

# TALK OF TOKYO By Heather Hallman

## EXCERPT

*Tokyo 1897*

*Foreign Quarter of Tsukiji*

“The door is over here,” a man called from the house.

Had Emperor Mutsuhito been standing on the front porch, Suki wouldn't have been more surprised. The irate gentleman she'd been expecting was looking at her with an expression of mild amusement. Up to now, she'd only caught glimpses of the incorrigible rake in passing. Closer examination revealed an angular jawline that an aspiring journalist might wish to trace with her finger and cheekbones ordinarily found on statues of world-conquering kings. Pillow-like lips, one touch of which would make a woman's insides melt, were already having that very effect on her.

Griffith Spenser was downright handsome. But not in a way that made Suki swoon into the azalea bushes. A crease lined the middle of his chin, and his nose could be described as a bit wide, his brow as a bit too high. The caramel-colored hair atop his head hadn't been set with a pomade but permitted its thick waves, adding a few inches of unruly height to the already tall, lean gentleman.

Given his reputation, she should have been prepared for a strong dose of masculine appeal. But her head felt light and airy, and her breath had all but disappeared. In its place, a bubbling sensation portended a spell of the giggles. Gripping her satchel, she took in enough air to restore her powers of reason. Unless she got to work, Spenser was going to be the instrument of her undoing. Fortunately, she knew his weakness. Like most foreign men who arrived on Japan's shores, Spenser was enamored with the nation's beauties. And although her chignon had loosened to lopsidedness, and her kimono bore the marks of a full day's teaching, and she was, in fact, only half-Japanese, she could muster enough charm to make Spenser reconsider his plans.