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MR. FABRE, for reasons more practical and less philosophic than those advanced by Mr. Sheepshanks, had decided that romantic love was undesirable, and by no means conducive to ultimate happiness. He himself had never been subject to this malady, which he regarded as endemic in the non-Latin races of Europe; but its presence in others had irked him more than once. There was the abortive motor-drive with Inez who, as a Latin, had no business to be romantic, and there had been some time previously a very awkward business ending in suicide. An Austrian girl had caused some commotion in Aoibashi, the great shopping centre of Totsuka, by leaping from the tenth storey of a department store at mid-day, and landing on a farmer who was in on an excursion for his first (and last) visit to the metropolis. He died some hours after the lady, his face retaining an expression of unbounded astonishment.

This beautiful Viennese, who had successfully taught a good many merchants' daughters to play Beethoven's easier sonatas on the 'grampianno', as they called it, met M. Fabre soon after her arrival in Japan, while she was going through that period of acute nostalgia which is common among immigrants. Professor Bela Kehrler of the Totsuka Conservatory was unable to devote the whole of his time to piloting her round the town; he had done a good deal for her already in the way of providing pupils, for music was 'bulling' in Japan and the Conservatory crammed to bursting point. So it

happened that one morning she alighted from the local electric train, not at Meijiro, where she had intended to visit the snuffy old Professor at his morning coffee, on business connected with a wealthy pupil, too stupid and sensitive to derive any benefit from his cantankerous methods, but at the slightly homophonous Meguro. As soon as she heard the porter wailing this trisyllable she mistook the one for the other, hastened to the barrier, at which the collector took her ticket without a glance at it, and, gazing round as soon as consciousness took the place of automatism, found that none of the landmarks that she had learnt to seek for purposes of guidance were in sight. A strange road, roaring with traffic, stretched itself before her bewildered eyes. This was certainly not Meijiro, whatever it was, but a confusing sort of place that one would do well to get out of with all possible dispatch. Retiring to the station, she approached a pigeon-hole and said 'Meijiro'.

The clerk muttered something that sounded like 'Some bun', and jerked his finger in the direction of another pigeon hole. Into this she repeated the word 'Meijiro', this time with a faintly querulous tone.

The young man in charge here was engaged in exchanging facetiae with a colleague. Without troubling to look at her he snapped, half turning round, 'Kata-michi des'ka, ofuka des'ka', and immediately afterwards resumed his conversation. Unable to reply to this cryptic remark, she waited patiently for a minute, during which a brisk, pig-faced little man in a solar topee and Japanese clothes pushed her aside, took his ticket and clattered off in a hurry, before she exclaimed for the third time, 'Meijiro', even more timidly than before.

The clerk now noticed that this was not the usual procedure of the bustling Totsukan. He stared for a while at the comical foreign face, and then punched with

the date and flung her a ticket. 'Ju-issen!' he barked, but, seeing that she hesitated; 'You : shall : pay : e-levenn : cents'.

She thanked heaven that she knew a little English and opened her reticule. It contained a lipstick, a powder-box and a bunch of keys. Amazed at this calamity, she found herself wandering, deaf to the merriment of the clerks, once more into the noisy street. In desperation she determined to walk to Meijiro, however far it was, asking her way from street to street; for this purpose she knew enough of English, a language which, she believed, was familiar to the Japanese. She walked a few hundred yards along the dangerous, jostling thoroughfare, dodging rickshaws that charged her with shouts of 'Hai-hai'! deafened by the thunder and belching Klaxon horns of lorries, by the endless scream of the pipe-cleaners' portable boiler, which advertises its presence with a steam-whistle, and by the racket of a 'Jinta', or advertising band, big drum, cornet and clarionet, a Ford car full of a dismal caterwauling, which passed by slowly, leaving streams of pink pamphlets, inviting one to see a picture-house or take a patent medicine. At length she saw a man in the blue uniform she had come to associate with students; but this happened to be a tram-conductor, who wears similar clothing, coming off duty.

'Vere is Meijiro?' she asked him.

He grinned, retorted, 'All-o-right-o!' and passed on. A woman with a baby on her back, crooning a nursery rhyme, and shifting rhythmically from one foot to the other, screamed with embarrassed laughter at the question, and called something to a half-naked man who was minding a greengrocer's shop. Children with scabby heads began to collect, elders to pause in their shopping. Here she was, marooned in an unknown

quarter of an alien city, the inhabitants of which did not seem disposed to be either friendly or obliging. The very vegetables had a strange, forbidding appearance—hairy, tuberous objects that looked as though they came from the operating theatre rather than from the field; pimentoes, lotus-roots, giant burdocks, gourds of monstrous girth and stinking pickled radish. A priapic green statue of a badger on guard outside a china shop leered at her, and little bone pendants of cocks treading hens, glass wind-bells with tufts of maiden-hair fern and palm-fibre clattered and clinked their tiny hostile voices. She felt very much inclined to cry.

Once more the guttural expletive of a Klaxon prompted her to step aside and turn in the direction of the noise. A Citroën car was pushing its way through the undisciplined swarm of humanity to whom 'rules of the road' were an enigma, an arbitrary foreign innovation imposed merely to annoy them. It was being driven to his office by M. Fabre, whom long experience had taught to thread a safe way through the traffic while keeping a fraction of his sight on the alert for a pretty girl. The spectacle of the slim, dark young foreigner, with her wide eyes and slightly Hungarian cheekbones turned toward him in distress, was more than a sufficient inducement for him to stop the car, jump out, and offer, politely and with an air of efficiency, his assistance.

The god, she felt with relief, had come from the car, fattish certainly, but well-favoured, dashing in manner, coolly master of the situation and the language. His smile revealed, between the clipped moustache and imperial, a rank of even white teeth which, with his brown eyes, looking buccaneering and cynical, as though he were intending to victimise her, but at the same time felt both sorry and amused at her plight, contributed to the unerasable first impression that she received of him.

‘ . . . Ah, Meijiro ; you’re a long way off. May I have the pleasure of driving you there ? ’

‘ Oh, that would be too much to ask. You must be very . . . ’

‘ I insist. My business is myself ; my time’s my own ’.

Taking his firm, dry hand, she mounted to a seat. His nails were manicured—little pink, Gothic arches.

‘ You’ve not been long in Totsuka, perhaps ? ’

‘ No ; I’m very lonely. I’ve no friends ’.

M. Fabre was the kind of person to whom such adventures frequently arrive—no doubt because he was not of the imaginative sort that wastes time in merely longing for them. Others might wander through the city with pure intentions, dreaming that they were knights-errant ; but M. Fabre had no dreams ; merely the fixed determination to let no chance escape him. Unlike Podler, he never worried about the incompatibility of love with business ; he was the true practician of method that can, more than conceive order and routine, create it, and conducted his amours on regular principles. Not for nothing was he the scion of a Flemish farming stock that had raised horses and children with the same efficient brutality, and had thriven by ferocious haggling and punctual labour. He had been brought up amid the reek of manure and horse-sweat ; but now a whiff of the rather heavy, passionate scent that she used excited him, perhaps all the more for that.

‘ I’m more grateful to you than I can say ’, she cried, dismounting at Professor Kehrer’s.

‘ Then show it by lunching with me. I’ll look for you by the Eastern barrier of Totsuka Central Station at 12.30 ’.

It was all thought out then ; she felt that, as an inert creature placed by him, as by Fate, in a particular niche in the scheme of things, she could not refuse. At lunch

M. Fabre prescribed effectively a little Quinquina, under the influence of which she consented to let him initiate her into the mysteries of Kabuki Drama on the following evening.

Upon the stage, a young man, fatally wounded by his father who wrongly believed him to have betrayed his lord, then in hiding and pursued by a bloodthirsty rival, howled and sobbed his life away, while the audience, sniffing into paper handkerchiefs, enjoyed themselves in a perfect welter of maudlin pity. The girl felt the infection in the form of a vague inclination to yield to some emotional impulse, preferably amative. M. Fabre knew all about this, and was careful to observe that her hand, when touched by his, was not withdrawn. This hand, the one nearest to him, rested on the join between the two seats, beneath the plush arm; he moved his outward all but imperceptibly, so that it remained for some time in contact with hers. When he lifted it so as to rest on the back of her wrist, she caught two of his fingers between her thumb and index.

She responded tumultuously to his kisses in a quiet spot without the city where an ilex grove excluded the stars. Thus began the only serious love-affair in her whole life history. The setting in function of so great a volume of force might be attributed largely to her salvation from loneliness and dejection, to the unexpected discovery of an oasis, all the more precious for the grim and malodorous desert that surrounded it. She fell hopelessly in love with M. Fabre—a rash thing to do, as he pointed out more than once.

‘I warn you, my dear, I’m a dangerous man; I have all the vices of the world and none of its scruples. I’m a nymphomaniac, and a single one can’t cure my disease—even you’.

‘I believe you’re merely posing; men like to play at

being more wicked than they are. And if it is true, I love you all the more for it'.

'Dear child!' he would reply, 'have a little Quinquina', exclaiming inwardly at the same time, 'Holy Virgin! another romantic. If she wasn't so pretty I should get out of this as fast as I can!'

The affair blazed Sirius-like through the strengthening heat of summer; he motored her to all the loveliest spots within striking distance from Totsuka, to Takao-Sama with its dragon-fretted temple and terraces of idols; to Ikaho, where the lilies of the valley perfume a whole range of hills and the Alps dream palely at a distance; to Nikko, lacquered like a rainbow, where the air trembles with the music of jade-brilliant waters; to Kusatsu past old Mount Asama, fuming sullenly in the twilight and distilling vitriolic waters that make the lepers shriek as they leap hopefully in. She learnt to sleep on mattresses stretched over rice-straw mats at an inn where the maids giggled and, though she did not know it, asked M. Fabre the most searingly intimate questions about the tending of his latest flame. Some of them had met him before, and knew very well what they were talking about. She enjoyed kneeling on a cushion before a mahogany table ten inches high, sampling egg soup, cuttlefish stewed in shoyu, sweet saké pickles, and such delicacies as are served in a multitude of small bowls and dishes, while the waitresses cackled with delight at her awkward manipulation of a pair of too fragile wooden chopsticks.

A week before the grand exodus to Osakai, M. Fabre met Madame Cavara at a reception accorded to Dru, the French round-the-world flier. Having just concluded not very successfully one of her periodical and terrific quarrels with her husband, a kind of cathartic which her soul required from time to time for its well-being, she encouraged him to such a degree that, thoroughly

inflamed, he decided to be off with the old love, and to prosecute the new with all his energies. He sent Leni, the Austrian girl, a diplomatic note with a thousand yen, which he thought most handsome, giving orders to his office clerk and servants that she was not to be admitted on any pretext whatever.

Leni found herself not only abandoned, but threatened with motherhood. These are no uncommon circumstances in any country ; but she was unnerved by her abrupt dismissal, frightened at the possibility of finding herself unemployed and homeless in a strange land, and dominated by the insidious power of the damp, wild island whose suicidal influence was before long to affect Mr. Sheepshanks as it now affected her. After two sleepless nights she went to the Midoriya Store, took the lift to the roof garden, and stepped off the parapet into space. The event created no great stir ; after all, it merely meant one foreigner the less in Japan.

But when, on the rebound from his defeat at the hands of Inez, M. Fabre began to be seen about with his new Japanese typist, a languid-looking, heavy-lipped girl who wore foreign clothes and took everything she could get as a matter of course, the police became discreetly attentive. M. Fabre's name was inscribed on the official black lists of nefarious foreigners who corrupt the morals of the aborigines. Miss Yaegashi's discarded Japanese lover saw to that.

The black list was a trump card in the hands of the able and rising politician, Dr. Kuwahara, who kept a select detachment of Centipedes in his pay, and had already caused Baron Kawaguchi, Mayor of Totsuka, to be well beaten and thrown into a ditch. As soon as the Seiyu-Honto government fell—and they had been very wobbly ever since the Aomori brothels scandal—he could boost the already flourishing ‘immoral foreigners’

campaign which, with its double appeal to patriotic and ethical sentiment, should do much towards consolidating his position in the new Cabinet—a position pregnant with golden possibilities of retrieving his damaged fortune (he had lost heavily in the two cases of opium-smuggling and drug adulteration which he had defended) and so of providing for his large legitimate and illegitimate families, and of showing in concrete form his gratitude to a favourite Geisha who had made herself politically useful.

M. Fabre had a Chinese cook ; a fat and jolly man who was genuinely fond of his master, though he hated all whites (and Japanese) on principle, and who, if he swindled him over the housekeeping, protected his interests at a hundred more vital points. If Ah Long disliked the Japanese, he loathed their police even more heartily. He warned his master that questions were being asked about him, and that visits were being paid with a view to extracting information from the housemaid. Fabre took the hint, and acted circumspectly in the matter of Miss Yaegashi. By means of an unwontedly daedal web of lies, an extravagant testimonial and a gratuity that was pretty sure, now that Japanese departments were under an imitation of the Geddes Axe, to exceed any official bribe that might offer, he succeeded in substituting for the butterfly of a housemaid a cross-grained but reliable female relative of Ah Long's, who summed up her opinion of the Japanese character in this aphorism : ' Outside he smile, he say " alligato gozaimasu "' (a polite form of thanks) ' inside he velly, bad '.

There were no more gaddings about to hotels where a foreigner had to register and could be easily traced. Like Dr. Rumbolt's family pill that ' don't go fooling around, but attends strictly to business ' ; he confined the

activities of his amour to the embrace and the use of the cheque-book ; but Miss Yaegashi did not object to these concrete Occidental methods. At length he deemed it safe for her to pay him visits to Osakai, provided that the following precautions were observed : she must arrive by a train due in at nightfall ; leaving the station alone by the landward exit, which lay nearest to a tract of little frequented fields, her modest luggage tied up in a kerchief, she was to walk a few hundred yards to a certain quiet spot behind a shrine, where he would be waiting with the Citroën, in which vehicle, carefully hooded, he would convey her to his little two-roomed cottage.

On the appointed day he arrived, through impatience, a little early at his trysting place, and descended from the car to sit on a bank and smoke. It was then that he noticed, to his disgust, that another person was loitering about there ; not, however, a Japanese detective, but a foreign lady, seated on a stump, and also smoking a cigarette. On closer inspection she proved to be Alba Sheepshanks.

This was disastrous ; she must be got rid of in quarter of an hour or the fat would be properly in the fire. Stupid M. Fabre ! as if Alba cared a curse for his affairs ; but the assiduities of the police had got rather on his nerves, as any annoyance will in Japan ; any witness might, without meaning it, bring trouble. We must bolt the badger, frighten, insult her, make love to her ; the remote chance of her responding was a risk of war.

‘ Ah ! I thought it was you ’, he called cheerfully. ‘ Now, what are you doing here alone, I wonder, pretty Meessers Sheepshanks ? Waiting for someone, yes ? ’

‘ I often come here ’ ; she had found the place that evening for the first time after painfully following

Podler's directions. 'It's quiet, and sometimes I like to be alone'. She hoped to the devil he'd take the hint.

'Yes, indeed. What a place for lovers'.

Alba froze a few degrees. 'Oh? Well, don't let me keep you if you're out for a drive. What a lovely evening you've got for it'.

'You come too, eh? Or we stay here together, pretty Meessers Sheepshanks'. He came close to her, smiling. 'They say English women are cold, but that's all rot. You're not cold, eh?' he took her hand. 'Cold hand and warm heart'.

'Look here, I don't know whether you're trying to make love to me or not; but if you are, there's nothing doing, so you can clear out'.

'Oh, don't pretend to be a Lucrece. I can see that your eyes are passionate; there are no virtuous women—they are pure fiction—very pure, as you know perfectly well. All women are the same as your Kipling says: sisters under the skin'.

'Well, it's no good your standing there talking nonsense. I've got nothing for you, my man, so the quicker you get out of it the better. Hi, James, James! For God's sake come and kick this drivelling Belgian out. He's gone dotty, I think'.

Mr. Podler glided leanly out of the shadows. If he had been the 'strong, silent man' that he idealised, he would have tried to knock M. Fabre down. As it was he asked as gruffly as he could, 'What's the trouble?'

'The lady is a little annoyed because I want to rest here, I think'.

Alba was boiling up for a furious reply; but Fabre continued, 'And I mean to rest here'. Podler, after rapid calculations, interposed.

'I say, we don't want a scandal. The fool's probably drunk. Come on'.

As they moved off, Alba said very distinctly, 'How lucky you happened to be passing'.

M. Fabre chuckled heartily: 'That was a poor attempt at deception, my plump Lucrece. But what a Tarquin. O Lord! Now if I was a girl . . .'

Miss Yaegashi tripped up six minutes later with her furoshiki. Lifting her into the air, he placed her in his car, which rattled joyfully in the direction of supper.

