

ドグラ・マグラ
夢野久作

Dogra Magra

Yumeno Kyūsaku

Yoru no Yume

Dogra Magra

Yumeno Kyūsaku

English translation

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About This Sample

This free sample contains the opening of Yoru no Yume's English translation of Yumeno Kyūsaku's *Dogra Magra*: the title, the opening poem and the first numbered section, about a tenth of the novel. The complete translation follows the Japanese text in the supplied MOBI, from its title and opening poem to its final Aozora Bunko credit.

The cover is a typographic design made for this edition; the illustrated cover in the supplied file was a third-party design and is not reproduced. The source contains no illustrations within the novel. The numbered sections in the contents follow the source file's divisions and are editorial navigation aids, not chapter titles supplied by the author.

The translation uses British spelling and Japanese name order. Supplied name readings, significant repetitions, emphasis, embedded documents and changes of voice guide the English. Apparent contradictions in dates, identities and the speakers' explanations remain part of the narrative. Occasional bracketed Gregorian years clarify Japanese era dates.

Published by Yoru no Yume (<https://yorunoyume.com>). This translation was made by AI agents and checked against the Japanese source in independent AI review passes. The complete English text has since been read in full by a human reader. The

editable manuscript, source mapping and detailed review records accompany the project files.

Opening Poem

O foetus

O foetus

Why do you leap?

Have you understood your mother's heart

And are you afraid?

.....Booo-----mmm-----mmmm.....

As I began dimly to wake, this sound, like the humming of a bee, still lingered distinctly inside my ears, a deep, resilient resonance.

Listening intently to it, I knew instinctively ... it must be the middle of the night. A striking clock must be sounding somewhere nearby ... and as I thought this, drifting off again, the bee-like humming gradually faded, echo after echo, until everything around me had fallen utterly silent.

My eyes flicked open.

A single bare electric bulb, coated in whitish dust, hung from a fairly high ceiling painted white. On the side of its glowing reddish-yellow glass a large fly sat motionless, as if dead. Directly beneath it, on a hard, cold floor of artificial stone, I seemed to be lying flat on my back with my arms and legs spread wide.

... How odd

Still motionless, still sprawled on my back, I opened my eyes as wide as they would go. Moving only the eyeballs, I rolled them up and down and from side to side.

It was a room some twelve feet square, enclosed by blue-black concrete walls.

Three of the walls each had one large, tall frosted-glass window, doubly protected by black iron bars and wire mesh: three windows in all. The room gave an impression of exceedingly tight security.

Against the foot of the windowless wall stood an equally stout iron bed, its pillow towards the entrance. The spotless white bedding lay so neatly spread that apparently no one had ever slept in it.

... Something's wrong

I raised my head a little and looked over my body.

I had been dressed in two new white cotton kimonos, stiff and rough, one over the other, and a short gauze sash was tied high across my chest. My four limbs protruded from them, plump and rounded, their entire surface dark and filthy with grime ... how disgusting they were ...

... Stranger and stranger ...

Timidly I raised my right hand and felt all over my face.

... A pointed nose ... sunken eyes ... hair in a wild, tangled mass ... a thick, straggling beard ...

... I sprang upright.

I ran my hand over my face once more.

I looked wildly about me.

... Who is this? ... I don't know anyone like this ...

My heart began pounding harder and harder. It beat in a wild tumult, like an alarm bell ... and my breathing grew ragged with it. Soon I was gasping as though I might die. ... Then, just as suddenly, everything grew quiet again.

... Could anything be so strange? ...

... I've forgotten myself ...

... However hard I think, I can't remember who I am or where I come from. ... Of all my past, the only thing remaining in my memory is that Booo—mmm of the striking clock I heard just now. ... That is all ...

... And yet my mind is perfectly clear. I can distinctly sense the hushed darkness surrounding this room, extending on and on without end ...

... This isn't a dream ... certainly not a dream

I leapt to my feet.

... I ran to a window and peered into the flat surface of the frosted glass. I tried to awaken some memory by looking at my

reflected face. ... But it was useless. On the glass I could see only my own shadowy figure, a demon with tangled hair.

I wheeled round and ran to the door beside the head of the bed. I put my face close to the brass fitting, in which a solitary keyhole gaped. But the surface of the fitting did not show my face. It merely reflected a dim yellow light.

... I searched round the legs of the bed. I turned over the bedding. I even undid my sash and examined the insides of the kimonos I was wearing, but I could discover nothing resembling even an initial, much less my name.

I stood bewildered. I was still an unknown self in an unknown world. A self whose identity even I did not know.

As these thoughts passed through me, I began to feel that I was dropping smoothly, straight down through limitless space, towards some unknown place, my sash trailing behind me. A shudder welled up from the depths of my bowels, and, beside myself, I cried aloud.

It was an extraordinarily shrill voice, metallic in tone ... but ... before it could recall anything from my past, the sound was sucked into the four concrete walls and vanished.

I shouted again. ... But again it was useless. My voice surged violently for a while, swirled, and died; after it was gone, the four walls, the three windows and the single door had merely fallen into a still more solemn silence.

I tried to shout again. ... But before the sound could form, it retreated into the depths of my throat. The terror of that silence, growing deeper each time I cried out ...

My back teeth began to chatter. My knees started shaking of their own accord. And still I could not remember who I was ... the suffocating misery of it.

Without knowing when it had begun, I was panting. Unable to cry out, unable to escape, I stood rigid in the centre of the room, panting, enveloped in terror.

... Is this a prison? ... A mental hospital? ...

The more I thought of it, the louder my breathing grew. I listened as it echoed against the four midnight walls like a wintry gale.

Presently I began to feel faint. A deep blackness swept over my eyes. My whole body, rigid as a stick and streaming with clammy sweat, seemed about to topple straight backwards, and involuntarily I closed my eyes in surrender ... or so I thought ... then, with a start, I mechanically braced my feet again. My eyes snapped wide open and fixed themselves on the concrete wall beyond the bed.

A strange voice had reached me from the other side of that wall.

... It certainly seemed to be a young woman's voice. Yet its tone was so hoarse that it scarcely sounded like a living human voice at all; only a piteous, heartbroken resonance penetrated the concrete.

“... Brother. Brother. Brother, Brother, Brother, Brother, Brother. ... Once more ... let me hear ... that voice again ————”

I shrank in astonishment. Involuntarily I looked behind me once more, though I knew perfectly well that there was no one in this room but myself ... then again I stared, as if to bore a hole through it, at the patch of concrete wall through which the woman's voice was seeping.

“Brother, Brother, Brother, Brother, Brother ... Brother in the room next door ... it's me. It's me. The girl who was your fiancée ... your future wife ... it's me. It's me. Please ... please let me hear

that voice again ... let me hear it ... let me hear ... let me hear you
—— ... Brother, Brother, Brother, Brother ... Bro-o-other—— ...”

I opened my eyes until my eyelids hurt. My lips fell apart. As though drawn by the voice, I tottered two or three steps forward and pressed both hands hard against my lower belly. I remained there, glaring fixedly at the concrete wall.

It was a cry of such terrible, innocent devotion that it seemed to hoist the listener's heart into empty space. A voice of intolerable, utter desperation, enough to freeze one's entrails to their deepest depths. ... Who knew when she had begun calling me ... or for how many thousands, how many tens of thousands of years she would go on? A voice of deadly earnestness and profound resentment. And from beyond the midnight concrete wall it was calling to me—me?

“Brother ... Brother, Brother, Brother. Why ... why won't you answer? It's me, it's me, it's me, it's me. Have you forgotten, Brother? It's me. It's me. Your fiancée ... have you ... have you forgotten me? ... The night before I was to be yours ... at midnight on the night before our wedding, I died at your hands. ... And then I came back to life ... came back to life from inside my grave, and here I am. I'm not a ghost or anything ... Brother, Brother, Brother, Brother. ... Why won't you answer me? ... Have you forgotten what happened then? ...”

I staggered backwards. Once more I stared, my eyes wide as saucers, in the direction from which the voice came ...

... What extraordinary things to say.

... The girl beyond the wall knew me. She said she was my fiancée. ... More than that, she herself said that I had killed her the night before our wedding ... and that she had come back to life. And apparently she had been shut up in the room just one wall away from me, calling to me like this, day and night. Crying

out these inconceivably bizarre facts, she seemed to be struggling desperately to awaken my memories of the past.

... Was she mad?

... Did she mean it?

No, no. Mad, mad ... such nonsense ... such impossible things ... ahahaha ...

I began to laugh involuntarily, but the laughter froze on the muscles of my face. ... An even more poignant, more anguished voice had pierced the concrete wall. I could not laugh ... it was filled with the certainty that she knew me for myself ... so earnest ... so desolate ...

“Brother, Brother, Brother. Why don't you answer? When I'm suffering like this ... just one word ... just one word ... answer me ...”

“.....”

“Just one word ... just one word ... if only you would answer ... that would be enough. ... Then the doctors in this hospital would know ... that I'm not mad. And ... the director would know that you had begun to recognise my voice ... and we could leave hospital together ... Brother, Brother, Brother, Brother ... why ... won't you answer? ...”

“.....”

“Don't you understand how I suffer? ... Every day, every day ... every night, every night, I call to you like this—can't you hear me? ... Oh ... Brother, Brother, Brother, Brother ... it's too cruel, too cruel, too cruel ... ah ... ah ... I ... my voice is almost ...”

As she spoke, another, different sound began to reach me from beyond the wall. Whether it was the flat of a hand or a fist I could not tell, but it was certainly the soft flesh of a living hand pattering against concrete. The sound of a weak woman's hand beating on and on, as though she cared nothing if the skin broke

and the flesh split. Imagining the blood that must be spattering and sticking to the far side of that wall, I went on staring intently, my back teeth clenched.

“Brother, Brother, Brother, Brother ... it's me, the girl who died at your hands. And now I'm alive again. Your poor little sister, with no one in the world but you to turn to. Here all alone ... have you forgotten me, Brother? ...”

“You're just the same, Brother. We're here, the only two people we have in all the world. And because other people think we're mad, we're shut up separately in this hospital.”

“.....”

“If you answer me ... what I say will be true. If you remember me, they'll know that neither I ... nor you ... are mental patients ... Just one word ... just one word ... if you would answer ... if you would call me Moyoko ... call my name ... ah ... Brother, Brother, Brother, Brother, Brother ... ah ... my voice is going ... my eyes ... everything's going dark ...”

Involuntarily I jumped onto the bed and clung to the blue-black concrete wall at the point from which the voice seemed to come. I wanted to answer at once ... to relieve the girl's suffering ... and to establish as quickly as possible the truth about who I was and where I came from. An irresistible impulse had driven me to it. ... But ... swallowing hard, I stopped myself again.

Slowly I slipped down from the bed. Keeping my eyes fixed on that one point of the wall, I edged backwards to the window directly opposite, trying to put as much distance as I could between myself and the voice.

... I could not answer her. No ... I must not answer her.

After all, I was a man who had no idea whether she was his wife. A man who, hearing those deeply anguished, piteous cries of pure devotion, could not even remember her face. A patient

suffering from an inconceivable loss of understanding, whose sole genuine memory of his own past was the sound of the clock he had heard just now ... Booo—mmm ... mmm ...

How could such a man answer as her husband? Even supposing that by answering her I might win my freedom, there was no knowing whether I would then learn my true origins and my correct, real name. ... I had no grounds on which to judge even whether she was sane or a mental patient ... And that was not all.

What if she really was a mental patient, and the person she was addressing in those terrible cries was nothing more than a vivid hallucination? If I carelessly answered, might it not lead to some dreadful mistake? ... And what if the man she was calling to really existed in this world, but was someone other than myself? Wouldn't my own rashness have made me steal another man's wife? Wouldn't I have profaned another man's sweetheart? ... Beset by these anxieties and terrors one after another, I swallowed again and again and clenched both fists tightly. All the while her cries pierced the wall without a break, assailing me from straight ahead.

“Brother, Brother, Brother, Brother, Brother. Too cruel, too cruel, too cruel, too cruel, too cruel ...”

That frail ... piteous, ghostly cry of boundless devotion and resentment ...

I seized my hair with both hands. With all ten overgrown nails I raked my scalp until it all but bled.

“Brother, Brother, Brother. I'm yours. I'm yours. Quickly ... quickly, take me into your arms ...”

I rubbed my face violently with my palms.

... No, no ... you're wrong, you're wrong. You're mistaken. I don't know you ...

... I had almost shouted it, but again I caught myself and closed my mouth. As I was now, I could not positively assert even that much ... I knew nothing whatever of my past ... I possessed not a single fact with which to contradict her ... let alone my parents, my brothers and sisters, or my native place ... until this very moment I had not even known whether I was a pig or a human being ...

I made a fist and knocked repeatedly on the bone behind my ear. But no memory emerged from it.

Still her voice went on. Breathless ... rising to such a pitch of poignant anguish that I could scarcely make out the words.

“Brother ... Brother ... please ... please ... help me ... help me ... ah ...”

As though driven by that voice, I looked once more at the four walls, the windows and the door. I started to run, then stopped again.

... I want to escape somewhere I can't hear anything ...

At the thought, a chill ran over me and my whole body broke into gooseflesh.

I ran to the entrance and hurled myself with all my strength against the blue-painted wooden door, so stout that it might have been iron. I peered into the dark keyhole. ... Numb with fear of that relentless knocking and the cries that were beginning to fail, still sounding on and on ... I seized the window bars in both hands and shook them with all my might. I managed only to bend one lower corner out of shape; beyond that, no human strength seemed capable of wrenching them free.

Defeated, I returned to the middle of the room. Shaking violently, I looked into every corner once again.

Was I really in the human world? ... Or had I only just entered the realm of the dead, to suffer some torment?

The instant I regained consciousness in this room, before I could even draw a breath of relief, the endless hell of self-oblivion had fallen upon me ... no response to anything ... nothing to hear but a clock ...

... And scarcely had I thought that before the cries of some unknown woman began tormenting me: a living hell without escape ... eternal punishment, unable either to relieve or to flee a tragic love too profound to belong to this world ...

I stamped until my heels hurt ... sat down heavily lay on my back ... rose again and looked round the room. ... Trying to wrench my attention away from the sounds next door, now too faint to be sure of hearing, and the intermittent sobs ... trying to recover my past as quickly as possible ... to save myself from this suffering ... to give her a definite answer ...

I do not know how many tens of minutes ... how many hours ... I spent raging round that room. Yet my head remained empty. I neither remembered nor discovered a single thing about myself, much less anything connected with her. An empty self lived inside an empty memory. That was all I was: a self struggling blindly, pursued by a woman's unrestrained cries.

Presently the cries of the girl beyond the wall grew weaker. They became higher and thinner, like a thread, until nothing remained but breathless weeping. At last the four midnight walls returned to their former profound silence.

I too was exhausted. Exhausted by frenzy, exhausted by thought. Listening to the steady clack-clack of a large clock somewhere that seemed to be the end of the corridor outside the door, unable to tell whether I was standing or sitting ... when ... what ... or how ... I sank steadily back into the unconsciousness from which I had begun ...

... A small clunk ...

When I came to myself, I was leaning against a corner of the wall opposite the entrance, my arms and legs stretched out before me, my head sunk heavily onto my chest, staring at a point on the artificial-stone floor just beneath my nose.

I saw that ... without my noticing, the floor, the windows and the walls had begun to shine with a pale, bluish light.

... Cheep-cheep ... chirrup-chirrup ... chirrup ... chit-chit-chirrup ...

The quiet voices of sparrows ... the sound of a tram gliding away in the distance ... the ceiling light had gone out without my noticing.

... Day has broken ...

Thinking this vaguely, I rubbed hard at my eyes with both hands. Perhaps because I had slept so soundly, I had completely forgotten the strange and terrifying events of the darkness before dawn. My body felt oddly stiff and sore all over; I stretched it vigorously and began a tremendous yawn. But before I had drawn a full breath, I caught myself and snapped my mouth shut.

A little hatch fitted beside the door, almost flush with the floor, was open, and a plain wooden tray bearing some white crockery and a silver-coloured plate seemed to be coming through.

The instant I saw it, something startled me. All the questions of that morning must unconsciously have sprung to life in my head. ... Beside myself, I leapt up, ran on tiptoe to the hatch, took careful aim at the woman's round, red, plump arm pushing the tray through, and seized it with both hands. ... The tray, the toast, the plate of vegetable salad and the milk bottle crashed and rolled across the floor.

I forced out a hoarse voice.

“Please ... please tell me. I ... what is my name?”

“.....”

She did not move a muscle. Beneath my hands, the cold upper arm protruding from the white sleeve, like a red radish, rapidly turned purple.

“I ... my name ... what is it? ... I'm not mad ... or anything ...”

“Aieeee—— ...”

A young woman's scream rose outside the hatch. The purple arm in my grip began struggling feebly.

“Someone ... someone come here! The patient in Number Seven ... oh! Someone, come he-e-ere—— ...”

“Shh, shh. Quiet, quiet ... please be quiet. Who am I? Where is this ... what time is it ... where am I? ... Please ... where is this ... then I'll let you go ...”

... Waaah! ... She burst into tears. At that instant my grip must have slackened, for her arm slipped clean out through the hatch. The crying stopped at once, and I heard footsteps pattering away down the corridor.

The arm to which I had been clinging so desperately was pulled free; thrown off balance, I landed heavily on my backside on the hard artificial-stone floor. I caught myself with both hands just short of toppling over and looked round, utterly deflated.

Then ... another strange thing happened.

As I landed on my backside, the tension that had held me so desperately taut began to slacken rapidly, and an inexplicable hilarity welled up from the pit of my stomach. I could do nothing to stop it. It was so bizarrely funny as to be quite unbearable ... so funny that every individual hair on my head seemed to quiver. It surged up from the very bottom of my soul, shaking my whole body, welling up endlessly, wave after wave: a hilarity that could

never be laughed out unless I laughed until flesh and bone fell apart.

... Ahahahahaha! What nonsense! What does a name matter? Forgetting it doesn't inconvenience me a bit. I'm still me, aren't I? Ahaha, ahaha, ahaha

At this realisation it became more unbearable than ever, and I rolled over on the floor. I clutched my head, beat my chest and kicked my feet as I laughed. Laughed ... laughed ... laughed. Choking as I swallowed my tears, writhing, twisting, flinging myself about, I rolled helplessly with laughter.

... Ahahahaha. Could anything be more absurd?

... Fallen from heaven or sprung from the earth, here's a man of completely unknown origin. I don't know anyone like him. Ahahahahahahaha ...

... Wherever has he been, and what has he been doing? And what does he intend to do from now on? I haven't the slightest idea about any of it. This is the first time in my life I've met such a person. Ahahahahaha

... What's going on? How strange, how utterly ridiculous. Aha ... aha ... funny, funny ... ahaha, ahaha, ahaha ...

... Oh, it hurts. I can't bear it. Why do I find it so funny? Ahahahahahahaha ...

Laughing endlessly like this, I rolled about on the artificial-stone floor. Eventually, perhaps because I had exhausted my capacity for laughter, it abruptly ceased to be funny, and I simply sat up. Rubbing my eyes, I looked carefully about me. Just beyond my toes lay the remains of the commotion: three pieces of bread, the plate of vegetables, a fork and the milk bottle, still stoppered.

For no particular reason, seeing these things made me blush, though I was alone. At the same time I realised that I was

beginning to feel unbearably hungry. The instant I had retied the sash lying beside me, I reached out with my right hand for the bottle of lukewarm milk, seized the buttered toast with my left, and began devouring it. Then I speared the vegetable salad with the fork, crammed my mouth with its irresistible deliciousness, crunched it up and gulped it down with the milk. Once completely full, I climbed onto the bed behind me, flopped onto the fresh sheet and closed my eyes in a long stretch.

After that I think I dozed for fifteen or twenty minutes. Perhaps because I was full, all strength drained limply from my body, my palms and the soles of my feet grew pleasantly warm, and the inside of my head gradually became a dim, empty cavern ... through it, near and far, the various sounds of morning passed and crossed and disappeared ... that heaviness ... that helpless languor ...

... The bustle of the street. Hurried footsteps in shoes. The slow dragging of wooden clogs. A bicycle bell ... the sound of someone dusting in a distant house ...

... A crow cawing somewhere high and far away ... a glass breaking with a clatter in what seemed to be a nearby kitchen ... then, suddenly, a woman's shrill voice just outside the window ...

“What a nasty thing ... well, really ... gave me such a fright ... goodness gracious ... just like a joke ... ehehehehe ...”

... Following on its heels, my stomach rumbled happily inside me ... All these sounds melted together one by one, retreating little by little into a faraway world, and I drifted into a blissful dreaminess ... how pleasant it was ... how welcome ...

... Presently one peculiar, distinct sound began reaching me from very far away. It was certainly a motor horn, a particularly high note like a large signal whistle ... peep ... peep ... peep-peep-peep-peep ... and I could not help feeling that it was racing

towards me on some terribly urgent business. Peeping and peeping above the various sounds that made up the morning stillness, overawing them, turning this way and that at what seemed to be city crossroads, it approached my resting head at astonishing speed. Soon it was bearing down upon me, and just as it seemed about to drive straight into my tangle of hair, it abruptly veered aside and made a wide circuit. With a very high whine it slowed, apparently retreating a hundred yards or so, then changed direction again. It approached rapidly, shrieking so shrilly that the sound penetrated the holes of my ears, and soon seemed to stop dead. All sound ceased. ... At once the whole world grew profoundly still, and my sleep deepened into a snug, satisfying slumber

... I had been enjoying that pleasant sensation for scarcely five minutes when the keyhole in the door beside my pillow suddenly clicked sharply. Then the door swung heavily open with a long creak. Something seemed to enter with a rustling sound, and I sprang up and turned by reflex. ... But ... when my eyes focused and I looked properly, I started in alarm.

A small wicker chair stood before the stout door, which was slowly closing in front of me. Before it stood an astonishingly peculiar figure, towering towards the clouds and looking down on me.

He was a giant who looked more than six feet tall. His face was long as a horse's, his skin pallid as porcelain. Beneath thin, extended eyebrows sat a pair of small, whale-like eyes; within them, pale pupils were filmed with a dull, feeble haze, like those of a tottering old man or a patient at death's door. His nose rose magnificently like a foreigner's, its bridge gleaming white. Below it a large mouth was shut in a straight horizontal line. Its lips were as pallid as the surrounding skin—might he have some

dreadful disease? Particularly unsettling were the slope of his immense forehead, broad as a temple roof, and the shape of his enormous chin, like the prow of a battleship ... at a glance he could only be a man of some strange, superhuman temperament. His glossy black hair was parted in two, and he wore what seemed an expensive dark-brown fur coat. Before the massive, platinum-coloured watch-chain glinting between its folds he rubbed together his long, slender, pale, hairy fingers. Standing there in front of the delicate wicker chair, which looked intended for a lady, he resembled a Western monster conjured up by some spell.

I looked up at him fearfully. Like a creature newly hatched from its egg, I held my breath and merely blinked, timidly moving my tongue inside my mouth. But presently I seemed to realise instinctively ... so this gentleman was the person in that motor car ... and without knowing it I turned and adjusted my seat to face him.

Before long a cold light, carrying a certain dignity, emerged from the depths of the giant gentleman's small, clouded pupils. He began in his turn to examine me minutely from above. For some reason I felt myself shrinking and could not help lowering my head.

The gigantic gentleman, however, seemed quite unconcerned. Having inspected my whole body with perfect composure, he raised his eyes and began slowly looking round the room. As that pale, clouded gaze passed from corner to corner, I felt, for no reason I could explain, that every shameful thing I had done since waking that morning was being seen through, and I shrank still further into myself. ... What on earth had brought this sinister gentleman to me? ... I wondered, terrified and bewildered at heart.

It happened then. Suddenly the gigantic gentleman contracted and bent forward, as if something had frightened him. Hastily he thrust a hand into his coat pocket, snatched out a white handkerchief and rushed it to his face. ... Then, turning away from me, he shook from head to foot with a succession of small, feeble coughs quite out of keeping with his appearance. After a little while, when his breathing had finally settled, he slowly turned back to me and bowed.

“Forgive me ... my health is rather poor ... please excuse my keeping my coat on ...”

His voice, like a woman's, was equally out of keeping with his frame. Yet the moment I heard it I felt somehow reassured. This giant gentleman began to seem a gentle, kindly man, contrary to his appearance. Sighing with relief, I looked up. He respectfully offered a visiting card just under my nose and fell to coughing once more.

“I am—co ... cough, cough ... forgive me ... excuse me ...”

Taking the card in both hands, I made a small attempt at a bow.

Professor of Forensic Medicine, Kyūshū Imperial University
Wakabayashi Kyōtarō
Dean of the Faculty of Medicine

I read the card two or three times, then stared blankly again. I could not help looking the giant gentleman up and down once more as he stood before me, holding back his cough. Then,

“This is ... Kyūshū University ...”

I murmured, as though to myself, unable to keep from looking restlessly to either side.

At that moment the muscles beneath the giant Dr Wakabayashi's left eye twitched faintly. It was a peculiar expression which might perhaps have been this man's own particular smile. Then his white lips began moving slowly.

“Precisely ... this is Room Seven of the Department of Psychiatry at Kyūshū University. I am most exceedingly sorry to disturb your sleep, but the reason for my calling so unexpectedly is simply this. ... To come straight to the point, I understand that a little while ago you asked the nurse serving your meal what your name was ... the medical officer on night duty reported this to me, and I came to see you at once. Now, how do matters stand? ... Have you remembered your name yet? ... Have you recovered all your memories concerning your past? ...”

I could not answer. Still open-mouthed, rolling my eyes like an imbecile, I continued looking up at the enormous chin before my nose ... or so I believe.

... How could I fail to be astonished? Since this morning it was as though I had been haunted by the ghost of my own name.

Since I had asked the nurse my name, not even an hour could possibly have passed. Yet in that brief interval, despite his illness, he had dressed himself so elaborately and hurried here to find out whether I had remembered my name ... that unnerving promptness, that incomprehensible eagerness ...

Why should the mere fact of my remembering my own name be an affair of such tremendous importance to this doctor? ...

Doubly and triply confounded, I could only look from the card on my palm to Dr Wakabayashi's face.

Strangely, however, Dr Wakabayashi too was looking down at my face without a single blink. Apparently waiting for an answer, his mouth tightly shut, he stared as though he would bore a hole through my face. His tense expression plainly showed that he was

awaiting my reply with some momentous expectation. Whether or not I remembered my own name along with my past history must have some profound connection with Dr Wakabayashi himself: I could read it more and more surely in his face, and it made me stiffen all the more.

For a little while we remained like this, staring at each other ... but ... eventually Dr Wakabayashi seemed to realise that I could give no answer, and gently closed his eyes in apparent disappointment. When his eyelids fluttered open again, however, a still deeper smile seemed to appear along his left cheek and down to his lips. Evidently mistaking my bewilderment for perplexity of some other kind, he nodded faintly two or three times and began speaking.

“Quite understandable. It is perfectly natural that you should find it strange. For me, who ought properly to confine myself to forensic medicine, to concern myself with the work of psychiatry in this fashion is certainly wholly irregular. There are, however, compelling circumstances which leave me no alternative ...”

Breaking off, Dr Wakabayashi braced himself for another fit of coughing, but this time it apparently subsided without incident. Blinking behind his handkerchief, he continued rather breathlessly.

“The explanation is simply this. ... To tell you the truth, until very recently this Department of Psychiatry was headed by the celebrated Professor Masaki Keishi.”

“Masaki ... Keishi ...”

“Precisely ... Masaki Keishi was a man of standing in academic circles throughout the world, not merely in our own country. He was a great scholar who boldly established a new theory of ‘mental science’, destined to revolutionise fundamentally the research into mental illness which had hitherto remained at an

impasse. ... This was, of course, no unscientific investigation of the kind previously practised under such names as psychical research or spiritualism. It was an epoch-making new principle founded upon a purely scientific basis. One need only consider how Professor Masaki established here in this department a treatment facility for mental illness without parallel anywhere in the world, and steadily demonstrated the truth of his theory, to appreciate that readily enough. ... Needless to say, you too were among those receiving this new treatment ...”

“I ... treatment for mental illness ...”

“Precisely ... and so, for me, a specialist in forensic medicine, to enquire after your condition when Professor Masaki himself was responsible for treating you is certainly most irregular. I find it entirely understandable that you should feel the doubts you have just expressed ... Yet ... most unfortunately, one month ago Professor Masaki suddenly passed away, leaving his unfinished work in my hands. ... His successor has yet to be appointed, and since there had previously been no suitable associate professor either, the university president directed me to take temporary charge of this department in addition to my own duties. Among its patients, the one whom Professor Masaki particularly entrusted to me, requesting that I devote every effort to his care, was none other than yourself. To put it differently, there are grounds for saying that at present the standing of this Department of Psychiatry—indeed, the honour of the entire Kyūdai Faculty of Medicine—depends upon one thing alone ... whether you recover your memories of the past ... whether you remember your own name.”

When Dr Wakabayashi finished, everything around me seemed suddenly dazzling, and I blinked. I felt as though the

ghost of my name might appear from somewhere nearby, a halo shining about it ...

... Yet ... in the next instant I was overcome by such wretchedness that I could not raise my face, and my head drooped of its own accord.

... This must indeed be a ward in the Department of Psychiatry at Kyūshū Imperial University. And I must be a man confined as a mental patient in this Room Seven—was that it?

... The strange sense that my head had somehow been working oddly ever since I woke this morning was proof that I had suffered ... no, was still suffering ... from some mental illness. ... Yes. I was mad.

... Ah. I, a wretched lunatic ...

... All this unbearable shame first became clearly conscious through Dr Wakabayashi's explanation, courteous almost to excess. My heart began to thump until I could scarcely breathe. An emotion I could not identify as shame, terror or sorrow seemed to prick my whole body, and once more my ears and the back of my neck burned. ... My eyes grew hot of their own accord. Filled with the desire to fling myself face down upon the bed, I sorrowfully covered my face with both palms and gently pressed the inner corners of my eyes.

Looking down at me, Dr Wakabayashi seemed to swallow twice with an audible gulp. Then, folding his hands before him as though addressing someone of exalted rank, he comforted me in a tone still kinder than before, almost a coaxing purr.

“Quite understandable. Entirely understandable. Anyone discovering himself in this ward experiences a shock approaching despair. ... But there is no cause for concern. Your presence here has a wholly different significance from that of the other patients in this building ...”

“I ... I'm ... different from the other patients ...”

“Precisely ... for you are the person who offered himself as the most valuable research material in the experiments in an epoch-making treatment for mental illness established here by Professor Masaki, whom I mentioned just now. He called it ‘liberation therapy for the insane’ ...”

“I ... myself ... experimental material for liberation therapy for the insane ... freeing mad people to treat them ...”

Dr Wakabayashi inclined his upper body a little and nodded, as though paying his respects to the very name ‘liberation therapy for the insane’.

“Precisely, precisely. Just so. Before long, I believe, you will understand what an epoch-making man Professor Masaki was, as the originator of these experiments in ‘liberation therapy for the insane’, and how revolutionary the theory he devised. And indeed ... through the accurate functioning of your own brain, you have already brought the doctor's experiment in his new mental science to a conclusion of astonishing success, impressing the name of this university upon scholarly circles throughout the world. ... Moreover, though you completely lost consciousness owing to the violent mental shock resulting from that experiment, at this very moment you are on the point of making a splendid recovery. ... Thus you are, so to speak, both the central representative of a certain astounding experiment conducted in the liberation therapy facility and the guardian deity, one might say, of the honour of this university.”

“The ... centre of such a terrible experiment ... why should I ...”

Involuntarily I hurried forward to the edge of the bed. I was terrified at finding myself drawn ever deeper into the centre of a story of such extreme strangeness ... Looking down at my face, Dr Wakabayashi nodded more calmly than ever.

“That is a perfectly natural question. ... Yet ... regrettably I cannot give you a clear explanation just now. Not until you yourself recall the course of events, as you surely will before long ...”

“Recall it myself ... but ... how am I to remember ...”

I stammered, more agitated still. His way of speaking seemed once again to bring home to me the wretchedness of being a mental patient ...

But Dr Wakabayashi remained unruffled. He quietly raised a hand to restrain me.

“Now ... now ... please wait. The circumstances are these. ... To tell you the truth, your admission to the liberation therapy facility had a profoundly complicated and exceedingly strange background which cannot be explained in a few words.

Furthermore, if I were to piece that story together according to my own ideas, I fear it might become entirely fictitious ...

Ultimately, unless you, who directly experienced those events, remember those profound and inexplicable experiences for yourself, no one can accept the story as true. Such fantastic and astounding circumstances are contained within your memories of the past ... Yet ... to set your mind at rest for the present, I believe I may explain this much. ... That is ... shortly after taking up his appointment at this university in February of this year, Professor Masaki began designing the facility for what he called ‘liberation therapy for the insane’. It was completed in July of the same year; experiments were conducted for a mere four months, and when Professor Masaki died on 20 October, exactly one month ago, it was closed. Yet the experiments he conducted in that brief interval were centred upon nothing other than the recovery of your memories of the past. As a result, Professor Masaki clearly predicted that you, who had been in a peculiar mental state for a

very long time, would before long recover to the condition we see today.”

“The late Dr Masaki ... predicted what would happen to me today ...”

“Precisely, precisely. Professor Masaki declared categorically that, if we cherished you as this university's greatest treasure and cared for you devotedly, you would assuredly return to your former state of mental awareness. You would personally demonstrate the principles of his great theory, and the efficacy of the experiment born from those principles. ... Moreover, if, as Professor Masaki said, you did recover the whole of your past memory, I too had no doubt that as an inevitable consequence you would at the same time remember the truth of a criminal case in which you were once involved, a case of almost unprecedented horror and strangeness. Naturally, I remain just as firmly convinced of this now ...”

“An unprecedented ... unprecedented criminal case ... I was involved in ...”

“Precisely. I have called it unprecedented for the moment, but the case is so extraordinary that it may well remain unmatched in the future too.”

“Wh ... what ... what sort of case ...”

Scarcely pausing for breath, I leaned out over the edge of the bed.

But Dr Wakabayashi remained composed throughout. Standing erect and dignified, he continued smoothly, his pale eyes looking quietly down at me ...

“As for that case, it is simply this. ... To be perfectly candid, I myself had long sought Professor Masaki's guidance in his research into mental science, and indeed I am still pursuing my own investigations into ‘crimes applying mental science’ ...”

“Crimes ... applying ... mental science ...”

“Precisely ... Yet that alone may not convey its meaning, since the subject is so new. Perhaps the following explanation will give you some general understanding. ... The original reason why I began investigating this subject was my recognition that the ‘mental science’ advocated by Professor Masaki was itself full of terrifying principles and laws. For example, the branch called ‘psychopathology’ includes innumerable appalling theories and actual instances: a certain kind of suggestion can suddenly transform a person's mental state as though he were someone else ... can wipe out his present mental life in an instant and replace it with the personality of an ancestor several generations back, lying dormant in the depths of his mind ... Furthermore, although the effects of applying and experimenting with these theories are scientifically exact and profound, their mechanisms and methods, unlike those of conventional science, are exceedingly commonplace. Depending on how one explains them, even women and children can readily and amusingly grasp them. In one sense, therefore, no research or experiment could be more dangerous. ... I shall not explain the details here, for I believe they will unfold vividly before your eyes before long ...”

“What ... what ... such terrifying research ... before my eyes ...”

Dr Wakabayashi nodded with the utmost solemnity.

“Precisely, precisely. As the person who has demonstrated the truth of that theory in his own body, you are not merely, in a sense, immune to the terror and horror manifested by its principles. When you recover your memories of the past in the near future, you will necessarily realise that you possess the right and qualifications to participate in research into this new science. But if the substance of this secret research were to leak out to anyone else, there is no predicting what might occur. ... Suppose,

for instance, that an age came in which one could discover some terrible hereditary mental tendency latent in the depths of a person's mind, give him a suggestion suited to it, and drive him mad in an instant—at the same time destroying his memory of the criminal who had driven him mad. What then? Its evil consequences would surely be beyond comparison with the intensification of warfare throughout the world brought about by the method of manufacturing gun cotton invented by Mr Nobel.

“... Thus, considering the matter from my professional standpoint as a forensic physician, I thought it would be disastrous if these theories of mental science should one day become common knowledge in society, as the theories of material science are today. We should then have to expect, as an inevitable consequence, that crimes applying mental science would become as widespread as crimes applying material science are now. By then, however, it would be too late to undo the damage. We can already see quite clearly that, should crimes applying mental science become a reality, crimes almost absolutely impossible to detect or investigate would spring up everywhere throughout the world, unlike the crimes applying material science committed nowadays. Accordingly, Professor Masaki must first of all take care that his new theory should on no account be made public. ... At the same time—though this may sound exceedingly self-serving—we must anticipate that eventuality and investigate as thoroughly as possible both how to prevent such crimes and how to detect and trace them ... Such were my thoughts, and for a long time, under Professor Masaki's guidance, I had been conducting investigations from every possible angle, in the strictest secrecy, under the heading ‘Crimes of Applied Mental Science and Their Traces’. In short, it was something in the nature of a joint undertaking between Professor Masaki and myself ...

“... Yet what carelessness can there have been between Professor Masaki and myself? ... Despite all these precautions, an inexplicable criminal case suddenly arose not far from this university, in which the theory producing the most powerful and profound effects in all mental science had been applied in practice with astonishing skill. We do not know when or how it was stolen. ... Outwardly, the case centres upon acts of the utmost cold-blooded cruelty, in which several men and women belonging to the bloodline of a wealthy family were made, for no reason whatever, to kill one another or drive one another mad. ... The first indication allowing us to establish that the methods of these crimes were connected with the mental science we were investigating was an incident involving a gentle, clear-headed young man, one of the last surviving members of that wealthy family's bloodline. ... To preserve his family's dying line, this young man was to marry a beautiful cousin who adored him. After midnight on the eve of the wedding, he unexpectedly entered a somnambulistic state and strangled the girl. Then, with her corpse lying before his eyes, he calmly spread out paper and began sketching her ... It was after these exceedingly peculiar and inexplicable facts were exposed and caused a great sensation that the connection became apparent ... Yet ... the two fundamental questions—what purpose lay behind reducing this family's bloodline to so miserable a condition, and who was responsible—remain unresolved to this day. It is a case whose depths of strangeness and horror we cannot fathom. ... The judicial authorities of Fukuoka Prefecture, known as the Metropolitan Police of Kyūshū, have, in this case alone, effectively proved completely powerless from beginning to end. And I, who undertook the investigation with all my strength, with Professor

Masaki's assistance, have likewise been left wandering in a fog to this day, unable to grasp a single clue to the truth.

“... Accordingly, only one means of investigating the case remains in my hands ... namely, when you yourself, the central figure who survives it, recover your memories of the past through Professor Masaki's enduring beneficence, to ask you directly to judge the truth ... to indicate the purpose of the crime and the identity of its perpetrator ... There is now no other course. Such are the almost supernatural means by which the mysterious fiend responsible has concealed his tracks. ... You must understand by now. The reason I cannot give you a concrete account of the case myself is that I have not established its true circumstances. Again ... I have intervened in the work of psychiatry, outside my own speciality, and undertaken your care personally because I wish to guard against the disclosure of these momentous secrets. At the same time, should your memories return, I must hurry here without delay and hear the truth of the case before anyone else ... I must have you expose the identity of the fiend who conceals that truth ... That is my intention. ... Furthermore, if your recovery of your memories should bring the truth of this case to light, the inevitable result would be the presentation of research possessing twofold and threefold depths of significance, both to the modern scientific world and to society at large, creating a worldwide sensation. That is to say, Professor Masaki's research, which he provisionally described in public as ‘liberation therapy for the insane’ ... in reality, a vast experiment capable of transforming our present material civilisation into a spiritual civilisation at a single stroke ... would not merely receive scientific proof of a certain momentous fact constituting its final conclusion. At the same time, you would enable me to complete beyond reproach one of the most important examples in the

paper I have been researching under his guidance, 'Crimes of Applied Mental Science and Their Traces'. And you would give us the opportunity to publish simultaneously the research into mental science to which Professor Masaki and I have devoted our hearts and souls for twenty years. ... For these twofold and threefold reasons, therefore, whether you actually remember your own name, whether you recover your past memories and elucidate the truth of that case, is a question upon which the eyes and ears of the entire world are focused, not merely those of this university or the judicial authorities of Fukuoka Prefecture. ... Now ...”

Having explained all this in one continuous flow, Dr Wakabayashi suddenly gave me a strange, pallid glance. ... Then he turned abruptly aside again, pressed his handkerchief to his face and began coughing with all his might.

Watching his profile contract into a mass of wrinkles, I sat bewildered, as though enveloped in smoke. Not one of the events crowding upon me since that morning had failed to bring fresh anxiety and astonishment ... and his explanations of them only grew more extravagant and supernatural by the moment, until I could scarcely believe them factual. Though everything he said appeared to concern me, it seemed to turn into a dream story entirely unrelated to me ...

Presently, having subdued his coughing, Dr Wakabayashi gave another pale glance of acknowledgement.

“Excuse me. I tire easily ...”

Saying this, he turned towards the delicate wicker chair behind him and slowly lowered himself into it. At the sight, I could not help averting my eyes again.

When I first saw that wicker chair behind Dr Wakabayashi, it looked as though it would collapse the moment anyone slightly large sat in it, and I had merely thought that someone else, perhaps a woman, might still be coming. Yet now his immense torso slipped effortlessly between its narrow arms. Folding his chest and belly into two, lowering his face until it almost rested upon his kneecaps, with only his eyes showing above the handkerchief, he huddled and shrank into the chair, perched snugly within it, as though saying ... I am the very fiend lurking behind that mysterious case ... His whole bulk looked scarcely half what it had been. However emaciated he might be ... however thin the fur of his coat ... it scarcely seemed a feat any ordinary human could perform. Yet from within it his voice alone continued as before ... no ... perhaps because he was comfortably seated, more calmly still ... with an air of 'I know everything'.

"Do excuse me ... Now, having called upon you and observed your condition, even I, outside the speciality, can see clearly that Professor Masaki's prediction is proving divinely accurate. At present you are distressed because, however hard you try to recover your past memories, you cannot recall a single thing. That is merely one stage in your return to the healthy mental awareness you possessed before undergoing this experiment. ... According to Professor Masaki's research, among the parts of your brain that reflect and communicate your memories of the past, there existed a hereditary weakness at a certain point governing the subconscious associated with your oldest memories: a point of extraordinary sensitivity.

"... On the other hand, there must have been somewhere a mysterious individual who had long been aware of this fact. Using material of suggestion of extreme mental-scientific potency, calculated to stimulate that most sensitive weakness to

its deepest depths, he brought that point into a state of extreme tension. As a result, the inherited, dormant memories of the profoundly bizarre romance of a very ancient ancestor of yours, a thousand years ago, became entirely dissociated and rose to the surface of your consciousness, plunging you into an exceedingly deep somnambulistic state. ... By today, the somnambulistic mental activity which had emerged dissociated from your subconscious had exhausted itself completely and returned to a state of emptiness, allowing you to escape from that dream-state as you have now done. However, the part of the subconscious which had maintained this abnormal activity, and the neighbouring part of the brain which reflects and communicates your past memories, remain profoundly exhausted by their prolonged tension and are at present wholly unable to function freely. In short, the older a memory, the less able you are to recall it. ... Thus only the part reflecting and communicating very recent events, whose impressions are newest and which had so far suffered relatively little fatigue, has for the moment awakened this morning. You fret and struggle to recover earlier memories, but cannot recall a single thing ... Such, we believe, is the present state of your mental awareness. Professor Masaki provisionally named this condition 'loss of self' ...”

“Loss ... of self ...”

“Precisely ... as a result of the criminal methods of mental science employed by the mysterious culprit behind that case, you spent the ensuing months in an abnormal somnambulistic state, as a wholly different person from your present self. ... Naturally, instances of such deep somnambulism, or extreme dual personality, are exceedingly rare, unlike the mild somnambulism of a dual-personality character often seen in ordinary people—the sort of thing we call talking in one's sleep or being half-asleep.

Yet unmistakable examples can be found in records and writings from ancient times. ‘The Old Man Who Remembered His Native Place after Fifty Years’, for instance; ‘Reflections of a Gentleman Who Realised He Was a Murderer Only When Confronted with the Evidence’; ‘Confession of a Lonely Spinster Who Met Her Own Child, Whom She Did Not Remember Bearing’; ‘Memoirs of a Poor Young Man Who Became a Bald Millionaire in What He Thought Was a Moment's Unconsciousness after a Train Collision’; ‘The Young Wife Who Turned into a White-haired Crone the Morning after What Seemed a Single Night Together’; or ‘Confession of a Holy Monk Who Committed a Great Crime through Reversing Dream and Reality’. Various writings preserve these strange actual examples, leaving people poised between belief and disbelief. But viewed in the light of Professor Masaki's original theory, they leave no room for anyone to doubt. Not merely is the scientific possibility of such phenomena demonstrated clearly and compellingly: both theory and practice establish that, when such people return to their former mental awareness, they invariably pass through a period of ‘loss of self’. ... Indeed, Professor Masaki has also demonstrated this fact: in the strict sense, the ceaseless changes in our mental condition in everyday life, stimulated by what we see and hear—our getting angry, feeling sad, or smiling all by ourselves—are likewise a kind of somnambulism. At every instant in those mental changes, the sequence ‘somnambulism’, ‘loss of self’, ‘awakening of self’ is repeated with extreme rapidity. ... Ordinary people are merely unaware of it. ... Needless to say, then, Professor Masaki clearly foresaw that you too would pass through this process and before long recover to your present condition. Only a question of time remained.”

Here Dr Wakabayashi paused for breath again and seemed to lick his lips.

I do not know what expression I wore then. Unable to understand any of it, I was simply terrified by his explanation, each sentence bearing scientific authority and bearing down on me with sharply mounting tension. My whole body stiffened as though subjected to high-voltage electricity. ... So the mysterious case he had described was indeed about me ... and I was now placed where I must at any moment remember that terrible event in my past along with my name ... In such inexpressible terror, cold sweat trickling beneath both armpits, I concentrated every nerve upon the long, pale face before me ... or so I believe.

Dr Wakabayashi lowered his pale eyes a little and spoke in a still lower tone.

“I repeat, every one of Professor Masaki's predictions has proved accurate to this day, without the slightest deviation. As of this morning you have already emerged completely from your former somnambulistic mental state and stand upon the very brink of recovering your old memories. ... That is why I have called upon you: first of all, to help you remember the name you asked the nurse about a little while ago.”

“Help me ... remember my name ...”

At my own cry, my heart suddenly gave a thump that stopped my breath. ... Could it be ... that I myself was the true culprit in that mysterious case? ... Wasn't Dr Wakabayashi's particular and tense attention to my name evidence of it? ... The thought struck like a flash through my head. But Dr Wakabayashi answered calmly, without any change of manner.

“Precisely. If you remember your own name, all your other memories should rise with it to the surface of your consciousness. How terrifying are the principles of mental science governing

that mysterious case from beginning to end; for what reason and under what motive that strange crime was carried out; who is the fiend at its centre—you should recall the truth to its very deepest depths, all at once. ... Thus my first responsibility, having accepted your care from Professor Masaki, is to assist you in remembering ...”

Once more I shuddered at some indescribable, dreadful foreboding. Involuntarily I shifted in my seat and cried out in a startled voice.

“What is it, then ... my name ...”

The instant I asked, Dr Wakabayashi shut his mouth with mechanical precision. As though searching for something within my mind ... or suggesting something of grave importance ... his dully gleaming eyes stared steadily into the depths of mine.

Looking back, I believe I must already have been caught in one of Dr Wakabayashi's unfathomable stratagems. The scientific and, at the same time, intensely sensational story he had told up to this point was certainly not without purpose. It must all have been a means of mental stimulation, calculated to stretch my attention towards my own name to the utmost limit and make me unable to rest until I remembered it. ... Thus, the instant I frantically asked my name, he must have closed his mouth and attempted, by silence, to bring my impatience to its highest pitch. He must have been trying to make me myself sharply stimulate the reproduction of the memories congealed in my brain.

But at the time I could not perceive the least trace of so delicate a strategy. Convinced merely that Dr Wakabayashi would tell me my name at once, I gazed intently at his pallid lips.

Watching my reaction, Dr Wakabayashi seemed once more to suffer some disappointment, and quietly closed his eyes. Slowly moving his head from side to side, he sighed lightly; then he

opened his eyes again and spoke in a voice thinner and colder than before.

“That will not do ... It would be quite useless for me to tell you. If you said you remembered no such name, that would be the end of it. You must, after all, remember it naturally for yourself ...”

Suddenly I felt relieved and, at the same time, forlorn.

“Will I be able to remember?”

Dr Wakabayashi answered firmly.

“You will. You most certainly will. And when you do, not only will you understand that everything I have told you is by no means imaginary: you will at once leave this hospital completely recovered, and every preparation has long been made for you to assume your legal and moral rights ... a fine household, that is, and all the happiness belonging to it. In short, to hand all these things over to you without fail is the second responsibility I inherited from Professor Masaki ...”

Having said this, Dr Wakabayashi fixed me once more with his cold, pale eyes, as though supremely certain. Oppressed by their force, I could only lower my head ... again feeling somehow that this had nothing to do with me ... that I was exhausted by hearing one strange, complicated story after another without understanding any of them ...

Unconcerned with my feelings, however, he cleared his throat lightly and changed his tone.

“Well, then ... I should now like to begin the experiment intended to help you recall your name ... There are various things which we ... Professor Masaki held the same view ... believe must have the closest connection with your past. I should like to show them to you one by one, and test whether they awaken your memories. Would that be agreeable?”

As he spoke he placed his hands on the wicker chair's arms and stretched his body upright.

Watching his face, I lowered my head a little ... as if to say, I have no objection at all. Do whatever you wish ...

Yet inwardly I hesitated considerably. Indeed, I even felt a certain absurdity in it.

... Might not both the girl in Room Six who had been calling to me since morning, and Dr Wakabayashi here before me, be mistaking me for someone else?

... Weren't they addressing and pressing me so eagerly because they had confused me with some other person? ... And wasn't that why, however long it went on, however hard they pressed me, I could remember absolutely nothing?

... Might these supposed mementoes of my past, which he was about to force upon me, really be the mementoes of a complete stranger with no connection to me whatever? ... Some cold-blooded, vicious mental patient, his identity unknown, hiding somewhere ... souvenirs of the strange, atrocious crimes he had enacted ... Was I to have such things thrust before me one after another, while they pressed me to remember, remember?

... Giving free rein to these wild imaginings, I unconsciously drew in my neck and made myself small.

Maintaining to the last his scholarly courtesy and modesty, Dr Wakabayashi quietly bowed to me and rose from the wicker chair. He slowly opened the door behind him; a little man strode briskly in, as though he had been waiting for the signal.

The little man had closely cropped hair and a stiff black moustache spreading down on either side. He wore an unfamiliar outfit: a white, high-collared jacket, black trousers and slippers made out of old shoes. He carried a square black leather bag in

one hand and a grubby folding chair in the other. A nurse followed him in and set a steaming enamel basin in the middle of the room; beside it he briskly unfolded the chair. He then set the black bag beside the chair, flipped it open, and began taking the barber's scissors and brushes jumbled inside it out onto its lid. Looking at me, he gave a bobbing bow, as if to say, 'Now, then, if you please.' Drawing the wicker chair up beside the head of the bed, Dr Wakabayashi too gave me a look that said, 'Come along, please.'

... So I was to have my hair cut here, I thought. I climbed barefoot down from the bed and seated myself in the folding chair. Almost at once the little man with the moustache flicked a white cloth round me. He wound a towel wrung out in hot water round my head, pressed it firmly down, and turned to Dr Wakabayashi.

"The same cut as last time, sir?"

At this question Dr Wakabayashi seemed to start. He appeared to steal a glance at my face, then answered in an offhand tone.

"Ah. We asked you on the previous occasion too, did we? Do you remember how you cut it then?"

"Yes, sir. It was exactly a month ago, and a special request, so I remember very well. High in the middle, to give the whole face a gentle oval shape ... very short round the sides, like the students in Tokyo ..."

"Yes, yes. The same again, please."

"Certainly, sir."

Even as he spoke, the scissors began clicking over my head. Dr Wakabayashi sank back into the wicker chair by the head of the bed and seemed to take some foreign book with a red cover out of his coat pocket.

I closed my eyes and began to think.

One way or another, my past was gradually coming to light. Leaving aside altogether the fantastic tale of connections Dr Wakabayashi had told me, at least the facts I could apparently accept as true were becoming little by little inferable in this way.

Since Taishō 15—whenever that was—I had been a patient in the Department of Psychiatry at Kyūshū Imperial University, and apparently had lived right up until yesterday absorbed in a somnambulistic state. At some point during that period, or perhaps before it, about a month ago, my hair had apparently been cut in the smart style of a student. I was now being restored to that appearance ... and so on ...

... Yet ... even if that were so, what meagre memories of a human being's past they made. Moreover, they were merely things heard from a medical doctor and a barber, both complete strangers. What I truly remembered as my own past consisted solely of the events of the few hours since I heard that ... Booo—mmm ... clock this morning. Everything before that ... Booo—mmm ... was utter nothingness to me. I could not even tell whether I had been alive or dead.

Where on earth had I been born, and how had I grown this big? My judgement, which could distinguish each thing as this or that ... my knowledge ... the education that enabled me to understand Dr Wakabayashi's explanations so profoundly as to tremble at them ... where had all these become mine? How had I forgotten, so utterly and cleanly, what must have been such innumerable, limitless memories of the past? ...

... Turning these things over with closed eyes, staring intently into the hollow inside my head, I felt my soul shrink smaller and smaller, until it seemed a microorganism wandering aimlessly

through infinite emptiness. ... I grew lonely ... dispirited ... sad ... my eyes grew somehow hot ...

... Something cold ... touched the back of my neck. The barber, who had finished cutting my hair without my noticing, had applied lather to shave my nape.

My head drooped heavily.

... Yet ... thinking again, a month ago I must already have had my head restored in this fashion by Dr Wakabayashi. If so, perhaps I had undergone a terrifying experience like this morning's a month ago too. Moreover, from his manner of speaking, it seemed that this barber might not be the only one he had ordered to restore my hair. If that were true, then before that, and still further back ... I might have repeated this experience over and over again. Perhaps, after all, I was merely some wretched somnambulist who did nothing but repeat such things endlessly ... That too occurred to me.

And might Dr Wakabayashi merely be a heartless scientist, conducting the same experiment over and over? ... No. Might not everything that had happened around me since this morning be no more than the hallucinations of a somnambulist—myself? ... I was dreaming here and now that I was having my hair smartly cut, my sideburns and the hair above and below my eyebrows trimmed; the real me ... my body ... was not here at all. Somewhere entirely different, somewhere preposterous, I was performing some preposterous act of somnambulism ...

... At this thought I started and jumped out of the chair. ... With the white cloth still round my neck, I dashed straight ahead ... or so I thought, but that was not what happened. ... An uproar suddenly broke out over my head, preventing me from opening either my eyes or my mouth. My backside, which had begun to

rise, dropped involuntarily back into the chair, and I pulled my neck down tight.

Two round brushes had begun racing side by side over my head in such a frenzy that I could hardly breathe ... but ... how wonderful it felt. For a moment I could no longer tell whether I was mad or who was mad. ... Like a dead soul cut off from joy and sorrow, fear and resentment, past and present, the universe and everything in it, I slumped back into the chair. The pleasure of having a bottomless, boundless itch scratched to its deepest depths seeped through every pore of my body into the very marrow of my bones. ... There was nothing to be done now. I understood nothing, but from now on I would obey Dr Wakabayashi absolutely. Whatever lay ahead no longer mattered ... Utterly deflated, I felt I had resigned myself completely to everything.

“Come this way.”

A young woman's voice sounded right beside my ear. Opening my eyes with a start, I found that two nurses had come in without my noticing and were holding my hands firmly on either side, as though I were a criminal. The barber had removed the white cloth from my neck without my knowing and was shaking it vigorously outside the door.

Dr Wakabayashi, absorbed in his red-covered foreign book, closed it flat and stood up. Lengthening his already long face as he coughed, ‘Ahem, ahem’, he moved both hands towards the door as if to say, ‘This way, please.’

Barely able to open my eyes through the hair and dandruff covering my face, I let the nurses lead me by both hands. My bare feet touched the cold paving, and for the first time in my life ... ? ... I passed through the door.

Dr Wakabayashi accompanied me out, but seemed to go off somewhere along the way.

Outside the door was a broad corridor of artificial stone, lined on either side by five facing doors of the same shape and colour as mine. In a dim recess in the wall at its end hung a clock as tall as a person, strictly enclosed in iron bars and wire mesh like the windows of my room. It was probably this clock that had hummed ... Booo—mmm ... and awakened me in the darkness early this morning. I could not tell where one might put a hand in to wind it. Its imposing long and short hands, ornamented with an old-fashioned arabesque pattern, pointed to four minutes past six. Its great brass pendulum swung clack-clack, somehow resembling a human being condemned to repeat that action as a punishment. Facing the clock, my room was on the left. A white-painted plaque about a foot long nailed beside the door bore small black Gothic lettering, 'Psychiatry, East, Ward One', and beneath it in larger letters, 'Room Seven'. There was no plaque with a patient's name.

Led by the hands by the two nurses, I turned my back on the clock and began walking. Before long we emerged into a bright outer corridor, facing a two-storey Western-style wooden building painted blue. On either side of the corridor lay white sand, overflowing with tiny chrysanthemums red as blood, cosmos white as dreams, and cockscombs shaped like strange red and yellow internal organs. Beyond these, on both sides, were dark-green pine woods. Morning sunshine gently touched the thin clouds moving over the pines; from somewhere far away the sound of waves drifted softly, softly towards us ... how pleasant it was ...

“... Ah ... it is autumn ...”

I thought. I drew in a lungful of cool, fresh, flowing air and sighed with relief. But before I had time to stop and look round at the scenery, the two nurses pulled firmly at my hands and led me into a dark corridor inside the blue building. At the first room on the right, another nurse who had been waiting there opened the door and went inside with us.

It was a fairly large, bright bathroom. Steam rising from a stone bath by the far window ran sparkling down the glass on three sides. The three red-cheeked nurses rolled up their sleeves and skirts to expose their matching round red arms and red legs, suddenly seized me, stripped me completely naked and drove me into the bath. When I had warmed up sufficiently and stood, they immediately hauled me out onto a board in the washing area and pressed cold soap and sponges against me from every direction, scrubbing vigorously without the least ceremony. Then, abruptly forcing my head down, they rubbed it with a bare cake of soap, raised a mountain of lather and raked it in a rough frenzy scarcely imaginable in women. Without warning, they doused me again and again with hot water until I could open neither eyes nor mouth. Then they seized both my hands again, permitting no objection,

“This way!”

they ordered shrilly, driving me back into the bath. Their roughness ... I almost suspected that the nurse who had brought my breakfast and suffered at my hands that morning was among them, taking her revenge. But on closer observation it also seemed merely the manner of people accustomed to handling lunatics every day, and I became utterly despondent.

Yet towards the end they cut my overgrown fingernails and toenails, cleaned my mouth with salt and a bamboo-handled brush, let me warm myself again, rubbed me all over with a fresh

towel and vigorously combed my hair up with a new yellow comb. After all that I really did feel reborn. I felt so good that it seemed utterly inexplicable that, refreshed and firmly myself as I now was, I should still be unable to remember my past.

“Put these on instead.”

One nurse spoke, and I turned to find that the patient clothes I had left on the wooden floor had vanished. In their place lay a large pale-yellow cloth bundle. When its knot was undone, a university student's uniform and cap emerged in a white cardboard box, together with a flecked overcoat, knitted underclothes, trousers, brown half-stockings and lace-up shoes wrapped in newspaper ... And when I opened a small leather case lying on top, it even contained a little, silvery watch.

Before I had time to wonder at these things, I took them one by one from the nurse and put them on. Looking as I did so, I could find no initials or anything else on any article to show that it belonged to me. Yet every item was properly creased, almost as if freshly tailored, and when I moved, each fitted as comfortably as an old acquaintance. Only the new collar inside the high-necked jacket seemed a little tight. To my astonishment, the brand-new square cap, the gleaming lace-up shoes, even the length of the watch's black ribbon—its hands showed twenty-three minutes past six—were all precisely right. In such wonder, I thrust both hands into my jacket pockets. On the right I felt a new handkerchief folded in four and some paper tissues; on the left, a small, smoothly bulging clasp purse, though I did not know how much it contained.

Once more I felt bewitched by a fox. I looked round restlessly for a mirror, but unfortunately there was not even a fragment in sight. The three nurses opened the door and left, looking back at my face with equally restless eyes.

As they departed, Dr Wakabayashi lumbered in, lowering his head beneath the lintel. He looked me up and down as though inspecting my clothes, silently led me into a corner, and removed a faded cotton bathrobe hanging partway up the opposite wall. Beneath it appeared, quite unexpectedly, an enormous full-length mirror.

I staggered backwards in spite of myself. ... I was astonished by the youth of the self reflected in it.

When I had felt my face and imagined my appearance in Room Seven before dawn, I had pictured a formidable, ugly, heavily bearded man of about thirty. Even allowing for the grooming I had since received, I had never imagined that the actual sight of me could differ so greatly from the impression my hands had conveyed.

Standing in the life-sized mirror before me, I looked no more than a stripling of twenty or thereabouts. A round forehead, a narrow jaw, large eyes and a startled face. Without the uniform I might have been taken for a middle-school boy. To think that I was such a youngster made all the spirit I had shown since morning drain rapidly away. I felt peculiarly disturbed ... happy ... sad ... a strange mixture beyond words.

From behind me Dr Wakabayashi spoke as though prompting me.

“Well? ... Have you remembered ... your own name? ...”

I hastily removed the cap I had been putting on. Swallowing a mouthful of cold saliva, I turned; and at last I understood why Dr Wakabayashi had been manipulating me in all these strange ways. Having promised to show me mementoes of my past, he had begun by confronting me with my own former appearance. He must have remembered in minute detail how I had looked before admission, restored me to precisely that appearance, and

then suddenly thrust it before my eyes to make me recall the past. ... Certainly, this could not be mistaken. It really was a memento of my past. ... Even if everything else was a misunderstanding, this alone could surely contain no error: my own remembered form ...

Yet ... unfortunately, his pains and efforts went unrewarded. Startled though I was at being shown myself for the first time, I remained as unable as ever to remember a single thing ... Worse, discovering that I was still such a boy left me feeling even more abashed ... as though I had been made a fool of ... filled with a vague terror ... an indescribable emotion. My head drooped as I wiped the sweat that had unconsciously begun running down my forehead.

Still comparing my face with the one in the mirror with an unchanging, expressionless stare, Dr Wakabayashi eventually nodded with a significant air.

“Quite understandable. Your complexion is much fairer than before, and you seem to have put on a little weight; you may feel that you look somewhat different from before your admission ... Well, come this way. We shall try the next method ... This time you will surely remember ...”

Stiffening my knees and my ankles inside the new lace-up shoes, I followed Dr Wakabayashi back along the corridor where the cockscombs bloomed. I thought we were returning to Room Seven, but he stopped at the door immediately before it, marked Room Six, and knocked twice. When he pulled the large brass handle, a woman of about fifty, apparently an attendant, emerged through the half-open door in a pale-yellow apron and bowed respectfully. Looking up at Dr Wakabayashi,

“She's sleeping soundly just now,”

she reported discreetly, then left towards the Western-style building from which we had come.

Dr Wakabayashi cautiously stretched his neck forward and went inside. Taking my hand gently in one of his, he quietly closed the door with the other and approached, with muffled footsteps, the iron bed against the far wall. There he gently released my hand, pointed softly with a hairy finger at the face of a girl asleep upon the bed, and glanced back at me.

I gripped my cap's peak tightly in both hands. Doubting my own eyes, I blinked two or three times.

... So beautiful was the girl sleeping peacefully there.

Her abundant glossy hair, arranged in a strange form like great black flower petals, lay tousled upon a pillow wrapped in a white towel. She wore a white cotton patient gown identical to the one I myself had worn until a little while ago. Her two hands, wrapped in fresh bandages, were neatly folded on the white blanket over her chest. The sight suggested that this must indeed be the girl who had tormented me early that morning by knocking on the wall and calling out. Naturally, I could discover none of the ghastly traces of oozing blood I had imagined upon the surrounding walls. Even so, the peace and innocence of her sleep made it impossible to believe that she had raged and wept in that terrible, suffocating voice ... Her long, slender crescent eyebrows, her long, thick eyelashes, the elegant bridge of her nose, her faintly flushed cheeks, her small, close-set, clover-shaped lips, even the charming, translucent curve of her double chin—she lay in such immaculate beauty that I wondered whether this might be a doll made just so. ... No. At that moment I truly did harbour that suspicion; forgetting everything else, I gazed upon the doll's sleeping face.

Then ... before my very eyes, a mysterious transformation, strange beyond all description, began upon that doll's sleeping face.

Upon the large pillow wrapped in a fresh towel, her softly red, down-covered ears lay on either side of a face whose long lashes rested tidily and happily closed. That sleeping face began, so quietly, so quietly as to be almost imperceptible, to take on an expression of sorrow. Yet all the outlines of her slender brows, her thick lashes and her little clover-shaped lips remained motionless in their original beautiful positions. Only the innocent girlish pink of her cheeks changed somehow to a lonely rose. Nothing more—and yet the guileless face which a moment before had seemed seventeen or eighteen gradually acquired the refined expression of a married lady of twenty-two or twenty-three. And how divine was the hue of sorrow shining faintly through from beneath ...

Again I began to doubt my eyes. But I felt incapable even of breathing, much less of rubbing them. As I went on gazing, spellbound and unblinking, clear beads of water began appearing between her long, double-folded eyelids. They rapidly swelled into great drops of dew, clung to her long eyelashes, glittered—and before I could draw breath, spilled down on either side. ... Then her little lips began moving in a faint tremor, and words as insubstantial as a dream escaped in broken fragments.

“Sister ... Sister ... I'm sorry, I'm sorry. ... I ... I loved Brother with all my heart. Though I knew how precious, how precious Brother was to you ... I had loved him for so long ... and so at last it came to this ... ah ... I'm sorry, I'm sorry ... please ... please ... forgive me, won't you ... forgive me ... please ... Sister ... please ... won't you ...”

Her faltering tones were so faint that one could barely infer the words from the movement of her trembling lips. But fresh tears welled up one after another, passing through her long eyelashes towards the outer corners of her eyes ... across her faintly white temples ... then disappearing into the translucent hairline at either side, darkly tinged with blue.

Presently the tears stopped. As the lonely rose colour sunken in both cheeks changed back to innocent pink, like the breaking of dawn, her expression—still motionless as a doll's—returned to the sleeping face of a healthy girl of seventeen or eighteen. ... In a brief dream she had aged five or six years and suffered sorrow. And now she was growing young again ... As I watched with this thought, a gentle smile even appeared at the corners of her lips.

Again a long sigh was drawn from the depths of my heart. Still feeling as though I myself had not quite awakened from a dream, I timidly looked behind me.

Standing behind me with his hands clasped at his back, Dr Wakabayashi was looking steadily down at me with the same expressionless expression as before. His face, hard as soapstone, showed that inwardly he was intensely strained. Quietly meeting my backward glance, he lightly moistened his white lips and spoke in a flat voice quite different from before.

“Do you ... know ... this lady's name?”

Once again I turned towards the girl's sleeping face. I shook my head quietly, as though afraid to disturb anyone.

... No ... not at all ...

That was what I meant. As though pursuing the gesture, Dr Wakabayashi whispered again in a low voice.

“Then ... do you not at least remember seeing her face?”

Looking up into his face as he spoke, I gave two or three emphatic blinks.

... Impossible ... when I didn't even know my own face, how could I remember anyone else's? ...

So my expression seemed to say ...

The instant I did so, a shade of inexpressible disappointment passed smoothly across his face again. His eyes seeming to become vacant, he stared at me for a while. Then, imperceptibly returning to his former lonely expression, he nodded lightly two or three times and quietly turned towards the girl beside me. With an exceedingly solemn step he advanced half a pace, clasped his hands before him as though swearing something before a deity, and looked down at me. In a slow, suggestive tone he said:

“Then ... I shall tell you. This lady is your only cousin, and she is betrothed to you.”

“Ah ...”

I swallowed a cry of astonishment. Pressing my forehead, I staggered backwards. Doubting both eyes and ears, I spoke in a cracked voice.

“How ... how could ... someone ... so beautiful ...”

“Yes, a beauty rare indeed in this world. But there is no mistake. On 26 April of this year ... Taishō 15 ... exactly six months ago, you and this cousin, your only cousin, were on the very point of marrying. Owing to the utterly inexplicable event that occurred on the previous night, she has lived in this pitiable condition ever since ...”

“.....”

“Accordingly ... to arrange for the two of you to leave hospital safely ... and return to a happy married life ... is likewise the final and momentous responsibility entrusted to me by Professor Masaki.”

His tone was slow and solemn, as though intended to overawe me.

But I merely turned to the bed again, staring as though bewitched by a fox, just as before. ... To have a girl like a heavenly maiden, whom I had never seen, suddenly pointed out as mine—the uneasiness of it ... the doubt ... and its inexplicable absurdity ...

“My ... only cousin ... but ... when she said ‘Sister’ just now ...”

“She is dreaming. ... As I have said, this young lady has never had any siblings; she is an only child. ... However, there is a record that the woman who was her ancestor a thousand years ago had an elder sister. At present she is dreaming of her as her own immediate sister ...”

“How ... can you ... know ... such a thing? ...”

My voice shook as I spoke. Looking up at Dr Wakabayashi, I could not help edging backwards. I had suddenly begun to doubt his sanity ... Only a sorcerer could look at another person's dream from outside and describe its contents ... Still more eerie was his calm, fluent explanation of bizarre events a thousand years ago, beyond reasoning or imagination, utterly inaccessible to human powers ... Dr Wakabayashi had been no ordinary person from the start. I began to suspect that he might, like myself, be some special kind of patient confined in this mental hospital ...

But Dr Wakabayashi looked not the least surprised. He answered with the same matter-of-fact, scientific manner, in the same broken, toneless voice ...

“We know ... because she says and does such things while awake too. ... Look at this strange arrangement of her hair. This is the hairstyle of a married woman of the period when her ancestor lived a thousand years ago, and from time to time she puts it up this way herself ... That is to say, though this young lady remains

a pure and innocent virgin, whenever she herself arranges her hair in this fashion, it is taken as evidence that the whole of her mental life has reverted to the habits, memories and personality of a certain married woman who was her ancestor a thousand years ago. Naturally, at such times no trace of maidenhood remains, from her eyes to her bodily movements. She looks so mature that one would mistake even her age, appearing an elegant young married lady. ... Of course, while she has forgotten that dream, she allows the attendant to wind her hair round in the usual fashion, like the other patients ...”

My mouth hung open. I could only compare in bewilderment that mysterious hairstyle and Dr Wakabayashi's solemn face.

“Then ... then ... when she said ‘Brother’ ...”

“That too refers to your ancestor of a thousand years ago. Your ancestor, who was then her sister's husband ... in other words, you, who were this lady's brother-in-law a thousand years ago. She is now dreaming of living with you.”

“Such ... such shameful ... immoral ...”

I began to cry out, then caught my breath. Dr Wakabayashi's pale hand had moved slowly to restrain me ...

“Shh ... quietly ... When you remember your own name, as you may at any moment, everything ...”

He too broke off abruptly. We both turned to the girl on the bed at the same instant. But it was already too late.

Apparently our voices had reached her ears. Moving her small red lips restlessly, she gently opened her eyes. Seeing my face immediately beside her, she blinked widely two or three times. For an instant her double-lidded eyes sparkled; then, apparently in great astonishment, her cheeks rapidly turned white. Her moist black pupils shone larger and larger, with a beauty scarcely

of this world. Then, with them, the colour of her cheeks suddenly flared up to her very ears,

“Ah ... Brother! ... What are you doing here? ...”

She cried out as though her soul had fled her and sat up. Jumping barefoot down from the bed, her skirts flying open, she tried to cling to me.

Astonished, I brushed her hands aside without thinking. I sprang back two or three paces and stared at her ... completely bewildered ...

... At that instant the girl too stopped. Arms outstretched, she stiffened as though struck by electricity. Her face turned deathly pale; even the colour left her lips. ... Then, her eyes wide and fixed on my face, she staggered backwards and braced both hands upon the bed. Her lips trembling violently, she went on gazing intently at me.

Then she looked fearfully round at Dr Wakabayashi's face and at the room ... before long both eyes filled with glittering tears. Her head drooped limply. Crumpling to the stone floor, she pressed the sleeve of her white gown to her face, gave a great cry and collapsed weeping over the bed.

I was more bewildered than ever. Wiping the sweat that had broken out all over my face, I looked between Dr Wakabayashi and the girl's back as she sobbed and sobbed in her hoarse voice.

Dr Wakabayashi ... did not move a single facial muscle. Returning my bewildered gaze coldly, he approached the girl without haste and bent down. With his mouth almost at her ear, he asked:

“Have you remembered? This gentleman's name ... and your own name too ...”

These words astonished me more than the girl. ... So she too, like myself, had fallen into a 'state of loss of self' while beginning to emerge from somnambulism? ... And Dr Wakabayashi was trying upon her the same experiment he was conducting upon me? ... I awaited her answer with such tension that my ears rang.

But the girl did not answer. For a moment she merely stopped crying, buried her face still deeper in the bed and shook her head.

"Then you do at least remember that this is the Brother to whom you were betrothed?"

The girl nodded. Then she began weeping in a higher, fiercer voice than before.

Even to someone who knew nothing of the circumstances, it was a truly agonising, gut-wrenching sound. Because she could not remember her lover's name, she had been left behind in the world of mental patients, far removed from him ... and now, though at last she had met him again and tried to cling to him, she was coldly thrust away. She seemed newly and keenly to realise her situation; her lament was beside itself with grief.

Though a man and not a woman, I was in the same mental condition, made to undergo the same suffering. Her utterly hoarsened sobbing drew me in to the depths of my heart. My position was wholly different from when she had called to me before dawn ... no, it was many times more suffocating. Still unable to remember either her face or her name, I was tormented by the feeling that I alone was responsible for being unable to do anything as this girl wept face down upon the white bed, her piteous back writhing and trembling, her cries so painful that I could not bear not to remember and help her that very instant. I covered my face with both hands, cold sweat streaming over my whole body. I grew faint, almost ready to stagger and fall.

But Dr Wakabayashi, whether aware of my suffering or not, remained bent over, soothingly stroking the girl's shoulder.

“Now ... now ... be calm ... be calm ... you will remember very soon. This gentleman too ... your Brother ... has forgotten your face. But he will remember before long. Then he will tell you at once. And you will leave hospital together. ... Come ... rest quietly. Wait until the time comes. It is by no means far away ...”

Speaking reassuringly, he raised his face. ... I stood petrified, astonished and helpless, wiping away silent tears; he took my hand, led me smartly out, and shut the heavy door firmly without a trace of reluctance. Clapping his hands twice, he summoned the elderly attendant, who was touching the cockscomb flowers farther along the corridor. Then, urging me on as I still hesitated for some reason, he led me back into Room Seven.

Listening carefully, I could hear that the girl's weeping had grown considerably quieter. Between her sobbing breaths, the elderly attendant seemed to be saying something to soothe her.

Standing upon the artificial-stone floor, I drew a deep sigh and composed myself. First of all, I looked up at Dr Wakabayashi and waited for an explanation.

... A girl of peerless beauty, whom until this very moment I could never have imagined even in a dream, and whom people in the world had probably never seen equalled except in a doll, was shut up as a miserable mental patient in the unsuspected neighbouring room, separated from me by a single wall.

... Moreover, not only was this beautiful girl my only cousin and my fiancée: she dreamed of living with *an utterly bizarre me*, ‘the me who was her sister's husband a thousand years ago’.

... Further, upon waking from that dream, the instant she saw my face she cried ‘Brother!’ and tried to embrace me.

... And because I pushed her away, she crumpled to the floor and lamented in gut-wrenching sorrow ...

I waited, my heart pounding, to hear how Dr Wakabayashi would explain these utterly strange and complicated facts.

Yet whatever he was thinking, at this moment he shut his mouth as firmly as though he had suddenly become mute. Merely casting me one cold, pale glance, he quietly lowered his eyes, searched his waistcoat pocket with his left hand, took out a large silver-coloured pocket watch and laid it on his palm. Then, placing the fingertips of his right hand gently against his left wrist, he peered at the dial, which showed half past seven, and began taking his own pulse.

Perhaps, being in poor health, he was accustomed to taking his pulse at this hour every morning. Even so, his manner retained no trace of the intense concentration he had shown until a moment ago. In its place was the indifference of a complete stranger passing in the street. His little eyes lowered like a ghost's, his white lips shut in a straight line, he pressed and released the middle finger upon his left pulse. Watching him, I felt he was trying by this behaviour to subdue my excitement over the inexplicable events he had just shown me next door. ... A girl writhing in twofold and threefold love in a bizarre world where past, present and future ... dream and reality ... were all jumbled together. Unimaginably adulterous and immoral ... incomparably pure and innocent ... neither virgin nor wife, neither distinguishably sane nor mad ... a girl of peerless beauty whose very existence seemed impossible. He had not merely introduced her as 'your cousin and your fiancée', but displayed the proof before my eyes; and now he seemed deliberately to evade my questions about these preposterous facts.

So, frustrated and unable to tell what to do, I could only fiddle with my cap and lower my head.

... And ... it was at that very instant, as I lowered my head, that I felt somehow I was being *made a fool of* by this doctor.

I could not say why, but perhaps Dr Wakabayashi was taking advantage of something wrong with my head, confronting me with astonishing inventions and trying to make me believe things without the least foundation. Perhaps he meant to use me for some scientific experiment ... The suspicion flashed into my head, then expanded rapidly to fill it, until it seemed that it must be true.

It all seemed decidedly odd: taking hold of me, who knew nothing, dressing me up as a university student for no imaginable reason, introducing a beautiful girl as my fiancée, and going to all these pains. Might not this uniform and cap have been tailored to my body while I was half-conscious? And might not the girl be some erotomaniac confined in this hospital, who behaved in that strange fashion with everyone she saw? Perhaps this hospital was not Kyūshū Imperial University at all. Perhaps even Dr Wakabayashi, standing before me, was some impostor of unknown origin. My brains having somehow evaporated for some reason, perhaps he had dragged me here from somewhere and was trying to put me into some grand illusion to make me serve a purpose. Otherwise, surely I could not meet such a beautiful girl, supposedly my own fiancée, without recalling a single thing from the past. Surely I would feel affection, joy ... something of the sort.

... Yes. I had certainly been on the point of being taken in.

... As this realisation dawned, the questions, perplexities and astonishment that had crowded my head began rapidly to

evaporate. Before I knew it, my head had returned to its original state, hollow and empty as ever. No responsibility, no worries ...

Yet along with that came the feeling that I was utterly alone, and a vague helplessness and loneliness began to assail me. With another thin sigh, I raised my face. Dr Wakabayashi too appeared just to have finished taking his pulse. Slowly dropping the watch from his left palm back into its pocket, he resumed the courteous manner with which he had first approached me that morning.

“Well, then. Are you not tired?”

Again I was somewhat disconcerted. His excessive air of unconcern deepened my sense that I was being made a fool of, yet I tried to nod just as casually.

“No. Not at all ...”

“Ah ... then we may continue a little further with the tests intended to help you recall your past?”

I nodded casually once more, feeling ... let whatever happens happen ... Seeing this, Dr Wakabayashi nodded in accord.

“Then I shall now take you to the professor's office in the main building of this university's Department of Psychiatry ... the room occupied until the day of his death by Professor Masaki Keishi, whom I mentioned earlier. While you examine the mementoes of your past displayed there, I am convinced that the strange mysteries surrounding you will unravel one by one and that in the end you will recover all your past memories fully. Then, I believe, you will at a stroke dispel the mystery of the utterly bizarre case in which you and that young lady are entangled ...”

His words rang with a conviction harder than iron, and seemed to contain some profoundly significant suggestion.

Unconcerned by such things, however, I bowed my head once more. ... Take me wherever you like. It can only turn out as it will ... Such was my resigned mood. At the same time I was driven by

a certain curiosity ... what strange thing would he produce next?

...

Dr Wakabayashi too nodded, apparently satisfied.

“Well, then ... this way, please ...”

End of Sample

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