

happy fashion, worshiped by her father's servants, but depending entirely upon Orito for all her small joys. Orito was her only companion and friend, and she believed blindly in him. She told him all her little troubles, and he in turn tried to teach her many things, for, although their fathers intended to betroth them to each other as soon as they were old enough, still Numè was only a little girl of ten, whilst Orito was a tall man-youth of nearly eighteen years. They loved each other very dearly; Orito loved Numè because she was one day to be his little wife, and because she was very bright and pretty; whilst Numè loved big Orito with a pride that was pathetic in its confidence.

That afternoon Numè waited long for Orito to come, but the boy had gone out across the valley, and was wandering aimlessly among the hills, trying to make up his mind to go to Numè and tell her that in less than a week he must leave her, and his beautiful home, for eight long years. The next day a great storm broke over the little town, and Numè was unable to go to the school, and because Orito had not come she became very restless and wandered fretfully about the house. So she complained bitterly to her father that Orito had not come. Then Omi, forgetting all else save the great future in store for his prospective son-in-law, told her of their plans. And Numè listened to him, not as Orito had done, with quiet, calm face, for hers was stormy and rebellious, and she sprang to her father's side and caught his hands sharply in her little ones, crying out passionately: