

# The Lord of Thunder Gate

By SIDNEY HERSHEL SMALL  
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## BUYING A WIFE

**SYNOPSIS.**—In a low drinking place in Japanese town of Mitagiri, Kayama, dissolute son of the wealthy Aochi, Lord of the Thunder Gate, boasts of a girl he is to purchase (with gold stolen from his father). Following a fight in the place, a drunken white man, speaking perfect Japanese, is left unconscious. Kayama, dreading his father's anger, sees a way of escape. He changes clothes with the unconscious white man (to whom he bears a remarkable resemblance), leaving a note in the garments promising him food, shelter and money if he will impersonate him (Kayama) for a time. Leaving Kayama is robbed and slain. The white man, as Kayama, is taken, unconscious, to the house of Aochi. His name is Robert Wells. Wells (who was born and passed his childhood in Japan) awakes bewildered, but to familiar scenes, in Aochi's house. Aochi, almost sightless from age, does not perceive the deception. He had determined his unworthy son should be put to death, but Wells' department leads him to think a reformation is possible.

## CHAPTER II—Continued.

As they walked down the corridor Wells was thinking as quickly as his muddled head would permit. What had Misako called him? Kayama! What had this servant called him? Kayama. That thing he'd seen—or had he dreamed it?—last night; that god. The thunder god. The god of Kayama's house, of which his nurse had so often told him in his baby days. He confound it, he'd see it through, for a time, anyhow.

A curious look of malignant hatred and incredulous, pleased surprise was on Aochi's face. Wells saw that the old Japanese's eyesight must be failing, for he constantly screwed up his eyebrows as if to peer more closely.

"Is it true that you chastised Ito, the inn keeper?"

Wells bowed. "That is the truth—my father."

"Where," the old man asked grimly, "is the gold?"

"Gold?"

"Gold! A bag of it. Come, where is it hidden?"

"I have no gold, father."

This Aochi pondered over. He considered the matter long, so long that finally his aged mind shifted and his face lit up. "Of what were we talking? I remember. Of Ito. A! I would have seen it. My servant told me. Your open hand was like the lightning. It closed as it struck. Ito's eyes blinked. He descended to the floor. That trick you must have learned in another country, Kayama. It is well that you learned something good. I had fears of that trip. I have not liked your speech. It is just a trifle halting. It is not so crisp as it should be."

He scratched his head. "Come closer, son. It would seem that your arm is bigger than it has been, but the men of our house are powerful men, Kayama."

He pressed Wells' bandaged arm, and the white man winced. Immediately Aochi's expression changed.

"You are ashamed," he announced. "A! misfortune to my house! that such a thing should occur. To be chased to my very gate by the husband of a rice picker. To have bargained with him for her lost honor, rather than take a knife . . . to haggle over the payment, over a single gold piece . . . to fear to fight, thus suffering—he pinched the arm again—*va broken arm and*—forefinger probing—"This cut above your eye. And yet the inn keeper was a stronger man. . . I do not understand it, Kayama. And I am tired from so much talk."

Wells smiled. "Perhaps I have been contaminated, my father. Think that this is a . . . wiser, different son returned to you, by the goodness of the gods. That the troublesome fellow who was Kayama is gone."

Aochi reached a clawlike hand toward Wells and opened the neck of the kimono.

"A! he cackled. "There is the lightning mark. It seems more red. Angry. Let us say that a miracle has been brought about. That the gods have given you sense."

From behind him he drew a long sword: Wells saw the lions of Shinto which swarmed the sheath and sprang about the exquisite hilt.

"This," Aochi lifted the blade, "I gave you, Kayama. Now the old son is gone, a thing of the past (indeed a body was floating down the river that runs past the Inn of the Tale Pearl, to rest at last upon a shivering bank of mud) and the honor of my house is thus appeased. I grow forgetful, Kayama."

"You should rest, father."

"That is true. I have not slept. I will retire for rest and devotion. I am very tired."

At the door he paused. "Also very happy in my new son," he added, and went off pleased with his conceit.

They found him, just before the hour for the noonday meal, prostrate before the household shrine, his wrinkled face smiling. Aochi had completed the last stage of the ceaseless journey. Telling Wells, between muffled sobs and cries, each member of the household made obeisance to the new Lord of the Thunder Gate, Kayama-San.

Wells' head whirled. Old stories danced through his mind; the tales of Shinto, the nurse, he marshaled them as best he could into an orderly array. Then, obviously, was no time for con-

cession—to whom, indeed, should he explain the tale, and who would believe? He had been accepted as Kayama by the head of the house. He . . . he was Kayama . . . for a bit, anyhow. He crossed the floor slowly, returning with a naked sword, which he laid across the dead man's arms, to keep away evil spirits. Tapers were lit, incense curled in the hot close air of the room. Servants hid away the household shrine. Finally a screen, green, covered with flying herons of gray, was placed about the body, and Kayama returned to his room.

The ancient servant maid awaited him.

"I was a season older than the lord," she greeted Wells. "The willow has outlived the pine." She bustled about with many unneeded steps, preparing white garments for Wells to don. "I saw Aochi-San's father die. I have seen Aochi-San die. Who knows but that you yourself might be stricken? See to it"—she wagged a finger at him—"that a little son trot about this house, Kayama-San."

She held up a white, unembroidered kimono for him. Wells dropped the blue kimono he had been wearing to the floor. The bit of paper fell with it, fluttered; he stooped, seeing writing thereon.

"Read, while I compose myself," he asked the woman. "It is doubtless of no importance. I do not know from whence it came."

"My eyes are old, Lord. If it be nothing, I will burn it in the brazier."

Wells glimpsed the characters for "Kayama," picked up the paper and read slowly. Slowly, and with dawning comprehension. "The swine," he said aloud in English. "Poor old Aochi! He's happier that I did happen along. Wonder when the beggar will show up again. What a mess!"

"Foreign words, Kayama-San, on the day you should be thinking of the many virtues of your departed father," the servant chided. "You have on the white robe. The priests will be waiting."

"The great bell of the Rokume temple was already reverberating slowly and regularly, punctuating Wells' wonder of this unreal situation. Peal after peal of the great bronze bell shook through the house of the Thunder Gate.

Wells took his place in the procession that had already formed at the gate of the house. All were white-hooded, and robed in white from head to foot. There were no relatives, only the men and women servants of the house, the leading priest, ringing a tiny bell, and Kayama . . . Wells.

The whole affair was dreamlike to him. Shadowy. Impressions only, yet unimpressed.

Eyes centered on Wells. Slowly, trying to remember everything that Misako had told him of (for she had been at this very temple many times, she had said), he rose, bowed low, lit an incense stick and stuck it in a bronze vase at Aochi's feet. He recited, clearly, the Words of Perfume, of the departed. These he had heard and angered his father by repeating, when he was a child.

Members of the household followed him, each thrusting a blazing, fuming bit of incense into the bowl, that Aochi might be wafted away quickly and safely. Voices broke. Aochi had been a noble, kind lord, if stern and strict. Who could say what Kayama would be? Many a prayer was muttered for the new lord, that the gods give him wisdom.

"Your devotion is pleasing to us," the head priest informed Wells. "We feared that your journeys in the seiyoin country, might cause you to forget . . ."

"There will be gold brought to the temple," Wells said, remembering.

"Gold is not a covering for devotion. You will"—smiling slyly—"bring the gold yourself, Kayama-San? You remember the price?"

"It will be ample, honorable priest."

"Ample! The price is fixed!"

"None shall complain of the generosity of the Lord of the Thunder Gate," Wells said, provoked by the insistence of the other.

The priest looked at him curiously. "You did not speak of generosity before, Kayama-San. You would have offered . . . more gold . . . for the maid." Then, suddenly: "surely you have not forgot our bargain? The maid is ready for you, upon payment of the six rolls of gold. When will you come for her?"

Wells considered this. A bargain had apparently been made between Kayama and the temple folk. He'd carry it out. An additional servant more or less—what did it matter? He knew that she would be well versed (for what Japanese maid is not?) in the needful duties. It would, also, be safer to be waited upon by some one unacquainted with Kayama. For, some time, somehow, his masquerade might totter, and the mask slip. . . .

"Today I devote to contemplation of my departed father's many virtues, that I profit by them. I will come tomorrow."

"With the six rolls of gold, Kayama-San?"

"I will bring them."

## CHAPTER III

"It is the hour for bathing," the old servant told Kayama, when he returned.

"I am tired," Wells feared that this would not satisfy her.

She, however, brought a volume to him. "Compose yourself, then, Kayama-San. Here is the First Book. In it—so I have heard—is written that to the young should come the young. I am old. There should be a gayer maid waiting upon you. She would drive the sorrow from your eyes. Tell me, Lord, does not young blood course in your veins?"

Wells smiled. "I go to the temple tomorrow, little mother. It seems that I am to buy a maid."

"Those priests! Much gold you will pay." Her hands fluttered. "It will be good to have a maid in the house again. And a babe."

"Wells thought in excellent American. "A fat chance," he was thinking.

"Your maid will pray each night that she be given a man-son," mumbled on the servant. "I will see to it that she protect your comforts, that each wish, even thoughts unuttered, be fulfilled."

Wells shivered. Why hadn't some one instructed—or didn't American mothers do such things?—Alberta? Had she ever, during their engagement, considered anything . . . and hadn't she been among the first to condemn him . . . unheard? With a start he remembered her beauty, only to find that he considered it as impersonal as a painting.

Footsteps in the hall aroused him. A priest, shaved of head, a comfortably plump fellow, bowed as he shuffled into the room. He refused the offered cup of tea, intimating by gestures that he wished to speak to Wells in private.

"The abbot has sent me," he whispered hoarsely. "There are missionaries in the next village. They will view the temple. They have prying eyes. The abbot wishes you to come for the maid."

"I am deep in devotion, honorable priest."

"You will find comfort in your sorrow. Be sure to warn your servants to be silent until the seiyoin depart. The matter is important. Be sure to bring the gold."

Why not? Wells thought. Better get it over with. He clapped his hands, giving orders: he was bringing a maid to the household. Let none mention it. (Why did the priest say that?) Prepare for her.

The serving-woman hurried for a gay robe. Furnerals were forgotten. Wells was soon ready, and accompanied the priest.

Already Wells saw the problems attendant upon buying a maid. He must tell her that she found no favor in his eyes—which would be difficult in view of the fact that he had bought her. How could he tell her?

The jangle of little bells announced the first prayer hour as he entered the temple yard. Heavy hangings to the left of the idol were brushed aside, and the eldest priest entered. "It has been decreed," he said gravely, "that temple-maids may be sold, but only as wives. Later they may be relegated to a lesser position. But each must be properly married. Is this satisfactory, Kayama-San?" Without permitting Wells to answer (and Wells was already thinking of the form of his protest, having his own ideas as to the binding of marriage ceremonies), he droned immediately into the ritual, as is proper for the bridegroom must not see the woman until they are actually married.

Complete, he told the shocked Wells he had a favor to ask. "The priests have never seen such a woman, Kayama-San. Is it permitted that they gaze upon such beauty, that they might remember it?"

What difference? Wells nodded assent.

Wells saw a second's byplay, just as the curtain parted, that was not intended to be seen: the trembling hands of a priest touching bright hair; the twisting of a woman's figure as if to offer combat, then the drooping of a hopeless head.

"Good!" he heard the priest say. "Keep your eyes discreetly to the floor. Walk slowly, and with guiding hand he led the girl into the room."

Fascinated, Wells' eyes held to the weirdness of the picture, to this rose in a Satsuma bowl. The priest was willing that this moment of awe, of expectation, be protracted, and, as was natural, the first upward sweep of the girl's eyes caught and held the one bright spot in the room, Wells' brilliant robes.

The maid says she is all white and begs his forbearance. Can you imagine how she comes to be a slave of the priests?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

### Sea Gypsies' Homes in Boats

The sea gypsies, who are also called mawken ("the sea-drowned folk"), belong to the Mergui archipelago, and the march to the sea has forced them first from the mainland to the islands and then to the sea. They consequently live their whole social life at sea, and while they are healthy, temperate, fearless, peaceful and chaste, says Prof. J. Arthur Thomson in "What is Man?" the boats, which are their homes, are the last word in dirtiness to our western notions. Everything from fish—their staple food—to pearl oysters is cleaned in the boat. Because "anything that would attract the sharks is fatal, hence nothing is thrown overboard. It is horrible, but intelligible," De Witt News.

## NEGLIGES AND LINGERIE, MIDSUMMER'S LOVELY HATS

THE rainbow has nothing on present-day lingerie and negligees, when it comes to being colorful—except that it began first. In the intimate garments that women of today choose, all the tints and shades of the sky's beautiful arc are repeated—and others are added. The limit of sheerness and daintiness has been reached in this field where fine ladies need not practice restraint in the quest of beauty.

The story of negligees is a long one and includes many garments which must be substantial, as well as those filmy affairs whose mission is first to be beautiful. One of the latter is shown here, made of georgette crepe and lace and adorned with narrow rib-



bons and ribbon flowers. Negligees of this kind impress the lighter colors into their service, and favor pink, orchid, pale green, French blue, rose, peach and flame color.

After georgette comes crepe de chine as a fabric for these elaborate types of the negligee, in the same colors and made up in much the same way. This season there are fine wool crepes, also in flower-like colors but not so much adorned. They are graceful with flowing sleeves, and edges finished with crochet work in silk. The same silk provides small tassels that punctuate long lines by furnishing a finish for narrow girdles or pointed sleeves.

Just a little heavier than these crepes are crepe satin and taffeta in change-



able and plain weaves. Narrow val lace is much in demand for trimming the satin garments and is used in rows. Square pockets almost covered with it, and neck and sleeve decorations are noted on the new models.

Leaving the company of silk negligees and joining that which is made up of cotton we find new and fascinating patterns in raitine. Soft corduroy maintains its popularity and is shown in lovely rose and purple shades, the stronger blues, henna and some darker tones. Familiar cotton crepes appear in prettier colors than ever. Plain garments have collars and bandings in any stripes.

Just why June should be of all months, the favorite for weddings

fancy hairbraids with gorgeous silk tulips, in orchid and other tones, drooping from the brim edge. Long leaves, equally gorgeous, are posed against the crown.

The winsome poke bonnet with crinkly straw crown and georgette brim, cut away at the back, has captured the fancy of many youthful wearers. It is trimmed with clusters of roses in natural colors at each side. A pretty hat of georgette crepe faced with braid and worn with a scarf of malines also chooses roses for its adornment and this finishes one chapter in the fascinating story of midsummer millinery that will grace June weddings. JULIA BOTTOMLEY.

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