AI-Generated Graded Readers
Masaru Uchida, Gifu University

Publication webpage:
https://www1.gifu-u.ac.jp/~masaru/a1/ai-generated_graded_readers.html

Publication date: March 21, 2026

About This Edition

This book is a simplified English adaptation created for extensive reading practice.
The text was translated from Japanese into English and simplified using ChatGPT for intermediate English learners as part of an educational project.

Target reading level: CEFR A2-B1

The adaptation aims to improve readability while preserving the narrative content and spirit of the original work.

Source Text

Original work: Dogura Magura (ドグラ・マグラ)
Author: Yumeno Kyūsaku (夢野久作)

Source: Aozora Bunko (青空文庫)
https://www.aozora.gr.jp/

Original Japanese text available at:
https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000096/card2093.html

The original work is in the public domain in Japan.

Copyright and Use

Disclaimer

Yumeno Kyūsaku, *Dogra Magra [Dogura Magura]* (Simplified Edition, Adapted and Simplified from the Japanese by ChatGPT)

Part 1

Buuuu—nnnn—nnn.

I woke slowly in the middle of the night, and the last part of a deep sound was still shaking inside my ears. It was a long, soft, heavy sound, like a large bee flying somewhere in the dark. While I listened, I felt at once that it must be midnight. I thought a big clock was ringing somewhere near me, and while that thought moved through my mind, the sound grew thinner and thinner. At last it faded away, and a complete silence filled the room.

Then I opened my eyes wide. Above me I saw a high white ceiling and one bare electric bulb hanging there alone. Its weak yellow-red light fell on the hard floor, and I understood that I myself was lying flat on that floor with my arms and legs spread out. A large fly sat on the side of the bulb and did not move at all, as if it too had died in that strange stillness. I did not know why I was sleeping there instead of in a bed. Even before I sat up, I felt that something was wrong.

Keeping my body still, I moved only my eyes and looked around me. The room was small and strong, built of dark walls that looked like stone. On three sides there were tall windows covered with bars, wire, and cloudy glass, so that no one could see out and no one could easily break them. On the fourth side there was a strong bed with clean white sheets on it, but it looked untouched, as if no one had slept there yet. Near the bed was a hard door with a lock, and everything in the room seemed made to hold a person inside. The sight of it made my skin grow cold.

I raised myself a little and looked down at my own body. I was wearing rough white clothes, and a short band was tied high around me. My arms and legs were dark with dirt, my nails were long, and when I touched my face I found deep hollows under my eyes, wild hair, and a thick beard. I jumped up at once and touched my face again, then stared at my hands as if they belonged to another

man. That was the first moment of true fear. I did not know the face, the body, or the man I had become.

My heart began to beat harder and harder, and my breath came fast, then stopped, then came again in painful waves. I tried to think of my name, my home, my family, or even one clear scene from my past, but nothing came. There was only that clock sound, the long “buuun” that I had heard just before waking. That one sound remained, and everything else was empty. I knew I was awake and not dreaming, yet I could not remember who I was. The more clearly I felt the room around me, the more terrible that emptiness became.

I ran to one of the windows and searched the cloudy glass for my reflection, hoping that the sight of my own face would call back some memory. It did not. I saw only a dark, broken shadow with rough hair, like the shape of an evil spirit. Then I rushed to the door and pressed my face close to the lock, but there was nothing to learn there either. I searched the bed, the sheets, my clothes, and every corner of the room for a name, a mark, a letter, anything that might tell me who I was, but I found nothing at all.

At last a deeper terror seized me. It felt as if I were falling straight down through an endless empty space, and the fear rose from the bottom of my body like ice. I cried out once, and my voice sounded thin, strange, and high, almost metallic, as if it were not really mine. The cry struck the walls and died at once. I cried out again, but the room remained silent after it, with the same four walls, three windows, and one locked door staring back at me. When I tried to shout a third time, my voice would not come, and I stood in the middle of the room trembling, wondering if I was in a prison or a hospital for the mad.

Just when I felt I might faint, I heard a voice through the wall beyond the bed. It was a young woman’s voice, but it was so worn and broken that it hardly sounded human. Still, its sadness went through the wall and through my chest. “Brother,” she called, again and again, begging me to let her hear my voice once more. I turned around in shock, though I knew there was no one else in my room, and stared at the wall as if I could burn a hole through it with my eyes. Then she spoke again, saying that she was the girl who had once been promised to me, my

future wife, and that she herself was calling me from the next room.

I could not move at first, and then I drifted a few steps closer, pulled by that voice against my will. She said that on the night before our wedding I had killed her with my own hands, and yet she had come back alive and was now shut away beside me. She begged me to answer only once, because if I answered, the doctors would know that she was not mad and that I too had begun to understand her again. Her voice was full of pain, hope, love, and a deep complaint that seemed older than one night or one life. I was shaken to the core, but I still could not answer, because I did not know whether she was telling the truth, whether she was mad, or whether I myself was the mad one.

I climbed onto the bed and pressed myself toward the wall, wanting to call back to her, to help her, and to learn the truth about myself in the same instant. But just as quickly I stopped. How could I answer as her promised husband when I could not even remember my own face, much less hers. If she was truly ill, my answer might only deepen her illness, and if she was sane, then one careless word from me might bind me to a terrible past that I still could not see. So I stepped down from the bed and moved away from her voice, inch by inch, until I reached the far side of the room. There, shaking in silence, I listened while she kept calling my name that I myself did not know.

Part 2

The girl did not stop. Her voice grew weaker, but it also grew deeper, as if it were coming from a place below life itself. She begged me to speak only one word, because then the doctors would know that she was not mad and that I too had begun to understand again. After that I heard another sound through the wall, soft at first and then more painful to imagine than to hear. It was the sound of a bare hand striking concrete over and over, as if she did not care whether her skin split open. I stood there with my teeth tight and my eyes wide, thinking of the blood that might already be on the other side.

She called herself poor, alone, and without anyone in the world except me. She

said that only two people truly belonged to each other, and both had been shut away in this place because others thought they were mad. She begged me to remember her name and call it once, but I still could not answer. I wanted to run to the wall, say something kind, and save both her and myself in a single moment. Yet the more I wanted that, the more afraid I became, because I still did not know whether she was my bride, another man's bride, or only a sick woman speaking to a dream.

So I climbed onto the bed, put my hands against the cold wall, and nearly spoke. Then I swallowed hard and stopped myself. I got down again and moved backward, step by step, until I reached the far window on the other side of the room. I told myself that I had no right to answer as her husband when I could not even remember my own name. I told myself that if she was truly ill, my answer might push her farther into her illness, and if she was sane, one careless word from me might tie me to a crime that I still could not see. While I argued with myself in that way, her voice kept coming through the wall and striking me like a blow.

At last I almost cried out, "You are wrong. I do not know you." But even that was more than I could honestly say. I had no proof against her, no proof for myself, no proof of anything at all except that I was standing in that locked room and shaking like a hunted animal. I beat the side of my head with my fist as if memory might fall loose from my skull, but nothing came. Then I ran again to the door, pushed my whole body against it, and pulled at the bars on the windows until one corner bent a little. It was useless. The room held me as firmly as before, and her voice, now thin and breaking, went on asking me to save her.

I do not know how long that struggle lasted. It may have been minutes, or it may have been hours. I walked, fell, stood, sat, lay down, and rose again, trying with all my strength to remember even one true thing from my life. But my mind remained empty, and in that emptiness I could feel myself growing weaker and duller. Little by little her voice faded into sobbing, then into broken breaths, and then into silence. When at last the room became quiet again, I too was finished, and while a great clock somewhere beyond the corridor went on with its hard regular beat, I slipped down into a blank state that was almost like sleep and

almost like death.

A small sound woke me. I found that I was sitting against the wall opposite the door with my head hanging down over my chest, staring without thought at one point on the floor. The room had changed, because a pale blue morning light had filled it while the electric bulb above had gone dark. I heard sparrows, a far train, and the thin living noise of a new day beginning outside the prison of my room. For one foolish moment I stretched my stiff body and almost yawned, because I had forgotten the horror of the night. Then I saw the little opening near the door and the breakfast tray coming in, and all my fear came back at once.

I rushed to it before I could think. As the tray slid in, I caught the fat red arm of the young nurse who was pushing it, and the bread, milk, and plate fell to the floor with a crash. In my dry rough voice I asked, “Please tell me. What is my name?” She said nothing, but I saw the skin of her arm turn dark under my hands. I asked again, told her I was not mad, and begged her to say who I was and where I was. Then she cried out for help, tore her arm free, and ran down the corridor while I lost my balance and fell heavily onto the stone floor.

The moment I hit the floor, something strange happened inside me. All the tight fear that had held me together through the night suddenly broke, and from the empty place it left behind there rose a great wild laughter. It was not ordinary laughter. It came from so deep inside me that I thought it would shake my bones apart, and I rolled on the floor laughing that a man could lose even his own name and still go on breathing. I laughed that I had just met myself like a stranger, that I had no past, no place, no clear face, and yet was still somehow “I.” I laughed until tears ran down my face and my chest hurt.

At last the laughter ended as suddenly as it had begun. Then I became aware of the fallen breakfast at my feet and of a hunger so sharp that it almost shamed me. I tied my belt, picked up the milk bottle and the pieces of bread, and ate everything I could with ugly speed, even the salad from the plate on the floor. After that, full and weak, I climbed at last onto the clean bed that had waited unused through the night and stretched out upon it. The room felt softer then, and morning sounds drifted toward me from very far away, as if the world outside had nothing to do

with me. I began to drift in and out of sleep, and in that half-sleep I heard street sounds, birds, voices, and then, clearer than anything else, the sharp cry of a motor horn coming fast toward the building.

The horn drew near, passed, turned, and stopped. For a few minutes after that everything was still, and my sleep grew heavier. Then the key in my door clicked, the heavy door opened, and I sat up at once. When I turned, I saw first a chair and then a man so strange that I stared at him as if I were looking at an animal from another world. He was very tall, pale, and huge, with a long face, a great white forehead, and a hard jaw, yet his eyes looked tired and weak, and after studying me in silence he suddenly covered his mouth and coughed in a small thin voice that did not fit his body at all. When he recovered, he bowed politely, gave me a card, and said, “Forgive me for coming in my coat. My health is poor.” I took the card in both hands and read the name there: Professor Wakabayashi Kyotaro of Kyushu Imperial University.

Part 3

I read the card again and again, and each time the words struck me harder. Kyushu Imperial University. Professor of forensic medicine. Dean of the medical school. I lifted my eyes from the card to the giant standing before me, then looked around the room as if the walls themselves might answer him. “This is… Kyushu University?” I whispered. At that moment a small line under his left eye trembled, and I thought it might be his way of smiling. Then he spoke in the same gentle voice and said that this was Ward Seven of the psychiatric department, and that he had come at once because the night doctor had reported that I had asked a nurse for my own name.

He asked whether I had remembered it yet. He asked whether my whole past had returned to me. I could not answer him at all. I only stared up at his long white face with my mouth open, because the question itself frightened me more than anything. I had asked the nurse only a short time before, and yet this sickly man had dressed, traveled, and come to me at once, as if my memory mattered to him

more than his own health. That eagerness was not natural. It made me feel that my lost name was not a small private matter, but some dangerous thing that had weight far beyond myself.

He kept watching me without moving. He looked as if he were waiting for a word that might change everything for him as well as for me. That made me even more silent, because I felt that my answer and his fate were somehow tied together. At last he seemed to understand that I could say nothing. He closed his eyes for a moment in disappointment, then opened them again with a softer expression and said that my surprise was only natural. He admitted that a man in his position should not usually be involved in psychiatric work, but added that there were deep reasons for his presence. Then he spoke a name for the first time, and that name entered the room like a new shadow.

“Until very recently,” he said, “this department was led by Professor Masaki Keishi.” I repeated the name after him because it rang strangely in my ears. Wakabayashi said that Masaki had been a great scholar, known not only in Japan but across the world, and that he had built a new science of the mind upon a strict scientific base. This was not table-turning, ghost-calling, or any foolish magic, he said, but a true new field. He explained that Masaki had even created, inside this very department, a treatment place unlike anything else in the world, and that the success of that place had already begun to prove his ideas. Then he added, in a matter-of-fact tone, that I myself had been one of the patients treated there.

“I have been under treatment for madness?” I asked. “Yes,” he answered, but he said it calmly, almost kindly. He explained that under ordinary conditions a man like him, trained in law and medical evidence, would have had no right to question one of Masaki’s patients in this way. Yet Masaki had died suddenly one month earlier, he said, and there was still no new professor ready to take his place. For that reason, by order of the university, Wakabayashi had temporarily taken charge of the department as well. More than that, Masaki had personally asked him to care for me with the greatest attention. Then he said something even stranger: the honor not only of this department, but of the entire medical school, now rested on whether I could recover my past and remember my own name.

When I heard those words, I felt as if the room had filled with a blinding light. For one wild second I almost believed my lost self would step out of the brightness and stand before me. But at the next second shame struck me harder than hope. If this was truly a psychiatric ward, then I was not in some prison by mistake, and not trapped in a nightmare without meaning. I was here because I was a mental patient. The strange emptiness in my head, the broken thoughts, the fear, the laughter, the voice from the next room, all of it suddenly seemed to point toward that one answer. “So I am mad,” I thought, and the thought burned me so deeply that I could hardly lift my face.

I covered my eyes with both hands because I did not want him to see them. My chest beat painfully, and I could not tell whether I was more ashamed, afraid, or miserable. He watched me for a moment and then swallowed twice before speaking in an even gentler tone than before. He said that anyone who first discovered himself in such a room would feel a kind of despair, and that I should not blame myself for it. Then he told me not to fear too much, because I was not in the ward in the same way as the other patients. I raised my head at once. There was some comfort in those words, but also a new kind of fear.

He said that I had offered myself as the most important subject in Masaki’s great experiment in what he called “the liberation treatment of the mad.” I repeated the phrase in confusion, because I did not understand how madness could be treated by “liberation.” Wakabayashi bowed his head slightly, as if speaking the title of a sacred idea. He told me that Masaki’s character had been extraordinary and that his theories would soon become clear to me, but for now I should know this much: by means of my own brain and mind, Masaki’s experiment had been brought to a remarkable success. I had, he said, helped prove the truth of a great new science. At the same time, the powerful mental shock produced by that experiment had made me lose my conscious self, and only now was I beginning to return.

“Why should I have been at the center of such a frightening experiment?” I asked, moving to the edge of the bed without thinking. I felt that some huge story was drawing me in, faster and faster, and that I was too weak to stop it.

Wakabayashi remained calm. He said he could not yet explain everything directly, because the truth was too deep, too strange, and too tied to my own experience. If he arranged the whole story with his own words, he said, it might sound like a lie. Only if I myself remembered it could it be believed as truth. For that reason, he could tell me only the outline for the moment. Masaki had built the treatment place in the spring, completed it in the summer, and used it for only a few months before dying on October twentieth. During that short time, the central purpose of the experiment had been the recovery of my lost memory.

He said that Masaki had predicted clearly that I would one day return to my present state and then move beyond it into full recollection. If that happened, Wakabayashi went on, I would not only remember my name and past life, but also the truth of a terrible crime unlike any other. He said he still believed that with complete confidence. When I heard the word “crime,” I leaned forward so sharply that I almost fell from the bed. “A crime? One connected to me?” I asked. He answered that it was not merely unusual, but perhaps without equal, and that for the present he could only say this: everything depended on my memory. Then he looked straight into my face and said that he had come, first of all, to help me remember my own name.

Part 4

He went on in the same cool voice, and the farther he spoke, the more terrible his meaning became. He said that he had long studied, under Masaki’s guidance, crimes committed through the use of mental science, because Masaki’s theories contained principles so fearful that they could not be safely given to the public. According to him, a man’s present mind might be suddenly erased and replaced by an older buried character, even one inherited from distant ancestors. Such methods, he said, were scientifically exact in effect and yet so simple in outward form that even a child might understand the trick if it were explained badly. For that reason, he had feared for years that someone might steal the most dangerous part of Masaki’s work and use it in the real world. Then, in spite of all their care,

just such a crime had broken out near the university.

He described it as a case within a wealthy family, where several men and women had been driven, for no clear reason, to kill one another or lose their minds. At the center of it, he said, stood a gentle and intelligent young man, the last hope of his bloodline, who had been about to marry a beautiful cousin that loved him deeply. Yet after midnight on the night before the wedding, that young man had risen in a state of sleepwalking madness, strangled the girl, and calmly spread paper beside her body to sketch what he saw. The story was so strange that it sounded to me like a cruel tale made only to frighten children, but Wakabayashi spoke with the calm certainty of a man reading from a legal record. He added that the worst part of the case was still unsolved. No one knew the true purpose of the crime, and no one knew the identity of the person behind it.

Then he said the one thing that froze me completely. Since I alone had survived as the central figure in that chain of events, my recovered memory was now the only path left to the truth. If I could remember my name, he said, the rest would rise with it: the purpose of the crime, the identity of the hidden criminal, and the scientific principle that ruled the whole case. He spoke as if the eyes of the university, the courts, and even the wider world were all turned toward this locked room and waiting for my mind to open. While he said this, he coughed again, covered his mouth, and lowered himself into the light chair behind him. It should have broken under his size, yet somehow his long body folded into it like cloth, and he sat there so unnaturally compressed that I felt I was looking at something not quite human.

From that strange chair he began once more, now in a lower and more exact tone. He said that my present state was only a passing stage on the way back to my former self, and that Masaki had predicted it in detail. According to his explanation, there was within my brain one especially weak and sensitive point connected to very old hidden memory. Someone who understood this weakness had struck it with a powerful mental suggestion, and as a result the memory of an ancient ancestral drama had risen to the surface and driven me into a long abnormal state of wandering consciousness. Now that borrowed dream-state had

spent itself, he said, and I had emerged from it; but the exhausted part of my mind could not yet call back the older layers of memory. That was why, he explained, I could remember only the most recent impressions and nothing beyond them.

He called this condition “loss of self,” and from there he moved on to other cases as if he were lecturing in a hall instead of speaking to the patient before him. He mentioned records of people who remembered their true home after fifty years, of men who learned only later that they themselves had committed murder, of lonely women meeting children they had borne without remembering it, and of other unbelievable cases where one mental life had replaced another. In all such cases, he said, the return to the old self was marked by a stretch of confusion like mine. He even claimed that ordinary daily life was full of tiny moments of sleepwalking, forgetting, and waking again, so that the strange state I feared was only a more extreme form of what all humans already lived through. I could not tell whether I was being enlightened or trapped. I only knew that every sentence drove my heart harder against my ribs.

At last he repeated, in a voice even softer than before, that I had already left the old dream-state and now stood on the very edge of remembrance. “So I came,” he said, “to help you remember your own name.” The words struck me with sudden horror. A thought flashed through me like a knife: perhaps the criminal he kept circling around was I myself, and perhaps that was why he watched my name so closely. My mouth moved before I could stop it. “Then what is it?” I cried. “What is my name?” But instead of answering, he became completely silent and fixed his pale eyes on mine as if waiting for something to rise from the bottom of my skull.

Later I understood that he had done this on purpose, after winding my fear tighter and tighter through all that learned explanation. He wanted my own mind, stretched to the limit, to break open from inside. But at that moment I understood nothing. I only stared at his white lips and waited for them to form the one word that might restore my whole existence. When he finally spoke, it was only to say that it would be useless if he told me directly. If the name came from him, I could always deny it; only if it rose naturally within me would it have power. Then,

almost as if he were offering comfort, he added that once I truly remembered, I would leave the hospital healed and take up the legal and moral rights that already waited for me: a household, a family, and all the happiness belonging to that house.

He then changed his tone and proposed an experiment. Since certain objects were believed to be deeply connected with my past, he would show them to me one by one and observe whether any memory awoke. I bowed my head a little to show that I agreed, but inside I was full of a different suspicion. Perhaps the girl in the next room and this doctor alike had mistaken me for someone else. Perhaps all the relics they meant to show me belonged to another man entirely, some hidden madman whose cruel history they wished to press into me by force. While I sat there imagining that, the doctor rose, opened the door behind him, and at once a small barber with a clipped head, black mustache, white jacket, and leather case came briskly in as if he had been waiting for a signal.

A nurse followed with a basin of steaming water, and in a moment a low chair was opened in the center of the room. I understood then that the first part of the experiment was not some book or letter but my own appearance. I stepped down from the bed barefoot and sat where they showed me, and the barber wrapped a white cloth around my neck and pressed a hot towel over my head. He asked Wakabayashi whether he should cut it the same way as before. At those words the doctor glanced at me and answered lightly that yes, it should be done as it had been one month earlier, with the center high, the sides short, and the whole face made to look gentle and oval, like a Tokyo student. So even this had happened before, I thought, and while the scissors began to ring above me, that thought sank like a stone into my chest.

As he cut, I tried to gather what little I could call my past. Since the previous year, perhaps, I had been a patient in this hospital. A month ago someone had already restored my hair to this same style. Yet none of that lived in me as memory. It was only information given by strangers. What I truly possessed as my own life began with the deep clock-sound in the dark and stretched only to the present hour. I began to wonder whether this whole morning had happened before, and before that again, many times over, while I played the same foolish part in some medical

test. Then, just as I nearly leaped from the chair in panic, two round combs raced wildly through my scalp and such a strange sweet pleasure spread through me that everything else fell away. In that helpless ease I gave up resisting and thought, “Very well. I will obey. Let whatever must happen happen.”

A young woman’s voice suddenly said close to my ear, “This way,” and when I opened my eyes I saw that two nurses had already taken my arms. The cloth had been removed, the barber was dusting it out in the hall, and Wakabayashi had closed the red-covered book he had been pretending to read. They led me out of my room for the first time into a wide stone corridor lined with doors like mine, and at the far end, behind iron bars, I saw the great old clock whose low sound had wakened me in the night. We passed into an outside passage where white sand, red flowers, pale flowers, dark pines, and the cool morning air all met me at once, and I thought with surprise, “It is autumn.” But I had no time to stop, because they hurried me into a blue western-style building and then into a large bath room full of steam. There they stripped me, washed me with rough quick hands, cut my nails, cleaned my mouth, poured hot water over me, and at last rubbed my body dry and dragged a new comb through my hair. When it was over, I felt as fresh as if I had been born again, and for that very reason it seemed all the more strange that my lost life still would not return.

Part 5

When the bath was over, one of the nurses pointed to a large pale-yellow cloth bundle on the floor and told me to change into what was inside. The rough patient clothes I had worn only a little while before were already gone, as if they had belonged to someone else. Inside the bundle I found a university student’s uniform, a cap, an overcoat, underwear, socks, laced shoes wrapped in newspaper, and even a small wristwatch shining like silver. I put each thing on as the nurses handed it to me, still too confused to refuse. None of the clothes showed any name or mark that told me they were mine, yet every piece fit me with a strange exactness, from the collar at my throat to the ribbon of the watch on my wrist.

That perfect fit frightened me more than if the clothes had been wrong. When I pushed my hands into the pockets, I found a clean folded handkerchief, some paper, and a small soft purse that held coins. Everything felt new, almost unused, but at the same time it sat on my body as if it had known me for years. I looked around wildly for a mirror, but the bath room held nothing that could show me my face. The three nurses watched me with curious side-glances, then opened the door and went out. At that very moment Wakabayashi came in, bent his huge body through the doorway, and silently examined me from head to foot.

Without a word he led me to one corner of the room, where a washed cotton robe had been hung over the wall. He lifted it away, and under it there appeared a tall full-length mirror. I stepped back at once, because the figure inside it was not the man I had imagined when I touched my beard in the dark room that morning. I had expected a hard-faced man near thirty, rough and dangerous, but the person in the mirror was only a very young student. His forehead was round, his chin was thin, his eyes were large and startled, and without the uniform he might have been taken for a schoolboy. Seeing such a young self drained the strength from me in a single instant and left me with a sick mixture of relief, shame, and fear.

Behind me Wakabayashi asked in a quiet pressing voice whether the sight had helped me remember my name. I turned sharply and, in that moment, finally understood what he had been trying to do. He had promised to show me objects from my past, and his first “object” had been my own former appearance. Since he remembered how I had looked before entering the hospital, he had rebuilt that lost image down to the smallest detail and placed it before me without warning. It was, without question, the most certain memorial from my past that could exist. Yet even after such care, even after the shock of seeing myself, I remembered nothing at all.

I lowered my head and felt sweat run down my face. Wakabayashi compared my real face and the face in the mirror for a little while with the same dead calm as before, then said that my color had become healthier and my body fuller than before my hospitalization, so perhaps I looked somewhat different now. He told me to come with him because he would try another method, and this time, he said,

I would surely remember. I followed him with stiff knees and strange new shoes, believing we were returning to Room Seven. Instead he stopped at the door of Room Six, knocked softly, and opened it only halfway. A woman of about fifty, wearing a pale apron like an attendant, came out, bowed, and reported that the young lady inside was sleeping well.

After she left, Wakabayashi drew me carefully into the room and shut the door without a sound. He took my hand for a moment, then let it go and pointed to the iron bed near the far wall. On that bed a young girl was asleep, and I gripped the brim of my cap so hard that my fingers hurt. She was so beautiful that I could scarcely believe she was real. Her hair, black and rich beyond measure, had been arranged in a strange flower-like shape and lay partly loose on a white towel pillow, while both her hands were wrapped in fresh bandages and rested gently on the blanket over her chest. From those bandaged hands I understood at once that this must be the same girl who had beaten on the wall and cried out to me in the night.

Yet the peaceful face before me did not seem able to make such desperate sounds. Her long brows, long lashes, high nose, soft cheeks, and small closed lips were so calm and delicate that she looked less like a patient than like a carefully made doll. While I stood there staring, something even stranger began to happen. Her face did not move, and yet its whole feeling slowly changed before my eyes. The innocent look of a girl of seventeen or eighteen turned little by little into the noble sadness of a woman some years older, as if grief itself were rising gently from under the skin. Then clear tears gathered under her closed lids, grew larger, shone on her lashes, and at last fell down the sides of her face.

Her lips began to move, and from them there came a broken whisper, so soft that I could understand it only by watching the shape of her mouth. She begged her “elder sister” for forgiveness, saying again and again that she had truly loved “brother” from long ago, even knowing he was precious to that sister. She said that because of that love everything had come to this, and that she was sorry from the bottom of her heart. I stood there without breathing, watching tears continue to rise and slide away into her hair. Then, just as quietly, the tears stopped, the

sorrow faded, and the older woman's expression softened back into the innocent face of the sleeping girl, until even a faint smile appeared at the edge of her lips.

I turned back toward Wakabayashi as if I myself were waking from a dream, and he asked in a low flat voice whether I knew this young lady's name. I shook my head. He then asked whether I recognized even her face, and I could only look at him as if to say that a man who had not known his own face that morning could hardly remember another's. A shadow of disappointment crossed his expression, but it vanished quickly. Then, with great solemnity, he told me that this girl was my only cousin and that she had also been my fiancée, that on April 26, 1926, just six months earlier, we had been about to marry, and that because of the terrible event of the night before, she had been living in this state ever since. I could barely speak when I answered that such a thing seemed impossible, because a beauty like this could not belong to a man who did not even know his own name.

He ignored that protest and continued in the same grave tone, saying that it was now his final great duty, as entrusted to him by Masaki, to see that both of us recovered, left the hospital safely, and returned to a happy married life. I stared at the sleeping girl and asked why, if she had no siblings, she had been begging forgiveness from an "elder sister" in her dream. Wakabayashi answered that the explanation was simple within Masaki's science: the sister belonged not to the present girl, but to an ancestress of hers from a thousand years before. He said that when her hair was arranged in that old married style, as it was now, her whole inner life returned to that ancient woman's habits, feelings, and memories. The calm way in which he said this horrified me more than the content itself, and for the first time I wondered seriously whether the great doctor before me might himself be insane.

I had only just formed that thought when the girl opened her eyes. She blinked once or twice, saw my face beside the bed, and in an instant her whole expression lit up with a beauty that seemed almost unearthly. "Brother! Why are you here?" she cried, and sprang barefoot from the bed, reaching for me with both arms. I was so shocked that I struck her hands away and jumped back without thinking. She stopped as if hit by lightning, stared at me, turned white, then red, then white

again, and finally collapsed beside the bed in tears. Wakabayashi bent over her at once and asked whether she now remembered my name and her own, and at that question I understood with fresh shock that he was performing on her the same terrible experiment he was performing on me. She could only shake her head, though she nodded when he asked whether she at least knew that I was the "brother" to whom she had once been promised. Then her crying grew sharper and more painful than before, and I stood there sweating and trembling, feeling as if the full weight of her suffering were somehow my own fault.

Part 6

Yet Wakabayashi showed no sign of surprise or pity on his face. He bent over the girl, laid a hand on her shoulder, and spoke into her ear in a low steady voice. He told her to be calm, to rest, and to wait a little longer, because the time was near when everything would return. He said that I too had forgotten her face, just as she had forgotten my name, but that memory would soon come back to both of us. While he spoke, I stood there unable to move, listening to the thin broken sound of her crying and feeling as if every tear were accusing me of some fault I could not remember.

Then he drew me away almost by force. He took my hand, led me out of the room, shut the heavy door behind us, and called the old attendant back with a clap of his hands. We returned to Room Seven, and once I was inside again, I stood still on the stone floor and tried to gather myself. From the next room I could still hear the girl's crying, now lower and more broken, while the old woman murmured to her in a voice too soft to catch. I lifted my face toward Wakabayashi and waited for his explanation, because I felt that only some long and clear answer could save my mind from breaking apart.

But instead of speaking at once, he became strangely silent. He looked at me only once, reached into his vest, and took out a large silver watch. Then, as calmly as if nothing extraordinary had happened, he laid his fingers on his own wrist and counted his pulse while watching the time. The whole movement was neat, cold,

and practiced, and because of that it angered me more than any open cruelty would have done. Only a moment earlier he had shown me a girl of impossible beauty, told me she was my cousin and promised bride, let her cry out to me and collapse in grief, and now he stood measuring his pulse as if he had merely finished a small morning task.

That was when a new suspicion began to spread through me. Perhaps I was being tricked. Perhaps the clothes, the bath, the mirror, the beautiful patient, and all the strange talk of ancient memory had been arranged only to press some false story into my head. Since I remembered nothing, anyone could dress me, name me, and place a past around me like theater scenery. The girl herself might be another patient taught to act in that way, or perhaps she always behaved so toward any man placed before her. As these thoughts grew, much of my earlier fear faded, and in its place came a dry empty feeling, as if I had been made a fool and was now too tired even to protest.

When he had finished counting, Wakabayashi slipped the watch back into his pocket and looked up with the same polite face he had worn when we first met. “Are you tired?” he asked. I said that I was not, though I hardly knew what I felt. He nodded and said that if I still had strength, he wished to continue the test meant to restore my past. Then he told me that he would take me to the room where Professor Masaki had worked until the day of his death, and that there I would see the objects most closely tied to my own history. He said again, with unshakable certainty, that if I looked at those things in the right order, the strange knot around my memory would loosen and the whole truth about myself and the girl would begin to open.

Since I had no better path, I bowed my head and followed him. We crossed the flower-lined outside passage again, passed through the blue western-style building, and entered the main hall of the psychiatric department. It was still early, and the front doors were closed, so the entrance lay in a dim blue half-light that made the whole place feel like a church before sunrise. We climbed a steep wooden stair, turned into a brighter south corridor, and walked past doors marked “Laboratory” and “Library.” At the end stood a brown door carrying a large

warning sign that said no one might enter. Wakabayashi opened it with a key on a wooden tag, stepped aside for me, and removed his coat and hat with a care that made the room beyond seem almost sacred.

I did the same and followed him in. It was a broad, bright room with windows on three sides. Pines covered the northern and western windows with dark green branches, but the southern windows stood open to light, sky, and the far sound of the sea, so that blue morning brightness poured in like water. My own dusty shoe marks and Wakabayashi's long narrow prints lay clearly on the floor, which told me that no one had entered for some time. The room felt both deserted and full of presence, as if the man who had once ruled it had only just stepped out and might return at any moment.

Wakabayashi raised his hand and slowly turned it in a circle. He explained that this had once been the department's library and specimen room, filled with books, records, objects made by patients, and other materials gathered by the former professor, Saito Juhachi. When Masaki took charge, he said, Masaki had moved things about as he pleased and turned half the room into his private working and living space, even adding comforts without waiting for official permission. Then Wakabayashi repeated, in a dry flat tone, a story that Masaki had once told an anxious office clerk: that since he himself was a kind of madman driven by research and grand ideas, his own brain ought to be displayed among the specimens in a psychiatric department. The remark should perhaps have sounded like a joke, yet the more I listened, the less it seemed like one.

For the first time I felt the real force of the dead professor's mind. This was not the greatness of a polite scholar who followed rules and bowed to titles. It was the greatness of a man who stood above such things and laughed at them, even while cutting straight into the darkest parts of the human mind. That thought sent a chill through me, because everything I had seen that morning now seemed to carry his design, even though he was already dead. Wakabayashi, however, did not pause. He said the purpose of bringing me there was simple: among all the objects in that room, some were linked to my hidden past, and if I let my attention move freely, my deeper memory would guide me toward them before my conscious mind

understood why.

He spoke of buried memory as if it were a living hand inside me. According to him, a man might forget names, faces, and even his own history, while still being secretly led by what he had forgotten. Masaki, he said, had learned a method from a woman seer in the Balkans and had proved many times that attention itself could reveal what reason could not. “So ask about anything that catches your eye,” he said. “Do not force yourself. Look as if you were studying this room for its own sake. When one object truly belongs to your past, you will know it at once.” Hearing this, I felt a fear unlike anything I had felt before, because now the choice would come from me. If my eye stopped upon the wrong thing, I could still call this whole business a trick. But if it stopped upon the right thing, then all the madness of the morning might be true.

I took out my new handkerchief and wiped the sweat from my forehead. Then, very slowly, I began to look around. The western half of the room was crowded with glass cabinets full of specimens and papers, while the eastern half held a great table covered in green cloth, two chairs, and several objects lying under a thin coat of dust. There were tied bundles of documents, a square blue cloth wrapping, and a red ceramic ash holder shaped like a Daruma, sitting with its back turned as if it had been left in the middle of a long yawn. Everything seemed to be waiting. With my heart beating harder at each step, I stood in that silent room and looked for the first object from my lost life.

Part 7

I moved first toward the row of glass cases on the brighter southern side, because light felt safer than shadow, though I did not really believe safety existed in that room. The cases were filled with strange papers, hanging scrolls, notebooks, and handmade objects, each with a small label beside it. When I bent close, I saw that many of them had been made by patients who wished to prove they were now well enough to leave the hospital. The thought alone was painful, and the things themselves were more painful still, because each one seemed to hold the last hope

of some broken mind.

There was a scroll of dolls painted, so the label said, with blood from the gums of a young woman who had finished college. There was a plan for conquering Mars written by a primary school teacher. There were lines of Chinese poetry written in fine formal hand by a farmer who had once been unable even to read, and page after page from a great foreign encyclopedia copied perfectly from memory by a failed student. There were dozens of notebooks filled with one song line written again and again by a ruined actor, a paper watch made by an old barber, a holy image carved into brick with bamboo, and even a little figure of mercy formed from filth and shut in a glass box. As I read one label after another, my face grew hot with pity and shame, and I found that I could not bear to examine the whole row to the end.

Yet just as I was about to turn away, my eye caught something set a little apart near the broken corner of one case door. At first it looked too small and plain to matter, and perhaps I noticed it only because the glass there had cracked away. But when I bent closer, I felt at once that it did not belong with the rest. It was not an object made in helpless madness, nor some poor offering placed before a doctor. It was a stack of manuscript books, about five in all, worn at the edges by many hands, and the upper pages were so rubbed and torn that they looked almost alive.

I reached carefully through the broken space so I would not cut my fingers and drew the stack a little forward. On the first page of each volume there was a large red Roman numeral, neatly written, and though the pages were damaged, the arrangement was exact, almost proud. On the first half-torn sheet of the top volume I found a short poem written sideways in red ink, like a notebook entry made in a fever and yet with perfect intention. It said, in effect, “Fetus, fetus, why do you leap? Is it because you know your mother’s heart and are afraid?” The words were so strange, so sudden, and so cold in their sweetness that I read them twice before turning to the next page.

There, in heavy black letters, stood the title: *Dogura Magura*. No author’s name appeared beneath it. The first line under the title was nothing but a long written sound, “Buuuu—nnnn—nnn,” like the hum of a great bell or insect, and when I

turned to the back of the same volume, I saw that the final line ended in almost the same sound. It looked less like a simple paper and more like some vast circular tale that had no true opening or ending. The title itself irritated me at once, because it seemed half-joking, half-insane, and yet I could not stop looking at it.

“What is this, Doctor?” I asked without taking my eyes from the page. “And what does *Dogura Magura* mean?” Behind me I heard Wakabayashi move a step closer, and when he answered, his voice was lighter than before, as if he had at last arrived at something he truly wished to show me. He said that the manuscript was one of the strangest productions ever gathered in the department, written in one rush by a young university student who had been admitted to these same hospital rooms not long after Professor Masaki’s death. According to him, the student had handed it in directly, and ever since then the doctors had been uncertain whether to call it a novel, a study, a confession, or a piece of malicious play.

I turned and looked at him in surprise. “A university student wrote all this?” I said. “A mad student?” He answered yes, but he added at once that the case was not simple. The young man, he said, had been brilliant from childhood through higher school and into the university, always at the top of his class, and had loved detective fiction so much that he came to believe the future of such writing lay in psychology, mind study, and the science of madness. Somewhere in that passion, Wakabayashi said, his mind had turned. After falling under the power of certain hallucinations and false beliefs, he had acted out a dreadful tragedy and then, soon after being confined here, had conceived the desire to write a story of terrible psychological detail based on his own condition.

The more he spoke, the less I liked the sound of it. “Then this is only nonsense,” I said. “A clever madman’s game.” Wakabayashi’s face tightened in a thin almost-smile under one eye, the same cold expression I had seen before. He said that if it were mere nonsense, he would not have kept it there with such care. The trouble, he explained, was that the events described in it were far too exact in places, far too orderly, and far too full of details that no ordinary invention should have produced. At one moment it looked like a scientific paper, at another like a

detective story unlike any ever written, and then again like a deliberate mockery of the very minds of Masaki and Wakabayashi themselves. Yet through all that confusion ran an unnatural clearness, as if madness had sharpened memory instead of breaking it.

He went on speaking, and his interest grew more visible with every sentence. He said that readers among the specialists had been pulled back to it again and again, not because it was pleasant, but because its structure seemed to wind around the mind of the reader and squeeze it from within. Some had said it mixed science, horror, desire, mystery, and sheer nonsense so closely that one could not separate them afterward. One man, he told me, had given up psychiatric study after reading it and moved into forensic medicine instead. Another, losing trust in his own brain after repeated readings, had gone out and thrown himself under a train. When he said this, he did not raise his voice, and that made the story more terrible than if he had shouted it.

“And the title?” I asked again, because I did not want to think about the train. “What does the word itself mean?” Wakabayashi spread his hands a little and admitted that even that remained uncertain. Perhaps, he said, the author had chosen it only because the whole document was built to confuse, to dazzle, and to pull a reader into a moving circle of dread. It began with a humming sound and ended with the same humming sound, as if the entire work were a wheel that rolled only to return to its own starting point. While he said this, I looked down once more at the black title on the page and felt a small unpleasant stirring in my chest. It seemed to me then that I had seen the word before, or heard it in a dream, and though I could not yet place it, I knew I could not leave that manuscript unopened.

Part 8

I kept staring at the black title while Wakabayashi came nearer and, for the first time since entering the room, sounded almost pleased. He said that the word itself had troubled him for some time, because it did not appear in ordinary dictionaries and at first seemed to be nothing more than a private joke invented by the writer.

The young patient, he explained, had written the whole mass of pages in only about a week with the fierce strength that certain mental patients sometimes show, and when he finished, he fell into such a heavy sleep that no one could question him about the title. So the doctors had been forced to guess. For a while the guess had failed, and the meaning of the word remained as dark as the manuscript itself.

Then, he said, an unexpected clue had appeared. In this region, old foreign words from Europe still survived here and there in local speech, changed by many tongues and many years, and he had begun to wonder whether *Dogura Magura* might belong to that forgotten group. After asking men who studied such dialect words, he had at last received an answer. Before the Restoration, in the Nagasaki area, the phrase had been used for the strange illusion arts practiced by Christian fathers and other foreign wonder-workers, and later it had remained only in the weaker sense of trick, hand-magic, or deception. He spoke the explanation calmly, but the moment I heard the words “illusion” and “trick,” I felt an unpleasant tightening in my chest, as if the title were already laughing at me.

Wakabayashi went on before I could interrupt him. He said the title suited the manuscript perfectly, because its contents were grotesque, erotic in a harsh way, full of detective-story cunning, and so deeply mixed with nonsense that the whole thing might be called a hell of the brain or a psychological maze built of tricks. Yet, he added, the work was not nonsense in the ordinary sense. The events in it were all founded, according to him, on facts that could not be denied by common sense and on truths deeper than common sense itself. He spoke as if he were praising both a scientific argument and a dangerous toy at the same time.

I asked what sort of events could deserve such a title, and he answered with a look of grave importance that the whole story turned upon an astonishing principle. Everything described there, he said, was nothing more than the dream seen in one instant by a madman who heard a single clock striking at midnight. The dream, however, felt to that dreamer like more than twenty hours of lived experience, so that the first clock sound and the last clock sound in the story could, in strict theory, be one and the same strike of the same clock. The manuscript, he said, existed almost to prove that one point. As he spoke, the soft bright room around me

seemed to tilt, and for a second I thought I heard again the deep humming sound that had woken me in the dark.

He reached out as if to take up the first volume and read from it, but I stopped him quickly with both hands. “No,” I said. “That is enough.” I shook my head again and again, almost angrily, because even from his explanation alone I felt my mind beginning to slide toward the strange circle of the title. If the manuscript had truly been written by a mad student, then surely it must be nothing but a confused mixture of school knowledge, half-remembered songs, and wild fantasy. I had no wish to load another man’s madness upon my own shoulders when the room, the girl, and my lost memory were already more than enough.

So I thrust both hands into my coat pockets and tried to turn away from the case with an air of indifference. Inside, however, I was not indifferent at all. The phrase “one clock strike” had gone into me like a needle, because my own life, so far as I knew it, had begun exactly with such a sound. The title, the humming line at the beginning and end, the dream that swallowed many hours into a single instant, all of it felt much too near my own condition. That was the very reason I wanted to reject it. A drowning man may fear a floating branch if it resembles a snake.

I moved along the line of cases to hide my uneasiness and fixed my eyes on whatever stood nearest, whether I cared for it or not. There were bundles of old papers tied with faded string, notebooks swollen from handling, and hanging documents whose labels I only half read. Some dealt with hospital cases, some with studies in inheritance and memory, and some with materials I could not yet understand. I tried to take them in one by one with cold attention, telling myself that I was merely examining a room full of research objects. Yet again and again my eye wanted to slip back toward the torn manuscript books behind me.

Wakabayashi seemed to notice this struggle and did not press me further for the moment. Instead he began to explain that many of the objects in the room were connected with Professor Masaki’s great work and with one long chain of events that had ended in the experiment on my own mind. He said that if I looked freely and let my deeper memory guide me, I would soon choose the object that truly belonged to my past. “Do not reason too hard,” he told me. “A buried memory

often moves before thought can follow it.” His tone was gentle, but I felt that he was watching every movement of my face and hands with exact professional hunger.

I wiped my palms on my coat without letting him see. The room had become very quiet, so quiet that I could hear a faint sound from outside, perhaps a branch rubbing the wall or the sea wind passing through pines. In that silence the glass cases and the table on the far side seemed no longer like furniture, but like witnesses waiting to see whether I would betray myself. I began to understand that I was being tested in every breath and glance, not only by the living man behind me, but by the dead professor whose presence still ruled the room. The thought made the bright morning air feel suddenly thin.

At last my eyes wandered away from the southern cases and crossed toward the large table in the eastern half of the room. A blue cloth bundle lay there, and near it stood the red Daruma-shaped ash holder I had noticed before, its round back turned toward me as if it had been left in the middle of some private joke. Beside these were tied packets of papers, several loose sheets, and a thick newspaper bundle that looked newer than the rest. None of these objects shone or called to me openly, yet as I looked at them I felt once more that odd inward pull Wakabayashi had spoken of. It was not memory itself, but something like the shadow cast by memory, moving before the thing that made it.

I took one slow step toward the table, then another. Behind me Wakabayashi said nothing, and that silence urged me on more strongly than words could have done. I did not yet know what I was seeking, only that the answer would not come by standing still. Somewhere in this room, he believed, lay the first thread leading back to my lost self, the girl in the next room, and the terrible crime he kept circling with such careful calm. With my heart beating hard and my hands still hidden in my pockets, I went nearer to the table to see what object would speak first.

Part 9

Just as I was about to go straight to the table, something on the window side of the room caught my eye and turned me aside. Along the wall and even across the outer sides of the cabinets, many photographs, charts, and comparison tables had been pinned in close crowded rows. Perhaps I noticed them only then because I was trying not to return to the torn manuscript books. In any case, I moved toward them with the excuse that I was still searching freely, just as Wakabayashi had instructed. He followed at a distance and let me look without interruption.

The first things I saw were not ordinary medical notices, but strange and almost cruelly exact studies. There were comparison photographs of patients before and after the beginning of mental illness, and beside them tables comparing food taken in and waste given out during different stages of disease. Nearby hung pictures made under hallucination and illusion, and series of photographs showing the twisted bodily shapes produced during hysterical fits. There were other groups arranged by disease type, showing how patients dressed themselves up or disguised themselves under the pressure of their delusions. All of it together gave the wall the look of a grotesque exhibition, half science and half human sorrow, and I felt more than once that I ought not to be seeing it.

Beyond those wall materials stood glass cabinets filled with still worse things. There were bottles holding brains of unusual size beside normal ones, and others marked as coming from murderers, paralytics, and different kinds of disturbed patients. There was a ghost painting once kept as a family treasure in a house ruined by madness, a short sword said to drive its owner insane when sharpened, whale bones sold by a patient as the bones of a mermaid, and the dried head of a black cat with gold-and-silver eyes that another patient had planned to boil into poison. Farther on I saw a patient’s own cut-off fingers with the knife used on them, a cracked skull from a suicide, a pillow shaped into a wife and embraced as one, bent metal, torn plate, and small delicate handwork made by other patients with almost impossible patience. I looked from object to object with growing dread, wondering whether one of them might somehow belong to my own past, but none of them stirred anything clear in me except pity and revulsion.

By the time I had gone through the line of cases, my forehead was wet again

and my nerves felt scraped raw. I returned at last to the side of the large table and let out a breath of relief before I knew what I was doing. Then, turning half around, I found myself directly facing a large old oil painting that seemed to have slid into place before me as if by design. I straightened my back and stared at it in silence. The more I looked, the more it drew me in with a quiet horror.

It showed what seemed to be a European scene from long ago, perhaps a burning or public execution. At the center three living people were tied naked to thick upright posts: an old man with white hair and beard in the middle, a thin pale young man to one side, and on the other side a woman with disordered hair and a wreath-like crown. Below them flames and smoke were rising from piled wood, and not far away richly dressed nobles watched from a golden seat with calm interest, surrounded by attendants. On the far edge a small child reached toward the burning mother in terror while two men, perhaps father and grandfather, held the child back and covered its mouth, and in the middle of the square an ugly old woman in a red pointed hood and black cloak stood grinning and showing the suffering victims to the nobles with a staff in her hand. It was painted in old yellow, brown, and dim green tones, but for that very reason it felt horribly alive.

“What is this picture?” I asked, pointing without taking my eyes from it. Wakabayashi answered at once that it showed a superstition from medieval Europe, perhaps France, when the mentally ill were treated as people possessed by evil and burned one after another. The old woman, he said, represented the healer-priest-diviner of that age, and Professor Masaki had bought the picture as material showing how cruelly the insane had once been handled. When he added, almost carelessly, that some people had even suggested it might be by Rembrandt and therefore valuable as art as well as evidence, I scarcely heard that part. I only asked whether burning people alive had truly been thought a form of treatment, and he replied that since no medicine was known for such an ungraspable disease, it had been, in a sense, a thorough treatment indeed.

Those words made my skin crawl. I tried to laugh and said that madmen born in the present age must be lucky by comparison, but even as I said it I felt the coldness in his pale eyes and imagined that if science demanded it, he might

calmly have me burned as well. A faint movement touched his cheek, almost like a smile, and he answered that this was not certain. Perhaps, he said, the madmen of old who were burned quickly had been happier than those living now. I had no answer to that. I wiped my face with my handkerchief, turned slightly to escape his gaze, and then noticed on the wall to my left a large framed photograph in black wood.

It showed a broad-faced older gentleman in formal dress, with a bald forehead and a long gray beard, smiling with such warmth and kindness that I first thought this must surely be Professor Masaki. I went and stood squarely before it, but after a moment I felt that it was not the same man whose fierce mind I had begun to imagine from everything in the room. So I turned and asked who it was. At once Wakabayashi's whole face softened more than I had yet seen. He said, with something close to reverence, that this was Professor Saito Juhachi, the man who had held this psychiatric classroom before Masaki and who had been their teacher.

Then he came closer and said something that made my chest stir in an odd deep way. "At last your eyes stopped there," he said, and when I asked what he meant, he explained that this photograph, more than anything else in the room, must be tied to my former life. He said that while I had moved from the *Dogura Magura* manuscript to the picture of madmen burned alive, my own buried memory had been slowly waking, and that same hidden memory had now led me before Saito's portrait. According to him, it was Professor Masaki himself who had placed the portrait beside the painting of the burning, because Masaki had devoted his life to fighting the kind of cruelty symbolized in that picture. Under Saito's guidance and help, he said, Masaki had at last built the new science that made "liberation treatment" possible, and by my own offered mind and body, that experiment had already been completed.

When he said that only one thing still remained—that I should recover my past and place my signature upon the reports of the experiment—I could only stare at him in helpless disbelief. It seemed to me that I had been drawn into that room not by chance, but by some old and solemn chain of causes stronger than my will, and that the painting and the photograph were like two gates through which I had

already half passed. Wakabayashi, however, went on as steadily as before. He said that if he now explained the relation between Saito, Masaki, and that image of burning madness, every step of the explanation would touch my own history: how Masaki had prepared for years to conduct this experiment on me, and what terrible labor he had poured into it. When I cried out in shock that such preparation could not have been for me, he answered with grave certainty that Masaki had spent more than twenty years getting ready.

I repeated the number without meaning to, and the word seemed to die in my throat before it was fully spoken. Then he said something even more terrible: Masaki had begun preparing for me before I was born. Seeing my confusion, he added that this was no strange way of speaking for effect, but a literal fact, and that even if I never recovered my memory completely, the materials he was about to place before me would allow me at least to infer my own name. With that he returned to the large table, pointed to a smaller revolving chair facing the stove, and asked me to sit. I obeyed like a patient about to undergo an operation, scarcely feeling that I was truly sitting at all, while he folded his long body into the larger chair opposite me, drew a bound set of papers toward him, brushed the dust from it, coughed lightly, and prepared at last to begin the long story of Masaki and Saito from the days when both were still young.

Part 10

"Twenty years…" I repeated, but the words did not fully come out. They turned into a low broken sound and seemed to fall back into my throat. It felt as if all of Professor Masaki's labor over those long years were winding itself around my neck at that very moment. Wakabayashi seemed to understand my feeling, because he nodded more slowly than before. Then he said something still more terrible: Masaki had begun preparing for this experiment before I was even born.

I stared at him and echoed the idea like a fool. "Before I was born… for me?" He answered that this was not an odd way of speaking for effect, but a literal truth. Masaki, he said, had foreseen my present condition long before my birth, and if I

could not recover my full memory, then at least the facts he was about to place before me would allow me to infer my own name. Once I had done that and compared the events in order, he was sure I would see that he had not exaggerated anything. He added that this method might be the best and final way to make me remember myself in truth.

After saying this, he walked back around the great table and pointed once more to the small revolving chair facing the stove. I obeyed him like a man about to be cut open by a surgeon. Even after I sat down, I did not feel that I was really seated; my body seemed only to be resting there while the rest of me hung somewhere in empty air. My chest had grown tight, and I kept swallowing again and again just to breathe. Meanwhile Wakabayashi folded himself into the larger chair opposite me, and without his overcoat his long arms, legs, neck, and trunk looked even more unnaturally thin and bent.

In that posture he no longer seemed entirely human to me. His large pale face remained the same size as before, but the body under it had folded inward until he looked like some giant white spider wearing morning clothes. The great fireplace behind him only strengthened that impression, as if he had just come creeping out from its dark mouth to feed on me. I straightened myself without meaning to and held the arms of my chair. He then drew a bound set of papers toward him, brushed the dust from it under the table, cleared his throat softly, and began his long explanation.

He said that in order to explain the great experiment Masaki had completed at the cost of his whole life, he would also have to speak about himself. The reason, he said, was simple. He and Masaki had both come originally from Chiba, and when this university was first established in 1903, under its earlier form as the Fukuoka Medical College of Kyoto Imperial University, they had entered together in the first class. They had graduated together in 1907 and, as he put it, had been classmates and equals from youth. Even after that, both had remained unmarried and given their lives to scholarship, but in two things Masaki had always stood far above ordinary men: the brilliance of his brain and the greatness of his wealth.

Wakabayashi explained that in those days study was hard because foreign

books could not be obtained freely as they were now. Students copied library books by hand day and night, but Masaki alone lived in another world. He ordered books from abroad with his own money, read them once, and then lent them away without regret. At the same time he wandered about collecting fossils or investigating the histories of shrines and temples, work that seemed to have nothing to do with medicine. Yet Wakabayashi said that after twenty years he had finally begun to understand that even those old hobbies had not been idle pleasures at all, but part of a long deliberate preparation for the experiment that would one day be called “liberation treatment.”

Because of all this, Masaki had already been known in student and faculty circles as a strange and extraordinary man. But according to Wakabayashi, the first person to recognize the greatness of that mind fully had been the man in the portrait, Professor Saito Juhachi. Saito, he said, had served at the university from its earliest days and had gathered most of the specimens still preserved in that room through his own effort. He was deeply learned, full of heat, and famous for speaking with force. Wakabayashi then gave an old example that, he said, showed Saito’s character well.

At the third anniversary celebration of the university, Masaki had spoken on behalf of the students. He declared before the whole hall that the worst fault of scholars was not drinking, gambling, or visiting pleasure districts, but becoming bachelors or doctors and then giving up serious research as if their work were already done. The entire audience of students and professors, Wakabayashi said, had changed color at those words. But Saito alone had risen to his feet and applauded wildly, even shouting “Bravo.” Wakabayashi said he still remembered that scene clearly, and from it alone one could understand something of Saito’s spirit.

In those years there was not yet a proper psychiatric department at the university, and Saito, as the only specialist in mental illness, held only a small post and a few lectures. This displeased him greatly, and he often complained to the young Masaki and Wakabayashi about the worship of material science and the bad direction of the nation. Wakabayashi admitted that he had never known how to

answer such speeches, but Masaki always replied with wild and unexpected counterattacks that left even Saito speechless. Of those replies, one in particular had stayed in his memory. Masaki had laughed at Saito's repeated complaints and told him to wait twenty years, because perhaps in Japan there would then appear one magnificent lunatic who would record in detail the cause of his madness and the process of its cure, astonish the scholars of the world, crush religion, morality, art, law, science, naturalism, nihilism, anarchism, and every other material culture underfoot, and in their place release the human soul naked to the bottom. If that madman succeeded, Masaki had said, then mental science would become the highest study on earth, and universities that treated psychiatry like a stepchild would become worthless.

Wakabayashi said that at the time both he and Saito had taken this as one more of Masaki's outrageous surprises. They could not imagine that he might truly be planning to create such a patient with his own hands. But not long afterward, at the very time they were graduating, an event occurred that began the great storm to come. Masaki submitted, as his graduation thesis, a strange study entitled *The Dream of the Fetus*. I cried out at that title before I could stop myself, because the words struck my ears with an unnatural force. Wakabayashi did not seem surprised at my reaction. He only nodded and said that the title alone was enough to show that the paper was no ordinary academic work, and that when it appeared, the whole university had stared in amazement and waited to see what sort of madness or genius could possibly be hidden inside it.

Part 11

Wakabayashi said that the title alone had been enough to throw the whole medical school into excited talk. In those days, he reminded me, even ordinary dreams were not clearly understood, so a graduation thesis called *The Dream of the Fetus* sounded almost like an insult to reason. Since Masaki was already famous among the students for his strange brilliance, everyone wanted to know what kind of paper could hide behind such a name. The more people guessed, the

more the rumor spread, until the entire university seemed to be waiting for the day of judgment.

But when the professors finally received the paper for formal review, the scandal became even greater. Wakabayashi said that Masaki, who could read difficult books in English, German, and French without trouble, had not written his thesis in the expected learned German style at all. Instead he had written it in plain living Japanese, mixed with common speech and even dialect, using a style far outside the rules of proper academic writing at that time. Worse still, the argument itself looked, at first glance, like mockery. More than one professor, he said, felt that Masaki was making fools of the whole faculty.

One angry professor, so the students heard, had gone as far as saying that a young man bold enough to submit such an unserious paper should be expelled to teach later students a lesson. By the day of the faculty meeting, almost everyone had gathered with the same view: whatever else might happen, the paper must not be accepted as a graduation thesis. Wakabayashi told me that the whole university watched that meeting in suspense. It was not only one student's future that seemed to hang there, but the pride of the new medical school itself. Then, just when rejection seemed certain, Saito rose from his place and asked permission to speak.

According to Wakabayashi, Saito declared at once that he held the exact opposite opinion from the other professors. He first brushed aside the complaint about style, saying that a research paper was not a begging letter sent to an office asking politely for a degree. Form, fixed wording, and approved phrases, he argued, were not the essence of science. Then he turned to the deeper matter. If the others could not see the value of Masaki's thesis, he said, it was because modern medicine had become too trapped in the material body and had neglected the scientific study of mind.

Saito then gave the paper's terrifying central claim as he understood it. During the ten months in the womb, he said, a fetus might live through an immeasurable dream, a dream in which it became the witness and heir of the whole long movement of life. In that dream, ancient beasts, vanished ages, disasters of earth and sky, the first human beings, and then generation after generation of ancestors

might all appear in living sequence, until the desires, crimes, fears, and habits of the parents themselves flowed into the unborn child. Such a claim, he admitted, could not be verified by a record written by the fetus itself. Yet, he argued, many sciences already worked by reading traces left behind in the present and using them to infer what had once been.

He compared it, Wakabayashi said, to history, archaeology, geology, and the study of ancient life. No one had stood beside the first humans and written their lives down in direct witness, yet scholars still reconstructed them from surviving marks and remains. Why, then, should it be considered unscientific to infer the lost dream-life of the unborn from the countless remains left in the adult body and mind. Saito pushed the matter even farther and declared that Masaki’s paper did not merely offer a bold guess, but hinted at an entire new science of mental structure, mental physiology, mental pathology, and mental heredity. If that path were followed further, he said, it might someday overturn human culture itself.

I listened in silence, but the blood in my body seemed to run colder with every sentence. It was not only the strangeness of the theory that disturbed me. It was the feeling that the theory already stood too close to my own condition, as if my missing memory were itself waiting somewhere inside those ideas. Wakabayashi must have noticed my unease, because he slowed his voice and told me that Saito had defended the paper with all the force of his learning. The argument raged from afternoon until night, and one professor after another was driven into silence.

At last, he said, the dean ruled that *The Dream of the Fetus* must indeed be recognized as a true scholarly work. Over the next two days all sixteen graduation theses were examined, and in the end Masaki’s paper was placed first, exactly as Saito had demanded. It should have been a perfect triumph. Yet on the very day of the graduation ceremony, when Masaki was to receive the silver watch given in honor of his rank, he vanished without a word. Wakabayashi paused there and looked hard at me, as if measuring whether I had understood more than I showed.

When I asked why Masaki had disappeared at such a moment, Wakabayashi answered in an even lower tone. He said no one had ever known the real reason, not even he himself, but he could not help thinking that the disappearance and the

thesis were tied together. Then he gave me one of the strangest explanations I had yet heard from him: perhaps Masaki had been threatened by the very hero of the dreadful film hidden inside his own thesis. I confessed that I could make nothing clear out of such words. He lifted one hand gently and told me that, for the present, it was better that I did not understand.

He said that when my own past returned fully, I would naturally grasp who the true “hero” of that terrible inner film had been. Then he continued. The day after the graduation ceremony, he said, the dean received a letter from Masaki. In it Masaki wrote that he had submitted the thesis expecting failure, because he believed no one in the scientific world could understand it. Since the dean and Saito had seen through it so easily, he now felt his work must still have been shallow; he had no face to show them, and so had hidden himself. He asked that the silver watch be kept for him until the day he could return with a study so great that no one at all would be able to understand it at once.

From there, Wakabayashi said, Masaki disappeared into Europe for eight long years and gathered honors abroad in Austria, Germany, and France. Then, after returning quietly to Japan, he did not settle down like an ordinary professor, but drifted from place to place. He visited mental hospitals across the country, traced bloodlines, legends, family records, and stories connected with hereditary madness, and all the while spread a small printed tract among the people. Its title, Wakabayashi said, was *Madmen’s Hell: A Heretical Chant*. When I asked what kind of thing could be written under such a name, he answered that I would soon see it with my own eyes.

Part 12

While he was still speaking about Professor Masaki, my eyes wandered again toward the wall and stopped on the calendar hanging below Professor Saito’s portrait. The date shown there was October 19, 1926, and for some reason that small fact struck me strongly. I turned back and said, almost without thinking, that the date must be exactly one year after Professor Saito’s death. The moment I said

it, Wakabayashi's face changed so suddenly that I felt a shock like cold water thrown over me. His white lips closed hard, his chin pushed forward, and his pale eyes opened wide as he stared at me as if he had been waiting for those words from the beginning.

I think I stared back in the same way, because the force of his expression dragged me into it before I could resist. Then, little by little, his face softened again, and what came over it next was not anger but a strange satisfaction. He nodded several times and said that I had noticed an important thing, a very important thing, and that my past memory must be waking more sharply than ever. He even confessed that when I asked that question, he had feared my whole forgotten life might suddenly return in one violent rush. "We are very near now," he said. "Very near indeed."

I asked then why the calendar still showed that old date if today was later. He answered in a solemn voice that the question itself was one of the keys to my own past. According to him, Professor Masaki had torn away the daily pages up to that date and then stopped forever. "Stopped?" I asked. "Why?" Wakabayashi drew himself up and answered that Masaki had died on the next day. More than that, he had thrown himself into the sea at the same place behind the Hakozaki Aquarium where Professor Saito had drowned exactly one year earlier.

I cannot describe fully what that news did to me. It was as if a bolt from a clear sky had split the room, yet no sound had followed it. I heard myself repeat, "Professor Masaki… suicide?" and even the sound of my own voice seemed false to me. A man of such size of mind, such force, such wild purpose, killing himself like an ordinary exhausted man seemed impossible. But the coincidence was worse still: the two heads of the same psychiatric school, dying one year apart, in the same sea, at the same place. I looked at Wakabayashi's pale face and wondered whether the whole building stood upon some curse rather than upon science.

Yet he met my stare with a grave and almost prayerful calm. He said again that Masaki had killed himself, and that no other word was honest enough. After twenty years of preparation, after fighting toward the great experiment of liberation treatment with all his strength, Masaki had, as Wakabayashi put it,

broken his sword and used his last arrow. The experiment had been planned to end when I and the young lady in Room Six recovered our pasts, left the hospital, and entered married life together. Instead, some unforeseen and tragic event had blocked everything halfway. No one, he said, knew for certain whether that tragedy had been Masaki's fault, but since it happened on the first death anniversary of Saito, Masaki felt the whole burden fall upon him and left the world.

My whole body turned cold as I listened. I could hardly force the words out when I asked whether I myself had somehow driven him to that death. Wakabayashi answered at once, "No. The opposite." He said Masaki had begun his work already knowing that I might one day curse him, and that he had accepted that fate from the start. More than that, he had arranged the whole course of research, step by step, over twenty years, so that his great scientific theory and my own destiny would finally meet in one point. That answer frightened me even more than blame would have done. A man may fight an enemy, but what is he to do against a plan laid before he was even born.

When I asked in a dry voice what sort of steps could join my life to such a design, Wakabayashi did not answer directly. Instead he closed the papers he had been glancing through while he spoke and pushed a thick packet toward me with both hands. I took it just as formally, because I could see at once that this was no ordinary bundle. On top lay a thin pamphlet with a red cover, beneath it were large ruled sheets, newspaper clippings pasted onto dark paper, and other manuscripts of different sizes, all bound together between stiff boards. It was heavier than I expected, and after turning a few pages without understanding anything, I closed it again and set it carefully on the table.

Wakabayashi then fixed his eyes directly on mine and explained what the packet was. It was, he said, almost the last remains of Masaki's work. The major scientific writings on mental anatomy, mental physiology, mental pathology, and psychological heredity had already been burned by Masaki together with the main body of his great brain theory just before his death. What remained here was only a small but precious line of papers, placed in a deliberate order by Masaki's own hand. Though not arranged by the dates when they had been written, they had

been set in the order in which a reader could most easily and most clearly understand the growth of Masaki's research. If I followed that order, Wakabayashi said, the whole road of his thought would open before me step by step.

He pointed first to the red pamphlet and said this was the beginning. It was the street pamphlet called *Madmen's Hell: A Heretical Chant*, the song Masaki had once sung in public while beating a wooden temple drum, handing copies to common people in towns across Japan. In that rough comic form, Wakabayashi said, Masaki had first cried out against the cruel treatment of the mentally ill and had shown the pain that drove him into research. The next documents, he continued, were newspaper pieces in which Masaki had explained with bitter humor the idea that the whole surface of the earth was a giant field for the liberation treatment of madmen, and after those came the more difficult writings on the brain and on inherited mind. Then, lower in the packet, stood the final pages, written in haste, which served as a kind of last report and last will.

He was still speaking, but by then his words had already begun to drift away from me. Without meaning to, I opened the red pamphlet and started reading from the title page. The bold printed name, *Madmen's Hell: A Heretical Chant*, stood there with a strange mixture of ridicule and sorrow. Below it was another title, "The Dark Age of the Mad," and beneath that a false comic signature full of foreign degrees, as if Masaki were laughing at scholarship while using it. Then the chant itself began in a wild noisy street voice that called to gentlemen, ladies, old people, and young people, begging them to come near, listen, and hear a true story for free. Even in silence, while I only moved my eyes across the lines, I could almost hear a wooden drum beating and a ragged voice rising in a crowd.

The first image was of the speaker himself, a half-beggar, half-monk figure, thin, bald, weather-beaten, poorly dressed, dragging worn sandals and carrying only one bag. He told of wandering across the world through city after city and of bringing back one terrible gift: a story of hell. Then, with rough comic force, the song declared that this hell was not the old religious hell of fire and punishment after death. It was a living hell in this very world, hidden behind the respectable face of the modern mental hospital. A place where truth and madness were not

clearly known, where human beings could be shut away, forgotten, mocked, and broken in the name of treatment. I kept reading, and before I knew it, the room around me had already begun to fade.

Part 13

I went on reading, and the rough song voice grew clearer in my mind with every line. It said that priests on high platforms loved to speak about the hell after death, with mountains of needles, lakes of blood, and endless torture for the sins of this life. But the singer laughed at such talk and called it easy business for living holy men who wished to gather money from the frightened. The true hell he had seen, he cried, was not far away at all. No train fare was needed, no prayer, no bell, no scripture. It was close at hand in this very world, where breathing men and women were thrown into suffering while still alive.

Then the song named that place openly. It said the living hell of the present age was the mental hospital. If one doubted it, one had only to step inside and look. There were iron bars, small stone cells, strong shirts without sleeves, handcuffs, leg irons, restraint beds, and all the tools of punishment that even prisons had already begun to throw away. Yet, the singer cried, among all those cruel devices there was almost nothing made to heal the heart or restore the broken mind. A sleepless patient received a drug, a noisy patient another drug, a starving patient a forced feeding or injection, and if the patient died, that was called fate, while if he recovered, the doctors took the praise.

I stopped there and drew a slow breath, because the rude comic tone of the pamphlet did not hide its anger at all. On the contrary, the laughter made the accusation feel sharper. It was not the voice of a scholar writing for a lecture room. It was the voice of a man who had walked through many wards, seen chains, beatings, fear, and neglect, and then gone out into the street to shout the truth in a form ordinary people could not ignore. As I read, I began to feel that Professor Masaki’s research had not begun in cold curiosity, but in rage.

The next section struck even harder. The singer said that what he had described

so far was only the edge of the river before the true hell, only the shallow water where one first put a foot in and trembled. The real cruelty, he claimed, lay not only inside the hospitals but outside them as well, in the villages, towns, and cities where the mad were hunted like animals. Men and women driven out by families, mocked by neighbors, stoned by children, beaten in the rain, frozen in the snow, and left to wander hungry under the bright sky—these too belonged to the same hell. Even the sun, the song said with bitter scorn, seemed to turn its face away and pretend not to see.

That part gave me a different kind of pain. The image of a mental patient shut in a room was terrible enough, but the image of one driven from house to house without shelter felt worse in another way. It suggested that the world itself had no place for such a person, neither inside walls nor outside them. I could not help thinking of myself then, though I still did not know who I was. If I had once been mad outside this hospital, had I too wandered under such a sky with no one to claim me. The thought passed through me like a cold wind, and I read on almost against my will.

The pamphlet then turned from pity to mockery again. It cried that modern people boasted of electric lights, gas lamps, trains, motorcars, and flying machines, yet in spite of all that bright material progress, the inner life of man had only grown darker. Men fought over money, women, rights, duties, rank, and success with every crooked trick they could invent. The world called this civilization, but the singer called it madness of a grander kind than anything seen in the locked wards. Those who were declared insane and shut away were, in his eyes, only the visible part of a much wider sickness spread over the entire earth.

Here I looked up at Wakabayashi for a moment, because I recognized in that thought the outline of what he had already told me: that there was no person on the surface of the earth who was wholly free from mental disorder. He stood beside the table with folded arms, watching me without speaking, and I lowered my eyes again at once. Even in the rough song of the pamphlet, I could already see the first shape of Masaki’s later science. The idea had not begun in abstract theory. It had begun in the sight of chains, mockery, exile, and the proud blindness

of ordinary society.

I turned another page. The singer now spoke of respectable gentlemen and ladies, of crowds standing about and listening with smiles, and then asked them to picture the famous heroes, great men, and geniuses of the world being led away by solemn white-clothed doctors, step by step, while the true fools looked on and built mountains of money and medals for themselves. The image was comic, but underneath it lay a dangerous suggestion. Perhaps the difference between the celebrated and the confined was not as certain as the public wished to believe. Perhaps one kind of madness won prizes while another was locked up.

That thought disturbed me more than I liked to admit. All morning I had been trying to divide the world into sane and insane, truth and delusion, doctor and patient, myself and the unknown man they believed me to be. Yet the pamphlet cut straight across those divisions and made them look childish. If Masaki truly believed such things, then his treatment of me and the young woman in the next room might not have been built upon ordinary mercy or ordinary law at all. It might have been built upon some larger, more terrible conviction that all human life moved within degrees of one common disorder. The room seemed quieter than before, and the open southern windows no longer felt bright.

The singer's voice then came back once more to the hospital and cried that the hearers still probably did not understand, because they had never seen such places with their own eyes. "Listen in order," he seemed to say. "Hear one thing after another, and by the end even you will have to admit it." The confidence of that challenge held me. It was the confidence not only of a satirist, but of a man who believed his evidence would force belief from the unwilling. I began to understand why Wakabayashi had said these documents were arranged so that one could follow the growth of Masaki's thought step by step.

By the time I reached the bottom of the next page, I had almost forgotten the room around me again. The chant had become a long drumbeat in my head, half laughter and half accusation, and behind it I could already feel some larger argument waiting to rise. This pamphlet was not the finished doctrine itself. It was the cry that came before doctrine, the public wound from which doctrine later

grew. Holding the red booklet open in both hands, I felt that I had begun to move at last along the path Masaki had laid down, and that every page after this would bring me nearer not only to his science, but to the lost and dangerous center of my own life.

Part 14

The next part of the pamphlet moved backward in time and said that the root of this living hell lay in what people called civilization itself. Medicine for the body, it declared, had advanced because the body could be opened, touched, measured, struck, listened to, and examined after death. If a doctor failed, the corpse itself might later reveal the truth. In that way error slowly became knowledge, and knowledge slowly became power. But the mind, the singer cried, could not be cut open in the same simple way, and because of that, the treatment of mental illness had remained in darkness while all other branches of medicine marched proudly forward.

He asked in mocking rhythm where exactly the doctor of madness could place his hand. Which pulse showed sorrow, which tongue revealed fear, which instrument could measure longing, hatred, or shame. X-rays could not expose false madness or true madness, and no glass tube could catch the shape of a thought. The mind could not be seen, heard, weighed, or placed on a dish, and yet people still talked about diagnosing it as if it were no more difficult than a broken arm. The singer laughed at that confidence and called it the greatest foolishness of modern learning. Reading those lines, I felt again the same unease I had felt all morning, because my own whole existence now hung on whether such impossible diagnosis could be trusted.

Then the pamphlet grew more savage. It said that once doctors admitted, even silently, that the true nature of mental illness could not be directly known, another absurd fact appeared at once. All over the world there still stood institutions with grand names, neat entrances, and learned men behind desks, taking in patients, charging fees, and speaking the language of exact science. If real diagnosis was

impossible, the singer asked, what kind of trade was this. Was it medicine, guesswork, or fraud. The rough humor of the question did not soften it at all. It only made it bite harder.

He answered his own question with brutal cheer. According to him, the trick was simple. By the time a troubled person arrived at such a hospital, the family had usually already decided there was something wrong, the officials had often stamped the needed papers, and the patient, whether wild or quiet, stood alone before experts who had every advantage. The doctors then looked at the outer behavior, listened to the family, opened a handbook, and chose a fitting name from among the many names already prepared. Once the label was attached, the rest followed almost automatically. The patient passed through the door, and the door closed behind him like the gate of hell.

That image struck me with painful force, because it came too near my own position. Had I too been named in such a manner, dropped into a category from a book while still protesting some truth no one wished to hear. The singer insisted that the greatest safety of this system lay in the fact that its errors were hard to expose. If a surgeon mistook one disease for another, the body might later show the mistake; but if a psychiatrist named a man wrongly, the man’s protest itself became further evidence against him. To cry, “I am not mad,” might only confirm the charge. I had already begun to see that logic working around me, and it filled me with a helpless anger I could not direct anywhere.

The pamphlet pushed onward from diagnosis to treatment. Here the mockery turned openly dark. The singer admitted that the age had improved somewhat, since modern hospitals did not always split skulls or burn the afflicted alive as earlier ages had done. Yet when one looked closely inside the wards, what did one see. Not instruments for healing the mind, but bars, chains, stone cells, restraint shirts, handcuffs, leg irons, and narrow boxes little better than torture machines. Against these, the true medicines seemed pitifully few: a sleeping drug for the sleepless, a calming drug for the noisy, a tube or injection for those who refused to eat, and after that, waiting.

If the patient recovered, the doctor claimed success. If the patient died, it was

said to be fate. This was written in such a joking street rhythm that I almost smiled once despite myself, but the smile died at once. There was something unbearable in the thought that misery might be managed in so casual a manner and yet still be covered by white coats, degrees, and the language of care. The room around me had become strangely tense. Even the open windows and bright southern light now seemed unable to soften what I was reading.

The next pages widened the accusation beyond hospitals again. The singer said that earlier ages had at least shown their cruelty openly. In times when science was weak, people had treated both bodily illness and madness with superstition, charms, prayers, and fear. Some mad people had been revered as touched by the divine, while others had been hunted as if possessed by demons or treated like dangerous beasts. Their heads were broken, their bodies burned, or they were buried like things no longer human. That, the singer said, had been the first lesson in the hell of madness.

But civilization, he claimed, had not erased that cruelty. It had only clothed it in better language. Old priests, judges, and village officials had given way to educated professionals, but the helpless person trapped beneath them remained helpless all the same. Worse still, once the label of madness became useful, clever and wicked people could turn it into a weapon. A rival, an inconvenient heir, a troublesome relative, or anyone whose removal brought profit might be whispered about, watched, denounced, and at last handed over to the machinery of confinement. In older times, the singer suggested, the plot might end in prison or execution. In the modern age, it might end in the hospital instead.

Here my hands grew cold around the pamphlet. I could not help thinking of the beautiful girl in the next room, of her broken cry that I had killed her on the night before our wedding, and of Wakabayashi's careful manner in presenting every fact to me as if he were both witness and judge. Had some part of the old family story, whatever it was, also passed through such hands. Was I the criminal, the victim, or both. The pamphlet gave me no answer, but it sharpened the edge of every question already inside me.

Then the song turned to the present age once more and addressed the educated

listener directly. “Go and read your books,” it seemed to say. “Look at the endless names of mental diseases in learned volumes, the rows of foreign terms and technical labels.” What certainty, it asked, stood behind those names. Often, according to the singer, the names were no more exact than calling a drinking man a crying drunkard, a laughing drunkard, or an angry drunkard, only now the labels wore the dignity of science. A man who set fires became a “fire-madman,” a man who stole a “stealing-madman,” a man overcome by desire a “desire-madman,” and so on. In that way the outer action was mistaken for the inner cause, and ignorance dressed itself up as classification.

I paused over that passage longer than I meant to, because it was both absurd and too believable. If the mind was truly as hidden as the pamphlet claimed, then naming its disorders from outward acts alone did seem childish. Yet hospitals, books, lectures, and authorities had been built upon such naming. I looked up once at Wakabayashi, wondering whether he felt the insult aimed at his whole profession, but he showed nothing except patient attention. Perhaps he believed these harsh pages were only the first rough cry of a theory that later became more exact. Perhaps he was waiting for me to see the same thing.

By the time I reached the end of that section, I had begun to understand the movement of Masaki’s thought more clearly. He was not arguing only that existing psychiatry was cruel. He was arguing that it was built on a false confidence about the mind itself, and that all the cruelty followed naturally from that falsehood. If one could not truly see the mind, one guessed; if one guessed, one labeled; if one labeled, one confined; and once confinement became ordinary, abuses of every kind could hide inside it. The red pamphlet trembled a little in my hands, whether from my own fatigue or from some deeper inward shaking, I could not tell. But I knew that I could not stop reading now, because the road laid down in these pages was leading toward something much larger than satire, and that larger thing was drawing nearer to my own lost name.

Part 15

I read on, and the pamphlet drove its accusation into still darker ground. It said that once such false certainty about madness had become an accepted part of society, the hospital could serve not only as a place of confinement, but as a weapon. A troublesome relative, a dangerous witness, an inconvenient heir, a preacher, a scholar, or any man who spoke too boldly against power might, under the right conditions, be seized and hidden away. The singer described rich men, officials, and their helpers as using doctors the way earlier tyrants had used prisons, only now the victim could be called insane and so lose even the right to defend himself. The thought was so terrible because it seemed at once exaggerated and entirely possible.

The pamphlet went on to describe such scenes in the same laughing street rhythm as before, and that laughter made the horror worse. Men walking alone could be thrown down, drugged, tied, and carried into a waiting car under the excuse that they had become dangerous to themselves or others. Once inside the machinery of confinement, the singer said, all ordinary protections fell away. No public trial was needed, no open sentence, no clear accusation, because the patient had already been moved into a world where his own words could be used against him. From there, the length of confinement, the degree of suffering, and even the manner of death might depend less on justice than on the wishes of those who had arranged it.

Reading that, I could not stop myself from thinking again of my own locked room and of the total emptiness in my mind when I woke there. Had I too been brought into such a place by a hand stronger than truth. If so, had the same hand also placed the young woman next door beside me, knowing what her cries would do to my heart. The pamphlet did not tell me that this had happened. Yet it placed the possibility before me in such vivid form that I felt for a moment as though the floor itself were no longer stable under my chair.

Then the song turned from conspiracy back to spectacle. It spoke of great men, famous men, men of genius, and heirs to proud families being led away by solemn attendants in white, while clever villains stood behind them smiling over money, medals, and private advantage. What the public saw, it suggested, was only the

outer procession. Behind that procession might stand greed, fear, revenge, inheritance, politics, or shame. In that sense, the singer cried, the hell of madness was not only for the truly mad. It was also a hidden road by which the strong could swallow the weak.

After that the pamphlet widened again and became almost like a map of descending circles. There was, it said, first the hell of false kindness, where a person was spoken to gently while his freedom was taken away. Then came the hell of contempt and ridicule, where every struggle and protest only made him look smaller in the eyes of the world. Below that lay the hell of abuse, where rough hands, indifference, and habit did their daily work. Still lower lay the hell of silent killing, whether by neglect, exhaustion, or means no one outside could ever clearly prove. And beneath even that, the singer hinted, there was a final darkness for which language itself had no proper name.

That image held me longer than some of the louder parts. A person could be destroyed step by step, not always by one great act of violence, but by passing from one level of humiliation to the next until nothing remained. I thought then of the girl in Room Six, not as I had first seen her sleeping like a doll, but as I had heard her in the night, striking the wall with her bandaged hands and begging to be believed. If she and I were truly tied together by some lost crime, then perhaps she too had fallen through such circles of pity, disbelief, and confinement. The whole building around me seemed to grow heavier.

Yet the singer did not end with accusation alone. Having shown the hell as broadly as he could, he finally declared that only one true remedy existed. If false confinement, false diagnosis, and cruel secrecy were made possible by narrow cells, chains, locked rooms, and the authority of fear, then one must create a place built on the opposite principle. There should be, he said, a vast hospital in a place of good air, good scenery, and complete separation, perhaps even on an island, where patients could be received freely, without prison methods, and watched under open conditions. No irons, no sleeves without arms, no stone boxes, no knife or drug as the first answer—rather a wide field, sunlight, movement, and an entirely new science of the mind.

Here the phrase “liberation treatment” began to sound less like a boast and more like a challenge. The pamphlet called such a place a pasture for the mentally ill, even a kind of paradise compared with the ordinary hells of confinement, yet beneath the comic words I could hear a fierce seriousness. The singer believed that only in freedom could the real laws of mental disorder be observed. The old hospital hid the truth behind restraint, force, and fear; the new hospital would reveal it by letting the patients live under the eye of nature itself. I remembered what Wakabayashi had said earlier, that the whole earth was for Masaki a great ward for the liberated mad, and I began to see how that strange idea had grown from this earlier cry.

After proposing this great new hospital, the pamphlet shifted once more into self-mockery. The singer described himself as a shabby wandering beggar, beating a wooden drum in the street, asking for support with a proposal so large that ordinary ears would naturally take it for madness. He admitted that people laughed at his face, his clothes, his strange language, and his impossible demand for huge sums of money. But then he answered that if he himself now seemed half-crazed, it was because he had looked too deeply into the suffering he described. Having seen that living hell, he could no longer go back to ordinary respectable speech. He had, in a sense, been infected by pity.

Those lines moved me more than I expected. Until then I had been reading the pamphlet as attack, ridicule, and theory, but here I felt the human wound underneath it. This was not only a plan for reform and not only a scholar’s argument dressed as street song. It was the cry of a man who had let himself be changed by what he had seen and who now no longer cared whether the crowd called him a fool, a fraud, or a madman, so long as the hidden truth reached the public ear. For the first time that morning, I felt something like respect for Professor Masaki that was not mixed entirely with fear.

The final pages pressed that appeal outward. The singer begged the listeners to take the printed pamphlet home, read it, speak of it to neighbors, and spread the rumor of this hidden hell until public opinion itself rose up and forced action. He even included a card, inviting anyone interested to write back for further

explanation, for stories of hereditary madness, family curses, strange mental disasters, and other materials that might help the cause. Out of his own wealth, he said, he was ready to devote a great sum as the base for such an institution, if only society would do the rest. I could feel in these last lines the curious mixture that seemed to belong only to Masaki: mockery, showmanship, scholarship, pity, and enormous will all tied together in one knot.

At last the chant ended in a rough farewell, asking pardon for delaying the passerby and urging him never again to see a mad person, a story of madness, or a news report of mental suffering without remembering this hidden hell beneath modern life. I lowered the red pamphlet very slowly, and for a moment the room swam before my eyes. Then, beneath the pamphlet in the packet, I saw the next document waiting. Its title was printed far more directly: *The Earth's Surface Is a Great Open Ward for the Liberation Treatment of Madmen.* Even before I turned the page, I knew that here the laughter of the street singer would give way to a colder and more terrible form of the same idea, and with a strange reluctance mixed with hunger, I began to read again.

Part 16

I turned the page and found that the next document was written in the form of a newspaper interview. The laughter of the red pamphlet had not vanished, but it had changed shape. Here Professor Masaki was no longer beating a wooden drum in the street. He was speaking in his own room to a reporter, and the tone was calmer, more public, and yet in some ways even more dangerous, because the mockery now wore the clothes of reason.

The article said that the new "liberation treatment ward" behind the psychiatric building had been under construction since early spring and that its true purpose had been kept secret until now. It had finally become known, however, that the whole place was being established at Masaki's own expense. Asked about it, he replied that people were foolishly calling the method his original invention and praising it as something wildly new, but that this was not the truth at all. In reality,

he said, the whole surface of the earth had long been one vast liberation ward for madmen. The sun, he declared, might be called its director, the air its nurse, and the soil its provider of food.

At first that sounded like another joke, but he refused to leave it at the level of play. He said that his entire study of mental illness had begun from that one observation. Human beings, he argued, were quick to point at any body that was bent, lacking, excessive, or unlike their own and to mark it as damaged. In exactly the same way, they found any mind whose workings were not fully under conscious control, or whose desires, fears, or thoughts were too weak or too strong, and stamped that person as mad. Society then gave that person a special treatment full of fear, contempt, pity, or cruelty, as if the “normal” people themselves were complete.

Masaki denied that they were complete in any such way. From the standpoint of strict and fair science, he said, every human being on the earth was mentally incomplete. Some were twisted in habit, some in desire, some in thought, some in temper, some in memory, and some in the balance between feeling and will. The only difference, according to him, was that such defects could not usually be seen by the naked eye as easily as a bent limb or a missing feature. In that sense, the world was already crowded to bursting with people who stood only fifty steps, or at most a hundred, away from the officially mad.

He then gave common examples with almost cheerful cruelty. A man swore again and again that he would give up some shameful habit and yet could not do it. Another knew that anger would ruin him and still fell into rage before he could stop himself. Some wept when they wished to remain calm, some trembled, some forgot, some obsessed over one small matter, some lived by fixed habits they could not break, and some sank into strange cravings or manias that everyone around them quietly accepted as personality. To Masaki, all these were signs that the head did not fully obey its owner, and once seen in that light, the difference between the respectable and the confined began to collapse.

What made the passage so disturbing was that it was not entirely absurd. Even while reading, I could not help testing the argument against my own experience.

That morning I had already learned how useless it was to insist, “I am not mad,” when I could not even recall my own name and when fear, laughter, silence, and terror had taken hold of me one after another without my control. Yet Masaki did not use such examples to condemn humanity. He claimed, rather, that since human beings were born and trained into such weakness, the true shame lay in the way so-called gentlemen and ladies despised those whose weakness had become too visible.

He pushed the idea farther with one of those coarse comparisons that seemed to delight him. To distinguish clearly between ordinary people and the mad, he said, was almost like trying to distinguish between criminals inside prison walls and those still walking outside. The ordinary world contained milder forms of the same crookedness, greed, obsession, and failure of self-command. It was only that the brick walls had not yet closed around those people. If this sounded like an insult, he admitted, then so be it. Fact remained fact, and no real science of mental illness could begin until one accepted such an uncomfortable truth.

From there the article returned to the earth itself as a vast ward. The sun, Masaki said, was carrying on a great silent treatment over all these countless mental patients spread across the globe. Over long stretches of time, human beings had dimly begun to realize their own dangerous tendencies and had therefore built religion, morality, law, and all the red and blue political creeds by which they begged one another not to go too far. His own hospital plan, he suggested, was only a small model of that larger natural process. He wished, standing in for the sun in a modest way, to attempt a drugless liberation treatment based on the recognition that humanity as a whole already lived within one enormous open ward.

The reporter then asked what kind of patients he intended to admit. Masaki answered that he could not yet say, because the place would be used for the experimental testing of his new theories and would require patients suitable to those theories. He said he meant first to rebuild the whole study of madness from the base upward, beginning with the action of the brain and overturning the old superstition that the brain was the place where thought occurred. From there he

would clarify the hereditary action of mind reflected in that new brain theory, and from the resulting mental anatomy, physiology, and pathology he would choose especially clear and interesting cases for treatment by means of his own system of mental suggestion and stimulation. What sorts of specimens would gather there, and what kind of disturbance would begin, he said with laughter, even he himself could not fully predict.

Then he ended with a declaration so savage that I read it twice. People must not imagine, he said, that because he was conducting the experiment, he himself stood outside all mental abnormality in perfect peace. Just as the sun goes on blazing over its immense ward without pause, burning and burning everything beneath it, so once he had begun the study of madness he could not stop, no matter who passed by, no matter what punishment or disgrace might follow. Perhaps all the other madmen on earth might recover, he said, but his own mental distortion would never fully heal. When I reached the end of that article, I lowered the sheet and sat still for a moment, because for the first time I felt that Masaki was not merely studying madness from a distance. He had willingly entered the circle himself and was speaking from inside it.

Beneath that interview lay the next document, printed under an even stranger title: *Absolute Detective Fiction: The Brain Is Not the Place That Thinks*. It began again as a reporter's conversation with Masaki, but this time the subject was his great brain thesis, the one he had not yet fully published. In the opening exchange he laughed at the university authorities, mocked the fear of scandal, offered cigars to the reporter, and suddenly asked whether the man read detective stories. Then, with growing delight, he declared that the finest detective fiction was nothing less than a sport of brains chasing brains, and that his own theory went beyond even that. What he meant to describe, he said, was an absolute scientific detective story in which the brain itself pursued the brain itself. I felt a fresh chill at those words, because the whole morning had already begun to seem like exactly such a chase, and with reluctant attention I turned the page to read what came next.

Part 17

The article opened with Masaki in a joking mood. He laughed at the idea that he was hiding his brain theory out of fear and said he only wished to add a few more points before publishing it in full. Then he complained, half in play and half in irritation, that his earlier remarks about the earth as a great open ward had already caused trouble because newspapers had printed them too boldly. University officials, he said, became nervous whenever he said anything large or strange, because the school was already rumored to be full of dangerous dreamers. Even so, he added, this new theory was far more explosive than the earlier one, and if it were properly understood, it would cause a much greater uproar.

The reporter promised not to print too soon, and Masaki, after first teasing him, finally agreed to speak. He offered the man a fine cigar and said that this was both the price of hearing his magnificent ideas and the fee for delaying publication. Then, without warning, he turned the talk back to detective stories. Ordinary detective fiction, he said, was only a game in which one brain chased another through tricks, false clues, confusion, and sudden reversals. His own version was absolute detective fiction of the highest order, because in it the brain itself chased the brain itself, and the whole trick that would astonish mankind was at the same time the very theme of his brain theory. He laughed loudly while saying this, but the more I read, the less it sounded like mere play.

He then warned the reporter that such a story might remain unreadable to anyone still thinking in the old way. The puzzle, he said, would be solved from the beginning and yet still remain invisible to the reader, who would feel only a whirl of illusion, confusion, and wrong ideas unless the reader first broke free from the common belief that the brain thinks. The style was full of boasting, laughter, and showmanship, but under all of it I could already feel the movement of a serious argument. Masaki was preparing, like a stage magician, to strike at what he believed to be the greatest hidden error in modern life. I found that I was holding the paper tighter than before.

He began by saying that the true subject of any supreme detective story about the mind must be the brain itself. What greater mystery could there be, he asked,

than the thing inside the skull that ruled everything and yet remained least understood. Modern science, according to him, had treated the brain as a great king, placed high above the body, drawing the best blood and nourishment from all other organs, commanding every movement and every act, and standing as the center of all culture. Yet after all the praise, all the study, all the confidence, one brutal fact remained. No one truly knew what the brain itself was doing.

That was his first great blow. He said that if one examined the matter strictly, all honest research led at last to the same answer: “We do not know.” Scientists spoke as if the brain were the seat of thought, but this, he said, was only a habit of speech hardened into belief. Worse still, he claimed that the brain itself had somehow tricked human beings into not seeing the weakness of that belief. It had filled the world with sciences, inventions, theories, and objects, while keeping hidden the truth about its own real function. In his image, the brain was like a monster sitting inside the skull and preventing all other brains from discovering what it truly was.

He mocked the common certainty of the world with savage delight. Everyone, he said, from the greatest scholar to the simplest laborer, lived as if it were obvious that the brain thought. Radios, aircraft, mathematics, fashion, razors, politics, poison gas, and music were all credited to that one lump of matter weighing no more than a little over a kilogram. Anatomy seemed to support the belief, because the nerves of the whole body ran toward the brain in a wonderfully ordered system, and it was easy to conclude from this that the center must also be the thinker. That conclusion, he admitted, looked natural. But natural, he said, was not the same as true.

Here he introduced the hero of his “detective story,” and I felt my heart give a strange jump. The hero was a brilliant young man of about twenty, beautiful, gifted, and yet burdened with a dangerous inherited mental disorder. Soon after entering the university, this young man had fallen into illness, lost his clear self, and then, upon partly recovering, discovered that he could not remember his home, his parents, or even his own name. Masaki gave this young man the mocking title “Dr. Fool Blank,” but behind the joke the figure stood out with frightening force.

I did not want to connect him with myself, yet the details already cut too close.

According to Masaki, this youth spent day and night walking the stone floor of his room, asking what his brain had been doing until then, what it had been thinking, and whether it ruled his body or the body ruled it. He would scratch at his uncut hair, strike the back of his own head with his fist, and circle the room without rest. Then, when the fit rose higher, he would stop suddenly, stare around him, and act as if he were pulling some invisible thing out of his own head and throwing it to the floor. After that he would begin giving a speech about the brain, full of gestures and excitement, until at last he would stamp upon that invisible object and collapse unconscious for many hours. When he woke, the whole cycle would begin again.

I read those lines with a tightening throat. The article treated the young man almost like a comic actor, yet behind the comedy lay something horribly intimate. Even the room of stone and the repeated rising and falling of consciousness felt too close to my own condition for comfort. I could not tell whether Masaki had written the scene with pity, admiration, cruelty, or all three at once. Perhaps he himself had not known. What mattered was that he presented this afflicted youth as a detective of the highest order, one who by his very disease had been pushed toward a truth the healthy world could not reach.

Then came the speech of this young “doctor.” In his delusion, or revelation, he imagined himself standing at a great crossing in a crowded city, stopping traffic and ordering all people to halt—gentlemen, ladies, workers, modern girls, officials, thieves, policemen, everyone. They were all in danger, he cried, because they moved through life trusting the brain and using it every moment to judge, decide, desire, avoid, and pursue. That was the danger itself. Modern humanity, he shouted, was made up of fools who still believed the brain thought, and on the strength of that one great misunderstanding had built a whole civilization rushing madly toward confusion.

The speech grew wilder and more serious at the same time. The young man declared that the “thinking brain” was humanity’s greatest enemy, a demon lodged in the skull, a false ruler claiming divine power. It said of itself, “I think, I create,

I judge, I rule," and on that claim it had trained human beings to worship intellect, speed, calculation, and material success. Under its rule, men had driven out God, then driven out nature, and then emptied the world of love, shame, loyalty, tenderness, conscience, and honest feeling, dismissing all such things as irrational. In their place, he said, the brain had built a world of appetite, vanity, machinery, chemical pleasures, competition, and spiritual emptiness.

What struck me most was that the speech did not stop at moral complaint. It pressed toward a scientific accusation. The young man cried that this supposed ruler of the body had explained everything except itself. It had given names, systems, and research to all other organs, all other diseases, all other functions, and yet had left the brain's own true activity in darkness. Humanity had built sciences about the body in every direction, but the essential questions of mind, memory, madness, hallucination, and mental disease remained blocked as if by a hand inside the skull. That blockage, he argued, was itself proof that the common picture of the brain was false. When I reached that point, I felt a chill run through me, because even I, who understood almost nothing, could feel the sharpness of the trap he was setting.

Part 18

After that, the article pressed the young man's argument into a new shape. He cried that if the brain truly thought, remembered, judged, and felt in the full sense people claimed, then the science of the brain ought by now to be the clearest and strongest of all sciences. Instead, whenever one asked what the brain itself was finally doing, the answer dissolved into uncertainty. That uncertainty, he said, was not a small gap in knowledge, but the central wound in modern thought. The king of the body had explained every servant except himself.

From there he turned suddenly toward a new idea, and the movement of the piece became sharper. Perhaps, he suggested, the brain had been given a task altogether different from the one people worshiped it for. Perhaps it was not the office where thought was born, but something more like a great exchange station,

receiving signals, passing them on, and arranging urgent traffic between the countless cells of the body. The true sources of awareness, impulse, and hidden intention might then lie spread through the whole living organism rather than gathered in one proud lump inside the skull. If that were so, the whole modern picture of mind would have to be rebuilt from the ground upward.

This was where his mockery became especially fierce. He said that people strained, twisted, and tortured their heads in the belief that harder thinking meant forcing the brain to labor more and more, as if one could pile every duty of the state onto a telephone exchange and still expect it to function smoothly. They bent over desks, gripped their hair, frowned, and squeezed their temples, all while commanding the poor brain to do work that did not belong to it. Then, when confusion, fatigue, distortion, or mental disaster followed, they called the result mysterious. In his view, it was not mysterious at all. It was only the natural collapse produced by overloading the wrong organ with the wrong kind of duty.

As I read this, I found myself touching the back of my own head almost without knowing it. The description struck too near my own state for comfort, because I had already beaten my skull with my fist that morning as if memory might be forced out of it by blows. If Masaki's young "doctor" was right, then such effort was not only useless, but foolish and dangerous. The brain, in that view, was not a hidden wise ruler refusing to answer me. It was perhaps only a troubled station already overworked and near breakdown. The thought was absurd, and yet it had a bitter kind of force.

The article then explained what happened when this supposed exchange station became overheated or weakened. Once the brain's normal relay function lost balance, the countless kinds of awareness living throughout the body could begin to lose orderly contact with one another. Small fragmentary currents of sensation, memory, habit, fear, or desire would then start moving freely, each following its own path without proper coordination. In mild cases, the result might be wandering thought, half-conscious drifting, or strange emotional weather passing through the body. In more serious cases, those loosened currents might whirl together into hallucination, illusion, or distorted ideas so vivid that they took on

the force of reality.

He insisted that the evidence for this stood in plain sight. Human beings already knew what happened when a person was exhausted, feverish, terrified, intoxicated, or driven too long without rest. Things were seen that were not there. Sounds were heard out of empty air. A harmless object became terrifying, or a beloved face grew strange, or a fixed idea would not loosen even when reason struck against it again and again. According to the article, such states were not accidents falling from nowhere. They were signs that the body's many buried forms of consciousness had begun to move without proper agreement.

Then came the example that held me most strongly. He wrote of somnambulism, or wandering in a dream-state, as one of the most cutting proofs against the old faith in the brain. During such attacks, he said, a person might do things far beyond what his ordinary waking self could manage. He might solve difficulties, show unexpected skill, perform delicate acts, move with marvelous accuracy, or reveal a kind of intelligence that astonished everyone watching. And yet when morning came, the same man might wake dull, ordinary, and entirely unable to remember a single moment of what he had done.

That example entered me like cold metal. Ever since I had woken in Ward Seven, I had been trapped between two impossible facts: I felt myself sane enough to question everything, yet I possessed almost no past at all. If a person could act brilliantly in one state and know nothing of it in another, then the ground under my own identity was far more unstable than I had wanted to admit. Perhaps the person I called "I" was not a single uninterrupted being at all. Perhaps other layers of action, memory, and desire had already lived through me and fallen away before this morning began. I did not want that idea, but I could not push it aside.

The article, delighted by this cruelty to common sense, pressed on. Experts who worshiped the thinking brain, it said, were left helpless before such cases and could only cry out that the performances of somnambulists were beyond what any human head ought to be able to produce. But that cry, according to the young "doctor," only showed the weakness of their assumptions. They had mistaken one visible office for the whole invisible government. Because of that mistake, every

remarkable action performed outside ordinary waking consciousness looked like a miracle, when in truth it was merely a release of powers usually hidden under the brain’s narrow routine control.

From there the argument broadened into a darker vision of civilization itself. If modern life endlessly demanded calculation, speed, ambition, and nervous strain, then it was not surprising that more and more people should drift toward breakdown, dream-wandering, obsession, false perception, and mental division. Society called these things abnormal because it wished to preserve its pride, yet society itself was producing the very overload that made them common. The age had built a culture that worshiped the head while quietly driving the head toward collapse. Seen in that light, madness was not only a private disaster. It was also a social consequence.

I could now see why Masaki had linked this theory with detective fiction. The mystery was not simply who had done some hidden deed, but which layer of a human being had acted, which buried current had risen, and which false belief about the brain had blinded everyone to the truth. Under such a system, crime, desire, inherited fear, wandering consciousness, and memory loss could all become parts of one larger pattern. The more I read, the more the room around me seemed to close inward, not with darkness this time, but with explanation. Every new page appeared to bring me nearer to a place where my own condition would no longer look like a random horror, but like evidence in someone else’s terrible theory.

At the end of that section, the young “doctor” seemed almost to laugh in triumph. Let the world go on saying that the brain thinks, he cried, and let scholars continue forcing onto it every office of memory, feeling, judgment, and will. The result would be the same as always: more blindness, more contradiction, and more fear when the human being suddenly behaved in ways no official science could explain. But if one began instead from the thought that the whole body remembered, the whole body suffered, and the whole body dreamed, then the path toward a new science might at last open. When I lowered the sheet after reading that last line, my fingers had tightened on the paper so hard that they ached, and I

knew that the next document would carry me still deeper into the same abyss.

Part 19

The article then came down from grand theory to smaller and more painful examples. It mentioned what people called “crying stroke” and “laughing stroke,” conditions in which a person, no matter what he truly felt, could express almost everything only by crying or only by laughing. Ordinary science, the paper said, explained this by claiming that most of the brain had been damaged while only the part for one emotion remained alive. That answer, Masaki’s young “doctor” declared, was not proof at all. It was only a forced explanation made necessary by the old belief that the brain itself thought and felt. In other words, once people had accepted that false beginning, they were trapped into defending it with weaker and weaker inventions.

The same weakness, he said, appeared in every question that touched mind and madness. Why did hallucinations appear. How did memory vanish and then return. What exactly changed in early dementia, or in obsession, or in dream-wandering, or in sudden emotional storms. On all these points, he claimed, the world’s science still moved in darkness, speaking grandly while understanding little. Yet the strangest thing of all was that almost no one felt the full shame of this ignorance. People had grown so used to the brain’s authority that they accepted its silence about itself as if that were natural.

He cried out again that this was the great comedy and tragedy of the brain. The brain had arranged careful sciences for the rest of the body—anatomy, physiology, pathology, heredity, and the many branches of healing—yet when it came to the organ that supposedly ruled everything, it left the most important questions still buried in fog. Universities were full of specialists in every small disease of flesh, bone, tooth, skin, ear, and eye, but nowhere, he said, had the true sciences of mental anatomy, mental physiology, mental pathology, and mental heredity yet been established in the form they deserved. For that reason, the treatment of mental illness remained clumsy, partial, and blind. Reading this, I understood

more clearly why Wakabayashi had said Masaki believed he was rebuilding the whole field from the ground upward.

The article then changed direction again and made a historical leap so strange that I nearly stopped reading. The young “doctor” declared that the brain’s long record of crimes against humanity could be reduced to five great acts. First, it had made man think himself greater than God. Second, it had driven man to rebel against great nature. Third, it had pushed humanity back toward the state of beasts. Fourth, it had driven mankind into a hollow world ruled only by matter and instinct. Fifth, it had finally set all humanity sliding down the slope of self-destruction. The list sounded mad, theatrical, and yet it was delivered with such certainty that I could not dismiss it as mere clowning.

To support this wild accusation, the article invented—or perhaps believed in—a strange old history of science. It spoke of a great Western scholar, the first man to discover the brain clearly inside a human corpse and to wonder what such a gray coiled mass might be for. He stared, so the story said, at the dead brain and then at the living brain inside his own skull, asking again and again what role such a thing truly played. Was it a tank for nourishment, a digestive organ, a storehouse for tears and mucus, or something else entirely. The more he thought, the more exhausted and confused he became, until the inside of his own head began to ache. At that very point, tricked by the pain produced in his own skull, he leaped to the false conclusion that the brain must be the place that thought.

From there the tale became still more savage in its irony. The scholar, now certain he had found the source of thought itself, cut the corpse to pieces, traced the nerves running through the whole body toward the brain, and ran out into the street crying that he had solved the secret of life. God, he declared, was no longer needed, because consciousness came from the chemical action of this lump of matter. The brain was the true lord, the true maker, the true power inside the living body. The crowd, already tired of old religious corruption, received this announcement with joy, and from that moment, the article suggested, the great mistake of modern civilization began in earnest.

Once humanity accepted the brain as its new god, the paper said, one

consequence followed after another. Men invented weapons more easily, medicines more boldly, machines more quickly, and means of travel and communication that made the world narrower and more restless. They filled the night with artificial light and drove away the stars. They shut themselves in houses of iron and stone, breathed gas and electric air, and painted, perfumed, stimulated, drugged, excited, and exhausted themselves until unnatural life seemed normal. Alcohol, nicotine, opium, sleeping drugs, love drugs, poisons, and every artificial pleasure became part of culture. The article described all this not as progress, but as the brain training humanity to depend on the unnatural.

It did not stop there. Having driven out God and then driven out nature, the "thinking brain," according to the article, next drove out the natural feelings that allowed human beings to live together. Love of parents, love between brothers and sisters, sexual loyalty, shame, sincerity, duty, gratitude, conscience, and fellow feeling were all pushed aside as unreasonable or inconvenient in a strictly material world. In their place, said the young "doctor," there rose a thin, selfish, nervous civilization full of instinct, vanity, competition, and spiritual emptiness. Humanity, proud of its clever head, drifted farther and farther toward exhaustion and inward collapse. By the time I reached that point, I no longer knew whether I was reading science, satire, prophecy, or a mad sermon.

Yet even in that confusion, I could feel the structure of the argument holding firm. If the brain had falsely claimed the whole kingdom of mind for itself, then every error of modern life could be retold as part of its long tyranny. That was why the article kept returning to the image of a demon coiled inside the skull, ruling by deception while pretending to be wisdom itself. It was ridiculous, but it was also powerful, because the image turned abstract theory into something I could almost see. More than once I found myself touching my own head again, as if that hidden coiled ruler might answer under my fingers. Of course it did not.

The final section of that portion returned once more to the central puzzle. If the brain truly could think everything, explain everything, and create everything, why had it left the study of itself in such darkness until now. Why had scholars piled up glittering sciences and brilliant inventions across the earth while failing to

solve the one question nearest to their own skulls. The article did not answer this modestly. It answered with triumph, saying that such blindness was itself proof of the brain's trick. I lowered the page for a moment and sat motionless, because the argument, however wild, was beginning to close around me from all sides, and I felt with growing dread that somewhere in the next pages that same theory would reach out and lay its hand directly upon my own forgotten life.

Part 20

I lifted the page again and found that the article was not yet done with its mockery. The young "doctor" now declared that if people truly wished to understand the hidden workings of mind, they must first learn three simple rules, as simple, he said, as the rules of a telephone exchange. The brain, in this image, was not a proud ruler but only a switching office, passing messages from the countless cells of the body to one another. If one accepted that, then many strange mental events that had long seemed impossible would become almost laughably clear. His tone was playful, but the confidence behind it was fierce.

The first rule, in effect, was that whatever message reached us through the brain's ordinary switching must be believed and remembered as fact, even if it later turned out to be false. The second rule was the opposite: anything not switched through that ordinary channel might fail to become fact for us at all, even if we ourselves had done it with our own hands. Thus dreams, half-waking states, and forgotten actions could slip away like smoke. The third rule was the most important and the most terrible. When the brain's switching function broke down or fell asleep too deeply, some isolated awareness or impulse in the body could cut loose from the rest, act independently, and even guide the whole person for a time without the brain's usual control.

Reading that, I felt a strong pressure in my chest, because the rule seemed built for my own case. It offered, in one cold gesture, an explanation for hallucination, sleepwalking, and those frightening conditions in which a person later remembers nothing of what he has done. The article gave examples with cruel enjoyment. A

man might laugh without reason because the “laughing current” had slipped free and outrun every other feeling. Another might cry in the same blind way. One might act, speak, move, choose, and even commit some deed during deep abnormal sleep, while the waking self afterward stood empty and innocent before the world. The paper treated all this as a simple matter of switching error, but to me it felt like the opening of a pit.

The young “doctor” then turned from disease to daily life and claimed that modern people were already half trapped by such errors. They tired their brains with thought beyond measure, overloaded the delicate exchange station, and then wondered when false perceptions, nervous exhaustion, and strange drifting states followed. In heavy cities, he said, people lived so fast and with such constant strain that they were almost always near these half-broken conditions. The result was not only clinical madness, but the endless smaller disturbances of modern life: empty fears, fixed ideas, false impressions, sudden inner collapses, and whole populations living one step away from nervous ruin. The more he wrote, the more I felt he was not only attacking psychiatry but attacking the whole age.

After that the article shifted again and brought in a lecture scene. Professor Masaki himself appeared, standing before students and explaining that the human brain acted like a great reflecting sphere, gathering and uniting the countless small awarenesses that moved among the body’s innumerable living cells. Personality, habit, desire, and even the ordinary balance called sanity were, in this view, only the temporary harmony of inherited psychological currents brought into one focus by this reflective function. If one strong inherited tendency grew too sharp, too tired, or too isolated, it might slip free from the whole and begin acting by itself. Madness then was not a spirit entering from outside, but one current of inherited life escaping the common order and running wild.

He gave the example of love carried too far. A woman, inheriting a mind that could cling too deeply, might fix her whole being on one man until the “loving” part of her mental life became exhausted, detached, and turned into its own independent wandering force. Then her whole world would fill with his image, his name, and the desire to reach him, until ordinary judgment was pushed aside.

Masaki, at least as the article presented him, claimed that many forms of obsession, mania, and madness were nothing more than such released currents moving without the balancing control of the whole. The thought was ghastly in its simplicity. One did not need demons if one already carried enough ancestral force within one's own flesh.

Then came the case that struck me hardest of all. Masaki described a certain young man, not yet fully twenty, who had passed the university entrance examination with the highest rank and soon after fallen into inherited sleepwalking illness. During one attack, this youth had strangled his bride on the night before their wedding. During an earlier attack, he had even killed his own mother. Yet when awake he seemed mild, gentle, almost too delicate to harm a fly, and remembered nothing of those acts. Worse still, after entering the hospital and undergoing treatment, he began wandering about in a state of broken memory, striking his own head and muttering that something must be wrong there, then repeating Masaki's lectures back almost word for word. As I read this, my hands tightened so hard on the pages that they shook.

The article spoke of this youth with cruel amusement and scholarly interest at once. It said that because he had been cut off from his former life, his present attention moved in a strange free space, and for that reason he sometimes remembered new impressions with inhuman precision even while lacking the ordinary thread of personal identity. Students, according to the article, laughed when Masaki presented him, and the young man, in shame and confusion, ran out of the lecture hall. After that, the reporter's piece ended in one more burst of grand boasting. The "absolute scientific detective story" had shown, Masaki said, how the brain could be chased, cornered, and symbolically thrown down to the earth by a higher understanding of mind. Then, in a final comic note, the reporter added that perhaps the whole dizzy discussion had owed something to the cigar Masaki had forced on him.

I lowered the document very slowly and sat without moving. Even if the style was theatrical, even if the article laughed too loudly at its own ideas, one fact now stood before me with terrible clarity. Somewhere inside these pages was a portrait

of a young man who resembled me too closely to be chance. The lost name, the broken memory, the wedding night crime, the restless hand striking the head, all of it had already passed too near my own condition. I did not yet dare say, even to myself, that the portrait was mine. But I could no longer pretend that these documents concerned only abstract theories and strangers.

Beneath that article lay the next text, and the moment I saw its title I felt the air in the room change. It was written in larger grave letters: *The Dream of the Fetus*. Unlike the mocking newspaper pieces before it, this document began with short severe notes, almost like a scientific warning. It said that the human fetus should be used as the representative of all other living embryos, and that the endless references, examples, and supporting materials from religion, science, and art would be omitted or only briefly touched. Even before reading the first sentence, I could feel that I had passed out of satire and into the central chamber of Masaki's thought.

Then I began. The paper declared, with complete seriousness, that during the ten months in the mother's womb, the human fetus sees a dream. That dream, it said, is like a vast moving picture in which the fetus itself is both witness and main actor, and in which the whole process of evolution is lived again from within. It begins with the life of the earliest single-celled ancestor and passes through unimaginable ages of disaster, struggle, destruction, survival, and change, until the chain reaches the fetus's own parents and nearest forebears. Not only that, but the paper claimed that the crimes, desires, fears, and harsh experiences of those ancestors also appear in the dream as if they were the direct present actions of the fetus itself. When I read that last thought, a coldness spread through my whole body, because I felt at once that I had arrived at the very heart of the abyss.

Part 21

I read on with a feeling almost like fever. The paper said, in an entirely serious tone, that the unborn child spends the ten months in the mother's body watching and living through an immeasurable dream. It is not a small private dream, not a

few broken images floating through sleep, but a vast moving picture in which the fetus itself is the witness, the actor, and the sufferer. In that dream, the whole story of life appears again from the beginning, not as dry knowledge, but as direct experience. The earliest living forms, the strange plants and beasts of ages before human history, and the unimaginable disasters that destroyed them all rise and pass before the unborn child as if they were happening in the present moment.

The paper then pushed the idea farther and made it much more terrible. After those earliest scenes of life and destruction, it said, the dream does not stop, but continues through the long generations of primitive humanity and then through the direct line of the fetus's own ancestors, all the way down to the child's present parents. Nor does it show only harmless facts. It shows, according to the paper, the fierce struggle for life, the many desires that drove human beings, the crimes they hid, the cruelties they committed, the secrets they carried to the grave, and the states of mind through which such deeds were handed on. All of this, the paper insisted, is experienced by the fetus not as history, but as its own immediate inner life.

Then came the part that seemed half science and half nightmare. The paper said that this unbelievable claim could be supported both directly and indirectly by two great mysteries, one taken from embryology and the other from the strange nature of dreams. It began with the first of these. When a human embryo first appears in the mother's body, it said, that beginning form is nothing more than a single round cell, the same kind of first form once shared by the earliest ancestors of all living things. Soon that one cell divides into two, then four, then eight, then sixteen, thirty-two, sixty-four, and onward without number, while still remaining one living being.

According to the paper, this multiplication is not merely growth in size. It is a repetition, in correct order, of the long upward movement by which the line of ancestors rose from the smallest one-celled life to the present human form. First the embryo becomes fish-like. Then, it said, the fins are replaced in effect by four limbs, and the body passes into a form like the crawling water-and-land creatures of an older age. After that come shapes more like reptiles and then forms nearer

to the higher animals, until at last the human body appears. The paper treated this not simply as resemblance, but as a profound clue that the body itself was retracing the ancient road of life while the mind, hidden within, was dreaming that same road from the inside.

This was already enough to turn my blood cold, yet the paper would not stop there. If the body repeated the outward stages of evolution in the womb, it argued, then the inward life of the fetus must also be repeating the mental history joined to those stages. Thus the dream seen in the womb is not peaceful. It is full of fright, struggle, hunger, destruction, and escape, because the ancient world itself was full of such things. Then, as the dream comes nearer to the human line, it fills with the lives of ancestors, not only their outward acts, but their shame, fear, lust, hidden violence, and the dangerous desires they could never confess openly.

The paper described these inherited memories with horrifying vividness. The crimes and secrets of forgotten forefathers, it said, may appear in the fetal dream as bloody faces, headless bodies, hair floating in a well, a short sword hidden in a ceiling, white bones lying at the bottom of a marsh, and other terrible images that rise one after another without mercy. Every time such a thing appears, the fetus is startled, terrified, and inwardly pained. The little body trembles in the mother’s womb, moves its arms and legs, and shudders under the force of dreams whose true meaning no waking child could later put into words. Reading this, I felt for a moment as though all the darkness hidden in old families, all the undiscovered evil of generations, had been gathered into the body before birth.

Yet even this great ancestral dream, the paper said, must finally come to an end. When the fetus has seen the dream down to the generation of its own parents and there remains no further inherited vision to be unfolded, it falls into a quiet sleep. Then labor begins. The child is forced from the womb, air rushes into the lungs, and in that violent instant the dream seen until then flees to the very bottom of the hidden mind. In its place there spreads through the whole body a sharp, painful, surface-level awareness of the outer world, utterly different from the old dream-consciousness. Startled and distressed by that sudden change, the newborn begins to cry wildly.

The paper treated that first cry not as a simple bodily act, but as the shock of being torn out of the fetal dream and thrown into reality. Only little by little, it said, after receiving the boundless tenderness of the parents, does the infant begin to form a new and peaceful kind of dream suitable to human life after birth. Even then, however, the older dream does not disappear. It only sinks beneath the new surface. The child grows, wakes, learns, and begins to create the continuation of its own life, but under all that waking experience there still remains the unfinished residue of the dream seen before birth. That thought was so strange and yet so perfectly fitted to the rest of the theory that I could not shake it off.

From this came one of the paper's boldest claims. When a baby with no possible conscious memory suddenly cries out in sleep as if frightened, or smiles as if remembering something dear, it is, the paper said, seeing again a fragment of that old fetal dream left unfinished in the womb. The same principle, it argued, might extend even to bodily or mental defects present from birth. If a child enters the world with some physical lack or some disturbance of mind, then there must have been, during the time before birth, some corresponding dream-cause through which that state was inwardly prepared. The paper spoke of this not modestly, but with a confidence that seemed almost frightening in itself.

I lowered the sheets for a moment, but I could not stop there. Everything in that document was monstrous, and yet it had a dreadful kind of order. It did not merely shout that the unborn dream of the ancient past. It tried to build a bridge from the developing body to the hidden mind, from evolution to inheritance, from secret ancestral crime to the living shock carried in a child's nerves before birth. As I sat there with the pages in my hands, I felt more strongly than before that Professor Masaki had not written these ideas as decoration or amusement. He had written them as the central key to everything else.

And the worst of it was this. Even before I turned the next page, I already knew why the theory frightened me so deeply. If the desires, crimes, and secrets of the dead could survive in hidden form inside the unborn and rise again later in life, then a man might carry within himself not only his own mind, but the unfinished will of those who came before him. In that case, memory loss, dream-wandering,

sudden violence, and impossible love would no longer be separate horrors. They would become parts of one long inherited movement. With that thought pressing against my chest, I looked down again and prepared to read what further proof the paper would dare to offer.

Part 22

The paper did not leave the matter there. It asked why every human embryo, after beginning as a single round cell, should pass through the old order of life with such exactness instead of simply taking human form at once and growing larger. It also asked why this order was not random, but seemed fixed for all, as if all unborn children were obeying one hidden memory older than themselves. The question was set down almost coldly, but its force was enormous. If the body repeated the road of the ancestors with that much order, then the paper insisted that the mind hidden inside that body could not be wandering without rule. Something had to be guiding both.

The answer given was terrifying in its boldness. The guide, the paper said, was the memory of the cells themselves. Each living cell, according to this theory, carried within it not only the power to divide and build tissue, but also a buried record of the long past through which the line of life had already moved. The embryo did not invent its path in the womb. It remembered it. And because those cellular memories were shared by the whole line of human inheritance, all embryos moved through the same broad stages in the same order, though each individual line also carried its own darker family burden.

This idea was then tied to time itself. The paper admitted that it sounded impossible for countless ages of life to be compressed into ten months, yet it insisted that this compression was no stranger than the way dream-time in ordinary sleep could stretch and twist far beyond clock-time. More than that, it argued that the shorter gestation of simpler animals supported the theory rather than weakened it. Lower creatures, having traveled a shorter road of development, needed a shorter dream. The simplest living things, which had hardly changed at

all since ancient beginnings, needed no such dream and simply divided into new life almost at once.

From there the paper moved to evidence in ordinary human life. It said that children, before they were fully covered by the habits and politeness of culture, often showed very old layers of inherited mind. A child who picked up a stick and turned it at once into a weapon was not merely “playing.” That impulse, the paper suggested, echoed the warlike psychology of remote ancestors who had survived by conflict. A child chasing insects, tearing at them, tormenting them, or finding strange joy in small acts of cruelty was, in the same harsh view, reenacting ancient hunting instincts and old victorious delight in the suffering of weaker things. The paper spoke of such behavior with frightening certainty, as though the nursery and the savage age were only two thinly separated rooms.

It did not stop with cruelty. A baby frightened by darkness, it said, might be showing the old terror of ages when darkness meant beasts, snakes, and sudden death. The untidy habits of infancy were linked, in the same way, to long-past periods when human beings had lived without shelter, order, or restraint. What modern people called childish foolishness, bad manners, mischief, or instinct was, under this theory, the half-visible return of earlier human conditions preserved in bodily memory. The more examples the paper gave, the less comforting the word “childhood” became. It began to sound instead like a stage at which ancient inheritance still walked openly before modern training had fastened its mask in place.

Then the paper gathered all these lines into one severe statement. The fetus, it said, lay in the womb cut off from the outside world and therefore in a state like the deepest sleep. During that time the whole body was growing, dividing, and moving toward humanity, while the countless cells reflected before the unborn consciousness scene after scene from the long inherited past. Because the fetus was protected from outer noise, duty, shame, and interruption, nothing distracted it from that one vast dream. In that sense, the dream of the fetus was even more orderly than the dreams of adults. The dream did not create confusion in the fetus, the paper argued; it created the fetus itself.

That sentence struck me harder than anything that had come before. “The fetus is made by its dream”—this was the heart of the claim. The dream was not an extra shadow floating beside growth. It was the inner principle by which growth took shape. If the cells remembered, and if their memory moved in the correct order, then the body and the dream advanced together as two faces of the same secret process. I sat with the paper in my hands and felt that, whether true or false, the theory had now become complete enough to act like a machine.

After that, the paper returned once more to nightmare. Since the ancestors of humanity had lived through endless struggle, selfish desire, violence, and hidden wrongdoing, the unborn child, it said, must necessarily see far more bad dreams than good ones. Every treachery, murder, cruelty, lust, betrayal, humiliation, and secret family shame stored in the long line before it would return as present experience inside the fetal dream. The paper listed scenes one after another with horrible calm: poisoned heirs, murdered lords, strangled infants, ruined brides, false accusations, buried crimes, perverse pleasures, abandoned bodies, and secret acts never confessed while living. It was as if all history, once stripped of polite language, became one red stream running into the womb.

The ending followed naturally from that horror. When the dream had reached the generation of the parents and there was no further inherited scene left to unfold, the fetus sank into calm sleep. Then labor began, air entered the lungs, and the old dream fled downward into the deepest hidden layer of consciousness while the pain and brightness of immediate reality spread through the newborn body. That, the paper said, was why the child cried out so violently at birth. Later smiles and cries in sleep were explained as fragments of the unfinished fetal dream still rising from below. Even congenital defects, it claimed, must have had some corresponding dream-cause during that period before birth.

At the bottom of the last page stood a simple ending mark, and after that the paper stopped. I remained motionless for a little while, unable to turn the next sheet. Everything in the room felt changed. The bright windows, the green outside, the table, and even Wakabayashi’s pale face across from me seemed now to exist under the pressure of that theory. If Professor Masaki truly believed all this, then

the hidden springs of crime, madness, love, terror, and inheritance were far older and deeper than law, morality, or ordinary medicine could ever reach.

At last I placed the paper down and looked at the next document in the packet. Its title stood before me in characters far more aggressive than the cool thesis I had just finished: *An Unprecedented Last Testament*. Under that was the date, the night of October 19, 1926, and below that, “Notes of the Mad Doctor.” Even before I read the first line, I felt that the tone of the room had shifted once again. This was no public interview, no street pamphlet, and no young scholar’s theory. It was the voice of Masaki himself, writing on the night before his death, and with a heaviness in my chest that I could not push away, I began to read his final words.

Part 23

But before I could truly pass on to the next document, I saw that the paper on the fetal dream had one more important section left. It now asked, with cold directness, what that forgotten dream must actually contain in concrete form. Until then the paper had argued from development, memory, cells, time, and inheritance, but here it no longer hid behind theory. It began to describe the dream itself. I felt a strong reluctance before reading on, because I knew that once the paper started speaking in images, the whole thing would come closer to experience and farther from abstract thought.

The first claim was terrible and simple. The unborn child, it said, must see mostly bad dreams rather than pleasant ones. Human beings had reached their present high place not by being naturally strong like bulls, or armed like tigers, or protected like insects, fish, and shelled creatures, but by surviving with weak bare bodies through endless danger. Therefore, the long road of human becoming must have been full of fear, pain, pressure, and desperate struggle. If the fetus truly relived that road, then its dream would be made less of peace than of terror, endurance, and the wish to become stronger.

The paper then tried to imagine the dream from the beginning. First, it said, the human seed, still only one tiny living cell, attaches itself within the mother and

begins to dream the age when all life was still nothing more than drifting microscopic existence. In that dream the unborn self floats with countless others in warm ancient water, shining in light, dividing, joining, and vanishing without rest. For an instant there is freedom and beauty, a strange joy in existence itself. Then some small change in the water becomes unbearable pain, whole swarms die away, and the dreaming life struggles to flee but cannot move. Even the first stage of being, the paper insisted, is already full of helplessness and terror.

After that, the dream changes shape as the cell divides and grows. The dreamer becomes fish-like, equipped now with skin, scales, fins, a tail, eyes, and the beginnings of ordered sensation, and for a moment believes that safety has finally been won. Yet safety never lasts. At once there rise giant creatures from the sea, monstrous enemies, huge claws, poison, sudden attack, and the desperate need to hide among plants, rocks, and dark water. The dreamer then longs not merely to survive, but to leave that heavy fearful world altogether and gain a freer body suited to another kind of life.

So the dream advances again. The paper describes the unborn self creeping onto land in small animal form, then facing earthquake, fire, flood, enormous beasts, flying predators, and every kind of vast natural violence. Each new shape brings a little hope and then a new danger. Even the move upward toward ape-like freedom in trees is no final escape, because then come snakes, birds of prey, insects, parasites, storm, cold, and constant fear without rest. Reading these scenes, I understood the paper’s intention more clearly than before. It wished to make human life itself seem born from a chain of old panic, and human form only the latest answer to ancient suffering.

At last, in this imagined dream, the creature becomes human. But that does not bring peace either. The paper says that once the fetal dream reaches humanity, it leaves behind natural enemies only to enter a far darker world, because human beings create new terrors for one another. Competition for life, inherited cruelty, selfish desire, betrayal, secret lust, and private greed now replace the sea monster and the storm. The dream becomes full of acts that are no longer merely violent, but morally stained. At this point I felt myself growing colder, because I already

knew that the paper was moving from evolution toward family history, and from family history toward crime.

The pages then listed example after example with a calm that felt almost inhuman. In the dream, it said, one may kill a lord and seize a castle, force a loyal man to cut open his own body, poison a wife or child for gain, starve a sick husband to death, crush a newborn child, drive a hated stepchild into a well, frame an innocent woman until she hangs herself, and take pleasure in humiliating, deceiving, or destroying the weak. The paper spoke of such scenes not as rare accidents, but as part of the long bloody memory carried through generations. Worse still, it added that these remembered crimes may not return only as acted scenes. They may also reappear as fragments and signs: a blood-covered face, a body without a head, hair in a well, a short sword hidden in a ceiling, white bones at the bottom of a marsh.

According to the paper, every time such a buried family memory rises into the dream, the fetus is inwardly shocked. It trembles inside the mother, startles, struggles, and suffers under the force of images it cannot yet understand. Thus even before birth, the body is already reacting to ancestral fear, guilt, and violence. By the time I finished those lines, I no longer felt that I was reading a mere theory about dreams. I felt instead that I was looking at a method for turning forgotten family evil into present living pain. That was why the paper frightened me so deeply. It seemed able to explain not only madness in general, but the return of one specific hidden crime through one specific body.

The end of the dream, the paper said, comes only when the chain of inherited scenes reaches the parents and there remains nothing more to unfold. Then the fetus falls into quiet sleep. Soon labor begins, the child is driven out, air rushes into the lungs, and in that violent instant the old dream drops to the deepest bottom of the hidden mind while a new sharp reality spreads through the whole body. That, it claimed, is why the newborn cries so wildly. Later, when a baby suddenly cries in sleep or smiles without cause, it is seeing remnants of the unfinished fetal dream. Even congenital weakness, mental defect, or monstrous interrupted growth may, according to the paper, be tied to some break, blockage, or terrible excess

within that prenatal dream itself.

At the very bottom stood a plain ending mark, and with that the paper finally closed. I sat still for some time, holding the sheets without turning them, because the room had become heavy with a silence different from any I had yet felt. The bright southern light, the table, the cabinets, and even Wakabayashi across from me all seemed to stand under the rule of that one fearful idea: that the dead might continue living within the unborn as memory, desire, and unfinished action. At last I put the pages down and looked again at the next document in the packet. The title was still there, waiting in large grave letters: *An Unprecedented Last Testament.* Beneath it stood the date, the night of October 19, 1926, and below that, "Notes of the Mad Doctor," and with a tightening in my chest that would not leave me, I began at last to read Masaki's final words.

Part 24

The first lines of the testament struck me like a shout in an empty hall. Masaki did not begin in the grave tone of a dying scholar. He called out boldly to anyone near or far, telling the distant to use a telescope and the near to come close with a microscope. He announced himself as Masaki Keishi, the famous "mad doctor" of the psychiatric department of Kyushu Imperial University, and declared that since he had suddenly decided upon suicide in order to turn the common sense of the whole world upside down, he would also leave behind the strangest last testament ever written. Whoever read it, he said, must decide whether the greater fool or madman was the writer or the reader.

Even in reading silence I could hear his laughter. The words were theatrical, vain, mocking, and yet not at all empty. They gave the feeling of a man who had already stepped outside ordinary shame and was speaking from a dangerous freedom. He invited every champion of common sense to come forward, rub his brow with spit to ward off deception, and face him seriously. Then, without any transition, he admitted that he did not know where to begin, because although this would be his first and last testament, he had never learned how such a thing ought

to be written.

That sudden drop from grand challenge to almost comic uncertainty made him seem more alive, not less. He said the writing was unexpectedly difficult, slow, and irritating. Yet since he was going to die anyway, he felt it would be dull not to leave something behind. What he now wrote, he explained, was almost an extra gift thrown in at the end. But beneath the joking tone came the first hard fact. The whole great experimental enterprise of his life, built around the fundamental principle he called psychological heredity, had reached the point where a living beautiful boy and a beautiful girl already dead in one sense and living in another were meant to come together in embrace and union, thereby completing the final proof of his science.

When I read that sentence, my whole body tightened. The “beautiful boy” and “beautiful girl” could not be far from the figures already circling around me in the documents. I did not yet dare connect them directly with myself and the girl in Room Six, but the pull was there. Masaki went on as if it were the simplest thing in the world. He said that because the experiment had already reached so favorable a stage, and because he had arranged matters so that they should end in joyful completion, he could afford to die at this very point and still leave the essential result to unfold. He wrote not like a man defeated, but like a showman stepping off the stage just before the applause.

Then he turned to his writings. He explained that among the great mass of his lifelong research there were many parts that deserved to be burned and many that deserved to survive. Most of the long full discussions of his brain theory, his mental anatomy and pathology, and the rest could be reduced, he said, because the main lines had either already appeared in newspapers or had been contained in earlier work such as *The Dream of the Fetus*. But the richest and most delicious parts—the best cut of the roast, as he called it in his own mocking way—he had chosen to preserve in this testament. These were the parts that would matter most to some future mad scholar who might one day wish to walk the same road.

That sentence explained much at once. The packet before me was not a random heap of papers. It was Masaki’s own chosen survival, the fragments he thought

most necessary after he himself was gone. He even admitted that his explanation here would be only a summary, because the full theory had been too large. What he now wished especially to set down was the relation between his proudest practical invention, the liberation treatment of madmen, and the principle of psychological heredity. In other words, the documents I had already read were not separate curiosities at all. They were the steps toward this union.

After saying so, the testament changed shape in a manner almost absurdly bold. Masaki began to describe the scene as if the reader were flying above the university in an airplane carrying a camera and operator. He pointed out the lines of pine trees running through and beyond the campus, the two great smoke-stacks, the shabby blue-painted western building that housed the psychiatric department, and beside it the square ground of about two hundred tsubo that formed the liberation treatment field. The imaginary plane, he said, was descending lower and lower until it landed at the southern edge of the professor's room window like a dragonfly or fly. The time should be taken as nine in the morning on October 19, 1926.

I could not help feeling a chill at that date. It was the day before the supposed date of his death, the date shown on the calendar in the room, and the date already tied in my mind to confusion, the treatment field, and some approaching crisis. Masaki's way of presenting it as a film scene made it stranger still. He seemed determined to turn his own last explanation into a moving picture, half comic and half exact, as though only such a style could match the twisted grandeur of the truth. Even his self-mockery now had purpose. He was staging the scene so the reader would not merely know, but see.

The viewpoint moved, in his description, toward the open southern window of the very room in which I now sat reading. I suddenly became deeply aware of the table, the chairs, the light, and the windows around me, because the room in the document and the room in which I sat were one and the same. It was as if the paper had folded time back upon itself. Masaki's voice, written before death, was inviting the reader to stand where I was standing, look where I was looking, and watch the field below at the hour before disaster. For a moment I felt that I was

no longer reading history, but being placed inside a prepared mechanism.

The section ended just as the airplane of his imagination seemed ready to settle and let the camera begin its work. The treatment field below, still quiet in the morning, was waiting to reveal its actors. I lowered the page only a little and listened to the silence of the actual room around me. Somewhere outside the pine branches shifted in the wind, and the bright southern light lay harmlessly across the floor, yet nothing felt harmless any longer. Masaki's testament had not yet shown me the field itself, but I knew with certainty that the next pages would do so, and that once I looked down through his eyes upon that ground, the path toward my own lost identity would grow far harder to escape.

Part 25

Then the scene in Masaki's testament seemed to open before me like a moving picture. He described the liberation ward as a square field surrounded by a high red brick wall, the wall tall enough to shut the world out and hold the patients in. The ground inside was covered all over with white sand of the kind found in that region, so bright and clean that it shone under the blue morning sky. Near the center stood about five paulownia trees, each loaded with yellow dying leaves. Masaki added, with one of his strange half-joking remarks, that those trees had once stood there peacefully as part of the old inner yard, but after being enclosed in this new treatment field they had begun to weaken badly, as if they too had fallen into mental disorder from being imprisoned in so unexpected a place.

The entrance to the field, he said, was on the east side near the patient rooms and also served as the passage to the toilet. Beside that entrance was a small long opening in the board door, and through that opening a large ill-faced guard in black uniform and cap stared into the field from morning to night with cold eyes. Masaki said that when one saw this, the whole square ward looked like a giant box of magic set down in a green sea of pine trees. Across the white sand at the bottom of that magic box moved dark human shapes, standing, sitting, crossing, stopping, and turning again under the bright air. He counted them one by one.

There were ten in all.

Those ten, he said, were mad people moving under the principle of psychological heredity, the principle drawn from his brain theory and from the continuation of the fetal dream. Then he added something that made me read more carefully than ever. Exactly three hours later, when the noon cannon sounded from across the water, a wonderful and terrible inherited psychological tragedy would burst out from among those ten and shock the whole world, driving even Masaki himself toward the resolve to die. Yet, he wrote, the signs of that coming disaster were already plain in the field from nine in the morning onward. Therefore the viewer must watch every movement of the patients with great care, because the first shadow of the catastrophe was already there.

After that he began to enlarge the figures one by one, as if the camera were drawing near. The first was an old white-haired man working busily beside the western brick wall with his upper body bare. He held a hoe in both hands and kept striking the earth, digging a long narrow bed of soil parallel to the wall. Yet when one looked at him closely, he did not seem like a true farmer at all. His arms and legs were pale and thin, the deep neck lines of a lifelong laborer were missing, and even the way he held himself suggested not long experience but a borrowed task. Worst of all were his hands, because though the hoe hid them partly, black stains could be seen on the handle where blood from his torn palms had dried and stuck, and still he would not stop.

Next to him stood a young man watching the old man’s hoe with full attention and a small smile. He wore a dark cotton robe with an old white sash, and because his hair was long and untidy he looked older at first than he truly was. But, Masaki said, if one looked carefully, one would see a fresh youth of about twenty. His skin was white like a girl’s from being indoors too long, his cheeks were softly red, and his eyes were so clear and still that he looked almost like a young princess brought up in seclusion rather than a male patient. That expression, Masaki added, was one of the hardest things to judge in psychiatry, because certain patients showed just such clear quiet eyes either just before returning to sanity or just before falling into a dangerous attack.

Farther behind the old man and the youth crouched a girl, so thin and pale that she looked almost like a ghost. Her face was covered with freckles, and her reddish-brown hair hung down in a loose tied style. She was planting things carefully along the edge of the bed the old man had made, but what she planted were not flowers at all. They were fallen paulownia leaves, dry pine twigs, bits of bamboo, pieces of roof tile, and even scraps of green grass found who knew where. Since the bed itself was only white sand, the bits of bamboo often leaned and fell over, and she would anxiously set them upright again as if they were delicate seedlings, only to tear them up angrily the moment they disappointed her too often.

Masaki paused over that girl's strength. Though her arms looked fine and weak, she could break and throw away those pieces with a force surprising even in a man. He said that this too should not be taken as a miracle, because women often possessed far more physical power than ordinary custom allowed them to show. It was only the long ancestral suggestion that women were weak, soft, and delicate that usually prevented that power from appearing. In times of mental disorder, or during great shocks such as fire or earthquake, that inherited restraint might break, and the person might return for a moment to a more basic bodily force. Thus even the girl's violent little gardening served, he said, as a reverse proof of psychological heredity.

Then the camera turned to the opposite side of the field. There, facing the eastern wall, a small man in a torn morning coat was giving a speech to the bricks as if they were a political crowd. Every few moments he lifted his right hand and waved it in the air, while his left hand held an invisible support, and his words were full of walls, barriers, destruction, and public life. Behind him walked a strange middle-aged woman with a low vulgar face, thick mud spread over it like make-up, bare feet, and a long ruined sash trailing behind her. On her wild hair she wore a cardboard crown painted red, and she walked back and forth proudly like a queen, lifting her head so the crown would not fall. Near the roots of one paulownia tree a huge bearded man bowed again and again to the ground in worship, because he believed this false queen to be a holy lady reborn.

Around that kneeling man danced a schoolgirl with long hanging hair, singing

her own song as she moved. Masaki said she had once been a quiet and gloomy second-year student with great talent in art, but after her illness began she had changed completely and now called herself a dancer from the world stage. On another side of the yard two men of about forty walked arm in arm like close friends on a grand journey, one imagining himself on a trip to Tokyo and the other on an expedition to the South Pole. Near the entrance sat a fat old woman dressed in clothing that suggested she had once belonged to a good family, yet she behaved as if she lived in the poorest slum, picking imaginary lice from herself and crushing them. Sometimes she even untied her sash, stripped naked, and beat the dust from her clothes with a great noise, making the speaker, the travelers, and the dancing girl all stop and laugh.

At that point Masaki paused in his moving description and answered the objection he expected from his audience. “What is so special here?” he imagined them saying. “These are only ordinary mad people, no different from the patients in any hospital yard.” He admitted that the objection sounded reasonable. Yet he insisted that these ten were enough, because among them stood representative champions of mental abnormality chosen from countless possible cases, and by explaining only a few of them one could understand the hidden causes of almost every kind of mental disturbance on earth. Then he returned to the first old man with the hoe and said that his story would come first. As I reached that point and saw that Masaki was about to begin the family history of the old man in detail, I understood that the terrible picture below the window was no mere spectacle. It was a stage on which the dead were already acting through the living.

Part 26

The testament then returned to the field and said that anyone tempted to laugh or feel disappointed should wait a little longer. These ten patients, Masaki insisted, were enough for his purpose. If one understood how even two or three of their strange acts had been shaped by psychological heredity, one could begin to understand the causes of almost every mental disorder in the world. In that sense,

he said, these patients were not random sufferers at all. They were chosen champions of mental abnormality, living examples through whom the hidden law of heredity could be seen directly in action.

He began with the white-haired old man digging by the brick wall. His name, Masaki wrote, was Hachimaki Gisaku. Five generations earlier, Gisaku's great-great-grandfather had been a famous rich farmer near Fukuoka named Giju, a man born left-handed and full of fierce strength. With nothing but a hoe and endless labor, that earlier Giju had built up a great fortune in his own lifetime and had been given the surname Hachimaki by the lord of Kuroda. The name itself, Masaki explained, had first been only a nickname, because the man hated wasting time to wipe sweat and always tied a cloth tightly around his forehead while working in the fields.

That old ancestor, Masaki said, was one of those men who seemed made of nothing but work. From dawn until dark he rested only once. When the noon drum sounded from Fukuoka Castle, he would throw down his hoe, sit in the shade near a bank or under the edge of a roof, eat, and sleep for a short time. Then he would rise and labor again until sunset made the earth too dark to see. The mark of the forehead cloth, it was said, remained white across his skin even after death, and once when he appeared before the lord with that mark still clear, someone near the lord cried out, "Take off your headcloth," which only amused the lord and made the name Hachimaki a kind of honor.

But time had changed everything. By the fifth generation, Masaki wrote, almost all the old inheritance had been lost. Gisaku had no great land, no famous strength, and not even the proud old family standing. He had become only a craftsman making brushes in Hakata, and when his eyes grew too weak in old age to handle fine brush hair any longer, he lost his work and soon lost the balance of his mind as well. About a week before the events now being described, he had been brought into the university hospital. Yet after being released into the open treatment field, something strange happened at once.

A helper had forgotten a hoe in one corner after killing a snake there, and the moment Gisaku found it, he began copying the life of his ancestor. He did not tie

a cloth around his head, but he worked without wiping sweat, just as the old man had done. Though before madness he had not been left-handed, he now held the hoe with his left hand as if that had always been natural. The moment the noon gun sounded, he dropped the tool, returned to his room, ate quickly, and lay down as if obeying a law older than his own memory. Once asleep, however, he no longer woke after a short rest like the ancestor, but slept straight through until the next morning, too exhausted even to eat supper, as if in dreams he had gone back to building again the long-lost family fortune of that earlier Giju.

After this first example, Masaki turned to the little man in the torn morning coat, the one still speaking to the brick wall. The movements of his right hand, the supporting pose of his left, and the very words of his speech, Masaki said, were the key. Again and again the man spoke of barriers, walls, collapse, and public danger. This made sense, Masaki argued, once one knew that his mother's father had been a plasterer employed by the Kuroda domain. That grandfather had once done dangerous repair work high on the castle tower, proud of his light body and fearless footing, and had more than once nearly died from slips and falls before escaping by luck.

At last that luck failed. While working at the very top of the tower under the gaze of the lord's telescope, he happened to turn his back in the lord's direction. An official below shouted a warning that the lord was watching, and in that instant of shame and stiff surprise the man lost his footing. He fell from the great height and was smashed to death on the stone below. Long afterward, Masaki wrote, that last instant of terror seemed still alive in the family blood. The little speaker in the field had, since middle school, sometimes leaped up in his sleep crying for help, and when his family calmed him, he said he had felt himself falling from some great roof or from a place high above the clouds. To Masaki this was a perfect example of a single moment of absolute fear being handed down and replayed in later descendants as dream and madness.

Then Masaki pointed out the older woman wearing the cardboard crown and walking proudly back and forth like a lady from another age. Before madness, she had been the daughter of a town house and had been sold into the life of a geisha.

She was skilled enough, he said, that a young banker soon wished to buy her freedom and marry her. But his parents were old-fashioned and refused to accept her as a proper wife because of her birth and position. Wounded beyond endurance by the insult of "different rank," she had exploded at a banquet, shouted at a guest for daring to offer her a cup, smashed the cup at him, and broken a shamisen underfoot. After that she had been brought into the hospital.

Yet the madness that followed did not make her more like a rough town woman. It made her more noble. Her eyes, posture, walk, and even the way she carried her clothing all became those of a refined high-born lady. Masaki explained this by saying that her family line, before the Restoration, had belonged to a fallen and impoverished court line in Kyoto. Before illness, the habits of recent town life had covered that older inheritance. Once her conscious mind broke, however, those recent habits fell away, and the ancient courtly manner rose to the surface. So even her wounded pride, which had seemed too narrow or too dramatic to modern people, now stood revealed as the return of a much older family self.

At that point, Masaki said, some listener would probably object that such examples were too small to justify all this noise about a great new science. He answered the imagined objection before it was fully spoken. It was exactly for that reason, he wrote, that the next part of the film would show Professor Masaki himself upon the screen, giving a lecture in answer to the question, "Is psychological heredity only this much?" Then the style of the testament changed once more. I could almost see the screen he described, and there on it stood Masaki in his white coat in the lecture hall of the psychiatric building, small, dark-faced, sharp-eyed, with close-cut hair, large shining glasses, and a mouth drawn tight in a straight line until suddenly he bared his false teeth in a broad smile.

In the next moment, the earlier explanation vanished and Masaki himself began speaking. He greeted the viewers with noisy pride and said that those who longed for the world beyond common sense had understood his experiments better than ordinary scholars ever could. They had already asked the true question, he said, the question that matched twenty years of his own research: was psychological heredity only something seen in mad patients, or did it run far more widely. Then

he answered with fierce pleasure that if it appeared only in the mad, it would not be so frightening. The real terror was that the same force appeared constantly in ordinary people too.

He said that habits, fixed likes and dislikes, sudden tears, sudden rage, nervous weakness, obsessions, addictions, strange tastes, sexual wandering, and every sort of odd impulse were nothing but the same inherited force at work. Human beings, he said, were wrapped in manners, law, morality, custom, and social shame like gifts covered in paper, ribbon, and labels, but under that wrapping there remained the endless mixed animal and human desires carried down from the ancestors. Most ordinary people managed only to keep the wrapping from tearing too openly in front of others. When it tore a little, it became a quarrel, a theft, a betrayal, a fight, or some other shameful act. When it tore so badly that it could not be mended, society gave the person another name and called him mad.

Part 27

Masaki went on in that fierce lecture voice and said that ordinary people were nothing but inherited animal and human desires wrapped up for display. The contents, he said, were low, serious, wild, and lawless, but on the outside society tied them up with a thin skin called “humanity.” Over that skin it bound tape labeled ethics, morality, law, and custom. Then it decorated the package with ribbons and tags called manners, rank, personality, and social dignity, and after that added still more powder, perfume, oil, parasols, and sticks, so that each person might stride through the street saying, “If you are a gentleman, then I too am one,” or, “If you are a lady, then I am one as well.” What the world called a civilized person, he cried, was often nothing more than such a dressed and tightened parcel.

But that wrapping, he said, was always under strain. It had to hold in the deep and unruly inheritance beneath it, and because of that it was never truly at rest. Ordinary people managed by letting out a little breath now and then in secret, patching themselves before others, and pretending that nothing troubled them. Yet when the pressure became too great, the wrapping tore. In one person the tear

appeared as temper, wandering desire, a quarrel, theft, fraud, adultery, or bloodshed. If it tore and could no longer be repaired, society called the person insane. When many such wrappings split at once, the result was riot, war, corrupt ideas, and whole eras of moral decay.

Therefore, Masaki shouted, it was foolish for anyone to imagine a clear bright line between the sane and the insane. The newspapers every day, he said, already gave more examples of exposed psychological heredity than any professor could need. Strange tastes, fixed habits, sudden moods, nervous weakness, forgetfulness, obsessions, addictions, sexual wandering, and every kind of twisted inward tendency could be seen everywhere. A hundred out of a hundred, a thousand out of a thousand, all carried some degree of mental abnormality, because no one lived outside psychological heredity. He even said openly that all of us, scholars and listeners alike, lived in a mental condition only fifty or a hundred steps away from the officially mad.

Then he drew a distinction that seemed small at first but grew more terrible the longer I considered it. In *The Dream of the Fetus*, he said, most of the examples had been common inheritances shared widely among human beings: the wish to eat, sleep, play, fight, win, or enjoy comfort. Those were broad and ordinary currents, found in almost everyone. But the cases now under study in the liberation ward were much narrower, stranger, and more deeply cut into individual family lines. They were the extreme, fantastic, grotesque, poisonous, and mysterious attacks of personal psychological heredity, the kind of things that modern taste for horror or detective stories could not even come near. Here, he said, one was no longer dealing with general human weakness, but with singular ancestral compulsions erupting into living bodies.

At that point his tone became half lecturer and half street-show man again. He called out as if inviting a crowd into a tent, saying, “Come in, come in. Here are living samples of karmic souls, ghosts in the daytime, monsters under the noon sun, and the very latest scientific experiment.” He mocked the imagined entrance fee, warned the audience not to push too hard lest the patients laugh at them, and then, with a sudden clearing of the throat, returned to gravity. The liberation ward

behind the psychiatric building, he said, was nothing less than a full-color, raised, speaking film of psychological heredity in action. Here one could see with living eyes what no book, sermon, or law court had ever properly grasped.

He then explained why the ten patients in the field had been chosen so carefully. Each one, he said, showed not merely a disease label, but a hereditary current that had detached itself from the whole person and begun running on its own. In one patient it was old labor. In another, ancestral terror. In another, inherited courtly pride. In another, desire fixed so deeply it had become a wandering dream. Once that detached current exhausted the part of the brain reflecting it, the current no longer remained balanced with the rest of the person. It hardened into fantasy, delusion, obsession, or sleepwalking action, and then the world, too blind to see the true mechanism, simply called the result madness.

To make the point sharper, he returned to the example of love. Suppose, he said, a woman inherited a tendency to think endlessly and intensely about one thing. If by chance she fixed that tendency upon a single man, she would begin to think of him waking and sleeping, always seeing him, wanting him, and circling around the same inward image. At first the brain would still reflect and balance that "loving consciousness" with other parts of life. But in time the special reflecting station for that one fixed feeling would grow tired and cease to function properly. Then the loving consciousness would slip free from the total personality, harden into fantasy and delusion, and begin wandering on its own like a snake of obsession, painting the beloved image day and night in empty air.

When that happened, Masaki said, the person did not simply "love too much" in the ordinary sense. A whole fragment of inherited mentality had separated and become an independent force. The brain, no longer able to coordinate it with the rest, left the person at the mercy of a partial self that now behaved like a complete one. This, he insisted, was the same basic mechanism behind many obsessions, hallucinations, sexual fixations, and dream-wandering states. The modern world liked to call these things mysterious or immoral, but in truth they were cases of released psychological heredity. It was not a devil entering from outside. It was an old inner force escaping control.

He then made the matter still darker. The same could happen, he said, not only with love, but with cruelty, lust, terror, pride, revenge, shame, religious fervor, political passion, or any other heavily inherited tendency. If one such current became overfed, overstrained, or violently awakened by some fitting object, it might tear loose from the common bundle and seize command. Then a gentle man might commit murder in a dream-state, a modest woman might become a queen from another century, an old artisan might return to the toil of an ancestor dead for generations, or a patient might speak with the fears and memories of a forefather whose death had happened long before the patient was born. To the ordinary observer these looked like separate madnesses. To Masaki they were variations of one law.

By then I had almost forgotten the room around me again, because the lecture on the page had begun to fit too tightly around the documents already read and the sights already seen. The old man with the hoe, the woman with the crown, the speaker facing the wall, the beautiful girl next door calling me her promised husband, and even my own blank memory now seemed to belong inside the same terrible machine. Masaki's voice on the page was arrogant, mocking, and full of display, but it was no longer empty boasting. It was building toward some one living proof he believed could silence every objection. And when I reached the end of that section, I felt with growing certainty that the proof he meant to show next would not be some distant stranger at all, but someone whose name I was already beginning, with dread, to approach.

Part 28

Masaki did not stop after saying that ordinary people were only better-wrapped versions of the mad. He pressed the point harder and said that if anyone doubted it, one needed only to look at children. A child, he argued, has not yet learned how to wear the full skin of culture. For that reason, the older layers inside the human line show themselves more openly there than in adults. Childhood, in his view, was not innocence alone. It was a half-open window through which ancient habits

of the species still looked out.

He gave the simplest example first. When a child picks up a stick and immediately wants to turn it into a weapon, that desire, he said, is not a meaningless game. It is the waking of an old warlike inheritance left from ages when one tribe fought another, when survival itself depended on attack, defense, and the joy of striking. The stick works as a suggestion, because it resembles a tool of battle, and at that signal the old buried current rises. In the same way, he said, when a child sees a small moving creature and begins chasing it with excited attention, that too is not empty play. It is the remnant of the hunting mind.

Then he turned to cruelty, and his tone became even sharper. A child who catches an insect and tears at its legs, wings, or body, who burns it, squeezes it, or takes pleasure in its helpless motion, is, according to Masaki, not inventing a new evil. The child is replaying in miniature the victorious delight of old humans who captured enemies, seized prey, mutilated the weak, and satisfied pride through domination. Civilization later covers such things with manners, pity, and good breeding, but the deeper inheritance remains. When the cover is still thin, as in children, the old shape can be seen almost directly.

What shocked me even more was what came next. Masaki said that in such play the child often half forgets that he himself is moving the toy, the stick, the insect, or the object before him. It is almost as if he believes the thing is moving on its own and offering itself for further handling. In that state, the child is not only cruel. He is also strangely divided, satisfying himself through a little false world in which his own hand and the object before him no longer stand clearly apart. This, Masaki said, was a clue of the greatest importance.

For if such delight in handling half-living or image-like things could arise so naturally, then a darker possibility followed. Humanity’s ancient pleasure in mastering prey, handling defeated bodies, or exalting itself over fallen enemies might, under certain conditions, return in twisted sleep-state form. A person in ordinary waking life might feel horror toward a corpse. Yet if some deep inherited cruelty were stirred in a dream-wandering condition, and if the right suggestion were given, that person might begin to handle the dead with the same ancient

victorious impulse, while later remembering little or nothing of it. Masaki presented this not as a wild fantasy, but as a natural extension of the very same law.

He then gave the concrete case in cold hypothetical form. Suppose, he said, that a person had remained beside a dying patient to the very end, or had himself handled the body after death. Suppose further that, exhausted from care, fear, relief, and physical strain, that person then fell into unusually deep sleep. In such a state the powerful impression made by the corpse might act as a suggestion. The sleeping mind, loosened from ordinary balance, might call up the old cruel current I had just read about and send the person, still in dream-wandering state, back toward the dead body.

Under those conditions, Masaki argued, even the digging up or taking out of a corpse and the strange handling of it might occur without the waking self truly knowing what it had done. The person might later stand before the world unable honestly to remember his own act. He wrote of this with dreadful calm, as though he were discussing no more than the likely path of water down a slope. Yet that very calmness made the idea far more terrible. He was not offering a ghost story. He was stripping old horror tales of ghosts and demons and replacing them with a law of inherited mind.

He admitted that clear records of such corpse-handling in dream-wandering state were rare and hard to prove. Much of what older ages had passed down under the names of corpse-spirits, corpse-demons, fire-carts carrying the dead, and similar wonders had, he suggested, probably been distorted reports of just such acts. In China, India, Japan, and elsewhere, legends had preserved the outer shape while losing the inner cause. Priests, scholars, and story-tellers had then wrapped the matter in religion, fear, and marvel. But if one examined such tales with the eyes of natural and mental science together, Masaki insisted, one could infer the hidden mechanism beneath them.

The argument then widened again. There had always existed, he said, certain people who, through long experience, secret teaching, or rough practical knowledge, knew how to stir such hidden weaknesses in others by means of strong

mental suggestion. Holy men, diviners, shrine specialists, prayer workers, wandering wonder-makers, and later more modern operators in hypnosis and spirit arts—among such people one might find techniques that were not supernatural at all, but mental. These techniques, when used on the weak, the frightened, the uneducated, women, children, or men already near breaking point, might wound the mind, push it into strange action, or even become tools in difficult hidden crimes.

Reading that, I felt again the old fear that had circled around Wakabayashi's early explanation of my case. Masaki was saying, in effect, that a specially prepared mind could be driven by exactly chosen suggestions into actions beyond its waking control. He even hinted that among the mentally disturbed wandering through hospitals, shelters, and streets there might well be victims of such secret crimes, though the modern world lacked the means to prove it clearly. Here theory, folklore, and criminal possibility all met in one place. I could not help feeling that the documents were turning, step by step, toward some one concrete case in which all these things had already happened.

By the end of that section, I understood why Masaki had begun with children, sticks, insects, and play. He had not wandered away from his subject at all. He was building a bridge from the open instincts of childhood to the hidden violences of adult sleepwalking, from small everyday cruelty to the most dreadful forms of inherited dream-action. Beneath all the strange learning, one message now stood plainly before me: a human being might carry within himself ancient impulses far darker than his waking face revealed, and under the right shock, fatigue, or suggestion, those impulses might rise, act, and leave him empty afterward. When I lowered the pages for a moment, my hands were cold, because I could already feel that the next turn of Masaki's argument would bring those possibilities nearer than ever to my own lost life.

Part 29

The next section of Masaki's document entered a still stranger region. He said

that what he called the hallucination of killing oneself, and the vision of one's own corpse, were among the rarest and most twisted forms of mind, difficult even to describe in plain order. Yet, he added, they could still be understood if one began from the same root as before. Love and desire, however noble they may look on the surface, are in the end tied to the instinct that treasures one's own living flesh and one's own satisfaction. If that desire grows too sharp, too constant, and too impossible to satisfy by ordinary means, it does not simply become stronger. It bends, narrows, and finally runs off the road into abnormal forms.

He first traced this on what he called the active side. A person who can no longer find enough satisfaction in ordinary union may begin to seek sharper and stranger pleasure in cruelty toward the beloved, then in the pain of the beloved, then even in killing, or in the handling of the dead, or in delight over some single body part or attached object rather than the whole person. In this way, he wrote, the desire slowly leaves the living other and moves toward symbols, fragments, and more violent images. Yet even that may still fail to satisfy. When it does, the current turns once more and bends back toward the self from which it first rose.

He then described the same movement on the passive side. A person may begin by wanting tenderness, but if that wanting grows too deep and cannot be fulfilled, it may reverse itself into a desire to be hurt, insulted, despised, shamed, or reduced. From there, he said, one may fall into delight in humiliation, in being looked down upon, in being dirtied, rejected, or made miserable, all because the original craving has become too intense and can no longer rest in simple fulfillment. In both the active and passive paths, the result is the same. The mind, unable to remain within ordinary love, bends inward and becomes attached to itself in the most distorted way.

This was what he called self-attachment in its most dangerous form. At first it may appear as delight in one's own image, one's own body, one's own beauty, or one's own emotional suffering. But it need not remain gentle or decorative. The same self-love may turn toward self-cruelty, self-exposure, self-contempt, self-fear, and at last even the imagined pleasure of destroying oneself or gazing upon one's own dead body as if it were a beloved object. Masaki insisted that such

things were not as rare as decent society liked to pretend. He pointed toward suicide notes, noble deaths, lovers' deaths, self-dramatizing despair, and all the sweet poison of self-pity hidden in human history as proof that the line between ordinary feeling and such extreme self-fascination was thinner than people wished to admit.

Having built that terrible argument, he turned at last to Ichiro's case. He said that during the dream-wandering attack, both before and after the strangling, Ichiro must have noticed that the victim's face resembled his own. Since the deep sexual storm driving the attack could not be fully released by the first act of violence alone, he must have gone on handling the body again and again, and in doing so must repeatedly have seen, in the dead woman's features, something like his own face. From that, Masaki argued, the next step followed naturally. The dream-state would have shifted from violence toward another person into the illusion that he was killing himself and then gazing upon his own dead body.

In that condition, he wrote, Ichiro would no longer have treated the corpse as simply the body of the victim. He would have half mistaken it for himself, half worshiped it, half tormented it, all at once. He would have strangled it more than once, not from practical need, but because the dream-state demanded a deepening of the same terrible satisfaction. At last, under the power of this self-corpse vision, he would have hanged the body from the railing above and then stood back at a fitting distance, looking at it with the excitement of one who sees his own death made visible before his eyes. In this way, Masaki said, the most puzzling outward signs of the case—the repeated strangling and the final hanging made to resemble suicide—became easy to understand. What had seemed a clever criminal trick was, in his view, the natural shape taken by a dream-state driven by hereditary abnormal desire.

Then he added one more point in a calmer tone. The violent sexual force that had carried Ichiro through the first stages of the attack was probably exhausted at that moment of self-corpse vision. After that, Masaki said, the dream-wandering did not cease at once, but changed its character. The main storm had broken; what followed was only an after-wave, a staggering continuation. Yet even that weaker

continuation, he warned, could still produce outward signs important enough to confuse investigators and hide the truth. With that he moved to the next section, which concerned Ichiro's bad dream, foul mouth, dizziness, nausea, and other bodily signs after waking.

He said that ordinary investigators had naturally suspected an anesthetic or some drug. The headache, chill, dizziness, nausea, and especially the strange bad smell in the mouth seemed, from a common-sense point of view, to support such an idea. But, Masaki wrote, this was another example of how poor the world's ordinary understanding of dreams and sleepwalking still was. The symptoms did not need a secret criminal drug at all. On the contrary, they could be explained far more naturally as effects belonging to dream-wandering itself and to what the patient had done while in that state.

Here he introduced one of the strangest comparisons in the whole document. Tales of the long-necked monster that creeps away at night to lick oil, dirty water, and other foul liquids, he said, were not simply stupid ghost stories. They were distorted symbolic memories of dream-wanderers. A person who has carried a violent sleepwalking attack to its highest point naturally falls afterward into terrible fatigue and thirst. In that dim half-conscious condition, he may keep moving while seeking liquid of any kind and may drink whatever seems wet enough—oil from a lamp, waste water, perfume, cosmetic liquid, or some other unsuitable thing—without clearly knowing what he has done.

By morning, such a person would wake with a foul mouth, nausea, headache, and general sickness, while the family, seeing that some strange liquid had gone missing in the night, might imagine that only the neck or head had wandered out and licked it. From such misunderstandings, Masaki said, legends had grown. In the same way, Ichiro's bad breath after the event did not prove the use of anesthetic. It suggested instead that during the later wandering stage he had drunk some liquid that was not water. The investigators, having failed to look in that direction, had missed a clue of the greatest value.

He ended that section by saying that Ichiro's bad dream after returning to bed had probably not been the direct replay of the whole night's crime. It was more

likely a later disturbed sleep shaped by the effects of whatever liquid he had swallowed and by the exhausted state of his body after the attack. When I reached that point, I lowered the papers and sat for a while without moving. The room around me felt colder than before, and the bright morning outside the windows no longer seemed to belong to the same world as the pages in my hands. With every sheet I read, the case was becoming less like a mystery built by some outside criminal and more like a long inward fall through heredity, dream, desire, and broken memory, and I felt with deepening dread that the name waiting at the bottom of it all could only be my own.

Part 30

I forced myself to keep reading. The next section of Masaki’s document said that, once all the earlier points were accepted, the time of Ichiro’s wandering attack could be placed with reasonable certainty. It had not happened after his final waking in the early morning, and it had not belonged to the later bad dream he remembered. Rather, it must have taken place between the first waking and the second, during the deepest stage of sleep reached after he had lain down again. If the victim’s death truly fell between two and three in the morning, then Ichiro, Masaki argued, must have entered the most favorable depth for such dream-wandering roughly thirty minutes to an hour after returning to sleep.

This explanation, cold as it was, had a terrible neatness. Masaki said that the waking at dawn was probably only an ordinary habitual rising of the sort many people experience without fully understanding it, not the true end of the attack itself. Only after that, when the body had already passed through the wandering storm, did the sufferer finally slip away from its after-waves and from the bad dream caused by whatever liquid he had swallowed during the episode. Then at last he entered real restorative sleep, a thing that could even be guessed, Masaki said, from the sweating noted afterward. I read these lines in a kind of numb attention, because the attack was being pinned down with such exactness that it no longer felt like rumor or story. It was becoming a measured thing, as if a ghost

had been turned into a timetable.

The next section was subtler and in some ways more frightening. It dealt with Ichiro's own faint suspicion, after waking and being questioned by the police, that perhaps he himself had killed and then forgotten. At first glance, Masaki wrote, this might seem like the strongest proof that some fragment of the wandering memory had remained in him. Yet he refused to grant even that point too easily. The suspicion, he said, may indeed have risen from bodily traces left in unconscious memory outside the ordinary thinking brain, perhaps from extreme fatigue or some buried physical impression brought to the surface by the pressure of questioning.

But Masaki also allowed another possibility, and I found it no less disturbing. Ichiro, he said, was by nature intelligent, honest, and fond of fiction. A mind like that, suddenly placed under terrible accusation, might create its own false suspicion through the very sharpness of its imagination. In other words, the thought "Perhaps I did it and forgot" might be not a fragment of true recollection, but the refined self-torment of a delicate mind trying to explain the impossible. Therefore, Masaki concluded, this faint self-suspicion could not serve as decisive proof in itself. It might be only an added hint, nothing more. That refusal to settle too quickly on one answer made the whole thing more convincing to me than if he had claimed certainty at every turn.

Then he turned, almost calmly, to the old question of double personality. The reason people had long believed dream-wanderers to possess two selves, he wrote, could now be understood more clearly. Every human being is already a kind of crowded inheritance, carrying innumerable ancestral memories, family traits, racial traces, and hidden capacities bound together in one temporary person. What the world calls a second personality is only one part of that vast inheritance becoming detached and showing itself during waking life. In exactly the same way, what appears as dream-wandering is a similar detachment taking place in sleep.

Once he had said that, the legal meaning followed with brutal logic. If dream-wandering and double personality are only inherited fragments breaking loose,

then the full burden of their crimes cannot always be laid simply on the waking person before the court. Masaki wrote that the responsibility of the dream-wanderer himself may in many cases be slight compared with that of the long ancestral chain and the society that shaped it. I paused there with the pages in my hands, because I could feel what was approaching. This was no longer only a theory meant to explain a past case. It was becoming a shield and a weapon at once, something that could protect one accused man even while leading into a darker and wider accusation against an entire bloodline.

The next heading made that perfectly clear. It announced itself as a set of riddles concerning the Kure family bloodline. Everything in the earlier testimonies, Masaki said, contained hints that some dreadful inherited element must already have existed in Ichiro's mind before the wandering attacks began. He began listing those hints one by one, drawing them from the statements of family members and witnesses. Ichiro's mother Chiseko, for example, had been described as unusually intelligent and strong-willed for a woman of her background, and yet she clung with abnormal force to crude ideas about fate and doom where her son and herself were concerned. Such a contradiction, Masaki said, suggested not ordinary superstition, but some deep unhealed anxiety pressing upon her from within.

He then pointed to the fortune-teller known as the Tanuki-Anna teacher, the man who had told Chiseko that she and her house were under some curse. Masaki suggested that this speaker may not have guessed blindly at all. He may instead have noticed certain facts in Chiseko's own words and drawn from them the suspicion that something dark truly clung to the family. Then came another curious point. Yayoko, though only a country widow without higher learning, had once asked at once whether Ichiro had perhaps seen some sort of dream when he was in custody. That question, Masaki wrote, was astonishingly advanced for a woman of her supposed education unless she had already long been thinking about such matters under the pressure of some grave private reason.

He went farther still. The Kure house, though wealthy, stood curiously isolated in kinship, with few nearby relatives. Such isolation, he noted, is often found in country families whose bloodline has long carried an evil reputation or some

feared hereditary defect, so that others avoid marrying into them. He then reconsidered the old story that Chiseko had left home merely to study embroidery and painting. Under the light of all the other hints, he said, this no longer looked simple. It might instead mean that the sisters had silently agreed that one of them must leave and preserve the family line elsewhere because marriage within their present situation had become nearly impossible.

Even the later rumor that Chiseko became a notorious devourer of men took on a different meaning under this view. Masaki did not discuss it in vulgar terms. Rather, he treated it as another sign that the family curse, if curse it was, had touched desire itself and twisted it into something restless, excessive, and destructive. When he gathered these points together, the result was chilling. From the beginning of the case, he wrote, it had already been sufficiently suggested that some extraordinarily terrible inherited thing existed in the Kure blood and that Yayoko and Chiseko both knew it well. I could feel the whole path narrowing now. The theory of heredity, the old crimes, the family rumors, the women's fear, and Ichiro's attacks were all drawing together toward one center.

Then came a sentence that seemed to strike the table before me like a hammer. All that now remained, Masaki wrote, was to determine exactly what kind of psychological heredity had erupted in Ichiro and to what degree it had shown itself. In the first attack, he said, the direct suggestion had been simple: the sleeping beauty of a woman's face. Because the object was only the mother and because the trigger was still relatively weak, the hereditary current had emerged only partly. Therefore, in that first episode, the old family force had shown itself chiefly in the act of strangling, while the rest had wandered away into side-paths of corpse-handling and distorted desire. But after the Nōgata case, Masaki continued, a second attack appeared about two years later, and in that second attack everything hidden before would become clear.

Beneath those words began a new heading: "Second Attack." The first reference was the testimony of Tokura Sengoro, an old farm servant questioned on April 26, 1926, the very day of the famous bride-murder at Meinohama. My heart tightened at once when I saw the date. Now at last the papers were moving

out of theory and back into living testimony, toward the beautiful girl in the next room, toward the wedding night, and toward the crime from which I had so long been recoiling without fully seeing it. I bent lower over the page and began reading Sengoro's account, feeling as if every line from here onward might lift one more piece of cloth from the face of my own lost life.

Part 31

I bent over the testimony of Tokura Sengoro and read it with a tightening chest. He began in the plain voice of an old farm servant, speaking first of the pain in his back from falling off the ladder on the very day of the crime. Then, almost at once, his account widened into a picture of the Kure household itself. It was, he said, one of the great farming houses of the district, rich in land, silkworms, chickens, and every kind of profit, all managed by the widow Yayoko with hard skill and exact hands. Into that rich but somewhat lonely house Ichiro had come as heir, gentle, quiet, and so modest with servants and neighbors that all praised him.

Sengoro said that before Ichiro's arrival the house had felt dark and inward, inhabited only by Yayoko and the young girl Moyoko. But after Ichiro came from Nogata, everything changed. The atmosphere grew brighter, work seemed lighter, and the future of the family looked secure at last. By the spring of that year, the joy had become complete, because Ichiro had graduated from the higher school at the top of his class and entered the university, also with first rank, and now his wedding to Moyoko had been fixed. Sengoro's simple words made that lost happiness almost visible before me, and perhaps for that very reason every later line of the testimony became harder to bear.

The day before the murder, he said, Ichiro had gone into Fukuoka to give the opening speech at an English speaking event for the graduating students. Yayoko had insisted that he wear his new university clothes instead of the old school uniform, though he had smiled and tried to refuse, saying it was still too early. At last she dressed him by force, then stood watching him leave with tears in her eyes.

Sengoro remembered that moment especially clearly because, as he now said, that had been the last time the young master ever wore the new student clothes in an innocent way. Even in the old man's plain speech, I could feel how heavily that memory lay on him.

On the wedding day itself, the whole house had been in happy confusion. Moyoko, her hair dressed high, had worn a green furisode and red sash while helping in the preparations, and everyone agreed that no finer bride could be seen in Hakata. Sengoro praised her beauty, her softness, and the rare good match between her and Ichiro, who, though only twenty, seemed as steady as a man near thirty. Even the new detached house built for the groom and the costly goods ordered from Fukuoka shops testified to Yayoko's fierce joy and pride. Yet when the hour passed at which Ichiro had promised to return from the city, and then another hour passed after that, the first small uneasiness began to move through the household.

Sengoro was finally sent out around four in the afternoon to look for him. He went first by light railway and then to the place where his own younger brother kept a shop near the end of the streetcar line at Imagawa Bridge. There he learned that Ichiro had indeed passed that way two hours earlier, walking west instead of taking the train, wearing the new university clothes. Since Ichiro often preferred walking through the fields rather than riding in the smoke of the line, this was not impossible, but it still made Sengoro uneasy, because the distance should not have taken so long. The old man then started back toward Meinohama along the road, increasingly troubled without yet knowing why.

Near the stone quarry by the roadside, he caught sight of a western-dressed figure moving in the dim red light among the cut stones. Climbing carefully over the blocks, he approached from above and saw that it was Ichiro sitting in the shadow of a great rock with a long scroll in his hands. Yet what startled him was that the scroll seemed to show nothing at all. Even when he crept nearer and strained his bad eyes, he could make out only white paper, though Ichiro kept staring at it with full attention as if reading writing or looking at pictures clearly visible before him. This was the first moment in the testimony at which I felt the

old family horror of the scroll truly joining itself to the present case.

Sengoro then went around openly and called to him. Ichiro seemed startled, looked up as if waking from a great distance, and only then recognized the old servant. When asked what the scroll was, he replied in a strange wandering way that it was something he must finish and later present to the Emperor, and that no one else could be allowed to see it. When Sengoro asked again who had given it to him, Ichiro said, after a pause and with tears almost in his eyes, that it had been returned by someone who had known his dead mother and had kept it in secret for her. The giver, he said, would meet him again in time, and until then Sengoro must tell no one. While reading this, I could feel how perfectly the conversation stood on the edge between sense and madness.

Sengoro added that Ichiro's manner throughout this meeting had not been his ordinary manner. He was absent, quick, restless, and moved at great speed when they set off home. After they arrived, he went at once to the detached house, and Moyoko was sent after him carrying a kettle. From a hidden place in the garden Sengoro later happened to see the two together through the glass doors. Ichiro, pale and with his brows twitching, seemed to be speaking urgently to Moyoko, not like a groom speaking playfully on the night before marriage, but like a man pressing some grave and secret demand. At first she laughed and shook her head in shame, but then he drew closer, pointed toward the line of storehouses, put a hand on her shoulder, and urged her again and again until at last she lifted her face, looked where he pointed, and gave a small unwilling nod.

Sengoro said that what followed had chilled him even then, though he had not understood it. Ichiro suddenly looked up at the evening sky and smiled with a strange blue-white face. He showed his teeth, ran his tongue over his lips, and wore an expression so uncanny that the old servant shivered where he sat. Still, he told himself it must be some educated young man's oddness and soon forgot it in the work of the household. But the image remained buried in him, and when he later remembered it beside Moyoko's corpse, it became one more proof that the disaster had already begun before night fully fell.

Near dawn, Sengoro woke by habit and rose to go to the toilet. Passing along

the veranda in the pale early light, he noticed first that one of the new paper doors and one of the glass rain-shutters near Ichiro's room stood open, and when he looked inside, the bedding was empty. Going then toward the main house, he saw further signs: a door left open, faint traces of sandy footwear, and at last the terrible fact that Moyoko's bed too lay empty, with only the bedding pushed aside and the high pillow left in the middle. At first he half reassured himself by remembering the earlier scene in the detached house, thinking perhaps the young couple had simply met in secret, but even in that thought something seemed deeply wrong.

So he woke Yayoko and showed her the empty bed. What she asked at once was not where the two had gone, but whether Ichiro had been seen carrying a scroll. When Sengoro answered yes and described the long white-looking thing he had seen at the quarry, Yayoko changed before his eyes. She cried out, "Has it appeared again?" and shook so violently that he was frightened. Then she mastered herself by force, wept, and told him to help search. Together they went outside in the damp gray dawn and noticed that the copper-covered door of the third storehouse stood open. The inner door would not move, and at Yayoko's order Sengoro set up a ladder and climbed to the window, though every nerve in him resisted.

What he saw there made him lose all strength and fall. In the upper room of the storehouse, among empty straw bags, a sort of square bed had been made on the boards, covered with Moyoko's bright sleeping clothes and red undergarments. Upon that lay Moyoko herself, naked and dead, her high bridal hair still fresh, while before her stood an old desk with a candle burning in a brass holder, school brushes and colors nearby, and the same long scroll spread out in front. Ichiro sat there in white nightclothes facing the scroll, and when Sengoro peered in, the young man turned quietly, smiled, and moved his hands from side to side as if to say, with calm courtesy, "You must not look." At that image my hands tightened on the document so hard that the paper trembled, because the testimony had now carried me to the very edge of the bridal crime itself, and I knew the next pages would force me to look still deeper.

Part 32

I read on without lifting my head. Sengoro said that when he fell from the ladder, Yayoko rushed to him, tried to raise him, and asked what he had seen, but in his terror he could hardly answer at all. He thought he may have pointed toward the window and babbled something, yet even that memory was broken. Yayoko, however, seemed to understand enough from his state alone. She righted the ladder at once and climbed it herself, gathering up her skirt and moving with a steadiness so cold that even the old servant, lying half-helpless below, felt a new fear rise in him.

He said he would never forget the strength of her nerve. She leaned over the window, looked inside for a long quiet moment, and then asked in a level voice, “What are you doing there?” From inside came Ichiro’s answer in an ordinary tone, almost polite: “Mother, please wait a little. It will begin to rot soon.” The stillness around the storehouse was so deep that every word carried clearly. Yayoko thought for only a second before replying that rot would not come so quickly and that, since dawn had already broken, he should come down and eat.

Ichiro answered, “Yes,” as obediently as a child. Sengoro said he could then see the candle-shadow shift within the storehouse, as if Ichiro had risen from the desk. Yayoko came down the ladder quickly and ran to the door, calling for a doctor, though the old servant could not yet understand why she would speak with such calm to a son sitting before a dead bride. The door was opened from within, and Ichiro came out wearing garden clogs and still holding a key. He smiled when he saw them, and though the old servant did not at first understand the meaning of that smile, he felt that Ichiro’s eyes were already unlike the eyes of any ordinary man.

Yayoko took the key softly from his hand and, speaking in a gentle deceptive way as if soothing a frightened child, led him back toward the detached house. Sengoro watched them go in and saw her lay him down. Then she returned alone to the storehouse and busied herself there for some time in secret. During that

interval Sengoro dragged himself away in terror, pulled himself upright by clinging to a tree, and trembled under the branches while listening. He heard first the copper-covered window flap close and then the outer lock fasten, and almost at once Yayoko ran back toward the detached house barefoot, her hair loose, the scroll clutched tightly in her hand.

Through the glass doors he could see her thrust the scroll at Ichiro and question him with a face of desperate severity. Ichiro, in turn, pointed repeatedly toward the stone quarry, mixing his gestures with excited explanations and words too difficult for the servant to understand, though phrases like “for the Emperor” and “for the people” came again and again. Yayoko listened with round staring eyes, nodding as if she were trying to force meaning from nonsense. Then, suddenly, Ichiro fell silent and fixed his gaze upon the scroll in her hands. In the next instant he snatched it away and hid it deep in his clothing.

Yayoko seized it back by force. Sengoro wrote that this, looking back, had been the true mistake. The moment the scroll left his possession, Ichiro seemed to lose some inner support and become terrifyingly blank. He stared at Yayoko with an empty open mouth, then slowly began to grin. The grin spread into a pleased, narrow-eyed smile so unnatural that even Yayoko, who until then had shown almost superhuman firmness, recoiled in fear and tried to withdraw.

Ichiro caught her at once. He seized her sleeve, pulled her heavily back onto the floor, and went on gazing into her face with the same delighted, almost tender smile. When she struggled to rise and escape by the veranda, he stood, followed, and seized her from behind by the hair at the back of her neck. Then, still smiling, he dragged her backward and down into the garden. Sengoro described the scene with horror that had plainly not faded even in old age. Ichiro picked up a nearby wooden clog and beat Yayoko about the head again and again, apparently with pleasure, while she bled, crawled over the ground, and screamed in a broken dying voice.

At that point the servant himself lost all courage and fled home bent over and clutching his waist, shouting only for a doctor. Soon after, he said, younger servants in the Kure house heard the cries, ran out, and tried to subdue Ichiro.

Even three or five men together could barely manage it, for the strength he showed in that state was beyond all reason, and the rope broke twice before they finally bound him to a pillar in the detached house. Once tied, however, he almost immediately fell into heavy sleep. Later, when he woke again and was questioned by the police, his whole manner had changed completely. He only looked around in blank confusion and answered nothing clearly.

Sengoro added that there had been an earlier outbreak of the same illness in Nogata and that, at that time, doctors had believed some drug had been used on Ichiro. Yet after witnessing this second disaster with his own eyes, the old servant no longer trusted such an explanation. To him it seemed far more likely that the old terror attached to the Kure bloodline and the forbidden scroll had awakened again. He ended by saying that the scroll had once been kept inside the belly of the principal image at Nyogetsu Temple and that the old belief in the district was simple and terrible: if a male born into the Kure line saw it, he would lose reason and kill any woman before him, whether mother, sister, bride, or stranger. The origin of that curse, Sengoro said, was supposedly written somewhere at the temple, though he himself only knew the rumor.

When I reached the end of the testimony, I let the pages sink a little in my hands and stared without seeing the room before me. The old servant’s plain words had carried the whole scene into a dreadful clarity: the quarry at evening, the white scroll, Moyoko’s red shame and nod, the candle in the storehouse, the corpse laid out before the desk, Yayoko’s superhuman control, and then the smiling beating in the dawn garden. None of it felt like invention. It felt instead like the hard outer shell of some deeper mechanism already described in the earlier documents. And because every page brought the hidden name of the bridegroom nearer to me, I could not shake the growing fear that I was no longer reading about another man’s crime at all, but about the lost and monstrous center of my own past.

Part 33

After Sengoro’s statement ended, the packet did not move at once into theory

again. There followed another voice, that of Yayoko herself, taken down in a state of grief so fierce that even the written words seemed to shake. I read that when she spoke of the man who had shown the scroll to Ichiro, she no longer spoke like the hard mistress of a great farming house. She spoke like a woman whose whole life had been broken in one blow and who could no longer separate reason from hatred. Again and again she said that if only that one person could be found, she wished to ask him one thing: for what hatred had he done something so cruel.

The more I read, the more terrible her voice became. She said that when Ichiro had left Nogata and come to Meinohama, no such scroll had been among his belongings, because she herself had checked everything around him with her own hands. Therefore the police, in her eyes, knew nothing. They had only tormented Ichiro uselessly and called that investigation. She had refused to answer them properly, not from stubborn pride alone, but because she already believed the true enemy lay somewhere else, outside the reach of their dull official questions.

Then came the lines that struck me hardest. She said that she no longer cared what became of herself, or whether Ichiro ever returned to sanity, or even whether her daughter might somehow come back from death. All that had already passed beyond help. But there remained one thing she could not let go. The enemy of her younger sister Chiyo, the enemy of Ichiro, and the enemy of Moyoko was one and the same man. It was the man who knew the whole matter of the picture scroll and still showed it to Ichiro. At that point the record broke off, because she had become too excited and confused to continue.

Even in that broken condition, however, her words cast a new light on everything that had come before. Until then, the documents had built a wide structure of heredity, dream-wandering, ancestral desire, and mental suggestion. But here, in Yayoko’s grief, there appeared alongside all that another shadow: the possibility of one living hand guiding events at the crucial moment. Not the ultimate cause, perhaps, but the human hand that had knowingly placed the forbidden object before the one man who could not safely see it. I felt, while reading, that the whole case was now narrowing toward two kinds of terror at once, one ancient and hereditary, the other deliberate and immediate.

After her broken statement came a dry official note, and the change in tone itself was painful. The note recorded the condition of the storehouse at half past ten on the morning of the crime, after entry had been forbidden. On old newspapers spread near the lower entrance were found exactly side by side Ichiro’s wooden-clog prints and Moyoko’s red cork sandals for going out. From that spot, drops of candle wax began and continued in a line up the steep stair. Even that small detail, so exact and lifeless in the report, made the whole scene more dreadful to me, because it suggested not struggle, but preparation.

The note then stated that in the upper room neither the state of the place nor the condition of the body showed signs of violent resistance, wrestling, or desperate suffering. Around Moyoko’s neck there were overlapping marks of strangling and blood-stopping pressure, yet no clear external break or tearing of the windpipe or great vessels could be found. Under the desk before the corpse lay a new Western towel smelling of face powder and perfume, believed to have belonged to the killer and to have been used in the crime. The report said this with the flat calm of a police record, but I could not read it without imagining the softness of the towel, the fragrance on it, and the hands that had handled it in the candlelight.

On the desk itself, the note went on, were spread more than ten folded sheets of soft paper carrying a woman’s bodily scent, almost as if the dead bride had been turned into some object of study or of ceremonial arrangement. To the left stood a brass candlestick from the family Buddhist goods, and later examination suggested that the thick candle had burned for about two hours and forty minutes before being put out. The simple weight of that number nearly stopped my breath. Two hours and forty minutes. Not a sudden blind act, then, but a long night locked with a corpse, a candle, a scroll, and some inward compulsion too terrible to name plainly.

I lowered the papers for a moment and looked without seeing the bright room around me. Everything in the note supported what the earlier theory had been leading toward. There had been no wild chase through the room, no desperate struggle, no ordinary criminal confusion. The body had been treated as part of a scene prepared and sustained over time. The wax, the paper, the towel, the candle,

and the calm arrangement below the desk all pointed not to common rage, but to some prolonged abnormal action in which desire, dream, and image had all joined together.

When I began reading again, the voice on the pages was no longer Yayoko's and no longer that of the police. It was Masaki's once more, cool, quick, and full of dreadful satisfaction at the way the evidence fitted his theory. He drew attention to the same facts that had shaken me: the absence of struggle, the length of the candle's burning, the scented towel, the paired footwear at the stair, and the stillness of the whole arrangement. To him these were not merely clues in a murder case. They were signs of dream-wandering under a deeply awakened hereditary force, signs that the act had not ended with killing, but had continued into a further stage of handling, looking, and arranging.

He then returned to the scroll and said, more clearly than before, that only two people apart from myself had actually seen it in the present time: Wakabayashi and Masaki. Yayoko had hidden it after taking it from the storehouse loft, and later Wakabayashi, suspecting its importance, had seized it and handed it over to Masaki. The law had not made much of it, because the officials did not understand what they were looking at. But to Masaki it had become the central material object in the case, the one visible suggestion that joined the Kure bloodline, the old curse, the dream-wandering attacks, and the bridal murder into one chain. As I read this, I felt again that all roads in the documents, no matter how wildly they seemed to turn, were really converging on one hidden center.

Then, with that same terrible confidence, he said that once one understood the scroll's meaning and the specific kind of hereditary force sleeping in the Kure line, the second attack became far more illuminating than the first. In the first attack, only strangling had corresponded directly with the ancestral pattern, while the later acts had wandered off into side channels of desire and corpse-handling. But in the second attack, the suggestion had gone deeper and the old force had shown itself more fully. That was why the events at Meinohama must be studied with the utmost care. And when I reached the end of that section, I felt with cold certainty that the next pages would no longer speak around the hidden inheritance of the

Kure house, but would name it more directly, and with every such step the distance between the papers in my hands and my own lost self was becoming harder and harder to maintain.

Part 34

Before I turned to the next group of records, I found one more note by Masaki, and the moment I began reading it, I understood that this was the part that should have stood like a dark pillar under everything else. He wrote that no one could understand the Kure case unless he first understood the first great crime of the Kure line itself. The later attacks, the forbidden scroll, the fear of the women in the family, and the strange acts of the sons were only branches. The root lay far back in China, in the Tang age, with a painter of the Kure blood named Kure Seishu. Until that point I had read of curses, old terror, and hidden heredity, but here, at last, the old family evil took a clear human shape.

Kure Seishu, Masaki wrote, had been a painter of rare skill. He was not merely a craftsman who copied faces and robes well. He was a man who could seize the life of a face so strongly that people felt the painted figure was still breathing inside the silk. Because of that gift, he came near the highest circles of power and at last stood before the Tang Emperor Xuanzong himself. But Seishu was not content to paint beauty as it appeared in the moment. He grew troubled by a darker thought, the thought that all living beauty was false because it passed away at once. The softer and brighter the beauty, the more empty it seemed to him, because it moved toward ruin from the very instant it appeared.

According to Masaki, Seishu became more and more disturbed by the emperor’s love of beautiful women and by the foolish pride of courts that worshiped soft skin, rich color, and passing charm as if such things were eternal. He wished to strike the emperor with a truth too harsh for words. If beauty in its living state made men drunk, then only beauty after death, losing shape hour by hour, could wake them. Only then, he thought, would a man truly understand how empty the body was. In an ordinary mind, such a thought would have remained

only a cruel idea or a bitter sermon. But in Seishu's mind, where art, pride, and abnormal desire had already twisted together, the thought became a plan.

The victim of that plan was his own wife. Masaki wrote that she was a woman of extraordinary beauty, not merely pleasing, but of the kind that fixes itself in memory and grows only more dangerous there. Seishu should have loved and protected her. Instead, because she was nearest to him and because her beauty had already entered his blood, he chose her as the body through which he would prove his terrible lesson. In secret he killed her with his own hands. He did not kill in sudden rage, nor for money, nor from ordinary jealousy. He killed because he wanted to possess beauty beyond life, stop it, and then record its fall step by step as it changed into corruption.

After that, Masaki said, Seishu committed the act that became the true curse of the family. He did not bury the body at once. He returned to it again and again and drew what he saw. He sketched the fresh corpse, then the change of color, the swelling, the first collapse of the face, the breaking of the skin, the feeding of worms and insects, the sinking of the flesh, and the coming out of the bones. In this way he made the long picture scroll later feared as the scroll of the nine phases of decay. The purpose, he said, was to show the emperor that the most beautiful living body and the most ruined dead body were not two separate things, but one single road. Yet what began as a warning to another man had already become, in Seishu himself, an act of monstrous delight.

For that was the point Masaki wished to drive into the reader's heart. Seishu was not only a moral teacher who chose a wicked method. He was a diseased man whose mind had already joined beauty, killing, looking, and possession into one abnormal desire. He wished not only to warn the emperor, but to keep the beautiful woman for himself in another form, to enjoy her beyond life, and to turn her body into an image that only he could fully command. In that sense, the scroll was born from two things at once: a severe truth about the body and a deep hereditary perversion. The truth gave the act its outer dignity. The perversion gave it blood.

From that moment, Masaki wrote, the evil did not end with Seishu's own death. The scroll remained, but more than the scroll remained. In the Kure bloodline

there continued a hidden union of beauty, death, image, and violent desire. What had appeared once in Seishu as a complete act could, in later descendants, rise again only in fragments. In one man it might appear as a sudden strangling impulse toward a beautiful woman. In another it might appear as fascination with the dead, with hanging, with handling the body after death, or with seeing one's own face in the victim's face. In another it might sleep for years and then wake only when the descendant saw the old scroll itself. The family "curse," therefore, was not childish magic. It was the survival of one ancestor's diseased pattern in blood and image together.

That was why the scroll mattered so terribly. To an ordinary stranger, Masaki said, it was only a horrifying old picture and perhaps a lesson in Buddhist impermanence. But to a male of the Kure line, especially one already carrying the hereditary weakness strongly, it was a direct suggestion from the first criminal of the family to the last. The son looking at the scroll did not merely understand it. He entered it. He was seized by the same current that had once moved Seishu's hand from beauty to murder and from murder to drawing. Thus the later attacks in the Kure house, however different they looked on the surface, all led back to this one ancestral union: beautiful woman, death, looking, and the strange satisfaction of fixing the falling body into image.

Masaki added that the women of the house had understood this more deeply than the men around them. Chiseko and Yayoko may not have spoken in scientific words, but they knew the scroll must never be seen by a male of the line. They knew that once it was seen, the old current might wake again. Their fear of the temple, their secrecy, their talk of curse and doom, and their desperate effort to control names, meetings, marriage, and movement all became clear under this light. They were not protecting some foolish village legend. They were standing guard over a hereditary wound that had already killed before and could kill again.

When I finished that note, I could no longer think of the Kure curse as something vague. It now had a beginning, a body, a crime, and a picture. A Tang painter had killed his own wife, watched her beauty rot away, and turned that rot into a scroll to strike an emperor. That act had then sunk into the bloodline and

waited there for generations. From that point onward, every later document I had read changed its color. Ichiro's attacks, Moyoko's death, the hidden scroll, the corpse-handling, and the terror of the women all stood under the shadow of that first painter's hand. And with that dreadful origin now clear before me, I turned at last to the next record and read on.

Part 35

The next pages did not name the hidden inheritance in a short direct way after all. Instead, Masaki suddenly changed methods and inserted what he called an appendix to his theory of psychological heredity, a bundle of selected records meant to let the reader solve the case as if watching a trick film unfold scene by scene. The first heading named the whole matter openly: a record of Ichiro Kure's attacks, based on the notes of W. At once the time shifted backward from the bridal murder to the earlier incident, the first attack, and I understood that Masaki meant to force the reader to pass through the whole chain of evidence from the beginning before daring to judge the second crime. I bent closer over the pages, because if this was true, then the road toward my own lost identity had now entered its oldest still-living track.

The first document in the appendix was Ichiro's own statement, taken a few days after the death of his mother Chiseko, in a room that had served as both his study and sleeping room above the girls' school she ran. Even before the content began, the dry official note struck me: Ichiro was eighteen, Chiseko thirty-six, and Yayoko, the aunt from Meinohama, sat there with W while he spoke. Then Ichiro's own voice began, and it was so quiet, so modest, and so grateful that I felt a fresh chill. He thanked W for asking the one question that made him remember the dream he had forgotten, and he said plainly that without that question he would have gone through life branded as a mother-killer. There was no theatrical grief in the opening, no wild denial. He spoke instead like a clever, delicate boy trying to tell the truth with exact care.

He said he knew almost nothing of his father. His mother had told him only that

she had left Meinohama at seventeen to study painting and embroidery, had gone to Tokyo while searching for the man, and had given birth to him there. “The greater a man is,” she had often said, “the more lies he tells,” and the boy, even while blushing over such words, guessed she must have been speaking of his father in bitterness. Yet whenever he asked more directly, she turned tearful, so in later years he had mostly stopped. Still, he had always understood that she had never truly given up searching. While reading this, I felt again the old pattern that had already appeared in the documents: concealment, pursuit, fear of exposure, and a child growing up under a silence too heavy to be ordinary.

Ichiro then described one of his earliest memories, and it was told with such careful childlike clarity that I could almost see it. When he was four or five, his mother took him by train from a large Tokyo station and then by horse-cart through fields and mountain roads for a very long time. He remembered falling asleep once and waking still inside the cart, and he remembered reaching some inn only after night had fully fallen. For days after that his mother carried him on her back while going from house to house somewhere in a mountain region, and he remembered only that he cried to go home and that the cart-driver had blown a trumpet-like horn. Later, after they had returned to Tokyo, she bought him a toy horn with the same sound. In later years he became convinced that this journey must have been one of her attempts to find his father’s home.

What moved me most in that section was not only the journey, but the way it remained in him as fragments: the sound of the horn, the horse-cart, the mountain shapes, the feeling of distance, and the certainty that his mother had gone three times to that same region. She would tell him only that if she lived until he graduated from the university, she would then reveal everything. So he had begun to study maps in secret, measuring train and cart times and concluding that the place must have lain in the mountains of Chiba or Tochigi. Here, already, the testimony felt less like a boy’s simple family story than like the beginning of a private detective life. The son had inherited not only mystery, but the habit of quietly pursuing it.

He went on to describe their Tokyo life in a way that deepened that impression.

They had moved again and again, living upstairs, in detached back rooms, or in storehouse-like rented spaces, always somewhat hidden, while his mother made fine embroidered goods that she sold through a house in Nihonbashi called Omiya. He remembered its elegant mistress, remembered being given sweets there, and remembered one particular embroidered silk fukusa so exquisitely made that the whole house had come out in wonder to see it. Yet even then, when payment had been offered, his mother had refused money and accepted only sweets, and the mistress and his mother had stood weeping at the gate when they parted. The memory was gentle on the surface, but I felt in it again that same old pressure of concealment, debt, love, pride, and refusal.

Then Ichiro explained why they had finally moved west to Nogata. His mother, he said, had consulted a fortune-teller from Mami-ana whom she trusted absolutely. This man had declared that mother and son were under some curse, that Tokyo would bring them nothing but misfortune, and that she must return westward to escape it. He had also warned that the man she sought belonged to a star-sign fatally opposed to her own and that even their belongings, if placed too near each other, would harm one another. That line struck me hard, because it echoed too closely the later warnings about keeping the relics of the father away. Ichiro himself repeated the words almost like a lesson learned by heart in childhood, and because he did so without mockery, I could feel how deeply such prophecies must have sunk into the house.

In Nogata, he said, Chiseko rented the house and opened a girls' school in embroidery and related arts. She was strong, quick-tempered, and fearless with troublesome men, yet at the same time she hated publicity of every kind where her son was concerned. He said she never minded if he studied well, but she deeply disliked his name appearing on posted rankings or in newspapers. Once she had even asked a teacher to place his work in some hidden corner where no one would notice it. At first this sounded merely eccentric, but Ichiro himself had already understood the deeper reason. She was afraid, perhaps not of newspapers in themselves, but of being found. That fear followed him too. Even while advancing through school at unusual speed, he knew he was being urged forward

toward the moment when she had promised to speak, and at the same time held back from all forms of public visibility.

He then said something that saddened me more quietly than the wilder parts of the record. He had wanted above all to enter university quickly, not only because he disliked Nogata and its coal smoke, but because he longed to hear the truth about his father before it was too late. Yet whenever he achieved something, his mother never seemed fully happy. She worried about his name in the papers, about strangers speaking to him, about bad boys and girls in Fukuoka, about any chance meeting that might reveal who or where he was. The testimony made clear that she lived in a constant defensive state, half practical, half superstitious, and that he, mild though he was, had grown up inside that nervous enclosure. Reading this, I felt that the future crimes, however monstrous, had not sprung from emptiness. They had grown in the shadow of long fear.

At last the statement reached the night of the first attack. Ichiro said there had seemed to be nothing unusual. He slept around nine as usual, and sometime after one in the morning he woke because he thought he had heard a heavy sound. He checked his watch, saw the time, went downstairs to the toilet, and on the way happened to look at his sleeping mother. Her mouth was slightly open, her cheeks red, her forehead pale and smooth, and in the dimness she looked, he said, strangely young, almost like one of the older girls who came to the school. He went back to bed, and after that came a series of terrible dreams: a train leaving its rails and chasing him, a black bull with a purple tongue staring at him, the sun pouring out black smoke, and the top of Mount Fuji splitting apart so that red blood rushed toward him in waves. He could not escape in any of them, no matter how desperately he tried.

When he woke again, dawn had already come. His head throbbed violently, his mouth smelled foul, his chest felt sick, and he fell asleep once more in heavy sweating sleep. Then came the awakening into ruin: men pulling him up, a police saber, his mother’s room under inspection, the old sash hanging in a noose shape from the stair rail, the daylight outside too bright to bear, and the horrifying realization at the police station that his mother had not died of illness, but had

been strangled and then hung to resemble suicide. Under questioning, as the pain in his head grew worse, he said a thought began slowly to form in him: could it be possible that he himself had killed and forgotten. By the end of the statement, after describing the accusations, the sweating, the nausea, the grief, and his later meeting with W and Yayoko, he said plainly that he had never before spoken of the dream because he had not remembered it until W asked. I lowered the pages after reading that and sat still, because the testimony had given me exactly what Masaki wanted the reader to see: not a monster speaking, but an intelligent, restrained boy standing already at the edge of hereditary terror, memory loss, and suspicion against himself.

Part 36

The next document was headed as an outline of Yayoko's statement, taken that same day around five in the afternoon in the back room of her house. The moment I began reading, I could feel that this was no longer the broken half-mad outcry I had seen before, but a record written while grief, rage, and purpose were still all burning together. She greeted W almost like a woman receiving the only person left in the world who might still act for her. She said her own wounds were nothing and her life itself was nothing, and while saying so she drew the scroll from where she had hidden it in her clothes and handed it over. Then she begged him, again and again, to find the one who had stolen that scroll from the temple, waited at the stone quarry, placed it into Ichiro's hands, and thereby planned the destruction of everyone in the house.

What pierced me most was the simplicity of the request that followed. She did not first ask for law, punishment, or explanation before a court. She asked only that if the person were found, he should be asked one question: for what hatred had he done such a cruel thing. She wept and said that if only she had learned the person's name while Ichiro was still sane, she would never have rested until she had chewed that man's bones. She insisted that when Ichiro was brought back from Nogata, nothing of the kind had been among his things, because she had

searched all around him herself. Therefore the police understood nothing, and their treatment of him had only been another act of cruelty added to the rest.

Then her grief turned into something even harsher. She said she had already given up on almost everything. It no longer mattered whether Ichiro would recover his mind, whether her daughter might come back from death, or what became of her own life. One thing alone remained fixed before her. The enemy of her younger sister Chiyo, the enemy of Ichiro, and the enemy of Moyoko were one and the same person: the one who knew the whole matter of the scroll and still showed it to Ichiro. At that point the record said she became too excited and confused to continue, and later, after about a week, slipped gradually toward a kind of absent-minded state rather than back into strong practical reason.

After this came a long series of notes, and their dry official tone made the horror sharper rather than softer. The first note described the interior of the storehouse at half past ten on the morning of the crime, after entry had been forbidden. On old newspapers laid just inside the entrance below were found, placed exactly side by side, the prints of Ichiro’s wooden clogs and Moyoko’s red outside sandals. From near them began the drops of candle wax, leading in a line up the steep stair. The upper room, the note said, showed no signs of violent struggle or resistance, and the body itself also lacked the outward marks of a desperate fight, as if the act had passed under some strange stillness rather than ordinary terror.

The details that followed held me like a bad dream. Around the neck there were the overlapping traces of strangling and pressure, yet no clear outer break of the great structures of the throat could be found. Under the desk before the body lay a new Western towel carrying the smell of face powder and perfume, believed to have belonged to the killer and to have been used in the act. On the center of the desk were spread many folded sheets of half paper, still carrying a woman’s bodily scent. To the left stood a brass candlestick from the family altar things, and later examination suggested that the thick candle had burned for about two hours and forty minutes before being put out. That number worked in me like poison. Two hours and forty minutes with the corpse, the scroll, the candle, the paper, and whatever blind purpose had held the killer there.

Then came a fact that changed the whole emotional shape of the scene. Three more new candles and a box of matches were found under the desk, and on all four candles, as well as on the matchbox, only Moyoko's fingerprints appeared. None of Ichiro's were present. From that, the note concluded that Moyoko herself had brought the candles, struck the match, and lit the one placed at the left edge of the desk. Another note added that when her body reached the university that night and was dissected by W in the presence of another doctor, the cause of death was confirmed as strangling, but her body also showed that she had lost consciousness before hanging and that her virginity remained intact. That last fact, written so flatly, struck me with enormous force, because it seemed to tear away one whole field of vulgar explanation and leave only the darker explanations standing.

After these case notes came strange temple notes concerning the principal image of Kisaragi Temple. The seated Miroku figure, the record said, had a disproportionately large head and small body, an eerie face, no halo, and a form so unusual that it might almost be taken for a self-image of its maker. On the bottom was cut the name "Shoku." Inside the body of the image was found an empty cylindrical space exactly matching the size of the scroll, with traces of pasted sealing at the neck and with old paper, cotton, and ash inside. The ash, when examined, showed signs only of burned Japanese paper and silk cloth, with no remains of mounting silk thread or wooden roller. All of this told me that the legend of the hidden scroll was no foolish village tale after all. It had had an exact bodily place in the statue, and its disappearance and reappearance now stood inside the case as hard fact.

There were also notes about the stone quarry. The place where Ichiro had sat reading the scroll lay hidden behind a coarse block, difficult for passersby on the road to notice. No useful footprints remained because of the light rain, and even the local stone workers, once questioned after recovering from a strange illness that had kept them away, remembered no suspicious figure going in and out. At the bottom of all these details Masaki had scribbled reminders to himself in a rough practical manner: to insert a photographic plate of the scroll, to give the

history of the scroll, and to add his observations on the second attack as a whole. Then suddenly that dry chain broke, and Masaki's own laughing voice burst into the text once more.

He laughed at the reader and asked whether we had been caught off guard. This, he said, was supposed to be one of the most important parts of his testament, yet by now the reader must have half forgotten that while moving through the mixture of tragedy, comedy, swordplay, sermons, and all the rest. He proudly declared that the forms taken by psychological heredity in these records were truly beyond compare, so wild that no ordinary handbook of science or common sense could stand against them. Then, with obvious delight, he quoted Wakabayashi's own exhausted conclusion that the true criminal in the case could only be called a hypothetical criminal, because the events seemed to require some being beyond the reach of present learning, morals, human feeling, and habit, some hidden power that had destroyed a family line while disguising every step as accident or something almost supernatural.

After quoting this, Masaki turned at once to the real center of his delight. Here, he said, lay the true interest of the entire case. From the very beginning, his own view and Wakabayashi's had stood in open opposition and remained so even now. Wakabayashi, speaking as a forensic man, believed there must be another hidden criminal somewhere, one who manipulated all the strange phenomena from behind a curtain. Masaki, as a man of mental science, refused that line entirely. To him this was a crime without a criminal in the ordinary sense, nothing but the outward flowering of a bizarre psychiatric attack in which victim and criminal had, under illusion, become one and the same. And if anyone still demanded a criminal, then, Masaki said with savage mockery, one should arrest the ancestor who had handed down such a psyche to Ichiro and throw that long-dead forefather into prison. When I reached the end of that outburst, I sat for a moment unable to turn the page, because the conflict he described no longer felt like a scholarly disagreement far from me. It felt like two opposite explanations tightening around my own life, and I could no longer tell which of them I feared more.

Part 37

Masaki's own voice then took over once more, and he answered Wakabayashi's idea of a hidden third criminal with open contempt. He said that once the evidence was read in the correct order, the whole affair became simpler, not more complicated. Ichiro's first attack against his mother could be understood as a dream-wandering seizure brought on by a buried hereditary force, and every effort to imagine some separate mastermind behind it only created fresh confusion. In Masaki's view, that so-called unseen criminal existed only because ordinary investigators were still trapped inside the old belief that all deliberate action must belong to the waking brain. Since they could not imagine a man acting with full bodily force and almost no waking memory, they had invented an extra criminal to fill the gap.

He then said that, even in the first attack, the strangling itself was only the beginning. The real key lay in what followed after the strangling, because the later acts looked too strange to fit the usual idea of blind rage. They seemed to show not simple panic, but a second movement in the dream-state, a movement away from the killing itself and toward the body of the dead woman. This, Masaki argued, was exactly what one should expect if the first burst of hereditary desire had partly spent itself and then slid into another inherited pattern. He called that second pattern corpse-handling, and he said that science had neglected it only because the surviving records had long been mixed up with ghost stories and superstition.

According to him, the old tales of corpse-demons, corpse-spirits, and fire-carts were not childish nonsense in their origin. They were broken folk memories of dream-wanderers dealing with the dead under the force of suggestion and inherited cruelty. When a corpse, once lying still, seemed in legend to rise, twist, swing, crawl, hang, or move through impossible positions, ordinary people had imagined a ghost or monster at work. But if one looked calmly, Masaki said, the shapes described in such legends resembled something much more familiar. They resembled the motions made by children when they play with dolls, toy bodies,

or small animals, turning them, hanging them, bending them, throwing them, and arranging them with delighted cruelty while half forgetting that their own hands are doing the work.

That comparison, he insisted, was not accidental. The delight children feel in such handling, he said, was itself an inherited remnant of older human joy in conquering prey, seizing enemies, and mastering helpless bodies. In adult waking life that impulse usually stays covered by shame, training, and habit. But in dream-wandering, especially after a severe emotional shock and in the presence of a corpse that gives a powerful suggestion, the old current may break loose again. In that state, the dreamer may touch, move, display, hide, or return a body while scarcely knowing that he himself is acting, and may later believe the corpse somehow moved of its own accord or that some supernatural power had intervened.

Masaki then applied the same idea directly to Ichiro. After the first burst of hereditary desire had driven him to strangling, he said, the dead or dying female body itself became the next suggestion. Ichiro therefore passed into a form of corpse-handling dream-wandering. What others later took for signs of desperate struggle, excessive suffering, or clever criminal staging might in fact have been traces left by this later handling. In other words, some marks attributed to the victim’s dying resistance may have belonged instead to the strange continuation of Ichiro’s dream-state after the killing was already complete.

Yet Masaki did not stop there, because he thought even corpse-handling alone failed to explain the fullest oddity of the case. He said the dream-state had contained not only cruelty toward another body, but a distorted sexual deepening that pushed still farther inward. Human desire, he argued, can become so sharpened and frustrated that it leaves ordinary love entirely and turns first toward cruelty, then toward body-fragments, then toward symbols, and finally back toward the self from which all desire first rises. From that reversal come the darkest forms of self-love and self-violence: delight in self-humiliation, self-display, self-destruction, and at the farthest edge, the imagined pleasure of killing oneself or gazing upon one’s own corpse.

Under this view, Ichiro's actions during the first attack took on a new and frightful meaning. The face of the victim, Masaki suggested, must in some shifting dream-like way have come to resemble Ichiro's own. While the first violent desire still burned and the corpse lay before him, he would have seen again and again something of himself in that face. That would naturally draw the dream farther from ordinary murder and toward the illusion that he was killing himself and then looking upon his own dead body. From there, Masaki said, the repeated pressure on the throat and the final hanging made terrible sense, not as practical concealment, but as the climax of a self-corpse vision in which Ichiro staged before his own eyes the sight of his own death.

He then added that the main sexual storm of the attack probably ended at that very point. Once the self-corpse vision had reached its highest pitch, the strongest inner pressure was relieved. What followed after that was not the same attack in full force, but what Masaki called its after-wave, a staggering continuation in which the dreamer still moved, but with weakened coordination and lowered clarity. Even in that half-broken state, however, important outward clues could be produced, and Masaki said investigators had missed them precisely because they kept searching for drugs, accomplices, and ordinary motives instead of studying the nature of dream-wandering itself.

This led him to one of the strangest points in the whole argument: Ichiro's foul breath, nausea, headache, and sick waking state after the attack. Many had suspected some anesthetic or poison, Masaki said, and from ordinary common sense the suspicion was understandable. But the symptoms could be explained much more naturally by what dream-wanderers often do after the main force of an attack has passed. At that stage, under terrible fatigue and thirst, they may continue moving in a dim half-conscious search for liquid and may drink anything that seems wet enough without properly knowing what it is. Here Masaki brought in the old legends of the long-necked monster that licks oil or dirty water at night, and he said those tales too were distorted memories of dreamers wandering to swallow whatever liquid they could find.

Under that explanation, Ichiro's bad breath no longer pointed toward a criminal

drug. It pointed instead toward something swallowed during the fading stage of the dream-state, after the worst of the violence had already ended. The later nightmare remembered upon waking, Masaki added, was probably not a full memory of the crime itself, but a confused disturbed sleep shaped by bodily exhaustion and by whatever he had drunk in that dim wandering condition. When I finished that section, I sat for a long moment without turning the page. The whole case had become even more terrible than before, because every oddity that once seemed to suggest some hidden outside plot was now being dragged inward and attached directly to the one lost man whose name I still could not bear to claim as my own.

Part 38

I turned the page, expecting another long net of theory, but instead Masaki seemed suddenly to lean out from the document and speak straight into my face. He mocked the reader in a half-laughing, half-warning tone and said that perhaps by now we had already decided upon the true criminal in the ordinary sense. Perhaps, he said, some clever hidden man really did stand behind the whole affair, just as Wakabayashi wished to believe. If so, he added, that conclusion would still remain only an inference, however sharp it might feel. No fully certain proof had yet been laid on the table.

That challenge struck me with peculiar force, because I myself had been moving, though unwillingly, toward exactly such a thought. The documents had made room for an unseen hand more than once: the man who gave the scroll to Ichiro, the one Yayoko hated, the keeper who had possessed the thing in secret, the hidden influence that had known how to strike at the Kure bloodline at the precise moment of weakness. Until then, however, these figures had floated like shadows between the lines rather than standing openly before me. Masaki now seemed to be daring me to name one of them. At the same time, he was warning me that naming was not the same as proving.

He then laughed again and said that if the reader wished to boast of solving the

case already, he should tighten his belt first. The whole interest of the matter, Masaki insisted, lay exactly there: between Wakabayashi's legal suspicion and his own psychiatric explanation. If one rushed too early toward a human culprit, one might lose the deeper truth. Yet if one refused to examine every last concrete sign, one might miss the human hand entirely. It was a taunt, but a fair one, and I could feel it bite deeper because it matched my own confusion too well.

Then, with a sudden turn, he said that the matter might still be decided by the scroll itself. Even if all the theories of heredity, dream-wandering, and ancestral desire were granted, one question remained. Was there not, perhaps, some tiny detail hidden in that mysterious scroll, some overlooked thing so small that no one had yet noticed it, and yet so important that it pointed directly toward the one who had set the whole disaster in motion. A thing, he said, which might even break the scroll's so-called curse in one stroke and turn everything back from enchantment toward truth. I felt my whole body tense while reading those lines, because the object lay somewhere in the room even now.

Masaki pressed the point with ruthless simplicity. Ichiro, he reminded the reader, had stared with complete concentration at the blank white part of the scroll in the quarry at Meinohama. At that time, Masaki wrote, Ichiro had already become half Kure Seishu and half Ichiro himself, so one could not say with certainty from which side of his divided inward state he had been looking. Yet one thing could be said. He had surely followed that blank white space all the way to the end, and in doing so he must have discovered something dropped, hidden, or overlooked there. Otherwise, Masaki asked, how could Ichiro later have told old Sengoro that he knew who the keeper of the scroll was.

The moment I read that sentence, everything in me seemed to stop. It was not a broad philosophical shock like the earlier theories. It was a sharp practical blow. Until that instant I had allowed myself to be carried along by the grandeur and horror of Masaki's explanations, but this was different. It was a simple question about a simple visible thing, and the force of it was terrible because it exposed how badly I myself had been reading. All at once I thought, "Why had I not noticed this before?" and the thought flashed through me so violently that I almost

rose from the chair without knowing I had done so.

For a brief second it seemed to me that someone was hurrying toward me from behind, or that some hidden pursuer had at last come close enough to lay a hand on my shoulder. I twisted around, but there was no one there beyond the bright room, the table, the cabinets, and Wakabayashi's pale watchful stillness. Then, with a kind of panic that was yet strangely exact, I looked first at my wristwatch and then at the electric clock in the room. Both showed four minutes before twelve. The agreement of those two times, so neat and so ordinary, only made the pressure in my chest worse, as if noon itself were an appointed boundary and I had almost missed it.

My hands moved before my mind had fully caught up. I snatched the blue cloth bundle toward me again and spread it open with fingers that would not keep still. Inside lay the newspaper-wrapped scroll and the investigation papers in the same careful order as before. Even that sight, which should have calmed me by its plain material reality, only deepened the strangeness. The cloth had kept its folds. The papers lay square. The scroll package showed no disturbance. It was all so exact, so untouched, that it seemed to accuse me of my own slowness.

I opened the wrapping and took up the scroll once more. A faint dry smell rose from it, mixed with the sharper smell of the preserving powder that had earlier fallen in white grains upon the table. The paper felt old, smooth, and dangerous in a way I cannot explain better. Somewhere within its painted and unpainted spaces, Masaki had suggested, there might remain a minute sign invisible to anyone who looked only at the obvious horror of the whole. Ichiro, in a divided state deeper than any ordinary waking attention, had seen something there. If that was true, then I, sitting in full daylight with my heart beating against my ribs, had no excuse not to look.

So I drew the roll toward me, found the long white section, and began very carefully to open it. I bent so low that my own breath touched the paper, and I followed the pale blankness inch by inch, no longer trusting the broad glance by which I had seen nothing before. The room around me had grown utterly still. Even Wakabayashi seemed to have withdrawn into silence so complete that I

could no longer tell whether he watched me or merely waited. With both hands trembling, with the clocks creeping toward noon, and with the feeling that one hidden grain of proof might now change everything at once, I went on unrolling the white part to its end.

Part 39

I followed the white part of the scroll farther and farther, but for a long time I found nothing at all. At first I tried to stay calm and careful, yet before long the work began to feel foolish. The paper looked like an endless white desert, and I felt as if I had been sent to cross it alone without any clear goal. I even started to doubt the whole idea. If Kure Seishu had drawn some last image there, surely his sister-in-law and all the others connected with the scroll would have noticed it long before a stranger like me.

Even so, I went on. My hands kept unrolling the paper almost by empty habit, while my mind drifted between duty, tiredness, and sleep. Then, just when I thought I had reached nothing but the end, I saw a small dark mark. I bent forward at once and opened my eyes wide. Near the final dark-blue paper, a little apart from the painted gold waves, there were five thin lines in a graceful woman’s hand. They were so fine and quiet that I could easily have missed them if I had looked with one careless glance.

The writing was a short poem first, and below it stood a date and a name. The poem spoke of a mother’s dark heart for her child and of the light of wisdom opening the future. Beneath it I read the date, November 26, 1907, written in Fukuoka. Then came the signature: Chiseko, mother of Masaki Ichiro. And under that, written as the person addressed, stood the name Masaki Keishi. The moment I read those words, every hair on my body seemed to rise.

I tried to roll the scroll back up, but my fingers would not obey me. The paper slipped from my hands, opened wider by itself, and fell from the table to the floor like a living thing. For one mad instant I could only stare at it. Then I rushed out of the room without knowing how I opened the door or crossed the corridor. At

that exact moment the great noon cannon sounded outside, and the whole university grounds shook with it. The sound seemed not to mark the hour, but to drive me away.

After that, my memory turned broken and wild. I knew only that I wandered through streets, across roads, past cars, tram bells, dogs, shouting voices, and blowing dust. I saw strange things in the bright air, some real and some perhaps not real at all. I remember red signs, long roads, clouds like faces, and a blue sky so sharp that it hurt my eyes. I remember thinking, again and again, that everything in the papers had been true and that the whole plan had belonged to Masaki alone. Wakabayashi, I thought, had not been the hidden master at all, but a man pulled into Masaki's design and used in it without knowing the last truth.

The more I walked, the clearer one idea became. Masaki had deceived Chiseko, taken the scroll from her, set the whole experiment in motion, and pushed forward over every human feeling in the name of science. Yet Chiseko had struck back in the only way still left to her. On the final page she had written the date, the child's name, and the father's name together, like a nail driven into the center of his magnificent plan. That tiny note, hidden at the end, was the one fatal opening in his great design. I felt both horror and pity when I thought of it, because the whole vast structure had been built by genius and then undone by a mother's grief and intelligence.

In that state I nearly walked into death myself. Someone shouted behind me, there was a crash, glass burst somewhere near my feet, and when I turned, I saw a goods truck, a broken bicycle, spilled bottles, and people staring at me in anger. I went on walking anyway, still thinking. The struggle between the ancient curse of Kure Seishu and the modern science of Masaki now seemed more dreadful than any common crime. Yet even in the middle of that storm of thought, one fact remained untouched, and when it rose before me, I stopped as if struck: for all I had learned, I still did not know who I myself was.

That loss swallowed everything else for a moment. I had uncovered names, dates, crimes, secrets, and long designs, yet I still could not answer the one question that mattered most to me. Who was I. What was my relation to this whole

terrible case. If only that one point would return, I felt that the curse of the scroll would lose its power at once. But no matter how I forced my mind, it would not come, and in my helplessness I went on walking faster and slower by turns like a man lost in fog.

Then a new terror seized me. I had left the scroll open in the professor's room. The hidden writing at the end must not be seen by anyone else, and above all not by Masaki if he were somehow still there. That thought struck me so strongly that I turned around at once and began to run. I ran through bright streets, then through dark side roads, then past music, shops, and crowds, hardly knowing where I was going. I remember only the feeling that I had to get back at once, though after a while even that purpose began to fade into a kind of blind motion. At last, after what may have been hours, I found myself once more in the professor's room, collapsed over the green table as if I had never truly left it.

When I raised my head, the room was bright with electric light, and at first I wondered whether the whole afternoon had been nothing but a dream seen while unconscious at the table. But my clothes, my torn sleeves, the dirt on my knees, and the dried blood on my left hand all told me otherwise. Then I looked around and felt a different kind of fear. The room was too neat. The papers on the table were set almost exactly as they had been in the morning, the blue cloth bundle looked untouched under a fine layer of dust, and even the red Daruma ash holder sat in its old position as if no one had moved it all day. Shaking, I pulled the bundle toward me, opened it, and found the scroll and the papers lying inside in neat old order, dusty and untouched, as if no human hand had handled them for a long time.

I could hardly breathe by then, but I kept searching. The scroll, the papers, even Masaki's testament all looked older than they had before, as if the fresh traces I thought I had seen that morning had belonged to another time. Then, under the packet, I found something that I was certain had not been there earlier: an old newspaper extra. I picked it up with both hands, opened it, and nearly cried out. The date was October 20, 1926, and across the top, in huge letters beside a rough photograph of Masaki's laughing face, stood the headline that froze my blood: *Professor Masaki of Kyushu Imperial University Drowns Himself.*

Part 40

The thought would not leave me. The more I tried to reject it, the more the facts pressed in on me from every side. If my day had truly repeated an earlier day, then Wakabayashi had led me through the same steps on purpose to test my mind. Perhaps he was watching me even now from somewhere nearby, writing down every movement, every pause, every sign of returning memory. Then an even darker thought came behind it. If his words about the date had been false, then perhaps I had not repeated this path only once, but many times since the real October twentieth, walking again and again through the same circle while he observed me.

As that possibility opened before me, a cold terror ran over my whole skin like a storm wind. My teeth shook against one another, and the room itself began to look like a great mouth opened to swallow me. I could no longer think of Wakabayashi as only a doctor or only a scholar. He seemed instead like a man who had joined scientific experiment and criminal investigation into one monstrous power. He stood, in my mind, at the center of the whole case, turning the fates of Masaki, the Kure family, the courts, and the university itself with his own hidden hands.

But even that terror led to something worse. If everything I had just understood was true, then I myself could be no one but Kure Ichiro. That name rose before me at last with horrible clearness. Masaki must then be my father, Chiseko my mother, and the beautiful suffering girl next door my promised bride. The full weight of that thought crushed the breath out of me. Was I truly the mad young man born to curse his parents, destroy his lover, and drag strangers too into blood and ruin.

I tried to cry out for father and mother, but my own voice did not reach my ears as a human sound. It only echoed back from the room in a mocking way. Even so, my mind remained strangely sharp. Half awake and half in a dream, I saw the floor of the room slant away before me as if it were sinking. Then I turned toward

the half-open door and began walking, leaning first one way and then the other, while telling myself that I must remain calm and must keep hold of reason to the very end.

I stepped into the corridor and looked back once at the white paper warning on the door. Moonlight lay along the windows of the passage, and I followed that pale line like a sleepwalker. At the stair I went down one step after another, hearing my own heavy footfalls in the silence. Near the bottom my foot missed the edge, and my whole body lurched in empty air. After that, I cannot say clearly how I rose or what path I took, only that before long I found myself standing like a stone figure before the door of Room Seven.

There I paused, feeling that I had forgotten something of the greatest importance and could not bring it back. Then, with sudden decision, I opened the door and went in. The bed stood there as it had in the morning, and I climbed onto it without removing my shoes and fell flat on my back. Behind my head the door closed by itself with a heavy dull sound. Almost at the same instant a woman's high broken voice rose from the next room, and it cut through me more sharply than anything that had come before.

She cried that her brother had returned and begged the attendants to let her see him. She insisted again and again that she was not mad, only his sister, and then she turned the cry toward me directly. While I lay still with open eyes, a thought spread slowly through me with dreadful calm. "This is the dream of the fetus," I said to myself. "Everything is the dream of the fetus." The girl's voice, the dark ceiling, the moonlight, the whole day, all of it belonged to one enormous dream in which I was still unborn and struggling inside my mother's body.

The more I thought that, the more natural it seemed. I was still in the womb, I told myself, twisting and suffering inside a terrible prenatal dream. The great shocks of the day were only the violent movements of that dream, and my mother alone could feel them from outside. No one else yet knew that when I finally came into the world, I was born to bring curse and death with me. That thought did not frighten me so much as it emptied me. It made all the rooms, faces, papers, and crimes seem both perfectly real and completely unreal at the same time.

Then I heard hands beating weakly against the concrete wall beside me. The girl called me by name at last, calling me Ichiro and begging me to remember her as Chiseko. After two or three cries, the sound changed into sobbing and then into the heavy collapse of someone throwing herself down in despair. I remained stretched out on the bed without moving, holding my breath like a dead man. Only my eyes stayed open, fixed on the darkness. Then, from the end of the corridor, the great clock began again with its deep humming stroke.

At the first sound the crying next door stopped completely. Another stroke followed, a little longer than before, and I opened my eyes wider still. With the next heavy hum, the skull-like face of Masaki appeared before me as if hanging in the air, covered with sweat, wearing his glasses, and smiling weakly as he lowered his eyes in a formal greeting before fading away. At the next stroke, Chiseko appeared near my face, her hair wild, her lower lip bloodied, and a cord tight around her neck. She looked at me with terrible pain, tried to speak, let tears fall, bit her lip once more, then turned pale and dropped her head backward into death.

The strokes went on, and with each one another face came. Shino with the smashed back of her head pouring dark fluid. Yayoko's blood-covered face, her eyes drawn tight with pain. Then the other patients one after another, wounded cheeks, broken brows, torn flesh, all rising and vanishing with the clock's deep sound. I covered my face with both hands and leaped from the bed. I ran straight ahead, and at once my forehead struck something hard so violently that light burst before my eyes and then everything went dark again.

In that darkness, one final face appeared. It was my own face and yet not mine, with wild hair, beard, hollow eyes, and a great red mouth laughing openly at me. I knew it at once and cried out, "Kure Seishu!" But even as I said the name, the face vanished as if cut away by a knife. Then only the sound remained, the long deep humming sound that had opened the whole nightmare and now closed it again, flowing on and on through the dark without end.

Buuuu—nnnn—nnn.