

Tina Cardillo

Alone I languish in this tepid water, waiting. My mind is cast back to what seems eons ago to a place where white tipped mountain tops filled the landscape and cherry blossoms bloomed in splendour. Where the magic of the forest was the only food I needed to sustain my breath. People here think that fish are stupid and that we have a short memory span, but my memory is sharp a Samurai's sword.

I was born in a moat, surrounding a house in a Tea garden deep in the countryside in the Kumano Kodo region. In that exquisite place a lifetime ago I was in the flow, I was connected to everything and it was connected to me. I had a family, a home and an honourable existence.

The owner of the house was Mr Ito. To the casual observer he was a frail, lonely old man, but if you looked a little closer at his slate grey eyes, an exuberance of an 18-year-old would be revealed. After the death of his beloved Mi some 30 years ago, Mr Ito had invested all of his time in producing the most beautiful Tea garden in all of Japan. However, nobody was ever going to see it because fame was not his master. His only desire was to honour nature, and that was only to be shared in the quiet whisperings of the forest.

Every afternoon without fail, just before the long shadows enveloped the landscape in their comforting blanket, he would sit quietly and drink his matcha tea. Next he would drum and chant with his Mokuggo, a wooden instrument carved in the shape of a fish. Then my favourite part of the day was when he would turn his attention to my siblings and I, where he would instruct us in the five elements; Earth, Water, Fire, Wind and the Void. They all held great wisdom for me but the Void in particular held me spellbound. The Void or Ku was the power of creativity, spirit and manifestation, if only I could master the Void, what an invincible Warrior I would make.

That was when I had purpose and passion, before I murdered trust because it had betrayed me in the most brutal way imaginable. My new owner is Mr Sinclair. He means well but his ignorance mystifies me. He is oblivious to the unseen, unheard and the undead. He, like Mr Ito, is a widower, but that is where the comparison stops. He fills the void with a house full of empty trophies; the fulfilment is temporary and hollow. I have been reduced to nothing more than a pretty trinket, something he can boast about to his friends. 'I had him flown in all the way from Japan,' he brags. He keeps repeating the same pattern with the same outcome and never learns from it.

Brainless man thinks I am lazy, but what he does not know is that I am not eating the foul food he throws me. I have tried to jump out of the prison but there is fine netting on top of me. If there is to be no dignity in life, I will have it in death. Every day I look above and practise to master the void. I know I will find peace one way or the other. The newspaper will read 'Death by Mango' but you and I will know the truth of it.