

The wanderer

By Kuroko

Submitted: February 4, 2004

Updated: February 4, 2004

A lone, ronin samurai, Ken Kitsune follows a stranger in a black cape who could be Kitsune's long lost twin brother.

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The wooden entrance was swayed closed after a shadow streaked past it. Amber eyes rose to identify the tavern that the black caped stranger had entered and detected a dangling sign over head: 'Zen Tavern, Good Money Good Service'

The solitary wanderer raised a dark brow slightly at the old, weakened sign that had its pained name partly faded away. Frowning, Ken Kitsune's eyes lowered to eye level before proceeding inside the tavern.

Naturally it was not the bars' contents that had drawn the lone wolf inside, but the samurai that has entered just before Kitsune had. Being a samurai as well, Kitsune had instinctively followed.

Striding across the polished tables Kitsune's eyes swept over the different faces in search of the other samurai, but to no avail. With a blown out sigh Kitsune bounded further down the series of various now stained tables that were occupied with grumpy, carefree and even half drunken strangers. Stopping at the bartender's desk Kitsune bowed politely and made a request.

“I would like some fresh sake if you have any.”

Since there were hardly any female samurais at all, Kitsune could have been strictly mistaken as a boy of nineteen with a pretty face from afar. Kitsune's calm, low-pitched voice was also an added point against her true gender if not given a second glance closer to inspect the recognizable femininity in her face. Kitsune's traditional long, hakadama and obi also showed some more evidence because shrine maidens usually wore those colors with white, lengthy sleeved komodos.

Normally the clothes were meant for spiritual performance and service but clearly Kitsune did otherwise; the long katana tied at her sash wound around her waist proved it. An over-komodo was worn over Kitsune's shoulders to take role of a cape that was required in the fashion of samurai's.

Kitsune's demeanor made a small, foreign impact of silence when the customers in the tavern realized they were seeing a woman with a sword in the tavern and breathing in the air only the samurai's were worthy of.

The female samurai's dignified profile certainly had an ominous element. A strong presence of a skilled warrior in which being female was in no consideration to her and greatly disliked being labeled as one and will deny anything woman about herself; but not the fact that she is one. The mere simple gesture and the way this tomboy acted would not be classified as a woman but as a placid, distantly respectful and even fierce wanderer. An enigmas character is the best word for this being and maybe even sorrowfully aloof in the depths of the soul.

Kitsune was sitting now with her sake in her hands fully aware of the new eyes darted in her back but didn't seem to care. However Kitsune was completely oblivious that one certain pair of eyes studied her harder than most. Instead, her face was lowered and well hidden by her long slightly arched tresses that were veiling her eyes with some shadow.

Her waist length hair was dark and almost raven black but it was a deep chestnut brown held in a high ponytail by an indigo ribbon. The ponytail was silk poured over her shoulders like a smooth waterfall almost mystical and divine as the earth's arcane glow.

There was a saddened flicker in her sunset eyes on her eyes that reflected inner loneliness and thoughts. Kitsune had been following that fellow samurai for a while now hoping to talk to him. The reason wasn't for mere attraction or for rival to cross swords. The goal was to discover if the man she was stealthily following was someone she lost long ago.

It was early this morning when Kitsune's piercing eyes caught sight of him and instantly felt a familiar essence from her home village. A pang of longing to experience the overwhelming warmth of comfort of any part of her past gave her no second thoughts to ever abandoned this possibility and followed the man like a moth's drawn shadow to a glowing fire.

Unfortunately she didn't get the chance to see his face except the prominent blazing red hair with a hair style that resembled her own but maybe just for the reason that this style was traditional to all samurai's. Perhaps if she somehow stole a glimpse of his face she would have been able to determine if he was the person she got separated from at a tender youth.

It was painful even now for Kitsune to recall and remind herself of the tragedy she suffered at that age.

Kitsune had lost her entire family in a bandit attack that ignited a relentless fire. She had been out buying tofu for dinner for the family but when she returned all she found was a burnt down havoc with nothing more than wrecked fragments of houses, blood and smoke. Finding no survivors she had found her parents dead bodies but there was no sign of her sibling. Believing to be alone and that her family was dead she had to look after herself independently and vowing to become a true samurai worthy enough for her family's name just like her father who was training her brother to become one.

Still as she raised herself to continue the family's bloodline it was lonely and she walked on dark days never smiling or emitting a happy glimmer in her eyes anymore.

The atmosphere around the wanderer darkened and Kitsune closed her eyes in silent torment.

“Kitsune?”

At call of her name Kitsune's eyes snapped sharply open in alert. Instinctively she whirled around to seek her caller. Immediately her eyes widened.

There before her in golden grace stood the samurai she had been tracking. It was the first time she saw his handsome features with unmistakable wisdom and comprehending experience of misery in his soulful eyes. The man's eyes were the same shade as her and both amber eyes gazed deep into the

depths of the others. His were moistened with tears threatening to take position to gather under his eyelid but it was not of sadness. It was the complete opposite.

For some time now they stood in silence not daring to breathe or utter a word. Kitsune wasn't even aware that her mouth had slid open ever so slightly with nothing to do but stare at him astonished with a pounding heart and rendered speechless with mixed emotions.

Then the answer struck into her heart and everything was confirmed.

Soon Kitsune's eyes were hazy too and for the first time in many, lonely years her mouth split into a tender smile at the face identical to hers. Her sharp eyes had dramatically softened, shedding a tear of emotional rebirth and compassion. It was both a single tear of transition that held a horrible past and one of a bright new future.

“Brother Shinkou...!”

In what seemed like ages of shattered life Kitsune had finally found her twin brother. It had been nine long years since she last saw him and since the last time Kitsune smiled so contently with once a broken life now mended together.

~The End~