

Omamori



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In a June day in 1936, marine clouds swept out across Nagasaki in a long gray shelf. Rising gradually from the west coast of Kyushu Island, Nagasaki, a small city of valleys and hills, was often referred to by travel guides as the San Francisco of Japan.

A high mountainous ridge divided two valleys into the old city and the new. The longest valley was the Urakami. There beat the heart of

industrial Nagasaki. From the steep hills terraced with quaint residential sections, one could look down on the peaceful Urakami River and the tall smokestacks of modern factories.

Within walking distance of a large textile mill, Hosokawa-Napier, Limited, stood the largest Catholic cathedral in Japan, giving proof to the fact that thousands of Nagasaki's citizens worshipped as Christians. The chiseled stones that housed a faith brought to Japan from the New World and the high brick walls built to shelter modern technology had existed since the nineteenth century, when Nagasaki had been the first city in the empire to open its port to trade with the West. Cathedral and weaving mill gave testimony to the rebirth of this city. God's house remained secure, but not the house of a dynasty that had woven silk into cloth for more than sixty years.

Douglas Napier waited with his Japanese partner in the broad gravel yard of Hosokawa-Napier, Limited, listening to the familiar thunder of machinery from inside the mill. Having done everything in their power to keep the looms running, they now waited for the silence they both dreaded. After a few minutes the mill grew quiet.

Baron Tadashi Hosokawa looked at his American partner but said nothing. Together they watched the factory smokestacks exhale a wispy haze. The Hosokawa-Napier signature had been among the first to be written in smoke across Nagasaki Bay. Now the stacks expelled their last gasps, which were carried away on the same breeze that lifted the kites of children playing nearby.

Watching the children, Douglas Napier smiled. This was a city of kite enthusiasts, and each year during the kite festival, throngs of spectators

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