

Ango's
Detective Casebook
No. 2

The Meiji Enlightenment Series

ANGO SAKAGUCHI

SHELLEY MARSHALL (TRANSLATOR)

The Meiji Enlightenment Series

Ango's Detective Casebook No. 1

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CHAPTER ONE

THE LIGHTNING SEES

SOME PEOPLE HATE thunder. Well, people usually hate thunder, but there is a type of person who despises it. A friend of mine hated thunderstorms so much he evacuated to live in the Ito area. Four or five times a year Ito makes weak attempts at feigning distant thunder. He said the one-way commute of three hours was inconvenient, but in exchange he had peace of mind and did not agonize over Raijin, the god of lightning, stealing his belly button.

Of course, Tokyo has many thunderstorms. I used to live in Yaguchi-no-Watashi scattered with regions plagued by horrific thunderstorms. The locals believe that thunderbolts in Yaguchi fall at the Nitta Shrine in Musashi-Nitta. They say the frequent thunderbolts at the shrine may be connected to the final sad, fierce moments of the god Nitta. The shrines at Nitta Shrine being blown up and destroyed during the war may have confused the thunderbolts. In Yaguchi, thunderbolts came riding in on thunderclouds spawned near Mount Oyama. If you lived in the region for five or six years, you would come to know this.

A thunder-hating professor, who lived in the Ito region, was surprised by the ferocity of his hatred of thunder. On his own, he drew up a thunder map of Tokyo. Where do the thunderclouds covering Tokyo originate?

The path of each thundercloud seemed to be fixed. He studied the paths of all thunderstorms in Tokyo, and, of course, the changes in their paths over time. In a glance, he grasped the landing sites and the destructive paths of the thunderstorms in Tokyo over roughly twenty years.

Over those two decades, thunderclouds formed at the same locations five hundred times. The map was color-coded. Zones on the same path hit at least three hundred times were drawn in red; at least one hundred times,

in orange; at least fifty times, in yellow; and at least ten times, in green. When this map was examined, some regions were visited twice or three times by different thunderclouds. Rare locations resembling small valleys were never in the paths of the thunderstorms. They appeared to be sanctuaries from the enemy thunder.

You may wonder how he created this comprehensive map. Heads of households, who hate thunder, always inhabited each area. With each evolving thunderstorm, the half-unconscious chroniclers fumbled for notebooks and pencils to record the paths. The following day, they confirmed the lightning strike locations and exchanged records with the landowners from other areas.

The owners were in immediate contact not as a conspiracy united against thunder or close friendships, but shared the same mythological obsession with checking the paths of thunderstorms and exchanging records. The richer ones exhaustively researched inns to be used as safe harbors. At the first signs of thunder, they jumped onto electric trains and into one-yen taxis to dash off to those inns.

One after another, five or six landowners with the pale faces of regulars swooped down. When the thunderstorm ended, no one remained to tell tall tales. The party instantly scattered. The order of the rush into the sanctuary was fixed. Specifically, the frontrunners, that is, the first, second, and third arrivals, were never out of order. Even among this group, one felt the thunderstorm an hour before the others. The less sensitive two felt the storm forty minutes and thirty minutes beforehand. In fact, storm detection by these owners surpassed the accuracy of the machines in meteorological stations. You may believe in a sixth sense, but few stories about these masters reached the world.

It was the night of August 18 soon after the spirits of the ancestors were honored in the Obon Festival. Thunderstorms in Tokyo did not appear on schedule, like phantoms; however, most occurred around evening and were savage. This is also the story of one landowner.

During the thunderstorm that night, flashes of light struck just a little before nine o'clock or around eight-thirty. Among those who are not landowners, accuracy varies. When did the flashes of lightning begin? No one knew.

A little before nine or around eight-thirty would become a problem at a later date in this story that took place at the residence in Hongo Komagome of a government official named Mori Daigaku. Many temples dotted the area. Near his home was the temple of Yaoya Oshichi Yukari to memorialize the greengrocer's daughter executed for love in 1683. The residence of Mori Daigaku did not have a graveyard next to the fence, but about the front acre in back was the graveyard.

The landowner Daigaku was what would be called today a high-level

government official at the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. He was forty-seven years old. By government order, he had been dispatched to Hokkaido to conduct an inspection at the end of the previous month and would return no sooner than the twentieth. During his absence, his family he left behind had to visit the graves of their ancestors for Obon. His wife Yasuno (34 years old) and their three children: a daughter, Tazuko (15); and two sons, Hideo (12) and Daizan (7), would travel to their hometown in Kyushu accompanied by the house steward Imamura Saden (62), his wife Kamejo (55), and the two maids Hatsue (22) and Sawako (17). They would not return until the following day, the nineteenth, or the twentieth.

The remaining five members of the household were the oldest son Yuya (23), a college student; and the servants: two maids Mieko (18) and Osono (18), the groom Tokichi (38) and his wife Raku (36). While not afflicted as severely as the master, three household members were not far behind him in their hatred of thunder.

"I'm not concerned about being away, only about thunderstorms. In the event of a storm, Mieko, please be strong. Sadly, nothing can be done about those three with their terror of thunderstorms," said Yasuno, the lady of the house, smiling when she departed. Tokichi, his wife Raku, and Osono were terrified of thunderstorms. These sufferers were beyond help and followed the orders barked by the master punctuated with claps, "Put up the mosquito nets! Pull the futons over your heads!" However, enveloped by claps of thunder, beads of sweat dripped down and futons were meaninglessly pulled over heads.

The visit to the grave demanded the presence of both the house steward Imamura and his wife Kamejo. The absence of the caring Kamejo would be a strain, but neither could stay behind. Tokichi and his wife were not upset by their coming absence because, except during thunderstorms, they were confident.

The groom Tokichi and Raku lived in a small cottage on the grounds beside the stable. While the master was away, Raku stayed in the maids' quarters in the main house. Tokichi joined them for dinner and returned to the cottage when finished. A flash of lightning sent a dismal-looking Tokichi to the maids' quarters. He could not bear the booming thunder and lightning flashes alone.

A rolling thunder began. The mosquito nets were hung up in the maids' quarters. The logic for arranging the beddings for the man and the women under one net crossed no one's mind. The best strategy was many allies. The three beddings were quickly laid down for the three sufferers. The frightened trio pulled the futons over their heads and shut tight their covers like shellfish guarding against enemy attack. Closing the cover was the best measure to prevent the penetration of the lightning flashes and to muffle the peals of thunder.

When a fierce thunderstorm approached, Mieko went around to secure the storm shutters in each room. Yuya was on summer vacation from college and went out everyday and returned home late at night while his parents were away. Some nights he stayed out all night, which was uncommon. Returning home after eleven or midnight rarely happened when his parents were home. However, with both parents gone, he stayed out almost everyday and still had not returned home that day. Mieko shut all the storm shutters and closed the gate leaving only the side door without the locking bar set. She also laid out the bedding in Yuya's room. She placed a flint and a wooden block on the candle stand on the desk arranged so he would not be confused if he returned home. She also filled a jar with water, and placed it and a teacup beside his bed.

How did they know Mieko completed the above tasks? When Mieko stood up to shut the storm shutters, Tokichi's voice called out from under the futon to ask for the gate to be closed. Raku asked her to prepare Yuya's bedding. Were those tasks their duties given the samurai nature of this house? Raku, not the young maids, saw to the particulars of Yuya's bedding.

When Mieko finished the requested tasks and returned, without peeking out of the futon, Tokichi made sure she had not set the locking bar on the side door; Raku checked that she placed the candle stand on Yuya's desk and water at his bedside, and that he had not returned yet.

Finally, the rumbling was above their heads. Cracks of lightning seemed to slice the air. Heaven and Earth seemed to be ripping apart. Around that time, Yuya returned home. Mieko shouted, "Yes," and stood. Osono said, "What is it?"

She listened from inside her futon cover. Only Osono asked because she was the only one who still had the complexion of the living.

"I think he's home. I heard hands clap," answered Mieko and left. The other three, sheathed by their futons surrounded by the incessant sounds of heavy rain striking the storm shutters, did not hear the handclap. Mieko said it was a handclap. Yuya's room was quite far from the maids' room. She figured he didn't think his handclap could be heard in their room during the torrential downpour with crashing thunder, so he moved closer to the maids' room on purpose before he clapped. Because the entryway was far away, Mieko had not heard the sounds of Yuya opening the entryway door when he returned. After coming to this conclusion, she rose to greet him.

That night's thunderstorm lasted a long time. Yuya returned sometime between nine-thirty and ten at the height of the violent thunderstorm. Centered on Mori Daigaku's residence, the storm slowly meandered around the surrounding area two, three, four times as Heaven and Earth continued to rip apart in all directions. If the storm seemed far, it was close. If it seemed to turn right, it doubled back to the left. The fierce thunderstorm continued until after eleven, but was far away at eleven-thirty. Even after

midnight, thunderclaps were remembered.

Mieko never came back to the maids' room, but Yuya returned home earlier than nine-thirty or ten o'clock. His custom was to eat after his late return each night, so preparations were made for his evening meal. Mieko collected the prepared meal in the kitchen to take to him. Naturally, this took time. None of the three was suspicious and went to sleep.

Raku was the first to wake up. The thunder was still strong, and the rains heavy. After thirty or forty minutes passed, the thunder was distant and muted. She crawled out from under the mosquito netting and lit a handheld candle. She looked at the wall clock in the maids' room. It was ten minutes before midnight. She shook her husband awake.

"You have to go home and go to bed. You can't sleep in the maids' room forever. I think the thunder has stopped," she said to make him go home to the cottage.

When Tokichi grudgingly rose, lightning struck, and he could hear distant thunder. He collapsed down to make sure the thunder was far, far away. When he was reassured and left, Raku shook Osono awake.

"You were fast asleep. What happened to Mie-chan? It's already midnight. Where could she be? She probably slept in another room because we were under our futons inside the mosquito netting. This room heats up after a thunderstorm because the storm shutters are closed. She probably got hot and left this room."

Osono was dripping in sweat. Mieko wasn't in the other maids' room, but many other rooms were cooler, like the make-up room in the room next to the bathroom, or the small waiting room next to the servants' entrance. They thought she was sleeping there and went back to sleep unconcerned. As they dozed off, they heard the loud splash of something dropped into the well near the back garden. Raku felt her head was spinning, but it was only her thinking her head was spinning. The fatigue gripping most of her body stopped her from moving.

"Did you hear something?" whispered Raku.

"I think so," Osono answered in a drowsier voice.

"Was that the well in the back garden?"

"I think so."

Her answer had no life. Raku fell asleep, too. Mieko was not seen again at the residence.



THE TWO WOMEN STARTED worrying the next morning after discovering no signs Mieko slept in any of the rooms they used. First, they noticed that the late-night meal prepared for Yuya was still in the kitchen. However, their suspicions weren't raised. Osono began cleaning up, but stopped to find Raku, busy in the kitchen preparing the meal, to tell her, "The entryway

is a mess. Yuya-sama threw up. Muddy footprints from feet, not *geta* sandals, are all over the place. He must've rushed in during that huge thunderstorm and lost his sandals last night on the way home."

Raku went to inspect the disgusting muddy scene. The muddy footprints made a mess. The vomit landed on a foreign book lying on the floor. Yuya probably dropped the book when he bent over to vomit.

"It looks like meat with noodles and raw onions. His puke looks like sukiyaki. What should we do about the book?"

Osono tossed ashes over the muck, shoveled it up, and threw it down the toilet. She washed and dried the dirty book. The book staying under the muck for the night made cleaning it without damaging the paper painstaking work. Probably, the door at the entryway wasn't bolted and the locking bar on the side door wasn't set because he was dead drunk.

Someone attempted to wipe up, but footprints remained. In the dark, the filth wasn't thoroughly cleaned up.

"Look, he walked inside on purpose to clap."

Footprints got close to the kitchen, but traces of mud plastered the entryway where she probably became distressed. The reason for her distress should be obvious even in the vomit-splattered entryway.

"Did Mie-chan try to wipe this up in the dark? She didn't get much up..." grumbled Osono to herself and traced the muddy tracks to the door of Yuya's bedroom to wipe them up. Next to the parlor for receiving guests was the room housing the Buddhist altar, and next to that was Yuya's room. A celadon vase in the alcove of the parlor and a large ornamental plate were both broken in two.

A plate made by Kakiemon and a rare Chinese celadon vase were among the fine articles Mori Daigaku owned to gratify his interest in pottery and porcelain. He took pride in and treasured these two objects. The maids always handled them with exceptional care. Although she had not broken them, Osono paled at the sight. Shocked, she went to tell Raku. They looked at each other and shivered. They had no words. With the damage to the treasured family objects, the whereabouts of Mieko, which up to that moment had not worried them, became a frightening reality.

What was that sound of something dropping into the well in the back garden?

This situation should strike home to any Japanese person and was meaningful to the maids. Doesn't the precious earthenware bring to mind the story of *The Dish Mansion at Bancho*? That story was a tale of ghostly revenge by a maid who jumped into a well after being falsely accused of losing a precious plate.

The two had an instant meeting of minds. They shuddered, paled, and could not move or speak.

"Hey, last night when I went back to the cottage to go to sleep, I heard a

loud splash. I'm pretty sure it came from the back garden, do you think it..." said Tokichi.

The women only heard a third of what he said. They were terrified and put their hands together as if in prayer to say, "Stop!"

It was close to noon when Yuya finally woke up. They showed him the damage to the precious objects. When they asked if he noticed anything, he only said, "Um, you see..."

Yuya dropped his head and seemed lost in thought. Was he pale because of a hangover? He was brooding, and his body seemed broken when he said, "Mie broke it by accident. The thunder startled her. She stumbled and fell on them, then began crying."

She cried and was exhausted. The women understood everything. The sadness in Mieko's crying was like cold water running down their backs.

Tokichi was a good-natured man, but a big coward. He was not a man who could go down into the well knowing that Mieko's dead body was inside. In a fix, he contacted the police to ask for a high-ranking officer and a young policeman to come with well diggers. The one who was surprised was Raku. Her husband was a chicken-hearted weakling. Without getting permission from Yuya-sama, he went to the police. While anxiously waiting for the police and the well diggers, he informed Yuya of the crisis. Yuya was eating a late breakfast served by Osono in the parlor. He asked about the back garden.

"What?"

He didn't seem to believe it, then seemed devastated by a terrifying image.

"In the back garden the..."

He seemed unable to say the word *well*, as were Osono and Raku. Not once since the morning could they utter the only noun at the core of this problem. The three shuddered with the same feelings.

"In the back garden the...inspect the... uh.... We have no choice. Do we?" Yuya looked drained. He only muttered weakly and didn't seem to understand what he heard. He soon dropped the chopsticks. He bowed sharply, stood despite being in the middle of a meal, and staggered out of the parlor and back to his room.

Osono came with tea. Yuya was sitting dazed in front of the desk. When she asked, "Are you finished, sir?" He did not answer.

"Did anyone see Mie jump into the well in the back garden?"

"We heard the same sound, but saw nothing. It's like the Dish Mansion..."

At that instant, Yuya was dizzy or shivering and sighed.

"Oh, the Dish Mansion? Is that it?"

His nod was like a cringe.

However, a mysterious event occurred. When a well digger inspected the

interior of the well, there was no body. The well water was surprisingly high after the heavy rains. The well was deep and collected a considerable amount of water. He was unable to reach the bottom. When he thrust a pole down, the water was twenty-seven feet deep. He could not dive in to examine the bottom. He carefully probed with the pole, but found nothing.

The senior policeman was a strong-willed man and said, "All right," as he stripped down to his loincloth, too. After he descended into the well and swirled around in the water, he said, "I was born in Boshu and know how to dive. Hold a thirty- to forty-pound rock and you can easily sink to the bottom to search. When you let go of the rock, you'll easily rise. Twenty-seven feet shouldn't be a problem."

He ordered the two well diggers to tie signaling ropes around their waists so they could be pulled up in an emergency. The well diggers took turns holding the rock to search for the bottom. He also tried three times using the same technique to search for the bottom. In time, they were certain no dead body was lodged in the well.

"I'm sure she did not throw herself into this well. Are there other wells around here?"

In those days, every house had a well. The rustic kitchen in the Mori house had a dirt floor and a well. There was also a well next to the stable. Both were searched, but Mieko's body was not found in either. They searched another well at a neighbor's house. Mieko's body was not there.

"It looks like if she was going to jump with a rock into a well and die, she would run away and go back to her home. Where is Mie's home?"

"Mie-chan's family went bankrupt, and she doesn't seem to have a home or any relatives. She only has an older brother. I think he is a freeloader or a guest of Osono-chan's family. Right, Osono-chan. He's her only relative."

"All right, have Osono take you to see him. If he's there, bring him here," the officer ordered his subordinate to go with Osono to her family home in Shimotani.



MIEKO'S OLDER BROTHER was a twenty-five-year-old college student named Yori Jutaro. He was working his way through school and a little older than most students, but a prodigy and a fearless hot-blooded man. He was a pleasant fellow who loved justice and resolved to sacrifice for the weak and the poor.

Generations of Osono's family have been beggars. Even today they were the bosses of beggars, given their bloodline from Kuruma Zenshichi, the government-recognized leader of Edo beggars. With Jutaro's encouragement, the boss left begging five years earlier to open an apothecary. In fact, Jutaro was just seventeen when he toured the world of beggars to begin to work towards making their businesses legitimate. The

man who listened to the honest advice of this young man was Osono's father, Kuruma Chokuro.

He opened an apothecary and trained his new workers. At the same time, he provided medicine to unhealthy beggars, and worked first for health and second for honest business. However, none of his colleagues wanted to stop begging because their ancestors had begged for generations, and they would never stop. They were not ashamed and had no desire to stop begging because they were not dissatisfied with being beggars by birth.

Kuruma Chokuro was disappointed his subordinates did not follow his example and persuaded Jutaro, who abandoned his studies to dedicate himself to beggars, to again concentrate on his studies. In addition to his studies, Jutaro opened a private elementary school to educate the beggars' children. When they grew up, he would move to execute his long-term plan of the natural eradication of the beggar class.

Jutaro asked Imamura Saden, a fellow believer he met at a Christian church, and his wife to send Mieko and Osono to serve as maids in the Mori residence. Imamura Kamejo was the daughter of a descendant of poor samurai and married Saden, who was also the descendant of poor samurai and eked out a living working as the steward to Mori Daigaku. In fact, Imamura Kamejo was a well-known poet. She took pride in her first-class skills in calligraphy, flower arranging, the tea ceremony, and cooking. Despite being respected in those fields, content with her life of honorable poverty, she was modest and did not take on pupils. She appeared more refined to those who knew of this.

Being that type of woman, Kamejo introduced Mieko as her younger sister and Osono as the daughter of the boss of beggars and placed them into the service of a respectable family to learn proper manners. She did not take pupils and did not have a maid in her own home; therefore, she placed the two young women entrusted to her in service in the Mori residence. Mori Daigaku was not surprised that they were the daughters of a boss of beggars, but his wife Yasuno and his daughter Tazuko disliked Osono and Mieko after hearing they were the daughters of beggars.

Tazuko was jealous of the beauty of Osono and Mie. She harassed or shamed the two — behavior enjoyed and encouraged by the senior maid Hatsue. Tazuko pestered her parents to hire Sawako, the daughter of a poor samurai family, as a chambermaid. Occasionally, she said, "Sawako is a descendant of samurai and can be seen in our presence. Hatsue is acceptable, too, because she is from a tradesman's family. You daughters of beggars should not enter our rooms because that is vile."

The college student Yuya was the child of Mori's previous wife and the older brother of Tazuko, who burned with jealousy when he gave a task to Mieko or Osono. Her plot was to make them fail and belittle them so her brother would stop making requests. Mieko was Jutaro's younger sister.

This older brother lived in the beggars' settlement, but was a descendant of an honorable direct vassal who went bankrupt. Tazuko found this talk of a direct vassal irritating and decided Mieko was also the younger sister of a beggar.

Despite the Imamuras' attempts to protect them for a time, the truth was people hold fast to the old ways. They were sensitive to the lascivious looks being cast at the daughters descended from beggars. Mieko and Osono were still young girls, but saw that Imamura Kamejo was absolutely not a poet aloof from the world, but a devout woman with no prejudice who embodied the proper teachings of god. Even more, the groom Tokichi and his wife had no prejudice. They made no distinction between a descendant of samurai and a member of the lowest caste of *shinheimin*.

Jutaro heard Mieko had destroyed a treasured possession of her master. His younger sister abided by the Christian religion and, despite being young, keenly understood duty and responsibility. She was not the type to not do what was right when she made a mistake. He could not believe that she would break a treasured object of her master and run away to hide. If that were true, he would find his sister, make her apologize to her master, and caution her about her future. If not, he was determined to uncover the truth and reveal his sister's innocence.

Osono thought of Jutaro as the greatest man in the world. First, she wanted to be loved by his sister Mieko and wished to be a good friend of Mieko more than anyone else and for the two of them to truly be friends more than sisters. Was that her goal because of her devoted love for Jutaro? Osono was annoyed that even Jutaro doubted Mieko and in front of the policeman, fearlessly said, "I don't believe Mie-chan broke the plate. It may be wrong to suspect people, but the dirty footprints left to wipe up were made by two people. They were different sizes. One was clearly bigger than the other. Something happened, I'm sure of it."

"But in the dark, Mieko likely tripped over the flower vase."

"No. Mie-chan was carrying a candlestick. I was under my futon, but through a little crack, I saw it slowly get darker when Mie-chan left."

"Well, I believe what happened is that Mieko broke the household treasure and fled outside. Yuya-san chased after her. Both of them went outside barefoot. The large and small footprints were made once he brought her back to the entryway."

"But I don't think one pair of footprints belonged to Mie-chan because Raku-san always took care of the beds, but this morning, Yuya-sama's bed was filthy and Raku-san asked me to come and help her. When I looked inside the closet where Yuya-sama's futon was put away, the futon of another person was in there. That one was muddy, too. Raku-san thought that was suspicious. When she took the futon out and spread it out, its interior was dirtier than Yuya-sama's, and a pair of eyeglasses was inside."

Yuya-sama doesn't wear glasses, and Mie-chan definitely doesn't wear men's eyeglasses. I thought some muddy man spent the night and left before daybreak."

This tale was unexpected. The young officer accompanying her named Toyama was warming up to Osono, and following her lead, felt more kindly toward Jutaro. He felt he better understood the histories and identities of Jutaro, Mieko, and Osono.

"Of course, there must be some deep meaning. In no one's story does anyone believe that Mieko-san ran away to hide. But why is there no trace of death? I will report this and make inquiries. In any case, this is a missing person's case for the young lady, so will you come with me to the station?"

"Yes, I will. If you intend to make the effort, please use me somehow in your investigation. Whether my sister is innocent or guilty, as her older brother, I have good reason to unearth the truth."

Thus, the three went to the police station where Jutaro was formally questioned. Assistant Inspector Sassa, who dove into the well earlier, agreed with the suspicions of Officer Toyama and ordered the investigation to continue. The three went to the Mori estate.

Jutaro looked at the book coated in vomit, it was titled *Shakespeare*. A name was written in Roman letters, K.TOCHIO. When Officer Toyama asked if Tochio was the name of a friend, Yuya was already outside, but both Raku and Osono knew of a friend named Tochio and luckily knew his address. When they visited his home at the foot of Mount Haku, he was home and confirmed that the book was his.

"I lent it to Tokida yesterday. Three fellows, Tokida, Mori, and Kawamata, came over for some fun. I loaned Tokida the book. The four of us went to a horse meat shop called Hagetako in Hakusan-Ue for some food and drink. Tokida is a brilliant man but a mean drunk. When he gets drunk, he blacks out and gets into shouting matches and acts crazy. Last night was no exception. We split up and left when the lightning started. Since Tokida was drunk, he went in the same direction as Mori. All four of us were drunk. Kawamata helped me home, so I wasn't with Mori. Kawamata knows this."

Because Hakusan-Ue was nearby, Officer Toyama and Jutaro went to Hagetako. Student's Stew was written on the signboard. It was mostly horse meat stew. The four were regular customers and known to the proprietor.

"Oh yeah, well, Tokida-san is a little scrappy sometimes. Usually, he's a smart fellow and dependable, but when he drinks, he changes and gets out of control. His quarrels aren't a big deal. They're all friends."

"Who was he fighting?"

"What? His friend. A guy in his group. Tochio-san and him. They're two good friends and geniuses, so they're not fighting. When good friends get drunk, they usually argue."

"The two geniuses have done nothing wrong. We're not investigating a misdeed committed by them. The fact is one of them has gone missing. We'd like to hear what they were arguing about."

"Oh, is that it? A while ago, Tochio-san came to return my umbrella. Tokida-san went missing after that? He's a young guy, so it's no mystery that he hit bottom in one night."

"The truth is tonight, there's an important event like a marriage meeting, so we urgently need to know where he is. In fact, we are asking this as an unusual, delicate, internal police matter."

"Of course. So that's it? Well, he didn't bring up last night. It's kind of funny. Actually, a little thing started the fight. Mori-san's family went back to their hometown in the country for Obon or something. Only he was left behind with only four servants. Three of them are rattled every time it thunders. Only one maid seems to have any sense, and she's a pretty thing."

"After the thunderstorm started, the dead drunk Tokida-san told Mori-san to put him up for the night. Because his family was away and the only one in her right mind was that girl, he would make her hold his hand. It was drunk talk, but he kept being a pest and was loud. Then Tochio-san got mad. Not Mori-san. Tochio-san. It wasn't a big deal. The pest didn't stop, so Tokida-san was smacked two or three times. Tokida-san was slapped."

"He was drunk. Dead drunk. He could barely stand. The fight was a draw. Mori-san carried Tokida-san back to his house. Mori-san planned to drink at home, and a bottle of cheap liquor swung by his side. It hadn't started raining yet. Tochio-san and Kawamata-san stayed a little while longer to drink. They were here when it started to rain. They intended to wait for the rain to stop, but a downpour started and only got worse. It looked like it'd never stop, so Tochio-san borrowed my umbrella and went home."

"That was about an hour after the first two left. Wait? What time did the rain start? I don't know, but about ten minutes after Tokida-san and Mori-san went home, the rain came trickling down. The heavy rains started about thirty minutes later. After the other two went home came the worst. It was bad for a long time. The loudest thunder I've ever heard in my life."

From what they heard, Tokida fought with Tochio. It sounded like Tochio, who hit him, was the brazen one? Tokida was dead drunk, so drunk he could barely stand. He didn't go home, but probably stayed at Mori's house, which was on the way. The muddy footprints in the entryway are proof of that. According to the story at Hagetako, raindrops were heard ten minutes after the two left. The time the handclap was heard and Mieko said, "Yes," and stood, was at the height of the heavy rains. It must have been at least an hour after they left Hagetako. Walking at an ordinary pace from Hagetako to the Mori residence would take about thirty or forty minutes. On a dark night and carrying someone while walking, they must

have taken another twenty or thirty minutes.

"That's strange. The handclap definitely happened in the middle of the heavy rains, so Miekko-san was the cause of the argument. When the smacker was Tochio, Tochio may have fallen in love with Miekko-san. The group knew that the other three servants were rattled by thunderstorms. I suspect that Tochio snuck in with an objective. If so, of course, he dropped his book. He said he loaned the book to Tokida, but the words of Tochio, who spoke brazenly without shame, obviously cannot be believed. First, let's pay a visit to Tokida."

Officer Toyama was young but discerning. Jutaro felt there was truth in his words. Did Tochio wear eyeglasses?

"Last night, was any one of the four wearing eyeglasses?" Jutaro asked. Hagetako thought then said, "Only Tokida-san was wearing glasses. Yes. Yes. He was drunk and they kept falling off. As Mori-san lugged Tokida-san out of the shop, his glasses fell off. Mori-san quickly picked them up when lightning flashed."

"All four ate horse meat stew."

"Yes, they did. There's nothing else to eat here."

"Did anyone throw up while here?"

"I don't know about each one. Do you think I go out to see when each guy goes outside to take a piss?"

"Did anyone have a book?"

"Students usually have books in their bags. Am I supposed to remember every detail?"

Hagetako looked bothered and angry, but listened to Jutaro's questions. Officer Toyama was confused about the importance of these points. The eyeglasses were especially important. Tokida was wearing glasses when he left the eatery.

Tokida's home was two times further away from Hagetako than Mori's. The Mori residence was right in the middle. The Tokida residence was huge. His parents were dead, but his grandfather was in good health. When Tokida graduated from college, his grandfather intended to retire from active life and pass on his inheritance. This was expected to be next year. The family seemed well-to-do. The many maids were well trained and already treated Tokida as the head of the family. Despite the unguarded words of a maid stating Yuya was among his visitors, Officer Toyama was dismayed by Tokida's denial of that fact when he appeared in the large Western-style drawing room.

"Tokida-san, we've been told you wear eyeglasses, is that so?" asked Jutaro. Tokida paled and returned a glare, but looked prepared.

"My glasses are in my room. Stop with these trivialities and state your business."

Toyama took charge and said, "The truth is we are here because your

eyeglasses showed up at a strange place."

Up to this point, Tokida listened calmly, but was surprised when Toyama said, "In fact, those eyeglasses came up from the bottom of the well in Mori-san's back garden."

Tokida's face didn't move, but he looked astonished, like a gaping hole opened up on his immobile face. He trembled from the depths of his heart, and his large round eyeballs opened wide.

"From the bottom of the well! I know nothing about that. That well. I did not lose my glasses."

"Really? Please show us the glasses in your room."

Tokida's face twisted. He quickly collected himself, but the sharp eyes of the two visitors missed nothing. Looking back at him as he left to retrieve his glasses, his gait looked weighed down by a crushing defeat. Ten minutes passed, and Tokida still had not returned. Toyama quickly put on his shoes and flew out. When he went around to the back gate to wait in the overgrowth, a maid dashed toward him in a frenzy. After he questioned her, he returned to the drawing room. Tokida soon appeared wearing his eyeglasses.

"Last night, I was drunk and broke one of the lenses, so I had them taken to be repaired. The maid just returned with them," he said sounding displeased.

Toyama wondered with regret whether Tokida prepared those words knowing he was watching the back gate. He failed! Before meeting Tokida, he should have asked when he returned home last night and about the eyeglasses. Confirmation from the mouth of Tokida was not needed. From that moment on, Tokida knew nothing no matter what he was asked. If Toyama thought he heard a lie, he would persist in questioning the maids. Although Toyama thought he found the weakness of his rival and would overpower and happily send off his rival defeated and a failure, his rival turned the table and used his weakness against them. Without a doubt, he swiftly sent one of the maids to buy eyeglasses, then gathered the other maids to concoct an alibi and gave them full instructions to meticulously follow without fail. The two men withdrew disappointed.

When they returned to the Mori residence, Osono came running to them.

"I found out something important. The steward Imamura-sama's house is behind this house and right behind the well in the back garden. Imamura-sama's son Koroku-sama heard the splashing sound of water from the well. Koroku is a student at a seminary and a devout believer of Christianity. He's famous for studying until two every morning. He was surprised by the splash from the well and got up to look. His room is on the second floor, and it was dark outside. He probably wouldn't be able to see anything outside, but lightning struck at that instant. Koroku-sama saw two figures

moving away from the well. The two were men. He said he didn't know who they were, but they were definitely two men."

The two cheered up and left to question Koroku. It was as Osono said. The well was beside the fence in the back garden of the Mori residence and a distance from the main building. Actually, it was very close to Imamura's house and directly below and close to Koroku's room. Koroku opened the storm door because the rain stopped. He was reading under the light of a small candle and surprised by the splash of water, so he got up to look. Lightning struck at that moment, and he saw what looked like two men moving toward the side of the fence between the well and the lower fence. Darkness returned immediately. He saw nothing else nor did he hear their footsteps or voices.

The facts they uncovered were strange. Nothing was in the well. What on earth happened?

The pair returned to the station to report to Assistant Inspector Sassa. The assistant inspector looked mystified, too. He said to Toyama, "Yes, this is bizarre. I've gotten word of a scandal at the Mori residence. An officer from another station made this report. In a notification from the pawnbroker Nosaru in Asakusa, valuable items like Mukade tea utensils, said to start wars in ancient times, were pawned about ten days ago. These days, they are known among collectors to be the property of the Mori family. The notification asked whether they were stolen. That was yesterday. This morning, the police in Asakusa sent the paperwork here. The person pawning them was a geisha named Kokatsu of Mukaishima. She should be investigated first."

Learning from past failures, Toyama changed into plainclothes. With Jutaro, they investigated everything about Kokatsu indirectly through her neighbors. Kokatsu was a local girl, twenty-two years old, and a leading beauty. She was given a house by her master and placed there as his mistress. However, a college student, who seemed to be Yuya, was an intimate friend of a geisha called Yakko, an employee of Kokatsu. A rich college student was a good friend with Yakko and connected to a geisha named Kosen, who was said to be a first-rate local beauty among the young courtesans. This friend was, no doubt, Tokida. Yuya had been brought to the red-light district by Tokida and acquired a taste for its pleasures. He became attached to Yakko and started living with her last year. However, he did not have money for unbridled amusements like Tokida. He brought two or three articles from his home and had Yakko pawn them. With well-known tea utensils like Mukade, the pawnshop reported them out of fear of a later inquiry. Since that time, in fact, similar objects have been pawned many times by the same hand.

Toyama and Jutaro asked around without attracting attention. That was all they checked for three days. Later, they kept watch to identify the places

where Tokida and Yuya went for fun. Once they amassed a plentiful harvest, they went to report at the station. Assistant Inspector Sassa saw their faces and said, "Hey, where have you two been roaming around? The Asakusa pawnshop made another report. Haven't the world-famous tea utensils been retrieved by the pawner? The pawned objects were redeemed the night I ordered you to investigate. What have you been up to?"

This time, Toyama took precautions and did not meet or talk directly to the concerned parties and shop workers. This time, he failed again and was disheartened. He told Jutaro he was off duty the next day. Jutaro consoled him.

"If that's the case, there's nothing we can do. However, we will watch and identify where Yuya goes."

"No. No. That's no good. Yuya's parents returned from their trip three or four days ago. He's no longer fooling around in public as he had been."

"He doesn't stay out overnight until his parents are away from home, but he seems to have a special method for playing around. I think that finding that out will be crucial."

"Yes, that's true. Well, let's go?"

Once again, the duo zealously made inquiries for three days. A man, who seemed to be Yuya, when not with Tokida, met a woman at a small restaurant named Kaneman. The pair went to the restaurant to investigate.

"Yes, that's true. Since March, Mori-san has come here and waited for a woman. It's usually on Sundays and never at night. The woman was seventeen or eighteen and quite pretty. She doesn't look at all like a woman from the world of bars. Is she a geisha? That's ridiculous. That woman is a believer in Christianity. Under the pretense of going to church, they have a rendezvous. Very clever. She is stylish, as they are today. No, she comes alone."

Hearing this, Jutaro seemed to fall into the abyss. Mieko and Osono cannot go to church every Sunday, but take turns by going to church every other Sunday. The two can't go together. Recently, Jutaro had been too busy to go to church every Sunday. No one knew what Mieko did before and after church.

What was happening? Although he thought the day of uncovering two men who carried out the trick at the well and demonstrating his sister's innocence was near, was his sister innocent or was she Yuya's secret lover? In either case, if evidence of a trick played by Yuya emerged, Mieko may also be involved as an accomplice in that scheme. And no dead body emerging from the well would make sense. How did she hide this conspiracy with Yuya? The dumbfounded Jutaro was dismayed.

"It's awful it has come to this. I apologize to the world given that my sister has come under suspicion. Since it's come to this, the greatest detective in Japan must search for the secret. As soon as possible, the truth

must be found, and I must apologize to the world," Jutaro lamented to Toyama, who had no words of comfort. Together, they visited Yuki Shinjuro. They explained all the facts revealed in the investigation and requested he bring the truth to light.



SHINJURO LISTENED TO their story and consoled the discouraged pair.

"You two have accomplished quite a lot. I would have taken the same path and investigated in nearly the same manner as you. However, you always finished by combining and considering facts you individually confirmed. Only that differs from my method. For example, are the figures of the two men illuminated by lightning seen after the splash from the well related to the secret rendezvous in the restaurant possibly between Yuya and Mieko and must they be combined?

"If the figures of the two men were lit up by lightning, who were those men? By simply identifying them, the dilemma of combining these facts is avoided? Although you identified the owner of the eyeglasses and were certain that a man lost his glasses, why didn't you pursue the reason for the lost glasses emerging from inside the dirty futon in the Mori house? If I were you, naturally, my investigation would not omit the following."

Shinjuro offered the following ten items.

1. Osono said Mieko was carrying a candlestick when she left, but where was it the following day?
2. Hagetako said that Yuya was going to drink at home and returned home with a full bottle of cheap sake dangling from his side, but where is that bottle?
3. Were the footprints close to the kitchen large or small?
4. Have you discovered what was used to wipe up the muddy footprints?
5. On the following morning, what was the state of the clothes worn by Yuya the day before?
6. What items went missing from the Mori residence?
7. Were the pawned objects, which were requested by Yuya, other than the Mukade tea utensils redeemed?
8. The amount of money received for pawning the Mukade tea utensils
9. The current whereabouts of the Mukade tea utensils
10. Yuya's movements on the night the Mukade tea utensils were redeemed

"These are the only elements you forgot to pursue. They are what you need to investigate. Now, your method failed, but you realized this and improved your technique when struck with the idea of outwitting your rival. Nonetheless, you suffered a greater failure. The next time you come here I will examine these items. Shall we meet again in three days?"

Jutaro and Toyama investigated and returned three days later with ten answers. Shinjuro nodded as he closely read the following.

1. The candle carried by Mieko when she left was at the Buddhist altar. The altar room is between Yuya's bedroom and the drawing room where the broken celadon porcelain and plate were kept.

2. The cheap bottle of liquor was empty and turned over in front of the small Enma-do temple to Enma, the King of Hell. The Enma-do is just off the cemetery in the path from Hagetako to Yuya's home. A beggar has been secretly spending nights inside the temple for the past two months. By a clever scheme, Jutaro succeeded in getting him to open up. They learned that two men sat inside the Enma-do to drink the bottle of sake and left when the rains became heavy. When they left, the beggar quickly went out to see. The bottle was knocked on its side and almost nothing remained inside. One man was very drunk.

3. The sizes of the footprints could not be remembered by Osono. They had been wiped up before she noticed their sizes.

4. What was used to wipe up the muddy footprints has not been discovered.

5. Yuya's wet clothes were thrown in a corner of his room. He put on his bedclothes and went to bed. That is why Yuya's futon was less muddy than the other muddy futon discovered in the closet.

6. The articles missing from the Mori residence are still not known.

7. The articles pawned by Yuya were not redeemed until the Mukade tea utensils were redeemed. The Mukade tea utensils and all the articles forfeited to the pawnbroker to be sold off were redeemed. They were a small sword, a Noh mask, and one Iro-Nabeshima porcelain plate. These three items with interest added were worth about 550 yen.

8. The Mukade tea utensils were pawned for a paltry 500 yen. The reason was the young girl acting as the go-between said that was fine.

9. Mori Daigaku stated that the Mukade tea utensils are now at his residence. He was unaware of anyone having pawned them during his absence.

10. The night they were redeemed, Yuya returned home late, close to midnight. Because that night was the first night Mieko's disappearance was discovered, the three remaining servants, including the man Tokichi, waited in the maids' room for Yuya to return home and intended for someone to stay awake until morning until he came home. Yuya returned home while all three were awake. They all went out to greet him, but he was empty handed. Later, he didn't seem to be carrying anything.

"Your investigation was thorough. Let me tell you about various critical matters based on these results."

"What critical matters?"

"Nearly everything. Should I tell you what I found? In the replies from

the police station in Mukaishima and the clerk of the family register in the ward office, the proprietress of the restaurant Kaneman is a relative with fifth degree of kinship to Yakko's mistress Kokatsu; and Kokatsu and her employee Yakko are closely connected to Kaneman. The friendship between the two has been close until now and no changes have been noticed. This is from the police investigation."

"What does that show?" asked Jutaro, who was at a loss.

Shinjuro smiled and said, "It is quite important. You're probably concerned about your inference. Needless to say, if that proprietress and Kokatsu's family are close, would Yuya, the lover of Kokatsu's employee, have a secret love with another woman and chose Kaneman, where Kokatsu is known above some other place?"

"If so, are you saying that the words of the proprietress are unreliable?"

"Well, what should we do? Thanks to you, crucial points are understood. Look here. According to your investigation, the object used to wipe up the muddy footprints has still not been found. This is, in fact, very bad. It's all terrible. Everything will be better understood together."

The cheerful Shinjuro looked almost playful. When done, he regained his calm and seemed like another person.

"By tomorrow, another critical point will be understood. That too, everything owes thanks to your investigation. Please come tomorrow around noon. The case may be solved tomorrow."

"Is my sister innocent?"

Shinjuro was silent and could not respond for a time to those worrying words.

"Yes, she is innocent,"

Shinjuro whispered. He gently took Jutaro's hand.

"Through your work, I knew the name of Yori Jutaro was worthy of respect. You are the sun. You are truly the sun. The sun itself. Your life is a life given to millions of people of Japan. Forgetting that you are the sun for millions of people would be unfortunate."

He said to the others present, "Tomorrow, we will meet at noon," then whispered something to the seasoned Officer Furuta.



TORANOSUKE HUMBLLY SAT before Kaishu. This time Shinjuro looked like he knew unpleasant facts. Only this time, Toranosuke was completely ignorant about the entire case. Hananoya equally feigned ignorance, but simply kept on grinning. Unlike a typical day, his silence was unusual and amusing. In short, only this time there was absolutely nothing he could do.

This was the perfect opportunity to view Hananoya with contempt. Toranosuke finished telling the entire story and waited impatiently for Kaishu Sensei's reasoning. He was impatient, if only he could he would

wring out Kaishu's response like a massage with bare judo hands. As usual, Kaishu took his knife to release impure blood. Today he took a long time. This time, Kaishu Sensei may be stumped, too. Kaishu finished squeezing out the bad blood and put away the knife.

"Mieko is innocent, but hid away at Yuya's request. An evil deed was the result of this. Mieko did not understand this herself, but she became an accomplice to an evil deed committed by Yuya. Mieko did not break the celadon porcelain or the plate. The drunken Tokida did. Yuya may have intentionally staggered toward them in order to break them. That may be the truth. Thus, after Tokida saw that he broke them, Yuya ordered Mieko to disappear to make it look like she did it.

"When Yuya asked Mieko to perform a dark act to save Tokida, her mistake was to quickly agree and disappear, and she may have died. This too may be your mistake. He invented this pretext for a fight in order to blackmail Tokida. Needless to say, the pawned items were redeemed using the money obtained through blackmail. The need for money may be the motive. The water splash heard from the well in the back garden was not from Mieko throwing herself in, no, it was nothing like that.

"When a servant breaks the master's treasured earthenware, the tale of the Dish Mansion comes to anyone's mind. Mieko quickly took the blame for her mistake. She fled the house and appeared to throw herself into the well in the back garden. Yuya frightened Tokida, deliberately led him to the side of the well, and dropped a rock to check whether a body was inside.

"That was the splash in the dead of night. This was a drastic and risky attempt to scare and blackmail Tokida. Yuya is a terrible scoundrel. This act came effortlessly to a fellow with this sort of evil courage rather than from a pious young girl. Mieko was not innocent and may have truly loved Yuya."

Kaishu finished and a smile faintly rose on his lips like the meaning of the puzzle was a challenge to unravel. He looked a stone Buddha with a flicker of a smile. Toranosuke was terrified like his bowels froze.



THE GROUP GATHERED at noon, but Shinjuro prattled on like he had forgotten yesterday's promise. Officer Furuta arrived in a rush and handed over a letter. Shinjuro let out a hearty laugh when he finished reading.

"The time to depart has come. All is as I thought."

Assistant Inspector Sassa greeted the group upon their arrival at the Mori residence in Komagome to escort them to the room for the gathering. Shinjuro said, "I thank you very much. This is my first time at this site. Would you be kind enough to show me the floor plan and the garden?"

He was given a tour of the residence, then led out to the garden. When they reached the back garden, the assistant inspector said, "That well has been closed up. Look. Around this side there is dirt on one side, the well is

underneath it is the well. No. It's there now. When the master returned from his trip, he said the jinxed well was a bad omen, and immediately instructed a worker to cap the well and cover it with dirt, leaving no traces."

"Is that so? Naturally, the jinxed old well in the back garden was buried," said Shinjuro and gave a quick nod, but soon he seemed surprised.

"What? What? Wait. Maybe? What's that?" he grumbled and looked conflicted.

"It was like that before the investigation. I want to try one thing. This will be pitiful, too."

Shinjuro whispered to Officer Furuta. No one understood what was happening and waited in ignorance. Officer Furuta returned with a worker to remove the dirt covering the well and to remove the cap. When the worker peeked inside the well, he smelled a foul stench. When the well was fully opened, Shinjuro looked in.

"It doesn't seem very deep. The stench is already horrible. I have some idea of what happened. The corpse of Mieko-san should be at the bottom of the well. All right? Of course, was it like that? The criminal thought this far ahead. This criminal is terrifying."

The worker donned a mask, dropped into the well, and pulled up the murdered body of Mieko. Shinjuro was not watching him but Yori Jutaro and gently squeezed his hand.

"You are Yori Jutaro. You understand. In this kind of situation, the sun is here, too. The sun cries..."

The true criminal among the people involved currently confined to a room had already been arrested. The group pressed a reluctant Shinjuro to explain the full truth of the case.

"The morning after the incident, the day Mieko's disappearance was discovered, weren't the mud and the dirty objects strange? Muddy footprints were wiped up, but muddy places remained to reveal the footprints from two people.

"Only one bedding was laid out, but another muddy futon was in the closet. Inside of the muddy futon were eyeglasses indicating that someone slept there. And there was the signed book owned by someone else under the vomit. Although the footprints were haphazardly wiped up and one bedding folded and put away in the closet, someone clearly stayed the previous night and tried to conceal that fact. However, his actions actually led to deep suspicions about someone having stayed the night. These were signs of an incident. Not finding the objects used to wipe the footprints means they were hidden. Thus, they had to be hidden somewhere. And can you think of something else that was hidden? Needless to say, that was Mieko-san's body.

"The criminal carried a cheap bottle full of sake to drink at home, but instead of drinking at home, he drank at the Enma-do closest to his home

and was not worried about the rain starting. That became necessary as the thunderstorm worsened. There were three victims with fear of thunder. It was important to use the intense thunder and wait for the time when the scared ones were incapacitated.

"While waiting for the intense thunder, if Tokida-san began to come around from his drunkenness, it was important to make him drink more sake and lose his senses. The sake was not for Yuya but to get another man drunk. Thus, when the intense thunder arrived, the three members of the thunder club would all be totally useless, as would one more by sake. Of the remaining two, the only other person, Mieko-san, was murdered by him and no longer existed. Not one other person other than himself was present for some time.

"While the crime was conceived from the argument between Tokida and Tochio and its planning meticulous, chance provided many allies. First, the severe thunderstorm the previous night actually lasted a long time. If you ask what was the result of this incident, the murderer redeemed the pawned items. That amount of money was huge, more than 1,000 yen. The articles were redeemed on the same night the incident was discovered. During the day, the murderer is known to have been with Tokida-san to get money from him.

"There was a reason for blackmailing Tokida-san, but what was it? There is no way to find that out at this site. I was determined to send a letter to Tokida-san to prove to him why he was not the murderer and to ask for a reply telling the truth of how the blackmail was carried out. Before we set out, Furuta-san delivered that reply. This is what he wrote."

Shinjuuro opened the letter.

"Tokida-san got dead drunk and passed out. This is why he has no memory of that time. When his eyes snapped open, he often didn't know why he was sleeping there. Yuya woke him by sitting like a despondent phantom at his bedside. Tokida-san was startled by Yuya, but when he looked hard, he noticed a woman sleeping beside him. He saw she was Mieko-san and already dead. In Yuya's story, he gradually remembered. He remembered wanting to see Mieko and wanting to grab her hand. He insisted that Yuya allow him to stay at his home.

"When Mieko-san came, she seemed half asleep, but got up after being awakened by Yuya. When Mieko appeared there carrying a candle, Tokida-san pounced and grabbed her hand. Mieko-san dropped the candle, and the room went dark. He had no memory of what happened after the confusion. In Yuya's story, Tokida-san strangled Mieko-san with his bare hands, naturally, killing her. Eventually, Yuya lit the candle. When he tried to remove the futon, Tokida-san was sleeping like a log, and Mieko-san was dead.

"After being in a trance for a long time, Yuya shook Tokida-san awake.

Somehow he recalled this. Yuya told him that the scratches on his arm were made by Mieko-san, and Tokida-san had to believe what he was told. Yuya would be in trouble with his father because Tokida-san killed her, so they should break his father's treasured objects and make Mieko disappear. Thus, they broke the celadon porcelain and Kakiemon plate. After that they buried Mieko's body in a hole they dug under the floor.

"Because in this situation, the Dish Mansion would pop into anyone's mind, they tossed a boulder into the well in the back to evoke that story. Therefore, if no dead body were found even though a splash was heard late at night and the well was searched, everyone would believe that was an attempt at a cover-up by Mieko-san and she was actually alive and hiding out. This was the plan told by Yuya. With the help of the long, severe thunderstorm, the disposal of the corpse was completed. They waited for the storm to end, threw the boulder in the well, then Tokida-san left the Mori residence.

"Yuya's plan to blackmail Tokida-san was a great success. He never told Tokida-san how he finally disposed of Mieko-san's body, but had thought about it from the beginning. Throwing the boulder into the well in the back garden was to make people think it was a dead body, but, in fact, was not. The scheme was to make it seem that Mieko-san created the pretense of the Dish Mansion. However, a more important meaning existed. That was to hide the body again. The safest hiding place for the body was a location already searched by the police. They would not search there a second time. He knew that his mother or father would bury the well underground. If his parents did not think of this, he would suggest it and was certain they would do that in the end. After the police officers searched as much as they liked, the well was buried underground and changed the contour of the ground pointing to the missing well. Consequently, the well could not be completely hidden. Tokida kept his secret, but did not know about the well. Thus, Yuya would be safe forever and could blackmail forever. Tokida-san would live forever with the fear of the discovery at any time of the body under the floor.

"If lightning had not lit up the garden at that time, his plan may have never been exposed. The body that should have been in the well was not, and anyone would think that Mieko-san created the circumstances for her disappearance. Yuya was probably confident. His method made the muddy footprints conspicuous on purpose to make it look like one person was involved, but it actually implicated two people, and the eyeglasses deepened suspicions about Tokida-san. That was also useful in the blackmail and why he forgot about the lightning. In short, this is a story about his fearsome evil courage."

That was Shinjuro's reasoning.



TORANOSUKE HUMBLY SAT before Kaishu. This time seemed special. After explaining Shinjuro's reasoning, he meekly said, "There were similarities concerning the point of Yuya blackmailing of Tokida, but the reality is a world of difference. Hmm. With all due respect, the similarity with your reasoning was only in the fearsome evil courage of Yuya. The obvious falsehood was the pious young woman being deeply drawn to his evil courage."

Frankly, Toranosuke seemed deeply impressed only this time, because Shinjuro heard the story without seeing the scene. However, Jutaro and Toyama told the story to Shinjuro while Toranosuke told the story to Kaishu. The vast difference cannot be calculated.

Looking unconcerned, Kaishu said, "Many resemble the words evil courage. That is the crux to everything. Everything was solved, still, I foolishly did not understand."

Toranosuke was satisfied with not understanding.