

# GRIMES AND THE GAIJIN DAIMYO

A. BERTRAM CHANDLER

The late A. BERTRAM CHANDLER began writing for John W. Campbell's germinal science fiction magazine *Astounding* in 1944 and became one of science fiction's most popular and prolific authors of space opera adventure. Along with Doc E. E. Smith, Robert Heinlein, Clifford Simak, A. E. Van Vogt, Lester Del Rey, Jack Williamson, L. Ron Hubbard, and Isaac Asimov, he was also a popular 'Golden Age' writer. That period from the late 1930s to the mid-1940s was ushered in by John W. Campbell and — to quote Sean McMullen in Paul Collins's *The Melbourne University Press Encyclopaedia of Australian Science Fiction & fantasy* — 'is often referred to as the Golden Age of science fiction because the older adventure-based forms were giving way to stories with more realistic technology at their core.' Chandler, who immigrated to Australia from the United Kingdom in 1956, was a veteran seaman and commanded merchant marine ships under Australian and New Zealand flags; and he used his specialised knowledge and experience to chronicle the epic adventures of the spacefarer John Grimes, his best-known character. Chandler's John Grimes/Rim World adventures have been rightly compared to C. S. Forester's Horatio Hornblower series; critic John Clute has written in *The Encyclopedia of Science fiction* that 'Grimes himself establishes a loyalty in his readers rather similar to that felt by readers of Hornblower.'

In 1981 Chandler wrote: 'Quite a few years ago Robert Heinlein said, "Only people who know ships can write convincingly about space ships." At the time I thought that was very true. I have not changed my opinion. I believe that the crews of the real spaceships of the future, vessels going a long way in a long time, will have far more in common with today's seamen than with today's airmen. I freely admit that my stories are essentially sea stories and that John Grimes, my series character, is descended from Hornblower.'

A. Bertram Chandler wrote over two hundred short stories and forty-four science fiction books, which include the Empress Irene series and Australian historical novels. Here are just a very few of his titles: *The Road to the Rim*, *To Prime the Pump*, *The Hard Way Up*, *False Fatherland*, *The Inheritors*, *The Broken Cycle*, *The Big Black Mark*, *Into the Alternate Universe*, *Contraband from Outer Space*, *The Way Back*, *Bring Back Yesterday*, *The Hamelin Plague*, and *Beyond the Galactic Rim*.

He won the Australian Ditmar Award in 1969, 1971, 1974, and 1976. He also was a recipient of Japan's Seiun Sho Award, the Invisible Little Man Award, an Australian Literature Board Fellowship, and was guest of honour at the Chicago World Science Fiction Convention.

A. Bertram Chandler passed away in 1984.

But it is my great pleasure to present his only (as far as we know) unpublished John Grimes/Rim World story. All credit goes to Paul Collins, who originally purchased the story some thirty years ago. Paul has kindly agreed to write the Afterword.

So here is our one last chance to sail with Commodore John Grimes, who, while comfortably settled in the day cabin of his ship *Faraway Quest*, will narrate his latest dangerous adventure in time and space to you himself...

\* \* \* \*

Kitty Kelly, by this time, did not need to be told to make herself at home in Grimes' day cabin aboard *Faraway Quest*. The old ship had now been a long time, too long a time, on Elsinore while repair work on her inertial drive unit dragged on, and on, and on. Shortly after the Quest's arrival at Port Fortinbras, Kitty had interviewed Grimes for Station Yorick and had persuaded him to tell one of his tall — but true — stories. The commodore, sitting at ease with pipe and glass to hand, had gone over well with Station Yorick's viewers. Soon he became a regular guest on Kitty's Korner, as Ms Kelly's programme was called.

'And still you're here,' she remarked brightly as she set up her recording apparatus, adjusting lenses and microphones.

'A blinding glimpse of the obvious!' he growled.

Still, he thought, watching the raven-haired, blue-eyed, creamy-skinned girl in the emerald green dress that left very little to the imagination, there were compensations, or at least one compensation — and she was it. He would feel a strong twinge of regret when, at long last, *Faraway Quest* was again spaceworthy and on her way.

'That's it,' she said finally, getting briefly to her feet and then subsiding into an easy chair, facing Grimes in his, stretching her long, shapely legs

before her. 'Ready to roll. But pour me a drink first, Johnnie boy.'

Grimes had learned not to wince at this appellation. (After all, during a long and, according to some, misspent life he had often been called worse.) He went to his liquor cabinet, poured an Irish whiskey for Kitty and constructed a pink gin for himself.

'Here's mud in your eye!' she toasted, raising her glass.

'And in yours,' he replied.

After what was more of a gulp than a ladylike sip she switched on the audio-visual recorder. 'And now, Commodore,' she said, 'can you tell us, in non-technical language if possible, why your ship, the Rim Worlds Confederacy's survey vessel *Faraway Quest*, has been so long on Elsinore?'

'Because my inertial drive is on the blink,' he said.

'In what way?'

'First of all it was the governor. There were no spares available here. Too, the inertial drive unit is a very old one; it came with the ship — and she's no chicken! So there were no spares anywhere at all for this model. A new governor was fabricated in our workshops at Port Forlorn, on Lorn. It was shipped out here. Then my engineers had to turn down the shaft so that it would fit the bearings. The drive was tested — and the main thruster fell to pieces. And so on, and so on ...'

'I'm only a planet lubber,' she said, 'but it seems to me that much time and money would have been saved if your *Faraway Quest's* inertial drive unit had been renewed, in its entirety, long before it got to the state that it's in now. After all, the Rim Worlds Navy, to which your *Quest* belongs, is not some penny-pinching star tramp outfit.'

Grimes laughed. 'Except in times of war, navies are as expert at penny-pinching as any commercial shipowner! And I often think that the only bastard who really wants to keep the old *Quest* running is me.'

'You have been in her a long time, haven't you, Commodore?'

'Too right. She started life as one of the Interstellar Transport Commission's Epsilon Class freighters. When she became obsolescent,

by the Commission's rather high standards, she was put up for sale. I happened to be in the right place at the right time — or the wrong place at the wrong time! — on the world about which her lay-up orbit had been established. Very temporarily I had too much money in my bank account. So I bought her, changing her name from *Epsilon Scorpii* to *Sister Sue*. She became the flagship — and the only ship — of my own star tramp company, Far Traveller Couriers. She replaced a deep space pinnacle that I'd been running single-handedly, called *Little Sister*. Well, I tramped around for quite a while, making not too bad a living. It helped that the Federation Survey Service, into which I'd sort of been dragged back with a reserve commission, organised the occasional lucrative charter for me. And then, while I was trying to weather a rather bad financial storm, I drifted out to the Rim Worlds. At that time Rim Runners, the Confederacy's merchant fleet, were going through a period of expansion. They were buying anything — anything! — that could clamber out of a gravity well and still remain reasonably airtight. They offered me a good price for the ship and offered, too, to absorb myself and my people with no loss of rank or seniority while guaranteeing repatriation to those who did not wish to become RimWorlders ...'

'But you became a RimWorlder, Commodore.'

'Yes, Kitty. And the ship was renamed again — to *Rim Scorpion*. For a while I stayed in command of her. Then, at about the same time that I got a shore job, as Rim Runners' Astronautical Superintendent, the ship had another change of name, to *Faraway Quest*. She was converted into a survey ship. Every time that she was required for survey work — which wasn't all that often — Rim Runners would second me to the Navy, in which I held, and still hold, a reserve commission. After all, I know the ship and, too, held command in the Federation Survey Service before I became an owner-master.'

Kitty laughed sympathetically. 'We can understand very well how much this ship means to you, Commodore.' She laughed again. 'Now I'm talking off the top of my head — but what a pity it is that you can't modify your Mannschenn Drive unit, your Time-twister, to take the ship back into the Past so that she can be refitted with a suitable inertial drive at a pre-inflation price. After all, there was that first story you told me, about the Siege of Glenrowan, when a modified Mannschenn Drive was used to send you back to 1880, Earth Old Reckoning, so that you could change the course of history.'

'I didn't change the course of history,' said Grimes stiffly. 'I prevented

the course of history from being changed.'

'Ensuring,' snapped Kitty, 'that my ancestor, the sainted Ned himself, was awarded a hemp necktie.'

'In any case,' Grimes told her, 'there was no *physical* Time travel. I was just sent back to occupy the mind of one of my own ancestors who was among those present at the siege.'

'And so even though your interstellar drive, your Mannschenn Drive, does odd things to the Space-Time Continuum, even though FTL flight is achieved by having the ship, as you told me once, going astern in Time while going ahead in Space, physical Time-travel is impossible? But isn't it true that most governments have forbidden research into possible techniques for using the Mannschenn Drive for real Time-travel, physical as well as psychological?

'Have *you* ever been involved in such research?' She grinned. 'After all, Commodore, there's not much that you haven't been involved in.'

Grimes made a major production of refilling and lighting his pipe. He replenished Kitty's glass, and then his own. He settled back in his chair.

He said, 'There was one rather odd business in which I played my part. In this very ship ...'

She asked sweetly, 'And did you interfere as you did at Glenrowan, changing the course of history?'

'I did *not* change the course of history on either occasion. I kept history on the right tracks.'

'But have you ever thought that these are the wrong tracks, that we're living in an alternative universe that could never have come into being but for your interference?'

'I like being *me*,' he told her, 'and I'm pretty sure that you like being *you*. And we are *us* only because *our* history has made us what we are. In an alternative universe we might have no existence at all.'

She laughed. 'We're neither of us cut out to be philosophers, Commodore. Just do us all a favour and wear your storyteller's hat for the next hour or so.'

'You're the boss,' said Grimes. He got up, recharged glasses, refilled and lit his pipe, then settled down back in his chair. 'You want a story. Here it is.'

\* \* \* \*

It was quite a few years ago, he said, more than just a few. It was when this ship was still called *Sister Sue* and I was both her master and her owner. It was during that period when the Federation Survey Service was still throwing charters my way like bones to a hungry dog. Very often I'd be carrying Survey Service cargoes from Earth to the various Survey Service bases throughout the Galaxy.

This was such an occasion. A cargo of *sake* and soy sauce and assorted pickles to Mikasa Base, the personnel of which was then, and probably still is, Japanese. Rather unusually I was loading not at Port Woomera in Australia but at the new spaceport just outside Yokohama in Japan. I still think that spaceports should be well away from heavily populated areas but the Japanese wanted one of their very own and they got it. Of course there were very strict regulations — inertial drive only, when landing or lifting off. No, repeat and underscore no, use of reaction drive when in the spaceport vicinity. But my inertial drive wasn't in the same mess that it's in now and I was reasonably sure that shouldn't need a squirt of superheated steam in an emergency.

It was my Mannschenn Drive that got me into trouble.

Well, even though Japan is a very small target compared to Australia, I found it without any trouble, and found the spaceport and set down in the middle of the triangle formed by the marker beacons. And then, as so often happens, especially when governmental agencies are involved, it was a case of hurry up and wait. The cargo wasn't ready for me. This pleased me rather than otherwise. The ship was on pay, which meant that myself and my officers were on pay. I treated myself to a couple or three weeks leave and booked on a JAL airship from Narita to Sydney, changing there to a Qantas flight to Alice Springs. My parents were pleased to see me. My mother was her charming, hospitable self and my father, as always, was both a good listener and a good talker — and could he talk on his pet subject, history! As I've told you before he was an author of historical romances and always prided himself on the thoroughness of his research.

He asked me about my impressions of Japan and told me that he had visited that country, doing research for one of his novels, a few weeks prior

to my arrival. 'Yokohama,' he said, 'is handy for two shrines that you will find worth a visit. There's Admiral Togo's flagship *Mikasa*, in which he defeated the Russian Navy during the Russo-Japanese War, preserved for posterity as the English have preserved Nelson's *Victory*. And, on a hilltop on the Miura Peninsular, is the tomb of Will Adams and his Japanese lady wife ...'

'Will Adams?' I asked. 'But that's not a Japanese name, surely? Why should a foreigner be honoured by having his grave regarded as a shrine?'

My father laughed. 'Oh, Will Adams was a *gaijin*, a foreigner, when he first set foot on Japanese soil. He was the first Englishman — although not the first European — in Japan. He was an Elizabethan — the first Elizabeth, of course — sea dog. He was pilot major — senior navigator — of a small fleet of Dutch ships that sailed to Japan in an attempt to get some share of the trade that had become the monopoly of the Portuguese. Only one ship, Adams' ship, reached Japan. Adams was sort of adopted by the Shogun, the real ruler — the Emperor was little more than a figurehead — and was made a Samurai, and then a Daimyo, which translates roughly to 'Baron'. He was known as the Anjin-sama — Pilot-lord — and as the Miura Anjin, after the estates on the Miura Peninsular that he was granted. He held the rank of admiral in the Japanese Navy ...'

I said, 'He must have been quite a character ...'

'He was,' agreed my father. 'I hope to use him in my next novel. He's been used before, of course, but I think that I shall be able to introduce a new twist. But if you find out anything interesting about him when you're back in Yokohama, let me know, will you?'

'I will,' I told him. 'I'll ask Yoshi Namakura what she knows about him.'

'Yoshi Namakura?' he asked.

'My Chief Mannschenn Drive Engineer. Oddly enough, in spite of her name, this is her first time in Japan. Her first time on Earth, too. I engaged her in Port Southern, on Austral, where her family have lived for generations. An attractive wench and clever with it. A list of letters after her name as long as my arm. Doctorates in mathematics and physics and the Odd Gods of the Galaxy alone know what else. And ardently Japanese. Knowing Yoshi I'm sure that she'll have been making the rounds of the local shrines, pouring libations and clapping her hands and bowing ...'

'I have often wished, John,' said my mother, 'that you did not have such a casual attitude towards religion.'

‘But I’ve always had the impression, Matilda,’ I told her, ‘that you’re an agnostic’

‘I am. But I try to avoid giving offence.’

‘Except when you want to,’ muttered my father.

‘That’s different, George,’ she snapped.

‘I suppose that I was rather making fun of Yoshi,’ I admitted. ‘But she’s such a *serious* person. But as far as Shinto is concerned I have far more respect for it than for many other faiths and I quite approve of the honouring of distinguished ancestors.’

‘You’d better honour me,’ said my father, ‘or I’ll come back and haunt you!’

And that was that.

The rest of my leave passed very pleasantly and it was with mixed emotions that, eventually, I made my way back to Yokohama. Mixed emotions? Yes. One’s boyhood home holds a large place in one’s affections but so does a ship, especially a ship that one both commands and owns.

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It was early evening when I got back to the Yokohama spaceport. *Sister Sue* was the only ship on the ground. The loading gantries had been set up about her but were still idle. She stood there in black silhouette against the odd, lemon-yellow sky, a dark tower surrounded by an elaborate tracery of metal, looking like one of those intricate Japanese ideographs that you see on ornamental scrolls and screens.

Security was fairly tight and I had to identify myself to the spaceport gatekeeper and then, again, to the guard on duty at the foot of the ramp. Port Regulations required that I employ him so I was pleased to find that he was taking his job seriously. In any case the charters, the Survey Service, would be picking up the bill for his wages. Once I was in the airlock I looked at the indicator screen to see who was aboard. The Third Officer was the shipkeeper. Normally, especially in a rather exotic port such as this, he would have been sulking in solitary state, feeling very hard done by. But, it seemed, he was not alone. Neither the Chief Mannschenn Drive Engineer

nor the Communications Officer was off painting the town red. But surely Yoshi would have made friends in Yokohama or, even, discovered distant relatives. Perhaps, I thought, she was entertaining some such or one such on board.

I took the elevator up from the airlock to my quarters. On its way it passed the Mannschenn Drive compartment. And the Drive was running — the oscillating whine that it made whilst operational was unmistakable. Perhaps, I thought, Yoshi was recalibrating the controls, a job that can be done only when the ship is at rest on a planetary surface. Recalibration should not be carried out without the permission of the Master. But so what? Billy Williams, my Chief Officer, had the authority to issue such permission during my absence.

But I was uneasy nonetheless.

I stopped the elevator then went down again to the Mannschenn Drive compartment. The door into it was both shut and locked. I could hear the whine of the machinery inside and, very faintly, the sound of voices. I rapped on the door. And again, more loudly. *They must be deaf in there*, I thought.

In my pocket was my keyring and on it, among others, was *my* key, the master key that would give me access to any compartment in the ship. I took it out, fitted its flat surface into the recess designed for its reception.

The door slid open, making a sharp clicking sound as it did so. One of the two men intently watching the display in the screen that had been set up alongside the complication of slowly rotating, ever-precussing flywheels — had the Drive been working at full capacity it would have been suicidal to have looked directly at it — turned his head and grumbled, ‘Come in, come in, whoever you are. This is Liberty Hall. You can spit on the mat and call the cat a bastard.’ Then he saw who it was and muttered, ‘Sorry, sir. We weren’t expecting you back just yet.’

It was the Third Officer and with him was the electronic communications officer. I glared at the two young men and they looked back at me. They were more than a little scared. And I’d give the puppies something to be scared about.

‘Where is Ms Namakura?’ I demanded. ‘What are the pair of you doing in the Mannschenn Drive room, running a machine that only qualified personnel are supposed to touch? The Odd Gods of the Galaxy alone know what damage you’ll do with your tinkering!’

'She ... she *was* here, sir,' stammered the Third.

'Is she in her quarters? Get her back down here. At *once*.'

'She ... she's not there ...' stammered the Third.

'She's not now ...' said Sparks.

'Are you mad?' I almost yelled, glaring at them. Somehow in the light that was coming from the screen the skin of their faces had an odd yellowish tinge and their eyes a peculiar slant to them. I remembered then that, like Yoshi Namakura, they both had Japanese blood, although, unlike hers, theirs was much diluted and their names were European. But the three of them, spaceman officer, communications officer, and Mannschenn Drive engineer, had always been as thick as thieves. There were those who suggested that they had a *ménage a trois* going. Perhaps they had, but what of it? A ship is not a Sunday School outing.

'Look at the screen, sir,' said Sparks.

I looked. The picture was that of the poop of some sort of ancient sailing vessel, a galleon, a small one, at sea. In the background were five other ships of the same type, on parallel courses.

'So you got some new spools for the playmaster,' I said. 'But what's a playmaster doing here? Its proper place is in the wardroom.'

'This is not a playmaster, sir, although it's adapted from one. Running in conjunction with the Drive it gives a picture of the Past.'

I remembered that conversation with my father. 'And now I suppose you'll try to tell me that you're picking up coverage of Will Adams' voyage to Japan.' I laughed. 'As I was told the story, only one of those Dutch ships got here.'

'Those are not Dutch ships, sir,' said Sparks. 'Look!'

He did something to the controls under the screen, zoomed into that poop deck in the foreground. There was an almost modern-looking binnacle and there was a large wheel with one man, clad only in baggy trousers, at it, steering the ship. He was obviously an Asiatic. Japanese? Chinese? But that wheel ... It looked wrong. Just *when* had the wheel

replaced the tiller? I was pretty sure that it had been well after Will Adams' time.

A man and a woman came into view — he a bearded European, tall, in a white shirt with ballooning sleeves, white trousers that flapped about his legs. Instead of a belt he wore a wide sash; thrust into it on one side was a sheathed sword, on the other a big, flintlock pistol. The woman was in what I thought of as traditional Japanese finery, with elaborately upswept hair. I recognised her, although I was more used to seeing her in uniform.

They were talking, this man and woman. What a pity it was that there was no sound — and lip reading is not one of my accomplishments. They paced slowly back and forth. Then the man sat on one of the two bronze cannons mounted on the poop and Yoshi subsided gracefully onto the wooden deck, leaning back against his legs.

'So far,' Sparks told me, 'this is the furthest into the future that we can get a clear picture. But the ones of the finish of the voyage are getting clearer all the time ...'

'The furthest into the *future*?' I asked, bewildered.

'Perhaps I didn't make myself clear, sir. What I meant was the future as reckoned from the start of the voyage ...'

'*What voyage?*'

Sparks fiddled with the controls. He got a clear picture of a seaport, a Japanese seaport, with the six galleons looking out of place among the smaller craft, with the wharf crowded with people, with armoured Samurai wielding long staffs to clear the way for those embarking aboard the ships, the tall European, attired now as a Japanese nobleman, his lady (*my* Chief Mannschenn Drive Engineer), the armoured Samurai of his personal guard ...

And the ships cast off and their unfurled sails filled and the gaily coloured streamers of bunting (or of silk?) fluttered from their mastheads and orange flame and white smoke gushed from their gunports as a salute was fired to the Emperor or the Shogun or whoever it was who had come to see them off.

I thought again what a pity it was that there was no sound.

'And now,' said Sparks, 'the finish of the voyage ...'

The picture was dim, distorted, the perspective all wrong, the colours sagging down the spectrum. But I recognised that coastline, that entrance to one of the world's — Earth's, I mean — finest harbours, with the sheer cliffs of the North Head and the less regular rock formations on the south side. The ships, the galleons, were standing in with a fair wind, guided by one of the small pinnaces that had carried out a preliminary survey.

'It's clearer than it was the last time we tried,' said the Third Officer. 'Do you realise what that means?'

He sounded frightened.

So he was frightened and I was both puzzled and angry.

'Just what the hell is going on here?' I demanded.

There were swivel chairs in the Mannschenn Drive room and we sat in them, turning them so that we did not have to look at those ever-recessing rotors or the screen with its disturbing pictures. It was heavy work at first trying to drag the story out of them but, at last, the dam broke. Then it was hard for me to get a word in edgewise, to ask the occasional question, to try to get clarification of various points.

It was Yoshi, of course, who had made the modifications to the Mannschenn Drive unit. I suspect that she had been toying with such an idea for quite some time but, until her visit to the home of her ancestors, had lacked a strong motivation. Shortly after *Sister Sue's* arrival at Yokohama spaceport she had made the pilgrimage to Will Adams' burial place, had made Shinto obeisance at the shrine. The story of Adams fascinated her. The man was among those who, with only the slightest nudge, could have changed history. And why should not she, Yoshi Namakura, supply that nudge?

She had Sparks and the Third Officer eating out of her hand. They would help her. Although they did not share her knowledge of the workings of the Mannschenn Drive they could be trusted to follow her instructions and to monitor her progress. They were to snatch her back to her own Time should things go wrong. (But, as they were beginning to realise, *right* for her could be *wrong* for very many people, including themselves. People face death — they're doing it all the time — but how do they face the utter extinction of never having been at all?)

History is full of *ifs*. *If* Napoleon had accepted the American inventor Fulton's offer to build him steam-driven warships ... (imagine a squadron of steam frigates, wearing the French flag, at Trafalgar!). *If* Pickett's charge at Gettysburg had been successful, and the Confederacy had won the War Between The States ... *If* that special train had been derailed, as intended, by Ned Kelly's freedom fighters at Glenrowan ...

And *if* Will Adams, the Anjin-sama, had been allowed to build European-style ships — with improvements, the Japanese excel at improving things — armed with cannons, officered by Samurai... *If* an expedition under the command of the Anjin-sama, the master navigator, himself had pushed south on a voyage of exploration ...

And *if*, I thought, on the some yet-to-become established Time Track he had pushed south, reaching Australia, founding a colony ... history might be, would be changed on a grand scale. With the resulting population shifts, with the wars that didn't happen in *our* history books, with inventions made before their time or not made at all, many of us might never have been born. I'm an Australian, as you know. Would I, could I have happened in an Australia that had been a Japanese colony founded in the Seventeenth Century?

I demanded, 'Why don't you bring her back? Why don't you snatch her back to our here and now from a time before she's had a chance to influence Will Adams and his sponsors?'

Sparks said, 'We've tried, sir. But she told us to pull her back only if things went wrong. She must be carrying some device that will keep her where and when she is, no matter what we do, as long as things are going to *her* satisfaction.'

'Then somebody,' I said, 'will have to go back to a time before the fleet sets sail to throw a spanner in the works ...'

'I'll go, sir,' said the Third bravely. 'Sparks has to stay here to operate the controls.'

'I'll go,' I said, not feeling at all brave. Oh, I did not doubt the Third Officer's courage but, after all, he had been under Yoshi's influence and, too, had Japanese blood himself. (Was it my imagination or had he been looking more and more Japanese as we had been talking? Was it proof that *our* Time Line was fading out?)

'But ...' objected both young men, yet I thought that I could detect a note of relief in their voices.

'Wait here,' I told them. 'Don't touch anything till I get back.'

\* \* \* \*

In my quarters I disguised myself as well as I could — by putting on a rather elaborately embroidered dressing gown over my shirt and trousers. From the ship's arms locker I took a stungun and a laser pistol, checking each to see that it was fully charged. I stuck both weapons in my dressing gown sash. I glanced in the mirror. I didn't look Japanese. I looked like a middle-aged shipmaster of European origin clad in a dressing gown hung around with incongruous weaponry. But I hoped that Sparks would be able to make me arrive at night — and the lighting in and around seaports wasn't all that good in those days. With any luck at all I should be able to do what I knew, with increasing certainty, I had to do, undetected.

I returned to the Mannschenn Drive room.

Sparks and the Third stared at me in some amazement. I ignored this. I told Sparks what I wanted and he fiddled with the controls of the monitor screen, at last got what I wanted. Despite the midnight darkness it was quite a clear picture, the galleons, with their lofty masts, the furled sails glimmering palely on their spars, were alongside in the Japanese seaport. There were a few, a very few, lights aboard them. Ashore watchfires, around which moved dark figures. What little light there was threw glimmering reflections from polished spearheads.

'That will do,' I said. 'The night before sailing day. All stores — including powder — aboard. All hands ashore enjoying a last night in the arms of their lady loves ...'

'What are you going to *do*, sir?' almost wailed Sparks.

'Never mind. I'm just going to do it. Or try to do it. Just get me back there, not too close to any of the sentries.'

'I think I can manage that, sir. I put Yoshi down by the side of the road where the Anjin-sama was taking his morning ride, unaccompanied. Do you see that circle painted on the deck? Just stand in it. Look at the rotors.'

I did as he directed, gave him last instructions. 'As soon as I've shunted history back onto its right track, use the recovery procedure. For

Ms Yamakura as well as for myself. It should work on her this time. Things will have gone very badly wrong — from her viewpoint.’

I looked at those blasted, precessing rotors. They seemed to be dragging me into some dark chasm that had opened in the Space-Time continuum. And their motion was subtly ... *wrong*. Their precession was not confined to the fourth dimension, somehow involved more dimensions than merely four.

And then the night air was cold on my face. A light drizzle was falling. I was standing in a puddle that chilled my feet in their light shoes. I could smell the smoke of the watchfires and something spicy cooking over one of them. I was sorry that in these circumstances I could not sample whatever it was. Somewhere a stringed musical instrument was plaintively *plinking* away. The nearest group of sentries were talking in quite loud voices and laughing. I wondered what the joke was.

I pulled the stungun out of my dressing gown sash, walked as quietly as possible towards the ships. Towards the one that was third in line from the head of the wharf; she had fewer lights aboard her than did the others and that at her gangway was almost out. The gangway, a slatted, wooden ramp, rattled slightly as I set foot on it. I froze. But the other gangways were rattling too as the ships stirred in the slight swell that was coming in from seaward.

At the head of the gangway was a sentry. He was standing there, leaning on the bulwark, more than half asleep. After a brief buzz from my stungun he was wholly asleep but did not fall, propped up as he was.

I wished that I'd been able to study constructional details of the ships of this period. The powder magazine would be, I thought, amidships, well below decks. But aft there should be a storeroom, the lazarette, with flammables of various kinds — canvas and cordage and barrels of tar and oil. So I made my way towards the stern. I let myself into the officers' quarters in the sterncastle, hoping that none of them would be spending this last night aboard.

I used my laser pistol, at a very low setting, as a torch. At last I found what I was looking for, two decks down. A small hatch. I lifted it, looked down into what seemed to be the bo's'n's store. There were coils of rope, bolts of canvas. There were barrels and there was the smell of tar. I aimed the pistol at one of the tar barrels, adjusted the beam. A viscous black fluid spilled out, igniting as it did so. The fire that I'd started needed no further help from me. I hoped that I'd be able to get out and clear before it reached

the magazine.

I scampered up the ladders, pursued by the acrid stench of burning. At the head of the gangway the sentry was still unconscious. I slung him over my shoulder in a fireman's carry — he was only a small man, luckily — and got him away from immediate danger. After all, I bore no grudge against him. I bore no grudge against anybody. I was just trying to save my — *our* — universe. And my own skin.

That fire was spreading fast. The big windows of the stern gallery were glowing ruddily and the flames were roaring, louder and louder. There was bawling and shouting among the sentries on the wharf, a great deal of running around. I did my best to impersonate a chicken with its head cut off, reasoning that if I joined the general panic I might escape notice. Then I found cover in a narrow alley between two warehouses, stood and watched. The galleon was well ablaze by now, with lines of fire running up her rigging, spreading to the furled canvas on her spars. Somebody had organised a bucket party but by this time it was utterly ineffectual. There was only one thing to do — to get the remaining ships away and out from the wharf before the first vessel's magazine went up. But there was nobody there to do it; those sentries must all have been soldiers, not seamen.

The fire reached the magazine.

Oh, I've seen, more than once, the sort of Big Bang that can be produced by modern weaponry — but that particular Big Bang still, after all these years, persists in my memory ... The strangely slow flare of orange flame and a somehow leisurely boom of man-made thunder ... The blazing fragments scattered in all directions and other fragments, not yet burning, black in silhouette against dreadful, ruddy light ... And the fires exploding in the rigging and on the decks of the other five ships — and on the roof of the warehouse beside which I was standing.

Somebody was addressing me urgently in Japanese. It was a tall, kimono-clad man, with pistols as well as a sheathed Samurai sword thrust into his sash. He was tall, as I have said, and bearded, and the language that he was using did not sound right from his lips. There was a kimono-clad woman with him. She stared at me wide-eyed.

'Captain!' she gasped. 'What are *you* doing here?' What have you *done*?'

'What have *you* been doing, Yoshi-san?' I demanded.

Adams — it could have been none other — had one of his pistols out, was pointing it at me.

‘Who is this,’ he asked, ‘that you know him? Some Spanish dog sent to frustrate me? Who are you, man, and who employs you? Should you make truthful answer I might spare your life.’

And then, at the other end of the timeline, Sparks did what he should have done minutes before and I was standing in *Sister Site’s* Mannschenn Drive room, with holes burned by flying sparks in my dressing gown, my face smoke-blackened. I moved out of the circle to look at the screen. Nothing could save those ships now. As I watched two of the others exploded.

I heard the Third say to Sparks, ‘What about Yoshi?’ and Sparks, reply, ‘I’m trying.’

And he got her.

She sprawled lifeless on the deck, in a pool of her own blood. A dagger was in her right hand. And one of those scraps of useless knowledge that one accumulates floated into my mind. Japanese ladies, wiping out some real or fancied disgrace, were not expected to carry out ritual self-disembowelment.

A mere throat-cutting would suffice.

But it wasn’t all over yet. The two young men who had been Yoshi’s accomplices were taking her death very badly. Before I could stop him Sparks had snatched the laser pistol from my sash. And he took his revenge. Oh, yes, Kitty, I know that I’m still here, but he took his revenge. He turned the destructive beam of the weapon onto the machine that had sent his lady back into the Past, to when and where she had met her death. He paid particular attention to the controls that she had installed. And I did not stop him. I did not try to stop him. It was better that Yoshi’s knowledge died with her. The Present may be bad enough, but tampering with the Past would almost certainly make it worse, not better. The mere fact that we are here and now is proof that on *this* Time Track things have been working out not too badly.

\* \* \* \*

‘Having known a few Australians, including yourself,’ said Kitty, ‘I still think

that a Japonified Australia might have been an improvement.'

'You're entitled to your opinion,' said Grimes stiffly.

\* \* \* \*

## AFTERWORD BY PAUL COLLINS

The road to publishing 'Grimes and the Gaijin Daimyo' has been long and circuitous. The journey started in 1982 or thereabouts and the winding path I'll describe below.

'Jack' Chandler was among a clique of well-known Australian authors who supported me in my early publishing days. We even collaborated, this group and me, on (an as yet unpublished) novel called *The Morgan Pattern*. I published the first edition of the last Grimes novel, *The Wild Ones*; and six of Jack's stories, and bought a seventh, the one you've just read. Whatever anthology I had planned never eventuated, and this particular story was filed away 'for later use'.

Skip the intervening years till about a year ago. A diehard Chandler fan called David Kelleher emailed me asking for miscellaneous Chandler material. I knew I had a manuscript 'somewhere', and after going to David's site ([www.bertramchandler.com](http://www.bertramchandler.com)) I decided I should make an effort and find that MS and send it to him. I had no idea that the story in question hadn't been published overseas, nor that no copy other than mine existed. Meanwhile another fan, Evan Ladouceur, asked me for Chandler paraphernalia. I sent both David and Evan a copy of 'Grimes and the Gaijin Daimyo'. I was informed that it was a rare find, an unpublished Chandler story. Yet another fan, Steve Davidson ([www.rimworlds.com](http://www.rimworlds.com)), began writing, and I started to realise 'the story' had to be published.

I believe David listed 'Grimes and the Gaijin Daimyo' on his site as being unpublished. Soon enough, Baen Books discovered its existence and an editor asked David for a copy because they were publishing a Kitty Kelly series e-book. At this point David asked for permission to send the story.

I thought long and hard and finally figured, no, I wanted this story's first appearance to be here in Australia, and definitely in print form, not e-book form. The trouble was, I knew I had a contract *somewhere*, but did I want to search through my garage for it? And surely the twenty-six-year-old

contract had expired by now. Luckily, neither David nor Evan, the only two people other than me on the planet who had copies of the story, were going to show the story to anyone without my consent.

I resisted all further calls for the story, and believe me, there were a few.

After the Baen Books enquiry it struck me that Jack Dann was editing *Dreaming Again*. A perfect spot for the final Grimes story had I been thinking on my feet — but the anthology was closed. With nothing to lose, I emailed Jack asking him if he'd like to read the manuscript. It's a carbon copy (faded and in parts almost illegible) and HarperCollins would have to get it keyed in, so I wasn't too hopeful.

Jack loved the story. But the road up ahead became murky. Joshua Bilmes, Chandler's US agent at JABerwocky Literary Agency, informed us that Susan Chandler, Jack's widow, who was signatory on his estate, had died recently. The Chandler estate was now in the hands of the Public Trustee NSW. Jack promptly wrote to Kim Schriever asking for permission to publish the story, and I subsequently received a letter asking for a copy of my contract.

To save a whole lot of bother on all fronts, I simply waived any rights I might have had to the story — my intention all along. And had not the Public Trustee's office been so efficient, 'Grimes and the Gaijin Daimyo' would still be in my filing cabinet in the garage, and bar a mention on David Kelleher's site, a piece of unknown Chandler history.

I hope you enjoyed the ride.

— Paul Collins