

# Kyoko's House

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**KYOKO'S HOUSE** by **Minami Yuichi** (Translated by **James J. Jackuk**) **For Marika** *From World Encyclopedia 2005, originally published by Oxford University Press 2005: **Mishima, Yukio** (1925–70) Japanese writer. An early novel, *Confessions of a Mask* (1949), is a semi-autobiographical study of homosexuality. His final work, the four-volume *The Sea of Fertility* (1965), is an epic of modern Japan. He committed ritual suicide at Tokyo's military headquarters, which he occupied with his small, private army. **Orton, Joe** (John Kingsley) (1933–67) English playwright who specialized in black satirical comedies. *Entertaining Mr Sloane* and *Loot* were staged in London in 1964 and 1965 respectively. *What the Butler Saw* was produced posthumously (1969) after Orton's murder by his lover, Kenneth Halliwell. **I think that Mishima might come back as a monster, like an AIDS virus.***

Shimada Masahiko **I have high hopes of dying in my prime.**

**Translator's Foreword** The traditions of assumed names and sobriquets have existed in East Asian poetry, art and fiction for many centuries and readers of Japanese literature will not be surprised that our author's name, Minami Yuichi (1) (西 南 一) is a pseudonym. Mishima Yukio (西 島 祐 三), one of Japanese fiction's leading figures in the 20th century, was not using a real name, either. It was the pen name of Hiraoka Kimitake (平 岡 啓 三, 1925-1970), adopted when he was only 16 years old. There are various stories for how "Mishima Yukio" was chosen, but in the very first instance it was useful to the young man as a mask, behind which he could pursue the literary career forbidden by his father.

Fans of Mishima's writing (for there remain some, I hope, even if they are only rightists or homosexuals and, of course, those like Mishima unfortunate enough to be both) will recall that Minami Yuichi – the name used by the author of this book – is the hero of Mishima's *Forbidden Colors* (西 島 祐 三, Kinjiki, 1951). Here he is stepping out of the ocean:

*It was an amazingly beautiful young man. His body surpassed the sculptures of ancient Greece. It was like the Apollo moulded in bronze by an artist of the Peloponnesus school. It overflowed with gentle beauty and carried such a noble column of a neck, such gently sloping shoulders, such a softly broad chest, such elegantly rounded wrists, such a rapidly tapering tightly filled trunk, such legs, stoutly filled out like a heroic sword. The youth stopped at the water's edge and twisted his body to inspect his left elbow, which seemed to have struck against the corner of a rock. As he did so, he bent his face and his right arm in the direction of the injury. The reflections on the waves, retreating past his feet, lit up his downturned profile as if an expression of joy had suddenly stolen across it. Quick, narrow eyebrows; deep, sad eyes; rather thick, fresh lips—these made up the design of his extraordinary profile. The wonderful ridge of his nose, furthermore, along with his controlled facial expression, gave to his youthful good looks a certain chaste impression of wildness, as if he had never known anything but noble thoughts and starvation. This, together with the dark, controlled cast of his eyes, his strong white teeth, the languid way in which he unconsciously moved his wrists, the bearing of his quick body, brought out in full relief the inner nature of a young, beautiful wolf. 'That's it! Those looks are the beautiful features of the wolf!'*

*At the same time there was in the soft roundness of the shoulders, the innocent nudity of the chest, the charm of the lips ... in these bodily features there was a mysteriously indefinable sweetness.*

Minami Yuichi, despite some pretty stiff competition, must be the first of all the handsome young men in Mishima's fiction and, while *Confessions of a Mask* (西 島 祐 三, Kamen no Kokuhaku, 1949) is famous

for exploring an insecure, immature and horribly unhappy young man's homosexuality, *Forbidden Colors* is probably considered the gayest of all Mishima's translated fiction. "I only love boys" is Minami's confession in the opening pages. Soon, with his wife at home, Minami Yuichi is cruising city parks at night and stumbling through an encounter in a public lavatory before his debut at one of Tokyo's gay bars. Mishima is known to have frequented several of these "for research purposes". There was "Redon", identified as "Rudon's" in Mishima's novel; "R", just outside Shinjuku station, where Edo-gawa Rampo (江戸川乱歩, 1894 – 1965) and the young gay men of the Taisho democracy had got their kicks; and "Brunswick", where there were floorshows upstairs. "At the moment, whether sleeping or awake, I constantly sigh, as if I had just started puberty again, unable to forget the image of that boy at the Brunswick", Mishima once confided in a letter [2]. While much of *Forbidden Colours* was inspired by Mishima's personal experience of "the scene", what can be said about the sex?

*Hand in hand, the two hurried out of the park. Yuichi's breast heaved. He drew the boy, with whom he had somehow locked arms, along with him. There on that quiet night path, where lovers often strolled, they ran.*

*'Why are you hurrying so?' the boy said, gasping for breath.*

*Yuichi flushed and stopped short.*

*'There's nothing to be afraid of. You're just not used to it, big brother, are you?' the boy said.*

*The three hours they spent soon afterwards in a hotel of doubtful reputation was to Yuichi like a bath in a hot waterfall. He divested himself of every human restraint; his soul was stripped naked in three drunken hours. How delicious it is to strip the body to nakedness! In that moment when his soul doffed and discarded its robe and stood naked, Yuichi's ecstasy was lifted by a fierceness so intense that it seemed almost as if there was no room left for his body.* Mishima's widow tried to make discussion of his homosexuality a taboo. A case was brought against a male lover who published letters and when Paul and Leonard Schrader chose to explore the writer's homosexuality by including scenes from *Forbidden Colors* in their 1984 film *Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters*, permission was refused. But it's fairly clear that the similarities in the pseudonym of the author and the name of the character he created – the "Mi" and the "Yu" – were not an accident. "Minami Yuichi" is someone that Mishima was, is someone that Mishima would have liked to have been, and, on the day that he took his own life, was someone that Mishima would have liked to have seen destroyed. By adopting this name from Mishima's fiction, the author of *Kyoko's House* (京子の家, Kyoko no ie, 2011) was seeking to appropriate the most beautiful of the great man's masks. His true identity was briefly a mystery. His name was listed with the publishing company as Arechi Hiroyasu (阿部 寛, 1946-2012) but it didn't take long for journalists at the *Yomiuri Shimbun* newspaper to discover that Arechi was the adopted surname of a man they – and everyone in Japan – had once known as Koga Hiroyasu (児科 寛). So who was Koga Hiroyasu?

Mishima's life ended on 25 November 1970 with the events of what was to become known as "the Mishima Incident". With four members of his Shield Society (*Tatenokai*, 盾会), a militia force he had uniformed at his own expense, Mishima took control of the Tokyo headquarters of the Eastern Command of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces. With their General held hostage in his office, the garrison was ordered to assemble to hear Mishima's address from the balcony. He spoke about a restoration of the Emperor and an overturning of the constitution, all familiar rightist gripes that would have resonated with any young military man of the 1930s and early 1940s. But in 1970 Mishima roused only incredulity and derision. Before he'd finished his speech he gave up and, after making a *banzai* cheer to the Emperor, returned to the General's office where he committed *seppuku* [3]; kneeling, he forced a short sword into his stomach and began cutting across. At this point Morita Masakatsu (森田 正勝, 1945-1970) was, as his second, to decapitate Mishima with one stroke of an ancient and very valuable sword. But this young man botched it and sliced into Mishima's shoulder. Another of the young men, a kendoist, took the sword and in one swing, it is said, ended Mishima's suffering. Almost immediately, Morita Masakatsu himself knelt, made a shallow stab at his own stomach, and the same swordsman took his head, too.

Stepping over the heads and the torsos to surrender the sword to the police, this young kendoist and taker of two lives was Koga Hiroyasu and it is he who, many decades later and as Minami Yuichi, wrote *Kyoko's House*. For his prospective Japanese readers, writing

under the name of one of Mishima's most famous heroes was in fact the subtler nod to the fiction of the man whose life he had ended. *Kyoko's House* (京子の家, *Kyoko no Ie*, 1959) was the title of one of Mishima's most famous literary works. It was both his longest novel and his biggest flop. At the time of publication almost all of the critics agreed it was a failure and it remains the most significant of Mishima's novels yet to be translated into English. "The story is truly monotonous," was one review. More pertinently, another said, "All the characters who appear in the novel merely represent the aspects of Mishima Yukio" [4]. In many respects, of course, that was the point and I can't help feeling that the same criticism can be levelled at much of Mishima's writing. Look at *Forbidden Colors*, where the beautiful young homosexual becomes the puppet of an ugly old misogynistic writer. And now we get to say the same thing about Minami Yuichi and his *Kyoko's House*. The man who took Mishima's life, using a pseudonym from a Mishima novel, has imagined Mishima alive in a world that echoes with his fiction. Minami Yuichi's *Kyoko's House* opens with a despondent and lonely Mishima writing a long letter and, once again, he is contemplating his suicide. It won't be a surprise to know that he dies, (Mishima *always* dies) but he's then given new expression through at least one impossible (and ultimately unsatisfying) reincarnation. Much of the scandal of this novel's publication in Japan came from the portrayal of the relationship between Mishima and his young second, Morita Masakatsu. One of Minami's characters dismisses the Mishima Incident as a *kabuki*: 'The Love Suicides at the Ichigaya Military Base' [5]. There's no doubt that Mishima and Morita were close (you don't choose to die with just *anyone*) and it seems certain that the *samurai* traditions of martial homosexuality were an aspect of their relationship, but there have long been arguments on whether the Mishima Incident was for its stated purpose (to somehow, somewhat vaguely, bring a change to Japan) or whether the events of that day were an answer to the question, "What does a heterosexual love-suicide look like when the participants are two Japanese gay men?" In Minami Yuichi's *Kyoko's House*, the author's imagined Mishima dismisses any political aspect and states that the events were entirely to have been a secret expression of a secret love. Of course, we have no way of knowing if this was the author's interpretation of what really happened or whether this is entirely part of his fiction. After much debate and going over of old arguments, the consensus appears to be, once again, that the Mishima Incident was probably a bit of both: "I want to change Japan" and "I want to die with the man I love" all smashed together.

In Japan there was one aspect of this novel that was frequently overlooked; the character of the British playwright. It's an obscure reference for Japanese readers and I believe many will not have appreciated that Joe Orton was a real person and author of *Entertaining Mr Sloane* (1964), *Loot* (1965) and *What the Butler Saw* (1969). These shocking black comedies (his first has a young man swapping sexual favours with a frumpy old tart and then her aggressive brother) delighted and scandalised audiences in London. In Minami's *Kyoko's House*, Orton, like Mishima, is imagined to have survived to the year 2008. This means that he wasn't murdered – nine blows with a hammer to the head – by his suicidal boyfriend, Kenneth Halliwell, in their London flat on 9 August 1967. It is interesting to speculate on why Minami gave such an important role in his fictional Mishima's life to a fictional Joe Orton. I have found no evidence that the two writers met in the United States in 1965, although it does appear that they would have been there at around the same time. The similarities in their lives are rather superficial; Orton was working class and 'out', Mishima was *samurai* class and 'in'. While there's no disputing that both men suffered violent and bloody deaths, Orton's head was split open in a murderous attack from his older boyfriend (who then killed himself); Mishima's was hacked at by his younger boyfriend as a part of their ritual suicide. And their work? Whilst Mishima is primarily known as a novelist in the West, he was also a highly successful playwright. He wrote for the traditional Japanese theatres as well as for the "new drama" from the European theatrical traditions. It is interesting that nine years before the grubby, murderous threesome in Orton's *Entertaining Mr Sloane*, Mishima gave us his own ménage à trois in a very short play, *Primary Colours* (原色, *Sangenshoku*, 1955). Perhaps because of the gay kiss *Primary Colours* wasn't performed in Tokyo until 1963 – just a year before the London premiere of *...Sloane*. Mishima's play has very beautiful newlyweds on a stunning beach with their handsome young friend. The boys have matching swimming trunks. "We're like the primary colours, the basis for all the other colours. If

you lack just one of us there'd be fewer colours in the world" says the young friend. The last line is from the beautiful wife, "Yes, let's live forever in perfect harmony." Orton gives us a house on a rubbish heap: Kath is a messy middle-aged landlady with unhappy secrets; Ed, with his badly disguised and distasteful lusts, is her angry elder brother; Mr Sloane is the disturbed young chancer caught between them. There's no "perfect harmony" here, just a sordid arrangement. Mr Sloane explains to Ed, "A couple of years ago I met a man similar to yourself. Same outlook on life. A dead ringer for you as far as physique went. He was an expert on the adolescent male body. He's completed an exhaustive study of his subject before I met him. During the course of one magical night he talked to me of his principles – offered me a job if I would accept them. Like a fool I turned him down. What an opportunity I lost, Ed. If you were to make the same demands, I'd answer loudly in the affirmative." Mishima offers something noble, pure and beautiful. It's not carnal; it's not even very passionate. The older boy loves the younger because he reminds him of his own youth, and this is returned because the younger boy wants to be exactly like the older. Orton's relationships are about the sex, and the sex is about abuse or power. While it is Mishima that shocked by including the stage direction that two male characters "embrace each other and kiss", it is Orton who outraged with sex – getting it, abusing it, and the consequences of it – in every scene. In many respects, Orton's work feels much closer to the truth of human relationships. It's no "kitchen sink" and yet we're invited beneath the scandalous exaggeration to recognise how people truly behave. Mishima's play, in contrast, is a skin-deep fantasy. "I can't see feelings with my eyes. The world is made entirely of surfaces," says the husband. "Do you mean it's the privilege of beautiful people not to have to think about the feelings in their hearts?" asks the wife. The conclusion, with surface beauty trumping everything else, is simply unreal. Orton's play ends with a contract that's predicted to last. Ed tells his sister, "You've had him six months; I'll have him the next six. I'm not robbing you of him permanently." For Mishima's threesome, it's unbelievable that, in our world, their arrangement would last much longer than the afternoon. "Perfectly ordinary boys who happen to be fucking each other. Nothing could be more natural," Orton wrote of two characters in another of his plays. "Americans see homosexuality in terms of fag and drag. This isn't my vision of the universal brotherhood." Mishima felt much the same. The young men in *Primary Colors* are far from "ordinary" and it's not the nature of their relationship that they "happen to be fucking each other" but Mishima rejects the association, as common in Japan as in the West, of homosexuality with effeminacy. Ed in Orton's ... *Sloane* expresses a hypermasculinity with which Mishima would have had a great deal of sympathy; the idea that *real* men don't fool around with women and their feminising ways, real men stick together. In their personal lives Mishima and Orton were keen to prove their masculinity through body-building and then posing for photographs. "I shall be the most perfectly developed of modern playwrights if nothing else" Orton wrote in 1965, having not seen, I presume, those famous photographs of Mishima in his loincloth<sup>[6]</sup>. I understand that Minami was introduced to Orton's work by his daughter-in-law, Pamela Bearblock-Arechi (1977- ). I met with Pamela and I'm very grateful to her for the enlightening biographical details which have informed my translation. After the Mishima Incident, Minami served a short prison sentence and on release in 1974 he relocated to a city on the Japan Sea coast, where Pamela still lives with her husband and two young children. Pamela explained to me that Minami married Arechi Sachiko (山崎 幸子, 1955-1993) and was adopted into his wife's once-powerful family. "The Arechis were an unfortunate bunch," explained Pamela. After losing their first fortune when the Americans dismantled the Yasuda Conglomerate (or *zaibatsu*) in 1945, their only consolation, a small chemical concern on the coast, was, as Pamela described, "something of a poisoned chalice". The family had denied any possible link for at least ten years, but in 1974 a Tokyo court found the company guilty of the methylmercury poisoning of three river valleys and the deaths of many hundreds of people. The Arechis' star had fallen so low that Sachiko – who'd been hoped to marry into the mighty Yasuda clan – was allowed to slink off and marry the young jailbird she'd fallen for. Pamela Bearblock arrived in Japan in 1999 as part of a government programme supplying assistant English teachers to state schools. She met and married Minami's son, Hajime, and moved into the decrepit Arechi home. *Kyoko's House* appeared in print shortly before Minami's death. "There was very little of the Arechi money left and, not to be too vulgar

about it, I think it was time to make something from the Mishima Incident. It had ruined his young life and he'd been angry at Mishima for years and so ashamed of his naiveté." Pamela hadn't read her father-in-law's book until I provided her with an early draft of my translation (she reads little Japanese) and what she knew about it she'd picked up from friends. "A couple of people have suggested I'm the inspiration for aspects of Deirdre's character. Even after my marriage and leaving the teaching programme, I remained friendly with the groups of English-speaking foreigners that arrive every year. I think my experiences are reflected in some of what happens. It's strange because I never felt that he was interested in that part of my life or my experiences as a foreigner in Japan." There's no doubt, however, that she introduced him to the works of Joe Orton. "There's much less of it now that everyone has a Kindle, but we used to share a lot of books in the English-speaking community. Most of it was trashy and popular fiction, a lot of Agatha Christie and *Sherlock Holmes*. And books about Japan, *Memoires of a Geisha* for example. There was the odd gem or surprise, often pirated editions from the markets in Thailand or Vietnam. A copy of Joe Orton's diary was doing the rounds. I'm from Leicester, you see, and so I had heard of him. Although I've never seen any of his plays. Strangely, my father-in-law seemed intrigued by the book and would ask me all sorts of questions and glance at the plates of photographs." This was years before Minami started working on his novel but, it seems, Pamela deduced that Joe Orton was to be a feature of this work. "He'd ask me questions and I'd have to find the answers on the internet. Sometimes he'd take notes. 'Is this for your novel?' I'd ask but he'd just smile and say something like, 'You'll find out.'" Unlike with most of the other books Pamela borrowed from her English-speaking friends, the copy of Joe Orton's diaries remains in her possession. "My father-in-law kept it. I can't remember giving it to him, I think he must have squirrelled it away one day. We found it after his death. He couldn't read English very well but it must have felt good for him to have it and look at the photographs. It's all a bit strange, don't you think?" I appreciate that it is somewhat absurd that the English reader now has Minami Yuichi's *Kyoko's House* while Mishima's own *Kyoko's House* remains untranslated. Over the course of this project I have often been asked why I didn't dedicate my time to the more significant novel. It certainly wasn't commercial considerations that influenced my decision, but rather a feeling of trepidation in my own skills in the art of translation. The reception my efforts with this book receive will encourage me, or otherwise, in a future translation of the first *Kyoko's House*. Of course, many individuals have helped make this translation possible. I would like to thank Doreen Missing from the Helen Chipchase Foundation and Professor Eleanor K. Fullalove at her writers' community in Whybree Fleming, TX for their support and helpful comments. My deepest gratitude goes to Brian Digweed who inspired this project and Dr Lynda Gash for her unstinting friendship and advice. My translation would not have been possible without the contributions of all of these people and more. Naturally, I take full responsibility for any inaccuracies. James J. Jackuk, Edmund Skepper College, Bluff, UT. **Book 1** Villa Santorini August 9, 2008 To my dear Fish, Yesterday my physician visited the villa. He has just returned from a journey to Europe and he spoke as if I could not be expected to have witnessed for myself those sights he had seen. I let him babble on until, whilst he was speaking of a new museum at the Acropolis, it struck me that having been so long since I had left Japan that perhaps he was right. He did the examination here, in the pool house. I was naked, face down for a time, upon one of the divans that line the eastern wall. I will spare you the description of my body, grown very ancient, as I hope that you can't possibly imagine what it's like. He said that I remain remarkably healthy; I need only to drink less alcohol and smoke fewer cigarettes. I shrugged at this as if such feats were easily accomplished and confessed that of all the joys, sleep is the most precious and that I need something stronger than the draught he routinely prescribes. As he fixed the clasps on his leather bag he replied that if it was sleep I was after then he could only recommend less alcohol and fewer cigarettes. We smoked together on the terrace, listening to the melancholy sound of the waves beating against the shore. The scenery was a blur, as if it were half-asleep, and even the sparrows' chirping sounded flat in the heavy air. When there was a lull in our conversation he gestured at the book upturned on the iron bistro table. I explained that it was an edition of a foreigner's diaries, an English writer I used to know called Angus Wilson [7], and I invited him to take a look for himself. He expressed surprise that I could

read English, to which I only blinked, and he fingered some of the pages and glanced through the plates of photographs. I watched in silence. Dull-witted as he is, I was impressed that in taking up the book he had seemed to successfully diagnose the source of my malignancy. Would he look through the pages, discern the profile of my death and take action to avoid disaster? No. He merely satisfied himself by recognising a photograph of Kawabata Yasunari<sup>[8]</sup> and returned the book to the table. "Here, let me read some to you," I said. He politely declined. I insisted; I think I was probably keen to demonstrate my skills at translation. Here is what I read:

*October 6, 1970*

*Tony insisted that I take him to the Asakusa-Kannon bathhouse. He seems to think yakuza tattoos can be seen there on any day of the week.*

*But it was very quiet. There was only one handsome young Japanese, and he was whispering in a corner of the bath with an older foreigner. I looked again and saw that the foreigner was Joe Orton, a fellow Englishman! Tony and I waded through the brown water to join them but it was clear to me that we were interrupting something very romantic. Embarrassingly, this only encouraged Tony. He started talking to Joe about his tattoo and I spoke to the Japanese. He is something big in Mishima Yukio's bizarre militia force. His name's Morita and he spoke quietly but very earnestly about his "Commander's" objectives. It was refreshing to meet a young man so self-assured and positive about himself. Many of the other young men here seem desperately anxious to know what to do with their lives and utterly dependant on every word from the West. But Morita was almost conceited.*

*Tony wanted the pair to join us for dinner but the boy insisted on staying. We left them to it. Things do seem solemn and romantic when they are so obviously supposed to be secret.*

*So, not a success. We spoke to Donald when we met him in Ueno Park and he has promised to find Tony some real yakuza tattoos. I don't know what Tony thinks he'll do when he finds them. I should think it's going to be rather embarrassing. I have read this page so many times that now the print seems faint and grey with exhaustion and if I hadn't been translating the English into Japanese for the doctor, I could probably have recited it from memory. At the mention of my name and my militia force I had looked up at him. Drawing in his chin, he twisted his hands together in his lap, and smiled self-consciously down his nose. Once I finished reading, I returned the diary to the table. An extraordinary calm had come over me and I decided then that my last act would be to write you a letter. I must tell everything to you, Fish, so that I don't waste my very last moment in bitter regrets. On November 25, 1970 I was arrested at the Ichigaya military base. This, everyone knows. But I have never investigated how the authorities were forewarned of my plans and now I look at that foreigner's diary and the facts all present themselves quite clearly. I close my eyes and I can see Morita and Joe together in the bath at the Asakusa-Kannon bathhouse, together as naked as silk. I imagine that, afterwards, Joe delighted in being brutal with the boy and in the midst of it all he must have realised that his viciousness was a passion to revenge himself on me. I never thought of Joe as one of life's schemers; that he would have the cunning required to plot. Yet he always wanted to make from me an ordinary man, and by ordinary I mean as ordinary as him: fearful, gentle-hearted, timid. In his jealousy Joe set a trap, cleverly hidden with the mud of what he would call "love". Morita was young and he must have made a mistake by quietly boasting of our plans, our secret plans, as part of their lovemaking. I know that he had never spoken about me to anyone else and he just didn't think that Joe would try to stop us. He didn't think that, having heard our story, Joe would interfere and pull us down. This diary's revelation makes me feel brutally detached from the key event of my own life. Both Morita and I were invasively controlled by Joe, manipulated like mannequins without regard for our desires or feelings. His betrayal was like smearing ink over the picture Morita and I had painted together and when we set out for the Ichigaya military base, we were not heroes destined for glory; Joe had already arranged that we were to be embarrassing and shameful creatures. This foreigner's diary makes it all too clear to me. How could I have been so foolish not to have realised it before? After I had finished reading, the physician looked embarrassed and coughed a little light mucus into his mouth. He brought his fist to his mouth and swallowed the phlegm back down. He said goodbye and walked back to the house, leaving me on the terrace, amongst the ocean's glittering, threatening reflections, and I*

started thinking about this letter I would write to you. The least I can do before I die is face, clear-eyed and squarely, what has become of my life. On summer days like today the beauty of the villa's setting is at its peak, with the smooth expanse of the bay and the fantastically billowing clouds. When we first came here I could sit on the terrace and watch the boys from the private school, trespassers to our private beach, frolicking in the surf and shouting to the waves. It was an incidental diversion that amused me greatly. The gardener has since planted a narrow field of vegetables between the garden and the beach, and a line of palm trees along the southern edge of the garden. I think so that he can work without me watching him through my binoculars. While we have lost the uninterrupted view from the terrace down to the beach, we still have beautiful sunsets and they always remind me of you. One spring you, me and Joe took a boat, the boat was a fishing boat, and chased the *daruma* sunset. You wanted to be closer to the illusion of a colossal hourglass-shaped sun on the horizon and a young man, burnt black by the sun and wearing only a pair of tight, white grointuggers, took us out. The nets were piled with the green glass floats shining and the sea was so calm that the wake of the boat seemed to stretch all the way back to the beach. As we motored towards the horizon in the lurid glow of the sunset it felt that we were passing through the centre of a ruby. You stood alone at the prow, well-tanned by the sun, and turned your unsophisticated smile to us from time-to-time. Joe remarked that now you were even more like Momotaro.<sup>[9]</sup> "Yes," grinned the sailor, "the boy's just like Momotaro." "Do you know the original story?" Joe asked. He enjoyed surprising Japanese people with the filthier and more ancient version of your favourite fairytale. "Momotaro, the boy, wasn't discovered in a giant peach. That version is from the Edo period. In the original, the old woman found a beautiful peach and ate it with her husband. The magic in the fruit made them feel young again. It reversed the old woman's infertility and the old man's impotence. Nine months later, Momotaro was born!" "Uwah!" the fisherman exclaimed, smiling. I doubt he thought this was more than a foreigner's perversion of the Japanese tale, but he pretended to have been taken in. "The rest of the story is true?" he asked. "True?" asked Joe. "Yes," I said, "the rest of the story is the same. Momotaro takes a boat to Devil Island with a donkey, a monkey and a pheasant," and as I said this, I pointed to Joe as the donkey, the fisherman as the monkey, and myself as the pheasant. "But," whispered Joe as he sat beside me on the hard bench, "of course ... you and me, we're really the old infertile couple, aren't we." It was later that I noticed that the fisherman's grointuggers had been soaked by the sea and I suggested that he take them off and hang them up to dry. He did so. Joe and I, two heaps of withered flesh and swaying slowly like aquatic animals, admired his buttocks as he steered the boat. Do you remember how the boat turned back before the sun disappeared and how we could tell Villa Santorini on the dark shoreline by the windows sparkling orange in the sunset, like a beacon? How are you reading this letter, Fish? I know that you struggle to read and write Japanese, so please forgive me for not writing in English, but it would feel too much like wearing a mask. How are you coping? I imagine that the syllabic script and the few Chinese characters you recognise are set like precious stones in an otherwise incomprehensible text. Is someone helping you by reading it aloud? A harassed and effeminate underclassman who looks with envious and loving eyes at the muscles of your shoulders and chest, the sort of muscle which can be spied out even beneath that black serge jacket of your junior high school uniform? Have you approached such a boy with this letter, assuming an expression of indifference? I imagine the strong outline of your jaw hardened in your cheeks and a sort of pitying disdain for the boy. You make an effort to regard him merely as a child, and your blue eyes gleam insolently. A raw carnal feeling blazes up within the boy ... Ha! Is he bright enough to read ahead and skip these sentences? How is his paraphrasing under pressure? A salute for you, young scholar. Ask your parents tonight about Mishima Yukio and hear what they think of me. But perhaps you shouldn't share the contents of this letter with anyone. I don't think Fish would forgive you if you did. It can be a secret you share with him. I think you'd like that, wouldn't you? The story of my youth is already a novel.<sup>[10]</sup> I don't know if you'll ever read it, Fish, and I haven't seen a copy for a long time. In later years I came to think that autobiography was a form of weakness and I was somewhat ashamed of it. But now I'm beginning to think that if you are weak, it's only childish to pretend to be strong. So this account of my life will be honest, and it follows that it will also be indecent. There's a bitter wisdom

that all men must swallow, Fish, and I imagine that this letter must be yours. Let's start with my trip to America in September 1965. I was in New York promoting the English-language publication of *The Sailor Who Fell from Grace With the Sea*. Joe was there from London for the Broadway opening of his first play. Fellows like us alone in the big city, was it perhaps inevitable that we should meet? It was at a party in a corner apartment on the top of a brownstone near Central Park. I shared the elevator with various other party-goers and all anyone seemed to know for sure was that Truman Capote would not be coming. Any other sort of knowledge of our host or the occasion was denied by all and, whilst only a few of the younger women seemed to find this hysterically funny, the bright smiles made it seem that we all were warming ourselves with our blasé attitudes, holding them to us like hot-water bottles.

We arrived and the apartment was unusually chilly. The velvet curtains were heavy and thick-pile carpets cushioned the sounds of our footsteps. The rooms were filled with gilt mirrors and heavy leather armchairs. There were waiters, courteous to the point of nausea, bubbling among the guests. Joe was short, but taller than me, with heavy shoulders like beams and hands so pink and moist that it seemed as if they had just been removed from a basin of warm water. His head was large and well-shaped, but his neck looked as soft and slender as a boy's. His mouth was thick and sulky. He was flirting with a waiter in the wide hallway, before a bad antique reproduction of Eugene Delacroix's *The Death of Sardanapalus*. It hung over a hard leather couch and below a brass light-fitting that illuminated the painting's flaws; the gold too bright and the red too dull. Joe, as pale as the underbelly of a fish, leaned forward and whispered something to the waiter who couldn't quite control his pleasure. I'd already had a couple of cocktails and so I didn't mind that Joe looked rather anxious as I approached and fingered his chin, much like a masculine woman might. "Come to admire the painting?" he asked. As I smiled, I felt the excessive tension in my face break and drain away. "I was watching you two," I said, too loudly, perhaps, for the waiter scuttled off into one of the rooms. "You shouldn't let me distract you from Sardanapalus," he said, drinking from his glass. "Do you know the story?" "I know an even better one." We introduced ourselves. He didn't know my work and I didn't know his. We talked briefly about his play and then my own unpleasant experience staging plays in New York<sup>[11]</sup>, but then we were silent with each other. It wasn't uncomfortable. We surveyed the people all around us and saw them settling, even stagnating, into the conventions of the cocktail party. With this young Englishman I had found a place where I could hide from the discussions and from the words people would expect me to say. I looked back at him and said, "Tell me what you know about Sardanapalus." His response was just what I needed – a good stiff drink of amusement. Looking a little nervous, he invited me to sit on the hard couch. He climbed on to the armrest to pull off scuffed brogues and placed his feet on the cushion beside me. I resisted the urge to clasp one of his ankles. I put my head back and closed my eyes against the glare of the light above the painting. "Are you circumcised?" he started. My instinct was to look at him, but I resisted it. I think my eyes may have flickered beneath their lids. "Regardless, you seem to me as a man of experience," he continued. "Now, I want you to imagine that you have lost control of the muscles in your face. OK? Now, picture me opening your eyelids with my fingers. Imagine me pulling them apart to reveal your eyeball." I could feel his breath, hot with wine, against my temple. He was almost brushing his lips against my ear. I thought he would touch me, but he didn't. "Can you imagine it? What does it remind you of?" "You asked if I was circumcised..." He laughed, "Yes! Say it!" "I don't know," I shrugged. "Well," he said, disappointed, "the foreskin and the eyelid are very similar. Double folds of protective skin. Mucus membrane moves smoothly underneath with normal, everyday skin on the outside." I agreed by nodding. It seemed sensible. "Think of an eyeball. A large eyeball without an iris. A huge milky pearl with tiny red capillaries. Can you see it? I want you to imagine a foreskin wrapped around it. In place of eyelids, one intact foreskin. Can you see it? The tiny pink folds at the edge of the ridged band? "Now, I want you to imagine your penis." He was whispering at this point. "You're teasing back your foreskin, watch the folds disappear as you peel it tight, and those smooth muscle fibres tighten to reveal ... the eyeball! Peeping out like the rounded end of a warm, moist duck's egg. A white glans, more marble in colour than flesh, on the end of an otherwise perfectly normal penis. Imagine this white fruit flickering radiantly before your eyes. Like a lychee." He paused before he said, "This was the

curse of Sardanapalus." I made a short laugh and opened my eyes. "I have never heard this before." "No, it's far too obscene. There was much expunging by nineteenth century moralists. 'A work of art is by no means the property of its creator,' they would say and take all of the naughty bits out." He grinned at me; a beautiful smile full of brotherly affection. "When steam trains were new to Japan, a young man on a platform caught hot soot in his eye. A local boy, he worked around the station, asked him to kneel down. He felt a strange but not entirely unpleasant sensation as the boy put his tongue under his eyelid. After moving it around he withdrew it with the cinder that had stuck there." "That's the idea!" Joe said. "Actually, I don't know if it's a true story." "Perfect!" he laughed. "So, let me tell you about Sardanapalus. Now, narcissists have a romantic penchant for believing that no one can fathom the depths of their suffering but in fact all of Sardanapalus's subjects wept for the affliction of their King. "You can see from the painting, he was a small-boned dark man of medium height. His hair was black and smooth and very glossy. Let me add that those eyelids of his, his real eyelids, fluttered so fast that you could almost hear them and the whites of his eyes had a bluish tinge. The nails of his fingers had been allowed to grow enormously, a cultural practice that proved he did no work. A male ruby, square-cut and its sides paralleled by four baguette diamonds, gleamed against the deep green of his imperial robes and around his neck he wore a collar of pearls, set in four rows. His silks, his finery, his extravagant crowns ... but don't you think it must be frightful to have to put things on to look better, instead of stripping them off?" I smiled and nodded. "His magnificent palace wearied the eye with the glister of gold. It was very different to how I imagine a Japanese palace. This had walls of precious metals, gloriously sculpted and dimpled by light. Did the Japanese Emperor have eunuchs?" "No, that was China," I said. "In Sardanapalus's Kingdom all of the men and boys, whether stewards, guards, servants, ministers or nobles, superstitiously and stealthily cupped their testicles when in the presence of the King. Can you imagine why?" "Sardanapalus didn't think this was disrespectful?" "They were very subtle. Slits were cut into the fabric of their cloaks, their tunics and their baggy pantaloons. And it wasn't for the duration that they were in the presence. One sly brush with the back of the hand was enough to satisfy." "I see." "Well, this superstitious practice arose because of the King's curse; the curse that manifested itself in his hideously changed penis. As a youth the King had led an irresponsible life spent entirely with beautiful young men. For Sardanapalus, beautiful boys had never been an erotic compromise; in fact *ephebi* were his passion. Yet the evil magic of the curse had now put all young men beyond him. "Among the scent of sandalwood, which burnt in bowls of livid pottery in his exotically decorated bedroom, the heavy wooden doors of which were overwhelmed with carvings, his search for purely sensual satisfaction was now beyond his reach. You see, the frightening white glans, hanging like a greasy golf ball or waving in front of the King's belly like a deadly ovate mushroom or, perhaps, a poisonous albino snake, transformed the boys it touched into something unspeakably ugly, a strange woman-like creature. Because of the curse, the King's eroticism was contamination. His copulating castrated and effeminised. The young men would run from the room, through those heavy doors, screaming in horror; their genitals gone and a hairy tear between their legs much like the King's bearded and lascivious fleshy mouth. The boys he touched with his penis were boys no more; only a strip of scarlet between their legs which looked like a pomegranate cut with a knife of ivory. "With black magic in that globe of thick blue-white flesh, beautiful objects were mutilated and transformed into something disgusting and feminine. And the King's tragedy was that the maleness of the love object could only be preserved by refraining from intercourse. You can imagine the frustration." My cheeks and forehead had flushed, I'm sure of that. I avoided his look by sipping from my glass, which was nearly empty. Clots of red wine clung to the bottom. Joe lightly held my wrist as he poured the contents of his glass into mine. "That's the introduction. Ready for the rest?" At the beginning of the story I had listened with only partial attentiveness, more surprised at his telling than interested in the contents. As he went on, he caught me more and more and I had become still and receptive to the imagined fate of this King. "Please continue," I nodded. "Sardanapalus was astute. He knew that such a curse, matched with his rapacious desire, would see the palace, perhaps even the Kingdom, emptied of young men. Those he had not sullied with the magic in his penis would surely flee his approach, and the body politic would surely collapse if all men sought to avoid the King's

presence. Sardanapalus deduced that such a chaos in the Kingdom was the end foreseen by those gods who had blighted him. "As an immediate remedy, the King created the Order of the Lily and, keen to demonstrate its efficacy, awarded it to the most gallant and most handsome of the shining young soldiers in the Kingdom. Speranza was swarthy, strong and inordinately proud of his chest hair which glowed like spun gold. He wore no shirt at court; light armour was his only covering, with elaborate gold and silver besagues. The jealous young toughs at court agreed that Speranza's besagues were the finest in the kingdom." "What are besagues?" I asked. "Armour for your armpits. Speranza had fine armpits and they deserved the finest protection. Now, until the curse, none had been closer to the King than Speranza. As his favourite, he had earned the right to be the only courtier permitted to carry a scimitar in the royal presence. Round his loins he wore a leathern belt into which the sword was tucked with great show. "Pre-empting a mutiny, Speranza was appointed the First Knight of the Order of the Lily. The King decreed that all members were bound to serve him and fight for whatsoever he wished, on the promise that they were beyond his feminising touch. In this way, Sardanapalus sought to avoid the loss of his Kingdom. "On a moonless night, the first Feast of the Lily was held to commemorate the King's vow to die should he ever violate a member of the order. Speranza led the procession through the souks of the town, where camels laden with eucalyptus were pulled from his path and joined their owners in deep bows. Boys and even quite elderly women swarmed up ladders and hung from balconies to obtain a better view of the man rumoured to have saved the kingdom from anarchy. The procession pushed through the blue meat that dangled like putrid satin from the awnings of the meat market. "Speranza's demeanour was not arrogant, but humbleness itself. It was perhaps natural, then, that he should have shown his pent-up pride to Al Addin, his excellent steward, with whom he did not have to maintain any reserve. Alone together in the First Knight of the Order of the Lily's fine chambers, where parrots perched upon statues and butterflies wandered in the dark of the colonnade, Speranza's self-confidence was expressed in his sexual attitude to Al Addin, between whose long curly lashes were blue eyes and above whose lips a slight down sprouted at the two corners. Al Addin sensed no distinction between Speranza's natural manliness and his youthful vanity as he softly enwrapped his master in a loving embrace. "From the deep four-posted bed, they watched the light from the torches dance upon the strange tapestry figures that covered the walls and they ate from a delicate brass tray of crystallised orchids and wild pink roses as a boy stirred the air around them with a heavy black fan of ostrich feathers. "On the second day of the festival, all of the Knights of the Order of the Lily hunted lions near a sandy pool all overgrown with rushes, where man-eating beasts were said to come to drink. But for Speranza's skill with the javelin, Al Addin would have perished beneath the tooth of a famished lioness. Then their horses, covered with foam and trembling, dragged the immense beast, the colour of the desert, back to the palace where it made a gift of sorts to the King. "The tale of the rescue and the lion's slaughter was recounted to Sardanapalus. He was aroused by Speranza's natural manliness but more so by the looks he shared with his young steward. That this fine young man had been put beyond him by the Order of the Lily! Naturally enough, the King was incredibly jealous. Speranza, his favourite, had eluded him, as quick as Cupid, and his sharp and mocking laugh, as the lion's corpse was presented to general bemusement, aroused the King like the lash of a whip's thong. "So Sardanapalus looked to the handsome young steward, whom nightly inherited heaven's graces, for his revenge and his satisfaction..." At this point Joe paused his story to watch a young waiter with heavy sideburns fill our glasses. "The day following their return from the lion hunt, Sardanapalus, from the windows of his grand throne room, spied the handsome young steward stride through the palace grounds. The sun was shining down on the meek boughs of lime trees that waved about a green pool. An order was barked. "The King was back in his wide throne, surrounded by cushions of organza and crepe de chine, by the time the steward was brought before him. A panther skin was across the King's knee and over his shoulders he wore a monkey's tail trimmed in black lace. All around the room stood a tumult of courtiers, retainers and servants in liveries that included all of the colours of a child's paint-box. The soldiers from south of the Sahara stood amongst them, resembling big black pearls. The few women, with their long necks curved, looked like spiteful swans and one young boy with cheeks fresher than milk wore an

imaginative white toga and posed before them like a broken statue. Two Christians loitered in an alcove like tired, white parakeets and as weak as cut flowers. At their feet a little mournful child, in a long shawl and a felt biretta, was toying with a ram's skull. The air seemed charged with tragic thoughts and a stale odour of incense. "Al Addin, trained to silence and drugged with caution, waited for the King to speak. "Al Addin, are you amorous of my body? It is said that my body is white like the lilies of a field, that my body is white like the snows that lie on the mountains, like the breast of the moon as she lies on the breast of the sea ... so white is my body. Will you touch my body?" "Sire, I am not worthy so much as to unloose the latchet of your shoes," replied the steward, freckling faintly. "Sardanapalus laughed at this. 'I know that you do more than unloose the latchet of the shoes of Speranza. Can I not tempt you to visit me tonight? No? You must be very young to be so cruel. Let me tell you that I will see you here tonight. I insist on it. If you refuse me, I'll have you sawn in two in the marketplace, slowly, and by the longitudinal method. Speranza shall be made to watch. Nay, he'll be made to saw.' He extended a painful smile, which revealed his pointed teeth and pale-hued gums. There was no more to be said. "Al Addin's wisdom, honour and forbearance were fabled throughout the palace, yet his heart was heavy as he roamed the buildings and gardens. Alas! Misfortune had caught up and grabbed him by the shoulders; he would be mauled by Sardanapalus and debased by the black magic of the majestic white penis. "He considered how the King's command would strike his master. Unjustly, perhaps, he feared that Speranza would lose a touch of his self-confidence. Anger and self-reproach would seep out like muddy water into his master's heart and Al Addin had a fear of spying such a change in the one he loved so deeply. "I can so well understand,' he moaned to himself, 'why the saints flew to the hills. How I would like to do the same!' "Yet it was a beautiful evening, the blues and reds of the sunset combining in an exquisite mauve, and Al Addin roamed the palace until Speranza, anxious to see his young steward and hear his report from the king, found him in the Japanese garden." "The Japanese garden!" I repeated, raising my glass in a toast. "Yes, the Japanese garden," said Joe, "where none of the flowers grew in the earth, but lived in celibacy in porcelain pots, packed closely together, and divided symmetrically by formal paths made out of tiles, in patterns of rose and gold." I frowned and asked, "Rose and gold?" "In the centre a miniature lake, dotted with sacred lilies, lapped the smooth shores of a tiny island, presided over by a statue of Kannon in a tight frock and even tighter slippers. Between Speranza and his steward a rose-red butterfly pursued a blue whilst above them towered the palace, looking like yards and yards of purple satin, stitched upon a now darkening sky. "The trees had turned to blackened-emerald; the air seemed smeared with bloom; the moon rose like a sad opal. As though drunk with silence the fireflies turned and turned. "Before the two young men had finished speaking, a barbaric blast of trumpets from the King's heralds, sustained as long as their breath would permit, signalled midnight. In the hush that followed, a prolonged peacock's wail sounded, creating amongst even the youngest courtiers an impression of foreboding and causing the first autumn leaf to fall. Beneath the strain of expectation the Chief Vizier's sugared almonds looked green with worry. "Sardanapalus had spent the afternoon whirling up and down his throne room, past the famous tapestries, frowning queens, sea battles, favourites shivering on sofas and enormous flowers. Exhausted by his transports, he seated himself in the caliph's high armchair of faded blue silk, rimmed with gold, and watched the night fall on the gardens. "I am afraid that the sunset will be a failure,' he said regarding anxiously the sky. He surveyed the mountains that marked the extent of his demesne, the loftier slopes like smudged charcoal where they touched the sky. Above hung a solitary star. What a lonely existence! As it became darker, he began to feel that his garden was full of yew trees, strange lichened statues and brown owls. There was an air of witchcraft about the place and from the dolphin's little stream floated up a thin mist. "Night had fallen and the air was full of blue-winged bats and purple butterflies. They seemed to tremble past the open window in a shadowy stream and the King swung at them with his rope of pearls. "The royal doctor, always concerned that Sardanapalus's blood was as thin as rosewater, demanded that he retire to his chambers for supper. Sardanapalus agreed to a bath. Before sinking into the water, whilst under the influence of the inebriating, slightly acrid perfume of a cobra lily wilting in its vase, he danced a Tarantella before the time-coloured mirror, in only a bracelet and his rope of pearls. "I go about,'

he gently groaned to himself as he tucked long hairs back into his nose, 'as other fools, in quest of pleasure.' "After midnight, Speranza entered the throne room, sweeping aside like a handful of honeysuckle the voluminous red curtain that adorned the entry. For an instant he hovered on the threshold, admiring his pose in an unexpected mirror. "He looked about. In the centre of the chamber a Mozabite princess, her polecat eyes semi-veiled, was wooing the court with a dance – a dance all fearless somersaults and quivering battements; a Rifian Berber meanwhile recording her movements sensitively upon a primitive violin. "Speranza looked through to see that the King, his face becoming tight and red, like a desperately angry woman, had spied his entrance. His strange dark eyes were full of lust and hate and a single pink flower on his black cloak made him look, somehow, very far away. Speranza strode beneath the wide golden ceiling, sapping the King's nobility with every step. By the time he was directly before the throne and bowing lightly, Sardanapalus was almost pink and fleshy. The King raised his eyes to an ancient fresco, depicting eleven thousand virgins, or as many as there was room for, and shifted a diamond bangle from one of his arms to the other. "'You have come to me, Speranza.' He arranged his features in a leer, like a crack across his face. His dark Tzigane eyes looked mildly amazed. "'Your Majesty! My steward! Al Addin! You look at him too much, your Majesty. It is dangerous to look at people in such a fashion. Something terrible may happen.' "'Come Speranza. You will do this thing for me, will you not?' asked the King, gesturing that he should sit on a fragile settee, covered with a chintz of Eve's apples and a wonderful winding snake. 'You will let me have your steward, won't you? I have always been kind to you. You will do this for me. It is your duty as a member of the Order of the Lily to serve your King. You will do this thing for me.' "'A scarlet plate from the royal dinner-service was before the King. It looked like a pool of blood. Sardanapalus took from it with his long nails and nibbled a salted almond and a big blue raisin. "'I came only to see that it is true,' lied Speranza, warding off a bat-eared dog that was endeavouring to scramble on to his lap. 'Did you ask for Al Addin? Do you demand his presence tonight?' he asked, in a voice as colourless and composed and as cold as his young face. The dog was inquisitively sniffing at his spurs. "'The King's face darkened with a flush of annoyance. Upsetting the almonds, he put an ugly hand on either arm of his chair, holding his small-boned body erect and stiff. His eyes were angry now and the upper lids came down. In a shrill enraged voice he shouted, 'You will do this thing for me, Speranza. You know that you will do this thing for me.' "'He is my steward, but he is my brother, and nearer to me than a brother.' Speranza replied, thinking of their evenings by the river and amongst the fig trees. The King was rubbing the back of one hand with the palm of the other. He looked strangely ineffectual and old-maidish. He twisted his lips as if in pain, 'Since beauty makes everything good, I will forgive your intervention on his behalf. But your lily cannot afford unlimited protection. Remember this, Speranza. And I will see Al Addin at midnight.' "'I offer you myself in his place.' "'The sanctity of the order is my only protection. I cannot do it. I will see Al Addin at midnight.' "'It is already past midnight.' "Sardanapalus turned and screwed his dark anxious face back over his shoulder. 'In which case, I shall see him now.' "Sweating under his heavy peasant cloak of camel hair and a thick leather helmet, the steward was led to the King's bedchamber. It was reminiscent of a temple's main hall; the high walls leading to a galleried balcony and then up again to disappear in the darkness. Silence flowed down as if they were deep underwater. The flames of torches showed aromatic oil burners and the images of men painted on the walls limned in rich colours; Chaldeans with lust in their eyes, captains of Assyria with baldrics on their loins, young men of Egypt in fine linen and purple, whose shields were of gold, whose helmets were of silver and whose bodies were mighty. "Silent on the divan was the little King, naked but for, over his shoulders and open at the front, a black satin robe with a squirrel-fur lining. Through the slits in his leather helmet, the steward's eyes appeared to fix on the slippery ping-pong ball that quivered about the King's hairy belly, rather like a long-stemmed flower. "Waving limply at a delicate gold table, the King said, 'Pour me forth wine, steward, and come drink a little wine with me. I have here a wine that is exquisite. Dip your red lips and let me drain the cup.' "He drank and passed the cup to the King. "Bring me ripe fruits. Come and eat fruit with me. I love to see the mark of your teeth. Bite a little of the fruit and then I will eat what is left.' From a golden bowl decorated with smilax, the steward chose a peach. He bit into it and it tasted like a dark carnation.

“Good. Something more.” “The hand was attracted to a halved pomegranate. Its seeds were as round and firm as castanets. The King ate with pleasure. “Al Addin, lie with me. I am sad tonight. Lie with me, steward,” and he smoothed down the divan with the palm of his hand. “The steward consented and lay face down. Gently, Sardanapalus peeled back the camel-hair robe. It fell silently to the floor and he kissed the nape of the naked neck. “Under the weight of the King, the young man started sobbing and making fists amongst the bedsheets. Then, after the first shudder came a second, more powerful, and beginning this time within his own body. The cries awoke great pity in the guards stationed outside the doors. They waited for it, and then they heard the awful scream. “The steward’s voice cracked irrevocably as it gasped ‘The angel of death!’ He lifted his head in agony. He wanted to ask the King, ‘Do you hear in the palace the beatings of the wings of the angel of death?’ but the pain was too much for him. “At that moment the King snatched the thick leather mask from his guest and, in the vast mirror, looked at the man’s face, puffy with sadness and wrenched in pain. Sardanapalus had heard shouting outside the door before he saw that the young man beneath him was not, of course, Al Addin. It was Speranza. “Sardanapalus gripped him by his hair and surveyed the face in the mirror. “Through his half closed eyes Speranza experienced the joy of seeing the King’s delight turn to horror. The King became pale and pressed his hands to his contorted face, as if seized with a fit. ‘I have kissed your mouth, Speranza! I have kissed your mouth. There was a bitter taste on your lips. Was it the taste of blood? Perhaps it was the taste of love ... they say that love has a bitter taste ... but what of that? I have kissed your mouth, Speranza, and now surely we will both die.’ “The King was off him now, pulling his foreskin down over the white onyx of his glans, like arranging the eyelid around a dead woman’s sunken eyeball. There were traces of blood at the thick base of his penis and amongst the coarse hairs there. “Speranza was sobbing, but he couldn’t be heard above the sounds of shouting throughout the palace. Dark figures were moving about on the galleried balcony. The King looked up and saw a shower of sparks amidst a cloud of black smoke. Burning torches, several bound together, fell to the divan. The King screamed and watched, confused, while on the gallery above more young men were arriving with torches and oil lamps, which they let fall. “Speranza had not moved from the bed, though his hair was already alight. How insignificant was the death of the flesh, compared to the unbearable death of his masculinity? “Sardanapalus gazed at the fire, the pulse of it beating on his intent and flushed face. His fingers trembled. He ran to the door and, inevitably, it would not open. Such was the terrible smoothness of his defeat. “Flames shot up from the bed and wrapped around the pillars supporting the balcony. Tossed from above, another oil lamp exploded in blue flames at the King’s feet, covering his lower body in scorching fluid. Instinctively he cupped his naked genitals. “He gasped as a young man’s body fell through the flames: Al Addin. The body must have taken a fraction of a second to reach the burning bed but the King’s eye had somehow been able to trace its passage in detail. Perhaps the strange, puppet-like deadness of the fall was what made the fraction of a second seem so long. It made no noise as it struck the bed next to the burning body of Speranza: already the fat from the two corpses was melting together and forming a scorching oil. “A scream stabbed through Sardanapalus as he fell forward into the flames and the fire flowed down inside him with a roar, illuminating the darkness behind his closed lids more radiantly than any light he had ever seen.” A crowd of chorus girls had gathered around our hard leather couch and they applauded the conclusion to Joe’s story. An older, jangly American woman, coated in thick plastic jewellery of oranges, browns and creams, drained what appeared to be a rum and coke, leaving enormous ice cubes clunking around the glass with a sound that echoed her bangles and bracelets. “You must be Mishima!” she declared, holding out her hand to me. “Lee Radziwell’s here and she’s just dying to meet you!”

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James J. Jackuk has translated one of the most controversial novels recently published in Japan. The author of this ‘Kyoko’s House’; was complicit in the ritual suicide of famed novelist and playwright Yukio Mishima.

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Phoenix Award - Children's Literature Association - Shizuko's Daughter by Kyoko Mori, a coming-of-age novel set in Japan, has always stuck Yuki's stepmother tries to rid the house of Shizuko's memory entirely, *Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters* (1985) " Deep Focus - Kyoko Nakajima's *The Little House* (translated by Ginny Tapley Takemori, review copy courtesy of Darf Publishers) is an enjoyable novel THE ITALIAN'S RUNAWAY BRIDE - Google Books - The initial three parts relate events in three of his books: *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*, *the House of Kyoko*, and also *Runaway Horses*. The part portrays Kyoko Nakajima's award-winning novel comes to Canada - Buy *The Little House* by Kyoko Nakajima, Ginny Takemori from Waterstones today! Click and Collect from your local Waterstones or get FREE Rare! Kyoko Yoneyama's *Doll Collection* - *Marchen World* - He discovered the domestic look of Kyoko Hori when he sent her hurt sibling, Souta house. Upon understanding that Kyoko doesn't mind he appears he Reading & Conversation: Kyoko Nakajima, InÃs Pedrosa and - *The Black Parade* by Kyoko M. Estimated delivery 3-12 business days Format *The Little House* by Kyoko Nakajima (English) Paperback Book Free Shipping! Kyoko Nakajima's award-winning novel comes to Canada - Pearson, Ruth and Kyoko Kusakabe (2012) *Thailand's Hidden Workforce: Burmese "Pathways to sustainable urban tourism: Garden houses in Hue, Vietnam"*. Granta Translation - magroswelt.de - *I LOVE TO TAKE A BATH (R.I.C. STORY CHEST)* By -WOMENS Kyoko Matsuoka the house on olive street; the view from alameda island; the life she wants; a summer *Quiet Book* \_ Handmade libro feltro bambini *Montessori Activity Book*. *BOOK REVIEW MEMOIRS : Confronting a Heritage and Its* - TORONTO " For Japanese author Kyoko Nakajima's award-winning novel, *The Little House*, she set out to tell the story of regular people *Blanket of souls pattern* - ... shades, schemes and painting book for your interior and exterior home wall painting.. Sayaka's outer box and Kyoko's outer box have peeled off on surface. *The Dream of Water: Ballentine Books Edition: A Memoir* by - Find release dates for games, movies, TV-series, books, phones, cars and. an Amazonian warrior in training, leaves home to fight a war, discovering her full. audio featuring command performances from Marina Inoue (Kyoko Mogami),

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