



X - Alpha

(continued from an idea begun last week ...)

I mentioned in the previous story how I have been feeling a tad frustrated in recent years because I have no 'free time', while fully admitting that this situation is due to my own inability to stop taking on new activities and projects.

So it was that late last year, when I was in the process of coming up with the print project that would follow the 'My Solitudes' series (which was coming to its completion), I decided to try and allow for 'free time' to be part of the calculations. Would this really be possible? Maybe. Here is what I came up with.

The prints in this new 'Mystique of the Japanese Print' series are relatively small, and because of this, two designs can be carved side-by-side on a single woodblock and then printed on a single sheet of paper. After this production process is complete, the finished sheet can be cut in half, resulting in *two* separate woodblock prints.

The time required for me to make a pair - start to finish - depends on the complexity of the designs and the number of prints I pull from the blocks, but is calculated to take me somewhere around four to five weeks. Given that I will be sending these prints out to the subscribers at the rate of one per month, you can see that - if this series proceeds according to plan - I will have quite a considerable amount of free time.

I say 'if' because the series is still at an early stage, and there were a great many factors involved in getting it started which have taken a great deal of time (not to mention money and energy). And as I still have quite a lot of unfinished work on my bench from previous projects, I have yet to actually see any of that projected free time. But as I study my schedule and the calendar, it seems as though sometime late this autumn things may start to line up as planned, and it is quite possible that I may wake up one morning in October or November and say to myself, "Hmm, I have nothing to do today ..."

Now that is something I have not been able to say in at least ten years, and perhaps quite a bit longer. So I'm not sure what will happen that day. I know what I *don't* want to happen - I don't want to find myself saying, "Let's see, I have lots of time today; perhaps it would be a good idea to start that project I have been thinking about for a while ..."

You can see where *that* would end up. I would be right back at the beginning again. This reminds me of a time many years ago when I was talking with a friend who couldn't quit smoking. I had said something like, "Well why don't you just stop?" and he had become angry, replying that "It's not that easy! I want to, but I can't!"

Given all this background, I am certainly not going to announce here on 'A Story A Week' that I am going to turn over a new leaf, change my habits, and stop taking on new projects. I think that would be silly. My character is clearly a 'type' that wants to be active and occupied, and I freely admit that this may be just as much of an 'addiction' as the smoking problem that plagued my friend.

But I *will* say that I am going to try and 'cut down'. I have another friend who frequently reminds me that I should 'stop and smell the roses' more often, and nobody can argue with that philosophy. So let's make a deal - this is the fourth story in Volume 10 of 'A Story A Week'. Please drop back for the fourth story in Volume 11, next January, where I'll make a complete report to you on what the intervening six months will have brought.

(If I have time, that is!)

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