The OLD JIRIKISHA
By Onoto Watanna

It was in the month of April, the height of the cherry blossom season, that I met her. The flowers were in full bloom, and the air was fragrant with their sweet perfume. I strolled through the gardens, admiring the beauty of the cherry blossoms, when I came upon her. She was walking alone, her face hidden in the shadows of the trees. I felt a strange sense of familiarity, as if I had seen her before. I approached her, and she turned to look at me. Her eyes were bright, and her expression was one of surprise.

"I'm sorry," she said, "I didn't mean to scare you."

I smiled at her. "You shouldn't be sorry," I said. "I'm the one who should be grateful." I reached out to take her hand, but she gently withdrew it. "You must be mistaken," she said. "I've never seen you before."

I shrugged. "Perhaps," I said. "But I have a feeling we've met before."

She laughed, a soft, delicate sound. "Perhaps," she said. "But how can that be?"

I took a deep breath. "I don't know," I said. "But I have a sense that we have a connection."

She looked at me curiously. "A connection," she said. "What kind of connection?"

I felt a surge of emotion, a sense of longing and desire. I reached out to take her hand again, but she pulled away. "I'm sorry," she said. "I can't do that."

I stood there, watching her as she walked away. I felt a sense of loss, a sense of longing. I knew I would never forget her, that she would stay with me always.

"We'll meet again," she said, as she disappeared into the crowd of cherry blossoms.

I turned to go, but I couldn't help turning back. "Goodbye," I called after her. "I'll see you soon."

She nodded, and I watched as she disappeared into the beauty of the cherry blossoms, leaving me with a sense of longing and desire.
to know whether she carried any weapon with her. A Japanese woman might have carried a small sword or dagger.

The girl fell into the trap and betrayed herself, and be knew she was defenceless.

"With my hand," she said, with inbred bravery, "you miserable, skinny, little rat, you. An American girl could do it, too, if she were strong enough, and she was measuring his little form with despairing eyes, even while she attempted to frighten him.

For answer the runner took hold of my shoulder, and quietly turned me slowly, holding me in this perilous position for fully two minutes, while the girl clung desperately to the sides.

"You pay that money—" he grinned, "pyou'll pay just as much if you fail!"

"I shall not," she said without any reply.

"Then I will—what do you call that—

"Diyun?"

"Diyun!"

The man thought she would not pay. He put me back in position, and the girl hastily alighted and advanced toward him.

Do you know that my—my friends and relatives will miss the Noon, and come to see you—for you will be punished—"

"That’s well. I think I go in my city with that money you got?”

"Oh!"

He assumed an attitude of importance and took my hand. "An I that you and got?" he said, "I go in my city."

"I don’t know anything about it."

The man went out and looked. Will you let her stay here?

"Oh! no! no! no! no!"

"The girl clung to my squatting pitifully, and tried to hold him on.

"You shall not go—leave me alone—"

She said breathless.

And now they were both fighting for my sake. Her little delicate hands ached with effort to hold me, and tried to wrestle with him. She must have felt that as long as she could hold on, she could not leave alone. The man belonged to the very lowest rank of them all. The girl was slender in her match in strength. Finding that he could not lift her with her, she was seemingly fearful of her strength. She sought a method of holding me by surprise with pain, and then flashed for her liberty. He bit one of her little tightly clamped hands. And then the American girl screamed aloud:

"Help! Help! oh! help! Fire! Murder! Thief! Help!"

Darkness was already at hand. Only the last rays of the dying sunset crept through the forest and spread a melancholy gray on the autumnal leaves of the trees. But a voice, a full, a manly voice answered that faint cry, and the voice was clear at hand.

"I will do it, if your hands are laid on the runner, and the distracted girl clinging, pitifully, unconscious of what she was doing, to a big stranger, and she was sobbing like a child against his shoulder.

It was the Englishman, and let the girl cry her heart-out, in his arms—any man who could have encouraged her to go on.

Then when she had quieted down, he led gently to his own turning, and walked up to the now shivering runner, who was being held by two of his men. The Englishman made the explanation from the girl was needed. He already understood. With rustling handbags, he had anticipated it somewhat, for he had been fearfully on the road the runner had taken. With hand on the collar of the woman, shivering, cringing, runner, he marshaled him over to the girl.

"I shall give him the damned thrashing he ever had in his life," he said then, when we got turned home, I’ll send him over to the police.

The girl recognized his voice, and in the semi-darkness saw his tall, good-looking figure, the girl did not recognize him.

"You—you Englishmen—are—so—fearful—and—Arms," she said between her sobs. Then she added timidly—

"You—you Englishmen—are—so—fearful—

She had forgotten what he had said about the runner.

Yes. I spoke to you—tried to warn you in the tea garden. I am afraid I offended you. I beg your pardon. The runner—"

She felt instinctively that he was smiling in spite of the situation, and she laughed a trifle hystically herself.

"Let’s go," she shivered; "it would do no good."

"Yes," there was a queer note in his voice now—"I—be—what?"

—and she may have done me a service, you know.

“And we," she breathed very gently.

The Englishman released his hold on the runner’s collar, and in the darkness found the girl’s little grateful hand extended.

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