

Be Not Ashamed

"Huh? What's up?" my friend Sam, in seventh grade chorus, asked me. I had been reading his manga (Japanese graphic novel/comic book) over his shoulder. On the pages, I saw a character with a spikey hairstyle that reminded me of another character in one of my favorite video games. I found out that the manga was based on an anime show called *Tenchi Muyo!* that was coming to Cartoon Network soon. I was very curious and decided to watch it when the show came on the air.

When it arrived, I sat down to watch it and then one of the characters began to stand out from among the others. At first, I saw her negatively, "What's with the huge, round pink eyes?" She had long pigtails that went down to her feet, and her hair was light blue, perfectly natural for an anime. The character's name was Sasami, the second princess of the planet Jurai.

Soon, she began to grow on me. She had a cute voice, laugh, and an adorable smile. I couldn't help myself; I started to like her; though she was eight-years-old and later, that would lead to some problems.

"Where is everyone?" Sasami asked with a small, disappointed voice in one episode. Before her was a grand table of well-cooked meat and vegetables that she cooked herself. And this was just breakfast. I wondered what lunch and dinner would have been like. Sasami was an expert cook. It has been suggested multiple times throughout the series that she was possibly the best chef in all the universe. Unfortunately, I am unable to taste her culinary arts for myself—the TV gets in the way.

Without a complaint (and happily even), Sasami took over almost all the house chores. She was three times the better house-keeper than any of the other girls in the show. And fans all around the world loved her for her house-keeping skills. I was different though, I grew attached to her charming personality, and just how cute, sweet, and kind she was.

The ninth episode of the series, my favorite, was all about Sasami. Strange things kept happening all over the house the Tenchi gang were working on repairing and for some odd reason,

Sasami seemed to be in the very place those things occurred. Then it happened. They saw her reflection in the water, and it was not Sasami's at all. In the water where Sasami's reflection should have been was Tsunami, the first ship and goddess of Jurai. In fear, Sasami ran away, hid herself in the woods, and began to cry. Finally, Tenchi, Washu, and Ayeka found her. Sasami apparently couldn't help herself from exclaiming:

“I'm not your sister, Ayeka! The real Sasami is dead!” What had happened? Why did Sasami have a reflection of a woman—who looked like Sasami, only older—instead of a normal reflection?

Then Tsunami spoke from the reflection in the water and began to explain. “It started over 700 years ago when the Space Pirate, Ryoko attacked Jurai.” Ryoko had broken through Jurai's defenses. She caused massive destruction to the main palace on the planet and almost ended up killing little four-year-old Sasami.

During the fight, Sasami was exploring. She went into the Inner Sanctum of the Palace where the growing trees were kept. However, it was dangerous, because the trees were all mounted on high-rising platforms which could only be crossed by teleporting from one spot to the other. Suddenly, there was a devastating hit from one of Ryoko's attacks and Sasami's foot slipped, causing her to fall hundreds of feet below onto a hard, dome-shaped rock surrounded by water. That scene aroused something in my heart. I wanted to reach out, and help her; to save her from her horrible fate.

There, the young Princess's blood was covering the rock. A small trickle of it ran down the surface, and then touched the water. That triggered Tsunami to appear, and to save Sasami's life by assimilating with her.

“The real Sasami died that day,” Sasami said in tears after Tsunami had finished telling the story. When she said that, I couldn't that believe in my heart. She still had to be alive somehow! Fortunately, such comfort came a few minutes later in the episode.

After Sasami was comforted by Ayeka and Tenchi, Tsunami appeared and spoke to them. “In truth, Sasami did not die that day. She barely survived. She believes that she is my creation, when in fact we are one and the same being.” Tsunami's appearance was an image, an image of what Sasami would look like when she grew up. What a relief.

Sasami forgave Ryoko for what the Space Pirate nearly did to her without words. She always called her “Ryoko-oneechan,” which was like saying, “My dear sister, Ryoko.” Sasami was unwittingly being like Christ, who taught us to forgive our enemies and even to love them.

Even more like Christ, Sasami even healed the sick and the wounded. In one episode, Tenchi fell ill with a flu. His vision became fuzzy and he fell to the ground, unconscious (that's a nasty flu). Everyone, save Sasami was punch-drunk and out cold from drinking too much sake. “Someone come and help me!” she cried before gasping at the awful scene of Ryoko, Ayeka, and the others just hanging there in the living room like dead bodies (really funny scene actually, and oh, so responsible of them). Immediately, she ran outside where it was snowing, endangering herself to find a way to help or heal Tenchi's illness.

Azaka and Kamidake, the twin guardians of Ayeka were hanging around at the gate when Sasami came to them. She was frantic. “Tenchi seems to be sick or something! He's breathing heavily and sweating a lot!”

“Please try to calm down,” Azaka said.

“He's not feeling well, and he has a fever!”

The guardians agreed that it sounded like Tenchi had the flu. Sasami asked what they could do, and they thought of using sap from a Jurain plant called 'Ryu-Oh' that had been planted in the lake.

Staying outside in the cold and risking hypothermia, Sasami attempted to get the sap from Ryu-Oh. She had nothing that could extract the sap from the plant; however, she could communicate with the plant because Ryu-Oh was the seedling of a Jurain tree. So, she prayed for it. Ryu-Oh responded by sending out small rays of rainbow-colored light to the ground and finally, some of its sap appeared on one of the leaves. Sasami took it and applied it to Tenchi, falling asleep next to his bed. It so heart-touching and cute that Sasami cared so much and went to so much effort at her own risk to help Tenchi.

Another time, Sasami needed to summon Tsunami to heal someone who was nearly dead. Tsunami appeared to the person in her hospital bed—none could see her—and then pressed her

forehead against the patient's own. Suddenly, the person's heart started up to the surprise of the doctors and the nurses.

Continually, Sasami went out of her way to help people in any way that she could. When I wondered and thought about the type of woman Sasami would be when she grew up, I thought that was it! I knew that she was the type of woman that I wanted at my side. Embarrassingly, I became somewhat of a fanatic of Sasami. Looking back, it was obvious that I was a little too obsessed with her, and it tended to annoy people. Some of my friends somewhat understood what I wanted, but it would get on their nerves whenever I would talk about Sasami too much. Other people were down-right cruel. They said things like:

“It's scary how obsessed you are with that girl.”

“Pedophile!”

“Ewww... what's wrong with you?”

Stop! Stop! Stop!

Sometimes it felt like no one understood me and my desires fully, except God. Eventually I silenced myself and kept my feelings to myself, bottling them up and hiding them for none to see. I was ashamed of what others might think. I didn't even want to know what my parents (my Mom hated anime) would think about my desires.

What would have caused such harsh reactions? Possibly due to how much attention I gave her. She was an eight-year old girl after all, character or no character. So some may have seen my actions as creepy because of the age difference and the slightly over-the-top obsession I had with her, whereas I saw them as innocent, kind, and cute.

When I was in my late teens, I ran into a graphic picture of Sasami on the net that disturbed me. Getting up from my computer, and going into the kitchen, I slammed my fists against the hard door of the fridge with real tears leaving my eyes. I cried to the Lord to comfort me in my sorrow. They had raped her. They had continually raped her. Why? Why? Why was something so kind, gentle, and loving

being torn apart and abused? The filthy picture that they made of her, chains, a needle-like device, and Sasami in the middle, looking frightened and scared. I just had to find that horrible pornographic picture. It was the same, in my eyes, as raping the character.

Years later, in college, I found out why; Sasami was the most popular character in the series worldwide. Hundreds or thousands of people were obsessed with her, some obsessed to the point of drawing horrible pornographic images of her, or sexual stories about her. Even worse, there was a group of “Anti-Sasami” fans who wrote stories of her being raped and killed in horrible ways. Either way, fan or anti-fan, they enjoyed the vile things they made (not that every fan was perverted, though).

Recently I reflected on that event and asked myself, was I too, also obsessed with her? Was I like them—monsters—that lusted after innocent children? I went back and looked at old records of showing how obsessed I was—mentioning her in almost every post on my favorite forum online, and in chatrooms. I thought about what I had been accused of, *pedophile*, *scary*, *wrong*. I asked myself, was I the same as those on the net who drew horrible pictures of her or wrote erotic stories about her?

As I wrote these words, a voice came to my heart, *Who art thou?*

“I’m Andrew...” I said.

Andrew, thou knowest who thou art. Fear not what others think, and be not ashamed because of thy desires. Wherefore are they evil? Do ye seek evil?

I didn't answer that immediately. I just thought of that smile, that laugh, those wonderful attributes that Sasami had, and hoped to find a real woman with that type of lovable personality.

I think I'll go watch another episode. There's no shame in that!