

# Points and Lines

by Seichō Matsumoto, 1909-1992

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## **Chapter 1**

### **The Asakaze Express.**

ON THE evening of January 13, Tatsuo Yasuda had a guest to dinner at the Koyuki, a Japanese-style restaurant in the Aka-saka quarter of Tokyo. The guest was a division chief in one of the government ministries.

Tatsuo Yasuda was president of the Yasuda Co., a precision tool and machinery firm that had grown considerably in recent years and seemed to be prospering. It did a great deal of business with certain government agencies, and there were those who said that this was the reason for the rapid expansion. It was these government contacts that Yasuda often entertained at the Koyuki.

This restaurant was by no means one of the best in the Akasaka district. Perhaps, for this very reason, guests found the atmosphere friendly and informal. Moreover, the waitresses who served in the private rooms were exceptionally competent. Yasuda was looked upon as one of their good customers. He was, of course, a liberal spender; money was his stock-in-trade, he was quick to admit. And the men he entertained were the sort that could be influenced by money. However, no matter how friendly he was with the waitresses, he never told them more than was necessary about his guests.

The previous fall a scandal had come to light, centering in a certain ministry. Several companies doing business with this government department were said to be involved. Although suspicion had not spread beyond a few minor officials, the press predicted that by spring it would reach into the higher ranks.

As a consequence, Yasuda was more discreet than usual when introducing his guests at the Koyuki. Still, there were some he invited as many as seven or eight times, and these the waitresses came to address familiarly by the first syllable of their names. It was always "Mr. Ko," or "Mr. Yu," although they never got to know anything personal about them. They were aware, however, that most of Yasuda's guests were government officials.

But never mind about the other guests. Yasuda was the guest who spent the money. He was the one who mattered at the Koyuki.

Tatsuo Yasuda was in his midthirties. Of slightly dark complexion, he had a broad forehead, a fleshy well-rounded face and a rather pointed nose. His eyes were bright and looked at one kindly from under brows so thick they appeared to be drawn in ink. Although he had the self-assured manner of the successful businessman and the waitresses liked him, he never seemed to take advantage of his popularity; he was friendly to all.

Since she happened to be assigned to the first party he gave, Otoki was always the one to wait on him when he came to the Koyuki. But their relations, while very friendly, were not known to extend beyond the restaurant.

Otoki was twenty-six but her clear white skin and pretty features made her look at least four years younger. Her customers would often comment on her big black eyes. They found her very becoming when she would look up at them quickly, a smile in her glance. She was well aware of the effect this had on men. She had an oval face, and the line between lips and chin gave her a delicate profile.

Little wonder some customers had tried to seduce her. All the waitresses lived at home and came daily to work. They arrived at four in the afternoon and left a little after eleven at night. There were guests who would wait for them sometimes as they came out of the restaurant and who would ask them to meet them later under the railway bridge near Shimbashi Station. The girls could not curtly refuse since these were good customers; they usually consented and then would stand them up, three or four times in a row. By then a man should have understood, the girls would say.

"Some men are stupid and get angry. The other evening one of them pinched me hard." Otoki opened the folds of her kimono and bared her knee. The skin was marked by a dark bruise. "You're a foolish girl. You encourage them," said Yasuda, smiling over his cup of sake. It was evident he was on very friendly terms with the girls.

"Come to think of it, Mr. Ya has never tried to seduce us," said Yaeko, one of the waitresses.

"No use trying. I'm on to you girls."

"Just listen to him. I know his type," said Kaneko playfully.

"Don't say that."

"It's no use, Kaneko," Otoki interjected. "Everyone here is in love with Mr. Ya and he doesn't so much as look at us. You had better give him up, and quickly."

Kaneko laughed. "Maybe you're right," she said.

It was a fact, as Otoki had stated, that the waitresses at the Koyuki were interested in Yasuda. Had he tried to become intimate with any one of them he would have been taken seriously. His appearance and personality were attractive to women.

That evening, after bidding good night to the government official at the door of the restaurant, Yasuda returned to his private dining room to drink and relax. Otoki had left the room; Yaeko and Tomiko were still clearing the table. "How about letting me treat you girls to an early dinner tomorrow?" he asked.

They accepted at once, with obvious delight. "Where is Otoki? She doesn't seem to be around. Please include her," Tokiko suggested.

"No, just the two of you will be fine. I'll invite Otoki some other time. It won't do to have so many of you late for work."

It was true. The waitresses were required to be at the restaurant by four in the afternoon. If they had dinner out, they would not be on time. It would not be right to have three of them report late to work.

"Be at the Levante in Yūraku-chō at 3:30 tomorrow afternoon," Yasuda said, smiling at the girls.

At 3:30 the following afternoon when Tomiko arrived at the Levante, Yasuda was already seated at a table in the rear, drinking coffee.

"Hello!" Yasuda greeted her and pointed to the seat facing him.

It was exciting to meet a customer outside one's place of work. Tomiko's face was slightly flushed as she sat down. "Hasn't Yaeko come yet?"

"She'll be here soon." Yasuda ordered a cup of coffee for her. A few minutes later Yaeko appeared, looking a little shy. The other guests in the coffee shop were all young couples and the two girls looked conspicuous, their profession obvious from the kimono they were wearing.

"What would you girls like this evening? Western food? Chinese? How about tempura or eels?"

"Western food," the girls answered simultaneously. A change was welcome from the Japanese dishes they had to serve every day at the Koyuki.

They left the Levante and walked in the direction of the Ginza. The streets were not crowded at this hour of the day, and though a cold wind was blowing, the weather was fine. They walked slowly, crossing from the corner of Owari-chō to the Matsuzakaya Department Store. The Ginza was quite deserted, so different from the year-end scenes two weeks before.

"Wasn't it a sight on Christmas Eve!" one of the girls commented as they strolled directly behind Yasuda.

Yasuda mounted the steps of the Coq d'Or Restaurant. It, too, was quite empty.

"Please order whatever you like," he said as they sat down at a table.

"Just anything will do," Yaeko and Tomiko replied at first, but presently they studied the menu and consulted each other. It took them a while to decide.

Yasuda was looking stealthily at his watch. Yaeko was quick to notice and asked, "Are you busy, Mr. Ya?"

"No, not busy, but I have to go to Kamakura later this afternoon." He crossed his hands on the table.

"Oh, I'm sorry; let's decide quickly, Tomiko." They finally gave their orders. The dinner started with soup and it took a long time to complete the full course. The conversation was desultory. Yasuda seemed to be enjoying himself. When the fruit was brought to the table he looked again at his watch.

"Hadn't we better hurry?"

"No, there's still time," he assured them. But when the coffee was served he again pushed back his cuff.

"It must be time. Let's go," said Yaeko, rising from her seat.

"Well..." Yasuda, smoking a cigarette, narrowed his eyes as if in thought. "To tell the truth, I'm feeling a bit lonely. Why don't you both come to Tokyo Station and see me off." It was hard to tell from his expression whether he was speaking seriously or in jest.

The girls exchanged glances. They were already late for work. To go to Tokyo Station would make them even later. Of course, it was a pleasant custom, and at the Koyuki they often accompanied departing guests to the railway station. Moreover, Yasuda's manner had suddenly grown serious and it made them believe that perhaps he really was lonely. In any case, after being treated so handsomely to dinner they found it difficult to refuse.

Tomiko was the first to answer. "Let me telephone the Koyuki. I'll tell them we'll be a little late." She returned from the phone booth, smiling. "It's all right; I let them know. Let's go to the station."

Yasuda said he was sorry to give them so much trouble. He again checked the time. The girls noticed the way he kept looking at his watch.

"What train are you taking?" Yaeko asked.

"The 6:12, or the one after that. It's now 5:30. We'll be in good time if we leave right away." Yasuda hurried off to pay the bill.

A taxi took them to the station in five minutes. In the cab, Yasuda apologized once again. "I'm making you late for work," he said. The girls told him not to worry. "We'd feel badly if we couldn't do this for you. It's such a small thing."

At the station, Yasuda bought his ticket and handed the girls their platform tickets. The Yokosuka Line, which serves Kamakura, leaves from platform 13. The station clock showed a few minutes before six o'clock.

"Good. I'm in plenty of time for the 6:12," he remarked.

His train had not yet pulled in to platform 13. While they waited, Yasuda kept watching the platforms immediately to the east. These were alongside tracks 14 and 15, used for the arrival and departure of long-distance trains. At the moment, there was a train waiting at platform 15. Since there was nothing on the intervening tracks, the three had a clear view of the train at platform 15.

"That train over there is the super-express to Hakata in Kyushu. It's called the Asakaze," Yasuda remarked to the girls.

There were many passengers, accompanied by friends and relatives, milling about the train. The platform had the air of excitement that prevails when a train is about to start on a long journey.

Suddenly, Yasuda said, "Say, isn't that Otoki?"

"What?" The two girls, their eyes round with astonishment, looked to where Yasuda was pointing.

"Well, I never... It is Otoki." Yaeko's voice betrayed her surprise. Otoki it was, walking through the crowd on platform 15. From the way she was dressed and from the suitcase she carried, it was evident that she was a passenger. Tomiko also spotted her at last and cried, "Why, of course! It's Otoki!"

What surprised them most was that Otoki was talking intimately to the young man who was walking beside her. His face, seen in profile, was not familiar to them. He was wearing a dark overcoat and carrying a small suitcase. The two were weaving their way through the crowd and making for the rear end of the train.

"Where do you suppose they're going?" Yaeko asked, catching her breath.

"I wonder who he is!" Tomiko exclaimed.

Unaware that she was being observed, Otoki continued to walk along the platform with her companion. They finally stopped in front of a coach, checked the number, then entered, the young man leading the way.

"She is a sly one! Do you think she's going all the way to Kyushu with him?"

Yasuda repressed a smile.

The two girls stood rooted to the platform. They looked astonished. They stared at the car into which Otoki had disappeared, unable to say a word more. People kept passing in front of them. Finally, Yaeko said, "They can't be going just a short distance; they're on a super-express."

"Did you know Otoki had a boy friend?" Tomiko asked.

"I had no idea! I'm very surprised."

The two girls exchanged excited comments in a rapid undertone, as if they had uncovered something of extraordinary interest.

Yaeko and Tomiko knew really nothing of Otoki's private life. She was not one to talk about herself. She did not appear to be married. She did not seem even to have a lover. Her reputation was very good. Girls working in restaurants belong generally to one of two types: the sort who like to confide in their co-workers, often asking their advice, and the other kind that keep their mouths shut like clams. Otoki was one of the clams. The two girls, therefore, felt they had accidentally uncovered a secret corner of Otoki's life and were thrilled.

"Let's go over and look through the window. I want to see what he's like," Yaeko said excitedly.

"Don't! Leave them alone," Yasuda interposed.

"Aren't you jealous, Mr. Ya?"

Yasuda laughed. "Why should I be? I'm going to Kamakura to see my wife."

The train for Yokosuka drew in to platform 13, blocking any further view of platform 15.

Yasuda boarded the train. Since it would not be leaving for another eleven minutes he put his head out of the window and called to the girls. "Please don't wait. You girls are busy; you mustn't stay any longer. Thank you for coming with me."

"Perhaps you're right," said Yaeko. She wanted very much to rush over and get a good look at Otoki's companion. "Goodbye, Mr. Ya. Have a good trip and come again soon." The girls shook hands with Yasuda through the window and left.

As they walked down the steps Yaeko said, "Tomiko, let's take a look at Otoki."

Although she answered, "I wonder if we should," Tomiko was not at all unwilling. The two girls ran over to platform 15.

They approached the coach they had seen the couple enter and looked through the windows, over the shoulders of the crowd standing close by. The car was brilliantly lighted. They soon spied Otoki and the young man, sitting side by side.

"I say, she's chattering away at a great rate, isn't she?" Yaeko observed.

"Why, he's quite good-looking! I wonder how old he is." Tomiko was more interested in the young man.

Yaeko was gazing intently at him. "Twenty-seven or twenty-eight. No, maybe twenty-five."

"That makes him a year older or a year younger than Otoki."

"Shall we go in and surprise her?"

"Don't, Yaeko." Tomiko stopped her from entering the coach.

They stood for a while, staring at the couple. Finally, Tomiko said, "Let's go. We'll be late." She prodded Yaeko who was still staring and seemed reluctant to leave.

When the girls arrived at the Koyuki Restaurant they immediately reported the incident to the proprietress. She too seemed very surprised.

"Really? Is that so? Just yesterday Otoki asked me for five or six days' leave; she said she wanted to go home. But fancy that—with a man!" Her eyes widened in astonishment.

"That was only an excuse. Otoki's home is up north, in Akita."

"She's such a quiet girl. It just goes to show you; one never knows. They'll probably get off the train at Kyoto and have a good time." The three women exchanged glances.

The following night Yasuda came again to the Koyuki with a guest. At the end of the evening, after the latter had departed, he said to Yaeko, "I suppose Otoki is off duty today."

"Not just today. She'll probably be away the whole week," Yaeko informed him, raising her eyebrows.

"Is she on a honeymoon with that man we saw?" Yasuda asked, setting his sake cup on the table.

"That's what it looks like. Isn't it startling?"

"Why should it shock you? You girls should do the same."

"No such luck. Not unless you take me, Mr. Ya."

"Me? Leave me out of it. Anyway, I couldn't take so many of you." Yasuda left, but, probably for business reasons, returned the following evening with two guests. On this occasion, both Tomiko and Yaeko waited on him and they talked about Otoki.

He returned again the following week, but by this time, as it happened, Otoki and her male companion had already been found dead, in a most unlikely place.

## Chapter 2

### The Love Suicide.

On the main railway line to Kagoshima there is a small station called Kashii, three stops before the city of Hakata. From the station, the road inland, in the direction of the mountains, leads to Kashii Shrine; in the opposite direction, it goes down to the seashore from where Hakata harbor can be seen.

Directly in front of the beach a narrow strip of land called Umi no Nakamichi extends into the sea like a sash, and at the end of it the island of Shika appears to float on the water. Off to the left lies the island of Noko, barely visible in the misty distance. It is an exceptionally beautiful spot.

This stretch of seashore is called Kashii Bay. In olden times it was known as Kashii Inlet. In those days, Otomo no Tabito, a government official, was inspired by this same scene to compose the poem that appears in the *Manyōshū*, a famous eighth century anthology:

At low tide though our sleeves may  
get wet, let us hunt  
After sea herbs for breakfast in  
Kashii Bay.

However, the sentiments of a court noble of long ago are scarcely relevant in the matter-of-fact world of today. On the very cold, early morning of January 21, at about 6:30, a workman was walking along this beach. Instead of looking for herbs for his morning meal, as in the poem, he was on his way to work at a factory in Najima. It was shortly after dawn. A thick mist was still gathered in the distance; Shika Island and Umi no Nakamichi were only dimly visible. The wind, which tasted of the sea, was penetrating and cold. The man was walking rapidly, his coat collar turned up. The beach, strewn with rocks, provided a short cut to his job; he passed here every day. But there was something this morning that was out of the ordinary. His eyes first took note of it. Among the jagged black rocks that stood in his path he spied two objects. Incongruous, irrelevant, they were conspicuous in that familiar scene. In the pale light of early morning, as yet unwarmed by the rays of the sun, the objects looked very forlorn. The loose ends of the wrappings that covered them fluttered in the wind; they were the only things that moved—they, and the long hair. The black shoes and white socks were very still.

His peaceful mood was shattered. The man turned and took to his heels. He ran back towards town and banged on the door of the first police box he came to.

"There are dead bodies on the beach!"

"Dead bodies? On the beach?" The old policeman stood up and shivered as he buttoned his jacket. The man was obviously very excited.

"Yes, two of them. It looks like a man and a woman."

Such a report, so early in the morning, made the old policeman's eyes pop open. "Where are they?"

"On the beach over there. I'll show you."

"Just a minute."

The policeman was a bit flustered. He took down the man's name and address, then telephoned the main police station at Kashii. As they left the police box together, their breath made little white puffs in the crisp morning air.

The two bodies lay on the beach in the cold, salty wind. Now that he was accompanied by the policeman, the workman was able to look at them more calmly. He noticed the woman first. She lay with her face looking up at the sky. Her eyes were closed but her mouth, partly open, revealed her white teeth. Her face was slightly flushed. Underneath a gray coat she wore a brick-colored kimono; the white collar was slightly open at the neck. The folds of the kimono were neatly arranged and she lay in a very orderly manner. The skirt ends of the kimono, fluttering in the wind, exposed the yellow lining. There were clean white socks on her feet, which lay primly aligned. Her clothes were not soiled. Nearby lay her sandals, also neatly arranged. The workman looked over at the man. His head was turned sideways. His face also appeared flushed, almost the face of a living person. He looked as if he had been drinking and had fallen asleep. The cuffs of his brown trousers showed from under a dark blue overcoat and his feet, in a pair



of black shoes, were carelessly extended. The shoes were brightly polished; the socks were blue, with red stripes. The bodies lay quite close together.

Small crabs were scurrying in and out of cracks in the rocks. One little crab was trying to crawl into a bottle of orange juice that lay near the man's body.

"Love suicide," said the old policeman, looking down at the bodies. "Poor souls; still young, too."

The light showed that it was getting on towards midmorning.

Forty minutes later, alerted by the Kashii police, the chief of the detective division, accompanied by two assistants, the police doctor and a criminal identification officer, arrived by car from the Fukuoka police station.

When they had finished taking pictures from every angle, the police doctor inspected the bodies.

"Potassium cyanide," he concluded. "The brightly flushed face is characteristic. They must have taken it with the juice." Some orange-colored liquid still remained in the soft drink bottle on the rocks nearby.

"Doc, how long do you think they've been dead?" the chief asked. He was fingering his small moustache.

"I can't be sure until I check more carefully. Offhand, I'd say about ten hours."

"Ten hours," the chief repeated, looking around. This set back the suicides to ten or eleven o'clock the previous night. He seemed to be trying to visualize the scene. "You believe they drank the poison together at the same time?"

"Yes. They must have taken the potassium cyanide in the orange juice."

"What a cold place to die in," someone remarked.

The doctor looked up at the speaker. He was a man in his early forties, very thin and wearing a shabby overcoat, a nondescript little man.

"Ah, Mr. Torigai!" The doctor addressed the detective, looking into his thin face. "Your remark applies to living persons. As for a place to die, it is immaterial whether it is hot or cold. For that matter, fruit juice is hardly a wintertime drink. Anyway, this couple..." The doctor stopped and smiled, then added, "They were probably in an abnormal state of mind, victims of a sort of perverse, inverted psychology."

The detectives laughed. The police doctor had a pretentious way of speaking that they liked to ridicule.

"It takes courage to decide to drink poison. And a peculiar state of mind to acquire that courage," the chief commented.

"Chief, do you think this could be a case of murder and suicide?" asked one of the detectives. He had a marked country accent.

"It can't be. There are no signs of a struggle; their clothes are not even in disorder. I feel sure they took the poison willingly."

It was true. The woman's body was in perfect repose. Her white socks were immaculate, as if they had just stepped out of the sandals that were neatly placed beside her. Her hands were folded over her breasts.

Since it was clearly a case of love suicide, the detectives relaxed. They even showed signs of disappointment that no crime was involved, that there was no need to search for the murderer. The two bodies were transported to the police station by special van. The detectives climbed aboard also and huddled inside to keep warm. With the

unsightly objects removed, Kashii Bay looked peaceful again in the bleak winter sunshine. And the wind kept blowing in from the sea.

The bodies were carefully examined at the police station. Many pictures were taken as each article of clothing was removed.

A wallet was found in the pocket of the man's jacket. He could therefore be identified. The wallet also contained a railway pass. It was a commutation ticket for the run between Asagaya and Tokyo Station, made out in the name of Kenichi Sayama, age 31. The business cards gave further details. Under the man's name was printed: X Ministry, 7 Section, Assistant Section Chief. His home address appeared in the righthand corner.

The detectives looked at each other. The 7 Section of the X Ministry was currently being investigated on charges of bribery and almost every day some item concerning the scandal appeared in the papers.

"Any last messages?" the chief asked.

"We've searched very carefully. There was nothing in any of his pockets. Less than ten thousand yen in cash, a handkerchief, a shoehorn, yesterday's newspaper, folded, and this crumpled receipt from a railway dining car-that was all we could find."

"A dining car receipt? What an odd thing to keep." The chief picked it up and carefully smoothed away the creases. It was crumpled as though carelessly left at the bottom of the pocket. "The receipt is dated January 14," the chief read. "The train number is 7 and it's punched for one person. The bill amounted to 340 yen. The receipt was issued by the Tokyo branch of the Japan Restaurant Co. But it doesn't say what he ordered."

"How about the woman?" someone asked. Her identity had also been established. In a folding pocketbook containing 8,000 yen were four or five business cards that read: "Tokyo, Akasaka, Restaurant Koyuki, Otoki."

"Otoki must be her name," the chief remarked. "She was probably a waitress at the Koyuki Restaurant in Akasaka. This looks like the love suicide of a government official and a restaurant waitress." He ordered telegrams sent to the addresses on both cards.

The bodies were examined further by the police doctor. There were no superficial wounds. The cause of the deaths was clearly from poisoning by potassium cyanide, and the presumed time of death was between nine and eleven o'clock of the previous night. "That means that they were walking on the beach at that hour, then committed suicide," said one of the detectives.

"They must have taken a long time saying goodbye," another one remarked pointedly. However, a medical examination showed no signs of intercourse prior to their death. This surprised the detectives. "They died remarkably innocent," one of them remarked cynically. Again it was confirmed that both deaths were from poisoning by potassium cyanide.

"They must have left Tokyo on the fourteenth," said the chief, checking the date on the dining car receipt. "Today is the twenty-first. Which means they left a week ago. I suppose they stopped off somewhere on the way, then came to Fukuoka to look for a place to die. Say, call the station and find out what this *train number 7* means."

One of the detectives went to the telephone. He soon returned with the report. "The train is the super-express from Tokyo to Hakata. It's called the Asakaze."

"What, the super-express to Hakata?" The chief looked skeptical. "I wonder if they came directly to Hakata. If so, they either stayed the whole week in Hakata or visited other parts of Kyushu. They must have had some baggage; we must look into that. Take their pictures and check all the inns and hotels in the city. See if anyone recognizes them."

One of the men spoke up. "Chief, may I see that dining car receipt?" It was the thin, dark-skinned detective, the small man with the big eyes and the unshaven face. He had been in the original group that went to Kashii Bay when the bodies were discovered. His suit was as shabby as his overcoat, and his frayed necktie was askew. His name was Jūtarō Torigai and he was one of the senior detectives.

Torigai studied the receipt which he had unfolded with his bony and not very clean fingers. He was muttering to himself, "For one person, eh! I suppose he dined alone."

The chief overheard him. "The woman didn't accompany him to the dining car probably because she didn't care to eat."

"But..." objected Torigai.

"But what?" asked his superior.

"But chief, a woman likes to eat, you know. Even if she's not hungry she'll usually go along with her escort and have a cup of coffee or some dessert with him."

The chief laughed. "That's true," he said, "but maybe this time she was so full she couldn't manage even that."

Torigai looked as if he were about to say something, but he changed his mind. He put on his hat, a very old hat with a floppy brim that seemed to match his personality, and quietly walked away. He was wearing a pair of shoes that were down at the heels, and he dragged his feet as he walked.

When the detectives had left, the room regained its air of emptiness and futility. One or two of the younger men remained behind; they put more charcoal in the brazier and every once in a while filled the teacup on the chief's desk.

Later in the afternoon, as the sun's rays, filtering through the window, grew weaker, footsteps resounded outside and the room suddenly filled with people. These were not policemen but newspaper reporters.

"Chief! A certain Sayama, assistant section chief in a Tokyo ministry, died in a love suicide. We were just notified by our head office and rushed over." Their voices betrayed their excitement as they pushed their way into the room. The Tokyo newspapers had immediately assumed a connection between the political scandal and the suicides and had alerted their offices in Fukuoka.

The morning papers carried in big headlines the news of the love suicide of Kenichi Sayama, assistant section chief of X Ministry, and a restaurant waitress. In addition to the two newspapers that have the largest nationwide circulation, the important local papers reported the news in detail. It was not an ordinary case of double suicide. The deaths were linked with the bribery case in a government ministry. All the papers broadly hinted that Sayama's death was connected with the scandal. The Public Prosecutor's Office was quoted as saying that Sayama had not been summoned to appear; nevertheless, according to the stories in the press,

it was certain that Sayama would have been called up as a witness and that he had committed suicide out of fear that the scandal would involve people higher up.

These newspapers were stacked on the chief's desk. The chief himself was looking over the contents of a small leather suitcase.

The suitcase had been discovered as a result of a thorough check, lasting through most of the night, of the inns in Fukuoka City. It had been found by a young detective at an inn called Tambaya. The inn reported that the man, identified by the picture the detective carried with him, had been a recent guest. In the register he was listed as Taizō Sugawara, 32, a businessman; address: 26 Minami Nakadōri, Fujisawa City. He had been alone from the night of the fifteenth until he departed on the night of the twentieth, after paying his bill. At that time, he had left the suitcase behind, saying that he would pick it up later.

The suitcase contained only such ordinary things as toilet articles, extra shirts and underwear and a few magazines that had probably been bought on the train. There was not even a notebook, let alone a letter or a farewell note.

When he finished examining the suitcase the chief turned to the young detective who had brought it to the station. "Did you say the man was alone?" he asked.

"Yes, he was alone."

"That's strange! What happened to the woman? I wonder where she was all that time. The fifteenth is when the Asakaze arrived from Tokyo. That whole week, from the fifteenth to the twentieth, did the man remain at the inn the entire time?"

"He didn't go out at all, apparently. He was alone at the inn."

"Didn't the woman show up at any time?"

"I was told that no one called on him."

While this conversation was taking place, Detective Torigai quietly left the room. Taking his old hat, he went out on tiptoe so as not to disturb anyone. Outside, he boarded a streetcar and sat down. He looked absentmindedly at the passing scenery through the window across the aisle. When the car reached a certain stop, he got off. His movements were as careful as those of an old man.

He turned many corners. His steps were very deliberate. Presently he came to a building which bore the sign "Tambaya." From the entrance he could see the well-polished hall and corridors. The hotel clerk greeted him with a low bow, straightening up rather quickly when he saw the police card.

The clerk confirmed what the young detective had reported earlier to the chief. Jūtarō Torigai then asked, his face bearing the semblance of a smile, "How did the man look when he arrived?"

"He looked tired and went to bed right after his dinner," the clerk answered.

"It must be very boring to stay indoors the whole time. What did he do all day?"

"Usually, he just stretched out on the tatami and read. He seldom called for the maid. Which reminds me, the maid did say that he was a gloomy sort of person. He seemed to be waiting anxiously for a phone call."

"A phone call?" Torigai's eyes brightened.

"Yes, he told me as well as the maid that he was expecting a phone call. He said to be sure to connect him as soon as the call came. I believe he didn't go out on that account."

Torigai nodded. "That could be. Did the call come through?"

"Yes, I took it. It was about eight o'clock, the night of the twentieth. A woman's voice said, 'Mr. Sugawara, please. He's one of your guests.'"

"A woman's voice! And she said Sugawara, not Sayama?"

"That's right. I knew he was waiting for the call so I put it through right away. We have a switchboard and extensions in every room."

"Could you hear the conversation?"

The clerk's smile was forced. "We're forbidden to listen in on guests' phone calls."

Torigai sucked in his breath as if in disappointment. "What happened next?"

"The call lasted only about a minute. Then he sent for the bill, paid it and left, asking us to hold his suitcase. We didn't dream that he was leaving to commit suicide."

Jūtarō Torigai was in deep thought, his fingers rubbing his unshaven chin. Assistant Section Chief Sayama waited impatiently at the inn a whole week for a phone call from the woman. And when the call came at last, he left right away, to commit suicide that same night. Very strange.

Still before his eyes was the dining car receipt plainly marked *for one person*. "Sayama was waiting at the inn for the woman to arrive," he muttered to himself. "Why in the devil did he have to wait a whole week for the woman he intended to commit suicide with?"

## Chapter 3

### Two Stations in Kashii.

Jūtarō Torigai got home about seven o'clock. Although the front door made a good deal of noise as he entered, no one appeared to greet him. He was removing his shoes in the small vestibule when he heard his wife call from the next room, "Hello, your bath is ready!" He pushed open the door and found her putting away her knitting. On the table the dinner dishes lay covered over with a white cloth. "I thought you'd be late so Sumiko and I had our dinner," she explained. "Sumiko went with Nitta to see a picture. Do take your bath first."

Torigai undressed quietly. The suit he put aside was well worn, the lining badly frayed. Some dust and sand spilled to the floor from inside the trouser cuffs. It was as if his weariness, from the many hours he had walked that day, was seeping out of his clothes.

His work obliged him to keep irregular hours. If he was not home by 6:30, his wife and daughter would not wait for dinner. Sumiko was his daughter and Nitta the young man she was going to marry soon.

As usual, Torigai took his bath silently. The bath was an old iron tub. "How's the water," his wife called to him. "Fine, fine," Torigai replied wearily. He was tired and did not feel like talking. He wanted just to sit in the tub and let his mind wander.

He started thinking about yesterday's suicides. What led them to take their lives, he wondered. He would know before long because telegrams had been

received from the families of the two young people to say they were sending representatives to claim the bodies. The newspapers reported that Sayama was deeply involved in the government scandal that was currently under investigation and that his death had come as a relief to some senior officers in the ministry that was implicated. Sayama, they said, was a good man but the timid sort. Also, according to the press, Sayama and Otoki were lovers and Sayama was believed to have been worried about the illicit relationship. If that were true, Torigai decided, Sayama had certainly solved his two problems, the office scandal and the love affair, by taking his own life. No, the scandal by itself might have been enough to drive him to suicide but the additional problem of the young woman was what made him do it. And yet... Torigai splashed the warm water over his face. After arriving together at Hakata station on the Asakaze, where did the woman go? Sayama was alone when he checked in at the Tambaya, the night of the fifteenth. There was the date on the dining car receipt and there was no mistaking the date of his arrival at Hakata, so he did go directly to the inn. The woman was not with him at the time. From the sixteenth to the twentieth-for five days, therefore-Sayama remained at the inn, waiting impatiently for a phone call from the woman. What was Otoki doing during this time?

Torigai wiped his face with a towel. That the phone call was important was obvious from the fact that Sayama waited at the inn, never leaving his room. The message from the woman came at around 8:00 on the night of the twentieth. It must have been from Otoki because she asked for Sugawara instead of Sayama. Clearly, they had arranged to use the false name. As soon as he received the call Sayama left the inn, probably to act upon it. That night he and Otoki committed suicide on Kashii beach. They seem to have rushed into death. Wouldn't you think they would want to spend a little time together after those days apart?

Getting out of the tub, Torigai sat naked on the bathroom floor, still absorbed in his thoughts. He let his body cool off. Were the circumstances so pressing, he asked himself that they could not enjoy to the full their last moments together? If so, what were those circumstances? They left no messages. Of course, that was not significant. Generally, only the very young left farewell notes. Often, when the situation was urgent, suicides left behind nothing at all. In the case of Sayama, he was probably in no position to write. The woman followed his example and didn't write either. It was that sort of a love suicide. Yes, no mistake about it; it was a love suicide. And yet... Torigai became aware that he was cold and stepped back into the tub.

"I can't help wondering about that dining car receipt made out for one person only. Then again, maybe I'm attaching too much importance to it," he mused to himself.

"Not out of the bath yet?" his wife called to him from the next room.

Jūtarō Torigai sat at the table, his face still aglow from the hot bath. He was especially enjoying his two little bottles of sake as he lingered over dinner. Side dishes of sea urchin, squid and dried codfish were set out on the table. He was tired from so much walking and the sake tasted good.

His wife was now sewing on a kimono. It had a bright red pattern and was intended for their daughter who was to be married soon. She was engrossed in her work.

"Rice!" he called to her, having finished the sake. She stopped sewing long enough to bring him the rice and then returned to her needlework. She continued to sew while waiting to serve him.

"Why don't you join me in a cup of tea?" suggested.

"Thank you, no." She was too busy even to look up.

Torigai looked at his wife intently over his bowl of rice. My wife is growing old, he decided. When a woman gets to be her age, she doesn't even want to take a cup of tea with her husband while he is having a late dinner. He nibbled on some pickles and sipped his tea.

His daughter's return interrupted his thoughts. Her face was radiant from the date with her fiance. "Where's Nitta?" her mother asked.

"He saw me to the door and left," the girl replied gaily. She took off her coat and sat down.

Torigai put aside the evening paper and looked at his daughter. "Sumiko, did you stop to have a cup of tea with Nitta after the movie?"

His daughter burst out laughing. "What a question, father! Of course we had tea."

"I see. Now, in that case..." He started to ask his daughter the question that was on his mind. "For instance, suppose Nitta was hungry and felt like eating, but you were not hungry and couldn't eat a thing?"

"That's a funny example."

"Now listen. Suppose Nitta said to you, 'All right, then, if you're not hungry spend the time window shopping while I get something to eat.' Would you do as you were told?"

"Well..." the girl hesitated, as if in thought. "I think I'd go to the restaurant with him. It wouldn't be fun to wait around alone."

"Just as I thought. You'd go with him even if you felt you couldn't take so much as a cup of tea?"

"Of course. I'd want to be with him. If I didn't feel like eating I suppose I'd order coffee or something, just to keep him company."

Her father nodded in agreement. "Just as I thought," he repeated. He sounded so serious that his wife began to laugh. "What in the world are you asking that for?" she inquired.

"You keep quiet!" He raised his voice, still annoyed that she would not take tea with him while he was having his dinner.

"I suppose you feel you should stay with Nitta," he pursued, turning to his daughter.

"Well, I think it's a question of love rather than of appetite," she answered.

"Ah, I see." Very smart, he said to himself. His daughter had put into a single sentence his own rather vague thoughts. A question of love rather than of appetite: that was it exactly.

He was still pondering the term "one person" on the dining car receipt but had come to no conclusion. A man and a woman set out together on a long trip to Kyushu to commit suicide. Their love must be deeper than the ordinary love of two people for each other. They are on a train. Even if the woman is not hungry, it would be natural for her to accompany her lover to the dining car and take at least a cup of coffee with him. They had reserved seats, so even if they left together for

another car, they need have no fear of losing their seats. Perhaps they were worried about their baggage and the woman had stayed behind to guard it? No, it could not be that. Torigai could not help but feel that there was something odd in the relationship between Sayama and Otoki.

Their behavior at Hakata was certainly strange. The woman left Sayama alone at the inn for five days and went off on her own. On the fifth night she telephoned him, and immediately after meeting they committed suicide. Nothing in Otoki's behavior had suggested suicide. There must be something more to the story, Torigai concluded. Yet, from whichever angle he looked at the case, the two bodies, laying side by side on the beach at Kashii, clearly pointed to suicide. His own eyes had confirmed it; there was no possible mistake. Well, perhaps I'm worrying about nothing at all, Torigai muttered to himself. But he still looked confused as he lit a cigarette.

The next morning three people arrived from Tokyo to claim the bodies. These were in the hospital morgue where the autopsies had been performed. Kenichi Sayama's claimant was his brother, a rather stout, dignified man with a mustache, in his early forties. To one of the policemen he presented his card which showed him to be the branch manager of a certain bank. For Otoki, an old woman of sixty odd years appeared and said she was her mother. She was accompanied by a smartly dressed young woman of about twenty-seven or -eight years of age. The younger woman gave her name as Tomiko, a waitress at a restaurant in Akasaka called Koyuki where Otoki had been employed. Thereupon, a disagreeable situation arose. The claimants for the two bodies ignored each other. They appeared together in the investigation room of the police station and at the waiting room of the hospital, but deliberately avoided each other. Actually, it was Sayama's brother, the branch bank manager, who was responsible for the strained atmosphere. He looked at the two women with obvious distaste and was cold and aloof throughout the formalities. It was as if he found the women disgusting, unclean. He kept them at a distance. They seemed afraid of him and acted nervous in his presence. This was most apparent when the three were interrogated by the chief.

When asked, "Do you know what led them to commit suicide?" the banker answered rather coldly:

"I am most embarrassed by my brother's disgraceful action. The reasons for his death have been stated in the papers. I know nothing about the scandal at the ministry. Naturally, I would not know, either, whether he was trying to protect his superiors by taking his own life. The last time I saw him, which was about three weeks ago, he looked depressed. He was the reticent sort and never confided in me. He lost his wife three years ago and there has been talk of a second marriage. However, my brother did not seem too eager to enter into it and matters were not going smoothly. I learned for the first time from this incident that he had a mistress. He was a serious-minded young man and I was told by a close friend of his, just before I left Tokyo, that he was worried about his relations with this woman. What a fool he was! I wish he had talked to me about his problems. What I regret above all is that the woman was a waitress at a restaurant in Akasaka. I could understand it had she been a woman of a better class, but his choice is unpardonable. My brother had few affairs with women and I suppose was led



astray by this one and was finally driven to suicide. Damn that woman! My brother had such a bright future and she ruined him." He seemed to want to transfer his bitterness to Otoki's relatives. He not only refused to speak to them but seemed ready to call them names and even to strike them. He might well have done something of the sort if there had been no one around and he could forget appearances.

Otoki's mother was next to be questioned.

"Otoki's real name is Hideko Kuwayama. We are from Akita and have been farmers for generations. She was married once but was not fortunate in her choice, and after she and her husband separated she began working in Tokyo. Before being employed at the Koyuki she worked at two or three other restaurants, but since she wrote home very seldom, I really know little about the life she led. I was concerned about her, but I have five children at home and therefore no time to worry much about any one of them. I hurried here as soon as I received the wire from the Koyuki Restaurant. I am heartbroken for the poor child." This was not said all in one breath; she spoke brokenly, holding back her tears. Her face was deeply lined for one of her age and the rims of her eyelids were red, as if inflamed.

She was followed by Tomiko, the waitress from the Koyuki.

"Otoki and I were close friends so the proprietress asked me to come. Otoki came to the Koyuki three years ago. She was clever at serving the guests and was liked by everyone. As far as I know she had no friends outside the restaurant. She had an independent character and was not the kind to talk about herself. I was her best friend yet even I know very little about her private life. However, there was never any gossip about her. So I was really shocked by this suicide. The proprietress and the rest of us are astonished because we don't know how or when she acquired a lover. As for Mr. Sayama, I know nothing about him. His picture is in the papers but none of us recognized him; he doesn't seem to have been one of our guests. However, Yaeko and I did see him with Otoki at Tokyo station. Yaeko also works at the Koyuki. She's my friend."

"You saw them together? What do you mean?" asked the chief.

"It was the evening of the fourteenth. There is a Mr. Yasuda, a good customer of the restaurant. Yaeko and I went to Tokyo Station that evening to see him off on the train to Kamakura. In the station, quite by chance, we saw Otoki and a gentleman board the super-express together. We were on platform 13 at the time and we could see their train at platform 15 because the tracks in between were clear. Mr. Yasuda said, 'Say, isn't that Otoki?' and we looked over. Sure enough, we saw Otoki and the gentleman walk along the platform and get on the express for Kyushu. We were very surprised. It was strange that she should be going on a train trip with a man. Having discovered her secret, we wanted to see more. After saying goodbye to Mr. Yasuda, we ran over to platform 15 and had a good look through the car window. There was Otoki sitting next to the gentleman and talking gaily. We were astonished!"

"Did you speak to Otoki?" asked the chief.

"We didn't want to intrude; they seemed so happy together. We went away. We are quite sure the gentleman we saw was Mr. Sayama whose picture has been in the papers. Now that I think of it, that must have been the beginning of the events that led to the love suicide. I never imagined it would end this way. The

proprietress told me that Otoki had asked for leave the day before so she must have been prepared for it. She was such a nice girl; I feel dreadfully sorry for her. I can't think of any reason why she would want to die. Of course, as I said before, she was not the sort who talks about herself, so I don't know the circumstances, but according to the papers Mr. Sayama was involved in some scandal or other and was desperate. Maybe Otoki felt sorry for him."

These were the statements made by the three people who came to claim the bodies. Detective Torigai was present at the interrogations.

The bodies were turned over to the claimants. They were cremated and the ashes taken back to Tokyo. Thereafter, the case of the double suicide at Kashii Beach was handled in a routine manner, having briefly left its mark on the events of the day.

Torigai had no right to interfere. Yet there were two things that bothered him. One was the dining car receipt *for one person*. It posed the problem of love versus appetite. The other was the fact that the girl had not joined Sayama at the inn, which raised the question of her whereabouts during his five lonely days. These doubts, however, were not strong enough to offer as objections. The chief would probably refuse to consider them. Actually, when looked at objectively, he himself had to admit they seemed to lack weight. Therefore, although far from satisfied, Torigai kept them to himself and let the case take its normal course. But to say nothing and to retain his peace of mind were two very different matters. From the moment he decided to keep silent, frustration grew within him. He felt he could not rest until he found the answers to the two questions that troubled him.

It's a simple case of love suicide; why worry any further about it, he would say to himself. No crime was committed; why not leave it alone? There was other work that needed his attention. But until these doubts were resolved, he knew he would never be content. "I think I'll look into it further; I'll do it on my own," he finally decided. "No need to tell anyone." Having come to this decision, he felt a great weight lift from his mind.

The story of the love suicide appeared in the papers for the next few days in connection with the scandal at the ministry, then was dropped. The press seemed to have concluded that it was a commonplace tale, not worth repeating. Reading the accounts, Torigai felt cheated. It was as if the usual leads and clues that help to reach a conclusion were being disregarded. He decided to go to Kashii Beach and look it over once more.

He got off the streetcar at Hakozaki and changed to the Nishitetsu, a private line going to Wajiro. This was more convenient than using the national railway. Moreover, the private line passed closer to the beach.

It is a ten-minute walk to the beach from Nishitetsu Kashii Station. A few houses stand on both sides of the road for a short distance from the station but they soon give way to a pine forest and, a little further along, there is the beach, strewn with rocks. The wind was still sharp but the sea already had the blue glints of spring. The cold, drab colors of winter had disappeared. Shika Island was enveloped in mist.

Jūtarō Torigai stood at the scene of the double suicide. It struck him as being strangely desolate. The rough black rocks covered the beach almost to the water's

edge. Had there been a struggle, it was the sort of place where no trace would ever be found.

He wondered why Kenichi Sayama and Otoki had chosen such a place in which to die. There must be more suitable spots, he thought. Couples planning suicide usually chose the site with elaborate care—a hot spring resort, say, or a place of renown. True, the view from here was beautiful but surely they could have selected some place where there was grass instead of only these hard rocks. Of course, it had happened at night. They had left the inn around eight and by ten o'clock they were dead. They had come directly here, as if they had planned it so from the start. The night was dark, he remembered, yet they behaved as if they knew the place well.

It occurred to him that perhaps one of them, Sayama or Otoki, had been here before. Their movements indicated that they were familiar with the area. Torigai turned and retraced his steps, walking fast. He went past Nishitetsu Kashii Station and headed toward the Kashii national railway station. Some five hundred meters separated the two. Houses and shops presently began to appear. At the station he took a worn notebook from his pocket, checked some addresses and sent two telegrams. They were addressed to Sayama's brother and Otoki's mother, asking the same question of each. He worked, tongue in cheek, to phrase the query so that it would not exceed the minimum charge for twenty words.

When this was done, he entered the station and studied the timetable. He found that there would be a train for Hakata in twenty minutes. While waiting for it he stood at the entrance to the station, his hands in his pockets, looking out at the street.

It was a dreary and uninteresting scene that he faced. There was a restaurant of sorts. There was a shop selling sundries. There was a fruit store. In the small square immediately in front of the station a truck was parked and two or three children were playing nearby. The sun was shining.

As Torigai stood absentmindedly observing the scene, a small doubt suddenly crept into his mind. Hitherto, he had taken for granted that Sayama and Otoki had arrived at Kashii on the private line. Could they have arrived by train at the national railway station? Turning to the timetable once again he saw that there was one from Hakata that arrived at 9:24 P.M.

Jūtarō Torigai closed his eyes. After a moment of thought he decided against returning immediately to Hakata. Instead, he walked over to the shop across the square. He had a question to ask. His heart beat a little faster as he tried to anticipate the answer.

## **Chapter 4**

### **A Man from Tokyo.**

Jūtarō Torigai stood in front of the fruit store across the square from the railway station. "May I ask you a question?" The middle-aged storekeeper put down the apple he was polishing and turned to greet him. Shopkeepers are generally surly if

addressed in this manner but when Torigai said he was from the police the man became attentive.

"How late do you keep the store open at night?" Torigai asked.

"I stay open until about 11."

"From here would you be able to see the passengers coming out of the station, say at 9:30 at night?"

"Nine-thirty? Oh, yes. There's a train from Hakata that arrives at 9:24 and I watch the people as they come out. The shop is quiet at that hour and I look for a possible customer."

"I see. On the night of the twentieth did you happen to notice a man about thirty years old, dressed in Western clothes, and a woman of about twenty-five, in kimono, coming out of the station at that time?"

"The night of the twentieth? That's some time ago. Hmm."

The storekeeper bent his head as if in thought. Torigai was aware that the question was difficult; the event had occurred four or five days before. The man would probably not remember the date. He thought of a better way of putting the question. "Have you heard of the recent suicides, here on the beach?"

"You mean the two bodies that were found on the beach the other morning? Yes, I heard about them and read about them in the papers."

"That's right. That was the morning of the twenty-first. The twentieth was therefore the night before. Now do you recall anything?"

The storekeeper slapped his thigh. He was wearing a heavy apron that carried the store's name in big letters. "You mean the night before the suicides. Now I remember. I saw them."

Torigai's eyes lighted up. "What, you saw them both?"

"Yes, I saw them. I remember it because of what happened the following morning. Let me see, that night there were only about ten passengers from the 9:24 train. There are never many, anyway, at that time of night. Among them I noticed a man and a woman who answer your description. I hoped they would stop to buy some fruit so I kept watching them from here."

"Did they buy anything?"

"No. They walked in the direction of the Nishitetsu station and disappeared. I was disappointed. Then there was the excitement the following morning and I wondered if that was the couple who had committed suicide. That's why I remember them."

"Did you see their faces?" Torigai looked intently at the storekeeper as he asked the question.

The man rubbed his chin with one hand. "As you can see, the station is rather far away. Besides, the station lights are behind the people as they come out. From here they are little more than black shadows. I can't see their faces. I know these two only from their pictures in the papers."

"Hmm." Torigai's shoulders sagged a little. "What about their clothes?"

"I don't know about that either. I saw them walk away, and I vaguely recall that the man was wearing an overcoat and the woman was in kimono."

"Could you see the pattern of the kimono?"

"Impossible." The storekeeper smiled apologetically.

A customer was in the shop, selecting oranges. He appeared to be listening to the conversation.

"You say the couple seemed to be heading for the private railway station. Is that in the direction of the beach?" Torigai asked.

"Yes, yes. If you go past that station you'll come to the beach."

Torigai thanked the storekeeper and left. I've found out a good deal, he thought as he walked away. His intuition was correct. While waiting at the station entrance he had had a hunch that perhaps someone in the shop had noticed them, and he was right. It was unfortunate that the shopkeeper had not seen their faces, but Torigai was certain that the two passengers were Kenichi Sayama and Otoki. They had come by train from Hakata, arriving at Kashii railway station at 9:24 on the night of the twentieth. This meant that they had left Hakata station about 9:10 since it was only a fifteen-minute journey.

Assuming Sayama had left the inn at about eight o'clock, after receiving the phone call from the woman, where did they meet and what did they do for that one hour before getting on the train at Hakata? This would be difficult to ascertain, probably impossible. There was no place from which to start checking in a city the size of Hakata.

Torigai was walking slowly towards the Nishitetsu station, pondering the problem, when someone called to him from behind.

"Excuse me!" Torigai turned around. A young man was approaching. "Are you from the police?" His manner was diffident.

"Yes," Torigai answered. The man was carrying a paper bag full of oranges. Torigai remembered seeing him make the purchase at the fruit store he had just left.

"I overheard your conversation while I was buying these oranges," the young man explained as he came up to Torigai. "I want to tell you that I also saw the couple you were inquiring about. It was around 9:30, the night of the twentieth."

"Oh," exclaimed Torigai, his voice betraying his surprise. Looking around, he saw a small shop at the side of the road that looked like a coffee shop and invited the rather shy young man to enter with him. Over a cup of something black and steaming that was said to be coffee he studied the young stranger. "Please tell me what you know."

"I really have little to tell," said the young man, scratching his head. "But when I overheard your conversation, I thought the few facts I have might be of use to you."

"That's kind of you. Please tell me what you know."

"I live here but I commute to Hakata where I work," the young stranger began. "The night before the bodies were found, therefore the night of the twentieth, I too saw a couple who resembled the pictures in the papers of the two who committed suicide. They arrived at Nishitetsu Kashii Station at 9:35."

"Wait a moment." Torigai held up his hand. "You say the Nishitetsu line?"

"Yes. That train leaves Keirinjo-mae at 9:27. It takes only eight minutes to get here." Keirinjo-mae is in Hakozaki, on the extreme eastern edge of Hakata.

"I see. Was it in the train that you saw the couple?"

"No, not in the train. The train had two coaches and I was in the second coach. There were only a few passengers so if they had been in my coach I would have noticed them. They must have been in the first coach."

"Then where did you see them?"

"After I came through the gate and was walking home. I had had a few drinks at Hakata that night and was a bit drunk so I was walking slowly. Two or three passengers who followed me through the gate soon passed me by. They were local people I know by sight. There was also a couple I did not recognize. They came from behind and walked past me quickly. The man wore an overcoat; the woman had a Japanese coat over her kimono. They took the deserted road that leads to the beach. I didn't think anything of it at the time. But then there was the incident the next morning! According to the papers they died around ten o'clock that night, so I wondered if they were not the couple I had noticed."

"Did you see their faces?"

"As I said before, they came from behind and hurried past me so I saw them only from the back."

"How about the color of the overcoat or the pattern of the kimono?"

"I didn't notice that either. The road was dark and I was a bit under the weather. But I did hear something the woman said."

Torigai's eyes brightened. "What did she say?"

"Just as they went past I heard her say, 'What a lonely place!'"

"What a lonely place," Jūtarō repeated to himself, half-mumbling. "What did the man say?"

"He said nothing; he just kept on walking."

"Did you notice anything in particular about the woman's voice?"

"No, it was a pleasant voice. But she didn't have the local accent. People around here don't speak like that. I believe it was a Tokyo accent."

Torigai took a cigarette from a crumpled packet and lit it. The smoke drifted in the air while he thought of other questions.

"That was the local train that arrived at 9:35?"

"No mistake about that. I make a point of always catching the same train, even if I stay over in Hakata for a drink or two."

Torigai pondered the answer. He was trying to determine whether the couple the young man had encountered was the same couple the fruit store dealer had seen, emerging from the main railway station. The young man had not seen them in his coach; he merely took it for granted that they had traveled with him in the same train because they had overtaken him outside the gate. The other train had arrived at the railway station at 9:24. His train had arrived at Nishitetsu Kashii Station at 9:35. Thus, there was a difference of eleven minutes. The distance between the two stations was about five hundred meters. The road to the beach from the railway station passed in front of the private railway station, so the time and place agreed.

"That is all I have to tell you." The young man stood up. He looked at Torigai who was still deep in thought. "I wanted to give you this information when I heard you making inquiries at the fruit store."

"Thank you very much." Torigai asked the stranger for his name and address and bowed low to him to show his sincere gratitude. Just to hear the one remark the woman had made was worth a good deal.

It was already dark when they left the coffee shop.

"What a lonely place!" The words the young man had repeated rang in Torigai's ears. It was as if he himself had overheard them.

That chance remark led Torigai to make three deductions:

From the woman's speech, he concluded that she was not from the area. She was not from Fukuoka and very likely not even from Kyushu.

As the words indicated, the place must have been unfamiliar to her.

Therefore, she was not asking the man to agree; it sounded, on the contrary, as if she were giving her impression of the place to someone who had been there before. The fact that the man did not answer, that he continued to walk rapidly, supported this view.

In short, the man must have been familiar with the area, whereas the woman was seeing it for the first time. She had a Tokyo accent, and the scene occurred shortly before the suicides were believed to have taken place. Torigai believed he could safely assume that the two people the storekeeper had noticed were the same two who had passed the young man on the road.

Of course, on second thought, he had no proof. In Fukuoka alone were thousands of visitors from Tokyo, and the fact that a couple was seen walking in the Kashii area at that hour of the night could be purely accidental and have no connection with the double suicide. But Torigai refused to entertain these doubts. He believed they were the two people who had committed suicide.

A cold wind was blowing. The stars were unusually bright in a very black sky.

Jūtarō Torigai returned to the railway station. Pausing at the entrance, he looked at his watch. It was an old timepiece but kept excellent time. He then started walking as if he had a stopwatch in his hand. He walked briskly, stooping slightly, his hands in his pockets. He was once again heading for the private railway station. The wind whipped the edges of his overcoat.

Coming to the brightly lighted station he looked at his watch. It has taken him less than six minutes. It took less than six minutes, he noted, to walk from one station to the other.

Torigai repeated the experiment. Again timing his walk, he turned around and headed back towards the national railway station. He could almost judge his speed from the sound of his footsteps. Arriving at the station, he checked his time. A little over six minutes!

For the third time, he started back on the same road. He deliberately slowed his steps. He studied the houses on either side of the road, as if taking a leisurely stroll. When he reached the private railway station he looked at his watch. Eight minutes!

The exercise had proved that it took six to seven minutes to walk, at a normal pace, from the Kashii national railway station to the Kashii Nishitetsu Station.

The couple the storekeeper had noticed coming out of the railway station were passengers on the 9:24. The couple the young man saw at the Nishitetsu station was among the passengers who had arrived on the 9:35. Thus, there was a time

lapse of eleven minutes. If it was the same couple in both instances, it had taken them eleven minutes to walk from the one station to the other.

What does this mean, Torigai asked himself. No matter how slow the pace, it had taken him only about eight minutes to cover the distance. How could they have taken eleven minutes? He remembered the young man telling him that the couple had passed him walking rapidly. If true, if they had walked fast, it shouldn't have taken them more than five minutes. How to explain the eleven minutes? Two alternatives came to Torigai's mind: 1. they stopped along the way for some reason, a purchase, for instance; 2. the couple seen by the storekeeper and the couple seen by the young man were not the same people. They were different couples.

Either alternative was possible. The first was probable enough while the second, equally acceptable, would account for the time lag of eleven minutes. Torigai had to admit there was no proof that it was the same couple seen in both places. The identification rested on the fact that in both instances the man wore an overcoat and the woman a kimono. No one had observed their faces or noticed the pattern of the kimono.

If there were two couples, then the one seen by the young man at the private railway station was very likely Sayama and Otoki.

The woman's exclamation had deeply impressed Torigai. On the other hand, he could not be certain that the couple seen at the railway station was not the pair in question. They could very well have stopped along the way. Torigai was not ready to give up the idea that the two couples were the same.

In the end, still undecided, he returned to his home in Hakata and went to bed.

Reporting to work the following morning he found two telegrams on his desk. He opened one:

Kenichi traveled often to Hakata on business. [Signed] Sayama.

He took up the other one:

Hideko had never visited Hakata.

These were replies to the telegrams he had sent from Kashii Station the day before. The first was from Kenichi Sayama's brother, the branch bank manager; the other, from Mrs. Kuwayama, Otoki's mother. The implication was quite clear: Kenichi Sayama had made many trips to Hakata on business; therefore he knew the locality well. Otoki, on the other hand, had not been in Hakata before.

Torigai recalled the scene of a woman exclaiming, "What a lonely place," and of a man walking rapidly towards the beach without making a reply.

Torigai accomplished one task in the course of the morning. Leaving the police station, he took a streetcar to Hakozaki and from there walked to the Keirinjo-mae station on the Nishitetsu line. This line continues on to Tsuyazaki, a port on the north coast of Kyushu, passing through Kashii. It was a bright and unusually warm day for winter.

Torigai presented his card to the station master.



"What brings you here?" asked the stout, ruddy-faced man in uniform from behind his desk.

"On the night of the twentieth a train on this line arrived at Kashii station at 9:35. What time did it leave here?" Torigai inquired.

"Nine twenty-seven," the station master replied promptly.

"I have some questions I'd like to ask the man who was on the gate that night. Is he around?"

"Let me see." The station master ordered his assistant to check. The name was on the office record and the man was found to be on duty. The assistant went to fetch him.

"Has anything happened?" the station master asked while they waited.

"Yes, an incident." Torigai took a sip of the tea that had been offered to him.

"You have a tough job," the station master commented.

A station employee entered the office, approached the desk and saluted. "This is the man who was on duty that night," said the station master.

Torigai turned to address him. "I'm sorry to trouble you, young man. Were you on duty at the gate when the 9:27 train left on the night of the twentieth?"

"Yes, sir, I was."

"Among the passengers did you by chance see a man, about twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old, wearing an overcoat, accompanied by a woman, around twenty-three or twenty-four, in kimono?"

"Let me think." The young man blinked his eyes. "There were many men wearing overcoats. Can you give me the color of their clothing?"

"The overcoat was a dark navy blue and he was wearing brown trousers. The women's coat was gray and under it she wore a brick-red kimono." Torigai was describing the clothes found on the two bodies on the beach. The young man tried to concentrate, his eyes looking into space.

"I'm afraid I don't remember. You see, most of the time we notice only the hands when we punch the tickets. Unless something unusual happens we seldom look at the faces of passengers. And anyway, since this is the start of the line, as soon as the gate opens passengers crowd through the wickets."

"But surely there was no crowd at that hour of the night?" Tongai remarked.

"There might have been thirty or forty passengers; that's about average."

"It's more usual for women to dress in western style these days, it seems to me. Not many wear kimono. Do think again; see if you can't remember."

"I'm afraid I can't."

Torigai was not easily put off. He insisted, but the station employee kept shaking his head and repeating that he could not remember. Jūtarō suddenly had another thought.

"Well, then, perhaps some people you know came through the gate that night."

"I believe there were."

"There were? Do you recall their names?"

"There were three, as I remember, all three old acquaintances of mine. I know their names and where they live."

"Excellent. Please let me have that information."

Torigai took it down in his notebook. He thanked both men for their cooperation and left the office. The next few hours were spent largely afoot. The three

individuals lived along the Nishitetsu line Torigai visited in turn Wajiro, Shingu and Fukuma stations.

The man residing at Wajiro had this to report:

"I was in the first of the two coaches and remember seeing two women wearing gray coats. One was about forty years old, the other about twenty-six or twenty-seven. Seated to either side of them were some young office girls. I don't believe there was a man in a navy blue overcoat."

Torigai took Otoki's picture out of his pocket and showed it to him. "Was she the younger of the two women?" he asked.

"No, the features were very different."

The man living at Shingu said he had been in the second coach.

"A woman wearing a coat? I don't know. Maybe she was there. Actually, I fell asleep almost immediately. And I don't recall seeing a man in a dark blue overcoat either." Torigai showed him the two pictures but he failed to recognize them.

The last of the three passengers, the one from Fukuma, had more to say: "In the second coach, where I was, there was a woman wearing a coat. Yes, I suppose she could have been about twenty-five or twenty-six."

"Was the coat gray?"

"I don't remember the color. But so many coats are gray, this one could have been also. She was talking all the time to the man seated beside her."

"A man? What type of man?" Torigai was aroused. The answer was disappointing.

"They could have been a married couple. He looked over forty. He was wearing a kimono."

Torigai showed him the pictures but the man saw no resemblance to the couple he had described. He added that he could not remember the color of the man's overcoat.

Torigai returned to Hakata weary and despondent. He had been unable to determine whether Otoki and Sayama had been aboard the train.

When he entered the police station the chief got up immediately from his desk, as if he had been waiting for him. "Ah, Torigai," he said, "someone is here from the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Board to see you."

A young stranger, wearing street clothes, was sitting next to the chief. He looked up at Torigai and smiled.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Torigai and Mihara.**

The stranger who stood up to greet Jūtarō Torigai was a man in his early thirties. He was short and sturdily built—so solid, in fact, he made the old detective think of a tree stump. Round eyes looked out at him from under heavy eyebrows, and an unusually clear complexion gave him a youthful appearance.

"You're Detective Torigai? I'm Kiichi Mihara, Assistant Inspector, 2nd Detective Section of the Metropolitan Police Board. I'm very glad to meet you." He bared a row of even white teeth as he smiled and presented his card.

At the mention of the 2nd Detective Section, Torigai knew at once that the inspector had come to investigate the Sayama suicide. The 1st Detective Section dealt with crimes of violence, the 2nd Section was responsible for cases of deception and fraud.

The Tokyo papers were playing up the scandal that had been uncovered in government circles. Kenichi Sayama's section in the X Ministry was the principal target. In fact, a colleague of Sayama's, an assistant section chief, was already under arrest. Only a week before, two leading members of a private organization closely connected with this same ministry had also been arrested. It looked as though the scandal would spread further. The 2nd Detective Section of the Metropolitan Police Board was in charge of the case.

"I've come to check on Kenichi Sayama, assistant section chief in the X Ministry, who committed suicide here," Inspector Mihara said as he settled back in his chair. "The chief has given me the outlines of the incident. He also gave me these materials which are most useful." On the desk were photographs of the scene of the suicides, the report of the autopsies and other documents. "I understand, Detective Torigai, that you have your suspicions about this love suicide."

"You remember giving me your opinion of the case the other day, Torigai?" the chief interjected, drawing nervously on his cigarette. "I repeated it to Inspector Mihara and he was very interested. Please explain it to him in detail." The chief detective's face betrayed his skepticism.

"That's right. I'm interested to hear that you have a different opinion of the Sayama case. I've been waiting to talk to you about it." Mihara's manner had charm.

"Well, it's not really a different opinion. It's hardly more than an idea." Torigai, aware of the presence of his chief, spoke with diffidence.

Mihara's eyes brightened. "Ideas are fine. Please let me hear yours."

Hesitantly, Torigai told him about the dining car receipt, made out for one person. As he spoke, his daughter's remark about love and appetite came to his mind but he refrained from repeating it.

"That's certainly an interesting fact," Mihara remarked in a tone intended as flattery. "Is the receipt on file?"

"Although the deaths were from an unnatural cause, since no crime was involved all the private effects were returned to the families of the deceased," the chief explained.

"Is that so!" Mihara showed his disappointment. "Are you sure the date on the receipt was January 14?" he asked Torigai.

"Yes."

"That's the day Sayama and Otoki left Tokyo Station on the Asakaze. Let me see..." Mihara took a notebook from his pocket. "I have the time schedule of the Asakaze. It leaves Tokyo at 6:30; Atami at 8:00; Shizuoka, 9:01; Nagoya, 11:21 and Osaka, 2 A.M. That would be the following morning, the fifteenth. Therefore, on the fourteenth, the date on the receipt, the last stop would have been Nagoya at 11:21."

Torigai began to grasp what Mihara was trying to say. He realized that this man shared his views of the case. Despite the fact that Mihara had the manner and the appearance of an insurance salesman, it was evident that he came from the prestigious Metropolitan Police Board.

Mihara addressed the chief detective. "I would like to visit the scene of the suicides. I know he's busy, but could I trouble Mr. Torigai to take me there?" The chief reluctantly agreed.

They took the streetcar. Assistant Inspector Mihara, standing next to Jūtarō Torigai and holding on to a strap, leaned over and said to him in a low voice. "The chief doesn't seem to be in very good humor." Torigai smiled, little creases appearing around his eyes. "It happens in every office. I am very interested in your ideas. I thought you might find it difficult to talk in front of the chief so I asked you to come with me."

"We can talk when we get to the beach," Torigai said. He was grateful for Mihara's thoughtfulness, unusual in a man of his age, he felt.

They changed to the Nishitetsu line at Keirinjo-mae and soon arrived at the Kashii station. Less than ten minutes later they were on the beach.

Mihara looked about him with interest. It was a clear day and the sea was sparkling. Mist obscured the distant islands and the horizon.

"Is this the famous Sea of Genkai? I was able to get a glimpse of it from the train window but this view from the beach is much better."

Torigai showed him the spot where the bodies were found. He related the scene at the time of the discovery, describing the position of the bodies, their appearance, their clothes. While he spoke, Mihara studied the photographs he had brought along, nodding his head from time to time.

"The beach here is quite rocky," Mihara presently remarked as he looked around.

"As you can see, nothing but rocks, almost to the water's edge."

"Not the sort of place to find any traces," Mihara commented.

Later, when they were seated side by side on a big rock, away from the scene of the suicides, Mihara said, "Now let me hear what you have on your mind." Wrapped in their overcoats and warmed by the late afternoon sun, they could have been taken for two men quietly basking in the sun.

"The first thing that struck me was the dining car receipt, which was made out to one person," Torigai began. He gave the reason for his suspicion, this time adding his daughter's comment on the matter of love and appetite. "That's why I believe Sayama was alone on that train," he concluded.

Mihara listened attentively. "That is interesting. I'm inclined to agree with you." His eyes were alert. "But aren't there witnesses who saw him board the train with a woman at Tokyo Station?"

"Certainly. But can't we assume that the woman—Otoki I mean—got off the train at some station along the way?"

"Yes, that can be assumed. If she did get off..." Mihara took the notebook from his pocket. "The date on the receipt is the fourteenth, so it would have to be before the Nagoya station where the train arrived at 11:21. Of course, Sayama must have gone to the dining car before it closed at 10:00. So if Otoki did get off, it was either at Atami, which the train left at 8:00, or at Shizuoka, at 9:01."

"Yes, that could be." Torigai nodded soberly. Mihara was putting his own vague thoughts into words.

"Good. Since a great deal of time has passed it's hard to say what we'll be able to find at this point. In any event, I'll have the station and inns checked at Atami and Shizuoka. The movements of a woman alone are sometimes surprisingly easy to follow." Mihara then asked: "Do you have anything else on your mind?"

"Sayama stayed by himself at an inn called Tambaya in Hakata from the fifteenth to the twentieth. The fifteenth is the day he arrived at Hakata from Tokyo." Torigai then related how Sayama had waited at the inn for a telephone call, and how the call had come through at eight o'clock on the night of the twentieth, a woman's voice asking for Sugawara, the name under which Sayama had registered at the inn, and how Sayama had left immediately afterward, and how it was assumed he had committed suicide that same night.

Mihara listened intently. "The fact that the woman knew Sayama's assumed name proves that it was Otoki," he remarked. "The matter of the inn and the false name must have been arranged beforehand."

"I believe so. That clears up one mystery."

"How's that?"

"Till now I had assumed that Sayama and Otoki had arrived together at Hakata and that Otoki had then gone off somewhere alone. After this talk with you, however, I think we are right in believing that Otoki got off somewhere along the way and only showed up later. Otoki must have left the train at Atami or Shizuoka on the fourteenth, letting Sayama proceed by himself, and only arrived at Hakata on the twentieth. Then she telephoned the inn, and since Sayama was awaiting the call, it was undoubtedly prearranged. There was one thing, however, that was not settled beforehand," Torigai added.

"What was that?"

"The time of Otoki's arrival at Hakata. We know that Sayama waited impatiently at the inn day after day for the phone call, so I'm sure the date of her arrival was not set."

Mihara was making an entry in his notebook. When he finished, he showed it to Torigai. "It would look something like this," he explained.

"That's it! That's it exactly!" Torigai exclaimed as he studied the diagram.

"But why did Otoki get off the train at a way station?" Mihara wondered out loud.

That was the question. Torigai had no answer. He had been asking himself the same thing and had come to no conclusion. "I don't understand," he admitted, rubbing his cheek. Mihara folded his arms and stared at the sea, as if trying to find the answer there. Shika Island was barely visible in the distance.

"Mr. Mihara!" Torigai quietly attracted his attention. He had decided to ask the question that had been uppermost in his mind for some time. "Why is the Metropolitan Police Board suddenly interested in this double suicide case?"

Mihara hesitated a moment before replying. He took his cigarettes and silently offered one to Torigai. He flicked open his lighter, lit the cigarette for him, then his own.

"Mr. Torigai, since you've been so helpful I'll tell you," Mihara began. "Kenichi Sayama was an important witness in the X Ministry investigation. Although only

an assistant section chief, he was actually in charge and thoroughly familiar with the administrative work of the section. He was therefore an important figure in the case. As a matter of fact, he was closer to being a suspect than a witness. Since the case was still young, we foolishly failed to have him closely watched. Because of this, we let him die." Mihara flicked the ash of his cigarette. "Many people were no doubt greatly relieved when they heard of his death. The further we investigate, the more we find that we would have liked to question him. We really lost a valuable witness. I can't tell you how much we regret it. His death is a serious blow. On the other hand, there are people who are probably dancing with joy at the news. He may have died meaning to protect them, but recently I've become suspicious of his suicide."

"Suspicious?"

"Yes, I'm beginning to suspect that he did not choose to die, that death was forced upon him by someone."

Torigai looked sharply at Mihara. "Is there any evidence of this?"

"Nothing definite. He left no letter and the same is true, I believe, of the woman."

Mihara was right; his suspicions were justified. Torigai had reached the same conclusion and had mentioned these doubts earlier to his chief.

"Moreover," Mihara continued, "in Tokyo we investigated Sayama's private life and could find no connection at all with Otoki."

"What? What did you say?"

"We did learn that Sayama probably had a mistress, but there is no evidence that Otoki was the mistress. As for Otoki, I myself went to the Koyuki Restaurant to talk to the waitresses and I checked her apartment. I found that there was a man in her life. She received phone calls at her home from a man, and she often spent the night away, but I can't identify him. He never came to her apartment, apparently. We are presuming it was Sayama but there is no proof at all that it was."

Torigai found this very strange. Hadn't Sayama and Otoki committed suicide together? "But Mr. Mihara, the waitresses at the Koyuki saw Sayama and Otoki get on the Asakaze. No, there was another person with them, a guest at the Koyuki. Three people therefore saw them. And they died here, together. I saw the scene with my own eyes and there is the evidence of the photographs and the police reports you were shown."

"That's the point!" Mihara looked perplexed for the first time. "Since coming here and seeing the evidence I've accepted the fact of the double suicide. There's no doubt about that. I'm disturbed now to find that the suspicions I have disagree completely with the actual facts."

Torigai was aware that he fully shared Mihara's confusion.

"Shall we go back?" Mihara suggested. They stood up, and walking side by side, returned by the same road.

At the Nishitetsu station Torigai had a sudden thought. "The other Kashii railway station is about five hundred meters from here. I think I have a piece of information that may be worthwhile." He told Mihara about the couples at the two stations on the night of the twentieth and explained how he had paced the distance between the stations and checked the time.

"That is most interesting," Mihara said, his eyes lighting up. "Let me check it myself." The two men walked from one station to the other, at three different speeds, as Torigai had done two days earlier.

"You're right. It takes not more than eight minutes, no matter how slowly you walk," said Mihara, looking at his watch. "Eleven minutes is too long, unless you stop along the way."

"Of course it could have been two different couples."

"That is possible, but..." Mihara was thinking, his eyes staring into space. "I believe it was the same couple. I believe they got off the train at the national railway station, walked past the other station, and went to the beach."

Torigai related in detail the information he had received from the station employee of the private railway line on duty at the time, and he repeated the stories he had gathered from the passengers. Mihara took notes while he spoke. "All of this leads to no conclusion," he said, "but it is interesting. Our job is really no sinecure," he added, looking sympathetically at his thin, elderly companion.

The following evening Torigai was on the platform at Hakata Station to see Assistant Inspector Mihara off to Tokyo. It was the express Unzen, leaving at 6:02.

"What time do you arrive in Tokyo?"

"Tomorrow afternoon at 3:40."

"You'll be very tired."

"Thank you again for all your kindness." Mihara bowed, his face wreathed in smiles.

"I'm afraid I wasn't of much help."

"On the contrary. This trip has been most profitable, thanks to you, Mr. Torigai." It was said with real sincerity.

They still had a few minutes before the Unzen, coming from Nagasaki, pulled into the station. They continued to stand side by side, chatting. In front of them trains arrived and departed. A line of freight cars stood on a track nearby. All around them was the noise and bustle of a big railway station.

"Tokyo Station, too, must be very crowded with trains," Torigai remarked as he tried to imagine the scene at the central station in the nation's capital.

"Indeed. It's frantic at times. Trains are continually arriving and departing," Mihara replied. He made the comment in an offhand manner but suddenly he gave a start, as if electrified. He had hit upon an important fact.

At Tokyo Station some people had seen Sayama and Otoki board the Asakaze. These eyewitnesses said that they were standing on platform 13 and saw the couple leave from platform 15. But what about tracks 13 and 14? At Tokyo Station, where trains depart and arrive incessantly, could a person on platform 13 see a train at platform 15 without having some train pull up and obstruct the view?

## **Chapter 6**

### **A Four Minute Gap.**

Kiichi Mihara arrived at Tokyo Station right on schedule. He felt the need of a good cup of coffee after the long train ride from Kyushu. He took a taxi and headed for his favorite coffee shop.

The waitress greeted him with a smile. "You've been away a long time," she said as she took his order.

Mihara came to this shop for coffee almost every other day. The girl has made the remark because he had been absent five or six days; she knew nothing of his trip to Kyushu, of course. He noted several familiar faces in the shop. Nothing had changed while he away; for the waitresses and the customers the days seemed to have passed uneventfully. And not for them only: on the Ginza itself, which he could glimpse through the window, everything looked unchanged. Mihara felt as if he alone had stepped out of the picture for a while. Nobody knew how he had spent those blank days. They appeared to be little interested in Mihara, despite what he had seen or done. This was natural, but the thought left him a little depressed.

The coffee was good. This was one thing he had missed in the country. He emptied his cup, picked up his bag and, ignoring the extravagance, hailed a taxi and drove to the Metropolitan Police Board.

He opened the door marked with the name of Inspector Kasai of the 2nd Detective Section and entered the room. His boss was at his desk. "I've just returned, sir."

The inspector turned his head to greet him. "Welcome back. Must have been a bit strenuous." He smiled. They were alone except for a new recruit who brought Mihara a cup of tea.

"How was it?"

Mihara opened his bag and took out the materials concerning the suicides of Sayama and Otoki which he had borrowed from the Hakata Police Station. "Here are the exhibits. The Fukuoka police have concluded it is a simple case of double suicide and are treating it accordingly."

"Hmm." The inspector looked at the photographs and read the results of the autopsies and the report. "I see. A case of love suicide, eh?" he muttered as he put aside the document that he had been studying. He sounded as if he were ready to accept the verdict.

"I'm sorry to have sent you on a futile assignment."

"No, not entirely futile."

Inspector Kasai looked up at Mihara, surprise in his glance. "What do you mean?"

"I learned some interesting facts."

"Hmm, let me hear them."

"What I have to say is not the official opinion of the Fukuoka police. Torigai, one of their veterans, gave me some interesting details." Mihara then told him about the dining car receipt and the walking time between the two Kashii stations.

"Hmm, the assumption regarding the dining car receipt is certainly interesting," said the inspector. "Otoki is believed to have left the train at Atami or Shizuoka; is that right? Then, after four or five days, spent no one knows where, she is presumed to have appeared in Fukuoka and telephoned Sayama who had arrived earlier. Is that the way you see it?"



"Exactly," said Mihara.

"We must check and find out why Sayama let Otoki stop off along the way, and what he had her do during those four or five days at Atami or Shizuoka."

"Chief, I see you too have your doubts. There's nothing suspicious about the double suicide, as these photos show, but you too believe, don't you, that there is something more to the case, something still obscure?"

The inspector looked away for a moment. "Mihara, we may be mistaken. But Sayama's death is such a serious blow to the bribery case I'd even want to doubt his suicide. It may just be our professional instinct, aroused in spite of us."

The inspector could be right: perhaps their state of mind was leading them astray. Nevertheless, Mihara wanted to investigate further. He was not ready to accept the obvious verdict. He felt he could not rest with so many doubts unresolved. When he spoke his mind the inspector merely nodded. He seemed to agree.

"Okay. Let's look into it further, although it may lead us nowhere. As you know, the Asakaze is a super-express; even the third class seats are reserved. If Otoki did get off somewhere along the way her seat would have become vacant. Check into that. I'll send someone to question the conductor of the train."

Kiichi Mihara went to Tokyo Station the following day. His head was clear and he felt unusually fit, probably because he had slept well the night before. He was young and one good night's rest was all he needed.

He climbed the stairs to platform 13 and stood facing the Yaesuguchi exits. He remained there for over an hour, as if waiting for someone.

It would be incorrect to say that he was looking at the exits themselves. The trains continually passing in front of him obstructed his view and he was unable to see any distance. Platform 13 was used only by the Yokosuka Line which meant that trains made up of many cars were constantly arriving and departing. Trains arrived and departed also from platform 14. On account of this ceaseless movement, Mihara could not see platform 15 from where he stood on platform 13. Even when a train pulled away from platform 13 there would be one alongside 14 to block the view. Since Tokyo Station is a main point of departure, trains waited a long while at their respective platforms. By the time one left from platform 14, another would have arrived at 13. Thus, the tracks between platforms 13 and 15 were never clear and he found it impossible to get an unobstructed view of track 15 from platform 13.

Mihara's hunch was correct. He had received the first hint in something Detective Torigai had said to him at Hakata Station. Now I understand, he said to himself. Although I've stood here for over an hour, I've not been able to see platform 15. What does this mean? Two witnesses, standing here on platform 13, state they actually saw Sayama and Otoki board the Asakaze at platform 15. Could they have had a clear view, even briefly, at the time they claim? Mihara considered the question for a moment longer, then walked along the platform and down the steps to the station offices.

He went to the office of the station master. After introducing himself he said, "I'm sorry to trouble you but I have a question to ask. Before the Asakaze leaves at 6:30 P.M. from platform 15, can it be seen at any time from platform 13?" The railway official was an older man. He looked at Mihara curiously.

"Are you asking if at any time the tracks between the two platforms are entirely clear?"

"Exactly."

"Well, I believe there is always one train or another obstructing the view. But let me check, to make sure. Please wait a moment." He went to his desk and brought out the train charts. His fingers followed the intricate lines that criss-crossed the paper. Suddenly, he remarked, "There is a break! For a short period there are no trains on tracks 13 and 14 and you should be able to see the Asakaze at platform 15. Well, I never! That is most unusual!" He sounded as if he had discovered something extraordinary.

"There is a break? Then it is possible to see the train?" Mihara was disappointed, but he suddenly became tense when he heard the station master's next words: "It is possible, but only for four minutes."

"Only four minutes?" Mihara's eyes widened. His heart missed a beat. "Please explain that."

"To be precise," the official began, "the Asakaze pulls in on track 15 at 5:49 and leaves at 6:30. It remains at platform 15 for forty-one minutes. Now let's see the arrivals and departures of trains on tracks 13 and 14. On track 13, on the Yokosuka Line, train No. 1703 arrives at 5:46, leaves at 5:57. then, at 6:01, No. 1801 arrives and leaves again at 6:12. After that Yokosuka Line train has departed the regular No. 341, bound for Shizu-oka, arrives at platform 14 and remains till 6:35, blocking the view of the Asakaze on track 15."

Mihara took out his notebook. He could not take in the details from just hearing them once. The station master, noticing this, said, "This is probably difficult to follow. Let me write it down for you," and he gave him an extract of the timetable.

Returning to the Metropolitan Police Board Mihara studied the timetable he had received, then took a sheet of paper from his desk and made a diagram of it. It now became clear to him: from 5:57, when the Yokosuka Line train No. 1703 left from platform 13, to 6:01, when No. 1801 arrived, was exactly four minutes. During that brief interval the tracks were clear and there was an unobstructed view of the Asakaze from platform 13. This meant that the group who saw Sayama and Otoki board the Asakaze happened to be standing on platform 13 during those four minutes.

Mihara knew the importance of the testimony given by these eyewitnesses. Their statements that Sayama and Otoki, talking together intimately, had boarded the Asakaze, provided the basis for establishing the love suicide theory. There was no other evidence that they were intimate. Although it was believed that both had had secret love affairs, the only people actually to observe them together were the witnesses, who chanced to see them while standing on platform 13 during those four minutes. How extraordinary that they should have been there at that particular moment, Mihara remarked to himself. Whereupon, another thought, born of the first one, flashed through his mind. Was it mere chance? There was no end to speculation when one started questioning these strange coincidences. However, this one, occurring within a time limit of four minutes, made Mihara feel there was perhaps more to it than he had at first surmised.

Who were the eyewitnesses? Two waitresses and a client from the Koyuki Restaurant. The client was leaving for Kamakura and the waitresses accompanied

him to platform 13 to see him off. While there, they saw Sayama and Otoki board the Asakaze. Mihara had these facts from Yaeko, one of the two waitresses, before he had left for Fukuoka. He had listened to her story at the time without giving it particular attention, but he felt now that he should hear it once again, and perhaps listen more attentively.

Mihara arrived at the Koyuki in Akasaka later that morning and found Yaeko sweeping the rooms. She was in slacks.

"I'm sorry this place is so untidy," she said, blushing a little.

"Thank you for your help the other day," Mihara said. "I'd like to refer again to what you said. You told me how you and another waitress accompanied a customer to Tokyo Station and there you saw Mr. Sayama and Otoki on another platform."

Yaeko nodded.

"I forgot to ask you for the name of the customer." Yaeko looked at him sharply.

Perceiving the girl's concern, Mihara tried to reassure her. Good customers are important to a restaurant and Mihara understood her reluctance to answer. "Don't worry. I won't bother him. I want his name only for reference."

"His name is Tatsuo Yasuda," Yaeko said, reluctantly.

"Tatsuo Yasuda. What's his business?"

"I've heard that he has a company in the Nihombashi district that manufactures machinery."

"I see. Is he an old customer?"

"He's been coming here for about three or four years. Otoki was generally in charge of his parties."

"That's why he knew her well, I suppose. Let me ask you something. Who saw Otoki first from the platform where you were standing?"

"Mr. Yasuda. He said, 'Isn't that Otoki?' and pointed her out to Tomiko and me."

"He did, did he?" Mihara became silent. He seemed to be preparing the next question, or perhaps his thoughts were on something quite different.

Mihara smiled and broke the silence. "When you and Tomiko saw Mr. Yasuda off, did you decide to do that on the spur of the moment?"

"Yes. We decided to do it at dinner that afternoon. Mr. Yasuda treated us to dinner at the Coq d'Or on the Ginza."

"Oh, he treated you to dinner? I suppose you made the date previously?"

"Yes. Mr. Yasuda was here the night before. It was then he invited us to join him on the Ginza at half-past three the next afternoon."

"I see. At 3:30. Then?"

"When we were almost through dinner Mr. Yasuda told us he was going to Kamakura and asked us to see him off at the station. So Tomiko and I went along."

"What time was that?"

"Let me see!" Yaeko inclined her head, as if in thought. "Yes, I asked him what train he was taking and he said the 6:12 on the Yokosuka Line. I remember him saying that it was already 5:35, so if we left right away we'd be there in time."

"The 6:12 on the Yokosuka Line." Mihara recalled the diagram he had made the night before. The 6:12 arrived at platform 13 at 6:01. Since Yasuda could see the Asakaze on track 15, it meant that they had arrived on platform 13 before 6:01.

"When the three of you arrived at platform 13, had the Yokosuka Line train already pulled in?"

"No, not yet." Yaeko answered at once.

"Then it must have arrived about 6 or a little before?" Mihara asked, so quietly it was more a comment than a question.

"Yes, the platform clock showed a couple of minutes before 6."

"You were quick to notice that."

"That's because Mr. Yasuda kept looking at his watch while we were in the taxi. Naturally, I began to worry about the time, too, and hoped he wouldn't miss the 6:12 train."

"You say Mr. Yasuda kept looking at his watch?"

"Oh, many times. Even while we were still at the Coq d'Or."

Mihara started thinking. He was deep in thought, even after he left Yaeko and got on the bus.

Yasuda had kept looking at his watch. Was this simply because he wanted to catch a train? Could it be that he was interested in catching something else? Perhaps he wanted to be in time for the four-minute interval.

In order to get a clear view of the Asakaze it could be neither before nor after those four minutes. If they arrived earlier, the 5:57 Yokosuka Line train would still be at the station and Yasuda would have to take it to Kamakura. Later, the 6:01 would have pulled in and blocked the view of the Asakaze. Did Yasuda keep worrying about the time because he was aiming to arrive at the station during those four minutes? Mihara wondered whether he was being too suspicious. He tried to dismiss the questions that assailed him but found it impossible. The more thought he gave to the facts the more suspicious he became.

Why did Yasuda have to plan it this way? The answer was simple if his suspicions were correct. Yasuda wanted Yaeko and Tomiko to see Sayama and Otoki board the super-express Asakaze; he wanted them there as eyewitnesses.

His heart beat faster. The figure of the man called Tatsuo Yasuda grew large in his mind. I must see him, he decided.

He acted upon it at once. That same afternoon he went to Yasuda's office. The reception room was bright with the afternoon sun pouring in through the window. Tatsuo Yasuda, Mihara's business card in his hand and smiling pleasantly, entered the room and asked his visitor to take a seat.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Only a Coincidence.**

"I must apologize for taking up your time. I've come to ask you a strange question," Mihara began.

"Yes, of course. Please feel free to ask." Yasuda offered him a cigarette from a box on the table. Taking one himself, he then lit both from his lighter. He seemed completely at ease.

"I've been assigned to investigate the case of double suicide involving Kenichi Sayama of the X Ministry. It was in the papers; you may have heard about it."

Puffing on his cigarette, Yasuda nodded. "Yes, indeed! I've more than heard about it. I knew Mr. Sayama. In fact, he did me a few favors. This was in connection with the ministry, which we supply with some of our machinery."

This was news to Mihara. He had not known that the Yasuda Company was doing business with the government.

"I feel very sorry for Mr. Sayama," Yasuda continued. "He was a good man. I didn't think he was the type that would commit suicide." There was a note of genuine feeling in his voice.

"It is about Mr. Sayama that I've come to see you." Mihara put his hand in his pocket, then withdrew it, undecided whether to consult his notebook. "I understand that you saw him, accompanied by a woman, board a train at Tokyo Station. I have this information from a waitress at the Koyuki Restaurant."

"That's correct." Yasuda leaned forward. "It was late one afternoon. I had to go to Kamakura and the waitresses from the Koyuki saw me off at the station. There, I saw Mr. Sayama and Otoki on another platform, about to board the the super-express. I called the girls' attention to them. I knew them both but had never seen them together so I was rather surprised. I didn't suspect a romance. I decided this was just another one of life's surprises." Yasuda's eyes narrowed as if troubled by the smoke. "I never dreamed that they would meet death at the end of that journey. I feel very sorry for them indeed. It all goes to show that one should not get that deeply involved." He smiled, and there was charm in his smile.

"Had Mr. Sayama ever been to the Koyuki?" Mihara asked.

"I don't believe so. I often use the restaurant for my business contacts but Mr. Sayama was never one of my guests. People become suspicious if you entertain government officials. I'm not saying this just because you are from the Metropolitan Police Board. But the X Ministry happens to be involved in a scandal."

"It's believed that Mr. Sayama committed suicide in order to protect his superiors. Do you think it possible that Otoki died with him because she felt sorry for him?"

"I don't know." Yasuda's blunt answer seemed to say that speculation was none of his business. "What surprised me was the fact of their relationship. I hadn't the slightest idea they were intimate."

"Did you know Otoki well?"

"She was often in charge of the parties I gave at the restaurant. I knew her quite well. I don't mean that there was anything between us. Our friendship was restricted to the Koyuki; it didn't extend beyond. So one could say either that I knew her or that I didn't know her. In any event, I was not aware that she was Sayama's mistress."

Mihara asked one more question. It was an important one. "Do you go often to Kamakura?"

Yasuda smiled, baring his teeth slightly. "My wife lives in Kamakura."

"Your wife?"

"She has tuberculosis. We've been living apart for a long time. I rented a small house for her near Gokuraku-ji. She lives there with an old servant. I visit her once a week."

"You must be concerned about her."

Yasuda bowed his head slightly, as if to thank Mihara for his sympathy. Mihara had yet other questions to ask but did not find the moment opportune.

He got up to leave. "Again I apologize for taking up your time."

"Don't mention it." Yasuda also rose from his seat. "I fear I've not been of much help. Please come again, anytime, if you have further questions to ask." He spoke politely, narrowing his eyes and smiling at his visitor.

As he walked down the street Mihara was thinking: Yasuda knows about the four-minute interval. He goes to Kamakura often so he must have noticed it. Well, anyway, it could be...

Returning to the office, Mihara went to see his supervisor, Inspector Kasai. It was not to report. He wanted to see him to talk about the four-minute interval. He mentioned the interview with Tatsuo Yasuda almost as an afterthought.

Inspector Kasai showed immediate interest. "Why, that's most interesting," he exclaimed. "Can it be possible? It hadn't occurred to me."

Mihara took from his pocket the diagram he had made of the arrival and departure of trains from platforms 13, 14 and 15 between 5:57 and 6:01. Kasai studied it intently.

"I see. I see it quite clearly. How very clever!"

The inspector looked up at Mihara and congratulated him. Mihara accepted the praise, but in his heart he knew he owed the discovery to the hint he had received from Torigai. The credit really belonged to that little old man.

"The real question is whether Yasuda and the other eyewitnesses on the platform during those four minutes were there by accident or by prearrangement." He asked Mihara to restate the facts and while he spoke Kasai quickly jotted down the important points:

Yasuda had invited the two waitresses from the Koyuki to dinner the day before. This was in order to have them accompany him to Tokyo Station;

He kept looking at his watch even while they were still at dinner;

He arrived at platform 13 in time for the four minutes in question;

It was Yasuda who saw Sayama and Otoki board the Asakaze and who pointed them out to the waitresses.

When the inspector finished writing he tapped his cheek with the pencil like a schoolboy and looked at the paper. "Good!" he exclaimed after studying it a while. "It could not be accidental. It was definitely planned."

Mihara caught his alert glance. "If it was planned, then the case is very serious."

"Very serious." Kasai was thinking, his eyes closed. Suddenly, he called loudly for one of the detectives. "Tatsuo Yasuda is a manufacturer of machinery. I want you to find how deeply involved he is with the X Ministry." The detective took down the name and other details in his notebook and left.

"Let's see, now." The inspector looked over what he had written as if to study it once again. "If Yasuda did plan this, then the next question is for what reason." He took out a cigarette and lit it. "When there's a plot, it's generally for the purpose of

gain. Now what would Yasuda gain by having witnesses present when Sayama and Otoki boarded the super-express to Hakata?"

"He needed a third person to witness the scene," Mihara suggested after some thought.

"A third person?"

"Yes. It wouldn't do for Yasuda to witness the scene alone. He had to have someone else see it too."

"Then Yasuda himself was not the third person?"

"That's right." Mihara wanted to add, "Isn't it obvious?"

The inspector was deep in thought. "Good. Let's work on it," he said finally. "Sayama and Otoki committed suicide near Hakata. They left Tokyo together on the super-express. Yasuda had the two girls watch them board the train together in order to have some other witnesses. Strange!"

Mihara knew what the inspector meant by strange. There was no apparent point in producing witnesses to the departure of two people bound on a suicidal journey. As for Yasuda, what part had he played in the love suicide? It was a puzzling question for Mihara also.

"Yes, there is something very suspect here."

"There is indeed." The inspector nodded in agreement.

"When we put together all the facts they add up to a plot by Yasuda. Yet there is no apparent purpose. There can't be a plot without a purpose and for the moment we don't know of any. But I'm sure if we pursue the case we'll be able to find one."

Inspector Kasai kept nodding his approval. Both men were aroused.

"Can you understand why Yasuda purposely chose those four minutes that would let the girls see the super-express on platform 15 from platform 13? If it were merely to have them observe the scene, why couldn't they have gone directly to platform 15?" The inspector posed the questions as though he were giving Mihara a test.

"That I can understand. Platform 15 is exclusively for long-distance trains; it would look too deliberate. It would be more natural to say that he had to go to Kamakura and have them witness the scene from platform 13. The reason why he took such pains over those particular four minutes was to make it look natural."

The inspector smiled. It meant that he was in agreement. "By the way, we've received a report from the conductor who was on the Asakaze on January 14."

"What?" Mihara leaned forward in his seat.

"Unfortunately, the conductor doesn't recall the vacant seat. He says he can't remember; it happened so long ago. A stupid young man! If he had remembered, we would know where Otoki left the train."

## **Chapter 8**

### **Hokkaido and Kyushu.**

When Kiichi Mihara reported to work the next morning he found the chief already at his desk.

"Good morning, sir."

"Good morning." Inspector Kasai was reading some documents. He looked up and beckoned to Mihara. "Come here a moment. Are you rested up from your trip to Kyushu?" He took a sip of tea from the extra large cup at his elbow.

"I've had two good nights' rest; I feel fine," Mihara answered with a smile.

"I'd like to give you some leave but that's not possible under the circumstances. You understand, of course."

"Of course."

"Now, about Tatsuo Yasuda." The chief started to talk business. "Have a seat." Mihara took the chair in front of the chief's desk.

"According to our investigation Yasuda seems to have close connections with X Ministry."

"Just as we thought."

"The amount of machinery he has been supplying is not very large but he seems to be on close terms with Yoshio Ishida, the division chief there."

"Division Chief Ishida?" Mihara looked up at his chief. Yoshio Ishida was an important official in the X Ministry and headed the division involved in the scandal under investigation. He was highly regarded for his intelligence and efficiency. However, the police had marked him as a suspect in the case.

"Yes, they are quite intimate, I'm told. An interesting piece of information!"

"Very!" Mihara thought of Yasuda whom he had questioned the day before. The man was obviously very clever. Those round, friendly eyes that were never still were the eyes of a shrewd businessman. Whether a person with such self-confidence could impose his will upon others Mihara could not judge, but he had certainly felt something attractive and at the same time unapproachable in Tatsuo Yasuda. Indeed, he believed such a man could probably win the confidence of someone like Ishida if he set his mind to it.

"Have we found out anything about Yasuda's relations with Sayama?" Mihara asked.

"You've been thinking about that, too. From what I gather, there seems to have been no close connection there," Kasai answered, holding the oversize cup of tea in both hands. "Of course, we can't be sure that Sayama had nothing to do with Yasuda since he was assistant chief of the section and therefore familiar with the business of that office. But our investigation so far shows nothing more than an ordinary business relationship between the two. We can find no private or personal behind-the-scenes contact between them."

"Is that so?" Mihara took the cigarette his chief offered him and lit it.

"How about investigating Yasuda for a bit?" Kasai thrust his head forward. This was a characteristic gesture when he was especially alert.

"I think it's necessary. I'd like to have a hand in it." Mihara studied the chief's face. The man's eyes were unusually bright.

"It's a question of chance or design, isn't it?" Kasai said, recalling their conversation of the day before. He was in a good mood.

"I would say design. The four-minute plot. There is little ground for believing it was simply by chance."

"You said yesterday that if we looked closely at the plot we'd uncover the purpose."



"Yes, I remember."

"Why did Yasuda want to have others besides himself see Sayama and Otoki leave together on a trip that was to end in their suicide? The fact that he arranged to have a third party there to witness the scene makes the whole episode appear to have been planned. Isn't that what you inferred?"

"Yes, and I believe it."

"Good. So do I." The chief was emphatic. "Go ahead. Start working on the case as you see it."

"I'll do my best." Mihara extinguished his cigarette and made a formal bow.

The inspector seemed reluctant to let him go. "Where do you plan to begin?" His voice was casual, but from the expression on his face it was clear he was extremely interested.

"I'll begin by checking Yasuda's movements during those three days-January 19, 20 and 21."

Kasai stared at the ceiling as if in deep thought. "Nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first. Ah, yes! Since the bodies were discovered on the morning of the twenty-first you'll want to check his movements on the two previous days. Those two days could account for the distance between Tokyo and Kyushu, I suppose."

"Yes. Do you think the twenty-second should also be included?"

"How long does it take by express from Tokyo to Hakata?"

"A little over twenty hours. By super-express, seventeen hours and twenty-five minutes. On the Asakaze, that is."

"I see. About forty hours for the round trip, then." Inspector Kasai, a cigarette between the fingers of one hand, the thumb of the other slowly rubbing his eye, was deep in thought.

Mihara was ushered into the same reception room he had visited the day before. The receptionist came in with a cup of tea and asked him to wait: Yasuda was on the telephone. It was rather a long wait. Mihara, absentmindedly staring at a still life painting on the wall, was thinking what a long time a business phone call could take. When Yasuda finally entered the room he was smiling and very apologetic. "I'm very sorry to have kept you waiting." As on the previous day, Mihara felt the force of his personality.

"I must apologize for bothering you again when you're so very busy." Mihara had stood up to greet him.

"No, no. No bother at all. Do please sit down. Unfortunately I was on the telephone and I had to keep you waiting." Yasuda was perfectly composed. The smile of greeting had not left his face.

"I'm glad to see that your business keeps you so busy."

"Thank you. That long phone call, however, was not on business. I was calling my home at Kamakura."

"Ah, your wife!" Mihara remembered what Yasuda had told him about his wife's convalescence at Kamakura.

"I talked with the maid. My wife's health has been worrying me. Since I can't go to Kamakura every day, I telephone to see how she is."

"You must be very concerned."

"Thank you."

"Mr. Yasuda, I came to ask you a few more questions." Mihara tried to make it sound casual.

"What could they be?" There was no uneasiness in Yasuda's expression. He was still smiling.

"This is rather a long time ago, but were you in Tokyo from January 20 through the 22? I wish to know just for the record."

Yasuda started to laugh. "Am I suspected of something?"

"No, no. Merely for reference, I assure you."

Mihara wondered whether Yasuda was going to speak of Sayama's suicide. From the man's face he could not tell how he was taking the reference to the three days in January.

"Let me see, January 20?" Yasuda pondered for a moment then took a small notebook from the desk drawer and thumbed through it. "I know. I was in Hokkaido."

"Hokkaido?"

"In Sapporo. There's a company there, the Futaba Company, with which I do a good deal of business. That's where I was on that day. I stayed in Hokkaido four days and returned to Tokyo on the twenty-fifth." Yasuda was still looking at his notebook.

Hokkaido! Mihara stared at him vacantly. That was at the opposite end of Japan from Kyushu.

"Shall I go into detail?" He was now looking at Mihara.

"If you don't mind." Mihara automatically took out his notebook and pencil.

"I left Ueno Station, Tokyo, on the 7:15 P.M. express, the Towada Express."

"Just a moment. Were you alone?"

"Yes. On business trips I am always alone."

"Please continue."

"I arrived at Aomori the following morning at 9:09. There, the train connects with the Sei-kan ferry, leaving at 9:50. I went aboard." Yasuda had turned back to his notebook. "The ferry arrives at Hakodate at 2:20. There's a connection there with the express to Nemuro. That's the Marimo, leaving at 2:50. I arrived at Sapporo at 8:34. I was taken directly to an inn called Marusō by Mr. Kawanishi from Futaba Company, who met me at the station. That was the night of the twenty-first. I stayed there through the twenty-third, left Hokkaido for the return journey on the twenty-fourth and arrived back in Tokyo on the twenty-fifth." Mihara took down the details.

"I hope this information will be of help." Yasuda put his notebook on the desk. Again, he was smiling. "I see. Thank you very much."

"Your work must be tedious. These endless investigations..." It was said quietly. To Mihara it sounded like sarcasm.

"Please don't feel offended. These are just routine inquiries."

"Of course. I'm not in the least put out. Please come back if you have any further questions."

"I'm sorry to have taken up so much of your time." Yasuda saw Mihara to the door. He was still quite calm; there was no sign of uneasiness in his manner.

Before returning to the office Mihara stopped in at his favorite coffee shop in Yūroku-chō. Seated at a table, he took out his notebook, tore out a blank page and again wrote out the information Yasuda had given him:

January 20: Left Ueno 7:15 (Towada). Arr. Aomori 21st, 9:09. Left Aomori 9:50 (Sei-kan ferry). Arr. Hakodate 2:20. Left Hakodate 2:50 (Marimo). Arr. Sapporo 8:34 (met at station).

January 21-24: Marusō Inn. Left January 24.

January 25: Arr. Tokyo

The waitress serving him noticed the schedule. "Are you planning a trip to Hokkaido?" she asked. "Maybe," Mihara replied, forcing a smile. The girl seemed envious. "You are lucky. You've just been to Kyushu and now it's Hokkaido. Why, that's from the extreme west to the extreme north!"

Yes, the case had spread out and now extended from one end of Japan to the other.

Mihara returned to his office and reported to Inspector Kasai. He repeated Yasuda's story and showed him the schedule he had put in writing.

The inspector looked at it intently. "Hokkaido is a surprise! The other end of Japan!"

"Yes, quite a distance from Kyushu. Disappointing!" Mihara said it with feeling.

"Do you believe he's telling the truth?" Kasai was still looking at the schedule, elbows on the table, chin resting between his fists.

"Yasuda is no fool. He wouldn't tell a lie that could be easily found out. I'm sure he's telling the truth."

"All right. But check his statements."

"Certainly. I'll ask the police at Sapporo to question the Futaba Company representative who is supposed to have met Yasuda at the station. I'll also have them check the inn where he said he stayed."

"Right. Get that done at once."

As Mihara stood up to leave the inspector stopped him. "Just a minute. How about Yasuda's family?"

"He has a wife who has tuberculosis. She lives apart from him, at Kamakura."

"Yes, yes, you told me that yesterday. Because of the frequent trips he makes to Kamakura he probably found out about the four-minute train interval. Wasn't that the point?"

"Yes. When I called on him today I found him telephoning to Kamakura. He's anxious about his wife's health."

"I see. He's living in Tokyo alone, then?"

"He has a house in the Asagaya district. He lives there with two servants. I've already investigated."

Mihara sent a long telegram to the Central Police Station in Sapporo. There would be no reply until the following day or the day after, at the earliest. However, he was not expecting much from that source. He was sure Tatsuo Yasuda would not be telling obvious lies; he was too clever for that.

He was at a loss. Perhaps, at the back of his mind, he was still hoping for something tangible in the reply to his telegram. But a feeling akin to frustration

was growing within him. Brooding over the meager facts in his possession he seized upon a new thought. Was Yasuda's wife really convalescing in Kamakura? Hadn't he better check that part of the story?

She could not possibly be involved in the case. Yet there was the matter of the four-minute interval. Yasuda learned about it because he went often to Kamakura to visit his sick wife. Mihara's suspicions were suddenly aroused. Suppose it was not his wife but someone else who lived there? He was certain Yasuda's trip to Hokkaido would be confirmed; Yasuda knew that would be checked. But regarding his wife, ill in bed, that was something people might easily believe, something so commonplace one was apt to accept it without question.

He looked in on his chief but Inspector Kasai had already left. He put a note on his desk to say that he was going to Kamakura and went out. It would be late by the time he returned.

He bought a box of cakes at a well-known store in the Tokyo Station Building. If he was going to call on Mrs. Yasuda it would look well to take a gift.

He climbed the stairs to platform 13 and got on a train that was waiting there. He looked over at platform 15. As he knew already, his own train and the one alongside at platform 14 prevented him from getting a clear view of platform 15. How very clever to have used that four-minute interval, Mihara again remarked. He was certain it was not just by chance; it must have been planned. Of course! Yasuda must have known he would be questioned and he prepared for it by providing the eyewitnesses. This was why he had other people present at the scene; Mihara was convinced of it now.

The train left the station. Many thoughts passed through his mind during the hour it took him to reach Kamakura. There was definitely something suspicious about Yasuda's movements. But what was it? The case was a simple one of double suicide. What did Yasuda gain by having these witnesses present? What was his purpose?

Moreover, Yasuda had stated that he was on his way to Hokkaido the night of the twentieth when Sayama and Otoki had committed suicide at the other end of Japan. Kyushu and Hokkaido! Kyushu and Hokkaido! They were too far apart to be in any way connected.

At Kamakura Mihara changed to the local line to Enoshima. The car was full of noisy school children on a day's outing.

He left the train at Gokuraku-ji. He was not sure of the house number but the town was small and the residences were closely clustered. If Mrs. Yasuda's house really existed it would not be difficult to find.

Mihara went to a police box and identified himself. He asked the young policeman on duty whether there was a Yasuda living in the neighborhood.

"You mean the house where the sick lady is living?"

Mihara felt strangely let down. He had vaguely hoped to catch Yasuda in a lie.

Since he had come this far he decided to see it through. He walked in the direction the policeman had indicated, carrying the box of cakes. It was a quiet residential neighborhood. A few of the houses had thatched roofs. A small hill rose abruptly to one side; on the other, over the top of some garden shrubbery, he caught a glimpse of the sea.

## Chapter 9

### Landscape with Figures.

The house stood at the bottom of a slight slope, some distance from the station. Most of the houses in the neighborhood were of wood, the walls a combination of bamboo and cedar. The Yasuda home had only one story and was quite small. It was shaded by a few tall cedars and a hedge enclosed the tiny garden. It was the kind of place a person would choose to recuperate in.

Mihara pressed the bell. He could hear it ringing in the house. He took a deep breath; the task before him was not a pleasant one.

The door was opened by an elderly woman.

"My name is Mihara; I'm from Tokyo. I'm a friend of Mr. Yasuda's. I happened to be in the neighborhood and have called to inquire about Mrs. Yasuda."

The servant listened politely, then disappeared indoors. She presently returned. "Please come in," she said.

She showed him into a Japanese-style room, about eight mats in size. The sunlight, slanting through the sliding glass doors that faced the garden, reached to the middle of the room where a bed was spread on the tatami.

Mrs. Yasuda was sitting up in the bed, waiting to receive her guest. The servant slipped a haori over her shoulders while she acknowledged Mihara's greeting. The dark silk jacket had a brilliant red pattern that formed a pool of color in the center of the room. She was a woman in her early thirties; her hair was tied loosely at the back and on her thin, extremely pale face Mihara noticed a trace of make-up, as if she had put it on hastily to receive him.

"Please forgive me for dropping in unannounced," Mihara said. "My name is Mihara; I'm a friend of Mr. Yasuda's. I was in the neighborhood and felt I should call." He could not very well hand her his official business card.

"It is very kind of you. I am Mr. Yasuda's wife."

She was very beautiful. Her eyes were large, the nose rather thin and pointed. The line from cheek to chin was angular and sharp but there was no noticeable sign of illness. A broad forehead, very slightly creased, gave her an air of intelligence.

"I hope you're feeling better," Mihara said. He felt guilty for deceiving her.

"Thank you. It will be a long convalescence, I'm afraid; I have given up hope of a quick recovery." A polite smile played about her lips.

"That is unfortunate. But perhaps now that it's getting warmer you'll get better more quickly. It has been a particularly cold winter."

Mrs. Yasuda looked out at the garden, her eyes blinking in the bright light. "This part of Kamakura does have a mild climate. There's usually a difference of four or five degrees between here and Tokyo. Even so, it has been very cold. I'm glad the warm weather has set in."

She looked up at Mihara. She had clear, beautiful eyes, and her gestures were graceful but studied, as if she calculated the effect of her glances. "Forgive me for asking, but are you a business friend of my husband?"

"In a way," Mihara replied vaguely. He was feeling uncomfortable. He would have to explain later to Yasuda.

"I'm sure my husband must be greatly indebted to you."

"On the contrary, it is I who's obligated to him." Perspiration appeared on Mihara's forehead. He quickly changed the subject. "Is Mr. Yasuda able to come here often?"

The invalid answered with a slow smile. "He's a busy man. But he makes a point of coming once a week." This confirmed what Yasuda had told him.

"How difficult for you both! But I'm glad to hear that your husband is so very busy."

He glanced casually around the room. Time must be heavy on her hands, he thought, as he noted the stacks of books in a corner of the alcove. He was surprised to see a literary monthly on top of one pile; atop another, a foreign novel in translation. Under the latter he noticed a paper pamphlet, the size and thickness of a small magazine. It looked familiar but the cover was hidden.

The servant entered with cups of tea. Mihara felt he should leave.

"Forgive me again for coming by unannounced. Do please take good care of your health."

Mrs. Yasuda looked up at him. In that light her eyes were almost blue and very bright. "Thank you for coming," she said quietly.

When Mihara presented the box of cakes she bowed formally to him from her bed. He noticed for the first time that her shoulders were pitifully thin.

The servant accompanied him to the door and while he was putting on his shoes he casually asked, "Who is Mrs. Yasuda's doctor?"

"Dr. Hasegawa. He lives near Daibutsu-mae." It was said without a moment's hesitation. There was even a note of friendliness in her voice as if she were grateful for his interest.

Mihara took the Enoshima Line to Daibutsu-mae. Once again the train was full of school children on a day's excursion.

He had no trouble finding Dr. Hasegawa's private clinic. At the entrance he presented his official card.

Dr. Hasegawa was a stout, ruddy-faced man with white hair, neatly combed. He put aside the business card, which he had been studying, and offered Mihara the chair beside his desk. He waited for Mihara to speak.

"I'm calling on you to get some information concerning a patient of yours, a Mrs. Yasuda."

At this remark, Dr. Hasegawa looked again at Mihara's card. "Is this an official inquiry?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Does it concern the patient's private life?"

"No, neither personal nor private. I merely want to know her state of health. Information of a general nature will be enough."

The doctor nodded. He asked the nurse to bring Mrs. Yasuda's card.

"She has tuberculosis. The treatment generally takes a long time. She's been ill now for three years. To be frank, in her case I see very little hope of recovery. I've told Mr. Yasuda. For the time being, her strength is being sustained by the injections I'm giving her."

"Is she confined to her bed?"

"No, she's able to get up from time to time, but she seldom goes out."

"She doesn't go out at all?"

"She can take short walks. And once in a great while she visits a relative living in Yugawara. She stays there a day or two. That much she can do."

"Do you visit her every day, Doctor?"

"No, not every day; her condition is not that critical. I make a point of going on Tuesdays and Fridays. And sometimes on Sunday afternoon."

The doctor smiled at Mihara's puzzled expression. "Mrs. Yasuda has literary tastes," he explained. "Patients who have a long convalescence often turn to literature. In her case, she's not only an avid reader of novels but sometimes she herself writes short stories and essays."

Mihara recalled the magazines and the foreign novels he had seen in her room.

"I, too, am interested in literature," the doctor continued. "I'm a friend of Masao Kume, the novelist. There are many writers living here in Kamakura but Kume is the only one I know. At my age one is a bit shy about calling on such people. But we have a group here, elderly people for the most part, who like to write-short pieces and poems- and we put out a little monthly magazine. It's our hobby; we turn to it as others do to bonsai, for example. Since we have this interest in common, sometimes I call on Mrs. Yasuda on Sunday afternoons and we talk about literature. We both enjoy it. About six months ago she gave me a copy of a short essay she had written. May I show it to you?"

It was in a little magazine of about thirty pages called Nanrin. Mihara turned to the index. He quickly found the essay, Landscape with Figures. Under the title was the name Ryōko Yasuda. This was her full name, he learned for the first time. He began to read the article with the curious title.

When one is confined to bed for a long time, reading becomes an absolute need. Of late, however, I have become weary of contemporary fiction. When only part of the way through a novel, I begin to lose interest and soon put it aside. One day, when my husband had come to see me, he happened to leave behind a railway timetable. I picked it up out of sheer boredom. A timetable is of no use to me, bed-ridden invalid that I am, but I found it surprisingly interesting. It was far more entertaining than a poorly written novel. My husband uses a timetable very often because of his many business trips. He is familiar with it for practical business reasons, whereas I, an invalid, have become a constant reader not out of necessity but for the sheer pleasure it gives me.

This timetable has the names of all the stations in Japan. As I read them, I can picture each one, even to the surrounding landscape. The small local stations are the ones that really stir my imagination. Toyotsu, Saikawa, Saki-yama, Yusubaru, Magarikane, Ita, Gotō-ji, these are names of little stations on the local lines in Kyushu. Shinjō, Masukata, Tsuya, Furukuchi, Takaya, Karikawa, Amarume lie along the local railways in the Tohoku region. The name Yusubaru, for instance, suggests to me a village set in a deep ravine filled with the luxuriant flora of the south; Amarume, I imagine to be a desolate little town in the northeast, cowering under a

sullen sky. In my mind's eye I see the villages, the towns, the mountains that surround these stations, the houses and even the people living there. I recall a phrase in the famous *Tsurezuregusa* which says, 'Whenever I hear a name, I seem to be able to visualize the person.' Well, I feel the same way about places. When I am bored, I open to a page in the timetable. No matter which page, I am carried away. I am free to travel through San-in, Shikoku, Hokuriku, just as I please.

But my imagination does not stop there; it extends into the element of time. For example, I may look casually at my watch: it is 1:36 in the afternoon. I turn the pages of the timetable and look for a station marked by the numerals 1:36. I find that at Sekiya Station on the Echigo Line, number 122 has just pulled in. At the same moment, people are getting off number 139 at Akune station on the Kago-shima Main Line. Number 815 has arrived at Hida Miyata. At Fujiu on the Sanyo Line, Iida in Shinshū, Kusano on the Jōban Line, Higashinoshiro on the Ōu Main Line, Ōji on the Kansai Main Line, at all these stations, trains have come to a stop at this same instant.

At this very moment, as I lie abed staring at my emaciated hands, trains are coming to a stop at certain stations in Japan. People from every walk of life and with varied backgrounds are getting on and off these trains. I close my eyes and picture the scene. If I check the time and the station I may even learn how trains pass each other and at which station and at what hour. This can be fascinating! How and when trains connect or pass each other is deliberate and planned, but the meeting and parting of passengers is purely accidental. At such moments I can imagine the ceaseless movements of these thousands as their paths cross and their lives briefly brush past each other in those faraway places. I find more pleasure in my own flights of fancy than in novels born of the imagination of others. It is a pleasure wrung from the dreams of a lonely woman.

The railway timetable with its numbers and Chinese ideographs is one of my favorite books these days.

Mihara finished reading and put the little magazine aside.

"An interesting idea, don't you think?" the doctor remarked. "Of course, these thoughts occur to her because she is confined to her room."

"I suppose so." Mihara's answer was curt. How Ryōko Yasuda felt or what she imagined did not interest him. What she had written at the beginning of the article was the important point. "My husband uses a timetable very often because of his many business trips. He is familiar with it..." For a moment, Mihara forgot the doctor's presence.

By the time Mihara had returned to his office it was close to eight o'clock. Inspector Kasai had already gone home. On the desk, under an ink bottle, Mihara found a telegram. It had arrived sooner than expected, he thought as he opened it. The message was from the Sapporo Central Police Station in Hokkaido and was a reply to his inquiry.



Kawanishi of Futaba Company says he met Yasuda at Sapporo Station on Jan. 21 stop Yasuda stayed at Marusō Inn Jan. 22 and 23.

He had half expected the confirmation; nevertheless he was disappointed. Kawanishi did meet Yasuda at Sapporo Station on January 21; Yasuda did stay at the Marusō Inn on Jan. 22 and 23. It was exactly as the man had claimed.

Mihara sat down at his desk and lit a cigarette. He was alone in the room. He could think quietly.

Yes, it was the answer he had expected. Yasuda would not tell a lie that could be easily detected. This meant that Yasuda had actually arrived in Hokkaido on the twenty-first. Sayama and Otoki committed suicide in Kyushu, at the other end of Japan, on the night of the twentieth; their bodies were discovered the following morning. During this time, Yasuda was aboard the express Towada on his way to Hokkaido. He had to be; he could not have met Kawanishi at Sapporo Station otherwise.

But Mihara was troubled by the fact that Yasuda had used the four minutes at Tokyo Station to make a third party witness Sayama and Otoki's departure. Why he had done this was still not clear. And since it was not clear, he could not help connecting Yasuda's movements on the twentieth and the twenty-first with the tragedy in Kyushu. Mihara was honest enough to admit to himself that he wanted to make the connection. He suspected Yasuda. Of what, he was still unable to say. Yet the man was actually traveling away from Kyushu at the time. Instead of going west he was going north!

He lit a second cigarette. Was there something suspicious, he wondered, in the mere fact that Yasuda was traveling in the opposite direction? Wasn't there something unusual, almost forced, in this trip of Yasuda's? Could it have been as deliberate, as carefully planned, as his use of the four-minute interval?

Mihara took from his desk drawer the file which contained the reports on the suicides. These were the materials that Tori-gai had collected for him. It was a long time since he had given a thought to that kindly little man with the thin face and the tired eyes.

He looked through the documents. Sayama and Otoki... they had swallowed potassium cyanide... the night of January 20, between the hours of 10 and 11. Double suicide, the police had concluded. There was the autopsy report.

He turned to the railway timetable on his desk. At that particular hour, he noted, the express Towada was passing through Hisa-no-hama or Hirono. He looked again at the schedule. At 6:30 on the morning of the twenty-first, the hour the bodies were discovered, the train had just left Ichinohe station in Iwate Prefecture. If Yasuda was a passenger it would be impossible to connect him with the events on Kashii Beach in Kyushu, either as to time or to place.

He had reached this conclusion when he realized suddenly that his manner of checking the trains was exactly as Mrs. Yasuda had described in the little magazine. The thought made him smile. In her essay she had written that her husband was always studying the timetable. Could that mean that he knew it thoroughly, perhaps by heart? Mihara had heard of people who were amused by such things. There was certainly something strange about this interest of his. Could a train schedule be the basis of an alibi?

No, it was incorrect to call it an alibi. Yasuda's absence from Tokyo during the three eventful days had been confirmed. Now what was needed was evidence that he had not been in Kyushu, that he was not on his way to Kyushu during this period.

Mihara picked up the telegram and reread it. He was not questioning the reply. The statements must be correct. But the important facts were missing. It was as if he were seeing a building from the outside only. There was something more, some addition, perhaps, to the structure that could not be seen from where he stood.

I've got to go to Hokkaido, he said to himself. In order to find out what was wrong with a thing, one had to see it, touch it, feel it. This was equally true of an investigation.

The next morning, as soon as Inspector Kasai arrived Mihara went up to his desk.

"We have the reply from Sapporo," he said, showing Kasai the telegram.

"Just as Yasuda reported," the inspector commented. "Sit down." He knew Mihara wanted to talk to him.

"I went to Kamakura yesterday," Mihara began.

"I know, I read the memo you left on my desk."

"I called on Yasuda's wife. I wanted to check his statements. She's in bed with tuberculosis, just as he said."

"Which means that everything he's told us so far has been true."

"I suppose so. But I came upon an interesting piece of information." Mihara then told him about the magazine article by Ryko Yasuda which the doctor had given him to read, and how it had mentioned Yasuda's interest in the railway timetable.

"That is interesting, to be sure." The chief folded his hands on the desk. "It could have some bearing on the four-minute train interval at Tokyo Station."

"I believe so too." Mihara was encouraged. "The fact that Yasuda deliberately had witnesses present during those four minutes makes me believe that he had something to do with the double suicide. This is just a hunch. I have nothing to support it. But I feel almost certain that he had something to do with it." Mihara was finally admitting that he believed a crime had been committed in connection with the suicides.

"Exactly!"

His boss, he discovered, was of the same opinion.

"I would like your permission to go to Hokkaido. I cannot accept the story that Yasuda was on his way to Hokkaido the day of the suicides. Even though we have the report from the Sapporo police, I can't help feeling that there are hidden facts in the case. When we find out what they are, we'll know why Yasuda needed to have a third party witness Sayama's departure from Tokyo Station."

Kasai did not answer at once. He sat thinking, his eyes averted. Suddenly he said, "Good! We've come this far. Go and investigate and clear away the suspicions. I'll talk to the section chief."

Mihara looked up at him, a question in his glance. "Is the section chief opposed to further investigation?"

"Not exactly opposed," Kasai answered vaguely. "There's no point in pursuing an investigation when the case is clearly one of suicide, he once said to me. For that reason he doesn't want to waste time on it. But don't you worry, I'll talk to him."

Inspector Kasai smiled at Mihara as if to encourage him.

## Chapter 10

### **An Eyewitness in Hokkaido.**

Mihara took the express Towada from Ueno Station the following evening. This was the train Yasuda claimed he had taken to Hokkaido. Mihara wanted to follow in his footsteps as closely as possible.

Only after passing Taira was Mihara able to fall asleep. The two passengers across the aisle never stopped talking and their loud voices and broad local dialect both amused and disturbed him. He was unable to relax. But by eleven o'clock the day's exertions took their toll; he dozed off. He was awakened at Sendai by the noise and bustle around him, but dropped off again and slept until the train arrived at Asamushi.

The sea looked fresh and inviting in the early dawn. As Mihara was starting to get ready to leave, the conductor appeared at the entrance to the car. He greeted the passengers with a cheerful "Good morning!" then announced, "the train is about to arrive at the terminal, Aomori Station. All of you must be very tired from the long journey. Will those who wish to board the Sei-kan ferry to Hakodate please sign the passenger register. I will now pass out the forms."

He passed through the car and handed the blank forms to those passengers who requested them. Since this was Mihara's first trip to Hokkaido the procedure was unfamiliar to him. He held out his hand for one. It was a single sheet with two identical columns marked A and B, the same information to be entered in each. The completed form had to be surrendered at the gate, upon leaving the station.

The train arrived at Aomori at 9:09. Although there was still forty minutes before the departure of the ferry, the passengers started running down the long platform in order to get a good seat on the boat. Mihara was badly jostled as he was swept along by the crowd.

The ferry docked at Hakodate at 2:20 in the afternoon. Twenty minutes later the express Marimo departed. The connections were as regular as links in a chain.

Mihara was disappointed in his first impressions of Hokkaido. For the next five and a half hours he was thoroughly bored-and very weary by nightfall when the train pulled into Sapporo.

Yasuda had probably traveled from Tokyo in comfort in a second class sleeper or, at least, a reserved seat in second class. A police inspector's travel allowance, however, was limited and such luxury was not for him. His back ached and his limbs were stiff.

Outside the station he inquired about an inexpensive inn and was recommended to one nearby. At the Marus he could have checked Yasuda's

movements more easily, but that inn, he knew, would be beyond his means. It started to rain early. Listening to the patter on the roof, Mihara quickly fell asleep.

It was after ten o'clock the next morning when he awoke with a start. The rain had stopped; sunlight was pouring into the room. But the air was chilly. Mihara realized he was in Hokkaido.

As soon as he had finished breakfast he set out for the Sapporo Central Police Station. It was to be a courtesy call.

He thanked them for the telegram they had sent to Tokyo some days before.

"Was the report satisfactory?" The chief detective appeared apprehensive: someone from the Metropolitan Police Board had come all the way from Tokyo. Mihara quickly reassured him. He had come to make a personal survey, he explained.

A detective from the police station offered to accompany him to the Marusō Inn. Mihara felt he could not refuse.

The inn had been checked earlier so there was no difficulty. The maid in charge at once brought out the guest book in which Yasuda's name was entered. "He arrived about 9 o'clock on the night of January 21," she explained. "He stayed till the twenty-fourth. During the day he was out on business but returned early each evening. There was nothing unusual about his behaviour. He was a quiet guest."

The maid's description of Yasuda clearly identified him. Mihara retained the guest book for future reference. Leaving the inn, he thanked the detective for his help and dismissed him. He wanted to be on his own.

The Futaba Company dealt in machinery. It occupied rather large premises on the main street of Sapporo. A diesel engine was on display in the window.

Kawanishi, a bald-headed man of about fifty years of age, introduced himself as the business manager of the company. His eyes widened in surprise when he saw Mihara's card. "A detective from the Sapporo police station questioned me the other day about Mr. Yasuda," he said. "He asked me whether I had met him at the station. Is Mr. Yasuda under suspicion?"

"No, that's not the point." Mihara hastened to reassure him. "We're merely checking references. No need to be concerned. How long have you been doing business with Mr. Yasuda?"

"About five or six years. I've always found him to be a man of his word—one I could trust," Kawanishi added, with deliberate emphasis.

Mihara nodded several times as though he approved the statement. "Did you meet him at the station when he arrived on January 21?"

For the answer to this question Mihara had come all the way to Hokkaido.

"Yes," Kawanishi replied. "I went to meet him because I received a telegram from him that he would arrive on the Marimo on the twenty-first. He asked me to meet him in the waiting room of the station. Unfortunately, I didn't keep the telegram."

"Do you always meet him at the station when he comes to Sapporo?"

"No, not as a rule. But this time he arrived at night and our office was closed. He had some urgent business to discuss so I went to the station."

"I see. Now, when the train arrived did Mr. Yasuda come directly to the waiting room?"

Kawanishi paused a moment, as if in thought. "Let me see. No, it wasn't right away. The express arrived at 8:34. I was watching for him through the waiting

room windows, and when I saw the passengers leaving the station I remember expecting him at any moment. I believe he must have come in about ten minutes later."

Arriving a few minutes late was not a matter of great importance. The important point was that Yasuda had actually arrived by the Marimo express.

Once again, Mihara was disappointed. Yasuda did come to Sapporo on the twenty-first by the express arriving at 8:34. He did stay at the Marusō Inn. There could be no question about these facts. They were just as Yasuda had told him. Mihara felt that he was up against a blank wall.

He was thinking of Inspector Kasai who had supported him so generously. The section chief, Kasai had told him, had been dubious from the beginning. It was the inspector who had been on his side, who had backed him up at every step. Mihara keenly felt his responsibility.

His disappointment showed in his face. Kawanishi, who had been watching him, said somewhat hesitantly, "Mr. Mihara, perhaps I shouldn't say this about Mr. Yasuda, but since you came all the way from Tokyo to inquire about him I must tell you what's on my mind. It's an observation only, mind you. Please don't let it influence you."

"Certainly. What is it?" He looked at Kawanishi with renewed interest.

"I told you that Mr. Yasuda telegraphed me to meet him on urgent business. I did receive such a message, of course, but when we met I was surprised to find that there was nothing at all urgent about the matter we discussed."

"What? Are you quite sure?" His throat had tightened and he was swallowing hard.

"Yes, it's true. It was something Mr. Yasuda could have talked over with me at the office the next day. I found it rather strange at the time."

Mihara thought he could see a tiny crack in the wall in front of him. He was excited. Outwardly, however, he remained calm. Quietly, he asked Kawanishi to repeat his remarks, looking over his notes as he listened.

Yasuda had asked Kawanishi to meet him at the station on urgent business. Since the business was not urgent, why had he done it? What was the reason? Could Yasuda have wanted a witness to the fact that he arrived at Sapporo Station by the Marimo on January 21? Had he selected Kawanishi to be that witness?

That was it! That must have been the purpose! The parallel was clear. Yasuda had had witnesses present during the four-minute train interval in Tokyo Station; in Sapporo he had repeated the performance. If this were true, if it was a plot, then it cast doubt upon Yasuda's assertion that he had arrived on the Marimo Express. It could even mean that he had not come by train.

Mihara recalled a remark Kawanishi had made earlier. "Mr. Kawanishi, you met Mr. Yasuda in the waiting room, didn't you?"

"Yes." Kawanishi looked uneasy. He seemed to fear what he might be asked next.

"You didn't meet him on the station platform?"

"No. The telegram said to meet him in the waiting room."

"Then you did not see Mr. Yasuda actually get off the train?"

"No..." Kawanishi wanted to say that since Tatsuo Yasuda had appeared before him in the waiting room he had no reason to doubt that he had arrived on that train.

Mihara left abruptly. He didn't even remember thanking Kawanishi for his information. He wandered through the unfamiliar streets, lined with acacia trees. His eyes hardly noted where he was going. A single thought occupied his mind. Yasuda was lying! He pretended to have arrived at Sapporo by the Marimo and sent a wire to Kawanishi to meet him in the station waiting room. He showed up at a time to coincide with the arrival of the express. So they had met. The wire from the Sapporo police in reply to Mihara's request for an investigation confirmed the fact that they had met. Since this much was true, anyone would assume that he had arrived by train. Yasuda knew this and had taken advantage of it. At Tokyo Station, he had used the two waitresses from the Koyuki Restaurant as witnesses. In Hokkaido, he had used Kawanishi for the same purpose.

Mihara took out his notebook and went over his memo again. Yasuda had explained it in this way: Left Ueno on the twentieth by the express Towada and arrived at Aomori Station the morning of the twenty-first. Left Aomori at 9:50 on the Sei-kan ferry, arriving in Hakodate at 2:20. Left Hakodate by the express Marimo and arrived in Sapporo at 8:34. As he studied the memo a new idea came to him. Why hadn't he thought of it before? He remembered that on the Sei-kan ferry all the passengers had to register. That register could provide the evidence that would destroy Yasuda's alibi, for if the man had crossed on the ferry as he claimed, his name would have to appear in it.

Mihara tried to control his excitement, for he was still unsure. A month had gone by since January 21. Would the files still be available? The station officials would know, of course. He hurried to Sapporo Station and sought the office of the railway security police. Introducing himself, he asked if they could tell him how long the ferry registers were retained.

"The passenger registers for the Sei-kan ferry are kept for six months," he was informed by the officer on duty. He was immensely relieved.

"They are kept at Aomori, I presume," he said.

"Did the passengers get on at Aomori?"

"Yes."

"Then I don't believe you need to go all the way to Aomori. There should be a copy at Hakodate."

Mihara looked puzzled. "There are identical columns, A and B, on the passenger forms," the security officer explained. "The A section is filed at the port of arrival. In this case, Hakodate would have a copy."

Mihara nodded. He remembered entering the same information in both columns.

"What dates are you checking?" the security officer asked.

"January 21. The ferry that arrived in Hakodate at 2:20 P.M."

"That's No. 17. If you yourself are making the investigation, I'll telephone and ask the Hakodate ferry terminal to have the file ready to show you."

"I'd be grateful if you would. I'll take a train that gets to Hakodate early tomorrow morning."

There was one departing at 10:00 that evening. That meant eight hours to train time and another eight hours for the journey to Hakodate. Mihara walked the streets of Sapporo aimlessly, to kill time, his mind so filled with thoughts of Yasuda that he could remember nothing of what he saw.

It was six o'clock in the morning when he arrived at Hakodate. The wind was bitterly cold. Mihara impatiently waited two hours for the ferry official in charge to report to work.

He was an obliging young man. When he heard Mihara's request he rose at once to his feet. "I received word about this by telephone yesterday. I have the file you asked for. The one for No. 17 on January 21, isn't it?" He brought out several bundles of forms, held together by a piece of string.

"These are divided into second and third class. Which one do you need?"

"It would be the second class, I believe, but it could be the third."

Third class was the far bigger bundle, and it looked as though it would take him a long time to go through the pile. Second class amounted to less than thirty forms. Mihara decided to search through these first. As he looked at them, one by one, he kept saying to himself, Tatsuo Yasuda's name can't be here, it mustn't be here. On the twelfth or thirteenth form his eyes caught a familiar name: "Yoshio Ishida, government official, age 50, Tokyo..."

Yoshio Ishida, again, the division chief in the X Ministry—Mihara remembered only too well. Here was the man under suspicion, the one at the center of the scandal and on whom the 2nd Detective Section was concentrating its attention. Ishida had crossed to Hokkaido on this ferry! A gloomy premonition flashed through Mihara's mind.

He continued checking the forms carefully. He leafed through a few more, and, suddenly, he almost cried out in disappointment. It was there!

"Tatsuo Yasuda, machinery manufacturer, age 42, address: Tokyo..." It was unbelievable. It could not be possible, yet there it was, right before his eyes. Mihara caught his breath. With unsteady hands he took from his bag the guest register he had brought from the Marusō Inn and placed the two documents side by side. The signatures were identical. Yasuda had crossed on the ferry.

Since this was clear evidence he had been a passenger on the ferry, it followed that his presence on the Marimo express could also be proven. Yasuda had not lied. The crack in the wall Mihara thought he had discovered was an illusion. He felt crushed. Numb with disappointment, he sat staring at the piece of paper lying on the table in front of him.

## **Chapter 11**

### **The Stubborn Wall.**

Mihara took the streetcar to Shinjuku from in front of the Metropolitan Police Board. It was past eight o'clock and the evening rush hour was over. The streetcar was almost empty. He was able to sit comfortably and cross his legs. The rocking motion of the car was not unpleasant.

Mihara was fond of streetcars. Strange as it may seem, he liked to board one of them just for the ride, without a set destination in mind. And when some problem arose to trouble him, he often chose to sit in a streetcar while he gave it thought. The slow speed and the swaying motion helped him to think. He enjoyed best a streetcar that stopped often, and that started up each time with a rattle and a jerk. He would get on one and ride to the end of the line, immersed in his thoughts.

Just as he was doing today. He was turning over in his mind what Kawanishi had told him. Yasuda had sent the Futaba Company a wire, asking Kawanishi to meet him at Sapporo Station. Yet the business was not urgent. Why, then, did he do it? Why did he have to ask for a meeting at the station? Mihara felt sure he now knew the reason. Yasuda wanted the fact confirmed that he did actually arrive at Sapporo Station on the Marimo express. He wanted Kawanishi to see him there in order to establish an alibi. An alibi? But what for? Why want to prove he was in Sapporo? Why try to prove he was not somewhere else?

Mihara was getting at the truth of something which hitherto had eluded him. He had to conclude that there was only one place that Yasuda would seek to avoid: that was Kashii Beach in Kyushu. Yasuda wanted to prove that he was not there.

He got out the railway timetable that, now, he always carried in his pocket. Assuming that the double suicide took place between 10 and 11 on the night of January 20, the first available express train to Tokyo from Hakata after the incident was the Satsuma leaving at 7:24 the following morning. At 8:44 P.M. on the twenty-first, when Yasuda appeared at Sapporo Station in Hokkaido and greeted Kawanishi, the express Satsuma would have just left Kyoto Station. Yasuda wanted to make it unmistakably clear that he was not, that he could not have been, present at the scene of the double suicide. But why insist upon it?

"Pardon me." The conductor tapped Mihara's arm to arouse him. The streetcar had reached the end of the line. Mihara got off, still deep in thought. He walked for a while through the brightly lighted streets, then boarded another streetcar. This one was bound for Ogikubo.

Presently he started pursuing a new train of thought. Yasuda's appearance at Sapporo Station threw new light on his actions at Tokyo Station. Until this moment, Mihara had assumed that Yasuda's purpose in having the two waitresses present at the station was to see Sayama and Otoki board the train together. He now believed there was another reason. Yasuda wanted eyewitnesses to testify that he, Yasuda, had no possible connection with the double suicide. It was he who called the waitresses' attention to Otoki getting on the train with a man, and the way he said it made it appear as if he were a mere bystander, as surprised as they were by the scene. Thus alerted, the two girls looked over and saw Sayama and Otoki sitting side by side in the super-express Asakaze at the start of the suicide journey, and Yasuda, of course, was not with them. Yasuda took the Yokosuka Line to Kamakura. This was his alibi. And to support it further, he appeared at the Koyuki Restaurant the following night and again the night after. It looked as though he were underscoring the point.

The persons at the station during the four-minute train interval were not there by accident; they had to be there. Their presence was necessary and was arranged by Yasuda. Kawanishi at Sapporo Station and the waitresses at Tokyo Station



were witnesses provided by Yasuda. They were there to prove that he was not at the scene of the double suicide. Both encounters were planned by Yasuda and were tied to the events at Kashii Beach. They had served to show that he had not been present.

But they failed to convince Mihara. He was now more certain than ever that Tatsuo Yasuda had definitely been present. By planting his witnesses, Yasuda had tried to give a false impression. But he had not succeeded; his story had to be an inverted image of the truth. The night of January 20, between the hours of 10 and 11, Tatsuo Yasuda was at Kashii Beach in Kyushu at the scene of the double suicide of Sayama and Otoki. And he was in some way involved. But how, how? That was still unanswered. Yes, he was surely there, on that day and at that hour. He must have watched Kenichi Sayama and Otoki take poison and die. He was not far away from the scene, as he pretended; he was undoubtedly present. After carefully studying Yasuda's actions, it was clear that his statements were lies.

This was Mihara's conclusion. Yet, according to this assumption, Yasuda would have had to leave Hakata for the return journey by the 7:24 Satsuma Express the following morning, the twenty-first. En route, the train stops at Kyoto from 8:30 to 8:44 P.M., the very hour Yasuda was meeting Kawanishi at Sapporo Station in Hokkaido. Kawanishi was not lying; there was no doubt about that. Moreover, Yasuda registered at the Marusō Inn in Sapporo that same night about nine o'clock when the Satsuma would be speeding by the shores of Lake Biwa. How could one explain this contradiction between theory and the bald facts?

And there was yet another serious objection. Evidence that strongly supported Yasuda's statement was his signature on the passenger list of the Sei-kan ferry. This alone was enough to destroy Mihara's assumptions.

But Mihara refused to surrender to the overwhelming evidence. He held something against Yasuda that was strong enough to override these contradictions. It was his instinctive suspicion of Yasuda, his disbelief in the man's story. It was something he could not explain to others.

"Excuse me." The conductor interrupted his train of thought. The streetcar had reached the end of the line; the other passengers had already left. Mihara got off and changed to the Chūō Line which would take him back to the center of town. Yasuda was exceptionally clever, he was thinking. He had planned well, but there had to be a weak point somewhere. Where could it be?

Mihara was sitting in the train by an open window, the wind in his face. He was absorbed in his thoughts, his eyes half closed. Some forty minutes later he looked up suddenly and stared blankly at the advertisements across the aisle. Something had occurred to him. He thought again about seeing the signature of Yoshio Ishida, the X Ministry official, when he had checked the passenger register of the ferry at Hakodate.

"We know a little more now about Yoshio Ishida," said Chief Inspector Kasai. He explained to Mihara that Ishida was very sensitive on account of the scandal within the ministry and he had to act with prudence. The man could not be questioned directly. When he said he knew a little more about him he meant that he had been able to obtain information through other channels.

"We know that Ishida made the trip to Hokkaido on January 20. He left Tokyo from Ueno Station at 7:15 P.M. on the express Towada and arrived at Sapporo on

the Marimo at 8:34 P.M. on the twenty-first. These are the same trains that Yasuda took." The chief had a copy of Ishida's schedule. It showed that the division chief had not left the train at Sapporo but had gone on to Kushiro. From there, he had made a tour of the eastern area of Hokkaido for which his office was responsible.

"I had my informant inquire about Tatsuo Yasuda. He confirmed the fact that both men were on the same train as far as Sapporo. Yasuda was also traveling second class but he was in a different coach. I'm told he came by several times to talk to Ishida so was clearly identified. Moreover, Yasuda is well known, for he is often seen at the ministry."

Mihara was bitterly disappointed. Once again, there was someone ready to testify that Yasuda was on the train. And this time it was not a witness provided by Yasuda. Ishida was a high ranking official; his itinerary for the trip to Hokkaido must have been arranged many days before. His name was on the passenger list of the ferry. There was not even a shred of doubt.

Mihara could not hide his disappointment. The chief got up from his desk, "Come on," he said, "the weather is fine. Let's take a walk."

Outside, it was warm and sunny. The bright sunlight was a sign of approaching summer. Men were walking about in their shirtsleeves. Coming out of their dark office in the Metropolitan Police Board building, their eyes were dazzled by the strong light. They crossed the street through heavy traffic and strolled along the palace moat. The white walls of the palace towers reflected the brilliant sunshine. Coming to an empty bench, they sat down. To the passers-by, they looked like a couple of company employees escaping from the office for a brief respite.

"While you were in Hokkaido I had the relations between Sayama and Otoki checked," the chief said. He took out a packet of cigarettes and offered one to Mihara.

Mihara looked at him. He had investigated the two who had committed suicide. For a moment he could not understand the reason. What did the chief have in mind?

"It probably wasn't necessary to check the relations of two people so intimate that they committed double suicide, but I wanted to be absolutely sure," the chief explained as if answering Mihara's unspoken question. "You know, they must have been meeting very secretly because nobody really knows anything about them. The girls at the Koyuki Restaurant were astonished that Otoki had committed suicide with Sayama. Waitresses usually learn about these love affairs very quickly, but in this case they didn't even suspect them. However..." The chief stopped and drew deeply on his cigarette as if to impress Mihara with the importance of what he was about to say.

"However, it's certain that Otoki had a lover. She lived alone in a small apartment where she received many telephone calls. According to the caretaker of the building, it was always a woman's voice on the telephone and she gave the name of Aoyama. Sometimes, when he took the message, he could hear music in the background, so the call might have come from a coffee shop or some similar place. The caretaker believes that she was calling Otoki for someone else, and he's sure that when Otoki came to the phone a man took over. Each time Otoki got a phone call from the woman she would immediately get dressed and go out. This

went on for six months, until her death. She never had a man visit her in her apartment. She appears to have been very discreet in her relations with men."

"Do you believe the phone calls were from Sayama?" Mihara asked. He was feeling very uneasy.

"It was probably Sayama. We had Sayama checked also, but that was even less profitable. He had always been a man of few words, I'm told, and in addition, was very shy. Not the type to talk to others about his love affairs. Since we know that he committed suicide with Otoki they must have been lovers."

There was something unconvincing in the way the chief announced his conclusion which increased Mihara's misgivings.

"Then I had Tatsuo Yasuda's private life checked." The chief looked up at the pine trees across the palace moat. A palace guard was standing at the top of the stone wall.

Mihara stared at him. He realized that while he was in Hokkaido invisible currents had been eddying around the chief. Yet Inspector Kasai, after all, was only one of the figures in the investigation.

"We didn't have much luck there either," Kasai stated bluntly. "Tatsuo Yasuda apparently visits his wife once a week. So it's more than likely that he has affairs with other women. But there's no evidence of this. If he does have a mistress, he's very clever about keeping it a secret. This is merely an assumption, of course; Yasuda may be a faithful husband. They seem to be a devoted couple."

Mihara nodded. This had been his impression also when he called on Mrs. Yasuda.

"It would appear that Otoki, Sayama and Yasuda, if he does have a mistress, are all very skillful at keeping their love affairs secret."

His words struck Mihara forcibly. What had been only a slight hint suddenly became clear.

"Chief, has there been some new development?" He tried to suppress his excitement.

"Yes," Chief Kasai replied. "The section chief has become interested in this double suicide!"

Mihara knew at once what this signified. The section chief was being subjected to pressure from higher up.

Mihara's surmise was correct, Inspector Kasai admitted.

When Mihara came into the office the following day the chief called him over to his desk.

"I want you to hear this. Ishida sent us a message." He placed his arms on the desk, his hands clasped. It was a typical gesture when perplexed. "He didn't come in person. He sent someone from the ministry. Ah, here's the man's card."

The visiting card read: *Kitarō Sasaki, Official of X Ministry*. Mihara looked at it, waiting for the chief to speak.

"Ishida said that he had been questioned the other day about Tatsuo Yasuda and when he found that the interrogation originated with the Metropolitan Police Board he decided to present his statement to us directly. He said that on his official trip to Hokkaido on January 20, Yasuda was on the same train. They were in different coaches but Yasuda dropped by to talk to him from time to time. If we want this corroborated we can question Katsuzō Inamura, an official of the

Hokkaido government, who joined him in his coach some time after Otaru. Inamura was on the train from Hakodate, and when Yasuda came to say goodbye, before getting off at Sapporo, he introduced the two men. Inamura would undoubtedly remember the meeting. That's the gist of his statement."

"He really went out of his way to protect Yasuda, didn't he?" Mihara observed.

"You can look at it that way, of course. But perhaps he wanted simply to cooperate with the police when he found we were investigating him." The chief was smiling. The meaning of the smile did not escape Mihara.

"What do you suppose the relations between Ishida and Yasuda are?"

"One is a government official, the other a manufacturer doing business with the government. I leave the connection to your imagination. Just remember that Ishida is the principal suspect in the government bribery case. However, we have found nothing between them that is suspicious. Of late, Yasuda has been doing a good deal of business with that ministry, so I am quite sure he has been giving presents to the division chief. Ishida's willingness to protect Yasuda may be in return for these favors." The chief was pulling his fingers until the joints cracked.

"Even so, even if true, there's little we can do. As a matter of course, I sent a wire to Hokkaido for confirmation of Ishida's statements, but I expect nothing new in the reply. What it all amounts to is that Yasuda was not lying when he said he was on the Marimo on January 21."

One more witness to testify that Yasuda was on the Marimo! Mihara returned to his desk, deeply discouraged.

It was past noon. Mihara went up to the dining hall on the fifth floor of the Metropolitan Police Board building. The room was the size of a small department store restaurant. Sunlight poured in through the tall windows. Mihara had no appetite. He ordered a cup of tea and while sipping it, started to write in his notebook:

Yasuda's trip to Hokkaido:

His signature on the passenger register of the Sei-kan ferry. (No. 17. Connects with the Marimo at Hakodate.)

Division Chief Ishida's statement.

After passing Otaru, Ishida introduced a Hokkaido government official to Yasuda.

Yasuda met Kawanishi at Sapporo Station.

Deep in thought, Mihara sat staring at his memo. The four items looked irrefutable; they were like four concrete blocks placed one on top of the other. But they must be toppled, he decided. They absolutely had to be pulled down. How could the express Satsuma, leaving Hakata in Kyushu at 7:24 on the twenty-first possibly be connected with the express Marimo arriving at Sapporo at 8:34 the same day. It was impossible. Impossible of course, meant that it could not be. But, but... Tatsuo Yasuda did actually appear at Sapporo Station in Hokkaido. Holding his head in both hands, Mihara looked at his memo for the tenth time. Then, suddenly, he noticed something strange.

The train had passed Otaru when Inamura of the Hokkaido government was said to have been introduced to Yasuda. Yasuda was reported to have come from another coach to say goodbye to Ishida. Wasn't it curious that he should put in an appearance only after the train had passed Otaru Station? Ishida, Inamura and

Yasuda boarded the Marimo at Hakodate but occupied different coaches. Why did Inamura get to meet Yasuda only after they had passed Otaru? Hadn't Yasuda called on Ishida from time to time during the journey?

Mihara took the timetable from his pocket. He saw that it took five hours by express from Hakodate to Otaru. Yasuda was on intimate terms with the division chief; surely he would not have avoided him during those five hours. Why didn't Yasuda ride in the same coach with Ishida and spend the time chatting with him? Of course it could have been diffidence on Yasuda's part, but there was no reason for not calling on him once during those five hours.

Inamura was a disinterested witness. He said he had met Yasuda for the first time after the train had passed Otaru. Could it be that Tatsuo Yasuda had boarded the Marimo at Otaru station?

The question flashed through Mihara's mind. If true, it would explain why they had met only after passing Otaru. It would also explain why Yasuda claimed to be in a different coach: he didn't want it known that he had come aboard at Otaru. He appeared before Ishida and Inamura as soon as the train pulled out of Otaru station, leaving Inamura with the impression he had been aboard since Hakodate.

Mihara thought he saw a ray of light piercing the gloom that had enveloped him. Something was vaguely taking shape. His heart beat faster.

But Yasuda could not have boarded the express at Otaru.

To do so, he would have to leave Hakodate on an earlier train than the Marimo in order to reach Otaru in time. With the available train connections, this was not possible.

But the thought that Yasuda might have gotten on at Otaru made Mihara pursue it further. It was hard to believe; he was not ready to accept it, but he felt there was something to the possibility. He finished his cup of tea that was now quite cold and left the dining hall. His mind was in a turmoil and he walked down the stairs in a daze.

Why did Yasuda get on the Marimo at Otaru station? Why should he want to get on at Otaru? Mihara kept turning the question over and over in his mind. If Yasuda did get on at Otaru, then he must have taken a train that left before the Marimo. The earlier train was the Akashiya, leaving Hakodate at 11:39. Still earlier were two local trains and an express which left at 6 A.M. But all of these were completely out of the question, of course.

To Mihara, Yasuda had to be situated at the scene of the double suicide in Kyushu between the hours of 10 and 11 on the night of the twentieth. He would look for the reasons later; Yasuda simply had to be there. But in order to get to Hokkaido from Hakata there was only the one express to Tokyo the following morning, leaving at 7:24. No matter which way he looked at it he encountered the same dead end.

"Without wings," he muttered to himself, "Yasuda couldn't possibly be in Hokkaido at that hour." Suddenly, he missed his step and fell on the stairs. The stairwell was brightly lighted.

He stifled a cry. Why hadn't he thought of it before? His ears were ringing. Picking himself up, he ran back to his office. He found the timetable and quickly turned to the back pages. This was the section reserved for Japan Airlines. His hands were unsteady. He read the flight schedule for the month of January:

Fukuoka 8:00 A.M... Tokyo 12:00 P.M. (Flight No. 302)

Tokyo 1:00 P.M... Sapporo 4:00 P.M. (Flight No. 503)

"I've got it!" Mihara took a deep breath. His ears were still ringing.

By plane, Yasuda could leave Hakata at 8 A.M. and arrive at Sapporo at four in the afternoon. Why hadn't this occurred to him before? He had concentrated on trains and could see no alternative to the Satsuma Express leaving Hakata at 7:24. He felt like pounding his stupid head. At long last his mind was clear of the fixation.

He telephoned the airline office. He asked how long it took to get from the Sapporo airport, located at Chitose, to the city proper.

"The bus takes about an hour and twenty minutes," he was informed. "From the bus terminal to the Sapporo railway station is a ten-minute walk."

Adding an hour and thirty minutes to 4:00 made 5:30. Yasuda could be at Sapporo station by 5:30. There were still three hours before the Marimo arrived at 8:34. Where was Yasuda during that time and what was he doing?

Mihara checked the schedule of the main line trains to Hakodate. He found a local leaving Sapporo at 5:40 that arrived at Otaru at 6:44. Next, he turned to the schedule of trains going to Sapporo on the same line. There was the Marimo Express, leaving Hakodate at 2:50 and arriving at Otaru at 7:51. This left an interval of an hour and seven minutes between the two trains. Yasuda would have a leisurely wait at Otaru Station before boarding the Marimo and heading back to Sapporo. He must have met Inamura shortly after boarding the train.

Why Yasuda had met Inamura for the first time after passing Otaru now became clear. Yasuda hadn't waited at Sapporo for three hours. Upon reaching the airport bus terminal, he hurried over to the Sapporo railway station and caught the local train for Otaru that left ten minutes later. At Sapporo he had had only ten minutes; at Otaru, a little over one hour. Yasuda had taken the greatest advantage of the least amount of time.

Mihara was reminded of the use the man had made of the four minutes between trains at Tokyo Station. He was impressed. Yasuda, he decided, was extraordinarily skillful in his employment of time.

He reported at once to Inspector Kasai. He went into detail, showing him the timetables. His voice betrayed his excitement.

"You've got it, I believe!" Kasai looked keenly at Mihara. His eyes seemed almost angry, reflecting his own excitement. "A fine job! This breaks Yasuda's alibi, although it seems odd to call it an alibi."

"I don't find it strange," Mihara insisted. "Up to now we believed that Yasuda could not have been at the scene of the suicides at the time they were committed. That is no longer true."

"You say it's no longer true that Yasuda could not have been there," the chief said, tapping the edge of his desk with his fingers. "Then do you believe it possible that he could have been there?"

"Certainly," Mihara replied, a note of triumph in his voice.

"You'll have to prove it," the chief said, again looking straight at Mihara.

"I can't do it right away. Give me time." He looked a little hurt.

"What you want to say is that there are still many points that are unclear. Isn't that it?"

"I'm afraid so."

"For instance, that Yasuda's alibi has been broken, but not completely."

The chief's face wore a curious expression. Mihara understood at once. "You are referring to Ishida's statements."

"Hmm!" Their eyes met and held for a few seconds. It was Kasai who looked away first. "Don't worry about Ishida. I'll take care of that." His voice was firm. The words were cryptic but Mihara knew what they meant. There was no need to explain; that could come later. They understood each other well.

"There is another problem that looks more difficult. What about the passenger list on the ferry? That's not personal evidence, it's written proof."

That was true, of course. When he had found Yasuda's signature in the passenger register at Hakodate, Mihara had sensed defeat. But now, strangely enough, he was not disheartened. True, the wall was still standing, but he no longer had a feeling of helplessness.

"I'll get past that one, too."

For the first time the chief laughed. "You seem in good spirits. Very different from the way you looked when you returned from Hokkaido. All right, do what you can."

Mihara was about to leave when Kasai put out his hand and stopped him. "You know, by trying to cover Yasuda, Ishida let the cat out of the bag, didn't he?"

Mihara was certain he had uncovered Yasuda's plan to use the Marimo as an alibi. But he still had to prove it. He put his thoughts down on paper: From Japan Airlines get name of person who made reservation on flight leaving Fukuoka 8 A.M. January 21 and reservation on connecting flight Tokyo to Sapporo 3:00 P.M. same day.

But wait! Yasuda said he had left Tokyo by the Towada Express from Ueno Station at 7:15 on the twentieth. Therefore he must still have been in Tokyo the afternoon of the twentieth. Knowing that he might be checked later, he wouldn't be so careless as to be away from Tokyo that whole day. He would put in an appearance at his office, or show up elsewhere, just to be noticed. Had he left for Hakata by train the afternoon of the twentieth he wouldn't arrive at Kashii Beach in time. So here also he must have used a plane.

Mihara again checked the airline schedule. There was a plane leaving Tokyo at 3:00, arriving at Fukuoka at 7:20. To reach the Tokyo airport by car takes thirty minutes. It would not look strange if he left the office about two in the afternoon, explaining that he had errands to do before catching the train at Ueno Station.

Next, Mihara listed the planes and trains which Yasuda might have used:

Jan. 20: 3:00 P.M. left Haneda (Tokyo) 7:20 P.M. arrived Itazuke (Fukuoka)  
(Probably he went to Kashū then spent the night at Fukuoka)

Jan. 21: 8:00 A.M. left Itazuke (Fukuoka) 12:00 P.M. arrived Haneda (Tokyo)  
1:00 P.M. left Haneda (Tokyo) 4:00 P.M. arrived Chitose (Sapporo) 5:40 P.M. left  
Sapporo (local train) 6:44 P.M. arrived Otaru 7:57 P.M. left Otaru (Marimo  
Express) 8:34 P.M. arrived Sapporo (Met Kawanishi in the Sapporo Station  
waiting room)

21st, 22nd, 23rd: stayed at the Marusō Inn. Returned to Tokyo 25th.

That's it, he concluded, looking at the memo. But one doubtful point came to his mind. Why did Yasuda wire Kawanishi to meet him in the Sapporo Station waiting room? Since Yasuda got aboard the Marimo at Otaru, wouldn't it have been more convincing if they had met on the platform instead of the waiting room and Kawanishi had seen him actually getting off the train? Was there some deliberate purpose in designating the waiting room? There must be, for Yasuda was exceptionally cautious. What was it? Mihara could find no ready answer.

Well, I'll think about that later, he decided. First, let me try to account for his movements:

1. Check the Japan Airlines' passenger lists for that day. Also, the taxi that took Yasuda to Haneda Airport, the taxi or bus he used from Itazuke Airport into Fukuoka, and from Chitose Airport into Sapporo. Since all this took place some time ago it might be difficult to get the information.
2. Check the inn at Fukuoka where Yasuda stayed.
3. Look for someone who remembers seeing Yasuda on the local train from Sapporo to Otaru. At Otaru, where he had an hour to spare before the Marimo arrived, find out if anyone saw him at the station.

This was the evidence he needed. He didn't expect much from item three. The first two were important.

Mihara left the Metropolitan Police Board. It was a bright day. The Ginza was crowded. The sun was so strong the faces of people he passed looked strangely pale, as if bleached.

He entered the offices of Japan Airlines and went to the domestic lines counter.

"Do you still have the passenger lists for the month of January?" he asked the clerk.

"If you mean January of this year, we do. We keep the files for one year."

"I'd like the name of the passenger who made a reservation on flight No. 305 to Fukuoka on January 20, on flight No. 302 to Tokyo on the twenty-first, and from Tokyo to Sapporo on flight No. 503 the same day."

"Would these reservations be for the same person?"

"Yes."

"He must be a busy man. It's rather unusual so it shouldn't be hard to find."

The clerk brought out the passenger records and referred to the lists for January 20. Flight No. 305 made a stop at Osaka: forty-three passengers had continued on to Fukuoka. On the following day, there were forty-one passengers on the plane from Fukuoka to Tokyo and fifty-nine on the flight to Sapporo. Tatsuo Yasuda's name was not in the lists, nor did any one name appear on all three.

Mihara was not surprised. He would expect Yasuda to travel under an assumed name, but he had hoped to find at least one name repeated in the lists. In the total of 143 passengers, each name was different. How was this possible?

"Can one get a seat without making a reservation?" he inquired.

"Unless you reserve three or four days in advance you are not likely to get on the flight you ask for," the clerk explained.

To Yasuda, it would be of paramount importance to have a seat on each of these three planes. For if any one had failed him, he would not have been able to



connect with the Marimo in Hokkaido on January 21. He must have made the reservations personally, and some days ahead. And even if he had used a false name, it should appear on the three lists. Yet however carefully Mihara checked, it was not there.

"I'm sorry to have troubled you. Please let me keep these for a few days." Mihara gave the clerk his card on which he wrote a receipt for the passenger lists.

He was depressed. The excitement with which he had started out the day had vanished. He walked as far as Yūroku-chō and stopped in at his coffee shop. He sat for a long while over his coffee, immersed in his thoughts. He couldn't understand! It wasn't possible, it couldn't be, he kept saying to himself.

Leaving the coffee shop, he started walking back to his office. At the Hibiya intersection, the red light held him up at the curb for a long moment. A stream of cars passed in front of him. They were of many different makes, he noted, without particular interest. Yet the spectacle, commonplace though it was, suddenly gave him a new thought.

How stupid he had been! Yasuda didn't have to use just one name. He could have made the plane reservations under different names. And he probably didn't appear at the airline office himself: he must have sent a different person each time to make the reservation for him. He could fly to Fukuoka as Mr. A, return to Tokyo the following morning as Mr. B and as Mr. C change to the plane for Sapporo. He had an hour to wait at Haneda Airport during which this could easily be done. How foolish to believe that because Yasuda traveled on all three planes he had used the same name each time. Why hadn't he thought of this before?

Had Mihara been in a less public place he would have struck his head with both fists. He had been very stupid and was ashamed.

The traffic light turned green and he started across. This means that there are at least three false names in the lists, he decided, and all three belong to Yasuda. Good, I'll have all the names checked. We're bound to find that three of them are assumed names, with false addresses. Mihara started walking briskly. He was smiling to himself. For the first time he could see a clear road ahead.

Mihara reported to the chief upon his return to the office. Kasai agreed to his plan.

"A total of 143, you say?" He was looking at the lists. "Over one-half live in Tokyo; the rest are in the country. We can have our men check the ones in the city. For the others, we'll ask the local police to investigate."

He gave the orders at once. The detectives took from the lists the names and addresses of those assigned to them. "If they have a telephone, either at home or at the office, call them up. Make sure that your man was on that plane."

After giving the orders, he said to Mihara, "Even if this investigation succeeds, there is still a major obstacle."

"You're referring to the passenger list of the ferry, aren't you?" This part of the wall stood firm as a rock. It still blocked his path.

Something like a warning flashed through Mihara's mind. It was strange that in the case of both the planes and the ferry, the passenger list should be the stumbling block. Could the parallel again be an illusion? Was he in danger of

being led astray by the apparent similarity? Mihara was so absorbed by the thought that the chief asked, "What's up?"

Instead of answering Mihara changed the subject. "What about the other problem?" he asked.

"Ah! A man from the Public Prosecutor's Office called on me yesterday." Kasai lowered his voice. "Their investigation of the ministry has run into difficulties. There's no doubt that Sayama's suicide has brought things to a standstill. A man holding the position of assistant section chief is a veteran; he's in full charge of the everyday business of the office. Division chiefs and section chiefs seem to leave all routine matters to these experienced assistants. They don't do this deliberately; what happens is that they themselves simply aren't familiar with the day-to-day affairs of the section. They're too busy climbing the ladder to success. They have no time to learn the office routine. Their assistants, on the other hand, have been handling it for a long time; they know the work thoroughly. They're like experienced craftsmen. But they can't go very far. They have to stand by and watch the younger men, the university graduates with the proper qualifications, get promoted and go past them. Most of them are resigned to this situation. They resent it, of course, but they know that to show their feelings will get them nowhere."

While he was talking, a detective put a cup of tea on his desk. He took a sip and continued, "For that reason, if a senior official so much as takes notice of one of them, the man is overjoyed. He sees a ray of hope in a world he had almost given up. He feels that recognition might still be possible. That's why he'll do anything to please the boss. As for those senior officers, it's fine if they recognize the man's competence and take the trouble to encourage him, but if they help him merely to take advantage of him and his work, the poor man is trapped. No matter how able these top officials may be, they have to depend on their assistants. They know they can't make them work just by giving orders, so they try to be kind. The assistants know all this, of course, but in order to keep their jobs, or to get promoted, they do what they're told and cooperate. That's human nature, I suppose. And speaking of human nature, you'll find a lot of interesting examples in those government offices."

He put his elbows on the desk. "In this case, everything seems to center on Sayama. He was an able worker. The investigator who came to see me was dismayed by the double suicide. Sayama's death has made the investigation very difficult, brought it practically to a standstill. Because Sayama held in his hands the invisible strings that lead to the top officials. He was the key man in that section. The Prosecutor's Office is deeply disturbed by his death. In the meantime, I suppose the higher-ups are rejoicing at their lucky escape."

"No doubt Ishida is one of those who are rejoicing."

"He must be the happiest of the lot. Generally, the assistant chief is the conscientious type who takes the responsibility for the entire ministry and will give his life for it. Whenever there is a big scandal, it is always the man in the subordinate position who commits suicide to cover up for the others."

"So you think that Sayama's death..."

"In the past they usually died alone. In Sayama's case a woman is involved. This makes it a little different, and perhaps gives it a romantic touch."

The chief fell silent. Mihara knew well what he was thinking but made no comment. He realized that the Public Prosecutor's Office, the chief of the detective section, and his own superior were on his side. He felt greatly encouraged.

Mihara took the file on Sayama and Otoki and reexamined the reference materials. He read the report of the scene and of the inquest and studied the photographs and the statements of the witnesses. He read every word carefully. The man and the woman had taken cyanide and had died side by side, almost in each other's arms. He had been through all this many times before; he could find nothing new. Yet once again it conjured up the figure of Yasuda, who had gone out of his way to have others witness the departure, together, from Tokyo, of Sayama and Otoki.

Three days later the investigation of the passengers on the three planes was completed. Not a single false name had been found. They were all authentic and borne by known persons.

"Yes, I was on that plane; there is no mistake." All 143 had answered in similar terms.

It was a great shock to Mihara. He held his head in his hands in an agony of doubt.

## **Chapter 12**

### **A Letter from an Old Man.**

Mr. Kiichi Mihara  
Assistant Inspector  
2nd Detective Section  
Metropolitan Police Board  
Tokyo

Dear Mr. Mihara:

Please forgive my long silence. Three months have gone by since I had the privilege of meeting you in Hakata. It was an unexpected pleasure to receive your long letter the other day. I want to thank you for your kindness and apologize for being such a poor correspondent.

When we first met it was early spring and a cold wind was blowing across the Sea of Genkai. Now we have reached the middle of May and it is too hot even to stroll in the sun. Time passes quickly. Our popular Dontaku Festival took place as usual early this month. It was very gay. When this holiday is announced, we say that summer is around the corner. Some day, when you have the time, I hope you will attend our festival.

I see from your letter that you are busy working on a very difficult case. I feel ashamed at my own idleness and at the same time envy you your activity. If only I were younger! It is frustrating to be old and living in such a remote corner of the country. But these are the querulous words of an old man; please overlook them.

I remember doing some work on my own, under the disapproving eyes of my superiors here at the police station, on the case of the double suicide at Kashii Beach. I am now deeply moved and very happy to learn that thanks to your efforts, my modest investigations are about to lead to the solution of this important case. I am grateful to you for keeping me informed of the recent developments. From your letter I realize how hard you have been working and what problems you faced. You kindly asked me if I had any suggestions. Unfortunately, this senile brain of mine is unable to advance any bright ideas. All I can do is compliment you on your earnestness and zeal.

I need not tell you that a detective should never give up a case; he must pursue it all the way. You may be offended by this obvious remark. Please forgive an old man who is inclined at times to talk out of turn.

I have been attached to this police station for twenty years and assigned to a surprising number of cases. Among them were several that are still unsolved. Now that I look back at them, I see some I wish I had handled differently. And in each case I now believe I simply didn't work hard enough. Had I persevered a little more, some of them would have been solved. Usually, it needs only a little more persistence.

Let me give you an example which troubles me to this day. It happened some twenty years ago. The decomposed body of an old woman was discovered at Hirao, on the outskirts of Fukuoka City. There were telltale marks around the throat, so the case was set down as death by strangulation. This was in May. According to the police doctor the crime had been committed more than three months before. Corroborating evidence was the thick winter jacket the old woman was wearing. This estimate of the time when the crime was assumed to have been committed did not seem unreasonable since she lived alone in an isolated house in the mountains and had little to do with her neighbors. However, the person I suspected was a man who had arrived from Formosa in early April and who lived not far from the victim's home. In other words, during the cold months, from January to early March, when heavy jackets are worn, this man was still in Formosa. I felt certain he was guilty but the official assumption that the woman had been murdered some time in February and the fact that my suspect had arrived from Formosa in April prevented me from arresting him. And so the case remained unsolved.

As I look back on it now I believe the police doctor misjudged the time of death. This is a difficult matter to determine, especially in the case of a decomposed corpse. Some doctors will make it earlier, others later; there will always be these differences of opinion. Our police doctor decided she had been dead a long while. Also, the fact that she was wearing a winter jacket helped to determine the time.

I still believe there are cold days even in April. When a cold front—the term we now use—approaches, we have an unseasonably cold spell. The day the old woman was killed might have been one of those unexpectedly cold days, and she might have taken the warm jacket out of the closet and worn it. This would be normal in an old person. Just because she was

wearing a heavy jacket need not mean that it was winter; it could have been April. For that reason, the crime could have been committed by the man I suspected.

By the time I had reached this conclusion it was too late. I regret I had not thought of it that day, twenty years ago. If I had persevered a little more I might have come up with the idea; but the police doctor's statement and the winter jacket made me let the decision pass unchallenged.

This is only one example. I give it to you as it comes to my mind. There are other, similar regrets in my past.

In short, if one is convinced that a certain person has committed the crime, one should not give up; one should pursue him relentlessly. Sometimes, a preconceived opinion will make us overlook the obvious. This is a frightening thing. We call it common sense but it often leaves us with a blind spot. Even if something appears to be obvious one should investigate, objectively, to make absolutely sure.

All that you have told me about the man called Tatsuo Yasuda and how he made certain persons witness the departure of Sayama and Otoki from Tokyo Station, I find most interesting. I too am convinced that this Yasuda played an important part in the double suicide case. I also believe, with you, that he was on the beach at Kashii that night and in some way participated in the incident.

This brings something to my mind. I still believe that of the two couples who left Kashii main station and Nishitetsu Kashii Station on January 20, the night of the suicides, one was Sayama and Otoki and the other Yasuda and an unidentified woman. These two couples got off the trains at almost the same time and both walked in the direction of the beach.

I wonder what part was played by the woman who accompanied Yasuda. If Yasuda was involved in the double suicide he would need a woman accomplice; he could not execute his plan without her help. Now, what was his plan? After I received your letter I went to Kashii Beach once again. I chose to go late at night. It was pleasantly cool, very different from the temperature at the time of the incident. Probably tempted by the weather, several couples were strolling along the beach. The lights of the town were faint in the distance and the couples were mere shadows. An ideal spot for young lovers, I decided. What I want to say is that our two couples, Sayama and Otoki and Yasuda and his woman companion, on the night of January 20 were also mere shadows, moving along the beach like the couples of today. And I also want to point out that it is very dark at that spot, so dark that at a distance of six or seven meters the couples cannot see each other.

I regret that I have nothing more to contribute at this time. I have some vague opinions, but they would be of no help to you.

Let me now refer to your question concerning the inn where Yasuda stayed the night of the twenty-first. I have done all I could but so far I have been unable to identify it. It happened several months ago, many people register under false names and some inns do not even keep a

register. I shall continue to check, of course, but I hold out little hope of finding it.

Until recently I believed that the woman who telephoned Sayama the night of the twentieth was Otoki, but could it not have been the woman who accompanied Yasuda? This is just an idea, of course; I have no evidence. But it occurs to me that if Yasuda had had previous contacts with Sayama and knew he would register at the inn under the name of Sugawara, it would be simple to have his companion ask for Mr. Sugawara when she telephoned. It did not have to be Otoki.

And, if we carry this assumption a little further, the person for whom Sayama waited all week at the inn in Hakata need not have been Otoki, with whom he committed suicide, but this mysterious woman. If this is the case, then we can understand why Otoki did not travel with Sayama all the way to Hakata but got off either at Atami or Shizuoka. Isn't it possible that Otoki's part in the tragedy was simply to get on the train with Sayama at Tokyo Station and travel a short distance with him? This possibility answers the question why Yasuda wanted to have someone else observe Sayama and Otoki entering the train together. Perhaps he wanted the witnesses to see these two start off together gaily, like lovers. Why? I don't know. I have no evidence to support my theory. I must give it more thought.

If my assumption is correct, then the next question is where was Otoki from the time she got off the train at Atami or Shizu-oka until she committed suicide on Kashii Beach the night of the twentieth? If we can find the answer to this, we will have a real basis for the assumption. That Otoki did not accompany Sayama all the way to Hakata can be shown by the dining car receipt, made out to one person, which was found in Sayama's coat pocket. I stated this as my opinion when you were here.

As you say in your letter, if it is essential that Yasuda be situated at the scene of the double suicide on the night of the twentieth, then it would be impossible for him to have arrived at Sapporo by the Marimo Express on the twenty-first. If there is no evidence that he used planes then I'm afraid we have overlooked something, while taking other facts for granted. This is what I meant by the ancient story of the old woman and her winter jacket. Please do not leave a stone unturned.

I've been carried away by the pleasure your long letter gave me and fear I have written you a lot of nonsense in return. I am embarrassed to have made you listen to such idle chatter. Unlike you who are young and alert, I am an old, worn-out hack, and you must make allowances for my humble opinions.

If there is anything I can do for you here in Kyushu please do not hesitate to let me know. I would be happy to cooperate to the extent of my ability.

I sincerely hope that your hard work will be rewarded and that soon you will be able to break the case. Please come on a leisurely visit to Kyushu when you have the time.

Sincerely yours,

## Jūtarō Torigai

Mihara was tired. The wall still blocked his way. He had been unable to find even the smallest crack in it.

He put Torigai's letter in his pocket, left the office and walked to his favorite coffee shop.

It was still lunchtime and the place was crowded. A waitress noticed him looking for a seat and indicated a table to him. It was already occupied by a young girl, sitting alone and drinking tea. The chair opposite her was vacant. Ill at ease at sharing a table with a strange girl, he seated himself on the edge of the chair and drank his coffee self-consciously, aware that his perplexity showed in his face.

Although Jūtarō Torigai's letter had helped to raise his flagging spirits it was not very encouraging. The old man's ideas were too general. His suggestion that one of the two couples who got off at the two Kashii stations, minutes apart, the night of the twentieth, included an unidentified woman was interesting but, as the old detective himself admitted, there was no proof. The couples might have happened to leave the two stations at about the same time and need not be related in any way. Or, again, it could be that Sayama and Otoki were first seen leaving the Kashii main station, then seen again by a different witness as they walked past the other Kashii station. According to Torigai's own measurement of the distance between the two stations, this was possible.

Mihara was certain that Yasuda was on Kashii Beach that night and that he was in some way connected with the suicides, but to bring a mysterious woman into the situation now seemed too fantastic. Yasuda was not the sort of man to have an accomplice. Why was not clear to Mihara; he just felt it was so. Moreover, Torigai's suggestion that the woman who telephoned Sayama at his inn was not Otoki was based on the vague assumption that the four people emerging from the two Kashii stations were Sayama, Otoki, Yasuda and the unknown woman.

More interesting was Torigai's opinion of why Yasuda had wanted a witness at Sayama and Otoki's departure from Tokyo Station. He was suggesting that it was to make the witness believe that they were lovers. Torigai was intimating that they were probably not lovers. If that were true, it would be all the more necessary to have a witness observe them gaily boarding the train together. They ended up committing suicide near Hakata, the destination of the super-express. Looked at from any angle, there could be no doubt that it was a double suicide. So here was the problem. Why would two people who were not lovers commit suicide together? As he asked himself the question Mihara could see Yasuda's figure flitting behind the contradictions.

The reason why Otoki got off at Atami or Shizuoka was still unanswered, but it was unimportant. The question had been raised by old Torigai merely on the evidence of the dining car receipt made out to one person. It was an interesting lead, prompted by his daughter's comments, but there was no proof. It was simply an assumption. The old man's perceptions were sharp but he was short of facts, of evidence. He wanted Otoki's movements traced after she left the train either at Atami or Shizuoka, but so much time had elapsed this would not only be difficult to do, the investigation itself would be meaningless.

Mihara, drinking his coffee and still looking glum, had reached this point in his reflections when a shadow fell across the table and a young man took the vacant seat opposite, next to the young girl.

"Sorry to be late," he said to the girl.

She had suddenly come alive, her face radiant. "What will you have?" she asked, looking at him eagerly.

"Coffee."

He gave the order to the waitress, "Have you been waiting long?" He was smiling at her.

"About forty minutes. Too long for one cup of coffee, so I ordered a cup of tea too."

"I'm sorry." He looked apologetic. "The bus was a long time coming. They're so irregular on that line. They can be as much as twenty minutes late. It's very annoying."

"Since the bus is to blame I have nothing to say." She looked at her watch. "The show has already started. Let's hurry."

Mihara listened idly to their conversation. There was nothing unusual about it. In the time it took him to light a cigarette the young man had sipped a mouthful of coffee and was on his feet. Mihara settled back and relaxed. Their cups were still on the table, one only half empty. The young man must live in the outskirts if the bus schedules were so irregular, Mihara was thinking. His mind, unconcerned for the moment with his own problems, was filled with idle thoughts.

No, not entirely idle. Mihara came to with a start. An idea had suddenly entered his mind. Yasuda did not have Kawanishi meet him on the railway platform at Sapporo; in his telegram he clearly indicated the waiting room of the station because he feared the plane might be delayed by bad weather.

Mihara stared at the painting on the wall, as if afraid to move. Since Yasuda planned to arrive by the Marimo, it would have been more effective to have Kawanishi meet him on the platform. That he did not have him do so was because planes are often delayed by the weather. Had the plane been seriously delayed, he would not have had time to travel from Sapporo to Otaru and catch the Marimo there. And if he were not on the Marimo and Kawanishi had come to meet him on the platform, it would be obvious he had not arrived by train. A very cautious Yasuda had foreseen this possibility and in his telegram had asked Kawanishi to meet him in the waiting room.

Mihara's eyes brightened with the joy of discovery. This is it, he thought. Yasuda's devious plan has only served to reveal that he actually used a plane.

He left the coffee shop feeling unusually elated. Outside, the sun was bright and inviting.

But wait a moment, he said to himself. From where did Yasuda send that telegram?

Mihara decided to check again on Yasuda's trip to Hokkaido. He had played tricks on that trip, which showed he had expected to be investigated. The encounter with the Hokkaido government official on the train was one, but the most obvious was the request for Kawanishi to meet him at Sapporo Station. Kawanishi had admitted the business was not urgent and there was no need for him to go to the station. From where did Yasuda send the telegram? When Mihara



had talked to him, Kawanishi had said he had thrown it away without noticing where it had been dispatched from.

Yasuda left Fukuoka by plane the morning of the twenty-first. Did he send it from the Fukuoka or Hakata telegraph office, or perhaps from the local airport? No, that could not be. He was a careful man; Kawanishi might notice the name of the dispatching office. He would probably send it from Tokyo. He had an hour to spare between the time his plane arrived at Haneda and his connecting flight left for Sapporo. No, that was not possible either. Upon arriving at Haneda he would know if the Sapporo plane was leaving on time. And if it left on time, he would be able to turn back from Sapporo and catch the Marimo at Otaru. There would be no reason, therefore, to have Kawanishi meet him in the station waiting room. It would be more convincing if he were met on the platform and actually seen getting off the train.

Mihara opened his notebook. Kawanishi had told him he thought the telegram had been sent at the ordinary rate and that he had received it about eleven o'clock on the twenty-first. Eleven o'clock meant that it was probably dispatched about nine in the morning, assuming that an ordinary telegram took two hours from Tokyo to Sapporo. But at that hour, Yasuda was in the plane that had left Itazuke Airport. He would be flying over Hiroshima or Okayama prefecture. He could not possibly have sent the wire himself from Tokyo.

How about Fukuoka? Since it could also be assumed that it took about two hours for a telegram to get from Fukuoka to Sapporo, if Yasuda had sent it around eight o'clock from Itazuke Airport, before the takeoff, it would be delivered to Kawanishi about eleven o'clock. Could he then have sent it from Fukuoka?

It would be unnaturally careless of him to reveal the dispatching office. Nevertheless, Mihara decided to ask the police at Fukuoka to check all outgoing telegrams on January 21.

He returned to the Metropolitan Police Board and outlined his plan to Kasai.

"A good idea," Kasai commented with a smile. "You've found the reason why Kawanishi was told to meet him in the waiting room. We'll have the Fukuoka police check the telegrams. As for Tokyo, if Yasuda didn't send the telegram himself from here, there is always the possibility that he had someone do it for him."

Mihara agreed. "I was about to say so. For that reason, I'd like to check the telegraph offices in Tokyo also."

"All right." The chief was still smiling as he sipped his tea. "You seem to get bright ideas in coffee shops."

"Coffee stimulates me, when I drink it outside the office," Mihara replied in the same bantering tone.

"Even if we find that the wire was sent from Tokyo, it still won't mean much. It wouldn't be unusual. On the other hand, if Yasuda telegraphed from Fukuoka, then his presence there would be established and that would be important."

"No." Mihara interrupted him. "Even if sent from Tokyo it would be important. He couldn't possibly have sent it himself, so it would mean he had asked someone to do it for him. I'd want to know who that was."

"It could be someone in his office."

"That's not possible."

"Why?"

"It was two o'clock on the afternoon of the twentieth when Yasuda left his office, saying he was going to Sapporo. It would be possible if the wire were sent on the twentieth; but it would look strange to ask someone to send it at nine o'clock on the following morning. Yasuda is very careful, even in minor details. Besides, he'd be afraid of an investigation."

A few days later the detectives reported that no such telegram had been dispatched on that day from any of the telegraph offices in Tokyo. The Fukuoka police forwarded a similar report: both the Fukuoka and Hakata telegraph offices had no record of the telegram.

Mihara's face bore a vacant look. "A telegram which was not sent could not be delivered," he muttered to himself. "Where did he send it from?"

Mihara clapped both hands to his head. "I've been a fool! I should have checked the receiving office; that would have been simpler." The disappointments and the rebuffs seemed to have dulled his senses. Immediately, he requested the Sapporo police to investigate. The reply came the following day.

The telegram in question was sent from Asamushi Station in Aomori Prefecture at 8:50 A.M. on January 21. Not Tokyo, not Fukuoka; it had been sent from Asamushi Hotspring in Aomori Prefecture. This was one station before the Aomori terminal.

Mihara was nonplussed. Had he given it thought, however, it should not have surprised him. The station was on the main line between Tokyo and Hokkaido. He noted the time of the dispatch: 8:50. According to the railway timetable, the Towada Express from Ueno, Tokyo, would be leaving Asamushi Station at that hour. The telegram was sent by the train conductor, at the request of a passenger, Mihara decided. The Towada, which passed through Asamushi on the morning of the twenty-first, was the train Yasuda said he had taken. It connected with the Sei-kan ferry No. 17.

So Yasuda was on the Towada, as he had declared! Mihara did not know what to think. The further he investigated, the more evidence accumulated that Yasuda was telling the truth.

Mihara buried his head in his hands. The chief interrupted his thoughts. "By the way, Mihara, do you believe it was Yasuda who sent that wire?"

"What?" Mihara raised his head.

"Remember saying that you'd like to know who might have sent the telegram for Yasuda? A stand-in, perhaps..."

Mihara stared at Chief Kasai. "Of course. I had forgotten."

"You shouldn't forget your own words." The chief was laughing quietly.

Mihara picked up the telephone and called Ueno Station. He asked to be connected with the train conductors' office.

"Hello! The conductor on the Towada express on duty between Sendai and Aomori: to which division would he belong?"

"He would work out of Ueno."

Mihara took a police car and hastened to Ueno Station. In the office he questioned the official on duty.

"No. 205, the Towada, on January 20 of this year, is it? Just a minute, please." The man consulted the duty records.

"Kajitani was the conductor. He should be around today. I'll have him called."

"Please do so." Mihara waited with mounting excitement.

The conductor presently arrived. He was not over thirty and looked intelligent. "Let me see. I don't remember the contents of the telegram but I do recall being asked to send one to Sapporo. That must have been from Kominato Station, near Asamushi. I believe it was the morning of January 21. I don't remember sending any other telegrams for passengers from up north."

"Do you recall the face of the passenger who gave it to you? Anything at all about him?" Mihara hoped the conductor would remember some detail.

"Let me see. It was a passenger in a second class sleeper."

"Yes."

"I believe he was tall and rather slim."

"What, slim? Quite sure he wasn't stout?" Mihara was secretly pleased but repeated the question to make certain.

"No, certainly not stout. I'd say he was thin." The conductor's memory seemed to be clearing. "It was a party of two."

"Two people?"

"I'm sure because I was checking the tickets. The man was holding his companion's ticket as well. No, not exactly a companion; the other man seemed more like his superior. He looked important. The slim man spoke to him very politely."

"Then it was the subordinate who asked you to send the wire?"

"Yes."

Tatsuo Yasuda's substitute was now clear. There was no possible mistake. The senior individual was Division Chief Ishida of X Ministry. The subordinate must have been the official traveling with him.

Until this moment, Mihara had taken for granted that Ishida had been traveling alone. But it was natural for a person in Ishida's position to be accompanied by a member of his staff.

Mihara went to the X Ministry to ascertain who had accompanied Division Chief Ishida on his trip to Hokkaido on January 20. He learned that it was Kitarō Sasaki. This was the same man who had visited the Metropolitan Police Board some days before on instructions from Ishida to inform Chief Kasai that Tatsuo Yasuda had been aboard the Marimo.

Mihara flew to Aomori the following day. He checked the passenger lists of all Sei-kan ferries on January 21. Ishida and Yasuda's names were there; Sasaki's name was not. It was clear that Sasaki had boarded the ferry using Yasuda's name.

The towering wall in front of Mihara had begun to crumble. At long last victory was in sight.

All he needed now was to find how Yasuda's signature came to be on the passenger list. Having come this far, that should not be difficult.

## **Chapter 13**

### **Mihara's Reply.**

Dear Mr. Torigai:

The weather is very hot. Walking in the scorching sun, one's shoes get stuck in the soft asphalt. All day I keep looking forward to the cold shower and the glass of cold beer that await me when I return home from work. I remember, almost with pleasure, the day you took me to Kashii Beach and I stood shivering in the cold wind that blew in from the Sea of Genkai.

Not for a long time have I been able to write a letter in so relaxed a mood. It was last February when we first met in Hakata. Seven months have gone by since I stood with teeth chattering on Kashii Beach and listened to your story. Ever since that time, my mind has been absorbed by the case and I have been unable to rest. Today, at long last, I am at peace; the feeling is like sunlight in early autumn. This is probably because the case is closed. The more difficult a case, I find, the more relaxed one feels when it is solved. To you, of course, this must be obvious. Nevertheless, it is this feeling of accomplishment which prompts me to write to you. Moreover, it is my duty. And also my pleasure.

I wrote you once before to tell you that the most difficult feature of the case was Tatsuo Yasuda's trip to Hokkaido. You sent back a kind letter, urging me to persist. I cannot tell you how much your encouragement has meant to me.

Yasuda's almost foolproof alibi, that he left Ueno Station in Tokyo by the express Towada on January 20 and crossed to Hokkaido on the Seikan ferry No. 17, arriving in Sapporo by the Marimo at 8:34 P.M. on the twenty-first, was finally broken. The formidable wall which kept blocking my way was not easy to demolish because Yasuda did meet an official of the Hokkaido government on the Marimo, he did meet Kawanishi at Sapporo Station when the train arrived, and his signature was definitely on the passenger list of the ferry. The most difficult point was that signature on the passenger list. He had seen to every last detail.

On the other hand, nothing seemed to develop from our assumption that he had used a plane. Yasuda's name was not on the passenger list of any one of the three flights—from Tokyo to Fukuoka, Fukuoka back to Tokyo, and Tokyo to Sapporo. We could not even discover a false name. We checked the 143 passengers on the three planes and found that each one could be identified, each one admitted traveling in one or the other of the planes. Unless he were a ghost, Yasuda could not have been on those flights. Once again his story proved to be true.

In short, on the train to Hokkaido Yasuda's presence aboard was definitely established, while his not being on the planes was equally well established.

However, I began to have doubts because of the fact that Yasuda had asked Kawanishi to meet him in the waiting room of Sapporo Station instead of on the platform. He did this, I surmised, because of a possible delay in the arrival of the plane. Flying to Sapporo made it possible, of course, for him to catch the Marimo later at Otaru. We located the

telegraph office which had dispatched the wire to Kawanishi. We found it was a passenger on the Towada who had asked the conductor to send it while the train was at a station near Asamushi on the morning of the twenty-first. The conductor remembered the passenger. From his description we recognized Division Chief Ishida of X Ministry and his staff assistant, Kitaro Sasaki. It was Sasaki who had handed the telegram to the conductor.

This gave me a further clue. Ishida's name was on the passenger list of the ferry but not Kitaro Sasaki's. I concluded that Sasaki, on boarding the ferry, had used Yasuda's name instead of his own when filling out the passenger form. We were remiss in not realizing that Ishida would be traveling with an assistant. We found this out only later. When we interrogated Sasaki, he confessed that Yasuda had prepared the passenger landing form two weeks before.

When you board the ferry at Aomori you can pick up any number of these forms. They are kept in a box outside the ticket window, just like telegraph blanks at a post office. Yasuda had asked Ishida to have one of his subordinates get him some forms when he went to Hokkaido, and he filled one out and left it with the division chief. Later, I will explain the relationship between Yasuda and Ishida, but the scheme to have Yasuda's name appear on the passenger list, which had us completely baffled, was as simple as that.

Yasuda's trip to Hokkaido by train was thus completely disproved. Next was the matter of the passengers on the planes. Here we had the reverse of the problem of the passenger list on the ferry.

We had the 143 passengers rechecked. We investigated their professions, as indicated on the passenger lists. We did this with a definite purpose in mind. Eventually the total narrowed down to five or six suspects. These turned out to be businessmen with close connections with X Ministry. We questioned them thoroughly and finally three of the men broke down and confessed. Between Tokyo and Fukuoka a Mr. A, from Fukuoka to Tokyo a Mr. B, and from Tokyo to Sapporo a Mr. C were not passengers on those planes. All three admitted that Ishida had asked them, under the seal of secrecy, to let him use their names. "One of our men has to travel on very discreet business so if the police should ask, please say that you were on the plane. It will not get you into trouble." This is what Ishida told them. The scandal at the ministry was breaking at the time and they believed an official was making the trip to hush it up. That sort of thing is not uncommon. As you may suppose, they were offered business opportunities by Ishida in return for the favor.

Tatsuo Yasuda flew to Fukuoka, Tokyo, Sapporo and back using the names of A, B and C. He used these different names in order to make it more difficult in the event of an investigation. Yasuda always had in mind the possibility of such an investigation and he laid his plans very carefully.

With the Hokkaido alibi broken and his presence in Hakata established, we were still left with one more problem, the matter of the witnesses. It

was clear that Yasuda had planted these witnesses, the two girls from the Koyuki who had watched Sayama and Otoki board the Asakaze at Tokyo Station on January 14. Now, the real relations between Sayama and Otoki are not known, nor have we been able to learn anything about them. Otoki was an unusually discreet young woman and, according to the waitresses at the Koyuki, although she seemed to have a lover no one was certain. They were not trying to protect her; they seemed really not to know. We had been told that Otoki used to get telephone calls from a man but she never brought him to her home. In other words, she seemed to have had a secret lover but he had yet to be identified. Of course, after the double suicide at Kashii everyone assumed that Sayama was the lover.

However, there was something strange about this aspect of the case.

Why did Yasuda need to have someone observe the couple leaving together? Did he merely want a witness to prove that they had boarded the Asakaze? And why did it have to be the Asakaze? Wouldn't any train going to Kyushu have served as well? Since they committed double suicide in Kyushu there was no mistaking where they went. Then what was the reason?

Yasuda had to have someone see Sayama and Otoki boarding the train together. He went to a great deal of trouble to have the witnesses on the platform at the right time. What he really wanted was someone to observe Sayama and Otoki together and to conclude that they were lovers.

Why was this necessary? It is a strange story. After giving the facts much thought I reached the startling conclusion that Sayama and Otoki were not lovers. This had to be so, I decided. Precisely because they were not lovers, Yasuda had to have someone witness their departure and conclude that they were.

I greatly admire your skill in deducing from the dining car receipt that Sayama had traveled to Hakata alone. Your suspicion was aroused by the fact that the receipt was made out for one person, and your daughter's observations on the subject of love and appetite were very enlightening. Otoki got off the train somewhere along the way and Sayama continued alone to Hakata. I came to the conclusion that Sayama and Otoki were only vaguely connected and that they were certainly not lovers.

Yasuda was a good client at the Koyuki, often entertaining his business friends there. Sayama did not frequent the Koyuki but he must have known Otoki. It is even possible that Yasuda, Sayama and Otoki met together at times, unknown to anyone. Sayama and Otoki were certainly acquainted and would naturally talk to each other as they boarded the Asakaze. To a third person they could well have looked like lovers departing on a trip together. That was Yasuda's intention.

Therefore, it must have been Yasuda who arranged for them to travel on the same train. He was probably in a position to do so.

Now, here was Yasuda's problem: It was all very well to plan to have the two waitresses see the couple, but since he had no reason to go to platform 15 he could not take them directly to the Asakaze. They had to come upon the scene naturally. Platform 15 is the one reserved for the

departure of the long-distance trains. To take the girls there deliberately would look suspicious. He had to let them observe the scene from another platform. The most natural way to do this would be to use platform 13, the one he always left from when visiting his wife in Kamakura. This would not arouse suspicion. But he was perplexed. From platform 13 one cannot see the trains on platform 15. Trains keep arriving and departing on the intervening tracks and obstruct the view. I believe I mentioned this before. After careful search, however, Yasuda discovered that prior to the Asakaze's departure, for exactly four minutes, from 5:57 to 6:01, the train could be clearly seen from platform 13. These were four valuable minutes. Yes, most precious minutes.

I said earlier that the couple could have taken any train to Kyushu but it was clear now that it had to be the Asakaze, leaving at 6:30. Yasuda had to get them aboard the Asakaze. Other trains bound for Kyushu could not be seen from platform 13. It was brilliant of Yasuda to have discovered this four-minute interval. There can be few, if any, railroad men at Tokyo Station aware of this brief interval.

Thus it became clear that Yasuda had planned the departure of Sayama and Otoki. But this did not solve the greater mystery: the double suicide on Kashii Beach six days later, the undeniable fact that Sayama and Otoki drank fruit juice containing cyanide and died, almost in each other's arms. Both the medical report and the photographs of the scene pointed unmistakably to a case of double suicide.

Here was something I could not understand. Why should these two, who were not lovers, commit suicide together? Surely Sayama and Otoki, who were barely acquainted, would not be so insane as to obey Yasuda's order (if his order it was) to kill themselves. Yet the stark fact of the double suicide destroyed the assumption that they were not lovers, no matter how convinced one was to the contrary. You were obliged to believe that they were intimate since they committed suicide together. I could find no answer to this contradiction.

However, since it was Yasuda's plan to have the two depart together, I could not fail to be suspicious of those suicides on Kashii Beach. Yet there was no denying that they had died there together. No matter how much I thought about it, I could not get past that obvious fact.

But since the beginning had been plotted by Yasuda, I thought I could discern Yasuda's presence at the end also, the tragic end in suicide. I could not dismiss this suspicion from my mind. All the while I was in Hokkaido investigating I could almost see Yasuda standing like a ghost on Kashii Beach the night of the tragedy. I had no idea what part he played. He could not have used hypnotism to make them commit suicide. Yet, as normal human beings, they would not have taken their own lives simply because he ordered them to do so. I didn't understand; nevertheless, I had to have Yasuda on that spot and on that night.

Fortunately, we broke Yasuda's Hokkaido alibi, and we proved that he had left Tokyo by Japan Airlines for Hakata at 3 P.M. on January 20, arriving at Itazuke Airport in Fukuoka at 7:20. Thus, he could have been

on Kashii Beach at 9:00, about the time the deaths took place. But when it came to trying to connect Yasuda with the actual suicides, I soon reached a dead end, as if confronted by a wall. I could think of no solution. I was completely baffled and I held my head in my hands.

It was on one of the days when I was feeling desperate that I happened to enter a coffee shop. I like coffee. My boss often makes fun of this, but I was deeply depressed and I wanted to get away from the office. Usually, I go to my favorite shop in Yūroku-chō, but it was raining that day so I stopped in at an unfamiliar place near Hibiya Park.

The shop had a second floor. As I was about to open the front door a young girl approached from the side and we almost collided. She was quite lovely. She was wearing a bright-colored raincoat. I was polite and let her enter first. She smiled at me, went in, and gave her umbrella to the waitress standing near the stairs. I followed and handed over my umbrella also. The waitress, taking us for a couple, quickly tied the two umbrellas together and offered me the check. The girl flushed slightly and I hastened to explain. "No, not together; we're strangers." The waitress apologized, untied the umbrellas and gave us separate checks.

You may think I relate the incident because it flattered me to be taken for the companion of an attractive young girl. Actually, something very different flashed through my mind at the time, something that astounded me. I went upstairs, sat down at one of the tables and for a while didn't even notice the cup of coffee in front of me, which I must have ordered.

The waitress had greeted us as a couple because we happened to enter the shop together. That was natural; almost anyone would have thought so. She drew this hasty inference from the way we had come in the door together. For me, however, the incident started a whole new train of thought.

We—including yourself and the men at your station—had concluded it was a double suicide because Sayama and Otoki were found dead, side by side. Now I understood! They had died separately and at different places. Only after they were dead were the two bodies brought together. Someone gave Sayama the cyanide and he died, and someone gave Otoki the same poison and she died; only then were the two bodies brought to the beach and placed side by side. The two deaths should never have been connected. Since they were similar, we believed it was a single case, but we were wrong.

Don't chide us for immediately concluding it was a case of double suicide when we discovered a man and a woman dead, almost in each other's arms. Love suicides are not uncommon; this is the way the bodies are always found. No one would think of doubting it. And when termed a love suicide, the inquest is never as strict as in the case of a murder. The investigation is generally perfunctory. Tatsuo Yasuda knew this.

I remember something you wrote to me once in a letter: "Sometimes a preconceived opinion will make us overlook the obvious. This is a frightening thing. We call it common sense but it often leaves us with a blind spot." Here was a case in point. A man and a woman are found dead



side by side. It is all quite clear. The obvious assumption that it is a love suicide puts an end to any further investigation of the case. And so everyone is deceived. A clever murderer knows this; he will take advantage of this so-called common sense.

This time, the criminal fooled us completely. But he still had reason to feel uneasy. Sayama and Otoki were only slightly connected yet he had to make the double suicide look convincing, he had to give the impression that they were lovers. This is the reason for having the waitresses of the Koyuki witness their departure together from Tokyo Station. He arranged the scene carefully. Nevertheless, a criminal never ceases to worry. In this case, he planned exceptionally well: he used the four-minute interval.

As I look back on it, I see the case built around train and plane schedules, from start to finish. It is buried in timetables. Did Yasuda have any personal knowledge of those things? Doubtful. It looks, rather, as if the crime had been planned by someone with a lively interest in such details.

Let's leave aside for the moment the matter of the deaths of Sayama and Otoki and turn our attention to these timetables.

The figure of a woman comes immediately to mind. She had a special interest in timetables. She even wrote an essay on the subject for some magazine. The piece was full of poetry and sentiment. What may look to us like very boring lists of names and numbers to her were more absorbing than the most exciting novel. From the tall columns of figures she drew inspiration for her poems and travel articles. She had been confined to her bed for a long time with tuberculosis and for her these timetables were a sort of bible, a constant companion in her loneliness. She never tired of them, turning to them as one would to a classic novel, a best seller or the scriptures. She was Yasuda's wife, then convalescing in Kamakura. Her name is Ryōko.

A person suffering from tuberculosis is often said to have a morbidly clear mind. I wonder what was behind that pale mask; what was Ryōko Yasuda thinking? No, not thinking; it would be more accurate perhaps to say plotting. She must have kept playing with those columns of figures, drawing lines up and down and across to form some sort of pattern. I came to the conclusion that the plot was not originally Yasuda's but Ryōko's.

Then I remembered the couples at the two Kashii stations the night of the tragedy. One couple, of course, was Sayama and Otoki. Could the other couple have been Yasuda and his wife Ryōko? It was a natural deduction. I found out later I was only half mistaken.

You also said in your letter, "I wonder what part was played by the woman who accompanied Yasuda. If Yasuda was involved in the double suicide he would need a woman accomplice, he could not execute his plan without her help." I've come to appreciate your insight. As soon as I began to suspect Yasuda's wife, I decided to investigate further. But she was at home, convalescing. The question in my mind, of course, was whether she was capable of making the trip to Kyushu. I went to Kamakura and called

on her doctor. He told me she was not always confined to her bed. At times, she would visit relatives in nearby Yugawara. Later, I checked her movements on January 20 and found that she was away from the nineteenth to the twenty-first. This appeared in the doctor's records. He sees her only twice a week and had made a house call on the twenty-second. She was running a temperature that day and he asked for the reason. She told him, "I went to Yugawara on the nineteenth and returned this morning. I may be a little tired."

I knew at once what that meant. If she left on the night of the nineteenth, she would reach Hakata the following morning. She could therefore have been at the scene of the suicides in time to see them occur. Yugawara must be a lie; she had gone to Kyushu, I felt sure. I went to her home, lured the old servant out of the house and pressed her till finally I learned that Ryōko had left for Yugawara about two in the afternoon in a rented car.

I located the driver.

She told the driver first to take her to Yugawara. At Yugawara, she ordered him to continue to Atami. He left her there at an inn called Kaifuso and returned to Kamakura.

I was excited. I left immediately for Atami and checked the Kaifuso. This is the information I gathered at the inn: Ryōko visited a woman who was a guest. This woman had arrived on the night of January 14, a little after eight o'clock, and had been occupying the room for five days. From her age and the description, there was no doubt it was Otoki. Of course she had not used her real name; she was registered as Yukiko Sugawara. You will remember that Sugawara was also the name Sayama used at the Tambaya Inn in Hakata. When Ryōko first arrived she asked to see Miss Sugawara. Therefore it was evident that all of this had been planned by Sayama, Otoki and Ryōko. No, not planned; plotted, by Ryōko Yasuda. The two women had dinner together in Otoki's room and left the inn about ten o'clock. Otoki's bill was paid by Ryōko.

Now, Otoki's arrival at the inn around eight o'clock on the fourteenth makes it clear that she came on the Asakaze that pulls in to Atami Station at 7:58. She had traveled with Sayama only as far as Atami. Your reasoning, therefore, with regard to the dining car receipt "for one person" was correct.

The two women left the inn about 10 P.M. on the nineteenth. Checking the timetable, I found that the express Tsukushi, bound for Hakata, left Atami at 10:25. This train arrived at Hakata, the terminus, at 7:45 P.M. on the twentieth.

All the pieces fitted. It was about 8 P.M. when a woman telephoned Sayama at the Tambaya Inn in Hakata. The two women must have called him as soon as they got off the train at Hakata.

I was able to get this far before being stopped once again. Was it Otoki or Ryōko who telephoned Sayama? At first I thought it was Otoki but quickly realized this could not be. Since there was nothing between the two, he would not respond if Otoki called. Sayama had been waiting

impatiently for a week for the telephone call so it could not be Otoki. Most probably, it was Ryōko. Because Ryōko was Yasuda's wife and could speak for him. In fact, Sayama was waiting for Yasuda to arrive. So if Ryōko said she had come in his stead, Sayama would react immediately.

Ryōko met Sayama in order to talk to him about the things that were worrying him. But first she led him to Kashii Beach. We don't know exactly what she said but she must have told him her message required the utmost secrecy and she therefore must choose some quiet spot. Kashii Beach was certainly an important feature of the plan.

What worried Sayama were the developments in the bribery case at the ministry. As assistant section chief, he knew all the facts and was aware that he was about to be arrested. It was Ishida, the division chief, who urged him to flee to Hakata under pretense of taking a holiday. Ishida was the central figure in the scandal and if Sayama were arrested Ishida would be in grave danger. So he persuaded Sayama to escape to Hakata. He even arranged for him to take the Asakaze on the fourteenth. He told him that Yasuda would give him further instructions, and asked him to wait at the inn in Hakata.

Sayama did not question these orders from his superior. We should not be too surprised at this. He knew his testimony would be damaging to the man who was his boss and who had helped him in his career. At the assistant section chief level there are many men like Sayama. I know some who have committed suicide under similar circumstances. In fact, suicide is what the criminal in this case was hoping for.

Ishida probably told Sayama that Yasuda would find a way to cover up the scandal and that he should stay away until it blew over. Therefore Sayama must have been anxiously waiting for Yasuda to arrive. But Yasuda did not appear; his wife came instead. Sayama knew Ryōko from previous visits to the Yasuda home. In fact, Yasuda may have invited Sayama to his house in Kamakura purposely to meet Ryōko.

These two—Ryōko and Sayama—came out of the Kashii main railway station unaware that immediately following them were Yasuda and Otoki. The latter got off at the Nishitetsu Kashii Station and took the same road to the beach. No, it was only Sayama who was in the dark; Ryōko knew every detail of the plot. Ryōko talked to Sayama. She told him everything was working out well and not to worry. The night was cold and she offered him whiskey. Sayama liked whiskey; he accepted it eagerly. It contained the cyanide and he dropped dead at her feet. The bottle of fruit juice containing cyanide was left at the scene to cover up the murder.

Yasuda was not far behind. He had arrived at Itazuke Airport at 7:20 on a Japan Airlines plane. He met Otoki somewhere, probably by prearrangement; Ryōko must have delivered the message. Otoki then accompanied Yasuda to the beach. On the way she was overheard by a passerby to exclaim, "What a lonely place!"

On the dark and deserted beach Yasuda offered Otoki a drink containing cyanide. Then he picked her up and placed her body beside Sayama who was already dead. Ryōko was standing nearby. Very likely

not more than twenty meters separated the exact spots where Otoki and Sayama met their deaths. It was night and Otoki could not have seen the other couple.

After killing Otoki, Yasuda probably called, "Ryōko!" and from out of the dark Ryōko must have answered, "Yes. Here I am." And with Otoki's body in his arms, Yasuda started making his way in the direction of the voice. I cannot imagine a more dreadful scene.

You remember the beach, I am sure; we looked at it together and found it very rocky. There would be no footprints even if one were to carry a heavy burden. Everything had been skillfully planned. Yasuda must have known the beach well and chose it for the scene of the crime.

It was a double murder, planned by Yasuda and his wife and made to look like a love suicide. Ryōko not only helped to plan it; she helped to carry it out. While Otoki, without a doubt, innocently obeyed the instructions she had received from Yasuda and his wife.

A strange feature of the case is the relationship between Otoki, Yasuda and Ryōko. As you may have gathered from the foregoing, it is evident that Yasuda and Otoki had been lovers. The affair was kept very secret; no one was aware of it. It must have developed during the time Yasuda was frequenting the Koyuki. Otoki had charge of the parties he gave there. The man who sometimes telephoned her at her apartment and with whom she spent the nights away was Yasuda.

But Ryōko's attitude is hard to understand. Why did she travel with Otoki and have dinner with her? The girl was her husband's mistress and therefore her rival. I understood the situation when I learned that it was Ryōko who paid Otoki's hotel bill at Atami. Ryōko was aware of the liaison and apparently had agreed to it. She even went so far as to give Otoki a monthly allowance. Remember: Ryōko was a very sick woman; she had been forbidden by her doctor to have intimate relations with her husband. In other words, Otoki was Yasuda's official mistress, with Ryōko's approval. It was a curious triangle. We may find it hard to accept but these situations do exist in modern society. Of course, it was common practice in feudal times.

At first they probably planned to have it look as if Sayama alone had committed suicide. But this was dangerous. Since he would leave no letter, it would appear suspect. So they decided on the love suicide. In such a case, the police investigation is seldom strict, and sometimes there is no autopsy. And there would be no follow-up. This was a safer way to commit the murder. Poor Otoki was chosen to be the innocent partner in the double suicide.

Yasuda had no real affection for Otoki. To him, she did not count. True, she was his mistress, but he could easily find another. As for Ryōko, she looked upon the girl simply as a pawn in her husband's plans; she used her as a necessary figure in the fake suicide. Yet deep in her heart she must have hated Otoki. Ryōko was really a frightening woman. Her mind was as sharp as a sword and as cold as the blood in her veins. After the murders she carefully arranged the folds of Otoki's kimono and changed

the girl's soiled socks for a fresh pair she had brought along expressly to make it appear as if Otoki had been prepared to die, that she had done so willingly. Ryōko thought of everything.

That night the Yasudas stayed at Hakata. He took the first plane back to Tokyo the following morning, then changed at Haneda to a connecting plane for Hokkaido. Ryōko returned to Kamakura by train.

The reason why Yasuda left for Hakata on the twentieth, a full six days after Otoki and Sayama, was because he was afraid it would arouse suspicion if he followed them too closely. Actually, after Otoki's departure on the fourteenth he showed up at the Koyuki Restaurant two or three days in succession. He even listened calmly while the waitresses talked about Otoki and her trip with a lover. He had to give the impression that he was in no way involved. Otoki was kept waiting at Atami for five days.

Thus Tatsuo Yasuda, prompted by Division Chief Ishida to whom he was greatly obligated, disposed of Assistant Section Chief Sayama. This saved Ishida. And not Ishida alone; there were other government officials under whom Sayama worked who heaved a sigh of relief when they learned of his death. And Tatsuo Yasuda, one of Tokyo's leading dealers in machinery, came out of it with Ishida now deeply in his debt.

The relations between Yasuda and Ishida were closer than was known to outsiders. Yasuda must have worked hard on Ishida to further his business with the X Ministry. I am sure he gave him many gifts and invited him to many parties. We may take this for granted from the fact that Ishida was at the center of the scandals. Moreover, we know the sort of man he is. Up to this time, Yasuda had not had particularly important business dealings with the ministry. Therefore, we were aware only of their overt relations and couldn't see what else was going on. Yasuda was cultivating Ishida with an eye to the future, using to the full his charm and his money. He succeeded in winning him over. He knew the division chief was worried about his involvement in the scandals that were coming to light, and he took upon himself the responsibility for eliminating Sayama who held the key to the investigation within the ministry. It is even possible that it was Yasuda who suggested this solution and got Ishida to accept. To be sure, Ishida had no intention at the start of murdering Sayama. He probably wanted only to drive him to the point of suicide, as has happened before in similar cases. But that did not seem possible. Therefore Yasuda thought of murder, a murder which would be made to look like suicide. A double suicide would be even more convincing. In the case of a simple suicide, there is always the suspicion of murder, but when a double suicide occurs and a woman is involved, there is far less cause to be suspicious. Yasuda was very clever. As it happened, we were all deceived.

Ishida may not have suspected that the plot would lead to murder. In the belief that Yasuda only intended to drive Sayama to suicide, he willingly entered into the plan. He procured the blank passenger forms on the Sei-kan ferry; he made the false statements about the trip to Hokkaido, and he arranged for the use of assumed names on the different

planes. Because of his position, he travels easily and often and it is simple for him to take along an assistant who will do as he is told.

Later, when he learned that Sayama and his woman companion had committed suicide by taking cyanide, he took fright. He was certain Yasuda had done it. From that moment, I believe Yasuda started to threaten, to put pressure on him. Ishida now found himself at the mercy of this man. I am sure it was at Yasuda's suggestion that he sent Sasaki, a member of his staff, to the Metropolitan Police Board to give evidence on the train trip in Hokkaido. Of course, this turned out to be Yasuda's undoing.

Yasuda had lost interest in Otoki and used her as an instrument in the murder of Sayama. The motive for Ryōko's participation was probably more than just a desire to help her husband. She could have wanted to kill Otoki, even though she accepted her as her husband's mistress. This had not changed her feelings as a woman and wife. Because Ryōko, a wife in name only, deep in her heart was probably more than normally jealous. The white fire of jealousy was burning within her like phosphorous, waiting for an opportunity to burst into flames. Otoki is the real victim of the drama. Yasuda himself may not have known whether his real purpose was to kill Sayama in order to put Ishida in his debt, or to get rid of Otoki who had become a burden to him.

All that I have written to you is my own analysis of the case—aided by the letter the Yasudas left.

Yes, Tatsuo Yasuda and his wife Ryōko were found dead in their house in Kamakura when we arrived to arrest them. They had taken cyanide. This time there was no attempt at mystification. Tatsuo Yasuda knew we were on his trail. He took his own life, followed by his wife whose physical condition had become critical. Yasuda left no message; it was Ryōko who wrote the letter. In it she admits the crime. Frankly, I am skeptical. I find it hard to accept that a man as tough as Yasuda would commit suicide. I believe that Ryōko, who knew her end was near, could have planned it and taken her husband with her. She was that kind of a woman.

I must admit I was relieved to find the Yasudas dead, because there is almost no material evidence in this murder case. It is all circumstantial. I am even surprised we were able to secure a warrant for their arrest. It was the type of case which, if brought to trial, one could not be sure of the outcome.

Speaking of the lack of evidence, this applies also to Division Chief Ishida. He was transferred to another division and, believe it or not, was given a promotion. This may appear incredible to you, but such things happen. He will probably become a bureau chief or a vice-minister, and may even run for a seat in the Diet. I feel sorry for these poor subordinates of his whom he uses as stepping stones. However, even if they know they are being abused, they will try to stay in his good graces by showing their loyalty. Their desire for advancement is pathetic. Which reminds me: Kitarō Sasaki, the man who made the trip to Hokkaido with

Ishida and who was of help to Yasuda, was made section chief. Here again, there is nothing we can do. The Yasudas are dead.

The whole case has left a bad taste in my mouth. Sitting here at home, completely relaxed, a glass of cold beer at my elbow, I don't have the satisfaction I generally feel when a case is solved and the criminal has been turned over to the Public Prosecutor. This is a very long letter; I trust you were not bored. I expect to take my vacation this autumn and, at your kind suggestion, my wife and I will visit you in Kyushu.

With best wishes,  
Kiichi Mihara

