



HIKARU

Are you in your right mind, Mrs. Rokujō?

MRS. ROKUJŌ

My name is Yasuko.

HIKARU

I am not obliged to call you by your first name.

MRS. ROKUJŌ

(Suddenly kneels, throws her arms around HIKARU's knees, and rubs her cheek against them.) I beg you, please don't be so cold to me.

HIKARU

This is the first time I've ever seen you lose your pride so. *(to himself)* It's funny. It doesn't feel as if a human being were holding me, and yet I can't move my feet.

MRS. ROKUJŌ

I had no pride, from the very beginning.

HIKARU

You should have confessed it earlier. Perhaps things might have lasted awhile longer.

MRS. ROKUJŌ

It was your fault not to have realized it. Couldn't you tell that my eyes had long since lost their pride? The clearest sign that a woman has lost her pride is when she talks in a highhanded way. A woman longs to be a queen because a



queen has the most pride to lose. . . . Ah, your knees—your knees are a cold, hard pillow.

HIKARU

Yasuko . . .

MRS. ROKUJŌ

I could sleep on this pillow. A cold, hard pillow that would never get warm. . . . My pillow becomes scalding hot as soon as my head touches it, and my head spends the night fleeing from the pillow's heat to the cold. A man who could walk barefoot over burning desert sands could not tread on my pillow.

HIKARU

(somewhat gentler) Please be careful. I am a very weak man when my pity is aroused.

MRS. ROKUJŌ

Now I understand! You married Aoi out of pity too! Didn't you?

HIKARU

(pushing her aside) Don't jump to any conclusions like that. *(He sits on the chair. MRS. ROKUJŌ still clings to his legs and rubs her cheek against his knees like a cat.)*

MRS. ROKUJŌ

Please don't abandon me.