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life!

THE STRAITS TIMES TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 16 2010 PAGE C19

# Men want to marry her

Professional costume player Alodia Gosiengfiao gets wedding proposals from male fans of her cosplay characters

rachael boon

**D**ealing with unknown men who propose to her and stalkers and fans who try to get upskirt photographs is probably a common occupational hazard for an attractive and popular female cosplayer such as Alodia Gosiengfiao.

So it takes something to grab the 22-year-old Filipino's attention. Her weirdest fan encounter happened recently back home in Manila where a fan prostrated himself before her.

"I was just walking around in a mall in my normal outfit, out of cosplay, when he approached me and bowed down right to the floor in public. I said 'Oh my gosh. What are you doing? Please stand up.' Everyone was staring," says the professional cosplayer, or costume player.

Cosplay is a role-playing game where participants wear elaborate homemade costumes to look like their favourite characters from Japanese comics and cartoons.

Gosiengfiao was in town for the Anime Festival Asia 2010, which celebrates Japanese pop culture, held at the Suntec Convention Centre over the weekend.

Last year at the same event, she, along with her younger sister, Ashley, competed in the Regional Cosplay Championship. They were one out of six finalists and represented the Philippines. This

time, she is a celebrity judge in the contest.

In fact, she has become so well known that she is sponsored by Japanese anime satellite television network Animax and Filipino clothing line Freshgear Jeans and gets paid to travel worldwide to grace cosplay events. The number of fans listed on her Facebook fan page has surged from 80,000 in July to almost 240,000.

"I never thought I would be doing this full-time as it started out as a hobby that I enjoyed in my free time. I am really happy it happened like this because it's doing what you love and getting paid for it," says Gosiengfiao, who used to spend about 5,000 pesos (S\$150) on each cosplay outfit that she made.

She dabbled in cosplay during high school at the age of 15 because she was part of a club called Anime Club, whose members encouraged her to try out cosplay. Her first few outfits were Ragnarok Priestess, a character from online role-playing game Ragnarok Online and Amaha Masane from the anime Witchblade.

Now, she spends about 10,000 to 15,000 pesos on a costume. Occasionally, she pays a seamstress to create an outfit for her, but she mostly likes to get the job done herself.

"I prefer quality costumes over quantity. I really want to do the finishing myself, to make it perfect, make sure all the details are there and secured because sometimes I see cosplayers with falling parts," says the perfectionist.

On her recent trip to Singapore, which she loves because fans here are respectful and ask for permission to take photos of her, she dressed up as Haruhi Suzumiya and Doronjo from the anime Yatterman.

Her favourite cosplay persona is Misa Amane, who is a popular idol character



from Japanese manga and anime series Death Note, because they share similar traits.

Gosiengfiao says: "She is most similar to me because she is bubbly, hyper, always smiling and likes to dress up."

**Alodia Gosiengfiao (above) and the butlers from Butlers Cafe (right) serve up a treat at the festival. PHOTOS: MALCOLM KOH FOR THE STRAITS TIMES**



Libidinous fans of the information design graduate from Ateneo de Manila University will be interested to know that the once-shy Gosiengfiao has no qualms about wearing revealing costumes.

She says: "If the character is of a certain manner, we should know and understand that it is what the character should be. I do psyche myself before donning the costume and try to cover up when I'm not on stage.

"But I definitely want to be as accurate as possible." rachaelb@sph.com.sg



PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

## White truffle sells for \$187,000

Alba (Italy) - A giant white truffle was sold off Sunday to a South Korean wine critic for €105,000 (\$187,000) at a lavish auction near the town of Alba in northern Italy, organisers said.

The truffle, presented at the auction in the mediaeval Castello di Grinzane in a region of Italy famous for its cuisine, weighed 900g.

The price per gram for the truffle was €117, lower than the rate of €133 per gram paid at the same auction last year.

The buyer was Ms Jeannie Cho Lee, who lives in Hong Kong and made her bid via a satellite link-up.

She said on her Twitter account that she bought the truffle with friends and will hold "a white truffle feast" after it arrives on Tuesday. "It is all for charity so it isn't logical prices," she said.

Last year's truffle also went to a buyer from Hong Kong.

Italian businessman Antonio Bertolotto bought three truffles for €108,000 and said he would donate one to Pope Benedict XVI.

Most of the proceeds from the auction, which brought in €307,000, will go to Italian scholarships and charities as well as the Mother's Choice children's charity in Hong Kong.

Agence France-Presse

HD bridges arts and screen divide

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