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HIS WIFE'S HUSBAND

By Onoto Watanna

ILLUSTRATED BY S. EPHRAIM

SHE sidled close up to him, and as soon as they were alone together told him she "lufed" him.

"But we scarcely know each other," he replied, with a trace of embarrassment mingled with the amusement in his face. The girl scoffed at the idea.

"Oa," she said, "tha's nodding. I thing' perhaps we knowing each odder in nodder life? Yaes?"

He smiled at him so engagingly that he relented.

"Well, what do you want me to do?" She peeped at him sideways. A moment, and he caught the glimmer of her black, saucy eyes between the half-closed lids.

"Tha's nize you marry with me?" she questioned. And thus tempted, Frank, who was being initiated into Japan and things Japanese, fell.

THEY started housekeeping in a fairy cottage which nestled in the very heart of a blue valley, close by the beautiful waters of the Hayama, and within sight of the peerless mountain Fuji-Yama. All about them the fields were alive with color, changing with every month, but always beautiful, sometimes vivid with a burning glory of natsuné or azalea blossoms, sometimes languorous and sleepy with the pale blue of the wistaria, or again the exquisite delight of the tinted cherry or plum blossom, both of which rivaled each other in beauty.

Amid such surroundings, with only a man and maid to command, was it any wonder that these two were happy, or that the American soon succumbed both to the *dolce far niente* of the atmosphere and the irresistible charms of Otama-san, who had infected him with some of her blissful delight in her new home? For Otama had been only a poor working-girl before she had met the American, and although he was merely receiving a good salary from the American-Oriental Railroad Company, yet to Otama he was as wealthy as any millionaire in the Empire.

Frank expected to spend the spring and summer in Japan, as his position as inspector of the road kept him seldom longer than a few months in any one particular place. He saw no reason why he should not make his visit as pleasant as possible. And so, waited on hand and foot by Otama, and beguiled and amused by her pretty speech, her singing and dainty charms, he was happy and blissfully unconscious, for the time being at least, of everything save that Japan with all its dreamy beauty was a Garden of Eden, wherein he was the Adam and Otama the Eve. Moreover, his duties were not at all heavy, and he had accomplished them inside of a few weeks after his coming to the island, so that he had a great deal of time to himself to see the country.

"You gitting vaery lazy," Otama told him, reproachfully one morning, when she discovered him rolled in a sleepy heap in the hammock, his cap pulled over his eyes. She had been bustling in and out of the house attending to her household duties, but finding time every few minutes to run out and talk to her big, sleepy husband.

Frank turned his head around on the pillow and surveyed her with lazy pleasure.

"Come here, witch," he said, stretching his long arms

out and trying to draw her into the hammock with him. "Do you know what I was thinking about?"

She knew, but preferred to appear mystified.

"No. Whad kin it be? 'Bout the beautiful Americanzan ladies?"

"Nope." He shook his head.

"Eenglish?"

"No," smiling.

"French? German?" she began, naming all the nations she had ever heard of. "Tha's mos' hard thing I aever heard to guess."

He pinched her cheek.

"I'm thinking of my wife, and whether she is going to be a good little girl while I am gone."

The girl's face instantly grew serious.

"You goin' to desert me sure thing?" she said, with a questioning note which wanted to be denied in her voice. "Only for a little while."

"Tha's whad they all say," she said, scornfully now. "All big mians from the West tell thad liddle story. I dunno thad I believe."

"Well, I'm different from the rest." He was still smiling. She shrugged her little shoulders.

"They also say thad; aever one them."

"Well, you're my wife, you know, Otama-san."

"Tha's so?" The cynicism she had learned somewhere

from some Japanese woman whose American husband had deserted her peeped out of her words still. "I thing' tha's only your wife s'long as you stay at Japan. You go way an'—"

"Nonsense, Mrs. Boyd."

"Why you nod tek me with you?"

He stirred uneasily. "It wouldn't do, Otama-san. People wouldn't understand you there, you know, and—er—besides, I like you better in Japan."

He had not banished the skepticism from her face in the slightest, but she preferred to change the subject since she could do nothing with him.

"Aenhow, I eggspeg you lig'in' me jus' now?"

"Well, I don't know about that."

She pouted roguishly.

"I don't know 'bout thad, needer—'bout lig'in' you."

The question they had discussed was a sore one between them. With all the girl's apparent artlessness there was a shrewd vein in her which had ever made her cautious in her marriage with the American. She was well aware that it was no uncommon thing for foreigners to marry Japanese girls, and after a short, happy, convenient season desert them. The girl, who had grown a trifle hardened through working in the factory among girls who were her inferior in every way, and which her dire poverty had driven her to, was determined not to suffer in the same way, and made up her mind, with all the strength of a Japanese woman, that if she did not go with her husband she surely would not become wretched on his account; for in his refusal to take her with him she fancied she detected his desire to leave her altogether, and although she was too proud to hold him, she would not permit herself to suffer more than she could help.

At last the day set for his departure arrived. Otama packed his clothes with trembling hands, and went about the house with a white, wistful little face that her husband made a point of taking between his hands and kissing into laughter every time he saw her. He was quite

cheerful, and made big promises to Otama—promises which Otama secretly believed he would break, but which she smiled at very bravely. At the last moment even his eyes were moist, for the girl clung to him in a perfect agony, pitifully begging to be taken with him. He put her from him very gently, whispered he would be back ere the first snow fell, and sprang up the gang-plank.

When his ship had once passed out of sight Otama-san walked home with a still, hard look about her eyes.

"Bring me my prettiest gown, my jewels, and dress my hair more becomingly than ever before," she said to the little maid; and when, after a couple of hours, she had emerged from the maid's hands she looked very beautiful, with her face very pink, gay flowers and ornaments in her hair, and a smile on her lips. Then she called to the man. "Haste! Go to the honorable Nakoda and bid him come to me."

She walked through the rooms in the house, destroying all traces of her husband, burning his pictures and books. When the Nakoda arrived she was very dignified and calm.

"A husband?" he inquired. He would have one for her in a week. Would he not have to consult her father and uncles? No, she had no near relatives. Ah! she was a widow? Her husband had deserted her—she had divorced him.

When the Nakoda had gone, and she was alone with the little maid, she flung herself wearily down. The timid little maid approached and put her arms about her.

"Perhaps he—the big barbarian would come back!"

"No—they never come—they always said so—that was all. They liked to give pain, but they cared not to see it," her mistress had answered, and added that she had discussed the subject well with those who knew and had suffered in that way.

And so, before the ship that bore her American husband back to his home was quarter way on its journey, Otama-san had married again. She had married again for several reasons. Her husband had left her only sufficient money to last her a few weeks, telling her he would send more. Otama had always desired a life of ease and comfort, and could not bear the idea of going back to the old drudgery. Hence her determination to marry some one who would be able to support her in the way she wished to live. Her beauty had grown since her marriage, and it was heightened by her clothes and surroundings, so that she could command a better husband now than formerly.

The Nakoda had an applicant on his list for a wife who exactly filled all Otama's requirements; he was well off, polite and kind, with influential relatives. He desired a wife who was beautiful, besides being modest and good. And so, with a philosophy she must have inherited from some old Samurai ancestor, Otama refused to permit herself to even think of her former husband, and tried in every way possible to please her new one and fulfill her duties as a good wife.

FOUR months had scarcely passed, and the first snow had not yet fallen. It was the middle of December, and the people were busy preparing for the New-Year holiday season. The streets looked very busy in Tokyo, which was only a short distance from where Otama lived.

The Empress of India crowded with foreign passengers, who chose this season, the pleasantest, for visiting Japan, had just arrived. One of the first passengers to alight was Frank Boyd. His open, boyish face looked happy and eager and he hailed a juramma with all his old-time familiarity with things Japanese.

He was met at the door by Yuri, the little maid, and in his boyish delight at seeing her familiar little face once more he caught her in his arms and kissed her joyously.

"Her mistress?" The girl sank in a heap at his feet, imploring him to go away. He thought at first she was fooling with him, and in his impatience to see his wife pushed her aside and strode into the house, the thin walls of which seemed to shake with his joyous tread.

He called her name in the old, happy fashion.

"Otama! Otama! It is I—your big barbarian!"

She came to meet him, shivering, her eyes averted and frightened, and when he tried to take her in his arms



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she, too, shrank from him and knelt at his feet as the maid had done. This was too much for Frank. He lifted her up bodily, and fell to kissing her in spite of her pitiful protesting, calling her by all the fond, ridiculous names he had loved to lavish on her in the past, and telling her how he had missed her and thought of her constantly. She must forgive him that he had not written. She did not understand English writing; he could not write in Japanese; he had the American's repugnance to having strangers read his letters to her. He had sent the money, however. Had she received it?

When his fluency had abated the girl extricated herself from his arms. She was dizzy and afraid of him. "That's too late." Her voice was faint and strained. "Why, little blossom, what do you mean?"

"Thad I marry ag'in," she said, and shrank back from him as though fearful he would strike her. The little maid began to sob bitterly behind the fusuma. The man still did not understand.

"You nod onderstan?" she repeated, wildly.

"Of course not." He was impatient now.

"I nod believe you aever goin' come bag to me, so I git nodder husban'."

His face had grown gray in one moment, and all the boyish joy was gone, leaving only a haggard, dull contempt mingled with slow comprehension.

"I see." He did not know his own voice even. "You had so little faith that you could not wait even a few months. I remember you used to hint of such things to me." He was speaking slowly—half to himself. She was clinging to his hands now, pressing them to her face, but he shook her off with the uttermost dislike.

"In my country they would consider you the lowest, most despicable of things," he said, cruelly. "One month one man's plaything—the next another's."

He found a seat and sat down stupidly, trying to recover his wits. It was one of the American chairs he had left behind, and it reminded him that the house was still his, according to the lease.

"Whad you goin' ter do?" She had dried her tears now.

"To stay in my own house," he told her, recklessly, though he did not himself know what he intended doing. She blanched whiter, if possible.

"Thad my husban' nod lig?" she began, timidly.

"I am your husband," he told her, fiercely, gripping her arm in a vise. She stared at him in terror, and then clung about his neck.

"Oh, why you nod tek me away to you home, Frang?" she said, bitterly. "Tha's goin' ter save all so much suffer."

Now that she was clinging to him he detested her again, and pushed her from him. She crept from the room like a wounded bird.

When her husband came home he found the American waiting for him. He was very urbane and polite.

"What did his augustness want? How was it he had deigned to enter his honorably miserable house?"

"This is my house," the American told him, savagely. He had rented it for a number of years. What the devil did he—the Japanese—want in it?

The Japanese was too surprised to answer for a moment, and Frank continued: "Furthermore, everything in the house is mine; do you understand—my wife, servants, furniture, everything—and I want you to get out!" he finished.

The Japanese was still smiling in a ghastly fashion and bowing politely. He failed to understand his claim. His wife was divorced from the American—the lease had been forfeited by his departure from Japan—he, the Japanese, refused to take commands from the American. If he desired further counsel as to his rights there were legal authorities to whom he could go in Japan.

The hopelessness of his claim came home to Frank. He restrained himself from strangling the Japanese, who, after all, was not the one to blame. For a time he stood looking straight before him, with miserable, unseeing eyes. Then without a word he strode across the room and passed out of the house. As he went down the hill mistress and maid watched till they could no longer see him; then the maid looked at her mistress' face and renewed her weeping, and this time the mistress wept with her.

same thing; besides, it looks to me as if a family of five men ought to produce at least one soldier."

"Yes, it does look that way," his mother said, in a hard, unnatural tone; "and I don't see how any of the rest could be spared. Your father's too old and Jack's too young, and neither Simon nor Eben could stand the life of a common soldier. I hope you'll keep your wits about you, and try to understand what's said to you, and not bring any—" she hesitated, came near saying "more," but finished, "any discredit on us."

"I'll do my best, mother, as I always do."

Mrs. Hillis made a movement of her shoulders that to the others expressed her lack of faith in Joe's "best."

After Joe was gone he was missed by the home folks because of the work he had done, and because there was no silent one to be ashamed of. His older brothers found it a continual joke that Joe had gone to be a soldier, but declared that it was not a bad idea. Some one of the family ought to go. From general appearances the war was likely to last for some time.

There were letters, dutiful and kindly, from Joe to his father and mother. To his brothers he sent messages which were received with broad smiles and such exclamations as, "Who'd 'a' believed it?" "Joe a soldier!" "Think of Joe being so far from home!"

After a time he mentioned skirmishes and battles he had been in. Once he was wounded, and wrote from a hospital. His name was in the newspaper lists. After seeing his name in print Joe's family knew that he was no longer a private. He was mentioned as Lieutenant Joseph Hillis. There was a general pause in the family conversation. Dr. Hillis was the first one to speak.

"Well, who'd 'a' believed it of Joe?"

The mother said, "Since he was the only one that could be spared, I'm glad he's doing so well," and the father wondered for a moment. No one had said that Joe was doing well of his wounds; then it dawned upon him that his wife meant their son was doing well to be promoted. Shortly Joe was back again to camp and field life, and soon after came news of the battle of the Wilderness—news in the public way, but no letter from Joe.

"Probably he's been promoted again," said merchant Simon Hillis, "and he's busy getting fitted with a new uniform." Dr. Hillis laughed and narrowly examined his polished finger-nails.

The father said, "We'll hear from him in good time, and mind what I say, we'll never get any discredit from news of Joe. He's not smart, but he's sound and true."

It was a Sunday afternoon, and all the Hillis family were at the farm. The air was warm enough to feel like spring, and cool enough to make a fire in the big fireplace pleasant, while the outside doors stood open.

There was a step on the porch. Mr. Hillis arose and met at the door a man in soldier-blue. His face was pale and thin and his right arm was in a sling.

"You don't know me?" he said, smiling; and then Mr. Hillis recognized Jim Smalley, who had gone into the army with Joe. He was warmly welcomed, but he responded coldly, they thought, and he was very serious for Jim Smalley. To the rallying of the Hillis brothers he gave short, sometimes irrelevant answers. He told them about his wound, but added that it was not serious.

Then Jack said, "Well, I say, Jim, isn't our Joe coming out in fine feather? You see him once in awhile, even if he is an officer, don't you?"

"Yes, yes, I see him sometimes."

"Do you think he'll be a brigadier-general before long?" Eben asked, laughing.

"No, I guess not," Smalley answered. "But he's got the title of hero if ever a man got it, and he'll keep it, too. Future histories will mention how Lieutenant Hillis, when officer after officer was shot down, steadily kept the men under control, prevented a retreat, and at last led them, bearing the colors himself, and captured the battery that was doing so much harm."

"Then he'll be captain or something higher?" Jack exclaimed, eagerly, and springing from his chair.

"No, he won't be anything," Smalley said, sadly.

"But why?" Mrs. Hillis asked, sharply.

"Because, Mrs. Hillis, I came to tell you—we thought it would be better—and I got a furlough—and I brought Joe home with me, and—"

There was the sound of slow-moving wheels at the gate. The father, from where he sat, looked through the open door. There was a hearse at the gate, draped with the Stars and Stripes.

Later Smalley told them how Joe had died of his wounds the night after the battle; how he, though wounded himself, had been able to minister to others, and he was with Joe till the last.

"And did he remember us? Did he send any message?" Mrs. Hillis sobbed.

"Yes, he remembered; he mentioned you especially. He said I should tell you that he was glad it was himself instead of either one of the other boys; that he was sure he could be best spared. But Joe always was modest."

Best spared! Mrs. Hillis recalled her own words. He could be spared at the time he went away, and the others were so precious. But never to see him again! This patient, silent, unappreciated son!

The manner of Joe's death was told over his remains, and each year as Memorial day comes little children hear the story of the young soldier whose grave is marked by a tall monument and a flagstaff where the colors are always flying.

After a time it was forgotten that Joe had been the stupid laughing-stock of the family and the neighbors; but an old woman does not forget. Each year, when the graves of this and other soldiers are covered with flowers, the old woman, leaning on the arm of one younger, but not young, sits by Joe's grave and says:

"Jennie, he was the only one of my boys I could spare to be a hero. He made our name known for bravery. My neglected Joe! I'm so glad that you loved him and that he knew it."



By Margaret Holmes Bates



IT WAS in the early days of the war, in the summer of '61, that Jack Hillis enlisted. It never would have happened, his mother said, if it had not been for that foolish excursion. The excursion in itself had not seemed foolish, and Mrs. Hillis had been one of the most enthusiastic of those preparing to celebrate the finishing of the new railroad from Bradley Junction to the lake.

But there was a recruiting-office at Lake City. In front of the door of this office a band was playing patriotic airs; above its roof the Stars and Stripes were flying. And there Major Seely harangued the young men.

Jack Hillis was seventeen and a month, but he was tall

and large and looked twenty. So he signed his name and was accepted. It was a possibility that his mother had never imagined. She was patriotic, though she averred she belonged to the peace party. She did not believe in war. It might be avoided. She was sure the difficulty would be settled very soon. The first call for soldiers, she was sure, too, was far in excess of the country's need. It was a useless expense. But if some restless men cared to go, she had nothing to say. That any whom she knew and cared for would join this impromptu army she did not believe. And now, not forty miles from the farm, was this loud-mouthed, shoulder-strapped fellow inveigling her boy and others into signing his papers. She would see about it.

Of Mrs. Hillis' four sons Jack was her favorite. Simon, the oldest of the family, was in business, and married. He was already making great gains on his merchandise because of the state of the country and the fears of the future. He was buying as far as his money and his credit would reach. He would most assuredly not enlist.

Eben had recently been graduated from a medical college. While he talked loftily about going into the field as a surgeon if Uncle Sam needed him. But as a common soldier?—"no, thank you."

Next there was Joe. It was the general opinion in the family and the neighborhood that Joe was good because he lacked strength of character to be anything else. No one knew his deficiency better than did his mother. He had always been the stupid one of the family. No bright sayings of Joe's childhood had ever been recorded. When there was extra work to be done, Joe was kept out of school to do it. "What does it matter?" his mother would say; "you're always at the foot of your classes."

So continually had Joe heard himself depreciated through his childhood and youth he grew to manhood fully understanding that he was the blockhead of the family. He was the drudge for his mother and his broth-

ers. His father was kinder, but he could do so little for Joe against the others. When the older boys had shown preferences for different ways of life they had been listened to, and allowed to have their way. Sometimes Joe thought he might like something else, on the farm, but if he hinted at the idea ever so mildly there was a general laugh, and then Joe turned scarlet and silent.

Jack, the youngest of the quartet of sons, was the darling of the house. He was the brightest of the family, and though the other boys were creditable, Jack would surely eclipse them when he made a choice of a business or profession for life. And now he had enlisted! It was not to be endured any longer than till such time as the work of the foolish boy could be undone.

On the evening of the day that Major Seely had released Jack, Joe was coming home from the Raynor farm-house. The Hillis and the Raynor farms joined. Jennie Raynor met Joe in the shadow of a hedge. Of all the girls in the neighborhood Jennie was the only one who was kind to Joe. The rest, taking the opinion of their elders for their own, snubbed Joe on every occasion. On this evening, after talking over Jack for some time, Joe said:

"If I should enlist I don't believe mother would try to get me off."

"Oh, yes," Jennie hesitated. She felt that Joe spoke the truth. After a pause she continued, "But you won't enlist, Joe?"

"I don't know; I'd rather volunteer than be drafted. I don't like the idea of being driven out to be shot at."

"Do you think the war's going to last long?"

"I don't know. If it does I'm going."

"Oh, Joe!" and Jennie's face was very white.

Joe, watching her, felt his heart give a great leap and then stand still. Could it be possible? He, the stupid of the family, the blockhead of the neighborhood, and she, the prettiest, the brightest and the best girl in the world!

There was a silence for a minute, then Jennie said she must go home. Joe detained her by the very slightest touch on her sleeve. "Would you care, Jennie? If I go to the war or if I stay at home, do you care?"

"Yes, Joe, I care very much," Jennie answered, with flushing cheeks and downcast eyes.

"It'll be awful hard to go if you don't want me to," Joe said, chokingly; "but, Jennie, you won't want me to stay at home if it comes to be my duty to go?"

"Oh, no, Joe; I couldn't love a coward."

"Jennie—"

She lifted her eyes. Joe's face was very near her own. The twilight was deepening. Their lips met, and each felt that this was their betrothal.

And so it came to pass that within less than six months from the time of the chance meeting in the shadow of the hedge Joe Hillis came home from Bradley looking very thoughtful. After supper he said:

"I enlisted to-day, and I'm going into camp the first of next week."

"You've enlisted!" Jack exclaimed. "What sort of rot are you givin' us? They wouldn't take you."

"Well, they have taken me, anyway," Joe answered.

"I belong to Terry's cavalry."

"Joe, why have you done this?" his father asked.

"For the same reason that other men are doing this