



Hamada San

It is the summer of 2002, Vera and I are together in Japan for the second time, we are in Tokyo in the prefecture of Kawasaki at the Fujitsu Dojo with friends from the Yutenkai of Tokyo. It is one of the hottest and wettest days I can remember, the wind is completely off, you sweat just because you exist.

It is the first training session of this journey in which we participate, and I train with the usual desire to share the most beautiful keiko in the world: the Egami KarateDo. It is well known for enthusiasts that in extreme weather conditions such as those of that day, it is harder to watch a workout than to do it.

At a certain point Kunio Hamada interrupts his keiko, detaches himself from the group, takes the fan facing us who are practicing and moves it, orienting it in the direction of Vera, who is sitting on a chair alone watching the training. I confess that this distracted me from my samurai concentration and I followed the evolution of that scene carefully.

Hamada san sits in seiza in front of Vera and greets her with a bow and a deep rei.

Vera is visibly embarrassed, she doesn't know whether to get up or stay seated. However, with a smile she also bows to share her greeting. I, always distracted by the keiko, remain completely enraptured by the unexpected behavior.

After the greeting, still in front of Vera, Hamada san spreads a large handkerchief on the ground and begins to arrange the necessary to perform the tea ceremony, dedicating it to her. Vera remains motionless all the time, pleasantly mesmerized by those harmonious and gentle

gestures, but increasingly amazed by this particular and unexpected attention she receives from a high-level black belt practitioner she does not know.

After the ceremony, Hamada san offers tea to Vera: they perform the final rei together and then he puts everything away and goes back to training.

That event was extremely simple but of great strength, the power of kindness and courtesy. This was Hamada san, his gesture so enchanted and positively impressed us that it changed the rest of our stay in Japan for the better.

Vera had always willingly accepted and respected my passion for the discipline and for Japan, she experienced it as a very positive thing, but still as my own. Since that day, thanks to Hamada san, something changed, she felt so welcomed and respected by that strange world of martial arts of the Yutenkai group, that she spontaneously began to share with me that feeling of love for that country so different and so far.

Hamada san took care of Vera by offering her the best welcome imaginable. At that precise moment, both Vera and I, who was watching, had the clear confirmation that we were in the right place and with the right people and that gesture by Hamada san made us feel extraordinarily welcomed, more than we already perceived. We truly felt at home in such an unusual and distant place.

Obviously, immediately after the event, the repeated bows of thanks and gratitude from Vera and mine at the end of training to Hamada san were certainly not lacking, but I feel that they were not enough.

My dear Hamada san, I will always carry with me the memory of your smile, your kindness and that unforgettable gesture of yours that fills me with joy and that I will never forget.

Thank you very much Hamada san, my friend.

March 23, 2021, Enzo Cellini