



Fudoki

Kij Johnson

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In her skillful debut novel, Kij Johnson took the classic Japanese myth of the fox who dared to become a woman to win true love and created *The Fox Woman*, a luminous, lyrical tale of love, desire, joy, and the nature of the soul.

Set in the same universe as *The Fox Woman*, this time Kij Johnson takes on another animal totem and enters the world of the creature who comes to be known as Kagaya-hime, a sometime woman warrior, occasional philosopher, and reluctant confidante to noblemen.

And who may or may not be the figment of the imagination of an aging empress who is embarking on the last journey of her life, setting aside the trappings of court life and reminiscing as she follows the paths that are leading her to the nunnery and death.

Fudoki is the tale of a being who starts her journey on the kami, or spirit road, as a humble-if ever a being such as a Cat can be humble-small tortoiseshell feline. She has seen her family destroyed by a fire that decimated most of the Imperial city. This loss renders her taleless, the only one left alive to pass on such stories as *The Cat Born the Year the Star Fell*, *the Cat with a Litter of Ten*, *the Fire-Tailed Cat*. Without her fudoki-self and soul and home and shrine-she cannot keep the power of her clan together. And she cannot join another fudoki because, although she might be able to win a place within another clan, to do so would mean that she would cease to be herself.

So a small cat begins an extraordinary journey. Along the way she will attract the attention of old and ancient powers, including gods who are curious about this creature newly come to Japan's shores, and who choose to give the tortoiseshell a human shape.

And who set her on a new kami road, where Kagaya-hime will have to choose a way to find what happiness she can.

Weaving a haunting story of one being's transformation and journey of discovery with the telling of another's long life set against the backdrop of the courtly rituals of Imperial power, Kij Johnson has written a powerful novel about the nature of freedom and the redemptive power of transformation--if only one is brave enough to risk it all.

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