



The Accidental Office Lady: An American Woman in Corporate Japan

By Laura Kriska

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A young woman with a new degree in Japanese studies and plenty of youthful idealism and can-do spirit accepts a job as the first American trainee at Honda's headquarters in Tokyo. Her image of Japanese corporate life is dramatically challenged on her first day at work when she is issued a blue polyester uniform—a uniform worn only by women!

From menial beginnings serving tea to executives and cleaning the boss's desk, to a stint in public relations, to developing training classes for Japanese associates going to America, Laura Kriska recounts her struggle to adapt to—and ultimately thrive in—the culture of a traditional Japanese company. Shortly before her departure, she travels full circle by introducing a successful campaign to make women's uniforms optional.

Now with a new foreword by the author, *The Accidental Office Lady* is a vivid and valuable firsthand account not only of corporate Japan and the gender inequality that persists within it, but of an outsider's successful attempt to work within cultural boundaries to affect organizational change.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

The Japan we see most often is an image of a country teetering on the edge of depression, an economic system that's too hamstrung by its own cultural traditions to fully participate in the global economy. The endless train of trade delegations to and from Tokyo seem to attest to the cultural gap that exists between Japan and the rest of the world--but that's where the explanation usually stops. We're rarely privy as to the nature of the gap itself.

That's why Laura Kriska's book, *The Accidental Office Lady*, is so valuable. The book is a firsthand account of Kriska's two years in Japan working as a trainee for the Honda Motor Company. As a trainee, she takes on a variety of tasks, from serving tea and taking the coats of senior executives to working in one of Honda's auto factories. Along the way she confronts the rigidity of business life in Japan: "I felt the corporate walls forcing me into a mold as though I were trapped inside a Fisher-Price playhouse, in which each piece of furniture fit perfectly into its assigned space and had a single hole for a peg-shaped doll. I didn't want to be that doll, and the more threatened I felt, the more I wanted to resist." Kriska not only successfully resists, but finds that she's able to fit into the corporate world of Honda. Anyone contemplating the nuances of Japanese life--especially from a woman's perspective--will find this an insightful and entertaining read. --*Harry C. Edwards*

From Publishers Weekly

First jobs straight out of college are never what one expects. With new degree in hand, Kriska accepted what sounded like a plum assignment as the first American woman trainee at Honda Motor Company's headquarters in Tokyo. Perhaps not surprisingly, her idealistic expectations of fulfilling work, engaging colleagues and authority to make contributions are chilled by standoffish co-workers who view her with confused suspicion and a day-to-day drudgery that starts with donning an ugly polyester uniform that is worn only by the women. Though as a "trainee" she is not on the lowest rung of the corporate ladder (and never holds the title "Office Lady"), this uniform symbolizes for her the very different levels of power that men and women hold at Honda's headquarters. It's not accidental that her occidental background leads to more than the usual trauma of being the newest kid on the block. As Kriska matures and gains the language and cultural skills necessary to begin to understand her work environment, she convinces her Japanese mentor that the work she can do best will take her into the nitty gritty of a company factory in Sayama. Although the precise time of her experiences is unclear, a wealth of details, recaptured from journal notes, make this an entertaining cross-cultural memoir: "I looked at the small entryway that had been filled with a pile of shoes and saw that all eleven pairs had been reorganized in pairs and reversed so that the toes pointed toward the door."

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Review

"...an entertaining cross-cultural memoir." —*Publishers Weekly*

"...*The Accidental Office Lady*, is an informative...account of what it was like to be the first American woman ever employed at Honda Motor Co. headquarters." —*BusinessWeek.com*

"...a revealing portrait of the corporate culture that reflects, and defines, Japan." —*New York Times On The Web*

"Laura Kriska's lively and invaluable story underlines the simple truth that making the world better starts with a fundamental respect for the way other people live. —**Greg Mortenson, author of *Three Cups of Tea and Stones Into Schools***

"*The Accidental Office Lady: An American Woman in Corporate Japan*, originally published in 1998 and recently rereleased with a new foreword by the author, is her story. The book is a testament to the fact that it is possible to thrive in even the most alien of cultures." —*Bangkok Post*

"This book resonated with me because it largely mirrored the experiences I had working in a Japanese office in the early 1980s. I could completely relate to the author's loneliness and frustration, as well as the way her experiences changed her, helped her grow, and left her with an abiding love of Japan." —*Goodreads*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Megan Snyder:

This *The Accidental Office Lady: An American Woman in Corporate Japan* usually are reliable for you who want to be described as a successful person, why. The explanation of this *The Accidental Office Lady: An American Woman in Corporate Japan* can be among the great books you must have is giving you more than just simple studying food but feed you actually with information that possibly will shock your earlier knowledge. This book is definitely handy, you can bring it all over the place and whenever your conditions in e-book and printed kinds. Beside that this *The Accidental Office Lady: An American Woman in Corporate Japan* giving you an enormous of experience like rich vocabulary, giving you trial of critical thinking that could it useful in your day pastime. So , let's have it and luxuriate in reading.

Jay Klein:

Reading a reserve tends to be new life style on this era globalization. With reading you can get a lot of information that could give you benefit in your life. Together with book everyone in this world could share their idea. Books can also inspire a lot of people. Lots of author can inspire their very own reader with their story as well as their experience. Not only situation that share in the guides. But also they write about the data about something that you need instance. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach children, there are many kinds of book which exist now. The authors nowadays always try to improve their proficiency in writing, they also doing some research before they write with their book. One of them is this *The Accidental Office Lady: An American Woman in Corporate Japan*.

Steven Miller:

Why? Because this *The Accidental Office Lady: An American Woman in Corporate Japan* is an unordinary book that the inside of the guide waiting for you to snap the item but latter it will shock you with the secret this inside. Reading this book next to it was fantastic author who also write the book in such wonderful way makes the content within easier to understand, entertaining technique but still convey the meaning entirely. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this any longer or you going to regret it. This unique book will give you a lot of rewards than the other book have got such as help improving your proficiency and your critical thinking method. So , still want to postpone having that book? If I were you I will go to the

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Gerard Norman:

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