



Risuko: A Kunoichi Tale

David Kudler

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A century of civil war has devastated Japan, but Kano Murasaki has grown up far from the conflicts and battles that rage in the nation. Nicknamed “Squirrel,” or Risuko, all the young girl wants to do is climb trees as she grows up in the Serenity Province. And yet, Risuko finds herself drawn into the war and handed responsibilities and expectations that she had never dreamed of when her innocuous hobby—tree-climbing—suddenly draws the attention of a powerful lady.

Now, Risuko finds herself pulled into a realm where the stakes are higher and the world more complicated and deadly. While some in her community believe that she can “bring victory” and become “a very special kind of woman,” Risuko longs to return to the simplicity of her life before. And yet, she finds herself in the center of the conflict, with the power in her hands to either reunite the nation for good, or to destroy it entirely.

Risuko is an artfully crafted novel that evokes a heavy sense of place and enchantment. The world in which Risuko lives is filled with lords and ladies, spies, and complicated battles, not all of which are fought out on the field. Lady Chiyome especially is an interesting figure, with a depth that is mirrored in the complicated relationships in the rest of the tale. *Risuko* becomes an interesting blend of both the historical and the magical, and the stakes of the story are enormous. In turn, Risuko’s development and evolution are fascinating to watch in this powerful and relentless coming-of-age adventure.

STEPHANIE BUCKLIN (Fall 2016)

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