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The Enemy Explanation -

There are other surgeons, Excellency," Sadao suggested. "None I trust," the General replied. "The best ones have been trained by Germans and would consider the operation successful even if I died. I do not care for their point of view." He sighed. "It seems a pity that we cannot better combine the German ruthlessness with the American sentimentality. Then you could turn your prisoner over to execution and yet I could be sure you would not murder me while I was unconscious." The General laughed. He had an unusual sense of humour. "As a Japanese, could you not combine these two foreign elements?" he asked.

ruthlessness: harshness

sentimentality: being emotional

execution: legal punishment

peculiar: strange

Sadao suggested to the general that there were many other surgeons in Japan. The general replied that he did not trust anyone else other than Sadao. He added that the best surgeons had been trained by the Germans and for them the operation would be successful even if the general died. He did not care for their point of view. The general added that the Japanese could not combine the harsh nature of the Germans with the emotional nature of the Americans. So the general wanted to say that they did not have such persons who could combine the harsh nature of a German and the emotional nature of an American. He said that if they would have been able to do that then Sadao could be harsh and could turn the prisoner to the Japanese and at the same time, be emotional and not murder the general during the operation. With this the general laughed. The writer says that the general had a strange sense of humour. He was very witty. Then he asked Sadao that being Japanese could he not combine these two foreign elements. So, the foreign elements to which the general is referring is the harsh nature of a German and the emotional nature of an American.

Sadao smiled. "I am not quite sure," he said, "but for your sake I would be willing to try, Excellency."

Sadao smiled at the general's question and said that he was not quite sure about it but for his betterment, he was willing to try it out.

The General shook his head. "I had rather not be the test case," he said.

The general shook his head as he did not want to be such a person on whom a new trial would be made.

He felt suddenly weak and overwhelmed with the cares of his life as an official in times such as these when repeated victory brought great responsibilities all over the south Pacific.

Overwhelmed: full of emotions

Cares of his life: problems and responsibilities that he faced during his life

South pacific: the part of the Pacific Ocean that lies in the southern hemisphere.

Suddenly, the general felt weak and emotional as he was reminded of the problems he had faced throughout his life while fulfilling his duties and responsibilities in various wars won by Japan.

"It is very unfortunate that this man should have washed up on your doorstep," he said irritably.

"I feel it so myself," Sadao said gently.

The general was irritated and said that the happening of the injured man reaching his house was an unfortunate one.

Sadao agreed with him.

"It would be best if he could be quietly killed," the General said. "Not by you, but by someone who does not know him. I have my own private assassins. Suppose I send two of them to your house tonight or better, any night. You need know nothing about it. It is now warm — what would be more natural than that you should leave the outer partition of the white man's room open to the garden while he sleeps?"

Assassins: professional killers

The general said that the best solution was to kill the man quietly. He added that he would not be killed by Sadao but by his hired killers. He would send two killers to Sadao's house that night or any night. Sadao did not need to know about it. As the weather was warm those days, he wanted Sadao to act naturally and keep the door of the outer partition of the man's room open. As it opened into the garden, it would give easy access to the killers while the man was asleep.

"Certainly it would be very natural," Sadao agreed. "Infact, it is so left open every night."

Sadao agreed that the idea seemed natural. He added that they did leave the door of the outer partition open at night.

"Good," the General said, yawning. "They are very capable assassins — they make no noise and they know the trick of inward bleeding. If you like I can even have them remove the body."

The general was over with the talk and so, he yawned to show disinterest. He added that was a good thing. He commented that the killers were experts – they did not make any noise and killed the person in such a way that he bled inside. There would be no traces of blood on his body. He would even ask them to remove the dead body if Sadao wanted.

Sadao considered. "That perhaps would be best, Excellency," he agreed, thinking of Hana.

Sadao thought about Hana and said that that would be very good.

He left the General's presence then and went home, thinking over the plan. In this way the whole thing would be taken out of his hands. He would tell Hana nothing, since she would be timid at the idea of assassins in the house, and yet certainly such persons were essential in an absolute state such as Japan was. How else could rulers deal with those who opposed them?

Timid: showing lack of courage or confidence

Absolute state: a state run by kings having total powers

Sadao went back home and on the way he kept on thinking of the plan that he had made along with the general. He thought that in this way, he would not be involved in the death of that American man. He planned that he would not tell Hana anything about this plan. Hana would not like the idea of the hired Killers coming to their house but such persons were essential in a place like Japan. It was the only way for the rulers to deal with their opponents.

He refused to allow anything but reason to be the atmosphere of his mind as he went into the room where the American was in bed. But as he opened the door, to his surprise he found the young man out of bed, and preparing to go into the garden.

Reason: an idea backed by common sense

Sadao did not let any thought enter his mind as he went into the room where the American man lay asleep. He was surprised to see the man out of his bed. He was getting ready to go out into the garden.

“What is this!” he exclaimed. “Who gave you permission to leave your room?”

Sadao was shocked as he asked him that who had permitted him to stand and walk.

“I’m not used to waiting for permission,” Tom said gaily. “Gosh, I feel pretty good again! But will the muscles on this side always feel stiff?”

Tom was happy and said that he was not in a habit of taking permission before doing anything. He said that he felt good again, just the muscles on the sides of his body were stiff and rigid.

“Is it so?” Sadao inquired, surprised. He forgot all else. “Now I thought I had provided against that,” he murmured. He lifted the edge of the man’s shirt and gazed at the healing scar.

“Massage may do it,” he said, “if exercise does not.”

Sadao was surprised to hear that. He forgot all work and said that he had warned the man not to stand and walk. He lifted the man’s shirt and inspected the scar. He said that massage could heal it if it would not be healed by exercise.

“It won’t bother me much,” the young man said. His young face was gaunt under the stubbly blond beard. “Say, Doctor, I’ve got something I want to say to you. If I hadn’t met a Jap like you — well, I wouldn’t be alive today. I know that.”

Sadao bowed but he could not speak.

Gaunt: gloomy, weak

Stubbly: unshaven, bearded

Blond: light – coloured, yellowish colour

The man said that the scar would not trouble him. His young, bearded face was weak. He thanked Sadao and said that if he had not reached Sadao that day, then he would have died.

“Sure, I know that,” Tom went on warmly. His big thin hands gripping a chair were white at the knuckles. “I guess if all the Japs were like you there wouldn’t have been a war.”

Gripping: holding tightly

Tom added that he was sure of that. As he held the chair tightly with his thin hands, the knuckles turned white in colour. This indicated that he was still weak and had not recovered fully. Tom added that if all the Japanese people would have been like Sadao, then the war would not have happened.

“Perhaps,” Sadao said with difficulty. “And now I think you had better go back to bed.”

Sadao said that maybe that could be true. He added that the man should go to sleep.

He helped the boy back into bed and then bowed. “Goodnight,” he said.

He helped the man lay in bed, bowed to him, said “goodnight”.

Sadao slept badly that night. Time and time again he woke, thinking he heard the rustling of footsteps, the sound of a twig broken or a stone displaced in the garden — a noise such as men might make who carried a burden.

Rustling: the sound made by footsteps

Twig: branch of tree

Burden: here, it refers to a dead body.

Sadao was restless all through the night as he felt that the hired killers were there to kill the man. He imagined hearing the sound of footsteps, branches being broken, stones moving as men walked on them and imagined that he heard such a noise which indicated that some men were carrying the American’s dead body. All this anxiety kept him awake.

The next morning, he made the excuse to go first into the guest room. If the American were gone he then could simply tell Hana that so the General had directed. But when he opened the door he saw at once that there on the pillow was the shaggy blond head. He could hear the peaceful breathing of sleep and he closed the door again quietly.

Shaggy: hairy

In the morning Sadao made an excuse to go into the American man's room first. He had planned that if the man was gone then he would tell Hana that the general had ordered for him to be removed from there. When he opened the door, he saw the man who had lots of yellowish coloured hair was asleep. He could hear the sound of his breathing. Sadao closed the door of the room.

"He is asleep," he told Hana. "He is almost well to sleep like that."

Sadao said to Hana that the man was asleep. He added that now he was well and did not need to sleep like that.

"What shall we do with him?" Hana whispered her old refrain.

Sadao shook his head. "I must decide in a day or two," he promised.

Refrain: a sound that is repeated time and again

Hana again asked Sadao that what should they do with the man. Sadao shook his head and promised her that he would decide it in one or two days.

But certainly, he thought, the second night must be the night. There rose a wind that night, and he listened to the sounds of bending boughs and whistling partitions.

Boughs: branches of trees

Partitions: structures dividing a room into parts

Sadao thought that perhaps the killers would come the next night. The night was windy. He heard the sounds made by the branches as they bent due to the wind and the partitions made whistling sound as the wind passed through them.

Hana woke too. "Ought we not to go and close the sickman's partition?" she asked.

Hana woke and asked that should they close the partition door of the man's room.

"No," Sadao said. "He is able now to do it for himself."

Sadao refused and said that the man was capable to do that himself.

But the next morning the American was still there.

The next morning the American man was still there in the room.

Then the third night of course must be the night. The wind changed to quiet rain and the garden was full of the sound of dripping eaves and running springs. Sadao slept a little better, but he woke at the sound of a crash and leaped to his feet.

Eaves: part of the roof that meets or overhangs the wall of a building

Springs:

Sadao was hopeful that they might come on the third night. Instead of the wind, there was rain that night. The garden was full of noises as the water dripped down the roof and tiny rivulets flowed through the garden. Sadao slept a little and jumped as he heard a loud noise.

“What was that?” Hana cried. The baby woke at her voice and began to wail. “I must go and see.”

But he held her and would not let her move.

“Sadao,” she cried, “what is the matter with you?”

“Don’t go,” he muttered, “don’t go!”

His terror infected her and she stood breathless, waiting. There was only silence. Together they crept back into the bed, the baby between them.

Wail: cry loudly

Infected: affected

Crept: crawled

Hana heard the loud crash and asked what it was. The baby also woke up and started crying. Hana wanted to go and check on it but Sadao stopped her. Hana screamed at him and asked what the matter was. Sadao spoke slowly and asked her not to go. He was scared and his scare affected Hana too. She stood without breathing and waited. There was silence and both of them crawled back into the bed with the baby lying on the bed in between them.

Yet when he opened the door of the guest room in the morning there was the young man. He was very gay and had already washed and was now on his feet. He had asked for a razor yesterday and had shaved himself and today there was a faint colour in his cheeks.

Gay: happy

Washed: bathed

there was a faint colour in his cheeks: his pale yellow coloured cheeks were turning pinkish in colour which indicated that he was recovering.

In the morning, Sadao went into the guest room and saw the man was there. He was happy and had taken his bath and had started moving around. He had borrowed a razor from Sadao the previous day and had shaved his beard. The colour of his cheeks was slightly pinkish which indicated that he was recovering and regaining good health.

"I am well," he said joyously.

The man announced happily that he was well.

Sadao drew his kimono round his weary body. He could not, he decided suddenly, go through another night. It was not that he cared for this young man's life. No, simply it was not worth the strain.

Weary: tired

Strain: stress

Sadao wrapped his traditional Japanese gown around his tired body. He was tired because the curiosity had kept him awake for two consecutive nights. He decided that he could not pass one more night in such a way. He was not bothered about the man's life but he could not bear the stress and anxiety any longer.

“You are well,” Sadao agreed. He lowered his voice. “You are so well that I think if I put my boat on the shore tonight, with food and extra clothing in it, you might be able to row to that little island not far from the coast. It is so near the coast that it has not been worth fortifying. Nobody lives on it because in storm it is submerged. But this is not the season of storm. You could live there until you saw a Korean fishing boat pass by. They pass quite near the island because the water is many fathoms deep there.”

Fortifying: putting security at a place

Submerged: here, sink into the sea

Fathom: a unit of measuring the depth of the sea.

Sadao said to the man that he was well now. He lowered his voice and said that he was strong enough to sail a boat. Sadao planned that if he arranged a boat, stock it with food and extra clothing, the man would be able to row it to the nearby island. As the island was so close to the coast, it had not been guarded. It was not inhabited as it sunk into the sea during the storms. As it was not the season of storms at that time, the man could live on the island until he spotted a Korean fishing boat pass by. The Korean fishing boats passed near the island as the sea was very deep there.

The young man stared at him, slowly comprehending. “Do I have to?” he asked.

“I think so,” Sadao said gently. “You understand — it is not hidden that you are here.”

The young man nodded in perfect comprehension. “Okay,” he said simply.

Comprehending: understanding

Nodded: lower and raise one’s head slightly and briefly, especially in greeting, assent, or understanding, or to give someone a signal.

The young man stared Sadao as he understood his words. He asked that was it necessary for him to do so. Sadao pleaded that he must understand that the fact that the man was living at his house was known to everyone. The young man agreed with him and said “okay”. He moved his head to indicate his acceptance.

Sadao did not see him again until evening. As soon as it was dark he had dragged the stout boat down to the shore and in it he put food and bottled water that he had bought secretly during the day, as well as two quilts he had bought at a pawnshop. The boat he tied to a post in the water, for the tide was high. There was no moon and he worked without a flashlight.

Dragged: pulled

Stout: fat, big

Pawnshop: a store that lends money in exchange for a valuable thing that they can sell if the person leaving it does not pay an agreed amount of money by an agreed time

Post: pole

Flashlight: torch

Sadao left and did not meet the young man until evening. During the day, he made arrangements for him. As it became dark, Sadao pulled out a big boat to the shore. He placed food and bottled water in it that he had bought secretly during the day. He kept two quilts in it. He had purchased them from the pawnshop. As there was a high tide in the sea, he tied the boat to a pole. It was a dark, moonless night and Sadao worked without a torch. He did not want to be spotted by anyone.

When he came to the house he entered as though he were just back from his work, and so Hana knew nothing. "Yumi was here today," she said as she served his supper. Though she was so modern, still she did not eat with him. "Yumi cried over the baby," she went on with a sigh. "She misses him so."

Supper: an evening meal, typically a light or informal one.

Modern: relating to the present or recent times as opposed to the remote past.

When Sadao came home, he pretended as though he had returned from work so that Hana did not guess anything. Hana served him the evening meal and said that Yumi had visited them that day as she missed the baby a lot. Although Yumi was modern, she did not eat with Sadao.

“The servants will come back as soon as the foreigner is gone,” Sadao said.

Sadao said that as soon as the American man left, the servants would return.

He went into the guest room that night before he went to bed himself and checked carefully the American’s temperature, the state of the wound, and his heart and pulse. The pulse was irregular but that was perhaps because of excitement. The young man’s pale lips were pressed together and his eyes burned. Only the scars on his neck were red.

Pulse: heartbeat

That night before going to bed, Sadao visited the man. He checked his body temperature, the wound, his heart and heartbeat. The heartbeat was unsteady due to excitement as he was about to leave their home. The man’s lips were pressed together and his eyes were red in colour which seemed to be burning with fire. The scars on his neck were still red as they had not healed yet.

“I realise you are saving my life again,” he told Sadao. “Not at all,” Sadao said. “It is only inconvenient to have you here any longer.”

The young man said to Sadao that he was saving his life once again. Sadao said that it was not like that. He was sending him because he could not keep him any longer.

He had hesitated a good deal about giving the man a flashlight. But he had decided to give it to him after all. It was a small one, his own, which he used at night when he was called.

Hesitated: paused in indecision before saying or doing something.

Sadao was reluctant in giving him a torch as he felt that if the man used it unwisely, he could be spotted and land into trouble. Finally, he gave him his own torch, the one that he used when he had to attend to patients at night.

“If your food runs out before you catch a boat,” he said, “signal me two flashes at the same instant the sun drops over the horizon. Do not signal in darkness, for it will be seen. If you are all right but still there, signal me once. You will find fresh fish easy to catch but you must eat them raw. A fire would be seen.”

“Okay,” the young man breathed.

Runs out: finishes

Sun drops: the Sun sets

Horizon: the line at which the earth’s surface and the sky appear to meet, skyline

Raw: uncooked

Sadao instructed the man. He said that if his stock of food finished before he found a Korean fishing boat, he could signal him with two flashes of the torch at dusk time. He asked him to be careful not to signal when it was dark because light was more visible in the dark as compared to dusk. He added that the man could find fish in the sea near the island but he had to eat it raw. He was not supposed to cook it because fire would be spotted by the guards and put him in danger. The man drew a breath on hearing the instructions and said “okay.”

He was dressed now in the Japanese clothes which Sadao had given him, and at the last moment Sadao wrapped a black cloth about his blond head.

“Now,” Sadao said.

The man wore the traditional Japanese dress that Sadao gave him to wear. Finally, Sadao wrapped a black cloth around his head to hide his golden coloured hair.

The young American, without a word, shook Sadao’s hand warmly, and then walked quite well across the floor and down the step into the darkness of the garden. Once — twice... Sadao saw his light flash to find his way. But that would not be suspected. He waited until from the shore there was one more flash. Then he closed the partition. That night he slept.

Suspected: doubted

The American man shook hands with Sadao as he walked away towards the boat. He used the torch twice to find his way, but the guards would not doubt that. Sadao waited till he saw the torch light once more as the man boarded the boat. Sadao closed the door of the partition and slept well that night as he had finally got rid of the man.

“You say the man escaped?” the General asked faintly. He had been operated upon a week before, an emergency operation to which Sadao had been called in the night. For twelve hours Sadao had not been sure the General would live. The gall bladder was much involved.

Gall bladder: the small sac-shaped organ beneath the liver, in which bile is stored after secretion by the liver and before release into the intestine.

A week ago, the general had been operated upon in an emergency in which Sadao took part. Sadao informed him that the man escaped. The general was weak as he was recovering from the operation. For twelve hours after the operation, his condition was critical and Sadao was not sure that he would survive. They had operated upon his gall bladder.

Then the old man had begun to breathe deeply again and to demand food. Sadao had not been able to ask about the assassins. So far as he knew they had never come. The servants had returned and Yumi had cleaned the guest room thoroughly and had burned sulphur in it to get the white man's smell out of it. Nobody said anything. Only the gardener was cross because he had got behind with his chrysanthemums.

Sulphur: a chemical element used as a disinfectant

Cross: angry, disappointed

Chrysanthemum: a flower

The general was an old man. After the operation, gradually, he started eating food and breathed deeply. Sadao did not have the courage to ask him what happened to the professional killers that he had promised to send to kill the American man. Sadao knew that the killers did not turn up ever. At Sadao's home things returned to normal. The servants returned, Yumi used Sulphur to disinfect the room used by the American man. The servants did not speak anything. The gardener was annoyed because he had got late to plant the chrysanthemum flowers due to this incident.

But after a week Sadao felt the General was well enough to be spoken to about the prisoner.

“Yes, Excellency, he escaped,” Sadao now said. He coughed, signifying that he had not said all he might have said, but was unwilling to disturb the General further. But the old man opened his eyes suddenly.

After one-week Sadao felt that the general was well enough that he could discuss the man with him. Sadao said that the man had escaped. Sadao coughed up which indicated that Sadao had not told him everything as he did not want to disturb him. The general was reminded of his promise to send the professional killers and he opened his eyes suddenly when he heard about the American man.

“That prisoner,” he said with some energy, “did I not promise you I would kill him for you?”

The general was reminded of his promise and asked Sadao that had he not promised him to get that man killed by his personal professional killers.

“You did, Excellency,” Sadao said.

“Well, well!” the old man said in a tone of amazement, “so I did! But you see, I was suffering a good deal. The truth is, I thought of nothing but myself. In short, I forgot my promise to you.”

Amazement: surprise

Sadao replied that he had promised him. The general was surprised and said that as he was suffering due to bad health, he had forgotten all about the promise that he had made.

“I wondered, Your Excellency,” Sadao murmured.

“It was certainly very careless of me,” the General said. “But you understand it was not lack of patriotism or dereliction of duty.” He looked anxiously at his doctor. “If the matter should come out you would understand that, wouldn’t you?”

Patriotism: love for one’s country

Dereliction: failure to perform one’s duty

Sadao spoke softly that he wondered that the general had forgotten his promise.

The general felt sorry that he had been careless. He added that it was neither that he did not love Japan nor that he was shirking from his duty. He looked at Sadao with curiosity as he sought support from him. He wondered that Sadao understood his problem.

“Certainly, Your Excellency,” Sadao said. He suddenly comprehended that the General was in the palm of his hand and that as a consequence he himself was perfectly safe. “I can swear to your loyalty, Excellency,” he said to the old General, “and to your zeal against the enemy.”

the General was in the palm of his hand: he had control of the general

consequence: result

zeal: great energy or enthusiasm in pursuit of a cause or an objective

Sadao said that he understood the general’s position well. He understood that the general was in his control and as a result, Sadao was safe. Sadao said that he could swear upon the general’s loyalty towards Japan and his enthusiasm to fight the enemy.

“You are a good man,” the General murmured and closed his eyes.” “You will be rewarded.”

But Sadao, searching the spot of black in the twilighted sea that night, had his reward. There was no prick of light in the dusk. No one was on the island. His prisoner was gone — safe, doubtless, for he had warned him to wait only for a Korean fishing boat.

Twilighted: at the time of twilight i.e. sunset or sunrise.

Prick: slightest amount

Dusk: the time of sunset

The general was relaxed and said that Sadao was a good man. He closed his eyes and said that Sadao would be rewarded for his goodness.

Sadao got his reward when at dusk, he looked towards the island and saw no trace of torch light. This meant that the American man had found a Korean fishing boat and had gone with it safely back home. Sadao did not doubt this as he had instructed the man to wait for a Korean fishing boat.

He stood for a moment on the veranda, gazing out to the sea from whence the young man had come that other night. And into his mind, although without reason, there came other white faces he had known — the professor at whose house he had met Hana, a dull man, and his wife had been a silly talkative woman, in spite of her wish to be kind. He remembered his old teacher of anatomy, who had been so insistent on mercy with the knife, and then he remembered the face of his fat and slatternly landlady. He had had great difficulty in finding a place to live in America because he was a Japanese. The Americans were full of prejudice and it had been bitter to live

in it, knowing himself their superior. How he had despised the ignorant and dirty old woman who had at last consented to house him in her

miserable home! He had once tried to be grateful to her because she had in his last year nursed him through influenza, but it was difficult, for she was no less repulsive to him in her kindness. Now he remembered the youthful, haggard face of his prisoner — white and repulsive.

“Strange,” he thought. “I wonder why I could not kill him?”

Whence: where

Anatomy: the branch of science concerned with the bodily structure of humans, animals, and other living organisms, especially as revealed by dissection and the separation of parts.

Slatternly: dirty, untidy

Prejudice: preconceived idea or opinion

Bitter: unpleasant

Despised: hated

Miserable: in poor condition

Grateful: thankful

Nursed him: taken care of him

Influenza: a highly contagious viral infection of the respiratory passages causing fever

Repulsive: awful, terrible

Haggard: looking exhausted and unwell, especially from fatigue, worry, or suffering.

Sadao stood in the veranda and recollected the past events. He looked at the sea from where the man had come that night. He had flashbacks of all the Americans he had met in his life – the dull professor at whose house he had met Hana, his silly, talkative wife who was very kind. He remembered his teacher of anatomy who had taught them to cut open the body with a knife. Then he remembered the fat, untidy landlady. Being a Japanese, he had found an accommodation in America with great difficulty. He hated living there knowing that the Japanese were superior to the Americans and still being treated like inferiors. Sadao disliked the dirty old

woman who finally agreed to let him live in her home which was in a bad condition. Sadao tried to be thankful to her because she had taken care of him when he was struck by influenza during the last year of his stay in America. It was difficult for Sadao to be thankful to her as he hated her even though she was kind to him. Sadao hated her so much that her kindness also did not make him like her. Finally, Sadao remembered the weak face of the American prisoner – it was white in colour and was terrible.

Sadao felt that it was strange that he could not kill his enemy.