



READING WITH INSIGHT

Q1. There are moments in life when we have to make hard choices between our roles as private individuals and as citizens with a sense of national loyalty? Discuss with reference to the story you have just read.

Ans: Dr Sadao Hoki faces a dilemma when he finds the body of an unconscious wounded white man lying on the lonely coast with dangerous rocks near his house. His first reaction was that the person was perhaps a fisherman who had been washed from his boat. He ran quickly down the steps. His wife, Hana came behind him. When they came near, Sadao found that the man was wounded and lay motionless. His face was in the sand. As they saw his face, they found that he was a white man with long yellow hair and a rough yellow beard.

Being an expert surgeon, Dr Sadao saw that the man had a gun-wound on the right side of his lower back. He at once packed the wound with sea moss to stanch the fearful bleeding. Since Japan was at war with America, the white man was an enemy. Dr Sadao muttered, "What shall we do with this man?" He answered the question himself, "The best thing that we could do would be to put him back in the sea." His wife approved of his decision.

Then Sadao made another observation. If they sheltered a white man in their house they would be arrested and if they turned him over as a prisoner, he would certainly die. Hana still insisted on putting him back into the sea. From his battered cap, Dr Sadao concluded that he was a sailor from an American warship. The man was a prisoner of war. He had escaped and that was why he was wounded in the back..

Hana asked if they were able to put him back into the sea. Sadao then said that if the man was whole he could turn the man over to the police without difficulty. He cared nothing for the man. He was their enemy. All Americans were their 'enemy'. But since he was wounded... Hana understood his dilemma and realised that in the conflict between his sense of national loyalty and his duty as a doctor, it was the latter which proved dominant. Since Sadao too could not throw him back to the sea, the only course left for them was to carry him to their house. Sadao enquired about the reaction of the servants.

Hana said that they would, tell the servants that they intended to give the man to the police. She told Sadao that they must do so. They had to think of the children and the doctor's position. It would endanger all of them if they did not give that man over as a prisoner of war.

Sadao agreed and promised that he would not think of doing anything else.

Q2. Dr Sadao was compelled by his duty as a doctor to help the enemy soldier. What made Hana, his wife, sympathetic to him in the face of open defiance from the domestic staff?

Ans: Dr Sadao and his wife, Hana, together lifted the wounded man and carried him to an empty bedroom in their house. The man was very dirty. Sadao suggested that he had better be washed. He offered to do so if she would fetch water. Hana was against it. She suggested that the maid, Yumi, could wash the man. They would have to tell the servants. Dr Sadao examined the man again and

remarked that the man would die unless he was operated upon at once. He left the room to bring his surgical instruments. The servants did not approve of their master's decision to heal the wound of a white man. Even Yumi refused to wash the white man. There was so fierce a look of resistance upon Yumi's round dull face that Hana felt unreasonably afraid. Then she said with dignity that they only wanted to bring him to his senses so that they would turn him over as a prisoner. However, Yumi refused to have anything to do with him. Hana asked Yumi gently to return to her work.

The open defiance from the domestic staff hurt Hana's feelings. She had told the servants to do what their master commanded them. She was convinced of her own superiority. She now became sympathetic to her husband and helped him in his efforts to heal the wounded man. Though the sight of the white man was repulsive to her, she washed his face and his upper body. She prepared herself to give him the anaesthetic according to her husband's instructions. She had never seen an operation. She choked and her face turned pale like sulphur. She felt like vomiting and left for a while. She returned after retching and administered anaesthetic to the man. Thus she co-operated with her husband fully to save the wounded man.

Q3. How would you explain the reluctance of the soldier to leave the shelter of the doctor's home even when he knew he couldn't stay there without risk to the doctor and himself?

Ans: On the third day after the operation, the young man asked Dr Sadao what he was going to do with him and if he was going to hand him over. Dr Sadao said that he did not know himself what he would do with the man. He ought to hand him over to the police as he was a prisoner of war.

The young man saw that Dr Sadao and his wife Hana were different from other Japanese. They spoke English well, looked after him and served him food. Seven days after the operation of the man, Dr Sadao was called to the palace to see the General. Hana thought that the police had come to arrest Dr Sadao. Dr Sadao confided in the General and he (General) promised to send his personal assassins to kill the man and remove his body. Dr Sadao waited for three nights. Nothing happened. Then he made a plan to let the prisoner escape. He told Tom, the young American, about it. The young man stared at him and asked if he had to leave. It seemed he was reluctant to leave. Dr Sadao told him that he should understand everything clearly. It was not hidden that he was there and this situation was full of risk for himself as well as for the doctor and his family. Thus it is quite clear that the reluctance of the soldier was caused by the single motive of self-preservation. He knew from the treatment he had received from the couple that they would save him.

Q4. What explains the attitude of the General in the matter of the enemy soldier? Was it human consideration, lack of national loyalty, dereliction of duty or simply self-absorption?

Ans: During his meeting with the General, Dr Sadao told him about the man he had operated on successfully. He explained that he cared nothing for the man. The General appreciated his skill and efficiency and promised that he would not be arrested.

The General thought it quite unfortunate that the man had been washed up to Dr Sadao's doorstep and thought it best if he could be quietly killed. He promised to send his private assassins to do so and remove his dead body. He suggested that Dr Sadao should leave the outer partition of the white man's room to the garden open at night.

It is evident that the General had no human consideration in this matter. For him an enemy was an enemy and must be wiped out. He wanted the man to be eliminated silently to save the doctor

from being arrested. It was neither lack of national loyalty nor dereliction of duty that guided and inspired his decision. It was simply his sense of self-absorption. He "wanted to keep Dr Sadao safe only for his own sake. He had no faith in the other Germany trained doctors. He might have to be operated upon anytime when he had another attack and he had full faith in the skill and loyalty of Dr Sadao only.

This fact is further corroborated by the General's remarks to Dr Sadao, one week after the emergency operation upon the General. Dr Sadao informed him that the man had escaped. The General asked whether he had not promised Sadao that he would kill the man for him. Dr Sadao replied that he had done nothing. The General admitted that he had forgotten his promise as he had been suffering a great deal and he thought of nothing but himself. He revealed the whole truth. He admitted that it was careless of him to have forgotten his promise. But added that it was not lack of patriotism or dereliction of duty on his part.

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