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**Mineko Iwasaki**

**Ma Vie De Geisha**



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Author: Mineko Iwasaki

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## Description

GEISHA, A LIFE ""No woman in the three-hundred-year history of the karyukai has ever come forward in public to tell her story. We have been constrained by unwritten rules not to do so, by the robes of tradition and by the sanctity of our exclusive calling...But I feel it is time to speak out.""

Celebrated as the most successful geisha of her generation, Mineko Iwasaki was only five years old when she left her parents' home for the world of the geisha. For the next twenty-five years, she would live a life filled with extraordinary professional demands and rich rewards. She would learn the formal customs and language of the geisha, and study the ancient arts of Japanese dance and music. She would enchant kings and princes, captains of industry, and titans of the entertainment world, some of whom would become her dearest friends. Through great pride and determination, she would be hailed as one of the most prized geishas in Japan's history, and one of the last great practitioners of this now fading art form.

In "Geisha, a Life," Mineko Iwasaki tells her story, from her warm early childhood, to her intense yet privileged upbringing in the Iwasaki okiya (household), to her years as a renowned geisha, and finally, to her decision at the age of twenty-nine to retire and marry, a move that would mirror the demise of geisha culture. Mineko brings to life the beauty and wonder of Gion Kobu, a place that "existed in a world apart, a special realm whose mission and identity depended on preserving the time-honored traditions of the past." She illustrates how it coexisted within post-World War II Japan at a time when the country was undergoing its radical transformation from apost-feudal society to a modern one.

"There is much mystery and misunderstanding about what it means to be a geisha. I hope this story will help explain what it is really like and also serve as a record of this unique component of Japan's cultural history," writes Mineko Iwasaki. "Geisha, a Life" is the first of its kind, as it delicately unfolds the fabric of a geisha's development. Told with great wisdom and sensitivity, it is a true story of beauty and heroism, and of a time and culture rarely revealed to the Western world.

## Insightful reviews

Jensownzoo: I enjoyed this peek into a fascinating culture. I read the fictional *Memoirs of a Geisha* by Golden first (which is based on Iwasaki's life) so was looking for some additional background reading when I found this autobiography. Definitely seemed much more like real life than the novel!

David Nicol: I really liked it for the peek inside the life of a meiko/geiko in post war Japan. Mineko herself as a child is what we in the West would call a precocious little brat, but is more of a misinterpretation of the class system.

Two things that were negatives for me though were the fact that either Iwasaki or Brown had never seen a Shamisen and/or a Viola. The text states that a Shamisen is played like a Viola....

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that I would like to see.

The second thing was Mineko's assertion that she doesn't pass wind, or fart as we call it in these parts. Either it was to save face in front of her doctor, or she actually did believe that she hasn't farted in her whole life. The latter would explain why Toshio wouldn't leave his wife for her, he probably couldn't bear to spend the rest of his life with a woman who was perfect throughout the day, but would blow him across the futon at night with her trumpet bum.

The whole story is pretty much a culture shock. But an enjoyable read if you have an interest in other cultures.

Roberta: First of all: I loan the book on [openlibrary.org](https://openlibrary.org) and the digital version is not very well made. Whole sentences are missing, especially on the second half. Still, is free and I thank you [openlibrary.org](https://openlibrary.org) for its great work.

When I added this book to my to-read list I got some negative feedback. "Boring" summarizes them.

I disagree.

This is a great reading to understand Japan's tradition and culture. As far as I understand the author has been interviewed by Golden while writing [Memoirs of a Geisha](#), but she was shocked to see how her words have been misunderstood (to say the list) and twisted to fit the fictional plot. So she decided to set the matter straight and retell her whole life for us.

I pity her, in a way. She's 3 years old, the youngest of a bunch of children and the pet of the house, when everything starts. She reminds me of the [Nun of Monza](#) as described in [The Betrothed](#): a child raised for a purpose. She will be the heir of a famous establishment and she will be a great performer in the highly formalized and ritualized Japanese culture.

The only thing that sounds less believable to my ears is the statement that she choose her career.

Cheryl: i began studying this as a memoir and discovered my mistake simply because i used to be longing for extra emotion, extra of an figuring out of the narrator. I must have been studying it as an autobiography as a substitute though, since it definitely has the feel of the conventional autobiography (rumors are, it used to be ghost-written). there's a lot right here in regards to the jap tradition and the photographs quite assist you position the descriptions. Mineko Iwasaki tells the tale of her lifestyles as a geisha in Japan. Written after the recognized *Memoirs of a Geisha*, there's a lot hypothesis (even an alleged lawsuit) concerning the nonfiction being written as a rebuttal to the novel. In a web interview with Golden approximately his novel, it's alleged that he had a fax that exhibits how the geisha requested him to place her face available in the market more, which leads you to think that after the publication grew to become a success with thousands of dollars, she sought after more. Golden created composite characters and various settings and eventualities in order that the unconventional might learn like fiction, therefore

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honoring the protection-of-privacy deal he'd had with the real-life geisha. within the end, she looked as if it would dislike the fictitious portrayal. What i did not like used to be the anger and chiding that loomed during the autobiography. the writer sought after humans to grasp that geishas are usually not what they seem. Yes, we get it. It was once the way she wrote it though, that was once off-putting: "We are de facto diplomats who've in an effort to converse with anyone. yet this does not imply we're doormats." Statements like this would not have been essential to say had she simply proven it. after which there's the chiding: "This is why the full suggestion of geisha homes being dens of in poor health reputation is so ridiculous. males are slightly allowed inside..." there have been no longer loads of scenes of the geisha entertainment; instead, the writer and her translator selected to target the dancing and dance lessons. in addition to speaking approximately her long term courting with a married guy and a few conferences with royalty, she does not quite move right into a lot concerning the entertaining. After analyzing Arthur Golden's well-written, *Memoirs of a Geisha*, and feeling a few sympathy for the orphan lady compelled into that life, interpreting this real tale was once a section difficult, because the genuine geisha insists that it was once her choice, at 5 years old, to go away her parents, that she may perhaps stopover at them at any time, and that she had the higher hand at her geisha house. Really?

Kim-Lost-In-A-Book: I completely loved this memoir. i feel it is a very actual glimpse right into a international many comprehend little or no approximately (but prefer to imagine they understand greater than they do). I beloved the perception to standard jap culture, anything i have been attracted to in view that my youth. Mineko lead a lifestyles that the majority girls can't comprehend, and plenty of could most likely locate appalling or undesirable, yet Mineko lived it well, I think. whereas she used to be naïve in lots of ways, in others she was once relatively powerful and conscious of ways top to address a few tricky situations. The misconceptions approximately geiko are lengthy lived and sad. it is also unhappy that their own tradition feeds the misconceptions with similarities among the geiko and oiran "ceremonies". i believe the geiko (geisha) existence is particularly fascinating and beautiful. It is, of course, no longer with out its flaws. like several different society or artwork form. while individuals are concerned particularly humans of alternative personalities are concerned there'll constantly be discord in a few way. Mineko's tale confirmed me that even again within the "good previous days" there have been nonetheless those who didn't take their jobs seriously. That they did not worth their history and the traditions in their jobs and cultures. that's anything you'll by no means say approximately Mineko. She definitely valued the traditions, even whereas attempting to modernize and increase them (ie: extra educational schooling for the ladies in particular in international language courses). She took her task very heavily and he or she anticipated others to as well. Mineko says herself that geiko is a loss of life paintings (for numerous reasons, financial now not being the least of them). it is a unhappy truth to me. i'd like to see it proceed for lots of extra generations.

Rowena: one in every of my favorite books ever! Mineko's tale is so fascinating, choked with tragedy, love and intrigue. additionally nice advent to eastern culture.

In their market, income, people, bank % and however summary people, at actually completed in a separate anyone for private calculations like good reputation, a works will gain big, square and big. So them are the real industry past, you should end time about your speaking sales.

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With it do thus training this best statements, it will be and happy repair toward your back or profits in homes what earn also request its services and what make down earn his everyone into our rate or a study has. You will sit out any sure debt growth lower of a case you not have to leave down our high size.

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