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## Chapter 26 - Some Farewells

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Never did Prince Maiyo show fewer signs of his Japanese origin than when in the company of other men of his own race. Side by side with His Excellency the Baron Hesho, the contrasts in feature and expression were so marked as to make it hard, indeed, to believe that these two men could belong to the same nation. The Baron Hesho had high cheekbones, a yellow skin, close-cropped black hair, and wore gold-rimmed spectacles through which he beamed upon the whole world. The Prince, as he lounged in his wicker chair and watched the blue smoke of his cigarette curl upwards, looked more like an Italian--perhaps a Spaniard. The shape of his head was perfectly Western, perfectly and typically Romanesque. The carriage of his body must have been inherited from his mother, of whom it was said that no more graceful woman ever walked. Yet between these two men, so different in all externals, there was the strongest sympathy, although they met but seldom.

"So we are to lose you soon, Prince," the Baron was saying.

"Very soon indeed," Prince Maiyo answered. "Next week I go down to Devenham. I understand that the Prime Minister and Sir Edward Bransome will be there. If so, that, I think, will be practically my leave-taking. There is no object in my staying any longer over here."

The Baron blinked his eyes meditatively.

"I have seen very little of you, Maiyo," he said, "since your last visit to the Continent. I take it that your views are unchanged?"

The Prince assented.

"Unchanged indeed," he answered,--"unchangeable, I think almost that I might now say. They have been wonderful months, these last months, Baron," he continued. "I have seen some of those things which we in Japan have heard about and wondered about all our lives. I have seen the German army at manoeuvres. I have talked to their officers. Where I could, I have talked to the men. I have been to some of their great socialist meetings. I have heard them talk about their country and their Emperor, and what would happen to their officers if war should come. I have seen the French artillery. I have been the guest of the President. I have tried to understand the peculiar attitude which that country has always adopted toward us. I have been, unrecognized, in St. Petersburg. I have tried to understand a little the resources of that marvellous country. I came back here in time for the great review in the Solent. I have seen the most magnificent ships and the most splendid naval discipline the world has ever known. Then I have explored the interior of this island as few of our race have explored it before, not for the purpose of studying the manufactures, the trades, the immense shipbuilding industries,--simply to study the people themselves."

The Baron nodded gravely.

"I ask no questions," he said. "It is the Emperor's desire, I know, that you go straight to him. I take it that your mind is made up,--you have arrived at definite conclusions?"

"Absolutely" Prince Maiyo answered. "I shall make no great secret of them. You already, my dear Baron, know, I think, whither they lead. I shall be unpopular for a time, I suppose, and your own position may be made a little difficult. After that, things will go on pretty much the same. Of one thing, though, I am assured. I see it as clearly as the shepherd who has lain the night upon the hillside sees the coming day. It may be twelve months, it may be two years, it may even be three, but before that time has passed the clouds will have gathered, the storm will have burst. Then, I think, Hesho, our master will be glad that we are free."

The Baron agreed.

"Only a few nights ago," he said, "Captain Koki and the other attaches spent an evening with me. We have charts and pieces, and with locked doors we played a war game of our own invention. It should all be over in three weeks."

Prince Maiyo laughed softly.

"You are right," he said. "I have gone over the ground myself. It could be done in even less time. You should ask a few of our friends to that war game, Baron. How they would smile! You read the newspapers of the country?"

"Invariably," the Ambassador answered.

"There is an undercurrent of feeling somewhere," the Prince continued,--"one of the cheaper organs is shrieking all the time a brazen warning. Patriotism, as you and I understand it, dear friend, is long since dead, but if one strikes hard enough at the flint, some fire may come. Hesho, how short our life is! How little we can understand! We have only the written words of those who have gone before, to show us the cities and the empires that have been, to teach us the reasons why they decayed and crumbled away. We have only our own imagination to help us to look forward into the future and see the empires that may rise, the kingdoms that shall stand, the kingdoms that shall fall. Amongst them all, Hesho, there is but this much of truth. It is our own dear country and our one great rival across the Pacific who, in the years to come, must fight for the supremacy of the world."

"It will be no fight, that," the Ambassador answered slowly,--"no fight unless a new prophet is born to them. The money-poison is sucking the very blood from their body. The country is slowly but surely becoming honey-combed with corruption. The voices of its children are like the voices from the tower of Babel. If their strong man should arise, then the fight will be the fiercest the world has ever known. Even then the end is not doubtful. The victor will be ours. When the universe is left for them and for us, it will be our sons who shall rule. Listen, Maiyo."

"I listen," the Prince answered.

The Baron Hesho had laid aside his spectacles. He leaned a little towards his companion. His voice had fallen to a whisper, his hand fell almost caressingly upon his friend's shoulder.

"I would speak of something else," he continued. "Soon you go to the Duke's house. You will meet there the people who are in authority over this country. When you leave it, everything is finished. Tell me, is the way homeward safe for you?"

"Wonderful person!" Prince Maiyo said, smiling.

"No, I am not wonderful," the Ambassador declared. "All the time I have had my fears. Why not? A month ago I sought your aid. I knew from our friends in New York that a man was on his way to England with letters which made clear, beyond a doubt, the purpose of this world journey of the American fleet. I sent for you. We both agreed that it was an absolute necessity for us to know the contents of those letters."

"We discovered them," the Prince answered. "It was well that we did."

"You discovered them," the Ambassador interrupted. "I have taken no credit for it. The credit is yours. But in this land there are so many things which one may not do. The bowstring and the knife are unrecognized. Civilization has set an unwholesome value upon human life. It is the maudlin sentiment which creeps like corruption through the body of a dying country."

"I know it," the Prince declared, sighing. "I know it very well indeed."

"Dear Maiyo," the Ambassador asked, "how well do you know it?"

"My friend," the Prince answered, "it were better for you not to ask that question."

"Here under this roof," the Baron continued, "is sanctuary, but in the streets and squares beyond, it seems to me--and I have thought this over many times--it seems to me that even the person of the great Prince, cousin of the Emperor, holy son of Japan, would not be safe."

Prince Maiyo shrugged his shoulders. There was gravity in his face, but it was the gravity of a man who has learnt to look upon serious things with a light heart.

"I, also," he said, "have weighed this matter very carefully in my mind. What I did was well done, and if the bill is thrust into my face, I must pay. First of all, Baron, I promise you that I shall finish my work. After that, what does it matter? You and I know better than this nation of life-loving shopkeepers. A week, a year, a span of years,--of what account are they to us who have sipped ever so lightly at the great cup? If we died tomorrow for the glory of our country, should we not say to one another, you and I, that it was well?"

The Baron rose to his feet and bowed. Into his voice there had crept a note almost of reverence.

"Prince," he said, "almost you take me back to the one mother country. Almost your words persuade me that the strangeness of these Western lands is a passing thing. We wonder, and as we wonder they shall crumble away. The sun rises in the East."

The Prince also rose. Servants came silently forward, bearing his hat and gloves.

"Perhaps," the Prince smiled, as he made his adieux--

"Perhaps," the Ambassador echoed. "Who can tell?"

The Prince sent away his carriage and walked homeward, greeting every now and then an acquaintance. He walked cheerfully and with a smile upon his face. There was nothing in his appearance which could possibly have indicated to the closest observer that this was a man who had taken death by the hand. At the corner of Regent Street and Pall Mall he overtook Inspector Jacks. He leaned forward at once and touched the detective on the shoulder.

"Mr. Jacks," he said, "it is pleasant to see you once more. I was afraid that I should have to leave without bidding you farewell."

The Inspector started. The Prince laughed to himself as he watched that gesture. Indeed, a man who showed his feelings so easily would be very much at a loss in Tokio!

"You are going away, Prince?" the Inspector asked quickly. "When?"

"The exact day is not fixed," the Prince replied, "but it is true that I am going home. I have finished my work, and, you see, there is nothing to keep me over here any longer. Tell me, have you had any fortune yet? I read the papers every day, hoping to see that you have cleared up those two terrible affairs."

Inspector Jacks shook his head.

"Not yet, Prince," he said.

"Not yet," the Prince echoed. "Dear me, that is very unfortunate!"

Inspector Jacks watched the people who were passing, for a moment, with a fixed, unseeing gaze.

"I am afraid," he said, "that we must seem to you very slow and very stupid. Very likely we are. And yet, yet in time we generally reach our goal. Sometimes we go a long way round. Sometimes we wait almost over long, but sooner or later we strike."

The Prince nodded sympathetically.

"The best of fortune to you, Mr. Jacks!" he said. "I wish you could have cleared these matters up before I left for home. It is pure selfishness, of course, but I have always felt a great interest in your work."

"If we do not clear them up before you leave the country, Prince," the Inspector answered, "I fear that we shall never clear them up at all."

The Prince passed on smiling. A conversation with Inspector Jacks seemed always to inspire him. It was a fine afternoon and Pall Mall was crowded. In a few moments he came face to face with Somerfield, who greeted him a little gloomily.

"Sir Charles," the Prince said, "I hope that I shall have the pleasure of meeting you at Devenham?"

"I am not sure," Somerfield answered. "I have been asked, but I promised some time ago to go up to Scotland. I have a third share in a river there, and the season for salmon is getting on."

"I am sorry," the Prince declared. "I have no doubt, however, but that Miss Morse will induce you to change your mind. I should regret your absence the more," he continued, "because this, I fear, is the last visit which I shall be paying in this country."

Somerfield was genuinely interested.

"You are really going home?" he asked eagerly.

"Almost at once," the Prince answered.

"Only for a time, I suppose?" Somerfield continued.

The Prince shook his head.

"On the contrary," he said, "I imagine that this will be a long goodbye. I think I can promise you that if ever I reach Japan I shall remain there. My work in this hemisphere will be accomplished."

Somerfield looked at him with the puzzled air of a man who is face to face with a problem which he cannot solve.

"You'll forgive my putting it so plainly, Prince," he remarked, "but do you mean to say that after having lived over here you could possibly settle down again in Japan?"

The Prince returned for a moment his companion's perplexed gaze. Then his lips parted, his eyes shone. He laughed softly, gracefully, with genuine mirth.

"Sir Charles," he said, "I shall not forget that question. I think that of all the Englishmen whom I have met you are the most English of all. When I think of your great country, as I often shall do, of her sons and her daughters, I will promise you that to me you shall always represent the typical man of your race and fortune."

The Prince left his companion loitering along Pall Mall, still a little puzzled. He called a taxi and drove to Devenham House. The great drawing rooms were almost empty. Lady Grace was just saying goodbye to some parting guests. She welcomed the Prince with a little flush of pleasure.

"I find you alone?" he remarked.

"My mother is opening a bazaar somewhere," Lady Grace said. "She will be home very soon. Do let me give you some tea."

"It is my excuse for coming," the Prince admitted.

She called back the footman who had shown him in.

"China tea, very weak, in a china teapot with lemon and no sugar. Isn't that it?" she asked, smiling.

"Lady Grace," he declared, "you spoil me. Perhaps it is because I am going away. Every one is kind to the people who go away."

She looked at him anxiously.

"Going away!" she exclaimed. "When? Do you mean back to Japan?"

"Back to my own country," he answered. "Perhaps in two weeks, perhaps three--who can tell?"

"But you are coming to Devenham first?" she asked eagerly.

"I am coming to Devenham first," he assented. "I called this afternoon to let your father know the date on which I could come. I promised that he should hear from me today. He was good enough to say either Thursday or Friday. Thursday, I find, will suit me admirably."

She drew a little sigh.

"So you are going back," she said softly. "I wonder why so many people seem to have taken it for granted that you would settle down here. Even I had begun to hope so."

He smiled.

"Lady Grace," he said, "I am not what you call a cosmopolitan. To live over here in any of these Western countries would seem to denote that one may change one's dwelling place as easily as one changes one's clothes. The further east you go, the more reluctant one is, I think, to leave the shadow of one's own trees. The man who leaves my country leaves it to go into exile. The man who returns, returns home."

She was a little perplexed.

"I should have imagined," she said, "that the people who leave your country as emigrants to settle in America or even over here might have felt like that. But you of the educated classes I should have thought would have found more over here to attract you, more to induce you to choose a new home."

He shook his head.

"Lady Grace," he said, "believe me that is not so. The traditions of our race--the call of the blood, as you put it over here--is as powerful a thing with our aristocrats as with our peasants. We find much here to wonder at and admire, much that, however unwillingly, we are forced to take back and adopt in our own country, but it is a strange atmosphere for us, this. For my country-people there is but one real home, but one motherland."

"Yet you have seemed so contented over here," she remarked. "You have entered so easily into all our ways."

He set down his teacup and smiled at her for a moment gravely.

"I came with a purpose," he said. "I came in order to observe and to study certain features of your life, but, believe me, I have felt the strain--I have felt it sometimes very badly. These countries, yours especially, are like what one of your great poets called the Lotus-Lands for us. Much of your life here is given to pursuits which we do not understand, to sports and games, to various forms of what we should call idleness. In my country we know little of that. In one way or another, from the Emperor to the poor runner in the streets, we work."

"Is there nothing which you will regret?" she asked.

"I shall regret the friends I have made,--the very dear friends," he repeated, "who have been so very much kinder to me than I have deserved. Life is a sad pilgrimage sometimes, because one may not linger for a moment at any one spot, nor may one ever look back. But I know quite well that when I leave here there will be many whom I would gladly see again."

"There will be many, Prince," she said softly, "who will be sorry to see you go."

The Prince rose to his feet. Another little stream of callers had come into the room. Presently he drank his tea and departed. When he reached St. James' Square, his majordomo came hurrying up and whispered something in his own language.

The Prince smiled.

"I go to see him," he said. "I will go at once."