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A SORT OF PILGRIMAGE

by Yoshiko Uchida

*Harriet Wolf*

AUTHORS REPRESENTATIVE

119 WEST 57TH STREET

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Most of the villagers are making such items as flower pots, suri-bachi (grooved bowls for grinding sesame seed), or large pots used by the chemical industry for storing sulfuric acid. And they are turning more and more to the use of machinery, not only because such items are not easily made by hand, but because they are seeking any available means to increase their productivity. Many of the villagers are now using electrically operated wheels and keep a surplus of pots on hand to keep ahead of anticipated demands. Even this doesn't insure them of economic security, however, for the market fluctuates frequently, and glassware is constantly competing with pottery in the chemical industry.

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Of all the people on our car, however, the one I liked best was an elderly gentleman dressed in a brown silk kimono and haori (jacket).



His kimono had been hoisted up at the waist for ease in walking, revealing a pair of close-fitting black breeches, navy blue socks, and a pair of black button shoes. On his head he wore a gray western hat and in his hand he carried a large bamboo basket that might have contained almost anything from a large can of tea to a flower vase. He sat across the aisle from me, and when he wasn't sleeping on a rumpled towel that he rolled into a pillow, he glanced surreptitiously in my direction with a curiosity that probably matched my own. I wondered what could be bringing him from the peace of his countryside to the clutter and noise of Osaka. I wondered if he were taking a silent request before the deity of some shrine, and what he would have said if I told him I had just come from a pilgrimage of my own, but that mine had involved not only ancestors, but the clay pots of Tachikui.

The end.



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Sharing our car with these women from the farm were the infinite variety of characters that makes riding on a Japanese train so interesting. There was one young man wearing a navy blue suit and red polka-dot tie, who might have come straight from Times Square had he not been speaking the native dialect. Near him sat a spectacled man, stiff and proper in striped pants and cutaway, probably on his way to the wedding of a relative. And across from him, sat a ruddy-faced child sucking pensively at the stem of a dandelion, taking it out occasionally to watch it curl. She wore no coat, but her forehead was moist, for like most Japanese, she probably wore a good number of warm underwear beneath her long-sleeved red dress. No one besides myself was wearing a coat, for the Japanese dress according to the calendar, and very few will be seen in an "ovah" (overcoat), no matter how chilly the weather, once April has come with its magnolia and cherries.

Of all the people on our car, however, the one I liked best was an elderly gentleman dressed in a brown silk kimono and haori (jacket).



His kimono had been hoisted up at the waist for ease in walking, revealing a pair of close-fitting black breeches, navy-blue socks, and a pair of black button shoes. On his head he wore a gray western hat and in his hand he carried a large bamboo basket that might have contained almost anything from a large can of tea to a flower vase. He sat across the aisle from me, and when he wasn't sleeping on a rumpled towel that he rolled into a pillow, he glanced surreptitiously in my direction with a curiosity that probably matched my own. I wondered what could be bringing him from the peace of his countryside to the clutter and noise of Osaka. I wondered if he were taking a silent request before the deity of some shrine, ~~or simply visiting a sick friend,~~ and what he would have said if I ~~had~~ told him I had just come from a pilgrimage of my own, but that mine had involved <sup>not only</sup> ~~bowing before~~ ancestors and ~~seeking out some pots of clay.~~ *but the clay pots of Tachikawa.*

The end.