

The door opens and a woman in her early 30's dressed in slacks with a mink coat over her shoulders enters. Her eyes are clear black and her straight black hair is combed back into a knot. Big Sister is sleek and beautiful. Everyone bows to Big Sister----she is the best dancer of the studio although she dances only occasionally now. She looks over to Teacher and catching her eyes, smiles and bows. Then she bows to the people gathered in the studio. Our philosopher leaves his seat and walks to the table of card-players.

"Hello, Fumiko," she says ~~st~~ sitting down beside her. and borrows a light from the Serpent. She flips open her flat gold cigarette case. "Well, what are you learning now?"

"Oh, just a ~~dance/lot~~ ^{ditty} short ~~one~~ for tomorrow's party and then I'm going to play the part of Princess Shizuka in the Thousand Cherry Trees," says Fumiko.

"I remember playing that part a long time ago. When I was your age, I guess. My hands were swollen for a while from beating the tsuzumi.

"Yes," says Fumiko, "I've been practicing and look at my blisters." She stands and leaves to ^{upon the radio} get the tsuzumi. It ~~is~~ stands apart and above the other drums lying about on the ~~fl~~ side of the ~~pl~~atform. A fascinating snare drum with a black-lacquer handle shaped like an hour-glass with fox-skin stretched over the top and bottom and red rope binding. Big Sister hands her cigarette to Fumiko and slides her

fingers among the red ropes and gets a good grip on the tsuzumi. She breathes upon the skin and strokes it. "I like it best of all the drums," she says, "you have to beat it with your own fingers so that when you're able to produce clear notes from it, the sound is your ~~own~~ own particular one." She samples a ~~few~~ few beats but it sounds merely like knocking on wood. "My fingers are stiff," she ~~says~~ laughs. "Anyways, I liked that ballet the Thousand Cherry Trees. A ~~fox~~ fox hears the beating of a tsuzumi made of his mother's skin, and it comes out disguised as a man; and the princess Shizuka believed the illusion." She takes back her cigarette and taking a deep puff breathes it out slowly into the air. "The Thousand Cherry Trees," she repeats ~~leisurely~~ leisurely, all to herself.

"why don't you come to the studio more often?" asks Fumiko.

"I'm too old to dance anymore, but I can't seem to cut myself from it entirely. Funny thing. You dance ~~for~~ for 15 years because your parents want you to learn; then one day it comes upon you, the meaning of art, why you dance."----and then you can never stop dancing. You invariably come back to it, especially after.....;" she watches the silky smoke curl into a faint wispy and vanish. She seems to be talking into the air with her head ~~lying~~ lying on the back of the davenport, "It touches something ~~like~~ that ~~like~~ nothing else ever quite reaches.....I don't know why I'm talking so

tonight."

"Oh, no," says Fumiko. "You talk so-----so beautifully and wisely."

"Wise?" she scoffs. "I'm not wise. Look at her; she's wise." Big Sister is ~~glancing to~~ looking toward a woman seated near the ~~at~~ card table..... a woman ~~of~~ in her 40's ~~with a well-rounded figure~~ dressed in black silk dress. Upon ~~her~~ her lap sits a dog looking just like a tiny miniature deer. "See," says Big Sister, "all the men at the card table have stopped playing and then are laughing with her. During her life she ~~is~~ has been the mistress of several men, a white man among them in New York. ~~That is why she knows men inwards and outwards~~ Now she belongs to a wealthy professional gambler. That is why she knows men inwards and outwards. She has been through all the experiences in the world given to a woman and she can still laugh and weep too. I have seen her ~~is~~ weep within a mere child dance. There is a strange consistency running under her...^{her humor} a strange honesty. And she can make any man ~~is~~ laugh and any child love her instantly. She is most wise."

Our philosopher returns from the card table. "I like to watch you dance," he says to Big Sister. "You have taught me the meaning of Japanese art. Within the ~~life~~ years of a teacher's life there are only a few people who catch what the teacher is trying to get across. For I have seen 300 swords and there are only few, about three, that I can re-

skin which was bound by redish ropes. Big Sister handed her cigarette to Fumiko and slid her fingers among the red ropes and got a good grip on the Tsuzumi. She breathed upon the skin and stroked it. "I like it best of all the drums," she said, "you have to beat it with your own fingers so that when the you're able to produce notes from it, the sound is your won particular one. ~~And just think, this is fox skin.~~ ^{you} A fox hears ^{you} the beating of the tsuzumi made of his own mother's skin, ~~and it come~~ ^{came} out disguised as ~~an~~ ^{a man}; and the princess Shizuka believed the illusion. I liked that ballet the Thousand Cherry Trees." She took back her cigarette and taking a deep puff breathed it out slowly into the air. "The Thousand Cherry Tree" she repeated ^{slowly} slowly. all to herself.

^{why don't you come over often.} "Funny thing, this thing called dancing. You dance for ten or fifteen years because your parents tell you to go and then one day suddenly it come upon you, the meaning of art, why you dance. It becomes a part of you and then you cant't ever get it out of your system. You keep on coming back to it because it satisfies a precious part in you that nothing else quite touches. You see, your dancing cannot be greater aor more meaningful to you or anyone else than your own background.

I was going to quit.