

“The Thirteenth Night:”

A Practice in Translating with Suchness and Rhetoricity

A THESIS

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Translator's Preface

Writing during the Meiji era, 1868 – 1912, Higuchi Ichiyō gained fame as a woman writer for her captivating writing, and is regarded today as one of the foremost Meiji writers. Higuchi utilized the classical writing style of Heian Japan, the period of time stretching from 794 to 1185, alongside Edo period (1600 – 1867) comedy and satire in her works. In both emulation and reference, Higuchi's writing style calls on the “deliberately vague and allusive courtly language...the ethereal, emotional tone” of Heian Japan, the era of classical works such as *The Tale of Genji*, *The Pillow Book*, and *The Tales of Ise* (Danly 133). But it is in the intertwining of such classical language with modern speech and style that Higuchi's writing has made a mark on the literary world. Taking the Edo author Saikaku as a model, Higuchi entertains her readers with “free-form, fluid sentences, drifting from descriptive passages to indirect dialogue to direct dialogue to narrator's asides” (133). Her unique and impactful style of writing then emphasizes the stories she tells, stories focusing on the downtrodden, the left behind: women and children in Meiji Japan.

As a specific author in a specific point of time and place, Higuchi Ichiyō's writing is necessarily influenced by her own circumstances and being, and it is an accumulation of all things surrounding her that results in this specific work. Higuchi was born in 1872 and lived to the age of 24, when she died of tuberculosis in 1896; she wrote “十三夜” (jūsan'ya), “The Thirteenth Night,” in December of 1895. The writings of her last few years are what pushed her into the literary spotlight in Japan: as a novel, brilliant, woman author. While her work brought her great praise from other contemporary male authors, Mori Ōgai proclaiming “I do not hesitate

to confer on Ichiyō the title of a true poet,” Higuchi nonetheless existed as a *woman* author in the eyes of the public (Danly 148). Danly writes in his biography of Higuchi,

Ichiyō hated being regarded as a curiosity. She immediately sensed a certain condescension in some of the people who came to see her. It infuriated her when a reviewer repeated received opinion: “Ichiyō is the foremost woman writer,” “Ichiyō is better than many men.” Why make the distinction? What difference was there, really, between women and men? We are all born with the same hearts, she declared in her diary, we all want the same things. (Danly 154)

Defining Higuchi as a “woman writer” obscures her identity as herself. In proclaiming such gender distinctions in the literary scene, an author’s existence, the entirety of what makes her herself, is erased, and she is forced into this role as a “woman writer” that writes “women’s literature.”¹

Such a label does not encase all of who Higuchi Ichiyō was. After losing her father, Higuchi became the main provider for her family, her mother and younger sister, and they fell on hard times. Moving several times to save money, Higuchi and her family at one point lived on the border of the Yoshiwara, the infamous red-light district that makes an appearance in several of her stories. While writing was her aspiration, Higuchi also depended on her writing for her family’s survival; her writing had to appeal to the populace, but she also refused to lower her standards of writing just for entertainment value (Danly 24, 63-64, 86-91, 132). It is this

¹ The distinction of Higuchi as a “woman writer” is an important and interesting concept, and a direction I originally wanted to go in this project. Unfortunately, it cannot be elaborated on in this thesis, but for more information regarding women’s literature in Japan, look at Joan E. Ericson’s book *Be A Woman: Hayashi Fumiko and Modern Japanese Women’s Literature* and Rebecca Copeland’s essay “The Meiji Woman Writer ‘Amidst a Forest of Beards.’”

uniqueness and specificity, of both herself, her moment, and her writing, that I wish to maintain within this translation.

My theory for this translation of “The Thirteenth Night” is taken primarily from the work of Gayatri Spivak and Antoine Berman, specifically Berman’s work on Friedrich Hölderlin; but I use the work of these theorists in relation to Nishitani Keiji (1900-1990) and his philosophical concepts regarding nihilism and existentialism. Following their thoughts, I hope to properly render the *suchness* of the original text, this short story written by Higuchi Ichiyō, into the translation.

Belonging to the famous Kyoto School of philosophy, Nishitani Keiji’s work particularly concerns itself with the concept of nihilism, the questioning of the meaning of existence itself. Yet Nishitani views nihilism in a certain way, specifically linking his notions of existentialism to religion, a vital part of humanity that he claims “has to do with life itself” (Nishitani 2). Religion is not a dogmatic practice or a sort of mysticism for Nishitani, but rather an experience that is “both our becoming aware of reality and, at the same time, the reality realizing itself in our awareness” (5). Religion is so integral to humanity’s being because it consists of how we relate, interact, and connect to everything else; it is the realization of the self as consisting of everything else. This realization is the overcoming of nihilism, but nihilism can only be reached when the subject truly sees itself as a subject, and thereby realizes its being has no ground to stand upon. In this nothingness, the subject comes into being within its own “*suchness*,” its own reality (21). As one falls into nihilism, the self loses all meaning, any basis of identity. The kicker here, then, is that in order to overcome this nihilism, an affirmation of the *other* in the self is required. After losing one’s self, completely, utterly, truly, does one realize its own actuality, an actuality that consists of everyone and everything else.

Here, I would like to take Nishitani's ideas regarding nihilism and apply them to the concept of translation. If religion has to do with life itself, is not life completely enveloped in and created by language? So then would not translation necessarily have to deal with the concept of existentialism, a questioning and realization of a total lack of meaning, and then the overcoming of such nothingness—overcoming a lack of meaning? Instead of viewing nihilism in regards to religion and being, I want to focus on nihilism in regards to translation and language. The very basis of language resides in its capability to convey words, ideas, and concepts: in both creating and conveying meaning. Nishitani's overcoming of nihilism does not fit perfectly with the practice of translation, but it brings to the forefront the issues and ideas I am concerned with; primarily the maintaining of the suchness, or the rhetoric, of the original work within the translation, while bringing it to a new field of existence.

Suchness for Nishitani almost seems to be the essence of being for an individual, but this essence is at once a self-contradictory negation and affirmation. A human being defines him/herself in accordance to the others who surround him/her: I know who I am because I am not anyone else. In negating one's own identity as an individual, there is an affirmation of the other, which in actuality reaffirms one's own identity (because I am what others are not). Conversely, if one negates the other and affirms the self, there is a reaffirmation of the other. There is an endless dialectic that occurs here, an endless self-contradiction. As the self falls into nihilism, into realizing the meaninglessness of existence, it reaches an overcoming of nihilism through this reaffirmation of the other: I am me because of everything around me. My inherent being as an individual has no basis of meaning, there is nothing. But because there is nothing, there is space for everything else, so therefore my existence as me is actually made up of everything surrounding me: relationships, history, experience. This is, for Nishitani, the

suchness, the actuality of a person, the accumulation of all things in the one. For translation then, as language falls into nihilism, losing all meaning, it overcomes this lack by its relation to everything else, its rhetoricity.

In her essay “The Politics of Translation,” Gayatri Spivak expounds on the importance of the original’s rhetoricity, which she defines as that which “must work in the silence between and around words in order to see what works and how much” (Spivak 181). The rhetoric is not so much the diction chosen by the writer, but the way in which the writer has chosen to use the chosen diction: the sentence structure, the style of writing, the art of the passage. It is not the “logic” of the language, but that what is inferred or moves beyond a straightforward, logical understanding (181). It is the part of literature that makes a work *literature*, and not a simple piece of writing. Rhetoric differs from the concept of language because it is not concerned with the meaning or the value of a word, but is instead focused on how the language itself moves and works together. Not only this, but “the ways in which rhetoric or figuration disrupt logic themselves point at the possibility of random contingency, beside language, around language” is important; the “random contingency,” of the writer’s moment, history, society, etc., also factor in to the work itself, in the rhetoric (180). It is this rhetoricity that is far too often lost in translation, Spivak claims, and can reach the point where “literature by a woman in Palestine begins to resemble, in the feel of its prose, something by a man in Taiwan” (182). In Nishitani’s words, it is the *suchness* of a work that is lost.

But why is the rhetoricity of the original so important, even more so than the language? It is because it is within the rhetoricity that the history of the specific moment, the history of the language, and the history of the author are included. If, to follow Nishitani’s notion that at the bottom of every existence there lies no meaning, and we take language as the basis of being in

regards to translation, then language “is an existence at one with nonexistence, swinging back and forth over nihility, ceaselessly passing away and ceaselessly regaining its existence:” there is no existential meaning residing within language (Nishitani 4). As it falls into this abyss, facing nihilism, language is reconstructed in accordance to its relationship with everything else, its rhetoricity. As Spivak stated, “Language is not everything. It is only a vital clue to where the self loses its boundaries” (Spivak 180). Identity is formed by relationships, history, experience, etc., and the realization of this is the overcoming of nihilism, is religion, and it is the same for language: it consists of everything surrounding it. Suchness is to being as rhetoricity is to a work of literature.

The process of translation, the overcoming of the nihilism of language, is a simultaneous double movement, according to Antoine Berman. In his section on Friedrich Hölderlin in his book *The Experience of the Foreign*, Berman focuses on how Hölderlin’s poetry contains a “double movement of a return to the meanings of the natural and native language, and of an appropriation of the *Sprachlichkeit* of a foreign language” (Berman 160). The double movement present in Hölderlin’s poetry, poetry impacted by his experience as a translator, is an embracing of both the foreign elements and native elements. It is a movement towards the foreign language and the original’s rhetoricity while simultaneously bringing it back towards the target language. While diving into and maintaining the rhetoricity of the original, the translator is bringing it back into his or her target language, a mixture of foreign and native components.

The key point is that translation is a movement, a process. It’s in this action that for Hölderlin, according to Berman, there is a “return to a certain originary literalness of the text. Literal translation goes toward this literalness and even, in a sort of hyperbolic movement, restores it where the original text tends to veil it or to ‘deny’ it” (169). For Hölderlin, there exists

an obscured element within the original itself, with the original being a “site of struggle, at all of its levels,” a place where the original’s rhetoricity is hidden beneath other factors. This hidden element is the work itself *as it actually is* (169).

For Nishitani, before one can actually come to question the self’s existence, there has to be a disintegration of the ego within the self. The typical field that humanity exists upon is based on viewing others in relation to the subject: I and them. However, from such a view point the subject also views itself as an object: “the self is set ever against itself, as some *thing* called ‘self’ and separated from other things” (Nishitani 10). The labelling of the self as a “self” inherently creates a subject-object relationship, preventing the subject from existing exactly as its self. This creation of subject as object is then rectified through nihilism, or here, the process of translation. It is going through this act of translating (overcoming of nihilism) that allows for the original’s actual potential (suchness) to come forward in the translation (in religion). Through the process of translation, that which has been obscured in the original, its original suchness or rhetoricity, is brought forth. The retaining of the suchness or rhetoricity of the original in the translation, while bringing it to a new field of existence in a new language, allows for reader and text to interact with each other in each one’s own suchness. A space is created for learning and experience. Through the process of translation, the experience of religion, a work has overcome nothingness, its lack of meaning, and has come into a new field of existence as a translated work.

It is with such thinking that I have tackled translating “The Thirteenth Night.” This short story follows for one evening the life of a married woman who desperately seeks a divorce from her husband. I chose this text because of how the protagonist’s identity, as wife, mother, daughter, and sister, is completely based on her relationships to other people. The story depicts the gender divide of Meiji Japan and the expectation of women to become “good wives, wise

mothers” (Mackie 3). Confucian values strongly placed the male as the head of the household, as the head of society: “In the Meiji system, women were doubly subject: subject to the Emperor, and subject to the authority of the father in the patriarchal family” (6). While a woman could now file for divorce, the husband had full child custody, full control over property, and the wife was left with a new existence as a social outcast. These circumstances inform this story, and as such is included in the work’s rhetoricity.

Here, it is important to note that despite the goal of this translation being to maintain the suchness or rhetoricity of the original text, the translation exists as its own entity, and thereby must also contain its own unique suchness. There is no denying that a translation and the original work are separate works of literature, and no matter the degree of loyalty to the original, the original finds a new, unique life, in the translation. Higuchi Ichiyō’s work “十三夜” exists as its own text with its own suchness, and this translation “The Thirteenth Night,” also exists as its own text with its own suchness; a suchness that now includes my own being as a translator. In trying to maintain the original text’s suchness, this translation does not align with typical English literature expectations. The sentence structure is often choppy, utilizing more commas than periods; long sections of dialogue are not broken up by narrator voice; at times it is not clear who is speaking until the end of the passage. In the original Japanese it is difficult to differentiate who is talking at times, whether things are being said aloud or in one’s head, and I have tried to keep this ambiguity as much as possible. To an English-speaking audience, it may seem like an oddly written story: which it should.

In applying this theory of translation, I have utilized two collections of Higuchi Ichiyō’s works, にごりえ、たけくらべ (*Nigorie, Takekurabe*) and たけくらべ (*Takekurabe*), both entitled after Higuchi’s most famous works. The first collection contains Higuchi’s writings as

they were originally published, lacking dialogue markers and other modern punctuation; the second collection has added dialogue markers, commas, and separates the writing into more paragraphs, clarifying the often subtle transitions of Higuchi's writing. The second collection also gives footnotes regarding difficult language or references within the text, and it is this collection that I have used the most.

In attempting to translate according to the above theory, I initially started with a basic translation of the original, attempting to render an almost literal translation. One instance of such is when I translate “遊んで遊んで遊び抜いて、呑んで呑んで呑み尽して” as “I played and played and played until the end, and drank and drank and drank until I was exhausted” (Takekurabe 207). The repetition of 遊, to play, and 呑, to drink, is kept, following how the original emphasizes the degree to which he played around and drank. Robert Danly translates it as “I fooled around to my heart's content and drank myself silly” (Danly 252). The meaning is beautifully rendered into impactful English in Danly's translation; in fact, all of Danly's translations in his work *In the Shade of Spring Leaves* are beautiful and lyrical. Nonetheless, the impact of the character speaking out loud that he “played and played and played” is lost. While Danly's translation keeps the meaning—the character's extreme amount of fooling around—it lacks Higuchi's specifically chosen structure. It was with her rhetoricity, her writing style, in mind that I kept the repetition of the verbs in the sentence.

In a particular example, that I think interestingly depicts the problem of existence and identity in the story, I translate a statement of the protagonist, Oseki, as “I am an unfortunate existence.” Danly translates this as “how unlucky I've been!” (Danly 245), while Tanaka Hisako translates it as “I am utterly miserable!” (Tanaka 383). The original Japanese is “私是不運でこ

ざります,” with “ござります” meaning “to exist” or “to be” (*Takekurabe* 189). Here, it is difficult to know whether the で is a “by” or a “means of” existence (if so, I would have translated it as “I am existing by misfortune”), or if it is connected to “ござります” to also mean “to be” or “is.” But either way, it is clear that for Oseki, her entire being of existence is misfortune, not simply a being with a characteristic of bad luck. The presence of “ござります” emphasizes that Oseki, now, in the present, is herself unlucky or unfortunate. It is with such an emphasis on her existence as such that I have included “existence” in the translation, instead of the straightforward one of “I am unfortunate.” Higuchi’s chosen diction works together to elaborate on Oseki’s actual being, and it is with such a focus that I have translated this statement.

In regards to the “double movement” aspect of my translation theory, I initially translate a scene where Oseki, after speaking to her parents of her troubles with her husband, breaks down sobbing, “cutting herself off as she bit into the sleeve of her undershirt. The ink on the bamboo patterned sleeves turned purple from her sorrow.” Here, I broke the original Japanese, written in a single sentence as “とわっと声たてるを噛みしめる襦袢の袖、墨絵の竹も紫竹の色にや出ると哀れなり,” into two sentences, cutting off the flow of the original; this choice was to emphasize the physical presence of her sorrow in her appearance (*Takekurabe* 185). In the second draft, instead of trying to render meaning, I wanted to maintain more of the structure of Higuchi’s writing to keep the suchness of her work. The new translation, “She cut off her sobs as she bit into her sleeve, the color of the bamboo ink patterns appearing violet from her sorrow,” follows the basic format of the original sentence, separating the two clauses with a simple comma. The first section is fairly straightforward, “わっと声” meaning sobbing or a sudden and

loud voice, while “たてる” means to cut off, sever. For the second part, however, a quite literal translation would be “The ink painting’s bamboo and violet color appeared with her sorrow.” But the importance of how the violet color is appearing from her sorrow is lost, leading me to translate it as “the color of the ink on her bamboo patterned sleeves appearing violet from her sorrow:” emphasizing that the very color of her sleeves are changing color from her tears. The general structure of the original is kept, moving from the patterned sleeves to the violet color to her sorrow, and hopefully keeps the feel of the original, the specific working of the language to create a desired effect; all the while attempting to bring the work into a new field of existence, into a new language.

The whole focus of trying to maintain the original work’s rhetoricity or suchness is to offer a continuation of the original in a new language, to create a new life in a new culture. Even though the translation exists as its own entity in its own suchness, there is an inextricable link to the original. The translation exists as a translation purely because it is both the original and it is not the original: a self-contradictory identity, nothing made up of everything, self and other at the same time. “十三夜” is Higuchi Ichiyo’s work of literature, containing all of her identity and moments as well as everyone who has read and interacted with the story itself. “The Thirteenth Night,” is Higuchi Ichiyō’s work, but it is also the work of a translator: containing all of Higuchi, the translator, and everyone and everything else that interacts with it within the new language. In the process of translating, the original is uncovered, undone, and then reformed in its suchness in the new field of existence: it has overcome nihilism through translation.

The Thirteenth Night

Usually, when she would pull up to the house in the black-lacquered rickshaw, her parents would say, “That sound that stopped at the gate, it must be our daughter,” and they would come out cheerfully to welcome her home. But tonight, she hopped on a rickshaw that she had caught at a street corner. She was returning home dejected, and as she stood outside the lattice door, she could hear her father’s loud voice talking.

“One could say I am one of the lucky ones. Both of the obedient children we raised up are praised by other people. I’m not wishing for anything more, otherwise I’d be far too greedy. Oh really, how thankful I am!”

“His conversation partner is definitely mother.¹ Ah, they don’t know anything, their joyful coming and going, the space given to them to have fun; what kind of face will I reduce them to, when I tell them of the divorce papers? I’m definitely going to be scolded. And what of Tarō? I have a child to think of. Before the time comes when I leave him and run away, there are numerous, serious things that need to be considered, exhaustively, later. But to do this now, after all this time, is going to shock them. Their happiness up till now will disappear like the bubbles on the surface of the water when disturbed. Rather, I could not have this talk and turn back; if I return to calling myself Tarō’s mother, and forever be the wife of Harada, my parents could still boast of their high ranked, government official son-in-law. If I could only keep going, I could keep giving them pleasant things and spending money. If I force through to my heart’s content this divorce, then Tarō will experience unhappiness with his step-mother. Up till now, my parent’s standing was humble, and this will abruptly bring them low again. People’s expectations, my brother’s future, oh, that one thing that comes from his heart, for his success in

life, I can't stop it. Let's go back...go back? To return to that demon of a husband, that demon, to be the wife of a demon, oh, how I hate to do so!"

As she trembled in her misery, her thoughts falling, tottering from her mind, unintentionally she banged against the lattice door. "Who's there?" said her father in a large voice, probably mistaking her for a young vagrant from the streets.

From outside came a laugh. "It's me, Dad. It's me stopping by," she said, speaking in a sweet voice.

"Huh? Who? Who's here?" said her father, as he slid open the shoji door. "Oseki? What, why are you still standing there like that, coming at such a late hour? Without a rickshaw too, did you not even bring a maid along with you? Well hurry up and come inside then, come on. Coming this suddenly gave me a shock, I'm confused! Oh, don't worry about closing the door, I'll get it.

"Anyhow, how's the husband? Oh, go towards where the moon is shining. Here, sit on this cushion. The tatami is so dirty, I asked the land lady if she can have a carpenter come in; they'll come when there's an opening. Don't be so hesitant or anything, you'll just dirty your kimono. Goodness! Why did you come here so late? Is the house, everyone okay?"

Her father welcomed her with his usual warmth, but it was as if she was lying in a bed of needles. Him treating her as a wife made her feel ashamed. She fixedly swallowed her tears. "Yes, everyone's okay, despite the time of year. I'm sorry for not stopping by in so long, but you and mom are doing well?" she asked.

"Bah, I haven't had so much as a sneeze. Mom has started to have that blood sickness,² fainting some, but she was told she'll be cured if she stays in the futon for half a day; she's completely fine, so there's no need to worry." He said cheerfully, with a laugh.

“I haven’t seen Ino tonight. Is that child replacing studying with something?” She asked her mother, who was wearing a smile as she blissfully made the tea.

“These days Ino has been going to night school. Another thing, thanks to you, the other day Ino received a pay raise because the branch manager was charmed by him. I wonder how long this security will last. It certainly came from Harada’s good fortune; in this house we live a good life every day. You don’t mess up any Oseki, and from now on you’ll take good care of Harada too. But you know Inosuke, in his own way, has quite a taciturn nature; at any rate when he sees Isamu he doesn’t give a satisfactory greeting, I think. How many times have you stood in the middle, understanding our hearts! Ino’s future is a favor that you gave to him! Although the weather has been bad as the season changes, is Tarō always up to mischief still? Why didn’t you bring him along tonight? Grandpa misses him and wants him to come over too.” Her mother said.

It was here that Oseki, mournfully, spoke. “I thought of bringing him along, however that child fell swiftly asleep earlier in the evening, so I left him like that to come visit. Really, his mischief is only growing stronger, his reasonableness is little to none. If he runs outside I chase his footsteps, if he’s in the house he’s right by my side peeking at what I’m doing. He really is a handful! I wonder how he became this way.”

She said, but as she spoke the tears from her memories seemed to overflow from her chest. In her mind she thought, “I had abandoned all thoughts and left them behind when I came, but about this time he’s probably awake, calling out for his mother and troubling the maids. They’ll have to console Tarō with rice crackers and rice cake, but it won’t work. All of them will wash their hands of him, threatening to feed him to a demon. Ah, the poor thing!” Her voice wanted to cry out wholeheartedly, but in the face of her parents’ good mood she couldn’t

interrupt. In smoke she diverted herself: in one, two, puffs of tobacco. Oseki began to cough, using the sleeve of her juban to hide her tears.

“Tonight is the 13th night of the old lunar calendar.³ However old-fashioned, we still make delicious dumplings in honor of the moon, following the moon-viewing of olden times. Since you love these things too, I wanted to have Inosuke take you some, but he was embarrassed and told me to stop. Because I didn’t send any on the 15th, sending some the next month’s moon would be bad too. I wanted you to eat some, but I could only think about it and not take you any. You coming here tonight is like a dream! My wishes reached you! At your house you probably eat a lot of delicious things, but the things your parents have made are special. Forget about being a wife tonight and return to the Oseki of the past; don’t worry about how it looks. Go ahead and eat the beans and chestnuts, the food you used to like.

“All the time when your father and I get to talking, well, your success is success, no doubt! The amazing match you’ve made, the good gentlemen of rank and the wives of status that you socialize with; be that as it may, by accepting and claiming the name of Harada’s wife, your worries and concerns must be exhausting. How to manage the maids, worrying over people coming and going: people who stand above have such hardships in plenty. Coming from our own family’s status, how even more difficult are such things. In order to not be despised by people, you seriously have to pay great attention! These sorts of various things we try to think over, your father and myself. Of course we want to see the faces of our grandchild and child, but we try to not go out and about so noisily, and restrain ourselves. We pass by the front of your gate, in a cotton kimono and raising a cotton umbrella, sometimes, and look at the bamboo screen on your second floor, wondering, ah, what is Oseki doing right now? And then we walk on. If only your parents were a little better off, your shoulders could be wider with pride. With all your other

hardships, you could breathe a little easier. What am I talking about, such things? Even though I wanted to give you the dumplings made for the moon viewing, I'm embarrassed about a simple tiered box. Really, I think about how you must feel." In the midst of her happiness, her mother quickly remembered how her daughter's coming home and visiting was so rare.

The one part of grumbling in her mother's speech made her feel ashamed. "Really, I am an undutiful daughter, I think. Such things I understand, with me wearing my silk kimono and using a private rickshaw, looking fancy. But for Dad and Mom, I can't do anything to help you, only helping my own vanity. I'd rather do pieceworks; living on the outskirts is an existence I'd gladly take." She spoke out.

"Idiot, idiot! This type of thing, you shouldn't talk of. A married woman doesn't support her parents! When you were in this house you were the daughter of Saito; in marrying Harada, you're now a gentleman's wife aren't you? You just need to seriously take care of Isamu, and run his house properly, and there will be no problems. It's a bone-breaking job, but this was your fate to be with him; there is no expectation for you not to support him. Women talk and complain about people, and your mother's the same, speaking out about such boring matters, it's so much trouble! Honestly, because she couldn't give you the dumplings she was angry all day long. She made them so ardently, here, eat plenty to ease her mind, would you? They're good, aren't they?" Her father spoke with humor flowing into his words. Once again missing her chance to speak of what she wanted to, the offered chestnuts and soybeans she gratefully took.

It's been seven years since they were married, and until tonight she has never visited after the sun has set, and she didn't have any gifts to bring as she came by herself. Truly, this hasn't happened before. Is it their imagination, or are her clothes this time somehow different, lacking in luster? In their joy at this sudden meeting, they didn't notice much, but, she hasn't given a

word of greeting from their son-in-law. Her smiling face is unnatural, and her very depths seem to be wilting. There must be a reason.

Her father gazed at the clock upon his desk. “Here, it’s already become ten o’clock, are you staying here or going home tonight? If you don’t go soon, you won’t be able to go home.” He looked into his daughter’s face, searching to find what she was feeling.

Their daughter, at this late hour, then raised her eyes to them and spoke. “Dad, I actually came because I have a request; please listen to me.” Resolving herself, on the tatami she placed both her hands firmly down. The first tear drop escaped, and the grief in her heart, that has accumulated and grown, was leaking out.

Her father’s face turned anxious. “What do you mean?” he asked, moving his knees forward.

“I stopped here for the night. Isamu had barely left, and the child is sleeping. I put Tarō to sleep, and resigning myself to never seeing his face again I came here. He won’t accept any other hand but mine, that child, but I’ve tricked him, forced him to sleep, and in his dreams I’ve become a demon and left him. Dad, Mom, please sympathize with me! Up until today I haven’t once spoken to you about Harada, about mine and Isamu’s relationship I haven’t told anyone, but, a thousand, a hundred times have I honestly thought about it; for two, three years have I cried tears, saying today’s the day, at any cost I’ll receive my divorce, hardening my determination in my heart. I’m begging you, please let me take the form of a divorced woman. From here I could work around the house or whatnot, or I can become Inosuke’s assistant! Please think about it, please let me spend my whole life alone!” She cut off her growing sobs as she bit into her sleeve, the color of the ink on her bamboo patterned sleeves appearing violet from her sorrow.

“Why is that?” Her father and mother asked, drawing closer.

“Until today, I have stayed still and silent. If you would look at the house of this married couple for just half a day, you would understand almost all of it. He only talks to me when he needs me to do something, and it’s always curt orders. When he wakes up I ask him how he’s feeling, but he casually turns away from me, looking out at the garden, giving forced praise to the flowers. Here, too, my stomach is rolling in anger, but he is my husband, so I endure. I’ve never argued with him. From the time breakfast is served he never stops scolding me! In front of the servants, he calls me unskilled and ill-mannered, telling me to straighten up. Even then I still try to endure, but his favorite saying is that those without an education, that those without are disdainful. From the start there was no doubt that I am not a student from the nobility’s school for girls, raised in one of those chairs. Unlike the wives of his colleagues, things like flower arranging or tea ceremony or music or art, I can’t stand on my own! I can’t hold a discussion about those things! He could let me take lessons in secret, not proclaiming my low-born status so publicly! In the faces of the female servants I can see contempt. During the first half a year of our marriage, he’d call me by name, doing all things for me. But from the time our child was born his speech and person changed entirely: it’s terrifying to remember. It’s as if I was pushed into that dark void in a valley; I couldn’t see the warmth of the sunlight.

“At the start, I thought it was all a joke, a forced cruelty he was playing at, but truly, he lost interest in me, wanting me to leave. Ah, he’s torturing me, torturing me so that I’ll bring up the divorce. Both Dad and Mom know my nature, supposing that my husband decided to go out to play with geishas, or has chosen a mistress, that kind of thing I wouldn’t be jealous of. Although I can hear that kind of rumor from the maids, that is just how he is. For men of his standing this is common, coming and going as usual. When he goes out I lay out his clothes with

care, keeping him in mind. All the things I do, every bit of it is worthless to him. Even the way I hold my chopsticks is wrong, and he says that the inside of the house isn't enjoyable because of the bad way I handle things. What things are bad? If he would just tell me what things are wrong, it would be better, but he only ever calls me boring and worthless, someone who doesn't understand anything and that he can't have a conversation with. He said that I'm more like Tarō's wetnurse! He's always ridiculing me! Really, he is not a husband, that gentleman is a demon. He won't tell me to get out and leave from his own mouth. With all this I'm just a coward, too attached to precious Tarō, I can't go against anything he says. His commands and complaints I listen to, and he says that I have no pride or self-respect, an idle person, and because of that he has no interest in me. But still, if I object even just a little bit, standing up and responding with a stubborn spirit, I know I will be told to get up and leave. Mom, it means nothing to me coming and leaving him. It's only the name of Harada Isamu that is great, and if I divorce him I won't have even a small remainder of regret. But when I think of Tarō, who doesn't know anything about this, and him becoming a child with only one parent, I lose my willpower, apologizing and trying to please him, apologizing for everything. Up till today, I have existed without talking. Dad, mom, I am an unfortunate existence." Oseki said, her frustrations and sadness leaving her mouth, thoughts she hadn't meant to bring out. Her parents looked at each other, and now, such a kind of bitter relationship astounded them. For a short while, there were no words spoken.

Her mother, to whom it was second nature to be sweet to her child; every bit pierced her, and her frustration grew. "I don't know what your father thinks, but from the start I thought him asking for your hand was improper. Our social status may be bad, but what's the matter with your schooling? How dare he, how dare he, all the selfish things you've talked about! He might

have forgotten what happened before, but even today I still remember, that Oseki was seventeen that New Year, and the pine boughs from the New Year were still hanging on the gate that morning, the seventh day of the month. In front of our old house in Sarugakuchou,⁴ you played badminton with the daughter of the house beside ours. That little girl whacked the white shuttlecock, and going across the road it fell into Harada's rickshaw. So Oseki went to take it back, and that moment was when he first saw you. He sent mediator after mediator, overbearingly proposing marriage. It was so out of character for someone of his high status, to ask that of us, with you still being a child, and without your lessons being completed, and we were too poor to help with any wedding preparations. I don't know how many times we refused! He didn't have any parents, so there was no noise from in-laws, no wishes or desires, and for him, there were no concerns about status or anything else. He said that you could take lessons after, and that he would care for you greatly! At any rate, he was so adamant about it all. From our side there was no begging, but he even arranged your trousseau. You were his beloved wife! Your father and I restrained ourselves from coming and visiting so much, but not because we are afraid of Isamu's position. You are not his mistress, but his lawful, proper wife. He came to us with such arrogance, asking a hundred times over for your hand. Although on that side, people exist successfully, and on this side, we exist on this poor road, we don't want to depend on your marriage, on aid from our son-in-law, and people thinking we do so would be mortifying. We're not enduring this out of pride, keeping up appearances and relations for that reason. That's why we don't see you often, although we want to see our daughter's face.

“What foolishness this is! As if you're an orphan he picked up and took home, the arrogance! Whether you can do such learned things or not, he shouldn't complain about it! Being silent is to have it grow endlessly worse, and it is a bad habit he'll get accustomed to. First off, in

front of the maids, your authority as the wife has splintered, the things your husband says in front of them lets them not listen to you. And what about Tarō learning these things? What will happen when he begins to look down on you? Just say the things you need to say properly! If that causes you to be scolded, then you have me and this house, you can leave and come over here, right? Really, what foolishness, that to such an extent you've kept quiet up until today, isn't it? Because you've been far too obedient his selfishness has grown worse. What I heard just now makes me furious! You don't have to give into him. What about social standing, you have your father and mother, and, although he's young, a brother. Why should you have to stand motionless in the middle of a fire? Say, Dad, let's go once to see Isamu, press him hard and take him to task, just for ten minutes." Said her mother, unable to see anything in front or behind her in her fury.

Her father for a while had his arms crossed and his eyes closed. "Oh wife, don't speak of unreasonable things. I'm only hearing these things for the first time, and I'm trying to think of what to do. Since these are Oseki's words, they can't be just ordinary matters. Such painful things have appeared and we can see them. And so, does our son-in-law know you're here tonight? Did something happen to make it turn for the worse? Has he brought up talk of divorce?" He asked in a composed manner.

"My husband hasn't returned home since yesterday. Not being home for five or six days is normal for him, it's not anything unusual. But when I was laying out his clothes, my way of sorting them he was angry with. No matter how many times I apologized he never accepted it! The clothes I prepared for him he took off and flung them, and he himself grabbed western clothes and changed into them, saying that he is a most unlucky person, with having a wife like me. And then he leaves to go out and play. Now what could that mean? Never in all the 365 days

of a year does he speak to me, and then he unexpectedly says such miserable things! With that do I still want to be Harada's wife? To be Tarō's mother, only composed on the outside? I don't understand why I have to endure these things! It's enough, enough, I can't be his wife or Tarō's mother! The time before I was married, when I think about it, I have no regrets, but even looking at the innocent face of Tarō as he sleeps, I left him and came here, for my heart has reached its limit. I can't be by Isamu's side anymore!

“Even without parents, children grow up,” they say. Instead of being brought up by the hand of an unfortunate mother like me, with a step-mother or a mistress, a woman that Isamu is happy with, his father might grow to like him, and in the future Tarō will be better off. After tonight, I will never return home again.” She said, but severing her love for her child was not easy; while she spoke decisively, her words trembled.

Her father sighed, grieving. “No wonder it's difficult to be there. It's become a difficult relationship.” He stared at Oseki's face for a moment. As she has grown older, her hair style has grown smaller,⁵ and she twists up her hair in a golden ring. She wore her silk crepe coat elegantly. Before they even noticed, their daughter had settled in as her role as a wife. He thought to himself, “To let you twist your hair back, and wear a work smock with the sleeves tied back as you wash and cook, how can I let you return to enduring this kind of life? And there's Tarō, we need to think of Tarō. One fragment of anger can dismantle a hundred years of fortune, and she'll become the laughingstock of the people. If she returns to being the daughter of Saitō Kazue, even for all the tears and all the laughter, to return once again as Harada Tarō's mother, she for certain could not do. Although she might not have any remaining affection for her husband, even if she severed herself from the love she has for her child, after the divorce more

and more will she think of him, and she'll long for today's hardships. Her misfortune was in being born beautiful, having an unsuitable⁶ marriage that ties her to so many hardships."

His sorrow increased, but nevertheless he said, "Oh Oseki, this talk with your dad, you might think that I'm merciless, that I don't understand your feelings, but I'm not by any means scolding you. If people's social standings are not the same, then opinions and natures are different. I'm sure that you've honestly devoted yourself to Isamu, but doing so doesn't mean it's all good from what he can see. Because Isamu took that path, of reason and knowledge, he's a smart man, an intellectual. He probably isn't senselessly mean; at any rate, men who are praised by the world and are hardworking are extremely, frighteningly, selfish. Outside, faces that they don't know they handle skillfully, but their dissatisfaction at work they take home with them and scatter them throughout. You becoming the target for his discontent must be extremely painful. However, to that extent you have responsibilities as his wife. The ward office worker, lunchbox tied to his waist, that kindles the fire underneath the kettle for you, their status is different from his. Even if he is fussy and difficult, to straighten out his mood into something good is a wife's duty. From the outside you can't see it, but many of the wives of the world don't have serious and happy relationships with their husbands. If you think that you are alone, only bitterness will come of it. Why, why with this it's the world's expectations, especially because your station is so different, you more than others have more suffering.

"Mom says arrogant things, but Inosuke got his monthly salary yesterday, and that is all due to Harada's influence. The light of a parent shines sevenfold on his child, they say: while at a distance he has given us favors, and we're indebted to him. It's painful, isn't it, but for the sake of your parents, for the sake of your younger brother, and for the sake of your son Tarō, if until today you've endured, from tonight on surely you can do it. Is going and taking a divorce a good

thing? Tarō would be Harada's, and you would be my daughter. To cut a bond one time is to cut a second one: his face you could never see again. If you're going to cry over your misfortune, you should cry as the wife of Harada. Ah, Oseki, isn't that okay? If you understand then hide these things in your heart, and with an unknowing face return home tonight. Just as you have till now, with self-restraint keep going, please. Even if you don't speak of this anymore, your parents know, your brother knows. We'll each take your tears." He spoke, reasoning everything out, from beginning to end, trying to get her to accept the inevitable as he wiped his eyes.

Oseki sobbed. "In that situation, to get a divorce means to be selfish. I understand. If I separate from Tarō I can never see his face again, and then living in this world would be worthless; escaping from this suffering that's right before me won't make any difference. If I can make myself as though I was dead, on all sides there will be no need to fight, and Tarō can be raised up by the hands of both parents. This was a stupid thing I've thought of, and you've listened to all the unpleasant matters. From tonight on Oseki will be dead, and my spirit will guard over Tarō; with that my husband's cruelty I can endure for a hundred years. What you've said is right, and I understand. I won't make you listen to this sort of thing anymore. Please don't worry about me." As she wiped her tears, more followed right after.

Her mother cried out, "How unhappy you are!"

For a while their sobbing was like the rain, and at that moment the moon misted over, desolate. The wild grasses, picked by her brother from the embankment behind the house, in their flower vase swayed in compassion this night.

Her parent's home was in Ueno, at the bottom of Shinzaka, on the road to Surugadai. It was in a forest in full bloom, and the shade beneath the trees was lonely and dark. But tonight the moon was shining, and to go by the main road it would be the same as if it was noon. There was

no set rickshaw company her parent's used, so from their window they called a rickshaw driver that was on the street.

“If you agree then, in any case, you should head home. Leaving and going out without permission while your husband is gone can get you in trouble, you'll need an excuse. You might be late by a moment, but you'll fly if you take a rickshaw. All the things we've talked about, that have piled up, we'll come and listen soon. But first, for tonight, please return home.” He took her hand and pulled her, as if to drag her along. This was the limit of her parent's pity, trying to let this matter end calmly.

Oseki knew there was nothing more she could do about her situation. “Dad, Mom, tonight's matters are here finished. I am returning home; I am Harada's wife. This is the end of me criticizing my husband, I have nothing left to say. In having such a prominent husband Inosuke can have his support. Ah, please rest easy, and be happy, I won't have any more of these thoughts. Never, by no means, will I do something foolish: please do not worry about that. My body from tonight on is Isamu's property. Whatever he wants I will do. Well then, I should go back, when Inosuke returns home tell him I said hello. Dad, Mom, take care of yourselves, next time I'll visit smiling.”

She rose, in a manner clear that there was nothing else she could do. Her mother took her purse that held little money out, and at the gate asked the rickshaw driver how much it would be to reach Surugadai. “Ah, Mom, I've got it, thank you,” she said in a meek voice, hiding her face as she went through the lattice door, pitifully concealing her tears as she moved to ride the rickshaw. Inside the house, her father cleared his throat, and this too had the sound of tears.

Part 2

The moon became serene as the wind accompanied it, the noises of the bugs faint as they continued towards Ueno. They were barely 100 meters into Ueno, but regardless of the distance, the rickshaw driver suddenly stopped, dropping the poles of the rickshaw. "I'm truly sorry, but I can't go on. I'm sorry, but I ask that this is as far as I go. You don't have to pay, just please get off." He abruptly said.

Oseki didn't know what to think, her heart spooked by his actions. "You what? Isn't what you said a real problem? I'm in a bit of a hurry, I'll pay you more if you keep going for me. This lonely place doesn't have any other rickshaws I can hire. You know you're causing me a great deal of trouble; don't complain, please take me home." She trembled slightly as she asked him.

He replied, "I'm not asking you to pay me more. This is my request, please get off. I'm tired of pulling."

"Well then, are you sick? Why can't you? You can't pull me up until here just to become tired and stop!" Her voice grew in power as she scolded the rickshaw driver.

"I am sorry, but at any cost I've become completely exhausted." He held the paper lantern as he laid down the rickshaw, stepping aside to avoid the poles.

"You are a selfish driver! You said you would go to Surugadai! Oh, please go until there is another rickshaw. Please go until the main road." She said this in a kind voice, trying to gain his favor.

"I understand, you are a young lady; surely to let you down in this lonely place would be to cause you trouble. Here I was being awful. Please get on, we'll go on. No doubt you were shocked." He was not appearing as bad a man as he picked up the paper lantern. Oseki as well

was feeling relieved and secure, as she looked at the rickshaw driver's face. He was a small, skinny man, of twenty-five to twenty-six years, with a dark complexion. She thought to herself, oh, his face was turned away from the moon, whose face is it? Who do you look like? His name was right there. "Could you possibly be..." Her voice came out without her realizing it.

"Huh?" the man said, surprised, looking up.

"Wait, it is you, isn't it! Surely you haven't forgotten me." She said, slipping down from the rickshaw, carefully gazing at him.

"You're Saito's Oseki! I'm embarrassed, being here like this. Without eyes on my back how could I have recognized you! And yet, you would expect that I'd be able to perceive who you were by the sound of your voice, but I've become very thick-headed." He stood, face turned down, feeling ashamed. Oseki looked at him from the front of his head to the tips of his toes.

"No, even if I chanced upon you in the street, in the dark, I couldn't have recognized you. Up until just a moment before, I was thinking you were just another rickshaw driver, someone I didn't know. It's natural that you didn't recognize me. But, I was rude to you about pulling the rickshaw, but because I didn't know, please forgive me! Ah, since when have you been doing this? You're taking care of yourself aren't you? I heard a rumor that your aunt had to withdraw to the countryside to live, and the store in Ogawa had to be abandoned. I heard it while moving, but, I'm also not the same person I used to be. Hindering things keep showing up, huh? It goes without saying that I have questions. I haven't sent any letters either, but where is your house now? How is your wife, has she had a child? Still now I often go to the new big department store in Ogawa, the original store is exactly the same as it was, the same tobacco store, but they changed its name to Notoya. Whenever I pass by I have to peek into it, and I think ah, that's where Kousaka Roku lived when he was a kid. On the way to and from school we would come to

the store, smoking a pipe and pretending to be adults. We really were the epitome of the lower city, with those manners! What have you been doing now? Since you have a gentle way about you, I wondered what kind of difficulties you're having trying to make a living, and it took away some of my heart. When I go to my parents' house I ask about your situation, if perhaps they know or have heard or seen you. I've left Surugadai five years ago now. I haven't heard at all about your fate, how I've missed you!" She had forgotten her identity as a married woman as she questioned him.

The man, sweating in shame, wiped his hands on a towel. "Embarrassingly, I fell low. Right now, I don't even have a home, my bedroom is a cheap hotel in Asakusa: run by a man named Murata, I'm on the second floor, thudding about when I feel like it. Or like tonight, I'm grinding away until late pulling rickshaws. From morning to night, all day long I idle about, my life like smoke. You were as beautiful as ever, I heard, and that you became someone's wife. Nevertheless I wondered if I could see you once more, talk about of what our lives have entailed. It looks like my dream came true! Up until today, my life had no use, and I didn't care at all what happened to me, but because I kept on living I got to see your face! Ah, I'm glad you remembered Kousaka Rokunosuke, I'm so grateful." He said, facing the ground.

Her tears were spilling out. "It's not just one person who suffers painfully in this world. What about your wife?" Oseki asked.

"You probably know her, she's the daughter of the Sugita store that was across from ours. She's the one that for her pale skin and her good figure people were always praising, thoughtlessly. I was a very heartless stray, never coming back home, and my obstinate relatives mistook it that it was time I should find a wife. And with that Mother put on her glasses, certain to find me a wife. She found one, and was so persistent and noisy I had to agree to her plans. It

was right when we accepted her into the house that I heard that you were pregnant. In a year people were congratulating us, as if by organizing a paper dog or a pinwheel⁷ they can change me, as if such things could stop a stray? People think that in having a wife with a pretty face a man will stop running around, and when a child is born their character will be reformed. If Ono no Komachi and Xi Shi took my hand and pulled me along, or if Princess Sotoori danced before me, my aimless ways wouldn't be cured; I'm firmly set in my ways. Why would seeing the child's face, smelling of milk, cause a spiritual awakening? I played and played and played until the end, and drank and drank and drank until I was exhausted. My home and my family business I ignored. By the year before last I didn't even have a single chopstick. My mother went to the countryside, where her sister had gone to marry. My wife took the baby and returned to her parent's home, and then broke off all contact. The child was a girl, so I didn't have any regrets or anything, but I heard that last year, she contracted typhoid and passed away. Girls are precocious, when she died surely she wanted her father and called out for me. If she had lived she would of been five years old this year. What a dull history for a person, it's not worth talking about."

The man, on his thin, lonely face, smiled. "I didn't know who you were, so please excuse me for my selfishness. Now, hop on, I'll get you back. Really, this suddenness must have really scared you, huh? I'm a rickshaw driver only in name. What's joyful about grasping the shaft of the rickshaw, what desire do I have to imitate an ox or a horse? Am I happy if I get money, will drinking alcohol cheer me up? When I think about it, anything and everything is detestable: giving customers rides or when the car's empty. When I don't want to pull I heartlessly stop. It's surprising, how selfish a man I am. Aren't you disgusted with me? Well get on, I'll take you home." He moved forward.

“What? When I didn’t know it was you it was a different matter, but how can I ride when I know it’s you? But even so, being alone in this desolate place is worrying; until we reach the main street, please walk with me. Let’s talk as we go.” Oseki lifted up the bottom of her kimono, holding it off the ground; the sound of her lacquered geta, this too was lonely.

“Of all my old friends, the one I could never forget my connection to was this person. Ogawa’s Kousaka, the tidy tobacco store’s only son, right now his skin is dark and he’s not a good sight to behold, but before he fell low his clothes matched his small frame well as he wore his apron. He was good at flattering people, amiable too, not matching his young age. When he was running the store it was livelier than when his father was. He was a famous and clever person, it’s shocking how he’s changed. After news of my marriage was first spread around, his endless playing around caused an uproar. It was like Kousaka’s son completely changed from a human being, as if he was possessed by a demon. Surely it’s not so simple a thing, I heard people say. Tonight I can truly see how wretched a person he is, him living in a cheap lodging house is something I’ve never even thought of. When I think about him, from when I was twelve to seventeen years old, every dawn and dusk we would see each other’s face. Oh how often would I imagine going to sit at the store, reading the newspaper and serving customers; but an unexpected person came along and asked for marriage, and with what my parents said I couldn’t fight against them. Me dreaming of being the tobacco store’s wife, it really was a child’s game of make-believe! From him and his family there were no words of marriage, and from our side even more so. It was a rambling, whimsical dream of being in love. I resolutely decided, decided to completely give up, and fix my heart and become Harada’s wife. But even up until the marriage I had tears in my eyes, I couldn’t forget him. As much as I thought of him, he must of thought of me as well. The reason for his destruction might very well be me. And me, with this married

woman's hairstyle and aloof figure, how offensive he must think I am! In no way am I as happy as I might appear," she thought to herself. She turned her head to look at Rokunosuke, wondering what he was thinking, but he had such a dazed look on his face. Even though he has this rare meeting with Oseki, he didn't appear very enthused.

When they came to the main street, there were more rickshaws. Oseki took from her wallet some amount of money, and carefully put her wallet back in the fold of her kimono. "Roku, this is truly impolite, but, please buy a handkerchief or something of the sort. It's been so long since I've seen you, I have too many things I want to say, but I can't form the words I suppose. Well then, I'll part with you here and go home. Don't exhaust yourself and trouble your body, hurry up and give your mother some peace of mind. I'll be secretly praying too. Please, become the Roku of before, show me him and that lovely little store again. Goodbye." As she said her goodbyes, Rokunosuke took each piece of paper from her.

"I should refuse this, but since it's from your hands, I'll accept, to remember you by. Leaving you is regrettable, but since this is like a dream, it can't be helped. Now, you should go, I will return home as well. As it gets late, the street becomes lonely, huh?"

He pulled the empty rickshaw, looking back towards her. His way was to the east, hers to the south. On the street the shadows of the willow trees, cast by the moon, swayed with the feeble sound of her lacquered geta. Murata's second floor resident and Harada's wife, both living with their own fair share of sorrow.

Notes

1. Here, I am writing in first person because of the use of “I” in the original, although it is used only once. Dialogue markers are added to indicate that these are Oseki’s inner thoughts, differing from the voice of the narrator. Robert Danly, in contrast, uses the third person to clarify and make the work flow better.

2. A traditional moon-viewing ceremony/event on the 13th of September. It’s one of two in the fall, the other taking place on August 15th. Typically, only one night would be observed.

3. In the original text this is written as “血の道,” literally translating to the “path of blood.” It refers to how the irregular circulation of blood is causing her to faint; also referenced as a woman’s sickness.

4. A town where many samurais and their families used to live; Higuchi’s father had saved money and purchased a samurai title for his family directly before the dissolution of the samurai system (Danly 9).

5. A married woman’s hairstyle, growing smaller as she ages.

6. The marriage is unsuitable due to their differences in social status.

7. The paper dog is a talisman or charm given during the Miyamairi, a newborn’s first shrine visit. The pinwheel is an infant’s toy.

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