Beautiful Town

Utsukushii Machi, 1919

I give this story to my
dear child Masaya.[1] It
was written by your father
when he was still young, some
twelve or thirteen years
before you were born.
Satō Haruo, summer 1947

We are such stuff as dreams are made on . . .
Shakespeare

My close friend O spoke to me one day about the painter E. . . . Mr. O had recently had an opportunity to meet this good friend, and E had inquired about me. (I wonder if O hadn't been speaking about me with too much interest.) E had borrowed from O's bookshelves a book of mine that I had given to O. On reading and returning the book he was reported to have said to O, "I've got a story that I'd really like the author of *The Fingerprint* to hear. . . ."

Speaking frankly, I have seldom been satisfied with a story that some kind person has told me I might like to use in my writing. Only in the case of the artist E did I foresee that I would surely be interested. Though I did not know him, I had seen E's work at exhibitions now

and then. I would usually linger in front of his work, finding there a certain concurrence of artistic sympathy. The fact that E found my books interesting was not just flattery, I was conceited enough to think. E felt we had something we could mutually agree on, a joint work of art, and he had a story that he wanted me to hear. Thus it happened that one winter's night, escorted by O, I called on E in his studio. As he stoked the fire and I urged him on, this is the story we heard.

As I write this, I express my deep gratitude to both E and O.

THE STORY TOLD ME BY ARTIST E

When you think of it, there was something extraordinary about this story from the beginning. It was eight or nine years ago. I was twenty-one or twenty-two at the time. I received a letter one day. It made me suspicious; the sender had a foreign name. Since I had neglected language study in my school days, I was prone to avoid being spoken to by foreigners and of course I had never been familiar enough with a foreigner to receive a letter from one. The letter was written in good simple Japanese, unduly familiar in tone, and in a clumsy hand on letter paper from the S Hotel in Tsukiji. . . . "Rather than my writing at length, you'll understand everything at once. I want you to come to my hotel at six this evening. The talk will be interesting. I want you to hear a discussion that may please you. . . ." That's all the letter said. Just think of it. I get a letter from someone I don't know. It's uncanny. I get it in the morning when I'm still in bed. All day long it worries me. I wonder if it isn't a stupid petty prank by one of my associates. Students of painting since Buffalmacco in the *Decameron* have diverted themselves by pestering people. Sensing this possibility, I asked someone to call the S Hotel and inquire whether there was anyone there by the name of Theodore Brentano, and if there really was, whether that person had mistaken my identity in asking me to come. To my surprise, I got the answer that there was no mistake. The call was for me.

By five it was already dark. The streets were lit with the lights of night. All because it was October. In rather dirty attire, affecting a

bohemian look, I stood timidly before the entrance to the elegant hotel. To my wonder, far from being rejected I was received politely by a bellhop in a uniform of gold braid and gold buttons who seemed to be expecting me and who led me through brightly lit halls to a room where he left me, asking me to wait briefly. Whoever the unknown person was who had invited me, he did not for some reason appear right away. I sat down at a table where a lot of large books had been tossed. As I glanced restlessly around the room, I was startled by a sight on one wall. An oil painting, a landscape some two-by-three feet in size, was hanging on the greenish-gray wall. I stared in surprise and disbelief. My doubts at last forced me to rise from my chair and go over to examine the picture. It was definitely my painting "Gloom in the City." I had shown it two years earlier in my first exhibition. As I thought about it, there was no reason to be so surprised. Someone must have bought it, even though I put a rather high price on it in my youthful pride and a sense of despair that it would not sell. But now I was astonished to see my own painting on a wall of this hotel. It was so unexpected. I was all the more unable to understand who had invited me here. The man who bought my picture "Gloom in the City"—what kind of connoisseur was he that I hadn't noticed him two years ago? Thinking about this strange day, I returned to my chair and waited impatiently to see the nature of the mysterious person who had invited me, the discriminating buyer of my painting. I slipped my watch out stealthily to look at. It was a little before six. In my anxiety I had come too early. Tiring of the critical examination of my painting, so unexpectedly thrust in front of me, I picked up one of the many big books piled on the table before me. They were all about construction. I looked through them briefly, and my eye was drawn to the abundant illustrations. . . . At that moment footsteps sounded heavily behind me and the door opened. Hurriedly I laid the book facedown, stood up and turned around. Mr. Theodore Brentano? An imposing, stout young gentleman came through the door, wearing a smoking jacket and apparently fresh from the dining room. He was about my age. As I started to bow politely, he smiled and nonchalantly said, "Hello."

Theodore Brentano?

He hadn't lied in his letter. The minute I saw his smiling face I understood it all. Theodore Brentano? I had forgotten my dear friend.

But the blame should not be attributed solely to my insensitivity. Why didn't Theodore Brentano sign his letter to me "Teizō Kawasaki" the way he used to? "Teizō Kawasaki" was my childhood friend whom I could recall without a moment's doubt. When I inquired, it seemed he was not without a secret intent to surprise me, though he did not use a made-up name. Kawasaki was a Eurasian child who went under either name. " 'Theodore Brentano' is right for today," he said laughing. After his mother had died his father took him to his own country to become an American. His father was a wealthy American who traveled a lot and had many business connections in the Far East. His mother was the man's mistress, remaining in Tokyo. The mother died when Kawasaki was sixteen. The boy was taken by his father by ship from Yokohama. The morning that I had gone to see him off at the station, there was Kawasaki wearing a brand-new Western suit and a necktie of mixed purple, red, and green in place of the school uniform he had shed. . . . Kawasaki, his head thrust out at us from the window of the first-class car he was riding in with his enormous father. . . . Kawasaki, who used to carry in his school uniform pocket the gold watch with the gold locket hanging from it that his father had given him. As I listened to the story of his subsequent life, it brought back all kinds of memories. His life, strange as it was, was not as strange as his name. Other than his name, all was but a matter of growing up over the years—his large build, his cheery style of talking, his attractive mouth, the eyes that seemed to bore into one, and then his wealth. He had grown surprisingly fast.

When I thought about him as a child like that, I became a child again myself.

He had been in Tokyo two years before, he said, and pointing behind him at my painting, he added, "That's not bad at all." He said he had studied painting a bit himself. Judging by what he said about my picture, one would not think that he, a complete amateur, was posing as an expert. With self-confidence and unyielding to my dissent, he admired Whistler. We shared lots of talk about the arts. Actually I thought he understood contemporary art better than its self-appointed critics. . . . While we were talking on about the arts, he suddenly changed his tone and began to speak of "a marvelous and most pleasing plan" (as he himself called it) that he hoped to realize in the near

future. As his story progressed, he became excited, and then his excitement spread to me. Before we knew it the two of us were enraptured. I was ardently drawn to the fantastic idea embraced by my friend, and I truly had to admire the American spirit it would take to realize it. There are plenty of millionaires in Japan, but how many among them would think of a project such as this? It would surely take some kind of genius to devise such a plan. As I recall it now, in the midst of talking about his plan he suddenly fetched a book from the next room and hastily ruffled through the pages to find and read me a passage. I didn't understand very well, but it was a section from Part II of Faust. (E told me so and gave me the gist of the poem. It was probably the following selection. Having arbitrarily so concluded, I quote the following extracts from Dr. Mori Ōgai's translation):[2]

> *Who am I? I am profusion. Poetry am I.*
> *I am the poet who finds fulfillment*
> *In squandering mine own greatest goods.*
> *I have riches too, unlimited.*
> *Myself I rate no less than Plutus,*
> *The God of Wealth, whose feasts and revels I adorn*
> *with merriment.*
> *What the God does lack I do dispense.*

. . . In a word, he wanted to build a beautiful town somewhere, investing all his fortune in it. He told me that the legacy his father left him, his father who had died four years earlier, amounted to some tens of millions of yen, including a huge gold mine somewhere in South America and other assets. . . . Converted into cash, such a fortune could cover a giant undertaking in Japan, but in America you could do only one-six-thousandth as much. In America his funds might be enough to build only one mansion, but in Japan he might be able to do about a hundred at one throw. "But," he said, "what I want does not require such magnificent mansions. Just a house is okay. In size a single house should be two stories with perhaps 1,500 to 1,800 square feet. I'd like to have about a hundred of these. In these houses, everything useless should be eliminated, but they should be beautifully adorned. Truly good decoration is always indispensable. To think that there is beauty

in needless luxury is a small and yet not insignificant fallacy derived from a larger modern fallacy. Mankind cherishes a love of opulence, but hardly any of our modern-day luxury springs from that love. It is in any case possible to eliminate everything useless and still achieve exquisite beauty. I'd like to have a hundred houses like that. I could build around a hundred. As I say, it's fine if they're just houses. Now how many can there be of which one can think, '*There* truly is a house'? Truly only a few. Just as the man is indeed rare of whom you can think, '*There* is a man.' . . . Then in these hundred houses I'd like to have a hundred people or rather a hundred families live. I wouldn't rent the houses to them. I'd only want them to live there." He spoke like this. When I asked him what kind of people he would like to have live in the houses, he stammered in distress. "I haven't fully thought about that yet. I can't become an examiner of people. If I can avoid being presumptuous, for the mere reason that I am the one who built the little town of one hundred houses, I'll choose people I like," he said as an opener. I think he went on to enumerate the following points. I don't remember very well, as I didn't pay much attention at the time. He said: "*(a)* People most satisfied by the houses I built. *(b)* Couples who have married of their own mutual choice and who both have stayed with their first marriage and have children. *(c)* People who have chosen as an occupation the work they like best. Therefore they've become most proficient in their work and have made a living from it. *(d)* No merchants, no public officials, no military. *(e)* People who keep the promise never to engage in monetary transactions in the town. So they will suffer some inconvenience. Therefore, near to my town but outside of it I should provide some money-transfer facilities for the people of the town. *(f)* They must have a dog as a pet. If by nature they don't like dogs, they must care for a cat. If they don't like either dogs or cats, they can keep a bird. . . ." And so on.

"I dare not presume to prescribe these or anything like them as requirements for human life," Kawasaki continued. "But provisionally I would like to set these criteria for choosing the people who are to live in the houses I build. In return for daring to undertake this project, I am prepared to accept public criticism that I am a foolish, capricious, eccentric person. Maybe I will have to endure more than that. In order for us to do unusual things, there is need in our world for all kinds of

sacrifice. . . . The houses I build must give a nice, comfortable feeling to those who live in them. If unfortunately I don't find anyone to live under such frivolous conditions in houses built by a foolish, capricious man like me, then I'll hire someone to keep my houses nice and clean. And when it becomes night, I think I'll put bright lights in those houses where no one is living, so that the lights will appear beautiful in the windows. Regardless of whether the houses are occupied or not, I will provide funds for a budget to maintain the little town. For about a hundred years—I'd like to say forever if I could—I want the houses to stand solidly for a hundred years. I also forgot to say my beautiful town must be located in the city of Tokyo. It must form a distinct quarter situated in an unexpected part of the city; it must be a place where it will invite scrutiny by many people. I hope that people as they gaze will think how good it would be to live in a place like that and will be surprised to hear that anyone can. On hearing the conditions that enable them to live there, however, they will be puzzled at why some eccentric fellow wasted so much valuable money to build a town for whatever purpose. I'd like to have people raise these questions. People may perceive me as a mysterious man. Above all I want boys and girls, noble beings who though small can think and feel things without preconception, in seeing this town's beauty, to get at one glance an impression they will never forget all their lives, like a fairy-tale masterpiece that had sunk deep into their tender hearts. The way young people will make a detour to see a beautiful girl, children must make a detour to go by my 'Beautiful Town.' "

"I think I can understand something of your happy idea, but I wonder how I can help you with it." I said this looking up at the excited face of my old friend, a man to be loved and admired, a fine young millionaire, a planner to be marveled at. In reply he said that there would be need for a painter like me in carrying out the plans, first in connection with the selection of the overall site, then for the walls and roofs of the individual houses, and finally for the general view of the whole town comprised of roofs and walls blending in harmonious colors. He took out a large notebook with a green leather cover and showed me the plans again in numerical figures. For me, totally unfamiliar with mathematics, it looked like numbers with lots of zeros piled up in layers step by step. He flipped back and forth through

twenty or thirty large pages of his notes, explaining his points one by one in a tone I should follow clearly. . . . On this basis I learned that he needed to find four acres of land at a price of some half-million yen. Beyond that everything was a little confused in my sketchy understanding. I was somewhat troubled by it, but his enthusiasm prevented me from saying that the explanation was useless. I thought blankly that the "Beautiful Town" he had outlined to me was more interesting, not for the figures he had used, but instead as seen shimmering through the purple swirls of heavy, fragrant smoke from the cigar he had pressed on me, the sweet-smelling cigar I was smoking. I was a young fellow at the time, who could brood seriously about the need for a monastery to serve writers and artists.

During our long conversation the night grew late without our knowing it. The sound of the streetcars we had earlier heard had now ceased. That night he put me in a car—automobiles were rare in Tokyo those days. Saying he wanted a little excursion himself, he got in with me and delivered me to my home in Ōkubo. . . . That night was the first time I had ridden in a car. In the car he spoke a little about how he couldn't sleep at night and so slept in the daytime and arose in the evening, and about how, as I was poor, he could give me some support. Then, tiring of talk and changing his attitude completely, he lapsed into almost total silence. Not only he, but the long night streets, the very night itself. . . . Outside were streetlights along a tree-lined road. Suddenly I was passing through places I did not know. I felt I was speeding swiftly toward the "Beautiful Town" that as yet existed nowhere.

If human beings were blessed with the ability to do freely whatever they wanted, I think from then on I would have seen in my dreams night after night that Beautiful Town that I knew could be built but knew not how. I did actually have such dreams once or twice. Kawasaki's marvelous plan had captivated me before I knew it. I had the feeling of dreaming as I walked through Tokyo, aimless but happy in the balmy autumn weather, my paint box clattering and dangling from my shoulder. As a student of painting I had done this before, and now

and then I found unexpected places to paint, but I was not now moved to paint them as I used to do. (If it were not for the idea inspired by Kawasaki, however, my series of etchings "Cityscapes" might not have come to be.) At that time, though, I had no mind to set up my easel, whether before a scene with trees, or a scene of just roofs, or along the banks of a ditch, or before a stone wall, or windows lit by the golden light of the setting sun. I was full of thoughts that today I would find the four acres blessed with the qualifications to become the Beautiful Town, the fields where would be sown the seeds of the mythical "blue flower,"[3] wherever those fields may be but we know not where for sure, the fields that will shortly become the living picture of Beautiful Town. If I didn't find the four acres today, all would come to naught, I felt. What I might never see again if I didn't get them today would, indeed, be scenes worth painting.

I did that for nearly two months, wandering the now chilly streets of Tokyo. Every day I returned discouraged. On those occasions when I took my disappointment to him in the S Hotel, he too was disappointed. In the end he had to look at me with displeasure.

Easily enthused yet easily let down as I am, I might soon have tired of this if it had gone on for another ten days. But I chanced onto a "Lucky Idea" (as Kawasaki called it at the time). I think you may know the copperplate engraving by Shiba Kōkan.[4] When I was out walking aimlessly one day, I recalled seeing in the newspaper that an exhibition worth dropping by had opened the day before at the K Club on O Street in Nihonbashi. The exhibition was assembled for the enjoyment of various Dutch and Spanish arts and crafts introduced of old into Japan by the red-headed "Southern Barbarians," as artistic dilettantes called them, and the show was timed to interest the swarms of busy people at the approaching New Year's season. I went out of curiosity. There were all kinds of things—scarlet wools, black velvets with purple and celadon-green arabesque patterns, Dutch plates, flower vases, large broken compasses, heavy handmade pocket watches, and so on. Exhibited side by side for reference were various naive Japanese imitations, mainly ceramics, produced under this Western influence. Deferring these till later and with one tour around, I did not look things over thoroughly. Not that I wasn't interested, but rather than those things, I found myself more attracted to some old prints hanging on the walls.

There were some rare works of Aodo—that was the first I had heard of him.[5] There was Shiba Kōkan too, who gave me that "Lucky Idea," as Kawasaki called it. I had seen his work once before, so I may be confusing it with another of his prints. What I remember now is that green and yellow-brown were the key tones of the copper engraving. It was colored only lightly, and here and there were very light spots of lemon-yellow. These had faded almost to the point of vanishing. The composition placed the horizon below the bottom third of the picture. There was a row of tiny houses, some smallish trees, and several small people and a dog walking on a miniature grassy road. As I recall, there was a clear pink tinge to the peoples' clothing. Very effective it was. The quiet clouds of autumn streamed slanting across the broad sky.

While the picture partook of a certain power of its own, what interested me more and gave me the "idea" was the title, which the author himself had written within the figure of a scroll flying in the wind, in a kind of engagingly childlike, mannered style across the top of the picture's open sky. In print-style Roman letters it said: "TOTO NAKASU NO KEI" (View of Nakazu in Tokyo).[6]

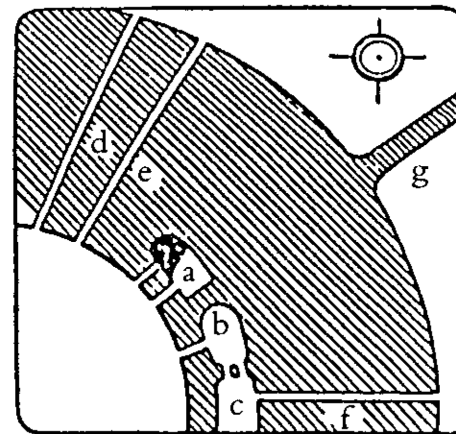
Nakazu! Nakazu!! Nakazu!!! As I shouted the words I fled out of the hall at top speed, but not really like I was crazy. I could not decide whether to go first to Nakazu or to Kawasaki's hotel in Tsukiji, but my hasty steps took me toward Tsukiji. Saying that Kawasaki was still asleep at three o'clock, the bellhop in his uniform of gold braid and gold buttons was reluctant to show me in. I wakened Kawasaki anyway, and the two of us went off to see Nakazu. He kept repeating "Lucky Idea, Lucky Idea." But I was strangely uneasy, thinking, "What if it's no good?" I almost felt I didn't want to go. . . . I've had no reason to visit there since that time, so I don't know how much it may have changed by now. When we went there then, though, I became discouraged at once. That rubbish-strewn, disorderly place gave me a chilly feeling. I didn't remotely have the courage to ask his opinion or express my own.

"Well, it's no good after all," was my only opinion. I thought with pity that my silent companion probably felt the same. As we listened to the jumble of evening sounds, we crossed the upstream bridge; whether it was the one called the male bridge or the female bridge I don't remember.

"Nope. It was a terrible 'Lucky Idea,' " I said, as if to laugh at myself and console my friend.

"Why?" he asked, with a rather triumphant air the moment he heard me. He was completely satisfied with that filthy, good-for-nothing land. The two of us walked in the opposite direction from the Gyōtoku riverbank. . . . Along here was a line of houses on the bank and we could not see Nakazu from the road. . . . Pointing ahead as we walked, he said, "Let's go up and look from the bridge. Shiba Kōkan must have drawn the view from above. I used to go under that bridge on a boat."

Yes. From the bridge! The bridge was the one called Shin-Ōhashi (The New Big Bridge), but that was before the present bridge was built. The former bridge was downstream from the present one, closer to Nakazu. (As Artist E told me the story, he took a sketchbook from a stack on the shelves behind where he stood. Laying it on the tea table surrounded by the three of us, he opened it to a blank page. Then, excusing himself with "Of course, I can't say this is accurate, but if this is the Sumida River . . . ", he drew a sketch with an artist's quick hand and then explained it.)



a Nakazu
b Hakozaki
c Tsukiji extended
d Shin-Ōhashi (New Big Bridge)
e Former Shin-Ōhashi
f Eitaibashi Bridge
g Onagi River

Kawasaki said, after all, that he liked it very much, very much indeed. . . . Actually, as I visualized from the bridge in the winter's setting sun the Beautiful Town without form but with the potential for

any form, and I put that vision in place of the cluster of dirty gray roofs that now existed, it was enough to make me change my mind and like the place. . . . So Kawasaki decided on the area you could see best from the bridge. (As he spoke, E pointed to the part colored black in the drawing.) He would do his best to realize this plan in all respects, Kawasaki declared. He said he would like to buy, if he could, that picture of Shiba Kōkan's, both as a memento of the source of our inspiration and as a way to let people know what kind of place our Beautiful Town had been in olden times. . . . But the art dealer reported that the owner of the picture was a collector of Shiba Kōkan. On this pretext the dealer set an exorbitant price. Kawasaki replied with vigor, "I must respect such an enthusiast for Shiba Kōkan. A man like that should not be overwhelmed by the power of money." So in the end he did not acquire the print.

That evening, the evening we decided on Nakazu as our intended site, our hearts were buoyant. We felt like we were at a temple festival, with its sideshows. I was so elated that I shaved off my ragged three-or-four-month beard before the mirror on his dressing table. I took off my dirty corduroy work clothes and put on an elegant dark suit I borrowed from Kawasaki. That was so I could accompany him to the very strict hotel dining room, which you could not enter without coat and tie. I remember something funny. I was so absorbed in our conversation that night and, heedless of things as I am, forgot I was wearing a borrowed suit and went home wearing it. . . . We drank quite a lot in the dining room. Kawasaki became slightly intoxicated, and on returning to his room he played the piano for me. What he played, whether he played well or played nonsense, I would not know. Music is something I don't understand at all. We continued talking that night of Beautiful Town. He would investigate tomorrow to see if he could buy the land he had seen that day, he said. He also wanted to run an advertisement in the newspaper to hire an architect to design the individual houses for Beautiful Town. He said that he himself was the composer of Beautiful Town, I was the conductor, and the architect he was going to hire would be the string section of the orchestra for all the beautiful houses that would make up Beautiful Town. I drafted the ad for the newspaper as he requested; he said he would pay the architect 3,000 yen per

month. . . . I didn't know whether that was adequate or was comparatively high for the service. When it came out in the paper, there were lots of applicants, so I guess it was an adequate allowance. Nearly twenty came for the interviews every evening, but all left after failing to satisfy him.

After we stopped receiving crowds of applicants in the hotel room that became the founding office for this strange town, a short, thin old man with pure-white hair came in one day. His outward appearance had something interesting about it. Forty years before it might have been thought the newest fashion. . . . An elderly architect in a proper morning suit worn with the odd grace befitting it and bearing the stigma of bashful refinement stood before Kawasaki. Kawasaki took to the old man at first sight, as did I some days later. The more he talked to the old man, the more Kawasaki liked him. The architect answered his questions in halting pauses. In the 1880s era of the Rokumeikan,[7] that fanciful, out-of-season flowery time, he had gone to Paris on his own funds to study his beloved "Architecture of Enlightenment." When he returned several years later, the period of unnatural westernization had ended and he encountered a period of even more unnatural retrogression. The knowledge he had taken pains to acquire in his middle years was unexpectedly useless in Japan. The newly returned architect saw himself growing old and poor. . . . In that time all he had been able to do was subcontracted design for some army barracks and movie houses. Once, through a secondhand appeal, he had designed a villa for some nobleman. The plans he drew at great pains and to his own satisfaction were, however, never used. One set was said to be too simple, the other too elaborate. The architect believed that something in-between would not be unsightly, but, already growing old, he declined to try again. He had a dutiful son who became a doctor and supported him. In the meantime he dreamed only of building for once in his life a house that he liked. But no one asked him. There was no land to build on. Still, he imagined all sorts of clients and all sorts of building sites, and he enjoyed working assiduously to design home after home. He had about fifty of these paper plans. Before he knew it he had grown to be an old and white-haired architect. (Like Urashima Tarō!)[8] He said his family had been trying to get him to give up this odd old man's pas-

sion, but he wanted, one way or another, for once in his life, to build one of his dream houses on real earth. He confessed that this was his desire for the little remaining time he had left.

"I think this is a man to be respected; we should surely consult him about our project. He has a love for his work that is rare nowadays. Anyway, I told him that I would like to see the plans that he has drawn to no purpose. He should come around 6:30 tomorrow evening. We have as good as got a faithful colleague in him, I think, but it is essential that you like him too. Can you meet him when he comes tomorrow night?" This is what Kawasaki told me the night after the old architect's first visit. When the time came for me to go to the hotel the next day, I saw the old man there a step ahead of me, climbing the stone steps of the hotel entrance. He was struggling with a big bulging portfolio under his arm. . . . Seen from behind, he was wearing the same respectable, old-fashioned, somewhat humorous attire that Kawasaki had described.

That evening I too reached an utterly sympathetic understanding with this elderly architect, just as my friend had the day before.

Thus the architect joined us to make three. Two weeks later the three of us were hurriedly at work to carry out our plans. At Kawasaki's request, the working hours were set from 7:30 to 11:30 in the evenings. For some reason it was not just the set four hours. We were so happy working we were often surprised to find that it was past midnight.

Each of us worked at his own lighted table in his own area of the large hotel room. Now and then, when necessary, we would all assemble around Kawasaki's big round table in the middle of the room. The first evening Kawasaki invited us to join him, and as he served us wine he explained rather concretely his overall plan for the town. From his subsequent investigation he thought he could acquire more than five acres at one end of that tract surrounded by water. To separate it from the other part of Nakazu, a ditch thirty feet wide and rather deep should be dug through the middle. We must build a strong stone wall to demarcate the independent area. The town road should follow the

shoreline to form a ring all the way around. The road should be eighteen feet wide. The side next to the water should be provided with a stone balustrade—a chest-high parapet. The houses along one side of the road would run in a smaller ring inside the road and the parapet. The houses, perhaps fewer than a hundred and each with its own distinct form, would blend harmoniously together, like a castle. The vacant land in the middle should present a garden, which could be seen at a glance from the inner windows of every house equally. . . . This was the gist of his concept. Each house should be two stories high and should not require much more than a thousand square feet of land. He said that people who needed a larger residence would not reside in this town.

For a time I was extremely busy. Kawasaki had recognized that more than ten of the nearly fifty houses the old architect had designed in vain would be fully suitable to build on the site we were planning. The footings and foundations used an abundance of stone. The houses themselves were to be of wood with the stucco exterior of the traditional Japanese storehouse style. The exteriors were almost pure Western, but the interiors were Japanese mansions designed each in its own distinctive style. There would be no discord with the exteriors, Kawasaki said in admiration. I took the drawings of the houses one by one, both the elevations and the three-dimensional projections, and tried to make simple watercolor paintings. Or I tried coloring over pencil drawings. The most practically designed houses became the most pictorial when they were converted into paintings. Alongside the houses or behind them I drew in trees of various shapes that I imagined would add beauty to the scene. Sometimes I thought of deciduous trees, other times of evergreens. I fancied various vines climbing the walls. Every day as I pursued my work, I felt that every existing house my eyes chanced upon and the treetops I saw showing over mansion garden walls had become objects of reference for my work just because they were there. Whenever I looked at the sky, the clouds, flowers in a park, a woman's kimono, I wondered right away whether that could not be the color for the walls of my houses, the pillars, the balcony railings, window curtains, and other household furnishings. That's how absorbed I became in my work. As I painted my pictures, then repainted, and again reconsidered them, uncertain in my mind and troubled at

the difficulties I saw, Kawasaki would offer some superb idea or thoughtful criticism. He would sit and look up now and then to stare dreamily at a large plat of the area that he had had someone survey and draft for him. Then again he would read from a book. He seemed to like *News from Nowhere* by William Morris.[9] He was always reading it. In those days he would get up around noon, and on the days when he didn't meet with people about the land purchase, he would talk about the houses that he had found to his liking on his walks around town.

In a single night the taciturn old architect would speak no more times than you could count on your fingers. Some days he would say nothing at all. However, the fact that he was in no ill humor was evident from his constant smile. When I needed to go to him for some question to consult about the plans he had already turned over to me, I would have to stand beside him and repeat his name two or three times. There were times when he never did look my way, and I had to give it up as useless. The old man was not deaf. He was just so absorbed, sharpening his pencil, lost in thought, or drawing with his drafting pen.

Our room was lit by necessity with the brightest lights shining like midday. When one of us had to go to someone to talk about business, it was our custom to tiptoe on the thick carpet to avoid disturbing the concentration of the others. Except for when the young hotel bellhop in his uniform of gold braid and gold buttons stealthily opened the door, entered, and stoked the stove with coal, the brilliantly gleaming room was hushed in dead silence. When I visualize us all moving about like silent shadows in that room, it leaves me with a strange feeling. I wonder, is it a scene in a dream reflected in a big mirror, or if not that, is it a single frame from a motion picture. . . ? That's how we worked. We were forever busy. And always happy. The silent bellhop no longer came to light the stove. The time had come instead for the three of us each to throw open the nearest window. Our work progressed rapidly. As we grew accustomed to our work, the old architect and I found our thoughts flowing spontaneously as we sat at our desks. Kawasaki, who had no special work assigned to him, naturally appeared bored. He seemed to be waiting impatiently, unable to bear the waiting, for us to finish our work on Beautiful Town. . . . It was the same with us. Then he thought up some work for himself.

One night when we came into Kawasaki's room as usual, there on

the big round table where we drank tea before starting our work lay several gleaming pairs of sharp scissors and knives, big and little ones, and a ruler. Next to them were four of the houses we had designed, built of cardboard and paste on a large wooden board. The paper houses were about two inches tall. Each had the same number of windows and doors, exactly as in the plans, that opened with unbelievable fidelity to the touch of your fingers. The same colors that I had conceived and designated were painted in oil on the tiny outer walls. They were not yet dry. Kawasaki's eyes were fixed on the cardboard with the gravity of a man lost in thought. From that evening on he worked alongside us, diligently building paper houses as his work while the two of us pursued our efforts. He was addicted to this serious pastime with the enthusiasm of a child. As each house was finished we too examined it with the joy of a child. "Look, this little house has exactly the arrangement, room by room. Isn't it fun?" Kawasaki said this as if it comprised the accomplished dream and all the rooms of all the little houses had actually been built for real. Every evening he was absorbed in his work of paper handicraft in a way that others than we would have found absurd. Some evenings he was interrupted in his work. The bellhop in the uniform of gold braid and gold buttons would announce a visitor with a calling card respectfully delivered on a silver tray. It was not really a hindrance to the building of Beautiful Town, but rather a sign of progress. These were agents for the land purchase we needed for Beautiful Town. They withdrew to continue discussions in the room next to where we were working.

As the number of cardboard houses increased, our innocent, enthusiastic dreamer was no longer content with houses alone. Now the assorted trees and vines I had conceived were constructed on that tabletop plank. They were cleverly built of wire and combed-wool yarn. So too the road around the town and the parapet on its outer edge were built piece by piece. For the water surrounding the whole layout, he had laid out mirrors that reflected the row of toy houses upside down. When the mirrors, shining too vividly, failed to create a reflection in the water, he replaced them with translucent frosted glass. His depiction of "Beautiful Town"—this whim made of cardboard—grew more and more elaborate, until even I thought it looked excessive. . . . This happened one night. As I was studying five sheets of

plans from the old architect, I was wondering what sequence would be best to match up the houses, and I was trying to draw every combination to find the most beautiful and natural arrangement. As was my custom at such times, I was in the midst of scribbling in my sketchbook, when suddenly the lights went out.

"What's going on?" I yelled out, and the architect muttered something.

In the darkness I heard the hysterical voice of Kawasaki. It was he who had turned off the lights. Startled, he turned them on again. He had become so absorbed in his own thoughts that he had forgotten we were working in the same room. He then asked us if it was all right to stop our work for a while and called us with a smile to come join him at the round table. Again he turned off the lights. I had no idea when he might have worked on it, but in that tabletop Beautiful Town of paper there were lights shining dimly from each and every house. They shone from those tiny windows to reveal to our eyes a miniature world of streets at night. Flickers of light spilled from the windows and were reflected hazily back by the still waters of frosted glass. . . . By his careful preparation hadn't the mirrors been placed at just the right angle to the houses? The many flickers of light were reflected in long, fine streaks, as if they were skimming the surface of the water.

"Then for the next thing," he said, flooding the roofs with the light of a dim green bulb. We stood there side by side looking at the town in the moonlight, when suddenly from above a giant finger reached down and pointed at an open space in the tiny paper town. The timid old architect spoke dryly.

"Um, wouldn't it be better to have a little more light? I was just now working on the design for the steps to this house here. . . ."

. . . Of course this happened only once. We would never play with this toy village every day as if it were nighttime or lit by the moon.

Kawasaki had given a lot of thought to the lighting of his houses in Beautiful Town. He was not satisfied with the idea of buying electricity from an outside electric company. He thought that would impair the independence, the separateness of his town. He could not consider asking his townspeople to use kerosene lamps. "I don't like to see the times do a backflip. That's nothing more than nostalgia. We should look ahead and not fix our eyes on the past. . . ."

My friend, who had reason in his dreams and dreams in his reason, continued.

"When science is perfected, we shall not need to rely on the necessarily large facilities of the electric companies. (That goes not just for electric lights.) There will come a day when people can light their own homes adequately with their own simple electric machines and with about the same time and effort they formerly expended on their oil lamps. The way every household treasures and uses its sewing machine. When that time comes, diverse machines will become objects to be cherished, not feared or hated, because we cannot do without them in our daily life. For our lives as humans to become fully rational and reach their highest potential, science, which is one side of our life, must reach its highest potential in its own way. I think when all of today's useful machines are fully perfected, the mechanical power to drive them will no longer depend on the huge factories that ceaselessly corrode people's health. Just as gentle, well-nurtured, domesticated wild animals, horses, and cows muster their graceful power in the service of humans, and people too through love can become like them, all kinds of necessary machines will become easier to use and will make the most handy tools to help people in the happy pursuit of their handicrafts. When that time comes, machine industry will be the indispensable first step in promoting the arts. Can't we call machine factories militarism in the service of the arts?"

Then again, "the society that we now live in—this is an odd remark about the unlimited power of money—is a dangerous ugly structure of arches in grotesque[10] shapes attached to a grotesque foundation, but the two-legged wingless animal that is man lives calmly in this queer nest. Even the people who call for improvement do no more than add another kind of grotesqueness," he pointed out with relish.

But for me, a person absorbed strictly in my own interests, watching the colors in the clouds and the movements of the stars rather than thinking of earthly matters, and not one with the temperament suitable for his kind of contemplation, I was not up to judging whether what he said was not after all just one kind of grotesqueness. I did not try to make him develop his thinking by interrupting with the question, "Why?" Often I was smothered in the smoke of confusion. Yet I saw the passion of a dreamer in the strong tides that flowed through

the depths of those statements, and he and I took pleasure together in the sentiment. "Even that Beautiful Town," he said once, gazing intently at the paper city on the tabletop. "We can only give form to it. Whether Beautiful Town really becomes a beautiful and happy place, only the hearts of each and every person who lives there can make it so."

Before we started our work and after we had finished, we would chat. He often brought up topics like this, but, oddly enough, those ideas interested the old architect more than me. That man retained the thinking of the Peoples' Rights Movement of some thirty-odd years before.

The three of us gathering there nightly, absorbed in our work, began in February of 1912 and continued for three years. At the end of the third summer, when the refreshing daylight was changing gradually to autumn, the work began to take shape. From the beginning Kawasaki had divided the project into three stages. It was at least a ten-year plan, but the first phase was accomplished early that fall, four or five months ahead of schedule. That was of course due to the extraordinary enthusiasm and energy of that old architect who lived in a world of nothing but straight lines, horizontal parallel lines, lines that cross or lines that rise vertically side by side, lines that press down on these from above. As the end of the first phase neared, Kawasaki stopped talking of his highly reasoned "two-legged, wingless animals, and grotesqueness," and instead pressed us with the greatest urgency; without limit we were pressed, even as we, exasperated at ourselves, wanted to see the first phase finished.

Then came the night when the first phase of our work was to be finished. We intended to work all night. . . . Those days we often worked all night. As the night grew utterly late, our inspiration soared. I was drawing a stone bridge; it had three arches of polished white granite that divided the flowing water. . . . The arches were reflected upside down in the water at flood tide, but the image of the bridge was ruffled in the roiling waters. . . . As I drew, I saw that view before me.

Kawasaki called us to the round table. There, beside the almost completed tiny paper model of Beautiful Town, stood three bottles of champagne. Next to them were three champagne glasses. When we had gathered as usual around three sides of the big round table, Kawasaki set a glass before each of us and poured the amber wine.

"Well, drink up! Drink up!" he said, flustered. He picked up the glass in front of him and drained it dry, peering at our faces as he did so.

"The time has come to buy the land. . . ."

He added, . . . but—it's in order now for me to tell you why the project did not materialize. When I tell you, you won't be too surprised. That land at Nakazu is even now a dirty, rubbish-strewn place, more so than in the past. More than being no surprise, that should have been foreseen from the start of my story. But for the two of us, the old architect and me, and maybe for Kawasaki too, the three of us, though we can leave him out of it, for the two of us it was completely unexpected. In a word, that preposterous man simply did not have the money to build the town!

We drank quickly in succession while he spoke as calmly as he could, in a moaning voice. . . .

"My dad was a swindler. The son of a swindler is also a swindler." He said this with scorn for himself, looking back and forth between us with the eyes of an imploring lion. "My father let it be known around the Far East that he owned a large trading company in America. In America he claimed that he held a large trading company in the Far East. He spent his life deceiving people, even me. When he died, he left a gold mine in South America. That was no lie. The mining concession was terribly big. My father's estate was full of defects and there was no hope of my being able to manage it. When I heard this from the executor, I decided to sell the mine with no regrets. If I sold the mineral rights in that enormous mine, it would be enough to redeem my father's debts and leave a large sum of money in my hands. To have money these days is everything. To have money these days is one of the great natural gifts. No, you might say it is the only one. If you have money, you can make a revolution. It was my choice what to do with this welcome gift. So what should I do? . . . As a youth of eighteen aiming to be an artist and waiting for my gold mine to be sold, I nursed my dream and finally hit on the plan for Beautiful Town. I thought of

Beautiful Town as a large living and moving work of art. That was when I began to think that building houses for people was a sacred concept, just like building shrines for the gods was sacred to the ancients. I often dreamed that halfway up a hill somewhere there was a big city of long-lasting stone houses built without sparing money and lined up in beautiful rhythm. My fantasies, those of a man who loves to fantasize, stretched out endlessly. That dream city towered through the vicissitudes of many centuries. Moss grew among the houses, vines coiled, and the whole town was infused with nature. The people of the town did not work to make money as was the custom of their eccentric ancestors. They worked for pleasure alone. As travelers come from other towns to see old temples, so travelers would dismount at the station at the foot of the hill to marvel at the many customs peculiar to this town since its founding and completely contrary to their own. . . . Thoughtful people might see the precious vein of ore that is human life partially revealed in this old town deep in the heart of the mountains. . . . I pictured that in my fancy, but reality gradually reduced my dreams to a meager prospect. . . . That is, the ore deposits in my father's, the swindler's, mine, though the claim was broad, were about to be exhausted. If the veins gave out, I was told, it was most doubtful that another lode would be found on the claim. In the end my big important dream, soaring on giant wings, came crashing down headlong. My visionary town was crushed beneath it, smashed into pieces. Father's mine was abandoned, an empty mountain gaping with crisscross holes like a beehive without honey, and his residence with its double mortgage did not leave enough to pay off dad's debts, they said. Well, they did give me a bare five hundred thousand dollars to get established in the world. The executor of dad's troublesome estate was an uncle of mine, dad's younger brother who came from Germany. As of now I can't be sure that I wasn't cheated by the unscrupulous administrator or by my uncle. It doesn't matter anyhow. I would like to have you imagine my disappointment when it was determined that I would receive only $500,000. . . . You, E the artist and Mr. T the architect, can easily understand that. . . . Your disappointment and surprise at this moment are no different from mine at that time.

"When I came to Tokyo, I had less than a million yen. There was to be no more from anywhere. Twenty million, that would have been

enough if only I'd had it, I thought constantly to myself. With twenty million as a base, twenty million I don't have except in my imagination, I began to build 'Phantom Town.' It was a Phantom Town, and once the thought came to me that it could never really be built, I thought I could express it through art, to create the reality in people's hearts at least. At first the fancy was a magic cloud floating in my heart, and I thought of writing it like a prose poem. If that had been the extent of my ambition, I would probably have been safe. . . . That would have matched my capacity. But I began to think I wanted to write it as a novel close to the truth. Then, to make the novel more realistic, I intended to put in a factual record of the designs for planning Beautiful Town up to the point of construction. Thus the hero of my novel unfortunately dies when the plans are completed, and Beautiful Town exists on no earthly map. The readers of my novel would be confused as to whether it falls into the realm of poetry or that of history. Even if they understood as they laid it aside that my book was poetry, they might have believed that, because of the passion I put into it and the totally intelligent and rational design, and if only I did have the money, that city truly would have been built there right before their eyes. Then among my ardent readers there might be a wealthy man so moved by my book that he would build that town himself. . . . I thought there might be. What a dreamer I am. I have read lots of books about building houses. In doing so, I had my father the swindler's heart in me. That heart deceived me first. . . . There were moments when I was convinced I actually had that much money in my own bank account. Those moments expanded into minutes, then grew long enough for me to visualize Beautiful Town. I'm like the hero in a story —in the daytime a hermit in a humble monastery, devoted to a life of submission, who every night gives himself over to debauchery as the gaudily dressed lover of a dissolute noble lady. When I was planning Beautiful Town—that was at night after all—I was a man of unlimited wealth. No, not only at night. Somehow I could think like that all the time. What convinced me was half in myself, the other half in everyone else I met. My thoughts that gave no heed to money, that scarcely respected money at all, and my disposition to leave things to chance, may have led to my being seen by the world as a billionaire with two or three thousand times the amount of money I actually possessed. They

were lionizing me. That's not unreasonable. After all, I valued two thousand yen the way common people value two hundred. Anyway, I was no common crook robbing large sums from other people. I was just a queer imposter squandering his own money on expenses that common people would see as entirely meaningless. That is, in order to make my fantasies real, I invested in the purchase of my own sense of reality. Even though that way of doing business has existed in the world, no one has done it more vigorously than I. Common people, therefore, may have had no need to be wary of me. . . . Except for that foolish real-estate agent. But it wasn't only the common people who were easily convinced that I was wealthy. I'm sorry about you two. Sad to say, when I asked for your help, noting that my own knowledge and ability were inadequate to weave the planning story into my work of art, the two of you believed without misgiving that I was wealthy enough to bring it off. Didn't you? . . . Of course, that was when I had no doubt of my own capacity. You two foolishly believed me the way other two-legged, wingless animals put their blind faith in the grotesque. So you were deceived. You worked as hard as you could, like people in a dream laboring to make money. You're bewildered now just like those people when they wake from their dreams of the grotesque! If sometime, any time, you had only asked, either of you, 'Can you really do this thing?' I could have confessed easily and honestly by saying, 'No, it's nothing but an idle dream.' Oh, truly, how much I sometimes wanted you, either of you, to give me that opportunity. If you wonder why, it's because I thought the time would come sooner or later, as it did tonight, when I would have to confess everything to you, how I had tricked you so easily and misled you with false hopes. Yet I could not say it to you on my own. . . . Mysteriously, I began to feel there was a kind of mental tension to the pleasure in this uneasy world where I am forever pursued by something. Just like men and women who are unlucky in love. Should I confess, I worried about crushing your enthusiasm. I didn't want you to think me like a coldhearted man dallying with a young woman whom he plans to abandon in due course. I do resemble the young man who indulges in his love with the one he knows he cannot marry, who steals that love in order to prolong it, and yet who lacks the courage to confess his intention to leave until he is cornered. . . . Don't you see me that way?

"We can imagine that the Beautiful Town that looms so clearly when we close our eyes is now lying in ruins many long years after it was built. Or maybe we destroyed it ourselves after we finished because we didn't like it. Then later we think it was not something that had to be destroyed, but rather a thing that should be honorably regretted. No, I'd say it's better not to deceive ourselves any longer. To say that the vision is more beautiful than the reality was my kind of stupid remark until yesterday. The vision is beautiful. So the actual is more beautiful, but our Beautiful Town is an impossibility! Because I don't have the money! That great natural gift needed for it—money—is not there. I'm like the artist who decieves himself that he has talent, who puts on airs because others see him as having talent, and who then, forgetting his limitations, rashly undertakes some large work of art, only to become frustrated in the end when he realizes he lacks the talent. Now the time has come when I must clearly acknowledge as much. . . . The day after tomorrow at 7 P.M. the real-estate agent will come with his crafty kind of compulsion to get my answer. To meet the payment of many million yen I don't have thirty thousand. That's just one-third of the agent's commission. The guy swallowed it whole. I would not be at all unhappy to see the boorish look on his vulgar face. Three weeks ago I bought a steamship ticket on the liner K——Maru. Tomorrow I leave Japan—at least I'll be gone from Tokyo. At first I thought I would go without saying anything to you two either. . . .

"But E, and Mr. T, the work you've done for me is surely not all in vain. All the effort you have put into my phantom town has enabled me to see it much more clearly. You have given me such good ideas and revealed such wisdom that even now I can fully picture the town. I haven't given up the idea of writing a book about it—under the title *Nisi Dominus Frustra* (All in Vain, Without God). When I do, I plan to dedicate it in honor of you two, my devoted collaborators who have bravely endured the same big disappointment as I. My trunks are full of your work. I own scarcely anything else. . . . I am penniless with infinite wealth."

As he talked on, Kawasaki gradually calmed down. He was a proud man, and rather than apologize for his own wrongdoing he spoke in a tone of bravado, threatening and consoling us. But the look on his pale face and his glistening tears belied his voice. There was nothing to say,

nothing we could think appropriate to say. The old architect and I fervently held our silence. I don't know what I did, but oddly enough old Mr. T kept lifting his already empty glass in vain as he tried again and again to drink, his hand trembling and his mind unconscious of the lack of any drink. At long last Kawasaki appeared to notice. He refilled the empty glass with champagne, then filled mine. "So, drink to the swindler!" he said. We three were sunk in a deep silence that may have lasted an hour or more. Meantime the cuckoo clock in his room next door sounded once in a voice like an owl—was it four o'clock? At the window facing the city where I continued to gaze to no purport, I saw the dim light of morning through the slats in the blind. Supposing I suddenly dared to laugh out loud, I wondered how my voice would echo through the silent daylight of that big room.

"That's the way it is," Kawasaki said at last. "From tonight I don't expect to be here and you won't be coming either. And so, E, I sent a letter to your home this evening. And to Mr. T's home too. . . . I think I will leave without saying any more to you. It is already morning and the streetcars should be running. I think I'd like to have you go now. . . . At ten this morning the used furniture dealer is coming. I'm selling all my household things here. Until then I'd like to sleep soundly."

As he spoke he rose and opened the door himself as if to spur us on. Then he led us down the staircase, awakened the hotel man, and had him open the front door. We parted from him silently and left the hotel. The strange night had fully dawned but morning fog hung low over the city below a still sunless sky. Streetcars were running with few passengers. My head in its odd condition was suddenly invigorated. I had no intention of feeling any different than usual. Then I was struck by a sense of confusion at some unexpected words from Kawasaki. The old architect and I would always say good-bye casually in front of the hotel and then go our separate ways. Only this time we did not part but walked on together. I accompanied the old man as he trudged along; it was in the opposite direction from my destination. We walked side by side for quite a long time, crossing one of the many bridges in that neighborhood, whatever it was called. By the time we had crossed the bridge without saying a word, I had almost forgotten the old architect was with me, when suddenly he spoke in that timid voice of his. . . .

"That man, after last night we shan't meet him again. But you'll meet with me again, won't you? You've become my friend. I'd like to talk with you from time to time. About that 'Beautiful Town.' "

So saying, he grasped my wrist with his chilly hands. As I was about to reply, something suddenly occurred to me, a terrible thought that had not previously crossed my mind.

"Mr. T. I'll talk with you later. Now I must go back to the hotel. I've got to see that man right away!"

Mr. Architect T appeared to think I was angry at Kawasaki. I shoved the old man aside as he tried to detain me, and without looking back I raced toward the hotel. I pictured my friend groaning on blood-soaked white sheets. . . . He had said he was going to Germany. . . . That was a lie. . . . He intended to die. . . . "The hero in my novel dies unfortunately when the planning is completed." Hadn't I heard him say that earlier? . . . Wouldn't a fool like him put himself into the story he was writing? A man like him thought nothing of death. . . . I recalled the man in the Russian novel who said, "If anyone asks, tell them I have gone to America," and then pointed a pistol at his head and pulled the trigger. . . . What he said could be considered a riddle about death. He said he sent a letter to my home. Was it to be a posthumous statement? My heart was beating hard; its echo pursued me as I ran. I was dizzy with the worry. I kept cool, though. Wasn't this the same street I had raced along so fast from the K Arts Club to Kawasaki's place that day when I had the "Lucky Idea" about Nakazu? . . . Oh, the sun was rising, I thought as I stared at my long shadow on the ground. I stepped on my shadow; I chased it as I walked. Hurriedly. When I turned a corner and saw the hotel, all was quiet. The lights in the windows had gone out. I leapt up the front steps and pushed on the door. It had been locked after our departure. Had nothing happened? Had no one discovered him? As I wondered I rang the bell by the door. . . . There was a long interval.

One of the bellhops that I had become familiar with over three long years, rubbing his eyes and hooking up the gold braid of his uniform, greeted me with a sour look and led me to Kawasaki's suite. The room was the opposite of what I had expected. The door as usual was not locked. When we opened it, a large leather briefcase lay on the round table. The paper city was crushed beneath it. The room next

door where Kawasaki slept was quiet; Kawasaki was not dead. He seemed rather to be sleeping like someone dead tired. I was ashamed of my pathologically nervous fantasies, and to cover up for having told the bellboy I had urgent business with Kawasaki, I said it could wait until after he woke up. Adding that it would be a nuisance to come again later, I lay down to sleep for a while on the sofa, as I always did after a long night's work, in the room where we worked—no, the room where until last night we worked. . . .

"Oh? What? Dead?" I called out crossly and jumped up, shaken out of my sleep roughly by the shoulders. . . . I was half asleep. The nervous delusions I had had before I went to sleep had continued in my sleep. My fitful sleep was haunted by all manner of Kawasakis hovering on the border between reality and dream. Though troubled by the bright morning light in the room, I had finally gotten to sleep.

"Hey? What kind of a dream are you having? . . . Get up quick!"

That dead Kawasaki was shaking me awake from my delusions.

"Get up quick! If you don't, I'll sell you to the furniture man along with the sofa."

Kawasaki's bad joke was accompanied by a burst of laughter from a merchant fawning before his classy client. I looked and saw two men standing behind Kawasaki. One was the hotel manager whom I had seen before; the other I assumed to be the secondhand-furniture dealer. Smiling wryly, I washed my face at Kawasaki's suggestion and went with him to eat in a corner of the dining room. Because it was a little after eleven we had lunch. Then it was time for Kawasaki and me to part. It seemed he really was going abroad. He was just like always. Although his facial color was poor, his smile had its usual cheerful charm. It was inconceivable that he was the protagonist of last night's scene. I was angry at myself for panicking, not so much last night as this morning. "The bellboy said you came back on urgent business?" he asked. "No, it was a nuisance to go home to sleep for nothing," I had to answer casually. Then I chanced to think: this man, the man now before me, if he had died, think how I would have been questioned in that flustered state. Kawasaki seemed not to notice what I was thinking but was instead rather jollier than usual.

We finished eating leisurely as we chatted pointlessly about these and other topics. How the furniture dealer came on schedule. How if the stuff was going to the dealer and if he would drop the word, the hotel would probably buy it up. How the hotel manager rattled on tediously and so it was better to leave the whole discussion to the two of them. How it was only the piano he hated to give up, and so he had played a piece this morning as soon as he had gotten up. When Kawasaki said that, how it was no dream when I thought I had seen him from the back, sitting and playing the piano in my dreams. How pleasant the ship's cabin would be on such a clear early-autumn morning. And how beautiful the sky really was. Even as I worried over it, I said nothing about the letter he said he had sent to my home last night. For one thing, I was posing and did not want him to think I was worried about it. For another thing, I didn't want by raising it to bring on last night's reaction in the presently rather calm Kawasaki. To tell the truth, I felt a little sad gazing at Kawasaki, whom I shall probably never see again. I am overly sentimental and more solicitous than others. For lack of sleep, or for whatever reason, this feeling of separation was curiously stimulated by the color, the very sight, of the fresh green apples on the table. . . . Even today green apples bring back the feeling of that day.

I parted from him there in that noisy room where the hotel manager and the furniture dealer were giving orders to move things about. I would never see him again—up to now. He said he was leaving on the 7 P.M. train. I spent the day sleeping. When I went to his place just before six to see him off, he had long since left at about four o'clock. The familiar bellhop answered the door and told me that. I barely missed the old architect, who came later for the same purpose and then went home. The architect had phoned around noon to ask the time of departure and Kawasaki sent the reply of seven o'clock. However, Kawasaki suddenly changed his plans and told the bellhop over and over to give us his regards. As I could not see him off in person, I could not help feeling he was somehow still there in the hotel. Not only that, I had been going to that hotel every night. The way we had been working there for three years I still could not believe it had all collapsed in a night. . . . I felt I should hurry on as always to the hotel to continue the work. But among all the brightly lit hotel windows only two on the front corner, second floor, that where we had worked until last night and Kawasaki's room, were dark. I looked back as I walked in a daze.

All I could think of was Beautiful Town. I don't know where or how I walked. I walked around the night streets. Like a young man hopeless in his love. . . . It struck me that Beautiful Town had actually become my love. That was a simile, I thought as I walked. It was something more than a simile. No matter how far I pushed it, I felt the resemblance was perfect. Had my feet taken me to Shin-Ōhashi (New Big Bridge) before I knew it? . . . Just as the hasty feet of a lover pining for his love take him unconsciously to the vicinity of her home. When I noticed I had come thus to the bridge, my steps slowed naturally to a stroll. Suddenly I saw, some twelve or fifteen feet ahead of me, a man leaning on the railing and gazing out unconcerned and oblivious to passersby. It was the old architect for sure. He was wearing the old morning coat as usual. When I knew without a doubt who he was, I turned hastily back in the direction from which I had come. I did not want to wake him from his dream. If he were to see me inadvertently and say a word, any words, I would burst instantly into tears. I should not like that at all. I realized that my nerves were totally prostrated from that strange night just past.

Beautiful Town! Beautiful Town! I thought I would forget that crazy idea in no time. The very next day I went out, wandering around with my paint box dangling from my shoulder. I tried setting up my easel here and there, hit or miss. It was no use. If I painted a tree, it reminded me at once of the garden in Beautiful Town. If it was a view of roofs, I thought of roofs in Beautiful Town. If I went to the art institute at night, my charcoal left off sketching the nude woman and drew a line of small houses on a corner of her figure. I was often uneasy with myself. I thought maybe I was possessed by something.

It happened on one of those days. I had an unexpected visit one evening from the old architect. He asked me to do something really strange. I already knew of his extraordinary personality, but when I heard this request, even I had to find the moment strange. Since the planning of Beautiful Town turned out to be fake and his work was now useless, he simply could not tell the facts to the family he had been

reporting to day by day. . . . So for the last ten days, like this night, he had been going out before seven, killing time till nearly eleven by walking around town and seeing movies he did not want to see before returning home to pretend he had been working on Beautiful Town. He could not be expected to continue this unreasonable, boring behavior forever and sometime would have to confess the truth to his household. He could not possibly do that himself. I asked whether his family had come to count on the pay from his work for their livelihood. That was definitely not the case, he said. . . . He was proud of his son, who was a medical doctor and professor of pathology at a medical school. The unselfish son dutifully provided them with almost all of his salary from the school. They—the old architect and his elderly wife—enjoyed what the world calls a comfortable retirement. As the old architect spoke awkwardly but quietly in his usual timid tone, I visualized a household where a nagging old woman taunted her unfortunate husband about everything. I tried to ask as indirectly as I could whether she was like that or what was the reason he could not tell her that Beautiful Town could not be built. His answer was the exact opposite of my unhappy surmise. She thought it would be great if her husband's houses could be built, and she was waiting as expectantly as he to see the realization of the plan, the construction at last of a long row of those wonderful homes. . . . That's why he felt he simply could not face his wife. From what he said, I inferred that the old couple's household was both an oddity matching the childlike shyness of the old man himself and a blessing of the highest order. When I undertook his request, therefore, I came to like him all the more. Thus we met again from time to time. Sometimes he came to visit me, at other times I went to him. We who were farther apart in age than father and son became longtime congenial friends. As I viewed their life, so filled with gentle love and serenity, I thought how dear it was to find such lives in the middle of the noisy city—on a back alley in downtown Nihonbashi.

I thought old Mr. T was the happiest man ever. Even if his worldly life was a failure, he was a person of such peace, with a good wife, a good son, good daughters, good grandchildren, a warbler singing in his sunny window, and even more good things in his everyday fancies. You could hang the title Beautiful Town onto that happiness.

But, with the verbosity of an old man, old Mr. T kept talking of Beautiful Town until I was completely worn down. As he spoke I became strangely sad—until finally I was as oppressed as if I were hearing news of a lover I had barely forgotten.

E's story went on and on. It grew long in becoming the story of old Mr. T. . . . I will stop my writing here, though. It has somehow become very trivial. A story heard from someone else that may seem a bit interesting when you start to write will usually end up worthless. As author I ended up writing that kind of worthless story. . . . Still, if I find later by some chance that I want to try to continue, it is not impossible that I might write a sequel to "Beautiful Town," even if there is no point to it. Before I hurriedly end this tale of two twenty-year-old youths ignorant of the world and a sixty-five-year old man who can still dream—a fairy tale told for the same kind of people as the heroes in my story—I must add a few words. Old Mr. T did finally build one of his dream houses, fulfilling his earlier wishes. That one house was Mr. E's celebrated studio, the serene workroom with its nooks where we had listened to this story into the long night. That faintly tinged "Portrait of an Old Man," reminiscent of the French painter Carrière, that made E famous in the exhibition of 1916—that was painted from the old architect T. Old Mr. T died last year, leaving as his last request the hope that his granddaughter and Mr. E would have a happy life together. This spring E's wife happily carried out her grandfather's wish. Next year (because it would not be auspicious this year of her wedding) she will get a dog, according to the rules for Beautiful Town. My dog, Leo, will likely have pups next spring. Leo always has good ones, so I promised her the best of the litter. Old Mr. T's prized warbler in the cage the old man built so diligently is even now cared for tenderly in the window of the alcove by E's vivacious, beautiful young wife. What about Theodore Brentano who was Teizō Kawasaki? Wasn't he a spy? The paper model of Beautiful Town, didn't it resemble a fort somewhere? Who would have raised such an absurd and yet at first blush not unreasonable question, and why? How well built was E's studio, and on what land? Where did the money come from to build such a fine studio? Why were the three names of T, E, and Kawasaki carved on the cornerstone along with the date of construction? What kind of a household

did E have, the man who rightly held a home from Beautiful Town? I can't relate all that in a word or two, and it is not impossible that I may feel like writing a sequel to "Beautiful Town." I may give it a try.

I think I will dedicate this rough and incomplete story to E and his wife as a token of my friendship. E, my magnanimous friend, can you bear with me that the interesting story you told at such great pains has ended in these muddled notes of mine? To atone for my faults I think it fitting to end with this famous poem by Akiko.[11]

How sweet to walk
that little path,
not one of life's grand avenues.

Notes

1. A son, born in 1932, now a professor of psychology at Keiō University.
2. From the Boy-Charioteer's speech in the Masquerade Ball Scene, Part II, act I, scene 2 of Goethe's *Faust*. Translation from the Japanese with reference to the German original.
3. Also used by Satō in *The Sick Rose* as a symbol for an idyllic age, taken from a novel by Novalis, eighteenth-century German poet.
4. 1738?–1818. Artist, painter, and engraver who studied Western-style perspective and technique from the Dutch in Nagasaki.
5. 1747?–1822. Western-style painter and printmaker.
6. Although the spelling on the picture is given as NAKASU in Roman letters, the correct name of this district in Tokyo is Nakazu. This kind of discrepancy in the use of Roman letters and in pronunciation is not uncommon.
7. An elegant palace of culture in the Tokyo of the 1880s for Japanese to display their interest in Western high society.
8. A Japanese Rip Van Winkle from a popular legend about a man who spent many years in an undersea palace and returned home to become instantly old.
9. English writer and artist, 1834–1896, who wrote of a utopian socialism where art is the salvation of mankind.
10. Satō repeatedly uses the German word *Grotesken*.
11. Yosano Akiko, 1878–1942, well-known Japanese woman poet. Translation by Carol Tenny.