

OXFORD, ENGLAND

1937

On a mild October evening an eighteen-year-old Rupert de Jongh was climbing a flight of stairs in a shabby rooming house on Holywell Street, willing himself not to drop the portable Gramophone he carried in his arms. Wouldn't do to shatter the bloody thing before he had a chance to hear his new Art Tatum and Duke Ellington recordings. De Jongh, a second-year student at Oxford University, owned a marvelous collection of works by Negro Americans, the sort of music your average Englishman called savage and decadent and refused to allow in his home. Typically dim-witted British reasoning.

His new Gramophone had been on order for months. Until now he'd been forced to borrow one belonging to a fellow student, a sexually indeterminate Communist in the room opposite him. Unfortunately, this meant listening to the Commie hold forth on dialectic materialism, while calling de Jongh "comrade" and telling him how smashing he looked in gray flannels.

Yesterday, the Commie had left for the United States to work with the American Student Union, which had followed Oxford in passing a resolution "not to support any war which the government may undertake."

Hitler, Mussolini, and Japan's leaders were talking of a Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis. Other nations publicly admitted they were afraid and had begun to rearm. War, the concentration of all human crimes, appeared imminent and inevitable.

But not to de Jongh. It was all so irrelevant. A spot of bother here and there and all of it happening far from the quadrangles of Oxford. Not to worry. Things always sorted themselves out in the end.

De Jongh's time was better spent listening to swing music or punting on the Thames or competing in the university's fencing club, where he was quite expert with saber and foil. There was also his membership in the dramatic society, which by tradition concentrated on the plays of Marlowe and Shakespeare. And he could take pleasure in an occasional slap and tickle with an accommodating female student, the two of them rolling about in the university's favorite trysting place, the tall grass of St. Hilda's College.

Life would turn serious soon enough. His father, Lord Clarence Geoffrey de Jongh, shrewd, ill-tempered, and charming, had followed the prescribed educational path for the upper classes. It went without saying that he expected his only son to do the same. Eton, Oxford, then the Grenadier Guards. Then a bit of foreign military service, followed by a place in the de Jongh holding company, with its large blocks of stock in a nationwide chain of chemist shops, a motor coach company, London's third largest department store, and a real estate corporation with land in England, Ireland, and Wales.

Piss on it, thought Rupert de Jongh. No one in his right mind could be interested in business, which was little better than swindling, thank you. All so boring, really. Business would kill him long before any war did. He had more energy than he could ever use as a businessman. His was a fire not easily controlled.

Gramophone clutched to his chest, he reached the top of the staircase and turned right, walking along a narrow hallway whose floorboards squeaked like mice. Too late he remembered that he should have purchased candles, his only source of light after sunset. His digs also lacked a bathroom, no small inconvenience, and his one window was missing a pane of glass. The bed had a few broken springs and the entire floor sloped noticeably to the left. Definitely not the Ritz, but somehow refreshing after the aristocratic clutter of his parents' seventeenth-century Jacobean home in Hertfordshire.

Though in need of repair, the ramshackle rooming house was not without its advantages. It was within walking distance of several of Oxford University's sixteen colleges. And to de Jongh's unbounded delight, for he was an avid reader, the house was only yards away from the Bodleian Library, one of the greatest in the world. Two and a half million volumes at his disposal, and on top of that, the library received a copy of every single book published in Britain. Sheer rapture. Perhaps the house's most exciting feature was its landlord, a shiny-eyed, bearded alcoholic with a withered arm and a tendency toward stammering fits. He was said to be the bastard son of a public hangman and a Rumanian murderess, a parentage giving him a celebrity status among Oxford students exceeding that of the most brilliant dean.

De Jongh was about to enter his room with his Gramophone when he stopped to listen. Singing coming from the Commie's digs. New tenant and guests, most likely. Japanese from the sounds of them and all drunk as a brewer's fart. Bloody wogs attempting to sing, of all things, English madrigals. Deplorable what they were doing to the delicate harmonies of "Phyllis, I Fain Would Die Now." Deplorable, yet rather charming in its own way.

Voices aside, the sound of their own native instruments was quite pleasant. De Jongh felt as though he'd heard them before, but that was impossible, of course. Bit of déjà vu.

Why did the instruments sound so disturbingly familiar?

He entered his own digs, placed the Gramophone on the bed, then walked across the hail and knocked on the door.

There were three of them. Young males no older than twenty, all sitting and drinking on the floor of a room no less pathetic than de Jongh's. All three decked out in the fashions favored by young Englishmen of the time:

chalk-stripe flannel pants, sleeveless knitted pullovers, black-and-white wingtips. A battered metal teakettle of rice wine was heating on a hot plate in front of them. Near the hot plate were two dishes of salted dried fish sprinkled with grated relish.

Two of the Nips were cousins, the birdlike Omuri and the shy, myopic Inoki. They were reading history at Corpus Christi College and lived several blocks away on Merton Street. Both were friends of the new tenant, Naiga Kanamori, a chunky handsome nineteen-year-old with a quick smile and a cool confidence that stamped him as a leader. All were second-year students like de Jongh. Bloody odd the way he took to them all right away. Lord knows he wasn't the type to make friends easily. But he liked these chaps, particularly Kanamori, a would-be playwright and the son of a wealthy and titled Japanese businessman.

Fueled by several cups of warm rice wine, de Jongh attempted to instruct them in the proper singing of madrigals. No luck there. Game lads all of them, but they lacked the necessary command of the English language. All words containing an R proved insurmountable. Not that it mattered, since a good time was had by all, de Jongh especially. He sang in a pleasing tenor and they applauded mightily. They sang and he, well, he encouraged. And they all ate salted fish, drank rice wine, and laughed together, and when another student pounded on the door, demanding quiet so that he could study, de Jongh called him a cunt and told him to get stuffed.

Evening. They lit candles and incense and as the mood turned quiet the Japanese played their native music for de Jongh. Omuri played a small hourglass-shaped drum, which he placed on his right shoulder and struck with the fingers of his right hand. Inoki, slanted eyes closed behind thick glasses, played a thirteen-string Japanese zither, plucking it with the thumb and two fingers of one hand.

Kanamori was the best musician of the three; he played a three-stringed banjo-like instrument with a sweet sadness that brought de Jongh, not the emotional type, to the brink of tears. De Jongh had heard this music before. Where?

When Kanamori finished playing, de Jongh asked him for the instrument, calling it by name. Shamisen. It was not a word he was expected to know. Had he admitted to being a Japanese scholar or having some interest in Japanese music, there would have been no reaction from the three Oriental S. It was Kanamori who held up a hand to silence his countrymen. No questions of the gaijin. Not at this moment.

De Jongh lovingly stroked the shamisen's long wooded neck and cat skin-covered sound box. He'd held one before. But when? He picked up the triangular ivory plectrum used by Kanamori and began to play, plucking the strings slowly. He stared straight ahead, eyes glazed. His playing was Japanese. Sad but pleasurable. And with a lyrical quietness.

Something was happening inside of him. He was shuffling the index cards of his memory and creating a new mind. One drawn toward Japan. The idea left him frightened and excited.

He finished to a strange silence. Kanamori's face was wet with tears. When he spoke his voice was choked and husky. "Do you know what you have just played?"

A dazed de Jongh shook his head.

"It is called gagaku," Kanamori said. "Ceremonial music from the Imperial Court of Japan." He leaned toward de Jongh. "From the Heian period. Twelve hundred years ago."

De Jongh had played the music flawlessly.

"Karma," said Kanamori. "It is the reason one is born again and again, as a greater or lesser man," he told de Jongh. "Karma is the unending process of action and reaction. What is called the eternal causal law. Past actions determining present action is. Present saying what the future will be."

How else to account for the differences between people in matters of health, ability, and wisdom, he said. How else to explain a young Englishman's ability to play an instrument he had never seen until today. "You have special knowledge of Japan," Kanamori said. "You are henna-gaijin. Perhaps more."

He picked up a folded napkin, wrapped it around the handle of the battered teakettle, then poured sake for de Jongh, Omuri, and Inoki. He did not, however, pour for himself. Instead he replaced the kettle on the hot plate and looked at de Jongh.

I know what to do, de Jongh thought. It is for me to honor him.

He picked up the kettle and filled Kanamori's cup. Among Japanese it was considered bad manners for a man to pour his own liquor.

A smiling Kanamori lifted his cup in a toast to de

Jongh. "Henna-gaijin," Kanamori said. Omuri and

Inoki repeated the word. All three bowed their heads.

De Jongh felt a chill, knowing they had done the correct

thing in bowing to him, but not knowing why. The Japanese waited until he sipped first. It was a gesture of respect due a leader.

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De Jongh's friendship with Kanamori fortified both of their lives. It was understood from the first that each could expect much from

the other. Kanamori thought they must have been brothers in a past life. Until now de Jongh had found it difficult to show affection to anyone, save his mother. But such was his warmth and regard for Kanamori that he allowed himself to be totally influenced by him.

Because of Kanamori, de Jongh now knew what he wanted and set about striving for it. He wanted the soul of a Japanese.

Kanamori said there were barriers preventing any non-Japanese from knowing Japan. But they could be broken if de Jongh learned to speak Japanese, no easy task since the language consisted of three alphabets, one of which was kanji, the picture writing from China. A truly educated Japanese knew at least five thousand kanji characters, as well as the two phonetic alphabets of forty-eight symbols each.

De Jongh was not discouraged. He lost no time in making arrangements with a university tutor for private language lessons. Within a month de Jongh was able to converse adequately in Japanese with Kanamori, Omuri, and Inoki. The astonished tutor said that in twenty-five years of teaching and study, he'd never encountered a more gifted student.

To learn Japanese history and philosophy, de Jongh haunted the Oriental department of the Bodleian Library. He ignored his regular Oxford classes to spend entire days reading about Japan, beginning with the eighth-century Nara period and going up to the Showa era, which had begun eleven years ago with the coronation of the young emperor, Hirohito. De Jongh's studies and conversations with Kanamori, however, did not teach him as much as the study of his own mind. Because Kanamori's father was something of a mystic, the young Japanese had an advantage in understanding de Jongh. All knowledge lay in the mind, Kanamori said. The mind, therefore, was de Jongh's key to penetrating the mystery that was Japan. No knowledge comes from outside, Kanamori said. It was all inherent in man and what a man knows was really what he discovered or unveiled by taking the cover off his own soul, a mine of infinite knowledge.

De Jongh was pleased to receive a letter from Kanamori's father, a baron who traced his ancestry back through twenty-one unbroken generations. The baron thanked him for his kindness to his son and the others. He also encouraged de Jongh to do all in his power to learn his true identity. In this search, wrote the baron, the external world was simply the suggestion, the occasion to set one to studying his own mind. Like fire in a piece of flint, knowledge exists in the mind. Suggestion was the friction that brought it out.

As for the friendship between de Jongh and Kanamori, the baron wrote that each seemed to have found a second self. And when de Jongh visited Japan he was to consider the baron's home as his own.

The more de Jongh learned about Japan, the more dissatisfied he became with England. Its fashions now appeared monotonous, its customs tedious, and its weather appalling. God knows, he'd never been comfortable with the Protestant religious code and its belief that nine out of ten human acts were despicable. And was there a more dismal spectacle than a world wearing black suits in imitation of the British upper classes?

Japan. The very word conveyed a sense of something transcending the expected and the mundane.

Henna-gaijin. Not something to be discussed with the family over tea and scones or opened up for discussion with his few English school chums. It would have to be a secret between de Jongh and his Japanese friends, though on occasion one even had to be careful around them. He once accused Kanamori of being *tatemae*, triggering the first bit of ill feeling between them. All Japanese simultaneously maintained two ways of dealing with the world. *Tatemae* was the superficial approach. One stuck to externals and dealt only with appearances. *Honne*, on the other hand, was a Japanese's true thoughts, an attitude revealed only in close friendship or after knowing someone for a long time.

The word *tatemae* had simply popped into de Jongh's head. God knows how, and he'd said it without thinking. Turned out he'd been correct about Kanamori. His friend had indeed been hiding his true thoughts. Blame it on the habits of a lifetime. But it was embarrassing to be criticized for it by a Westerner, a *gaijin*. And in front of Omuri and Inoki. There was a lesson in this for de Jongh: refrain from saying the first thing that comes to mind. And do realize that there will be times when Kanamori and other Japanese would see him as an outsider and not *henna-gaijin*.

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De Jongh was invited to join Kanamori, Omuri, and Inoki in judo practice, held in the basement of the rooming house. Judo was a combination of wrestling and gymnastics, with two fighters attempting to off-balance, then throw one another. Following the throw both struggled on the mat, trying to apply a stranglehold, arm lock, or a hold-down that had to be maintained for thirty seconds. Practice also included *ate-waza*, striking of the body's vital points with hands, fingers, elbows, feet, and knees. De Jongh became so obsessed by judo that he dropped all other sports to concentrate on it.

For mats, they used old mattresses and rugs. Kanamori, with his rank of *nidan*, second-dan black belt, led the workouts. He, Omuri, and Inoki wore judo costumes—white cotton jackets, trousers, and a belt. De Jongh wore an old blazer and a battered pair of corduroy pants. Later Baron Kanamori mailed him a judo costume, along with a rare and valued textbook by Jigoro Kano, founder of judo.

If Kanamori was the most skilled, de Jongh was the most aggressive, attacking his opponents unceasingly and with a ferocity difficult to fend off. Kanamori's nickname for him was *oni*, demon. When there was no one to practice with, de Jongh practiced alone, spending the time learning to fall safely and easily. If he had no fear of being thrown, then he could risk all on his *kake*, his attack.

In judo, Kanamori told him, *yo ii* must seize your opportunity. You must avoid mistakes and you must destroy your enemy at all costs. Defeat your enemy and not yourself. Concentrate and never weaken. This is the way of *budo*, the martial path. It was more,

thought de Jongh. It was a wisdom to be treasured as long as one lived.

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Until Kanamori, de Jongh had been indifferent to the black-balling of colored students by Oxford's more exclusive social clubs. Why concern himself if the university's all-white, all-male brotherhoods continually rejected Indians, Africans, and Orientals?

De Jongh himself was a member of two well-known clubs—the Gridiron, which accepted only public school graduates, and the Canton, which had its own wine steward. Why join when he considered most of the members to be little more than chinless wonders and upper-class twits? Because his father had been a member in his school days and had prodded his son into doing same. So now Rupert de Jongh occasionally found himself in the company of young aristocrats whose idea of unbridled merriment was to smash restaurant crockery, wreck their rooms, and drink themselves into a paralytic stupor.

Still, there was an undeniable prestige in belonging to such clubs and de Jongh saw no reason why Kanamori shouldn't apply for membership. Kanamori's family was *kazoku*, nobility descended from court nobles, feudal lords, and samurai. The family also had money and political influence. Kanamori himself was attractive, had good manners, and spoke English, French, and German. He was also a musician and a promising playwright, with an encyclopedic knowledge of Shakespeare and Shaw. Above all, he was de Jongh's friend.

But no matter how hard he tried, de Jongh could not get the Gridiron or the Canton to lower their color bars. Kanamori was blackballed and De Jongh was advised to choose his friends more carefully in the future.

De Jongh's reaction was to send letters of resignation to both clubs, stating his refusal to be dictated to by cretins who couldn't pick their noses without sticking a finger in each eye. This action insured him of more than a few enemies. Students now went out of their way to avoid him. He was a leper with a bell around his neck to clear everyone out of his way.

One unsigned letter shoved under the door of de Jongh's room accused him of having committed an act so wicked that it would destroy the university. A more violent confrontation involved three rugby players. They attacked de Jongh and Kanamori one evening outside of an Oxford restaurant, but were easily defeated through judo. De Jongh broke one attacker's arm so severely that the forearm bone tore through the skin. Although there were no more such attacks, the hatred toward de Jongh and Kanamori did not let up.

It reminded de Jongh of the thrashings he'd received from snobbish Etonians because his mother had been an actress in musicals. Damn the English upper classes and their tweed souls. Nothing but bloody hypocrites, the lot of them. Always insisting on being reasonable with each other, but in private they were nothing but liars, drunks, and whoremongers. Including his own father, who'd been unfaithful to de Jongh's mother from the outset of their marriage.

Kanamori took the rejection with good grace, saying that man can plan but only fate may complete. To show his appreciation for what de Jongh had tried to do, he presented him with a *bonsecki* that he had personally made. This was a miniature dry landscape, white sand and rocks arranged on a black lacquer tray to represent mountains and the ocean. De Jongh placed it in the window of his room, where in the morning sunlight the tiny sand waves appeared to rise and fall.

De Jongh's Hertfordshire home, called Bramfield House after the nearby village where Thomas Becket had been a twelfth-century rector, was also the scene of racism aimed at Kanamori. The perpetrator was none other than the corpulent and bearded Lord de Jongh, who refused to shake Kanamori's hand. And who let it be known through his wife that he would not dine with the family for the next few days.

"He's furious, love," Lady Anna de Jongh said. "Claims he wasn't told your friend was Japanese."

"Was and is," Rupert de Jongh said.

"Your father says that when you mentioned you were bringing one of the chaps home for the weekend, he thought—"

De Jongh snorted. "Him think? Not bloody likely. And he manages to take offense at everything. Look, I'm damn sick of the treatment Kanamori's getting in this country. I've promised him a pleasant weekend, and by God he's going to get one if I have to burn this house down. All the lord of the manor has to do is be civil until Kanamori and I return to university. Now if he can't find it in his heart to do so, then he and I shall have one awful row. And I wouldn't count on him getting the best of it."

Lady Anna, who'd noticed her son's increased confidence, tried to head off any conflict. "Darling, please leave things to me. Would you do that for your dear mother? I shall personally see to it that your friend enjoys his stay with us. Welcome is the best cheer, don't you think?"

She was as good as her word, this small, pretty woman who wore her blond hair in a pageboy cut and dressed in slacks, the American fashion rage popularized by Marlene Dietrich. Accompanied by her son, she led Kanamori through rooms hung with tapestries and rich wallpaper and filled with furniture covered in embroidered fabrics. She politely answered Kanamori's many questions about the history of the beautiful home and showed him its greatest treasure, one of the two shirts worn by King Charles I at his execution in 1649, to keep from shivering on that bitterly cold day. The king, Lady Anna said, did not want to appear frightened.

She took her son and Kanamori on walks through woodlands and along Roman roads to view Tudor cottages, ruins, a moated Norman castle, and a village that still kept a whipping post and medieval stocks in its square. Kanamori was delighted with all he saw and heard. And there was no end to his questions. He asked Lady Anna about the recent marriage of Britain's former king Edward VIII, now Duke of Windsor, to the American divorcee Mrs. Wallis Simpson. He wanted to know what the English thought of Hitler and if Winston Churchill was a warmonger and would ever be returned to power. Was it true that Rudyard Kipling, who died

last year, had been the world's highest-paid writer and if Britain wanted peace, as its leaders claimed, why were all citizens being fitted for gas masks?

The Japanese, de Jongh told his mother, were God's most curious people. Their desire for information of any kind was insatiable. He casually added that he had switched his course of study at Oxford from economics to Oriental history. And he would soon visit Japan at the invitation of Kanamori's father_

Lady Anna said de Jongh's father wouldn't like this Japan business. You know how he feels about—she almost said wogs, but caught herself. De Jongh politely ended the conversation by saying he had the right to choose and had exercised it and that if he had to clutter up his skull with mistakes, he insisted they be of his own making.

Shortly before de Jongh and Kanamori's arrival at Bramfield House, Lady Anna had suffered an accident in the kitchen. She had knocked a pot of hot oil on herself, burning her left arm and hip. Both wounds were painful and hadn't healed. She was said to have slipped on a wet kitchen floor, but it was known that she had become something of a drinker. De Jongh blamed his father, accounting for a growing coolness between the two. Lady Anna drank because of her husband's infidelity. And she drank because it hurt to be snubbed by his family and friends, who thought he had married beneath him.

She also drank because she was lonely. Her husband had forbidden her to associate with anyone from the theater or to invite her relatives to Bramfield House. In a cruel move to cut her off from the past, he had recently thrown out Lady Anna's treasured collection of rare theater programs, posters, costumes, and photographs. Rubbish and claptrap, he called them.

Kanamori could do nothing for Lady Anna's troubled marriage, but he could do something about her burns. At sundown one evening he and Rupert de Jongh searched the woodlands for frogs. When they had found eight or so, they returned to the house where Kanamori took over the kitchen and boiled the frogs into grease. He applied the grease to Lady Anna's burns. She felt an immediate relief. And there was a visible improvement in her wounds that same day. In gratitude she and her son presented Kanamori with an ornate pocket watch that chimed the quarter hour and had a gold sovereign for a watch fob.

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If Lord de Jongh was feared by his wife and servants, he was not feared by his son. Success, position, and money had given Lord de Jongh a self-assurance, but dear God, it was nothing like the composure exhibited by his son. What on earth had gotten into the boy? Frightening to admit that you could no longer lead your own son by punishment or persuasion. Bloody bastard had outgrown his father as he would a pair of cheap trousers. The day before Rupert de Jongh and Kanamori were to return to Oxford, father and son accidentally met alone at the top of Bramfield House's magnificently carved wooden staircase, where a year before her death a feeble-minded Elizabeth I had scratched her initials on the banister with a ring. "Understand you're planning a visit to the Far East," Lord de Jongh said.

A nod from his son. Nothing mere.

The father said, "Do make sure not to bring any more of them back with you. We have all the laundry men we need in England."

The look from his son was one the elder de Jongh would always remember. It was enough to make one's hair stand on end. And it revealed something about his son he had never seen before. In that look was the power to destroy.

To hide his fear Lord de Jongh excused himself and walked downstairs, leaving his son alone on the landing. At the bottom of the stairs the father's courage returned and he said, "Perhaps you should roam abroad in the world and get that arrogance knocked out of you before coming to work for me. I daresay a change of climate might mean a change of soul."

His son's smile was feral and cold-blooded. Yes, that was the word. Cold-blooded. "I'm certain it will," he said to his father. "I'm quite certain it will."

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Two months later de Jongh and Kanamori flew to Tokyo, arriving in the Japanese capital on a gray New Year's Eve morning. De Jongh was immediately treated to a demonstration of Baron Kanamori's power and prestige. At customs all foreigners had to undergo a detailed written and oral questioning, luggage search, and physical examination that included testing of urine and feces. As they had for hundreds of years, the Japanese remained an insular people who guarded their borders with an iron-fisted security.

De Jongh, however, was excused from all scrutiny. He was treated as though he were Japanese. An important Japanese. He and Kanamori were met by the baron's private secretary and an army major, who escorted them past white-gloved customs officials to a waiting motor car in front of the terminal. The secretary was a short, fat young man named Hara Giichi, who had a perpetual smile, extraordinarily small ears, and a club foot. The major was Jiro Takeo, burly and slovenly, with food stains on his jacket, broken, yellow teeth, and the breath of a farm animal. He wore a special badge of a star surrounded by leaves, indicating he was attached to the Kempei-Tai, the secret police.

Major Takeo led the way through the terminal, with people hastening to clear a path for him. De Jongh noticed that Giichi was visibly uneasy in Takeo's presence. Kanamori greeted the Major with a certain reserve and seemed visibly relieved when he didn't get into the car with them. De Jongh found Giichi congenial enough, but Major Takeo came across as a nasty piece of work. He glared at de Jongh and gave him a bone-crushing hand shake before swaggering back into the terminal. Disappointed no doubt at riot being allowed to play the hooligan with the baron's Western visitor.

De Jongh didn't tell Kanamori, but he thought the major was a swine.

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The chauffeur-driven car passed through Tokyo on its way north to the baron's home in Kanazawa, described by young Kanamori as an attractive provincial town in the Japanese Alps. They would spend New Year's Day there before returning to Tokyo. De Jongh, keyed up and hungry for anything Japanese, hoped Kanazawa was more exciting than Tokyo, which he found gloomy and ponderous. Too bloody quiet by far.

Kanamori said the quiet was actually Japanese self-control, developed from living hundreds of years in cramped, flimsy houses, which allowed no room for privacy and individualism. Self-control born of fear because severe punishments by generations of samurai had guaranteed obedience to even the harshest social code. De Jongh said it was interesting that much of Japanese life had always been maintained by force.

Tokyo, he learned, wasn't one city but a collection of cities, villages, and towns. Modern buildings side by side with a maze of winding alleys lined with low, wooden houses. There were even a number of farms within the city limits. In Japan, the old and new existed side by side. The past and present were intertwined.

De Jongh said he'd never seen both crowds and traffic so hushed and free of noise. And there were no colors running riot in Tokyo's one might find in Europe or in other parts of Asia. Everyone wore black, gray and khaki. Murderously dull, if you asked him.

Where in God's name were the kaleidoscopic kimonos he'd seen in books and museums? After a while he came to look upon an occasional glimpse of white-gloved traffic policemen and white-covered taxi and rickshaw seats as a shocking "color". Such a passive city. Quite disappointing, really.

But as the car left the city it circled a small park where a crowd of young men with flags, placards, and banners had surrounded a bus and were singing at the top of their lungs while clapping in rhythm. Nodding their heads in rhythm as well. They sang with an overwhelming feeling. De Jongh knew he was witnessing a strong, forceful devotion to something.

To what?

A word from Giichi and the car slowed down. De Jongh watched the singing go on for a minute or two longer and when it ended the crowd cheered, threw both arms in the air, and cried, "Banzai!" Long life to the emperor. They had worked themselves into a frenzy. Damn alarming to see. De Jongh had never witnessed such fanaticism in his life. Frightening. Yet impressive.

Giichi tapped the driver on the shoulder. As the car pulled away, the secretary began to explain to de Jongh in halting English what they had just seen. De Jongh interrupted, politely ordering Giichi to speak Japanese. A bow of the head and the secretary continued. The crowd was giving a rousing send-off to a busload of students who had been conscripted into the army. Japan was at war with China. Soon she would be at war with the West. With Britain and America. A silent Kanamori and Giichi awaited de Jongh's reaction.

He looked at the Japanese for a few seconds, then said what was in his heart. Things cannot be helped even when they can be. Giichi asked if war comes do you not fear for your life? De Jongh said that once a fire has been lit who can order it to burn this and not to burn that? After this Giichi remained silent for most of the ride. And whenever de Jongh spoke the secretary listened carefully, leaving no doubt in de Jongh's mind that Mr. Giichi was mentally preparing some sort of report on him.

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Kanazawa was as lovely as young Kanamori had said, with narrow, winding streets that had remained unchanged since the seventeenth century. A heavy snowfall only added to its beauty. The snow, however, left Kanamori less than enthused. He disliked the cold intensely, preferring Tokyo, where it never snowed and pretty girls could be counted in the hundreds. The only thing he liked about Kanazawa was Kenrokuen Park, one of the most beautiful in Japan. He was mesmerized by its artificial waterfalls, rivers, pools, and cleverly designed running streams.

As they drove past the park, de Jongh said he had walked here when it had been Lord Maeda's private garden, when the Maeda clan ruled Kanazawa. Lord Maeda himself had honored him for faithful service. The lord's gift to de Jongh had been a beautiful white horse.

Kanamori and Giichi knew that the Maedas had ruled the city in the seventeenth century. But both men made no comment.

Then Kanamori asked de Jongh if he remembered what had happened to the horse.

De Jongh said, "No. Perhaps it will come to me later." His heart was beating abnormally fast. So many things seen, then forgotten. And dimly remembered once more.

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Baron Kanamori's home faced Kenrokuen Park and was a mansion of graceful beams, shoji screens, ancient ceramics, and a priceless collection of woodblock prints. De Jongh initially had trouble accepting the spartan elegance of the rooms, but he soon dropped his Western expectations and viewed the mansion through Japanese eyes. What was a bare room with a single piece of furniture now became a room with sliding screens, floor mats, wall scroll, tea cabinet, and a single vase of flowers. Perfectly tasteful. Nothing else need be added. De Jongh's sole complaint concerned the temperature. The mansion was cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey and apparently he was the only one bothered by it. Heat, such as it was, came from a small hibachi in a room corner. A hibachi only half filled with burning charcoal and ashes. The living room fared somewhat better. It was heated by an irori, a hearth sunk into the floor. This was as close as the Japanese came to a fireplace. No chimney. Just a

large square hole in the center of the floor. Supposedly, the smoke escaped through a hole in the roof. More often than not it remained in the room to burn one's eyes and trigger a coughing spell.

Baron Kanamori was in his late fifties, a wispy little man with a large head, close-cropped white hair, and the unblinking, predatory stare of a hawk bearing down on its prey. His considerable fortune came from oil tankers, the manufacture of iron ore and cigarettes, and the importing of rice from Formosa and Korea. He had the proud bearing of a man whose ancestors had been samurai in the service of emperors, shoguns, and warlords. His black kimono bore the family crest of a silver fox and two gold empress trees.

De Jongh was, of course, apprehensive about meeting him. After all, the old boy was said to be a mystic who went days without food, meditated sitting under a waterfall in Kenrokuen Park, and spent hours kneeling before a blank wall in silent contemplation. According to young Kanamori, who was vague about specifics, his father was an associate of top military and political figures. The baron was also tied to various secret societies, some patriotic, some involving the martial arts. De Jongh didn't ask if this included ties to the yakuza. He simply assumed it did. It was an open secret to anyone who knew about Japan that the yakuza were bully boys for hire, primarily used by conservative businessmen against liberal politicians.

Young Kanamori said, "My father's most outstanding quality is his perseverance. He is single-minded and tenacious in all things. Japan is his first love, perhaps his only love. He will do anything to protect it. All of us— my mother, my sister, and I—have been told that one day we may have to give our lives for Japan."

De Jongh wondered if the baron wasn't a bit unbalanced. Off his chump, as it were.

Young Kanamori eventually told de Jongh about the secret societies. The Black Dragon, White Wolf, and the Brotherhood of Blood were patriotic groups, as were the martial arts clubs. They dated back to the nineteenth century and had begun by collecting intelligence on Japan's greatest foreign enemies, China and Russia. Later they extended their information gathering to all of Asia, Africa, Europe, and America. Membership included cabinet ministers, industrialists, military officers, journalists, students, intelligence agents.

To de Jongh's mind this made Baron Kanamori some sort of unofficial spymaster. A hard-core nationalist who believed that the military caste should again rule Japan as it had before the restoration of the emperor in the nineteenth century.

Young Kanamori spoke about the yakuza reluctantly. He was an idealist; it was very difficult for him to accept gangsters as a necessary part of the political process. But he had a duty to support his father and that meant not questioning him on the use of the yakuza. Baron Kanamori insisted that the yakuza had a major role to play in Japan's destiny. Japan was on a collision course with China and Russia for control of the Far East. Britain and America were also potential foes; they had Pacific colonies and wanted more. Unless Japan established its right to rule in its corner of the world, she could end up a conquered nation. To avoid this, she would need the help of all her people. All.

De Jongh found such a concept fascinating. The yakuza, vicious and disreputable, were somehow involved in national politics. Remarkable. Rascals and scoundrels found their way into Britain's government, but strictly on an individual basis, not as part of a conspiracy. The yakuza invariably got its way through intimidation and force. They were people who had nothing to lose. De Jongh envied their ability to go about their business minus any shame or guilt. He wondered if Baron Kanamori was an oyabun. It was one of several questions he wanted to ask the Japanese industrialist. But in the smoky, chilly living room it was Baron Kanamori who asked questions of de Jongh. The first questions were silent ones, involving only the eyes. The Englishman had never been stared at with such intensity in his life. After a few seconds, the baron dismissed his secretary and son. He also told his son that he and the gaijin were not to be disturbed.

When they were alone the baron took de Jongh's face between his small hands, hands that were abnormally warm. De Jongh almost pulled away, then decided no. Better see this thing through. Find out once and for all if he belonged here or in England.

The baron slowly ran his fingertips over de Jongh's forehead, eyes, ears, mouth. De Jongh felt his initial nervousness begin to fade. Yes, there was something different about the little, white-haired man, but not to worry. He definitely meant de Jongh no harm. De Jongh actually felt composed, totally undisturbed. The baron wanted to know all there was to know about him. By touching de Jongh he was stroking his soul. He was reading his inner consciousness and touching the vital spark.

The baron said a single word: bushido.

De Jongh held his gaze and said that it was the warrior's code. Loyalty to the lord,, bravery in battle. And honor before life itself.

The baron exhaled. He was satisfied. "You have arrived just in time. Japan has need of you, gaijin. We must hurry and teach you what you already know."

* * *

Baron Kanamori, his son, and de Jongh left the mansion an hour before midnight and drove toward the sea, to a valley temple three miles away. They were to spend New Year's Eve working with Shinto priests, to bring blessings on the Kanamori family during the coming year.

The night had grown colder and there was a full moon. The snow had begun to fall again, the richest, whitest snow de Jongh had ever seen. Inside the bare temple the three of them lit candles and assisted dark-robed priests in selling talismans and fortunes to long lines of worshippers. The worshippers had also come to ring the temple bell and offer prayers for the coming year. In the freezing air, surrounded by sounds of bells and wooden drums, de Jongh had never felt so happy. And at peace.

Dawn. The number of temple goers grew smaller. With an hour break before the crowds returned at sunrise, de Jongh and the Kanamoris joined the priests at the hibachi. They warmed their hands over its glowing coals, ate rice cakes, and sipped the first sake of the year. The darkness lifted and de Jongh could see the falling snow through open temple doors. Cherry trees in front of the temple had been wrapped in rice straw coats to protect them against the cold. The Japanese revered trees, believing them to be living things with souls. Snow and cherry trees formed a combination of heartbreaking beauty. De Jongh could never be completely English again.

Nor did he have to be told the significance of being in the temple on this particular night. For him, the new year meant a new life.

He looked down into the hibachi, at its seductive and subdued light. He was drained, physically exhausted, but where he wanted to be. In Japan.

Priests began to chant and it -vas a few minutes before he realized that the chanting had a meaning for him. What has been, shall be. What is done, shall be done. Yesterday, today, forever.

De Jongh closed his eyes, felt himself falling asleep on his feet, and opened his eyes wide. The priests were gone. And so was young Kanamori. De Jongh and the baron were alone at the hibachi.

They talked until it was light, until crowds again filled the temple. The baron drew de Jongh's past out of him, leaving de Jongh with a pride in his previous lives as a samurai, court noble, poet, and musician. Leaving him also with an uncontrollable desire to remain in Japan.

Suddenly the baron said, "Join me, henna-gaijin, in a prayer for my son." The baron had become solemn. His shift in mood caught de Jongh off guard. Something was wrong.

Baron Kanamori said, "Naiga will soon enter into rest."

At first de Jongh thought he had misunderstood, that he had not heard correctly because of the crowds. But the sad look on Baron Kanamori's face told him there had been no mistake.

De Jongh said, "How do you know?"

"I know, as I know about you. Naiga has fulfilled his karma, which was to bring you to me. He is now through with this world."

"But why must he die?"

The baron looked into the hibachi. "Because of you, gaijin. Because a blood sacrifice is needed to bind you to Japan. Because you can do the things for this nation that he cannot. Come to me, gaijin, when my son has died."

* * *

Oxford.

On a cold, damp February evening de Jongh and Kanamori attended the newly opened George Street cinema. It was their second trip to the ornate movie house in three days. Kanamori was infatuated with the pictures, particularly the Hollywood variety. He was even more ecstatic about the cinema itself, one of only two in Oxford and the most exciting thing to hit the university town since last year's exhibition match between Fred Perry, three-time British Wimbledon champion, and the great American champion Donald Budge.

On the whole de Jongh enjoyed the flicks, but the George, as locals called the new movie house, was too overdone for his taste. The lobby had a fountain with spurting colored waters, a lounge with an orchestra, and three restaurants. The theater ceiling was decorated like a night sky, complete with moving clouds and twinkling stars. In addition to a first-run film, there was a stage show and an organist.

This evening de Jongh and Kanamori sat through a stage show that featured singing dogs and a tap-dancing hermaphrodite. Kanamori was delighted by all of it. De Jongh's verdict: horrendous. Things picked up with the showing of Gary Cooper in Mr. Deeds Goes to Town. But even as de Jongh sat in the dark and watched Cooper give away a \$20 million inheritance, his mind was on a greater adventure.

He had remained in Japan two weeks longer than planned. His father was incensed, and de Jongh also fell behind in his Oxford studies. But he had stayed in Japan because of Yamato Damishii, the spirit of Japan. It was a phrase not easily defined; it was simply something to be felt and understood. The Japanese did. And so did de Jongh. Call it a spiritual strength, something the Japanese believed would sustain them through any year. Yamato Damishii united the entire nation, committing every man, woman, and child to total war, if need be, in defense of a country they loved with a passion that defied words.

The West wanted Japan out of China and a Japanese pledge against any future aggression in Asia. Unless Japan complied it could find itself under great economic pressure. Britain and America had spheres of influence in Asia and the Pacific, giving them valuable territories and natural resources, which they did not intend to share with Japan. Asian colonies tied to the West meant no raw materials for Japan's growing industries. The choice: submit to the West or acquire raw materials through conquest.

De Jongh had witnessed and experienced Yamato Damishii. Japan's choice would be conquest and he wanted to be a part of that great adventure.

When the cinema closed at 11.00 p.m., de Jongh and Kanamori found a High Street restaurant that was still open and had a late supper. They talked of films and Japan, For de Jongh it was one of those few times when all thoughts of the baron's prophesy about Kanamori's death had mercifully slipped his mind.

After dinner they stepped into a street that was dark and practically deserted. Public transport had stopped and a single student cycled past them on the way to his digs. Oxford was a small town; a short stroll in the night air and they would be back at the rooming house.

They started walking and in seconds saw the light and their elongated shadows in front of them. De Jongh looked over his shoulder. Behind them a car was moving in fast, roaring through the streets as though driven by a demon. Or a drunken student. De Jongh motioned Kanamori away from the edge of the sidewalk and closer to the shops. Let the bugger drive by and don't give him too tempting a target.

When the car was just yards away, it leaped on the sidewalk behind them and began to scrape a brick wall, leaving a shower of sparks in its wake. The car hit a dustbin, grazed a lamppost, and knocked over sandwich boards serving as shop signs. A horrified de Jongh realized the car was deliberately trying to hit them.

Everything happened quickly. He caught a glimpse of the car, a yellow Daimler. Then he was blinded by its headlights and was flying through the air. Kanamori had violently shoved him off the sidewalk and clear of the Daimler. De Jongh landed painfully in the street and followed his instinct, which said keep rolling, get away from the car. He rolled until he slammed into the gutter on the far side.

Still on his back, he saw the Daimler speed along the sidewalk, dragging a screaming Kanamori beneath its front bumper. Inside the car someone yelled in triumph. There were at least three passengers besides the driver. And then the Daimler passed over Kanamori's body, swerving onto the street and leaving the body in front of a sweets shop.

Horn blaring, the Daimler raced up the High Street, red taillights receding and finally disappearing in the darkness.

De Jongh pushed himself to his knees, collapsed, then crawled toward Kanamori. He became aware of injuries suffered in the street fall. Head and left ankle hurting unmercifully. Face cut and bleeding. Pain in the left side. Had it not been for Kanamori, de Jongh would have been much worse off. Much worse.

But he had seen the car. And he knew the identity of the bastard who had been at the wheel.

De Jongh reached Kanamori and almost fainted at the sight of him. The Daimler had torn off Kanamori's legs, scraped off much of his clothing and turned his face into something unrecognizable. The area around the Japanese was so slick with blood that de Jongh almost slipped to the ground. Kanamori's mouth was a black hole in a blood-drenched skull; -when he tried to speak, nothing came out. He reached up for de Jongh with an arm covered in bloody rags.

In the upper-floor rooms overlooking the street, lights came on. Windows opened. People in night dress looked out and called down, demanding to know who was causing all the trouble.

A weeping de Jongh took Kanamori into his arms. He felt a misery so overpowering that he knew he was about to be physically ill. In an amazing show of strength Kanamori gripped one of de Jongh's hands until de Jongh thought the bones would break, and then he died.

It took four constables to pull the hysterical de Jongh from Kanamori's mutilated corpse.

* * *

De Jongh suffered a concussion, twisted ankle, facial lacerations, and cracked ribs. But he left his hospital bed and testified before a police inquiry that the owner of the yellow Daimler was an Oxford student named Denis Addison. De Jongh added that he and Kanamori had bested Addison and two of his rugby teammates in a punch-up near a Merton Street restaurant. Addison, it seems, had now taken his revenge.

But in his testimony Addison claimed the Daimler had been stolen two days before Kanamori's unfortunate accident. And when the accident occurred Addison had been at a private party in Christ Church meadow some distance from the High Street. Numerous witnesses were prepared to come forward and testify to this. Yes, he'd had trouble with de Jongh and his Japanese friend. They had given him a severe arm injury, which had forced him to drop out of all school athletics. He blamed the fight on Kanamori's resentment at having been blackballed from the university's private clubs. Rupert de Jongh, said Addison, had instigated the fight in support of his Japanese friend.

Addison's father, a newly appointed admiral of the fleet, called on the old-boy network to support his son. And so Oxford authorities investigating Kanamori's death began receiving character references, telephone calls, and other communications on behalf of young Addison. They came from the House of Lords, Whitehall ministers, the Ministry of Defense, and Church of England officials.

It was Lord de Jongh who gave his son a shocking bit of news about the "accident." The police report on the stolen Daimler was false. The car had actually been reported missing thirty minutes after Kanamori's death. Rupert de Jongh asked if the police were deliberately lying. "Of course," his father replied. "Who in God's name do you think is going out of its way to protect the boy?"

"You'll have to bite the bullet on this one, laddy buck," Lord de Jongh told his son. "And don't count on the little tale I've just told you ever seeing the light of day. I promise you it will stay buried for some time to come."

In the bitter argument that followed, Rupert de Jongh named Kanamori's true murderers: English wealth and privilege. His father called him an ass for placing the death of a single wog above the institutions of your country. And how could the de Jongh family be on speaking terms with the Addisons and others like them if this Kanamori business wasn't allowed to fade away? Son or no son, unless young Mr. de Jongh came to his senses and renounced the late Mr. Kanamori, Lord de Jongh was prepared to cut off all monies and assistance starting immediately. Break off all contact with the press and the Japanese embassy in London and stop trying to convince them to look into this so-called murder. "You haven't been quite the same since returning from the Far East," Lord de Jongh said. "You're a white man, by God. Act like one."

Choose, he said. England and family. Or dead scum. When Kanamori's body was shipped home to his family in Japan, de Jongh accompanied the coffin.

He was never to set foot in England again.

SEA OF JAPAN

SEPTEMBER 1944

On a freighter bound for Korea, Rupert de Jongh leaned against a derrick mast and watched a teenage Japanese girl use a folding fan to simulate several visual and emotional effects. She was quite good. Blessed with supple wrists, expressive hands, and the gift to make others see beauty. She stood near a lifeboat, performing for a dozen young Japanese girls seated at her feet. De Jongh had interrupted a morning stroll about the deck to watch her.

His eyes followed the fan. A cigarette in his mouth remained unlit. The fan was an eagle in pursuit of her empty hand, a wounded sparrow. Positively mesmerizing. The girl was as good as any professional dancer or kabuki performer he'd ever seen. And the sole bright spot on this revoltingly ugly vessel.

The SS Ukai was a small freighter sailing out of a port near Kanazawa and calling at ports in Korea and China. It was little more than a leaky rust bucket, with holes in the deck, broken railings fore and aft, and cargo hatches that reeked of fish, animal carcasses, and urine. There were only six cabins, all located astern behind one large room on the bridge, which served as wheelhouse, chart room, and radio room. Those cabins were cramped, with malfunctioning toilets and clanking steam pipes. The cuisine was an inescapable horror.

The twelve-man crew could only be described as vicious and foul. They were a mixture of Koreans and Japanese, a collection of loud-talking, brawling drunks who rarely bathed. Their captain was a fortyish Korean, a flat-faced and toothy little man named Pukhan. De Jongh knew him to be violently covetous, with a history of discreditable acts involving young girls. Sailing with Pukhan, and de Jongh had made a few trips with him, meant putting up with his servile and fawning ways. The captain, alas, was a toady. De Jongh had once seen him continue to flatter a general who had spat in his face. A disgusting little man, really. Amusing to watch him come to attention on the bow of the Ukai and salute passing Japanese submarines, destroyers, cruisers, and aircraft carriers in the Sea of Japan.

De Jongh lit his Senior Service, enjoying the hard-to-come-by British cigarette, and watched the teenager turn her fan into a sword, then into the Sun God. Then it became a curtain, temporarily hiding her face before she revealed one emotion after another. Joy. Sorrow. And hope.

De Jongh thought, Precious little hope for you, fan girl. Or for those sitting at your feet and gazing at you with such adoring eyes. They were karayuki, females sold abroad to military brothels in Japanese-occupied Manchuria, China, Southeast Asia, Korea, and the Pacific. The fan girl, a ravishing little thing with waist-length hair and an adorable mouth, appeared to be the oldest. Around fifteen, de Jongh guessed. A few of the others couldn't have been more than eight or nine. Most had been sold to a broker by parents too poor to feed them. The rest had probably been snatched off Tokyo streets by a pimp and taken on board the Ukai against their will.

All were bound for the port of Samchok in Korea, to be sold on the dock to the highest bidder. Nothing for them to look forward to but a lifetime of whoring for some callous, stonyhearted brothel keeper until they became too old or too disease-ridden to service customers. Last night, first night out at sea, the girls had been raped by Captain Pukhan and his crew. It had been a foretaste of what the girls could expect when the ship docked.

Over breakfast this morning, de Jongh had been forced to listen to Captain Pukhan tell of throwing one twelve-year-old overboard last night because she had resisted a bit too strenuously. But not before removing her clothes, which he planned to sell.

De Jongh had refused Pukhan's invitation to join in last night's goings-on. Nor would de Jongh allow the two yakuza with him to indulge. 'The three of them were on Baron Kanamori's business and had no time for diversions. De Jongh, the gaijin, known to be an effective intelligence agent and no one to argue with, was obeyed without question. When challenged, he had the reputation of responding with prompt and inflexible savagery.

Since the start of the war with China, Japan had flooded that country's northern provinces with heroin and morphine in an attempt to weaken the huge population and destroy their will to resist. But today drug dealing had become merely a way of making money. Some used Koreans to handle this for them.

Baron Kanamori, impoverished by the demands of

Japan's war machine on his fortune, used the yakuza.