AN UNEXPECTED GRANDCHILD

By Onoto Watanna

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ALL afternoon she had pored over the story. Now, as she closed the book, her face still held its absorbed expression of pain. Her cheek-bones were flushed, her eyes snapped feverishly. She looked as if she wanted to express her thoughts violently to somebody.

Somebody, as it happened, just then opened the door, after a light tap, and thrust in a bright, laughing face.

"Still reading, ladykins?"

"No, I have finished the story. I will say, it—affects me horribly!"

The girl, a pretty young thing of twenty, moved her fan vigorously. It was hot, and she would much have preferred being out somewhere, pulled along in a jinrikisha through the fascinating streets and parks. But she herself had lent the book to her prospective mother-in-law.

"It is a dear tale," she admitted good-humoredly.

"Dear!" repeated the elder lady. "It is a bit of life—tragedy—here in Japan! I feel it—know it must have happened scores of times."

She turned somewhat irritably toward the maid who had silently entered the room and as silently had thrust a tray before her.

"No, thank you." Then to Gertrude: "This is the fourth time this afternoon they have sent up the tray. I've already said no. Kiku is so officious that if she did not happen to be the only maid here who speaks English, I believe I—— What are you waiting for?"

Kiku smiled, that ever ready, mysterious smile, half humility, half as though she laughed within herself. She was a diminutive, brown-faced city wench, who, so the Howlands had learned, had once been a geisha. In some way or other she had acquired a certain knowledge of the English language, and as she was really an excellent servant in spite of the suspicion of superciliousness about her, she was in great demand about the hotel.

"Aexcuse"—now bowed the smiling Kiku—"bud mos' humble one got frien'—mek a nize call unto Okusama. She mek a beg look

at mos' august magnificent wedding clothes of elevated foreign young miss."

"Not at present." Mrs. Howland shook her head.

"Oh, do let them," interposed Gertrude sweetly. "You know we should be just as interested in a Japanese bride's trousseau, and——"

"Very well, then. Kiku-san, you may take your friend into Miss Gertrude's room, but be very careful to touch nothing."

For a while Gertrude, at least, listened to the tittering and whispering on the other side the partition, which was very fragile. Mrs. Howland, however, soon called for her full attention.

"Do you know what I think of these Japanese marriages?" she demanded—"the ones between foreigners and native girls?"

"No; what do you think, dear?"

"I declare that they are just as binding as any other kind of marriage."

She arose and stood looking fiercely at the inoffensive Gertrude.

"If a son of mine contracted any such union," said she, "I should force him to bring his Japanese wife to me, and I should protect her, if necessary, from him."

The murmuring in the adjoining room had ceased, and from the two peep-holes, quite plainly shown on the wall, it was clear that the Japanese girls were attracted by the Okusama's deep and commanding voice.

"Here," she went on oracularly, "we have before us the candid, tragic tale of a girl victim of some brute countryman of our own."

"But it is only a tale!"

"The man who wrote it knew," declared the older woman vehemently.

"The man who wrote it lived all his life in Philadelphia," laughed the girl.

Mrs. Howland regarded the girl severely.

"My dear Gertrude," she said coldly, "it is immaterial where the author lived. The fact remains that such things happen daily in Japan. It is a well known thing."

Gertrude turned away, sighing slightly, and, leaning from the window, she stared wistfully up the street.

"I wonder where Noble is," she said softly.

"Why, in Yokohama, of course. He must finish that contract, you know."

"Yes, I do know; but I just wondered—for the moment—where he was, and what he was doing."

She arose languidly, most of her bright look gone.

"I'm going for a little ride, dear. Good-by for the present."

Mrs. Howland, alone, continued to regard the book fixedly. She

was a woman of turbulent emotions and commanding nature. Though outwardly big and almost mannish, her expression concealed a heart of such extraordinary charity that her very indignation over the wrongs of others fixed her features harshly.

Twilight was settling, and the smoothly matted chamber, with its bamboo chairs and furnishings—a concession to foreign guests—was becoming quite dark. The lady with the book became aware of this. She set it down and crossed the room to ring for lights, absently surprised that Kiku had not come sooner to perform this service. A photograph of her son, insecurely tacked upon the wall, served to distract her attention. There was a glint of light across the face, which smiled out at his mother in an engaging, boyish fashion. She looked at it steadily, the severity of her face slowly softening away.

"My boy!" she said gently; and then: "Thank God *he* is different!"

As she opened the door she nearly walked into the little figure pressed up there against it, her head drooped downward, the face hidden in the long, loose sleeve of her kimona. Mrs. Howland started back with an ejaculation of astonishment. For a moment she remained staring at the little figure before her. Then, her hand trembling slightly, she touched the girl's arm.

"You are in trouble. What can I do for you?"

The hump upon the girl's back suddenly moved upward, showing a baby's small, round head. A little gurgling sound, a soft chuckle of baby joy, was the only answer she received. Mrs. Howland's heart beat with a great mothering thud. At the same time, the maid, Okiku-san, in her noiseless stockinged feet, pattered into the apartment and one by one lit the lamps. Her face with its perpetual smile seemed more mask-like than ever, and as she went from the room her narrow slits of eyes seemed barely to rest upon the visitor now slowly raising her head. The face Mrs. Howland found herself looking into was like one she had dreamed of or imagined. It was pretty, after a doll-like, babyish fashion. The cheeks were round and rosy, and the eyes, palpably meant for mirth and laughter, were full of a child's appeal. Now Mrs. Howland placed her. She was exactly like the heroine of the story, even to her poppy-crowned head and rosy kimona.

"What is it, dear? Can you speak English?"

"Yaes, honorable one."

"What can I do for you?"

Two little hands were instantly extended to her.

"Oh, mos' high up one, pity me!" said the girl tremulously. "I—I got a breagin' ad my heart!" and she clutched her heart tightly.

"You poor little creature! Tell me your trouble."

"My hosban'—he 'Merican-jin. Me? I loogin' aeverywhere for him. Marry me jost liddle bit while. Me? I no god moaneys account he goin' way. Baby velly much starve. Mos' sad."

Every fibre in Mrs. Howland was now athrill. So here before her was one of the very victims of which she had heard and read. So full indeed was her heart that she could not find words to express herself, a condition in the lady almost unbelievable. Her feelings, however, were destined to a new laceration and shock, for the girl went on, her words gathering headlong speed with the earnestness and pain which apparently possessed her:

"So—me? I comin' unto you. Hear you mos' kind lady ad Japan. I come beggin' thad you speak unto your son. Ask him condescend show liddle kindness unto me—thas hees wife, and also thas hees bebby!"

Mrs. Howland's face was like a gray, paralyzed mask. She could not move. She could not speak. Her boy! She stared fixedly, glaringly, at the girl, who had again thrown out a pair of exquisite little hands. Her tremulous voice seemed overfreighted with tears.

"I—I *loave* you' son," she breathed, "and liddle while ago also he loavin' me. Oh, pray you be nod harsh unto me. For myself I ask nothing, bud for my bebby—for hees bebby—I cum unto you. Ah, pray you, tek thad liddle bebby! Wiz me he starve. I go away, bag unto my fadder's house, worg lik' slave, mek enough eat!"

The handle of the door turned, but ere it opened Mrs. Howland was pressed against it.

"Gertrude, go away!" Her voice was hoarse, terrible.

"What is it, dear?" outside cried the girl. "Please let me in."

"No. Go away!"

"Something is wrong. Let me in. I will. . . . Oh-h!"

Her young strength was greater than that of the older woman, and she forced her way in. Her face was still white with the unknown fear she had experienced when the other woman had held her out. Nor did the color come back to it as she looked from the intruder to Mrs. Howland. The older woman was speechless. She had covered her face with a pair of trembling hands and had sunk down limply into the nearest chair. The baby on the girl's back tossed itself upward and waved its small fat fists triumphantly.

Suddenly Mrs. Howland leaped frantically to her feet.

"Let me look at it!" she cried hoarsely, and seized upon the baby. Her eyes widened with horrified emotion as she saw the color of its hair and eyes, the one tawny red, as was her own son's, the other blue as the sea, as were her son's.

"Dear Mrs. Howland, for pity's sake tell me what does it mean? Why are you so agitated? Who is this girl?"

"My poor, poor child!" said Mrs. Howland hoarsely. "My heart bleeds for you. But"—and she turned heroically toward the Japanese girl, whose face was again hidden in her sheltering sleeve—"but right is right. We as women, as sisters to this poor, betrayed creature, owe her a duty and—reparation! What my son refused to give her, *I* will—protection!"

"Mrs. Howland——"

"Gertrude, it is better you should know the truth, and you must try to bear it like a woman—a brave and noble woman. This girl is my son Noble's wife, and this—his child!"

Gertrude stared at her with an expression almost of hatred, so intense was her horror of the woman's statement. Then with only a lowly whispered "Oh-h!" she slipped forward, fainting for the first time in all her strong young life.

Mr. John Noble Howland, Jr., was inditing a love letter. He sat in his pleasant office—he was an architect of Yokohama, catering chiefly to the foreign residents who had their bungalows on the cliffs—before a long table, upon which various maps and papers were laid, apparently in excellent order. Having covered fifteen pages with closely written terms of endearment, he coolly proceeded to end the letter with a series of circular marks. Apparently they had some occult meaning comprehensible only to the one who should receive the epistle, for presently he chuckled, and then, with an impulsive, boyish moment, stooped and put his lips upon the aforesaid circles.

He had barely sealed the letter when his secretary brought him a telegram, and acquainted him for the sixth time with the information of the waiting clients without.

"In a minute," said the American cheerily, opening and smoothing out the telegram. "What the—— Well, what's the matter with old mater now!"

The telegram he held read as follows:

> Come at once to your wife and baby with me. God forgive. Gertrude cannot.

He re-read the telegram with deepening amazement, then, swinging about in his chair—

"Hi, Taku! Mistake here. Somebody else's wire," and he gave the paper back to the secretary.

But as he turned over the letter he had just written to Miss Anderson, the words of the telegram kept sticking in his mind: "God forgive. Gertrude cannot."

He ran his hand nervously through his curly crop of auburn hair.

"Strange!" he said. "If it was n't for that confounded contract,

I'd light out for Tokyo. Just like mother to insist upon settling there, with me stationed here. Poor little girl, coming all the way here to marry a homely duffer like me—and here I am cooped up with—— What is it now, Taku? Another telegram?"

He slipped his finger under the flap and opened the envelope. He turned pale as he read. Then a slow flush darkened his face, flooding his neck, too. He had the outraged, indignant look so often worn by his mother. Muttering an oath, he picked up his hat, slammed it down upon his head, and fairly rushed out of his office, passing the waiting clients without a word. The telegram this time had been very plain:

> Leave for U. S. at once. Return all gifts to you. Never want to see your face again.—G. ANDERSON.

Meanwhile another individual had received an equally confounding wire. He was having the time of his life. Away from all home dissenting or opposition, Mr. John Noble Howland, Sr., was enjoying a little fishing trip in secluded, peaceful Sendai. He was a little man, with a wizened, anxious face, which nevertheless showed a hint of an abundant sense of humor. His brows puckered comically as with adjusted glasses he read the following message:

> Come at once. Noble has wife and baby. Gertrude leaves for U. S. at once.—ELLEN.

"Dear me!" said the little old gentleman, scratching the back of his ear. But he fished all of that morning and most of the afternoon ere he answered the telegram:

> Bless and forgive young people impetuous action. Will return soon as possible.

The answer to this came at night, when he was awakened from a most delightful slumber:

> Gertrude not wife. Come at once.

This looked more serious, and the old gentleman's face was stern as he prepared to start for Tokyo.

Attired in an orange-colored kimona, decorated with silver storks and reeds, the red-haired baby looked incongruous and fascinating. His eyes were the brightest blue, his skin as white as milk, save where the cheeks expanded on either side into two rosy red balloons. He was a noisy little chap, given to loud and engaging laughter. Unwelcome perhaps he may have been upon his arrival, but by constant and

persistent degrees he had laughed and chuckled his way into the hearts of even the stoniest disposed toward him.

Mrs. Howland had accepted him as a matter of duty, and not, as she sternly assured Gertrude, from any motive of affection. Before retiring, however, she had not resisted the impulse which induced her to go to the impromptu bed prepared for the little stranger. There he lay in a rosy sleep, his fat legs outside the covers. His hair was one mass of ringlets; one fat thumb was snugly tucked into the diminutive mouth. Mrs. Howland turned away quickly, the choking feeling in her throat and the new fluttering at her heart causing her to look even more severe, as though she fiercely sought to fight against impending tears.

Twice in the night she stole out of bed to reassure herself that he was covered up—the nights were chilly—and almost before the dawn the lady was panically answering the first demands of the morning. He was howling like a good fellow for his milk. She aroused Kiku and sent her flying in search of milk or baby's food, and meanwhile she walked the floor with the rampant infant clutched warmly and closely to her now thoroughly thawed-out heart.

"After all," she apologized to herself, "he 's mine—my very own little grandchild. I understand my feelings now. It 's nature! There, there, there, lovey, in a minute, in a minute. Milky comin' in a minute!"

Duly fed and changed, master baby resumed his customary humor, and, to the amazed delight of his now doting grandmother, ejaculated these two clearly spoken American words: "Da-da!" and "Mum-mum!"

"To think," said Mrs. Howland, "that the poor creature actually taught her baby to speak its father's language!"

This feat of the baby's was too much for her to keep to herself, and she obeyed the fond impulse to confide in Gertrude. In her now overwhelming infatuation for the baby, she had almost forgotten the condition of the girl. She was quickly recalled to this, however, as soon as she entered Gertrude's room. The young girl's face looked pinched and faded. There were peevish lines of pain about her mouth. Her eyes were dark and wild-looking. She turned a bitter, reproachful look upon the elder woman.

"My poor, poor——"

"No, you need not pity me. Besides, you don't really feel it!"

"My poor child!"

"I know all about it. I saw you with—with that—— *My* feelings are nothing to you—*my* future—the humiliation I shall have to bear—the—the—— Oh-h! to think of my coming out here—leaving my home. Papa knew. Papa guessed. That 's why he insisted that we

wait. That 's why he imposed the condition on Noble that he should go away and do something—achieve something. He has. *He has.* A hideous little heathen imp!"

Mrs. Howland's face had undergone various changes of expression. First anxiety, melting pity, then outraged pride, indignation. She was standing as severely and sternly now as a statue.

"You apply that term to my grandchild?"

"Yes, yes—your grandchild! Ha, ha! It 's a joke—screechingly funny. It would be if it—if it—were n't so terrible! I shall be a laughing-stock. Oh!—I! Think of it! And you talk of your grandchild! You are all wrapped up in it. You think of it, not me. You flame into anger against me—me—who——"

"No, no, dear child;" and she knelt beside the girl and attempted to draw her to her, but Gertrude pushed her away, her little hands fairly hurting as she shoved Mrs. Howland aside and stood up.

"Oh, let me be! Go away—do! You 're just like he is—just like your son. I never realized before how much."

"Gertrude!" Mrs. Howland's voice broke. "You know I love you. Yet out of suffering must come strength. Let us not visit our wrath upon the innocent."

Gertrude began pushing back the loose hair from her face, and searching about the little bamboo stand for her brush.

"Come with me," pleaded the older woman, "and see for yourself—the little baby! I am sure it will soften your heart."

"I don't like babies," said the girl peevishly. She was brushing her hair now with a feverish little hand. "Besides, I 've no time. I 'm going to catch that steamer, if possible. I 'm going to see about my ticket, and—go—home. I hate Japan! It 's a horrid, detestable place, and the people look like—like monkeys." She set her hair in place with a final vicious twist.

"Okusama——" Kiku was bowing in the doorway.

"What is it?"

"Honorable baby-san jus' receive bath."

A bitter, sneering smile had curled up the lips of the girl at the unconscious look of maternity which had softened the entire face of Mrs. Howland.

"Oh, go, go!" cried she banteringly, pushing her along. "Yum-yum wants you. There! I 'll go with you, too!" and she flung out of the room recklessly, pushing the older woman along.

Upon a woollen blanket which had been spread upon the matted floor, before a warm *hibachi,* the little baby lay. He was upon his back, both fat little legs in the air, the foot of one gleefully enclasped in a round, dimpled hand. He was in a frenzy of delight, induced by his erstwhile successful efforts to sit up halfway and also his

ability to put his toe into his mouth. His mirth appeared to increase at the approach of the new-comers, and, as if to perform for their especial benefit, he rolled over on his stomach and endeavored to raise himself to his knees by pressing his two little hands upon the floor. Then he rolled over on his back again. He lay still for a moment, suddenly sobered. His eyes, going from the admiring nurse to the emotion-choked grandmother, had finally fallen upon the pale, working face of Miss Gertrude Anderson. A smile which opened up his rosy mouth, showing the four ridiculous little teeth within, and displaying every adorable dimple encrusted in his fair fatness, was directed fully at the girl.

"He *is* sweet!" she whispered in a strangled voice, and suddenly she slipped to her knees, and, with her face hidden on its warm little body, she burst into a passion of tears.

John Noble Howland, Jr., burst open the door of his mother's sitting-room. She looked up from her fascinating employment to see him glowering there in the doorway. Setting the baby down, she arose and faced him. At the same moment Gertrude came into the room from an interior apartment. Her face looked lily white and ethereal. It was to her impulsively he turned. Something in the girl's face went to his heart. He forgot the bitterness of thought he had been enduring. He knew only that Gertrude, the girl he loved, was suffering.

"Gertrude!"

She drew herself up. Her eyes met his squarely. They whipped him with their icy contempt. She condescended not one word. He turned to his mother. His voice was husky, stupid.

"What is it, mater?"

"You—know!" she said solemnly. "It is useless to waste words."

He had recovered from the shock of the change in his fiancée. His temper was aroused again.

"Know! I know nothing. What sort of ruction is this you 've got up anyhow?"

"Noble Howland, I am your mother, but——"

"See here, I want to get at facts. What 's the matter with you? What 've I done that I should suddenly get such damnable messages from you both, and now this sweet reception?"

"What have you done?" repeated his outraged mother. "Wretch! That I should have to so call my own son! Yet, understand, no matter what your father may say, no matter what you yourself may say, *I* intend to stand by *your wife and child!*"

"My wife and——! Say, is it a joke? What the——"

"I would that it were," groaned his mother, "but, alas! it is only

too true. Your Japanese wife has been here. We know all. What is more, we have—taken—your child."

"My—— Well, if this does n't beat the Dutch. Say, I 'd laugh if I was n't so —— tired."

Here his mother impressively raised the kimona-clad infant and held it out toward him. He stared at it with his mouth agape.

"That brat—mine!" he suddenly exploded. "Not by a darned sight! You 're crazy—loony—bug-house—dopey!"

As he spoke, he repelled the advances of the friendly infant with a savage push of the hand. His action had an instant effect upon both ladies. It was strange that he did not wither under the lightning looks of scorn and indignation cast upon him. Gertrude, without a word, had stepped between him and the baby, as if to shield it from pollution even by sight of its unwilling parent. Seizing it in her arms, she cuddled it up against her neck, murmuring words of pity and endearment.

Mrs. Howland faced her son.

"If," said she, "you, my son, are base enough to deny your own son, then I deny—denounce you!"

"Deny it!" shouted the now thoroughly enraged Noble. "It 's a —— imposture. Look at the brat. Does it resemble me?"

Gertrude coldly turned toward him, holding the baby slightly forward. Her action was even more eloquent than his mother's words.

"Unfortunately for it," said Mrs. Howland, "it has inherited none of its poor mother's racial characteristics. From the top of its little red head to its tiny pink heels, with a *mole upon each,* as I, your mother, can testify is upon your own, he is the living image of you as you were when a baby."

"Rot!" shrilly cried the young man, lunging savagely across the room. "All red-haired kids look alike, and everybody has moles on their heels." He went into the next room, slamming the door so loudly behind him that it seemed as if the whole hotel were shaken.

Meanwhile Howland, senior, was speeding along through the intricate streets of Tokyo in a little jerking vehicle propelled by man-power. He had been travelling all night, and now, dusty, sleepy, and tired, he listened with only half interest to the monotonous shouting of some vender, or jinrikiman, as he took him to be. The man had a gigantic sign, a square-faced lantern, upon which black letters were printed. This was carried aloft upon a stick. Whatever the message or advertisement, it was printed on the four sides of the lantern. As he drew nearer to the jinrikisha of Mr. Howland the latter saw that half of the lettering was in English. He leaned slightly out of his carriage and read:

LOST OR STOLEN! BABY TAKEN FROM——

The man whirled the sign about on his stick, and when next it was visible to the now more distant rider he could see only the illumined lettering of the name of the European hotel where his own family were stopping. The incident troubled him, for he was of a tender-hearted disposition; besides, foreigners in Japan really have a brotherly feeling at bottom for one another. He jogged in discomfort along.

As they drew up before the hotel, Mr. Howland noticed that the rooms occupied by his family appeared to be all lighted, even his son's. Apparently they were still up, though it was past midnight. Noble must be in Tokyo—the scamp!

He knocked before entering his wife's sitting-room, and some one within hastily opened the door. There in various rigid attitudes of antagonism were his wife, his son, and Gertrude. The latter was smiling slightly, but in a contemptuous, baffling way. Noble had his head thrown defiantly back, his hands thrust in his trousers pockets. He seemed to have just come from the adjoining room, for the door was still half-opened behind him.

Mrs. Howland, strong, self-reliant lady, let forth a cry at the advent of her husband, and flew at once to his sheltering arms.

"Oh, John, John, John! You are here at last!"

He found himself patting her as if she were a child. She had clutched hold of him as if he were some rock of salvation which would save them from all further peril. He turned inquiringly first toward his son and then toward Gertrude. She spoke with a bitter brightness:

"You've interrupted a most touching domestic incident, Mr. Howland."

"Yes?"

"Your wife just opened the door of—er—the baby's room, to find—to find its papa cuddling and playing with it. Quite natural, of course, and very pretty, I'm sure."

"Isn't it?" snarled Noble, who looked like a great, sulky, angry boy. "I did pick up the little cub. Went in to take a look at it. It was friendly disposed at first, then started to howl. So I dangled it to hush its cries. I always did like kids!" he added defiantly.

"Especially when they're your own," said Gertrude, with sarcastic sweetness.

"Dad"—he turned to his father—"*you* don't believe it of me, do you? Why, I—I've lived the straightest sort of life here. I've never even looked cross-eyed at a Japanese girl, and as for marrying one and having a——" He choked.

His father coughed uneasily, his brows drawing together in a frown that was half humorous and half severe.

"The facts are these," put in his wife ponderously: "a Japanese girl claims to be the wife of your son. She says they were married about a year ago. He, like other foreigners who contract these abominable unions, considered it but temporary, and accordingly deserted her and her child. On account of dear Gertrude here, I insisted upon his wife's returning to her own people, for the present at least, which she was eager indeed to do. I gave her ample money to defray all expenses. To me the case is a most tragic one, but for one illuminating item. Oh, John, the baby—our own grandchild, John—is—*beautiful!*—and the living image of Noble!"

"Pish!" snorted the young man, disgusted. "If I thought I looked anything like that red-faced, bloated, animated atom, I'd go swallow myself whole."

"That is one thing," said Mrs. Howland explosively, "I will *not* endure. One word of criticism or derision of that innocent child, your own flesh and blood!"

Howland, senior, interposed timidly.

"Suppose we all go to bed and sleep upon the matter. Perhaps," he added with a weak attempt to be jocular, "it's nothing but a bad dream, after all."

The Howland family occupied a suite of four rooms running one after the other down the full length of the hotel corridor. The first of these rooms was Gertrude's. Then came the sitting-room, which opened into Mrs. Howland's room, and, finally, at the end of the hall, was the room always reserved for Noble.

On this night the head of the family, tired and badgered, and ardently desiring a long, silent night of peaceful rest, wisely opined that there was no prospect of this if his room was to be shared by an uncertain infant. Accordingly he timidly suggested to his wife that the baby sleep in the sitting-room. She spurned the very thought of such a thing. The idea! Never had she seen such an extraordinarily good baby before. Why, it slept clear through from its ten o'clock bottle till a little before five. Mr. Howland blinked at the thought of that five o'clock awakening. That blink was fatal. Instantly his wife pounced upon it. Her words belied her injured tone.

"While I, his grandmother, would not think of leaving him in a room by himself, there is really no occasion, John, for you to sacrifice your own comfort. There's an unoccupied room, I believe, in the very next corridor. Go down to the office at once and secure it."

"I will," said her husband unflinchingly, and, whistling with gay bravado, he obeyed his wife's injunction.

It was a nice, square room, the last but one at the end of the long hall. The big enamelled bed looked inviting to the tired one, as he

proceeded to pull off his boots. So sleepy was he that his head was nodding even while he buttoned his pajamas, and as his head finally touched the pillow a deep breath that was in itself a gentle snore escaped him.

The clock pointed to 1:45 A.M., an hour when reasonable night-quiet might be expected even in a Japanese hotel. At 1:55 he suddenly sat up in bed with a start. In the darkness he remained sitting, with his ears pricked up. He struck a match, looked under his bed. Then he lay down again.

Two minutes later he again sat up, his queer little face thrust out alertly. Plainly in the silence and darkness he heard the low moaning and sobbing of a woman in distress or pain. So weirdly did the sound at first strike him that he imagined it ghostly, and could not stir. A fit of shivering seized him. The perspiration dripped down his face. He managed to get out of bed, fumbled around, found his clothes and matches, and lit the lamp.

Presently he heard the sound of some one in the adjoining room—it was the one at the end of the hall—tramping heavily across the floor, and the low wailing grew louder, wilder. Then suddenly it was muffled, and a man's voice sounded gruffly above the moaning. Whatever he was saying or doing appeared to arouse the sufferer to a sudden wild activity the next moment. The trembling old man in the next room could hear her as she sprang to her feet and plunged in some headlong rush across the room. He heard them struggling within, and, trembling as if afflicted with ague, Mr. Howland crept to the bell and pushed it.

Presently it was silent again in the adjoining room, and he heard the man trampling heavily across the floor, as though bearing some heavy load in his arms.

No one answered Mr. Howland's summons. He thought of opening his door and calling for help, arousing one of his family. How ardently he wished he had remained with his wife this night! But he was in a condition of real terror. Here in a strange "heathen" country he was conscious of the possibility of unknown crimes.

By and by he crept back into bed again, but, even with his head under the covers, all through the night he heard the woman crying and the dull steady walking of the man, as if on guard, back and forth, back and forth, until the dawn.

Noble Howland was sleeping the sound, dreamless sleep of healthy, guiltless youth. He too was tired out. He had spent an entire day and a good part of a night trying to induce two "cracked" women to see that it was impossible for him to belie his name—Noble. On the one hand he met the outraged, indignant regard of his mother, and on

the other the bitter, contemptuous, wild regard of the girl he loved. He did love her—that was the beastly part of it, he told himself. He loved her desperately and madly in spite of her cruelty and delusions. When he retired he could not efface from his mind her pale, scornful little face. It tormented him. He seemed to see the tears and heartache which showed like a shadow behind all her vaunted scorn and indifference.

He finally dropped off asleep, and slept unmoving until the dawn. Then some one awoke him, and he turned over in bed to hear his father's voice. Sleepy as he was, its tone aroused him, and he stared up at the shaking, gray, haggard little figure standing there by his bed in the dawn.

"Dad!"

He sprang up impetuously, throwing his arm about the old man and drawing him down beside him.

"Are you sick? Here, lie down. Get into my bed. Jove! You're shivering. Hold on—I'll get you something."

He was out of bed in an instant. The old gentleman swallowed the stimulant at a gulp.

"What was it, dad? Were you taken sick in the night?"

The father shook his head, moistening his lips. Feebly he told the boy the incidents of the night.

"And they did not answer your ring? Well, I bet they will mine," he said, and stood with his finger steadily pressed to the button until the hasty patter of feet along the hall was heard and a very much disturbed little bell-boy answered his summons.

"Who occupies room 22—end of next corridor?"

"Most elevated foreign gent and Mrs.," glibly answered the clerk.

"Well, go to their room and find out what's the matter. They've kept my father awake all night. There's something wrong."

The Japanese boy agreed, bowing very politely and solemnly.

"Yaes, it unhappily is true, your graciousness. Poor foreign Mrs. velly much wrong—velly ill. Got a—what you call thad?—er—crack at a heart. Too bad. Velly sad."

"You mean she's in trouble of some sort?"

"Yaes. Velly sad. Too bad. Velly sad. Velly sad. Nize leddy! Pretty bebby, too—fine, fat! Got a hair like you exaltedness."

The mystified look on Noble's face had slowly turned to amazement.

"You mean," he queried eagerly, "that her trouble has some connection with a baby?"

He wondered vaguely as he put the question whether he himself were going insane upon this baby subject. But the Japanese boy bowed profoundly in assent.

"Alas, thas fact, excellency. Velly bad nurse stealie nize fat

bebby. Got a hair like you augustness. Foreign Mrs. speag a scold at bad servant. Servant tek a bebby. Mek a nize walk take. No come bag aeny more. Two—thlee—mebbe four day he pass. No come. Velly sad. Velly sad. Too bad."

A wide, capacious grin slowly spread itself over the countenance of Noble Howland, Jr. He turned to his father, but that gentleman was snuggled up under the warm bed-clothes and was sleeping at last, soundly and peacefully.

"Hold on a bit," said Noble, lowering his voice. Then he scribbled hastily upon a pad of paper:

> Kindly call at Room 8, same floor, at ten A.M. to-day, concerning baby.

He signed no name. With a chuckle, he handed the note to the boy, at the same time slipping a coin into his hand.

"Your job is to put that under the door of room 22, sonny. *Sabe?*"

It was fully two hours before ten o'clock that the occupants of room No. 22 assailed the door of room No. 8. In point of fact, they had rushed out the instant they had found and read the note.

Some one was singing inside room No. 8. It was a woman's voice, very low and crooning, and she sang some little nonsense song of a baby who sailed away on a lullaby ship on a slumber sea, to return on a sunbeam with the day. The woman outside the door knew the song too—had sung it herself once upon a time—and now she clutched her husband's arm, and sobbed against it in a way that was quite heart-rending to see. The singer had stopped as their knock sounded. Then she called, "Come!"

Mrs. Howland rose quickly as her visitors entered. She had thought it was the late Kiku, who had again disappeared. The woman, whose wan face looked as if it had been literally washed out with tears, turned a pair of feverish eyes upon her.

"Oh, we got your note! We could n't wait. Please, oh, please, please, tell me where is my baby!"

"My note!" exclaimed Mrs. Howland. "There must be a mistake. I wrote no note."

"Yes, yes, you did. Please don't say you did not. It was about a baby—my baby. I—you see—we—we lost our little, little baby."

A look of enlightenment and of intense pity dawned on Mrs. Howland's face. The poor creature was demented. The loss of her child had driven her mad. Oh, surely she, Mrs. Howland, knew how to sympathize with such a suffering one, and she knew a salve which might soothe even a heart as sore as this poor mother's.

"Gertrude," she called, "bring the baby, dear;" and then, turning to the visitors: "We have a dear little grandchild—a sweet little—— Madam!"

The last word escaped her like an explosive. She saw the eyes of the woman before her dilate wildly. Then, with a cry that was like that of some entrapped animal suddenly set free, she had darted forward. She tore the baby from the arms of the panic-stricken Gertrude, and then in an agony of bliss crushed it to her heart.

"Oh-h!" said Gertrude, backing from her. "The poor woman! What——"

"Violent!" huskily whispered Mrs. Howland, turning for confirmation to the man, who, strangely enough, had thrown his arms bodily about the woman and child together.

Mrs. Howland essayed several times to attract their attention, but vainly. She was wringing her hands and saying: "My poor little grandchild! He will be hurt!"

"Grandchild! That's good!"

Her son, Noble, had suddenly appeared. His hands in his pockets, he looked jeeringly down at the two women who chiefly interested him.

"Why, mamma, you old dotard, you, you don't mean to say you are claiming kinship with these strange folk?"

She turned upon him sternly.

"I will have none of your levity at this time."

"Ask *them* if you're the kid's grandma, then?"

The man was looking at them now, his lean, grave face, with the troubled, sleepless eyes, studying them slowly, as though he dully speculated upon their exact relation to the matter.

"You wish to know whose child this is? Ours. Stolen three days ago by a vicious nurse whom my wife was obliged to reprimand. We later learned she was an adventuress, an ex-geisha, who took positions with foreign families coming to Japan, with the object of robbing them in some way. Last night it was learned another conspirator assisted her, who also acted as maid here—Okiku by name—perhaps you know her? She has gone—probably got wind that we were on her track. Her going prostrated my wife last night, as we had thought Okiku might give us some clue. I feared my wife's reason was giving way—that she would injure herself; but now, you see—she—she—will be herself again!"

Mrs. Howland sat down limply and stared dully at the speaker.

"How could she have known about us?" she said in a hollow voice.

"Oh, don't you remember?" put in Gertrude, with a voice half vibrating with tears and half with a joy of which she was fearful. "They were there that day, Okiku and her friend—in that next room.

Oh, they must have listened! And you said—you said you—you would befriend and protect the Japanese wife of your son. Don't you remember all you said that day?"

Mrs. Howland did.

"It's clear as day to me now," said Gertrude. "We have been deluded idiots—both of us!"

"Exactly," said Noble grimly.

The man and the woman were going, the woman too entranced even to turn to hear or heed the explanations. Mrs. Howland choked as she watched them, and two great tears rolled down her furrowed cheeks.

"I—I—loved that baby," she said. Then, after another silence, she added slowly and painfully: "And I gave her five hundred dollars. I could not conceive of a Japanese adventuress. It seems incredible even now."

Her son mopped up her tears in a roughly affectionate manner, half chiding, half loving.

"And to think," she added, gulping down a great sob, "that I believed my own son capable of such villainy!"

"Oh, you were n't the only one," said he jauntily. "Now, you take your punishment like a good fellow, mamma. Go in there and blubber it out alone. I want to chastise Gertrude."

After Mrs. Howland had gone the pair remained in a silence which to one of them at least was hard to bear. She was holding herself very stiffly, her proud little head drooping not one jot from its height. She knew very well that he was standing squarely in front of her, gloating over her discomfiture. Finally she could bear it no longer.

"Anyhow," she said shakily, "its hair *was* red."

"A color you despise?" he questioned politely.

For the first time she looked at him directly, and instantly her face flamed.

"I *love* it!" she said passionately. "It's *your* color—dear!"

She might have said more, but that her very close proximity to her lover quite prevented.

THE ARRAIGNMENT

BY GRACE MACGOWAN COOKE

IF he has bread, and you have none,
Has God blest him, forsaken you?
When there was something to be done,
What did you do?