

Ango's
Detective Casebook
No. 1

The Meiji Enlightenment Series

ANGO SAKAGUCHI

SHELLEY MARSHALL (TRANSLATOR)

The Meiji Enlightenment Series

Ango's Detective Casebook No. 1

Ango's Detective Casebook No. 2

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A MESSAGE TO THE READER

THIS CASEBOOK IS composed of five stages. In the first stage, Toranosuke pays a visit to Kaishu to explain the incident. (However, this stage may be skipped.) In the second stage, the incident is described. The third stage is the reasoning. In the fourth stage, Shinjuro discovers the criminal. And in the fifth stage, Kaishu fails to admit he lost. Of these stages, the second stage is approximately five-sixths of the process. If all of the stages take sixty pages, then this stage is fifty pages; and the rest occupies ten pages.

This is a casebook and not strictly mystery stories. This casebook places special importance on reason, and the seeds of the reasoning are laid out in the second stage. As a diversion to possibly stave off boredom, you should make your own deductions as you read. The author wrote this casebook with this intention. Kaishu's third stage uses his mind's eye, please lay down the magazine and reason while having a smoke. Kaishu will fail seven out of ten times. In detective stories up to now, a stupid detective appeared as the sidekick of a superior detective, but he had major flaws in his reasoning and was a little too stupid. Usually, the reader is wrong in his reasoning and appears to be stupid like Detective Dummy. However, because Kaishu, the biggest brain of the Meiji era, fails, even if the reasoning of a reader of this casebook is wildly wrong, take heart with me that it's not all bad. In short, this casebook says to you, "Well done. Congratulations."

CHAPTER ONE

MURDER AT THE BALL

IZUMIYAMA TORANOSUKE, A MASTER swordsman from Kagurazaka, passed through the black-board fence encircling Kaishu's mansion in Hikawa. The times were the years of enlightenment around Meiji year 18 or 19 (1885 or 1886). This man, Izumiyama Toranosuke, seemed to be drunk and had the vice of striking a pose like Tachibana Tokiyasu and wanting to lick the cheeks of young women.

As a boy, Toranosuke learned swordsmanship from Kaishu. In those days, Katsu Kaishu was poor; he had not yet been promoted to an important position in the last days of the shogunate, and was making a living through swordsmanship and the study of Western sciences. He trained with Kaishu for two or three years until Kaishu entered the government, became very busy, and placed him under the supervision of Yamaoka Tesshu. At that time, Toranosuke was a child in the fourth or fifth grade and, from then on, continued to study swordsmanship under Yamaoka. Toranosuke opened a dojo in Kagurazaka, but rarely practiced.

Toranosuke sat racking his brains on the rattan chair at the entrance to Kaishu's home. This was the strange habit of this man. When troubled, he would visit Kaishu's mansion, sit on the rattan chair at the entrance, bury his head in his hands, and brood over his problem, like he was doing now. Over time, this loosened the chair's legs making it wobble.

After four or five minutes, Toranosuke boldly stood up to be shown in for his visit. The housemaid stayed inside, instead, Kaishu's mistress Koito appeared to welcome and invite him in. He was led to a twelve-by-six tatami-mat parlor with a table and chairs. In its days as the mansion of a vassal, this was a formal tatami room. An oil painting of a dragon by

Kawamura Kiyoo lay on the floor. The small room adjacent to this drawing room was originally a study in the Kaishu Library. It was a historic small room where the secret and virtuous conversations with Saigo Nanshu and Okubo Koto were often held. When he looked to the right and went about thirty feet, there was the current study, a six-by-eight tatami room with an attached three-tatami tearoom and a pantry.

Today, there was no blissful companion. The dignity filling his body emanated from Kaishu, but the man himself sat cross-legged and began to scold Toranosuke.

"Ah, Tora? How are you? Have you been busy lately with your swordsmanship training?"

"Somehow hunger is kept at bay for the father, mother, and five children."

"It's like a drunk in Kagurazaka testing a new sword by killing a passerby. That talk sounds like you."

"Don't be ridiculous."

"Because some fool is clinging to women's necks and licking their cheeks, women refuse to pass through Kagurazaka after eight at night. 'If I'm going to get licked, I'd like him to be Shinjuro-sama from next door,' seems to be the prayer of the girls and young courtesans in Kagurazaka. Tora biting the neck resembles Enma, the king of hell, giving his right eye and receiving a *konnyaku* jelly cake in appreciation, and succeeds only in angering the masseur Ogin."

"I'm ashamed and know from personal experience, but it's not as you say. The truth is that Yuki Shinjuro wishes to borrow your resourcefulness."

"Was there an incident?"

"A truly serious national incident, so serious the newspapers were banned from reporting it. Secret agents flew to all parts of the country. The government held a conference in the presence of the emperor."

As always, Toranosuke's story was big, but the Imperial Council was an exception. Kaishu was amazed.

"Where did this war start?"

"Around eight o'clock last night, the politically connected businessman Kanou Gohei was murdered by someone attending a costume ball. Starting with cabinet ministers, diplomats from various countries, as well as Tsushimashi Tenroku and Kanda Masahiko were in attendance."

As expected, Kaishu was perfectly composed; he held his tongue and slipped into deep thought. Despite his uncommon intellect with the sharpness of a sword, his swift perception like a flying arrow, and his microscopic mind's eye, this matter was extraordinary to him.

It was a secret within a secret, the government at the time had the difficult task of gambling with the country's fate. In Japan at that time, industry did not look industrial. There wasn't even an iron works with an

annual production of one thousand tons. Older trains had been in service for a dozen years, but their locomotives were still imported from overseas. None of the conveniences of civilization could be manufactured domestically. Industry must be energized to join the family of civilized nations, and for that, first, large-scale ironworks were required. However, there was no capital. Japan's wealthy bourgeois was absorbed in businesses with quick arbitrage like trade and shipping, but took little notice of vital industries that demanded huge investments in capital for the provision of equipment, a focus on the essence of a technology, and many years of accumulated research.

The government of the time feared this, and at the outset of joining the family of civilized nations, first, decided to build large ironworks. Because they lacked capital, it was believed that five million pounds should be borrowed from country X. If it was five million pounds, then it was fifty million dollars. At today's market price, this huge sum of money would be about three hundred billion yen.

However, there were countries that did not delight in Japan setting up large-scale industries. Country Z was a typical example. It feared devastation of its own market some time in the future.

Consequently, the prime minister brooded over this situation. (Until December 1885, the prime minister was called the chancellor. That time was exactly the period of this case. The official position is clearly from the historical record and is known to be secret. Therefore, chancellors are lumped in with prime ministers and also called prime ministers. In addition, please permit the use of the noun *modernism* and not the noun *truth* in the specific case where, depending on the situation, secret historical facts are known.) If large ironworks were a national business, an international incident would develop. And a semi-governmental business would be dull. One move would be to use a private citizen. There was a politically connected man called Kanou Gohei, a happy ambitious man. This project became the personal business of this man.

For the record, even with a five million pound loan, the business was, in fact, a national business where the government provided the guarantee, settled the loan, and assumed all responsibility. Because country X was an opposing power to country Z and had a relationship of hate, it would not disapprove if Japan started a business and somehow ruined the Eastern markets of country Z. Therefore, Japan and country X began secret negotiations.

However, five million pounds was a huge amount of money. The enemy country Z was in a delicate international situation and did not want to commit a foolish act that would invite the other country's anger with nothing to gain. Country X was cautious and never offered to lend five million pounds.

While nothing happened for nearly six months, country Z saw through these secret negotiations and saw through to the underside.

Therefore, country Z frustrated their plan and wondered what to do in revenge. It warned Japan to not protest to country X. Japan bought paper, oil, and cotton yarn from country X. (As with the name of the former prime minister, these product names are nonsense because the secrets would be known if the truth were written.) This became hugely profitable for country X. Z exacted revenge on X by planning to assist in providing inexpensive raw materials from other countries to Japan and to start large industries of paper manufacture, oil refining, and cotton manufacture.

The secret talks held by country Z were conducted by Taima Tenroku, who was a political rival of Prime Minister Kamiizumi Zenki and said to be the inevitable candidate in the next government. Tenroku was a representative of an influential faction in opposition to Zenki's faction. Ambassador Franken of country Z privately summoned Tenroku. (This name Franken is also nonsense. Discretion was chosen because the country's name would be exposed by its pronunciation.) Franken offered to loan five million pounds to create businesses for large-scale paper manufacture, oil refining, and cotton manufacture; and would provide assistance in overseas markets of raw materials and manufactured goods.

However, Tenroku acting as a politician would be outrageous on an international scale; therefore, official business had to be carried out as the personal business of the businessman Kanda Masahiko. That was the guarantee, but when he became prime minister, the approach was to not have an official loan agreement in writing.

Tenroku was very happy. Of course he was happy to hear that request from Franken. Soon Kanda Masahiko was called and told the story. Kanda was a politically connected but divisive businessman who opposed Kanou Gohei. In opposition to Kanou's connection to Kamiizumi Zenki, he was connected to the evenly matched Tenroku. The advice was readily accepted. Kanda was more delighted than Tenroku.

When a confrontation occurred between the two, secrets were unknowingly leaked. The secrets on the underside of the political world would reach the ears of insiders and had already reached those of Kaishu.

Because countries X and Z opposed each other, accepting the challenge was human nature. People said that five million pounds were simply given in response to the government's application, but that was not so. However, it could not be said to be a lie.

The most common speculation was that Ambassador Chamelos of country X was devoted to the eighteen-year-old Rie, the daughter of Kanou Gohei, and hinted this to Prime Minister Kamiizumi Zenki. Sweating blood, Zenki and Gohei pestered Rie and went down on their knees to ask, but Rie's response was, "Come the day before yesterday."

Her use of words in a way unbecoming a graduate of Gakushuin were no problem at all.

In fact, the domestic administration in X was in ruin and too weak to respond to the offensive by Z. At that time, however, people laid blame on Rie.

The following tale spread throughout the world as an untold story. In the seduction of a young woman, diplomatic negotiations sometimes demand the opening of one's heart. Zenki took out his prized wax matches from his pocket to show her. They were imported matches received from Ambassador Chamelos and were different from Japanese matches. They lit up wherever they were struck. He said that it was a curiosity even in the West. He gave one to Rie and struck another on the sole of his shoe to demonstrate.

"Oh, those are unusual. Wait a minute Pop," said Rie with a glint in her eyes. She stood, stepped forward, and grabbed hold of the baldhead of a surprised Zenki and struck a match with full force. Because the fire anticipated by Rie didn't come, she said, "Hey, you lied," and flung the match away. Zenki had earned the nickname of Minister Thunder. He was famous for his temper, but this moment was a time for patience. Steam did not rise from the baldhead now sporting a line drawn by the wax match; he simply grinned.

Negotiations stalled just as they were about to conclude. Kanou Gohei was murdered. Moreover, it happened at a ball held at his home.

Because it was called the Ball at Gohei's House, the usual meaning may have been the true meaning. After Franken called Tenroku and Kanda, Gohei rushed into sight. The rumor among insiders was that every night Gohei would secretly visit his daughter's room, kneel down, cry, put his hands together, and plead, "Because I hate balls..."

Kaishu badmouthed the ball with evident revenge and complex mystery.

"Perhaps, for certain people with history to gather in one hall is mysterious. While there is no mystery to meeting in a hall, these were villains meeting at the Ball at Gohei's House. If I speak too soon, my words will invite ridicule. Tell me about the pattern of the case that only you know. Be mindful of my hardhead so I don't misunderstand the context."

"Yes. As you wish."

Oddly, Toranosuke lowered himself down to one knee to ardently express his gratitude. By borrowing Kaishu's ingenuity, he possessed an ulterior motive nurtured over many years to foil Yuki Shinjuro and Hananoya Inga. Therefore, conscious of his hardhead, with great self-discipline, Toranosuke quietly began the story.



THE COSTUME BALL was originally planned to be held at the Rokumeikan, a Meiji-era, Western-style building. Gohei built a fine trendy banquet hall and had already used it a few times, but it lacked class and was too humble to hold a huge banquet with the guests of cabinet ministers and ambassadors of various nations. However, some people prodded him to hold the ball at his home and not at the Rokumeikan, and he did. The hall was not cheaply built as much as it was modest. Despite his objections, Gohei knew it was not an entirely bad idea.

Gohei's wife Atsuko was his twenty-seven-year-old second wife from a noble daimyo family. Needless to say, she was not Rie's birth mother. Her mother died from illness leaving behind Rie and her older brother Mantaro. Mantaro studied at Cambridge University and recently returned home. Although this costume ball was not public, Gohei privately delighted in his desire to celebrate Mantaro's return and send him into the world as a full-fledged Japanese gentleman. This private matter could be said to not be public, but, in fact, the main purpose was a public affair. Gohei gradually came to believe that the proper course was to stay away from the Rokumeikan and to use his own home.

That morning, Rie was called to Atsuko's room. Atsuko was a late riser and woke a little after noon. She did not eat with the family nor see her husband Gohei off to work.

"What costume are you wearing to tonight's ball?" her stepmother asked Rie.

"I won't be wearing a costume."

"Well, you will wear a mask."

"No, I hate masks. I also hate balls. So, tonight, I'm going out horseback riding with friends."

Rie made that unladylike comment. As the daughter of a daimyo, Atsuko was dignified, fearless, and caustic, like she was capable of killing with her own hands. Her gray eyes filled with a ghostly essence.

"Here is the costume I readied for you. You will play bathing Venus, the figure in a masterpiece of Western painting. Mantaro returned home with a terra-cotta vase. Your hem will hang down, and you will hug the vase and search for an enjoyable place to bathe, and take a nice stroll along the riverbank. Then..."

Atsuko stared at Rie like she could stab her to death.

"If Ambassador Chamelos takes your hand...he will be costumed as Sultan of the Muslims. Lead him out to the lawn in the shade of the trees in the garden. Then pour out whiskey from the vase and offer it to the ambassador."

The strange tale was Venus who wore nightclothes with a long trailing hem and the naked sultan wrapped in a blanket having a banquet on the

lawn. It seemed like a nonsensical scheme to remove pins one by one from critical points to strip them both naked.

While Atsuko did not intend to be a tool of Zenki and Gohei, she may abruptly thought of becoming their partner. A daimyo's daughter puts on airs and makes selfish commands.

"Well, a cobra will come out of the vase. All right."

Rie scowled at the daimyo's daughter and dodged her to make her escape from the room.

However, as the daughter of a daimyo, she had guardian souls over generations of ancestors, and the instinct to serve feminine virtues, to guard, and to dispatch spies that would not vanish even in the future. Women confidantes of Atsuko kept watch at key positions making it impossible for Rie to escape.

Although Gohei should have returned home early that day to welcome the guests, he still had not come home. About half of the guests had arrived when a rickshaw barreled in through the back gate looking about to tip over.

"No, no, he changed into a ghost. There's no reason for him to be alive."

Wiping off sweat and mumbling that puzzling statement, Gohei gulped down three bowls of rice, got dressed to become a Hakone palanquin bearer, and ran into the hall. Because he was a palanquin bearer, in a fine performance true to his nature, he was sweating when he ran into the hall, but he was putting on an act.

This may have been rude to the guests, but was terribly rude to his partner. This partner of the palanquin bearer was a rookie who went by the name Hayami Seigen, the police superintendent, who stood by a mountain palanquin eagerly awaiting Gohei's appearance. This rookie was dead drunk, angry, rude, and, ideally, arrested thieves, but was a conscientious man who surely lowered national prestige when brought to an international meeting place. And yet, that man disliked coming to social gatherings, but had no choice. He looked pained by having to go out in society and seemed to be in agony as if he were dying, but he had to be invited.

When Gohei rushed in, Seigen was not at the formal entrance. A waitress secretly placed a basket of food at the entry and called to stop another waitress passing by to good-naturedly take away food and drink. When he saw Gohei, "Ah, you came. You're here. You'll be the front bearer. I'll be the back bearer. Assholes cannot ride. Pretty ladies, beauties. I think if an asshole gets on, we'll abandon him."

He was the important police superintendent.

With a heave-ho and shout by the rookie, the two shouldered the mountain palanquin and returned to the hall.

Prime Minister Zenki armed himself with armor and a helmet, and wore

the soothing disguise with a military leader's fan in one hand. In fact, he looked at Chamelos, who nervously wondered what Rie-san was doing and when would she appear, and was unable to curb his distress.

Chamelos also seemed to be concealing his concern, but Tenroku dressed as a Shinto priest began talking to him and never left his side as if he noticed Chamelos' agitation and was making fun of him.

A look at Franken revealed he was only wearing a mask, then he was drinking and dancing with Atsuko, who was also only wearing a mask. Kanda Masahiko should have been present, but his costume was unknown, and he could not be found.

Zenki could no longer bear it and called over the palanquin bearer Gohei.

"How is Rie-san? Have you seen her?"

"Huh? No. She should be here, but I've looked around and she doesn't seem to have come yet."

"Idiot. I've been looking and looking for thirty minutes. Are you feeling okay?"

A cold sweat was visible on Gohei's forehead. His breathing became labored, but Gohei managed a slight smile.

"I'm fine, it was all that running with the palanquin. Rie should be ready soon."

He went over to Atsuko who was dancing with Franken to ask. When he returned he said, "She should be here soon."

"Is that so? So everything's fine."

A happy Zenki returned to his seat.

Rie appeared at that moment. As Atsuko commanded, she was dressed as a bathing Venus and was carrying a vase. Smiling and relaxed, she looked around and walked toward Chamelos. When she walked about three steps closer to him, she felt something touch her left arm, which held the vase, and glanced down.

"Ah!"

A soft, sharp shriek escaped Rie's mouth like her body had been slashed twice. Rie saw a snake. It slithered out of the vase and coiled around her arm.

Rie dropped the vase, then fainted and fell onto the broken shards.

A crowd rushed toward her. Chamelos picked up Rie as others stomped the snake to death. Swearing and cursing rang out. A thick, harsh voice shouted, "Hey! Hey! Get a doctor! Somebody call a doctor!"

This shout came from a corner far from the crowd surrounding Rie.

When everyone turned to look, the rookie palanquin bearer had thrown aside the mountain palanquin and staggered in shock. A mendicant Zen priest dressed in black let go of his bamboo flute and was tightly holding onto the other palanquin bearer.

Kanou Gohei had been killed before the eyes of the police superintendent.

The rookie Seigen did not forget his duty as the police superintendent.

"Everyone! Quiet! Quiet down!"

Wasn't he the most panicked? But Seigen used his huge hands to stem the flow of the Oigawa River all by himself.

"Stay where you are! Stop moving! A serious crime has been committed. For now, please stay where you are and be quiet. You must not move until the doctor and the detectives arrive."

The Kanou residence in Ushigome Yaraicho was said to be the happy in unhappy. The last resort of the rookie Seigen was none other than the Gentleman Detective, Yuki Shinjuro. This Gentleman Detective lived in Kagurazaka.

Seigen was elated to see an older policeman he knew named Furuta Kagura who patrolled the neighborhood of the Kanou residence.

"Why are you here? Go quickly and return with Shinjuro of Kagurazaka. Hurry. Can you run or has dotage taken over?"

Kagura ran with all his might. He was an officer who originally served under Yuki Shinjuro. If there was business with Shinjuro, his duty was to run to him.

Shinjuro was a descendant of a direct vassal of the shogun and a stylish man whose father was a chief vassal of the Tokugawa clan during the last days of the Tokugawa shogunate. He was a well-informed man with expert knowledge after returning from travels in the West and better informed than the five erudite panelists on the radio quiz show *Hanashi no Izumi*. His immense mind's eye was keen and penetrated deeply into knowledge.

Izumiyama Toranosuke, his neighbor on the right, opened a town dojo, but part of his business was to work for the Metropolitan Police Department to teach swordsmanship to the police.

Toranosuke was zealous, demanding, and devoted to special investigations. He was an unfortunate man only able to enjoy himself when he concentrated his mind's eye and brainstormed. Upon hearing about a crime, he abandoned his business and sprinted to the scene of the crime. When he shoved aside his police disciples to come out in front, he took a deep breath and centered his power below his navel, made meticulous observations, and quietly used his mind's eye. However, his mind's eye squinted and was color-blind.

When he returned home, he introduced the case to people who gathered in the neighborhood to see and hear the explanation of the workings of Shinjuro's mind's eye. This was his greatest joy in life. After Shinjuro returned to Japan from his travels in the West, his mind's eye had divergent views and perfectly guessed the true criminal. Toranosuke was a disappointment, but had to be admired. Shinjuro's reasoning was brilliant

and fixated on critical aspects overlooked by others. No matter how cunning a criminal may be, he could not fool Shinjuro's mind's eye. From that trigger, Toranosuke first guided Shinjuro through the crime scene. Shinjuro became famous for solving several perplexing cases with ease.

The name of Yuki Shinjuro, an expert on the West, handsome Japanese man, and gentlemen detective echoed throughout the land. He was voted Japan's most popular man in a newspaper poll. The Metropolitan Police invited him to be a lead detective, but he hated the constraints of work and declined the offer. However, he took a lower position to work the path he preferred and worked his mind's eye when an important case was reported. The person in charge of running to report and to act as his guide was the elderly Officer Furuta Kagura.

However, the neighbor living on the left of Shinjuro was the well-known popular novelist Hananoya Inga. Popular novelists were mainly born in Edo and Osaka, but Hananoya was a cop from Satsuma and the platoon leader of the gun squad who put on straw sandals at the Battle of Toba-Fushimi and waved around long swords as they burst into the occupied Ueno Kaneji Temple.

Who was Inga? This man loved novels. In addition, his devotion to the style of the city that seized his heart persuaded all his colleagues to enter government service with him when the Restoration came. As his shoulders cut through the wind, this man had a purpose in life and became a pupil of a popular novelist. He learned how to write novels, then wrote them. In an unorthodox world, a misguided expert, who yielded surprising results, was both looked down on and treasured. Hananoya Inga, as this shrewd bumpkin and mixture of Shinto and Buddhism, was welcomed by rickshaw men and maids as a refined man among refined men, and won considerable popularity.

This man was more of a perfectionist than Toranosuke and focused particularly on detective work. He accurately recalled the sound of Officer Furuta's shoes. When the sound of those footsteps passed through Shinjuro's gate, Inga quickly straightened his clothes and waited in front of the gate for Shinjuro to emerge.

"So shall we go?" he said and glanced at his pocket watch.

"Yes. We have to hurry," said the guide who came with the request. Without delay, they were off.

When he noticed the three leave, Toranosuke hurriedly tightened his *obi* belt.

"Hey! Wait! Will you wait? What mean guys."

He slipped on his student *geta* sandals and chased after them. Shinjuro had a slender walking stick he had custom made in the flower of Paris. Because Hananoya was also a man about town, he wore stylish Western clothes and a hat, had a walking stick in one hand, and always smoked a

Suifu cigarette.

The three men brought together by Kagura's report arrived at the Kanou residence in Yaraicho.

Seigen greeted them at the gate and firmly shook Shinjuro's hand.

"Despite being dubbed Japan's Hiroshi, it has only been a stain. I am asking for your help."

The words of his greeting were filled with anguish. The gravity of the matter was burned into his eyes, and his heart ached.

"What has happened?"

Seigen described the incident.

"Regrettably, Gohei-sama died right before my eyes."

Shinjuro looked at him with compassion.

"The other people rushed to the fallen woman Rie-san. Only you, the palanquin bearers, stayed back."

"It's unbelievable. Perhaps a quarter of them ran over? Then three-quarters did not move. Did you see what made Rie-san faint?"

"Did you see Kanou-san collapse?"

"It's embarrassing, but I was preoccupied with Rie-san and didn't witness the criminal or the moment of the crime. The mountain palanquin carried by us was shaking and tilting in front, so I looked and saw Gohei holding his chest or stomach and falling flat on his face.

"As a brave man, he didn't release one hand from the mountain palanquin even for an instant. I noticed Gohei's mysterious condition, jumped sideways, and ran over to him. The mendicant Zen priest was holding Gohei who had just fallen. Since both of his arms were around Gohei, I heard the sound of the bamboo flute he was holding hitting the floor.

"Later, when I approached the basket hat from behind to look, the Zen priest was the oil painter Tadoko Kinji. There was another Zen priest in costume tonight. He was an industrialist with political influence, Kanda Masahiko."

"Until that moment, no one had gotten close to the victim?"

"About four or five minutes earlier, the prime minister went over to Gohei to talk business for a short time. Then Gohei looked around for his wife and in good time saw her dancing nearby with Ambassador Franken. He went over to them and appeared to ask a few questions. Gohei returned to report to the prime minister. Around that time, for some reason, Gohei didn't look well."

Shinjuro nodded and asked, "Will you show me where this occurred?"

Seigen escorted him. With Kagura joining them, the four went inside. Seigen was taken aback as he stared at Toranosuke.

"You can't go in looking like that. Tighten your belt and take off your shoes. This evening, the ambassadors of various countries are present. You

will diminish our national prestige," he said. Toranosuke breathed out and said, "The superintendent is only wearing a loincloth. I believe that has already diminished national prestige."

"Ah, what a mess."

Shinjuuro stood in the middle to mediate.

"Since all the detectives are in disguise, may we have a look?"

"Uh, yes, yes."

Seigen was satisfied and guided the four. Everyone had gathered along a wall in the ballroom. In a corner in the center of the expansive floor, Kanou Gohei dressed as a palanquin bearer lay dead. The mountain palanquin had tumbled over on its side just off his shoulders and looked like an extension of his dead body.

Shinjuuro examined the corpse. A small *kozuka* knife was thrust in Gohei's side. That knife had been thrown. Although the blade was plunged in up to the handle, a small amount of blood oozed out.

Toranosuke traced with his eyes the orientation of the knife.

"If he didn't twist when he fell, the direction was the band seats."

"Which direction?"

Hananoya challenged the mind's eye of Toranosuke, but Toranosuke took no notice of this sort of man of little importance.

"The direction from which the murderer threw the knife. A shrewd bumpkin does not understand, but the murderer took the moment when everyone's attention was directed to Rie-san to throw the knife. Therefore, the superintendent did not see the culprit either. When the superintendent noticed, the victim was holding his side and stumbling forward."

Hananoya happily laughed and said, "The master is a swordsman, but does not fight with real swords. There was a union of killers called the *Shinsengumi* in the final days of the shogunate, but the master was not that type of man."

"What do you mean by fight with real swords?"

"Would a thrown knife stab him up to the handle? The human stomach is soft, but a bit harder than tofu."

Toranosuke glowered at the shrewd bumpkin. He could not partner with a trifling man. With arms folded, in deep thought, he studied the direction of the dead body. Of course, Toranosuke had no clue about the stabbing force of a thrown knife. However, probably no one did. Depending on how it hit, perhaps the whole blade may be thrust into the side of a man. It was nothing special like the silly argument of the shrewd bumpkin.

Other than the wound made by the *kozuka* thrust into his side, there were no other wounds. The *kozuka* flew from somewhere to steal his life in an instant. Gohei's eyes and mouth were open like he wanted to say something when he dropped to all fours and died. Tadoko Kinji, who

jumped to his side, was unable to make out Gohei's last words.

What did Shinjuro ask the superintendent? The rookie Seigen gave a dignified nod, stood stiffly at attention like a palanquin bearer, and called out in a harsh voice, "Ladies and gentlemen, please go stand where you were the moment Lord Kanou Gohei died, that is, when your humble servant yelled out."

He zealously weighed each word so as not to diminish national prestige.

Therefore, when he looked at the positions where they stood, people related to national secrets, both ambassadors, Prime Ministers Zenki and Tenroku, were all standing along the wall far from where Gohei collapsed. The attention of the detectives looked for Kanda Masahiko dressed as a wandering Zen priest, but he was also huddled close to the wall far away from Gohei.

Hananoya asked Seigen with a tinge of suspicion, "When Kanou-san collapsed, was the Zen priest Tadoko-san nearby?"

"Yes. There was only one Zen priest close by at that time."

Gohei's family who were far away from him at the time seemed to be bickering. Atsuko huddled with Franken and continued to dance near the band seats. That was the direction from which the thrown knife flew, but was about twenty-four feet from where Gohei fell. The Zen priest Tadoko was closest to Gohei. He was walking around playing a bamboo flute.

But at the closest position on the opposite side was Mantaro. He happened to be about twelve feet from Gohei.

"Were you going to your sister after she fainted?" Shinjuro asked.

"No, she was walking toward me. I realized that something disturbed the crowd, but I didn't know my sister fainted."

"Did you see your father fall down?"

"I didn't see him fall. But after he collapsed, I was behind him and saw him being held by the Zen priest Tadoko-san."

Mantaro trusted the famous detective who was a few years older. He focused his eyes on Shinjuro and looked like he wanted to say something, but looked away.

The guests were not questioned, but allowed to go their separate ways.

The people remaining behind were the superintendent and, more importantly, the musicians who had been ordered to remain seated.

"You were seated at the highest vantage point, yet no one witnessed the crime?"

No one answered. Shinjuro nodded.

"Like smoke, a criminal killed a man. However, someone should have witnessed the moment the victim fell."

After Gohei staggered, three people saw a Zen priest jump to his side and embrace him.

"When you saw the victim stagger, what did you think he was doing?"

"Not staggering, but he appeared to be bent forward and crouched down," one said. Another added, "Yes. Yes. Me too. I saw that. That bearer was crouching down. That's it. I didn't see him right before he died."

"But while crouched down, he was tearing at his chest. He was holding his chest."

"His chest? Not his stomach?"

"No, it looked like he was hugging something. He wasn't holding himself because he was naked. He was probably rubbing his chest. I clearly saw that. Maybe it was the pain of death."

That's all they saw.

Shinjuro returned to the musicians and called over the twenty or so maids, manservants, and houseboys. He asked if anyone had noticed anything strange. Other than a young maid named Kinu who remembered a puzzling grumbling by Gohei who returned home late, no one else saw anything unusual.

Kinu blushed when she said, "I don't remember exactly, but he said something like he was tricked by a ghost..."

Kinu laughed at her own words.

"But he really said that. Then he said something like, 'He's not alive.'"

"Around what time did he return?"

"It was after almost everyone had gathered in the hall. He quickly ate three bowls of rice. He ate tea poured over rice. He was always like that when in a hurry. He gulped it down in a few minutes, then went out dressed as the palanquin bearer. About a half hour later, he was like that."

Shinjuro called over the rickshaw man.

"The master returned late, so where did you take him?"

"Yuzuki in Karasumori. I don't know what business he had. But on the way back, he said, 'I don't think it was a prank, but if he's alive, why didn't he come? There's no reason not to come.' He told the madam at Yuzuki that if she saw anyone to send a messenger."

When the questioning was over and the group began to leave, from the shadows of the hall stairwell, Gohei's daughter, like a flower, appeared. She walked directly to the group, boldly stared at Shinjuro, and said, "Are you The Great Detective?"

Shinjuro laughed brightly and said, "Do you know who the murderer is?"

She bowed.

"Unfortunately, I am at a loss."

When Shinjuro gently answered, her eyes flickered as if on fire.

"You did not see your father die because you fainted. Tadoko-sama dressed as a Zen priest cared for him."

"It's as you say."

"The Zen priest undoubtedly had a secret. It's been that way for a long

time. It would be good to search for that secret. Ask the old manservant Yakichi."

With those parting words, Rie, shaken by her own words, made a hasty exit.

"That was the daughter who fainted? A snake was in that vase. She fainted?"

Shinjuro deliberated while muttering these small facts. He suddenly remembered something and said, "The older brother Mantaro wanted to say something. That brother and sister appeared to be making a plea. Let's call the old man Yakichi."

Yakichi had reached sixty years and was the longest-serving servant of the family. He had been a faithful and loyal servant to Rie's late mother.

"Grandfather, thank you for your years of service. This was a terrible incident. You are probably in anguish. However, Rie-san asked me to question you, then left shaken. What sort of secret does Tadoko-san, the oil painter home from his travels abroad, harbor?"

Yakichi stared at Shinjuro and said, "Rie-san said to ask me?"

"Yes. She plainly said that."

Yakichi nodded slowly and peered at Shinjuro.

"Well then, I'll tell you. Tadoko-sama is the lover of the lady of this house. This didn't just happen yesterday. Before Tadoko-sama went to the West, it was that way. Maybe the gods and Buddha know from whose seed the child Ryosuke-sama came."

Yakichi's eyes burned with anger when he made his frank statement, then he bowed and promptly left.

Everyone sighed.

The rookie Seigen cleaned out his ears, "How awful, I can't listen. As the old proverb says, *To have no ears is good*. Oh, this is terrible."

The police superintendent was a timid fellow.

Shinjuro started to leave, but thought of something and returned to the maids' room and called over Kinu. One by one, he traced the order of events: Gohei returning from the back gate, eating three bowls of rice, then going out dressed as a palanquin bearer.

"The master did not drink sake?"

"No, he was a heavy drinker."

"It was strange to eat three bowls of tea over rice before a banquet. He probably didn't like delicious sake."

"No. The master had queer little rituals. He ate a meal, then went out to important banquets. He did it to avoid getting terribly drunk."

"Of course. A first-rate man has a different frame of mind."

As Shinjuro nodded with admiration, Kinu blushed as if she were being praised. The handsome man was a special man.

"Tonight, what did he eat?"

"Grilled eel, sashimi, ayu, and Western food. Different foods were prepared, but when in a hurry, he would eat tea over rice and six or seven pickled plums. He loved pickled plums. Pickled vegetables from Odawara farm were specially ordered for the master's pickled plums."

The jar for the pickled plums placed in Gohei's bowl was expensive Ming pottery. Six large plums that probably spent a decade inside still remained.

When the investigation ended and they went out the gate, Toranosuke seemed to be trembling with glee; he poked Hananoya and gave a meaningful look at Shinjuro's back.

"Aha, ha, ha. Looks like a dead end. Aha, ha, ha. He can't see it. I'm being a bit rude. Ha, ha, ha, ha."

"Shameful. Some people laugh carelessly. Their jaws drop like horses. Your direction is wrong. A waste of time and labor."

"Aha, ha, ha, ha."

Toranosuke was all smiles like he had eaten hallucinogenic mushrooms.

"I'll be off. Excuse me. Ha, ha, ha, ha."

Where was he happily going?

Shinjuro said to Kagura, "Go to Yuzuki in Karasumori and find out who Kanou-san was supposed to meet. Then, this may be a little difficult, I'd like to know more about the behavior of Kanou's wife."

Hananoya was glad to hear this and said, "So the master's mind's eye focused there. Toranosuke is watching Tadoko. It's a squint. That man's intelligence is, excuse me for saying, shallow. As for me, I saw it clearly. Over there."

Shinjuro could not suppress his desire to laugh and asked, "Where over there?"

"Look right over there. Where the master's mind's eye is looking."

"Where am I pointing?"

"I don't know. It's your move. As for Kanou's wife's behavior, it's Franken. He's the murderer. I also thought that deep wound was strange for a thrown knife. I don't know about Western-style knife throwing. The technique is different. Franken is a good-looking man, but I suspect he may be an accredited master of Western-style knife throwing."



TORANOSUKE SAT PROPERLY before Kaishu to make sure there were no misunderstandings of the context. He drew a long breath when he finished.

From then on, the problem was that Hananoya treated him with contempt, regrettably, it differed little from abuse. His mind's eye seemed to have gone mad. Perhaps, it was not mad, but surely ashamed. As usual, the craziness of his mind's eye toward Kaishu was corrected. Toranosuke's face was not easily read.

Kaishu said, "The man who approached Gohei was none other than the prime minister. He went over to Atsuko and Franken, but returned without incident. The prime minister left a few minutes later, Tadoko ran over to hold Gohei after he staggered and collapsed. No one approached him before he began staggering. A few minutes after the prime minister left, the moment Rie fainted and drew everyone to her, the person who threw the knife, the murderer, could only be Tadoko. The person closest to the direction where the knife came from was Tadoko. Although he was a little distant from Franken, his position obstructed Tadoko making it impossible for him to throw the knife. The reason the one who ran up to hold the fallen Gohei was at a distance was to provide an alibi to make it look like he didn't stab Gohei. He intended to fool everyone, but he gave himself away. Only Tadoko saw Gohei stagger and fall. If a thrown knife hit the man, he would not have missed that."

Kaishu pulled out a knife from the drawer below the tobacco tray. He drew a grindstone closer, dampened the stone with water, and started to sharpen the knife. The grindstone and knife were necessities by his side. He cut open his own finger or head to draw out impure blood.

Toranosuke said, "The incorrect judgment of viewing Tadoko as the murderer is distressing, but when his close friend was investigated, from childhood to adulthood, he was a weak man even inferior to women, thought martial arts were stupid, and didn't even like kung fu. This has become a big problem."

This was a kind of sorrow. It was agony. Kaishu gave his sharpening hand a rest to ask, "Kanda Masahiko was a Zen priest?"

"So it seems. But Kanda was standing far away by the wall. He was sitting with and talking to an attaché to the embassy of Franken's country."

"So he was."

Kaishu slowly stopped sharpening, took the knife in his other hand, and made a small cut to the back of his head. He used a piece of paper folded inside his kimono to dab the virulent blood. After he thoroughly wrung out the blood, he made a small cut to his little finger and took up the blood with the paper. While he was wringing out the blood, he slowly engaged his mind's eye. Kaishu put away the knife and the grindstone and wiped up the blood.

"It's remarkable, but if you look at colors, they are different. This may be a little hard for you to understand, Tora. But that day, Atsuko said she acted as an intermediary between Chamelos and Rie, but this was a strategy. Atsuko and Franken are intimate.

"I met Franken three or four times and talked with him. He's a handsome and smart man; he's a soft-looking man whose entire face — his nose, lips, and eyes — is vague. Those features resembled Robespierre. His features are the same and so is his soul. In Japan, Saito Dosan was a crafty,

daring scoundrel and was a fine-looking man. He was probably also a gentle-looking man with fine eyes and nose. If you look at the evidence provided by a person, perhaps it's best understood from the face.

"Although Atsuko and Franken seemed to come together and dance, that action was brazen. They had confidence that no one would penetrate their plot. However, the killer was neither Franken nor Atsuko. The Zen priest Kanda Masahiko stabbed Gohei," said Kaishu nonchalantly. While he continued to wipe the still flowing blood, he added, "Don't forget there were two Zen priests. Tadoko, Atsuko's lover, told her what he'd be wearing that day. Or Atsuko may have suggested his costume. That was probably the case.

"The mendicant Zen priest did not show his face to others, but he could watch them, perfect for committing murder at a costume ball. On top of that, he came with a bamboo flute. The kozuka knife that killed Gohei conveniently fit inside the flute.

"Kanda was a pirate and came to greet me when I was a seaman, but is a man with insight about everything from family to military arts. A man probably becomes a pirate or a businessman for the love of money, but if in government, becoming the prime minister is fitting. He thinks of murder as being as trivial as wrenching a cucumber. A terrible fellow. Atsuko suddenly pretended to be an ally of Chamelos. First, she gave Rie the vase holding the snake. Secondly, Chamelos, Zenki, and the opposition party members were distracted by Rie and Chamelos. Rie fainted. When everyone's attention turned to her, the one waiting to throw the knife was Kanda. Tadoko in nearly the identical Zen priest costume being nearby was by accident or part of their plan. Having two Zen priests was a good idea. At the ball, everyone danced around, leaving no one in the same place. There was almost no way to know who was where at any particular moment. The twirling crowd changed every moment.

"If at that time, Kanda was conversing with the embassy staff member from Franken's country, none of the evidence countered that. Even if someone thought he noticed a Zen priest there, two priests being there did not present a problem. This was the truth of Gohei's murder. There was no proof, but Franken was also a co-conspirator. Even if Zenki had an inkling, the murderer could not be arrested."

His keen insight was god-like. Toranosuke listened attentively. Word by word, the cloud in his mind's eye faded away, and he politely left.



WHEN TORANOSUKE HURRIED back from Kaishu's residence to call on Shinjuro, Hananoya was waiting to go out with him. It seemed to be a bad time. Shinjuro was absorbed in a game of Western chess with the houseboy Ango.

When he saw Toranosuke, Hananoya cheered up and said, "Hey, welcome back. Great Detective. At last, you've found the murderer?"

"Ha, ha, ha. What does your mind's eye say?" asked Toranosuke.

"What? The murderer is Franken. Although his face is handsome, the basis of the finding is that he is a master of Western-style knife throwing," said Hananoya.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha. But when you look at Franken, he is too good to be true just like the shrewd bumpkin. You're blushing; the differences are extraordinary. The burdens are piling up on you."

Kagura returned dead tired. This old policeman was slow-witted by nature, but had the merit of scrupulously carrying out any order received. Last night on Shinjuro's order, he ran all around with almost no sleep and just came back. He crawled on his knees over to Shinjuro's side.

"The man he was waiting for at Yuzuki was Nakasono Hiroshi."

"Kanou-san's first secretary, Nakasono, was reported missing three years ago."

"Yes. The madam of Yuzuki talked frankly and fortunately knew something. That afternoon, an unfamiliar man, a messenger sent by Nakasono appeared. He only told her to tell you that Nakasono had recently returned from China, but it wasn't time for him to appear because his work still was unfinished, and for Kanou-san to go to Yuzuki in the evening. Kanou-san could not believe it, because Nakasono was on his way to China on business when his ship sunk in the Genkai Sea, and he had no reason to believe that he had been rescued. The talk was mysterious."

Shinjuro nodded and said, "Of course, that may be so. Did Nakasono appear at Yuzuki?"

"No, he still hasn't shown up."

"Yes. Maybe, he'll never come. So now...?"

"That's all for Yuzuki, but Atsuko's behavior is really baffling. Not only Tadoko, I don't understand her true nature. But a lot of her behavior is notorious. The latest rumors say that she is particularly friendly with Franken. After all that walking to find out what happened, in the end, that was it."

Shinjuro laughed and said, "As always, I thank you. Instead of my legs, your work is unrivaled. Thanks to you, I have been able to enjoy a game of Western chess. Walking around by myself, I would never be able to ferret out more than you. Well, shall we be off soon?"

Toranosuke was ecstatic and, naturally, a smile began to open from his mouth as he asked, "Hey, where are we going?"

"We are off to Kanou's residence."

Toranosuke could no longer stand it and started to titter, "To that place, for what?"

"Well, Izumiyama-san, you have found the murderer. I'm ashamed, but

from this moment on, I will set out to determine the murderer."

Toranosuke couldn't help himself from egging on the affable Shinjuro. While hanging from a pole and twisting his back, he dissolved into laughter letting out a queer gurgling sound like a sponge ball was stuck in his throat. Shinjuro gave a command to Ango, "You go and show Doctor Kazamaki the way to Kanou's residence. The doctor should be waiting impatiently."

The four went together to visit the Kanou residence. Today, Hayami Seigen was dressed in his police superintendent's uniform, and accompanied by his assistant, pompously awaited the arrival of Shinjuro. In his uniform, diminished national prestige looked gallant. When he saw Shinjuro, he approached to shake hands.

"I'm relying on you. If this criminal is not found, the government will collapse. Public opinion throughout Japan will quake. It will be horrible. This being my responsibility is terrible. Did you find the murderer?"

"Perhaps, we will find proof that the murderer is here in this residence."

"Fantastic!"

Seigen was overwhelmed with emotion. Shinjuro went directly to the kitchen. He called Kinu and had her take out the small jar of pickled plums he saw the day before. He opened the jar and looked inside. Satisfied, he closed the lid.

"Someone tampered with this jar."

"No one should have tampered with it. How could that happen?"

"Really, no one tampered with it?"

"I absolutely did not tamper with it. The lord put it in the cupboard himself. I didn't touch this at all today."

"That may be true, but someone has tampered with this jar. Yesterday, six pickled plums remained in the jar, but today there are eight."

A surprised, Kinu paled. Shinjuro said with sympathy, "You did nothing wrong. But where is the large jar of pickled plums?"

"The lord's items are all in the same cupboard."

When he opened the cupboard, there were four large jars of pickled plums on the bottom shelf.

"Well then, shall we pay a visit to Rie-san?"

They were escorted to Rie's room. Shinjuro courteously greeted her then asked, "I'm so sorry to trouble you, but I have a concern about last night. You were late getting to the hall. Was there a reason?"

"I don't have a reason to tell you. It was only, well, I wasn't in the mood. I was as late as I could be. I didn't want to go."

"There was no one you were there to meet nor anyone who invited you to come when you appeared at that time."

"No one. It was my choice. I chose when to come out. Who invited me? Me."

Unable to stand it, Toranosuke interrupted her.

"That lie won't work. At that time, someone must have made you come out. Look closely at my eyes."

As Shinjuro gasped and Toranosuke was about to withdraw, Toranosuke noisily yelled and tumbled over.

This happened because Rie slyly stretched back her hand to clutch a peacock's feather on her desk and penetrated deep into his eyes.

Shinjuro helped Toranosuke up.

"No one gave this young lady any orders. Rather, it was by coincidence that Rie-san fainted at that time. Rie-san's fainting and the last moments of Kanou-san happening at that time were fate. This is the essence of the incident. I've been convinced of this since last night. Miss, thank you very much. It is thanks to you that we will catch this murderer."

With extraordinary trust, Rie gazed at Shinjuro.

"When will it happen?"

"Within a half hour, the arrest will be made. Miss, would you like to know the name?"

Rie nodded yes.

The beautiful young woman and man seemed to draw closer somehow in their hearts as friends. Toranosuke was filled with discontent, "It's unbelievable. Yuki-san. Oh, sexual passion is a frightening thing. It comes easily, even to you. Is your mind's eye clouded, too? You were just about to unveil the sinister plan of the true murderer."

Shinjuro calmed Toranosuke.

"No, after the beautiful young lady appeared, the clarity in my mind's eye surged," he said smiling.

Shinjuro blushed. Seeing this, so did Rie. Then a messenger came. He said that Doctor Kazamaki was waiting. Shinjuro tensed and said, "The time to unravel all of the riddles has arrived. Rie-san, shall we go to the hall."

They went to the hall where Gohei's body lay in state. The hall was crowded with relatives, friends, and people Gohei helped. After Shinjuro exchanged greetings with Doctor Kazamaki, he said, "As you know, Doctor, I'd like you to examine the body."

Doctor Kazamaki was a prominent doctor of Western medicine who studied in Europe and was well versed in modern medicine.

Shinjuro placed his hands on the coffin lid.

"What happened here? The coffin lid was supposed to be nailed shut later."

A house steward stepped forward, "Although this situation is unusual, and viewing this face of an unnatural death may damage your reputation, the lady of the house wishes this morning's viewing only for relatives to conclude and the lid to be sealed."

"Doctor Kazamaki must investigate, and I would like the lady's

permission to remove the lid. I wish to see the lady."

The steward went to Atsuko's living room and returned with her. She seemed drained and a little tragic. Shinjuro felt compassion and had difficulty speaking.

"Ma'am, would it be all right for me to open the lid?"

"Please do."

He removed the nails and took off the lid. He removed the fillers, moved aside the shroud. Doctor Kazamaki completed a detailed investigation of his eyes, mouth, and wound. The doctor turned to look at Shinjuro and said, "In a glance, the signs of death by poisoning are obvious. I do not know what poison was used, but he definitely did not die from the knife wound."

"In that case, the cause of Kanou-san staggering forward and crouching down while clutching his chest was not the knife wound, but the action of poison."

"Yes, that's probably true. When the kozuka knife pierced his side, the staggering was curious. Shouting and turning around are fairly odd reactions."

"Thank you. Thanks to you the full details of this case are known. Death by poisoning was certain. Since last night, I was convinced the stabbing with a knife was to divert attention from the poisoning. I knew the death was from poisoning and could easily see that the murderer lived in this residence. Many people may have believed the timing of Rie-san's fainting was determined by another person, but that time was selected by her and nothing more than a coincidence. The time was determined by the person who had Kanou-san receive a message from a ghost to lure him to Yuzuki. This person instigated this ruse to delay Kanou-san's return home. This was the work of someone familiar with Kanou-san's habits. That is, Kanou-san would eat before attending the important banquet. The plan was conceived by a person with absolute knowledge that he would gulp down only tea over rice and eat pickled plums when in a hurry. The murderer had to make Kanou-san eat briskly. The poison was in those pickled plums."

Toranosuke was dissatisfied and sniffed.

"Was it really that? The kozuka knife was plunged in the interval when everyone's attention turned to Rie-san who fainted. If there had not been an interval, would the knife have been plunged in?"

Shinjuro smiled.

"A kozuka knife is not a throwing knife. The murderer knew that the poison was circulating, and Kanou-san would get dizzy and collapse. While he waited, he circled Kanou-san. As the poison circulated and Kanou began to collapse, he pounced to make it look like he was caring for Kanou-san and stabbed the kozuka into his stomach. The kozuka had been hidden in the Zen priest's bamboo flute."

Shouts of surprise rose. Everyone stood in unison, but Hananoya and Kagura desperately grabbed hold of Tadoko to arrest him. Hananoya Inga, the shrewd bumpkin and mixture of Shinto and Buddhism, was disguised. Originally, he was the leader of a rifle squad who gained experience from Toba-Fushimi to Ueno Kaneji Temple and possessed the right skills. He arrested Tadoko and was delighted with his reasoning and the arrest. Tadoko was outmaneuvered and had already given up and closed his eyes. Shinjuro waited for the others to quiet down.

"This was a clever murderer. This person had a general idea about the costumes of the important people that night. Of course, Kanda Masahiko would be a Zen priest or in a roundabout way may have encouraged Kanda-san to dress as a wandering Zen priest. This person hid the knife in the bamboo flute, and planned ahead of time to shadow Kanou-san until the effects of the poison began. By having two Zen priests, the one always with Kanou-san was needed as a distraction. Then that person had Tadoko dress as a Zen priest, put the poison in the pickled plums, and lure Kanou-san to Yuzuki.

Everyone looked at each other in shock. Hananoya had doubts.

"So is there another true murderer?"

"Because being stabbed by a kozuka knife did not deliver a fatal wound, the person who inserted the poison should be the real murderer of this important man. Well, should we visit the room of the culprit? But..."

Shinjuro knew that Atsuko was already gone. He had an inkling about what would happen next. That spirited woman...was probably a combination of Hosokawa Gracia and Dakkino Ohyaku. If no one saw through the plot, Mantaro would have been killed too and the child of the illicit liaison would inherit the estate. The key to the room was locked. When they broke through the door and entered, Atsuko had stabbed her child Ryosuke and slashed her own throat with a dagger, and drawn her last breath. It was an admirable end.



AS KAISHU COLLECTED the tainted blood with a knife, Toranosuke finished his report.

"Well now, if I did not go to that place, I could not have known about death by poison. I saw it in a glance. That is reasoning. As always, Shinjuro performed splendidly. The need to have two wandering Zen priests, the kozuka knife shoved in the bamboo flute. I clearly identified these elements, too."

Toranosuke again praised Kaishu's terrifying mind's eye and attentive listening and purged the cloud shrouding his own mind's eye.