

As a child I never dreamed that I would fall in love with a Samaria, let alone become one myself. It has been six years since my childhood ended and I married my husband, Han. Since then things about me have changed. I am no longer the shy, self-conscious, weak girl I use to be. But I did not overcome these easily. It took years of harassment from government officials and many long hours of teaching for me to finally understand my place in this cosmos, and then accept it. I am to make good strong home, full of honor and pride. I am to raise my two sons in the proper ways of our Tokugawa society. My home must be an environment of learning and strong family bonds for the sake of my family and the honor of my family. I must admit though, Zin and Yang are worth ever second of my laboring. I hope that they one day fallow in the footsteps of their father and serve the shogun honorably and chivalrously.

I have also changed physically from what I imagined. As a little girl I often dread of the life of a Geisha, mysterious companion and master of entertainment. But now I am in my silk Kimonos, my small dagger at my waist constantly reminding me of my obligation to serve and uphold the family honor. A burden, I might add, that is shown well on my face, more so each day as my features become more and more haggard with worry and duty. After I married Han, I blackened my teeth in the traditional manor and did away with my furisode, the long sleeved silk kimono of my childhood, and now wear my kimonos in the traditional style, which is half sleeves and elaborate patterns. I have also kept up with the latest styles and fashions by wearing my hair tied up in a bun and various other forms of round displays. It's nice to be allowed to try new things with my hair, considering how annoying and bland the old styles where, strait, down, simple. Blah. Who would ever want that for their everyday wardrobe. However I must admit that it is easier to deal with down when Han and I travel. I must always travel with a male comrade, be it if I travel at all, so it is easier to keep pace with the male ego when I have less famine maintenance to worry about.

There are some cons to my rather lavish lifestyle though. The thought of failing....I can hardly think the word without a sinking feeling entering my chest, must be up held. If I am ever to

dishonor my family, or anyone for that matter, I must kill myself, as is customary. I must use the dagger at my waist, and slit my own through..... Enough. I won't consider that now. There are far too many positive things to think about in life to concern myself with such a dark business. My children...

It reminds me of the times when we were at war, and as a female Samaria, I was to dress and clean the decapitated heads of our enemies that were to be presented to our leaders and shoguns as signs of wealth and success in battle. I shall ever forget the eyes of those heads, staring back at me with such a human expression, and yet no life or soul behind them. I was like looking into a black abyss and knowing that at one point in time, there was something there to see, something glorious and fierce...and now, nothing. Nothing more than a blank slate. Devoid of color, life, and emotion.

But I can not complain. I can shop in the market and all the luxuries necessary are allowed to me. I have a sense of honor and pride in who I am and what my family is. We serve our masters, and in return are respected amongst all. I am proud to be a Samaria warrior.

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I had another successful transaction today. Dealing with the daimyo may seem like a useless pastime—as, indeed, it often is. Yet these daimyo have to buy rice like any other men! Of course, I never actually see the daimyo themselves. They are too high up to see the likes of me, a low merchant, although I have more money than any of them. Hmph. Confucian snobs.

Speaking of those Confucian bureaucrats... I was heading to the theater this night when I passed one in the street. He sneered at me and quickened his pace, muttering under his breath about those “evil parasites of society, preying on the weak of mind...” I hoped he was too busy looking down his nose to notice that I was wearing a silk kimono, a big error in their minds, although quite comfortable and not too expensive. And slightly illegal. However, if the government was to arrest all merchants who wore silk, they would have a shortage of dealers. Not to mention

a great number of unhappy peasants. Since they so highly value those peasants—uneducated lot, if you ask me—they should forget about trying to stop us.

I met with Lilano at the theater. He was once a samurai, but retired and joined the ranks of merchants that are steadily growing. It is an interesting phenomenon, but the samurai and merchants are mingling more than ever since the Tokugawa shoguns have started demanding that the daimyo remain in Edo for half their lives. The roads are safer, so the samurai who usually protect the daimyo have nothing to do. Instead, they befriend us merchants, and learn the trade. It makes more money than sitting around waiting for some daimyo.

Lilano is part of a growing fashion trend. He wears his hair almost exactly like a samurai's, with the top shaved off and the sides and back pulled into a knot. To ensure that merchants can be distinguished, the knot is slightly different than that of a samurai's. My wife thinks that I should wear my hair like that. Personally, I feel that it looks a little ridiculous, and that it makes us seem that we are desperate to be like the samurai. However, if the trend continues, I suppose I shall have to give in.

The play was excellent. It was a new hilarious kabuki. Afterwards, Lilano and I went and got some drinks and talked. It is important to maintain friendships during these turbulent times.