, Komiyama, who had become quite an experienced traveler, raised his umbrella, and headed back to his boarding house in the Yushima Shinhana district. When he was about to enter a cut through with earthen banks on either side, his surroundings were completely deserted. From behind him, someone called,

“Miss? Shall we go, miss?”

Since there was no one there when he turned to look, he simply decided that the sound of the pouring rain must have confused him, and that although he could not hear the sound of the wheels on ruts, there must have been a ricksha puller behind him.

Shocked by a sudden thought, Komiyama stopped dead in his tracks in the middle of the rain. “Wait a minute” he thought, “What if it’s that which I was entrusted with, following me?” Though horrified, if that was the case, it made sense that he would be taking it home with him. He changed direction for another destination and set off for the Hongō Motomachi district.

This was the neighborhood where Shinoda lived. He was accustomed to walking right through the front gate of Shinoda’s house without announcing himself, but this evening, perhaps because of the rain, the gate was closed. However, Komiyama was used to the environs; next to the gate there was the entrance to a nursing association, and shaking off raindrops, he entered the alleyway between the two gates. At the end of it, on the second floor, were Shinoda’s lodgings; his lamp still lit, it appeared that he was not sleeping. Thereupon, still without saying a word, Komiyama went up ahead and, on the second floor, while holding the lamp, he saw that Shinoda has gone out somewhere, as his sliding windows were dark. He waited a bit, but Shinoda did not return.
Unsure if Shinoda might have gone down the first floor, in which case, Komiyama thought, it may be better to announce himself at the gate, and so he went around to the front again, but this time, the front entrance, which had been locked a short while ago, now, for some reason, opened with the mere touch of his hand.

Thinking nothing of it, Komiyama went in and at the entrance to the boarding house, the servants were sound asleep in the cashier’s box, and so he called out in a loud voice, “Shinoda, Shinoda.”

He had not repeated it three times when Shinoda came down.

“Ah, you just got back, right? Well, please come up!” And with that, he hurriedly climbed the stairs. Following right after him, Komiyama went up to the second floor, and as he was passing his room, Shinoda, holding a Western-style lamp, stopped at the entrance and peered inside.

“What!?” he exclaimed, surveying the entire room restlessly. He appeared baffled by something. He seemed so distracted that Komiyama could barely keep himself from thumping him on the back to get his attention.

“What’s the matter?” Komiyama asked.

“You know everything. There’s no reason to hide it from you. I won’t hide it from you, I am just really grateful to you, you know… Oyuki, whom you brought with you, got here just before you. She was here up until now, but where in the world could she have gone to?” Shinoda said with a grave expression.

Komiyama was horror-stricken again.

“What? Oyuki-san? How was she?”
“To tell you the truth, I was still up reading a book, when I heard a woman’s voice calling at the entrance, “I’ve just arrived. Please, may I come in” I did not know who she had business with, but thinking that it must be quite nasty in this rain, I went down to open the door, and when I looked, it was Oyuki! I came with Komiyama-san, she said, all drenched by the rain, and so I said, let’s talk later, and brought her in here to dry off right away, she was sitting right here, the tatami must still be wet,” the flustered Shinoda was on his knees frantically patting the tatami. In the midst of this situation, Komiyama folded his arms and thought for a while in silence, then his attitude suddenly became grave, and he said,

“Shinoda, there are several things we need to talk about, but let’s do all that tomorrow. Until then, well, do me a favor, calm down and wait. I’ve given you what I was entrusted to bring here.”

“Huh?”

“I’ve passed to you what I was entrusted to bring.”

“What were you entrusted to bring to me?”

“Why, what you just received!”

“What did I receive?” Shinoda asked in bewilderment, his eyes unfocussed.

“Just say ‘I received it.’ Please go ahead and say it! You’ll understand later. Please, for heaven’s sake!”

Komiyama desired to obtain a sort of receipt as proof of delivery, but explaining this was going to be difficult. Under the onslaught of Komiyama’s demand, unable to discern between dreams and reality, Shinoda said, “Alright, then, I received it.” Shinoda had barely finished uttering the words when Komiyama bid a brief farewell fled the
house with all the haste he could muster. “I delivered my burden. I’ve made it back to Tokyo. And the rain is letting up, isn’t it? It’s a bloody miracle!” and Komiyama rushed home.

The next day, without delay, he paid a visit to Shinoda and told him the whole story in detail. Shinoda, who upon reflection realized he had not told Oyuki where he lived, looked like he was ready to jump at his own shadow, turned pale and, I daresay, was shaken to the core.

Then the two of them wrote and both signed a letter sent to the Ogawa hot springs. Barely a week had passed, when Komiyama received a small package containing a familiar yukata he had worn and a lined kimono with traces of her white powder, a garment Oyuki had been wearing at the time; the accompanying letter informed him that, regrettably, Oyuki had passed away.

Shinoda remains a bachelor to this day. I’ve been told that it will be a long time before either of them forgets the anniversary of Oyuki’s death.

I am truly sorry to have taken so much of your time with this boring story. My sincerest apologies.
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