

# **The House of the Misty Star eBook**

## **The House of the Misty Star by Frances Little**

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The House  
of the Misty Star

[Illustration]

The House  
of the Misty Star

I

### **ENTER JANE GRAY**

It must have been the name that made me take that little house on the hilltop. It was mostly view, but the title—supplemented by the very low rent—suggested the first line of a beautiful poem.

## Page 2

Nobody knows who began the custom or when, but for unknown years a night-light had been kept burning in a battered old bronze lantern swung just over my front door. Through the early morning mists the low white building itself seemed made of dreams; but the tiny flame, slipping beyond the low curving eaves, shone far at sea and by its light the Japanese sailors, coming around the rocky Tongue of Dragons point in their old junks, steered for home and rest. To them it was a welcome beacon. They called the place "The House of the Misty Star."

In it for thirty years I have toiled and taught and dreamed. From it I have watched the ships of mighty nations pass—some on errands of peace; some to change the map of the world. Through its casements I have seen God's glory in the sunsets and the tenderness of His love in the dawns. The pink hills of the spring and the crimson of the autumn have come and gone, and through the carved portals that mark the entrance to my home have drifted the flotsam and jetsam of the world. They have come for shelter, for food, for curiosity and sometimes because they must, till I have earned my title clear as step-mother-in-law to half the waifs and strays of the Orient.

Once it was a Chinese general, seeking safety from a mob. Then it was a fierce-looking Russian suspected as a spy and, when searched, found to be a frightened girl, seeking her sweetheart among the prisoners of war. The high, the low, the meek, and the impertinent, lost babies, begging pilgrims and tailless cats—all sooner or later have found their way through my gates and out again, barely touching the outer edges of my home life. But things never really began to happen to me, I mean things that actually counted, until Jane Gray came. After that it looked as if they were never going to stop.

You see I'd lived about fifty-eight years of solid monotony, broken only by the novelty of coming to Japan as a school teacher thirty years before and, although my soul yearned for the chance to indulge in the frills of romance, opportunity to do so was about the only thing that failed to knock at my door. From the time I heard the name of Ursula Priscilla Jenkins and knew it belonged to me, I can recall but one beautiful memory of my childhood. It is the face of my mother in its frame of poke bonnet and pink roses, as she leaned over to kiss me good-by. I never saw her again, nor my father. Yellow fever laid heavy tribute upon our southern United States. I was the only one left in the big house on the plantation, and my old black nurse was the sole survivor in the servants' quarters. She took me to an orphan asylum in a straggly little southern town where everything from river banks to complexions was mud color.



## Page 3

Bareness and spareness were the rule, and when the tall, bony, woman manager stood near the yellow-brown partition, it took keen eyes to tell just where her face left off and the plaster began. She did not believe in education. But I was born with ideas of my own and a goodly share of ambition. I learned to read by secretly borrowing from the wharf master a newspaper or an occasional magazine which sometimes strayed off a river packet. Then I paid for a four years' course at a neighboring semi-college by working and by serving the other students. I did everything—from polishing their shoes to studying their lessons for them; it earned me many a penny and a varied knowledge of human nature. But nothing ever happened to me as it did to the other girls. I never had a holiday; I was never sick; I never went to a circus; and I never even had a proposal.

One night I went to church and heard a missionary from Japan speak. My goodness! how that man could say words! His appeal for workers to go to the Flowery Kingdom was as convincing as the hump on his nose, as irresistible as the fire in his eyes. The combination ended in my coming as a teacher to the eager Nipponese, who were all athirst for English. Japan I knew was a country all by itself, and not a slice off of China; that it raised rice, kimonos and heathen. Otherwise it was only a place on the map. Whatever the new country might hold, at least, I thought, it would open a door that would lead me far away from the drab world in which I lived.

My appointment led me to the little city of Hijiyama, overlooking the magical Inland Sea. It is swung in the cleft of a mountain like a clustered jewel tucked in the folds of a giant velvet robe. It is a place of crumbling castles and lotus-filled moats. Here progress hesitated before the defiant breath of the ancient gods. For centuries a city of content, whispers of greater things finally reached the listening ears of eager youth, fired ambition, demanded things foreign, especially the English language, and I came in on this great wave.

I found near contentment and sober joy in my work and my beautiful old garden. But deep down in my heart I was waiting, ever waiting, for something to happen—something big, stirring, and tremendous, something romantic and poetical; but it never did. Year after year I wore the groove of my life deeper, but never slipped out of it, and one day was so like another it was hard to believe that even a night separated them.

Then without the slightest warning the change came. One day in my mail I found a letter from a student which read as follows:

O! Most Respected Teacher.



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How it was our great pleasure to write your noble personage. When I triumphed to my native home after speaking last lesson before your honorable face, my knowledge was informed by rumors of gossip that in most hateful place in city of Hijiyama was American lady. She wear name of Miss Jaygray. Who have affliction of kind heart and very bad health. Also she have white hair and no medicine. Street she live in have also Japanese gentlemans what kill and steal and even lie. Very bad for lady who have nice thought for gentlemans, and speak many words about Christians God. Now not one word can she speak. Her sicker too great. Your great country say "Unions is strong and we stand together till divided by falling out." Please union with lady countryman and also divide. She very tired. I think little hungry too.

Yours verily

*Takata.*

(Some little more.) Go down House of Flying-Sparrow Street and discover Tube-Rose Lane. There maybe you see policeman. He whistle his two partner. Hand in hand they show you bad gentlemens street where lives sick ladys mansion.

I hastened at once to the succor of my sick countrywoman. The way led through streets obscure and ill-kept, the inhabitants covertly seeking shelter as the policemen and I approached. It was a section I knew to be the rendezvous of outcasts of this and neighboring cities. It was a place where the bravest officer never went alone. For making a last stand for the right to their pitiful sordid lives, the criminals herded together in one desperate band when danger threatened any of the brotherhood. The very stillness of the streets bespoke hidden iniquity. Every house presented a closed front. Surely, I thought, ignorance of conditions could be the only excuse for any woman of any creed choosing to live in such surroundings as these.

In the cleanest of the hovels I found Miss Gray, her middle-aged figure shrunken to the proportions of a child. There was no difficulty in finding the cause of her illness. She was half-starved. Her reason for being in that section was as senseless as it was mistaken, except to one whose heart had been fired by a passion for saving souls. After being revived by a stimulant from my emergency kit, she told me her name, which I already knew, that she was an American and her calling that of a missionary. I thought I knew every type of the profession and I was proud to call many of them my friends, but Miss Gray was an original model, peculiar in quality and indefinite in pattern.

"Does your Mission Board give you permission to live in a place or fashion like this?" I asked sternly.

"Haven't any Board," she answered weakly. "I'm an Independent."

"Independent what?" I demanded.

“Independent Daughter of Hope.”



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Her appearance was a libel on any variety of independence and a joke on hope, but I waited for the rest of the story.

She said that the Order to which she belonged was not large. She was one of a small band of women bound by a solemn oath to go where they could and seek to help and uplift fallen humanity by living the life of the native poor. She had chosen Japan because it was "so pretty and poetical." She had worked her way across the Pacific as stewardess on a large steamer, and had landed in Hijiyama a few months before with enough cash to keep a canary bird in delicate health for a month. Her enthusiasm was high, her zeal blazed. If only her faith were strong enough to stand the test, her need for food and clothing would be supplied from somewhere. "Now," she moaned, "something has happened. Maybe my want of absolute trust brought me to it. I'm sick and hungry and I've failed. Oh! I wanted to help these sweet people; I wanted to save their dear souls."

I was skeptical as to this special brand of philanthropy, but I was touched by the grief of her disappointed hopes. I knew the particular sting. At the same time my hand twitched to shake her for going into this thing in so impractical a way. Teaching and preaching in a foreign land may include romance, but I've yet to hear where the most enthusiastic or fanatical found nourishment or inspiration on a diet of visions pure and simple. While there must be something worth while in a woman who could starve for her belief, yet in the eyes of the one before me was the look of a trusting child who would never know the practical side of life any more than she would believe in its ugliness. It was not faith she needed. It was a guardian.

"Maybe I had better die," she wailed. "Dead missionaries are far too few to prove the glory of the cause."

I suggested that live ones could glorify far more than dead ones, and told her that I was going to take her home with me and put strength into her body and a little judgment into her head, if I could.

She broke out again. "Oh, I cannot go! I must stay here! If work is denied me, maybe it is my part to starve and prove my faith by selling my soul for the highest price."

Although I was to learn that this was a favorite expression of Miss Gray's, the meaning of which she never made quite clear to me, that day it sounded like the melancholy mutterings of hunger. For scattering vapors of pessimism, and stirring up symptoms of hope, I'd pin my faith to a bowl of thick hot soup before I would a book full of sermons.

Without further argument I called to some coolies to come with a "kago," a kind of lie-down-sit-up basket swung from a pole, and in it we laid the weak, protesting woman.

The men lifted it to their shoulders and the little procession, guarded fore and aft by a policeman, moved through the sinister shadows of Flying Sparrow street to the clearer heights of "The House of the Misty Star."



## Page 6

Long training had strengthened, and association had verified my unshakable belief that the most essential quality of the very high calling of a missionary, is an unlimited supply of consecrated commonsense. So far, not a vestige of it had I discovered in the devotee I was taking to my home, but Jane Gray was as full of surprises as she was of sentiment.

[Illustration: Through the sinister shadows of Flying Sparrow Street]

She not only stayed in my house, but with her coming the spell of changeless days was broken. It was as if her thin hand held the charm by which my door of opportunity was flung wide, and through it I saw my garden of dreams bursting into flower.

## II

### KISHIMOTO SAN CALLS

I had always been dead set against taking a companion permanently into my home. For one reason I heeded the warning of the man who made the Japanese language. To denote "peace" he drew a picture of a roof with a woman under it. Evidently being a gentleman of experience, he expressed the word "trouble" by adding another person of the same sex to the picture without changing the size of the roof.

Then, too, there was my cash account to settle with. Ever since I'd been drawing a salary from the National Education Board of Missions, I felt like apologizing to the few feeble figures that stared accusingly at me from my small ledger, for the demands I made upon them for charity, for sickness, and for entertainment of all who knocked at my door.

My classes were always crowded, but there were times when the purses of my students were more lean than their bodies. Frequently such an one looked at me and said, "Moneys have all flewed away from my pockets. Only have vast consuming fire for learning." It being against my principle to see anybody consumed while I had a rin, there was nothing to do but make up to the Board what I had failed to collect.

These circumstances caused me to hesitate risking the peace of my household, or putting one more responsibility on my purse.

Then sweet potatoes decided me. It was a matter of history that famine, neither wide-spread nor local, ever gained a foothold where "Satsuma Emo" flourished. This year they were fatter and cheaper than ever before. I knew dozens of ways to fix them, natural and disguised; so I bought an extra supply and made up my mind to keep Jane Gray.



The little missionary thrived in her new environment as would a drooping plant freshly potted. As she grew stronger, she hinted at trying once again to live in her old quarters, that she might fast and work and pray for her sinners. I promptly suppressed any plans in that direction.

After all, I had been a lonelier woman than I realized, and Jane was like a kitten with a bell around its neck—one grows used to its playing about the house and misses it when gone. She also resembled a fixed star in her belief that she had been divinely appointed to carry a message of hope to the vilest of earth, and I felt that the same power had charged me with the responsibility of impressing her with a measure of commonsense.



## Page 7

So we compromised for a while at least. She would stay with me, and I would not interfere with her work in the crime section, nor give way to remarks on the subject.

I was sure the conditions in the Quarter would prove impossible, but as some people cannot be convinced unless permitted to draw their own diagram of failure, it was best for her to try when she was able to make the effort.

The making of an extra room in a Japanese house is only a matter of shifting a paper screen or so into a ready-made groove. It took me some time to decide whether I should screen off Jane in the corner that commanded a full view of the wonderful sea, or at the end where by sliding open the paper doors she could step at once into the fairy land of my garden.

Jane decided it herself. I discovered her stretched in an old wheel-chair before the open doors, looking into the sun-flooded greenery of the garden, and heard her softly repeating,

“Fair as plumes of dreams  
In a land  
Where only dreams come true,  
And flutes of memory waken  
Longings forgotten.”

Any one who felt that way about my garden had a right to live close to it.

In half an hour Jane was established. My enthusiasm waned a bit the next day when I found all the pigeons in the neighborhood fluttering about the open door, fearlessly perching on the invalid's lap and shoulders while she fed them high-priced rice and dainty bits of dearly-bought chicken.

I dispersed the pigeons with a flap of my apron and with forced mildness protested. “I'm obliged to ask you to be less generous. The price of rice is higher than those pigeons can fly and, as for chicken, it's about ten sen a feather. There's abundant food for you; but we cannot afford to feed all the fowls of the air.”

“Oh! dear Miss Jenkins, I couldn't drive them away. The cunning things! Every coo they uttered sounded like a love word.”

I hoped it was the patient's physical weakness, and not a part of her nature.

I could not possibly survive a steady diet of emotion so tender that it bubbled over at the flutter of a pigeon's wing.

I'd brought it on myself, however, and I was determined to share my home and my life with Jane Gray. Sentimental and visionary as she was, with the funny little twist in her



tongue, the poor excuse of a body seemed the last place power of any kind would choose for a habitation. I was not disposed to attribute the supernatural to my companion, but from the day of her arrival unusual events popped up to speak for themselves.

A nearby volcano, asleep for half a century, blew off its cap, covering land and sea with ashes and fiery lava. All my pink roses bloomed weeks earlier than they had any business to, and for the first time in years my old gardener got drunk. Between dashes of cold water on his head he tearfully wailed my unexpressed sentiments, in part:



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“Too many damfooly things happen all same time. Evil spirit get loose. Sake help me fight. Me nice boy. Me ve’y good boy but I no like foreign devil what is.”

Then one day, about a month after my family had been enlarged, I had just wheeled my newly acquired responsibility out in the garden to sun when Kishimoto San called. He often came for consultation. While his chief interest in life was to keep Hijiyama strictly Japanese and rigidly Buddhist, he was also superintendent of schools for his district and educational matters gave us a common interest. However, the late afternoon was an unusual hour for him to appear and one glance at his face showed trouble of a personal nature had drawn heavy lines in his mask of calmness. I had known Kishimoto San for twenty years. Part of him I could read like a primer; the other part was a sealed volume to which I doubt if even Buddha had the key. Sometimes when he was calling I wished Gabriel would appear in my doorway and announce the end of the world to see, if without omitting a syllable, Kishimoto would keep on to the end of the last phrase in the greeting prescribed for the occasion.

The ceremony off his mind, he sat silent, unresponsive to the openings I tried to make for a beginning. Not till I had exhausted small talk of current events and asked after his family in particular instead of his ancestors in general, did his tongue loosen.

Then the floodgates of his pent-up emotion opened and forth poured a torrent of anger, disappointment, and outraged pride. I had never before seen a man so shaken, but then I hadn’t seen many, much less one with the red blood of Daimyos in his veins. He was a man whose soul dwelt in the innermost place of a citadel built of ancient beliefs and traditions.

Out of the unchecked flood of denunciation, I learned that he held Christianity responsible for his woes. I, as a believer and an American, must hear what he thought; as his friend I must advise him if I could.

In the twenty years that I had known the school superintendent, he had always been reserved regarding his personal and family life. To me his home was a vague, blurred background in which possible members of his family moved. He surprised me this day by referring in detail to the bitter grief which had come to him in years gone by through his only child.

I had heard the story outside, but not even remotely had Kishimoto San ever before hinted that he possessed a child. I knew his need for help must be imperative, that the wound was torn afresh, else he was too good a Buddhist to make “heavy the ears of a friend” with a recital of his own sorrows.

He said he had been most ambitious for his daughter. Years ago he had sent her to Yokohama to study English and music. While there the girl lived with his sister who had absorbed many new ideas regarding liberty for women. Once he was absent from

Japan and without his knowledge the girl married an American artist, Harold Wingate by name, and went with him to his country to live.

## Page 9

Kishimoto San had not seen her since her marriage until lately. He had honorably prayed that he never would. Some weeks before she had returned to Hijiyama practically penniless, which was bad, and a widow, which made it very difficult to marry her off again; but worse still was the half-breed child she had brought with her, a daughter of about seventeen. This girl, whose name was Zura, I soon found was the sore spot in Kishimoto San's grievance, the center around which his storm of trouble brewed.

It was like pouring oil on flames when I asked particularly about the girl.

Though he could speak English that was quite understandable, he broke loose in Japanese hardly translatable. "She is a wild, untamed barbarian. She has neither manners nor modesty, and not only dares openly to scorn the customs of my country and religion, but defies my commands, my authority."

Knowing him as I did, I thought it must indeed be a free, wild spirit to meet the blow of Kishimoto San's will and not be crushed by the impact. My interest in the girl increased in proportion to his vehemence. I ventured to ask for details. They came in a torrent.

"It is not our custom for young girls to go on the street unattended. I forbade her going. Deaf to my orders, she strays about the streets alone and dares to sail her own sampan. She handles it as deftly as a common fisherman. She goes to out-of-the-way places and there remains till it suits her impudence to return to my house. In the hours of the night she disturbs my meditations by sobbing for her home and her father. She romps on the highways with street children, who follow her as they would a performing monkey."

"But surely," I mildly interposed, "it is no great breach of custom to play with children. Your granddaughter is doubtless lonely and it may give her pleasure."

The face of my visitor stiffened.

"Pleasure!" he repeated. "Does she not know that a woman's only pleasure is obedience? Is there not enough of my blood in her to make her bow to the law? Twice she has told me to attend to my own affairs! Told me! Her ancestor! Her Master!" This last word he always pronounced with a capital M.

Kishimoto San was not cruel. Unlike many of his countrymen, who are educated by modern methods as regarding laws governing women, he was still an old-time Oriental in the raw.

It was at this uncomfortable moment that the little maid brought in tea. I instructed her to serve it on the balcony which overlooked sea and mountain. The appealing beauty of the scene always soothed me as a lullaby would a restless child. I hoped as much for

my disturbed visitor. I gave him his second cup of tea, and asked him whether the mother could not control her daughter. It set him going.

## Page 10

“Her mother!” he scoffed. “Madam, if her mother had been blest with the backbone of a jellyfish she would never have married a man whose people were not her people, whose customs are as far removed from hers as the East is from the West. My daughter was young. Had she married one of her own country, all would have been well. Her will would have been directed by her mother-in-law. She was trained to obedience. See what the teachings of your country do to our women! In a letter she wrote telling me she had gone, she thanked me for teaching her the laws of submission. It helped her to bow to the commands of this man when he bade her marry him, and she loved him! Love! as if that had anything to do with marriage. Now comes the result of this accursed union—a troublesome girl who is neither one thing nor the other, who laughs at the customs of my country and upsets the peace of my house, who boldly declares she is an American. She need not herald it. In dress and manners she wears the marks of her training.”

I offered no comment, but every moment served to deepen my interest in this girl who could defy a will which had ruled a whole island for half a century.

My silence seemed to irritate him. He turned fiercely upon me.

“Tell me, what kind of girls does America produce? What is your boasted freedom for women but license? Is their place never taught them? Have they no understanding of the one great law for women?”

I had been absent from my country many long years, and while neither the best nor the worst had come my way, America was my country, her people my people, and they stood to me for all that was great and honorable and righteous. The implication of Kishimoto’s question annoyed me all the more, because I knew him to be a keen observer and not hasty in his conclusions.

“Softly, Kishimoto San. You answered your own question a few moments ago. The customs of the two countries are as wide apart as the East is from the West. Tastes differ in manners as well as religion. If there are things in America that do not please you, so there are many laws in Japan that are repugnant to Americans. You are unjust to hold my country responsible for your woes.”

“But I do hold it responsible. My granddaughter comes of its teaching. I meditate what kind of religion it is that permits a girl to question her elder’s authority and to defy the greatest of laws, filial piety. What manner of a country is it where custom grants liberty to a girl that she may roam the streets and sit in a public garden alone with a man!”

This last was indeed serious. In my day and in my town it could be done if the girl were so fortunate as to have something that stood for a male cousin. But neither then nor now was it permissible in a land of man-made laws for men. Unless it was between

husband and wife, private conversation, or a promenade just for two branded the participants as bold, possibly evil.



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I asked for further details. Kishimoto San said the young man was a minor officer on the steamer by which his granddaughter and her mother had crossed the Pacific. He thought he was an American. Whenever the ship coaled in a nearby port, the young chap communicated with the girl and together they walked and talked.

The plain facts after all sounded harmless and innocent. What more natural than for a lonely girl to seek for pastime the company of a youth of her own kind? But it could not be—not in Japan; though as innocent as two baby kittens playing on the green, it would bring shame upon the girl and the family, which no deed of heroism would ever erase from local history. Something must be done; I asked Kishimoto San how I could be of assistance.

“I have been consulting with myself,” he replied in English. “Would you grant me permission to send her to you daily as a student? Besides her strange ways, she talks in strange English. I cannot find the same in any conversation book. Her whole being has need of reconstruction.”

I was not in the reconstructing business, but a young girl in the house meant youth and diversion and a private pupil meant extra pay. What a little extra money wouldn't do in my house wasn't worth adding up. In thought I repaired the roof and bought new legs for the kitchen stove.

My visitor, mistaking my silence for hesitation, suggested, “First come and see her. Analyze her conduct and grant me decision whether she is a natural, free-born American citizen, as she boasts, or if the gods have cursed her with a bold spirit. She is of your country, your religion, if any, and perhaps you can understand her. I fail to comprehend.”

He folded his arms for emphasis. The gleam of the western sun caught the sheen of his silk kimono and covered him with a glow. From under bent brows he gazed at the scene before him.

Earth and sky and sea breathed beauty. The evening song of the birds was of love. The spirit of the fading day whispered peace, but unheeding he sat in troubled silence. Then from the street far below came the shout of a boy at play. It was a voice full of the gladness of youth. In it was a challenge of daring and courage. Loudly he called to his troop of play soldiers to charge splendidly, to fight with the glorious *Yamato Damashi* (spirit of Japan).

Kishimoto San heard and with a quick movement raised his head as though he had felt a blow. “Ah,” he murmured to himself, “if it had only been a boy!”

There was the secret wound that was ever sore and bleeding. There was no son to perpetuate the name. His most vital hope was dead, his greatest desire crushed, and

by a creature out of the West, who not only stole his daughter but fathered this girl whom no true Japanese would want as a wife. To a man of Kishimoto San's traditions the hurt was deep and cruel.



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I well understood his sorrow and disappointment. Pity put all my annoyance to flight. I promised to go to his house and see if I could help in any way. I did not tell him that I was about as familiar with young girls from my home land as I was with young eagles, for the undaunted spirit of that child had aroused all my love of adventure; and I wanted to see her. Then, too, I was haunted by the picture of a lonely girl in a strange land, crying out in the night for her dead father.

I was trembling with new emotion that evening when I brought my invalid in from the garden, and tucked her into bed.

Kishimoto San had not only offered me a tremendous experience, but all unwittingly he made it easily possible for me to defy the tradition of his picture language, and risk Jane Gray as a permanent fireside companion.

### III

#### ZURA

Just below "The House of the Misty Star," in an old temple, a priest played a merry tattoo on a mighty gong early every morning. First one stroke and a pause, then two strokes and a pause, followed by so many strokes without pause that the sounds merged into one deep mellow tone reaching from temple to distant hills. It was, so to speak, the rising bell for the deities in that district and announced to them the beginning of their day of business.

In years gone by the echo of the music had stirred me only to a drowsy thankfulness that I was no goddess, happy as I turned for a longer sleep. The morning after Kishimoto San's visit, long before any sound disturbed the sleeping gods, from my window I watched the Great Dipper drop behind the crookedest old pine in the garden and heard the story of the night-wind as it whispered its secret to the leaves.

Usually my patience was short with people who went mooning around the house at all hours of the night when they should have been sleeping. Somehow though, things seemed changed and changing. Coming events were not casting shadows before them in my home, but thrills. Formerly I had not even a passing acquaintance with thrills. Now, half a century behind-time, they were beginning to burst in upon me all at once, as would a troop of merry friends bent on giving me a surprise party, and the things they seemed to promise kept me awake half the night. My restlessness must have penetrated the thin partition of my Japanese house, for when I went out to breakfast there sat Jane Gray, very small and pale, but as bright-eyed and perky as a sparrow. It was her first appearance at the morning meal.



Before I could ask why she had not rested as usual, she put a question to me. “Well, what is it?”

“What’s what?” I returned.

“Why,” she exclaimed, “you have been up most of the night. I wanted to ask if you were ill, but I was counting sheep jumping over the fence, and it made me so sleepy I mixed you up with them. I hope it isn’t the precious cod-liver babies that are keeping you awake.”



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It was at Jane's suggestion that we had eliminated meat from our menu and established a kind of liquid food station for the ill-nourished offspring of the quarry women near us.

I assured Miss Gray that babies had been far from my thoughts. Then I told her of my interview with Kishimoto San; of how Zura Wingate had come to her grandfather's house; of her rebellion against things that were; and that she was to come to me for private study. Had I not been so excited over the elements of romance in my story, I would have omitted telling Jane of the incident of the girl and the youth in the park, for it had a wonderful effect on her.

Jane's sentiment was like a full molasses pitcher that continues to drip in spite of all the lickings you give it. At once I saw I was in for an overflow. It was the only part of the story she took in, and as she listened, passed into some kind of a spell. She cuddled down into her chair and shut her eyes like a child in the ecstasies of a fairy story. She barely breathed enough to say, "The darlings! and in that lovely old park! I hope it was moonlight. Do you suppose they sat under the wistaria?"

Not for a copper mine would I have hinted that through the night there had come before my mind a picture very like that. Such a picture in the Orient could only be labeled tragedy; the more quickly it was blotted out from mind and reality the better for all concerned. I spoke positively to my companion.

"Look here, Jane Gray, if it wasn't for breaking a commandment I would call you foolish with one syllable. Don't you know that in this country a young man and woman walking and talking together cannot be permitted? Neither love nor romance is free or permissible, but they are governed by laws which, if transgressed, will break heart and spirit."

"So I have heard," cooed Miss Gray, unimpressed by my statements. "Wouldn't it be sweet, though, for you and me to go about teaching these dear Japanese people that young love will have its freedom and make a custom of its own?"

"Yes, indeed! Wouldn't it be a sweet spectacle to see two middle-aged women, one fat and one lean, stumping the country on a campaign for young love—subjects in which we are versed only by hearsay and a stray novel or so!" I said all this and a little more.

Jane went on unheeding, "That's it. We must preach love and live it till we have made convicts of every inhabitant."

Of course she meant "converts," but the kinks in Miss Gray's tongue were as startling as the peculiar twists in her religion.

Upon her asking for more particulars I repeated what Kishimoto San had told me. The girl's father was an artist by profession and, as nearly as I could judge, a rover by habit.



Of late the family had lived in a western city. I was not familiar with the name Kishimoto San gave; he called it "Shaal."

"Oh," cried my companion, "I know. I lived there once. It's Seattle."

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Occasionally there shot through Jane's mind a real thought, as luminous as a shaft of light through a jar of honey. I would have never guessed the name of that city.

"Then what else happened?" she continued, as eagerly as a young girl hearing a love story.

I told her it had not happened yet, and before it did I was going to call at the house and see the girl as I had promised and settle upon the hour she was to come for daily lessons. Meantime Jane was to take her nap, her milk, and her tonic without my standing over her. In her devotion to her profession she was apt to forget the small details of eating and resting.

My craving for things to happen was being fed as fast as a rapid-firing gun in full action. I found waiting very irksome but there was a cooking class, a mother's meeting, two sets of composition papers to be corrected and various household duties that stubbornly refused to adjust themselves to my limited time.

At last, however, I was free to go and delayed not a minute in starting on my visit.

\* \* \* \* \*

Kishimoto's home was lower down in the city than mine and very near the sea. The house was ancient and honorable. Its air of antiquity was undisturbed by the great changes which had swept the land in the ages it had stood. The masters had changed from father to son, but the house was as it had been in the beginning, and with it lived unbroken and unshifting, the traditions and beliefs of its founders.

It was only a matter of a few minutes after passing the lodge gates until I was ushered into the general living-room and the center of the family life.

The master being absent, the ceremony of welcoming to his house a strange guest was performed by his wife.

One could see at a glance that she belonged to the old order of things when the seed of a woman's soul seldom had a chance to sprout. She performed her duties with the precision of a clock, with the soft alarm wound to strike at a certain hour, then to be set aside to tick unobtrusively on till needed again.

The seat of honor in a Japanese home is a small alcove designated as "the Tokonoma." In this ancient house simple decorations of a priceless scroll and a flowering plum graced the recess. Before it on a cushion of rich brocade I was asked to be seated.

Etiquette demanded that I hesitate and apologize for my unworthiness as I bowed low and long.



Custom insisted that my hostess urge my acceptance as she abased herself by touching her forehead to her hands folded upon the floor.

Of course it ended by my occupying the cushion, and I was glad for the interruption of tea and cake.

[Illustration: Zura Wingate advanced to my lowly seat on the floor, and listlessly put out one hand to greet me]



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Then equal in length and formality followed the ceremony of being introduced to Kishimoto San's mother and widowed daughter, Mrs. Wingate. The mother, old and withered, was made strong by her power as mother-in-law and her faith in her country and her gods. The daughter was weak and negative by reason of no particular faith and no definite gods. The system by which she had been trained did not include self-reliance nor foster individuality. Under it many of the country's daughters grow to beautiful womanhood because of their gift of living their own inner lives entirely apart, while submitting to the external one imposed by custom.

By the same system other women are made the playthings of circumstance and the soul is ever like a frosted flower bud.

Years ago a man, attracted by the soft girlishness and touched by the adoring deference to his sex, bade this girl marry him without the authority of her father. Nothing had been developed in her to resist outside conditions. It was an unanswered query, whether it was because of ignorance or courage, she braved displeasure, and followed the strange man to a strange country. Sometimes the weakness of Japanese women is their greatest strength. This woman knew how to obey. In her way she had learned to love, but her limited capacity for affection was consumed by wifedom. Having married and borne a child to the man who required nothing of her, duty in life so far as she saw it was canceled. Further effort on her part was unnecessary until the time for her to assert her power as mother-in-law.

Even the contemplation of that happy state failed to enthuse. Languid and a bit sad, her hold on life was gone. The blight had come. On her frail beauty was stamped the sign of the white plague. She greeted me in very broken English, then left the chief duty of entertaining to the mother. The stilted conversation was after the prescribed form and my eagerness to see Zura, whom custom forbade my asking for, was, I dare say, ill concealed.

When I first entered, the farther parts of the large room were veiled in the shadow of the late afternoon. But when Mrs. Kishimoto called, "Zura, come!" a stream of sunlight, as though waiting for the proper time, danced into one corner and rested on the figure of a young girl, sitting awkwardly on her feet, reading.

Her response to her grandmother's command was none too eager; but as she came forward the brilliant light revealed in coloring of hair and dress as many shades of brown as could be found in a pile of autumn leaves. In the round eyes, deep set in a face sprinkled with freckles, in the impertinent tilt of the nose, there was no trace of the Orient; but the high arch of the dark brows betrayed her Japanese origin.



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The girl's costume was more remarkable than the girl herself; it was like a velvet pillow slip with neither beginning nor end. It was low in the neck and had no sleeves worth mentioning. How she got into it or out of it was a problem that distracted me half the night, when I was trying to plan for her soul's salvation. I could not hide my amazement at her appearance. She as closely resembled my idea of an American girl as a cartoon does a miniature; but I had seen so very few girls of my country since my coming to Japan. I remembered hearing Jane say that the styles now change there every two or three years. My new skirt, I've had only five years, has seven pleats and as many more gores.

Zura Wingate advanced to my lowly seat on the floor and listlessly put out one hand to greet me. The other she held behind her. It had been years since I had shaken hands with any one. I was ill at ease, and made more so by realizing that I did not know what to say to this self-contained child of my own beloved land. I made a brilliant start, however. "Howdy. Do you like Japan?"

The answer came with the sudden energy of a popgun: "No." Then she sat down close to a hibachi, her back against the wall.

I went on, determined to be friendly. "I am sure you will find much of interest here. All the beauties of Japan are not on the surface. The loveliness of the scenery and the picturesqueness of the people will appeal to you."

The phrase was about as new as "Mary had a little lamb," but it was all I could think to say. My conversational powers seemed off duty.

The girl scented my confusion and a half-smile crept around her lips.

"Country's all right," she answered. "But the natives are like punk imitations of a vaudeville poster; they're the extension of the limit."

Her words, although English, were as incomprehensible to me as if I had never heard the language, but her scorn was unmistakable. As if to emphasize it, the hand she had persistently held behind her was thrust forward toward the burning coals in the hibachi. Her fingers held a half burnt cigarette. This she lighted, and without embarrassment or enjoyment began to smoke.

An American girl smoking! I was shocked, but I held tight.

"Do you smoke much?" I asked, for the want of something better to say.

"Never smoked before. But my august, heaven-born grandfather, who to my mind is descended direct from the devil, wishes me to adopt the customs of his country. Thought I'd start with this."



“But,” I reminded her, “it is not the custom in this country for young girls to smoke.”

“Oh, isn’t it?”—indifferently—“it doesn’t matter. Had to begin on something or—die.”

The spasm of pain which swept the girl’s face stirred within me a memory long forgotten.

Once, when my own starved youth had wearied and clamored anew for an outlet, I had determined on a reckless adventure. From corn-shucks and dried grass I made a cigar which I tried to smoke. It gave me the most miserable penitent hour I have ever known. The picture of the child of long ago hiding in the corn crib until recovery was possible caused me now to shake with laughter.



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The fire in Zura's eyes began to burn. "Think it's funny? I don't. Have one." She flung a package of cigarettes in my lap.

Ignoring the impertinence of her speech and act I hastened to explain the cause of my amusement. I told her of my desolate childhood, of the quiet village in which my uneventful girlhood was passed, where the most exciting thing that ever happened was a funeral about once in four years.

When I finished she showed the first signs of friendliness as she exclaimed, "Heavens! Didn't you have any 'movies,' any chums, any boys to treat you now and then to a sundae?"

Kishimoto San certainly stated a fact. Her English was strange. I was sure the words were not in my dictionary. But I would not appear stupid before this child who had no business to know more than I did. So I looked a little stern and said that my Sundays never seemed a treat; they were no different from week-days. If the other things she talked about were in a circus, I had never been to one to hear them.

At this such a peal of laughter went up from the girl as I dare say at no time had ever played about the ancient beams. The maid, just entering with hot tea, stood as if stunned. The old grandmother sat like a statue of age with hand uplifted, protesting against any expression of youth and its joys.

Mrs. Wingate pushed aside the paper doors, gently chiding, "Zura, yo' naughty ve'y bad."

But the reproof was as meaningless as the babbling of a baby. Neither disapproval nor black looks availed; unchecked the merriment went on until exhausted by its own violence. I knew she was laughing at me, but what mattered? To her I was a comical old figure in a strange museum. To me she stood for all I had lost of girlhood rights and I wanted her for my friend. Her laughter went through me like a draft of wine. The echo swept a long silent chord, and the tune it played was the jig-time of youth.

When Zura caught her breath and explained the meaning of her words, it disclosed to me a phase of life of which I had never dreamed. Pictures that moved and talked while you looked, public halls for dancing, and boys meeting young girls alone after dark to "treat" them! The child spoke of it all easily and as a matter of course. I knew more than I wanted of the dark side of Oriental life, but I had been so long accustomed to idealizing my own country and all its ways that her talk was to me like an unkind story about a dear friend.

But happy to find a listener who was interested in things familiar to her—Zura chattered away, of her friends and her pleasures, and though many of her words were in an unknown tongue, the picture she unconsciously drew of herself was as clear as



transparency. It was an unguided, undisciplined life, big with possibilities for love or hate that even now was wavering in the balance for good or bad.

Once again the afternoon sun fell upon the girl. It touched her face, tender of contour and coloring. It found her hair and made of it a crown of bronze and gold. For a moment it lingered, then climbing, lighted up a yellow parchment hanging on the wall just above.

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Through its aged dim characters I read an edict issued in the days of long ago, banishing from the land of fair Nippon all Christians and Christianity. It threatened with relentless torture any attempt to promulgate the faith, and contained an order for all citizens to appear in the public place on a certain day for adherents of the new religion to recant, by stamping on the Cross.

As the girl talked on, she revealed a life strangely inconsistent in a land which to me stood for all that was highest and most beautiful. A curious thought came to me. I wondered if the man who framed that edict had a vision of what foreign teachings might bring in its trail? Possibly some presentiment haunted him of the great danger that would come to his people through contact with a country leagues removed in customs and beliefs. Neither crucifixion nor torture had availed to keep out the new religion. With it came wisdom and great reforms. Misinterpretation too, had followed. Old laws were shattered, and this girl, Zura Wingate was a product of a new order of things, the result of broken traditions, a daughter of two countries, a representative of neither.

Zura's conversation was mainly of her amusements and diversions.

"But how did you manage so many pleasures while you were attending school?" I inquired.

"School?" she echoed. "Oh! that never bothered me. I had a system at school; it worked fine. The days I felt like going, I crammed hard and broke the average record. I also accumulated a beautiful headache. This earned me a holiday and an excursion for my health."

It was hard for me to understand a girl who deliberately planned to miss school, but I was taking a whole course in one afternoon. Carefully I approached the object of my visit. "Well, of course you desire to further pursue your studies in English, even though your home is to be in Japan. I came this afternoon to ask—do you not think it would be pleasant if you came to my house every day for a little study—just to keep in practice?"

The girl's lips framed a red circle as she drew out a long "Oh-h-h! I see! The mighty honorable Boss has been laying plans, has he? Well, I think it would be perfectly grand—N-I-T—which in plain American spells 'I will not do it.'"

Imagine a young girl telling one of her elders right to her face, she would not do it. I never heard of such a thing. For a moment I was torn between a desire to administer a stern reproof and leave her, and a great yearning to stand by and with love and sympathy to try to soften the only fate which could be in store for such as she.

We took each other's measure and she, pretty and saucy as a gay young robin, went on fearlessly:



“I’m an American to the backbone; I’m not going to be Japanese, or any kin to them. As long as I have to stay I’m going to pursue the heavenly scenery around here and put it on paper. Between pictures I’m going to have a good time—all I want to. Thank you for your invitation, but I have other engagements.”



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A wilful girl in a Japanese home! My disapproval fled. Soon enough life would administer reproof and stretch out a rough hand to stay her eagerness. I need add nothing.

A little depressed at losing her as a pupil and knowing that her defiance could only bring sorrow, I asked her gently, "Do you love good times?"

"Do I? Well, just wait till I get started. See if the slant eyes of the inhabitants will not have another angle before I get through. They need a few lessons on the rights of girls."

Neither Zura's home nor her parents seemed to have any part in her life. She told of a prank played at midnight one Hallowe'en.

"But," I asked, "did your mother permit you to be out at such an hour?"

"My mother!" she repeated with a light laugh. "My mother is nothing but a baby. She neither cared nor knew where I was or what I did."

"What about your father?" I ventured. "I understand you and he were great friends."

If I had struck the girl, the effect could not have been more certain. She arose quickly, her face aquiver with pain; she threw her hands forward as if in appeal to some unseen figure; then she moaned, "Oh! Daddy!" and she was gone.

Like the stupid old meddler I was, I tore the wound afresh. I exposed the bruised place in the girl's life, but my blunder brought to light unsuspected depths.

It was all so sudden that I was speechless and stared blankly at the mother, who looked helpless and bewildered. The two grandmothers had taken no part nor interest in the scene. Their faces expressed nothing. To them the girl was as incomprehensible as any jungle savage. To me she was like some wild, free bird, caught in a net, old, but very strong, for its meshes were made from a relentless law.

I made my adieu with what grace I could and left.

\* \* \* \* \*

On my way home I met Kishimoto San. Omitting details, I told him Zura declined to come to my house for lessons.

"So! My granddaughter announced she will not? I shall give her a command to obey."

I suggested that the girl needed time for adjustment and that he needed much patience.



“Patience! With a girl?” he replied. “Ah. madam, you utter great demands of my dignity! It is like requesting me to smile sweetly when grasping the fruit of a chestnut tree which wears a prickly overcoat. But I thank your great kindness for honoring my house and my family. *Sayonara.*”

Deep thought held me fast as I passed through the cheerful, busy streets and up the long flight of steps that led from the highway to my home. I was too occupied mentally to pay much attention to Jane’s unnumbered questions regarding my visit. Anyhow, my association with Jane had led me to discover she could talk for a very long while, and never get anywhere, not even to an end.

That night she talked herself to sleep about girls and poetry and beaux, which as far as I could see had nothing to do with the matter.



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Had Jane been a mind reader, long ere the night had gone, she could have found strange things in my brain.

Hours afterwards I sat on my balcony that overhung the soft lapping waters below, still deeply thinking. Often at the end of the day's toil I sought this retreat and refreshed my soul in the incomparable beauty of the view.

In that hour the tender spirit of night folded me about. Out of the mystery of the vast blue I heard faintly a new message, potent with promise, charged with possibilities. The earth was wrapped in a robe of gray, made of mist and illusion, and its every sound was hushed by the lullaby of the night-wind. Dim, silent mountains clustered about the silver waters, as great watchmen guarding a precious jewel.

Toward me across the moon-misted sea came a procession of ghostly sails. Every ship seemed to bear troops of white-robed maidens and, as they floated past, they gaily waved their hands to me, calling for comradeship and understanding, a wide-open heart, freedom to love.

## IV

### JANE GRAY BRINGS HOME A MAN

During the weeks following my visit I had good reason to believe that Kishimoto San's power to command was not in working order. Zura failed to put in an appearance for her lessons, nor did any message come from the ancient house by the sea to explain the delay.

I could only guess how things stood between the grandfather and the alien child.

Every minute of my day was filled with classes, demands and sick babies, but between duties and when Jane was elsewhere I snatched time to inspect eagerly every visitor who clicked a sandal or shoe-heel on the rough stones of my crooked front path. I kept up the vigil for my desired pupil until I heard one of my adoring housemaids confide to the other that she had "the great grief to relate Jenkins Sensie was getting little illness in her head. She condescended to respond to the honorable knock at her door—and she a great teacher lady!"

After this I transferred my observations to the crescent-shaped window at one end of my study. This ornamental opening in the wall commanded a full view of the main highway of Hijiyama. Through it I could look down far below upon the street life which was a panorama quietly intense, but gay and hopeful. The moving throng resembled a great bouquet swayed by a friendly breeze, so bright in coloring with the flower-sellers, white-garbed jinricksha men, vegetable vendors, and troops of butterfly children that any tone of softer hue attracted immediate attention.



This led me to a discovery one day when I caught sight of a dark-brown velvet dress, and I knew that my promised pupil was inside it. Her shining hair made me sure, and I guessed that the young man with whom she walked was the ship's officer. The sight troubled me; but interference except by invitation was not my part. I could do nothing but wait.



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However, so unusual a creature as Zura Wingate could neither escape notice nor outspoken comment in a conservative, etiquette-bound old town like Hijiyama. Through my pupils, most of them boys and eager to practise their English, I heard of many startling things she did. They talked of her fearlessness; with what skill she could trim a sail; how she had raced with the crack oarsman of the Naval College; and how the aforesaid cadet was now in disgrace because he had condescended to compete with a girl. Much of the talk was of the girl's wonderful talent in putting on paper Japanese women and babies in a way so true that Chinda, a withered old man in whom the love of art was the only sign of life, said, "Except for her foreign blood the child would be a gift of the gods." I had dwelt too long in the Orient, though, to hear with much peace of mind the girl's name so freely used and I discouraged the talk.

Even if I had thought it best to do so, there was no chance for a repetition of my visit to Kishimoto San's house. The demands upon my time and my resources were heavier than ever before. The winter had been bitterly cold. As the thermometer went down and somebody cornered the supply of sweet potatoes, the price of rice soared till there seemed nothing left to sustain the working people except the scent of the early plum flowers that flourished in the poorer districts. Sheltered by a great mountain from the keen winds, they thrust their pink blossoms through the covering of snow and cheered the beauty-loving people to much silent endurance. The plum tree was almost an object of worship in this part of the Empire. It stood for bravery and loyalty in the face of disaster, but as one tottering old woman put it, as she went down on her knees begging food for her grandbabies, "The Ume Ke makes me suffer great shame for my weakness. It gives joy to weary eyes, courage to fainting heart, but no food for babies." In the outlying districts many children on their way to school fainted for want of food; hospitals were full of the half-starved; police stations were crowded with the desperate; and temples were packed with petitioners beseeching the gods.

It was near the holidays. My pupil teachers and helpers worked extra hours and pinched from their scant savings that those they could reach might not have a hungry Christmas. They put together the price of their gifts to each other and bought rice. In gay little groups they went from door to door and gathered up twenty feeble old women, brought them to my house and feasted them to the utmost.

Hardly a day passed without some new and unusual demand, until learning to stand up and sit down at the same time was almost a necessity.

Had my own life lacked absorbing interest, Jane Gray's activities would have furnished an inexhaustible supply. As she grew stronger and could come and go at her pleasure, her unexpectedness upset my systematic household to the point of confusion. She supplied untold excitement to Pine Tree and Maple Leaf, the two serving maids earning an education by service, and drove old Ishi the gardener to tearful protest. "Miss Jaygray dangerous girl. She boldly confistéal a dimension of flower house and request strange demons to roost on premises."



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This all came about because my fireside companion was a born collector. Not of any reasonable thing like stamps or butterflies, but of stray animals and wandering humans. Her affections embraced every created thing that came out of the ark, including all the descendants of Mr. and Mrs. Noah. A choice spot in my beloved garden, which was also Ishi's heaven, housed a family of weather-beaten world-weary cats, three chattering monkeys, that made love to Jane and hideous faces at everybody else, a parakeet and a blind pup. If the collection fell short in quality, it abounded in variety. On one occasion she brought home two ragged and hungry American sailors, and it required military tactics to piece out the "left-over" lunch for them. Another time she shared her room with a poor creature who had been a pretty woman, now seeking shelter till her transportation could be secured.

Late one snowy night Jane came stumbling in weighted with an extra bundle. Tenderly unwrapping the covering she disclosed a half-starved baby. That day she had gone to a distant part of the city to assist in organizing a soup kitchen, and a Bible class. On her way home she heard a feeble cry coming from a ditch. She located a bundle of rags, and found a bit of discarded humanity.

"Isn't it sweet?" murmured the little missionary as she laid the weakling before the fire and fed it barley water with an ink dropper. "I'm going to keep it for my very own. I've always wanted one," she announced joyfully.

"Well, you just won't do anything of the kind," was my firm conclusion. I had no wish to be unkind, but repression was the only course left. I loved children, as I loved flowers, but it was impossible to inflate another figure for expense.

"It's all we can do to support that menagerie in the garden without starting an orphan asylum. Babies, as well as cats and dogs, cost money."

"Yes, yes, I know, Miss Jenkins," replied my companion eagerly, her face bright with some inner sunbeam of hope, "but wait till I tell you of a darling plan. The other day I saw the nicest sign over a door. It said 'Moderated and modified milk for babies and small animals.' It's tin, the milk I mean, and that is what I am going to feed them on. It's so filling."

"Beautifully simple, and tin milk must be so nourishing, is it not?" I snapped, ruffled by Miss Gray's never-defeated hopefulness. "Of course the kind gentleman who keeps this magic food, stands at the door and hands it out by the bucketful."

That was before I learned that sarcasm could no more pierce Jane's optimism, than a hair would cut a diamond.



“No,” she answered sweetly, “he sits on the floor, and takes cans from a box. He gets money for it, but I am going to make a grand bargain with him. I am going to trade him a package of tracts and that cunning parrakeet for milk.”

“How do you know he wants parrots or tracts?” I said.



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“Oh, yes, he does. I talked to him. He showed me a faded old tract he had been reading every day for twenty years. Now his eyes are failing. He can get his customers to read a new one to him. He wants the bird for a spot of color as it grows darker. Please, dear Miss Jenkins, let me keep the baby!”

Of course I was weak enough to give in. Jane made her bargain and for a month the little stray stayed with us. Then one glorious dawn the tiny creature smiled as only a baby can, and gave up the struggle. In a corner of the garden, where the pigeons are ever cooing, we made a small mound.

To this good day Ishi declares the children’s god Jizo comes every night to take the child away, but cannot because it lies in a Christian grave, and that is why he keeps the spot smothered in flowers.

Not in the least discouraged by death or desertion of her proteges, Jane Gray continued to bring things home, and one day she burst into the room calling, “Oh, Jenkins San! Come quick! See what I have found.”

Her find proved to be a youthful American about twenty-four, whom she introduced as Page Hanaford.

From the moment the tall young man stood before me, hat in hand, a wistful something in his gray eyes, I had to crush a sudden desire to lay my hand on his shoulder and call him son. It would have been against my principles to be so outspokenly sentimental, but his light hair waved back from a boyish face pallid with illness and the playful curve of his mouth touched me. If I had been Jane Gray I should have cried over him. From the forced smile to the button hanging loose on his vest there was a silent appeal. All the mother in me was aroused and mentally I had to give myself a good slap to meet the situation with dignity.

I asked the young man to come into the sitting-room and we soon heard the story he had to tell.

He said his home had been in Texas. His father, an oil operator and supposed to be very rich, died a bankrupt. He was the only member of the family left, and he had recently started to the Far East to begin making his fortune. By chance he had drifted into Hijiyama. He understood there was a demand for teachers here. He was quite sure he could teach; but he would have to go slow at first, for he was just recovering from a slight illness.

“Have you been ill a long time?” I asked, striving to keep my fast rising sympathy in hand.



“Y-es; no,” was the uncertain reply. “You see, I don’t quite remember. Time seems to have run away from me.”

“Were you ill before you left America, or after you sailed?” I inquired with increasing interest.

The boy paled, flushed, then stammered out his answer. “I—I—I’m sorry, but really I can’t tell you. The beastly thing seems to have left me a bit hazy.”

A bit hazy indeed! It was as plain as the marks of his severe illness that he was evading my question. His hands trembled so he could hardly hold the cup of tea I gave him, so I pursued my inquiries no further. As I was hostess to my guests, whoever they might be, I asked neither for credentials nor the right to judge them, for their temptations had not been mine.



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After a long pause he slowly tried again to tell his story. "I was seeking employment when Miss Gray found me. My! but I was glad to see some one who seemed like home. The way she walked right up to me and said, 'Why, howdy do. I'm glad to see you. Now come right up to the "Misty Star" with me,' I tell you it made my heart thump. Didn't know whether the Misty Star was a balloon or a planet; didn't care much. Miss Gray was so kind and I was tired. Hunting a job in an unknown language is rather discouraging."

"Discouraged!" laughed Jane, poking up the fire and arranging a big chair in which she put Mr. Hanaford, at the same time stuffing a pillow behind his back. "The idea of being discouraged when the world is full of poetry and love staring you right in the face! Besides, there is always hope blooming everywhere like a field full of faisies."

Our visitor's face crinkled with suppressed amusement at the little lady's funny mixture of words and he asked, "Are you never discouraged?"

"Goodness me, no! Not now. Every time I see a blue thought sticking its head around the corner, I begin to sing the long meter doxology. My music sends it flying. I can't afford to be discouraged. You see, I'm pledged to help a lot of unfortunate friends. I haven't a cent of money and every time I let the teeniest little discouragement show its face, it would surely knock a plank out of the hospital I'm going to build for them."

"Build a hospital without money?" said he. "If you are that kind of a magician, perhaps you can tell me where I can find so many students that riches will pour in upon me?"

"Yes, indeed, I can," assented Miss Gray generously. "The pupils are sure, if the pay isn't. Miss Jenkins can find you a barrelful."

The young man turned to me. "A baker's dozen would do to start with. Would you be so kind? I need them very much. I must have work."

His manner was so earnest and appealing, his need so evident that I was ready to turn over to him every student on my list, if that were the thing necessary to enable him to earn a living and get a new grip on life. There were more than enough pupils to go around, and I was glad to put away my work and give the afternoon to planning for a place in which to house Mr. Hanaford and his going-to-be-pupils.

Our guest entered into all our suggestions eagerly. The environment of our simple home, the ministrations of motherly hands touched hidden chords. He did not hide his enjoyment, but talked well and entertainingly of everything—except himself. At times he was boyishly gay; then, seemingly without cause, the expectant look of his eyes would fade into one of bewildered confusion and he would sit in silence. I hoped it was the effect of his illness.



Jane was happier over this last addition to her collection than any previous specimen.

When at last he rose reluctantly and said he must be going, she anxiously inquired if he would be sure to come back to-morrow and the day after.



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“Why, dear lady, you are very kind! Sure there will be no risk of wearing out a welcome? And I have no letter of introduction.”

“You can’t even dent the welcome at Miss Jenkins’s house. It has been forged with kindness and polished with love, and we wouldn’t have time to read a letter of introduction if you had one. Please come right away.”

Our visitor stood voicing his thanks and bidding us adieu when the tuneful gong at the front door was struck by no uncertain hand.

The setting sun wrapped “The House of the Misty Star” in a veil of purple, shot with pink. The subdued radiance crept into the room and covered its shabbiness with a soft glory, the paper door slid open and, framed in the tender twilight, stood Zura Wingate.

“I’ve come—” she began, then stopped.

The unfinished speech still parting her lips, with hair wind-blown and face aglow, she gazed in surprise at Page Hanaford, and he, bending slightly forward, gazed back at the girl, who radiated youth and all its glorious freedom in every movement.

The silence was brief, but intense. Then Jane Gray gave vent to a long ecstatic “Oh-h-h-h!” I made haste to welcome and introduce Zura.

“I can’t stop,” she said when I offered her a chair and refreshment; and she added rather breathlessly: “I started for this house at noon; side-tracked and went sailing. Just come to say thank you very much, but I don’t care for any lessons in English or manners, and I won’t have any kind old grandpa interfering with my affairs. Now I must hustle. If I don’t, there’ll be an uprising of my ancestors. Good-by.”

She went as suddenly as she had come. It was as though a wild sea-bird had swept through the room, leaving us startled, but refreshed.

From the shadows near the door came Page Hanaford’s half-humorous query, “Do these visions have a habit of appearing in your doorway, Miss Jenkins, or how much of what I saw was real?”

“Zura Wingate is the realest girl I know, Mr. Hanaford.” He listened intently to the short history of the girl I gave him, made no comment, asked no questions, but said good-night very gently and went out into the dusk.

Jane stood looking into the fire. Tightly clasping her hands across her thin chest and closing her eyes, she murmured delightedly, “Oh, the sweet darlings!”

I did not ask whether she referred to our late visitors or something in her menagerie.



I was in a whirl of thought myself. I had lost a pupil; my purse was leaner than ever, my responsibilities heavier; yet intangible joys were storming my old heart, and it was athrill with visions of youth and hope and love, although I saw them through windows doubly barred and locked.

**V**

**A CALL AND AN INVITATION**

## Page 26

The weeks that followed were happy ones in “The House of the Misty Star.” Page Hanaford dropped in frequently after supper, and my liking for the boy grew stronger with each visit. His good breeding and gentle rearing were as innate as the brightness of his eyes; and no less evident was his sore need of companionship, though when he talked it was on diversified subjects, never personal ones. If the time between visits were longer than I thought it should be, I invented excuses and sent for him. I asked little favors of him which necessitated his coming to my house; then I asked more, which kept him.

Thus it was that many delightful hours were spent in the cozy, cheerful living-room of the little house perched high upon the hill. In one shadowy corner Jane Gray usually sat, busy with her endless knitting of bibs for babies. Close beside her the maids, Pine Tree and Maple Leaf, looked up from their seats upon the floor, intent on every movement of her flying fingers that they too might quickly learn and help to “bib” the small citizens of their country.

From my place on one side of the reading lamp I could look, unobserved, at Page Hanaford on the other side, as he sat in the deep chair and stretched his long limbs toward the glowing grate stove, while he read to us tales of travel and fiction. Jane said they were as delightful as his voice. I was often too busy studying the boy to give much heed to his reading, but when he spoke it was a different matter.

His familiarity with the remote places of the world, centers of commerce, and the names of men high in affairs, made me wonder and wonder again what had led him to choose for advance in fortune this Buddhist stronghold of moats and medieval castles, so limited in possibilities, so far from contact with foreign things. The teaching of English, as I had good reason to know, yielded many a hearty laugh, but a scant living. There was no other opening here for Europeans.

Every time I saw Page, the more certain I was, not only of his ability, but of his past experience in bigger things. The inconsistencies of his story began to irritate me like the pricking of a pin which the presence of company forbade my removing. However, I did not question him openly; I tried not to do so in my heart. I found for him more students as well as excuses to mend his clothes and have him with us. I scolded him for taking cold, filled him up with stews, brews, and tonics, and with Jane as chief enthusiast—she had fallen an easy victim—we managed to make something of a home life for him.

The boy could not hide his pleasure in our little parties; but it was with protest that he accepted so much waiting on and coddling. He was always deferential, but delighted in gently laughing at Jane and telling me stories that could not happen out of a book.

Sometimes his spirits ran high and found expression in song or a whistled tune. When there was a sudden knock or when he was definitely questioned, there was something

in his attitude which I would have named fear, had not every line in his lean, muscular body contradicted the suggestion.



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It had not happened very often, but when it did, a nameless something seemed to cover us, and in passing, left a shadow which turned our happy evenings cold and bleak.

It was the custom for every member of my household to assemble in the living-room after supper for evening prayer. Jane and I, the cook, and the two little maids were there because we found comfort and joy. Old Ishi, the gardener, attended because he hoped to discover the witch that made the music inside the baby organ. At the same time he propitiated the foreigner's god, though he kept on the good side of his own deities by going immediately afterwards to offer apology and incense at the temple.

Often Page Hanaford came in at this hour and quietly joined us.

It was an incongruous group, but touching with one accord the border of holier things, banished differences of creed and race and cemented a bond of friendship.

One evening after the service Jane—taking the maids and a heaped-up basket—went to answer a prayer for daily bread she had overheard coming from a hut that day. Page and I settled down for a long, pleasant evening, he with his pipe and book, I with a pile of English compositions to be corrected. "Change" was the subject of the first one I picked up, and I read the opening paragraph aloud: "The seasons change from one to the other without fuss or feather and obey the laws of nature. All mens change from one thing to other by spontaneous combustion and obey the universal laws of God."

My companion was still laughing at this remarkable statement and I puzzling over its meaning when Kishimoto San was announced. I found a possible translation of the sentence in his appearance. "Spontaneous combustion" nearly fitted the state of mind he disclosed to me. The change in him was startling. I had only seen the school superintendent outside his home. In times of difficulty when his will could not prevail, which was seldom, he dismissed the matter at once, and found refuge in that fatalistic word "Shikataganai" (it can't be helped).

But now his fort of stoicism was being besieged, and the walls breached by a girl-child in his home, who was proving a redoubtable foe to his will and his calm, for of course the trouble was Zura. I learned this after he had finished acknowledging his introduction to Page. The bowing, bending, and indrawing of breath, demanded by this ceremony, took time. But it had to be.

Then I asked after the general prosperity of his ancestors, the health of his relatives, finally working my way down to Zura.

[Illustration: The bowing, bending, and indrawing of breath]

Ordinarily Kishimoto San would have scorned to mention his affairs before a stranger, but his world of tradition was upside down. In his haste to right it he broke other laws of

convention. Page had withdrawn into the shadow of the window seat after the introduction, but listened intently to the conversation and soon caught the drift of it.



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From accounts the situation between Kishimoto San and his granddaughter was not a happy one. The passing weeks had not brought reconciliation to them nor to the conditions. It had come almost to open warfare. "And," declared the troubled man, "if she does not render obedience I will reduce her to bread and water, and subject her to a lonely place, till she comprehends who is the master and acknowledges filial piety."

I protested that such a measure would only urge to desperation a girl of Zura's temperament and that, to my mind, people could not be made good by law, but by love.

The master of many women looked at me pityingly. "Madam, would you condescend to inform my ignorance how love is joined to obedience? Speaks the one great book of this land written for the guidance of women, 'The lifelong duty of women is obedience. Seeing that it is a girl's destiny on reaching womanhood to go to a new home and live in submission to her mother-in-law, it is incumbent upon her to reverence her parents' and elders' instruction at the peril of her life.'"

"But," I remarked, "there is something like two centuries between your granddaughter and this unreasonable book. Its antiquated laws are as withered as the dead needles of a pine tree. Any one reading it would know that when old man Kaibara wrote it he was not feeling well or had quarreled with his cook."

In most things Kishimoto San was just; in many things he was kind. But he was as utterly devoid of humor as a pumpkin is of champagne. Without a flicker he went on. "Dead these sacred laws may be in practice, but the great spirit of them must live, else man in this land will cease to be master in his own house; the peace of our homes will pass. Also, does not your own holy book write plainly on this subject of obedience of women and children?"

Kishimoto San was a good fighter for what he believed was right, and as a warrior for his cause he had armed himself in every possible way. He had a passable knowledge of English and an amazing familiarity with the Scriptures. He also possessed a knack of interpreting any phase of it to strengthen the argument from his standpoint. But I, too, could fight for ideals; love of freedom and the divine right of the individual were themes as dear to me as they were hateful to Kishimoto San. It had occurred many times before, and we always argued in a circular process. Neither of us had ever given in.

But this night Kishimoto San gave me as a last shot: "The confusion of your religion is, it boasts only one God and numberless creeds. Each creed claims superiority. This brings inharmony and causes Christians to snap at each other like a pack of wolves. We have many gods and only one creed. We have knowledge and enlightenment which finally lead to Nirvana."

I could always let my friend have the last word but one. I now asked him if he could deny the enlightenment of which he boasted led as often to despair as it did to Nirvana.

If his knowledge were so all-inclusive, why had it failed to suggest some path up or down which he could peacefully lead Zura Wingate?



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Before he could answer I offered him a cup of tea, hoping it would cool him off, and asked him to tell me his special grievance.

He said it was the custom in his house for each member of the family to go before the house-shrine and, kneeling, bow the head to the floor three times. Zura had refused to approach the spot and, when he insisted, instead of bowing she had looked straight at the god and contorted her face till it looked like an Oni (a demon). It was most dangerous. The gods would surely avenge such disrespect.

It seemed incredible that keen intelligence and silly superstition could be such close neighbors in the same brain, for I knew Kishimoto San to be an honest man. He not only lived what he believed, he insisted on others believing all that he lived.

He continued his story—the girl not only refused to come to me for English lessons, but declined to go for her lessons in Japanese etiquette, necessary to fit her for her destiny as a wife. She absented herself from the house a whole day at a time. When she returned she said, without the slightest shame, that she had been racing with the naval cadets, or else had been for a picnic with the young officer from the ship. Like a chattering monkey she would relate what had been done or said.

At least, thought I, the girl makes no secret of her reckless doings. She is open and honest about it. I said as much to my visitor.

He was quietly savage. “Honest! Open you name it! There is but one definition for it. Immodesty! In a young girl that is deadlier than impiety. It is the wild blood of her father,” he ended sadly.

I could have added, “Dashed with a full measure of grandpa’s stubbornness.” But I was truly sorry for Kishimoto San. His trouble was genuine. It was no small thing to be compelled to shoulder a problem begun in a foreign land, complicated by influences far removed from his understanding, then thrust upon him for solution. He was a faithful adherent of the old system where individuality counted for nothing and a woman for less. To his idea the salvation of a girl depended on her submission to the rules laid down by his ancestors for the women of his house. He was an ardent Buddhist and under old conditions its teachings had answered to his every need. But both law and religion failed him when it came to dealing with this child who had come to him from a free land across the sea and whose will had the same adamant quality as his own.

While I was turning over in my mind how I should help either the girl or the man, I ventured to change the subject by consulting Kishimoto San upon important school matters. The effort was useless. His mind stuck as fast to his worries as a wooden shoe in spring mud.



Not least among his vexations was the difficulty he would have in marrying Zura off. If she failed in filial piety and obedience to him, how could she ever learn that most needful lesson of abandoning herself to the direction of her mother-in-law?



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The picture of Zura Wingate, whose early training had been free and unrestrained, being brought to order by a Japanese mother-in-law was almost too much for my gravity. It would be like a big black beetle ordering the life of a butterfly. Not without a struggle the conservative grandfather acknowledged that his system had failed. For the first time since I had known him Kishimoto San, with genuine humility, appealed for help. "Madam, my granddaughter is like new machineries. The complexities of her conduct causes my mind to suffer confusion of many strange thought. Condescend to extend to me the help of your great knowledge relating to girls reared with your flag of freedom."

I had always thought my ignorance on the subject as deep as a cave. I would begin at once to excavate my soul in search of that "great knowledge."

I proceeded a little loftily: "Oh, Kishimoto San, I am sure there is a way to right things. The fault lies in the fact that Zura and you do not understand each other. Suppose you permit her to come to me for a little visit without study. It would give us great pleasure and I could learn to know her better."

Pushing aside all hesitation and the apologies that etiquette required on such occasions, greatly relieved, he quickly accepted my invitation. "You do my house great honor to assume the mystery of Zura's conduct. I give you most honorable thanks."

When he said good-night the look on his face suggested that a smile might penetrate the gloom, if he lived long enough.

\* \* \* \* \*

"By Jove! is that what the women of this country have to go up against?" Page asked when the door had closed behind Kishimoto San.

"A very small part of them must do so, Mr. Hanaford. It is not so hard for the women born to it, as they know their fate and can accept it from babyhood. The suffering falls upon the alien, who runs afoul of their customs, especially one who has known the delight of liberty."

"Liberty!" repeated Page, gazing out of the window on the thousands of lights below, which were fluttering in the velvety darkness like a vast army of fireflies. "Without it, what is life to the smallest—moth!"

## VI

### ZURA WINGATE'S VISIT



These were the days I kept an eagle eye on Jane Gray. She grew steadily stronger and her activities resembled a hive of bees. Unless she was carefully observed and brought to order, her allowance of milk and part of her food went to some child or stray beggar, waiting outside the lodge gates.

She talked incessantly and confidently of the hospital she intended to build in the Quarters. She had not a sen and I had less.

With the grocery bill unpaid, her cheerful assurance sometimes provoked me. "Goodness, Jane, you haven't enough to buy even one shingle for a hospital! To hear you talk one would think the National Bank was at your command."



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“But, Miss Jenkins,” she said, smiling, “we are not going to use shingles for the roof, but straw; and I have something stronger than a national bank. You see, I was just born hoping. I know some of the sweetest people at home. I’ve written nearly one thousand letters, telling them all about my dear friends in the Quarters.”

So that’s where all the stamps went that she bought with the money I gave her for winter clothes!

I was taking Jane to task for this when a note arrived from Zura. I had been almost sure that my invitation would meet the same fate as the English lessons. My fears disappeared when I opened the missive. It read as follows:

Dear Miss Jenkins:

Thank you. Never did like to study in vacation, but if it is plain visiting I’ll be delighted, for I’m starving. Have lived so long on rice and raw fish I feel like an Irish stew. You’ll surely be shocked at what I can do to ham and eggs and hot biscuit! I’ll float in about Thursday.

Hungrily yours,  
*Zura Wingate.*

When I told my companion that Zura was coming to make us a little visit, she was preparing to start for her work. She had just tied a bright green veil over her hat. Failing in its mission as trimming, the chiffon dropped forward in reckless folds almost covering her face; it gave her a dissipated look as she hurried about, gathering up her things, eager to be gone. But I was seeking information and detained her. “Jane,” I asked, “what do young girls in our country like best?”

“Boys and tolu,” was the astonishing reply.

The twinkle in her one visible eye increased to enough for two when I said with quite a good deal of dignity that, while I had some idea what boys were, I knew nothing of the other article she mentioned.

“Oh, don’t you really know what tolu is? It’s a kind of rubber and girls like to chew it.”

“American girls chew! Why, the thing is impossible,” I cried, pained to have an ideal shattered.

“Keep calm, Miss Jenkins, this is a different kind of chew from the one you are thinking about. It isn’t pretty, but it won’t hurt them, any more than a peck of chocolates and, tolu or no tolu, in all the world there isn’t anything dearer than young American girls. They are so fluffy and bossy and sweet, and they do make the darlingest mamas.”



Jane waited for some comment from me. Seeing I had none to make, she said, “Well, there aren’t any boys for Zura to play with, and no tolu this side of San Francisco.” Then, brightening with sudden inspiration, she exclaimed, “But I tell you what: wait till I take this basket down to Omoto’s home and I’ll run right back and make some bear and tiger cookies and gingerbread Johnnies. Children adore them.”

“What is the matter now down at Omoto’s house?”

“Oh, nothing much. He’s in jail and his wife simply cannot work out in the field to-day. She has a brand-new pair of the sweetest twins, and a headache besides.”

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Even after Jane departed I did some hard thinking how I was to entertain so youthful a visitor as Zura. Inside our simple home there was nothing especially beautiful, and my companion had never mentioned that she ever found me amusing. Outside fore and aft there was a view which brought rapture to all beholders and peace to many troubled souls. I was not sure how a wild young maid would thrive on views.

From the moment Zura entered the house and I caught sight of her face as she looked at my garden through the glassed-in end of the sitting-room, my fears disappeared like mist before a breeze. A bit of her soul was in her eyes and, when she asked for a nearer view, I put down my work and led her through the carved gates into the ancient glory which was not only the garden of my house, but the garden of my soul. We passed a moss-grown shrine where a quaint old image looked out across the lake rimmed with flaming azaleas, and on its waters a family of long-legged cranes consulted with each other. Our way led over a bridge with a humped-up back and along a little path for one, then across a bank of ferns and into the tangle of bamboo all silvery with the sunshine.

At the beginning of our walk my guest's conversation was of the many happy nothings I suppose most girls indulge in, but as we went farther she had less to say. Her eyes grew wider and darker as the beauty of the place pressed in upon her. We found a seat arched over with a blossoming vine and sat down for rest.

Zura was quiet and, finding she avoided every allusion to home, I drifted into telling her a bit of the garden's history—its unknown age, the real princes and princesses who in the long ago had trodden its crooked paths. Legend said that so great was their love for it their spirits refused to abide in Nirvana and came to dwell in the depths of the dim old garden. I told her the spot had been my play place, my haven of rest for thirty years, and how for want of company I had peopled it with lords and ladies of my fancy. Armored knights and dark-haired dames of my imagination had lived and laughed and loved in the shadows of its soft beauty. Anxious to entertain and pleased to have an audience, I opened wider the doors to my sentimental self than I really intended. I went from story to story till the air was filled with the sweetness of romance and poetry. In the midst of a wondrous love legend a noise, sudden but suppressed, stopped me short. I looked at the girl. She was shaking with laughter.

When I asked why, she managed to gasp, "Oh, but you're an old softy!"

It was disrespectful, but it was also true and, though I felt as if a hot wind had been blowing on my face, there was such a note of comradeship in her voice that it cheered me to the point of joining in her merriment. Our laugh seemed to sweep away many of the years that stood between us and the old thrill of anticipation passed through me.



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We found many other things to talk about, for I searched every crook and cranny of my old brain for bits of any sort with which to interest her. The last turn in the path leading back to the house found us friendly and with a taste or two in common.

Once, seeing something near by she wanted to sketch, she whispered to me as familiarly as if I were the same age, "For the love of Mike! hold my hat while I put that on paper."

I had no acquaintance with "Mike" and she was bareheaded, but so infectious was her eagerness that I felt about twenty.

What she wanted to sketch was only a small girl in a gay kimono and a big red umbrella, but the tiny mite made a vivid spot of color as she stood motionless to watch a great brown moth hovering over a bed of iris. Before I could explain that the child was a waif temporarily housed with me, shy and easily frightened, Zura whipped from somewhere out of the mysteries of a tight dress a pad and pencil and, with something like magic, the lines of the little maid's figure and face were transferred to the white sheet.

"How Daddy would have loved her," said Zura, softly, as she covered her work. I was silent.

Later my guest and I went into the house and I showed her my treasures. They were few, but precious in their way: Some rare old prints, a piece of ivory, and an old jewelry box of gold lacquer, all from grateful pupils. Zura's appreciation of the artistic side of her mother's country was keen. In connection with it she spoke of her father's great gift and how he had begun teaching her to paint when he had to tie her to a chair to steady her and almost before her hand was big enough to hold a brush. She referred to their close companionship. Mother wanted to rest very often and seldom joined them. Father and daughter would prepare their own lunch and go for a long day's tramping and sketching. Once they were gone for a week and slept out under the trees. Daddy was the jolliest chum and always let her do as she pleased. He trusted her and never had corrected her. Her voice was low and sweet as she dwelt upon the memories of her father, and when I saw her round white throat contract with the effort for control, I found something else to talk about.

Altogether it was a smooth day and to me a very happy one. Jane had been absent since noon. Her occupations were unquestioned, but when she joined us at the evening dinner it was good to see how her tired face brightened at Zura's girlish way of telling things.

Our guest thanked Jane for the cakes. Said she simply adored bear and tiger cookies, and as for gingerbread Johnnies she couldn't live without them. "It was so good of you to think of me," she told Jane.



“Not at all,” replied Miss Gray. “I was as glad to make them as I am to have you with us. Two lone women in one house are bound to get stale. We need young sweet things about to keep us enthusiastic and poetical.”



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At this Zura's eyes sparkled, but the sincerity of Jane's welcome appealed to her better part and she suppressed a laugh.

\* \* \* \* \*

My house possesses one small guest-room. Without mentioning it, I disposed of a few curios and with the proceeds I ransacked the shops for things suitable for girls. My morning had been spent in arranging my purchases. It was a very sweet moment to me when, after I had ushered in my guest, she stood for a second taking it all in; then putting out her hand she said, "It's like a picture and you are very kind."

Afterwards Jane Gray, looking like a trousered ghost in her outdoor sleeping garments, crept into my study and interrupted the work I was trying to make up.

"Oh, Miss Jenkins," she whispered mysteriously, "I've just thought it all out—a way to make everybody happy, I mean. Wouldn't it be truly splendid if dear Page Hanaford and Zura were to fall in love? It's a grand idea. She has the mares and anners of a duchess and so has he." Excitement invariably twisted Jane's tongue.

"For Heaven's sake, Jane, do you mean airs and manners?"

"Yes, that's what I said," went on Jane undisturbed. "And oh! can you think of anything more sweetly romantic?"

I laid down my pen and asked Miss Gray to look me straight in the eyes. Then I put the question to her: "Will you tell me what on earth romance, sweet or otherwise, has to do with a young fellow struggling not only with poverty, but with something that looks like mystery, and a wild, untamed, wilful girl?"

To which my companion replied: "But just think what love would do to them both!"

I guess the difference in Jane's sentiment and mine is the same as between a soft-shell crab and a hard-shell one.

## VII

### AN INTERRUPTED DINNER

The next two days passed happily, if a little giddily, and Jane and I commanded every resource to entertain our guest. Zura saw and responded like a watch-spring suddenly released. She found in two simple old women perfect subjects on which to vent her long-suppressed spirits. She entered into the activities of the household with such amazing zest, it seemed as if we were playing kitchen furniture. While it surprised me how one young girl could so disturb regular working hours and get things generally a-



flutter, I could easily see that all she needed was a chance to be herself. That was the point that Kishimoto had to understand and would not.

“Please let me be Santa Claus this time, and give out the cod liver oil and the milk and the bibs to the babies,” Zura begged one day when these articles were to be distributed; “and mayn’t I keep the kiddies for just a little while to play with?”

An hour later, attracted by much noise, I walked out into the garden and saw Zura with a clean, but much-patched baby on her back, one in each arm, and a half-dozen trailing behind. The game was “Here we go ’round the mulberry bush,” sung in English and played in Japanese.



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“Oh, Miss Jenkins,” cried the merry leader, “come quick. We need a bush and you will make such a nice fat one.”

Before I knew what was happening I was drawn into the mad frolic, reckless of all the work piled up on my desk in the study. I thought maybe I was growing feeble-minded, but the way to it was delightful, if foolish.

\* \* \* \* \*

Strangely enough, during this time Page Hanaford did not appear. We explained to Zura that he was present the day she made her brief call.

“Oh! do you mean the day I flew into the ‘Misty Star’ and right out again? Yes, I remember his outlines. Where did you find him? Looked more like a sure-enough man than anything I’ve seen in Japan.”

Jane monopolized the talk at breakfast that morning, describing to Zura the good looks of Page Hanaford and the charm of his romantic story.

Zura seemed more amused by Jane’s manner and the funny twist in her tongue than impressed by her description.

Miss Gray finally turned to me and urged once again, “Do let’s have him to-night. I’ll get the dinner.”

Zura clapped her hands and said eagerly, “Oh, let’s do! I haven’t been to a party in a century. If Miss Gray will be the ‘chefess,’ I’ll be assistant potato peeler. I can make the best salad. It’s called ‘Salade de la Marquise de Chateaubriand’; but it won’t hurt you. It is only peanuts and cabbage. Daddy and I used to feast on it once a week.”

There was no resisting her enthusiasm, and I sent a note to Page Hanaford asking him to come that evening for dinner.

After all there was nothing I could label a reason why he and Zura should not meet.

Domesticity was the last thing anybody would suspect a characteristic of either Jane or Zura. Not knowing what the result would be, I gave the cook a holiday and turned the incongruous pair loose to do as they pleased in kitchen and dining-room.

All the afternoon I was busy with my writing, but from time to time there penetrated through the closed doors of my study sounds of swift-moving feet and gay laughter. The old house seemed infected with youth. Contact with it was sweet. Some of my dreams were coming true. I found myself repeating a long-forgotten poem as I took up another stupid report. I even hummed a tune, something I had not done in twenty years.



Just before the dinner hour Jane and Zura came into the living-room. Evidently their work in a common cause put them on the friendliest terms. They were arm in arm, and I knew by the set of Jane's collar and the rose in her hair that young and skilful hands had been at work. Zura's white dress was dainty enough, but it seemed to melt into nothing about the neck and sleeves. It must have been brought from America, as I had seen none like it. Nobody could deny, however, that with her face, all aglow beneath her lustrous hair, she was a goodly sight for young and old.



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“Isn’t she the very sweetest thing?” asked Jane as they approached, adding wistfully, “But I truly wish her dear nose didn’t tilt up!”

Zura with stern, forbidding brows, but laughing eyes, rebuked the wisher. “See here, Miss Jinny Gray, that is the only nose I have, if it is sudden. I’ve worked hard to coax it in the straight and narrow path. I’ve even slept on my face for a week at a time.” Then with swift, dramatic gestures as the gong sounded at the entrance-door, she whispered, “Hush! The man of mystery doth appear!”

Page Hanaford came in. All our tempting tonics and special dishes had failed to curve the angles in the boy’s face and body. He still looked ill. The brooding sadness that frequently overshadowed his lighter moods troubled me.

When he caught sight of Zura, his alertness of manner was pleasing and the kind of joy-look in his eyes did me good. I guessed he was downright glad to see something youthful hovering around the “Misty Star.” I was glad too, but the situation did not seem to call for hurrahs and fireworks. Two young American people meeting, shaking hands, and courteously greeting each other was an unusual sight to me, but after all a natural one. Page said he had been obliged to forego the pleasure of seeing us, as he had been very busy organizing his new classes. He was glad to come again.

We went at once to dinner. I wondered from where the new “chefess” and her assistant “potato peeler” had procured the materials necessary to so pretentious a meal. Though surprised, I soon learned that Jane Gray was mistress of the art of making something beautiful out of nothing.

We sat down to the softly-lighted table. The china was old and somewhat chipped, but on its white background a design in tender blue just matched the fresh larkspur used for table decorations. With the bringing in of each dish prepared by the new cooks the little party grew gayer and friendlier. The quaint old dining-room had never witnessed festivities like these. In the long ago it served as the audience chamber of a Daimyo’s ‘Besso’ or play place. It was here that the feudal lord had held council of war and state. The walls had never before echoed the laughter of joyous youth. Now even the grotesque figures on the carved beams seemed to awaken from a long sleep and give back smile for smile.

Pine Tree and Maple Leaf, gay in holiday dress, usually so precise and formal, fluttered about like distracted butterflies as they served the dinner, often stopping to hide their faces in the long sleeves when Zura honored them with side remarks for, of course, she was the source of all the merriment, the life of the party. She also reduced Jane to a state of helpless laughter. I felt the years dropping away from me, and the face of the boy whom I had learned to love was less strained and brighter than I had ever seen it. He said little at first, but his eyes smiled, and he listened eagerly to all Zura’s chatter and seemed to be hearing once again of joys dreamed of and a world lost to him.



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I knew myself growing happier every minute. The after-dinner coffee was not necessary to make, somewhere near my heart, little thrills jump up and down, like corn in a hot popper. I was getting what my soul craved—companionship, contact with life, and a glimpse into the doings of youth's magic years.

We soon returned to the living-room. Page prepared to smoke, and we settled down to a friendly, intimate time.

The talk turned to school. Jane had been telling of a Japanese woman, who, handicapped by the loss of an arm, and no longer being useful in field work, trudged every morning eight miles to school where she could learn sewing so as to help husband and babies.

"Well!" remarked Zura doubtingly. "I can't sew with two hands, and my tongue thrown in. I do not see how she manipulates anything so contrary as a needle, single-fisted."

"Oh! my dear," said Jane, "you can believe with one hand just as hard as you can with two. It's hoping with all your might, while one is doing, that makes our dreams come true. I'm afraid you never really loved school."

"Oh, yes, I did in spots," she said. "Especially if there were a fight on—I mean—a contest. I could bear with cheerful resignation all the V.P's., the B.B's., and chilly zeros they tagged on to my department, but I would have worked myself into a family skeleton, before I would permit another girl to outclass me in a test exam! I could forgive the intellectual her sunset hair, but her Grecian nose—never!"

The methods employed by the two contestants as related by Zura had called forth my unqualified sympathy for the teacher when once again the gong on my front-door rang out and a voice was heard asking for Miss Wingate.

Zura jumped up from her seat and greeted the visitor with frank delight. "Oh!" she said, "it's Pinkey Chalmers! Who'd believe it! Hello, Pinkey! My! but it is good to see somebody from home."

There was ushered into the room a well nourished looking chap, who greeted Zura by her first name familiarly. I did not need to be told that he was the young man with whom she had been seen on the highway. He was introduced to me as Mr. Tom Chalmers; I was told he had earned his nickname, "Pinkey," by contracting the pink-shirt habit.

The youth was carelessly courteous and very sure of himself. My impression was that he had seen too much of the world and not enough of his mother. He declined my invitation to dine, saying he had had late tea before he left the ship which was coaling in a nearby port.



“I started early,” he went on, “but maybe you think I didn’t have a great old time finding this place. You said in your note, Zura, it was the ‘Misty Star’ at the top of the hill. Before I reached here I thought it must be the last stopping-place in the Milky Way. Climbing up those steps was something awful.”

Mr. Chalmers mopped his rosy brow, but later conversation proved his sensitiveness to feminine beauty quite overbalanced his physical exhaustion, as on the way many pretty girls peeped out from behind paper doors.

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Page kept in the background, plainly arranging a mode of escape. He soon excused himself on the plea of work, saying as he left, "I'll drop in some time to-morrow for the book. You'll find it by then."

With the look of a disappointed child on her face, Jane called to her little attendants, went to her room and resumed her knitting.

The unbidden guest was gaiety itself, and there was no denying the genuine pleasure of the girl. As the night was warm and glorious, I suggested that Zura and her guest sit on the balcony.

I picked up a book and sat by my reading lamp, but my eyes saw no printed words. My mind was busy with other thoughts. I was a woman without experience and had never lived in the world of these two. But intuition is stronger than custom and longer than fashion. The standards I held for the boys and girls of my country were high and noble. Frankly I did not like the man's attention to Zura, the intimate companionship suggested by his actions, nor his unreserved manner. The girl had told us of their chance meeting on the steamer coming from Seattle. Any mention of his name on her part was so open, she spoke of him as just a good playfellow to help her to pass away the time, I could not believe her feelings involved. But, fearful tragedies can be fostered by loneliness and in Mr. Chalmers's easy familiarity with the lonely girl, there was something wanting; I could only name it chivalry. Yet, as their voices came to me, glad, happy, vibrant with the joys of youth and its interests, I thought perhaps I did not understand the ways of the young and their customs, because I had never known their delights. On and on the boy and girl talked, unheeding my presence and the fact that I could hear.

From out the open window I caught a glimpse of the radiant blue between the distant hills and the light of the great evening star as it flashed its eternal message to the sparkling waters below.

Zura saw it and called softly to her companion, "Hush, Pinkey! Look! Isn't that a bit of heaven?"

And he of the earth replied, "I am looking at you. That is all the heaven I want just now."

"You silly!" was the unvexed reproof.

After a pause they began to talk of queer and, to me, far-off things—something about the "average" of "Giants" and "Cubs," of "quarter-backs," "full-backs" and a kind of "great rush," though what it was after I never knew. I supposed he was telling her of some wild tribe festival when he spoke of dances bearing the names of animals and fowls. It was all as incomprehensible to me as Hindustanee.



At last he said to her, "Well, girlie, I'm about due to leave now. I am sorry, but I must be moving." Then more softly, "Remember to-morrow night. You take a wrap and I'll see to the lunch. Boat will be ready at eight. By Jove! with a night like this what a lark it will be!"

The meaning of this was as clear as my crystal paper weight, and between the door where Mr. Chalmers bade Zura good-night and the lodge where I aroused the sleeping Ishi to his duty of custodian my thoughts went around like a fly-wheel on full duty.



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The reflected flame of the old bronze lantern, swayed by the night-wind, fell on the great gate and transformed the carved dragons and attendant demons into living, moving things.

The departing guest saw it and remarked with a mock fear, "That dragonette seems alive; hope he and his angels will not follow me. Some carving that!"

"Are you interested in curious things, Mr. Chalmers?"

"I should say. Everything from jiu-jitsu to eels and chopsticks catches me."

"Have you ever seen a garden in this country which boasts some three or four centuries of birthdays?"

"No; but I should like to gaze on the spectacle."

Here was my opportunity to get in serious conference with the young man, and as it seemed one of the few sights Mr. Chalmers had missed, I was charmed to make my offer.

"My garden is very famous," I said, "and just now it is in its full beauty. I wonder if you would come to-morrow morning and permit me to show it to you?"

"Sure. Thanks," was the answer as he swung down the street and into the sleeping town below.

## VIII

### MR. CHALMERS SEES THE GARDEN AND HEARS THE TRUTH

Early next day I cornered Jane privately and told her of the conversation I had overheard the night before and the visitor I was expecting, adding, "This is Orphan Asylum day. I can't go, but take Zura with you. I don't want her to see that Chalmers boy again. He's too friendly, too highly colored to suit my ideas."

If my tones were sharper than the occasion demanded, it was because of the combination of a shriveled cash account, and an undesirable male around. The general disturbance of mind made me say, not quite honestly:

"He may be all right, but so far I can see not one good quality in Mr. Chalmers's make-up."



“Oh! yes, there is, Miss Jenkins,” said Jane, quick to defend. “He can whistle beautifully. Last night as he went down the street you should have heard, ‘Oh! Promise Me!’ It was so pretty I almost cried.”

“Spare your tears, Jane; the prettiest whistle that ever grew never made a real man. Mr. Chalmers will have to shine in another direction before I am convinced. Now get Zura and clear out, and don’t you dare to take more than one basket of gingerbread Johnnies to the orphans.”

\* \* \* \* \*

When Mr. Tom Chalmers walked in at ten o’clock he barely concealed his regret at there being only an elderly hostess to receive him. The garden where I conducted my visitor, might have added joy to its symbol of peace on this perfect day of early spring. In each flower, in every leaf a glad spirit seemed to dwell. The feathered tribe that made its home among the branches madly rejoiced in a melody of song and twitterings. A white mother pigeon sheltered her young in a gnarled old plum tree, full-blossomed and crimson, while in a lofty pine old man crow scolded all birdkind as he swayed on the topmost branch, a bit of ebony against the matchless sky of blue.



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There is only one effectual way of dealing with things one does not want to do—make past history of them as fast as possible. Very soon after entering the garden I asked Mr. Chalmers, who was mildly interested in the beauties before him, to sit down with me. Without further dallying, I went straight to the point of the interview. I told him I had heard him make the appointment with Zura the night before and he seemed to have forgotten to mention the matter to me, though I was close by. For a time at least I was responsible for Zura, and I thought it best to call his attention to a few facts which could not be overlooked.

“I wonder, Mr. Chalmers, if you realize that in this country it is impossible for a boy and a girl to associate together alone. It is barely permissible for you to see her in the company of others. Already your attentions have caused Zura to be talked about and there is very serious trouble with her grandfather. Further than that, the excursion you are planning for to-night is not only improper in any country, but it means actual disgrace here.”

“It does? Well, I’ll be hanged! Can’t take a girl out and give her a good time! I knew these Japs were fools, but their laws are plain rot.”

“Possibly, from your standpoint, Mr. Chalmers; but you see these laws and customs were in good working order in Japan long before Columbus had a grandfather. They can’t be changed on the spur of the moment.”

“That’s all right,” he responded hotly. “What you can’t change you can sometimes break; I’m good at that kind of game.”

Something in the boy’s resentful face said that I was an impudent old meddler, an officious interloper. It made my voice as sharp as pins. “Very well, young man,” I said, “there will be just one time in your life’s history when you have encountered both an old law and an old woman that you will neither break nor change. Your attentions to Zura Wingate have got to be stopped and at once.”

“Stopped!” he retorted. “Who’s going to make me? I come from a free country where every fellow is his own boss. I’ll do as I please. What do I care about the laws of these little brown monkeys! Where would they be anyhow if it wasn’t for America? Didn’t we yank ’em out of their hermits’ nest and make them play the game whether they wanted to or not? They had better lay low! Don’t they know there are ninety millions of us? Why, with one hand tied behind we could lick the Rising Sun clean off their little old flag!”

If it ever happened, I wondered about what point in the battle I could locate Mr. Pinkey Chalmers. The more he talked, the less I was sure of my pet belief in the divine right of the individual. Then my heart jumped; I saw Page Hanaford coming.

“The maid was unable to find the book I came for. She directed me here. Do I interrupt?” he asked on reaching us, bowing slightly and looking inquiringly from my frowning face to Pinkey Chalmers’s wrathful one.



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“Interrupt? No,” said that youth. “Welcome to our prayer-meeting! I’ve planned a picnic and a sail for Zura and me to-night. This lady says it shall not be and I’m speculating who’s going to stop it.”

Page stepped quietly up to the defiant Pinkey. “I will, Mr. Chalmers, if necessary. I know nothing of your plans, but in this place Miss Jenkins’s word is law. You and I are here to obey it as gentlemen.”

Tommy blazed. “Gentlemen! Who are you, I’d like to know, pushing in and meddling with my affairs,” he said.

At the challenge the old look of confusion momentarily clouded Page’s eyes. Then with an effort he found himself. “My ancestry would not appeal to you, sir. But”—half good-humoredly—“the punch of my fist might.”

[Illustration: Page started forward. A sound stopped him]

“Oh h—h—ho!” stuttered Pinkey, angry and game. “You want to fight, do you! Light in! I’m ready.”

Page started forward. A sound stopped him. It was voices singing an age-old nursery tune:

“Skip to my loobyloo,  
Skip to my loobyloo,  
Skip to my loobyloo  
All of a Saturday morning.”

It was a strange and curious sight in that wonderful old garden. Down the sandy path under the overhanging blossoms came Jane and Zura, skipping and bowing in time to the game’s demands. The last line brought them to us. Hand in hand they stopped, Zura dishevelled, Jane’s hat looking as if it grew out of her ear, but old maid and young were laughing and happy as children.

“We were practising games for the ‘Sylumites,’” explained Zura. “I’m premier danseuse to the Nipponese kiddies and Lady Jenny is my understudy. What’s the argument?” she asked, observing first one face, then the other, keenly alive to some inharmony.

Mr. Chalmers started to speak.

I cut him short. “Zura, take Mr. Hanaford with you and give him the book he wants. You’ll find it on my desk. You go too, Jane, and help; Mr. Hanaford is in a hurry. I’ll bring Mr. Chalmers later.”



“Lovely!” exclaimed Jane; “and everybody will stay to lunch. Come on, let’s have a feast.”

A feast! Jane knew well enough it was bean soup and salad day, and not even a sweet potato in the pantry. Miss Gray and Zura started house-ward, slowly followed by Page. He had looked very straight at Mr. Chalmers, who returned the gaze, adding compound interest, and a contemptuous shrug.

They were barely out of hearing when he began, “Brave soldier of fortune, that! Where did he come from?” Without waiting for me to answer he went on: “I didn’t know you were a missionary, else you couldn’t have tied me with a rope and made me listen to a sermon and a peck of golden texts ‘a la Japanese.’”

“Unfortunately, Mr. Chalmers, I’m not a missionary. If I were, I would leave off teaching the so-called heathen at once and be head chaplain to some of the ninety millions you were talking about. Speaking of golden texts, I know my Bible too well to cast pearls. Now, young man, once for all let me say, this thing simply cannot be. Zura is a lonely girl in a strange land. She must live under her grandfather’s roof. Your slightest attention will make mountains of difficulty for her, and she is not going with you to-night even if you mean to marry her to-morrow.”



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Pinkey turned nearly white. "Marry her!" he exclaimed, "Why, I'm engaged to a girl back home."

"Why, I never intended to marry her," he went on, more concerned than at any time before. "I was just having a little flirtation."

A little flirtation! By the powers that be! My country had progressed if it had come to the place where a man could swear allegiance to one woman, then blithely sail the seas to find heaven in another woman's eyes!

My few days' experience with a girl had set me more problems than I ever found in arithmetic. This boy was a whole algebra, and they both belonged to my country where I thought rearing children was like growing flowers. Not only were things happening, I was learning new lessons faster than I really cared for. I asked him if Zura knew of his engagement.

"No," he replied as he walked restlessly about, "I just met her coming over. She isn't in love with me and I don't trouble others with my private affairs."

"Really! I am afraid your manly self-control will cause Zura many a heart ache. I know of nothing more contemptible than being engaged to one girl and flirting with another."

"Most men do it," he answered sullenly.

"I don't believe you, boy, and it will take more proof than you can furnish to convince me that the men of my country have so low a standard of honor." I put a heavy accent on "men."

My guest flushed. "Well, I like that! What do you call me?"

"A thoughtless boy," I said. "But if you want to be a man, here's your chance. You go right back to your ship; write to Zura; tell her of your engagement and why you cannot see her any more; then stay away."

I knew as little about men as I did about fashion, but I plunged on. "What do you think the girl back home would think? Suppose somebody treated her as you have treated Zura? Shame on you, boy! Be a man and help an old woman as well as a young one."

The desire to have his own way died hard, but something conquered. "I'll do it! Just watch me," he said at last, a certain bravado accompanying his words.

I could see that he was much disturbed by our interview. He rose and moved towards the gate. His effort to live up to his newly-awakened manhood was boyish, but sincere.



He whirled about suddenly and said, "Miss Jenkins, I apologize to you and Zura. I—I'm awfully sorry. Zura is such a jolly chum, and she was very lonely; I wasn't any too gay myself at leaving home. But, honestly, I didn't mean to make it hard for her. I—I didn't think. Please tell her."

Impulsively he took my hand and lightly kissed it. But for his earnestness I would have thought it impudent. He was soon gone.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Where's Pink Tommy?" cried Zura, as I entered the living-room.

"Where's Mr. Hanaford?" I questioned back.

"Why, he took his book and left. Didn't you say he was in a hurry?"



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“Yes, I did; so was Mr. Chalmers. He left good-by!”

“Good-by?” In Zura’s question there was much annoyance and some anger.

Jane chimed in. “Both the boys gone? What a pity! I’ve just made a relly joll.”

Whether intentional or not, Jane’s twisted words sent a little breeze of laughter before the coming storm. For the rest of the afternoon Zura had little to say. Book in hand she sat in the windowseat overlooking the water, watching the snow-white sails skim the opal sea.

I made no further explanation of Mr. Chalmers or his call, thinking it best to await the arrival of his note.

It came just before night. The reading of it left Zura white. She looked at me stonily, “I suppose,” she began, stiff with anger, “that you did this.”

“I did,” I answered, looking into her blazing eyes.

“And I suppose too,” she continued with withering scorn, “that was why the gay cavalier kissed your hand. I saw him through the window. So touching! That’s what you were plotting when I found you in the garden. Page Hanaford was in it too; I saw it in his face. I hate him! I hate everything! Oh!” she cried, with a sudden outburst of passion, “the lot of you are a pack of withered mummies. Not one of you know what it means to be homesick; how I’m aching for a good time! Yes, I was going with Pinkey to have a picnic on the island. Yes, I was going to slip off without telling you. How could you understand? What was the harm in my having a little pleasure? Do you think I intend to bend to the rules of this law-cursed country? No, I will not! I’ll go where I please. I’ll have my own friends!”

As gently as I could I forced her to go to her room and listen to what I had to say. I related what had passed between Mr. Chalmers and me, of the fatal thing she was contemplating and how her grandfather had appealed to me for help. Never had I dreamed of such passion, such grief in a young girl. She was like some wild thing, trying to beat its way to freedom through prison bars.

No word of mine, however tender, seemed to touch her. I began to feel useless, miserable, and a joy killer in general. I almost wished for the dull days of old; at least I knew how to deal with them. I could give points to the Minister of Education, talk volubly at Mothers’ Meetings and translate Confucius from the original, but I was helpless before this girl in her conflict with conditions to which she could never yield and which she fought with all the fierceness of undisciplined strength. I could think of no word to comfort her. I sought to divert her. “Zura, listen! Do you remember the hat I wore the first day I came to see you? You do remember, for I saw you smiling at it.



Well, I've worn it for eight years. Don't cry, Dearie; please don't; and I'll let you send to Yokohama and select me another one."

Sending to Yokohama for anything had always been an event to me. It was the only excitement I could think of. But Zura flung herself around at me. "Hang your old hat! What is a hat to a man, and he the only friend I have out here. I don't care if there was another girl! She can have him. He was somebody to play with. It was something to do, a touch of home. Oh! it's cruel! cruel!"



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Though another ideal was gone to smash, I was almost ready to cry myself with relief that it was only a playmate Zura wanted in Pinkey and not a sweetheart. Even at that I was at my wit's ends again to know what to say next when the door opened. Jane had heard the commotion, and there she stood in her sleeping garments and cap, a kimono floating behind her. In one hand was her candle, in the other the only ornament she possessed—a stuffed parrot!

She came in and, as if talking to soothe a three-year-old child, she coaxed, “Zury, Zury, don't cry! Look what Jane has to show you. This is Willie. For a long time he was my only friend; then he died. I missed him terribly at first; but don't you cry about Mr. Pinkey. There are plenty more men in this world, just as there are plenty more parrots and as easy to get.”

“Oh, I wish everybody had died!” the girl sobbed on, heedless of Jane's attempt at comfort. Suddenly, turning away from us, she stretched her arms to the starlit space beyond the windows and cried, “I want my home! I want my friends! I want life!”

\* \* \* \* \*

Hours later the great golden moon rose from out the velvety shadows of the mountains. It looked in the window, found a sleeping girl, and kissed the heavy lashes still wet with passionate tears. Veering still farther around to the balcony, it rested on two silent old women.

From the city there floated up to us the tinkling of the samisens in the tea-houses; the high, sweet voice of a dancing girl as she sang the story of an old, old love; the sad notes of the blind masseur as he sought for trade by the pathos of his bamboo flute; the night-taps from the far-away barracks. Off to the west we could see the fast-disappearing lights of a Pacific steamer.

Neither sounds nor sights seemed to touch Miss Gray nor ruffle her serenity. For a long time she had been looking steadily into space, as if held by a mental vision of some spiritual glory.

“Jane,” I asked at last, “what shall we do?”

Maybe it was the moon, but something had smoothed out every wrinkle in her face. She looked young and wise, as she leaned over and put her hand on mine. Here was a Jane I had never known before. In a voice low and sweet, she repeated the ancient hymn:

“God holds the key of all unknown  
And I am glad.  
If other hands should hold the key,



Or if He trusted it to me,  
I might be sad.”

From that night my feeling of superiority to Jane diminished. Some of her strong sweetness, penetrating what seemed the crusty exterior of my heart, entered in to abide with me always.

## **IX**

### **JANE HOPES; KISHIMOTO DESPAIRS**

When Zura appeared the following morning no reference was made to the events of the night before. She was pale and coldly courteous. In her sharp brightness there was no hint of an olive branch being hid about her to be offered to me or presented to her grandfather when she returned to his house that day, as previously arranged.



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Once only did the girl's manner soften, and then neither to Jane nor to me. Outside, from every glint of the sun on the new green of the pines to the joyous call of the white sea birds, was the glad message of spring, and spring in this lovely Island is no mere promise of things to come, but an everlasting fulfilment of the glorious promises made in the hour the great Artist dreamed it.

Zura looked through the window at the sea, gaily breaking its silvered crests against the gray old rocks and, just above, the great patches of rose-pink cherries streaking the blue haze of the mountains. As the girl took in the tender beauty of the scene some memory seemed to touch her. Her eyes filled, her lips trembled; but she quickly recovered herself and soon after made her adieus.

I walked with her to the gate and watched her go down the long flight of steps. Everything about her, from the poise of her head to the swing of her body, courted conflict and prophesied disaster. I felt as if I had snatched a bag of candy from a hungry child.

A week later Kishimoto San came to make the call customary on occasions when any kindness had been done to him or his family. His gratitude for my efforts to make some headway with Zura was very sincere. He supplemented his thanks by a large box of cake. The gift was decorated with a red string and a good-luck emblem and wrapped in a bright yellow cloth. From the atmosphere, all concerned needed not only good luck, but something the color of sunshine; one look into Kishimoto San's face assured me it was neither springtime nor rosetime in the path he was treading.

My visitor was a busy man of many affairs, and I a woman much occupied; but custom said that a ceremonial visit must be just so long, and Kishimoto would rather break his neck once a week than a rule of etiquette once a life-time.

So we fell to talking of a recent trip he had made to Yokohama. He said a great foreign fleet was visiting the port. The festivities and the gaieties were unending. He had been only a looker-on, but a deeply-interested observer.

He spoke of how his country had strained its every resource to give welcome to this fleet, making a neighborly call, though armed to the ship's last rail. He continued:

"The whole scene give me reminder of one very small boy who had grand record of good fight, also he has the great exhaustion of strength from last battle with tall giant. Small boy has poverty too, but he draw forth his many ancient toy for guest to play. Makes big debt of money to give him feast. He very much desire to keep face of big boy all covered with smiles."

Then from the way my visitor half shut his eyes and looked at me, I knew something more was coming.



“Americans are a great people, but disagree with their wonderfulness.”

“You mean they are inconsistent?” I suggested.

Kishimoto San, being too much in earnest to search for the proper English, dropped into Japanese—



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“Yes, the old proverb fits them, ‘A physician breaking the rules of health.’”

“Why do you say that of my people?” I asked in a moment on the defensive.

“Because you literally strain your bodies to hold very high a moral standard for other nations, that you, yourselves fail to follow.”

“What do you mean?”

He went on slowly:

“I was wondering if it is the custom in your country for ladies to smoke and drink liquor in public places?”

“Ladies!” I repeated amazed. “American women smoke and drink in public or other places! Certainly not,” I declared emphatically. “Why do you hint at such a thing?”

Thirty years’ absence from my country had glorified my ideal of its womanhood.

“Only this,” said Kishimoto San, “several times while in Yokohama I had occasion to visit the Ocean Hotel. On the broad veranda facing the sea were seated numbers of great men and ladies together, many of them were smoking and I could not count the number of cocktails they consumed.”

“They were not American women,” was my vigorous protest.

“Yes, madam, they were. First they were beautiful and sparkle with eyes and tongue. All men bow down to them same as we bow to our Empress. Then afterwards I examine register and clerk of hotel confirm my thought.”

“Possibly what you say is true, Kishimoto San, but hasn’t it a flavor of littleness to label as a national habit the acts of a few exhilarated travelers? What have you to say of the vast army of American women who could not be forced into doing the things you mention?”

“Nothing. Except I was just wondering how America could spare so many missionaries. You know we do not beg for their company.”

“It is not well for you to forget what your country of all others owes to the missionaries,” I reminded him. “Though your beliefs are as far apart as the Poles, your sense of justice can but acknowledge that the unselfish service of the missionaries has led your people to heights they never could have reached without them.”

“True,” he responded, “it was not of their work in this country I was speaking, but the need of more work in their own. You have very good story in your big book about the



'beam and mote.' Do not the morals of your own country need uplifting before you insist on sending emissaries to turn my people from the teachings of many centuries? Has your religion and system of education proved so infallible for yourselves that you must force it upon others? Ah, madam, America has led us far and high, but the West is for the West and the East is for the East. So far, on the road to progress they can march side by side. Further than that, the paths divide and are separated by insurmountable differences, because your country is ruled by the teachings of freedom which you cannot practise. We are governed by the will of our divine Emperor, and the spirit of our ancestors. And I pray the great Amida before my country is stripped of her love and reverence for these, my poor spirit will be annihilated. For if they are taken away, what can we put in their places save the liberty of the Occident, which means license in the Orient."



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I heard him in silence, for while there was much truth in what he said, many times we had argued ourselves into a fever over these questions and never got anywhere. We could no more agree than we could worship the same God.

For my part, whatever might be the erratic actions of a few of its freakish individuals, my faith in my country and its people is my faith in my God. I was old fashioned enough to believe every man his brother's keeper. There was nothing more for me to say.

For him, intense loyal patriot that he was, his devotion to crumbling old standards was making his fight against the new a bitter and hopeless struggle. But I had never seen the man so stirred as he was this day. He went on:

"What of the teachings for your young? They may do for your country, but not for mine! So far as I can see, your boys and girls are left to grow as weeds. They are as free as the foxes and learn their cunning without their wisdom. They are without filial piety. They reverence neither ancestors, the law, nor the great gods. Neither do they fear their own devil, nor the evil spirits."

"How do you know this?" I inquired.

"I know because I have seen their comings and goings. I have heard their free speech before the face of their parents and mothers-in-law. And I have seen them as visitors in the temples. Because"—the man's voice shook with feeling—"I have in my house a girl with the blood of the East in her veins and the influence of the West in her life. She is rebellious, rude and irreverent. Only this morning, when I gave warning what vengeance the great Buddha would send upon her for impiety, did she not toss her red head and laughingly scoff in my face." At this point I arose and rang for tea and my visitor continued: "Ah, I tremble at her daring. It is her foreign blood, her training. It will curse us yet."

I cheerfully assured him that I thought it would unless he could bring himself to see that the girl was entitled to a few rights as well as himself. I inquired how things had gone since Zura's visit to me. He said she had not often referred to her visit; when she did it was in pleasant terms. But her attitude to him and his household was as disrespectful as ever and, he thought, more defiant.

He then spoke of a great Buddhist festival that had begun that week and was to continue for several days. It was very important that each member of his family should attend and take part in every service. So far Zura had refused to go. With sketch-book in hand she disappeared from the house every morning. While he had not seen or heard of her being with the young officer man, he had no doubt she spent her time in his company.



In as few words as possible I told Kishimoto of my interview with Mr. Chalmers, and his promise not to come again nor to further complicate matters.

My listener was more than pleased. "I thank you," he said impressively. "You are a strong-minded woman."



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When I remarked that Japan was no place for a weak-minded one he seemed to think again about smiling, but changed his mind and asked me solemnly if I would not honor him by coming to his house the following evening and, with his family, attending the great festival on the last night.

I accepted the invitation and he left.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the evening Page Hanaford came to dinner. When I told him Zura had returned to her home, the smile on his face faded. It spread to his lips and eyes as I rehearsed the close of my interview with Mr. Chalmers.

"I sincerely hope that danger is passed," I said earnestly.

"I would not consider Mr. Chalmers dangerous by nature, only by thoughtlessness," remarked Page; "his bravado needs seasoning like his youth. Will you not let me help you, Miss Gray?" he exclaimed as that lady came in almost smothered in the packages her frail arms held.

"Oh! it's just grand—how many nice people there are in the world," the little missionary said enthusiastically, when relieved of her burdens and seated. "That druggist gentleman was lovely. I bought a jar of vaseline, and he found out I could talk English. Then I found out he was trying to talk it; I told him about my hospital, and he gave me all these splendid medicines I brought in. There's court-plaster and corn-salve and quinine and tooth-powder and a dozen milk bottles for the babies, and plenty of cans to put things in. That's a good start for my drug store."

"The drug store and the patients, but the building!" I exclaimed. "Only a dream! I don't want to be a cold-water dasher but, Jane Gray, where will your visions lead you?"

"To Heaven, Miss Jenkins; that's where they were meant to lead. My hospital is a dream now because it is not built. But it's going to be soon; I know it. Didn't that splendid Japanese man clothe and educate hundreds of orphans for years on faith, pure and simple? Of course my little hospital is on the way! What better proof does anybody want than the story of Mr. Hoda's Orphan Asylum?"

"Give us the story," urged Page, sinking into a big chair, after he had made Jane comfortable.

"Indeed I will. I love to tell it for Mr. Hoda certainly sold his soul for the highest price."

"When he was a very young and ambitious man, doing without food to get his medical education, three homeless babies fell into his hands. He and his mother lived on a little less and made room for the children. Soon more waifs drifted in. Mr. Hoda couldn't turn



them away, but he wondered where he was to get the food for them. Then he had a vision and a dream. In it a great famine was sweeping the land. He saw a Man beautiful, but sorrowful, toiling up a steep mountain, with His arms full of helpless children and more clinging to His white garments. This wonderful Being turned and saw the great pity in Mr. Hoda's eyes, then

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called back, 'Help me care for the many that are left. I will never forsake you nor them.' After that, Mr. Hoda knew what his work was. He fought so hard to follow his vision he burned all his doctor's books for fear he might be tempted. He had gone hungry to buy those books. A long time after, Mr. Hoda didn't care about them, for his vision brought him the beautifullest faith. He knew food and clothing for the children would come, and often there hasn't been a bite nor a penny in the house and almost time for the dinner bell to ring, when from somewhere food or the way to buy it, would come pouring in as though that Orphan Asylum was built in a land filled with manna and flowing with honey. Mr. Hoda and his flock of orphans have waited but never wanted. I'm waiting; but I am just as sure of my dream as I am of my friends."

"Of course you are," encouraged Page. "Talk of removing mountains! Why, a faith like that would set a whole Himalayan range to dancing. You are a great little missionary, Miss Gray."

"Thank you, Mr. Page; missionaries are not great. We can't help living what we believe. Wouldn't you be very happy if you were as certain and sure of all your dreams as we are?"

"Happy!" cried the boy, getting up and walking about. "I'd give a life-time to know—- never mind. Your hospital will come true. When it does we will ask the city to decorate as it is doing to-day for some big festival. My! the streets look like bargain day in Christmas trees," he ended, recovering some of his light spirits.

"That's so. There is a festival. What is it, Miss Jenkins?"

I explained the meaning of the festival, which was more strictly observant of ritual and old customs than any other of the year, and I told of Kishimoto San's invitation to me.

Miss Gray exclaimed anxiously, "But you are not going?" Jane was slow in shaking off the limitations of the doctrine that branded all religions in a foreign country as idolatrous and contaminating.

I said I intended going.

"Oh, Miss Jenkins," Jane cried, "do be careful! They might ask you to bow down before one of those heathen idols, and maybe they might make you offer at its feet a stick of something smelly in one of those insect burners."

For the first time since I had known Page Hanaford, he shouted with laughter. "Sweet aroma of incense, that's a blow for you!" he said. "Come to think of it, I believe I'll happen along and see how it's done."



## X

### ZURA GOES TO THE FESTIVAL

On my way to join the festival party at the appointed time I passed through the streets of the city, brilliant with decorations of flags and lanterns. Gay crowds sauntered beneath graceful arches of pine and lacy bamboo. For the time worry and work were laid aside with every-day dress, and like smiling, happy children on a picnic, the vast throngs moved toward the temple where the great "Matsuri" was in progress. A man deaf and blind would have known it was a holiday by the feel in the air. He would also have felt as I did the change in the atmosphere as he neared Kishimoto's house.



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The maid, who answered my summons, said the family would soon be ready to start; the hairdresser had finished; the ceremonial obis were being tied for the madams; the Dana San had about completed his devotions before the household shrine. Would I bring my most august body into the living-room and hang my honorable self upon the floor?

I complied with the request and found Zura alone.

Considering the strained relations at our last parting and the solemnity of the present occasion, she greeted me with a flippancy that was laughable. "Oh, here's Miss Jenkins! Welcome to our happy home, and I certainly wish you joy on this jaunt."

"Are you not going with us?" I asked, observing that she carried in her hand a paint-box as well as her hat.

"Not I," she laughed. "I'd picnic with Mrs. Satan and her family first. But do come in. The ogre awaits you. One of the two witches has just had a spell."

"Which one?" I inquired, putting into my question every inviting tone at my command. I was determined to get on terms of friendliness with this girl. Had not I in the long ago longed for liberty and for life as I had never craved orthodox salvation? Not even to myself had I acknowledged how strong an appeal to my love of fair play, was Zura's frank rebellion against being reduced to an emotionless creature guaranteed to move at the command of her Masters.

All her warfare had been in the open. At no time in her visit to me, did she mention the unhappy conditions at her home nor voice complaints of its inmates.

Undisciplined, untrained as she was, there was in her nature a certain reserve which compelled admiration. When not on the defensive for what she considered her rights, she had a decided sweetness that drew me irresistibly. I did not approve of her methods, but my sympathy was deep for this child of freedom forced to live in the painful restrictions of a conservative Japanese family.

I was beginning to see that Zura would break long before she would bend. To break at all meant disaster. To break alone meant ruin. She was of my country, my people. Without further ado I arrayed myself on the side of the one who had four against her.

Before she answered my question, she looked at me as a chained creature might eye a strange hand to see if it were outstretched for a caress or a blow. Having decided, she went on, "The ancientest one. Some red lilies I carried brought on the fit. An hour ago I gathered a few from the rice fields and took them to my room. When the old dame saw their crimson petals she began to foam at the mouth and splutter a lot of nonsense about the flowers being tongues of flame; she said they would set the house on fire and



burn us all to a cinder. If I thought that I'd bring a cartload, and then run. She took them away and threw them in the hot bath. The lovely things shriveled like scalded baby hands. About then, my august grandfather arrived on the scene. He ordered me to put on Japanese dress and come to their old festival. I've planned otherwise, and I won't do it." She put on her hat and stabbed it with a long pin.



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“Look here, Zura,” I ventured, “you’ll miss a joyfully good time if you don’t go. The country people swarm to these festivals, and babies are as thick as ants. You’ll see more pictures than you can paint in a life-time. There are queer things to buy and funny things to eat. The fire-walking ceremony is wonderful.”

This caught her attention. “What do they do at this ceremony?”

“It has been a long time since I saw it, but I remember it was thrilling to watch the worshipers walk barefoot over the hot coals. Come along with me, Zura. Come on,” I urged, seeking in my mind for a more persuasive word and finding a memory of Mr. Pinkey Chalmers to help me out, “and we’ll make a night of it.”

I saw nothing humorous in what I had said, but it had a curious effect on Zura. She changed her mind so swiftly, her manner grew so gleeful, I thought maybe I had made a promise I could not keep.

“All right, old sport,” she laughed with reckless gaiety, “I’ll go; you stick to me and I’ll give you the time of your young life. But make it clear to the devotees in this house that I won’t tie myself up in a kimono; neither will I bend an inch before any of those dropsical-looking images.”

Soon we heard the rustle of the Master’s silken garments. He entered, closely followed by his mother, wife and daughter, their kimonos and obis in colors soft and mellow as befitted older women, and each covered with an overcoat thin of texture and rich in quality. This outer garment was the insignia not only of rank, but of the grave importance of the occasion.

Their greetings to me were soon over, and Zura announced that she was going with us.

Without a glimmer of pleasure in her seeming willingness to obey, her grandfather said, “It is well.”

Had he glanced at the girl when he voiced it, he would have chosen other words. In her very bright eyes there was a look which boded no spirit of good will.

Kishimoto San, with his mother, led the way on our pilgrimage. We followed behind; and bringing up the rear was an army of servants loaded with blankets, cushions and hampers of food. It was to be a long session of worship and festivities, and the family would need all the comforts of home before their return.

The festival was called “Tanjo Shaka” (Buddha’s Birthday), and as our little party passed through the great gates the crowds of holiday-makers, which thronged the enclosure, testified to the popularity of the day. The broad avenue leading to the steps of the old temple was lined on each side by temporary booths, from which one could purchase



anything from a hot sweet potato to a much-decorated prayer, from false teeth to a charm to ward off the chicken-pox.

There was a man who made a dainty fan while you waited; the cook who made a cake while you prayed; the handkerchief man and the sock man; and ah me! the funny old codger, bald of head and shriveled of body, but with a bit of heaven in his weary old eyes. It was the reflection of the baby faces about him. His was the privilege of fashioning from sticky, sweet dough wonderful flowers of brilliant hue and the children flocked about him like birds of Paradise to a field of grain.

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On every side were set up images of the infant Buddha. Around these, worshipers crowded that they might purchase some portion of the licorice tea poured over the image and supposed to guard against many evils.

Groups of white-garbed pilgrims from distant cities passed on to worship, their tinkling bells keeping time to the soft pad of their sandaled feet. Under the overhanging boughs of the ancient trees were placed low platforms spread with bright red blankets, and thereon sat the family groups. In these throngs very few were well off in worldly possessions. For the masses this day meant curtailment of necessities for many other days. It was a willing sacrifice, for, having done duty at the temple and cheerfully contributed their hard-earned "rin," they yielded themselves up to the enjoyment of being set free, in a space where neither worry nor want were permitted to enter, where their poor lives touched something higher or less sordid than themselves. The day was a gift of the gods and they would be merry, for to-morrow was toil and poverty. It was neither satisfying nor permanent but all so simple and happy. Only a heartless stickler for creed and dogma would have labeled it idolatry or banished from the garden of the temple the participants who were childlike in their enjoyment.

It took us some time to make our way to the building where Kishimoto guided us that he with his family might first offer their devotions. Once there, the ceremony began. I was not expected to participate and stood aside. It was not without anxiety that I heard the grandfather give a stern command to Zura to approach and kneel with him before the great bronze image, and her equally rigid refusal to do so.

With difficulty the proud old Buddhist refrained from creating a scene before the other worshipers, but it was plain that he was stung to the quick for the honor of his religion. From the look in his face he only bided his time.

The girl moved nearer to me and none too quietly mocked priest and worshiper gaily. Both maid and man seemed determined once for all to settle the supremacy of will. They were like two warriors measuring their strength before the final contest. The slip of a dark-eyed girl seemed an adversary easily disposed of. Though justly angered, her opponent had learned that if from him she had inherited tenacity of will, the legacy from her father had been an invincible belief in her individual right and courage to assert it.

After this clash we walked about till it was time for the evening meal. It was served in an open tea-house. Hospitable and kind to the last degree, both host and hostesses pressed upon me every dainty eatable, and tried by all they knew to dispel the gathering clouds. I was touched by their efforts and did my best to smooth the way to peace, but my endeavors were vain. It was a conflict of conditions in which were both wrong and right, but which not to the end of time would ever be reconciled.



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At last the family sat apart and talked in low tones. Zura moved closer to me and, though white-lipped and restless after the many encounters with her grandfather, her spirit was undaunted.

### XI

#### A BROKEN SHRINE

The feast over, we moved on. The servants were left to pack up, and instructed to join the family at a certain shrine some distance away; devotions at that place would end the festival.

The closing down of night was like the working of some magic. From every point of temple, shrine, and tree sprang a light. Fireworks shaped like huge peonies, lilies, and lesser flowers spluttered in the air. Myriad lights turned the garden into a place of enchantment. In the hand of every feaster swung a paper lantern, gay in color, daring in design, its soft glow reflected on the happy face above. The whole enclosure seemed to be a bit of fairy land, where workaday people were transformed into beings made only for the pleasures of life.

I kept close to Zura regardless of where she led, for all she saw seemed not only to increase her interest, but to intensify her reckless mood. On our way we paused at a Pagoda. A group of priests were marching around it chanting some ritual. They were very solemn and their voices most weird.

“What are they doing with their throats, Miss Jenkins?” asked Zura.

“Singing.”

“Singing! Well, they know as much about singing as tit-willows do about grand opera. But the colors of those gorgeous robes are fascinating. Aren't the curves of that roof lovely? See how the corners turn up. Exactly like the mustache of the little band master at home. Oh, look at those darling kiddies!” she suddenly exclaimed, going swiftly to the nearby stand of a cake man.

A dozen children or so, wistful-eyed and a bit sad, stood around. These were the city rats and street waifs, who only came from their holes after dark. Too poor to buy, they could only gaze and wish. The old man, for the sake of the hungry birdlings at home, could give no further of his store.

Zura stopped before the little heaps of sweet dough. The children closed about her. None were afraid, and all instinctively felt her friendship. Her bargain was quickly made. Soon each child had a large share not only of cake, but also of tiny flags and paper cherry blossoms which had adorned the owner's booth. Zura emptied a small



knitted purse of “rins” and “sens.” She had told me earlier that she had sold a picture to a postcard man. The cake dealer got it all.

We left the children open-mouthed, gazing at the “Ojosan” (honorable elder sister) who had proved nothing less than a goddess; but the girl heeded neither their looks nor their thanks, for we had come upon the ancient rite of firewalking, once a holy ceremony for the driving out of demons, now used for the purpose of proving the protection of the gods for the devout.



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On a mat of straw, overspread by a thick layer of sand, was a bed of charcoal kept glowing by attendants armed with fans attached to long poles. Priests were intoning a prayer to the god of water, who lived in the moon, to descend with vengeance upon the god of fire. With much twisting of fingers and cabalistic waving of hands, a worshiper would draw something from a bag purchased from the priest. This he told the onlookers was spirit powder. Sprinkling a part of it on the fire and rubbing his feet with what was left he would cross the live coals, arriving at the other end unharmed. His swaggering air, indicating "I am divinely protected," deeply impressed the wondering crowd.

Absorbed in watching the fantastic scene, I failed for some time to notice Zura's absence from my side. Neither was she with her family, who were near by. Anxiously turning to search for her, I saw her opposite in a cleared space and, through the background of an eager, curious crowd, Page Hanaford hurriedly pushing his way to the front.

At the edge of the fire stood Zura without shoes or stockings.

Page saw. His voice rang out, "Miss Wingate! I beg of you!"

For a moment she poised as light as a bird; then, lifting her dress, she quickly walked across the burning coals. The sparks flew upward, lighting the bronze and gold in her hair, showing too her face, a study in scornful daring.

The lookers-on cheered, some crying, "Skilful, skilful!" and others, "Brave as an empress!" "She is protected by her foreign god."

Heedless of the crowds, as if they were not, Zura took her hat, shoes, and stockings from the adoring small boy who held them and rejoined me. I glanced around at the family. The women's faces said nothing. To at least two of them, Zura was a strange being not of their kind and with whom they had nothing to do. But the look in Kishimoto San's eyes made me shrink for the fate of the girl.

Laying my hand upon her arm I asked, "Oh, Zura, why did you do it? Aren't your feet burned?"

"Burned! Nonsense! They are not even overheated. I used some of their spirit powder, which is plain salt. I did it to prove to myself that all they teach and do is fakery."

Page joined us, inquiring anxiously, "You are not hurt? I call it plucky, but very foolish. Didn't you hear me call to you?"

Zura, looking up from fastening her shoe, replied stiffly, "Mr. Hanaford, once is quite enough for you to interfere with my affairs."

The boy flushed, then smiled, and dropped to the rear.

As she spoke I could but notice her voice was a little less joyous. It sounded a note of weariness as if her high spirit, though unconquered, was a bit tired of the game.

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In depressed silence our party mingled with the throng on its way to the shrine where the last tribute was to be paid. The place of devotion was in a dense grove, isolated and weird. A single upright post held a frail, box-like contrivance. The inner recess of this was supposed to hold a relic of Buddha—some whispered a finger, some a piece of the great teacher's robe; but whatever the holy emblem, both place and shrine were surrounded with a veil of superstitious mystery and held in awe. A lonely taper burned before the shrine, dimly lighting a small opening covered with ground glass and disclosed above a written warning to all passers-by to stop and offer prayer or else be cursed.

The crowd of worshipers paid tribute, but rather than pass on, lingered in the shadow, their curious eyes fixed upon the half-foreign girl.

It was splendid for her to brave the fire-god, but no living soul dared face the Holy Shrine with the scorn Zura's face and manner so plainly showed. Admiration melted into distrust. They would wait and see the end.

One by one my host, his mother, wife and daughter passed before the relic and reverently bowed. Then they stood aside in a silent group, slightly apart from Page and me. It was Zura's turn. In the face of Kishimoto San, as he looked at his granddaughter, was concentrated the power of his will and all the intolerant passion of his religion. He looked and he waited—in vain. The girl did not move.

When he finally spoke, his voice was low, but his words fairly stabbed the air. "Obey me! Approach and bow!"

Zura seemed to be turned to stone. But her words were as clear and as measured as his own. "I will not! Now or ever!"

Past all endurance of the girl's disrespect, the man made one step forward, grasped Zura by the shoulders, and pushed her towards the shrine. The force sent her forward. As she stumbled she seized a bamboo pole. With it she gave one swift blow. At our feet the little shrine lay shattered, and out of its secret recess rolled a pasteboard box, mildewed and empty.

Then, like the hissing wind, rose the quick anger of the people.

At the same instant Page and the crowd rushed toward Zura, who, with bamboo stick in her raised hand, stood white and defiant.

A coolie made a lunge at her. With closed fist Page Hanaford struck him full in the face; the other arm shielded Zura. Another man spat at her, and met the fate of his brother from Page's well-directed blow. There is nothing so savage as a Japanese mob when roused to anger. Knowing them to be cruel and revengeful, my heart stood still as I



watched the throng close about Page and Zura. I knew the boy single-handed could not hold out long before the outraged worshipers.

Then above the noise and curses and threats Kishimoto San's voice rang out. "Stop! you crawling vipers of the swamp! How dare you brawl before this sacred place? How dare you touch one of my blood! My granddaughter accounts to me, not to the spawn of the earth—such as you! Disperse your dishonorable bodies to your dishonored homes! Go!"



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Blind to reason, they cowered before a masterful mind. They knew the unbending quality of Kishimoto's will, his power to command, to punish. The number grew steadily less, leaving Page and Zura and her grandfather alone.

Kishimoto San turned to the girl and with words cold as icicles, cutting as a whiplash, dismissed the child of his only daughter from his house and home. He cared neither where she went, nor what she did. She no longer belonged to him or his kind. He disowned her. Her foreign blood would be curse enough.

Bidding his family follow, he turned and left. As Mrs. Wingate passed her disgraced offspring, with troubled voice and bewildered looks she repeated once more her set formula of reproof, "Oh, Zura! I no understand yo' naughty; I no like yo' bad."

The homeless girl, Page, and I were left in the darkness.

"Come with me, Zura," I said, not knowing what else to do; and the three of us made our way toward the high twinkling light that marked the House of the Misty Star.

As the boy walked beside her, hatless, tie and collar disarranged, I could but see what his defense of Zura had cost him in physical strength. His face twitched with the effort to control his shaking limbs; that strange illness had robbed him of so much.

"Please, Mr. Hanaford, do not trouble to climb the steps with us," I urged. "There is no danger. By now the crowd is doubtless laughing over the whole thing."

"No, Miss Jenkins," he said, "I cannot leave you till you are safely shut in the house. Rather interesting, wasn't it?"

"Interesting! Well, I guess I know now what making a night of it means."

It was my one attempt to lighten conversation. We went on in silence.

Wordless my other companion walked beside me. She gave no sign. Only once, when I stumbled, the hand she outstretched in quick support was shaking and cold.

On reaching the house Page declined to come in; but, seeing the knuckles of his right hand torn and bleeding, I would take no refusal. "Boy, your hand is bleeding. Come right in and let me dress it," said I.

"Don't trouble. It's nothing; only a bit of knocked-up skin. That coolie must have sharpened his teeth for the occasion."

Zura spoke for the first time as I made the room light. "Oh! I didn't know you were hurt, Mr. Hanaford. I am sorry. Let me see." She took his hand in both of hers and held it



closer under the lamp. Still holding it, she lifted her eyes with sympathy to his. "I'm not worth it," she said softly.

I did not hear Page's answer; but I thought he was almost gruff when he quickly drew away and walked to the window. He had nothing to say when I bandaged his hand, and he soon left.



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It was only a matter of a few minutes to light the lamp and arrange the bed in the guest-room I had taken such pleasure in preparing before for Zura's visit. I went through these small duties without speaking. I bore no ill will to the girl who had been thrust upon me. My thoughts were too deep for anger against the wayward child whose start in life had been neither fair nor just. But in separating herself from her family she had done the most serious thing a girl can do in whose veins runs the blood of a Japanese. Everything ready, I said good-night as kindly as circumstances would permit.

Zura put out her hand and thanked me. A smile twitched her lips as she said, "Never mind, Miss Jenkins. Don't be troubled. No use fighting against fate and freckles." The tears in her voice belied her frivolous words.

Anxious for what might happen, I sat for the rest of the night in the room adjoining the one occupied by my unexpected guest. Twice before the coming of the dawn there reached me from the farther chamber sounds of a soul in conflict—the first battle of a young girl in a strange land, facing the future penniless and heavily handicapped.

It was a lonely vigil and a weary one.

## XII

### A DREAM COMES TRUE

If becoming a member of my household was a turning-point in Zura's life, in mine it was nothing less than a small-sized revolution, moving with the speed of a typhoon.

The days piled into weeks; the weeks plunged head-foremost into eternity, and before we could say "how d'y' do" to lovely summer, autumn had put on her splendid robes of red and yellow and soft, dull brown.

If once I yearned for things to happen, I now sometimes pined for a chance, as one of my students put it, "to shut the door of think and rest my tired by suspended animation." For I had as much idea about rearing girls as I had on the subject of training young kangaroos. But it grew plainer to me every day my nearly ossified habits would have to disintegrate. Also I must learn to manipulate the role of mother without being one.

Soon after the girl's break with her family the ineffective child-woman who had given Zura life passed quietly into the great Silence before the daughter could be summoned. Though Zura was included among the mourners at the stately funeral, she had no communication with her grandfather. Afterwards the separation was final.

Once only I visited Kishimoto San's house and had an interview with him. He was courteous, and his formality more sad than cold. He would never again take Zura into his house; neither would he interfere with her. Her name had been stricken from his

family register. As long as I was kind enough to give her shelter, he would provide for her. Further than that he would not go, “for his memory had long ears and he could never forget.”

It was a painful hour which I did not care to repeat.



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\* \* \* \* \*

I acquainted Zura with her grandfather's decision.

Her only comment was, "His memory has long ears, has it? So has mine, and they'll grow longer, for I have longer to live."

In the first intimate talk I had with my protegee, her one idea was to earn the money to return to America, where there was "more chance to make a living." So far as she knew her father was without relatives. There was no one to look to for help. But she could work; she knew many girls who worked; and there was always "something to do" in Seattle.

"How good it will be to get back to it. Wish I could get a whiff of the air right now. Yes, indeed! I am American to the ends of my fingers, and hallelujah to the day when I sail back."

I entered into her plans with enthusiasm, reserving my determination never to lose sight of her till she was in safer hands than mine.

She was very eager to begin earning money for her passage home, offering to teach, to scrub, and even to learn to cook, if we'd learn to eat it.

I pointed out that, with her ability to sketch and her natural fascination for young girls, the forming of classes would be a simple matter. She was only to teach them drawing at first.

To this she demurred; the pay was so poor that she pleaded to be allowed to have one little class in English.

I was dubious; but, as it was only a beginner's class, I consented—upon her solemn promise to "cut out all ragtime classics and teach plain cats and dogs, rats and mice."

The process of readjustment in life is sometimes as painful as skin grafting. The passing of each day under the new conditions which Zura's coming had brought about marked for both of us either a decided growth or a complete backset. With earnestness I endeavored to make my old eyes see the world and all its allurements from the windows of Zura's uncontrolled youth. Earnestly I then appealed to her to try to understand that life was a school and not a playground and to look without prejudice at the reasonableness of conventions which life in any country demanded, if happiness was to come.

For the first time since I had known her the girl seemed fully to realize that regulated law was a force, and no bogey man which crabbed old grandfathers dangled before pleasure-loving girls, and for her running loose in the green pasture of life was at an



end. The bit she must learn to wear would teach her to be bridle wise. However stupid, the process was an unavoidable necessity.

Zura was really serious when we finished our long conference. She leaned over and put her hand on mine. “Nobody but father was ever so kind to me. I’ll truly do my best.” As if afraid of growing too serious she added: “But, Miss Jenkins,”—her voice was low and her eyes sparkled, proving how hard the old Zura was dying—“I just bet I kick over the traces some time. I feel it in my system.”



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"You what?" I reminded.

"Madam, I have a premonition that this process of eliminating the gay and the festive will be something of a herculean task. In other words, keeping in the middle of the road is a dull, tough job."

"Oh, Zura!" I cried despairingly.

"Yes'm. But from this minute I am starting down the track on the race for reformation. Give me time. Even a colt can't get a new character and a sweet disposition in a week."

\* \* \* \* \*

As the days passed it proved not a race, but a hard, up-hill battle, where in gaining one fight she sometimes lost two, and while still aching with the last defeat had to begin all over again. The vision, though, of the home-going to America lured and beckoned her to the utmost effort to conquer not only circumstances, but herself.

Jane and I helped whenever we could, but there were places so dark through which the girl must pass alone, that not even our fast increasing love could light the shadows of the struggles.

I realized that a young girl should have young company of her own kind; but there was none for her. In Hijiyama, and especially in our neighborhood, were many high-class families. Even members of the royal line claimed it as residence. With these the taint of foreign blood in any Japanese marked that person impossible. I dreaded to tell Zura this. She saved me the trouble by finding it out for herself. Ever afterward, when by chance she encountered the elect, her attitude caused me no end of delight and amusement. In courteous snubbing she outclassed the highest and most conservative to them. In absenting herself from their presence Zura's queenly dignity would have been matchless, had she been a little taller.

As much as possible, I made of myself a companion for her and the most of our days were spent together.

It was a curious pact between young and old. One learning to keep the law, the other to break it, for in my efforts to be a gay comrade as well as a wise mother I came as near to breaking my neck as my well-seasoned habits. Zura had a passion for out-of-door sketching, as violent as the whooping cough and lasting longer and the particular view she craved proved always most difficult of access, It severely tested my durability and mettle. I wondered if Zura had this in mind, but I stuck grimly to my task and though often with aching muscles and panting lungs, scrambled by dangerous paths to the edge of some precipice where I dared neither to stand up nor to sit down, but I had



longed for excitement and happenings and dared not complain when my wish was fulfilled.

I could always count upon it that, whatever place Zura chose, from there one could obtain the most splendid view of vast stretches of sea, the curve of a temple roof, a crooked pine, or a mass of blossom. She was as irresistibly drawn to the beautiful as love is to youth. Her passion for the lovely scenery of Japan amounted almost to worship.



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I had never been a model for anything. Now I was used as such by my companion indiscriminately, in the background, in the foreground and once as a grayhaired witch. I was commanded to sit still, to not wink an eyelash, though the mosquitoes feasted and the hornets buzzed.

Fortunately the summer holiday gave me some leisure. I absorbed every moment seeking comprehension of youthful ways of looking at things, and in Zura's effort to reduce her wild gallop to a sober pace, the way was as rough for the girl, as the climb up the mountain side was for me. Often she stumbled and was bruised in the fall. Brushing aside the tears of discouragement she pluckily faced about and tried again.

There were many battles of tongue and spirit but when the smoke had been swept away, the vision was clearer, the purpose firmer.

That monotony might not work disaster or routine grow irksome our workdays were interspersed with picnics, journeys to famous spots and, for the nights, moonlight sails on the Inland Sea.

Page Hanaford was our frequent guest. To Jane and me his attitude was one of kindly deference and attention. Towards Zura it was the mighty call of youth to youth. She answered with ready friendship. It was easy to see that the boy was buoyant by nature, but the moods that sometimes overtook him were strange. Often at a moment when the merriment was at its height, the hand of some invisible enemy seemed to reach out and clutch him in a dumb horror, confused the frankness of his eyes, left him with bloodless lips. From light-hearted happiness he plunged to silent gloom.

Twice it had occurred when the day was heavy with moisture, thick and superheated by the summer's sun. The last time it happened, to the heat was added the excitement of a police launch stopping our little pleasure craft and demanding our names and business. When it left Page grew silent and, until we landed, lay in the prow his face hidden by his hat. Mental or physical I could not say. I wished I knew for it subtracted the joy from the day as surely as dampness takes the kink out of unnatural curls.

When I mentioned the incident to Jane, she only looked wise and smiled. I could almost believe she was glad, for it gave her unlimited opportunity for coddling. Zura made no comment. So great was the rebound partial freedom induced, her spirits refused to descend from the exhilarating heights of "having a good time and doing things." She blandly ignored any suggestion of hidden trouble, or the possibility of it daring to come in the future. Untiring in her preparations for our festivities, the hour of their happening found her so gracious a hostess, naturally she was the pivot around which the other three of us swung.

I wondered if, in our many festivities we were not forming habits of useless dissipation. Jane said our parties were much livelier than church socials at home. Our experienced



leader assured me, however, these picnics were as slow as a gathering of turtles in a coral cave, but they continued, ceasing only when the nights grew too chill for comfort. Our pleasures were then transferred to the homeyness of the little living-room in "The House of the Misty Star."



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In my adoption of Zura the humor was incidental; in Zura's adoption of Jane it was uppermost. From the first the girl assumed proprietorship and authority that kept the little gray missionary see-sawing between pleasure and trouble. By Zura's merry teasing Jane's naturally stammering tongue was fatally twisted. She joked till tears were near; then with swift compunction Jane was caught in arms tender and strong and loved back to happiness.

Like a mother guarding a busy careless child, Zura watched Miss Gray's comings and goings. Overshoes and wraps became a special subject of argument. There was no denying that in the arrangement of Jane's clothes there was a startling transformation.

My attention was called to this one morning when I heard a merry, audacious voice cry out, "See here, Lady Jinny, do you think it a hallmark of piety to have that hefty safety-pin showing in your waistband? Walk right back and get your belt."

"Oh, Zury," pleaded the harassed woman, "what's the use of putting it on? I'll just have to take it off to-night and, my dear, people are waiting for me."

"Let 'em whistle, Sweetheart," was the unmoved response. "Even though the heathen roar, I cannot turn aside from my purpose of making you a Parisian fashion-plate."

"Yes, child! It is good of you to want to dress me up. But," with a half-laugh, "don't try to make me resemble one of those foreign fashion ladies. I saw one picture in a style paper that looked almost immoral. The placket of the dress was at the foot and showed two inches of the ankle."

"Trust your mother, innocent child," Zura advised, "those picture ladies don't wear dresses, just symptoms and I'd slap anybody that would ask you to wear a symptom. Now, tell me where to search for your belt."

Jane, ever weak in certain resistances, yielded and adored the more while submitting.

Under Zura's care Jane's person grew neater and trimmer. In her face, now filled out with proper food and rest, there was a look of happiness as if some great hope foreshadowed fulfilment.

The self-appointed missionary in her talks with me seldom referred to her work in detail. I respected her reserve and asked no questions, for I gravely doubted any good results from her labor. But to Zura she confided her plans and her dreams, and Zura having many dreams of her own, listened and sympathized. In all the Empire there was no collection of humanity that could surpass in degradation and sordid evil the inhabitants of the quarter that Jane Gray had chosen to uplift. Time and again the best-trained



workers had experimented in this place. Men and women with splendid theories, and the courage to try them had given it up as hopeless, for fear of their lives.

Once only I remonstrated with Miss Gray and that when there had been in that section an unprovoked murder of particular horror. The answer of the frail woman was:



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“I don’t want to make you anxious, Miss Jenkins, but I must go back. The people are my friends. I’ve been charged with a message for them and I must deliver it. My poor life would be small forfeit, could I but make them fully understand.”

I said no more for I thought if Jane was set on dying that way she’d just as well get all the pleasure out of it possible. To my surprise, unmolested and unafraid, she made her way through streets where no one officer went alone. Haunts of criminals and gamblers, murderers in hiding followed by their unspeakable womenkind.

This dream of Miss Gray’s scorned to limit itself to a hospital for diseased bodies of the wretched inhabitants, but included a chapel for sick souls. These days it was difficult enough to get money for real things, the unreal stood no chance. Without resources of her own, backed by no organization, it seemed to me, like a child planning a palace. To the little missionary the dawn of each glorious day brought new enthusiasm, fresh confidence and the vision was an ever beckoning fire, which might consume her body if it would accomplish her desire.

At present she rented a tiny house in the Quarters and called it her preaching place. I was told that to it flocked the outcasts of life who listened in silent curiosity to the strange foreign woman delivering a message from a stranger foreign God.

As the days went by the members of my household were deeply absorbed in dreams of a hospital, pursuit of passage money to America, and wisdom in guiding girls.

In all the years in my adopted country I’d never seen so lovely an autumn. Colors were brighter, the haze bluer, and far more tender the smile of the heavens on the face of the waters.

The song of the North wind through the top of the ancient pines was no melancholy dirge of the dying summer, but a hymn of peace and restful joy to the coming winter.

One lovely day melted into another. The year was sinking softly to its close when one evening found Zura, Jane and me quietly at work in the living-room of the House of the Misty Star. Jane was knitting on the eternal bibs, Zura adding figures in a little book.

Our quiet was broken by a knock at the door. Maple Leaf appeared bearing on a tray a pink folded paper.

“It’s a cable; I know its color,” exclaimed Zura, “and it’s for Miss Jane Gray.”

With shaking fingers Jane tore open the message. She read, then dropped her face in her hands.

“What is it?” I asked anxiously.



“It’s the hospital.”

“In a cable?” cried Zura. “Think of that and break into tears.”

“No, the money for it.”

“Money! Where did you get it?” I demanded, thinking that Jane had suddenly gone crazy.

“I prayed and wrote letters,” she answered. “Read.”

Still doubting I took the paper and read aloud:

Build hospital. Draft for four thousand dollars on way.



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*Friends of the cause.*

For minutes the ticking of the clock sounded like the dropping of pebbles in a still pool. I could not speak, for the wonder of a miracle was upon me. By faith the impossible had come to pass. Finally Jane looked up and asked wistfully, "Oh! Zury, aren't you glad for me?"

"Glad!" echoed the girl, leaning over and caressing the faded cheek. "I'm as happy as if I were pinning on my own orange blossoms this minute. Dear, dear little Jinny with her beautiful dream coming true!"

I had never thought Zura beautiful. Now, as she bent over Jane, flushed with excitement, her eyes deep glowing, her shining hair flashing back the red of the firelight, she was as brilliant as a golden pheasant hovering above a little gray sparrow.

With some sudden memory the girl stood erect and reached for a calendar. "Hurrah!" she cried, "It's true! To-morrow is Thanksgiving at home. We are going to celebrate too, if I have to sell my shoes."

Seeing Jane still shaken with emotion and the glad tears so close to hand, Zura jumped up on a chair and began to read from the calendar as if it were a proclamation:

"Know all ye! Wherever you be up above or down below, far or near on the to-morrow, by my command, every citizen of these United States is to assemble all by himself, or with his best girl and give thanks. Thanks for living and for giving. Thanks for hospitals and people to build them. Sermons to preach and sinners to hear. Then give thanks and still more thanks, that to you and to me, the beautifullest land the good God ever made spells home, and friends, and America! Amen."

## XIII

### A THANKSGIVING DINNER

More and more Zura had assumed the duties of our housekeeping. The generous sum Kishimoto San promptly forwarded each month for her maintenance so relieved the financial pressure that I was able to relax somewhat my vigilance over the treasury. So I stepped aside that her ambition and energy might have full expression. I knew that absorbing work erases restlessness in mind and heart as effectively as a hot iron smooths out a rough-dried cloth. I urged her to further experiments and made a joke of her many mistakes, oftentimes when it was sheer waste of material. But what mattered that? Better to die softheaded, than hardhearted. I wanted the girl to be happy. Rather than be separated, I would let her make a bonfire of every bean, potato and barrel of flour in the house. As even the sun has specks on it, I saw no reason to be too critical of my understudy, whose shortcomings grew less as she grew prettier.



With all the cocksureness of youth, Zura seized the domestic steering gear. Sometimes the weather was very fair and we sailed along. Often it was squally, but the crew was merry, and I was happy. I had something of my very own to love.



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To Pine Tree and Maple Leaf and the ancient cook the young housekeeper was a gifted being from a wonderful country where every woman was a princess. Unquestioningly they obeyed and adored her, but Ishi to whom no woman was a princess and all of them nuisances—stood proof against Zura's every smile and coaxing word. Love of flowers amounted to a passion with the old gardener. To him they were living, breathing beings to be adored and jealously protected. His forefathers had ever been keepers of this place. He inherited all their garden skill and his equal could not be found in the Empire. For that reason, I forgave his backsliding seventy times one hundred and seventy, and kept him.

Often Zura took the children she used as models for her pictures into the garden and loaded them with flowers. On the mossy banks they romped and indulged in feasts of tea and crackers. Ishi would stand near and invoke the vengeance of eighty thousand deities to descend and annihilate this forward girl from a land of barbarians. Finding his deities failed to respond, he threatened to cast his unworthy body upon the point of a sword, if Zura cut another bud. But I knew, if Ishi's love of flowers failed to prevent so tragic an end, his love of sake would do so.

For years the garden had been his undisturbed kingdom, and now that it should be invaded and the flowers cut without his permission and frequently without his knowledge enraged him to the bursting point. His habits were as set as the wart on his nose and he proposed to change neither one nor the other. "Most very bad," he wailed to me. "All blossoms soul have got. Bad girl cut off head of same; peaceful makes absence from their hearts. Their weep strikes my ear."

So on the day we were to celebrate Thanksgiving and Jane's happiness, and Zura had declared her intention of decorating every spot in the house, I was not surprised to hear coming from the garden sounds of an overheated argument. "Ishi, if it weren't for hurting the feelings of the august pig I would say you were it. Stand aside and let me cut those roses. There's a thousand of them, if there's one."

The protest came high and shrill. "Decapitate heads! You sha'n't not! All of ones convey soul of great ancestors."

"Do they?"—in high glee—"all right, I'll make the souls of your blessed ancestors serve as a decoration for America's glorious festival day."

The outraged Ishi fairly shrieked. "Ishi's ancestors! America! You have blasphemeness. I perish to recover!"

Hostilities were suspended for a minute.



Then Zura's fresh young voice called out from below my window: "Ursula, please instruct this bow-legged image of an honorable monkey to let me cut the roses. Hurry, else my hand may get loose and 'swat' him."

What the child meant by "swat" I had no idea; neither did I care. She had called me "Ursula!" Since childhood I had not heard the name. Coming from her lips it went through me like a sharp, sweet pain. Had she beheaded every rose and old Ishi in the bargain I would have smiled, for something in me was being satisfied.



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I gave orders to Ishi, to which Zura added, "You are to take your dishonorable old body to the furthestmost shrine, and repent of your rudeness to your young mistress." As he turned his angry back upon her, she inquired in honeyed tones, "Mercy, Ishi! How did you ever teach your face to look that way? Take it to a circus! It will make a fortune!"

Very soon after she came into the room so laden with roses that I could just see her face. "Aren't they darlings?" she exclaimed. "Poor old Ishi, I can't blame him much!" Then to me, "Say, beautifullest, tell you what: I'll arrange these flowers and I promise, if I find a sign of an ancestor, I'll go at once and apologize to his mighty madness—if you will write a note to Mr. Hanaford and bid him to the Thanksgiving feast."

I agreed, and she went her busy way. In addressing the note to Page, I was reminded that a few days before his servant had called for a package of his master's clothing which Jane and I kept in repair. To my surprise the servant said that Hanaford San had gone away on business.

Possibly my look of astonishment at the news invited confidence. After glancing around to make sure we were alone, he approached and in mixed Japanese and broken English told me how his heart was weighed "with anxious" for his employer. He said his master was very kind. Therefore, Master's trouble was his. Sometimes the young man was happy and sang tunes through whistle of lips; but one day he walked the floor all night. Lately he sat by the windows long hours and look fast into picture scenery. He feared illness for master. Often he forget to sing, whistle, and eat foods; just sit with hand on head. "One time I say 'Master, have got painful in brain spot? Or have fox spirit got brain?' He give big laugh; then myself makes many fools to see happy stay with master."

He wished Hanaford San had some people, but in his room was not one picture of ancestor. He never had a happy time with many guests, and samisens and feast drinks, like other young American Dana Sans in Yokohama. When not teaching he sat alone with only his pipe and heart for company, sometimes a book.

It was not polite for him to speak of Master's affairs but he hoped the foreign Sensies could advise him how to make Hanaford San have more happy thoughts all of time.

I told the boy that Mr. Hanaford had lost his money and all his people, and probably it was thoughts of these losses that caused his sad hours; he would be all right in time.

"Time," murmured the unsatisfied man, "time very long for troubled heart of young."

Then, as if trying to forget that he was powerless to help, he began to recite the events of a recent visit to the city of a group of Tokio's famous detectives. They were searching for special fugitives and making the rounds of all suspicious quarters. It was most exciting and because of master's absence he had been able to see much. Though he

wished Page had been at home. It might have entertained him. With many thanks for my “listening ear” the servant left.



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Everywhere I looked I seemed to see this question written: Was Page Hanaford's absence at the time of the detectives' visit accidental or planned? Try as I would to put the hateful thought away from me, it came back again and again.

The boy's slow return to health had troubled me more than I could well say. It was so unnatural. Jane and I did everything that sincere affection could suggest to ward off the hours of strange dejection, and he never failed in appreciation; yet we made no headway to a permanent sunny spot in his life, where he could be always happy and healthy, as was the right of youth. I gave him every opportunity to tell me what caused his moods. I showed him by my interest and sympathy that I wanted to believe in him and would stand by him at any cost. There were times when he seemed on the verge of making a confidant of me, but his lips refused to utter the words.

Usually he responded eagerly to Zura's gay coaxings to friendship and gladly shared her blithesome fun; but sometimes there was a look in his eyes such as a youthful prisoner might have when he knew that for life he is barred from blue skies. As time went on less often appeared the playful curve of his lips, the crinkly smile in the corners of his eyes.

Once in the moonlight I saw him stretch out his hand as if to touch Zura's glistening hair. Some memory smote him. He drew back sharply.

At times I was sure that he was purposely avoiding her. Yet the thought seemed foolish. If ever there was a goodly sight for eyes glad or sad it was the incarnation of joyous girlhood whose name was Zura Wingate.

Unable to solve the puzzle, I could only give my unstinted attention to the boy and girl. If only our armor of love could shield the beloved!

I sent the invitation for the Thanksgiving celebration, and was much relieved by the answer that Mr. Hanaford would join us that evening.

The dinner was a great success. For all of us it was full of good cheer. Jane in her happiness looked years younger. She was in high glee.

"Do you know, my friends in the Quarters are so happy over the hospital," she exclaimed. "I was obliged to ask the Sake Ya to sell only one little bottle of wine to each man. He promised and said he would dilute it at that. Wasn't it good of him to do it? Oh! it's beautiful how big difficulties are melting away—just like fax in the wire!" She joined in the laugh at her expense.

Zura urged, "Lady Jinny, please get you a pair of crutches for that limp in your tongue."

"Better than that, child. First operation in the hospital will be to take the kinks out of my foolish, twisted words."



Afterwards in the sitting-room Zura went through her pretty little ceremony of making after-dinner coffee and serving it in some rare old Kutani cups. The wonderful decoration of the frail china led her to talk of the many phases of Japan and its life that appealed to the artist. Of the lights and shadows on land and sea the effects of the mists and the combination of color that defied mere paint.



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I'd never heard Zura talk so well nor so enthusiastically on a sensible subject. For a moment I had a hope that her love for the beauty of the country would overcome her antagonism to her mother's people. I was quickly undeceived.

Then, as if fearful that praise for the glories of old Nippon might make her seem forgetful of the festal day of her own land, she flashed out, "But please don't anybody forget that I am an American to the marrow-bone." She turned to Page. "Did you come direct from America to Japan?"

The usual miserable flush of confusion covered the boy's face. "Well—you see, I never keep track of dates; guess I'm too—maybe I've traveled a bit too much to count days—"

Either ignoring Page's evasion or not seeing it, Zura continued, "But you love the blessed old country, don't you?"

"With all my heart," he answered fervently.

"Then why do you stay out here? A man can go where he pleases."

"I have my work on hand and riches in mind. You know the old saw about a rolling stone?"

"Indeed I do. It gathers no moss. Neither does it collect burrs in gray whiskers and hayseed in long hair. I tell you," she half-whispered, leaning towards him confidentially, "Let's you and I kidnap Jane and Ursula and emigrate to 'Dixie Land, the land of cotton, where fun and life are easily gotten.' Are you with me?" she audaciously challenged.

Page's face matched the white flowers near him. With a lightness, all assumed, he answered, "All right; but wait till I make a fortune—teaching." He arose, saying he would go out on the balcony for a smoke.

Soon after that Jane left, saying she must write many letters of thanks.

I was alone with Zura. The night being mild for the time of year, she proposed that we stroll in the garden. To her this lovely spot was something new and beautiful. To me it was something old and tender, but the charm, the spell it wove around us both was the same. It lay in perfect peace, kissed to silence and tender mystery by the splendor of the great, red, autumn moon. More beautiful now, the legend said, because the gods gathered all the brilliant coloring from the dying foliage and gave it to the pale moon lady for safe keeping.

"And look," exclaimed Zura, as we walked beside the waters which gave back the unclouded glory, "if the shining dame isn't using our lake for a looking-glass. You know, Ursula, this is the only night in the year the moon wears a hat. It's made from the scent of the flowers. Doesn't that halo around her look like a chapeau?"



We strolled along, and to Zura's pleadings I answered with ghost legends and myths from a full store gathered through long, lonely years. Charmed by the magic of the night and the wonder of the garden, we lingered long.

We paused in the ghostly half-light of the tall bamboo where the moonlight trickled through, to listen to the song of the Mysterious Bird of the Spirit Land. The bird is seldom seen alive, but if separated from its mate, at once it begins the search by a soft appealing call. If absence is prolonged the call increases to heart-breaking moaning, till from exhaustion the bird droops head downward and dies from grief.



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That night the mate was surely lost. The lonely feathered thing made us shiver with the weirdness of its sad notes.

Suddenly we remembered the lateness of the hour and our guest. We took a short cut across the soft grass toward the house.

We turned sharply around a clump of bamboo and halted. A few steps before us was Page Hanaford. Seated on the edge of an old stone lantern, head in hands, out of the bitterness of some agony we heard him cry, "God in Heaven! *How* can I tell her!"

Zura and I clutched hands and crept away to the house. Even then we did not dare to look each other in the face.

Soon after Page came in. He gave no sign of his recent storm, but said good-night to me and, looking down at Zura, he held out his hand without speaking.

Now that I could see the girl's face I could hardly believe she was the same being. With flushed cheeks and downcast eyes she stood in wondering silence, as if in stumbling upon a secret place in a man's soul, she had fallen upon undiscovered regions in her own.

When I returned from locking the door after Page, Zura had gone to her room.

In the night I remembered that not once had Page referred to his absence from the city.

Zura, Jane and I had not often discussed young Hanaford. When we did, it was how we could give him pleasure rather than the probable cause of his spells of dejection. But when I found Jane alone the next day and told her what we had seen in the gardens, omitting what we'd heard, she had an explanation for the whole affair.

[Illustration: "God in Heaven. How can I tell her!"]

"It is perfectly plain, Miss Jenkins. Page has been disappointed in love. I know the signs," Jane said with a little sigh, brightening as she went on, "but that doesn't kill, just hurts, and makes people moody. I am going to tell Page I know his secret. I know, too, a recipe that will soon heal wounds like his. We have it right here in the house."

"Oh! Jane Gray," I said, exasperated, "do cultivate a little common sense. Now you run along and make us some beaten biscuit for supper by that recipe that you know is infallible, and do not add to Page's burden whatever it is, by trying your sentimental remedies on him."



## XIV

### WHAT THE SETTING SUN REVEALED

I heard Zura softly singing as she went about her work. She sang more and talked less in the two weeks that followed our Thanksgiving celebration than ever before since I had known her. In that time we had not seen Page. In our one talk of what we had seen in the garden Zura simply remarked that she supposed what we heard Page say meant he dreaded to tell somebody of the loss of his fortune and family. She lightly scoffed at my suggestion of anything more serious. I prayed that might be true, but why his confusion and evasion?



## Page 69

Thoughts of the boy and his secret would have weighed heavily upon me had it not been for my joy in seeing day by day the increasing sweetness and graciousness of my adopted child. Her gentleness of manner and speech often caused me to wonder if she could be the same untamed hoyden of some months ago. Every day I prided myself on my quick understanding of girls, also of the way to rear them. It made me more than happy to see what I was accomplishing with Jane's help. While it was no royal road to peace and happiness which we traveled, for Zura's impatience with the Orient and its ways, her rebellion against the stigma laid upon Eurasians, brought the shadows upon many a day's sunshine, yet, as the time slipped by, there seemed to be a growing contentment. There were fewer references made to a definite return to America. In the prospect of her permanent stay with me, I found great joy.

Her high spirits found expression in her work. Her love of excitement fed on encounters with Ishi and in teasing Jane.

One afternoon she locked the old gardener up in a tea-house till he apologized for some disrespect. She detained him till intense fear of the coming darkness induced him to submit.

One night Jane brought home a long bundle.

"A new dress, Saint Jinny?" asked Zura.

"No, honey, I haven't had a store dress in ten years. One somebody is through with becomes me quite well. These are the models for my hospital."

"You mean plans, don't you? You wouldn't be caught bringing home a model. Models are ladies who would be overcome by the superfluous drapery of a dress. My daddy used them for pictures in his studio. Sit right down here by the fire, Miss Jaygray, and while you dissipate in hot beef tea, I'll give you a lesson on models."

Zura painted so graphically a word picture of her father's studio it made me laugh, for I knew well enough that such clotheless creatures would not be permitted outside the Cannibal islands. The sheriff would take them up.

As Zura continued her wild exaggerations a look of horror covered Miss Gray's face.

"Oh! Zury!" she cried. "Surely those ladies had on part of a dress."

"No! angel child, not even a symptom. Daddy didn't want to paint their clothes. He wanted to copy the curves that grew on the people."

Jane covered her eyes and spoke in a voice filled with trouble.



“Dearie! I’ve lived in America a long time but I didn’t know there were people like that! I’m really afraid they aren’t selling their souls for the highest price.”

“Daddy wasn’t dealing in souls, but he did pay a pretty high price for lines.”

Jane, unsatisfied, asked why her father couldn’t use statues for his model and Zura seeing how troubled her friend was for the souls of the undressed, asked with eager sympathy to be allowed to see the plans for the soon-to-be built hospital.



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The ground for the building had been purchased and work was well on the way. Shortly the roof-raising ceremony would take place. In this part of the country it is the most important event in building. Jane said that we were all expected to attend these exercises, even if we were so afraid of the criminal quarters that we had to take our hearts in our hands to enter.

Brown head and gray were bent together over blueprints and long columns of figures. Both maid and woman were frail and delicate tools to be used in the up-building of wrecked lives. Yet by the skill of the Master Mechanic these instruments were not only working wonders in other lives, but also something very beautiful in their own.

Zura took untiring interest in all Jane's plans for the after-festivities of the occasion. Most of their evenings were spent in arranging programs. I took no part. My hands were full of my own work and, while they talked, I paused to listen and was delighted not only in the transformation of Zura, but also in my own enlarged understanding of her.

I loved all young things, and youth itself, but I had never been near them before. With tender interest I watched every mood of Zura's, passing from an untamed child to a lovely girl. Sometimes her bounding spirits seemed overlaid by a soft enchantment. She would sit chin in palm, dark, luminous eyes gazing out into space as if she saw some wonderful picture. I suppose most girls do this. I never had time, but I made it possible for Zura to have her dreams. She should have all that I had missed, if I could give it to her—even a lover in years to come. I did not share these thoughts with Jane, for it is plain human to be irritated when we see our weaknesses reflected in another, and encouragement was the last thing Jane's sentimental soul needed. I failed to make out what had come over my companion these days; she would fasten her eyes on Zura and smile knowingly, as if telling herself a happy secret, sighing softly the while. And poetry! We ate, lived and slept to the swing of some love ditty.

Once I found Zura in a mood of gentle brooding. I suggested to her that, as the year was drawing to a close, it would be wise to start the new one with a clean bill of conscience. Did she not think it would be well for her to write to her grandfather and tell him she could see now that she had made it most difficult for him? That while she didn't want to be taken back she would like to be friends with him?

At once she was alert, but not aggressively so as in the past. "Ursula, I'll do it if you insist; but it wouldn't be honest and I couldn't be polite. I do not want to be friends with that old man who labels everybody evil that doesn't think as he does. We'd never think alike in a thousand years. What's the use of poking up a tiger when he's quiet?"

I persuaded.

She evaded by saying at last: "Well, some time—maybe. I have too much on my mind now."



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“What, Zura?”

“Oh, my future—and a few other things.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Kishimoto San had never honored me with a visit since his granddaughter had been an inmate of my house. Whenever a business conference was necessary, I was requested, by mail, to “assemble” in the audience chamber of the Normal School.

The man was beginning to look old and broken but he still faithfully carried out his many duties of office and religion.

He never retreated one inch in his fight against all innovations that would make the country the less Japanese or his faith less Buddhistic. More often than not he stood alone and faced the bitter opposition of the progressives. In no one thing did he so prove his unconquerable spirit and his great ideals for his country as the patience with which he endured the ridicule of his opponents. For to a man of the proud and sensitive East, shot and shell are far easier to face than ridicule.

On a certain afternoon I had gone to meet with a committee to discuss a question pertaining to a school regulation, by which the girl students of the city schools would be granted liberty in dress and conduct more equal with the boys. Of course Kishimoto San stood firm against so radical a measure. Another member of the committee asked him if he did not believe in progress. The unbending old man answered sternly:

“Progress—yes. But a progress based on the traditions of our august ancestors, not a progress founded on Western principle, which, if adopted by us unmodified, means that we, with our legions of years behind us, our forefathers descended from the gods, as they were, will be neither wholly East nor West but a something as distorted as a dragon’s body with the heads and wings of an eagle. Progress! Have not our misconceptions of progress cost us countless lives and sickening humiliations? Has not the breaking of traditions threatened the very foundations of our homes? Small wonder the foreign nations offer careless insult when we stoop to make monkeys of ourselves and adopt customs and assume a civilization that can no more be grafted on to our nation than cabbage can be grown on plum trees. Take what is needful to strengthen and uplift. Make the highest and best of any land your own standard and live thereby. But remember, in long years ago the divine gods created you Japanese, and to the end of eternity, struggle as you may, as such you cannot escape your destiny!”

As he finished his impassioned speech, a ray of sun fell upon his face, lifted in stern warning to his opponents. He was like a figure of the Past demanding reverence and a hearing from the Present.



For the time he won his point and I was glad, for it was Kishimoto San's last public speech. Soon after he was stricken with a lingering illness.

In previous talks he had neither asked after his granddaughter nor referred to her. But this afternoon, taking advantage of his look of half-pleasure caused by the victory he had won single handed, I took occasion, when offering congratulations, to give him every opportunity to inquire as to Zura and her progress. I was very proud of what I had done with the girl, of the change her affection for Jane and me had accomplished.



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Naturally I was anxious to exhibit my handiwork. As well tempt a mountain lion to inspect a piece of beautiful tapestry in the process of weaving.

However tactfully I led up to the subject he walked around it without touching it. To him she was not. Reconciliation was afar off. I said good-by and left. It was this and the speech I had heard in the afternoon that occupied my mind as I wended my way home.

Of course the country must go forward; but it was a pity that, even if progress were not compatible with tradition, it could not be tempered with beauty. Why must the youth of the land adopt those hideous imitations of foreign clothes? The flower-like children wear on their heads the grotesque combinations of muslin and chicken feathers they called hats? There are miles of ancient moats around the city, filled with lotus, the great pink-and-white blossoms giving joy to the eye as its roots gave food for the body. Slowly these stretches of loveliness were being turned into dreary levels of sand for the roadbed of a trolley. Even now the quiet of the city was broken by the clang of the street-car gong. I was taking my first ride that day.

With Kishimoto San's plea for progress of the right kind still ringing in my ears, my eyes fell upon some of the rules for the conduct of the passengers, printed in large type, and hung upon the front door of the car:

"Please do not stick your knees or your elbows out of the windows."

"Fat people must ride on the platform."

"Soiled coolies must take a bath before entering."

An advertisement in English emphasized the talk of the afternoon: "Invaluable most fragrant and nice pills, especially for sudden illness. For refreshing drooping minds and regulating disordered spirits, whooping cough and helping reconvalescents to progress."

The force of Kishimoto's appeal was strong upon me.

I alighted at my street and began the climb that led to my house. Halfway up a picture-book tea-house offered hospitality; in its miniature garden I paused to rest and faced the sea in all its evening beauty. Happily the glory of the skies and the tender loveliness of the hills still belonged to their Maker, untouched by commercialism.

The golden track of the setting sun streamed across the mountain tops and turned to fiery red a feathery shock of distant clouds. High and clear came the note of a wild goose as he called to his mate on their homeward flight. In the city below a thousand lights danced and beckoned through the soft velvet shadows of coming night. There fluttered up to me many sounds—a temple bell, the happy call of children at play, cheerful echoes of home-like content, the gentle gaiety of simple life. It was for these,



the foundations of the Empire, that Kishimoto San feared ruin, with the coming of too sudden a transition.

But I forgot the man and his woes. The spell of heavenly peace that spread upon land and sea fell like a benediction.



## Page 73

It crept into my heart and filled me with thankfulness that I had known this land and its people and for all the blessings that had fallen to me in the coming of Zura Wingate. Gratitude for my full understanding of her was deep. If only the shadows could be cleared away from the boy I loved, life would be complete.

Exalted by the beauty of the evening, and by my spiritual communings, I entered my house and faced the door of the study. It was ajar. Silhouetted against the golden light, which had so filled me with joy and peace, stood two figures. And the man held the hands of the girl against his breast, and looked down into her glad eyes as a soul in the balance must look into Paradise.

It was Page Hanaford and Zura Wingate!

As quietly as possible I went around another way and dropped into the first handy chair. The truth was as bare as a model. The force of it came to me like a blow between the eyes. Long ago, because of chilblains, I had adopted felt shoes. In that second of time I stood at the door the noiseless footgear cured me of all the egotism I ever possessed.

Now I knew by what magic the transformation had been wrought in Zura. And the castle of dreams, built on my supposed understanding of youth and the way it grew, was swept away by a single breath from the young god of love. What a silly old jay bird I had been! Was that what Jane Gray had been smiling to herself about? I felt like shaking her for seeing it before I did.

\* \* \* \* \*

At dinner Jane was the only one of the three of us without an impediment in her silence. I was glad when the meal was over and we went to the study.

Zura buried herself in a deep windowseat, to watch the lights on the water, she said. When there was not another glimmer to be seen, from the shadows came a voice with a soft little tremble in it, or possibly I had grown suddenly sensitive to trembles: "Ursula, Mr. Hanaford was here this afternoon."

Now, thought I, it's coming. Steadying myself I asked: "Was he? What did he have to say?"

"Oh-h!"—indifferently—"nothing much. He brought back an armful of books."

An armful of books—aye, and his heart full of love! How dared he speak of it with his life wrapped in the dark shadows of some secret?

Talk to me of progress! That day I could have raced neck-and-neck with a shooting star!



## XV

### PINKEY CHALMERS CALLS AGAIN

Never having been within hailing distance before of the processes of love and proceedings of courtship there were no signposts in my experience to guide me as to what should be my next step, if it were mine to take. I had been too busy a woman to indulge in many novels, but in the few I had read the hero lost no time in saying, "Will you?" and at once somebody began to practise the wedding march. I suppose the fashion in lovemaking changes as much as the styles; nothing I ever thought or dreamed on the subject seemed to fit the case in hand.

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I waited for Zura to tell me, but she didn't. She only sang the more as she went about her work, doubling her efforts in making sweet the home and herself. She seemed to find fresh joy in every hour.

Any thoughts I'd cherished that young Hanaford would come at once, clear up all the confusion about himself, frankly declare his love for Zura and be happy forever afterward died from lack of nourishment.

Only my deep affection for the boy restrained my anger at his silence. The love and sympathy which bolstered up my faith in him were reinforced by his gentle breeding and high mental quality; but circumstances forced me reluctantly to admit that the story he told when he first came was not true. Page Hanaford was not only under a shadow, but also was undoubtedly seeking to conceal his whereabouts. And why? The question sat on the foot of my bed at night and made faces at me, scrawled itself all over my work and met me around every corner.

It was next to impossible to connect him with dishonesty or baseness when looking into his face, or hearing him talk. But why didn't he speak out, and why hide his talents in this obscure place? He was gifted. His classes had increased to large numbers, and so excellent were his methods his fame had gone abroad. The Department of Education had offered him a lucrative position as teacher in the Higher Normal College in a neighboring city. But, instead of snatching at this good fortune, he asked for time to consider.

He came frequently to talk it over with me; at least that's what he said he came for. The law required the applicant for such a position to answer questions concerning himself and all his ancestors. In my talks with Page about this law I emphasized every detail of the intimate questions that would be put to him. I tried to impress upon him the necessity of having either a clean record, or a very clever tongue when he went before the judgment seat of the Japanese authorities. I hoped my seriousness would bring about a speedy explanation, denial, declaration—anything, so it came quickly. The truth is I don't believe he ever heard a word of what I said on the subject.

If Zura was out of the room, his eyes were glued to the door watching for it to open. If she were present, his eyes would be fixed on her face. If I made an excuse to leave the room, Page made another to keep me, as if he feared the thing he most desired. What did it all mean? If Page Hanaford could not explain himself honorably, what right had he to look at the girl with his heart in his eyes? If no explanation could be given, what right had Zura Wingate to grow prettier and happier every day?

I had always believed that love was as simple and straightforward as finding the end of a blind alley. There was good reason for me to change my belief as the days passed and nothing was said on the subject.



Of course, I could have hauled the two up before me, like children, and told them what I had seen and was still seeing; but I dreaded to force the man's secret and I had to acknowledge that, for the time, I was no more equal to guiding this thing called "love" than I was to instructing birds to build a nest.



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Jane was not a bit of help to me. Refusing to discuss anything except the sentimental side of the affair, she repeated verse till I was almost persuaded this poetical streak was a disease rather than a habit. Between stanzas she proffered food and drink to Page, in quantities sufficient to end quickly both man and mystery, had he accepted. Her attitude to Zura was one of perfect understanding and entire sympathy. Every time she looked at the girl, she sighed and went off into more poetry.

Troubled thoughts stormed my brain as hailstones pelt a tin roof. I prayed for wisdom as I had never prayed for happiness.

The announcement one day that Mr. Tom Chalmers had called caused no sudden rise in my spirits, but a second card, bearing the name of Mrs. Tom, somewhat relieved my mind. Their coming offered a diversion and proved Pinkey of a forgiving spirit.

They were on their wedding journey, he told us after I had summoned Zura. Greetings and congratulations were soon over. While the steamer was coaling in a near-by port he thought he would just run over in jinrikishas to say "Hello!" and show Mrs. Chalmers to us. Yankee Doodle with a hat full of feathers could not have been more proud.

What there was of Mrs. Pinkey to exhibit was indeed a show. Her youthful prettiness belonged more to the schoolroom period than wifehood; and Heaven forbid that the clothes she wore should be typical of my country; there was not enough material in her skirt to make me a comfortable pair of sleeves! I marveled how, in so limited a space, she advanced one limb before the other.

Later Zura explained the process to me: "It's a matter of politeness, Ursula. One knee says to the other, 'You let me pass this time, and I'll step aside when your turn comes.'"

Even this courtesy had failed to prevent a catastrophe; one seam of her dress was ripped for a foot above the ankle. The coat of this remarkable costume was all back and no front, and from the rear edge of her hat floated a wonderful feather like a flag from the stern of a gunboat.

I could see by her face how funny she thought my clothes. I hoped she did not realize how near to scandalous her outfit seemed to me. Usually the point of view depends on which side of the ocean one is when delivering judgment.

Pinkey was as eloquent on the subject of his wedding as if he had been the only Adam who ever marched down a church aisle. He was most joyful at the prospect of showing to his bride all the curiosities and shortcomings of the East. He felt he had encompassed wide and intimate knowledge of it in his two or three trips. I asked Mrs. Chalmers how she liked Japan.



She took her adoring eyes off her newly-acquired husband long enough to answer: “It is lovely. Wonderful little people—so progressive and clean. It’s too bad they are so dishonest; of course you must have lost a lot of money.”

“No, I can’t say that I have. I’ve been in the country thirty years and never lost a ‘rin’ except when my pocket was torn. Come to think of it, if histories, travelers and police records state facts, dishonesty is not peculiar to the Orient.”



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The little bride answered: "I don't know about that; but the Japanese must be awfully tricky, for Pinkey says so and the captain of the ship, who hates every inhabitant of the Empire, said the banks had to employ Chinese clerks."

Why waste words? What were real facts, or the experience of a lifetime against such unimpeachable authority as Mr. Pinkey Chalmers and the captain of a Pacific steamer! Why condemn the little bride, for after all she was human. Nationally and individually, the tighter we hug our own sins and hide their faces, the more clearly we can see the distorted features of our neighbor's weakness. There was more of pity than anger due a person who, ignoring all the beauty in the treasure house before her, chose as a souvenir a warped and very ancient skeleton of a truth and found the same pleasure in dangling it, that a child would in exhibiting a newly-extracted tooth.

Mr. Chalmers had been talking to Zura, but when he caught the word "bank" he included the entire company in his conversation. "Talking banks, are you? Well that is a pretty sore subject with me. Just lost my whole fortune in a bank. Had it happened before the wedding I'd have been obliged to put the soft pedals on the merry marriage bells. Guess you heard about the million-dollar robbery of the Chicago Bank; biggest pile any one fellow ever got away with. And that's the wonder: he got clean away, simply faded into nothing. It happened months ago and not a trace of him since. Detectives everywhere are on the keen jump; big reward hung up. He's being gay somewhere with seventy-five dollars of my good money."

Tea was served and we indulged in much small talk, but I was not sorry when Pinkey said he "must be moving along" to the steamer. He charged us to wireless him, if we saw a strange man standing around with a bushel of gold concealed about his person. It was sure to be the missing cashier. "By-the-way," he asked, pausing at the door, "where is that chap I met when I was here before, who took such an interest in my business? Maybe he is among those absent wanted ones. What was he doing here anyhow?"

Zura answered with what I thought unnecessary color that Mr. Hanaford was in the city, and was soon to be promoted to a very high position in the educational world.

Pinkey looked into her face and, turning, gave me a violent wink. "Oho! Now I'm getting wise." At the same time humming a strain supposed to be from a wedding march.

Oh, but I wished I could slap him! Think of his seeing in a wink what I hadn't seen in months!

My visitors said good-by and went their happy way, but in the story of the missing cashier Mr. Chalmers left behind a suggestion that was as hateful as it was painful and haunting.

\* \* \* \* \*

Page spent that evening with us. He was lighter of heart than I had ever seen him, more at ease and entertaining, and as far removed from crime as courage is from cowardice.



## Page 77

My heart ached as I looked at him, for I longed for his happiness as I yearned to know he was clean of soul.

If some cruel mistake had darkened his life, why did he not say so and let us, his friends, help him forget? Why not start anew with love as a guide?

It was another Page we were seeing that night. Was it the magic of love that made him hopeful, almost gay? Or was it for the moment he was permitted one more joyous flight in the blue skies of freedom before he was finally caught in the snare of the shadow?

For the time he sunned his soul in the garden of friendship and love and gave us, not only glimpses of other worlds, but disclosed another side of himself. If the new man I was seeing in Page Hanaford captivated me the revelation of the undiscovered woman in Zura mystified and amazed me. Till now her every characteristic was so distinctly of her father's race, everything about her so essentially Western, that I was beginning to think she had tricked a favorite law of Nature and defied maternal influence.

As much as she loved pretty clothes, and regardless of the pressure brought to bear by her grandfather, she had refused to wear the native garb, preferring the shabby garments she brought with her from America. I had never thought of her being Japanese; but that evening, when Page was announced and Zura walked into the room clothed in kimono and obi, my eyes were astonished with as fair a daughter of old Nippon as ever pompadoured her hair or wore sandals on her feet.

She was like a new creature to me. Her daring and sparkling vivacity were tempered by a tranquil charm, as if a slumbering something, wholly of the East had suddenly awakened and claimed her. With eyes half lowered she responded with easy familiarity to Page's talk of other lands. She said her father had traveled far and had spent many of their long winter evenings in spinning yarns of foreign countries for her enjoyment. She'd been brought up more regularly on pictures than she had food. Once they had copies of all the great paintings. Mother sold the last one to get money to pay the passage to come to Japan.

And so they talked. Jane, snug in her chair, was content to listen, and I, who had been blind, was now dumb with the startling surprises that the game of life being played before me revealed.

The girl glowed as softly bright as a firefly and the light lured the man to happy forgetfulness. For once he let love have full sway. He neither sought to conceal what he felt, nor to stem the tide which was fast sweeping him—he knew not nor cared not whither so long as his eyes might rest upon the dearness of Zura's face, as with folded feet and hands she sat on a low cushion, the dull red fire reflecting its glory in the gold embroidery of her gown.



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There had been a long silence. Then Zura recalled the event of the day: "Oh, Mr. Hanaford, by the way. You remember Pinkey Chalmers, don't you—the nice boy you and Ursula entertained so beautifully in the garden when he called the last time? He was here again to-day; had his bride with him. Ursula will tell you what she looked like. I do wish you had been here. Mr. Chalmers told us the most exciting news about a Chicago cashier who skipped away with a million dollars and hid both himself and the money—nobody knows where. They think he is out this way and I think I am going to find him."

In the passing of one second the happiness in Page Hanaford's face withered. Like a mask fear covered it. He thrust his strained body forward and with shaking hand grasped the shoulder of the girl. "Hid it! Tell me, in heaven's name, tell me where could a man hide a million dollars?" His voice was tense to the breaking point. He searched the girl's face as if all eternity depended upon her reply.

Before she could make it he sank back in his chair, pitifully white and limp. He begged for air. We opened the window. Zura ran for water. While I bathed his face he said, looking at Zura: "I beg your pardon. I'm not at all well, but I didn't mean to startle you."

"I'm not startled," she answered, and lightly added: "but I was just wondering why anybody would care so much where a million old dollars were hid. I know a hundred things I'd rather find."

The man laid his hand on that of the girl as it rested on the arm of the chair. "Name one, Zura."

"Love." And on her face the high lights were softened to compassion and tenderness.

Page took his hand from hers and covered his eyes.

\* \* \* \* \*

There I stood waiting to put another cold cloth on the boy's head. Neither one of them knew I was on earth. I hardly knew it myself. For the first time in my life I was seeing the real thing and the wonder of it almost petrified me.

What else might have happened is an untold tale. Jane saved the situation. I had not noticed her absence. She now entered, carrying a tray well filled with crackers and a beverage which she placed before Page. "Honey, I don't believe in any of those spirit-rising liquors even when you faint, but I made this jape gruce right off our own vine and fig tree and I know it's pure and innocent. Yes, Zura, grape juice is what I said. Page can drink every gallon I have if he wants it, and I'll toast cheese and crackers for him all night."



The twist in Jane Gray's tongue might lead to laughter, but her heart never missed the road to thoughtful kindness.

Very soon Page said he felt much better and would get home and to bed. When he took his coat and hat from the hall he looked so weak, so near to illness, I begged him to stay and let us care for him. He gently refused, saying he would be all right in the morning. I followed him to the gate. He turned to say good-night.



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I put my hands on his shoulders and with all the affection at my command I invited his confidence. “What is it, son? I’m an old woman, but maybe I can help you. Let me try.”

He lifted his hands to mine and his grasp was painful. The dim light from the old bronze lantern reflected the tears in his eyes as he answered: “Help me? You have in a thousand ways. I’ll soon be all right. I’m just a little over-worked. Haven’t slept much lately. Need rest.”

Then leaning near with sudden tenderness: “Heaven bless you, dear woman. You have been as good to me as my own mother. Some day—perhaps. Good-night. Don’t worry, Miss Jenkins.”

Why didn’t he throw me over into a bramble patch and tell me not to get scratched? I just leaned my old head up against the gate and cried.

I returned to the house by a rear door, for Jane was in the living-room.

## XVI

### ENTER KOBU, THE DETECTIVE

The compensation of the morning’s belated brightness came in the golden glory with which it flooded the world, so warm it melted the hoar frost jewels on tree and shrub, so tender the drooping roses lifted their pink heads and blushed anew. It was the kind of a morning one knew that something was waiting just ahead. It required no feat of intellect for me to know that a great many somethings awaited my little household. Whenever I arose in the morning feeling sentimental, something was sure to happen. The afternoon of this day was the appointed time for the “roof-raising festival” of Jane’s hospital. Three o’clock was the hour set to begin the ceremonies, but early morning found Jane and Zura as busy collecting books, bundles and a folding baby-organ, as if moving day had fallen upon the household. Neither one of my companions seemed depressed by the happenings of the night before, or else they were determined that every other thought should be put aside till the roof was safely over the dream of Jane’s life. Jinrickishas piled high with baskets of refreshments and decorations moved gaily down the street. Jane and Zura, laughing like two schoolgirls and as irrepressible, headed the little procession.

I waved them good luck and went back to my work and my thoughts. I was interrupted by a note that came from Page in answer to one of mine, saying a slight fever would prevent his accepting the invitation to go with me to the exercises in the afternoon, but he hoped to see us at the house later in the evening. Of course he meant us in general, Zura particularly, and it might be fever or it might be other things that kept him away from Jane’s tea party. I was going to know in either case as soon as I could get Page



Hanaford by himself. Right or wrong I would help him all I could, but know I must and would. I simply could not live through another day of anxiety.

If Page told me his trouble, there was no reason why it would fade away, and my anxiety cease to be, but having made up my mind to act definitely, my spirits rose like a clay pigeon released by a spring.



## Page 80

That afternoon, at the time appointed for the ceremony, when I turned from Flying Sparrow Street into Tube Rose Lane a strange sight met my eyes. It was clean. For once in the history of the Quarter poverty and crime had taken a bath and were indulging in an open holiday. It had gone still farther. From the lowliest hut of straw and plaster to the little better house of the chief criminal, cheap, but very gay decorations fluttered in honor of the coming hospital. The people stood about in small groups. The many kimonos, well patched in varied colors, lent a touch of brilliancy to the sordid alleyway, haunted with ghosts of men and women, dead to all things spiritual.

Here and there policemen strolled, always in pairs. Whenever they drew near, and until they were past, the talking groups fell silent, and before an open door, or window a blank white screen was softly shifted. This coming from cover by the inhabitants and premeditatedly giving a visible sign of their existence was a supreme tribute to the woman who had lived among them successfully, because hers was the courage of the sanctified, her bravery that of love.

The day sparkled with winter's bright beauty. The sun had wooed an ancient plum tree into blossoming long before its time. It spread its dainty flowers on the soft straw bed of an old gray roof. A playful wind caught up the petals, sending the white blossoms flying across the heads of the unjust into the unclean ditches where they covered stagnation with a frail loveliness.

For the time at least degradation hid its face. Though poverty and sin were abroad, peace and good will might have been their next-door neighbors had it not been for a certain quality in the atmosphere, invisible but powerful, which caused a feeling that behind it all, there was an evil something that sneered alike at life and beauty; that had for its motto lust and greed, and mercilessly demanded as tribute the soul of every inhabitant.

Collected crime at bay was an unyielding force not easily reckoned with. The fact that one small woman, with only faith to back her, was battling against it single-handed, sent Jane Gray so high up in my estimation that I could barely see her as she floated in the clouds.

I saw my companion in an entirely new light as I joined the throngs gathered about the space where the raising of the roof was taking place. The ceremony here was brief. With countless ropes tied to the joined roof as it lay on the ground, the eager coolies stood ready for the signal to pull aloft the structure and guide it to the posts placed ready to receive it.

Jane walked to the cleared center and stood waiting to speak. There was instant silence when the crowd saw her. With simple words she thanked the workmen for their interest and the many half-days' labor they had contributed, then she raised her hand,

and with great shouting and cheering the roof of Jane's long-dreamed-of refuge for sinners, sick and hopeless, was safely hoisted to its place.



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After this everybody was entitled to a holiday and went quickly to the tea and cake which Zura and her helpers had prepared and served from small booths. The rest of the exercises were to take place in the near-by house that Miss Gray had been using temporarily. By removing all the paper partitions the lower part of the house had been thrown into one large room. Circling the crowd of waiting people seated on the floor a row of cots held the sick and afflicted, worsted by sin and disease.

Before them stood Jane, who, in the custom of the country, bade them welcome. A small sea of faces was lifted to her. Such faces!—none beautiful; all stamped with crime; some scarcely human, only physical apparitions of debased Nature.

With shifting glances they listened to an official who made Jane an offer from the city to contribute to the support of the hospital, the pledge of two doctors to give their services so many hours a week, a contribution of milk from a rich merchant, and an offer from a friendly barber to give so many free shaves. Their eyes widened with wonder and suspicion. What could people mean by giving things and taking away the excitement of stealing them?

But when the man spoke of how the officials had watched Jane and her work, at first with skeptical unbelief because they thought she would not endure a month, now with warmest sympathy because she had succeeded in keeping the Quarters freer of crime and disease than ever before, they forgot their fear and voiced their approval in much hand-clapping, and wise shaking of heads. They called for Miss Gray.

Jane arose and very shyly thanked the city's representative. Then as gently and as simply as if talking to wayward children, she spoke to the men and women before her, who bent forward with respectful attention while the sick ones fastened their weary eyes upon her.

“My people, the building of this little hospital means not only the healing of your bodies, but also the way to cleansing your souls. Dear friends, let me say in this world there is nothing worth while but your souls. Make them clean and white. Sell them for the highest price. What do I mean by that? I mean that if it is for the sake of your souls, it is nothing to go hungry, cold and in rags. What matters the outside so long as you make your hearts sweet and shiny and true? All of you before me have gone astray. So many of you have wandered like lost children from the homeward path, and darkness came and you could not find the way back. Each of you was once a happy little child, with some place to call home and some one there to care when you were lost. I do not know why the darkness overtook you, but I know it did, and to-day, as before, I am a messenger to show you the way back. I have come to tell you that there is still Somebody who cares whether you are lost or not. There is still Some One who waits to guide you home. He asks you as a little child to take hold of His hand and He will lead you out of the fearful darkness. I do not ask what nameless deeds have made you fear the light of day and the eyes of men. I only know you are my friends, to whom I

so gladly bring this message, and to whom I so willingly give my strength and my life to help you find the way back to the greatest Friend, who, understanding all, forgives.”



## Page 82

A look resembling a shadow of hope came into their faces as she finished, and when, at a sign, Zura haltingly played, "I Need Thee Every Hour," and the people stumbled along with the music in an attempt to sing, the burden of the sound as well as the song was a cry for help.

The song finished, one part of the crowd seemed to fade away, the others stayed and gathered about Jane as if only to touch her meant something better than their own sin-stained lives. She moved among them speaking gently to this one, earnestly to that one. Tenderly she smoothed the covers over the sick bodies, leaving a smile and word of cheer wherever she stopped.

Sentimentalism dropped from her like a garment worn for play. It was the spiritual woman only I was seeing, one who faced these real and awful facts of life with the calm, blissful assurance of knowing the truth, of giving her life for humanity because of love.

Jane Gray was indeed a "Daughter of Hope."

\* \* \* \* \*

A little later, Zura—here, there, everywhere, like a bright autumn leaf dancing among dead twigs—found me conversing with a man who all the afternoon had kept very near to me and evidenced every desire to be friendly.

"Belovedest," exclaimed the girl gaily, her face glowing as she approached, "come with me quick or you will miss the sight of your young life. You may come, too, sir, if you wish," addressing my persistent companion, who apparently had decided to spend the rest of his natural life in my presence.

Zura led us toward the rear of the house. As we approached a closed room there came to us sounds of splashing water and happy squeals. She slid open the paper doors. Before us were two big tubs full of small children. The baths were wide enough for six and so deep only the cropped heads showed above the rims as they stood neck high. The lower ranks of young Japan were engaged in a fierce water battle of ducking and splashing and a trial of endurance, as to who could stay under longest. Their thin yellow bodies gleamed in the sun of the late afternoon as they romped and shouted.

The fun growing so boisterous, and a miniature war threatening, the one attendant, a very old woman, was outclassed. Without invitation Zura rolled up her sleeves and took part in the fray.

Instantly there was quiet. A bath was strange enough to those waifs, but to be touched by a foreigner who looked like a princess made them half fear while they wondered. They soon found she knew their games as well as their talk; then everybody claimed attention at once.



She scrubbed them one by one playfully but firmly. She stood them in a row and put them through a funny little drill, commanding them to salute, and when they finished they were clothed ready to march out to the street in perfect order.



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While this was going on the man who had attached himself to me stood close by, seemingly much interested. In a detached sort of way he began talking in broken English. "Miss Jaygray most wonderful of persons," he observed. "She come to this place of hell and make clean spot. She like gray owl too. She have see of all bad things. But learning of such stop right in her eye; it never get to her memory place. All time she talk 'bout one, two very little good thing what are in this street. Low womans in here give much works also rin and sen for to buy water tubs for babies. Bad mens give work of hands, for Miss Jaygray. She most wonderful of females. Maybe because she 'Merican. Hijiyama much honored by skilful 'Mericans: Jenkins San, Wingate San, Hanaford San too. He most skilful of all. You know Hanaford San?"

Something in his voice made me look in the man's face. It was as expressive as biscuit dough. I acknowledged my acquaintance with Page.

The man resumed: "Hanaford San nice gentleman. I give wonder why he stay this far-away place. I hear some time he have much sadful. Too bad. Maybe he have the yearn for his country. If this be truthful why he not give quick return to 'Merica?"

I answered that Mr. Hanaford had lost all his money and his father and had come to Japan to begin anew. His success in teaching was reason enough for his remaining.

Apparently indifferent my questioner mused as if to himself: "Him papa have gone dead. Badful news. And moneys have got lost. Most big troublesome for young man."

I did not think it strange this queer person knew Page. The boy had all kinds and conditions in his classes, as Jane had in her Quarters. Neither was it unusual for a stranger to follow me around. When I went to a new part of the city, I was accustomed to being followed as if I were a part of a circus. But my self-attached friend's interest in Page's history caused me to observe him more closely. Except that his patched clothes were cleaner and he spoke English I could discover little difference between him and Jane's other guests.

Criminal or not his carelessly put but persistent questions regarding Page, his habits, how long I had known him, how often he came to my house and many other things, so annoyed me that I arose to find Jane and suggest going home. Failing in my quest I returned to find my inquisitor gone and Zura putting on her coat and hat.

"Zura," I said, "who was that man who stuck to me all afternoon like furniture varnish? He made me talk whether I wanted to or not. Such questions as he asked!"



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“Do you mean that clean, raggy little man who looked through you, but not at you?” she questioned. “Star of my Sapphire, you have made a hit. That was Kobu, the keenest detective the flag of the Rising Sun ever waved over. I thought you knew. He has been here a week trying to pry information out of Lady Jinny. You should hear their interviews. He asks the subtlest questions, and Jane Gray doesn’t do a thing but let her tongue get locomotor ataxia, and Kobu can make nothing of her answers. It’s as good as vaudeville to hear them. He’d just as well leave her alone. Torture wouldn’t make her tell what she knows, and she doesn’t have to either! Did he ask you about Page? He did me too. What does it matter? I told him all I knew. That is most all. Why shouldn’t I? There’s nothing wrong about Page. He just can’t get over the loss of his father, and there is something about old money that worries him.”

She threw her arms around my waist.

“What a happy day! Isn’t Jane the realest saint you ever knew? You’re a saint, too, Ursula, the nice sinnery kind that I love to play with. I am tired and hungry. Come on, let’s find Lady Jinny and go home. Isn’t the blessedest thing in the world to have one to go to? I dare you to race me to the corner.” I was far from feeling playful, so declined.

More than ever I felt the necessity of an interview with Page. I must know the truth. He must know the happenings of the afternoon.

\* \* \* \* \*

That evening, after dinner, while sitting with Zura in the living-room, I eagerly listened for Page’s step in the hall. Soon it came, and as we arose to greet him I was made more anxious by his fever-bright eyes.

I was reassured, however, when he replied to my inquiries by saying: “Quite all right, thank you. Head gets a bit rocky at times, but that does not matter. Awfully sorry I was unable to be among those present at Miss Jane’s tea party. Tell me all about it—the guests and the costumes.”

Though he walked about the room, picking up books and small objects only to lay them quickly down, he gave the closest attention to Zura as she eagerly gave her account of the afternoon.

I was about to interrupt with a request to Page to come with me for a private conference in the dining-room, when a summons came for me to go at once to the house in the garden where Ishi lived. The messenger thought Ishi was very ill, or gone crazy. I found him very drunk. Standing in the middle of the room, with rows of rare orchids ranged around the walls, he was waving a sharp-bladed weapon while executing a sword dance. In between steps he made speeches to the plants, telling them how their



blessed brothers and sisters had had their heads cut off by a silly girl on whom he would have vengeance. He had sworn by his blood at the temple.



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It required me a good hour to reduce him to submission and to sleep. When I returned to the house Page Hanaford was gone. I was disappointed enough to cry. Zura said that the next morning was the time for him to go to the Government office to fill out the papers required for his position at the Normal College, and that he must make his last preparation for this. He asked her to say to me that he would accept the offer I had made to go with him as interpreter and would call for me on his way down.

"But," I asked almost peevishly, "what made him go so soon?"

"I am not sure. Maybe he wanted to study. Or, it may be, I made his head ache. I did talk a lot. I told him everything—about the babies in the bath and Jane's sermon and your detective."

"Oh, Zura!" I said helplessly.

"Yes, I did. Why not?"

She leaned 'way over and looked at me steadily. Then with something of her old passion she cried: "Listen to me, Ursula! Don't you dare think Page Hanaford guilty of crime! There isn't anything wrong with him. I know it. I know it."

"How do you know it, my child? Has he told you the real reason for his being in Japan? Has he told you why fear suddenly overtakes and confuses him? Or has he only dared to tell you other things?"

A joyous little sob caught in her throat. "His lips have told me nothing, Ursula. His eyes and my heart have told me all."

"And without knowing these things you love him, Zura?"

"Love him," she echoed softly. "Right or wrong, I love him absolutely!"

I looked at the girl in amazed wonder. There seemed to be an inner radiance as if her soul had been steeped in some luminous medium. She came nearer, her young face held close to mine. "Oh, I am so happy, so blissfully happy! For good or not, it's love for eternity. Dear, kind old friend!"—inclosing my face with her hands, she kissed me on the lips. In that faraway time of my babyhood my mother's good-by kiss was the last I had known. The rapture of the girl's caress repaid long, empty years. For a moment I was as happy as she. Then I remembered.

All day I had seen love perform miracles, and, like some invisible power, regulate the workings of life as some deft hand might guide a piece of delicate machinery; but that anybody could be happy, radiantly happy, with shadows and detectives closing around the main cause of happiness was farther than I could stretch my belief in the



transforming power of joy. Surely this thing called “love” was either farseeing wisdom or shortsighted foolishness.

## **XVII**

### **A VISIT TO THE KENCHO**



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The North Wind began a wild song through the trees in the night. It tore at the mountains with the fury of an attacking army. It lashed the waters of the sea into a frenzy. With the dawn came the snow. Softly and tenderly it wrapped the earth in a great white coverlet, hushing the troubled notes of the savage storm music into plaintive echoes of a lullaby. As it grew light a world of magic beauty greeted my eyes. Winter was King, but withal a tender monarch wooing as his handmaidens the beauties of early spring. The great Camellia trees gave lavishly of their waxen flowers, brocading the snow in crimson. Young bamboo swinging low under the burden, edged its covering of white down with a lacy fringe of delicate green. The scene should have called forth a hymn of praise; but the feelings which gripped me more nearly matched the clouds rolled in heavy gray masses over land and sea.

Page was to call for me at ten. Long before that time I was sitting on the edge of the chair, ready and waiting, trying to coax into my over-soul an ounce or so of poise, a measure of serenity. It needed no fortune teller to forecast that this visit to the Kencho would be productive of results, whether good or bad the coming hours alone could tell.

Knowing the searching questions that would be put to Page Hanaford, I was beginning to wonder if the offer of this position was not part of the game Kobu was playing. I had never seen Japan's famous manhunter till the day before, but by reputation I knew him to be relentless in pursuit of victims to be offered as tribute to his genius. Thoughts of Page Hanaford in prison garb behind barred doors made me shiver.

I was depressed in spirits and was trying to plan what I could possibly do, when the sound of Zura's voice came to me as she moved about in the upper story attending to her household duties. It was a foolish old negro melody she sang, and one of its verses ran:

Ole Cap'n Noah a-feelin' mighty blue,  
Kep' a sayin' to hisself, "Oh, what shall I do?"  
'Long come a sparrow bird, spic 'n spin,  
'N *he* say, "Brer Noah, do de bes' you kin.

Yo' joy 'n yo' trouble is sho' gwine to bide  
'N las' jes' as long as yo' own tough hide.  
So say, Cap'n Noah, better laugh 'n grin;  
Perk up yo' speerits 'n do de bes' yo kin.

The insistent note of happiness in the girl's voice and the humble philosophy of the song so cheered me that, when my escort appeared on the stroke of ten, hope came riding down on the streaks of sunshine that were battling through the clouds.

While my companion had about him every mark of nervous restlessness that so often precedes a crisis or an illness he also had the air of a man at last determined to turn



and face a pursuing enemy and stand, or fall by the clash. Fear was absent from face and manner. He even lightly jested as Jane, while greeting him, slipped into his pocket a tempting-looking package.



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“Page, dear,” she twittered, “it is only cookies and sandwiches and pickles and cake. But talking always makes people hungry. Those nice gentlemen down at the Kencho are never in a hurry. They may keep you till after lunchtime. You and Miss Jenkins can have a tea party.”

Page laid a kindly hand on Jane’s shoulder. “You dear little saint of a woman! How good all of you are to me, and how I thank you. Well good-by. When you see me again I’ll be—”

With hand outstretched to open the door for me to pass, he paused. Once again the sound of a song reached us:

“Before I slept, I thought of thee;  
Then fell asleep and sought for thee  
And found thee.  
Had I but known ’twas only seeming,  
I had not waked, but lay forever dreaming.”

There was enough sweetness in Zura’s voice to woo a man to Heaven or lure him to the other place. Page listened till the last note, then softly closed the door and walked beside me. The look on his face held me speechless. It was a glorious something he had gained, yet never to be his; a glimpse into paradise, then the falling of the shadows between; but the vision was his reward.

Usually it takes endless time in Japan to unwind the huge ball of red tape that is wrapped about the smallest official act. That morning, when Page and I presented ourselves at the Government office, the end of the tape seemed to have a pin stuck in it, so easily and swiftly was it found. Promptly announced, we were ushered without delay into a small inner office.

The walls of this room were lined with numberless shelves filled with files and papers. Any remaining space was covered by pictures of famous persons, people wanted or wanting, and a geisha girl or two.

I noticed two other things in the room. Adorning the center of the table, before which we were seated, was a large cuspidor. The fresh flowers inside matched the painted ones outside. To Japanese eyes the only possible use for such an ornament was to hold blossoms. It was neither beautiful nor artistic, but being foreign was the very thing with which to welcome American guests. Anxious as I was I felt myself smiling, if rather palely, at the many ways in which Kishimoto’s prophecy was being fulfilled.

The other thing was not amusing, only significant. Page sat opposite me and I faced a heavily curtained recess, and some one was behind the drapery. I had seen the folds move. I had no way of warning the boy. Had we been alone, I doubt if I would have



made the effort. Concealment for Page, unendurable suspense for those who loved him, must end. I spoke only when necessary to interpret an unusual word.

A small official with a big manner began by eulogizing Mr. Hanaford's skill in teaching and his success in imparting English. He felt it a great rudeness of manner to the honorable teacher gentleman, but the law compelled applicant for the position of Professor of English in the Normal College to answer many personal questions. For a moment he dallied with a few preliminary statements; then, throwing aside all reserve, the man began his probe as a skilled surgeon might search a victim's body for hidden bullets.



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Page, outwardly calm, answered steadily at first, but his knotted fingers and swelling veins showed the strain. Once his lips trembled. I had never seen a man's lips tremble before. It's no wonder mothers can die for sons.

Inquiries as to quantity and quality of ancestors, place of birth, age, calling now and formerly came with the precision of a marksman hunting the center of the target. "How long have you been in this country?"

"About a year."

"From where did you come to Japan?"

Page hesitated, then stammered: "Don't remember."

The high-lifted brows of the official were eloquent, his voice increasingly sarcastic: "So! Your memory makes absence. Repeat your name once again."

"Page Hanaford."

"Hanaford? So! Now your other name?"

"I have no other name."

"Your other name!" was the sharp demand.

"My name is Page Hanaford, I tell you." He spoke with quick anger as he arose from the chair.

"Your other name!" sternly reiterated his inquisitor.

A wave of confusion seemed to cover the boy. Desperate and at bay, he rather feebly steadied himself for a last defense. "What do you mean? Can't you hear me? I tell you for the last time my name is—"

"Ford Page Hamilton," supplied the voice of Kobu, cool, suave and sure as he came from behind the curtain. "I arrest you as fugitive. See what paper says? You take moneys from bank." He exposed a circular printed in large type. It read:

"\$5,000 reward for information of one Ford Page Hamilton, dead or alive. Last seen in Singapore, summer of 1912," followed by a detailed description and signed by a Chicago banking firm.

"It's a lie!" shouted Page as he read.



“No lie. See? Page Hanaford San, Ford Hamilton San all same.” Kobu held close to the pitiful white face a photograph which undoubtedly could have been Page Hanaford in happier days.

The boy looked, then laid his shaking arm across his eyes. With a moan as if his soul had yielded to despair he hoarsely whispered: “Oh, God! A thief! It’s over!”

He sank to the floor.

## XVIII

### A VISITOR FROM AMERICA

In old Nippon the flower of kindness reaches full perfection when friend or foe suffers defeat. Page Hanaford might be a long-hunted prize in the police world, but to the group around him as he lay on the floor, his head upon my lap, he was a stranger far from home and very ill. Justice could wait while mercy served. Pity urged willing messengers to bring restoratives, to summon doctors who pronounced the sick man in the clutches of fever. Hospitals in Hijiya are built for the emergencies of war, and solicitude for Page’s comfort was uppermost when, after a short consultation among the officials, permission was granted to remove him to my house with an officer in charge.



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A policeman headed the little procession that moved slowly up the steps to The House of the Misty Star, and one followed to keep at a distance the sympathetic, but curious crowd. Four men carried a stretcher beside which I walked holding the limp hand of Page, who was still claimed by a merciful unconsciousness.

The news spread rapidly. As we reached the upper road I saw Zura at the entrance, waiting our coming, so rigid she seemed a part of the carving on the old lodge gates. Her face matched the snow beneath her feet.

“Is he dead?” she demanded, as we came closer.

“No. But he’s desperately ill—and under arrest,” I hurriedly added.

“Oh, but he’s alive; nothing else matters. Come on; my room is ready.”

Before I could protest, she had given orders to the men, and Zura’s bedroom was soon converted from a girlish habitation into a dwelling place where life and death waged contest.

Later the two physicians asked for an audience with me and delivered their opinion: “Hanaford San’s illness is the result of a severe mental shock, received before recovery from previous illness; cause unknown; outcome doubtful.”

From the sick-room orders had been issued for absolute quiet. Every member of the house crept about, keenly aware of the grim foe that lurked in every corner. When night came down the darkness seemed to enter the house and wrap itself about us as well.

[Illustration: “Oh, God! A thief! It’s over!”]

As Red Cross nurse on battlefields in the aftermath, I had helped put together the remnants of splendid men and promising youth; in sorrowing homes I had seen hope die with the going-out of such as these. But for me, no past moment of life held gloom so impenetrable as that first night when Page Hanaford lay in my house, helpless. The dreaded thing had come. The boy who had walked into our hearts to stay was a fugitive with only a small chance to live that he might prove he was not a criminal.

The evening household dinner remained untouched. The servants hung about the doors, eager to be of service, refusing to believe the sick man was anything but a prince of whom the gods were jealous. Only old Ishi was happy. In festal robes he was stationed at the lodge gates with a small table before him ready to do the honors of the house in the ancient custom of receiving cards.

Up the steps came a long procession of students, officials and civilians, my friends and Page’s, every caller in best kimono. From one hand dangled a lighted lantern with the caller’s name and calling shining boldly out through the thin paper, in the other he held a



calling-card which was laid upon the table in passing. The long line testified to their liking and sympathy for the sick man. To each caller Ishi had a wonderful tale to tell. The marvel of it grew as his cups of sake increased. At a late hour I found him entertaining a crowd with the story of how the silly foreign girl had cut off the heads of his ancestors which were in the flowers. Now the gods were taking their vengeance upon the one she loved best. Of course only an American girl would be so brazen as to show her liking for any special man. I took him by the shoulder.



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“Ishi, you are drunk. And at such a time.”

“No, Jenkins San, I triumph for Hanaford San. He die to escape Zura San. 'T is special 'casion. All Japanese gentlemens drink special 'casions. I assist honorable gods celebrate downfall of 'Merca and women.”

Having locked up the gates and Ishi, I went back to the living-room, where I found Jane and Zura. It was my first opportunity to tell them in detail what had happened at the Kencho—of Kobu's charge, the arrest and Page's collapse.

Zura was called from the room by some household duty. Jane and I were left alone. Though my companion looked tired and a little anxious, she seemed buoyed up by some mental vision to which she hopefully clung.

“Miss Jenkins, please tell me just what the poster said,” asked Jane.

The printed words I had read that morning seemed burned into my brain. I repeated them exactly.

“Well, it didn't even give a hint that Page was that nice cashier gentleman from Chicago, did it?” she inquired.

“No, Jane, it didn't; only it was signed by the Chicago Bank. But Kobu told me he was sure Page was the man. He has cabled the authorities to come.”

“He has cabled, has he? He knows, does he? Kobu has himself going to another thought. Isn't that what Zura says? Page Hanaford is no more the man wanted for borrowing that bank's money than I am a fashion plate wanted in Paris.” Her words were light, but very sure.

Her apparent levity irritated me. “How do you know? What are you saying, Jane?” I asked sharply.

“Oh, I just have a feeling that way. Page is too good-looking,” answered my companion.

“For the love of heaven, Jane Gray, that's no reason. Good looks don't keep a man from sin.”

“Maybe not, but they help; and Page loves poetry too,” she ended with quiet stubbornness. Then after a pause: “That program did not say what particular thing our boy was wanted for, did it?” Neither in joy nor sorrow did Jane's talent desert her for misusing words.

“No, the circular did not state the details. But if you think there is any mistake about the whole thing go to the room and look at that policeman pacing up and down before the



door. And if you think the boy's not desperately ill, look inside and see those two doctors and that speck of a trained nurse watching his every breath. You can read the paper yourself, if you don't believe me."

"Miss Jenkins, don't pin your faith to a program; they tell awful fibs. Once I wrote one myself for a meeting and I said, 'The audience will remain standing while collection is taken,' and it made me say: 'The remains of the audience will be collected while standing.'"

"How can you?" I asked. Hot tears stung my eyes.

Instantly Jane was by my side. "How can I? Because it's best never to believe anything you hear and only half of what you see. I know the dear boy is ill. But he's not guilty. The idea of that sweet boy, with such a nice mouth and teeth, doing anything dishonorable! It's all a mistake. I know guilt when I see it, and Page hasn't a feature of it."



## Page 91

Jane Gray exasperated me to the verge of hysteria, but her sure, simple faith had built a hospital and changed the criminal record of a city. The thought that she might be right, in spite of the circular and Kobu, gave me so much comfort that the tears flowed unchecked.

My companion looked at me critically for a moment, then left the room. She returned shortly bearing a heaped-up tray, which she arranged before me. "Honey, you can't be hopeful when you are hungry. You told me so yourself. I don't believe you've eaten since morning. Here's just a little bite of turkey and mince pie and chicken salad. Eat it. There's plenty more, for nobody's touched that big dinner we were going to celebrate Page's new position with. Now turn around to the lamp so you can see. What a funny fat shadow you make! But how sweet it is to know if we keep our faces to the light the shadows are always behind us! Now I must run and get a little sleep. Zura says I am to go on watch at three."

I thought her gone, when the door opened again and I could see only her gray head and bright, though tired face. "Miss Jenkins, please don't let that layer cake fool you. It is not tough. I just forgot to take the brown papers from the bottom of the layers when I iced them. Do as I tell you, eat and sleep."

"What if to-morrow's care were here  
Without its rest?  
I'd rather He'd unlock the day  
And, as the hours swing open, say,  
'Thy will be best.'"

"Good-night, dear friend."

Then she was gone. The tables were turned in more ways than one. Jane was counselor and I the counseled, she the comforter and I to be comforted.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the daughters of Japan lies a hidden quality ever dormant unless aroused by a rough shake from the hand of necessity; it is the power to respond calmly and skilfully to emergencies. In this, as never before, Zura Wingate declared her Oriental heritage. On the tragic morning when I had gone with Page to the Kencho I had left her a singing, joyous girl, her feet touching the borderland of earth's paradise. I returned and found her a woman, white lipped and tense, but full of quiet command. The path to love's domain had been blocked by a sorrow which threatened desolation to happiness and life. Not with tears and vain rebellion did she protest against fate or circumstances, nor waste a grain of energy in useless re-pinings. With the lofty bearing her lordly forefathers wore when going forth to defeat or victory this girl stood ready, and served



so efficiently that both nurse and doctors bestowed their highest praise when they told her she was truly a Japanese woman.

So frequent were the demands from household and sick-room that I feared for her strength. I knew she suffered. Rigid face muscles and dark-rimmed eyes so testified; but aside from these some tireless spirit held her far above weariness. Alert to see and quick to perform, under her hand, after a few days, the house settled down into a routine where each member had a special duty. In turn we watched or waited while the heavy, anxious days dragged themselves along until they numbered ten.



## Page 92

In the last half of each night Zura and I watched by Page and wrestled with the cruel thing that held him captive. They were painful, but revealing hours. I was very close to the great secrets of life, and the eternal miracle of coming dawn was only matched in tender beauty by the wonder of a woman's love. It was Zura's cool, soft hand that held the burning lids and shut out the hideous specters Page's fevered eyes saw closing down upon him. It was her voice that soothed him into slumber after the frenzy of delirium.

"Ah," he'd pant, weary of the struggle with a fancied foe, "you've come, my lovely princess. No! You're my goddess!" Then with tones piteous and beseeching he would begin anew the prayer ever present on his lips since his illness. "Beloved goddess, tell me—what did I do with them? You are divine; you know. Help me to find them quick. Quick; they are shutting the door; it has bars. I cannot see your face."

"I am here, Page," Zura would answer. "If the door shuts, I'll be right by your side."

In love for the boy each member of the house was ready day or night for instant service, but vain were our combined efforts to help the fevered brain to lay hold of definite thought long enough for him to name the thing that was breaking his heart. From pleading for time to search for something, he would wander into scenes of his boyhood. Once he appealed to me as his mother and asked me to sing him to sleep. Before I could steady my lips he had drifted into talk of the sea and tried to sing a sailor's song. Often he fancied himself on a pirate ship and begged not to be put off on some lonely island. He fiercely resisted. But his feebleness was no match for Zura's young strength, and as she held him she would begin to sing:

"Before I slept I thought of thee;  
Then fell asleep and sought for thee  
And found thee:  
Had I but known 'twas only seeming,  
I had not waked, but lay forever dreaming."

"Dreaming, dreaming," the boy would repeat. "Sweetheart, you are my dearest dream."

Inch by inch we fought and held at bay the enemy. We lost all contact with the outside. To us the center of the world was the pink-and-white room, and on the stricken boy that lay on the bed was staked all our hope.

The long delayed crisis flashed upon us early one morning when the doctors found in what we had feared was the end only a healing sleep from which Page awakened and called Zura by name. Even then it was a toss-up whether he could win out against despair. Uppermost in his mind was ever the torturing thought of the thing that had made him a fugitive.



An icy hand was laid upon our joy at the signs of returning health when we remembered a certain ship that was right then cutting the blue waters of the Pacific nearing the shores of Japan, bearing authority to make a prisoner of Page if he lived. They were not happy days, and it was with undefined emotions that I saw life and strength come slowly to the sick man.



## Page 93

By daily visits Koku kept himself advised of the patient's condition, and kept us informed of the swift approach of the Vancouver steamer and its dreaded passenger. One day, when Page was sleeping and our anxiety as to what was coming had reached the breaking point, the detective came. He announced that he had received information that the steamer had docked at Yokohama that morning. In the afternoon the Chicago Bank representative would arrive at Otsu, our nearest railroad station. Koku said he would bring the guest to our house at once and his kind wish that Page San's "sicker would soon be healthy" did not wholly hide the triumph of his professional pride.

He went his way to the station, leaving behind him thoughts sadder than death can bring.

When I told Jane what we were to expect her pale eyes were almost drowned. She looked frail and tired, but from somewhere a smile made rainbows of her tears.

"Don't give up, Miss Jenkins. No use crying over cherry blossoms before they wither. Koku's human enough to be mistaken. Detectives aren't so smart. Sometimes they tree a chipmunk and think it's a bear."

It was the nearest I'd ever heard Jane come to a criticism, and I knew she felt deeply to go this far.

Zura listened quietly to what I had to tell. But her eyes darkened and widened. "You mean they are coming to take Page away?"

"Yes; as soon as he is strong enough."

"Then I am going with him."

"Go with him? You, a young girl, go with a man who is in charge of an officer? It's impossible. I pray God it's not true, but if the law can prove that Page has sinned, he will have to pay the penalty in prison. You can't go there."

"No, but I can wait outside, and be ready to stand by him when he is released. No matter how guilty the law declares him, he is still the same Page to me. He's mine. I belong to him. Did not my own mother think home and country well lost for love? She knew her fate and smiled while she blindly followed. I know mine, and there is no other path for me but by the side of Page. Whatever comes I've known his love."

It was not the raving of a hysterical girl; it was the calm utterance of a woman—one of the East, who in recognizing the call of her destiny unshrinkingly accepts its decrees of sorrow as well as of joy. By training, environment and inclination Zura Wingate might be of the West; but her Occidental blood was diluted with that of the East, and wherever is found even one small drop, though it sleep long, in the end it arises and claims its own as surely as death claims life.



It was only a little while since Kobu had left us to go to the station to bring the unwelcome visitor from America.

The hills had scarcely ceased the echo of the shrieking engine, it seemed to me, when I heard the tap of the gong at the entrance. I started at once for Page's room where Zura and Jane were on watch.



## Page 94

Kobu and his companion were ahead of me. The brilliant light of a sunny afternoon softened as it sifted through the paper shoji, suffusing room and occupants in a tender glow. Through it, as I reached the door, I saw Zura half bending over the bed, shielding the face of the sick boy, Jane at the foot with lifted, detaining hand, Kobu's face as he pointed to the bed, saying, "There, sir, is the thief—I mean prisoner," and his startled look as the tall, gray-headed stranger went swiftly to the bed and gathered Page into his outstretched arms.

"A thief!" he cried. "Somebody's going to get hurt in a minute. He's my son. Oh! boy, boy, I thought I'd lost you!"

### XIX

*"The end of the perfect day"*

Jane was the first in that astonished group to recover, and her voice was as sweet and clear as a trumpet-call of victory, singing her gladness and trust: "I knew it! I knew it! But who are you, sir? Page said his father was dead."

"I? My name is Ford Page Hamilton, and this is my boy. I've been looking for him for months."

Page's eyes intently searched his father's face, as alternate fear and joy possessed him. The moment was tense; we waited breathlessly; at last Page asked: "But, Father, what did I do with them?"

"With what, son?"

"The bags of money—the collection I was to turn over to the firm."

"You delivered them sealed and labeled, then you disappeared off the map, just as if you had melted."

The word "melted" seemed to open in the brain of the invalid a door long closed. A sleeping memory stirred. "Wait! It is all coming back! Give me time!" he pleaded.

It was no place for a crowd. I took Zura by the hand, pulled Jane's sleeve, motioned Kobu toward the door, and together we went softly away.

\* \* \* \* \*

An hour later, when Mr. Hamilton came in, the happiest spot in all the Flowery Kingdom was the little living-room of "The House of the Misty Star."



Page was asleep through sheer exhaustion, and the father, with lowered voice and dimmed eyes, told the story.

The explanation was all so simple I felt as if I should be sentenced for not thinking of it before. For had I not seen what tricks the heat of the Orient could play with the brain cells of a white man? Had I not seen men and women go down to despair under some fixed hallucination, conjured from the combination of overwork and a steamed atmosphere—transforming happy, normal humans into fear-haunted creatures, ever pursued by an unseen foe? In such a fever-racked mind lay all Page's troubles.

For the last four years he had held a place of heavy responsibility with a large oil concern in Singapore. His duties led him into isolated districts. Danger was ever present, but a Malay robber was no more treacherous an enemy than the heat, and far less subtle. One day, after some unusually hard work, Page turned in his money and reports, and went his way under the blistering sun.



## Page 95

It was then that the fever played its favorite game by confusing his brain and tangling his thoughts. He wandered down to the docks and aboard a tramp steamer about to lift anchor. When the vessel was far away the fateful disease released its grip on his body. But in the many months of cruising among unnamed islands in southern seas, it cruelly mocked him with a belief he had purloined the money and taunted him with forgetfulness as to the hiding place.

When Page left the ship at a Japanese port memory cleared enough to give him back a part of his name, but tricked him into hiding from a crime he had not committed.

My remorse was unmeasurable as I realized the whole truth, but my heart out-caroled any lark that ever grew a feather. The boy's soul was as clean as our love for him was deep.

[Illustration: "Oh! boy, boy, I thought I'd lost you"]

"You see," continued Mr. Hamilton, "Page's mother died when he was only a lad, and my responsibility was doubled. When his regular letters ceased I cabled his firm for information. They were unable to find any trace of him. He had always been such a strong, sturdy youth I could not connect him with illness. Fearing he had been waylaid or was held for ransom I offered the reward through my Chicago bankers. The months at sea of course blocked us. The suspense was growing intolerable when the information came from Mr. Kobu; that brought me here."

All this time the detective had been silent. But no word or look of the others escaped him. At last the thing was forced upon him. He had missed the much-wanted cashier whose capture meant a triumph over the whole detective world. And he had been so very sure Page was the man! Descriptions and measurements were so alike. Both from the same city, one with the name of Hamilton, the other with that of Hammerton.

As Page's father remarked when he heard the story: "Mr. Kobu, those names are enough alike to be brothers, though I'm glad they are not."

But Kobu was not to be coaxed into any excuse for himself. Any one who knew him could but know the humiliation he would suffer at mistaking the prize. Even a big reward was slight balm to the blow at his pride. Intently he watched and listened until the details were clear to him. He could not understand all this emotion and indulgence in tears which were good only to wash the dust from eyes. But Kobu was truly Japanese in his comprehension of a father's love. He masked his chagrin with a smile and paid unstinted praise to the man who had tirelessly searched for his only son. With many bows and indrawings of breath the detective made a profound adieu to each of us and took his leave.



As the sound of the closing lodge gates reached us something in Jane's attitude caught my attention. In her eye was the look of a mischievous child who had foiled its playmate.

"Jane, what is the matter with you?" I asked.



## Page 96

“I was just feeling so sorry for Mr. Kobu. He is awfully nice, but I could not tell him. I knew!”

“What?” I demanded.

“Oh, I knew dear Page was not the gentleman who borrowed the bank’s money.”

“Knew it! How did you know?”

“Because a little while ago that nice cashier gentleman from Chicago sought shelter in the Quarters. I heard his story. He was the hungriest man for home cooking I ever saw. I gave him plenty of it, too, and a little Testament besides, before he left.”

“Why, Jane Gray! you knew this and did not tell?”

“Yes, Miss Jenkins; that is what I did. You see I am a sort of father confessor. I simply cannot furnish information about the dear people who confide in me. I would have saved Page, but when I came home and found him ill something told me to give both men a chance. I knew Page was not guilty. The same thing that made me sure of my hospital made me certain he would get well. The other man—well, you know, I am only a messenger of hope. I wanted to give him time to read that little book!”

I was dumb with astonishment.

“Upon my word,” remarked Mr. Hamilton after an eloquent pause, “as a soul diplomat you give me a new light on missionaries! Everything is all right now. I have found my son, and, if I know the signs, a daughter as well. She is a picture in her nurse’s dress. Tell me about her.”

I turned to look for Zura, but she was no longer in the room.

Leaving the delighted Jane in a full swing of talk about Zura, I withdrew and crossed the passageway. The paper doors of the sick chamber were wide apart, and once again I saw outlined against the glow of the evening sky two figures. The girl held the hands of the man against her heart, and through the soft shadows came low, happy voices:

“Ah, Zura, ‘I sought for thee and found thee!’”

“Belovedest,” joyously whispered the girl, bending low. Darkness, tender as love itself, folded about them, and I went my peaceful way.

\* \* \* \* \*

Two long-to-be-remembered months passed swiftly. On the wings of each succeeding hour was borne to Page the joy of returning health, to the other members of my



household the gladness of life we had never before known. Mr. Hamilton remained, waiting to take back with him, as one, Page and Zura. In the fullness of her joy Zura was quite ready to forgive and be forgiven, and said so very sincerely to her grandfather.

Kishimoto San replied in a way characteristic. He said the whole tragedy was the inevitable result of broken traditions and the mixing of two races which to the end of eternity would never assimilate. He had washed his heart clean of all anger against her, but his days were nearing a close. He had lost the fight and for him life was done. Oblivion would be welcome, for after all

“What of our life! 'T is imaged by a boat:  
The wide dawn sees it on the sea afloat;  
Swiftly it rows away,  
And on the dancing waves no trace is seen  
That it has ever been!”



## Page 97

Jane's hospital was soon completed, and I could no longer resist the sincere pleadings for her to be allowed to live in the quarters once again. "My people are calling, and, though I am a frail and feeble leader, I must give all my time to them and help them to find the way back home and sell their souls for the highest price."

Without protest I let her go. I had no word of criticism for Jane. Every soul is born for a purpose—some to teach, others to preach, and all to serve. Miss "Jaygray" more than justified her calling and her kind. Her simple faith had made many whole.

\* \* \* \* \*

Once again the Spirit of Spring held the old garden in a radiance of color. Once again the bird from the spirit land called to its mate and heard the soft thrill of the answer. The singing breeze swayed the cloud of cherry bloom, sending showers of petals to earth, covering the grim old stone image, making giant pink mushrooms of the low lanterns.

How lonely a thing would have been the Spirit of Spring had it not walked hand in hand with the Spirit of Love!

In the white moonlight sifting through the pines I saw Page and Zura in my garden on their last night in old Japan—destinies, begun afar, fulfilled beneath the shadows of the smiling gods.

"But think what love will do to them both," had once said the foolishly wise little missionary.

And now it has all come to pass.

Once again I am alone, yet never lonely, for my blessings are unmeasured. I have my work. I have love, and The House of the Misty Star holds the precious jewel of memory.

## THE END

Transcriber's notes: Quotation marks normalised.