

Holding the front folds of her *shalwar* protectively, Sakina Bano strode toward the water. As she went past the other woman in the *sari* she smiled at her. The woman gave her a startled look, and then, dropping the hand with which she had been shielding her eyes from the sun, she let her arm fall away from her knees, and following Sakina Bano with her gaze, she returned her smile.

"Wait for me," Sakina Bano called to Hameeda in a loud, happy voice, "wait, girl."

FOR DISCUSSION AND WRITING

1. The author presents the beach scene from the point of view of Raza's mother, Sakina. What details show how Sakina views the beach scene in which her son is comfortable? How would the beach scene be different if it were told from Raza's point of view?
2. What qualities can help a person adapt to a different culture? Do you have these qualities? What in your life indicates whether or not you are adaptable?
3. How open to change is Sakina Bano? Use the story to support your response.

NOTES FROM A FRAGMENTED DAUGHTER

Elena Tajima Creef

"Notes From A Fragmented Daughter," is an autobiographical memoir by the daughter of a Japanese mother and a white North Carolinian father. Elena Tajima Creef, a Ph.D. candidate in the History of Consciousness at the University of California, describes herself as "your basic half-Japanese gemini feminist, existentialist would-be writer of bad one-act comedy revues." In the following selection, her wry humor provides a balance for her explorations of World War II and Asian-American women's history and literature.

SOME PERSONAL SCENES

I. At an art gallery opening for local Asian American women artists, a tall white man in glasses, beard, and big hair bundled up into a ponytail hovers over a table full of sushi, chow mein, egg rolls, and teriyaki chick-

en. He looks at me awkwardly and attempts conversation. "Did you make any of the food? I notice you look kinda Asian."

2. Marion is half Chinese and half Japanese and I like the way his face looks. We sit and talk about what it means to have mixed backgrounds in a culture that can't tell Chinese apart from Japanese and where McDonald's still serves Shanghai Chicken McNuggets with teriyaki sauce.

3. I am fifteen and am sitting in the back seat of my best friend Doreen's Volkswagon Bug, when her uncle's new wife Clara climbs into the passenger seat and we are introduced. Clara speaks in tongues at the Ladies Prayer Meetings, and has seen angels in the sky through her Kodak Instamatic.

She turns to me and shouts in a thick New York accent,

"So what are you studying?"

I say, "English."

She says, "Gee, your English is very good.

How long have you been in this country?"

I say, "All of my life."

She shouts, "Are you Chinese?"

I say, "Japanese."

She says, "I admire your people very much!"

I smile and say, "Yes, and we are very good with our hands, too."

4. Katie Gonzales follows me around for one week at sixth grade summer camp, her left arm in a sling from a tetherball accident. "I'm gonna get you, you flat-faced chinaman." I want to tell her that I'm only half-Japanese, but the words stick in my mouth and instead, I call her a beaner and imagine I am twisting that left arm right off her brown skinny body.

5. Later, when I am thirteen, I bury my mother once and for all and decide to go Mexican. It makes a lot of sense. I am no longer Elena, I am now Elaina and I begin insisting I am Mexican wherever I go. With my long black hair, my sun-darkened skin, and my new name, I can pass and I am safe. For the next year, I obsessively hide my Japanese mother and deny my Japanese roots. No one is allowed to meet her. I do not let her answer the phone if I can help it, or go near the door if I can get there first. I sabotage the PTA's efforts to get her to come to their monthly meetings, and

I conveniently get dates mixed up for "Open House." I live in fear that someone will find out that my mother is Japanese and spread it around the classroom like a dirty rumor. I love it when people ask if I am Español, because it is safe, because it means I do not stand out.

6. My mother and I are getting out of the car at Builder's Emporium when a young, ugly, straw-haired man gets out of his truck and shouts that my mother has stolen his parking space. She says she doesn't know what he's talking about and he tells her to shut up her slant-eyed face. My heart is pounding as we shop for light fixtures and nails but we never say a thing.

7. It is a dark, wet, rainy Santa Cruz night, and I go to see "Tampopo"—your basic Japanese noodle western—by myself. I am in a very good mood and allow a balding middle-aged man with a burgundy plum scarf tied around his neck to make conversation with me in the lobby.

"I really love Japanese films, almost as much as I love Asian girls! I'm going to Taiwan next month to meet this woman I've been corresponding with. I really prefer Oriental women to American because (he whispers) there are so many 'feminists' in this town. You are Asian, aren't you? Don't tell me, let me guess. Japanese? Chinese? Hawaiian? Eurasian?"
Idiot. I am the daughter of a World War II Japanese war bride who met and married my North Carolinian hillbilly father one fine day in 1949 while she was hanging up the laundry to dry. Nine months out of the year, I pose as a doctoral student—a historian of consciousness; the rest of the time, I am your basic half-Japanese postmodernist gemini feminist, existentialist would-be writer of bad one-act comedy revues, avid cat trainer, and closet reader of mademoiselle, cosmo, signs, diacritics, elle, tv guide, cultural critique, representations, people magazine, critical inquiry, national enquirer, feminist issues, house beautiful, architectural digest, country living, cat fancy, bird talk, mother jones, covert action, vogue, glamour, the new yorker, l.a. times, l.a. weekly, and sometimes penthouse forum.

So how do you like them apples, bub? If you come near me one more time with your touch-me-feel-you New Age Bagwan male sensitivity, I just may strangle you with the burgundy plum scarf you have tied around your neck.

The headlines blare: "They're Bringing Home Japanese Brides! Six thousand Americans in Japan have taken Japanese brides since 1945, and all the little Madam Butterflies are studying hamburgers, Hollywood and home on the range, before coming to live in the U.S.A."

Although she is not interviewed, my mother appears in one of the bright technicolor photographs in the January 19, 1952, issue of the *Saturday Evening Post*. She is the short one with the funny hairdo, hovering over an apple pie, smiling with her classmates in the American Red Cross "Brides' School" for Japanese Wives. While the article attempts to tell the postwar story of the Japanese war bride in general, it also tells the story of how my own American G.I. father met and married my Japanese mother in war-torn occupied Japan. It is, in essence, my own pictorial origin story.

There are over 45,000 Japanese women who married American servicemen after World War II and immigrated to the United States. I have been meeting and interviewing these women for the last few years for a collection of oral histories I hope to someday publish. I have been told over and over again by many of these women that they despise the name "war bride." There is something dirty and derogatory about this word, but rarely has anyone told me why. "Call us 'Shin Issei' (the New Immigrants)," they say. Or how about, "Japanese Wives of American Servicemen." Don't call us "war brides." They whisper, "It is not nice."

I am the daughter of a World War II Japanese war bride who met and married my white North Carolinian hillbilly father one fine day in 1949 while she was hanging up the laundry to dry.

There is no escaping this body made out of history,
war and peace,
two languages,
and two cultures.

My name is Elena June,
I am the youngest daughter of Chiyohi,
who is the only surviving daughter of Iso,
who was the daughter of the Mayor of Yokoze

and was the Village Beauty
born in the last century to a Japanese woman
whose name is now forgotten,
but who lived in the Meiji era
and loved to tell ghost stories.

FOR DISCUSSION AND WRITING

1. *Creef presents a number of situations that anger or exasperate her. Which of these situations would bother you most?*
2. *What attitude does the author have toward Shanghai Chicken McNuggets with teriyaki sauce?*
3. *Why does the author choose the “note” form for this memoir? Do you feel that it is effective? Explain.*
4. *Creef presents situations in which she feels people acted ignorantly or disrespectfully toward her. Create an additional note in the author’s style in which someone she meets for the first time acts appropriately.*
5. *Create a dialogue between Creef and her mother about one of the incidents in the selection.*