

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott  
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel  
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen  
Weber Freiligrath Frey  
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel  
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas  
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach  
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil  
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London  
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer  
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup  
Mommsen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff  
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt  
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier  
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder  
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer George  
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke Bebel Proust  
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot  
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy  
Storm Casanova Lessing Tersteegen Gilm Gryphius  
Chamberlain Langbein Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates  
Brentano Strachwitz Claudius Schiller Bellamy Schilling Kralik Gibbon Tschchow  
Katharina II. von Rußland Gerstäcker Raabe Gleim Vulpius  
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Morgenstern Goedicke  
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Kleist  
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Mörike Musil  
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus  
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus  
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke  
Nestroy Marie de France  
Nietzsche Nansen Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht  
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**Madame Chrysantheme –  
Volume 4**

Pierre Loti

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# MADAME CHRYSANTHEME

By  
PIERRE LOTI



## BOOK 4.

### CHAPTER XLVII

#### A MIDNIGHT ALARM

It is the middle of the night, perhaps about two o'clock in the morning. Our lamps are burning somewhat dimly before our placid idols. Chrysantheme wakes me suddenly, and I turn to look at her: she has raised herself on one arm, and her face expresses the most intense terror; she makes a sign, without daring to speak, that some one or something is near, creeping up to us. What ill-timed visit is this? A feeling of fear gains possession of me also. I have a rapid impression of some great unknown danger, in this isolated spot, in this strange country of which I do not even yet comprehend the inhabitants and the mysteries. It must be something very frightful to hold her there, rooted to the spot, half dead with fright, she who does comprehend all these things.

It seems to be outside; it is coming from the garden; with trembling hand she indicates to me that it will come through the veranda, over Madame Prune's roof. Certainly, I hear faint noises, and they do approach us.

I suggest to her

"Neko-San?" ("It is Messieurs the cats?")

"No!" she replies, still terrified, and in an alarmed tone.

"Bakemono-Sama?" ("Is it my lords the ghosts?") I have already the Japanese habit of expressing myself with excessive politeness.

"No! 'Dorobo!'" ("Thieves!")

Thieves! Ah! this is better; I much prefer this to a visit such as I have just been dreading in the sudden awakening from sleep: from ghosts or spirits of the dead; thieves, that is to say, worthy fellows very much alive, and having, undoubtedly, inasmuch as they are Japanese thieves, faces of the most meritorious oddity. I am not in

the least frightened, now that I know precisely what to expect, and we will immediately set to work to ascertain the truth, for something is certainly moving on Madame Prune's roof; some one is walking upon it.

I open one of our wooden panels and look out.

I can see only a vast expanse, calm, peaceful, and exquisite under the full brilliance of the moonlight; sleeping Japan, lulled by the sonorous song of the grasshoppers, is charming indeed to-night, and the free, pure air is delicious.

Chrysantheme, half hidden behind my shoulder, listens tremblingly, peering forward to examine the gardens and the roofs with dilated eyes like a frightened cat. No, nothing! not a thing moves. Here and there are a few strangely substantial shadows, which at first glance were not easy to explain, but which turn out to be real shadows, thrown by bits of wall, by boughs of trees, and which preserve an extremely reassuring stillness. Everything seems absolutely tranquil, and profound silence reigns in the dreamy vagueness which moonlight sheds over all.

Nothing; nothing to be seen anywhere. It was Messieurs the cats after all, or perhaps my ladies the owls; sounds increase in volume in the most amazing manner at night, in this house of ours.

Let us close the panel again carefully, as a measure of prudence, and then light a lantern and go downstairs to see whether there may be any one hidden in corners, and whether the doors are tightly shut; in short, to reassure Chrysantheme we will go the round of the house.

Behold us, then, on tiptoe, searching together every hole and corner of the house, which, to judge by its foundations, must be very ancient, notwithstanding the fragile appearance of its panels of white paper. It contains the blackest of cavities, little vaulted cellars with worm-eaten beams; cupboards for rice which smell of mould and decay; mysterious hollows where lies accumulated the dust of centuries. In the middle of the night, and during a hunt for thieves, this part of the house, as yet unknown to me, has an ugly look.

Noiselessly we step across the apartment of our landlord and landlady. Chrysantheme drags me by the hand, and I allow myself

to be led. There they are, sleeping in a row under their blue gauze tent, lighted by the night-lamps burning before the altars of their ancestors. Ha! I observe that they are arranged in an order which might give rise to gossip. First comes Mademoiselle Oyouki, very taking in her attitude of rest! Then Madame Prune, who sleeps with her mouth wide open, showing her rows of blackened teeth; from her throat arises an intermittent sound like the grunting of a sow. Oh! poor Madame Prune! how hideous she is!! Next, M. Sucre, a mere mummy for the time being. And finally, at his side, last of the row, is their servant, Mademoiselle Dede!

The gauze hanging over them throws reflections as of the sea upon them; one might suppose them victims drowned in an aquarium. And withal the sacred lamps, the altar crowded with strange Shintoist symbols, give a mock religious air to this family tableau.

'Honi soit qui mal y pense', but why is not that maidservant rather laid by the side of her mistresses? Now, when we on the floor above offer our hospitality to Yves, we are careful to place ourselves under our mosquito-net in a more correct style!

One corner, which as a last resort we inspect, inspires me with a certain amount of apprehension. It is a low, mysterious loft, against the door of which is stuck, as a thing no longer wanted, a very old, pious image Kwanon with the thousand arms, and Kwanon with the horses' head, seated among clouds and flames, both horrible to behold with their spectral grins.

We open the door, and Chrysantheme starts back uttering a fearful cry. I should have thought the robbers were there, had I not seen a little gray creature, rapid and noiseless, rush by her and disappear; a young rat that had been eating rice on the top of a shelf, and, in its alarm, had dashed in her face.



## CHAPTER XLVIII

### UNUSUAL HOSPITALITY

September 16th.

Yves has let fall his silver whistle in the ocean, the whistle so absolutely indispensable for the manoeuvres; and we search the town all day long, followed by Chrysantheme and Mesdemoiselles La Neige and La Lune, her sisters, in the endeavor to find another.

It is, however, very difficult to find such a thing in Nagasaki; above all, very difficult to explain in Japanese what is a sailor's whistle of the traditional shape, curved, and with a little ball at the end to modulate the trills and the various sounds of official orders. For three hours we are sent from shop to shop; at each one they pretend to understand perfectly what is wanted and trace on tissue-paper, with a paint-brush, the addresses of the shops where we shall without fail meet with what we require. Away we go, full of hope, only to encounter some fresh mystification, till our breathless djins get quite bewildered.

They understand admirably that we want a thing that will make a noise, music, in short; thereupon they offer us instruments of every, and of the most unexpected, shape—squeakers for Punch-and-Judy voices, dog-whistles, trumpets. Each time it is something more and more absurd, so that at last we are overcome with uncontrollable fits of laughter. Last of all, an aged Japanese optician, who assumes a most knowing air, a look of sublime wisdom, goes off to forage in his back shop, and brings to light a steam fog-horn, a relict from some wrecked steamer.

After dinner, the chief event of the evening is a deluge of rain, which takes us by surprise as we leave the teahouses, on our return from our fashionable stroll. It so happened that we were a large party, having with us several mousme guests, and from the moment that the rain began to fall from the skies, as if out of a watering-pot turned upside down, the band became disorganized. The mousmes

run off, with bird-like cries, and take refuge under doorways, in the shops, under the hoods of the djins.

Then, before long—when the shops shut up in haste, when the emptied streets are flooded, and almost black, and the paper lanterns, piteous objects, wet through and extinguished—I find myself, I know not how it happens, flattened against a wall, under the projecting eaves, alone in the company of Mademoiselle Fraise, my cousin, who is crying bitterly because her fine robe is wet through. And in the noise of the rain, which is still falling, and splashing everything with the spouts and gutters, which in the darkness plaintively murmur like running streams, the town appears to me suddenly an abode of the gloomiest sadness.

The shower is soon over, and the mousmes come out of their holes like so many mice; they look for one another, call one another, and their little voices take the singular, melancholy, dragging inflections they assume whenever they have to call from afar.

"Hi! Mademoiselle Lu-u-u-une!"

"Hi! Madame Jonqui-i-i-ille!"

They shout from one to another their outlandish names, prolonging them indefinitely in the now silent night, in the reverberations of the damp air after the great summer rain.

At length they are all collected and united again, these tiny personages with narrow eyes and no brains, and we return to Diou-djen-dji all wet through.

For the third time, we have Yves sleeping beside us under our blue tent.

There is a great noise shortly after midnight in the apartment beneath us: our landlord's family have returned from a pilgrimage to a far-distant temple of the Goddess of Grace. (Although Madame Prune is a Shintoist, she reveres this deity, who, scandal says, watched over her youth.) A moment after, Mademoiselle Oyouki bursts into our room like a rocket, bringing, on a charming little tray, sweetmeats which have been blessed and bought at the gates of the temple yonder, on purpose for us, and which we must positively eat at once, before the virtue is gone out of them. Hardly

rousing ourselves, we absorb these little edibles flavored with sugar and pepper, and return a great many sleepy thanks.

Yves sleeps quietly on this occasion, without dealing any blows to the floor or the panels with either fists or feet. He has hung his watch on one of the hands of our gilded idol in order to be more sure of seeing the hour at any time of the night, by the light of the sacred lamps. He gets up betimes in the morning, asking: "Well, did I behave properly?" and dresses in haste, preoccupied about duty and the roll-call.

Outside, no doubt, it is daylight already: through the tiny holes which time has pierced in our wooden panels, threads of morning light penetrate our chamber, and in the atmosphere of our room where night still lingers, they trace vague white rays. Soon, when the sun shall have risen, these rays will lengthen and become beautifully golden. The cocks and the cicadas make themselves heard, and now Madame Prune will begin her mystic drone.

Nevertheless, out of politeness for Yves-San, Chrysantheme lights a lantern and escorts him to the foot of the dark staircase. I even fancy that, on parting, I hear a kiss exchanged. In Japan this is of no consequence, I know; it is very usual, and quite admissible; no matter where one goes, in houses one enters for the first time, one is quite at liberty to kiss any mousme who may be present, without any notice being taken of it. But with regard to Chrysantheme, Yves is in a delicate position, and he ought to understand it better. I begin to feel uneasy about the hours they have so often spent together alone; and I make up my mind that this very day I will not play the spy upon them, but speak frankly to Yves, and make a clean breast of it.

Suddenly from below, *clac! clac!* two dry hands are clapped together; it is Madame Prune's warning to the Great Spirit. And immediately after her prayer breaks forth, soars upward in a shrill nasal falsetto, like a morning alarum when the hour for waking has come, the mechanical noise of a spring let go and running down.

".....The richest woman in the world! Cleansed from all my sins, O Ama-Terace-Omi-Kami! in the river of Kamo."

And this extraordinary bleating, hardly human, scatters and changes my ideas, which were very nearly clear at the moment I awoke.

## CHAPTER XLIX

### RUMORS OF DEPARTURE

September 15th.

Rumor of departure is in the air. Since yesterday there has been vague talk of our being sent to China, to the Gulf of Peking; one of those rumors which spread, no one knows how, from one end of the ship to the other, two or three days before the official orders arrive, and which usually turn out tolerably correct. What will the last act of my little Japanese comedy be? the denouement, the separation? Will there be any touch of sadness on the part of my mousme, or on my own, just a tightening of the heartstrings at the moment of our final farewell? At this moment I can imagine nothing of the sort. And then the adieu of Yves and Chrysantheme, what will they be? This question preoccupies me more than all.

Nothing very definite has been learned as yet, but it is certain that, one way or another, our stay in Japan is drawing to a close. It is this, perhaps, which disposes me this evening to look more kindly on my surroundings. It is about six o'clock, after a day spent on duty, when I reach Diou-djen-dji. The evening sun, low in the sky, on the point of setting, pours into my room, and floods it with rays of red gold, lighting up the Buddhas and the great sheaves of quaintly arranged flowers in the antique vases. Here are assembled five or six little dolls, my neighbors, amusing themselves by dancing to the sound of Chrysantheme's guitar. And this evening I experienced a real charm in feeling that this dwelling and the woman who leads the dance are mine. On the whole, I have perhaps been unjust to this country; it seems to me that my eyes are at last opened to see it in its true light, that all my senses are undergoing a strange and abrupt transition. I suddenly have a better perception and appreciation of all the infinity of dainty trifles among which I live; of the fragile and studied grace of their forms, the oddity of their drawings, the refined choice of their colors.

I stretch myself upon the white mats; Chrysantheme, always eagerly attentive, brings me my pillow of serpent's-skin; and the smiling mousmes, with the interrupted rhythm of a while ago still running in their heads, move around me with measured steps.

Their immaculate socks with the separate great toes make no noise; nothing is heard, as they glide by, but a 'froufrou' of silken stuffs. I find them all pleasant to look upon; their dollish air pleases me now, and I fancy I have discovered what it is that gives it to them: it is not only their round, inexpressive faces with eyebrows far removed from the eyelids, but the excessive amplitude of their dress. With those huge sleeves, it might be supposed they have neither back nor shoulders; their delicate figures are lost in these wide robes, which float around what might be little marionettes without bodies at all, and which would slip to the ground of themselves were they not kept together midway, about where a waist should be, by the wide silken sashes—a very different comprehension of the art of dressing to ours, which endeavors as much as possible to bring into relief the curves, real or false, of the figure.

And then, how much I admire the flowers in our vases, arranged by Chrysantheme, with her Japanese taste, lotus-flowers, great, sacred flowers of a tender, veined rose color, the milky rose-tint seen on porcelain; they resemble, when in full bloom, great water-lilies, and when only in bud might be taken for long pale tulips. Their soft but rather cloying scent is added to that other indefinable odor of mousmes, of yellow race, of Japan, which is always and everywhere in the air. The late flowers of September, at this season very rare and expensive, grow on longer stems than the summer blooms; Chrysantheme has left them in their large aquatic leaves of a melancholy seaweed-green, and mingled with them tall, slight rushes. I look at them, and recall with some irony those great round bunches in the shape of cauliflowers, which our florists sell in France, wrapped in white lace-paper!

Still no letters from Europe, from any one. How things change, become effaced and forgotten! Here am I, accommodating myself to this finical Japan and dwindling down to its affected mannerism; I feel that my thoughts run in smaller grooves, my tastes incline to smaller things— things which suggest nothing greater than a smile.

I am becoming used to tiny and ingenious furniture, to doll-like desks, to miniature bowls with which to play at dinner, to the immaculate monotony of the mats, to the finely finished simplicity of the white woodwork. I am even losing my Western prejudices; all my preconceived ideas are this evening evaporating and vanishing; crossing the garden I have courteously saluted M. Sucre, who was watering his dwarf shrubs and his deformed flowers; and Madame Prune appears to me a highly respectable old lady, in whose past there is nothing to criticise.

We shall take no walk to-night; my only wish is to remain stretched out where I am, listening to the music of my mousme's 'chamecen'.

Till now I have always used the word guitar, to avoid exotic terms, for the abuse of which I have been so reproached. But neither the word guitar nor mandolin suffices to designate this slender instrument with its long neck, the high notes of which are shriller than the voice of the grasshopper; and henceforth, I will write 'chamecen'.

I will also call my mousme Kikou, Kikou-San; this name suits her better than Chrysantheme, which, though translating the sense exactly, does not preserve the strange-sounding euphony of the original.

I therefore say to Kikou, my wife:

"Play, play on for me; I shall remain here all the evening and listen to you."

Astonished to find me in so amiable a mood, she requires pressing a little, and with almost a bitter curve of triumph and disdain upon her lips, she seats herself in the attitude of an idol, raises her long, dark-colored sleeves, and begins. The first hesitating notes are murmured faintly and mingle with the music of the insects humming outside, in the quiet air of the warm and golden twilight. First she plays slowly, a confused medley of fragments which she does not seem to remember perfectly, of which one waits for the finish and waits in vain; while the other girls giggle, inattentive, and regretful of their interrupted dance. She herself is absent, sulky, as if she were only performing a duty.

Then by degrees, little by little, the music becomes more animated, and the mousmes begin to listen. Now, tremblingly, it grows into a feverish rapidity, and her gaze has no longer the vacant stare of a doll. Then the music changes again; in it there is the sighing of the wind, the hideous laughter of ghouls; tears, heartrending plaints, and her dilated pupils seem to be directed inwardly in settled gaze on some indescribable Japanesery within her own soul.

I listen, lying there with eyes half shut, looking out between my drooping eyelids, which are gradually lowering, in involuntary heaviness, upon the enormous red sun dying away over Nagasaki. I have a somewhat melancholy feeling that my past life and all other places in the world are receding from my view and fading away. At this moment of nightfall I feel almost at home in this corner of Japan, amidst the gardens of this suburb. I never have had such an impression before.

## CHAPTER I

### A DOLLS' DUET

September 16th.

Seven o'clock in the evening. We shall not go down into Nagasaki tonight; but, like good Japanese citizens, remain in our lofty suburb.

In undress uniform we shall go, Yves and I, in a neighborly way, as far as the fencing-gallery, which is only two steps away, just above our villa, and almost abutting on our fresh and scented garden.

The gallery is closed already, and a little mousko, seated at the door, explains, with many low bows, that we come too late, all the amateurs are gone; we must come again tomorrow.

The evening is so mild and fine that we remain out of doors, following, without any definite purpose, the pathway which rises ever higher and higher, and loses itself at length in the solitary regions of the mountain among the upper peaks.

For an hour at least we wander on—an unintended walk—and finally find ourselves at a great height commanding an endless perspective lighted by the last gleams of daylight; we are in a desolate and mournful spot, in the midst of the little Buddhist cemeteries, which are scattered over the country in every direction.

We meet a few belated laborers, who are returning from the fields with bundles of tea upon their shoulders. These peasants have a half-savage air. They are half naked, too, or clothed only in long robes of blue cotton; as they pass, they salute us with humble bows.

No trees in this elevated region. Fields of tea alternate with tombs: old granite statues which represent Buddha in his lotus, or else old monumental stones on which gleam remains of inscriptions in golden letters. Rocks, brushwood, uncultivated spaces, surround us on all sides.

We meet no more passers-by, and the light is failing. We will halt for a moment, and then it will be time to turn our steps homeward.

But, close to the spot where we stand, a box of white wood provided with handles, a sort of sedan-chair, rests on the freshly disturbed earth, with its lotus of silvered paper, and the little incense-sticks, burning yet, by its side; clearly some one has been buried here this very evening.

I can not picture this personage to myself; the Japanese are so grotesque in life that it is almost impossible to imagine them in the calm majesty of death. Nevertheless, let us move farther on, we might disturb him; he is too recently dead, his presence unnerves us. We will go and seat ourselves on one of these other tombs, so unutterably ancient that there can no longer be anything within it but dust. And there, seated in the dying sunlight, while the valleys and plains of the earth below are already lost in shadow, we will talk together.

I wish to speak to Yves about Chrysantheme; it is indeed somewhat in view of this that I have persuaded him to sit down; but how to set about it without hurting his feelings, and without making myself ridiculous, I hardly know. However, the pure air playing round me up here, and the magnificent landscape spread beneath my feet, impart a certain serenity to my thoughts which makes me feel a contemptuous pity, both for my suspicions and the cause of them.

We speak, first of all, of the order for departure, which may arrive at any moment, for China or for France. Soon we shall have to leave this easy and almost amusing life, this Japanese suburb where chance has installed us, and our little house buried among flowers. Yves perhaps will regret all this more than I. I know that well enough; for it is the first time that any such interlude has broken the rude monotony of his hard-worked career. Formerly, when in an inferior rank, he was hardly more often on shore, in foreign countries, than the sea-gulls themselves; while I, from the very beginning, have been spoiled by residence in all sorts of charming spots, infinitely superior to this, in all sorts of countries, and the remembrance still haunts me pleasantly.

In order to discover how the land lies, I risk the remark: