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The Life of a Geisha

Eleanor Underwood

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Eleanor Underwood : The Life of a Geisha before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Life of a Geisha:

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THE LIFE OF A GEISHA illustrates the fascinating world of Japan's powerful and seductive geishas, a fading yet beautiful world that has captured the imaginations of millions of readers. This striking book contains full-color woodblock prints made during Japan's famous Edo Period, historic and contemporary photographs of geisha life, and images of the "floating world," Japan's mysterious artistic subculture. The accompanying text includes evocative Japanese poems and haikus. All celebrate the beauty and creativity of the geisha, who with her exquisitely detailed costume, elaborate makeup and hairstyle, and artfully ritualized behavior, chastely beguiles and entertains Japan's most powerful men.

From the Inside Flap
The mysterious milieu of Japan's treasured geisha—with her stylized makeup, elaborate coiffure, elegant kimono, and artful, coquettish manner—has long fascinated observers around the globe. With gorgeous illustrations and a lively text, "The Life of a Geisha" explores the world of geisha, from their early predecessors in the seventh century to modern geisha today. Beautiful ukiyo-e woodblock prints by Japanese masters Hiroshige, Yoshitoshi, Kunisada and others reveal the special geisha spirit, or *iki*, that brought forth the popular rise of geisha. Geisha songs, haiku and senry (satirical Edo-period verse) accompany enchanting images of geisha in various stages of development—from shikomi or indentured servant, to maiko or apprentice geisha—to portray the unique realm of these female artist-entertainers who gained full-fledged geisha status only after years of shamisen-playing and other lessons. Antique photographers from the late nineteenth century as well as vintage postcards and posters offer a glimpse into the singular Japanese subculture that was little known in the years before World War II, while stunning art photography from the mid-1940's to today illustrates geisha's contemporary role as beloved standard-bearers of traditional arts. This lovely volume fully illuminates the seductive geisha world, offering a look "behind the scenes" into the life and times of this chastely beguiling female icon who has captivated Japan's most powerful men for over 200 years.