

The samurais garden by gail tsukiyama

Literature



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The Samurai's Garden by Gail Tsukiyama

In Gail Tsukiyama's "The Samurai's Garden," Stephen is a young Chinese man who studies at a university, and Matsu is a middle-aged servant at a house in Japan. At first, it seems very unlikely that these characters have much in common due to the differences in their ages, their social status, and the war between their mother countries; however, Stephen and Matsu develop a friendship in spite of these obstacles. This relationship between Stephen and Matsu is perhaps the most interesting and stimulating aspect of the novel. Ultimately, this relationship is able to survive because it grows from an extremely deep spiritual connection, which makes it much more difficult for external factors to poison or destroy this bond.

In order to recover from tuberculosis, Stephen is sent to Japan in the autumn of 1937. It is here that he first encounters the family servant, Matsu, who has taken care of Stephen's grandfather's beach house for thirty years. "This early autumn there didn't seem to be anyone else here, just me, Matsu, and a complete, white silence" (9). Matsu did not impress Stephen very much in the beginning as he was rather quiet and uncommunicative. Although Matsu's taciturn nature made Stephen feel uncomfortable, it did not hinder the development of their relationship. As the two begin to spend more time together, Stephen gradually discovers some of Matsu's unique personalities traits. At one point Stephen states "You have a strong face. A face someone doesn't forget. [...] Like a samurai" (30). Matsu keeps silent after Stephen's words, but the reader is able to infer that his heart has softened toward Stephen, and this moment aids in the development of their relationship. Stephen and Matsu's friendship continues to grow during the winter of 1937. At this particular juncture, Stephen has become accustomed to Matsu's

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silence. Although Matsu is still a rather quiet individual, he is now able to open up to Stephen a bit more. " Matsu took his time before he finally looked up at me, his stare softening. ' It was the anger speaking, not the man,' he said" (91). Facing certain false accusations, Matsu shows his tolerance and patience. He is a man with a myriad of colorful life experiences, which has given him a compassionate heart towards Stephen, even while he is being falsely accused. At the same time, Stephen is now able to read Matsu's mind as well. " I wanted to say something about how sorry and embarrassed I felt, but I closed my eyes and fell into a deep sleep" (100). Stephen knows that Kenzo's death came as a sudden blow to Matsu. However, he is also very much aware of the fact that Matsu is a tough man, and he did not really need to comfort him as Matsu could escape the shadow of Kenzo's death by himself. I believe that Stephen's attitude is not indifferent, but is, instead, an alternate means of expressing his concern for Matsu.

As the autumn of 1938 begins, a solid friendship is completely established between Stephen and Matsu. In fact, in Stephen's mind, Matsu is not a servant anymore, but one of his family members who deserves respect. " I realized for the first time that he'd never had a place of his own. Matsu had spent the entirety of his adult life living and taking care of my grandfather's beach house" (190). Although there are still a few conversations between Stephen and Matsu, they are now close enough that they can communicate without words as they both know what the other is thinking and feeling. " Most of the time Matsu and I don't know what to say to each other. [...] but I know we both feel lost. It's as if the house is slowly becoming a stranger to us. Matsu stares hard into each room as if he already sees it as it once was, silent and uncluttered" (207). All good things must come to an end. As the <https://assignbuster.com/the-samurais-garden-by-gail-tsukiyama/>

day of Stephen's departure arrives, Stephen and Matsu sink into a state of depression; however, they both do their best to disguise their emotions. Since they know each other so well, words seem useless. They appear to have a tacit understanding that, regardless of what the future holds in terms of the war between their countries, they will always remain friends.

" True friendship, unlike love, always lasts forever." - Sent by Chatterbox. Stephen and Matsu may be physically separated by fate, but the bridge that connects their minds and hearts will never collapse. "' It is another life. It (the war) will never have anything to do with us,' he finished" (211). Matsu's last sentence contains not only a blessing for Stephen, but also contains his certainty of their enduring friendship. I firmly believe that a friendship like Stephen and Matsu's has the potential to last forever because they have a bond that is built upon a deep spiritual connection.