Duty Matters

Raisa Feni Elisabeth Riupassa



BINUS UNIVERSITY

Saionji Hirohito, or Hiro, was extremely happy today. The ten years old Samurai woke up late after having a good night sleep dreaming about his Mother – Hiro couldn't really remember how she looked like because she died when Hiro was four, but she really was pretty, Hiro was sure of that; with her flowy pink and white kimono, gentle smile, and long silky black hair. Dream Mother and Hiro had spent their entire time in his dream painting a really beautiful painting of their Saionji Clan house, which was a huge Samurai house filled with many maids, servants, cooks, and their family members. They had painted the background pink, gold, and white, with a small full moon at the top right corner. Hiro really liked the painting.

He had jumped out of his bed right away that morning after Iyo, one of the Saionji family maids, woke him up. The picture of the painting was still fresh in his mind – he needed to paint it now! So, Hiro urgently brushed off Iyo's attempt in dressing him up for the day in order to run to his study room where all his paintings and painting tools were. Sadly, Iyo was having none of that.

"Young Master, you need to dress properly before running around in the house!" the young lady chastised. "Otherwise the clan leader won't be happy. Do you wish to anger him?"

Hiro scoffed, but relented. Iyo was right. He didn't want to get yelled at by his big brother, Saionji Teruuchi – who was now the leader of their clan at seventeen, replacing their father who had passed away five years ago, in this beautiful morning. Big brother Teru was really scary when he's angry. And lately, he got angry a lot.

When Hiro asked her where his big brother was now, Iyo answered calmly while brushing his hair. "The clan leader is in the middle of a meeting with the clan elders, Young Master."

Hiro beamed. "Sweet!"

With his big brother out of the way, Hiro could paint peacefully all day without being yelled at to study, or to practice his mamorigatana sword and the difficult katas he didn't care enough to learn. His brother said it was his duty to study all that, but screw his duty! Hiro only liked painting, and painting only.

So, once Hiro was decent enough to go out of his room, he made a beeline to his study room to paint. He passed by some of the servants, who bowed him good morning. The young master only paused to briefly return their bow, before resuming his run.

But, once the boy arrived in his study room, he was surprised to see who was waiting for him there.

Teru was sitting behind Hiro's floor table in the middle of the room with his arms crossed in front of his chest. A serious expression on his face.

"Big brother? What are you doing here? Iyo said you're in a meeting!"

"The meeting ended ten minutes ago."

Hiro examined his empty table, and cried. "Where are my paint brushes?"

Teru sighed, his expression turned hard. "I've gotten rid of them. The elders and I have talked. We've decided that you need to step up your training from now on. It had been agreed that it wouldn't be good for the clan's name if its young master has inadequate skills in combat and political knowledge."

"What?"

"That means no more painting for you, little brother." Teru declared sternly, before getting up. "I myself will keep track of your training from now on. Now, I want you to memorize your katas and be ready with your sword when I come back. We'll spar. I know you don't like this, but this is for your own good."

With that, Teru left the room. Leaving a gobsmacked Hiro behind.

How's this for his own good? Hiro knew what was good for himself, thank you very much!

So, instead of doing what Teru told him to do, the stubborn Hiro sneaked out of his study room as quietly as possible after taking his

secret stack of golden coins in one of the drawers, carefully making his way across the compound ground, and out of the main gate.

One goal in his mind; he needs to get to the market to get a beautiful new paint brush to paint his and Mother's painting!

But, not too long after he left the house, five unfamiliar figures clad in black jumped out and circled him. Katanas drawn in their hands.

"The second young master of the Saionji Clan sure is unwise. Leaving the compound by himself." One of them laughed, before referring to his

men. "Capture him."

Hiro tried to run away, but one of the men then lifted him off the ground.

"Hey!" Hiro cried, struggling to free himself as he felt his body being lifted higher to be slumped over the man's shoulder like a sack.

"We got him. Move!" yelled his capturer.

Before Hiro knew what was it that he was doing, he screamed at the top of his voice.

"TERUU! HELP!"

But it was too late. His capturers had moved quickly, heading at a high speed away from his house.

Hiro prayed for the gods to let his brother hear his scream. He had never been more scared in life!

He got his answer when a flash of blue attacked his capturer, sending Hiro flying out of his grasp and into the air before landing right into his big brother's arms. Teru's katana was readied in front of them. A menacing glare on his face as he stared at their enemies.

It all happened so fast. Teru fought like he was dancing. Beating Hiro's capturers with practiced ease even with Hiro in his arm.

In no time, the brothers walked back to their house in silence. Hiro, knowing his brother was mad at him, took it as his job to break the silence and make things right.

“I’m sorry, big brother.” Hiro said. “If I had listened to you, none of this would’ve happened.”

Teru shook his head. “Don’t be. Now you understand how important it is for you to be a responsible kid and start taking your training and studying seriously, right?”

Hiro nodded solemnly. It’s for his own good.

“Don’t worry, you can still paint in your free time.”

Hiro’s face lit up. “Really? But the brush-”

“They are in my room, Hiro.” Teru smiled. “And you’re grounded.”