



Should he live for love
or die for honour?



Heavy as a Mountain

VINCENT
CONNOLLY

This Paper is Needed for Our War Effort—Save It!

The Argus.

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DARWIN HEAVILY BOMBED IN 2 RAIDS

ATTACKS BY 93
PLANES:
4 SHOT DOWN
DAMAGE "CONSIDERABLE":



MOBILISATION OF
ALL LABOUR
AND PROPERTY

Mr. Curtin Explains
New Regulations

SYDNEY, Thursday.—Regulations giving the Federal Government power for complete mobilisation of the resources and property of the Australian people were announced today in accordance with the declaration made by the Prime Minister when he opened the Chamber of Commerce on Tuesday.

From Our Own Correspondent
LONDON, Thursday.—
Opinion regarding Mr. Churchill's resignation—as far as it has come of the fall of Singapore and of the escape of the German warships through the English Channel, is intensifying every day. It will reach a climax whether for or against him, at the end of next week's session in the House of Commons. The Parliamentary Labour Party will meet before then.

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editions

Lovebirds

Toshi thinks it's an inauspicious beginning to their marriage that his bride dislikes the wedding present he's bought her, but he'll soon do something about that. The tiny bird lies trapped in his left hand, not screeching now, its little heart racing against the skin of his enclosing palm. In his right hand, he holds Mother's long dress-making shears, silver points lethal.

He looks at the ornate birdcage, remembering the portion of his lieutenant's pay that it cost him. He's about to do the deed when Sachiko, his bride, comes into the room. Her jaw drops and she makes no sound for a moment, perhaps trying to make sense of what she sees. Then comes the long scream that must surely alarm the entire household, the first of many as she runs across the tatami and throws herself at him, her small fists beating him around the head.

He's at a disadvantage. Release the bird and it will be a great nuisance catching it again. The shears will be a danger to Sachiko if he tries to catch her up in his arms to restrain her, even more of a risk to himself if he drops them and she gets possession in this mood. He bows his head over and presents his back to her, which she pummels, while he shouts at her. This will now be a public dispute heard not just by the family but by the neighbouring suburb. He calls on her to control herself – it seems to have the opposite effect. He begs her to let him explain, tries to order her to sit on the bed and listen to him.

He will not harm the bird.

When she finally lets him, he puts the bird back in the cage with its nervous companion, stows the scissors and takes his weeping bride in his arms, caressing her, soothing her. When he kisses her neck, he feels the rushing of her pulse through his lips.

‘I mean no harm to the birds,’ he tells her. ‘If some of their feathers are trimmed, then we can let them out of the cage, close up all the screens so they don’t fly away. They’ll still fly around the room but more gently – less likely to hurt themselves, to knock things over, easier to catch again.’

‘You never asked me first. They’re mine, you gave them to me.’

‘You don’t like them, anyhow.’

‘No – you don’t try to understand. I love them. I just felt sorry for them having to live in their cage. They’re birds – they want to fly.’

‘They will fly.’

‘But you’ll hurt them.’

He holds her close, tries to explain that birds feel no pain from their feathers being cut, that he has asked others, knows what he is doing – he is a flyer himself, after all. The birds will be happier and stay close to their nest.

She doubts him, and says, ‘Why not just let them out, see what happens?’

When Toshi opens the cage, the two lovebirds take some time to find their way out – not surprising, as it’s a largish structure with beautiful towers and turrets, formed from fine white bamboo strips. When they make their exit, the birds race around the room with blinding speed, stopping suddenly to perch briefly on every surface, to peck at this and that, then they’re off again. Sachiko is delighted.

When Toshi arms himself with a broom and tries to catch the birds to put them back in the cage, he’s the one that knocks things over, and then they’re both laughing, Sachiko screaming as loudly as

before when one bird lands a shit on his trousers. He looks at her and feels his heart bursting at her happiness. It's worth this disorder just to hear her laughter.

How different she is from any of the other young brides that could have easily been arranged for him. A person of passion, of exuberance, grown up in Yokosuka, home port of his carrier fleet.

Now she thinks there's a better way of getting the birds back into the cage. She puts a little seed about, makes a show of putting more seed and water in the cage, too. She and Toshi sit on the bed with arms around each other, quiet, barely a move, and the birds eventually find their way back. Simple creatures – food, water and companionship is all that's needed.

Toshi feels such pride and love for his bride, and tells her so. She closes his words with her own mouth and then tells him she should sponge that mark off his trousers before it sets; she undoes his belt, his buttons.

Uncle Fuchida

When Toshi leads Sachiko downstairs, Uncle Fuchida is already holding court in the main room. He looks comfortable here, happy to see them.

‘Ha. The newlyweds. Finally out of bed.’

Younger brother Mitsuo sits cross-legged, excited, at his uncle’s feet; Father is delighted to see his old friend – their friendship is the reason for the honorific, ‘uncle’; Mother rushes about, trying to organise for this unexpected visit. Toshi feels a little uncomfortable in his hastily donned ceremonial whites, while Fuchida looks ready for real business in his greens, the insignia of a commander, but what business could it be? After a flurry of greetings and bows, Mother pulls Sachiko aside to help.

Fuchida resumes a discussion with Father: the slow progress of the Chinese War in the face of grinding opposition. Many like him believe there are easier pickings elsewhere, a view that has gained strength.

His business here is then finally revealed: the start of a great new enterprise in East Asia, the creation of a new regional order. He looks at Father, his eyes glowing. ‘It will all be possible because of our mighty naval air power, which I have the honour to lead. And your son will be part of it.’

He beams at Toshi. ‘In two days, your waiting will be over, my

boy. You will be one of my flight leaders.'

Mitsuo leaps to his feet. 'Toshi will smash them.'

Father claps his hands. 'A toast! Bring some saké.'

Toshi feels overwhelmed by happiness. First, the joy of being wedded to Sachiko, and now this great adventure. And flight leader. He looks at his bride and draws a breath. She's frozen, devastated. A tray of glasses trembles in one hand, a jug of ice water in the other. How do two great joys become one great sorrow?

She crosses the room and puts the tray down in front of Fuchida with an unceremonious clatter, lifts a glass and splashes water into it. Some of it goes on the Commander's uniform. Her voice is tight with suppressed anger.

'I believe water is the correct toast for departing warriors.'

The room is silenced, each member of the family dropping their eyes. Fuchida takes the glass, gives a wry smile to Toshi, as if to say, you've got yourself a lively one here, my boy.

'You're absolutely right, Sachiko. The purification before battle. You've done well.' He brushes some droplets from his trousers and raises his glass. 'A toast to this noble household. May Toshi bring it ever more honour.'

Father raises his glass. 'As did our first son, Katsuro.'

The name is too much for Sachiko. 'No! Not like Katsuro!' She rushes from the room.

Toshi sees his family are embarrassed by the improper behaviour of their newest member. They stare at the floor, but not Fuchida. He puts down the water, grins and rubs his hands. 'So, how about some of that saké now?'

Mother follows Sachiko outside, fuming.



In the rock garden, Mother throws her words at Sachiko's back. 'You married a Navy man. You knew he'd be away from you. Maybe for a long time.'

'Not forever.' Sachiko swings around to face her. 'I don't want a dead husband. A wasted life like Katsuro's.'

'Wasted?' Mother catches Sachiko by the wrist and drags her across the garden, scattering marble pebbles in their wake. In one corner, surrounded by white chrysanthemums, stands a pottery urn, a memorial. 'See? Here is Katsuro. His ashes. But not wasted. Killed fighting for Japan. His courage brings great honour to our family.'

'Honour. I'm sick of all this honour. What use is it to you?'

'You think it's nothing? It's won by blood. What are your feelings compared to that? Duty will be Toshi's lot, too, so you be ready to lose him. This is a woman's sacrifice.'

Sachiko jerks her hand free, spits out the words: 'You say go, be killed. You don't care if Toshi dies. Double our family honour.'

Mother's hand comes up and slaps Sachiko's face hard, but she's already weeping, as is Mother now.

Toshi steps between the two women. 'Please. I won't die.' He looks from his mother to his wife, concern creasing his face. 'I promise you. I'll return.'

He puts an arm around each of them, holds them close, listens to their breathing growing quieter as the minutes pass, hears the bees in the autumn flowers around his brother's urn, crows calling in the cemetery trees.

Mother finally speaks, soft, halting: 'Katsuro is gone. Now perhaps you, Toshi. I will only have Mitsuo left. Of all my children.'

'And Sachiko,' Toshi reminds her.

Mother bows her head. 'And Sachiko.'

A Thousand Stitches

When Fuchida is flown back to the carrier from a quick trip to Tokyo and presentation to the Emperor, he calls Toshi to see him.

After greetings and a toast, he gives Toshi a small parcel.

‘From your good wife, and I was able to see your family briefly. They all seem well and send you the usual greetings.’ He moves on quickly, eager to share his experiences at the Emperor’s court: ‘Extraordinary. We’re in a room with decorated walls. Painted pines – your father would know about the artistry. I was impressed by all the gold. A very severe official tells us how we should behave and address the Emperor, or not address him, actually. We must only address the official, even if the Emperor asks us a question. Then a Shinto priest comes in with an incense burner and circles the throne with the stuff. Protection, I suppose, from the evils we warriors might bring in.’

Toshi laughs. ‘And the Emperor?’

‘Arrives in naval uniform, more gold on him than ten admirals. Our Nagumo’s there as Fleet Commander, gives a summary and then hands over to me for the details. I have my maps and photographs set out on the table in front of us. The Emperor’s chair is on a platform higher than the table. Quite awkward for me looking up and remembering to tell it to the official up there, too.’

‘You were lost for words, Uncle?’

Fuchida grins and punches Toshi’s arm. ‘Never. I had them lapping it up in no time. When I came to the attack, the torpedoes and bombs flying, the Emperor’s leaning down, eyes alight, taking in the photographs, wanting more, he and I conversing directly – even the flunkey stops scowling – and then he takes the photos to show his wife.’

Toshi congratulates him and they share another toast.

‘Another amazing thing,’ Fuchida continues. ‘While there was always a feeling the people weren’t completely appreciating the Chinese War, the euphoria about Pearl Harbor, it’s brought the whole country behind our efforts. Even the liberal press has congratulated us. It’s as if that attack has legitimised our warfare.’

Toshi can see how this might be. Rivalry with China went back centuries, but they were, after all, fellow Asians. Japanese history with the Europeans and Americans was more recent: humiliations, domination by white nations who thought they were superior to us. The world would be seeing a different Japan now.

Fuchida grins broadly. ‘The Government and High Command are delighted.’

So different from his earlier depression over Pearl Harbor and the missed opportunities.

‘What about Admiral Yamamoto?’

Fuchida shakes his head. ‘Going berserk about what should be a minor matter – that submariner the Americans captured at Pearl. He was unconscious, couldn’t help it, but the poor fellow’s family will be shamed. A trophy for the Americans. The Admiral is very concerned about America piling into the war, though – we have awakened a sleeping giant, it seems. At least Yamamoto is one that appreciates the potential of carriers and air warfare. He sees the future.’

The future, as Fuchida describes it, is one of supremacy for the

carrier. Naval battles will be fought at long range by aircraft. Such a confrontation with the American fleet must be faced soon.

‘You and your fellow pilots, my boy, are the vital resource. We know the Americans are rushing great numbers through pilot training. They may gain the advantage in quantity, but our pilots are much longer trained and experienced. We have the advantage of quality.’



Later, when Toshi retreats to the relative privacy of his bunk in the junior officers' quarters, he opens the brown-paper parcel Fuchida gave him. Inside is another package, this one beautifully wrapped. He undoes the layers of white tissue, finds a sealed envelope with his name inscribed on it by Sachiko's hand, and a folded cloth strip that he recognises straight away: a *senninbari*, a belt of a thousand stitches, the traditional gift from a wife to a warrior to protect him from danger, a simple white cotton waistband, the red stitches marching across it in rows of ten.

He drapes the belt around his neck, opens the envelope and unfolds the letter, breathes its scent: spring flowers. He reads.

My dear husband,

With all the strength of loving-kindness in my heart, I pray that you are safe, that you are free from suffering, that you are at peace.

At peace, as much as your grave situation allows. We hear of your great exploits, the nation rejoices in them. Father is bursting with pride, devouring the news. I take pride in you as always, my brave Toshi, and know that you must do your duty, but I hope only that you will keep your promise to me, hope only that you will soon return to my arms.

Winter has been so cold without you. Tokyo is bereft of all greenery. But Father has drawn my attention to the old plum trees. Their ancient wood is dry and hollowed out by past decay, their bark is rough. Yet they show the tiny spurs that will grow into new branches, bud into new leaves and flowers, burst into fruit. The first plum blossom will soon be here, a sign that spring must surely follow. How I hope that your business will be as quickly concluded, and that we will share this spring together.

I apologise, dear Husband, that I did not present you with this senninbari on your departure. I did not expect that our married time together would be so brief. As a result of Mother's careful supervision, here I present you with my humble effort. I confess I did not gather stitches from other women passing through Nippori Station, as Mother had directed, instead I preferred to do most by my own hand. I think you trust more in your own courage and skills to keep you safe, rather than in such talismans and traditions.

Take it then, dear Toshi, as an expression of my love. With every stitch I have shed a tear for you. With every stitch I have recalled a thousand memories of the joys you have brought to me.

Forgive me, your loving and devoted wife must end this now before her heart breaks.

Sachiko

Father McGrath

On Bathurst Island, sixty miles north of the Australian mainland, Father John McGrath, Missionary of the Sacred Heart, kneels in the chapel, saying to himself, and to his God, the Divine Office, a daily obligation, but one he appreciates. It's a time of no interruption, a moment for the spirit amid all the practicalities of the Mission. *Out of the depths I cry to thee – Lord hear my prayer.* His thoughts pass to the statues around him, controversial but effective, incorporating the local spirit beliefs, like the Bird Man, transformed into an angel. The local woodcarvers are fine craftsmen, and ingenious enough to slip their own icons and totems past the mainland hierarchy. McGrath doesn't regard these distractions as a fault in his practice; rather, an enrichment. *If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, Lord who could stand? We're all sinners, so we'll all go together. But with you there is forgiveness.* That's the comforting bit.

The chapel door creaks open and a Tiwi man steps in, seeming uncertain of his next move. McGrath turns to him with questioning eyebrows: 'Yes, Paul?'

'Father, many planes coming.'

McGrath claps his breviary shut and runs to the door. He blinks in the strong sunlight, sees many specks high in the sky to the north, hearing the sound of the engines that was now reaching them. American planes on patrol sometimes flew back this way, sometimes

Australian ones, but their numbers were small. Nothing he's heard has told him there's been a big increase.

'Paul, get everyone out. Into the bush.'

McGrath runs to the radio shack.



Paul is running away from the village houses with a dozen other Tiwi, mostly women with children, a couple of other men, seeking shelter under the surrounding trees. When he has time to look up, the sky seems full of dots and white trails, regular and parallel, north to south. He sees a slight change, two white threads breaking off and seeming to stand still. He stops and watches steadily. The dots are growing larger by the second and a new sound reaches him – an approaching roar. He turns back and runs towards the church.

In the radio shack attached to the church, Father McGrath is at the transceiver, microphone in hand, speaking on the open frequency for Darwin Coastal Radio.

'Large number of aircraft overhead, identification not clear, flying south-east ...'

Paul rushes in, no reticence now, pulls the priest from his seat and hauls him towards the door.

'Get away, Father. Planes coming for us.'

What they see and hear outside are two planes screaming down towards them at more than two hundred miles per hour. As the two men run away from the buildings, they hear gunfire and see bullets punching holes in the church's timber walls. Cannon shells burst nearby and they throw themselves on the ground. The two aircraft pull out of their dive, seemingly at ground level, banking away to circle back.

McGrath, deafened by the explosions, is dragged to his feet by

Paul, and the two men reach the shelter of the trees. The planes return to strafe, raking the buildings with more machine-gun fire. McGrath thinks he should pray; instead, he worries whether Darwin has understood his message.

Giorgio

Giorgio Farelli, Professor of Italian Studies, sits on his bunk in Hay Internment Camp and cries. Tears fall on the latest letter to reach him in the camp. Tears of frustration and anger, as much as grief.

He's aware that his hut companions are trying not to stare, but he doesn't care. Through his tears, he sees one of the latest arrivals sneaking a look at him, wide-eyed. Giorgio turns to him, glares, and the man drops his eyes. Japanese, just arrived with five like him; he sits on the next bunk unpacking his kitbag. Navy airmen, Giorgio has heard.

He returns to his letter. He had thought he'd reached his lowest point but now realises that life always has another punch left. He hears a soft voice.

'Letter brought bad news? Sorry?'

'Yes. The letter has brought bad news.' Giorgio has automatically corrected the Japanese man's grammar and pronunciation, ever the language teacher – but is he still a teacher? Or parent – is he still that?

The man bows slightly, whether acknowledging the information or the teaching, who knows, rummages in his gear, brings out a crumpled packet of cigarettes and offers him one.

Giorgio looks at the man, the offered packet, and he feels his eyes

drying in a heat that is building in his head, his chest. This fucking war has taken everything from him, his career, his wife, perhaps now his only son, and these Japanese, the instigators, the perpetrators, here with their gentle smiles and tokens.

The back of his heavy hand swings into the outstretched arm. The packet goes flying and the cigarettes are scattered. The Japanese airman's eyes open wide in surprise, but he doesn't flinch, doesn't move. The other Japanese scramble for the cigarettes, a precious commodity here, then bring them back to their comrade and remain standing behind him. An impassive solidarity. Giorgio curses them in Italian and leaves the hut.

Outside, he breathes deeply – the cigarette would have been useful. He feels embarrassed now at his tears, realising that he had chosen anger over tears, the manlier way of dealing with it, the more acceptable, the less foreign. The Japanese man, a boy really, no older than his own son, his life was just as much fucked up by this war.



That night, as he carries his meal through the dining shed, Giorgio sees the six Japanese eating at a table. They don't seem to have mixed yet with the other Japanese, who are civilians like himself. These seem younger, a different breed. He stops at their table. The cigarette man has his head down eating, a healing scar across his forehead. One of his companions mutters something and he looks up at Giorgio, curious.

'I wish to apologise for my behaviour,' Giorgio tells him.

The airman takes this in for a moment. 'Thank you. I'm sorry the letter has brought you bad news.'

The young man's solemn face surrenders a sympathetic smile, with just a hint of a twinkle at his corrected grammar and pronunciation.

He raises his eyebrows in offer, indicates with his hand a place beside him. His companions smile warily and shuffle up. Giorgio puts his tray down and joins them.

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A WWII Japanese airman in the two greatest battles fought on Australian soil, shamed by his capture, faces a dilemma – uphold the honour of his family or risk the life of his young wife?

When a young Japanese fighter pilot is shot down and captured in the 1942 Darwin bombing, he knows in his heart he should be dead. Duty is heavy as a mountain, death as light as a feather. That's the Military Code and it means a fight to the death, never surrender or you'll bring a bitter shame on yourself and family.

He conceals his true name to protect his family. Suicide is a possibility, but he's drawn away from his military indoctrination by experiences with ordinary Australians, drawn towards living out his own individuality.

But the young bride he left behind had vowed she would kill herself if he died. He could write to tell her he lives, but would that reveal his cowardice, shame his family?

And must he sacrifice his individuality to join the growing number of Japanese prisoners in their ferocious plans for a murderous and suicidal breakout?

A moving tale of the Australian WWII experience, seen through the eyes of this deeply troubled man.



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