



Translation

“Hanayo no hime,” or “Blossom Princess”

SCROLL I

WHEN one meditates on human vanity, rapid shifts and fleeting moments in the rhythm of human life echo the way of the world. Sometimes good ebbs, and evil flows. In this transitory world, icicles in the valley melt first in spring, and flowers begin to blossom. Yet, while flowers in the beautiful richness of full bloom enchant people, their moment is fleeting. Soon the deutzia flower, and cuckoos start to sing their sweet songs in the mountains. The cicadas drone loudly in the trees. In the heat of summer it is delightful to be at the foot of spring water; but soon, the first autumn wind visits pine trees and the moon brightly shines in the clear sky. Almost imperceptibly, the crickets' chirpings dwindle in the evening at Sagano (a place of scenic beauty in Kyoto) and the sky of the Tenth Month is all a drizzling mist. It is hard to pass a long, cold night in only one's thin clothes, but life is hard to abandon. Days and months go by while people lament an all too brief and wretched life.

Now, an exceptionally wealthy man lived in a mountain village near the foot of the famous Mt. Fuji in Suruga Province (present-day central Shizuoka prefecture). His name was Bungo no kami Moritaka¹ of the Wada clan. He had all the abundant treasures any man could desire; nothing was missing except for one thing—he did not have a child. The man and his wife lamented this fact, each thinking in his or her turn, “What is the use of building treasure houses in every direction if we have no child to whom we can leave this wealth and who will pray for our happiness in the next life?” Nevertheless, the couple were deeply religious and compassionate. They enshrined an image of Shō Kannon 正観音 [Aryavalokiteśvara; often written 聖観音], the patron of those who suffer, in the hall of their great house. Every morning and evening when they burned incense, offered flowers, and chanted sutras for the Kannon, they prayed for a

child, a boy or a girl, who would hold memorial services for them. But there was no sign, thus far, that Shō Kannon had heard their prayers.

One day while Moritaka's wife walked about the Kannon Hall, she saw a sparrow lovingly play with its baby birds on a plum tree in the garden, and felt deeply envious of the birds with their babies.

"What kind of retribution leaves us childless?" she said through her tears and went to the Kannon Hall, prostrated herself before the image of Kannon, and grieved. That night, she had a dream that she was chanting a sutra as usual. Then a plum blossom in front of the Kannon was thrown onto her knees. When she picked up the plum blossom to look at it, the color and fragrance of it was unparalleled. The flower was at the height of its beauty. So enchanting, rare, and delightful was the blossom that she put it into her right sleeve. When she awoke from the dream, she thought it so extraordinary and unusual that she woke up her husband, Moritaka, who was lying beside her and told him all about the dream.

Moritaka said, "This is indeed an auspicious dream. The Kannon must have pitied us and given us a child. It must be a girl since you put the blossom into your right sleeve.² Regardless of the child's gender, this dream is indeed propitious." The couple were delighted by the dream. On the following day, Moritaka and his wife went to the hall and worshiped the Kannon all the more.

Soon the lady started to feel unwell and her monthly courses stopped; indeed, it appeared that the lady had at long last conceived a child. Their attendants and servants, who had lamented their masters' childless state, were very happy to see the lady's symptoms. The months passed quickly, and in due course the lady safely gave birth to a beautiful, jewel-like baby girl. As this was what the couple had always wanted, their rapture was beyond description. Moritaka and the lady carefully selected appropriate nurses and assistants for their priceless princess.

Thus they led a happy life and soon the princess became nine years old. That spring the lady started to feel unwell. "Could it be another auspicious sign?" people wondered, but that was not the case. The lady's body gradually weakened and her chances of recovery looked less and less promising with each passing day. Moritaka was heartbroken—he prayed and had the priests in the temples and shrines pray for her recovery. But as days and months passed, her state only deteriorated.

The lady called her husband to her bedside and said, "It seems there is no sign your generous prayers will be answered. I don't care what becomes of me, but since you won't stay single after my death, my pity goes to our princess. Would you please raise her well, marry her to someone appropriate, and have her succeed you? That is the only concern I have." Moritaka looked helpless. She then called her princess.

Stroking her hair, the lady said, "Oh, how I regret to leave you behind. After I'm gone you can only rely on your father. Be mature and don't let people hate you. I have named you 'Blossom Princess' because when I conceived you I had a dream of a blossom given to me. As the prime of flowers is momentary, your well-being weighs heavily on my mind. My only joy among much grief is that I am leaving this world first. You must succeed your father. Nurses, do attend to her well,

I beg you." So saying, she closed her eyes on thirty-three short years of life like a dewdrop in the morning.

The grief of Moritaka and the princess was indescribable. They agonized and wished to go to the other world with the lady, but that was all in vain. Since they could not hold on to her forever, her body was taken to the field for burial. Various memorial services were held for the lady but there was no end to their tears.

While they toiled with their grief, three years passed and the princess became eleven years of age.³ The New Year had come and gone and when Moritaka's relatives gathered together, they repeatedly recommended that Moritaka take a new wife and comfort himself, for being single forever could not make his late wife come back to this world. For a long time Moritaka simply did not listen. The relatives did not give up, however. Saying that the princess would be lonely without a mother, the relatives made arrangements with a certain lady and urged Moritaka to marry her. Since Moritaka could not persist in his refusal of his relatives' decision, he grudgingly got married. However, Moritaka prayed morning and evening for his late wife's peace in the afterlife just like his princess, and rarely visited his new wife in her quarters.

Thus years went by and the princess became fourteen years old. The older she grew, the more superior both her character and appearance became. Moritaka was pleased with the princess's fine growth and summoned her nurse. "Listen. My princess has already become fourteen years of age. I wish to have her marry an appropriate man. But that makes me miss her mother again, for with whom shall I consult about an appropriate husband for my princess?" So saying, he shed tears.

The nurse was of the same mind and cried too. She then offered an idea: "It will be difficult for the princess to succeed you and maintain this house all by herself. If you ask your former mother-in-law, there may be some appropriate suitor in her clan to marry our princess and succeed this house with her." Moritaka agreed. So one day he summoned his adjunct, Isobe Saemon Tadafuyu, and told him to prepare for a journey because Moritaka was going to visit his former mother-in-law in the west for some business the following day. Tadafuyu immediately prepared a large oblong chest into which he put various gifts. On the following day, Moritaka summoned the princess's nurse named Akashi, her assistant Kojijū, and Kochōnomai—the princess' constant attendants—and he said carefully, "As the princess has grown up, I am going to my mother-in-law to discuss the matter of her marriage. I will be back in two or three days. In the meantime, don't let the princess feel lonesome as I will be home soon." He then left. As for the princess, who had never spent a day without her father, she was moved to tears in parting with him. Her tears could not have been more prophetic.

Among the people of Moritaka's household, Akashi, Kojijū, and Kochōnomai were particularly intimate with the princess. At the time of the princess's auspicious birth, Moritaka was exhilarated to find a nurse for his daughter and said, "Lady Akashi in the *Tale of Genji* had a most fortunate daughter with many august children.⁴ I will call you Nurse Akashi." Usually she is simply called Akashi. Kojijū was a little older and discreet; she was hired as Akashi's assistant to attend to the

princess and raise the child carefully with the same mind as Akashi. Kochōnomai was Akashi's daughter. She was raised at her grandmother's home until she was five years old when she was called to Moritaka's mansion to be the princess's playmate. Since then she had always played with the princess and had never left her household.

In the meantime, the princess's stepmother was convinced that if the princess stayed in the house, her husband's neglect of her would only intensify. She consulted with her main nurse as to how to get rid of the princess while Moritaka was away. "My lady," said the nurse, "That is easy. I have a cousin who is a samurai. He is a smart fellow. I will ask him to come and take the princess away from this house and abandon her somewhere." Moritaka's new wife was delighted to hear this, and thought up a plan to dupe the three people close to the princess. The new wife most courteously invited the three servants to her chambers, saying "Why don't you come to this quarter tomorrow to play, for the lord is away on business." Unfortunately the princess's three servants were taken in by the new wife's ruse, and considering her invitation to be genuine, they fell into her trap. Only one would later realize their mistake.

On the following morning, the stepmother feigned shock and told the princess and her three servants, "It sounds presumptuous, but I must tell you nonetheless. Last night I had a particularly ominous dream about the princess. Why don't you three make a wish to the gods and buddhas for her safety? I would not say this if the dream were not so terrible."

Hearing this, Akashi had a vague apprehension and was moved to tears. "But I am not so sure because the lord is not here." Then she cried.

The stepmother said, "That's no problem. Just do as I say. I will entertain the princess here today, so you need not worry about her." As the stepmother threatened and coaxed the three to act as she schemed, they reluctantly took everyone who served the princess, from eight ladies-in-waiting to lowly maids, to a temple to pray for the princess's safety. The stepmother had her own nurse's younger sister accompany Akashi's party to mislead their way and trick them into spending a night away from the house. After they left, the stepmother pretended to entertain the princess, but the young girl was not amused. Quite the contrary—she was doleful and lonely. Since her birth, the princess had never been away from her three servants, so she was anxious about them and longed for their quick return.

In the meantime, the princess's grandmother was delighted at Moritaka's rare visit. Moritaka told her how beautiful the princess had grown and that he wanted to consult with her about the princess's future. While talking, both Moritaka and his mother-in-law could not help thinking about their beloved wife and daughter and tears welled up.

The grandmother then said, "I understand that a Middle Councilor of the capital, who lives in the south of this house, is a splendid lord and has a number of lordly sons. Among them, the third son is seventeen or eighteen years of age and is still single. I hear that he excels in appearance, talent, and character. I was just thinking about sending a word about him to you. How timely is your visit."

"Wonderful!" Moritaka replied, truly thrilled by the information. The grandmother entertained Moritaka for several days and they did not have the slightest idea what was going on at home.

At Moritaka's house, while entertaining the princess, the stepmother pretended to look distracted, sometimes whispering to her nurse. Then she came to the princess's side and said, "I really don't want to tell you this but I have to, because this is not something we can hide forever. It's about your father. I don't know what devil enters his mind, but he has a mistress somewhere. Yesterday when he left he didn't go to your grandmother's house as he told you. Instead he is visiting his mistress. His servant has just arrived to take you somewhere because your father has decided to bring his mistress here tomorrow and give your room to her."

Not knowing whether or not what her stepmother said was true, the princess wept bitterly nevertheless. She begged her stepmother to wait until her nurse returned. But the stepmother refused, saying that her father's attendant would not wait that long and urged the princess to go meet the servant. The princess returned to her room for one last time, feeling as if she would drown in her despair. Again she broke down crying. "My father cannot possibly be doing this," she thought through her tears. The princess missed her nurse woefully as her stepmother kept remonstrating with her to leave immediately, saying "The attendant is waiting impatiently." The princess put her valuables in a small embroidered bag: a charm of the Chinese brocade sutra her mother used every day, a golden jar, a small silver water dropper, and a lacquer comb—all mementos of her mother's. The princess was determined to carry them with her as long as she was alive. She tearfully put them into her sleeve and left the room.

The stepmother told the princess to be silent and led her to a backdoor at a veranda where the man was waiting. The attendant quickly explained to the princess, as the stepmother had planned, that her father wanted her to leave. The stepmother turned to the princess, saying, "I will send your nurse to you as soon as she returns." The stepmother then ordered the samurai to accompany the princess until the princess met with the nurse. The princess was wearing a quilted glossy silk undergarment with layers of scarlet and purple garments and Chinese fabric over them. Over her head she wore a scarf of glossy silk. Though her eyes were swollen and red with tears, the princess looked beautiful as she left the home of her birth.

A greedy man of little imagination, this samurai neither thought nor cared much for the moral distinction between right and wrong. He lifted the princess onto his broad back, piggyback style, and ran through the alleys and mountain roads until he arrived at his house. "Listen," he said curtly to his wife, "this girl has incurred the lord's displeasure and I was ordered to abandon her wherever convenient. Strip off her clothes. It's a pity to waste them." The princess was appalled to hear this.

"I am not to be blamed. What is happening? Is this a dream or reality? I wish my nurse were here. How hateful this world is." She felt as if she were about to faint.

Looking at the princess's utter despair, the man's wife felt pity for the girl; she approached the princess and tried to console her. "Don't grieve so much. If only you are alive, the end will be happy. They say a tortoise that completes its life goes

to an enchanted land. I wish I could let you keep your clothes, but my husband strictly forbids it.”

“Even if you kill me, please let me keep this undergarment. Please don’t shame me until I die,” the princess begged her. The samurai’s wife was so moved to pity for the princess that she let her keep the undergarment in spite of her husband’s orders. “Put my clothes over your under things.” So saying, the wife took off her light hemp garment and covered the princess’s undergarment. She then trussed up the princess’s beautiful long hair and hid her face with her hand towel. Finally, the wife put a sedge-woven hat on the young girl’s head to hide her from people’s eyes. The samurai’s wife indeed felt deep pity for the princess. “I wish I could accompany you till your destination,” she said, “but since this whole thing is to be carried out quietly, I cannot do that.” So saying, the wife put her sleeves to her eyes to wipe her tears and asked her husband, “Leave her in a far field or on the other side of a mountain, but please save her life.” She seemed to be a compassionate woman.

As for the princess, she did not know what to think and hoped this was a bad dream. The man again took the princess up upon his back. He carried her through fields and over mountains, until at last they entered a deep mountain valley into which nobody traveled. He stopped on a little hill where he dropped the princess. “You can go deeper into the valley than here,” he said coldly, “but do not return. On the other side of this mountain a samurai will be waiting. Don’t blame me.” Not knowing what to do, the princess prostrated herself and simply cried. The man’s heart was like a stone. He abandoned her there and returned to his home without ever looking back. He went directly to the stepmother’s place. She came out onto her verandah and met with him.

“Have you completed your task?” she asked. The man replied, “I went through mountains and entered a mountain called Ubagamine [Old Women’s Peak] where nobody goes. I left her in the deep valley of the mountain. She will soon be the wild beasts’ prey. She will not last the night.”

“Well done!” The stepmother was delighted and sent him home with many gifts.

When the princess’s nurse and her entourage returned home, the place was quiet. When they realized the princess was nowhere to be found, the nurse became suspicious and asked the lady of the house what had happened. Through feigned tears the lady cried, “Just as I thought, a terrible thing happened while you were away. Around noon of the day you left, the princess went out onto the verandah, then she disappeared. I looked everywhere but nowhere could I find her.” The nurse and others were appalled to hear the news. “Why did we ever leave her?” they thought. They looked for her in her quarters again and again in vain. The nurse had never been away from the princess since her birth, not even for a moment. On that day, too, the nurse returned from the temple at a quick pace, worrying that her princess would be anxiously waiting. “Could this be real or is this a nightmare? What will become of my princess?” The nurse grieved, looking up to the sky and prostrating herself on the ground.

Moritaka, unaware of what was happening in his absence, took leave of his mother-in-law the following day. On his way home, he met an express messenger from his house and heard the news of the princess's disappearance. Moritaka did not believe it but hurried his horse homeward. Arriving at home, however, he did not see the princess. Instead, everyone in his household was crying in great confusion. When Moritaka inquired about the situation, the nurse tearfully reported what had happened. The lady of the house gave her version of affairs all the while shedding crocodile tears. It is painful to imagine the father's heartache. Separation from an unsightly child among many children is sad, let alone this princess who was his only child, excellent in both appearance and character. Moritaka's fatherly love for her was unparalleled. Being told that the princess had vanished into thin air, he was so heartbroken that he wished to end his life.

"But then, who will pray for her in the afterlife?" he thought. He pulled himself together as best he could and started to look for his daughter. His search party went through the trees and grasses at the foot of Mt. Fuji, looking for her in every nook and cranny. Even if her body could be discovered, his servants thought that at least that could be presented to their lord—but nothing was found. Not a trace. The party dejectedly reported their failure, and unable to come up with an alternative, Moritaka ordered that a funeral be held for his Blossom Princess. Various memorial services were held for her. Moritaka's pain deepened all the more as nothing of her remains existed. The nurse felt the same as her lord and said, "If I were with the princess even in the fire or at the bottom of the sea, I wouldn't be so distressed. Rather than surviving woefully in this fleeting world, I wish to drown myself and visit her." Seeing her so agonized, everyone wept.

At this moment, the wife of Isobe Saemon Tadahuyu, Moritaka's adjunct, pulled at the nurse's sleeve and took her to a place where no one could hear. She whispered, "How can you be sure to meet the princess even if you enter the water? I know a reliable diviner [*miko*].⁵ I suggest you meet her and see whether the princess is still alive or not, and then decide what you should do. I will take you to her myself, but tell no one." The nurse was heartened to hear this. She told the people around her that she was going to a temple to pray for the princess's happiness in the afterlife and quietly left the house with a set of the princess's quilted silk garments. Arriving at the house of Isobe's wife, the nurse met with the diviner. The diviner asked the nurse to tell her all about the princess, so the nurse told the diviner everything about the girl, from the princess's age, to the dream the child's mother had at her conception, to the girl being named Blossom Princess because of the plum blossom. The diviner listened carefully and consulted various fortune papers.

Finally she said, "This is a propitious fortune. I see a happy ending. First, having a dream of a plum blossom signifies the child was born with an auspicious omen. People use plum blossoms more than any other flowers because of their fragrance. It indicates prosperity because after the petals scatter, it bears fruit and doesn't waste anything. The princess's life is safe. Though she is suffering right now she will find happiness next spring. So you have to be strong. You will be happy to meet your princess at the beginning of next autumn. The princess's character is

currently buried underneath some dust, but spring wind will blow the dirt off and her real worth will be exposed. You have to be patient though, and strong as well, because there will be no sign of her, not even a whisper, until early autumn. There is no mistake; if there were one, Myōō 明王 [*vidyaraaja*, Buddhist deities who protect Dharma and eliminate evil and ignorance] would lose his credibility, so rest assured.” The nurse was so delighted that she gave the princess’s silk garment to the diviner. The diviner declined it, saying that she would take it after her fortune came true. But as the nurse insisted that the garment was an offering and that other gifts would be bestowed when the fortune came true, the diviner at last accepted the garment.

The nurse, now happy and hopeful, returned to her master’s house, went directly to Moritaka’s room and told her lord quietly and carefully about what the diviner had told her about the princess’s fortune. Moritaka’s mind cleared a bit, but now knowing that she was alive, he was anxious about her hardships. “How come I am given a child with so many worries and cares? I feel like blaming even Kannon. If my daughter is really still alive, please let me see her just as she used to be once more.” So he prayed and put down his head on a pillow. In his dream, Moritaka was praying before Kannon. There was a piece of paper in front of him. He picked it up and found a poem on it:

*Tada tanome/ hana⁶ wa kuruma no/ wa no uchi ni/ meguri au yo no/ mizu
wa tsukiseji*

Earnestly rely on [Kannon]/ a blossom is within the wheel/ meeting [her] in
this world again/ as water running on the turning wheel.⁷

This was an auspicious and hopeful poem indeed. Moritaka prayed for his longstanding desire all the more strongly to Kannon, offering material gifts. People believed that Moritaka was praying for the princess’s afterlife. Moritaka had visited his present wife on occasion at the beginning, but the situation quickly changed. Now he would not even cast an eye on her. The lady lived only with her own grumblings.

While all this transpired, the abandoned princess was all alone in the unknown mountains. She was in a state of stupor first, but after awhile, she came to herself and realized that the sun was about to set. Since the time was about the middle of the ninth month, fog was thick and the wind blew hard in the mountains. The princess felt all the more helpless. “What kind of crimes have I committed to be like this? How bitter this fleeting world is and oh, how I miss my father. There must be wild beasts in the mountains. Alas, I will be their prey.” She was frightened to the point of despair. “If I am destined to die,” she prayed, “please take my life without being prey for wild beasts. Would my mother have known my fate? What a hateful ending to my life. God of this mountain, please take pity on me and save me. I am without sin.” So saying, she composed a poem:

*Chibayafuru/ kami mo aware o/ kaketamae/ shiranu yamaji ni/ madō wa-
gami o*

Please god/ have mercy on me/ on a strange mountain path/ so lost I am.

Then she recited a sutra and prayed, "May Great Compassionate Kannon, if you please, help me and let me see my beloved people once again." When she opened her eyes and looked around, the moon shone on the mountain peak, but where the princess was, all was still dark. When she turned in the direction of the valley, she saw a hint of a bonfire in the distance. "There must be someone there, or there would be no bonfire. I'll go there." She got up tearfully and trod the mountain path with the bonfire as her guide. She reached a bamboo field and as she pushed her way through it, her clothes became soaking wet. Through her tears and the fog the princess could hardly see and she nearly fainted. When she looked in the direction of the light, she discovered that it was not a house but a cave in which some fearful-looking creature was making a fire. This scary sight made her hair stand on end and she was again frightened nearly out of her wits. But she had nowhere else to turn so she simply stood there.

"Who is standing there? Come here," called a hoarse voice from inside the cave. The princess was petrified, but resigning herself to the idea that there was no way out, she went in. There she found an extremely old woman—a *yamauba*—with a square face. Her eyes were sunk deep into her head but still her eyeballs protruded. She had a big mouth, the ends of which almost touched the edges of her nose. That nose resembled a bird's beak and her forehead was wrinkled up; her hair looked as though she had recently worn a bowl on her head. The princess could not bear the sight of the woman and fell on the spot. The *yamauba* looked at the princess carefully and said, "You must be human. Come here and warm yourself by the fire. If you are wet, dry yourself. I'll tell you a story." Hearing the hideous woman's kind words, the princess pulled herself up and walked toward the fire. Though frightened, she dried her clothes. Then the *yamauba* began to talk. "How piteous," the old woman said, "You must be a fortunate person, and I'm sorry that you have unexpectedly lost your way." So saying, the *yamauba* began to cry.

"Ah," thought the princess, "as the old saying goes: even demons sometimes cry."

Then the old woman began the story of her past. "Listen, I was human once. But I've outlived all my children. After that, my grandchildren and great-grandchildren were taking care of me, but they hated me and would not let me in their house. So I made the mountain my home, picking up nuts for food. One day an *oni* came and felt affection for me. He usually journeys from the peak of Mt. Fuji and sleeps in this cavern at night. During the day he cuts firewood and piles it at the cavern's entrance, and during the night I make a fire and warm myself by it. Even now when I have the mind of an ordinary human, I try to be compassionate."

"So, this is an *oni*'s cave," the princess thought, and her fear increased all the more.

The *yamauba* then said, "My head is itchy. Would you kill the worms on my head?" The princess was stricken with terror, wondering what they were. The *yamauba* gave her the iron tongs, red with fire, and said, "Pin down the worms with the tongs."

SCROLL II

When the princess looked at the old woman's head closely, her hair was as red as the fur of a yak's tail that is colored crimson,⁸ and on her skull were fourteen or fifteen small bump-like horns around which worms resembling small snakes had coiled. As the princess put the scorching tong on the worms, they fell from the woman's head one by one. Pleased, the *yamauba* picked them up and ate them saying, "Ah, yummy." The princess was still scared but spent the night in the *yamauba*'s cave. Soon the dawn broke, and the *yamauba* thanked the princess for killing the worms on her head. "You are a fortunate person but meet hardship like this because someone hates you," the *yamauba* said, "still, in the end, you will be happy. Come here. I'll give you this small bag because you've done something for me. Open it when you marry a young man. I see you haven't eaten much recently. These are *hanayone* [花米],⁹ rice grains offered to the Great Bodhisattva of Mt. Fuji. One grain will keep you strong without food for twenty days." So saying, the old woman put three grains into the princess's mouth. "I want to let you go now," the *yamauba* continued, "but my *oni*-husband has come. If he sees you, you will be eaten. I'll hide you in a pit at the back of this cavern." The princess didn't feel like she was alive in the pit.

Soon, an *oni* came with a wild wind. When the *oni* peeked at the cavern, his eyes sparkled like lightening. "It smells fishy," the *oni* commented. The *yamauba* responded, "That's the smell of a head I threw away into the valley just a moment ago. The smell comes with the gust you brought." At this the *oni* laughed. There is nothing false in the words of demons, they say.¹⁰ Laughing, the *oni* returned to his place on the peak of Mt. Fuji. After the demon had left, the woman pulled the princess from the pit. "If you go as you are, people will be suspicious," she said. "I'll let you wear my clothes that I put aside during summer because it's so hot. Here, wear this. This will make you look old. If you go over that peak, you'll see a river flowing from the south. Don't go downstream but follow the river upstream instead. Then you'll see smoke in the distance. If you go in the direction of the smoke, you'll find a human habitation. When someone comes out and talks to you there, stay in that place." The *yamauba* accompanied the princess through the mountain and sent her in the right direction.

After the *yamauba* left, the princess pressed on as instructed. Indeed, she soon saw smoke in the distance. Relieved, she thought to herself, "How strange that I can finally reach a human habitation. It's a miracle that I'm alive, without becoming prey for *oni*." As she did not know exactly where to visit, she was a little apprehensive. But she trod on, step by step, and soon she reached a house. Remembering what the *yamauba* said, the princess followed the white water (*shirumizu*, the water that has been used to wash rice) and arrived at the small back gate of the Middle Councilor's house. She could hear lively voices at the front gate of the house and wondered if anyone would come outside. Looking at the splendid house, she thought to herself, "My father's house is by no means inferior to this. What a hateful world this is." While the princess stood at the back gate and

rested for a moment, a maid came out and looked carefully at the princess who was disguised as an old woman. The maid asked kindly, "Old lady, where did you come from? Would you like to build up the fire each morning and night for this house?" The princess thought to herself, "How will I do this, I have never done such a thing before." As she had nowhere to go, tears started to well up in her eyes once again.

The maid, whose name was Akino, happened to be a compassionate woman, so she took pity on the princess and brought her to her house. That night, the maid told the princess, "This is the house of the Middle Councilor, a splendid gentleman. My work is to make hot water, but I am so busy that I want you to make a fire for this pot, please." "How can I decline this woman's request?" the princess thought. "The maid is a kind person and I believe I can rely on her." So, even though she had never made a fire before, she accepted the request.

"Oh, I'm happy you agree. Please put water in the pot and make the fire." Akino thought, "What kind of person could this old lady be? She looks a little feeble." Nevertheless, Akino tenderly taught the princess to build the fire and made her a sleeping place beside a cooking pot. The princess got up while it was still dark outside and made the fire for cooking. It was a pitiful sight, but as her job was only to make a fire at the back of the house where nobody came, she did not have to worry about people's eyes. Still, her tears came down constantly at the drudgery of such unfamiliar work.

The year passed and the New Year arrived. Various celebrations were held at the Middle Councilor's house and people came and went in splendid clothes. "If I weren't in this state, I could be like them, too," thought the princess and wept without being noticed by anyone. Time passed quickly and it was already the fifteenth of the first month. The Middle Councilor, the lady, and their four children gathered around for an incense-smelling gathering, with various blends of fine incense and censers. Saké was offered. After the merrymaking was over, each gentleman went back to his own quarters. But Saishō, the youngest son, feeling a little lonesome, did not return to his room. Instead, he played the flute, amusing himself by gazing at the hazy moon in the spring night's sky. When everyone had gone to bed and he too was thinking about going to his own room as well, he saw a faint light in the distance. He thought it strange and quietly stepped outside and walked in the direction of the light. He could dimly see an oil-lamp that barely lit a small untidy area in the hedges. Being curious, Saishō approached and peeped in. There he found a graceful maiden of fourteen or fifteen years of age combing her long hair with a lacquer comb. She had a lovely complexion with a sublime charm about her eyes—her beauty might be painted but could not possibly be described with words. There was no defect about her whatsoever. Her exquisiteness might be compared to a shining jewel. "As long as I live in this fleeting world," he thought, "I want to make love to a maiden like that just for the memory. How come such a beautiful young lady is in a place like this? So strange." Saishō wished to get a closer look at the young maiden, but on further consideration he thought, "What if the maiden is really a supernatural being out to trick me? I should go back now

and return here tomorrow night to find out.” Reluctantly, and with a great deal of effort, Saishō returned to his room.

Saishō went to bed, but with the princess’s stunning beauty remaining in his eyes, he could not sleep. “I have seen many people lately, but have never seen such a beauty,” the young man thought, “I haven’t had anyone that I have cared for, but since I saw her by chance, I can’t help thinking of her. I won’t be able to give her up. If only I can spend one night with her—even if she is a demon—I don’t care if I die.” On the following morning, he waited for the day to end. Before long, it was dark. Saishō called Matsuwaka-maru, his page, and said, “I want to tell you something. Don’t tell anyone.”

Matsuwaka-maru humbly replied, “Whatever it is, I will never reveal your secrets. I will swear to the gods.”

“Good. Then I’ll tell you,” Saishō continued. “When night comes, I will go somewhere to visit someone. You will wait here as usual. I shall be fine,” Saishō reassured his page and he waited for people’s voices to subside.

After the people of the house lay down to sleep and the house became quiet, Saishō silently left his room. Entering the princess’s hut he peered with the faint oil light. The princess was chanting the *Kannon Sutra* [*Kannon kyō* 観音経] from her gold-painted scripture with a crystal rosary on her hands. After that she went on to intone the “Devadatta Chapter” [*Daiba bon* 提婆品].¹¹

“Great Compassionate Kannon, please have mercy on me. With the merits of the *Kannon Sutra*, let me see my father once more. With the merits of the ‘Devadatta Chapter,’ may my mother in the netherland attain buddhahood immediately.” Thus she prayed for the repose of her mother’s soul and wiped her tears with her sleeve. She then composed a poem:

*Hito shirezu/ namida no kakaru/ waga sode wo/ hosu hima mo naki/ haru ni
au kana*

Nobody knows/ of my wet sleeves/ from my tears/ no time to get dry/ Alas
the spring has already come.

She closed her eyes and leaned on a nearby hedge. Thinking this a great opportunity, Saishō quietly went through the hedge and approached her. The princess noticed a sudden waft of a familiar scent. Thinking it strange, she opened her eyes. There, stood in front of her, was a good-looking young gentleman. Shocked by the sudden appearance of a man, she immediately put out the oil light.

Saishō whispered, “Please don’t make a noise. We are destined to meet each other, so I came.” He came closer and behaved affectionately. The princess felt ashamed and frightened at the same time. She cast her eyes down—her tears were brimming over. Her body was like a supple green willow in spring yielding to the wind. He pulled her towards him and spoke softly, “This must be our fate from a previous life. By accident I saw you last night and fell in love with you. Since then you’ve filled my heart. I waited until it got dark to come here and watched you intoning the sutra secretly from here. I heard your recitation—every word of your memorial service. You must be the daughter of a gentleman. I heard your poem.

Please allow me to recite a poem in reply. Your sleeve may be wet, but I will dry it for you:

*Sa nomi tada/ namida ni nururu/ kimi ga sode/ haru no hikage ni/ bosazarame
ya wa*

Your sleeve/ wet from the tears/ let me dry it/ in the shade of the spring sun.

Saishō lovingly talked to her, but she was too embarrassed to say anything and the tears kept welling up her eyes.

Looking at the princess Saishō said, “You must be very cautious. I’ll let you know who I am. Do you know the master of this house? He is an aristocrat formerly attending the Imperial Court in the capital. But there was something unpleasant happening in the capital, so he moved to this province where he had connections. He is Middle Councilor Tadafusa, and I am his youngest son, Saishō. You can see I am not a demon or anything evil. Please yield to me,” he begged. The princess thought it would be too unkind if she did not respond at all, so she murmured, “It must be so. But I am of humble origin and I don’t know how you look at this. I am so embarrassed. If you don’t forget me, please stop by again, but please leave now.” She then looked down.

Saishō was determined. “How could I possibly forget you—whatever you say?” He pleaded, “How can you make me anxious forever?” He took off his silk garment and lay down with her on it. Although this took the princess completely by surprise, drowned in a current of sympathy and affection, she yielded to him. Saishō was in rapture. Although he wished the night to last forever, the spring night was short and birds started to chirp. As Saishō wished to keep his love affair a secret, he very reluctantly parted with her. As for the princess, she started to make the fire. Then Akino came to get hot water. Although the princess knew that Akino was unaware of anything that had transpired, she felt so embarrassed and sad that as soon as she finished making the fire, she went back to her place and lay down. Akino said sympathetically, “Are you all right, old lady? You must be feeling unwell. Please take care of yourself. I will make a fire tonight then.”

The princess sat worrying about her situation. She said to herself, “There is nothing more bitter than a woman. I hear that a man swears his everlasting love just to have one night’s passion. I don’t think he will visit me again. What will happen to me if this incident is ever revealed? Should I throw myself from a cliff?”

The day came to an end and again Saishō visited her. He continued to come for four or five days on end and promised their bond to the next life. Saishō then said, “People may start to suspect if I keep visiting here like this. I will move you to my nurse’s house so that I can visit you with ease.” Thus Saishō wrote to his nurse, “I have found someone in an unexpected place. Let her take lodging in your house. If it’s alright with you, I will come to your place with her this evening. Please reply.” Matsuwaka-maru carried the letter to Saishō’s nurse. When the nurse received the letter, she wondered who it was—“This is indeed an unexpected thing.” Although she asked Matsuwaka-maru who this person was, Matsuwaka-maru had not the slightest idea. Since the master’s request was to be obeyed by all means, she wrote

a reply and had Matsuwaka-maru take it to Saishō. Saishō was delighted to see a positive response and went to the princess's place after dark.

"I have arranged for everything. Don't worry, come with me," said Saishō. The princess followed at his will and wrapped the *yamauba's* clothes most carefully. "I must never be parted from these," said the princess and held the bundle tightly. "I understand," Saishō said and took it from her and carried it for her. Taking her hand, Saishō first went back to his room and chose for her a superior silk garment. He then put one on himself to look like a woman. Having Matsuwaka-maru carry his sword and letting him go first, the two left his quarters for the nurse's house.

At the nurse's house, all day, the nurse and her daughter, Chiyoi, had been preparing for the princess's stay by dusting the tie beams and changing the tatami mat on the floor. The nurse put the oil light on at night and had been waiting. When she went out to welcome her master, Matsuwaka-maru came to inform her of his master's arrival. She let Chiyoi show them directly to the guest room and she joined them a little later. Saishō, in good spirits, said to his nurse, "I'm sorry to bother you, but please take good care of your guest. And you, Chiyoi, serve this lady well."

Saishō and the princess looked harmonious together. "What will happen, I wonder," the nurse thought to herself, "He hasn't informed his parents of this matter." As the nurse looked carefully at the princess, she too thought that the young girl's beauty and elegance might be artistically portrayed but could not be described in words. "No wonder my master has fallen in love," was her thought. They celebrated the couple's happiness with saké. After that as Saishō visited the princess at the nurse's house every night and his affection for her only increased, the nurse could not possibly treat her unwell. The princess felt at ease but the welfare of her father and nurse, Akashi, was constantly on her mind.

Back in the princess's old workplace, Akino came on the morning following the princess's departure and found no fire in the stove. Thinking it strange, Akino checked the girl's room but the princess was nowhere to be found. "I wonder where the old lady has gone—how piteous," she sighed. A rice scooper said that the old woman must have been a buddha or some supernatural being who came to help Akino during her busy winter time. The scooper continued, "The rice never ran out in her utensil. I saw her making a little hole in the rice. The old woman didn't even eat fish. She is purifying herself by abstaining from eating meat. In fact, nobody saw her eating at all. It is strange that the old woman vanished into thin air." The rice scooper's observation was nearly correct for the princess had put a small amount of rice into an iron jar and had thus maintained her life.

One day the Middle Councilor's children gathered before their mother and had a banquet. All the gentlemen showed their refined accomplishments, like poetry and music, but among them, Saishō looked particularly superior. His mother felt proud and wished there were a suitable lady for Saishō—a parent's fleeting compassion. Saishō, on the other hand, visited the princess sometimes even during the day, but since she was at his nurse's house, nobody suspected. One day when Saishō received a beautiful plum branch from some acquaintance, he thought it

so pretty that he wanted to show it to the princess. But as he could not share it openly, Saishō wrapped the branch in a thin paper and wrote a poem on it:

Koishisa o/ tsutsumite zo yaru/ ume no hana/ nioi o tome yo/ kimi ga tamoto ni
 Enveloping my love/ I send to you/ the plum blossoms/ accept their fragrance/
 in your sleeves.

Then he had Matsuwaka-maru carry it to the princess. At the nurse’s house, Chiyoi received it and gave it to the princess, who looked at the gift and smiled shyly. Chiyoi also looked at the poem and said, “What a grateful heart.” Chiyoi brought in an ink stone and paper, and urged the princess, “Please write a poem in reply.” So the princess picked up the brush and after awhile she wrote:

Ume no hana/ morite kokoro no/ iroka made/ nao hazukashiki/ haru no kyō
kana
 Plum blossoms/ rich in affection/ and fragrance/ humbly flattered to receive
 them/ this day in the spring.

Chiyoi took the poem, folded it, and gave it to Matsuwaka-maru. When Saishō received the princess’s poem and looked at her exquisite handwriting, his affection for her deepened all the more.

At the end of the day, Saishō visited the nurse’s house and complimented the princess on her poem of plum blossoms, and playfully told his nurse about it, too. The nurse said, “How auspicious, I will also add a poem.” Then she recited:

Ume no hana/ yae kōbai no/ iro soete/ kawaranu haru zo/ chiyo o henu beshi
 Plum blossoms/ adding colors to/ double red-blossomed tree/ May this
 spring/ last forever and ever.

When everyone felt comfortable, as saké went round, Saishō told Chiyoi, who was pouring wine for him, “You should add a poem, too. Come, do so.” As Chiyoi blushed, she composed,

Ume no hana/ iro sou haru no/ kyō goto ni/ chiyo yorozu yo no/ kage zo hisashiki
 The plum blossoms/ deepening their colors in spring/ today and everyday/
 vestige of the lasting happiness/ ever and forever.

The love between Saishō and the princess deepened increasingly, and Saishō’s sole concern was that his parents know nothing about this. “What will happen later when this is revealed?” he thought. But as the nurse, Chiyoi, and Matsuwaka-maru were determined to keep it secret, nobody knew anything about it.

Thus Saishō came night after night and felt utterly comfortable, and nothing seemed to separate the couple. But because Saishō’s mother had not the slightest idea about Saishō’s affair, she pondered day and night about her son’s future partner. One day after seeing Saishō off, the mother told Saishō’s nurse, “You know, nurse. Saishō has grown up. He looks particularly mature recently. I have hesitated but it’s getting a little too late. I am considering a certain princess for his bride.”

The nurse replied with a blush, “I understand,” worrying what her young master and the lady would think.

The nurse went to Saishō and told him what his mother had said. Saishō was very upset and said, “You just cannot accept all of my parents’ ideas.” He cried. “This life is not worthwhile if I am to be separated from my lady and must marry a person I don’t want to be with. If my parents force me to do this, I will leave the house and go wherever my feet take me. I will not abandon my lady. Tell this to my mother.” Listening to him speak in this vein, the nurse was finally sure that her master’s love for the princess was not simply a young man’s fancy. She knew indeed that Saishō would never leave the lady. She also considered it cruel to separate the couple who were so much in love.

So the nurse later told Saishō’s mother on an occasion of talking about something else, “Madam, recently I hear that the young master has someone he loves and visits. I doubt it, but ...”

“What!?! How terrible,” the mother interjected. “What kind of woman is she? Well, that is simply not to be. The parents should plan for their children. I wonder whether someone recommended her. Matsuwaka-maru must know about this. Eh!?! Ask him.”

The nurse, however, replied, “I’m afraid, Madam, Matsuwaka-maru says he doesn’t know. The young master has hidden this so deeply that nobody knows.” The mother regretted waiting so long to find Saishō someone extraordinary.

A lady-in-waiting serving the mother, aged about sixty, proposed an idea. “I suggest you order a ‘brides contest.’ There are examples now and past. If she is unaccomplished, the young master will feel ashamed and will abandon her.” The mother thought it a great idea and sent her lady attendants to Saishō with a message: “The plum blossoms in the garden have passed their height, but please come and look at them one last time tomorrow. All my daughters-in-law are coming, so please have your lady [Blossom Princess] attend the gathering, too. We will have a ‘bride’s contest.’”

To this, Saishō replied without hesitation, “Although my lady is a woman of humble origin, your order is of the utmost importance. I will have her attend the party.” After reporting his message back to the lady of the house [Saishō’s mother] and leaving her presence, the lady’s attendants whispered, “The young master’s insolence is extraordinary. Has he no sense of shame? We didn’t know he was such an unkind person.” Hearing Saishō’s message, his mother, too, became anxious.

When the sun had set, Saishō came to his nurse’s house and told the story of the day. The princess said, “What a bitter request. I am prepared to leave for wherever. Please obey your parents’ wishes.”

Listening to her, Saishō responded, “If you are leaving, take me with you till the end of the earth. But how can we hide like this forever?” he pleaded, “After this, we can stay together openly. As for your dress for tomorrow, I will have my nurse request one from my little sister.”

The nurse responded, “That’s not necessary, young master. I have prepared a set of costumes for Chiyoi’s marriage someday. Your lady can use the costumes for tomorrow’s occasion. Please rest assured.” The couple was extremely pleased and

grateful. The nurse was happy as well for she knew that the princess was superior to any of the brides of Saishō's brothers.

The following morning, the princess took a bath in a washtub and applied her makeup beautifully. Then she remembered what the *yamauba* had told her to do when she met the man she was to marry. "I shall do it now," she said and went behind the screen. She opened the bag and found a jewel of variegated colors. Before her eyes, the jewel immediately changed into an abundance of gold and silver, twill and brocade fabrics, Chinese cloths and lady's costumes, hairpieces, sashes, beddings and swords, piling upon each other. Bewildered, the princess called upon the nurse, and the nurse was no less surprised to see the mountain of treasure. "What are these?" the nurse asked.

"This must be Kannon's promise," the princess replied.

"What a propitious promise indeed!" said the nurse. "So you are the Kannon-sent child then. Today's event is all the more auspicious." From the Chinese brocade, Chinese cloths, to a scarlet *hakama* (divided skirt), there was nothing missing. A long hairpiece the princess put on her hair swayed gracefully. She looked like a blooming flower. The nurse was indeed pleased to see such a stunning sight, knowing no one could surpass her beauty.

Several messengers came from the parents' house and urged the princess to come forth without further delay. "In that case," the nurse said, "Please bring a palanquin." The messengers whispered to each other, "That's funny. For whom is the nurse requesting a palanquin?" But considering the position of their young master, they sent a palanquin to the nurse's house. The princess quietly sat in the palanquin, followed by the nurse and Chiyoi. Soon they arrived at the Middle Councilor's house. Saishō's two elder brothers had been waiting for the princess's arrival—they had secretly planned to watch the princess as she came out of the palanquin to laugh at her. The princess came out of the palanquin with the assistance of the nurse and Chiyoi. Again, the princess's appearance might be portrayed but could not be described by words. Looking at her, the elder brothers forgot all about laughing. They looked at each other and whispered, "Where does she come from?" Then they left.

In the banquet room the two wives and a younger sister were sitting with full confidence. There, the princess entered—as if a celestial being descending from the heavens. Both the Middle Councilor and his wife were so astounded and delighted to see her stunning beauty that his wife stood up and led the princess by the hand to the right side of her seat, looking at the princess thoroughly. The young lady looked about fourteen or fifteen years of age. Her face was like a shining jewel with sublime charm in her eyes. Her hair was softly hanging at both sides of her face—resembling a willow branch swaying in the spring wind. It was impossible to find a single flaw in her appearance.

Who could have ever known how beautiful and enchanting Saishō's lady would turn out to be? "Where could he possibly have found such a beauty?" The mother thought it so strange that she summoned Saishō's nurse and asked. But the nurse only replied, "I really do not know in the least. The young master

simply says that he found her.” “In that case,” the mother mused, “she must be truly a celestial being descending on earth. She certainly does not look like an ordinary mortal.”

Now the saké came. After three cups of saké and various entertainment, rare incense in a censer was brought in. The censer went around the party and was taken to the princess, for she was the guest of the day. After she gracefully put her hand around the censer and smelled the scent, she took out from her sleeve an exquisite golden incense box containing fine wooden incense and put it gently on the tray. Looking at the princess’ gesture, the Middle Councilor asked for the tray with the princess’s incense box. When he examined the incense, it was *Ama no hagoromo* (Angel’s Feathered Robe), so named because it was the angels’ favorite and its fragrance went up to the sky.

“How rare it is!” So saying, the Middle Councilor broke some off and put it in the censer. The delicate scent was indeed superb, as if it erased human sins. People were sure that a heavenly being had, indeed, descended. “With what good fortune was Saishō born! Where did he find this angelic lady?” They were all curious.

The day was over and so was the party. People went back to their own residences. The Middle Councilor and his wife felt that the princess should not be allowed to live in a plain house, so they had the princess use a parlor, which was designed for the Middle Councilor’s entertainment room. Further, they attached a number of servants to the princess, from ladies-in-waiting to some humble maids to wait upon her with utmost care.

Thus Saishō and the princess stayed together as they pleased. Saishō’s mother thought the princess adorable and frequently visited the princess’s quarters with her daughter and daughters-in-law. The ladies entertained the princess with various activities including reading and writing, and playing musical instruments, but the princess’s skill surpassed anyone else’s as she even knew the secret music of *bima*.

SCROLL III

In the meantime, the Middle Councilor and his wife had an auspicious day selected for building the residence for Saishō and his princess. A great number of carpenters were summoned and the residence was soon completed. On the occasion of Saishō and the princess moving into the new house, the young couple received various congratulatory gifts. The Middle Councilor gave them two warehouses, one a treasury, the other a granary. People were all envious of such a generous and propitious gift.

Thus Saishō and the princess led a happy married life, pledging eternal marital vows to each other. There was nothing missing or lacking in their lives—except that the princess missed her father and nurse, and wished her familiar servants were there at her side. With that weighing on her mind, she shed tears morning and evening. Time passed. In spring they played with flowers—the late cherry blossoms flowered among green leaves, but sadly spring days were soon gone.

With deutzia flowers the summer came. A breeze from a fan was refreshing and the fountain water comforted people. Quickly though, the summer was gone and it was already autumn. It was the Seventh Day of the Seventh Month, the day of the Star Festival. Many offerings were given to the Weaver and Herd Boy in the sky. Saishō, too, composed a poem and offered it to the stars. While he was at it, he playfully wrote another poem and put it on the princess’s lap. The princess read:

Aki machite/ kyō Tanabata no/ yorokobi mo/ ware hatsuaki no/ ureshisa zo masu

Long awaited autumn/ the joy of today’s meeting/ of the Weaver and Altar/ is all the greater/ the first autumn I spend with you.

She was amused by the poem. Saishō gave her his brush and asked her to compose as well. Finding it hard to resist, the princess wrote:

Tanabata no/ au hatsuaki to/ kiku kara ni/ itodo tsuyukeki/ waga tamoto kana

Hearing it is/ the first autumn/ when the Weaver and Altar meet/ my sleeves are/ indeed wet.

She then put her sleeves on her face. Looking at her and her poem, Saishō asked, “Do you have, then, a secret lover whom you miss?”

“Oh no, never,” she replied. “But my love for my father is no less great than my love for you.” Listening to her, Saishō urged, “So you have a parent you terribly miss. Tell me who it is. Even if he is in a barbarian land, I will surely bring him back here. You are so cautious.”

The princess realized that she should not hide her secret any longer, so she replied, “It shouldn’t be concealed, but I had a great deal of scruples about saying it. My father is Bungo no kami Moritaka, who lives in a village at the foot of Mt. Fuji. I am his only child and my parents have doted on me. But my mother died when I was nine years old, and my father grieved so much to the point of following her. Three years after my mother passed away, the relatives got together and through the good offices of someone close, my stepmother came to our house. My father would only think of praying for my mother’s happiness in the next life from morning till night and hardly visited his new wife’s quarters. She hated me because she thought my father did not frequent her quarters because of me. Although I pretended not to know her feelings, one day while my father was away from home, she schemed to have a samurai kidnap and abandon me in the deep mountains. Fortunately, perhaps by Kannon’s power, I didn’t become prey for the wild beasts, and instead, a *yamauba* kindly gave me lodging for the night. This *yamauba* was compassionate. She gave me directions to a human habitation, accompanying me till midway. She then said that once I got there I should follow the white water. When I walked slowly along the white water, I arrived at the east gate of this house. While I was resting, Akino, a maid of this house, came out and took me to her home to take care of me. Later, she let me stay beside the cooking stove during the winter. I don’t know what karma it was, but then you found me there. Nobody

noticed me [during the day] because I was wearing a *yamauba*'s clothes that transformed me into an old woman. The treasure I found right before I came into your parents' house came from a small bag the *yamauba* gave me. I didn't wish to tell this story because I didn't want my stepmother's name to be revealed."

Listening to her story, Saishō also shed tears. "Indeed, you have steadfastly concealed this story. However, now that I know, please write a letter to your father. I will have it delivered to him."

"That, I thank you, but please do it secretly," she said. Saishō understood. "Don't worry. I'll send a very trustworthy man. Rest assured, and do it quickly."

The princess then happily wrote a detailed letter: "I miss you, father, more and more recently. As I am a woman who caused you displeasure, I spend time lamenting. If you are so inclined, please come and see me soon, and let me see your unchanged appearance." Receiving her letter, Saishō summoned a man named Genta, who was wise and ran fast. Genta received detailed instructions and left Saishō's house on the following morning while it was still dark outside.

Arriving at Moritaka's house before noon, Genta announced himself to an attendant. "I have brought a letter from the direction of the capital. I wish to see Lord Moritaka." The attendant conveyed Genta's message to Moritaka, who came out of his quarters and asked from whom the letter was sent. Genta unwrapped the paper and took out a letter on which was written, "A letter to Lord Moritaka from Blossom Princess."

"Is this a dream or reality?" Moritaka asked and immediately opened the letter and confirmed that it was indeed from his beloved Blossom Princess. Disregarding his surroundings, Moritaka pressed her letter to his face and wept, so happy was he to know his daughter was alive. Then he invited Genta to his quarters, clearing out the people and asked about his daughter in detail. Genta replied to Moritaka according to Saishō's instructions, and Moritaka was exuberant. "It is an auspicious sign to live," he said. "It was good that I did not commit suicide when my daughter disappeared." Moritaka summoned Saemon, his adjunct, and told him to keep this matter secret. He then ordered Saemon to send Genta home after entertaining him. Further, he asked Saemon whether there was someone who knew the way to the Middle Councilor's residence. Saemon replied that his wife was from the village of the Middle Councilor's house and therefore knew where he lived. Moritaka was delighted. While Saemon entertained Genta, Moritaka wrote a letter in reply to his daughter and gave it to Genta. Moritaka also gave Genta a quilted silk garment for a gift, which Genta received humbly and put on his shoulder. Further, Moritaka provide a fine horse with a saddle on it. "This horse runs fast. Please go quickly," said Moritaka's attendant who accompanied Genta until outside the gate. Once outside, Genta got on the horse and whipped it to a gallop.

As Genta took the matter as his own and hurried, he arrived at Saishō's house before sunset. Immediately Genta presented the letter to Saishō, who was delighted to see him back so soon. Genta showed the gifts of the quilted silk gar-

ment and horse, and reported, "I have returned quickly riding on this horse. The lord lives in a magnificent house. He said that he would visit you tomorrow."

Saishō was pleased to give the happy news to the princess. With the reports of her father's safety and anticipating their reunion, the princess shed tears of joy. She read his letter and impatiently awaited the following morning.

At Moritaka's house, immediately after Genta had left, the lord commanded Saemon to prepare everything for an early departure on the following day. "For this visit no treasure can be too good or wasteful," Moritaka said. "Open one whole warehouse. Prepare various gifts: gold, silver, gold-brocaded satin damask, Chinese twilled silk fabric, Chinese textiles, embroidered costumes, silk, and so forth. Into one oblong chest put golden armor, breast-protectors, and swords. Another chest should include white cloths for all the expenses. Also, prepare thirteen fine horses with a golden saddle on each. Accompanying attendants should look fine—not unsightly: ten mounted retainers and twenty foot soldiers only. The visit should be secret, tell people that the entourage travels to pray at a shrine. Let them carry ample treasures." Lord Moritaka wanted to share his secret with Akashi. "But women are indiscreet. It will be regrettable if her face shows the joy and my wife notices the truth"; so thinking, he went to his wife's quarters and summoned Akashi. In a good humor, he told Akashi to stay home while he went to a shrine to pray for longstanding desire the following day.

Moritaka was all smiles and left the quarters. The wife was happy to see him in such a good mood, and vainly thought he would visit her upon his return.

On the following day, the party left while it was still dark outside. Though the entourage had been ordered to be small because of secrecy, one had to be cautious against bandits along the way. Thus, the accompanying number became large, with people equipped with spears and halberds. A long line of people carrying the large oblong chests led the way. Looking at this sight, people whispered to each other, "That's strange. Which shrine is Lord Moritaka going to visit? Our lord is said to be secluded," was the common answer. None could make out the intentions of their lord.

Moritaka's party went quickly, and soon they arrived at Saishō's residence. Moritaka sent his man to report his arrival and Genta came out immediately. As Genta had anticipated, Moritaka's entourage was quite large. He ushered Lord Moritaka and his immediate retainers in while having the rest of the party wait outside the gate. The princess scurried to the edge of the room, for she had been eagerly awaiting her father. She took her father's hand and ushered him into the room. She could not find words to express her joy. She stayed close to her father and wept. Moritaka also wept. "Blossom Princess," he said through his tears. "I am so happy to see you. After I lost you, I thought of killing myself. But I have survived until now, relying on the Buddha's oracle. It is indeed a miracle."

The princess looked up at her father and said, "I am sorry to see your emaciated face. My sin to make you worry so must be deep. While you were away, my step-mother, your wife, drove me out of the house saying that it was your wish to do so. The feigned messenger carried me on his back, and never stopping once, he abandoned me on an unfamiliar mountain. But because of Kannon's help I escaped the

jaws of wild beasts and miraculously survived to see your unchanged appearance. How grateful I am,” and she wept profusely. These were tears of joy; the nurse and attendants near the princess all shared their tears. The princess then asked after Akashi. Her father replied, “Akashi, Kojijū, and Kochōnomai are all well and waiting for your news. I haven’t told them of this happy event yet. I will send for them tomorrow.” Hearing this, the princess impatiently waited for the following day.

The Middle Councilor heard the news of Moritaka’s arrival. “What an unexpected guest! It would be rude to send a messenger on my behalf while I am here.” So saying, the Middle Councilor visited Saishō’s residence with the rest of his children. Moritaka came out to meet the Middle Councilor in person. This was their first encounter. “Your arrival is indeed unanticipated. I regret that you didn’t tell us earlier,” said the Middle Councilor.

“You are quite right,” Moritaka replied. “I am ashamed to visit so brazenly like this. However, I have only one child who disappeared the past autumn. By some miracle, I learned that she is staying at this house as the wife [of your youngest son], so I came here clandestinely without any regard to public gaze or shame—probably I have lost control of myself for the love of my child. You are so fortunate to have so many fine, grown-up children. I am envious.” Moritaka shed tears.

The Middle Councilor replied, “Thank you for your kind words. We are blessed with many children, and we love them all. Now that you are here there is nothing more joyous than this. Please be kind to consider Saishō as your child after this.”

The parents merrily exchanged saké, and then the Middle Councilor returned to his residence with two of his children. Saishō remained in the place and entertained Moritaka with various stories. Moritaka’s happiness was indescribable. Later, he made a return visit to the Middle Councilor’s quarters and presented various gifts for celebration: to the Middle Councilor he gave ten scrolls of gold brocade, a fine horse with a gold saddle, and a golden sword; to the eldest son, a fine horse with a gold saddle and a golden sword; for the Middle Councilor’s wife, three sets of Chinese textiles and gold dust; for Saishō’s younger sister, one set of Chinese twilled clothing and a shining decorative miniature citrus tree with three golden fruit. All, from the ladies-in-waiting to lowly servants, received numerous and diverse gifts. The clan’s men and household retainers, without omission, from the old to the young, were given horses, saddles, armor, and swords. “What a splendid entry from the father-in-law!” said the people of the Middle Councilor’s quarters. All were delighted.

Moritaka then returned to Saishō’s residence. He was thrilled to see his son-in-law and overjoyed to be with his beloved Blossom Princess again—the reunion might be compared to seeing the *udumbara* [*udonge* 優曇華] that is said to flower once in three thousand years. The celebration gifts to Saishō were a six-year-old dappled gray horse with a fine saddle, three grooms for the horse, a golden sword, ten scrolls of gold brocade and a silk damask, and three packets of gold dust wrapped in paper—each worth a hundred *ryō*. The wedding celebration gifts for the princess were three sets of Chinese red cloths, Chinese twill fabric and silk

textiles, plus a scarlet *hakama*. For the nurse and Chiyoi and her female attendants, Moritaka gave gifts according to their rank. Moritaka told the nurse and Chiyoi, "Your kindness to my princess shall never be forgotten. The gifts here are only a token. Later you shall receive more." Their joy was limitless.

After that, Moritaka sent a messenger to inform Akashi of the matter. Receiving the news, Akashi could not believe her ears. She was so ecstatic that she did not know what to think. As the messenger told the detailed story of the princess's adventures, joy began to settle in Akashi's heart. "How grateful. So it is really true. It is worth living this long." So saying, she wept for joy. Kojijū, Kochōnomai, the princess's eight ladies-in-waiting and her maids were all exuberant with the good news. The messenger said, "Of whom are you afraid now? Please depart immediately." Akashi sent a message to the lady of the house: "Our princess who disappeared in the past autumn has been discovered. So please excuse us, we are going to see her," and left for Saishō's house with her people. The stepmother was too appalled to speak. Then the lady's nurse came near her and said, "I heard that the princess had already been eaten by wolves. The person who has been found must be an imposter."

Whether it was happiness or hardship that brought them, tears flowed on the cheeks of the princess and her nurse. After a while Akashi told the princess how terrible she had felt after she had gone. Relying on Lord Moritaka's dream and the diviner's divination, however, she had been waiting for the first of autumn. There was no end to her stories. As for the princess, she told how much she missed Akashi when the nurse left for the shrine on the morning of her abduction, her worries when she was driven out of the house, the samurai's wife's kindness, her loneliness in the mountains, how scared she was at the *yamauba*'s cavern, and how relieved she was when the *yamauba* turned out to be kind and gave her miraculous clothes and led her to the Middle Councilor's gate. The princess told how Akino had found her and how she made the cooking fire at this house, how Saishō's nurse and Chiyoi were generous, and so on. They talked to each other from morning to night endlessly—interrupted only by frequent tears.

Now Moritaka had been staying at Saishō's residence for ten days, entertained by this person and that person. Since this was an event known widely in the province, people all over the province talked about it. The people close to the stepmother heard the rumor and thought, "How wretched! We shall lose face because of the lady's inhumane treatment of her stepdaughter. There is no need to write her a letter." So no one visited the stepmother. All hated her. Since the woman could no longer live under Lord Moritaka's roof, and there was nowhere else for her to go, she left the house with her nurse without any destination. It was a sad journey for her to say the least.

Later, Lord Moritaka took leave of the Middle Councilor, and said to the princess, "Now that I see your happiness, I have nothing to worry about. I will now return home to offer my gratitude to the Kannon, and then I will come back here to discuss some matter with the Middle Councilor. Wait until then." He then bid farewell to Saishō and left.

When Moritaka returned home, his wife had gone. “They say ‘when one is guilty, the world is small.’ It cannot be helped.” So thinking, Moritaka pursued the matter no further. He went immediately to the Kannon Hall and prayed earnestly: “With your grateful vow to save Blossom Princess, I could see my daughter once again. I am very thankful. Please continue to protect her in the future.” Soon he had a residence hall and pagoda built on a hill and employed twenty Buddhist priests to conduct religious services for Shō Kannon every morning and evening. Because of this miraculous Kannon, many people came to pay a visit. Moritaka also revered the *yamauba*’s wondrous clothes and had the priests hold a memorial service. The mound was built near the Kannon and a wooden grave tablet with a divine name was erected for the clothes so that the clothes, which were an intrinsic part of the *oni*’s nature, might be transformed to a Buddha and rest in peace. After that, Moritaka gave the diviner one hundred *koku* of rice and one hundred *kan* of currency, saying, “You foretold well. I couldn’t have known happiness or hardship without your divination.”

The princess also sent a gift of a quilted silk garment and one hundred gold coins to the diviner with a note that read, “Because of your divination, I could see my father and nurse once again. How can I not be delighted?” These were happy events. The princess presented the gifts with the intent to become the diviner’s long-term patron. Further, Akashi and a number of lady attendants took off their quilted silk garments and offered them to the diviner, saying, “Because of this diviner, we found hope to live and wait for.” The samurai who had kidnapped the princess was captured and was sentenced to death by means of *surikubi*, beheading with a dull knife, for seven days and seven nights. As for the samurai’s wife, she might have suffered a similar fate, but if she were killed immediately, she would not be able to atone for her sin; today’s happiness existed because the princess’s life was spared through the intervention of the samurai’s wife. Still, because the woman aided her husband it was not possible to reward her. So with a lecture she was sent home. As for Moritaka’s evil wife, had her whereabouts been known, he would have sent her some form of stipend and “returned good for evil.” But she was sinful and unaccounted for. It was indeed hard for the evil woman to avoid karma.

After Lord Moritaka had effected justice and directed events as he pleased, he quickly returned to the Middle Councilor’s residence and requested that the Middle Councilor allow Saishō to become his successor. Moritaka wished Saishō to succeed to his lordship, and thus handed over his fiefdom, his residence, and his many warehouses to both Blossom Princess and Saishō, who was renamed Tango no kami Morie. Further, Moritaka invited his mother-in-law to stay at his residence as a happy reminder of his late wife. As the Middle Councilor and his wife loved the princess without equal, they deeply regretted the young couple leaving. Moritaka, however, consoled them by saying, “Please attend our various gatherings, including flower-viewings in spring and those of maple leaves in autumn. Please come often to our house.” Thus Moritaka bid farewell to the Middle Councilor and his wife. As the princess got in a palanquin, Moritaka and Morie rode

on horses. The Middle Councilor came out with his two children to see the party off as a celebration of Moriie’s first entry to his inherited fief. This was a serious matter. The Middle Councilor’s party rode a long way with Moritaka’s entourage. Moritaka, however, at last urged them to return as the distance they had ridden together was already too far—thus being polite and respectful to each other, both entourages parted ways.

Meanwhile, in Moritaka’s village everyone from the most noble to the lowliest persons came out to welcome the party home. “The princess is resurrected and returns with her husband,” they cried. “There is nothing more auspicious than this.” Moritaka’s joy was without equal. Not only people in the household but also those outside came to visit with saké to celebrate. Moritaka continually held celebrations and banquets without comparison from morning to night. As Lord Moriie excelled in learning, martial arts, and various other accomplishments, people in Moritaka’s clan all considered Moriie their worthy leader.

Later the princess wondered, “Don’t I owe my present prosperity solely to my mother? She revered Kannon so deeply that the Kannon’s protection has been profound.” So believing, she held memorial services for her late mother all the more. She had a temple built and conducted services for the benefit of suffering spirits. On behalf of her mother she gave treasures to needy people. As she was always compassionate, her family prospered all the more with Kannon’s protection. Further, she summoned Akino and her husband, built a good house in which the couple could live, and sent rice and paid other expenses monthly so that the couple became rich and lived luxuriously. As for the princess herself, she gave birth to a prince and a princess one after another. The appropriate wet nurses and nurses were chosen for each child. Akashi, the princess’s nurse, and Saishō’s nurse named Shii got along as if they were two halves of the whole and everyone revered them. As Moritaka was too young to remain a widower, he married the Middle Councilor’s twenty-year-old niece. There was a breach in the previous engagement of the niece and she had been single for three years. Moritaka considered her just like his late wife and they lived happily together. They both took to the moon and flowers, and enjoyed dance performances and music.

If one is honest and compassionate, and believes in buddhas and gods, one’s life in both this transitory world and the next will be good. For those who read this tale, be kind and compassionate to people. Akino and her husband prospered because she was compassionate and sympathetic to others. Further, if you rely on the grateful Kannon single-mindedly, your desire will materialize in the end and your life in this world will be peaceful. Further, you will be born into a good place in your next life. Repeatedly think of compassion from morning till night.

NOTES

* According to Inai Hitomi, there are four *hanbon* 版本 or books printed from woodblocks, and three *shabon* 写本 or written copies for “Blossom Princess.” The four book prints are all from the same woodblocks or *han* 版. For the three written copies—1) former *Shikada-bon*; 2) former *Takano-bon*; and 3) Hiroshima *daigaku-bon*, two of them—numbers 1) and 3)—are

considered to be the same copy by different names. That means that only two written copies exist. “Blossom Princess” is a work with few versions (INAI 1986, 26–27), and there is hardly any textual difference between the woodblock version and the Hiroshima *daigaku-bon*. This translation is based upon a book print published in MJMT 10: 515–59. I also consulted Shimazu Hisamoto’s edition of “Hanayo no hime” (SHIMAZU 1936, 55–98). This online translation is supplementary to “Hanayo no hime,” or “Blossom Princess”: A late-Medieval Japanese Step-daughter Story and Provincial Customs, *Asian Ethnology* 70, 59–80.

1. “Bungo no kami” means a governor of Bungo Province, located in present-day Ōita prefecture.

2. According to yin-yang theory, “right” symbolizes female. Hence, the flower that is stored in the right sleeve represents a female child.

3. This should actually be twelve years old because three years had passed since Blossom Princess was nine.

4. *Genji monogatari* [The Tale of Genji] (ca. 1010) was written by Lady Murasaki. Lady Akashi is one of Genji’s mistresses who bore Genji his (and her) only daughter. Her daughter later becomes empress (Empress Akashi) and has five children, including the crown prince.

5. *Miko* is generally translated as a priestess or shaman who is, “According to the Kōjien dictionary, a divinely inspired person who transmits the divine will while in a state of inspiration... the fact that they are generally used for persons who are able to contact spirits by incorporating them further suggests that here possession is thought to be the main form of contact” (KNECHT 2003, 4). *Miko* appears in such *otogizōshi* stories as “Kachō Fūgetsu” 花鳥風月 (Kachō and Fūgetsu). In this text, however, I translated a *miko* as a diviner rather than a priestess or shaman because the *miko* in the text is not possessed for divine inspiration, but rather she uses paper devices for predicting Blossom Princess’s well-being. Interestingly, the picture of the diviner in “Blossom Princess” owned by Hiroshima University Library is male. See Hiroshima University Library, <http://www.lib.hiroshimau.ac.jp/dc/kyodo/narahun/research/01/> (accessed 22 July 2008).

6. In the Shimazu version, this is *haru* (spring) instead of *hana*.

7. The wheel, one of the most important symbols of Buddhism, represents the teachings of the Buddha and Dharma. The poem reveals the assurance of the Kannon; it suggests that a blossom, in other words, Blossom Princess, is protected by Kannon. Just as water running on the wheel is never exhausted—like Kannon’s compassion—and goes around, Moritaka will meet his daughter again.

8. *Shaguma* 赤熊, or a fur of a yak’s tail that is colored crimson, was used as a decoration for helmets, Buddhist priests’ flappers, and wigs.

9. *Hanayone* can mean two things: one is rice grains wrapped in paper—the wrapped paper is tied to a branch to be offered to a god. The second refers to the sacred rice grains scattered before an altar to cast evil away.

10. The same expression appears in *Otogizōshi*’s “Shuten Dōji” and the Noh play titled “Ōeyama.” The idea that demons are honest and not manipulative is not novel. For example, in the tale titled “Miyoshi no Kiyotsura no saishō no ie-watari no koto” (The eviction) from *Konjaku monogatari shū*, Minister Miyoshi no Kiyotsura (847–918) says, “Real demons know right from wrong and are perfectly straight about it. That’s what makes them frightening” (TYLER 1987, 123). The original Japanese text is found in SNKBZ 38: 97–101.

11. This is Chapter 12 of the *Lotus Sutra* or *Hokekyō* 法華經. The chapter includes a famous story of the Dragon Princess transforming into a Buddha instantly.

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