



## The 2016 Kurodahan Press Translation Prize

Kurodahan Press is pleased to announce the 2016 Kurodahan Press Translation Prize, awarded for translation excellence of a selected Japanese short story into English. The winning translation will be considered for inclusion in the upcoming Kurodahan Press anthology *Speculative Japan Volume 4*, which is scheduled for publication in 2016–17, and the translator given full credit.

### 1. Eligibility

There are no restrictions whatsoever on translator participation. All translators are encouraged to apply, regardless of whether or not you have worked with us before.

### 2. Submission

Send your translation to the below address, by regular postal mail or (preferably) E-mail.

Please be sure to read the submission instructions, which cover formatting requirements (for both printouts and electronic files) and provide information on Kurodahan Press standards and other points. Submission instructions are given in the style sheet included in the contest package at:

<http://www.kurodahan.com/mt/e/khpprize/2016prize.pdf>

Submitted translations will not be returned, but the translator will retain all rights to the translation. Kurodahan Press will receive first publication rights to the winning translation, to be arranged under a separate and specific agreement when the book project gets under way.

No information about any submissions, including the names or contact information for people submitting translations, will be made available to any third party, including the judges, with the exception of the name of the winner (or a pseudonym, if the winner prefers). Translators are of course welcome to tell anyone they wish that they have made a submission.

### 3. Source material

The story to be translated is

「たそがれ」 by 鈴木三重吉 (roughly 1,800 字)

The submission package, including a PDF of the story, style sheet and instructions, is available as a downloadable PDF. The source book is available at Amazon Japan:

<http://www.amazon.co.jp/dp/4480428690/kurodahanpres-22>

### 4. Application Deadline

Translations must be received no later than September 30, 2016. A notice confirming receipt will be issued. The results should be announced by the end of the year.

However, the prize may be cancelled, or the deadline extended, if we haven't received at least twenty submissions by the initial deadline.



## 5. Submission address and contact

### Grand Prize / one winner

30,000 yen prize money. At a later time we plan to invite the winner to publish the story in an upcoming Kurodahan Press anthology (*Speculative Japan Volume 4*) for an additional payment of 30,000 yen, to be covered by a separate contract (first English publication rights; translator keeps all other rights to translation).

Note: Prize payments will be subject to source-tax deductions as required by Japanese law.

Submissions should be sent to:

Kurodahan Press  
3-9-10-403 Tenjin  
Chuo-ku, Fukuoka  
810-0001 Japan

Electronic submissions preferred via our website.

## 6. Notification

All contest entrants will be informed of the contest results. The winner's name (or a pseudonym if desired) will be posted on the Kurodahan Press website.

## 7. Judging

All decisions will be final and except in extremely unusual circumstances the reasons for the decision and the specific votes of the jurors will not be revealed. The goal of the contest, simply stated, is to produce an English translation faithful to the original, which can be read and enjoyed by someone with no specialized knowledge of Japan or Japanese.

The winner will be selected by a panel of three jurors, all translators working in the field.

Tyran Grillo  
Nancy Ross  
Ginny Tapley Takemori



## Style Guide for Kurodahan Translation Contest Submissions

v1.3 of June 9, 2014

This document is in two parts. The first part refers to the technical specifications we expect to see in documents submitted to us. The second part covers conventions of usage we prefer to see. As one might expect, the first part is less open to modification than the second part.

### Part One: Technical Specifications

#### Word processing:

Please submit documents in Microsoft Word DOC/DOCX format if possible. RTF or TXT files are also acceptable, but DOC/DOCX files are preferred. If you would like to use a file format other than one of these, please contact us in advance.

#### Document formatting:

Use a common font (such as Times) at 10 or 12 point size.

As much as possible, use only one font at one size throughout your document. See part two for a discussion of special accented characters.

Use italics for emphasis.

**Do not start paragraphs with tabs, and do not insert blank lines between paragraphs.**

**If you want to insert a blank line that would show up in the published layout, insert "\*\*\*blank line" into the document.**

You can use headers and footers if you wish, but do not put important information in headers or footers if it does not also appear somewhere else. If possible (depending on your software), put page numbers and your name in either the header or footer on every page.

This will result in a pretty boring layout, but we do not want typographical games in the submissions... before the submissions are given to the judges, all formatting (font, font size, etc.) will be made uniform (italics will of course be preserved), and legible. Everyone will be using the same formatting, and judges will have to judge you on the merits of your translation, not your skill as a book designer.

#### Document layout:

On the first page of your document, include the following information in the following order. Please put

(1) Your name. (This line can also include the translator's assertion of copyright.) You may of course specify a pseudonym for public release if you prefer, but please make it clear which is which.

(2) Your contact information (current mailing address, telephone number and email). This information will be kept confidential from everyone except KHP administrative personnel and Japanese tax authorities. Specifically, it will not be released to other contestants, jurors or the general public. The winner will have to provide it for Japanese tax purposes, however.

#### File name conventions:

Please give the file your own name, without spaces and using only letters and numerals. If your name is Fred Smith, for example, name your file something like FredSmith.doc.



In general:

Avoid fancy formatting of all types. The contest judges your translation and writing abilities, not your artistic skills.

Make your document plain and simple. It may not be as attractive as you might like, but it will keep problems and file sizes to a minimum.

## Part Two: Style Conventions

For the sake of convenience and to aid in mutual understanding, Kurodahan Press turns to the Chicago Manual of Style to answer questions as they arise. We will not always follow the Chicago Manual's advice, but we will start there to explain what we prefer to see in print.

For information on handling uniquely Japanese situations, we refer to the style guide of Monumenta Nipponica, which is available as a downloadable PDF from

[http://monumenta.cc.sophia.ac.jp/MN\\_Style.html](http://monumenta.cc.sophia.ac.jp/MN_Style.html)

Kurodahan Press uses American English as the basis of its own documents and most of its publications. If a translator prefers to use a different set of spelling and usage conventions, we will not object, but we will insist on internal consistency. Punctuation will follow American usage as outlined in the Chicago Manual of Style.

We also use the following general reference works as authorities: Encyclopaedia Britannica, and for U.S. spelling the Webster's Third New International Dictionary (the big heavy one that was in your school library).

We view matters of style and usage as conventions, not laws, and so we are open to reasoned argument if a translator wishes to do something other than what we initially require. Please be aware that "this is right" and "this is wrong" are not in themselves convincing arguments.

Representing the source language in the translation:

While Kurodahan Press normally romanizes extended vowels with macrons, people submitting translations may have difficulty with these special characters. For that reason, while we welcome the use of macrons or circumflexes over extended vowels, they are not required and will not be considered when judging a submission.

Chinese, Japanese, and Korean names are given in Asian order (for example: Murakami Haruki). Western names are given in Western order (for example: Tom Hanks). The general principle we follow is this: we wish to represent names as they would be represented in the source language culture. We recognize that this gets tricky sometimes, so discussion is possible in special cases. The name of a character in a Japanese novel is not, in our view, a special case.

Recasting passages:

Recasting is often necessary to make an original text read smoothly in English. Our goal is to produce texts that will appeal to general readers: translations should read smoothly, and should not attract attention to themselves in places where their original authors did not intend to attract attention.



#### Allusions in the source text:

A source text will often refer to a work of art or literature, to a cultural practice, proverb, famous place, or other aspect of common culture that readers of the original can be expected to understand. In cases where English readers could be expected to follow the allusion, the translation should attempt to reproduce it as closely as possible. If the source text refers to something which would be unfamiliar to English readers, the translation should recast the passage to retain the flavor of the original as much as possible. This may involve brief, discreet definitions (something like: "Amaterasu, the sun goddess") or more substantial recasting.

#### Quoted titles of works in the source language:

If a work makes reference to a publication in the source language, the translator should (a) romanize the reference if the work is not available in English translation, or (b) replace it with a reference to the most recent published English translation. If the atmosphere conveyed by a title, rather than the specific text being referred to, is most important to the meaning of a passage, the translator might choose to translate the title. This applies to works of fiction intended for general readers – specialist texts, nonfiction, and bibliographies require different treatment.

#### Unusual dialects

This is a constant problem, and many attempts at dialect can be way off course. You should try to suggest regional accents or bumpkin-ness through a few well-chosen words and phrases, and leave most of the sentences as standard speech.

Many translators have suggested or used many different ways of doing this, but (in our considered opinion) none of them is really successful. For example, "Them people up there" as opposed to "those people" is preferable to "Them people uppa yonder." We want to suggest something of the flavor of the original, but we can't slow readers down, or make them laugh when the scene isn't funny, or (the worst) make them stop and think "that's odd." Using prohibition-era gangster slang for a yakuza speaking Osaka dialect just doesn't work.

#### Translator notes

If you wish to add notes about your translation you are of course welcome to. However, your translation will be judged on its merits as a finished translation. You will have to come up with appropriate answers for your questions, and write the story to reflect them. **With the exception of design and layout issues, what you write should be ready for publication.**

#### One last word:

**DON'T FORGET TO TRANSLATE THE TITLE, TOO!**

## たそがれ

鈴木三重吉

私を探していらしたの？ 今裏の庭へ出ていたところです。裏の栗の木から、蜘蛛が糸に伝つって水に下おりました。そして水の上へ網を張っています。あなたは私には隠してお出でですけれど、今にじきあちらへ帰っておしまいになるのでしょうか？ でも夕方に蜘蛛が水の上へ下りると屹きつ度だれかが遠くへ行くのだといいます。いいえ本当です。この海ばたの人が言うことは何でも一々ちゃんと当ります。小さい蜘蛛。あなたも見て入いらっしゃい。下駄をおはきにならないでも芝生の上ですから足は汚れません。私だったて足袋たびの鏝ます。

別れが悪いからと思って、黙もっていらっしゃるのでしょうか？ どちらにしてももう五日とはここにはお出でになりはしないでしょう。そこから見えませうでしょうか？ あの無花果いちじくの木の下したのところ。もう暗くいから急いいで巣くさを張はっています。黄色い蜘蛛。伯母おばあさんがですか？ どうですか。あなたに何か言いいましたか？ それは少しは何と

か思っているかも知れません。こないだも縫物をしているときに、何でも女がしまいは損をするのだからと、出し抜けにこんなことを言いますから、それは何の事ですと聞きましたら、女は一度人を思うと死ぬまで忘れられないから怖ろしいと言うのです。私は解らないようなふりをして聞いていました。伯母さんはただそれだけしか言いはしません。

私が何をあなたにかくしたでしょう？　こないだ言いかけてやめた事ですか？　言います。隠したのじゃありません。しまいには言おうと思っておりました。私の事ではありません。私の小さいときに亡くなった母の事です。伯母さんが何でもない事を私に話してお聞かせたものですから、私は憂な気になりました。伯母さんは母が苦勞ばかりして死んだのが可哀想だと言って、私のまだ生れぬ前の事なぞをいろいろ詳しく話してくれました。ついこないだ。私の母は丁度今の私と同じ年に、家へ嫁入りして来ようというその晩に、不意に自分で死のうとしたのです。嫁入りの晩にです。

その頃は母の実家も物がたんとあった時分でしたから、母は大変に立派な支度をしてもらったのだそうでした。そして今日はいよいよ嫁入りして出るのだというその夕方、家中が大ぜいで取り込んでいる間に、母へ衣裳を着せる役目の女が、母はどこへ行ったのかと言ひ言ひ、方々を探して廻ったそうでした。すると母がどこにもいないものですから、伯母さんと二人で探し廻っていると、髪結いが、さきほど髪がすんでお化粧をな

さると、そのまま倉の方へ走せてお行きになったと言うので、二人で倉へ尋ねに行ったら、倉の二階にいたそうです。伯母さんは何にも知らないものですから、ただ恥かしさに逃げ隠れているのだとはかり思つて、手燭を点して二階へ上つて行くと、薄暗い向うの片隅に、二つ折りの屏風が立ててあるので、まあと言つて笑つたのです。おいでなさいよ、何事ですと言ひ言ひ側へ行つて覗いて見ると、母は上から下まで目無垢の着物を着て、俯つ伏していましたと。咽喉を切つて死んでいたのだそうです。

私は聞いて慄と顫えました。そしてもう沢山ですと言つてわんわん泣き出しました。伯母さんは、悪かった、こんなことまで話すのではなかったのにと、自分もやっぱり涙ぐんでいました。

私はこの話を聞いてからは、悲しい心持になりました。それからはよく、怖ろしいものを覗いて見るように、時々この話を思い出しては、血が黒くなるように悲しいものですから、どうかして忘れるように、考えないようにしようと思ひ思ひしていましたが、どうした訳ですか、この頃では、あれは私の母ではなく、私の事のような気がしてなりません。私が眞つ白い着物を着て、血に染つて倒れたのだと思われませんか。

人に言つては母に叱られるような気もしますけれど、なぜかこの話をそつとあなたに話したくて、今言おうか言おうかと、なんべんとなく思ひました。もういつお別れしてもほかに言うことはありません。私？　泣いていやしません。ただお話ですもの。

でも、もうほかのお話をしましょう。ごらんなさい。暗くなりましたこと。もう蜘蛛の巣が見えませんわ。真ん中に黒く見えるのが蜘蛛でしょうか。私？ どうしてあなたのこと忘れられましょう。おや、浮草の葉が流れて来ました。まあ、待って……人が見るから。

IDno	1	2	3	4	total	Rank
2016.010	54	50	52		156	1
2016.006	51	48	50		149	2
2016.009	48	56	44		148	3
2016.024	45	50	52		147	4
2016.076	48	50	48		146	5
2016.055	39	46	56		141	6
2016.033	45	48	44		137	7
2016.085	45	44	46		135	8
2016.068	48	34	52		134	9
2016.088	42	48	42		132	10
2016.035	42	36	52		130	11
2016.011	48	36	42		126	12
2016.048	42	46	38		126	12
2016.053	15	56	54		125	14
2016.056	21	52	50		123	15
2016.040	18	50	54		122	16
2016.028	42	20	54		116	17
2016.017	45	22	48		115	18
2016.047	21	40	52		113	19
2016.027	15	58	36		109	20
2016.064	18	46	44		108	21
2016.002	18	50	38		106	22
2016.016	15	36	54		105	23
2016.039	15	42	48		105	23
2016.063	15	42	48		105	23
2016.077	15	40	50		105	23
2016.062	21	32	50		103	27
2016.069	21	42	40		103	27
2016.079	21	34	42		97	29
2016.051	18	42	36		96	30

IDno	1	2	3	4	total	Rank
2016.067	18	34	44		96	30
2016.043	18	44	32		94	32
2016.018	18	22	52		92	33
2016.074	18	34	40		92	33
2016.041	21	34	36		91	35
2016.080	15	42	34		91	35
2016.042	15	30	44		89	37
2016.005	18	30	40		88	38
2016.004	15	36	36		87	39
2016.054	18	22	46		86	40
2016.023	15	28	42		85	41
2016.050	15	24	46		85	41
2016.013	15	32	36		83	43
2016.052	21	32	30		83	43
2016.025	18	42	22		82	45
2016.065	21	30	30		81	46
2016.008	18	26	36		80	47
2016.012	21	12	40		73	48
2016.044	21	22	30		73	48
2016.070	15	26	32		73	48
2016.007	15	20	36		71	51
2016.066	15	16	40		71	51
2016.087	15	28	28		71	51
2016.086	21	20	28		69	54
2016.021	18	14	36		68	55
2016.057	15	20	32		67	56
2016.003	21	8	36		65	57
2016.059	21	16	28		65	57
2016.061	18	20	24		62	59
2016.019	21	4	36		61	60

IDno	1	2	3	4	total	Rank
2016.075	21	28	12		61	60
2016.022	21	2	36		59	62
2016.081	18	12	28		58	63
2016.030	21	22	14		57	64
2016.073	15	6	36		57	64
2016.015	21	8	24		53	66
2016.072	21	8	22		51	67
2016.037	18	28	4		50	68
2016.001	15	18	16		49	69
2016.032	18	10	20		48	70
2016.078	18	20	4		42	71
2016.084	18	16	4		38	72
2016.029	18	10	8		36	73
2016.036	6	0	30		36	73
2016.038	21	8	6		35	75
2016.071	6	0	28		34	76
2016.031	15	8	8		31	77
2016.060	15	12	4		31	77
2016.082	21	10	0		31	77
2016.046	18	6	6		30	80
2016.058	18	8	4		30	80
2016.034	21	4	0		25	82
2016.083	15	2	4		21	83
2016.014	6	0	14		20	84
2016.045	15	4	0		19	85
2016.026	6	0	12		18	86
2016.020	6	0	10		16	87
2016.089	6	0	0		6	88

At the End of the Day

By Miekichi Suzuki

Were you looking for me? I was just out back. There's a spider running its thread down to the water from the chestnut tree back there, he's spreading his little net above the water.

You were trying to leave without me seeing, but once you cross over it's finished, isn't it?

But you know, they say when a spider descends to the water in the evening, someone is bound for a long trip. No, really, they do. And the things people along this coast say all come true, every one.

It's such a small spider.

Do come in and see it. You don't need sandals, your feet won't get dirty on the lawn. See, I'm in my stocking feet myself.

Are you so quiet because you feel bad for going? Well, it was only for five days anyway.

Oh, can you see it from there? Just below that fig tree. It's getting dark, so he's in a rush to finish his web. A yellow spider...

My Aunt? I wonder. Did she say something to you? Well, I know she's got something on her mind.

You know, just the other day when she was doing the sewing, she said that a woman always loses out in the end, and there's no getting by it, and when I wondered what that was supposed to mean she said "Once a woman gets her mind set on someone, she'll never forget him until she dies, and that's a terrible thing." I just listened and put on like I didn't understand. But that's all she said.

Why would you think I'm hiding something? Oh, you mean when I stopped what I was going to say earlier? I guess I'll tell you, then. I wasn't hiding anything. I just thought I'd leave it till the very end. It's not about me. It's about my mother, who passed when I was little. Aunt told me this like it was nothing at all, but it made me feel so peculiar.

Aunt said that my mother suffered terribly until she died, the poor thing, and she told me all about this eerie thing that happened before I was even born. This was just the other day that she told me. When my mother was just the same age as me now, on the evening she was to come join her new husband, apparently she tried to take her own life, without even realizing it! Can you imagine, on her own wedding night!

At the time mother's family were quite well off, you know, and so she always enjoyed the best. And of course, it was the day she was finally to be wed, so the house was all in a tizzy, and amongst all of that the girl who was to help mother dress started running around, saying "Where is she? Where is she?" and just looking for her everywhere. And mother was nowhere to be found!

So she and Aunt went to look together, and the hairdresser told them that she'd seen her, with her hair tied up and no makeup on, walking out to the storehouse. So the two of them went out to check the storehouse together, and they figured she was up on the second floor.

Aunt didn't know what was going on, she just thought mother had run off to hide out of

embarrassment, you know, so she lit a candle and they went up to the second story. There was a folding screen blocking off one dark corner, so Auntie laughed and said “There you are!” She went over, saying “Come on out now, whatever are you doing in there?” but when they got up alongside it they found mother lying face up, all wrapped in her white kimono, with her throat cut and pale as death.

When I heard that I took to shivering, and said “Oh, that is enough!” and began sobbing and crying...

Then Auntie said “Oh, I am sorry, I should never have mentioned it.” And you know, she was moved to tears herself.

Ever since I heard that story, I’ve been in such a melancholy state. And it seems to come back to me from time to time, as if I’d seen something terrible, and I find myself trying to forget it, trying to think of something else, because it makes me sad to my very bones. And you know now, sometimes I can’t help but feel as if it weren’t my mother but me. Me, all dressed in white, lying there covered in blood.

Telling someone about it makes me feel like a naughty child, but for some reason I just felt I had to tell you, and just now I was wondering if I should or if I shouldn’t, but I really just couldn’t help myself. Because, you see, once we’ve parted I may never have the chance again.

Me? No, I’m not crying. It’s just a story.

Oh, but let’s do talk of something else. Look. It’s already dark out. You can’t see the spider’s web at all. That dark spot at the very center, though, that must be the spider. Me? How could I ever forget you? Look there, the first leaves have come drifting by.

Oh stop...someone will see.

## The Fading Light

Have you been searching for me? I'd just gone out to the back garden. There's a spider which descended down from the Japanese Photinia tree at the back and is weaving a web over the water. You were planning to leave without me knowing weren't you? Soon you're planning to go back home for good right? They say that when a spider comes down to the water, someone will go far away. It really is true you know. Every single thing this coastal woman says comes true. Such a small spider. Go on, have a look. It's on the lawn so even without your shoes on your feet won't get dirty. Look, I'm only wearing socks.

You couldn't bear to say goodbye so you kept quite right? Either way it's been five days already. It's not like you were going to stay here any longer. You should be able to see it from there. It's under that fig tree over there. It's rushing to beat the night, that yellow spider. Is it because of my aunt? Am I right? Did she say something to you? She may be thinking of something. Something happened the other day as well. Whilst doing some embroidery, she said out of the blue that apparently it's because women hurt people in the end. So I asked her what she meant and she said that women are terrifying because once they fall for someone they won't be able to forget them until the end of their life. I just listened acting like I didn't understand. And that's all she said.

So what is it that you think I'm hiding from you? The thing from the other day which I started to talk about but stopped? I'll tell you if you want. It's not as if I was trying to keep it a secret or anything. I was thinking about telling you eventually. Though it's not about me, it's about my mother who passed away when I was young. My aunt always makes me listen to trivial things so I thought it a little strange. Just the other day, she said she thought it sad that my mother suffered up until death. She talked in great detail about things which happened before I was born and when I was young. It was on the evening of my mother's marriage into the family, she would have been the same age I am now. On that night, on her wedding night, she killed herself. Mother was well endowed and I'm told that the preparations for the ceremony were splendid. On the night when she was finally going to get married, amongst the many people bustling about the house was the woman with the duty of getting her into her dress. She was searching all over for my mother asking where she had gone. However she couldn't find her, so my aunt joined her in the search. As they were looking, the hairdresser told them that after her hair and makeup were done, my mother had made off for the storehouse, so they went to the storehouse where they found her on the first floor. My aunt has always been bad at understanding these things so she just assumed that my mother was hiding out of embarrassment. She lit a candle lamp and went up to the first floor to find a folding screen folded in half standing erect in a gloomy corner on the opposite side of the room. At which my aunt said "ah" and smiled. She approached the other side of the room whilst calling for my mother to come out but when she peeked behind the folding screen, she saw my mother lying on the floor dressed from head to foot in a white kimono. Her throat was slit, she was dead.

Hearing that, I shook terribly, said "That's enough" and burst out crying. My aunt said "sorry, there was no need for me to speak of this" and shed a few tears herself. After hearing that story I became quite depressed. Afterwards I would sometimes remember the story with fright, as if I had taken a peek at something terrifying. When I recalled it the sadness could have made my blood run cold, so I tried with all my might to try and forget, to try not to think

about it. I wonder why it is that lately all I can see is not my mother, but myself dressed in that pure white kimono, stained with blood, lying on the floor. I get the feeling that if I told anyone I would be reprimanded, as if by my mother. Even so, for some reason I've thought so many times about secretly telling you.

It doesn't matter when we part. I don't have anything else to say. Me? I'm not crying. After all, it's just a story. But anyway, let's talk about something else. Take a look. It's really gotten dark. You can't see the spider anymore. I wonder if it's the blackish object right in the center. Me? Why is it that I can forget about you? Oh my, the duck weed has flown this way. Ah, wait, someone will see.

## Twilight

Suzuki Miekichi

Looking for me, were you? I was outside in the rear garden just now. At the chestnut tree back there a spider slid down a strand onto the pond and then started spinning a web over the water. You've been keeping it from me, but you're going to be heading back for good any day now, aren't you? Well, when a spider alights upon the water in the evening somebody's surely travelling afar, they say. No, really, and the old sayings of the seaside folk around here always hit the mark to a tee. A small spider—come see for yourself. Don't bother with your sandals, your feet won't get dirty on the grassy lawn. See, I'm just in my socks.

You're so quiet because you feel bad about leaving me, no? But anyway after the fifth you'll be long gone, I guess. You can see the spider from there, can't you, over by that withered old tree? Spinning its web as fast as can be since it's already getting dark. A yellow spider.

My aunt? Why? Did she say something to you? Perhaps she kind of had something like this in mind. The other day we were doing our needlework together when suddenly out of the blue she started in on how women always lose out in the end. When I asked her what brought that on, she just went on saying how frightful it can be the way a woman, once she falls for a man, can never forget him till the day she dies. I sat there listening as if I had no idea what she was talking about, and that's all she said on the subject.

What have I kept from you? That thing the other day I started to mention but stopped? I'll tell you. It's not that I was keeping secrets from you. I was meaning to tell you before too long. No, not about me. It's about my mother, who died when I was little. I was in a weird mood because my aunt had been filling my head with trifling stories about her. She said how pitiful it was the way my mother suffered constantly till her death and told me in detail about various things that happened before I was born. Why, just the other day she told me how when my mother was exactly the same age as me now, on the night of her wedding she unexpectedly tried to kill herself. On the very night of her wedding.

In those days my mother's family was a pretty big deal so she was being married off in grand style, apparently. So at last it was the big day when she'd be leaving home as a bride, and that evening the whole household was in a big flurry when the girl who was supposed to dress my mother in her wedding garments kept going around asking everyone where'd she gone, looking for her here, there, and everywhere. But she was nowhere to be found, so my aunt started looking too, and the hairdresser told them that just a while ago once her hair and makeup were done she ran as is over back to the storehouse. When the two of them went to check the storehouse, it seemed like she was up on the second floor. My aunt, with no idea what was going on, thinking my mother had merely fled and hid out of shyness, lit a candle and went up the stairs. Over across in a corner dimly lit was standing a double folding screen. Laughing and teasing her to come out already, my aunt went over and peeked around the screen and saw my mother dressed head to toe in her pure white wedding dress bent over prone. She had slit her throat and was dying.

Hearing this made me shiver with cold chills. Telling my aunt enough already, I burst into tears. "I'm so sorry, this isn't something I should've told you," she said and started crying herself.

I've been feeling depressed ever since hearing this story. And ever since, each and every time it pops into my mind like a sneak peep at something awful I try whatever I can to forget it and get it out of my head since it's so sad it could make your blood run black, but for

whatever reason lately I can't help but get the feeling that it wasn't my mother, it was me. Me dressed in a pure white dress, me collapsed covered in blood.

I feel like my mother would be mad at me for talking to people about all this, but for some reason I wanted to secretly tell you and you alone, and I came this close to doing so oh so many times. Even when we go our separate ways, I'll never tell anyone else. Me? I'm not crying. It's just a story, after all.

But anyway, let's talk about something else. Look how dark it's gotten. You can't even see the web anymore. That dark-looking thing in the middle, would that be the spider? Me? How could I ever forget you? Look, duckweed leaves floating by! My goodness, wait...people will see us.

## Twilight

Suzuki Miekichi

Were you looking for me? I was just out in the courtyard garden. There was a spider hanging from the chestnut tree out back; it was dangling over the pond. It seems to be making a web over the water. I know you will be going back soon, and I know you're trying to keep this a secret from me. I'm right, aren't I? I know because I've heard that when a spider lowers itself towards a pool of water in the evening, it means that soon, someone will be going far away. No, it's true. People who live near this sea are always right about these kinds of things. It's just a small spider. Please go, take a look. You don't need to put on any geta sandals; you can walk on the grass so your feet won't get dirty. I only wore my tabi socks.

Perhaps you are silent because you feel bad about parting? It doesn't matter. I knew you wouldn't be here longer than five nights in any case. Can you see it from there?

Underneath the fig tree. It's frantically weaving its web because it knows that darkness will be falling soon. That yellow spider.

My aunt? Who knows. Did she mention something to you? Perhaps she has something on her mind. When she was sewing the other day, she suddenly said to me, "No matter what they do, women always lose in the end." When I asked her what she meant, she replied, "Once a woman has fallen in love, she will never be able to forget that person for the rest of her life. It is a horrible affliction." I just listened and pretended not to really understand. That was all she said to me though.

What do you suppose I hid from you? You mean the thing I stopped myself from saying the other day? I'll tell you. I didn't hide it from you though. I intended to tell you in the end. In fact, it's not even about me. It's about my mother; she died when I was young. But my aunt told me this story out of the blue, and it just made me feel anxious. My aunt was saying that she felt such pity for my mother, dying after going through so much hardship, and she told me all about my mother's life before I was born. It was just the other day that she told me. My aunt was saying that on the night my mother was to be wed into my father's family, when she was just around my age, she had abruptly tried to kill herself. On the night she was to be married.

Her family was quite wealthy in those days, and apparently they went to great lengths to arrange a grand celebration. On the evening when she was finally to be wed away, while the whole house was bustling with activity, the young maiden who was to help my mother put on her gown was running around looking for her, mumbling to herself, "Where is she? Oh, where is she?" When my mother was nowhere to be found, my aunt went with the girl to look for her. The hairdresser said that she had done my mother's hair and makeup a little while ago, and then saw her hurry off to the storehouse. When the two of them investigated the storehouse, they found her up on the second floor. My aunt was oblivious, just thinking that my mother must have run off to escape the embarrassment. She brought a candle up to the second floor and could see a folding

screen standing in the dimness of the corner. My aunt told me that she chuckled, “Well, well... Come on then, what is this about...,” and as she came closer and peered into the darkness, she saw my mother dressed in her pure white wedding kimono, lying face down. It looked like she had cut her throat and died.

When I heard that, a frightful shiver ran through me. I managed to choke out, “...Stop, please...,” as tears began to flood my eyes. My aunt apologized, saying “Forgive me. I really didn’t mean to say that much...” as she started to tear up herself.

My heart has felt heavy ever since I heard this story. I recall it every now and then, as if I myself was gazing upon that terrible scene, and every time do, I feel my blood run black with sorrow. So I try to forget about it, and try not to think about it, but for some reason, whenever I do, I always imagine that this person wasn’t my mother, but was me instead. I can only imagine myself, toppled over, adorned in a white kimono stained with blood.

My mother would scold me if she knew I told anyone, but somehow I wanted to tell you this story in confidence, and always thought to myself, should I tell them now? How about now? And so now, no matter when we part, there is nothing more I need to say. Me? I’m not crying. It is just a story anyways.

But, let’s talk about something else. Look. Look how dark it has gotten. I can’t see the spider’s web anymore. I suppose that dark spot in the middle is the spider. Me? How can I forget about you. Oh, some floating weeds have come drifting past. Hold on... I can see the figure of a person.

## Twilight (Suzuki Miekichi)

Were you looking for me? I just stepped out into the back garden. A spider scrambled down its thread from the chestnut tree and now it's spinning a web above the surface of the water. You wouldn't tell me, but you're going back soon. They say that when a spider descends to the water in the evening, someone is bound to set off on a distant journey. It's true. Whatever the people along the coast here say will happen always comes to pass. Little spider. You come and look at it too. You won't get your feet dirty here on the grass, even without clogs. I'm only wearing socks myself.

I suppose you said nothing because you felt guilty about leaving. In any case, you won't stay here for another five days. You must be able to see it from there. Under that fig tree. Hurrying to spin its web now it's dark already. Yellow spider.

Does my aunt know? It's difficult to say. Did she mention something to you? Perhaps she has an inkling. When we were sewing the other day, she said that women always lose out in the end and, because her words were so unexpected, I asked her what she meant. She said that it was terrifying how when a woman falls in love with a man, she cannot forget him to her dying day. I pretended not to understand her. That was all she said then.

And what did I conceal from you? The story I began and then cut short? I'll tell it. It wasn't as if I was hiding anything. I planned to share it with you in the end. It's not about me, but my mother, who died when I was small. It felt strange to me that my aunt spoke about it so lightly. She said what a shame it was that my mother had suffered so much and died, and told me all kinds of things that had happened before I was born. She told me this not long ago. She said that when my mother was the same age I am now, on the evening she was due to join the family as a bride, she'd suddenly attempted suicide. On the evening of her wedding.

My mother's family was well off then, so they'd made all kinds of lavish preparations. And on the evening of the wedding, as the house was in a great state of confusion, the maid who was to dress my mother went from person to person asking where she had gone. Because she couldn't find her anywhere, my aunt joined in the search. The hairdresser told them that after her hair and makeup were complete, my mother had just dashed off as she was toward the storehouse. When they went to the storehouse, they found her on the second floor. My aunt had no idea what had happened, imagining only that my mother had run away to hide out of embarrassment. When she lit a candle and climbed the stairs, she gasped in surprise and laughed as she saw a folding screen was standing in front of the dimly lit corner on the opposite side of the room. "Come here," she said, and "What's the matter?" as she walked over there, but when she looked around the screen, my mother was lying face-down, fully dressed in her pure white wedding kimono. She lay there dead, with her throat cut.

I trembled in fear as I listened. Then I screamed, "Enough," and burst out weeping. "It was wrong to tell you so much," my aunt said, and her eyes also filled with tears.

I've been full of sadness ever since I heard this story. Often, as though I'm peering at something terrifying. . . when I recall, it's like my blood turns black with sorrow, and I've tried and tried to forget and steer my thoughts away. . . but for some reason now I feel that

it's not my mother in the story, but me. I can only think that I'm lying there in a white kimono stained with blood.

My mother would probably scold me for telling, yet I wanted to share it with you somehow, just between the two of us. I've often been on the point of telling you. Even if we're to part, there's nothing else to say. Me? I'm not crying, only saying what happened.

But let's talk about something else. Look. It's dark now. You can't see the spider's web. I suppose the blackness in the center is the spider. And me? I don't know how I'll ever forget you. There, a lily pad has floated over. Oh, wait. . . Someone might see.

## The Gathering Dusk

by

Suzuki Miekichi

Were you looking for me? I was just out in the back garden. A spider has come down to the surface of the water on its thread from the chestnut tree at the end of the garden. It is spinning its web there, over the water.

You're trying to hide it from me, but soon you will leave for that other place again, won't you? A spider coming down to spin its web over the water at twilight surely means that soon, someone will be leaving for somewhere far away. No, it's true. The things this lady of the waves says are never wrong. Tiny spider. Darling, come and look with me. There is no need to wear your *geta* sandals as we can walk upon the grass. See, I am fine in my *tabi* socks.

Are you so silent because you feel it wrong to leave me?

Either way, you will not be returning here for five days. You can see it from there. Beneath the fig tree. Night is coming on, so it is hurriedly spinning its web there, the yellow spider.

My aunt did? And what did she say to you?

That has been on her mind for some time. Recently, when we were sewing, she abruptly said that eventually women always feel a loss, one way or another. When I asked why she thought so, she told me that once a woman thinks of someone, she can never forget them as long as she lives, and horrible that is. I listened to her, feigning ignorance. My aunt said only that, and did not continue.

That story I have been withholding from you? The one I had started to tell you, but could not finish? Let me tell you now. I was not actually withholding anything from you. I had been meaning to tell you, eventually. It is not about me. It concerns my mother, who passed away when I was little. My aunt had been chatting on about trivial topics when she unexpectedly sprung that story on me, and it upset me. She said that she felt so sorry that my mother had died after suffering such a hard life, and she told me many things that happened before I was even born, in such detail. It was just a little while ago. She told me that when my mother was exactly the same age as I am now, on the eve of her wedding, she had suddenly determined to die. On the very eve of her wedding.

It was a time when my mother's family were rather well off, and they had been making very lavish preparations for her wedding. On the evening that she was finally to be married, the house was a flurry of activity. The woman who had the role of dressing my

mother asked where she had gone and calling for her insistently, set about searching for her high and low. As my mother was nowhere to be found, my aunt joined the search. The hair stylist informed the pair that my mother's hair and makeup had just been finished, when she had run off in the direction of the storehouse. When the two women went to investigate the storehouse, it appeared that she must have gone up to the second floor. My aunt, knowing nothing and thinking only that she must have run off and hidden due to nerves, lit a candle and ascended the stairs. There was a small folding screen standing in the deep shadows of one corner. My aunt exclaimed, "Well!" And laughed. Asking what was wrong and entreating my mother to come out, she had approached the screen and peered around it. My mother was there, dressed in her pure white *kimono* from head to foot, lying prone upon the floor. She had slit her own throat and died.

Upon hearing this, I trembled with horror. My aunt exclaimed that she had already said too much, and burst into tears. She apologised for telling me so much, and I found that I was crying too.

I have been feeling sad ever since I heard that story. Since then, as if daring myself to steal a glance at some terrible object, I sometimes think back to it. It is such a miserable tale that it might turn your blood black with sadness. Because of that, I try to forget it. I try over and over not to think of it but recently, no matter what, I persistently feel that somehow the story was not about my mother, but about me. I can think of nothing but myself fallen to the floor in my pure white *kimono*, which is soaked with blood.

I feel as if my mother would scold me for telling this story, but for some reason I wanted to tell it privately to *you*. I kept wondering when to tell you, if this were the moment. There is nothing more that I would say before we part. Me? Oh no, I am not crying. It is only a story.

Anyway, let us talk about something else. Look at that, it is already dark. I can no longer make out the spider's web. That blackness at the centre must be the spider. Me? Oh, how can I ever forget you? Look, fronds of duckweed have come floating down on the water. Ah, wait... Someone might see.

“Evening”

by Suzuki Miekichi

Were you looking for me? I was just out in the backyard. From the chestnut tree out back, a spider traveled down its thread and landed on the water. And now it's spreading its web above the water. You're keeping me in the dark about it, but soon enough you'll have to return back there, right? They say that when a spider alights on the water in the evening, someone is sure to go far, far away. No—it's true. The people who live by the seashore here, each and every thing they say proves to be true. The small spider. Take a look too, please. Even if you don't put on your clogs, it's just grass, so your feet won't get dirty. Even I'm just in my socks.

Are you keeping silent because you feel badly about parting? Anyway, I take it that for five days you won't be returning. You can see it from there, yes? Under the fig tree. Night has already fallen, so it's hastily spinning its web. The yellow spider.

*Aunt* did? What is it? Did she tell you something? She's probably been thinking, “I've just got to...!” The other day, she's sewing when she suddenly exclaims, “Woman always ends up the loser!” So I ask, “And by that you mean?” and *Aunt* responds, “It's dreadful—once a woman thinks of a man, she can't forget about him until she dies.” I'd listened with feigned ignorance. *Aunt* doesn't say anything else.

What could it be that I hid from you? Is it what I started to say the other day, and then stopped? I'll say it. I'm not hiding anything. I was thinking that at the end of the day, I'd go ahead and tell you. It's not about me. It's about my mother, who died when I was small. *Aunt* is given to filling my ears with trivial things, so I had a strange feeling about this story. *Aunt* said that it was pitiful, how Mother labored and toiled and then died, and she went into detail about all sorts of tales, especially from the time before my birth. Just recently. *Aunt* said that when Mother was the same age as I am now, on the night when she was to be married into the family, she unexpectedly tried to do away with herself. On the night of her wedding.

Back then, the story goes, Mother's family was also well-to-do, so she was outfitted with the most splendid attire. On the evening when she was finally to be married off, when all the family was taken up with all the people present, the woman tasked with dressing Mother cried out, “Where is she? Where is she?” and then searched all about. But Mother was nowhere to be found, so *Aunt* joined the woman in her hunt, when the hairdresser said, “I was done with her hair and she'd applied her makeup, when she ran off just like that in the direction of the storehouse.” So the two of them headed towards the storehouse to check, and there she was on the second floor. Being naive, *Aunt* was fixated on the idea that Mother had escaped and hidden away purely out of bashfulness. *Aunt* lit a candlestick and ascended to the second floor, and there, in the faint darkness of the opposite corner, was erected a two-paneled folding screen. “Well then!” *Aunt* said and laughed. “Come on out. What's wrong?” she asked, and went to the side of the screen and peeked around, and there Mother was, in a pure white kimono, facedown. She had slit her throat and was dying.

I shuddered at the account. “That's enough already,” I said and burst out crying. “Sorry,” *Aunt* said, “I shouldn't have shared all of that.” And then, sure enough, she too started tearing up.

The story left me feeling gloomy. From then on, time and again I would recall the story as though I were trying to peer at some fearsome thing. I would then feel glum, like my veins were filling with blackness, and so I tried and tried to forget, to not think, but for some reason, I can't help but feel these days that it's not Mother's story, but mine. I can't help but think that it is I who am wearing the white garments, stained with blood, and fallen.

I have a feeling that sharing with others this story means getting scolded by Mother, but somehow I've just been dying to secretly tell it to *you*, and time and again I've thought, "Should I speak now? What about now?" But now, regardless of when you leave, there's nothing left to say. Me? Crying?—I'm not crying. It's just a story.

But let's talk about something else now. Look there. It's already dark. Oh no, the spider's web can no longer be seen! In the middle, the dark-looking thing—that's the spider, right? Me? How will I ever forget you? Oh!—a leaf from a floating plant has drifted over. Hey there, wait a moment...people will see us!

Dusk – Suzuki Miekichi

Were you looking for me? I was just in the back garden. A spider dangled itself down from the chestnut tree at the back, and now it's spinning a web above the water. You've been keeping it a secret from me, but you're going to leave soon, aren't you? They say that when a spider lowers itself down to the water in the evening, somebody will go far away. No, really – it's true. Everything these coast-dwellers say, even the smallest thing, comes to pass. Now come take a look at the little spider. You don't even have to put your shoes on since the lawn will stop your feet from getting dirty. I went out in my socks.

You're keeping quiet because you feel guilty about leaving me, aren't you? In any case, you'll be gone in five days time. Can you see it from there? There, at the bottom of the fig tree. It's spinning its web quickly since it's getting dark. The yellow spider.

It was my aunt, wasn't it? Did she say something to you? She may suspect something at least. Recently, while sewing, she said out of the blue that it's women who lose in the end. I asked her what she meant, and she said that it's terrible being a woman because once a woman falls in love with a man, she can't forget about him until she dies. I listened, pretending not to understand what she was talking about. But that was all she said.

What have I hidden from you? Are you worried about that thing I started – then stopped – telling you about the other day? Well, let me tell you everything now. I haven't been hiding this from you – I was going to tell you eventually. It's not even about me. It's about my mother, who died when I was young. My aunt told me all sorts of little things about her, which made me feel so strange. She told me that she felt sorry for my mother because she lived a life full of suffering and then died, and she told me in detail about many things that happened before I was born. This was quite recently. She said that when my mother was exactly the same age as I am now, on the night when she was due to move into her new husband's home, she unexpectedly tried to kill herself. It was the night when she was due to move in.

At that time, my mother's family was well-off, so my mother was given lots of extravagant things to start her new life with. On the evening when everything was due to be moved into her husband's home, while the house was busy with an army of people, the woman who was tasked with helping my mother get dressed couldn't find her anywhere. She searched high and low, asking where my mother had gone, but she was nowhere to be found, so my aunt joined the search. The stylist told them that my mother had run off towards the warehouse after she'd finished her hair and makeup, so the two of them headed to the warehouse and sensed my mother was on the second floor. My aunt didn't know what had happened and just thought that my mother was hiding because she felt nervous. She lit a candle and headed up to the second floor, where a folding screen stood in a dark corner. "Well, well, well," my aunt laughed. "What are you doing? Come on out of there," she said, moving towards the corner to get a better look. But when she looked behind the screen, she saw my mother lying face down, clothed head-to-toe in her white kimono. She had cut her own throat; she was dead.

I shook uncontrollably when I heard this. "That's enough!" I said, and broke down crying. My aunt apologized: "I've told you too much," she said. She also had tears in her eyes.

I've felt sad ever since I heard what happened. Whenever I think about it, it's like I'm confronting something truly terrible, and I feel a deep sadness, as if my blood has turned black. I've tried hard to forget, not to think about it, but for some reason, recently, I can't help but feel that it wasn't my mother, it was me. All I can think is that it was me lying there, in a pure white kimono, covered in blood.

I felt like if I told people about this, my mother would be angry with me, but I did want to tell you, I did try to tell you, many, many times. Even if we do part ways now, I've nothing left to say. Me? I'm not looking for sympathy. I'm just telling you my story.

But let's talk about something else. Look. It's become dark. I can't see the spider web anymore. Though that black thing in the middle may be the spider. As for me? How will I forget about you? Oh, the duckweed has drifted over. Ah, wait a minute...somebody might see us.

## Dusk

By Suzuki Miekichi

Oh, were you looking for me? I was out in the backyard just now. A spider went down to the water on its thread from the chestnut tree in the back, then started building a web over the water's surface. You may be hiding it from me, but you'll be going back to that place soon, won't you? It's said when a spider weaves its web over water in the evening, someone will surely go far away. No, really, it's true. The people living here by the sea are always right about everything they say. It's a small spider. You take a look, too. You don't need to put on your sandals, your feet won't get dirty walking on the grass. I'm just in my socks, myself.

Do you stay silent because you feel bad about parting? But you'll be gone in five days either way, yes? Surely you can see it from where you are. Around the bottom of that fig tree. It's already dark, so it's rushing to spin its web. That yellow spider.

Auntie did? How was that? Did she say something to you? She must've had her reasons. Just recently she was doing her needlework when all of a sudden she blurted out that women always end up hurt in the end. When I asked what she meant, she explained that once a woman loves someone, she can't forget him until the day she dies, and how frightening that was. I listened pretending like I didn't get it. That was all she said.

What did I hide from you? Do you mean what I was about to say the other day? I'll tell you. I wasn't hiding it. I was thinking of telling you in the end. It wasn't about me. It was about my mother, who died when I was little. Auntie told me all this as if it were nothing, so it left me bewildered. She said she felt sorry for how my mother died after a life of nothing but suffering, and recounted things in great detail that happened before I was born and such. She said all this very recently. When my mother was precisely the age I am now, on the night she was to marry into this family, out of the blue, she tried to kill herself. On her wedding night, mind you.

At that time, my mother's family was very well-off, so the arrangements were absolutely magnificent. Then, on the very evening she was finally to leave her parents' house, the woman who was supposed to dress my mother in her wedding attire was going around asking where my mother had gone off to. Apparently, she'd been searching all over the place for her. But my mother was nowhere to be found, so Auntie joined the woman in the search. As they looked everywhere, they came across the hairdresser, who said she had just finished doing my mother's hair, and that once her makeup was done, my mother had run in the direction of the warehouse just like that. So the two women went to check the warehouse, and found that my mother was on the second floor. Auntie had no idea what was going on, she just assumed my mother had run away and hid out of shyness. She lit a candle in a holder and went up to the second floor. In a dim corner beyond the halo of candlelight stood a two-panel folding screen. Auntie said, "Now, now," and laughed. "What is all this? Come out from there." As she tried to coax my mother out she approached the screen and peered around it. That's when she saw my mother, lying face down, dressed from head to toe in her wedding kimono, dead from a slit throat.

When I heard that, I shook with uncontrollable fear. I yelled that I'd had enough and started bawling my eyes out. Auntie apologized, saying she shouldn't have told me all that, and even she ended up with tears at the corners of her eyes.

I'd been in a glum mood ever since I heard all this. Since then, I often recalled this story as if with that desire people sometimes have to see scary things. But it was so sad it made my heart sink into the ground, so ultimately I ended up telling myself not to think about it. Yet

for some reason, around this time, I can't help feeling like that wasn't my mother, it was me. All I can think is that I was the one lying there in a white kimono, covered in blood.

I get the feeling my mother would scold me if I told anyone this story, but I've always had an inexplicable urge to tell *you*. Countless times I've thought, "I'll tell him now, I'll tell him now." So now, it doesn't matter when we part, I have nothing left to say. Me? I don't cry about it. It's only a story.

But let's talk about something else now. Look, it's gotten dark. You can't see the web anymore. That black thing in the middle, is that the spider? Me? How could I possibly forget you? Oh, some duckweed has come drifting by. Wait, hold on... Someone might see us.

*Twilight**Suzuki Miekichi*

Were you looking for me? I've just come into the back garden, where a spider has lowered itself to the water by a thread from the chestnut tree, casting its web down to the surface. You came out here, hiding yourself from me, but are you about to slip back inside again? It's said that when a spider lowers itself to the water in the evening it means that someone is sure to go far away. No, really. Everything that the people who live here by the ocean say is true. Come and look. It's a little spider. Even without sandals your feet won't get dirty on the lawn; I'm only wearing socks.

Have you nothing to say because you think it's wrong to split up? Whatever, you'll be gone in less than five days. You can see from over there under the fig tree can't you? It's getting dark, so the yellow spider is hurrying to spin its web.

Was it my aunt? Is that what it's all about? Did she say something to you? Perhaps she's got something on her mind. The other day, as she was sewing, she suddenly said to me, 'Whatever a woman does ends in misfortune.' When I asked her what she meant she went on, 'It's awful that once a woman has tender thoughts about someone, she'll never forget that person until she dies.' I pretended not to understand, but that was all she had to say.

Do you think I've hidden something from you? Something that I've started to say, but didn't finish? I'll tell you. I haven't hidden anything. I intended to let you know everything in the end. It's not about me, but about my mother who died when I was small. My aunt had only ever told me trivial things about her, which left me with an uneasy feeling. But only recently she spoke about how my mother had endured terrible hardship, how pathetic her death had been, and in great detail about various things that had happened before I was even born. She also said that on the evening of her wedding, when my mother was exactly the same age as I am now, for some reason she took her own life.

In honour of the occasion there had been lots to do in the family home, and elaborate preparations had to be made for my mother herself. Eventually, the evening of the wedding came, but when the house had filled with people the woman who was to help my mother get dressed suddenly cried, 'Where's she gone? Where's she gone?' looking around for her everywhere. Because my mother was nowhere to be found, the dresser and my aunt went to look for her. As they searched, the hairstylist told them that, having had her hair and makeup done, my mother had run off towards a barn. The two women went to the barn; it looked as if my mother must be on the first floor. My aunt had no idea what was going on, but guessed that she had run off and hidden out of embarrassment. Taking a lighted candle, she went up to the first floor, where there were two folding screens standing in a dimly-lit corner. 'Aha!' exclaimed my aunt, smiling with relief. 'Come out! What's the matter?' Approaching the screens, she peeped behind them. My mother, dressed from head to foot in her pure white wedding kimono, was lying face down. She was dead, her throat cut.

I shook with horror as I listened to this story, and the more I heard the more I wept. Realizing that she had said too much, my aunt was moved to tears herself.

Hearing the story made me terribly unhappy. Ever since, as if re-living the horror itself, I sometimes remember it, and am overwhelmed by sadness, my blood running cold. Time and time again I have wondered how I can forget, how I can stop thinking about it, how I can stop myself feeling that it was not my mother's experience but my own. But I can only imagine myself in a pure white kimono, collapsed and soaked in blood.

When I tell the story to other people I feel as if my mother is scolding me, and countless times I have thought, 'I want to tell it. But should I? Really, should I?' Anyway, once we have parted I won't be able to talk about it with you. What will I do then? Crying won't cure anything. It's just a story.

But let's change the subject. See, it's got dark. Now you can't see the spider's web. Is that black thing in the middle the spider? And me? How will I be able to forget *you*? Well, things are going to be rather unsettled. But we'll see.

*Dusk*

*Written by Suzuki Miekichi*

Were you looking for me? I was just out in the back yard for a bit. There was a spider descending from the chestnut tree on a strand of gossamer down to the water. Now she's spinning a web there over it. . . . I knew you were keeping her a secret from me, but you'll soon be going back to her and that'll be the end of us won't it? They say that if you see a spider coming down to the water at evening it means that someone will surely be going far away. No, it's true. The folks who live in this little seaside town are always right about such things. It's a little spider, you know. Why don't you come see for yourself? It's on the grass so you won't even have to wear your *geta* clogs to keep your feet clean. I'm still in just my *tabi* socks.

You're not telling me you're leaving because you think it would hurt me, don't you? Either way, you wouldn't be coming back here for another five days anyway, would you? Can you see it from where you are? It's over there under the fig tree. She's hurrying now to finish her web before it gets too dark. It's a yellow spider.

You mean my aunt? I'm not sure. Why, did she say something to you? She probably is a bit suspicious, though. When we were sewing together the other evening, out of the blue she said, "Women always suffer in the end, you know." Then when I asked her what she was talking about she said, "Once a woman loves a man, she'll never be able to forget him as long as she lives. It's just dreadful." I listened without comment as though her words had nothing to do with me. She had nothing more to say after that.

Oh, did I hide something from you? You mean what I started to say the other day and then thought better of? I'll tell you about it now. It wasn't that I was trying to hide it from you. I was going to tell you eventually. It's not about me, you know. It's about my late mother, who died when I was still a child. My aunt told me about something that she probably shouldn't have, and it crept me out a little. She used to tell me in considerable detail about all sorts of things, like things that happened with my mother before I was born, saying how sad it was that she had died after so many hardships. Just recently, she told me that when my mother was right about the same age as I am now, on the night of her wedding, she suddenly got the urge to die. On the very night she was to marry my father.

In those days, my mother's family was quite well-to-do, so they had spared no expense in preparing for her wedding. Then, on the very evening that she was to leave for her new husband's home, while the whole household was busy with the preparations, the servant woman who was to help my mother change into her wedding garments was going around throughout the house asking everyone where mother had gone off to. But since she was nowhere to be found, my aunt started going about with the woman to look for her. That's when they found the hairdresser, who told them that as soon as they had finished tying up her hair and doing her makeup, mother had hurried off toward the storehouse. So my aunt and the servant woman went to look for her there, and sure enough found her there in the upper room. Since my aunt didn't know anything about what my mother was planning, she just thought that she had run and hid out of embarrassment, so she lit a candle and climbed up to the second story. There in the dim light she saw a two-panelled privacy screen set up in the far corner of the room and laughed, "There you are, trying to hide!" She went over to my mother, urging her "Come on down! What are you up to?!" and there she found her lying face

down, arrayed from head to toe in a wedding kimono of the purest white. She told me she appeared to be dead, her throat slit. I shuddered when I heard this. I then told her that I just couldn't bear to hear any more and began bawling. My aunt apologized, admitting that she had told me too much, and teared up herself.

After hearing about this, I began to be sad and depressed all the time. I would often recall this story, in the way that one looks at something that frightens them, and became so distraught over it that I felt as though my blood might turn black. So I decided that I had to try to forget about it somehow, and kept trying not to think about it, but recently for some reason, I can't shake the feeling that that was me lying there, not my mother. I can't stop thinking about myself fallen there in my snow-white kimono all stained with blood.

It almost feels like my mother would scold me for telling someone about this, but I've been wanting so much to tell *you* about it when we're alone together, and have on so many occasions been on the cusp of doing so. So whenever it is that you will leave me, know that I have said all that I had to say to you. Me? Oh no, I won't cry about it. I was just saying.

Anyway, let's talk about something else. Look how dark it's gotten. I can't even see the spider web now. That little black thing in the middle of it must be the spider. But as for me? What can I do to forget you. Hah, what's this? a blade of grass floating by on the water. Someone must be upstream. Wait, don't go just yet, . . . they might see you.

“Evenfall”  
Suzuki Miekichi (1882-1936)

Are you here looking for me? I just went into the backyard. From the chestnut tree in the back, a spider moved along its thread, dropped down towards the water, and began spinning its web above the water. You were coming in secret, but now you’re going right back where you came from, aren’t you? They say that when a spider drops down towards the water, it’s certain that someone is going far, far away. No, really. Each and every thing these people by the seaside say comes true, no matter what it is. Little spider, you’ll see too. It’s such nice grass your feet won’t get dirty even if you aren’t wearing your clogs—me, I only have socks.

You’re thinking you’re so bad at saying goodbye that you’ll just stay silent, aren’t you? No matter what happens, you’ll be gone by the fifth. You can see from there, can’t you—there under that fig tree? It’s getting dark, so it’s hurrying to spin its web. The spider at evenfall.

Auntie, you say? I wonder, did she say something to you? You never know, she was probably thinking about something. Just the other day, when she was sewing, she blurted out that women always lose out in the end. And when I asked what that meant, she said that it’s scary how when a woman falls in love with someone, she won’t forget him until the day she dies. I listened, pretending not to understand. Auntie wouldn’t say anything more.

What did I hide from you? You mean the other day when I started to say something and then stopped? Well, I’ll tell you. But I wasn’t hiding anything. I was thinking about telling you in the end anyway. And it’s not about me, it’s about Mother. She died when I was young. I felt awkward whenever Auntie told me these little things about her, like when she said Mother was to be pitied because she died knowing nothing but hardship. Auntie would tell me all sorts of details about things that happened before I was born. Like just the other day, she told me that when Mother was exactly the same age as I am now, on the evening she came home from her wedding, she suddenly tried to kill herself. On her wedding night.

She said that back then, Mother’s family was quite prosperous, so they made extravagant arrangements for the wedding. Then the day finally arrived: she was to become a bride. That very evening, as the house was packed with throngs of people, the woman in charge of getting mother dressed asked over and over again whether mother had gone off somewhere. She searched everywhere, but Mother was nowhere to be seen, so Auntie joined in and the two of them began looking for her. The hairstylist reported that she had just done up Mother’s hair, and when her make-up was done, Mother went running off in full dress towards the storehouse. So the two went looking for her, and when they arrived at the storehouse, Mother was on the second floor. Not suspecting a thing, Auntie thought Mother was just embarrassed and had run away to hide. They lit a candle and made their way up to the second floor where they saw a two-paneled folding screen off in a dimly lit corner. They both gave a little laugh. “Come on out now. What are you up to?” they said as they approached. But when they peered over, they saw that Mother, dressed top to bottom in her pure white kimono, was lying face-down on the floor. She had slit her throat and looked all but dead.

When I heard this, I trembled in fear. I said I didn’t want to hear any more, and started to cry. Auntie was moved to tears herself and said she was sorry for taking it that far.

I fell into a deep depression after hearing this story. From then on, I would remember it from time to time as though I had seen the horror myself, and a dark sadness would seep through my veins. I tried and tried to forget, to not think about it somehow. But these days, for some reason, I can’t help but feel that it all happened not to my mother, but to me. All I can see is myself, in that pure white kimono, collapsed and drenched in blood.

Even though I know Mother would scold me if she knew I told anyone, I still wanted to tell *you*, somehow. Ever so many times I thought, “Now? Should I tell you now?” This way, even when you leave, I won’t have anything more to say. Me? No, I won’t cry. It’s only a story after all.

But let’s talk about something else. See how dark it’s gotten. I can’t see the spider’s web anymore. That black spot in the middle must be the spider. Me? How could I forget you? Look, a piece of driftweed is floating by. Ah, wait... or someone will see.

“As Dusk Falls”

by Suzuki Miekichi

Were you looking for me? I was out there, in the garden. Back beneath the spreading chestnut tree—I saw a spider sliding down its silk onto the water. It began to spin a web across the surface. I see you’re preparing to leave without telling me—are you going all the way back home already? They say when a spider slides down onto water in an evening, it means someone’s about to embark on a long journey. No, it’s true. Here, in this land by the sea, the things people say always come true. That tiny little spider. Come, let me show you. Don’t worry, the grass will keep your feet clean even without *geta*. See? I’m stocking-footed myself. Are you afraid I will take your leaving badly? Is that why you do not speak? I knew whatever came to pass, you would leave before five days were through. Can you see from where you’re standing? There, beneath the fig. It’s becoming dark, so he’s hurrying to finish his web. A yellow spider.

My aunt? I wonder. Did she say something to you? It’s true, she likely suspects us. The other day, as she was knitting, she said something to me out of the blue that struck me strange. *Whatever she does, a woman’s life ends in ruin*, she said, and when I asked her what she meant, she continued: *Being a woman is a fearsome thing—love someone once and you’ll never forget, not till the day you die*. I pretended not to understand. But whatever else she might have had to say she left unsaid.

What am I hiding from you? You mean, what was I about to say before I stopped? I’ll tell you. It was never my intention to hide a single thing. I always meant to tell you in the end. It is not my story. It is the story of my mother, who died when I was young. My aunt told me things I didn’t fully understand, plunging me into a strange confusion. She told me she pitied my mother, living such a short life of nothing but hardship; she told me so many things about her time before I came into this world. But she only told me recently about the night my mother was to enter this house as a new bride at the very age I am now, the night she tried to take her own life. Her wedding night.

My mother’s family was blessed with riches then, and her wedding finery dripped with luxury. After so much preparation, the night had arrived for her to become a bride, and the house was aflutter with activity. The woman charged with dressing her couldn’t find her, though, and she began to ask after her here and there, wondering where she’d gone, searching the house top to

bottom and finding her nowhere. My aunt joined her and the two of them searched together, inquiring everywhere, until the woman charged with arranging her coiffure told them that as soon as her hair was done and her face was painted, my mother fled the house in the direction of the storehouse; and so they paid a visit there, divining that she must be on the second floor. My aunt wasn't one to suspect the worst, so she assumed my mother had simply fled the commotion from shyness, and this was why, after climbing the stairs with a candle in her hand and seeing, in the dim, flickering light, a folded screen in the corner of the room at the top, she laughed a fond, indulgent laugh and said, *There, there, come on out—what seems to be the matter?* And as she did, she made her way across the room and peered behind the screen only to find my mother lying there, face up, covered head to toe in a kimono of purest white. Her throat was slashed; she was dead.

Hearing this story sent a chill up my spine. *It's too much*, I cried, wracked with wrenching sobs. *Please forgive me*, my aunt replied. *I never meant to tell you*— and then she, too, dissolved into tears.

My aunt's story has brought me such sorrow. Even so, I find myself unable to keep from thinking of it time and again, as if peeking in on some hidden horror, a thing so sad and terrible it makes my blood run black; I've tried with all my might to forget it, to think of something, anything else, but even as I do, I can never shake the feeling that the story isn't a story about my mother at all, that it's a story about me. That it was me lying there in that pure white kimono, and it was me who stained it red with my own blood.

Mother may get angry with me for telling stories out of turn, but still, I've felt such a compulsion to confide in you, to whisper it in secret—*Shall I tell him now?* I'd think, and then later: *How about now?* But at last I've said it, and whenever or however we may part, I have no more left to tell... Me? Oh, no, I'm not going to cry. This is simply my story.

Let us speak of something else. Look. It's so dark now. The web is invisible. But there, in the center, you can make it out. Something darker still. The spider, I suppose. And me? Will I ever find a way to forget you? Ahhh, look there, at the weeds floating by.... Wait! —Someone is watching....

*TWILIGHT* (by Miekichi Suzuki)

Oh, you were looking for me? I'm in the garden out back. A spider had lowered itself from the chestnut tree and was spreading its web above the water. I know you're hiding from me inside at the moment, but I imagine it's only a matter of time before you go home. They say that when a spider descends upon the water in the evening, someone is bound to go far away. Really, it's true: everything the people here by the sea say tends to hit the mark. A tiny spider. Come see it yourself. You need only cross the lawn to see, so you won't dirty your feet even if you're not wearing shoes. I myself am still in my socks.

You likely want to go without a word to me because you feel guilty about saying goodbye. I suppose you'll only be here for a few more days at most. Can't you see the yellow spider from where you are? It's under the fig tree, hurrying to build its web before it gets too dark.

. . . My aunt? What about her? Did she tell you something that bothered you? When we were doing some sewing together recently, she suddenly said out of nowhere, "It's always women who suffer in the end." When I asked her what she meant, she said, "When a woman falls in love with someone, she can't forget him until the day she dies. It's so frightening." I pretended that I didn't really know what she was talking about. My aunt said nothing besides that.

. . . What am I hiding from you? You mean what I started to tell you the other day but couldn't finish? I'll tell you now. It's not like I was hiding anything from you. I meant to tell you at some point. It doesn't even concern me—it has to do with my mother, who died when I was a child. My aunt told me this story so offhandedly that it felt uncanny. My aunt said that she felt sorry for my mother because she suffered so much before her death. She also spoke at length about various events that transpired before I was born. Most recently, she told me that my mother—at the time exactly the same age as I am now—tried to kill herself on the night she was to be married. Yes, the very night she was to be wed.

At the time, my mother's family estate had everything one can imagine, so she was able to make quite lavish preparations for the event. During the early evening of the day she was to leave, everyone at home was bustling about getting ready for the big event. But, the woman responsible for dressing my mother couldn't find her. "Where did she go?" she wondered. She searched everywhere for my mother, but since she was nowhere to be found, my aunt ended up joining the search. My mother's hairdresser told the two that, after she had finished doing my mother's hair, my mother had left in a hurry to the shed, saying that she needed to put on her makeup. When they went to go see her in the shed, my mother was on the second floor. My aunt suspected nothing, thinking that my mother had run off to be by herself out of embarrassment. When my aunt went up the second floor, candle in hand, she saw that a pair of folding screens had been set up in the dim corner opposite to her. "Oh, so you're over there! Do come out," my aunt said, laughing. But when she drew closer and looked behind the screens, my mother was slumped face-down on the floor, clad head to toe in her pure-white kimono. She had slit her throat and died.

I shuddered after hearing this. "I've heard enough," I said, bursting into tears. My aunt apologized, saying she shouldn't have said so much. There were tears in her eyes as well. I've felt depressed ever since hearing this story. Sometimes, when I remember what my aunt told me, I feel like I'm beholding something truly terrifying. I become so despondent that it feels like my very blood is turning black, so I try with all my strength to forget, but now I can't help but think that what my aunt told me had nothing to do with my mother—it was about me. I'm convinced that I'm the one wearing the pure-white kimono, lying on the floor in a pool of blood.

I know if I told this to anyone my mother would give me a reproachful look from beyond the grave, but for some reason I wanted to whisper this in your ears alone. All the while I was

thinking—Should I say it now? Or perhaps now? At last, I have nothing more to say to you before we part ways . . . Am I crying? No, I'm not crying at all. I'm just telling you a story. But let's talk about something else. Look how dark it's gotten. I can no longer see the spider's web. Is that black little spot in the middle of the pond the spider? . . . Will I forget you? How could I possibly forget you? Oh, look—some duckweed has come floating along . . . Wait! . . . Someone might see us.

## Twilight by Suzuki Miekichi

Perhaps you were looking for me? I've just come out to the back garden. In the chestnut tree in the back, a spider has slid down on its thread to the pond's edge, and is now spinning a web across the water. You've crept up on me without my knowledge, and now you're about to return to that place over there, aren't you? Did you know that when a spider comes down to the water's edge in the evening, they say that someone would go off to a faraway place? No, it's true. The things these sea folk around here say are really accurate. Hey, little spider. Come on over and take a look. It's just grass. Your feet won't get soiled even if you don't have your clogs or footwear on. I'm only wearing my socks.

Now, you're keeping very quiet because you don't think it's right to say goodbye. Whatever it is, I know you won't come out again on the fifth. You can see from there, can't you? Yellow spider. Hurrying to get a nest ready. It's already dark, just under the fig tree way over there.

My aunt? What about her? Did she tell you something? She might have been hoping that it did something. Just the other day, as we were weaving, she suddenly said,

"Girls always lose out in the end."

"What are you talking about?"

"It's frightening that when a girl falls for a boy, she will remember him until she dies."

I acted as if I didn't know what it meant. That was all she would say.

What did I not tell you? The other day, when I stopped myself halfway? I wasn't hiding it from you. I'll tell you. I thought I would someday, in the end. It's not about me. It's about my mother. She died when I was very little. My aunt just started talking to me, out of nothing, and it has given me weird thoughts. She felt sorry for my mother because she died after having suffered a lot. That was a time before I was born, she told me, describing things in great detail. This happened very recently. My mother was around my age on the night that she was to be married into the family. She suddenly tried to kill herself. On the night of her wedding.

At that time, my mother's family was well to do, and they could afford the many lavish preparations. In the evening that my mother was to get married into this family, the house was busy and bustling with people preparing for the big day. Then when the lady who had come to help her put on the wedding kimono started looking for her, many others soon followed. Yet no one could find her. My aunt, searching together with the kimono lady, found out that she had just finished doing her hair. But instead of going for makeup, she had simply run away to the store room. So the two of them went to check the store room, and found her on the second floor. My aunt didn't know much at the time, so she only thought that my mother had ran off because she felt shy. In the light from a freshly lit candle stand, she made her way up to the second floor. A two-panel folding screen stood in the far end of the darkness.

"Well, now" my aunt said, chuckling.

"Come on over," she continued, making her way softly across the room.

"Whatever's the matter?"

As she peeked into the other side, she found my mother lying face down. Dressed fully in her white wedding kimono. She was dead by then. Throat slit.

This left me trembling in horror.

"No! No more," I protested and started bawling.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to tell you so much," she apologized, tears also welling up in her eyes.

Ever since I heard this story, I have become very sad, deep down inside. I would often peer into terrifying things, and sometimes, when this story comes to mind, I would get really depressed, as if my blood would turn black. I'm trying very hard to somehow forget, to stop thinking about it. I don't know why, but these few days, I sometimes feel convinced that the story is not about my mother but me instead. I would only see myself lying very still in a pure white wedding kimono, soaked in blood.

I feel as if my mother would scold me if I told anyone, but somehow, I wanted to tell *you* this story, secretly. I have tried time and again to bring myself to finally do it. I don't have anything left to say, no matter when we should part. Me? I'm not crying at all. It's just a story.

Let's talk about something else already. Look, it's turned so dark that I cannot see the spider's web any more. That dark little dot in the middle. I wonder if that's the spider. Me? My, how I shall forget you.

Well, a lost leaf from a floating weed has just found its way over here. Oh wait, please... someone will see.

## Melancholia

By Mieki Suzuki

Were you looking for me, my Lord? I just came back from the rear of the garden. There was a spider crawling on its web behind the chestnut tree, but it fell into the water. Now it is spinning a web on the water. Even though you come to visit me in secret, must you leave so soon my Lord? They say at dusk whenever a spider falls into the water, someone dies. No, really, it's true. Each and every thing the people on the seashore says is true. *The small spider.* And you too will see it, my Lord. We are on the lawn, my Lord. Your feet will not get dirty even if you are not wearing your clogs. Look, even I am in my socks, and they are not dirty.

You think us parting is terrible, so you remain silent. Isn't that right, my Lord? Either way, you will leave in five days, right? From there, we can see the spider, right? From under the fig tree. It's already late, so the spider is in a rush to weave its web. *The yellow spider.*

Is it your aunt? How is she? Did she say something to you? Something is on her mind. Just the other day, when she was sewing, I was told several things by her. I was told that in the end, it is women who lose everything, and that women have to use their wits to avoid this. When I asked, *what do you mean?*, at once your aunt thought of one person. She said until the day that she dies, she can never forget that one person. She said it was very frightening. I pretended that I didn't understand, and I kept on asking. Your aunt said only that.

You think that I'm hiding something from you? Is it because I've stopped talking to you recently? There is nothing that I'm hiding from you. It's just that I've been thinking that I should've said something to you, my Lord. No, she did not talk about me. She talked about *my mother*, who passed away when I was a child. I had a strange feeling about your aunt because she spoke trivial matters to me, and made me to listen to her. Your aunt said that my mother only experienced hardships and that her death was tragic. She told me various mysterious things, which occurred before I was born, in very fine detail. It was quite recently that she told me all of this. She said that my mother, at the same age as I am right now, married into a family, and on the night of her wedding, unexpectedly tried to take her own life. *On the night of her own wedding...*

At that time, the ceremony was held at her parents-in-law's home, so my mother had extravagant arrangements made for her marriage, and today was that evening that my mother got married. While the whole family was busy, the woman who was in charge of dressing my mother realized my mother was nowhere to be seen, and wandered off to search for the other family members to help her find her. She only found your aunt, and together they went around searching for her. Your aunt joined in after she finished up her hair and doing her make-up, leaving some of it undone. The two of them went out, with their wedding clothes, make-up and all, and rode horses. When the two of them went out to search the warehouse, they had a feeling that my mother was on the second floor of the warehouse. Your aunt did not know anything about my mother's Melancholia at the time, she thought my mother ran away to hide because of her embarrassment. She lit a candlestick, and went upstairs to the second floor. When she entered the room, she saw that there stood a folding screen in the dimly lit corner opposite to her. *Well*, she said, and giggled. *Get over here, what's the matter?* She went to that side of the room. She looked over and saw that my mother, from

head to toe, was in an all-white wedding dress. However, mother had been in a fit of Melancholia and killed herself by slitting her throat.

When she said this, I trembled with fear. She had more to say, but I burst into tears. Your aunt said, *I'm sorry I didn't tell you sooner*; her eyes were also filled with tears.

After I heard the story, I was put into a state of melancholy. Afterwards, often, like looking at something frightening, whenever I remember this story, my blood hardens and I lose the will to live. I've decided to try and forget it and not think about it. But *why* did she do it? I feel that it was not my mother who committed suicide, but *myself*. I can only think that I am the one dressed in all white, and that I will paint it with my blood and perish.

If I were to tell it to other people, I feel like mother would scold me if she were alive right now. But why did I want to tell this story secretly to *you my dear*? I thought repeatedly, *should I tell him? should I not?* You can go already; I have nothing else to say. *Me?* I am not crying. It's only a story.

However, let's change the subject. Please look, my Lord, at the thing that has become dark. The spider's web has already disappeared. In the dead center, that black thing that we can see is the spider, right? *Me?* If only you could understand how *I feel*, my Lord. I will never forget you. Oh my! Look at the duck-leaves floating towards us, just like how life floats on by. Hold on a second...someone's coming.

## Blue Twilight

Suzuki Miekichi

Were you looking for me? I was just in the back garden. There was a spider, drawing a thread from the chestnut tree to land on the water. Casting its web above. You hid your leaving from me, but soon you will go back there, will you not? And this will all be over. They say that if a spider drops down over water in the evening, someone will surely go far away. No, it is true. Each and every thing the people on the coast here say turns out to be true – all of it. It is a small spider. Go and take a look. There is grass, so your feet will not get dirty even if you do not wear your wooden sandals. I am wearing only my white socks.

You have been keeping quiet because you thought it was wrong to leave me – is it not so? Anyway, I can tell that you will not be coming here for five days already. You can see it from there, can you not? Underneath the fig tree. It is already dark, so it is hurrying to build its web. A yellow spider.

My aunt? I wonder. Did she say something to you? She might be thinking something, a little. The other day while we were sewing, she abruptly said something like, women always lose in the end – and when I asked her what she was talking about, she said that to fall in love is a fearful thing, because once a woman falls in love, she will be unable to forget that person till she dies. I listened to her, pretending I did not understand; she would say nothing else.

What did I hide from you? That thing I started to tell you before, and then changed my mind? I shall say it. I was not hiding it. I had thought to tell you at the end. It is not about me. It is about my mother, who passed away when I was small. It was a trivial matter that my aunt told me, and it made me feel strange. My aunt said that my mother died after a life filled with suffering, and she pitied her. She told me many stories, even things which happened before I was born. Just recently – she told me that when my mother was the same age as I am now, on the evening she was to enter this house as a bride, she suddenly decided to end her own life. On her wedding night.

It was a time when my mother's childhood home was filled with abundance, and I am told they had provided for my mother quite splendidly. In the evening of the day my mother would at last leave the house as a bride, while the whole household was caught up in preparations, the woman who was in charge of helping my mother dress ran this way and that, searching for her and asking over and over where she had gone. But my mother was nowhere to be found, so my aunt joined in the search. Then the hairdresser told them that as soon as she had had her hair and makeup arranged, she had sprinted toward the storehouse, so the two of them went to search the storehouse, and she was on the second floor. My aunt said that she knew nothing at all, so she thought only that my mother had fled and hidden herself out of maidenly shyness. She lit a candlestick and went up to the second floor, and in the gloomy far corner was a two panel folding screen. "Well!" she said, and smiled. Saying "Come, what is the matter?", she approached the screen and peeped around it. My mother, dressed head to toe in a pure white wedding kimono, lay with her face hidden. She was dead; her throat cut.

Listening to the tale, I trembled with fear. "This is too much," I told her, and burst into tears. My aunt said, "I am sorry, I should not have told you this much," and was moved to tears also.

Having heard this tale, I felt sorrow in my heart. Often since then, remembering this story as though I am peering at something fearful, I feel so sad it chills my blood, and I kept trying to make myself forget, and to not think of it, but for some reason, recently I keep feeling as though it were not my mother, but myself – and I cannot stop myself thinking of it. I can think nothing but that it was me lying there in that white kimono stained with blood.

I feel like my mother would scold me for saying this to people, but somehow I wanted to tell *you* this secret, and just now I was thinking over and over: Should I? No matter when you leave me, there is nothing else for me to say. Me? I am not crying. It is just a story.

But, let us talk of something else. Look. It is dark now. We can no longer see the spider's web. I wonder if that black spot in the middle is the spider. Me? I shall try to forget about you somehow. Oh! Some duckweed has floated this way. Oh, stop... someone will see.

## At Dusk

Oh, were you looking for me? I've just come in from the back garden. There's a spider out there that's travelled down on its thread from the chestnut tree, onto the water below. It was spinning its web on the surface of the water, would you believe. You know, I know that you're trying to keep it from me, but you'll be going back very soon, won't you? People around here have it that when a spider descends onto the water, it means that someone will depart for some far-off place. No, trust me, it's the truth. The sayings of the people living by the coast here always turn out to be right. It's just a tiny little thing, the spider. You should go and take a look at it for yourself. You don't need to worry about putting on sandals, the grass won't dirty your feet. See, look at me! I'm just in my socks.

You've been keeping it quiet because you felt bad about leaving, I suppose? Well, anyway, come a few days, you won't be visiting here any more, I know that. You should be able to see it from there. It's under that fig tree, over that way. Dark is falling, you see, so it's in a hurry to spin its web. It's a little yellow one.

My aunt, you say? What do you think? Has she said anything to you about it? I do think it's possible that she's sensed something. You know, a little while ago when knitting, she suddenly came out with how women always end up losing out, whatever happens. Naturally I asked her what she was talking about, and she started saying how it's a terrible business when women develop feelings for someone, how they're unable to forget that person for the rest of their lives. I pretended to have no idea what she was speaking of, and that was all she said of it.

What do you mean? What have I ever hidden from you? Are you talking about the thing I began to speak to you of a while back, by any chance? Oh, I'm happy to tell you about that. I wasn't hiding it from you, you understand. It was always my plan to tell you sooner or later. In fact, it's not about me. It concerns my mother, who died when I was young. You know, the only reason it's on my mind is because my aunt let slip to me some things about my mother, and since then I've not been quite myself. My aunt started saying one day how sorry she felt for my mother, enduring such suffering only to meet her end like that, and then began going into all the things that happened before I was born. This was only recently that this conversation happened. At the same age as I am now, my mother was to be married into this household, you see, and that was when she took her own life. The very night that she was supposed to be married.

Back in those days, my mother's family was rather well off, and the preparations they made for the upcoming marriage of their daughter were truly splendid, my aunt said. At last, the evening came that she was to enter as the bride into her new house, and the entire household was a flurry of activity. And amid all of that, the lady responsible for putting on my mother's kimono started asking people where she was, looking for her all over the place, but without any luck. My aunt joined the kimono lady in looking for her, and together they heard from the person who had fixed my mother's hair that after her hair and makeup had been done, my mother had gone running out to the storehouse. So, naturally, the two of them went out to the storehouse, and sure enough there she was, on the upper floor. My aunt had no idea what was going on, and assumed that she'd fled out of embarrassment, so she lit a candle and climbed the steps leading to the upper level of the storehouse. Seeing that my mother had put up a two-panel folding screen there, she laughed, and said 'Well, would you look at this!' She moved closer to the screen, saying, 'Come on, it's time to come out. What are you doing in there?' and so on. And when she got up to

the screen and looked behind it, she saw my mother in her pure white kimono lying face down on the floor. She had slit her throat, my aunt said.

Well, when I heard that, I started trembling all over. I can't bear to hear any more, I said, and began wailing like a baby. My aunt apologized, said that she'd let her mouth run away with her, and I saw her eyes fill with tears too.

And I've been feeling rather melancholy ever since. It comes to me often. It's a little like sneaking a peek at some kind of ghastly sight, and each time I think of it, I feel a sadness so deep that it turns my blood black. After a while, I began to think that I had to find a way to forget about it somehow, started trying not to remember it. And yet, for some unknown reason, I've started to feel of late as if the person in the story is not my mother, but me. I've somehow become convinced that it was me who put on that pure white kimono, only to stain it with blood, topple to the ground.

I have the sense that I will be in trouble with my mother for speaking of this to anyone, but somehow I felt I wanted to confide in you about it. There have been a good few times when I've been on the verge of telling you. But anyway, now I have, so whenever we part there'll be nothing I've left unsaid. Hm? No, no, why would I be crying? It's only a story, after all.

But look, let's change the subject! I really am sorry, I can see I've gone and made things rather heavy. Look, you can't see the web any more. That black speck in the middle, is that the spider I wonder? What's that you say? Oh come now, how could I ever forget about you? Well would you look at that, there's a bit of duckweed come floating towards us. Oh...Oh! No, please stop that... Someone might see us...

**Twilight – Suzuki Miekichi**

Were you looking for me? I was just out in the garden. A spider emerged from that chestnut tree back there and slid down to the water on its thread. It is spinning a web above the surface. You were trying to sneak away without my noticing, are you leaving so soon? Although they say that when a spider hangs above the water's surface at night, it means someone is going far away. No, honestly. I note all of the expressions used by the people of this shore. A tiny spider. Go and take a look. It's grass, so your feet won't get dirty even without slippers. Why, I'm just in my socks.

Are you silent because you feel bad about leaving? But you have already stayed five days. Can you see it from there? Just under that fig tree. It is already dark so it is hurrying to finish its web. A yellow spider.

Auntie? What about her? Has she said something to you? I thought she might. Recently when she was sewing, she said, "No matter what, in the end women always lose." It was so out of the blue that I asked her what she meant, and she said, "Once a woman falls in love with someone, she cannot forget him until she dies. It's awful." As I listened I made a show of not understanding, but that was all she would say.

What am I hiding from you? What I was about to say just now? I'll tell you. I wasn't hiding anything. I was going to tell you eventually. It's not about me. It's about my mother, who died when I was young. It is something my aunt told me while we were chatting about nothing much, and it made me feel quite peculiar. She said she felt so sorry for my mother, because she died having known nothing but hardship, and she told me a number of stories from before I was born. It was just the other day. She told me that when my mother was exactly the same age as I am now, on the evening she was due to marry into this family, she suddenly tried to kill herself. On the night of her wedding.

At this time my mother's family was quite affluent and had prepared a splendid trousseau for her. On the night she was finally due to marry and leave the household, while the house was in a complete state of confusion, the woman who had been tasked with dressing her was searching all over the place, asking where she was. She was nowhere to be found, and so my aunt joined the search. The hairdresser told them that a little while earlier when she had finished fixing up her hair and makeup, my mother had run out just as she was in the direction of the storehouse.

When the pair went out to look, it seemed that she was on the upper level of the barn. None the wiser, assuming my mother had just run and hidden out of embarrassment, my aunt lit a candle and climbed up to the second floor. In a dimly lit corner there was a two panel folding screen, and my aunt burst out laughing. "Get up, what on earth are you doing?" she cried, and drew closer to get a better look. My mother was lying face down, clothed from top to toe in a pure white kimono. She had slit her throat and was dead.

I trembled with horror as I listened. "That's enough", I cried, and started sobbing uncontrollably.

"I'm sorry", said my aunt, her eyes welling up as well. "I didn't mean to tell you all that".

After hearing that story I fell into a melancholy frame of mind. Now and then, when with a sense of peering at something terrible I remember that conversation, I feel as though the blood is freezing in my veins. I try my hardest not to think of it, to forget, but for some reason when I do remember I am unable to suppress the feeling that it wasn't my mother, but me. All I can see is an image of myself collapsed on the ground, dressed in a pure white kimono and covered in blood.

Whenever I tell somebody I feel as though my mother will scold me, but for some reason I have wanted to whisper this story to you in secret, and have almost done so countless times. Now I have nothing left to say before you go. Me? I'm not crying. It is only a story.

But let's talk about something else. Look. It has turned dark. You can't see the spider's web anymore. Is that black spot in the middle the spider? Me? I will forget about you somehow. Oh, the pondweed has floated over. But wait a moment... someone will see.

Dusk  
Suzuki Miekichi

Were you looking for me? I was just going out to the back of the garden. Behind the chestnut tree, a spider lowered its thread into the water. Above the water it spins its web. You were hiding from me, but you must have returned home by now, right? Still, in the evening, as the spider descends onto the water, it says someone will surely be going far away. No, really. Everything this fisherman says becomes true. Little spider, please look, too. Your feet do not get dirty above the lawn, even without shoes. Like me in my socks.

Since it's difficult to part ways, I wonder if we should just be silent? Either way, five days have already come and gone, it seems. Can't you see that from over there? There under the fig tree. It's already dark, so you are hastily building your web. Yellow spider.

Auntie, is that you? How are you? Did someone say something to you? Maybe that's what is on your mind. The other day when she was sewing, she suddenly said, "No matter what, a woman is always worse for wear in the end." When I asked what she meant, she says it's terrible that once a woman thinks of someone, she won't be able to forget them until she dies. I was listening, pretending like I didn't understand. My aunt says nothing else.

I wonder what I was hiding from you? What did I stop myself from saying the other day? I'll tell you. There's nothing to hide. I think we should finally talk about it. Not about me. About my mother who died when I was little. My aunt told me to never mind about it, so it gave me a strange feeling. My aunt said that my mother's life was full of nothing but hardships and that her death was unfortunate. She gave me details about a number of things that happened before I was born. Just the other day. She says that I'm the exact same age as my mother when she came home to get married and unexpectedly killed herself. On her wedding night. My mother's family was well off in those days, so splendid preparations were made for her wedding. Then that night, as the wedding drew closer and closer, while the many relatives were being picked up, the woman who was to dress my mother in her wedding kimono kept asking where had she gone. They went everywhere, searching this way and that, but my mother was nowhere to be found. My aunt was continuing to search when the hairdresser said, that just after finishing her hair and in the middle of doing her makeup, my mother ran off toward some kind of warehouse. So the two of them went to the warehouse to investigate. It seems my mother was on the second floor of the warehouse. My aunt didn't know anything, so she thought my mother was hiding simply out of embarrassment. She lit a candle as she ascended to the second floor. Facing the dim corner, there stood two folding screens. "There, there," she said, smiling. "Come here and tell me everything." She moved closer, peering through the screen. My mother was wearing a pure white kimono and lying face down. She had cut her throat and died.

I listened and shivered with fear. Then, having said more than enough, she burst into tears. My aunt said, "It was horrible, and yet I couldn't tell you this story until now." I, too, was moved to tears.

After hearing this story, a sad feeling loomed over me. Ever since, I often feel like I am peering into dreadful things. Sometimes I'm reminded of this story and am overwhelmed with a sadness that feels like the blood turning black. I kept thinking, "Try not to think about it. Somehow try to forget." But what's the point? It's not just my mother; these days, I have also lost a sense of myself. It seems I am only ever wearing a pure white kimono, covered in blood, collapsed.

I feel as if my aunt will scold me like my mother, but she says, "For some reason, I've secretly *wanted* to tell you this story. 'Now let's talk about it, let's talk about it,' I thought how many countless times." Now when we are parting, there is nothing left to say. As for me? I cry. I am not healed. After all, it's only a story.

Even so, let's tell other stories already. Look now. It's become dark. I can no longer see the spider's web. Perhaps the spider can see in the middle of the dark. Me? Why would I forget you?

Ah, a floating weed's leaf came drifting toward me. Oh, wait...someone is watching.

*In The Twilight*  
Suzuki Miekichi

Oh, hello, were you looking for me? I have just been to the back garden. A little spider has been dangling itself from the chestnut tree, weaving its web just above the water. I suppose you thought you would leave without a word, but now there's only a short time left. I expected as much, of course. When a spider lowers itself to water it's a sign that someone will soon be gone far, far away. Of course, it's true! My family has always lived near the ocean, that's why we know how to read the natural signs. Come in, you come and see it too. Just a little thing. Never mind the sandals, you won't dirty your feet if you stay on the grass. Look, I've only got my stockings on.

You're very quiet. Can't you think of anything to say? In a few more days, you won't be able to come again at all. There, you see it? Beneath the bare tree? It must be weaving in a hurry, now that it's gotten dark. A little yellow spider.

My aunt? No, not a word. Did she perhaps say something to you? Oh, I was just curious, because she did say something peculiar to me the other day. It's always the woman who gets hurt in the end, she came out with, suddenly, while we were knitting. In spite of myself, I asked what in the world she meant, and she simply replied, a woman never forgets those she has once known. I feigned disinterest, and so she said no more.

No, I haven't been keeping anything from you. What I stopped myself from saying the other day? All right, I'll tell you. I had planned to, eventually. It wasn't as if I wanted to hide it. No, it wasn't anything you needed to know, just a little story. About my late mother. Auntie had been opining how tragically she passed away, while telling all sorts of stories from before I was born, so it simply stuck in my mind. Yes, this was just recently. She was as old as I am now, you know, and the night of her wedding, she took her own life. The very night!

Her family was wealthy at the time, and many fine gifts were prepared for her. As the whole house was in a state of affairs preparing for her to leave, the bridesmaid began dashing thither and fro, asking, where was my mother? So she and my aunt set about searching for her together. When the hairdresser told them she had run off to the storage building just after her setting was finished, the two of them followed.

Thinking her simply gripped by an onset of reticence, my aunt lit a candle and the two of them followed the disturbed dust to the second floor. There, finding her shape slumped beyond a folding screen in a dimly lit corner, they cooed and tittered and cajoled her, why was she hiding? Come out, come out! Stepping closer, then, they peered around the curtain, and there she lay, resplendent in her pure, white gown, back to the sky, and throat cut open.

I shivered at those last words, and in the next instant began to sob, and cried aloud, enough! Blinking back her own tears, Auntie apologized for all she had said, for saying too much.

Ever since hearing that story, my heart has rested heavily. I have often felt the same chill I did that day, as if looking upon some terrible sight, and recalled my mother's fate. If I could only forget it, I surely would, but no matter how I try, I somehow find myself picturing that night, and imaging that body as if it were none other than myself lying on the floor, my gown besmirched with grisly red.

I'm sure Mother wouldn't have approved of me telling her story, but I made up my mind to tell it to you. I can't count how often the words have stuck in my throat, how many times I began and couldn't finish, knowing you would leave soon. No, you needn't worry for me, I won't cry again. It's just an old story, after all.

But enough about it. Look, it's grown dark already. You can't see the spider's web anymore. But there, that black spot in the center, that must be the spider. I'll do my best to move on, don't spare a thought for me. Look, and now the wind has changed and the weeds are floating this way. Oh! Keep your hands to yourself, will you? What if someone were to see?

**Twilight**  
Suzuki Miekichi

Were you looking for me? I was just out in the back garden. A spider has descended along a strand of webbing from the chestnut tree onto the water and is spinning a web on the surface. You're going to leave without telling me; you'll go back there now and that will be the end of it, won't it? But then, they say that when a spider descends onto the water at dusk it's a sign that someone will surely be going far away. No, it's true. These coastal folk know what they're talking about. A little spider. You should see it, too. Even if you don't have your *geta* on, you can walk on the grass so your feet won't get dirty. I was just wearing *tabi* myself.

Are you leaving without a word because you don't like farewells? Whatever the case, you were hardly here 5 days. Can you see it from there? Under that fig tree. It's already getting dark so it's spinning its web quickly, that yellow spider.

Was it auntie? Did she say something to you? She probably suspects something. Just the other day when I was sewing, out of the blue she says, it's always the woman who suffers in the end, you know. When I asked what she meant by that, she said that it's terrifying for a woman because once she falls in love with someone, it's for keeps. I acted like I didn't understand, but she just left it at that.

What was I keeping from you? That thing I was going to tell you the other day, but then didn't? I'll tell you. It's not that I was hiding something; I was planning on telling you in the end. It's not about me—it's about my mother, who died when I was little. Auntie told me about it as if it were nothing, which put me out of sorts. She said it was a shame that my mother had known nothing but hardship before she died, and went on in detail about various things, like what happened before I was born. This was just the other day. Auntie said that when my mother was just the age I am now, she nearly died on her wedding night, unexpectedly. On the very night of her wedding.

At that time, my mother's family was quite well off, so they had spared no expense on the wedding preparations. At last the day of the wedding had arrived, when, amidst the hustle and bustle, the lady who was to dress my mother asked where she had gone. They looked all over, but she was nowhere to be found. The hairdresser, who was searching together with my aunt, said that she had seen my mother heading toward the storehouse earlier, after her hair and make-up had been done. When they went to the storehouse to check, they found her on the second floor. My aunt didn't suspect anything; she just thought that my mother must have run off and hidden out of shyness. When she lit a lamp and went up to the second floor, a folding screen had been erected in the dimly-lit far corner. Well, well, she chuckled, calling out, What are you doing? Come out! But when she drew near and peered over, she saw my mother, clad in a pure white kimono, lying face down. She had slit her throat and died, said Auntie.

When I heard that, I shuddered. That's enough, I told her, and started wailing. For shame, Auntie, how could you say such a thing? I said, at which she started to tear up as well.

Ever since hearing that story, I've been in a dreadful state. Whenever I happen to be reminded of it, like when I look upon something frightful, my blood freezes. I've tried my best to forget it, to not think about it, but for some reason it's gotten to the point now that I can't help but feel like it wasn't my mother—it was me. I can't help but think it was me lying there in a pure white kimono stained with blood.

If I tell people, I feel like my mother will scold me, but for some reason I've been secretly wanting to tell *you*; I was just waiting for the right time. No matter when we part, there's nothing else I have to say. Me? Crying won't help—it's just a story.

But let's talk about something else. Look—it's gotten dark. You can't see the spider's web any longer. Is that black spot in the middle the spider, I wonder? Me? How could I forget you? Ah, some duckweed fronds have drifted near. But wait.... people will see.

## Twilight

Suzuki Miekichi

Have you been looking for me? I just came out to the backyard. Look, a spider pulled a thread of gossamer from the chestnut tree down to the water. Now it's pulling it back from the surface. You've been hiding from me. You're leaving again soon, aren't you? Whenever a spider goes down to the surface of the water in the evening, it means someone is going to go far, far away. No, it's true. I grew up learning these things in my village near the sea. Their predictions are always right. Please come take a look at this spider. Don't worry, your feet will stay clean on this soft grass even if you aren't wearing shoes. See? I'm only wearing my tabi socks.

Have you gone quiet because you think farewells are bad? In any case, we still have about five days left before we part ways. Can see it from where you are? It's just beneath the fig tree. It's already getting dark so this yellow spider is being quick about spinning its web.

My aunt? What about her? Did she say something to you? I might know something about that. One time while she was knitting, she told me out of the blue that every woman meets her end through a personal loss. I asked her what in the world she was going on about, and she said it's terrible that girls can't forget the people they've had feelings for until they die. I acted like I didn't understand. That was all she said about it.

Why did I hide something from you dear? I was going to share all of this with you the other day and I decided not to. I'll tell you now. I wasn't trying to hide it from you. I wanted to finish telling you when all of this came to an end. It isn't even about me though. It's about my mother. She died when I was little. My aunt told me what had happened to her. She said it broke her heart to watch my mother's suffering up until her last breath. Then she went into detail about some confusing things that happened before I was born. I felt strange afterwards. This happened just the other day. My mom was going to get married when she was exactly the same age as I am now. She had a traditional wedding called a *yomeiri*. The groom's family said they were coming over to our house, and my mom suddenly became suicidal. On the night of her wedding.

My aunt said my mom had incredibly elegant wedding preparations since our family had a fortune back then. When evening came and it was finally time for the wedding, a crowd of her husband-to-be's family members gathered inside our house and waited for my mom to make her appearance. However, the bridal stylist lost track of her and ran around asking people if they knew where she had gone. The stylist saw my mom run off towards the storehouse as soon as she finished with her hair and makeup. My aunt went with her to the

storehouse, and it seemed my mom was on the second floor. My aunt's theory was that my mom was hiding up there out of sheer embarrassment, so she lit a candlestick and crept upstairs. On the other side of the darkness was a folding screen that had been stood upright. She let out a laugh of surprise when she saw it and then she called out over and over, "come here, what's wrong?" She moved a little closer to the edge of the screen each time in an effort get a better glimpse of my mom. Finally, my aunt peered around to see her dressed from head to toe in a pure white kimono, lying face-down on the floor. She saw my mom's throat was slit and she was dead.

I was shaking from fear when my aunt told me that. I said I'd heard enough. That was all I could do besides sit there and whimper. She apologized and said she didn't mean to share so much. Then she broke down and started crying.

Ever since I heard this story, I've felt somewhat sad. Thinking about it is like taking a peek at something horrible. It left me with the same kind of sadness I felt when I found out blood turns black when it dries. Sometimes when a detail comes into my head, I try to push it away in hopes I can forget it somehow. These days I can't help but think about how it would feel for me to be wearing that pure white kimono and have my blood spill onto it.

My mom would probably scold me if she knew I was telling anyone about this. I don't know why, but I've been obsessed with the thought of telling *you* in private. I won't have anything more to say once we've parted ways. Me? I'm not crying. This is just a story now.

I'm through with this. Let's talk about something else. I'm sorry, it's gotten dark. You can't see the spider web anymore. Is that black spot in the middle the spider? Me? How can I forget about you? The weeds on the surface of the water have floated this way. Ah, wait... I can see someone.

## Twilight

You were looking for me? I've just come out to the back garden. A spider was threading its way down to the water from the chestnut tree. Now it's weaving a web over it. You've been hiding from me, but soon you'll be going home and this will all be over, won't it? But they say that if a spider hangs down over water in the evening, it means that someone will be going far away. No it's true. Everything that man from Umibata says comes true, one thing after another. It's a small spider. You can come see it too. It's on the lawn, so your feet won't get dirty even without shoes. Even I am wearing socks.

I thought it might be because you feel guilty about parting, but you're holding back, aren't you?

Anyway, you won't be coming here for five days now. You can see from there, can't you? Under that fig tree. It's already dark so it's rushing to weave its web. The yellow spider.

Aunty did? How is she? Did she say anything to you? I had a feeling she might think that. The other day too, while she was sewing: they say that eventually women are the ones that lose. And because she said such a thing out of the blue, I asked what she was talking about, and she said: it's dreadful, because once a woman has thought of someone, she won't forget them until she dies. I was listening as if I didn't understand. Aunty will not say any more than that.

I hid something from you? That thing I suddenly stopped talking about the other day? I will tell you. I wasn't hiding it. I was thinking of telling you eventually. It's not about me. It's about my mother, who died when I was a child. It's something I learnt while Aunty was talking casually about other things, so I felt quite disturbed afterwards. Aunty had said it was awful that my mother died after having such a hard life, and she told me about lots of things, including from the time before I was born. Just the other day. She said that when my mother was exactly my age now, on the night that she had gone to her fiancé's home to get married, she suddenly tried to kill herself. The night of her wedding.

I heard that my mother had truly wonderful preparations made for her, as her home was also very rich at the time. That day, when finally she was to marry and leave her family—apparently, that evening, while the house was busy with a great many people, the woman who was in charge of dressing my mother went all around asking where she had gone. As my mother was nowhere to be found, Aunty and the woman went around looking for her together, and they saw the hairdresser, who said that my mother had run off to the warehouse just after doing her hair and make-up, so the two of them went to look for her at the warehouse, where she was supposedly on the second floor. Aunty didn't know anything, and only thought that my mother had hidden out of embarrassment, so she lit a candlestick and went to the second floor, and there, because she saw a folded screen had been set up in the corner, she burst out laughing: My goodness! Come here now, what are you do-

ing, she said as she walked over and peeked round the side—and saw my mother, dressed head to toe in the white kimono, lying face down on the floor. She said her throat was slit.

When I heard that, I began to shake terribly. Then I said that's enough, and I burst into tears. Auntie said sorry, that she had not meant to talk about that, but she herself was crying.

I have felt sad ever since I heard that story. Because of that—because, like glimpsing something terrible, if I remember that story it turns my blood black with sorrow—I have often wondered how I could forget it, or stop thinking about it, but for some reason, right now I can't help but feel that it's not a story about my mother, but about me. I can't think of anything but my fallen body, dressed in a white kimono, dyed with blood.

I feel as if my mother would scold me if I were to tell anyone, but despite that I somehow secretly wanted to tell *you*, and I thought about it so many times: should I tell you now, or now... Well, whenever we do part, I have nothing more to say. Me? Of course I'm not crying. It's just the story. Anyway, let us talk about something else now. Look at that. It's already dark. You can't even see the spider's web. I wonder if that black spot in the middle is the spider. Me? Why would I forget about you. Oh, the floating weeds have drifted over. Hey, wait... people can see.

## Twilight

by Suzuki Miekichi

Were you looking for me? I was just out in the back garden. A spider came down from the chestnut tree around back, on a thread, right onto the water. Now it's spinning a web on the surface. You were leaving in secret, without telling me... You'll be going back home soon, won't you? They say when a spider descends over water in the evening, someone's sure to go far away. No, it's true. Here by the ocean, every little thing people say turns out to be right. That tiny spider. You come and look, too. Even if you don't put on your wooden sandals, we'll be on the lawn, so your feet won't get soiled. I'm only in my stocking feet.

You thought it would be an unpleasant goodbye. That's why you were going to go without saying anything, isn't it? Either way, you won't come again for another five days. You can see it from there, can't you? Under that fig tree. It's already dark, so it's hurrying to spin its web. A yellow spider.

...My aunt? I wonder. Did she say something to you? Well, yes, she may have a thing or two on her mind. You know, when we were weaving the other day, she told me – quite suddenly – that women always lose out in the end. I asked her what she meant by it, and she said that once women develop feelings for someone, it's terrifying, because they can't forget until they die. I listened, but I pretended not to understand. That's all she's said.

What have I hidden from you? Do you mean the time I started to speak the other day and didn't finish? I'll tell you. I didn't hide it. I thought I would tell you, at the end. It isn't about me. It's about my mother, who died when I was small. My aunt told me something trivial, and it made me feel very strange. She said my mother was a poor soul who knew nothing but hardship until she died, and she told me about all sorts of things that happened before I was born, in detail. It was only a little while ago. When my mother was just the age I am now, on the night she was supposed to marry into this family, she abruptly tried to kill herself. On the eve of her marriage, mind you.

At the time, my mother's family was quite well-off, so they made really splendid preparations for her. That evening, just before she was supposed to leave for her wedding, while there were crowds of people in the house, all very busy, the woman whose job it was to dress my mother went around asking where she'd gone, and people began to search for her. They couldn't find her anywhere, so she and my aunt went around looking for her together. The hairdresser said she'd just finished doing her hair and makeup when she'd gone running off towards the storehouse, and so the two of them went there, and they found her on the second floor. My aunt didn't know anything, and she just assumed she'd gotten embarrassed and had run away to hide. She lit a candlestick and climbed up to the second floor. There was a two-paneled folding screen set up in a gloomy corner on the opposite side of the room, and she told me she said "My!" and laughed. "Come here," she said, "What's the matter?" When she went over and peeked in, there was my mother, dressed in purest white from head to toe, lying face down. She'd slit her throat, and she was dead.

When I heard about it, I shuddered. I told her that was just too much, and I burst into tears. My aunt said she was sorry, and she shouldn't have told me that, and her eyes filled with tears, too.

Ever since I heard that story, I've felt melancholy. I remember it from time to time, as if I'm peeking in at something dreadful. It's sad enough to blacken the blood, so I've tried various things in order to forget about it, to keep from thinking about it. Still, for some reason, lately, I've had an overwhelming sense that that was me, and not my mother. All I can think is that I wore a pure white kimono and collapsed, stained with blood.

It feels as though my mother will scold me if I tell people, but for some reason, I wanted to confide this story in you. I thought, *Should I say it now? Or maybe now?*, so many times. Now no matter when we part, I'll have nothing more to say. ...Me? I'm not crying. It's only a story, after all.

Still, let's talk of something else. Look. It's grown dark. I can't see the web anymore. The black thing in the middle must be the spider. ...Me? How could I ever forget you? Oh, there are duckweed leaves floating this way. No, wait... People will see.

Dusk  
Suzuki Miekichi

Were you looking for me? I was in the rear garden. A spider was dangling from the chestnut tree, descending to the water. It started spinning a web over the water. You may be hiding it from me, but soon you will be going back, won't you? But they say that when a spider goes down to the water in the evening, it is a sign that someone will go far away. No, it's true. The words of those by the sea, every time, they come true. A little spider. Please, have a look. There is no need to wear your sandals; the lawn will not soil your feet. I myself am in my socks.

Is it for guilt that you speak not of your departure? Be that as it may, I should hardly imagine you might stay five days more. Can you see it from there? Under the fig tree. Rushing to spin that web before the dark sets in. That yellow spider.

Auntie? So, did she say anything to you? Then perhaps there is something there. The other day I was sewing with her when all of a sudden she said, "Women always lose out in the end," and when I asked her what she meant, she just said, "It's frightening how, when a woman comes to care for someone, she never forgets to the day she dies." I inquired as if I didn't understand. But that was all she would say.

What have I hidden from you? What I was starting to say and didn't before? I shall say it. I was not hiding it. I was planning to tell you in the end. It is not about me. It is about my mother, who passed away when I was small. Auntie told me the story much in passing, and it made me feel most queer. She told me at length about many things from before I was born, saying she pitied my mother, to have died after trouble after trouble. It was just the other day. She said that, when my mother was just around my age, the night she was to wed into this house, she rejected her life, with no warning. On her wedding night.

Back then, Auntie said, my mother's house was still full of things, so quite lavish preparations were being made on her behalf. Then, when it was finally the night she would go to marry, and all were hustling and bustling throughout the house, the woman who was to put her into her garments started asking where she had gone. When she had looked most everywhere unsuccessfully, she turned to my aunt, and they looked together. The hairdresser said that she had just recently finished my mother's hair and made her up when she ran right off to the storehouse. So the two went to look in the storehouse, and there she was, on the second floor. Auntie didn't know; she thought she was just running and hiding from embarrassment, so Auntie lit a candle and went up, and there in the darkness of a corner on the other side was a two-panel screen. "Oh my," she laughed. "Come, whatever is the matter?" As she teased my mother, she went and looked behind the screen, and there was my mother, decked top to bottom in a pure white kimono, lying on her face. She had slit her throat and died.

It gave me a cold jolt to hear this. I said, "I've had enough of this," and I started bawling. Auntie said, "I'm sorry, I didn't need to tell you this much," and she got tears in her eyes, too.

After hearing the story, I became pensive. Every so often I would remember it, as if glimpsing something frightful, and I would become sad like blood going black. So I tried and tried to forget it, not to think about it, but now it is as if it was not my mother, but I. Somehow I can only think that it was I who wore a pure white kimono and lay on the floor stained in blood.

I do feel as though my mother would scold me for telling this story, but for some reason I have always wanted to whisper it to you. I have wondered time and time again, should I say it now, should I say it now? By now it is the only thing I have to say to you, no matter when we part. I? I am not crying. It is only a story.

Still, let us speak of other things. Look. It has become so dark. It is impossible to see the spider's web by now. Perhaps that is the spider black in the middle. I? What can I do to forget you? Oh, look at the duckweed floating down. Wait, not so fast . . . People might see.

At Dusk  
Suzuki Miekichi

“Were you looking for me? I was just on my way out to the backyard. A spider let down a strand of silk from the chestnut tree and climbed down to the water, and now she’s spinning a web. You were going to leave without telling me your secret, weren’t you? I know you’re returning home soon. They say that when a spider descends toward water in the evening someone will travel far away. No, really—it’s true. Everything said by the people living on this seashore proves to be true. Come and watch the little spider with me. Even if you don’t put on *geta*, your feet won’t get dirty on the grass. I’m going in my socks.

“Are you silent because you dislike partings? In any case, you won’t be here much longer. Look! Can you see it—below the fig tree? It’s a yellow spider. It’s already dark, so she’s hurrying to finish the web.

“So, is it your aunt? What happened? Did she tell you something? Ah, yes, she might be thinking about *that*. Once, while she was sewing, your aunt suddenly said, ‘The girl always gets the short end of the stick.’ I asked her what she was talking about, and she said, ‘It’s frightening—once a woman falls in love with someone, she will never forget him until she dies.’ I listened, pretending not to know what she was talking about, but that was all she would say.”

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“You think I have a secret that I cannot bring myself to say? No, I planned to tell you before I left. It’s not about me. It’s about my mother, who passed away when I was young. My aunt never talked much about her before, so my heart felt strange when she began saying it was tragic that my mother suffered terribly before she died. She told me in detail about things that happened before I was born. Finally, she told me that my mother tried to kill herself when she was exactly the same age as I am now. It was the night of her wedding.

“At that time, my mother’s family was very wealthy, and they gave their daughter a lavish trousseau. On the evening of the wedding, when the whole family had gathered, the girl who was going to help my mother get dressed asked where the bride was and searched everywhere, but my mother was nowhere to be found. My aunt joined the girl in the search. The hairdresser told my aunt and the girl that she had just done my mother’s hair and makeup a while before, and after she had finished my mother had run to the storehouse. So, my aunt and the girl went to the storehouse to find her. My mother was on the second floor. My aunt didn’t know that there was a problem and thought that my mother was simply nervous. She lit a candle and went up to the second floor. Two folding screens stood in a dimly lit corner. My aunt chuckled and said, ‘Come on out! What’s the matter?’ She walked up to the screens and peered down. My mother was dressed from head to toe in a white kimono, lying down with her face to the floor. She had cut her throat and was dead.

“I trembled when I heard this. I said, ‘That’s enough,’ and I wept and wept. My aunt said, ‘I’m sorry. I’ve said too much,’ and she, too, was moved to tears.

“I felt miserable after hearing that story. Merely remembering it felt as if I was actually looking upon the terrible scene. It was so sickening that I wanted to forget it. I tried not to think about it, but matters only got worse, and now it’s not my mother in the story, but me. I can imagine only myself wearing the white kimono, stained with blood and fallen on the floor. There’s nothing I can do to stop it.

“I feel like my mother would scold me if I told anyone, but for some reason I want to confide in *you*. During these past few days, I’ve asked myself again and again: ‘Should I tell him

now?' You and I will be parting ways before long, but I've said all that I must. No, I won't cry. I only wanted to tell you the story.'

## Twilight Spider

By Miekichi Suzuki

Have you been looking for me? I was just heading down back there. From behind the chestnut tree a spider travels down to the water using its web as a conduit. Also above the water the net continues to expand. You came to me in secret, but you will soon return there for good won't you? Then again they say that when a spider comes down to the surface of the water at twilight then someone will surely set off for somewhere far far away. No, really. People who live by this sea say that no matter what it happens each time without fail. Just a tiny spider. Here, you come take a look as well. Don't worry, even though you are not wearing wooden clogs your feet won't get dirty from walking on the grass. Look, I'm only wearing socks.

You are being quiet because you think separating is terrible right? Well no matter what is done, in five days I will leave from this place at my liking, won't I? Can you see from there? There, under that fig tree. Because it is getting darker it is rushing to expand its nest. The yellow spider.

*My auntie? How is she?* Did she say something to you? I had an inkling she might do that. The other day while she was sewing she said out of the blue, "that's why every woman loses out in the end." I asked her what she was talking about and she said that once a woman thinks about a person it is scary how she will be unable to forget them until she dies. I shook my head and listened intently as if I did not understand. That was all my auntie said.

Would I hide anything from you? *Oh, about the thing I started to tell you the other day but stopped?* I will tell you. It is no secret. I thought I had spoken about it at length. Only, it is not about me. It is about my mother who died when I was young. Because auntie would not tell me anything about it, I began to feel strange. Auntie would only tell me that mother suffered a tragic death, she finally told me in detail about the mysterious events that happened before my birth. This was only the other day. My mother, when she was the exact same age as I am now, moved into this house on her wedding night when, quite unexpectedly, she killed herself. On the very night of the wedding.

At that time there was something going on at my mother's family home; great effort was made to create splendid preparations for her. Today was finally the day she was to marry and enter the household at dusk. While inside the house there was a large crowd in waiting, the woman responsible for dressing mother kept walking around looking and inquiring about where she went. Then, because mother was nowhere to be found, auntie joined the woman and the two went around looking for her when they happened upon the hairdresser who said she had just done mother's hair and makeup a short while ago before she ran off in the direction of the storehouse, still made up as she was. Thus the pair went to inquire at the storehouse and it seemed like the second floor was the place to look. Auntie knew nothing of what was going on; she thought maybe it was a simple case of nervousness and hiding away in embarrassment. She lit a candlestick and climbed up to the second floor and, gazing into the thin darkness at the corner of the room, she saw a twice-folded screen standing there, and

said “Oh dear”, with a laugh. “Please come out. What is this?” she said, as she moved in the direction of the screen and peeped forward. She found mother dressed from top to bottom in a pure white kimono, but she was lying face down. She appeared to have died from a slit throat.

I trembled and trembled like a chestnut in the wind as I heard all this. If that wasn't already a lot I also wailed and cried like a small dog. Auntie, it was so terrible, said she could not even tell me that part of the story, of course as I was still in tears.

I started feeling sad upon hearing this story. Since then, from time to time when I remembered that story I would gaze deeply as if staring at something horrifying, as if my blood would turn black with sadness; I did whatever I could to forget, but for whatever reason this affair no longer belonged to my mother as I realized it was now my own burden. I am wearing a pure white kimono, and all I can think about is the sight of it painted in blood and fallen over. Even though when I tell people this story I feel as though my mother could scold me, for some reason I wanted to tell you this story in whispers; I have thought it over many times, whether I should say it or I should not say it now. There is nothing else I want to tell you before we say goodbye. *Me?* I won't cry or anything. After all, it is just a story.

However, I have another story to tell. Behold. It has gotten dark. Already you can no longer see the spider's nest. In the pitch black darkness can you even see the spider? *Me?* Somehow I will be able to forget about you. Gee, the leaves of the floating duckweeds have coming streaming here. Oh dear! Wait, not yet.....people could see us!

## A Pensive Dusk

Were you looking for me? I was just leaving for the rear garden. But then I saw a spider walk along a thread and descend to the water from a chestnut tree behind the house. And now you are weaving a web towards the water's surface. You may have hidden something from me, but soon I will return there and all this will come to a close, will it not? They say that if a spider descends to the surface of the water in the evening, somebody will suddenly leave and go far away. No, it's true. This girl by the riverbank has figured it out. Behold, little spider. Even without wearing wooden *geta*, your feet are not dirtied by the lawn. And here I stand in just my *tabi* socks.

I gather you are staying silent because you dislike farewells. But in any case, you will probably be gone within five days. Can you see it from there? That spot under the fig tree? It's already dark, so you are hurriedly weaving your nest. My yellow spider.

My aunt? What about her. Did she say something to you?

"You must have thought about it a little," she once said to me. "Lately, while sewing, I have thought about how women are usually the ones who lose in the end. This is why they speak out like this so suddenly – they cannot hold it in any longer. You would be horrified if you heard what they had to say, because one moment of sympathy for another human being can leave a woman with a secret that she must carry with her until the day she dies."

I listened, my face the picture of misunderstanding. My aunt said nothing more.

You think I'm hiding something from you? What did I stop myself from saying before? I'll tell you. I was not hiding it. I thought I would tell you at the end. It is not a story about me, but one about my mother, who died when I was small. My aunt would only tell me tiny, inconsequential things, but still I became oddly curious about it. My mother's life was full of hardships before her death – a pitiable existence, according to my aunt. She would tell me about things that happened before I was born in great detail. And then, quite recently, she told me something else. That on the night that my mother was supposed to be married into the family – when she was exactly the age that I am now – she suddenly tried to kill herself. On the night of her wedding.

At the time, my mother's hometown was like something from a storybook, so apparently the arrangements made for her were incredibly beautiful. But that evening, on the day that she was finally leaving to be married, the woman who dressed my mother in her wedding clothes could be seen wandering amongst the confusion of family members, asking and asking: "Where is the bride?" She searched all over for her, but she was nowhere to be found. So the woman continued the search together with my aunt, and was told by the hairdresser that she'd last seen my mother hurrying off to the storehouse, with her freshly applied hair and make-up still on. When the two of them went to enquire at the storehouse, they learned that my mother was still there, on the second floor. Unaware of her state, my aunt thought she had simply run away and hidden from embarrassment, and so when they lit a candlestick and ascended to the second floor to find two folded screens standing over in a gloomy corner, she said, "Come now," and laughed. They called and called: "Please, come out of there," but when they finally went up and peeked over the screens, they found my mother lying there, face-down, covered head to toe in the pure white fabric of her wedding *kimono*. She was dead – her throat cut.

Upon hearing that I trembled with fear. And then I wailed that I had heard enough. My aunt said, "I'm sorry. I told myself I would never tell this story," and she herself was moved to tears.

After hearing this story, I fell into a sorrowful mood. From that moment on I often felt as if I'd peeked at something dreadful, and sometimes, when I remember this story, it feels like my blood is running black with sadness. No matter how much I try to forget about it and think of anything else, lately, for some reason, I cannot shake off the feeling that it was not my mother's story, but my own. All I can think of is me wearing a pure white *kimono*, fallen down and stained with blood.

Telling people so makes me feel as if my mother is scolding me. So why is it that I wanted to softly whisper this story to *you*, when I've already thought however many times, "Should I tell it now? Should I tell it at all?" By the time we bid farewell, there'll be nothing else to say. Me? Crying will not heal me. It's just a story, after all.

But, let's talk about something else. Look around. It is dark now. I can no longer see the spider's nest. That black spot in the very middle must be you, little spider. Me? Why would I forget about you? Oh, the leaves of the floating weeds have been carried this way. And now they wait . . . for they can only move when no one is watching.

Twilight  
Suzuki Miekichi

Were you looking for me? I was just out in the backyard. From the chestnut tree at the back, a spider has descended on its thread to the water. Now, it's spinning a web above the water. Have you come here behind my back, only to go back there again just like that? But they say, when a spider lowers itself to the waters at dusk, someone will leave for a far-away place. Why, it's true. Everything these seaside people say will surely come true—every single thing. A small spider. Why don't you come over and take a look too? You won't be needing your sandals—we'll be on the grass so your feet won't get dirty. Even I'm just wearing my socks.

You must feel bad about our parting, that's why you're staying silent. Anyway, I don't suppose you'll be coming here for the fifth day running. You can see it from there, can't you. Under that fig tree. Furiously spinning its web because it's already getting dark. A yellow spider.

Auntie, you say? What about her? Did she tell you something? She could've been thinking about that. The other day, when she was doing her sewing, she uttered out of the blue that it's always the woman who loses out in the end. When I asked her what she meant, she said that it was frightening how a woman, once she has given her heart to someone, won't be able to forget that person until she dies. I listened, pretending not to understand. Auntie did not say anything more.

What did I hide from you? Was it what I was about to say the other day, but didn't? I'll say it now. I wasn't hiding it. I intended to tell you about it eventually. It's not about me. It's about my mother who died when I was small. Because Auntie tells me anything and everything, I've been having strange thoughts. Auntie said it was a pity that mother died leading such a hard life, and would tell me all about the things that happened before I was born. And then, there was the other day. When Mother was exactly the same age I am now, on the night she was to be married, she abruptly tried to take her own life. On her wedding night.

As Mother's family was well-to-do at the time, preparations for the wedding were terribly lavish. Finally, on the evening of the much-anticipated wedding day, while the household was caught up in the bustle of activity, the maid charged with dressing Mother up reported that she was missing—she had searched high and low for her. As there was still no sight of Mother, Auntie searched along with her. Just then, the hairdresser said that Mother had no sooner gotten her hair and makeup done than she dashed off to the warehouse. So Auntie and the maid headed for the warehouse and there she was, on the second floor. Auntie, suspecting nothing, presumed that Mother was hiding out of embarrassment. She lit a candle and climbed up to the second floor. There, in the dim corner ahead stood a two-panel folding screen. "Well, well," Auntie let out a chuckle as she cajoled Mother. "Come on out now, what's the matter", she coaxed as she approached and peeked behind the screen. Mother was dressed from head to toe in an immaculate white kimono, hunched over. She had slit her throat and lay lifeless.

Hearing that, I shuddered with fear. That's enough, I said, and burst into tears. Auntie said sorry, and that she shouldn't have told me about that. She, too, was awash in tears.

I've been feeling heavy-hearted ever since I heard that story. Often since then, just like one can't help taking a peek at scary things, I recall this story, and my blood runs cold because it's just so heart-breaking. I've been trying not to think about it, hoping I could forget it. But, of late, I can't help but think that all that did not happen to my mother, but to me. I can't help but feel as though it was I who was wearing the pure white kimono, soaked in blood and collapsed on the floor.

I have a feeling that Mother would scold me for telling someone about this, but somehow I just want to whisper this to you, and have been on the verge of telling you many times. Even though we'll have to part someday, there's nothing else I have to say to you. Me? I won't cry. It's just a story after all.

But now, let's talk about something else. Look, it's gotten dark. You can't see the spider web any more. That spot of black in the centre—that's the spider, isn't it. Me? I'll forget about you somehow. Oh, the leaves of the floating weeds have drifted here. Well, wait... someone's watching.

**Twilight**  
**By Suzuki Miekichi**

Were you searching for me? I was just coming out of the rear garden. There, from the farthest chestnut tree, a spider, having lowered itself on its silk thread onto the water, was casting a web across the surface. You were keeping it from me, but now your departure is imminent, and that will be the end of it, will it not? You know, they say that if a spider lowers itself onto water in the evening, then someone is to go far away. No, really! What the local ocean-siders say always comes to pass. Such a small spider. Please look for yourself. There is no need to wear your *geta* on this grass—your feet will not be soiled. I myself went in my cotton *tabi*.

Are you perhaps feeling guilty to leave me—is that why you are silent? In any case, you were to stay here no longer than five days. I wonder, are you able to see from where you are—there, beneath that fig tree? The light has already faded, so it is hastening to spin its web. A yellow spider.

My aunt? Did she say something to you, then? Well, she may have something of an opinion on the subject. When we were doing needle-work the other day, out of the blue she said, “It’s the woman always suffers in the end, you know.” When I asked her what she was talking about, she told me that once a woman has feelings for someone, she will carry thoughts of them to the grave—“how terrifying,” she said. I simply listened, feigning incomprehension. That was all she had to say.

What did I conceal from you, I wonder? Are you perhaps referring to what I started to say the other day, and then left off? I shall tell you. I was not hiding anything. I had thought to tell you at the end. It is not about me. It is regarding my mother, who passed away when I was little. My aunt spoke to me of some trivial matter, which put me in a queer humor. She told me she felt sorry for my mother, who had worked her fingers to the bone and then died; she gave me details about things from before I was born. This was just the other day. My aunt told me that when my mother was at exactly the same age I am now, on the evening she was to come to this household as a bride she abruptly took her own life. On her very wedding night.

As my mother’s family too had been prosperous during that period, elaborate preparations were being made for her. Now at last the wedding day had arrived, and she would go off to be married that evening, as was the custom, so the whole household was consumed with the preparations. The woman whose role it was to dress my mother in her robes searched high and low for her, asking where she had gone. My mother was nowhere to be found, so the woman and my aunt conducted a search together. The

coiffeuse mentioned that, not long before, when her hair was done and makeup applied, my mother had run off to the storehouse: whither the pair then proceeded. My mother, it appeared, was on the second floor. My aunt, knowing no better, simply assumed that my mother had fled in an attack of shyness. Lighting a candle, she went upstairs, and, sighting a triple-paneled folding screen standing in the gloom in the far corner, she exclaimed, laughing: “Come on out, what do you think you’re doing?”

But when my aunt went over for a closer look, she saw my mother, dressed from head to toe in an all-white kimono, lying face down. She was dead, her throat slit.

On hearing this, I gave a shudder. “That’s enough,” I cried, bursting into tears. My aunt apologized, saying she should not have told so much, and began herself to weep.

Her story left me bereft. When I would subsequently recall it, as if spying something baleful enough to turn my blood black, I would often try to forget, to turn my thoughts from it, but recently, for whatever reason, I have been unable to shake off the conviction that it was not a story about my mother, but rather about myself. I am convinced it is I wearing the pure-white kimono; it is I lying soaked in my own blood.

I expect my mother would have scolded me for revealing such things to others, but somehow I have been bursting to confide them all to *you*. Whenever we might part, that is all I wished to say to you. No—I am not crying. We are simply talking.

But now let us talk of something else. Behold—it has got dark. The spider’s web is no longer visible, is it. Yet is that blackness at the center the spider, perhaps?—And how am I supposed to forget about you? Ah, the floating weeds have drifted up to us. Wait—people will see....

Dusk  
Suzuki Miekichi

Were you looking for me? I was about to go out to the back garden. A spider has scurried down its thread to the water from the chestnut tree out back, and it's spinning a web over the surface. You may be hiding it from me, but you are about to leave, are you not? But they do say that when a spider descends to the surface of water in the evening, it means that someone is about to depart for a faraway place. No, it really is so. Each of the sayings passed down by the people from this coastal area really are accurate. What a small spider! Come and have a look too. You only need to cross the lawn, so even if you do not wear clogs, your feet will not get dirty. Look, I am only wearing socks.

You did not say anything because you felt bad about leaving, did you not? Whatever it is, I suppose you will not stay here for more than another five days. Can you see it from over there? There, under that fig tree. It's already dark so it's rushing to spin its web. It's a yellow spider.

My aunt? How about it? Did she say anything to you? I guess she does have some opinion on the matter. The other day when we were working on the loom, out of the blue she said that in the end women always get the short end of the stick. When I asked her what she was talking about, she replied that once a woman falls in love she cannot forget it till death, and what a frightening thing that was. I listened to her words while pretending not to understand what she meant. That was all my aunt said. Did I hide something from you? Is it what I was on the verge of saying the other day? I will say it now. It's not like I am hiding it from you. I intended to tell you before you leave. It's not about me; it's about my mother who passed away when I was still little. Because my aunt made so little of the matter when she told it to me, I was left with an uncanny feeling. My aunt said that my mother was very pitiful for suffering throughout her short life, and often related to me in great detail stories from my mother's past before I was born. Just the other day, she told me how when my mother was my age, she suddenly thought to end her life on the night she was to be married. On the night she was to be married!

Back then, my mother's family was still affluent, and so apparently my mother's trousseau was quite the sight to behold. It was the long-awaited day on which my mother was to leave for her future husband's home, and while the house was a flurry of activity, the girl who was tasked with helping my mother change into her garments was all in a frenzy, going around looking for my mother who had gone missing. She could not find my mother anywhere, and so she and my aunt went around together looking for her. According to the hair stylist, my mother had only just finished having her hair set, and was seen making her way briskly in the direction of the storehouse, saying that she was going to have her makeup done. Upon hearing this, my aunt and the girl made their way to the storehouse, and they found my mother on the second floor. Because my aunt was completely unsuspecting, she thought my mother was simply hiding herself out of embarrassment, and so went up to the second floor of the storehouse, lighting her way with a lamp. She saw a two-paneled folding screen in the far side of the dark storehouse, and so laughing, said "Come on, now. Come here, what is the matter?" Making her way over to the screen, she peeped around it, and there was my mother, dressed from head to toe in a pure white kimono, lying face down. She was dead with her throat slit open.

Upon hearing this, I felt a chill run up my spine. And then I started to sob uncontrollably while saying, "This is all too much!" My aunt said, "I'm sorry, I did not intend to go so far as to tell you such a story," and she too had tears in her eyes. After hearing this story, I was put in a sorrowful mood. And I started to, with the feeling of peeking at something terrifying, sometimes turn the story over in my head. And each time I did so, because it was something so sad, like blood turning black, I kept telling myself to try to forget it, to not think about it, but for some reason, I cannot rid myself of the feeling that it was not about my mother, but something that happened to me myself. I cannot get it out of my head that it was I who was wearing the snow white kimono and collapsed there, all drenched in blood.

I feel like I would be berated by my mother if I told this story to other people, but somehow I wanted to tell it to *you*, and kept turning it over in my head if I should tell you now. And now no matter when we part ways, there is nothing more to say. Me? I am not crying. We are merely talking are we not?

However, let us talk about something else. Look, it has grown dark. You cannot see the spider's web anymore. I wonder if that black spot in the middle is the spider? Me? Why should I have to forget about you? Oh, a duckweed leaf has drifted over. Oh my, please stop... someone may be watching.

## Nightfall

Were you looking for me? I've just been out to the garden. There's a spider lowering itself down to the water from the chestnut tree at the back. It's spinning a web across the water's surface. Were you going to leave without saying goodbye, you'll be going back soon won't you? They say when a spider lowers itself to the water in the evening someone will be going far away. No really. People who live by the sea say a lot of things but each and every one of them is true. It's a small spider. Come and see. No need to put your shoes on, it's just across the grass so your feet won't get too dirty. I'm going in my socks.

You're sorry to be leaving, that's why you're so quiet? Well anyway, you've five more days. Can you see from there? Just under that fig tree. It's already getting dark so he's going flat out to spin his web. A yellow spider.

My aunt? Really? Did she say something to you? Maybe it's nothing. Women all lose it in the end you know. Just recently when she's at her sewing she suddenly comes out with things like this. Women are frightening creatures really, we commit someone to memory and never, ever, forget them until the day we die. I pretend not to hear and ask what she's on about but that's all there is to it.

You think I've been keeping something from you? I started to say something and then stopped? I'll tell you. I wasn't keeping anything from you. I was planning on telling you eventually. It's not about me. It's about my mother who died when I was a child. My aunt says such ridiculous things and gets you to ask me all these questions, it's too much, really. She feels sorry for my mother, my aunt, because she suffered all her life and then she died. All of this happened before I was born so my aunt told me the whole story. Not so long ago, in fact. My mother was just the age that I am now on the night that she came here as a bride. She tried to kill herself that very same night. The night of her wedding.

Back then my mother's family was enjoying a period of prosperity so they'd put on a splendid show for my mother. Dusk was falling on the evening of the day she was to be married. With the whole household busying itself with preparations, the woman who was supposed to dress my mother began to ask people where she'd got to, looking for her here, there and everywhere. My mother was nowhere to be found, so my aunt and the other woman went to look for her together. She'd had her hair done and was about to do her makeup, but had run off towards the storehouse. The two women went to look for her there and found my mother on the second floor. My aunt didn't know anything then. She thought my mother had run away because she was nervous. Climbing up to the second floor with only a candle to light the way, my aunt could make out a doubled up screen in a darkened corner. It's funny, almost. Come on now, she said, what's all this about? Peeking around the side she saw my mother in her pure white kimono lying hidden behind the screen. She'd cut her throat, my aunt thought she was dead.

I was so frightened that I began to tremble. Enough, I said, and began to cry, loudly. My aunt said she was sorry, she wasn't going to tell me all of this but now she had and she felt like crying too.

Ever since I found out I've become rather sad. Every so often I remember and it's like catching sight of some frightening vision. It's such a sorry tale, enough to make your blood run cold. I told myself I had to try and forget it, just not think about it any more. I don't know why but lately I've begun to feel as if it's not my mother's story at all but my own. It's me dressed in the white kimono, collapsed and drenched in my own blood. I don't think my mother would like me telling this story. For some reason I secretly wanted to tell you. So many times I thought about doing it. You'll be leaving soon, there's nothing else to say. Me? Crying never makes me feel any better. It's only a story.

Well then, let's talk about something else. Look. It's getting dark. You can't see the spider's web anymore. Is that the spider, the black thing in the middle? Me? Why would I ever forget you? Ah look, the duckweed is floating down. What are you doing, wait...someone's looking.

## Half-light - Suzuki Miekichi

Have you been looking for me? I've just gone out into the back garden. A spider came down from the chestnut tree onto the water on its thread and now it's building a web there. Even though you are hiding it from me, you will very soon be returning to that place, won't you? It's being said, a spider's coming down onto the water in the evening is a certain sign for someone's traveling to shores far away - No, it's true. What the people around here say proves to be absolutely right every single time. A tiny spider. Have a look at it. Your feet won't get dirty because you are on the lawn, even if you don't wear any wooden sandals. I'm only wearing traditional socks myself.

You probably remained silent because bidding farewell seemed too hard for you? Anyway, you will be here another five days, won't you? Can you see from there? From underneath that fig tree? It's swiftly building its web because the light is already fading. That yellow spider.

My aunt? What about her? Did she say anything to you? It must occur rather strange to you. The other day when she was doing her sewing she said that in the end the loss was always on the woman's side. I asked her what she meant by that because her saying so had come very suddenly out of nowhere, on which she answered that she found it dreadful, that a woman can never forget a person she had once thought of dearly until the day she dies. I pretended not to understand and asked her further but my aunt wouldn't say any more.

You think I was hiding something from you? Is it about the other day, when I started to tell you something but then didn't after all? I'll tell you now. I wasn't hiding it from you. In the end I wanted to tell you. It's nothing about me. It is about my mother, who died when I was small. I felt strangely uncomfortable when my aunt told me that she wanted to speak to me about something trivial. She said that she was very sorry that my mother had died deeply troubled, and told me in detail about various things that had happened in a time before I was born. Only recently that was. She told me that on the eve of her wedding day, the day she was to join her husband's household - back then she was near enough the same age as I am now - my mother suddenly decided to end her life. On her wedding eve.

Apparently the most splendid arrangements had been set up for my mother because her parents were extremely rich at the time. Many people had come and the whole house was busy and crowded when the great day had finally arrived. In the middle of the turmoil the woman in charge of helping my mother getting dressed was running around in search of her, asking again and again, where my mother might have gone. Because my mother was nowhere to be found, my aunt joined the search and together they asked the hairdresser. They were told, that she had finished my mother's hair a short while ago and was about to do her makeup when she took off in the direction of the storage house. On hearing this the two of them went to look for her there, where apparently they were to find her on the second floor. My aunt suspecting nothing, thought that she had run away to hide because she simply felt overwhelmed. They lit a candle in the holder and made their way up the stairs to the second floor. There, in a gloomy corner on the opposite side of the room was a Japanese two-folding screen. „Well,well,“ they said teasingly, „Come out! What's this all about“, all the while they were walking towards the screen to take a glance around it. Then - they found my mother there, dressed from head to toe in a white kimono, lying flat on the ground - her throat was cut and she was dead.

I was trembling all over when I heard this. I said, that I couldn't take any more and burst into tears, sobbing dreadfully. „I'm sorry,“ said my aunt „and I haven't even told you all that much yet“, and her eyes, too, were filled with tears.

Since I heard this story, my heart is filled with a sense of sorrow. And quite often, as if I would want to take a glance at something dreadful, I sometimes recall this story. Its sadness makes my heart bleed, and even though I try so hard to somehow forget and not to think about it anymore, I lately just can't help feeling that this wasn't my mother at all, but that it was myself instead. I can't think of anything else but of me lying on the floor, the pure white kimono I am wearing tainted red with blood. I also have a certain feeling that I will be scolded by my mother, if I tell other people about it. But somehow for some reason, I secretly wanted to tell *you* this story - so many times did I think, now was right the time, now, and how many times, did I decide against it. You can say your farewell any time now, I have nothing left to say. Me? I'm not crying. It's just a story after all.

But let's talk about something else, shall we? Look. It's darkened. One can't even see the spiderweb anymore. Right in the middle there seems to be something black, that must be the spider, don't you think? Me? Why should I forget you? Oh! A floating weed is drifting towards us on the surface. Now, wait a minute - there's people watching you.

Dusk  
Suzuki Miekichi

“Were you looking for me? I have just stepped out into the back garden. A spider has come down a thread from the chestnut tree out the back, and into the water. Then it spread a net above the water. You were hiding from me but have you finished over there now? They say that in the evening spiders drop down above the water and quickly climb up if someone comes. No, it’s true. Everything the beach people say is true. It’s a small spider. Do you want to come see it? Even if you don’t have your clogs on it is grass so you won’t get your feet dirty. I’m just out here in my socks.

“It is hard to say goodbye but you seem quiet. However you look at it it’s been more than five days since you went outside. Can you see from there? Underneath the fig tree. It is already dark so it is quickly making a web. It’s a yellow spider.

“Are you ok Auntie? Did you say something? You must be thinking something. When you have been doing your needlework these past few days you have been lost in it as women often are, but then out of the blue you said something and it was scary because once a woman hears something she will remember it until she dies. I pretended not to understand what I heard. But those are the only words you have spoken.

“Would I have hidden it from you? Would I have stopped myself from speaking? I would speak. It would not have been hidden. I think I would have ended up telling you. It is not mine to tell. It is my mother’s to tell, and she died when I was young. I feel strange because you will listen to whatever I want to tell you. You said that it was a pity my mother who had done nothing but struggle was dead, and you told me all about a secret from before I was born. Just the other day. When my mother was exactly the same age as I am now, on the night she was due to get married she suddenly tried to kill herself. On her wedding night.

“At that time most of my mother’s things were at her parents’ house and she kindly helped you get ready. Then on the night that she was finally due to get married, while all sorts was taking place at the house, the woman who came to dress her kept asking where my mother had gone and then everyone went looking for her. My mother couldn’t be found anywhere so together the two of you went round looking for her. Someone said she had gone into the barn with her hair and makeup done and as you went into the barn together it looked like she was upstairs. A double folding screen stood in the pitch black corner made you jump. You peeped round calling for my mother to come and asking her what on earth she was doing. And then saw my mother, dressed from head to toe in white, lying face down. It looked as if she had slit her throat.

“I trembled with fear when I heard this. “That’s enough!” I barked through tears. You said you hadn’t meant to say so much and you were also crying.

“I have felt so sad since I heard this story. When I catch a glimpse of something scary sometimes the story comes flooding back and I am so sad my blood runs cold. I keep thinking if only I could forget it, if only I could not think about it, but for some reason instead of my mother, I feel that it is me. All I can think of is me dressed completely in white and the blood dripping down.

“I say that I feel as though I want to scold my mother, but why you won’t talk about it no matter how much I suggest we do? You don’t even have anything else to talk about. Me? Crying won’t fix things. It’s just a story, right?

“Let’s just talk about something else. Look – it’s getting dark. You can’t see the spider’s web anymore. The dark thing you can see in the middle is the spider. You can make out the dark spider in the centre. Me? Let’s just forget about it all. Wow, the leaves of the floating grass have floated in. Wait... I can see someone.”

## TWILIGHT

By Suzuki Miekichi

Were you searching for me? I went to the garden in the backyard. A spider, which came down from the chestnut vine started spinning a web above the water. You came without my knowledge but when you leave, will it end? They say that if a spider lands on the water in the evening, someone will go far away. No, it is the truth! Every single thing told by the people on this side of the ocean, comes true. Small spider. You also keep watching. I still have my socks on which keeps my feet clean, since I am not wearing my sandals.

Are you silent because you are afraid of separation? Whatever it might be, won't you be back in five days? Can you see from below that fig tree? The looming darkness making it to spin the web hurriedly. The Yellow Spider.

Is it my aunt? How about it? Did she say something to you? I cannot even understand what she thinks. That time too, while doing the embroidery she exclaimed suddenly that no matter what happens, in the end, women are the ones who suffer. When I asked her what it was about, she said that if a woman thinks about a person once, she will never be able to forget that person for the rest of her life and that it is terrifying. I pretended as if I did not understand and kept on listening to her. She said nothing more.

What did I ever hide from you? Is it something I was about to tell you the other day? Okay, I will tell. It is not my intention to hide it. I wanted to save it for the end. It is not about me. It is about my mother who died when I was very young. I felt strange since my aunt made me hear such a trivial thing. Just the other day, my aunt expressed how pitiable my mom was, with only hardships in her life. She also mentioned about the various things that happened before my birth. My mom entered the house as a bride at almost the same age as I am and chose death on the very evening she became a bride. The very evening!

At that time, when there was abundant wealth and possessions, splendid arrangements were made for her. And on the day when my mom was to enter as a bride, in the evening, when the house was bustling with a great number of people, the lady who was supposed to dress her, went around asking where she was. She was nowhere to be found. When the lady and my aunt went around asking her whereabouts, the hairdresser informed that she had her hair done and ran toward the warehouse while in the middle of make-up. They found that she was on the second floor of the warehouse. My aunt, who knew nothing and kept thinking that she was running because of her shyness, lit a candle and climbed up the staircase. In the dim light, she reached the two-folded screen in the corner, "Well!" she said with a smile. "Come on, whatever it is tell me!" she said, while nearing the screen and peeked inside. My mother, wearing a white kimono, was lying face down. She had died by cutting her throat.

It made me tremble. She said that it was too much and started crying. With tears in her eyes, my aunt said "I am sorry. I did not mean to tell these things."

I became sad on hearing this story. When I remember this story my blood freezes in terror and I am overcome with sadness. No matter how many times I kept telling myself to forget it, I could not and this time I felt like it was not my mom, but me in that white Kimono, soaked in blood.

When I tell this to people, I feel like I am being scolded by my mother. I wanted to tell you this so many times but I kept putting it off. No matter when we get separated, I have nothing more to say. Me? I am not crying. This is just a story.

Let us talk something else. Look. It has become dark. The spider web cannot be seen anymore. The black thing in the center, is it the spider? Me? How will I ever forget you? Look! A duckweed leaf has come floating by. Hey wait...I can see some people.

*Dusk*

Oh? Were you looking for me? I had just come out here to the back garden. There's a spider, he's come down to the water along a thread of web hanging from the garden's chestnut tree. Now he's spinning a web, there above the water. I know you weren't going to tell me when you leave, but I suppose you'll be going back very soon, now, and that'll be the end of it, yes? But, you see, they say when a spider comes down to the surface of the water in the evening, someone is sure to leave for far away. No, really, it's the truth. It's what the people living here by the seashore say, and everything they say comes true. Such a little spider. Here, come and see. No need to take off your shoes, your feet won't get dirty on the lawn. See, I'm still in my socks.

It's because farewells are awful. That's why you didn't say anything, yes? It doesn't matter, though. You'll be gone from here in five days' time, anyway. Can you see him from there? Over there, beneath the fig tree. It's already dark, so he's hurrying to finish his web. The little yellow spider.

My aunt? How was she—did she say something to you? I think she might suspect something. Earlier, when she was doing her weaving, she said that it's the woman who always suffers in the end. She said it so suddenly, out of nowhere, so I asked what she meant, and she said how awful it is, once a woman's held someone in her heart she won't forget him, not until death. When I asked her, I acted like I didn't know what she meant. She didn't say anything else after that.

Was I hiding something from you? Something I was going to say, but stopped midway? No, I'll tell you. I wasn't trying to hide anything. I thought I'd tell you, at the end. It's not about me, it's about my mother—she died when I was little. My aunt, she's told me such a small thing, and it's left me unsettled. She said how pitiful it was, how my mother had died knowing nothing but pain. She told me about all these things that had happened before I was born. No, this was recently. She said my mother decided to die, the night she was coming to join my father's household. The night of her wedding. She would've been the very same age I am now, that night.

My mother's family was very well-off at the time, and so she was done up in the most gorgeous clothing, I heard. It was in the evening, on the day where at last she was to marry and leave home. The whole house was busy with the preparations, and in the midst of it the woman who was there to dress my mother in her gown was searching all around the house, asking where she'd gone off to. But she couldn't find my mother anywhere. So my aunt joined her and they began looking around together, until the lady who dressed her hair mentioned that my mother had ran off toward the storehouse earlier, after her hair and make-up were done. When they went to check the storehouse, they realized she was up on the second floor. But my aunt had no idea of what had actually happened, thought only that my mother had run off to hide out of simple shyness. She lit a candle, went up to the second floor, and saw a two-part folding screen set up off in the gloom of the far corner. My aunt told me how she let out a laugh at that

and went over to have a peek, saying come now, come now, what's all this about. On the other side of the screen, she saw my mother, stretched out face down, white as snow from head to toe in her wedding kimono. She had slit her own throat and was lying there, dead.

When I heard this, I started to tremble. I told my aunt no more, that's enough, sobbing and crying. My aunt said that she was sorry, that she shouldn't have told me so much, and her eyes started welling with tears, too.

Ever since I heard that story, there's been this sorrow upon me. Since then, the story comes to my mind again and again, like I'm peering in on some horrible scene. I feel this sadness, like my blood's gone black, and though I've tried and tried to somehow forget it, to not think of it, lately for some reason I can't get rid of this feeling. Like it wasn't my mother in that story. Like it was me, dressed in a pure white gown, lying there in a pool of blood. It's all I can think of.

There's this other feeling, too, like my mother would scold me for telling other people about it. But somehow I've been wanting to share it with you, alone. I've thought to myself countless times that now, now is the time to tell you. You'll be leaving any day now, but that doesn't matter. There's nothing left to say. Me? Am I crying? No, not at all. We're just talking.

But come, let's talk about something else. Look how dark it's gotten. You can't see that little spider's web anymore. The dark spot, there in the middle. That's him, isn't it. Me? Why would I ever forget you? Look there, some duckweed's come floating down the water—oh? Oh now, wait a moment... someone will see us.

## Dusk

By Suzuki Miekichi

Oh, were you looking for me? I've just come out to the back garden. There, on that chestnut tree in the back; a spider is following its thread down onto the water. It's casting its web now over the surface. You're trying to keep it from me, but you'll be going away before long—isn't that right? They say that when a spider comes down onto the water at sundown, someone is about to go far away. Really, they do! The things these seaside people say always do come true, you know. Such a little spider. Come and see. There's no need to wear sandals. It's only grass, so your feet won't get dirty. I'm only wearing *tabi*, after all.

You're so quiet because you're worried that parting will be hard, isn't that so? In any case, I imagine you won't be here more than five days longer. Can you see it from there? Just at the foot of that fig tree. It's already dark, so it's in a hurry to weave its web—a yellow spider.

Oh, my aunt? I wonder. Did she say something to you? I suspect she might have some idea. Just the other day, when I was doing my sewing, my aunt said to me all of a sudden that anything a woman does is bound to end in loss, and so I asked her what she could mean. She said to me that what makes a woman so terrifying is that once she falls in love, she never will forget it until the day she dies. I listened, pretending that I didn't understand what she had said. My aunt would say nothing more.

What was I hiding from you? Oh, do you mean what I was beginning to tell you the other day? I'll tell you. I wasn't hiding it from you; I meant to tell you in the end. It isn't about me at all. It's about my mother, who died when I was small. My aunt began speaking to me about nothing very much at all, so a strange feeling came over me. She then said how sad it was that my mother had suffered such hardship until her death and began to tell me stories from before I was born in great detail. This was just the other day. When my mother was just the same age I am now, on the night she married into this house, she decided without warning to take her own life. On the very night of her wedding.

My mother's family was prosperous then, and her wedding preparations were very grand. On the eve of the wedding, as the whole household was in a flurry of preparation, the woman who had come to dress my mother asked where she had gone, searching here and there for her. My mother was nowhere to be found, so my aunt and the woman searched for her together. Just then, the hairdresser told them that earlier, after her hair and makeup had been done, my mother had run off toward the storehouse. The two went to search the storehouse, and my mother was there on the second floor. Knowing nothing, and guessing my mother had simply fled in bashfulness, my aunt climbed to the second floor with a lantern in hand. A two-paneled screen stood dimly in the far corner. Well now, my aunt said with a chuckle. Come out, what's the matter, she said, moving towards the screen and peering around to the other side. There my mother lay, draped from head to toe in a pure white wedding kimono, her face downwards. She had slit her throat, and she was dead.

I listened to the story, and a shudder ran across my spine. I'd had enough, I said through heavy sobs. My aunt said that she was sorry, and that she should not have told me all that she had. Her eyes were wet with tears.

Hearing the story left me in a sorrowful mood. Since then, I've thought back on it from time to time, and, almost as if I were stealing a glance at some fearful thing, I feel a sadness as though my blood were running black... I do anything I can to forget,

to keep from thinking about that story, but for some strange reason, these days, I can't help but feel that it wasn't my mother in the story at all, but me. That I was the one dressed all in white, lying on the floor, stained with blood.

I feel as though my mother would scold me if I told this story to anyone, but somehow I wanted to tell it in secret to *you*—and so I kept thinking over and over again whether I should. Now we can part at any time, and there's nothing more I need to say. Me? No, of course I'm not crying. It's nothing but a story, after all.

But let's talk of something else. Look, now. My, how it's gotten dark! You can't even see the spider's web. I wonder if that's the spider there, that dark spot in the middle. Me? How could I forget you? Look, a patch of duckweed is floating this way. Wait, now... someone will see.

## End of Day

Searching for me, were you? I was just tending to the back yard. Watched a spider waft down on a thread, suspended from the chestnut tree out back. It pitched its net across the water.

You were just making your clandestine escape, were you not? Scurrying home once and for all?

See, they say when a spider descends upon the water at nightfall, someone runs away; far, far away. No – it's true. The things these sea-side dwellers say never miss the mark. A little spider. You best go yonder and look, too. You need not wear your slides. Your feet won't get dirty on the lawn, after all. Even me, I'm just in my socks.

Perhaps you feel badly of breaking away, and that's why you've clammed up. I reckoned you'd be gone in five days' time anyhow. You can see it from there, can't you? Right below that fig tree. The darker it gets, the quicker it works. That yellow spider.

My aunt, you say? How is she? Did she say something to you? I reckon Auntie does wonder about us. Just the other day as I sewed, she blurted, unanticipated, how all women are scorned eventually. I asked her to explain herself, and she said once a woman feels for someone, she won't forget them until she knows death. This is what makes women tremendous. I listen, feigning confusion. Auntie said no more.

What do you think I concealed from you just now? Perhaps what I started to tell you earlier? I'll tell you now. I wasn't hiding anything, per se. I was planning on telling you down the line. This isn't about me. This is about my mother, who lost her life when I was still small. Auntie shared with me this story as though it were nothing. This felt deeply off to me. Auntie, ever sympathetic of my mother who passed to great suffering, would divulge in me these detailed stories from before my birth. It was just the other day. Mother was nearly exactly the same age that I am now. The very evening before she was to be married off, in an unforeseen twist, she ventured to take her own life. The very evening before her wedding.

In these days my mother's home had plenty to spare, and it was said that she had received the most handsome of preparations. As the wedding quickly approached, with the house taken over by commotion and chaos, the woman responsible for dressing my mother had lost complete sight of her. Exclaiming wildly for her whereabouts, she searched high and low for the absent bride. Auntie joined the search and together they led a fruitless hunt, when alas!

They come across the hairdresser, who thought perhaps the barn, towards which she saw my mother scurry upon finishing her hair and makeup. The two took for the barn, and there she was on the second story. Still blind to the circumstances, Auntie assumed mother was hiding from cold feet and, toting a candlestick, ascended. In the dim corner stood a proud folding screen, and Auntie laughed and asked for my mother to come hither. Wondering what was happening, she peeked behind the screen. Her eyes fell upon my mother, clad head to toe in her white wedding robes, lying on her front. She was dead. She had cut her throat.

Hearing this, I shook violently. I said that's plenty and sobbed and sobbed. Auntie blamed herself, saying she was never to bring such a thing up, her own eyes brimming with tears.

My disposition has since been stained with sadness. Quite frequently now, as though stumbling upon something horrifying, I return to this story. A story so sad it turns my blood black. I've tried forgetting, I've tried not to think about it, but as of late I've begun picturing the woman *not* as my mother but as myself. I am the woman decked in white, dyed red with blood, collapsed.

I feel as though mother would scold me for telling this tale, but something compelled me to recount it to you, softly. Over and over again I deliberated sharing this with you. You may leave whenever now; I have nothing else to say. Me? I'm not crying. It's just a story, after all.

Let's talk about something else. Look here. Night's fallen. Not a sight of the spider's web anymore. I suppose that dark spot could be the spider. Me? How could I ever forget you. Why, if it isn't duck grass floating on by. Hold on ... people can see.

## Dusk

Were you looking for me? I was just out in the garden. There was a spider that crawled down a strand of silk hanging from the chestnut tree out back and dropped into the water. It's built a web there, above the water. You weren't planning on telling me, but I imagine you'll be heading back before long, won't you? They say that when a spider touches the water at dusk, it's a sign that someone will leave on a long trip. No, I'm serious. This man of the sea speaks nary a word that doesn't ring true. It's a tiny little spider. Why not come take a look as well? No need for sandals, the grass won't dirty your feet. I'm only in my socks, after all.

Is it our parting that leaves you so quiet? I didn't imagine you'd stay more than five days anyway. You should be able to see it from there, underneath the fig tree. The sun is setting, and it's rushing to build its web. A yellow spider. My aunt? What about her? Did she say something to you? I thought that might have had something to do with it. Earlier, while she was sewing, she said to me suddenly, it's always the woman who suffers in the end. When I asked her what she meant, she said that once you get into a woman's head, it's terrible, how she'll remember you until the day she dies. I listened, pretending I didn't know what she meant. That was all she said to me.

Am I hiding something from you? Something only half-spoken? I'll tell you. No, it's not a secret. I had wanted to tell you, when this was over. No, not about me. About my mother, who died when I was young. My aunt would always make me listen to these pointless stories, which is what made this one so strange. She said how sad it was when my mother died, how she was always struggling, all the things she had been through before I was born. This was just the other day. My mother was about my age, she told me, on the night of her wedding, when out of nowhere she'd tried to kill herself. On the very night of her wedding.

At the time my mother's family was rather well-to-do, and they had apparently spent quite lavishly on the preparations. That night, as their home filled with guests, the woman whose job it was to help her into her outfit was in a fluster—where had my mother gone to!—as she searched through the crowd. When she realized that my mother was nowhere to be found, my aunt helped her to look, and the hairdresser told them that after she had finished doing my mother's hair and makeup that she had run off towards the storehouse. They searched the storehouse and there they found her, on the second floor. My aunt, not knowing what was wrong, assumed that she had gotten cold feet, so she lit a candlestick and climbed up to the second floor, where a folding screen stood in a the corner. My my, she laughed to herself. Come now, it's not so bad, she said, approaching the screen to peer around the side, and there lay my mother, clad head to toe in her pristine white kimono. She was dead, slit her own throat, my aunt said.

When I heard this I shook with horror. I cried, told her that I didn't want to hear anymore. My aunt said that she was sorry, that she had never told anyone about it before, and of course she was crying too.

I've felt miserable ever since I heard the story. It keeps coming back to me sporadically, like the memory of some horrific sight, the anguish turning my blood black, and I try to forget about it, try to tell myself to stop thinking about it, but for some reason, lately, I've found myself thinking, what if that were me instead of my mother? What if I were the one in the white kimono, splayed on the ground and covered in blood?

I feel like my mother would scold me were I to tell anyone, but for some reason I kept thinking that I should let you know—Should I tell her now? How about now?—over and over like that. We'll be going our separate ways soon enough, but that's all I had left to say. Me? It's not worth crying over. It's just a story.

But let us speak of something else. Look, it's gotten dark. You can't see the spider's web anymore. Just the spider itself, that black spot in the center, maybe. Me? I imagine I'll forget you in time. Look, the duckweeds are floating this way. Hold on, now...someone will see you.

## A Spider at Dusk

Were you looking for me? I just stepped out into the back garden. I watched a spider climb down a thread from the chestnut tree to build a web there, above the water. And now I know your secret. You are going back, and you and I will be over. Oh yes, I can tell.

*See a spider at dusk go to water,  
a man's love is sure to falter.*

No, it's true. The superstitions of this coastal town always come true, every single one. Down to the little spiders. Come, I'll show you. Oh, darling, you won't need those sandals. The grass is much more comfortable. Look, I'm going out in my bare socks.

You think it will spare my feelings if you leave without saying a word. Never mind, it doesn't matter. In five days' time, you will be gone. Oh, can you see that from where you're standing? A yellow spider, at the foot of that fig tree. She's racing against the dark to spin her web.

My aunt? What about her? She said something to you, didn't she? Perhaps she has sensed it, too. Just the other day, I was sitting there sewing, and she came up to me to say, "Women always suffer in the end." I was taken aback. I asked her what she was talking about. I honestly had no idea. And do you know what she said? "Women are frightful creatures. Once we fall in love, we never forget." I hoped she would explain when she saw my puzzled expression. But she said nothing more.

What is it you think I'm hiding from you? What I started to say a few days ago? No, I'll tell you. I wouldn't hide anything from you. I always intended to tell you. It's not about me, you see, it's about my mother. She died when I was young. My aunt told me all this out of the blue just the other day, with no more concern than if she were commenting on the weather. It struck me in a most peculiar way. She said to me, "Your poor mother – her whole life was nothing but suffering, until the day she died," and then she went on to tell me about events that happened before I was born. That my mother was my age when she came to my father's house to be married, and that she attempted to end her life that very evening. On the night she was to be wed.

In those days, my mother's family was fairly well-to-do, and I'm told they spared no expense in the wedding arrangements. On the evening of the wedding, while the whole household was hard at work with the preparations, the kimono dresser went running around the house asking everyone, "Where is she? Where is she?" She couldn't find my mother anywhere. My aunt helped her search, too. The hairdresser told them that she had just finished my mother's hair, and that my mother, saying she was going to put on her makeup, had hurried

away in the direction of the storehouse. My aunt and the kimono dresser rushed to the storehouse and found my mother there in the loft. My aunt didn't realize what was happening – you see, she thought my mother had gotten cold feet and had gone to hide, so she lit a candlestick and climbed up the stairs. She saw a two-panel folding screen standing in a dim corner of the second floor loft. “Come on, now,” she laughed. She walked over to the folding screen, saying, “What's this all about, now? Come on out.” But when she peered behind the screen, she saw my mother in a pure-white kimono, lying face-down. My mother gave one final sob as she lay there, dying.

I shuddered when she said this, and I began crying uncontrollably. “Please, say no more!” I begged. My aunt said, “I'm sorry, I didn't mean to tell you all that.” There were tears in her eyes, too.

This story has weighed on my heart ever since. I often find myself replaying it in my mind, like a gruesome scene laid out before my eyes, and morbid curiosity compels me to stare. Could you ever know the depth of my despair? It is such that the very blood coursing through my veins seems to blacken, and– oh, no, I mustn't. I must forget this horror. Again and again I will myself not to think of it, but now... How strange. Lately it seems as if the woman in the story is not my mother at all. It is me. I am there, lying face down in the storehouse, sobbing as my blood seeps slowly into the white kimono.

I worry my mother would not approve of me talking of this, but I felt compelled to tell you, only you, and I kept looking for an opportunity. Now you know everything. If we were never to meet again after tonight, I would have no regrets. No, I'm not crying. It's just a story.

But please darling, let's speak of something else. Why, look how dark the evening has become. It has already hidden that spider web out of sight. Where is she? That black figure there in the middle must be her. No, don't say that – I could never forget you. Oh, look at that lily pad! It's floating towards us. Please, darling – not here. Someone will see.

## As the Light Fades

Have you been looking for me? I just came into the back garden. Earlier a spider descended from the chestnut tree to the pond, suspended by a silken thread. Now it is weaving its web over the water, a net for unsuspecting prey. You hid your arrival from me, but I am sure you will soon leave just as quietly. I've heard that when a spider descends over water of an evening, someone will soon depart. No, it's true. Everything the people in this coastal village say is accurate. Such a small spider. Come and see for yourself. You won't need your sandals, just walk on the grass and your feet won't get dirty. I, too, am in just my *tabi* socks.

Why will you not speak? Are you sorry for our imminent parting? Either way, I am convinced you will not be back for at least five days. Do you see it? Over there, beneath the fig tree. It is spinning its web hastily – it is already growing dark. See? A small, amber spider.

What of my aunt? Did she say something to you? It is possible she has guessed something. Not long ago, as she was doing her needlework, she told me that women always suffer in the end. I had to ask what it meant, this sudden warning. She replied that once we women form an attachment we cling onto it until we die, leading to all sorts of misfortune. I feigned ignorance. She said nothing more on the subject.

What have I hidden from you? The thing I stopped myself from saying not long ago? I will tell you. I didn't intend to keep it from you. I was always going to tell you, in the end. In any case, it is not about me but my mother, who died when I was young. My aunt spoke of this as if it were nothing, throwing my mind into confusion. She said she felt sorry for my mother, having experienced only suffering, and recounted in detail stories from before I was born. It was just recently. She talked about how, when Mother was the same age as I am now, she tried to take her own life, on her wedding night of all times.

According to my aunt, Mother's family were quite well-off at the time, so the wedding preparations were extravagant. On the night Mother was to be wed, while the house was in confusion with all the guests, the dress-maid became aware that Mother was missing, and began searching about the house with my aunt. The hairdresser mentioned that Mother had dashed off to the storehouse as soon as her hair was done and face made up. My aunt and the dress-maid, checking the storehouse, found Mother on the second floor. Knowing nothing of the situation, my aunt supposed that Mother was simply embarrassed by the all the pre-wedding fuss. She lit a candle and climbed the stairs to the second level. A two-panel folding screen stood in a shadowy corner of the room. Suspecting nothing, my aunt just chuckled. Calling for Mother to come out and talk to her, she made her way around the screen, only to find Mother, dressed from head to toe in her white wedding kimono, lying face down on the floor. She had slit her own throat and appeared to be dead.

When I heard this I shivered violently, told my aunt I had heard enough and burst into tears. Realising she should not have told me, she apologised, and began to tear up herself.

Ever since I heard this story, I have been awash with sorrow. I sometimes remember it, as if stealing a glance at a terrible accident. But this serves only to darken my mood, as if my blood has become ink of the deepest black. Though I try hard to forget about the incident, for some reason I have come to feel as if it is not my mother I imagine, but myself. Me, lying face down, wearing a pure white kimono stained red with my own blood.

Mother would berate me if she heard me speaking of this, but for some reason I have wanted to tell you for a long time. How many times have I been on the verge of opening up, only to stop myself at the last moment? Now, no matter when we part, there will have been no secrets between the two of us. Me? I won't cry. After all, it is just a story. Just a silly story.

But let us speak of something else. How dark it has become. I can no longer see the spider's web. Is that black spot in the middle the spider? And me? How am I to forget about you? Look, the pondweed is drifting closer. Oh, don't leave... Someone will see.

Dusk

By Miekichi Suzuki

Oh, hello. Were you looking for me? I was just out back in the garden watching a spider. It dropped down on a single thread from the chestnut tree, and now it's weaving a web over the pond. I know what you're trying to hide from me. Soon you'll be going back forever, won't you? They say a person will go far away if a spider climbs down over the water at dusk. No, it's really true. Old sayings along the coast here always turn out to be true. It's a tiny spider. Come here and see for yourself. No need to wear *geta*. Your feet won't get dirty walking on the grass. I came down here in my *tabi*.

You're so quiet. You must feel bad about saying goodbye. It doesn't matter. In five days you'll be gone forever. Look, it's a yellow spider. I'm sure you can see it from there. Under the fig tree and in a big hurry to finish the web because it's getting dark.

My aunt? Well, has she said anything to you? She probably suspects something is going on. The other day Auntie and I were sewing, and suddenly she announced, "It's always the woman who gets hurt." I asked her what she meant, and she said it's terrible that once a woman gives her heart to a man, she can't forget him till the day she dies. I pretended not to understand, and she didn't say any more.

I know you think I'm hiding something, but how could I? It's about the other day when I started talking and stopped, isn't it? Now I'll tell you. I wasn't actually trying to hide it, and I was going to tell you eventually. And it's not about me. It's about my mother. She died when I was very young. Well, just the other day Auntie started talking about a lot of different things, acting like they were nothing special, but I sensed she was leading up to something. She told me many things that happened before I was born, and she said it was a shame that my mother had to suffer so much before she died. Then it finally came out. She said my mother was just my age on her wedding day, and on the night she was supposed to ride in the wedding procession from her family's house to the groom's house, she suddenly decided to kill herself. On that very night.

Auntie says the family was pretty well off then, so they had made lavish arrangements. That evening the house was full of people preparing for the big event. The lady who was to help my mother put on her bridal attire was going around calling for her, but couldn't find her anywhere in the house. Auntie joined in the search, and the hair dresser said that she saw my mother run toward the storage shed after her hair and makeup were finished. So the two of them went to the storage shed, and it turned out mother was upstairs. Auntie had no idea anything was wrong, and she assumed my mother was just acting bashful and hiding. They lit candles and climbed the steps. In the shadows they could see a folding screen standing in the corner. Auntie laughed and said, "What do you think you're doing? Come out of there." Then she walked closer, and when she looked around the screen, she saw my mother lying face down, dressed in her pure white kimono. Dead. Apparently, she had slit her own throat.

When I heard those words, I began to shiver. "That's enough. No more!" I screamed, and started to wail. Auntie apologized and admitted she had gone too far. She was crying too.

I've felt sad ever since. Like someone who can't resist peeking at something dreadful, I keep recalling this story...only to feel my blood turn dark with despair. I just want to forget it all. I've tried so hard not to think about it. I really have. But you know, I keep thinking it wasn't my mother at all. It was me. It must have been *me* lying there, wearing that white kimono, stained in blood.

I'm sure my mother would be upset with me for telling you all this, but I wanted you to know. Just *you*. I really did try to tell you. Over and over, waiting for the right moment. Now that you know all my secrets, you can go anytime. I have nothing left to tell you. Me? I'm not crying. I just had to tell you my story.

Oh well, let's talk about something else. See, it's finally dark. I can't see the spider's web anymore. I wonder if that dark spot in the center is the spider. Me? How can I ever forget you? Look. The plants floating on the water are drifting this way. No...wait...people will see us.

Dusk

By Suzuki Miekichi

You came looking for me? I had just now gone out to the garden in back. Spiders were going down to the water along their threads from the chestnut trees out back. What's more, they're spinning webs above the water. You kept it from me that you'd be coming, and yet you're headed straight back now, right? But they say that when spiders come down to the water at night, it means someone will surely be going far away. No, it's true. Whatever people around the coast, here, say is always right on the mark. Small spiders. You go have a look, too. It's grass, so your feet won't get dirty even if you're not wearing sandals. Even I'm just in my socks.

You're keeping quiet because you think it's bad to leave, aren't you? Either way, you won't be coming around here for five days, will you? Can you see it from there? Beneath that fig tree. It's hurrying to spin its web since it's already dark out. A yellow spider.

My aunt? How is she? Did she say anything to you? Maybe she's been thinking a bit about something. Lately, she'll be sewing and will suddenly start talking about the harm women always end up causing. When I ask her what she means, she says that women are frightening because once they think of someone they aren't able to forget them until they die. I listened to her, pretending I didn't understand. She doesn't say anything but that.

What was it I hid from you? The thing I started to tell you about recently, and then stopped? I'll tell you. It's not that I hid it. I figured I would tell you in the end. It isn't about me. It's about my mother, who passed away when I was little. My aunt had been talking to me about nothing in particular, so I felt odd. She said it was so sad that my mother died having only struggled, and went into detail about some of the things happened before I was born. Just recently. My mother was exactly the same age as me when she died by her own hand, suddenly, on the night she was coming home to be married. On the night she was getting married.

At the time, my mother's family was pretty well off, so the preparations she

had done were quite extravagant. Then, on the night she was to finally get married and leave home, the house was full of guests and in a commotion. Amidst all this, the woman in charge of dressing my mother kept asking where she had gone, and was searching all around for her. As my mother was nowhere to be found, my aunt went to look with her. The woman doing her hair said that her hair had been finished a little while ago and that she had ran off to the storehouse when she did her makeup. When the two of them went to inquire at the storehouse, it turned out she was on the second floor. My aunt didn't know what was going on, so she just thought she had ran off and hid out of embarrassment. When she went up to the second floor, shining a candle, she said she sighed and laughed, as there was a two-panel folding screen set up in the dim corner across from them. She kept saying, "Come out. What's going on?" and went over to take a peak. My mother was face down, dressed head to toe in a pure white kimono. She had died from slitting her throat.

I shuddered when I heard this story. I told her that that was enough and began crying my eyes out. My aunt said that it had been bad of her, and that she wasn't going to have spoken about all this. Of course, she became teary-eyed herself.

After I heard this story, I became sad. Later, when I would sometimes remember this story, like I was looking upon some horrific sight, I would feel sad, as though my blood was turning black. So, to somehow forget, I would try to not think of it, but now I can't help but think for some reason that it was not my mother, but I. I can only think that I collapsed, smeared with blood, wearing a white kimono.

I feel that if I tell this to people, I'll be scolded by my mother, but I've wanted to tell *you* for some reason and kept mulling over when I should. Even in parting, I have nothing else to say. Me? I ain't crying. It's just a story.

But let's talk about something else. Take a look. It's gotten dark out. You can't see the spider webs anymore. Isn't that black looking thing in the middle a spider? Me? How could I forget you? Oh, a floating weed has drifted over. Ah, wait...because people will see.

**Fade to night***Suzuki Miekichi*

Were you looking for me?

I just stepped out into the courtyard.

Out here, a spider, stringing its threads from the chestnut tree, has descended to the surface of the pond. It's weaving a net over the water.

You might conceal it from me, but soon, you'll go back *there*, and that will be the end, won't it? They say that when a spider hangs over the water in the evening, there can be no doubt about it: someone will be going somewhere far away.

No, it's true. These seaside-dwelling folk are right in everything they say.

This little spider... You should come and watch it too. Your feet won't get dirty standing on the lawn, even if you don't wear your sandals. I'm only wearing my socks.

I suppose you're silent because you feel guilty about leaving?

In any case, I know you won't be here for more than another five days.

You can see it from there, can't you? Beneath the fig tree. It's already dark, so it's hastily weaving its web—a yellow spider.

Was it my aunt? I wonder... Did she say something to you? I suppose she might have been considering something like that.

The other day, while we were sewing, she said that it's always the women who suffer in the end. Because she said a thing like that so suddenly, I asked her what she meant. She replied that the awful thing is, if a woman cares for someone once, she will never forget them, not until the day she dies. I listened, and feigned confusion, but she would say nothing more.

Did you think I was hiding something from you? The thing I began to tell you the other day, but stopped?

I'll tell you. I wasn't hiding it from you. I just thought that I would tell you at the end. It's not about me, but about my mother, who died when I was young.

It was unnerving, because my aunt usually spoke to me only of trivial things. She said she felt sorry for my mother, who knew nothing but suffering until she died, and related, in some detail, events that had taken place before I was born. Then—and this was only the other day—she told me that my mother, at exactly the same age as I am now, on the night she was to be married, unexpectedly tried to take her own life. On the night of her wedding.

It seems my mother's household was quite wealthy at the time, and she received an impressive dowry. Then came the day of her bridal preparations, and that evening, she was to leave her parents' home. While her family was frantically busy, the woman who was tasked with helping my mother dress searched all over for her, asking where she had gone. She was nowhere to be found, so my aunt joined in the search, and the hairdresser said that after she had done her hair and powdered her face, my mother had immediately run off in the direction of the storehouses.

They went to check, and there she was, on the second floor.

Not knowing any better, and thinking only that my mother had run off and hidden out of embarrassment, my aunt took a lantern and went up. She said a folding screen stood in the gloom of the far corner, and she sighed and smiled. *Now, now, come out of there. What are you doing?* She crossed the room and looked over the screen to find my mother, dressed from head to toe in her snowy white kimono, lying face-down on the floor. She'd cut her throat, and showed no sign of life. As I listened, a chill ran through me. I cried out, *That's enough!* and began to wail. My aunt said she was sorry, she hadn't meant to say so much; she was on the verge of tears herself.

I've felt miserable ever since I heard that story. Every now and then, I recall it, and it's like catching a glimpse of something horrifying. It makes me sad enough to turn my blood black, so, when it comes to mind, I try to find a way to forget it; to not think about it. But for some reason, now, I feel as though that was not my mother, but me. I can think nothing other than that it was I who wore the snowy white kimono and collapsed to the floor, stained with blood.

I think my mother would scold me for telling anyone this tale. But somehow, I wanted to tell it, softly, to *you*.

Over and over again, I wondered if the time had come to tell you. Then, it wouldn't matter when you left. There would be nothing else I'd need to say.

Me?

I'm not crying. It's only a story.

But let's talk about something else. Look—how dark it's become! The spider's web is invisible now. I suppose the black thing in the middle must be the spider.

Me?

How could I possibly forget you?

Oh, the duckweed leaves have drifted near.

No, wait a moment...people can see.

Dusk

Suzuki Miekichi

Looking for me? I've been out here in the back garden. From the chestnut tree out the back, a spider has lowered herself down to the water on a thread. And on the water, she spreads her net. You try to hide it, but I can tell you'll be stealing back home any time now, won't you? But it is said that when spiders go down to the water in the evening, someone must be going far away. No, really. The sayings of the shore people always prove true. Such a little spider. Come and look, darling. You shouldn't need sandals; your feet won't get dirty on the lawn. I'm in *tabi* socks.

You are silent, perhaps because you feel ashamed to leave me? In any case, I dare say you won't show your face here again for at least five days. Can you see from there? The spider is under that fig tree. It is already getting dark, so she hurries to weave her web. A yellow spider.

My aunt? I don't think she does. Did she say something to you? She may well be wondering about us a little. The other day when we were sewing, she said that women are always the ones who suffer in the end, and as it was apropos of nothing, I asked her what on earth she was talking about, and she said that women are terrifying creatures; once a woman falls in love with a man, she won't be able to forget him, until she dies. I asked her as if I had no idea what she was talking about. That was all she said.

What could I have been hiding from you? I suppose you mean what I started to tell you the other day? I'll tell you. It's not something I've been hiding. I thought I would tell you in the end. It's not my story. It's my mother's, who died when I was very young. Ever since my aunt told me about it as if it were nothing at all, I've felt strange. Aunt was telling me this and that about happenings before I was born; she said that my poor mother had nothing but suffering before she died. Aunt told me just the other day. When my mother was exactly the age I am now, on the evening she was to be wed, all of a sudden she tried to kill herself. On her wedding night.

At the time, my family were very well-to-do, and so the wedding preparations were lavish. And on the very evening of the long-awaited day on which my mother was to be married, as the whole house filled with hustle and bustle, the woman who was to dress her was calling out, "Where has she gone?", having searched far and wide. But she wasn't to be found anywhere, so my aunt went along to help search, and they heard from the hairdresser that right after my mother's hair and makeup were done, she had run in the direction of the storehouse, and so the two of them went to search, and found her there on the upper level. Aunt didn't know anything was amiss, she just thought that my mother had run away to hide out of pure embarrassment, and so when she went up there with a candle to light the way, and saw that someone had opened a folding screen in the dimness of the far corner, she sighed and laughed. "Come here at once, explain yourself," she cried as she went to peek behind the

screen, and saw my mother dressed in her wedding kimono head-to-toe in white, facedown on the floor. She had slit her own throat to die.

I was shaking with horror as I listened. And I said "That's enough," and burst into tears. Aunt said sorry, she hadn't meant to say so much, and her own eyes filled.

Since I heard that story, it has weighed heavy on my heart. I often remember it at odd moments, as if I'm peeking at something terrifying; a sad thing like blood turning black that I tell myself to somehow forget, not to think of it anymore, but for some reason, lately, I can't help feeling that it wasn't my mother: it was me. I can't stop imagining it is me who is dressed in a pure white kimono, stained with blood, fallen.

I feel like my mother should scold me for telling anyone, but somehow I wanted to confide in *you*, my dearest; I just kept thinking shall I say it, shall I say it now. Whenever you leave me, just know that is all I had to say. I? I'm not crying. Just making conversation.

At any rate, do let us talk about something else. See, darling. It's dark now. You can't see the spider's web anymore. That black bit in the middle is the spider, isn't it? I? How could I ever forget you, dearest. Oh look, floating weeds are drifting down in the current. Dear, don't be so hasty... ...people can see.

Dusk

By SUZUKI Miekichi

Were you looking for me? I've just come out here to the back garden. A spider let itself down from the chestnut tree to the water. It's now spinning a web on the surface. You've appeared without telling me, but will it end with you going back soon? They do say that when a spider comes down to water in the evening someone will travel far. No it's true. The people of this coast are always right with their sayings. Little spider. You go and have a look too. No need to put on geta, it's across the grass so your feet won't get dirty. Me, I'm still wearing tabi.

Are you keeping silent because you think parting is bad? Either way, you won't be out here for another five days will you? You can see it from there, right. The yellow spider just beneath that fig tree, hurrying to spin its web as it's already dark.

What of Auntie? I can't say. Did she say something to you? Perhaps that means she had something on her mind. The other day, while sewing, she abruptly said it's because women always end up losing out. Pretending not to understand, I asked what she was referring to. She replied that it's frightening how once a woman has someone in her thoughts she never forgets them until death. That's all she would say.

What did I hide from you? Is it what I started to say but didn't finish that time? Let me say it then. I wasn't hiding it, I meant to tell you in the end. It's not about me. It's about my mother who died when I was small. Just recently when telling me about it, Auntie called it a trivial matter. That made me feel strange. She told me how sorry she felt for Mother who suffered so much only to die, telling me all about events that took place before I was born. Mother was just the same age as I am now when it happened. It seems that on the night she was married, when preparing to leave for our home, she suddenly attempted to take her own life. On her wedding night . . .

In those days they didn't want for anything at the family home, so apparently lavish preparations had been made for Mother. It was on the evening when she was about to leave and begin married life, while the whole house was busy getting ready, that she went missing. The woman who had come to help Mother dress began asking where she had gone, and everyone set about searching for her. But Mother was nowhere to be found. In the search, Auntie and the dress assistant came across the hairdresser who told them that after her hair was finished, and her makeup was done, Mother had set off towards the storehouse. When they got there it appears she was on the second floor. With no idea of what was going on and believing that Mother was merely hiding out of shyness, lighting a candlestick, Auntie made her way upstairs. Through the gloom, she noticed a two-panel folding screen standing in a corner of the room. Auntie said she smiled then as she realized she had found her. Proclaiming, "Come out from there, what is all the fuss?" she went over and looked behind the screen. There she discovered Mother lying face down, dead, in her all-white kimono. Apparently she had cut her own throat.

Hearing that I trembled with horror and, saying I had heard enough, began to sob inconsolably. Tears welling herself, Auntie apologized, adding that she had never intended to tell me so much.

After learning of the story I began to harbor a deep sadness inside. From that time on, as if I were stealing a glance at something terrible, I would often recall this story. It was so distressing it made my blood run cold. So I did all I could to prevent myself from thinking of it. But try as I might to forget, for whatever reason, recently I couldn't help thinking that the story was not about Mother, but about me. I couldn't help but feel that it was I lying on the ground in that pure white kimono stained red with blood.

I think Mother would scold me for telling others about this, but I couldn't resist the urge to whisper it softly now, to *you*. Now we are free to part as there is nothing left to say. Me? No I'm not crying. It's just a story after all.

But let us talk about something else. Look, darkness has fallen. The spider's web is hidden from view. Maybe that black spot in the middle is the spider. Me? Why can I not forget you? Ah, the duckweed leaves are floating past. But wait . . . people will see.

**Wistful Dusk by Miekichi Suzuki**

You were looking for me? I was just out in the back garden. A spider lowered itself on silk to the water from the chestnut tree out there. Now it is spinning a web above the water. You are trying to hide it from me but you will soon be ending things and going back over there won't you? They say when a spider lowers itself to the water at dusk it no doubt means someone will be going far away. No, it is true. I am told the people living by this sea get it right every single time. It is a small spider. Why don't you go and have a look too? There is no need to wear your wooden sandals. Your feet won't get dirty for you'll be on the lawn. Even I only wore my socks.

You thought farewells would be wrong so did not say anything, right? Either way, you would not come here for at least another five days. Can you see it from where you are? It is under that fig tree. It is already dark so it is spinning its web in a hurry. It is a yellow spider.

My aunt? I wonder. Did she say something to you? Then she might have a little something on her mind. Actually, just recently while we were sewing, she suddenly said that women will always get the short end of the stick when things end. When I asked her what she meant she told me that once a woman loves she is unable to forget until she dies, which is terrifying. I listened to her pretending not to understand. My aunt does not say things like that without a reason.

I am hiding something from you? Are you speaking of what I almost told you but in the end did not? I will tell you. I did not hide it from you. I was thinking of telling you when things ended. It is not about me. It is about my mother who passed away when I was young. My aunt spoke to me about something of not much importance so I was strangely curious about it. My aunt said it was a shame my mother died only living a life of hardships and told me various things about her in detail like what she was like before I was born. She only told me this recently. My aunt told me when my mother was just the same age as I am now, she suddenly thought to kill herself on the night she was to marry into this household. On the night she was to marry.

At that time my mother's family were pretty wealthy so it seemed her wedding preparations were extremely impressive. On the evening when my mother would finally be wedded, just when everyone in the house was making preparations, the woman who was to dress my mother searched around everywhere for her wondering where she had gone. My mother was nowhere to be found but as the woman was searching around with my aunt, the hairdresser told them my mother had run straight in the direction of the warehouse when her hair had been styled and was to have her make-up done. So my aunt and the woman went to the warehouse. When they did, it seemed my mother was on the second level. My aunt wasn't aware of anything so she only thought my mother had run and hid out of embarrassment. My aunt lit a portable candle and went up to the second level. She laughed fondly at when she saw a two-panelled folding screen upright on the other side of the level in the dim corner. As she asked my mother to come out and what she was doing, she walked up next to the screens

and took a peek. There, my mother was dressed from top to bottom in her white wedding kimono, lying face down. She had cut her throat and died.

I trembled in horror when I heard that. Then I told my aunt I had enough and wept loudly. My aunt said she shouldn't have told me that much and was in tears in the end.

After I heard this, I felt miserable. Ever since then it is as if I have started to get glimpses of something dreadful. Sometimes when I remember this I become depressed and my blood runs cold so I try to do something to forget it. I try make myself not think about it but for some reason, these days I get the feeling that is not my mother on the ground but me. I can only see it as me wearing a completely white kimono, dyed in blood, collapsed on the floor.

If I told people about this, I feel as if I would be scolded by my mother but somehow I wanted to secretly tell you, especially, about this. Over and over again I had thought to tell you. I do not have anything else to say no matter when we part. Me? I am not crying. It is only a story.

But let us talk of something else. Look. It has gotten dark. We can no longer see the spider web. I wonder if the black thing we can see in the middle is the spider. Me? What shall I do to forget you? Oh, a duckweed has floated by. Oh, wait...let me take a look at you.

## Dusk by Miekichi Suzuki

Oh, were you looking for me? I've just stepped out into the back garden. A spider has climbed down a thread dangling from the chestnut tree out back, all the way down to the water. And now it's spinning a web just above the surface. You've been keeping it a secret from me, but you're about to leave here and go back to that place, aren't you? Well, they say if a spider lowers itself onto water in evening, then someone is bound to go someplace far away. Nay, it's the truth. Whatever the people on this coast say comes true—every last thing. Little spider. Come here and have a look, dear. You don't have to put on your *geta* sandals; there's grass, so your feet won't get soiled. Why, I'm out here in only my *tabi* socks. You stayed silent because you felt badly about leaving me, didn't you? In any case, you won't stay here longer than five more days, I suppose. You can see it from over there, can't you? There, under that fig tree. It's already fallen dark, so it's hurriedly spinning its web. The yellow spider.

What about my auntie? I wonder. Did she say something to you? Yes, well, she may have some opinion about it. Just the other day while doing needlework, she declared that in the end, it's always women who suffer—she said it so suddenly, I asked her what she was talking about, and she replied that it's terrifying how once a woman falls in love with someone, she never forgets about that person until she dies. I just listened, pretending not to understand. That's all auntie said.

I hid what from you? That thing I stopped myself from saying the other day? Then I shall say it. I'm not hiding anything. I had intended to tell you in the end. It's not about me; it's about my mother, who died when I was young. I was feeling rather queer after my auntie told me about a trivial matter, you see. Auntie told me all sorts of things about the time before I was born, saying that mother was pitiful because she died after suffering so much. Only a short while ago, you see. She said when mother was the exact same age as me, on the night she was supposed to be married into this house, she suddenly tried to kill herself. On her very wedding night.

Mother's family was quite wealthy back then, so apparently the bridal preparations had been exceedingly lavish. On the evening she was going to be married off at last, while the entire house was in a flurry with preparations, the woman who was charged with dressing mother was searching everywhere up and down for her, asking again and again where mother might have gone to. When she couldn't find mother anywhere, auntie and the woman began searching together, then another woman in charge of setting mother's hair said that as soon as mother had her hair and makeup done, she had run off towards the storehouse, so the two went to the storehouse, and there mother was, on the second floor. Auntie hadn't any idea about what was going on, so she merely supposed mother had run away and hidden herself out of shyness. When she lit a candle and climbed up to the second floor, on the other side in a dim corner there was a folding screen propped up, so she exclaimed, "My!" and laughed. So auntie said to her—she said to her, "Come here now, what's the matter?" and when she went over beside the screen and took a peek, mother was there lying face down, dressed in a pure white kimono from head to toe. She was dead, her throat having been slit.

I started trembling when I heard this. I said that was enough, and burst into loud sobs. Auntie said she was sorry, that she shouldn't have told me, her eyes also brimming with tears.

I've been in such low spirits since hearing that story. Ever since then, I'll remember it often, and, as if peering in at some horrible thing, I'll become so sad that it feels as though my blood has gone black, so I tell myself and I tell myself not to dwell on it—anything to forget—but for some reason, these days I have a nagging feeling that it wasn't mother at

all—rather, that it was me. I can't help but think that it was *me* who was lying down like that, wrapped up in a pure white kimono, soaked in blood.

My mother would scold me for telling this to other people, but I had longed to tell *you* this story in private—I thought of telling you oh so many times. Now there's nothing left for me to say, no matter when we have to part. Me? Oh no, I'm not crying. It's just a story, after all. Now, let's do speak of something else. Look. It's become so very dark. Why, I can't make out the spider's web anymore! That black thing in the center, is that the spider? Me? How could I ever forget about you, my dear? Oh! Some duckweed leaves have come floating down this way. Dear, please wait... people will see us.

At Twilight  
by SUZUKI Miekichi

Were you looking for me? I was just out in the garden at the back. There I watched a spider lower itself from the chestnut tree down to the water on a single thread. Then it began to spin its web above the water. You came here unannounced and you intend to leave soon, do you not? They say that when a spider lowers itself down to the water when evening comes, it means someone is set to go far away. No, it is true. Here by the sea, the things people say are all true, every one of them. And that little spider—well, go and see for yourself. No, you will not need your *geta* sandals. It is there on the lawn. You will not dirty your feet. See, I wear only these *tabi* socks.

You say nothing. Is it because you feel bad about leaving? Well, in any case, you do not intend to return here anytime soon, do you? Look beneath that fig tree. You can see it from where you stand, can you not? The yellow spider busies itself spinning its web before it grows too dark.

My aunt? Well? Did she say something to you? Perhaps this is playing on her mind. Why, the other day as we sat at our needlework, she suddenly declared that things were always harder on women in the end. I asked her what she meant and she replied that woman were fearsome—when they love someone, they never forget them, not until their dying day. I continued to listen, pretending I did not understand. But that was all she said.

What have I ever concealed from you? Ah, you mean before, when I began to tell you something? Well, I shall tell you now. But know that I was not hiding anything from you. No, I wanted to tell you at the end. But this is not about me. It concerns my mother, who died when I was small. My aunt told me this as if it were nothing out of the ordinary, which made me feel rather odd. She said that it broke her heart to think that my mother had known nothing but suffering all her life. Then she told me about all manner of things, even those that had happened before I was born. It was just the other day. She told me that when my mother was precisely the age that I am now, she had been due to go to their family home as a bride. But that evening she took her own life without any warning. On the very night she was to be wed.

My aunt told me that back then my mother's family were well-to-do, and it seems that no expense had been spared in preparing for the wedding. On the evening she was due to be married and take leave of her family, the house was full of people. In the midst of all this, the girl who was charged with dressing my mother began searching the house from top to bottom, asking where my mother could have got to. She could not find her anywhere, so my aunt joined her in her search. The girl who had been attending to my mother's hair and make-up told them that after she had finished, the young mistress had run straight out to the storehouse. My aunt and the other girl went there and that is where they found her. She was upstairs. Not knowing any differently, my aunt merely thought that my mother had been overcome by shyness and had run off to hide. So she lit a candle and climbed the stairs. There she saw that a folding screen stood in the gloom in the far corner. My aunt told me that she smiled and made her way towards it, reassuring my mother all the while: 'Come now. What's all this?' But when she looked behind the screen, she saw my mother lying face down, dressed in a spotless white *kimono*. She was dead. She had slit her own throat.

When I heard this, I shuddered with horror. I told her I had heard enough and burst into violent sobs. My aunt told me she was sorry, and that she had said too much. Then she too began to cry.

Ever since I learned all this, I have felt so sad. Yet I think about it often, in the same way that one cannot quite resist peeking at something one finds terrifying. I recall my aunt's story and I am overwhelmed by a sadness that feels like it could turn my blood black. I try to forget it, and do all I can to put it out of my mind, but for some reason I cannot explain, I cannot escape the feeling lately that it is not my mother at all—it is me. It is me who is dressed in that spotless white *kimono*. It is me who is lying on the floor, stained with blood.

I fear my mother would be angry at me for speaking of this to anyone, but for whatever reason, I have been longing to share this with you, just you. I have been turning it over and over in my mind, thinking about the right time to say it. Now you may leave whenever you wish. I have said what I needed to say.

What is that? No, I am not crying! I am merely telling you a story. But now let us speak of other things. Look. It grows dark. The spider's web can no longer be seen, just that black shape at its center. That is the spider, I take it. But what am I to do? How can I ever hope to forget you? Oh, see how that weed floats this way. But wait, please. Someone might see.

Veiled by Darkness  
By Suzuki Miekichi

Were you looking for me? I was just heading to the back garden. There is a spider lowering itself over the water from the chestnut tree. It is spinning a web there. You are hiding it from me, but you will be leaving soon, won't you? They say that when spiders spin their webs towards the water at night, it means that someone will be departing for someplace distant. Really. It's true. The things said by the people who live by the lake are all accurate. It's a small spider. Come here and look. You'll be on the grass, so your feet won't get dirty even without your *geta* sandals. See? I'm only wearing *tabi* socks.

You aren't saying anything because you feel guilty for leaving, don't you? Well. No matter the reason, you won't be here in another five days. You can see it from where you are, can't you? Under that fig tree. It's getting dark, so it's spinning its web quickly. It's a yellow spider.

My aunt? I wonder. Did she say something to you? She might have had something on her mind. Recently when she was doing her embroidery work, she said that at the end of the day, women always get the short end of the stick. When I asked her what she meant by that, she said that women are scary because once they love someone, they will never forget that person until they die. I pretended not to understand and just listened. That's all she said.

What did I ever hide from you? You mean the part where I stopped talking mid-sentence? I'll tell you. I wasn't hiding anything. I intended to tell you everything. It isn't about me. It's about my late mother, who passed away when I was still small. My aunt has a tendency to make me listen to random stories, so that's why I was acting irrational. She said my mother experienced nothing but hardship until her death and that her heart hurt for her. She told me many things about what my mother was like before I was born. One story was quite recent. When my mother was my age, on the night she was married into the family, she unexpectedly committed suicide. It was the night of her own wedding.

My mother's family was very well-off at the time, so her wedding arrangements were incredibly elaborate. On the evening she was to leave with her new husband, with the house full of guests, the woman responsible for dressing my mother kept going around the house, asking where she had gone. My mother was nowhere to be found, so my aunt went with the woman to look for her. The beautician said she had just finished my mother's hair and makeup when my mother ran off in the direction of the storehouse. When the two went to check the building, my mother was on the second floor. My aunt didn't know the circumstances, so she only thought my mother ran to hide because she was embarrassed. So when she lit a candle and went upstairs, she saw my mother behind a folding screen in a corner thinly veiled by darkness. She just laughed and said, "Oh, goodness. Come on out. What is this about?" She repeated herself, again and again, as she approached and peered around the folding screen. And there was my mother, face down on the floor, dressed head to toe in her white kimono. She had slit her own throat and died.

I trembled in fear as I listened to that story. I wailed, and told my aunt that I'd heard enough. She apologized, on the verge of tears herself, and said she never should have told me the full story.

My mind has been in constant sorrow ever since I heard the story. I recall it often – it feels as if I am peering in on something terrifying. It is so sorrowful. Enough to turn my blood black. I keep thinking: How can I forget it? How can I stop thinking about it? Yet lately, for some reason, I feel as if it isn't my mother's story. I feel like it is mine. I see myself collapsed on that floor, wearing that white kimono, stained with blood.

I feel like my mother would scold me for telling that story to others. But for some reason, I just had to tell it to *you*. It's been on the tip of my tongue for quite a while. Now that I have told you, it doesn't matter when we separate. I have nothing left to say. Me? I'm not crying. After all, it is only a story.

But let us talk about something else. Look at how much darker it has gotten. We cannot see the spider's web anymore. I wonder if that black spot in the middle is the spider? Me? I wonder how I will ever forget about you? Oh? Duckweed leaves have washed ashore. Wait. Don't go... Someone will see you.

## Twilight

by Miekichi Suzuki

Were you looking for me? I was just in the backyard. You know what? A spider went down on the water surface swinging from a thread and is spinning its web on the water. I know you are holding out on me, but you are going to go back there shortly, aren't you? There is a lore that somebody goes far away when a spider goes down on the water. Trust me. Whatever people living by this sea say will be accurate. It was a small spider. Why don't you go and see it? You don't have to put on your clogs. You can walk on the grass, and your foot won't get dirty. Look my foot. I got on the grass with my Tabi socks.

I believe you have not told me that because you thought farewell is bad to me. You may be leaving here in 5 days. Can't you see the spider from there? Under the fig tree. It is spinning the web in a hurry because it is getting dark. The yellow one.

My aunt? Did she say something to you? Yeah, she might be thinking about that a bit. She said abruptly that it can be disadvantageous to women at the end. So I asked her what she meant. Then she said that it is horrible that a woman cannot forget a man once the woman loved the man. I heard that as if I don't understand it. So, she did not say about it anymore.

Did I hold out anything on you? Is that the thing I stop talking in the middle of a sentence? I didn't mean to hold out on you. I thought I would tell you. It's not about me but my mom who died when I was a little girl. I felt strange because my aunt told me a thing nothing special. She told me that my mom is poor because she experienced many hardships and died. And she told me my mom's story before she gave birth to me in detail. That was just the other day. My mom suddenly tried to kill herself in the night married into a family at the age of mine today. That was the night of marriage.

My mom's parents were wealthy at that time. They prepared a marital package for her more than enough. In the evening she had to leave her parent's home for marriage, she disappeared while many people in the home were busy to get ready for the marriage. A woman who had to dress my mom in the bridal clothes was looking for my mom everywhere by asking others where she went, but she could not find my mom. So, my aunt joined her, and they were looking for my mom. Then a hairdresser told them that she put a makeup on after dressing her hair in Japanese traditional style and ran toward the storehouse as she was. So, they went to the store house and found her in the upstairs. My aunt didn't know anything and thought that my mom hid and escaped from others because my mom got bashful. When she went upstairs with a lighted portable candlestick, she found a folding

screen with 2 panels set in an obscure corner and smiled. She said “Well, well. Come over here. What is wrong with you?” and reached the screen. When she looked in at the screen, she found my mom laid face down wearing the white bridal clothes. My mom killed herself by cutting her throat.

When I heard the story, I got chills. I told her that I don’t want to hear it anymore and broke into a flood of tears. She told me in tears that she was sorry and didn’t intend to talk this much.

After that, my heart filled with deep sorrow. Since then, I sometimes remembered the story and felt deep sorrow that is difficult to endure as if I looked inside of something horrible. So, I tried to forget it somehow by trying not to think about it. Recently, I can’t help feeling that the story is not my mom’s but mine. Just feel that I am the one who to fall down in the sparkling white Kimono dyeing with blood.

My mom might scold me if I tell that to somebody, but I wanted to tell YOU the story gently and tried to tell you so many times. I have nothing else to tell you even if we break up in the near future. Are you asking me if I cry now? No, I am not crying. This is just a story.

Well, this is enough. Let’s talk about other thing. Look. It’s got dark. We cannot see the spider’s web. Well, but the spider might be the black one in the center. Are you asking me if I can forget you? How can I forget you? Well, floating weeds floated down the stream. Look, wait... You might be presented by eyes.

Fading Light  
by Suzuki Miekichi

Were you looking for me? I just stepped out into the rear garden. A spider came down by a strand of its silk from one of the chestnut trees out back and descended to the water. It's spinning its web there, above the surface. You tried to keep it a secret from me, but soon you'll be going back to that place, won't you? They say when a spider comes down to the water in the evening, it means someone is going far away. Honestly, it's true. The people who live along the sea... when they say something, it always comes true. It's a small spider. Come take a look. It's grassy here, so you don't need your shoes; your feet won't get dirty. I'm just wearing my socks.

Are you silent because you don't want to say goodbye? Either way, it's already the fifth day, and I expect that means you won't be coming around anymore. Can you see it from over there... beneath that fig tree in the distance? It's already dark, so it's rushing to spin out its web; a yellow spider.

Was it my aunt? Did she say something to you? She probably had something on her mind.

The other day, while sewing, out of nowhere she said, "It's always the woman who suffers in the end."

It was so sudden I couldn't help but ask, "Oh? What do you mean by that?"

"Once a woman starts caring about someone, she'll never forget them for the rest of her life," she replied. "It's a truly terrible thing."

I just listened, pretending like I didn't know what she was talking about. But that was all she had to say.

What have I ever hidden from you? Was it the thing I started to say the other day, but stopped myself before I had finished saying it? I'll tell you. I wasn't hiding it. I planned on telling you eventually. It wasn't about me... it was about my mother, who died when I was still young. It was something that caught me off guard because my aunt said it during small talk. She said it was quite sad how my mother had died having done nothing but suffer. She spoke in great detail about many things that had happened before I was born. Finally, the other day, she told me that when my mother was about the same age as I am now, on the night she was to be married, she tried to take her own life. On the very night of her wedding...

At the time, my mother's family was fairly well off, so I hear they prepared quite a lavish event for her. When the day finally came, while all her relatives gathered in celebration, the girl who was responsible for fitting my mother's wedding clothes started murmuring, "Where is she? Where could she have gone?" And she set off looking for her. But she couldn't find my mother anywhere, so my aunt joined in to help look. They asked the person who did my mother's hair, and the hairdresser said that when she had finished and was about to move on to makeup, my mother had run off, down toward the storehouse... and it was in the storehouse that they found her, up on the second floor. Not knowing what had happened, my aunt thought my mother had just run off and hid out of embarrassment. When they climbed

the stairs and cast candlelight on the area, they found a folding screen propped up in a dark corner across from them. My aunt couldn't help but let out a chuckle and say, "Come on out of there. What's the matter anyway?" But when they crossed the room to see for themselves, they found my mother sprawled out in her white kimono. She looked like she had died; as if she had slit her own throat.

Upon hearing this, I let out a shudder. My aunt was choked up, and just before she burst into tears she said, "I've already told you too much." She apologized, "I'm sorry, I never meant to say all this."

I was crying too.

I had been extremely melancholic since I heard this story. Sometimes I would remember it, and I would feel my blood blacken, as if I were trying to look upon some horrific thing. I had tried not to think about it, so that I might somehow forget it. Yet, for some reason I can't quite explain, I now feel as though the story was not about my mother, but about me. All I can imagine is myself sprawled out, wearing a pure white kimono soaked in blood.

I'm sure that if I told anyone, my mother would be quite upset with me, but nevertheless I find myself wanting to whisper it to *you*, of all people, and countless times I thought to myself, "Say it... just say it." Even though you're leaving now, there's nothing else I have to say. Me? No, I'm not crying. I'm just talking.

But let's talk about something else now. Look. It's gotten dark. You can't see the spider's web anymore. I think that black spot in the middle is the spider, isn't it? Me? No, I'll probably never forget you. Oh, a weed has drifted in on the current. Wait... people are watching.

Dusk  
Suzuki Miekichi

Were you looking for me? I was just headed for the back garden. There's a chestnut tree at the back, where a spider has travelled along his thread to drop down to the water below, and stretched his web towards the surface of the water. Haven't you been hiding away from me, even though you will soon be heading faraway for home? They say that for every spider that descends to the surface of the water, someone will be moving far away. No, truly. The seafishers in these parts will never steer you wrong in anything they say. It's a small spider. Come, please look for yourself. There's no need to put on *geta* sandals; the lawn will protect your feet from becoming muddy. I'm only wearing *tabi* socks, myself.

Is it because the thought of parting is so terrible that you're keeping silent? Come what may, you will have gone by the 5th. Can you see from there? Underneath the fig tree. He's busily spinning his web because dusk is falling. He's a yellow spider.

Auntie did? Well, I wonder. Did she say anything to you? I don't have the slightest idea what I should think about that. Recently, while embroidering, she said that women will always suffer at the hands of their sister. Since she said it out of the blue, I asked what it was that she meant, and she replied that if a woman thinks of a person just once, she will remember them until the day they die, and that that's frightful. I pretended not to understand. That's all she said.

Have I been hiding something from you? Something I had said recently, and then not mentioned again? I'll say it outright. I haven't been hiding anything. I've been thinking about discussing it with my sister. Not about myself. About my mother, who passed away when I was a child. It's because Auntie told me about some silly story that I've been feeling so strange. Auntie said that it was so sad that mother had done nothing but suffer until the day she died, and she told me some stories in great detail, like those that took place before I was born. Just recently. She said that when my mother was about the age that I am now, on the night that she was to go home to be wed, she suddenly tried to kill herself. This was the night of the wedding.

Since my mother's family had a great deal of wealth at the time, very many wonderful preparations had been made for my mother. On the evening that my mother was finally to be wed, while the house was abuzz with people, the lady in charge of dressing my mother ran around from place to place in search of my mother, saying over and over, "Where has she gone?" As she was nowhere to be found, Auntie joined into the search, whereupon the hairdresser then said that he had just finished doing my mother's hair, but that before he could move onto my mother's make-up, my

mother had made for the store-room; and so, the two of them went to check the store-room, to find that my mother appeared to be on the second floor. Auntie, unawares and thinking only that my mother had simply run off and hidden herself in a fit of embarrassment, lit a candlestick and went up to the second floor; and there, in a corner sunken in the gloom, was a two-panelled folding screen, and Auntie said with a laugh, "Well, what can you do." Auntie made her way to the side of the folding screen to steal a look behind it, saying repeatedly, "Come out now, whatever is the matter"; and there was my mother, clothed from head to toe in a white kimono, lying face-down. Apparently she had died with her throat slit open.

Hearing this, I shuddered in horror. And then I started crying wretchedly, saying that I had heard enough. Auntie apologized, and said that she should not have said so much, and in the end, she also broke down into tears herself.

I've been feeling sad ever since. And since then, often, as though I am peering at something awful, I occasionally remember that story, and it's a tale so bloodcurdlingly sad, so I thought to myself, over and over again, how can I forget about it, how can I stop thinking about it, but what am I to do; lately, I can't help feeling like that story isn't about my mother, but about myself. I can't think of anything other than of having collapsed, dressed in a white kimono dyed with a blood.

I feel like my mother will scold me for having spoken of this to someone, but for some reason I felt like confiding to you, my dear, and over and over again I wondered if I should say anything. Me? I'm not crying. It's just a story.

But let's turn our talk to other matters. Please, look. Dusk has fallen. The spider's web is no longer visible. There's something black in the middle that may be the spider. Me? I'll forget about you somehow. Oh, look, the leaves of the duckweed have floated towards us. Ah, not now... people are looking.

Those by Twilight Shrouded

Suzuki Miekichi

Were you looking for me? I was out back in the garden. I saw a spider there. It dropped down on its thread from the chestnut tree and hovered over the water. There it started to spin its web.

You're going away soon, aren't you? You've been trying to hide it, but I can tell. They say that when a spider glides down over the water, someone close to you is about to go far away. No, it's true. The people living here by the sea know about these things; everything they say comes true. Oh, little spider... You should go look at it, too. You needn't put on your sandals; you won't dirty your feet walking over the grass. See? I'm in just my stocking feet.

Do you feel guilty about leaving? Is that why you won't say anything? It doesn't matter. I know you won't be back here for at least five days.

Can you see it? Look under that fig tree. It's getting dark out, so she's hurrying to finish. Golden spider...

My aunt? Heavens. Did she say something to you? It seems like she might have something to say about us. The other day when I was sewing, she suddenly began talking. "Women always get hurt in the end, you know." When I asked her what she meant, she said that love is a frightful thing; that once a woman has feelings for someone, she'll never be able to forget them. I pretended not to know what she was talking about. That's all she said about it.

I'm hiding something from you? You're thinking about the other day, aren't you? That time I started to speak and stopped. I'll say it. I wasn't hiding anything. I'd planned to tell you before you left. In fact, it's not even about me. It's about my mother. She died when I was young. My aunt told me the story. The way she told it to me, like it was a thing of no particular importance, left me with a dreadful feeling. She said she always felt bad for my mother, for the rough life she lived only to die young. Just the other day she was telling me about the years before I was born and about all the other things that had happened to her, too.

When my mother was the same age that I am now, on the evening she was to be wed, she was suddenly seized with the urge to take her own life. Can you imagine? On the very eve of her wedding...

Back then times were good, and her family was still wealthy, so she had been outfitted with all the finest things to begin her newly married life. And that evening on which she was finally to leave home, when the house was full of relatives, guests and other well-wishers, the woman who was to help my mother put on her kimono began walking from room to room asking if anyone had seen the bride. My mother was nowhere to be found, so my aunt began

searching alongside the woman, and they came to the stylist, who told them that just after she'd finished with the hair and makeup, the bride had taken off toward the storehouse. My aunt and the woman continued on their search to the storehouse, where it seemed my mother had climbed up to the attic on the second floor. My aunt still had no idea what she would find. She merely thought wedding nerves had sent my mother running off to hide. So she lit a candle and climbed the steps. In the gray dark of the attic she saw a folding screen set up in one corner. On seeing it she chuckled, and began to call out, "Come on out, dear. Why are you hiding? What's wrong?" As she spoke she made her way to the side of the screen, and when she peered behind it, my mother was lying face-down, covered head to toe in her white wedding kimono. She had slit her own throat and died there on the floor.

As I listened to the story I began to shiver with fright. I told my aunt, "No more!" and began to sob uncontrollably. My aunt said she was sorry and that she shouldn't have brought it up. Even she was holding back tears.

Ever since then I've felt very somber. I try to stop myself from thinking about it, to forget about it, but the story keeps running through my mind. Each time it does, it's as if I've seen some terrible apparition; sorrow streaks through me, like the blood in my veins has gone black and thick. And now, I don't quite know why, but I'm overwhelmed with a new feeling: that the woman in the story isn't my mother but me instead. I can't help but feel that it's me there on the floor, wearing the pure white kimono stained with red.

I half feel as though my mother would scold me for speaking so loosely, but for some reason I've wanted to share that story, quietly, with you. As we've been together, over and over I've asked myself, "Should I tell him now?" It's the last thing I had to tell you before you go.

Me? I'm not crying. It's just talk. But let's think about something else now. Look. It's grown dark outside. I can't see the web anymore. Maybe that dark spot in the middle of the pond is the spider.

Me? I'll find a way to forget about you. Oh, look over there. Some waterlens fronds just drifted into the pond.

...All right, but wait until we've gone inside. People will see us here.

## Twilight

Suzuki Miekichi

Sorry, were you looking for me? I was just in the garden out back. A spider dropped down from the chestnut tree on a thread and started spinning a web above the water in the pond. You won't tell me yourself but I know you're about to go back there, aren't you? They say that when a spider goes down to the water in the evening someone must be about to leave for far away. No, it's true. The old man by the sea is never wrong about these things. It's only a little spider. Go and have a look for yourself. Don't worry about sandals, your feet won't get dirty walking on grass. I'm only wearing *tabi* socks myself.

You probably didn't say anything because you felt bad about leaving, right? Either way, I know you won't be back for some time. You should be able to see it from there. Just below the fig tree. It's already getting dark so he's busily trying to finish his web. The yellow spider, just there.

You mean *my* auntie? Why, did she say something to you? It's funny you should say that. The other day when I was doing some sewing, she suddenly tells me out of the blue, *women always end up worse-off no matter what we do*, and when I asked her what she meant by it she tells me, *once a woman cares for someone we can't ever seem to forget about them, it's awful*. I listened on somewhat nonchalantly, but she didn't elaborate any further.

You think *I'm* hiding something from you? Oh, you mean the thing that I started to tell you the other day but didn't finish? Okay, I'll tell you then. I was never hiding it; I was just waiting for the right time to tell you. And it isn't a story about me, either. It's about my mother who passed away when I was young. My aunt told me this story as though she was just revealing something trivial, but I struggle to share her indifference. First she told me how sad it was that my mother died experiencing such hardships in life, and then she proceeded to tell me various stories about her before I was born. She only told me this story recently. It was the night of my mother's wedding, when she was the same age that I am now and getting ready to move into this house, that she suddenly decided to kill herself. On her wedding night of all nights.

Her parents were quite well-off back then, I'm told, and they spared no expense in the preparations. Then came the evening that she was to leave home and become a wife, and amidst all the calamity of everyone trying to get her ready, the woman who was responsible for getting mother into her bridal garments starts asking around if anyone had seen where my mother had gone to because she can't seem to find her anywhere. My aunt then decides to join in the search and as the two go looking for her together the hairdresser tells them that after she finished doing the hair and makeup my mother ran out towards the storehouse. So my aunt and the other woman go to have a look inside the storehouse where they eventually find her upstairs on the second floor. My aunt still doesn't know anything at this point and simply thinks that my mother has run off and hid out of embarrassment, so she lights a candle and carries it upstairs to the second floor where in the corner she spots the two-panel folding screen and lets out a little laugh. *Come now, what's all this fuss about?* She calls out to her, and as she nears closer to get a better look, she finds my mother dressed head-to-toe in a white kimono, lying face-down. She had slit her own throat and killed herself.

The story sent shivers down my spine. I told my aunt that I didn't want to hear anymore and burst into tears. My aunt apologized saying she didn't mean to get so carried away as even she was now crying.

What my aunt told me that day left me with a lingering sadness. I've thought about that story often ever since and whenever I do I'm filled with sorrow, like I've just been witness to something horrible. And I've tried countless times to forget about it and put it out of my mind, but for some reason, I have this overwhelming feeling lately that it wasn't my mother in that story at all, it was me. I keep telling myself that it was *me* dressed in that white kimono, lying face-down and covered in blood.

My mother would be beside herself if she knew I was telling this story to other people, but it's really only you that I wanted to tell, I could just never seem to find the right time to tell you. At least if we were to part ways now there's nothing left between us unsaid. Who, *me*? No, I'm not going to cry. We're only making conversation after all. Let's talk about something else, though. Look, it's completely dark now. You can't even see the spider's web anymore. That black thing in the middle must be the spider. Me? Why would I ever want to forget you? My, look at the duckweeds floating about the surface. No, wait...Just a little bit longer.

Twilight  
By Miekichi Suzuki

Were you looking for me? I've come out here onto the backyard. From the chestnut tree out back, a spider hanging on its thread has made its way down to the water and spinning a web over it. You can't hide it from me; in time, you'll leave me for her, won't you? Did you know people say that whenever a spider comes down onto the water in the twilight, someone is about to go afar. No it's true. The things people living along this shoreline have said has always come true. Little spider. Come, take a look. You won't need your *geta*; your feet won't get soiled here on the lawn. See, I'm just wearing my *tabi* socks.

Leaving me makes you feel guilty, that's why you're keeping your intentions from me, isn't it? In any case, I won't see you for another five days. Can you see, from where you are? Beneath the fig tree over there. The failing light is driving it to finish its web. A yellow spider.

From Auntie? What about it. Did she tell you something? I suppose she has her thoughts about our relationship. A few days ago, while I was doing my needlework, she tells me all of a sudden that a woman is always at a disadvantage. I asked her what she meant, and Auntie responded, once a woman fancies a man, her desire consumes her until she is no more; oh woe is woman. Even as I listened, I pretended not to understand. And Auntie spoke no further.

Am I hiding something from you? Is this about what I tried to tell you the last time you were here? Alright. I wasn't hiding anything. I was going to tell you, when you've finally made up your mind to leave me. It wasn't about me. It was about my Mother, who passed away when I was little. Though this matter was hardly of any interest to me, I became upset when Auntie told me about it. She related Mother's life before I was born in detail, and how pitiful it was that she died after suffering so much. She told me this just recently: on the night of her wedding, Mother, who was of the same age as I am, decided on a whim to end her life. On her wedding night.

In those days, Mother's house was still well-to-do and they were able to provide her with a considerable dowry. On the evening when she was to be wed, while the entire house was astir with preparations and such, Mother's wedding dresser began searching for her everywhere, repeating: where has she gone. As Mother was nowhere to be found, Auntie joined the dresser in her search. Then, the coiffeuse told them that after her hair was done, Mother had run off to the storehouse to do her face, so the two went looking for her there and found her upstairs. Auntie, who had no idea what had happened,

simply thought that Mother was just being shy and hiding. Lighting a *te-shoku* candle holder, she went upstairs, where a two-panel folding screen stood in a dim corner. Oh my, she said with a chuckle as she went over there. Come on, come out of there, she coaxed as she looked behind the screen, and found Mother prone on the floor, donned from head to toe in an immaculate *shiomuku* wedding dress. She had slit her throat and died.

The moment I heard this, I began to tremble with horror. Enough, I begged, as I cried out loud. I'm sorry, I shouldn't have told you this, Auntie apologized, as her eyes filled with tears.

Ever since I heard this story, my heart has been filled with sorrow. And many times after that, I recall, as if gazing into a horrible scene, this bloodcurdling story which I try with all my strength to forget and tell myself over and over not to think about. And now, I cannot help but be under the impression that this is not the story of my Mother, but of my own self. That it was I who was on the floor in the blood-soaked *shiomuku* wedding dress. I suppose Mother would disapprove if I told this to anyone, but I just could not get it out of my mind, could not restrain the urge to confide this to *you*. Now you may leave me whenever you wish, for I have no more secrets left to tell you. I? Why should I cry. It's just a story.

But, let's change the subject. See. It's so dark now. Where's the spider's web. Is that black spot at the center the spider. I? How can I stop thinking about you. Look, a floating weed leaf is drifting. Oh, wait... someone might see us.

## Twilight

Are you searching for me? I just came from the back garden. A spider was coming down from the branch of a chestnut tree and built a net above the water. You're hiding from me but soon, where you came from? People say that when one sees a spider above the water in the evening, then someone is going to leave far away. No, it's true. Anything and everything the people here say come true. Small spider. You're also welcome to see. They will be standing on the grass without *geta* and the legs don't get dirty. After all, I am myself with just the socks.

Are you being silent about the sad separation that fell on me? Whether you say it or not, you won't be here for the next 5 days. Can you see from there? Under the fig tree. As it's already dark, it's weaving the web quickly. The yellow spider. Is it my aunt? How? Did she say anything to you? I don't know what to anticipate.

I was sewing the other day. Any woman would end up getting hurt when told such a thing all of a sudden. When I asked what it was about, she said that once a woman thinks of a person and then she cannot forget it until death. And this was frightening her. I was pretending as if I didn't understand. My aunt did not say anything other than this.

What did I hide from you? That one when I stopped in the middle of a sentence? I'll say. I was not hiding anything. I wanted to say you finally. It's not about me. It's about my mother who died when I was young. I developed a strange feeling when my aunt told me about things that didn't matter. Just the other day, my aunt explained me that it was pity that mother died because of hardships and lot of other things that happened before I was born. That wedding evening, when my mother who was as old as I am now was about to get married, she tried to kill herself suddenly.

My mother received a great preparation as that was the time when her family used to be wealthy. At last when the wedding evening arrived and when all the family members were busy preparing for the wedding, the woman who has to do the costume was looking for her and asked where my mother is. And then when my mother was missing, two people went looking for her. It seems that the hairdresser told them when she finished her hair and also the face make up, my mother ran towards the warehouse and there they found her in the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of warehouse.

My aunt had no idea what was happening and so she thought that my mother would have felt shy of becoming a bride and fled. When she went to the second floor with a lit candlestick, she smiled heaving as she saw a folding screen of two wooden boxes raised up in the gloomy corner. When she peeked towards the side asking 'Come, what's the matter?' it seems that my mother clad was in a white kimono top to bottom lying with her face down. She had cut

her throat and died.

I shivered with fear after hearing that. That was enough and I burst into tears. My aunt felt sorry and she didn't intend to tell me all these. She also moved to tears after all.

I became sad extremely after hearing this story. Since then, when I try to take a quick look at something frightening, I often remember this story and I become sad as if my blood turns black. I try to forget somehow and not to think of it. These days, I get the feeling that that was not my mother and I cannot but feel that it was about me. I don't think anything other than that I wore a pure white kimono and I fell down in the blood.

I feel like, if I say this story to someone, I would be scolded by my mother but for some reason I wanted to talk about this story only to you. Many times, I had a strong urge to tell you this story, but I couldn't. I cannot say to anybody even when I bid farewell. Me? I am not crying. Just a story. But, let's talk about something else now. Please look. How dark! Cobweb is not seen anymore. The one that's black in the center is spider? Me? Why should I forget about you? Oh! The leaves of the duckweed are coming apart. Ok, wait, people are seeing.

Dusk

By Suzuki Miekichi

Were you searching for me? I was just out in the back garden. A spider descended on a thread from the chestnut tree to the water. It is casting a net atop the water now. You did not inform me that you were here... I suppose when you depart shortly, it will be over? It is said that when a spider descends to the water at dusk, it always means that someone is going far away. No, really. Such sayings of the seaside folk always come true. It is such a small spider. Won't you come see it, too? The garden is grassy, so your feet will not be dirtied without your sandals. I'm in my socks too, see?

Is it perhaps because you feel bad about parting that you are so quiet? All the same, you do realize you haven't come by here for five days now. You can see it from there, can't you? Right beneath that fig tree. See how it hurries to weave its web in the growing dark. Such a yellow spider.

My aunt? I wonder. Did she say something to you? She may have some inkling. During our sewing the other day, she said out of the blue that women are on the losing end of everything. When I asked her what she meant, she said that it is a dreadful thing how a woman can never forget her feelings for someone she once loved, right up to the day she dies. I listened with feigned ignorance. My aunt said nothing more.

What did I ever hide from you, pray tell? Is this about what I stopped myself from saying the other day? I will say it now. It is not something I was hiding. I thought I would tell you when it was over. It is not about me. It is about my mother, who passed away when I was small. My aunt told me some trifle of a tale, which has somewhat perturbed me. She said it was a shame that my mother suffered so much when she died, and so she told me many stories from before I was born. This was just the other day. She said that when my mother was just the age I am now, on the night she was to be wed, she suddenly tried to kill herself. On the night she was to wed.

My mother's family was quite wealthy back then, so my mother had gone to great lengths to have everything magnificently arranged. The evening of her wedding finally arrived, and the house was packed with guests. But the woman who was supposed to help my mother into her dress was searching high and low, asking over and over where the bride had gone. She couldn't find her anywhere, so my aunt joined the search. The hairdresser said that she had finished my mother's hair a little while ago and sent her off to the storehouse for makeup, and when the two women asked at the storehouse, they learned that she was on the second floor. My aunt knew nothing, and thought only that she had run and hidden out of nerves. She lit a candle and went upstairs, and off in the gloomy corner stood a folding screen. My aunt clucked and smiled. Come on out and tell me what's wrong, she coaxed, and when she went

to peek around the screen, she found my mother lying face down, clad in a pure white kimono. She had slit her throat and lay dying.

Hearing this, I gave a horrified shudder. I told her I had heard quite enough, and then I burst into tears. My aunt said she was sorry, she should never have told me such a thing, and she too grew weepy.

Ever since hearing that story, I have been plagued by sorrow. I think of it sometimes, and the memory is like peeking in at some dreadful thing, a thing so sad the blood thickens in my veins. I have been trying and trying to somehow forget about it, to not think about it. But for some reason, around this hour, I cannot help the feeling that the story was not about my mother, but about me. I can only think that I was the one in that pure white kimono, face-down in a pool of blood.

I also get the feeling that my mother would be upset with me for telling people about this, but for some reason I wanted to confide it quietly to *you*. Over and over I wondered, shall I tell you now? Shall I tell you? And now, whenever we may part, I have nothing more to say. Me? No, of course I'm not going to cry. It is just a story.

But let us speak of something else. Look. It has grown dark. You can't see the spider web anymore. I wonder if that dark shape in the center there is the spider. Me? How could I possibly forget you? Oh, some duckweed has drifted in. W-Wait... someone will see.

Twilight Gloom  
by Suzuki Miekichi

Were you looking for me? I just came out to the back garden. The spiders are traveling down their threads from the chestnut tree to the water, and spinning their webs above its surface. You hide your departure from me, but you were going to end it all by returning home now, weren't you? But they say that when the spiders climb down to the water's surface at twilight, it means someone will surely be going far away. No, it's true. The sayings of the people who live here by the sea are always correct. Little spiders. Look for yourself. You can step on the lawn, so your feet won't get dirty even if you don't put on sandals. Even I'm just wearing socks.

Are you staying quiet because you think our parting will be bad? Regardless, you haven't come out here for five whole days now. You can see them from there, right? Around the bottom of that flowerless, fruitless tree. It's dark already, so they're hurrying to spin their webs. Yellow spiders.

My aunt? I wonder. Did I say something to you? I may have been thinking about that a little. The other day when we were sewing, she said that no matter what, women always lose in the end. She just said that out of nowhere, so I asked her what she meant. She said that women are scary because once they think of a person, they will not forget that person until they die. I made a puzzled expression and asked her about it, but she said nothing more than that.

You think I hid something from you? Oh, about that matter I started to speak on the other day? I'll tell you. I wasn't hiding it. I was thinking I would tell you in the end. It isn't about me. It's about my mother, who passed away when I was small. My aunt told me about a trivial matter, and it made me feel strange. My aunt said that my poor mother experienced only suffering before she died, and she told me in detail about various things, like things that happened before I was born. So, about the other day. My aunt said that when my mother was just my age, on the night she was to be married, she suddenly decided to die. Right on the night of her marriage.

Around that time, my mother's family was very well-off, so they made truly wonderful preparations for her. And finally the evening came when she was to go out and get married. The entire household was busy with preparations when the woman who had gone to help my mother get dressed came out saying that my mother had gone off somewhere. Everyone went around looking, but my mother was nowhere to be found. As my aunt and the woman were looking, they found the hairdresser, who told them that just now my mother had finished her hair and makeup and then suddenly run off in the direction of the storehouse. So the pair of them went to the storehouse to investigate, and it looked like my mother was up on the second floor. My aunt didn't know anything was wrong; she just assumed my mother had run off to hide because she was embarrassed. So she lit a candle and went up to the second floor, and in a darkened corner she could see a two-fold folding screen set up. She laughed a little. She went over, telling my mother to come on out, asking her what all this was about, and peeked around the side of the screen. My mother was dressed in a white kimono, pure white from head to toe, with her head tilted down to the ground. She had cut her throat and died.

When I heard that, I shuddered suddenly. I started crying like a child, asking my aunt to stop. My aunt apologized, saying she shouldn't have spoken of such things, and she was crying too. Since hearing that story, I have been feeling very sad. Oftentimes that story will suddenly come into my head, as though I'm taking a peek at something terrible. It's sad enough to freeze my blood. I've been trying as hard as I can to think of a way to forget it, to not think about it. Lately, for some reason, I can't help but get the feeling that it was me and not my mother. I can't help but think that it was me dressed in a pure white kimono, dyed red with blood, fallen over onto the floor.

When I say it to someone else, it feels almost like my mother is scolding me. But for some reason I wanted to secretly tell *you* this story, and I didn't worry at all whether or not I should say anything. Now even if we should part some day, there is nothing else to tell you. Me? I'm not crying or anything. It's just a story, after all.

But come, let's talk about something else. Look, you see? It's gotten completely dark. You can no longer see the spiderwebs. Do you think that dark spot in the middle is the spider? Me? I wonder why I can forget you. Oh look, the leaves of the floating plants are drifting this way. Ah, wait...people are looking.

“Twilight” by Suzuki Miekichi

Were you looking for me? I was just out in the backyard. A spider lowered itself down from the chestnut tree in the back and landed on the water. Now it's spinning a web on the water. I know you are hiding it from me, but you are going back there soon, aren't you? ...They say that when a spider lands on water in the early evening someone goes far away. No, it's true. Every little thing the people on this shore-side say comes true. The little spider... You should come see it too. Your feet will not become soiled even if you don't wear sandals because it's all grass. Look, I'm also just wearing my socks.

You are staying silent because you think parting is bad, right? I'm sure you will stop showing up here in five days or so anyway. Can't you see from where you are? There, under that fig tree. It's spinning its web in a rush now that it has grown dark. That yellow spider...

My aunt? Oh, I don't know. Did she say something to you? Well, she may be thinking about something or other... at least a little bit. The other day while she was sewing, she suddenly blurted out that in the end, it's always the woman who loses. I asked her what she was talking about, and she said that it is frightening how once a woman falls in love that she cannot forget the man until she dies. I listened, pretending I didn't understand. That's all she would say.

What did I hide from you? Is it that thing I started telling you and then stopped? I will tell you. I did not hide it. I was planning on eventually telling you everything. It's not about me. It's about my mother who died when I was young. I started feeling strange because my aunt told me this little thing. My aunt told me all sorts of stories from before I was born, saying she pitied my mother who died after having lived through so much... just the other day. She told me that my mother, when she was exactly the same age as I am now, suddenly tried to kill herself on the evening that she was to move to her husband's home—on the eve of her wedding.

It was at a time my mother's family still had plenty so my mother was given a grand send-off. That evening, when she was finally to leave the house she grew up in for her marital household, the entire house was abuzz with preparations. It was then that the woman in charge of dressing my mother was looking for her here and there saying, Where did she go? Where is she? The kimono dresser could not find my mother so my aunt joined in looking for her. Then the hairdresser told them that she ran to the warehouse after her hair and makeup was done so they headed there and found her on the second floor. My aunt did not suspect anything and thought that she was only hiding out of bashfulness, and went upstairs with a candle in hand. She chuckled when she saw a folded screen in the dark corner. She approached the corner saying, come over here now, what's the matter? When she peaked inside she found my mother wearing the all-white wedding kimono, facing down. My mother had slit her throat and was lying there dead.

I heard this and I trembled in fear. I then started sobbing saying that was enough. My aunt said, I'm sorry; I didn't mean to tell you all this much, and was teary-eyed herself.

I became sad after hearing this story. After that, I started recalling this story from time to time like I was peaking into something terrifying, which would make me so sad it turned my blood black. I kept thinking I should forget it, to not think about it, but for some reason, lately I have come to feel like that was me, not my mother. It seems like it could have been only me who wore that white kimono and fell covered in blood.

My mother would probably scold me if I told this to anyone, but for some reason I wanted to quietly tell you this story and kept going back and forth about when I should tell you. I now have nothing else to tell you before we part. Me? No, I'm not crying. It's just a story after all. Let's talk about other things now. Look. It has become so dark. We can't see the spider's web anymore. I wonder if that black thing in the middle is the spider. Me? How can I forget you... Oh my, a floating weed is coming towards us. Oh, wait... People will see....