

The Samurai

By Luke Wattchow

It was the Edo period in Japan, the new age was dawning.

It was sun set. The golden glow of the last sun rays were escaping across the majestic Mount Fuji. You could hear the soft sound of the trickle of water from the flowing river, you could smell the light, sweet, scent of the cherry blossoms falling slowly, off of the tree.

“Ha, Ha, Ha!” . Laughter erupted around the table as one of Lord Ichigo’s subjects drunk himself tipsy, with Lord Ichigo nearing the same point. His sly, ambitious nephew knew that now was the time to approach him. The nephew walked up to Lord Ichigo, bowed down in mock respect and spoke.

“Lord Ichigo, I am but a humble servant, wanting what is best for this country,” he greased. “When you inherited this land from your fore-father, you were a great samurai, who was well respected throughout the province and country. You had proved your worth innumerable times in battle and out of battle as well. Do you really believe your son has done the same? He has not proved his worth in battle, nor out of it”.

“My son,” began Lord Ichigo, “has proved his worth and loyalty to me many times over. He has mastered every battle weapon there is, and defeated every weapons expert in the land. He would do anything that I command of him, he would commit hari kari if he was asked. Is this not enough?” he questioned.

“Yes my lord, of course, but if you have so much faith in him, would you be willing to submit him to a challenge that all of the Mongol adolescents take part in when they reach a certain age, to be able to be counted worthy to stay within the tribe,”
“ What is this test?” replied Lord Ichigo, boredly.

“For this test, the mongol adolescent must sit in a circle, drawn outside the tribal grounds by his father. For three days he must not eat, nor drink anything and may not move out of the circle, no matter what temptations”.

“If this is what Mongols do for a challenge, no wonder they are weak! If this is difficult for them it will be as a walk through the gardens for my son! He shall enter your test, but within three days, he shall have taken over my rule, and will be ruling and reigning victoriously, I have utmost confidence in him”.

The golden sun rose over the strong trees as the day dawned. A young, muscular figure sat in the middle of a circle, crudely drawn with a stick, in the dirt. He wore a large straw hat, shading his face from the rising sun. You could see the sun, refracting from off of his traditional red and gold bushido garments, his black cape billowing in

the wind. The great sun rose above his head and then slowly began its descent back down to the earth.

Finally, a figure slowly made its way across the horizon, followed by many other riding horses. They approached the man and moved in front of the circle. The lead man jumped off of his horse and opened the saddle bags.

He moved directly in front of the circle and emptied the contents of the saddle bags onto the ground. Golden coins poured out of the saddle bags onto the floor, clinking as they hit one another on the ground. The rest of the men behind him followed suit. Soon, there amassed a large pile of coins in front of Lord Ichigo's son. The leader of this group, spoke up, "All of this money, and more, can be yours, all you have to do is step out of this circle,". Lord Ichigo's son's eyes did not even twitch.

The man spoke up again, "You are truly honourable. My son would have sold his soul, and mine, for just a handful of these coins", after saying this, he, and his men took away the coins and disappeared back off into the horizon.

That night at the banquet, the lord's nephew gave a report of the day's proceedings to Lord Ichigo.

"Of course your trial failed! Do you really think that my honourable son would give in to a meagre pile of coins, instead of inheriting the whole fortune of the land? You are pathetic! In two days my son will be lord, and you be but a humble servant before his throne".

Rain poured down in bucketfuls that night. Lightning struck and thunder clapped as the gale force winds blew across the plain, resounding in a deathly, hollow noise, yet he did budge.

As the day above the circle, Lord Ichigo's son, sodden, still sat in the middle of the circle, unfazed. The day wore on and on until, just as the sun was setting, another figure made its way over the horizon, still on a horse, but this time followed by several other figures, pushing large, covered objects.

When they neared the circle, the lead man jumped off of his horse, made his way towards the cloaked objects, grabbed the side of the cloth that was covering one of the objects and pulled it off. He then did the same to all of the other figures. Uncovered, lay several brand new siege weapons and battle weapons, the like of which had never been seen before.

The leader spoke: "All of these weapons could be yours, to learn and master. You could overthrow any government, any country, with these weapons, all you need to do, is step out of this circle and they will be yours to control"..
Lord Ichigo's son didn't even sniff.

Seeing that he was getting nowhere, the leader spoke yet again, "It is a shame" He disappeared into the horizon.

That night, Lord Ichigo's nephew, once again, went before his throne, to give the days report.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Lord Ichigo burst into laughter, "Why would my son; my son! Give into those petty temptations? When he inherits the throne, there will be made unto him indestructible, new, weapons which he will have command over, and the old ones, all over Japan! This is pathetic! You are truly going to have to try harder tomorrow. In one day, my son will be lord, and your test will be over".

The sun rose on the third day. The son waited, and waited, and waited for the final trial to be upon him. Just as the sun was beginning to set over the majestic, Mount Fuji, a samurai figure made it's way across the plain, swords at his side, walking at ease with them - obviously a trained samurai from another country or province.

He walked towards the circle, cape billowing behind him. As he neared the circle he began the insults.

"Look at you" he began, "You are pathetic, sitting in a circle in the dirt, how low can you get! You are the scum of the earth, you do not deserve to live!" Lord Ichigo's son's head twitched.

The newly come samurai moved the targeted insults away from him, and onto his father and mother. Lord Ichigo's son stood up quickly in anger. The sun was almost set. The samurai started again, this time onto his country.

A shout of anger rose up from within Lord Ichigo's son's throat as he stepped outside of the circle, and in one carefully practised move, unsheathed his sword and sliced the man's neck open. He approached the now motionless body, and flicked the dead man's helmet off with the tip of his sword, revealing the face of his father.