



The Waiting Years

Fumiko Enchi

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The beautiful, immature girl whom she took home to her husband was a maid only in name. Tomo's real mission had been to find him a mistress. Nor did her secret humiliation end there. The web that his insatiable lust spun about him soon trapped another young woman, and another ... and the relationships between the women thus caught were to form, over the years, a subtle, shifting pattern in which they all played a part. There was Suga, the innocent, introspective girl from a respectable but impoverished family; the outgoing, cheerful, almost boyish Yumi; the flirtatious, seductive Miya, who soon found her father-in-law more dependable as a man than his brutish son.... And at the center, rejected yet dominating them all, the near tragic figure of the wife Tomo, whose passionate heart was always, until that final day, held in check by an old-fashioned code.

In a series of colorful, unforgettable scenes, Enchi brilliantly handles the human interplay within the ill-fated Shirakawa family. Japan's leading woman novelist and a member of the prestigious Art Academy, she combines a graceful, evocative style that consciously echoes the *Tale of Genji* with keen insight and an impressive ability to develop her characters over a long period of time. Her work is rooted deep in the female psychology, and it is her women above all—so clearly differentiated yet all so utterly feminine—who live in the memory. With *The Waiting Years*, a new and important literary figure makes her debut in the Western world.

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