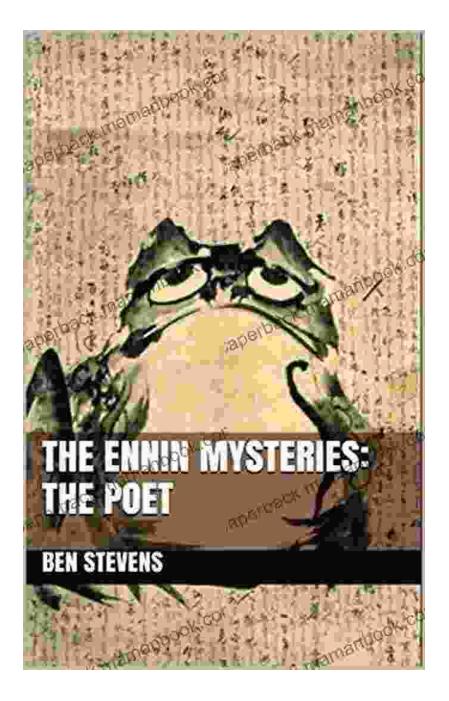
# The Poet: An Ennin Mystery 25

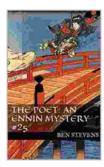
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The Poet: An Ennin Mystery #25 by Ben Stevens

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### An Ennin Mystery 25

### The Poet

In the tranquil heart of the Heian era, where cherry blossoms danced in the spring breeze and the moon cast an ethereal glow upon the ancient capital of Kyoto, a poet emerged, destined to leave an enduring legacy in the annals of Japanese literature.

Ariwara no Narihira, a renowned nobleman and courtier, possessed a gift for words that captivated the hearts of his contemporaries. His poetry, imbued with an exquisite blend of melancholy and beauty, reflected the ephemeral nature of life and the bittersweet joys of love.

One fateful evening, as Narihira strolled through the moonlit streets of Kyoto, his keen eyes beheld a sight that ignited a spark within him. A young woman, her beauty surpassing the finest blooms, stood forlornly near a willow tree. Her eyes, filled with unshed tears, spoke volumes of sorrow and longing.

Intrigued and compelled by the woman's plight, Narihira approached her cautiously. With gentle words, he inquired about her troubles. The woman,

her voice trembling, confided in him a tale of heartbreak and despair.

She revealed that she was the beloved daughter of a wealthy merchant. However, her father had recently betrothed her to a cruel and unfeeling man, one who had no regard for her happiness. Desperate to escape her fate, she had fled her home and wandered the streets, seeking solace and a glimmer of hope.

Narihira's heart was moved by the woman's plight. A poet at heart, he saw in her story an opportunity to weave a tale of love, loss, and the indomitable spirit of a woman. With a surge of inspiration, he promised to compose a poem that would resonate with her pain and offer a glimmer of hope.

Returning to his residence, Narihira spent sleepless nights crafting his verses. Each line flowed effortlessly from his pen, capturing the essence of the woman's sorrow and the bittersweet longing that consumed her heart.

When the poem was complete, Narihira returned to the willow tree where he had first encountered the woman. She was still there, her spirit broken by the weight of her despair. Narihira approached her with a gentle smile and read her his verses.

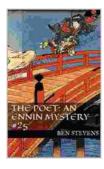
As the woman listened to Narihira's words, a flicker of hope reignited within her. The poet's words painted a vivid tapestry of her emotions, acknowledging her pain while offering a glimmer of solace and strength. In that moment, she realized that she was not alone in her suffering.

Overwhelmed by gratitude, the woman thanked Narihira profusely. His poem had given her the courage to face her future with renewed determination. She vowed to seek her own path, one that would lead her towards happiness and fulfillment.

As the sun began to rise, the woman bid farewell to Narihira. She promised to return to the willow tree one day, when she had found the strength to rebuild her life anew. Narihira watched her depart, his heart filled with a sense of peace and contentment.

The encounter with the young woman had a profound impact on Narihira. It had inspired him to create one of his most poignant and enduring works of poetry. Through the power of his words, he had not only touched the heart of one woman but had also left an indelible mark on the literary landscape of his time.

And so, the legend of the poet Narihira and the woman beneath the willow tree lived on, a testament to the transformative power of poetry and the enduring bonds that can be forged between strangers.



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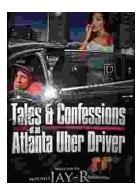
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