The Unexpected V - Brand New World

by totally4ryo

Summary

Dee and Ryo, along with Bikky, Carol and the twins, go to Japan for an extended family vacation. They are in for an interesting adventure. Meanwhile things are heating up in New York with trouble caused by the Anti-Carrier Coalition.
Prologue

PROLOGUE

October 13, 2006
Port Walk Mall
Nakagawa Ward, Nagoya Japan

Momo Fujioka walked across the parking garage toward the entrance to the mall. Alongside her, strolled her husband, Dafydd Fujioka. Her husband looked like he would rather be anywhere else, but he couldn’t say no to Momo. Not that she would let him out of it if he did. Dafydd probably knew that too, but the fact was that her husband adored her and would have said yes if it made her happy. It didn’t mean that he had to be happy about it. It was a good thing she adored him too, so he was getting away with his pouty, sulky mood.

“Tell me again,” Dafydd said in Japanese, “why we are here.”

“We need to get nice gifts to give to my cousin at his party,” Momo replied also in Japanese. “I want to also get something for Akira-san, since she is hosting the party.”

“About the gifts,” Dafydd started. “I was thinking rice crackers or something like that. Maybe some mochi. We can go to our favorite shop by Oso Kannon and bring them the best mochi in Japan.”

Momo smiled at her husband’s words. He had a lot of pride in being born and raised in Nagoya. “We can bring that too,” Momo said. “But we really need to get something nice for my cousin and his family.”

“Momo, it’s not like Ryo-san’s a close cousin. You’re not even an Aoki. Your father was a second cousin to Akira-san’s cousin’s husband’s brother. Isn’t that what you said when you first got the party invitation?”

“That’s correct,” Momo agreed.
“So, what’s the big fuss?” Dafydd asked. “We’ve been together almost 10 years and it’s the first that I’m hearing about this part of your family.”

“That’s not true. I mentioned Ryo-san before. But this is a big deal that he is coming back to Japan for a visit. The last time he was in Japan for any significant time was when he was in the Army and stationed at Zama. That was around 10 years ago.”

“No,” Dafydd disagreed. “It’s only a big deal because Akira Aoki summoned every corner of her relations to a party for her grandson, who is only part Japanese, and his gaijin family.”

Momo shook her head. Looking up at her husband, she said, “Like you’re one to talk about gaijin, Dafydd Fujioka. Your first name is from your gaijin daddy’s nationality.”

“So I’m half-Welsh by a father I never knew, but I was born and raised in Japan. I lived all my life in Nagoya. There might be some Welsh in there but as far as I’m concerned, I’m Japanese,” Dafydd protested.

“Excuse me, but didn’t you go to university in New York?” Momo asked, looking up at her husband with accusing dark eyes.

“Okay, minus four years. I had my reasons for going to New York University, but then I came back here. I worked at my fathers’ store for a while and then joined the police.”

“They almost did not take you because they thought you were gaijin,” she pointed out with amusement.

“And I proved that I am not. Momo, stop it. I am Japanese with a little international travel and a Welsh first name. You once said that made me exotic.” He flashed a charming look at her, his dark eyes meeting hers. He grinned in a way that still made her shiver, even after 10 years together.

“That is one of the first things I noticed about you. Your name. It stood out, just like you do. You are taller than the average Japanese man. You get that from your Welsh daddy, I suppose.”

Dafydd shrugged. “I guess so. I am the tallest in my family. My brothers are shorter than me.”
“That’s because they’re your half-brothers and they are full Japanese.” Momo gazed up at her husband, expecting his reaction. This was far from the first time they had this conversation and Dafydd fell for it every time, with the same reaction.

“How about me?” Dafydd asked with a frown.

Momo laughed. “You always fall for that! You know that I love that you’re half-Welsh, but so Japanese. It makes you unique. And you’re mine. Besides, your dark eyes say that you’re Japanese.” She squeezed his arm as she giggled at the face her husband made.

Dafydd finally laughed. “I can’t find fault in that.”

It went just like all the other times, just as Momo knew it would and she laughed again, smiling up with love shining in her eyes for her handsome husband. He was much taller than her, but she did not mind. In fact, she loved that Dafydd was taller than the average Japanese man.

Dafydd took his wife by her hand. They stopped in the middle of the mall and looked around. “I still don’t know about a full shopping spree for your cousin and his family,” he said dubiously.

“They must be treated well. We don’t want his family going back to America thinking bad of Japan.”

Dafydd laughed. “Momo, I’m sorry to say this, but if we never show, no one would notice, and most certainly your cousin and his family would not have hurt feelings. We’re like the outer limits of the family tree.”

Momo laughed. “That might be true, but we’re still family. We were invited, so we go. Remember we’re not just going for the party. We have been meaning to go to Tokyo and Yokohama for a vacation and this is a perfect reason to go.”

“Yes, it will be nice. I’m just sorry we will have to leave Kiyoshi and Tatsuya with my father because of school. I know they would love to go to Tokyo. They don’t really remember the last time we took them there.”

“Then that will be another excuse to not wait too long before going to Tokyo again. We’ll go when
they are on school break,” Momo said about their 6-year-old twin sons. “But this time, except for the party for my cousin, Tokyo is going to be our nice romantic getaway for six days.”

Dafydd looked thoughtful as he allowed himself to be pulled toward the Sanrio store. “Where are we staying in Tokyo?” he asked, looking worried. “If we spend too much on a hotel, along with eating out, we won’t have money to go back to Tokyo for another year.”

“When I emailed that we are coming, I received an email shortly after saying that for the night of the party and Sunday, we will be staying at the New Crown Star Hotel in Roppongi. We can figure out if we can continue to stay there or we can find something less expensive while we’re out on Sunday.”

“I’m afraid we’ll end up spending the romantic part of this trip in a capsule hotel,” Dafydd said with a sigh.

“Don’t be silly,” Momo said with a laugh. She glanced slyly up at her husband. “It can be very cozy for two in one.” She batted her eyes up at Dafydd.

“Yes, it can be, if we can get on the same floor. Assuming there are co-ed capsule hotels in Tokyo. But I can make sure we’re very cozy in an actual hotel room,” Dafydd said. “Just as long as we have some money left in our account.”

“Of course we will,” Momo said and then walked into the Sanrio store.

Dafydd followed her. “Why are we here? Do you really plan to give them Hello Kitty? They have a lot of Hello Kitty in New York. They even have Sanrio stores.”

“I also received another email from another cousin saying that they are collecting Little Twin Stars. That would be the best start in shopping for the family. I’m sure we can find something that is not available in America.”

“Momo, do we even know what this cousin of yours looks like?”

“Yes, we do,” Momo said. “I have some pictures from when we were kids and his parents came to Osaka and Nagoya a few times. He also went to Nagoya for a weekend when he was in the Army and we met up. I showed him around Nagoya. Then for Emiko’s wedding we spent time together. I
have pictures of him and I’m certain you saw them.” Emiko remembered Dafydd begging out of
going with her to Tokyo for Emiko’s wedding, and wasn’t entirely sure that the reason Dafydd gave,
that he was too pregnant to travel and wanted to stay home, was just an excuse to get out of spending
time with people he saw as strangers despite Momo calling them family. Dafydd never really
considered any of the Aoki family as her family. “If you didn’t, I’ll show them to you later. I also
know he was getting married in March and they were expecting a baby girl.”

“But we never got the wedding announcements and anything on when the baby was born. Now we
have to spend one month’s pay on gifts for them?”

“Don’t be silly. It won’t cost us that much to get gifts for the family,” Momo chastised. “At least they
didn’t expect wedding and baby gifts,” Momo pointed out. “I did think of it anyway,” she admitted,
“but I had no address to send them, and I didn’t want to put it on Akira-san to pay for the postage.”

“She could afford it,” Dafydd commented. When Momo glared at him, he raised his hands in
surrender and walked away and started to look through the store for anything with Little Twin Stars.

He still believed that considering the circumstances, rice cakes would have been enough.

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Chapter 1

Chapter Summary

Dee, Ryo, Bikky, Carol and the twins arrive in Japan, to stay with Ryo's grandmother in Kamakura.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

CHAPTER ONE

October 19, 2006

Haneda Airport

Tokyo, Japan

The Greenways Airline 737 was parked at the gate designated for Greenways flights at the International terminal. Normally only one Greenways flight a day came into and left from Haneda, the flight going non-stop to Frankfurt, Germany and then making stops in Paris and terminating in London. During the day, the gate was also used for two other airlines that had only one of their planes land in Haneda a day, and there were a few open slots to be used by private business jets. The private Greenways jet was becoming a regular at Haneda as business transactions took place to purchase hotels in Japan and other Asian countries. The headquarters for the Asian division of L-M Hotels International was located in Tokyo with a corporate jet coming in from other parts of Asia on a regular basis while hotels were being bought. The 737 that was parked at the gate looked like another of Greenways jets, but if someone looked closer at the logo on the tail, under in small letters said ‘Corporate Jet’.

Inside the private 737, Dee and Ryo were preparing to disembark. Dee looked around the luxurious front lounge with buttery tan leather and cherry wood couches and arm chairs. Bikky was sitting at a chair and table by the window, putting his Gameboy into his rucksack. Ryo was getting the twins settled in their strollers and Carol was in the bathroom, checking her make-up.

Dee had enjoyed the private flight from New York to Tokyo. This was something he decided he could completely get on board with. It was much easier with two infants and two teenagers. He also loved that he didn’t have to be cramped in a seat for the 13-hour flight. It was even much more
comfortable than first class. Once they had reached cruising altitude, they were allowed to sit on the couches and armchairs in the front section. In the middle section, there were tables with cushioned seats by the windows. Best of all, they all got to sleep during some of the journey in the two staterooms in the aft section of the jet. They allowed Carol and Bikky to share one of the staterooms, saying they would prefer nothing but some kissing happened, but if more did, they did not want to know. Even more, they did not want the flight crew to know. When they weren’t sleeping, they spent time watching movies on the large flat screen in the lounge.

Dee could still remember how long and uncomfortable his previous flights to and from Tokyo were. This trip seemed like it took them hardly any time at all. Being able to watch movies as a family and sleeping for almost half the flight in a decent bed definitely had made the trip seem shorter than it was. The only thing a private jet could not relieve was Dee’s mounting excitement to finally see Japan again. This time he was going there with his husband, who had been to Japan many times growing up, and his family. He was hoping that Bikky and Carol would love it as much as Dee and Ryo believed they would. The teens were excited about the trip, and hopefully it wouldn’t disappoint their expectations.

Dee looked at Ryo and could tell his husband was also excited. Ryo once thought that he would always go on a trip to Japan, getting used to the travel when his parents would visit his grandmother, but after his time stationed at Camp Zama when he was in the U.S. Army, he never had a chance to go back. The night before they left, Ryo had admitted he was glad they upped their plans to go then instead of waiting another year or two. Ryo wanted Bikky to finally see the land that was a second home to him, and he wished that Ryoko and Darin would grow up knowing Japan, just as he had.

The only thing Dee was not looking forward to was customs. They were told that instead of going through customs on the plane, they would have to get on the customs line with everyone else who had arrived on commercials flights. While firming the plans for this trip, they were told how the two airports in Tokyo expected everyone to get on the lines for customs. They had also found out that the process to get a slot for a private jet was difficult and more expensive than other airports in Japan. They had considered flying into Nagoya, where the airport was more private jet friendly and then take the 90-minute ride on the Shinkansen to Tokyo. It was Estelle who pointed out that another 90-minute ride after all the time flying across the Pacific Ocean just might not be the best idea, especially with the twins and that the people at the airline had their ways of obtaining a slot for the jet to park. The plane would only be in Tokyo long enough for their belongings to be removed, and to be fueled up. They would probably still be on the line going through customs when the jet would be departing for Hong Kong, where it would stay until the acquisition team for L-M Hotels were ready to head back to the U.S.

Carol entered the lounge, and went over to the couch to collect her carry-on bags.

“Are we ready?” Ryo asked.
“Yup!” Bikky exclaimed. He had been sitting by the window with Carol when the jet made its final approach into Haneda. He had become very excited as he looked below at the streets of Tokyo. He had laughed as he had pointed out three 7-11s on the approach. “It still can’t believe the first thing I saw of Japan was a 7-11!”

“Welcome to the land of the 7-11s,” Ryo said with a laugh. “Just you wait until we go in one. It’s nothing like you’re used to.”

“Oh, tell me!” Dee agreed. “I’m still getting used to our 7-11s not having bento boxes and other cool food.”

“Really?” Carol asked as she joined Ryo and Dee. “Can we go in one?”

“You’ll go in one plenty of times while we’re here,” Dee said. “Don’t you worry.” He took one of the baby bags from Ryo and put his hands on one of the strollers. He looked down into the stroller. “Hey there, baby girl. Are you ready to see Tokyo for the first time?”

Ryoko looked up and smiled at Dee, but he knew it was because she noticed him and nothing more. It would still be few more years before she and her brother would start having opinions about anywhere they travelled.

“I think Darin is ready to get off the plane,” Ryo said with a laugh, pointing to the baby boy in his stroller.

“Oh man!” Bikky laughed. “He looks like he wants to get the stroller moving on its own. Crazy baby.” Darin was wiggling in a way that if he could lift his body, he would have been setting the stroller in motion.

Dee was laughing too.

“Does everyone have everything?” Ryo asked.

The others nodded their heads. “Even if we did, we either do without it or we’ll get a call and have to come back to the airport to pick it up,” Dee commented.
“I’d rather not,” Ryo said.

“Agreed,” said Dee. “But we’re good. So, let’s get off this thing and let them start their turn around while we get on a nice long line.”

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Another advantage of a private flight was that someone from the flight crew accompanied the group as they made their way from the gate to customs, pushing a baggage cart with all the luggage they had aboard with them and not in the baggage hold. Meanwhile another crew member handled their luggage in the cargo hold and accompanied it through customs and into a waiting van hired to deliver the luggage to Akira’s home.

The customs line was not as long as they feared, because they were led to a shorter line for people with small children. It took them twenty minutes before they were officially in Japan and entering the arrivals lobby to meet up with Ryo’s grandmother and uncle. The flight attendant, who had also gone through customs with them, was still with the group, pushing the luggage cart, smiling at the family’s enthusiasm.

“Are you sure we’re going to be able to get everything in one of their vehicles?” Dee asked as they entered the baggage claim area.

“Relax Dee. It’s all being loaded onto a van and they have Obāsan’s address. It’s all being handled through Greenways’ personnel situated in Tokyo. It might even make it there before we do.”

“Or it might end up arriving tomorrow after everything finally clears customs,” Dee quipped. “We did take a lot with us. While packing, I almost felt like I was moving to Japan again. Hell, that time I left New York with two suitcases and a carry-on.”

“Well, let’s see,” Ryo said, “we have two babies, a teenage boy and an 18-year-old girl, plus us. For a two month stay. Yes, that’s a lot of luggage. Also, keep in mind that there’s still a chance that if something doesn’t clear customs, we’ll have to come back to settle it. Hopefully that doesn’t happen and everything makes it to Obāsan’s house sometime today.”
Dee agreed with Ryo as he noticed both Bikky and Carol were giggling like crazy, trying not to outright laugh. “What’s with you two?” he asked.


“Especially the really colorful ones,” Carol added. “One lady had one with Hello Kitty on hers.”

“Remember that Japanese are very polite people,” Ryo explained as Dee rolled his eyes and started to grin. “So, when someone is sick, they wear surgical masks, which you can buy just about anywhere here, to keep their colds to themselves.”

“Seriously?” Bikky asked.

“Wow, that is polite,” Carol remarked. “I guess it’s not so silly after all.”

“It’s probably better than the American way,” Ryo said.

“How come you never wear one when you’re sick, Dads?” Bikky asked. “You both lived here. And Ryo you practically grew up here.”

“He’s not that Japanese,” Dee replied with amusement about Ryo, “and I’m not Japanese. Besides, I hardly get sick, but yeah while I did live here, if I was sick, I was expected to wear one, but I tried to keep it to at home when I wasn’t in my room and at school. I was also expected to wear one if one of the other guys got sick, but I never went that far. Not only are the Japanese polite but they are also very cautious. They also might wear them when they are around someone who is sick so they don’t get sick. Sometimes they’ll wear masks in public places not to pick up any germs from strangers too. Not all Japanese, but some. I knew some people who wore the masks almost all the time when in public.”

Ryo smirked. “I lived on base, with a bunch of Americans. We never thought about the masks, and I tried to avoid going to Obāsan’s house on the weekends if I was sick. At least wearing one in the house because someone else is sick is optional in Obāsan’s home.”

“Does that mean if we get sick while we’re here, we’ll have to wear one?” Carol asked.
“Yes. Exactly,” Ryo replied.

“That sucks,” Bikky remarked.

“Then don’t get sick,” Dee commented.

“Look!” Bikky cut in, “there’s Obāsan and Uncle Nobu!” He ran off to meet his great-grandmother and great-uncle.

“Don’t knock anyone over,” Dee warned. He laughed and looked at Ryo. “At least he seems to be on the tall side between his growing and the average Japanese height.”

Ryo spared a hand from the stroller to reach out and lightly pinch Dee. “Don’t get him started on that,” he warned.

“Ouch!” Dee complained. “It’s true, even if I won’t say that to him. Which happens to go against the code I have with Bikky. I’ve always been honest with him.”

“A little too honest sometimes.”

Dee and Ryo watched as Akira hugged Bikky tenderly, kissing his head. Ryo smiled warmly, glad that his grandmother accepted Bikky as his son as much as Ryoko and Darin were his children. He was also happy that Bikky came to love her as much as if she actually was his grandmother, or great-grandmother. They continued to watch as Bikky moved from Akira to Ryo’s uncle as Akira welcomed Carol to Japan. Once Carol was released and turned to say hello to Nobu, Dee and Ryo approached.

Dee was prepared to hold back as Ryo took the last few steps toward his grandmother but Akira closed the distance, going between the strollers and was hugging both of them. “Oh, my darlings, you really are here, along with your lovely family,” Akira gushed happily in English for Bikky’s and Carol’s sake. “Welcome to Japan.” She then knelt before the strollers. “Hello my sweet chibis. I know it wasn’t that long, but I have missed you all so much.”

Darin and Ryoko both squealed when they saw Akira before them. Darin kicked his feet and waved
his arms while looking at her, while Ryoko reach out as she smiled.

Ryo laughed and said, “It looks like they missed you too, Obāsan.”

Everyone else laughed at the twins greeting their great-grandmother.

Dee said, “What will they do when they don’t see you for months when we get back to New York?”

“We’ll find a reason to get you back here before too long, if I can’t make it to New York,” Akira replied with a smile.

Nobu came over to them, bowing in greeting. The two men bowed back and smiled at Ryo’s uncle. “I received a call assuring me that the rest of your luggage is already going through customs and will be on the way to the house shortly,” he said in English, also mindful of Bikky and Carol. He assisted his mother to her feet. “Shall we go to the house now? I am sure you are all tired from your journey.”

Nobu turned to acknowledge the crewman with their bags. “Please follow us,” he said.

“Getting to the house would be good,” Dee replied, “but we’re not really tired. We all got to sleep some during the flight. Chibis included.”

Ryo laughed. “Yeah, we slept for about 6 hours or so. Right now, I think there’s a lot of adrenalin from finally being in Japan that we’ll need to work off before attempting anymore sleep,” he said as the group started across the arrival lobby toward the exit.

“Did the little ones have any problems with the flight?” Nobu asked as they walked.

Akira had accepted Bikky’s offered arm making the teen smile as they walked. Carol walked alongside Nobu while Dee and Ryo each pushed a stroller. Bringing up the rear of the group was the flight attendant with the baggage cart.

“They both screamed their little heads off during takeoff,” Ryo explained. “We were expecting them to cry for the entire flight from the way they carried on, but once we hit cruising altitude and leveled off, Darin started to calm down and happily snuggled against Dee. We had them in the baby slings.
you bought for us, Obāsan.”

“He fell asleep,” Dee added with a laugh.

“Yes, he did,” Ryo agreed. “His being calm and accepting of the flight seemed to get Koko to calm down soon after he fell asleep. Which is a change of pace for these two.”

“No more crying until we went into final approach,” Dee said. “It wasn’t as bad as going up, and we knew they would settle soon once we were on the ground, so we just snuggled them until then.”

“Obāsan, Uncle Nobu,” Ryo started, “I hope you don’t mind, but we’re thinking of going out for a bit later today. I don’t think we can keep Bikky and Carol from exploring until tomorrow.” He glanced sideways. “Probably Dee too,” he said with a laugh.

“Oh, I don’t mind going out and showing the kids around,” Dee said, “but I’ll be thankful enough just to sit in a car and watch as we go to Obāsan’s house. Just getting around Japan is an experience in itself.”

“That is so very true, Dei,” Akira said with a laugh. “I found myself thinking that too when I finally got back here after my last trip to New York.”

“Do you think we can stop at a 7-11 today?” Bikky asked.

“My boy,” Nobu said with a laugh, “don’t you have enough of them in New York?”

“Not as many as here,” Dee said. “Besides I think Ryo and I talked up the differences between them here and in New York, and now Bikky has it on the top of his list of experiencing Japan.”

“That’s because it’s also the first thing I noticed on our approach to land and then saw two more after before we touched down,” Bikky said.

“Oh, I don’t know what’s going on for lunch yet, so I’ll stop at the one near home so you can pick up some snacks,” Nobu said. “After all, you’re here to enjoy yourself on your vacation. We’ll make sure you do just that.”
“I’m enjoying see Obāsan and you again, Uncle Nobu,” Bikky replied with a smile, “but there’s so much I want to do, I don’t know where to start.”

“We have time to do it all,” Ryo said to his son. “That is another reason why we are staying in Japan as long as we are. Besides, I doubt I’d be able to get your father on a plane after only a week.”

Bikky started to laugh. “I don’t blame him. Even the airport seems so…. Japanese.”

“It really does,” Carol said. “I know I’m in Japan already. This is so unbelievable.” She smiled, looking back at Dee and Ryo. “I don’t know how I’m going to thank you for bringing me along.”

“Just have a great time, Princess,” Dee replied. “That’s all we ask.”

“I will!” Carol exclaimed.

As they reached the doors leading to the outside, Dee checked to make sure both babies had their blankets still tucked around them. It wasn’t cold outside but it was slightly cool. The travelers only had light jackets, knowing soon enough they would be inside a vehicle. Inside the trunks with their clothes for their stay, they all had warmer jackets. They considered bringing coats along, and decided that if the temperature did drop that much, they would buy something there. Dee and Ryo already knew there would be at least one shopping trip during their time there so that Carol could come back to New York with some Japanese fashions, which they knew she was interested in.

“Obāsan, I was thinking we could walk around near your area,” Ryo said. “And if it’s not too late, we can kick off the sightseeing with Daibutsu.”

“What’s Daibutsu?” Carol asked.

“The Great Buddha,” Bikky answered and glanced at his dads, who both nodded with approval. Ryo was smiling.

“Obāsan lives not far from Daibutsu,” Ryo explained. “Just a short walk, in fact. I’ve been there many times.”
“I’ve been there twice,” Dee said. “I’ve been to the beaches in Kamakura plenty of times.”

“So it’s this big Buddha in the middle of Kamakura?” Carol asked.

“You’ll find lots of ancient things in the middle of cities around here,” Dee explained.

“Dee is correct,” Nobu said. “About Daibutsu, it is a bronze statue of Buddha, about 11 meters tall. It was built in 1252.”

“Wow!” Carol exclaimed.

“Originally it was within a temple,” Akira explained while they entered the parking building. “But the temple was destroyed by typhoons and a tsunami. Only the statue remained.”

“When was that?” Carol asked, intrigued.

“Since 1495,” Nobu replied. “Sometime during the Edo period, one of the temples on the grounds was restored and became the Kotoku-in.

“Wow! It’s so old! I do want to see it now!” Carol exclaimed.

“My dads told me about it. I really want to see it too,” Bikky said.

“If we can’t make it there before they close today, we can go back tomorrow morning,” Ryo offered. “We can at least make it to temple and maybe catch a glimpse of it today.”

“I’d like that,” Carol said.

“Awesome!” came from Bikky.
They continued with small talk about the flight and things that had happened since the last time they spoke on the phone until Nobu and Akira stopped them at a vehicle that was a compact size bus. It looked like an over-sized van.

Dee tipped the crewman after the bags were in the vehicle. “Thank you for putting up with us,” he said with a smile, handing the man a hundred-dollar bill. “Have a good flight to Hong Kong.”

The man looked at his tip and his smile grew. “Thank you, sir. I will. Enjoy your stay in Japan.” He bowed to the family and walked away, taking the baggage cart with him.

Dee leaned over to whisper in Ryo’s ear, “Did I tip too much?”

Ryo laughed and hugged Dee. “According to my dad’s standards, it was just perfect. We can afford it, so don’t stop if someone helps us in our travels.”

“Good,” Dee said. “That felt good.”

Ryo chuckled. “I left an envelope on one of the tables with something for the pilots and attendants, but John did extra so he gets extra. We’re good.”

“I’m glad.”

Overall the vehicle was smaller than the buses that were rented in New York, but inside there was room for everyone, including two seats with baby car seats already set up. In the back was room for their carry-on bags. They still had room to seat two more.

“This is cool!” Bikky said as he looked to the front right side as Nobu sat in the driver’s seat. “I knew the steering wheel was on the right side, but to actually see it. Wow!”

Nobu laughed. “Just wait until I start driving on the left side of the road.”

“When I first arrived in Japan, I was told that the right side is the left side, and that Americans drive on the wrong side,” Dee said laughing.
“That is truth,” Nobu said with a smirk, making Akira laugh.

“Whenever someone has an issue with me being left handed,” Dee said, “I tell them that I’m so left-handed, I even learned how to drive stick left-handed.”

Bikky looked at Dee in confusion, while Carol laughed along with the other adults.

“I learned how to drive a stick here, Bikky,” Dee offered. “Most cars are standard, including the car that I found that was affordable. So, I had to learn how to drive stick.” Dee pointed to the shift stick between the two front seats to the left of Nobu.

“Oh.” Bikky started to laugh. “That is cool.”

“Actually, didn’t you learn how to drive while in college?” Ryo asked Dee.

“Yeah. Before I got here, there was no reason to drive. There really wasn’t a reason to drive living in Yokohama, but we got an offer to buy a car cheap, so I learned how to drive,” Dee explained. “Having a car was practical when we wanted to get out of the area or go to the beaches, but usually going to Tokyo or somewhere around here, the car usually went as far as the lot for the local train station and we took the train.”

“Does that mean you did not have the comedy of confusing blinkers and windshield wipers?” Nobu asked.

“Not here, but the first time I drove a car in New York, I seemed to have that problem,” Dee replied ruefully, making everyone laugh.

“Oh that’s awesome!” Bikky remarked as he laughed.

“I’m guessing we’ll be hearing cool, awesome and wow a lot over the next few days,” Ryo said, smiling at Bikky. “And I don’t mind it.”
Looking around the interior of the vehicle, Dee asked, “I hope you didn’t rent this just because of us?”

Ryo laughed. “This is a newer one than I remember, but Obāsan always had a vehicle like this because most of the family live close in Kamakura and loves to do things together. I remember as far back as I can that we would get into something like this at times.”

“Yes, this is a family vehicle,” Akira agreed. “No need to use several cars when we don’t have to. I keep it parked by my house, but Nobu usually gets to drive it.”

“I am the family chauffeur. So, do not worry about asking to make stops. I am used to it,” Nobu announced, making everyone laugh.

Nobu drove the vehicle out of the airport. Even knowing, Bikky and Carol stared mesmerized as they drove on the left side. They stared intently at signs as they came up, noticing they were in Japanese and English, making it somewhat easier to figure out where they are going.”

“Will we see Tokyo on the way?” Carol asked.

“We are in Tokyo,” Ryo replied. “However, this is not the very photographed area of Tokyo or what you see in manga and anime.”

“So no Tokyo Tower or Ginza?” Carol asked.

“Tomorrow night,” Akira assured her. “We’re planning on going out to dinner in Tokyo tomorrow. We thought you might like to spend tonight at home, so I am cooking.”

“I missed your cooking, Obāsan,” Bikky said. “Yum! I mean oshii!”

“We will be going through Yokohama,” Dee offered. “If I remember correctly, we’ll be taking the Yokohama Bay Bridge on this route.” He looked at Akira, who nodded.

“Yes, we are,” Nobu replied. “And you’ll be able to see some of the famous buildings in Yokohama as we pass,” he added for Bikky and Carol.
“Is that the bridge that’s on those coffee cans that you have?” Carol asked.

Ryo started to laugh. “Yup. That’s the same bridge.” He smiled at Dee.

“Hey, don’t knock the Yokohama Coffee cans. I love those cans. That’s why I made sure to take some back to New York with me,” Dee said with a laugh.

“Is that a tunnel we’re going into?” Bikky asked. “You can’t see anything from a tunnel.” He started to frown.

“We’re going under a runway,” Nobu explained as he entered the tunnel. “And then we have several more tunnels as we go under parts of Tokyo Bay. When we’re not in a tunnel, I’m afraid we’ll have a stretch of pretty boring highway until we reach the bridge. Then things will get more interesting once we go over the bridge.”

“You’ll notice we end up going through a lot of tunnels driving around here,” said Ryo.

Dee suddenly sat up in his seat. “Nobu-san, may I make a stop request, kudasai?”

“Oh oh,” Carol giggled. “When Dee throws a little Japanese into English, he’s up to something.”

“Yeah,” Bikky said intrigued. He leaned forward to look at Dee better. “Especially since I know what kudasai is. Where do you want us to go?”

“As I said before, I’m willing to stop along the way. Where do you want to go, Dee?” he asked.


Ryo looked at Dee confused. “A rest area? Why?”

“Haven’t you ever been at the rest area before going on the bridge into Yokohama?” Dee asked Ryo.
“Maybe. I don’t remember, but I’m sure I might have a couple of times.”

“Of course you have, Ryo. Many times, including your last time you were here. What makes you remember it, Dei?” Akira asked.

“For some reason, we would go there a lot,” Dee replied. “One of the advantages of having a car and going local. We would get on the toll road, and over the bridge just to go to that rest area. We’d grab something to eat and hang out for a while checking out the cars. It was a popular spot to show off the fancier cars, and work done on them. So we’d walk around, talk to others and have a good time. Not counting the toll, it was a fun and cheap night out,” he added with a laugh. “Well, cheap depends on how hungry we were. But it was something we’d do often and at night, the expressway ramps above were kinda cool. Plus it wasn’t that far from home if we stayed out late.”

“We’ would mean your friends in Yokohama from school, yes?” Akira asked.

“Yes. Sometimes with some others.”

“Do you plan on calling them today and letting them know you arrived safely?” Akira asked. “You can call them on our house line until we get you burner phones for your stay.”

“That’s what we should do this afternoon,” Nobu said. “Or we can stop on the way home.”

“Stop along the way sounds good to me,” Dee said.

“Same here,” Ryo said. “We can let the kids walk around a bit too.”

“While you get your phones?” Bikky asked. “Don’t I get one?”

“Yes, both you and Carol are getting phones, but you don’t have to be with us,” Ryo said. “I promise we’ll get the same type of phones for everyone.”

“There’s no way we’re going to let you two go off on your own without phones,” Dee remarked.
“And you better keep them on at all times when you’re not with us.”

“Sure. We will,” Bikky replied. “So we’ll be free to roam on our own?”

“Not for the first few days,” Ryo said. “We’ll be doing some family sightseeing.”

“If we have some down time, going off on your own might be an option,” Dee added.

“I can accompany Bikky and Carol,” Akira said. “It would be my honor to show my great-grandson and his girlfriend some Japanese streets for the first time.”

“I can handle the chibis,” Nobu offered.

“Sounds like we have a plan,” Akira said with a smile.

OoOoOoO

Daikoku PA Toll Road Rest Area
Yokohama, Kanagawa Prefecture

The adults sat on benches in the center of the various food shops with the twins in their strollers. After walking around once, and explaining about the toll roads rest areas, they gave Bikky and Carol some yen and let them go off on their own for a while with a warning not to eat too much.

Bikky wanted to see more rest areas. Ryo assured him that they had just arrived in Japan and they would come across plenty of service areas, especially during their cross-country trip in a few weeks. Originally Dee and Ryo thought they would get train passes for their family and take the Shinkansen across the country, but considered traveling in a group of four plus two infants and suddenly taking trains, and taxis and public transportation didn’t seem practical. They decided they would rent a van for their trip, but as they discussed their plans with Akira and Nobu, they were told they could use
the vehicle currently parked not far in the parking lot. Nobu assured that the family could survive two weeks without it, and it would be perfect for the trip.

Ryo and Dee thanked Akira and Nobu, and then Nobu set off to round up Bikky and Carol. They watched as Nobu finally came into view from the noodle shop with a protesting Bikky and Carol in tow.

Dee laughed, shaking his head. “Bikky is acting like this is the only time he’ll see this or other road stops.”

“This was a good idea, Dei,” Akira said. They had stopped 45 minutes before. “After that long stretch of not very interesting scenery while stuck in traffic, at least Bikky and Carol got to see something uniquely Japanese.”

“Our toll road rest areas back home are nothing like the ones here,” Ryo said. Earlier as they approached the rest area, Ryo blurted out that he did remember that particular one and he had gone there several times with Eddie and his Army buddies at times to look at the customized cars. He had also stopped there coming back from picking up or dropping friends off at the airport. Akira added that she had pictures of Ryo as a boy in the rest area. Dee had made her promise to take out the family pictures, especially of Ryo during his time in Japan with his parents.

“Bikky certainly did get a kick out of the actual rest area, didn’t he?” Dee said with a chuckle. “We certainly don’t have those back in the States.”

“I take it that you used one of those at some point, Dei? I know Ryo did,” Akira said. She looked up and smiled as Nobu, Bikky and Carol stopped by them.

“I did,” Dee said. “Not this one because it’s so close to home, but at a few others, yes. I still have the stamps that I had collected too. Sometimes I’d make us stop just so I could get a stamp.”

Ryo slapped his forehead. “I forgot about that! Okay, one last thing we do before we hit the road again to Kamakura.”

“Stamps?” Bikky asked. “This place is really cool. I wish we could stay longer.”

“We’ll be back, Biks,” Dee assured him. “And there is a helluva lot of really cool things you’ll be
seeing during our time here. Including other rest areas when we take our trip.”

“Before we leave, I’m going to take you two to get one of Japan’s unique souvenirs,” Ryo said. He looked at Dee. “Wanna get a new one?” he asked. “I know I do.”

“We’ll all go,” Akira said. “You can show them the chibis and say you want one for each of them too. You can put it in their baby books.”

“Oh, I like that idea,” Ryo said, standing up. “Well chibis. How are you liking Japan so far?”

Nobu laughed as he looked in the strollers. “I think they find this all boring. They’ve been sleeping for most of the time we were here.”

“At least someone in this family has jet lag,” Akira commented with a small smile as she took Ryo’s offered hand and stood up.

Ryo led the group toward the lobby where there was a concierge desk. At the desk, he spoke to the woman in Japanese. With a smile the woman bowed and took out papers with the rest area’s name in Japanese and English. She picked up a stamp and started to stamp enough of the papers for everyone in the group, including the twins. She came around the counter and with a bow, handed Bikky and Carol stamped papers, then Akira and Nobu. Dee and Ryo was next, and then she knelt before the strollers and after exclaiming how adorable the babies were, set the stamps in an inside pocket. Darin was up by then and waving his hands at her and smiled, making cooing sounds.

“Really?” Ryo said, rolling his eyes. “Your son is a big flirt, Dee.”

Dee’s mouth dropped open a moment and uttered, “Nani?” before he caught a glimpse of Darin with the information counter representative and started to laugh. “Okay, now I think Darin’s impressed with Japan.”

It made Nobu and Akira laugh. Ryo rolled his eyes again and then joined in as Bikky and Carol also laughed.

“The baby boy looks very Japanese,” the woman said in English, “while the little girl looks somewhat Japanese, but they are both beautiful babies.”
“Darin looking Japanese is all his fault,” Dee replied to her in Japanese, with a proud smile, indicating Ryo. “This is his family. We are here on vacation to visit with them.” He pointed to Akira and Nobu.

“Oh, you speak Japanese!” she exclaimed.

Dee grinned as he nodded. “I went to Yokohama University,” he replied still in Japanese.

Ryo folded his arms and leaned toward his uncle. “And it’s all Dee’s fault that Darin is going to be a big flirt,” he said. He tried to keep a straight face, but the moment the woman hid her face behind her hand while blushing and Dee gave Ryo a shocked look, he started to laugh. “That’s my Dee. If he didn’t flirt, I wouldn’t know my husband.”

“Oh! They are your babies,” she realized.

“Hai,” Ryo replied, taking Dee’s hand. “They are.”

“And they’re twins! Twins to Carriers are very special in Japan, but I understand that they are very rare outside of Japan,” she said. “I also see why they are so beautiful.”

Akira started to laugh. “We have to stop telling these two that!” She made Nobu start to laugh again.

Sleepily, Ryoko opened her eyes and glanced around.

“Look who’s up,” Bikky said.

Akira looked at Dee and Ryo. “May I?” Her eyes went to the twins and then the woman.

“If it pleases you, Obāsan,” Ryo said.

In Japanese, she said to the woman, “These ones here are my great-grandchildren by my grandson,
“Ryo,” she pointed to Ryo, “and his husband, Dei. This is Darin,” she gestured to Darin, “and Ryoko,” as she gestured to Ryoko.

“I am very pleased to meet them and your lovely family,” the woman said. She bowed to the group and in English, said, “I hope you enjoy your time in Japan.”

“We plan on it, but thank you,” Dee replied, with a bow. “Well little man, time to get back into the van,” he said as he placed his hands on the handle of Darin’s stroller. “Say bye bye to the pretty lady.”

Darin looked at the woman with a smile and let out a happy squeal, making everyone laugh.

“Maybe in 18 years we’ll take you back here, little Mister,” Ryo as he bowed to the woman and started to push the stroller with Ryoko in it.

“You’re telling me,” Dee laughed. He also bowed as he started to push Darin’s stroller toward the door. Nobu and Akira also bowed, making the poor woman bow back again as she did with Dee and Ryo.

Bikky and Carol were watching the adults and then Carol nudged Bikky before bowing to the woman. “Domo arigato gozaimasu for your kindness,” she said.

“Um yeah,” said Bikky. “Domo arigato.” He followed Carol’s example and also bowed before joining the rest of the family as they left the rest area.

Bikky looked to Carol. “I hardly understood a word they said.”

In English, Akira said, “That is why we speak English with you around. Until you learn Japanese.”

“He’s starting,” Ryo replied. “You started him with reading hiragana. He’s been reading those books you bought for him but while he can read the books, he hardly understands what he’s reading.”

“I know a few words, but you didn’t use enough of them for me to understand,” Bikky added.
“Bikky’s new school offers Japanese, so Bikky’s going to sign up for it. He has to take a language anyway,” Dee explained.

“And I already know enough of Spanish that that class would be boring,” Bikky said.

“That’s true,” Ryo said. “We also got him kanji flashcards after you left, but that’s a little slow going except for the numbers.”

“Oh yeah, I can count in Japanese,” Bikky said as they walked across the plaza toward the parking area. “That’s okay that you all spoke in Japanese to the Japanese lady. Besides, it was Dad who started it. She started to speak English to us and then you got her back to Japanese.”

Carol laughed. “You threw her off, Dee,” she said. “That was awesome.”

Dee laughed. “You should have seen back in my uniform days when I had to arrest a bunch of drunk and disorderly Japanese businessmen. They kept talking about me in Japanese. I let them talk a while before I let them know that I understood every word they said.”

“Oh that’s funny!” Carol exclaimed.

“The weird thing with him,” Ryo said about Dee, “is that around other Japanese, sometimes they are shocked that he knows Japanese and other times they expect him to speak it.”

“He’s not holding his camera,” Nobu commented. “That why she was surprised.”

“Huh?” Dee asked, confused. “Are you picking on me taking photos again?”

“Oh, I caught Dei taking some pictures on his cell phone,” Akira commented. “But Ryo was too.”

“Our first outing in Japan with our family?” Dee asked. “Hell yeah, we’re gonna take pictures of the kids.”
Ryo nodded his head in agreement. “I have to agree with Dee. This is all stuff we want to look back on. Our cell phones may not be of much use as phones, but at least we can still take quick pictures when we don’t have the camera handy.”

As they walked along the shops going toward the van, Carol looked at the stamp. “This is neat. My first Japanese souvenir. Do they do this at all rest areas?”

“Yes, on the toll road parking areas, they do,” Ryo said. “Even the Japanese make a habit of collecting the stamps. Each parking area’s stamp and design on the paper they stamp is different.”

“I think it’s cool,” Bikky said. “I’m glad you remembered, especially since this is our first stop in Japan. I have something to remember it by.”

“I’m going to put my stamps in a scrapbook,” Carol said, “along with anything else I can collect and put in a scrapbook.”

“You’re making room for photos too, I hope,” Nobu asked as he stopped by their car.

“Of course,” Carol replied. “Dee and Ryo were sweet enough to buy me a new camera.”

“These rest areas are called PAs here in Japan,” Nobu explained.

“PA?” Carol asked. “What’s that for?”

“Parking area,” Dee replied. “Yes, the initials come from English words. I noticed a few things like that.”

“Oh,” Carol said. “Well, I’m going to make a list of them as we come across something. Starting with PA.”

“I’m just going to collect the stamps from them,” Bikky said.

“You can get stamps at many of the castles too,” Akira said.
“Oh neat!” Bikky exclaimed. “I can’t wait until we see a castle.”

“Hopefully tomorrow you’ll see your first castle,” Akira said with a smile.”

When they got to the van, Dee lifted Darin from the stroller to place him in the car seat. Nobu started to fold the stroller to place in the back, along with the luggage they got off the plane with. “Come on, little Romeo, time to buckle you in.”

Everyone started to laugh at Dee’s comment.

“He really is your son,” Ryo commented from the other side of the van while he buckled Ryoko in her car seat.”

Once they were settled in the van, Dee explained, “We’re not sure what type of phones we’ll end up with. We’re hoping smartphones, but just in case they had no camera or they do but very low quality pictures, Ryo and I thought both Bikky and Carol should have good digital cameras to take pictures of whatever they want when we’re out and about. We left Bikky’s cellphone at home because he’s not really going to be talking to his friends all the time from here so he doesn’t need their numbers. Besides, cell phone cameras are good for quick shots you might miss otherwise, but there’s nothing like a good camera to best the best photos.”

“That is a very good idea,” Akira agreed. “Do you and Ryo each have your own cameras too?”

Ryo shook his head. “We have just the camera and digital recorder we’ve been using while you stayed with us. We figured we can switch off between them.”

“That is wise too.”

Ryo made sure that Bikky and Carol put their stamps in a safe place in one of their bags, while he took possession of the ones for the twins, placing them in a folder he kept in his bag.

Sitting behind Nobu, Dee took out the camera he had with them and was taking pictures.
“What do you plan to take pictures of now, Dee?” Carol asked.

Ryo started laughing. “Give Dee a camera and he ends up taking more photos than the Japanese.”

“Now no one would look surprised if he spoke Japanese,” Nobu teased, making Akira and Ryo laugh.

“I wish we had digital back when I was in college,” Dee commented. “I didn’t take half the pictures I wanted to because of film. Not only the cost to buy film but to process it. One of those things is the Yokohama Bay Bridge while going over it.”

“You never had your camera to take even one picture?” Akira asked.

“Every time I went over the bridge, I was driving. This is the first time ever that I will be a passenger going over the bridge, meaning I’m free to finally take pictures.

With a wicked grin, Nobu looked back at Dee. “I can make you drive, Dee.”

“Maybe later,” Dee said and gulped.

Nobu laughed. “Just kidding. Take all the pictures you want as we cross. Take enough and we’ll make you honorary Japanese.” He winked at Dee, while everyone else laughed.

“Sheesh,” Dee commented, blushing slightly as Nobu started to pull the van out of the parking space.

OoOoOoO

Their stop to get cell phones took longer than expected. Dee and Ryo took a while before deciding on phones for their family, seeming to check all the features on each phone and comparing them. They finally settled on very nice smartphones that were much more advanced than the phones currently in their pockets. It did not come as a surprise to them, both of them experiencing cell
phones in Japan around ten years earlier and coming back to New York to feel like they had taken ten steps back with mobile phones.

As they walked from the public parking building, Dee had said that his very first experience with cell phones was in Japan, never having seen one until his first night in Japan and mistakenly thinking the lone man walking behind him, talking away in Japanese, was crazy only to discover he was talking on a phone. Ryo had laughed and admitted he did encounter cell phones in the U.S. because both Elena and Rick used them for business but they were large and clunky, unlike the phones his Japanese family had. Knowing that Japan was far more technologically advanced in cell phones did not stop Ryo’s dismay over having to go back to bricks after being used to the phone he had used during his time stationed at Camp Zama. Akira had taken him shortly after his arrival to Japan and put him on her plan so he was able to contact her and his family while he was there. Dee admitted to going into backward culture shock upon returning to New York and when he finally got his first cell phone was handed a brick.

Inside the shop, they had decided to take advantage of the technology while they had access to it and ended up buying the best smartphones there was to offer with the best data package available for prepaid phones, not worrying about the costs. They were also thankful that the shop clerk gave them batteries that were already charged so they could start using their phones immediately instead of waiting for when they got to Akira’s house and able to charge the phones for a while.

Unlike their stop at the parking area and the concierge’s reaction to Dee when he started to speak in Japanese, the man behind the counter in the store directed most of his conversation toward Dee, and seemed more surprised when Ryo started speaking Japanese. Dee seemed amused about it especially since Ryo was raised from the start to speak English and Japanese while Dee’s first languages were English and Spanish, picking up Japanese later during his childhood.

As they walked out of the store with their purchases in colorful shopping bags with the shop’s name in Japanese, they found the rest of their family sitting in the plaza near the store. The area had many shops and restaurants along the stone paved sidewalks, edged along the curbs with green shrubs and decorative railings. The sidewalks were wider than usual but Akira was explaining to Bikky and Carol that they were in a modern neighborhood and seemed to be more upscale judging by some of the boutiques and restaurants that were along both sides of the wide street that had two lanes for each direction of traffic. Carol was fascinated by what she called a bridge a couple of blocks away, so they had walked past the parking structure where they had parked the van to show Carol that it was used for crossing the street. Unlike the intersections before reaching that one, where the shrubs and railings stopped at the corners allowing for crossing the street, at that particular intersection it was difficult to simply cross the main street and pedestrians had to go up the stairs and cross over the bridge to the other side of the road. Dee and Ryo stood off to the side with Akira and Nobu, along with the twins and watched for a while as Bikky and Carol amused themselves crossing the street several times before they were called back to go back to the van.

Their progress was also slowed because Bikky and Carol had to stop and look at all the contents of the different vending machines they passed between stores. They were particularly shocked when...
they encountered a vending machine that sold alcohol.

Ryo let out a sigh, forgetting about that until that moment and said low to Dee, “We’re going to have to give Bikky the alcohol talk again, you know.”

Dee nodded and then looked at Carol then back to Ryo. “You know what? I think we have two kids to give the talk to. Carol may be 18 but that’s still underage here even if it’s easier for kids to get it here. I know they haven’t really shown signs that they’re interested in drinking, but they are both at that age, and so open to try everything here. Because you can just drop money in a machine to get alcohol, it could become tempting.”

“Yeah, I know. We need to sit them both down and have a talk,” Ryo agreed. “I think it’s also a good idea to let them know how dry Japanese alcohol can be.”

Dee chuckled. “Oh yeah. I can impart a few stories of waking up with the Sahara Desert in my brain the next day.”

“Oh, me too,” Ryo said with a laugh.

Inside the van, Dee and Ryo showed Bikky and Carol the phones they would be using while in Japan. Bikky was warned once again that his phone was not be used calling his friends back in New York.

True to his word, Nobu had stopped so they could go into a 7-11. Even hearing about them, Bikky and Carol still went crazy going through the store, looking at all the various bento boxes and packaged food. It could have been embarrassing for the adults with them if they were standing off to the side as Ryo tested his new phone’s video feature to capture it all to show at a later time when they were back in New York. Dee had joined Bikky and Carol and managed to contain some of the frantic rushing around the store to look at everything, but showing them what was his favorite things to pick up from a 7-11 in Japan and answering questions.

There was even an aisle just for all the different instant noodles, plenty Bikky and Carol had never seen before, including at Mitsuwa. Most of the food available in the store was familiar to Bikky and Carol because of Mitsuwa and other Asian stores in New York, but it was the novelty of it being in a 7-11 that fascinated the teens. They still wanted to get almost everything only because it was in a 7-11.
Akira reminded them of the call she had received from her daughter-in-law after they got the cell phones and how they were going to be having lunch not too long after they arrived at the house. Bikky and Carol ended up walking out of the store each with an onigiri and something to drink as Akira promised them that they would have plenty of opportunity to try different things from the 7-11s along with all the other convenience stores in Japan.

Dee also could not resist getting a snack and walked out with a banana crème and chocolate bun that he exclaimed he had not had since he left Japan and had been one of his favorite snacks.

OoOoOoO

Chapter End Notes

Note: The Unexpected is obviously set in an alternate world - there are pregnant men, after all. Which means some points in history is also alternate. It was somewhat noticeable in the previous stories (different NYC mayor and some things available before they were in real life). That's going to be more noticeable in Japan. As much as Japan is Japan, it's also different in many ways, so if you come across something and think, "Nah, that's not right", you probably are right in real world, but again, this is alternate universe. Music may come out in different years, bands formed, etc. Also, I should mention, I have been to Japan. I spent three years in Japan. That's why I got into manga and anime in the first place, and also listen to a lot of Japanese music. Anyway, back to the main point, there are also changes in Japanese history for this and there are reasons for the changes.

One of the bands that will be getting a bit of a "makeover" is AKB48 and its sister groups. I'm considering changing the initials and numbers for this universe, so when you come across something like TKY52, yup that's AKB48 in disguise. SKE48, HKT48, etc will also show up in a similiar disguise. I still might use some actual song titles, or alter them a bit. Those are the songs that I have on a playlist for inspiration while writing this. Other songs might also show up, most likely by the same groups/artists but the years they came out might be a bit different. I might be willing to share the playlist, aka The Unexpected - Brand New World soundtrack. LOL! Also, I got the title for TUV from "Brand New World" by Dempagumi inc. Brand New World fits the story in so many levels, like "The Unexpected" did for the first story, but I'm not going to tell you them here. *grins*

Please let me know what you think. I have to admit knowing someone is hopefully enjoying it makes me want to get the next chapter to my beta, and write more to finish this, faster. Thanks for reading! :)

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

The Laytnert-MacLeans get settled in Kamakura.

CHAPTER TWO

Aoki Residence

Kamakura, Kanagawa Prefecture

Japan

Akira, Nobu and Hoshi stood to the side with Ryo, watching with amusement as Dee, Bikky and Carol explored the common room of Akira’s large traditional style home.

It was in her family for 4 generations. The basic structure of the house remained the same but her parents had made some modern improvements, and when Akira took over the family home, she had made more. The biggest improvement she had made was adding another wing to the back of the house. She had shared the house with one of her brothers. They had both married and had children while living in the house.

The addition was a wing with four bedrooms and another sitting room. Shigeru, her brother, and his wife, Edi, had moved to Nagano when their youngest had started college in Osaka. His children had already moved out of the house, and currently lived around the Tokyo/Yokohama area, except for his eldest son who, with his family, lived with his father after his wife was killed in a car crash a couple of years after moving to Nagano. Two of Akira’s sons still lived with her but their children had moved out, most of them now having families of their own. Nobu had managed to buy the land and house next to Akira’s when it went up for sale and Tsubasa and his family lived there. Emiko and Daito were living in Tokyo before moving to New York City the month before. Along with Nobu and Hoshi, Akira’s middle son, Takehide and his wife Moriko still lived with Akira. Their three children also were living on their own. Their youngest was in his last term at Keio University in Tokyo and lived near the school. Tenuyoshi already had expressed his wish to continue living in Tokyo while he took a position in the family shipping business to support himself.

Ryo found it both amusing and irritating that Dee could still gape at luxury. Upon approaching the
house, hidden behind a high stone wall surrounding it except for the iron gate to enter, it was obvious that the house belonged to someone of wealth. His grandmother’s house was elegant with its dark wood interior but with the large rooms and design of the house, it was light and airy. He loved his grandmother’s house with all its elegance and history, but as grand as it was by Japanese standards, it was nothing like his other grandparents’ estate. Dee had been there enough times by then that he didn’t blink twice anymore. Yet there he was, gawking like an idiot as he wandered around the common areas of the house.

Apparently, listening to Dee, he had walked past many of the larger and older houses when he lived in Yokohama but had never been inside one, and Akira’s was one of the largest that he could remember.

Akira finally was able to take them on a tour of the rest of the house. When they were in the newer wing, she pointed out Bikky’s and Carol’s rooms. She assured Dee and Ryo that Takehide and Moriko’s room was in the same wing and with the paper-thin walls, the two teens would be able to do nothing more than kissing, should one of them go into the other’s room. She also added that her son and daughter-in-law would be able to hear someone going into another room in that wing. She spoke in front of Bikky and Carol. The two teens turned their heads while blushing. Ryo started to smirk and Dee winked at him with a small smile.

Nobu and Hoshi had a room in the second level of the house, as was Akira’s room.

Bikky commented on how many of the hallways in the house ran along the outer sides of the house instead of the middle like he was used to in New York and could look outside as they walked through the hallways. Akira explained that the hallways were called engawa corridors and then demonstrated how some of the walls to the interior of the house were sliding doors, opening that room to the light coming from the window side of the hallway, and then how some of exterior walls were also sliding doors opening the room to the outside. She pointed out that the moveable interior walls were called shoji walls. They were made in the same materials as the shoji screens.

“Since it is cooler now, we keep most of the rooms closed from the outside,” Akira explained as she slid the panels closed again. “You should come here in the summer when we keep the house open for most of the day.”

“Older Japanese houses were built to be one with nature, rather than destroy nature for the house to exist,” Ryo said, remembering the summers he had spent in the house. When he first found himself living in New York City, his parents had an apartment in Manhattan and even young as he was, Ryo had found it extremely restrictive compared to what he was used to living in his grandmother’s house and always looked forward to visits to his grandmother and the time he could spend in her house. When his parents bought a house in Westchester, which was much bigger than the apartment, it still did not feel as open and free as his grandmother’s house did. Not even his other grandparent’s sprawling manor with all its large rooms compared to the house in Kamakura that opened to the
Ryo still wished they could have a house like his grandmother’s but even if such a structure existed in New York City, it would be impractical. With the thin, sometimes paper walls and flimsy locks, it was an invitation to criminals of all types to invade the house. Which is most probably why there were no homes even remotely close to this one in New York. Crime was relatively low in Japan, especially compared to New York City.

After Akira showed them the house, she led them outside using the back entrance near the kitchen. They got to see more of the gardens surrounding the house, including the koi pond and tea arbor. The tea arbor was a small structure that barely fit five people along with the antique equipment to make ceremonial tea. She pointed out the extremely low and small opening to enter the arbor, laughing at Dee’s face as he was the tallest one out of everyone present in the house, and most likely the tallest out of the entire family. Her husband Jordon had been on the tall side and had the same reaction as Dee when he first saw the tea arbor’s entrance. Thankfully the house itself had high ceilings, which Dee had commented was unlike the house he had lived in and had only a couple inches above his head in many areas of the house and needed to duck going through most doorways.

Ryo laughed at Dee’s reaction and commented, “There was once a time when I thought that entrance was so big.” He bent forward toward the entrance to peer inside. After Dee, he was the second tallest in the family and the tallest living Aoki by birth. Ryo’s grandfather had been slightly taller, making him once the tallest, but as he was no longer with them, the honor went to Ryo. Ryo’s great uncle Julian, who was his grandfather’s younger brother, took more after the Japanese side of the family, having the average height of Japanese men. “I used to play in here all the time, pretending it was a fortress. Now I have to get on all fours to get in. Hell, I think that even Bikky and Carol need to do the same.” He glanced at Dee and with a teasing smile said, “Never mind you. You’ll get stuck.”

Nobu, who had joined them in the garden, laughed. Hoshi was sitting on a bench by the koi pond with the twins in their strollers. “That is the purpose of the entrance,” he stated, looking at Bikky and Carol. “Back when this house was built, it was common for the average man to carry weapons. They could not go through the entrance with them, so they had to leave them outside. Also by entering on hands and knees, it makes for a most humble entrance. A tea ceremony reflects tranquility and harmony. A good dose to humility does wonders for harmony.”

For once, Bikky actually looked fascinated by the history lesson Nobu was giving, and Ryo was reminded once again on how this trip might be good for Bikky in many ways. He had already made a turnaround from the track he was on when Ryo first took him in. He even tried harder in his studies once Ryo and Dee both started to take the time to sit with him when they had the chance when Bikky did his homework, and then with the new school they had him in. However, there was still room for improvement, and Ryo hoped that this trip would show Bikky that wanting to reach out for knowledge was not a bad thing and not hard at all to do. He did seem to be absorbing everything so far since they had arrived, so Ryo had hope.
Ryo poked Dee when Nobu finished speaking and said, “I should make you go in there after all.”

“Hey! What are you trying to say here?” Dee grumbled and then frowned more as Ryo started to laugh.

Ryo hugged him and kissed his cheek. “I love you anyway,” he said and patted the cheek he kissed. Ryo moved his head so his nose touched Dee’s and grinned as he watched Dee struggle not to lose the frown. Low, he whispered, “Yeah, I know. Rumor has it that we have the guest house all to ourselves so you can punish me.”

Dee’s eyes went wide and he gulped, losing the frown. “Yeah?” he asked.

Ryo shrugged. “Well, as long as we don’t wake up the chibis. They’ll still be with us.” He grinned at Dee.

“I can work with that,” Dee replied.

“Ewwww,” Bikky exclaimed. “There they go again!”

Dee and Ryo looked at their son and grinned.

“Yeah, yeah, I know. I’m glad I have two dads who love each other. Still gotta do it, ‘cause you know if I don’t, you might start thinking I don’t care anymore.” Bikky gave a sly shrug as he looked at his fathers, making everyone laugh.

Looking amused, Akira explained that the tea arbor was just for show as it had been part of the grounds through the generations the house had been passed down. They had already seen the room in the house where Akira preferred to serve tea when she wanted to be formal, but she had added that tea and coffee was allowed to be drunk in almost any rooms in the house. The tea room in the house had a built-in floor hearth in the center of the room with tatami flooring with a low round table with a compartment to keep her tea accessories and cups. On a wall shelf, she had the traditional items for a tea ceremony, which Akira loved to do at least once a day when she had time, because she found it calming and helped her center herself. She had done it many times during her time staying with Dee and Ryo in New York, and taught them how to do it right. Ryo had been taught by her before but it had been too many years since he had made tea the ceremonial way. Dee had only observed the ceremony once but was willing to learn. As was Bikky and Carol. In their apartment in New York City, it was something that Akira took much pride in passing onto her family. She was
looking forward to tea time while they were there, and even had plans to have each of them prepare the tea for the household.

Ryo pointed out that it was allowed to be used as a child’s playhouse, smiling again at the memories he had when he was younger.

“That is true. When Ryoko and Darin are old enough, I’ll make sure it’s safe again to allow them to use it when you visit,” Akira said.

“I’m looking forward to it, Obāsan,” Ryo said with a smile.

“Making sure means that she’ll have me and Takehide childproof it,” Nobu commented and smiled at his mother.

With a mock huff, Akira turned and led them along the stone path through the garden which went around the house until they came to the back and the smaller house they had noticed while exploring the new wing. It was a guest house, built by Akira’s father around the same time they were making some modernization on the main house. The construction and materials of the one level guest house match the main house. That was to be where Dee and Ryo would be sleeping. She also explained that they would be able to make their own meals if they did not feel like joining the rest of the family or if they just wanted a snack. It was a simple one bedroom house with a living area and small kitchen. There was also a second small room big enough for a single futon, and a crib, which Akira had already set up.

Akira also had a few commitments during their stay at her house and even with the two other couples living there, they might find themselves at a mealtime and need to fend for themselves. They had the option of going out to eat or to make something in the typical Japanese style kitchen with the two-burner gas dai – a table top gas burner set on a counter by the window, and a convection oven on another counter, a small prep area and a narrow refrigerator with the fridge on the upper half and had two doors, and under a pull-out bin that was part of the fridge was the freezer. The freezer was two pull out drawers. It was probably going to be mostly empty, which was a good thing that it wasn’t a large one, like what Akira had in her kitchen.
While they were being shown around the main house, Nobu had already taken the bags Dee and Ryo had with them to the guest house. Shortly after they went back into the main house, the van with the rest of their luggage had arrived and time was spent getting the luggage into the appropriate rooms.

A few minutes after the van arrived, Ryo’s Aunt Moriko, who had been out shopping for their lunch, deciding that their first meal there had to be fresh, returned home. The men were in the main living room, sorting the luggage to be taken to the appropriate rooms.

It was the first time for Dee, Bikky and Carol to meet Ryo’s Aunt Moriko, but Dee felt like he knew the woman very well since they had spoken on the phone and group video conferences over the internet. Moriko had bypassed all formality by dropping her bags on a nearby table and rushing over to hug first Ryo, gushing over how proud she was of him and then moved onto Dee, Bikky and finally Carol, full of hugs and welcoming them finally to Japan and their home. Dee knew he would like her and knew for certain by the time she was done greeting them, still full of smiles and giggling madly with excitement as she finally had a chance to hold Ryoko and Darin, seeing them also for the first time other than in photos and video.

Moriko spoken in broken English and sometimes fumbled with words, and even at times using the Japanese word when she could not think of the English one, but they all knew that she understood English better than she could speak it and was already used to her style of speaking English. Many of her exclamations when she greeted them were in Japanese.

Once they had everything out of the van and put in the rooms where the suitcases and trunks belonged, Akira sent everyone off to their rooms to settle in and relax for a while, giving them a time a half hour later when lunch was expected to be ready.

Part of their settling in for Dee and Ryo once they were back in the guest house was contacting relatives back home who should still be up. Ryo had called Elena, letting her and Rick know that they had arrived safely and gave his and Dee’s cell numbers for when they wanted to call. He added that he planned on calling his grandparents later in the evening, when it would be morning in New York, but if she spoke to them first to feel free to give them the numbers. After he spoke to Dani and Stefan, Elena had him put Dee on so she could talk to him for a few minutes. Dee had already checked in with Barry, also giving him their numbers, and then after speaking to Elena, he sent a text to Maria’s cell phone, in case she was asleep. A few minutes later, Dee’s phone rang and he smiled as he answered it, starting to tell her about the flight and their time so far, ending the call with a promise to call her later with updates. After saying hello to Maria, and giving the phone back to Dee, Ryo called Diana to give her their numbers and for her to pass on to the others. He did request that they call only if something major that they should know about and not wait until they returned to New York.

Everyone was nervous about the upcoming convention that the Anti-Carrier Coalition was going to
hold on Monday. They could only imagine what they would decide to do at that convention and when they would start making trouble by going public more than just advertising about the convention. At least they had insiders who would relay proceedings to their unit. Dee and Ryo had talked about the upcoming convention during the flight and agreed that while they did trust New York as a whole, especially with new laws concerning Carriers in place, there were still enough loud Anti-Carriers to make trouble. They already made an uproar earlier in the week when the new laws enforcing Carrier protection were made public. There were protests at City Hall and Gracie Mansion, with another planned that weekend in Central Park. Thankfully for all the Anti-Carriers chanting hatred toward Carriers and the city’s government, there were at least three times that amount also showing up in support of Carriers. There were still some arrests made when some of the Anti-Carriers got violent against the supporters but on the whole, it was peaceful so far. Dee and Ryo were still glad to be away from it all, considering they had two infants they wanted to keep safe, along with Bikky, who sometimes had the tendency to get in trouble while sticking up for what he believed in. They did not want Bikky to end up in the hospital or worse because he could not keep his emotions in check. They did feel a little guilty, feeling like they were running, but the trip to Japan was planned before finding out about the Mayor’s plans to sign new bills and of the ACC firming a date for their convention.

They did plan to keep in touch with news from New York and across the U.S. during their extended vacation because it was important to them, but they intended to concentrate on enjoying their time in Japan, which they were quickly learning had already went past all the craziness going on in the U.S. At the airport, they noticed there were more pregnant men than they were used to in New York. During her visit with them, Akira had mentioned that Japan was a Carrier Friendly nation and while it was common to the Japanese, they still held Carriers in high regard. Ryo never noticed it during his previous times in Japan, but then again, it wasn’t something that he really paid much attention to. He’d had the typical American attitude of the time that it didn’t concern him and while he meant them no harm, he really did not take any extra notice of them.

Perhaps that was a good thing, because Carriers were just men to him, just as he really did not notice race or color much, except for Japanese. That was only because he was Japanese too, so it concerned him. Now, the topic of Carriers was a major interest of his between his own family situation and work. So immediately he started to notice the vast number of men who were pregnant or male couples with children resembling both men. There were definitely more of them in Haneda than at JFK International in New York. He continued to notice just how many were in Japan as they travelled from the airport to Akira’s house. Dee had commented on it too. Akira said that it was almost as natural for a man to decide to Carry children in a male/female relationship, sharing the child bearing with their wives. Many Carriers felt it was their duty to contribute at least one child to the family. As they got off the tollway and drove toward the house, Nobu had pointed out a couple of temples dedicated to Carriers and said that there were many more.

Ryo was amazed that he had actually been afraid of mentioning Dee’s pregnancy to his grandmother, fearing she might have been too traditional to accept that he was having a baby with another man. She had accepted it so easily because tradition in Japan seemed to include Carriers and even homosexuals. He’d mentioned it to his grandmother while they had explored the area where they got their cell phones. She had laughed and suggested that perhaps that was because as far as he knew he was the only gay man in their family and the only one who had a child through another man.
Back when Ryo had found out that Dee was pregnant and they were planning their wedding, he had not been as much in touch with his grandmother as he would have liked, and did not know that one of his cousins had divorced her husband, realizing she had made a mistake convincing herself that she was heterosexual. She was currently living with a woman Ryo was yet to meet, and together they raised her two children she had from her marriage. Akira said she was glad Ryo had accepted the truth that he loved Dee and settled down with the man he loved rather than go through what poor Miyoko, who was Takehide’s oldest child, went through. It was a messy divorce and the children still felt the pain because while they loved living with their mother and hopefully soon-to-be stepmother, they missed their father because they did not see him as much as they wished they could. Hideyoshi, Miyoko’s ex-husband, would only take the children for a week every three months or so and maybe a week during school vacation.

Since arriving, Ryo was seeing for himself why his entire Japanese family had so quickly accepted his decision to marry Dee as well as accept Dee, Bikky and the at the time unborn babies into the family. Akira also mentioned that her brother Kei’s oldest son was also gay, but so far had been unable to find someone he wanted to settle down with and have a family with.

Ryo already knew from her time in New York that he did get his Carrier gene from Akira’s side, but it just worked out that no one in her direct line actively Carried but there was still the generation after Ryo’s for it to happen if Ryo did not Carry his and Dee’s next child when they were ready. She had a nephew who was married to a woman that Carried two of his four children. Also on Akira’s father side, she had two grandfathers.

It made Ryo and Dee feel guilty that they knew nothing about Carriers outside of the U.S. and that they were going to start with Japan while they were there and then extend their research to learning about how Carriers were treated in other countries. For one thing, it was a good thing to know just on general principal. Learning about Carriers in Japan was also first priority because Ryo was Japanese and hoping to Carry their next child. It also was beneficial to learn about countries such as Japan, who did not have all the drama they were experiencing in the U.S., hoping they could learn from those countries and use them as models in finally getting America to have the same attitudes toward Carriers.

Ryo also decided it was time to learn more about his family’s history, which he realized how much he did not know. He felt ashamed about it, but also blamed Akira for not sharing any of the new information earlier. He never met his great aunts and uncles except for Kaito, who had lived with Akira for a while after he split from his wife until he was able to find his own place.

A half hour later, Ryo practically had to drag Dee into the main house, as Dee had to look at everything in the house, poking at every nook and cranny and acting as if he had never been in a Japanese style home before. Ryo knew better, and even if Dee did not live in a house in Yokohama once, Ryo also knew that his grandmother would be expecting them as it was now the time that Akira had given them to be back in the main house for lunch.
They entered the main house, each of them carrying a baby and Ryo had one of the baby bags that he repacked, to find Hoshi and Moriko helping with lunch while Nobu, Carol and Bikky were setting the table. Akira had a formal dining room with a Western style antique dining set, and the kitchen also had a table and chairs seating five. Being that they had more than five for lunch, one of the tatami family rooms was set up with a U-shaped low table and pillows for everyone.

Takehide was at work and would be joining them for dinner later in the day. Moriko had her own business that she operated from home and a shed on the grounds where she made her pottery and clay beads.

By the table were two baby playmats on the floor that had arches above the mats. From the arches dangled colorful anime style animals. When grabbed or squeezed, the animals made sounds. There were also different shapes, also in bright colors that rattled when moved. The frame of the two arches were within clear plastic tubing.

“Are these why you said we shouldn’t bring the playmats with us?” Ryo asked his grandmother as he knelt on the floor between the mats. He seemed almost as fascinated with the hanging objects as the babies the mats were designed for.

“Yes. I saw these while shopping after I returned from New York and could not resist buying them. If I did not know you were coming to Japan, I would have sent them to you.”

“They are much nicer than the ones we have,” Dee said as he looked down at the two wiggling babies on their mats and smiled. “And we had pretty nice ones.”

“Watch this,” Nobu said, also on his knees by Ryoko’s mat. He squeezed one of the animals that hung lower.

Dee’s and Ryo’s eyes went wide as small colorful LED lights ran along one of the arches inside the plastic tubing.

Ryoko squealed and reached for the lights, her eyes wide with wonder and smiling.

Ryo reached over to squeeze the same animal on Darin’s mat. Darin seemed to be even more amused than his sister as he screeched and kicked his feet, grabbing toward the lights. He started to giggle. Ryo did it again and watched as his baby son giggled more.
Dee laughed as he still stood looking down, but was recording the babies’ reactions to their new playmats with the camcorder. “I think Darin’s really impressed,” he commented.

Ryoko was making sounds as she reached out at the animals. Ryo squeezed the one that made the lights run on hers again. She squealed happily again, batting at the animals. He made the lights run on Darin’s and once again, the baby boy started to giggle.

“Yup, Darin’s really amused with it,” Ryo commented with a laugh. “Okay you two, this should keep you busy while we eat. Enjoy.”

Dee continued to record Darin and Ryoko as they explored their new playmats. Darin’s fist bumped the one animal and started to giggle again, waving his outstretched hands toward the lights, making the adults laugh again. Dee stopped the recording after a couple of more minutes and joined the others at the table to eat.

Lunch was curry and tonkatsu pork cutlets served over rice along with miso soup and salad with ginger dressing. As they sat down to eat, Akira promised that there would be sweets when they went on their walk around the area. Nobu backed her up, reminded them of the many shops they had passed as they neared the house.

Kamakura was known as a resort town, with beaches stretching along the shore that was a popular surfing spot for locals. It was mostly busy during the summer months but with many temples and shrines, there were tourists year-round, especially at the Kōtoku-in Temple where Daibutsu was the center attraction. Akira’s land was a short walk from the main street that to the north was the temple and went down to almost to the beach. The stretch of road had shops that tailored to the tourist, many of them for Japanese tourists coming to the beach or the temples but also had some shops for the foreign tourist looking for something to take back home with them from Japan. Among the stores selling wares were cafes, restaurants and many shops to get confections and even ice cream.

It was all within walking distance from the house, but during their tour of the outside land of the house, Akira had showed Bikky and Carol bicycles that they were welcome to use if they did not feel like walking when they were allowed to go off on their own. She also explained that if they chose to go to Yokohama or Tokyo by train, they could leave the bikes at the train station. She highly suggested it if they planned to do a lot of walking wherever they would be off to explore. She also showed her own small car for the times that Dee and Ryo might want to go off just themselves or to join Dee’s friends for some time with just adults.

As they ate, Moriko asked Dee if he had been to Kamakura before. Dee replied that he had been to Kamakura many times but mostly for the beaches but remembered the road from the few times he
had gone to the Kōtoku-in Temple, but having only driven on the road to the temple and did not really walk far from the temple or the beaches. Only once he had ventured to walk a little away from the parking lot. He now wondered why it had never occurred to him to convince the others to park and just walk around, or even venture further from the parking lots for the beach. He was looking forward to their adventure after lunch and finally see the area.

“Didn’t you go anywhere in the area to eat when you went to the beach?” Moriko asked in Japanese.

Dee smiled at her. “The first time I went to the beach here it was with Japanese friends. I was expecting us to settle somewhere to eat, so imagine my surprise when they pulled out the cooler and grill and cooked lunch on the beach. After that, I got my own grill that I kept in the car and we always cooked when we went to the beach.”

“If Dei had gone with some of his American schoolmates, they might have gone somewhere to eat,” Akira said, “but he was exposed to the Japanese way from the start, so he adapted. I’ll bet that it was frustrating going back to New York and realizing that you couldn’t cook on the beach.”

Ryo laughed. “He still has his little grill. He couldn’t even use it in the house since it was a little bigger than a hibachi. At least he got to use it when we went up to the lakes in the Catskills for a picnic. I do like that we don’t have to find a grill not being used or dragging the usual size portable grills we have in America.”

“Meaning it’s finally being used again once in a while,” Dee said with a smile.

“Well before you leave for New York, you will know Kamakura very well,” Nobu said to Dee.

“I’m looking forward to it.”

“Takehide sends his apologies for not being here when you arrived, but something came up at work and he had to be there,” Moriko said in English as they ate. “He plans to be here in time for dinner.”

Nobu shook his head slowly. “It should have been me there today but he insisted that he go because he knew how much I was looking forward to meeting you at the airport and having the honor to drive Bikky and Carol as they had their first look at Japan.” Takehide was his younger brother. They had both taken over the family freight business, already working for it once they were old enough. At first it was part time while they attended college and then upon graduation they each went full time. When their father had passed away 15 years ago, Nobu took over as the CEO, being the first in
line to take over the company. He immediately took Takehide as his second, making him the Chief Logistics Officer, which he was much better at anyway and they both basically kept the company running smoothly since.

“He’ll be back before dinner,” Akira assured Nobu and Moriko. “It was only a mix up with transport schedules. He should be home to find us out exploring the streets around here.” When Nobu looked at her in curiosity, she smiled at him. “He called when you were all making such a big fuss about getting the luggage out of the van and said he was getting ready to leave the office.”

“I hope you don’t mind, but some of your cousins will be here tonight,” Moriko said to Dee and Ryo. “They wanted to finally meet you today instead of waiting.”

“Of course, they are welcome,” Akira stated. “This is their home too, even if they have their own. This house is always open to family.” She pointed looked at Dee and Ryo and then to Bikky, making sure they knew that they were also included in her statement.

Nobu laughed. “I think Moriko meant that to Ryo and Dee, Mother. We don’t know if they are up to having the clan invade on their first night here after that long flight.”

“I am just as anxious to finally see everyone again, so I don’t mind,” Ryo said, smiling. He was looking forward to seeing everyone again and actually having time to spend quality time with them, unlike when he was in Japan for Emiko’s wedding. He basically was there for just her wedding, arriving in Tokyo that morning and flying out the next day because he was unable to take much time off. He had hoped to make it back to Japan sooner than six years.

He already had mentioned to Dee several times on the ride from the airport that they had to come back at least once a year, even if for a week. Dee had agreed each time and even mentioned it himself during their stop at the parking area by the Yokohama Bay Bridge. He was also the one who mentioned that if they couldn’t get the private jet, they still were able to fly Greenways free, and if they chose another airline, they could afford the getaway. It made Ryo happy to see Dee was settled enough with their new money to be able to make comments like that. It meant they would not be waiting another six or ten years before going back. They no longer had excuses not to. He was also equally happy that his grandmother felt comfortable in New York again and had reasons to visit them in between their own trips.

It was really coming together for Ryo with both of his families to the point it no longer felt like two families but one, just having a Japanese side and a Scottish-American one. He was in contact with all his grandparents constantly now and once again felt like he had a family, rather than the outsider of both families. To think that it all came together because Dee had unexpectedly gotten pregnant still amazed Ryo, but he was taking that gift without inspecting it too carefully and considered a blessing. There were some things that shouldn’t be questioned and just accepted, and having his family as a
Dee nodded his head enthusiastically as Akira and Ryo looked at him. “I’m also anxious to finally meet all those wonderful people I’ve just been talking to, so bring ‘em on,” he said with a smile and went back to eating his almost finished meal, dark green eyes sparkling.

Ryo noted Dee’s eyes had been sparkling like that ever since they had left the airport. It was not for lack of wanting to go to Japan again that kept Dee away for ten years. While he had accepted the Lane family’s generosity to pay his way to go to college in Yokohama, he never wanted to ask them for money just to take a vacation, feeling that any money coming from the family should go to Mother for the orphanage. The trip to England was on Dee’s credit card. Watching Dee that day, Ryo felt guilty for talking Dee into going to England for a vacation instead of suggesting Japan. His husband had really missed Japan, and while he knew it, he didn’t realize how much until they had arrived there.

In a sense, probably even more than Ryo, it was like coming home for Dee. Dee would say that New York was home, no doubt but that Yokohama was his second home and that his time spend in Japan also contributed in shaping the man he was now. Except for his first five years, Ryo had never spent as much time in one stretch in Japan than Dee had during his college years. His own tour at Camp Zama was for three years, which was less than Dee’s time at college. Still even with those three years that Ryo spend at Camp Zama and adding it to all the various lengths of time he would go to Japan with his parents, it was definitely a homecoming to him and he wondered if his eyes had the same light as Dee’s had, because he certainly felt the same excitement that seemed to pour from his husband.

Akira laughed at Dee’s statement. “I’m glad you feel that way because I fear that they all might decide to drop by at some point today. Thankfully most of them are at work right now, so it will give you a little time before this house gets crowded.”

Ryo and Dee laughed, remembering how their apartment would get crowded with their visitors from Japan, along with Ryo’s other family and their friends. It was nothing new to them, but it also made them consider they needed a bigger place when they were ready just to have the room to accept everyone, even if it meant moving outside of Manhattan to find such a house. “We’re used to crowded houses by now, Obāsan,” Ryo assured his grandmother, “so don’t worry about us.”

After lunch was finished, Akira shooed the visitors away for a bit while they cleaned up from lunch, refusing any offers from Ryo, Dee and Carol to help. They sat in the family room and Dee called Hide, letting him know they were in Japan and made plans to meet the next day. Dee started to laugh at something Hide said and after glancing at Ryo, he excused himself from the room and went outside to finish making arrangements. Ryo wondered what Dee was up to, looking like he realized that Bikky and Carol probably couldn’t understand what he was saying to Hide, but remembered that Ryo could.
Not long after Dee came back into the house, Akira entered the room.

“Do you want to wait a while, maybe take naps, or do you want to start exploring Kamakura?” she asked them.

“Exploring!” Bikky exclaimed, almost jumping up to his feet.

“I think Bikky wants to head out now,” Hoshi remarked, amused, having joined them in the room. Nobu was standing in the doorway. “Moriko wants to join us, if you don’t mind. She doesn’t want to be left out of Bikky and Carol’s first experiences with Kamakura.”

“The more the merrier,” Dee said with a laugh. “And I second Bikky’s vote.”

“That might not be a problem being a big group in New York,” Ryo said, “but a big group around here should be very interesting.”

Dee shrugged. “Been there, done it. I know how to handle it. As long as whoever is walking closest to the street doesn’t fling their arms out while talking, we should be fine.”

Ryo’s mouth dropped, while the other adults laughed. Bikky and Carol looked at Dee in confusion.

“Remember our sidewalks are not as wide as in New York, unless you’re in the more metropolitan cities, like a lot of Tokyo and Yokohama. Here, we even some sidewalks that are not sidewalks,” Akira explained to the teens.

“There are areas where pedestrians, cars and even street vendors all basically share the same road,” Dee added, “making it really tight for everyone.”

“And I had to drive a big-ass stake truck through some of the worse of them at times,” Ryo muttered.

“You did?” Dee asked.
“Yeah. Sometimes I had to go to the other bases for something or another, or to one of the housing areas.”

“What the heck did you have to take a truck to the housing areas for?” Dee asked intrigued.

“Festival preparation, parties, whatever. They figured since I was licensed to drive a truck and was part Japanese, I was the best one to drive one of those monster trucks off base. Otherwise known in the military as ‘other duties assigned’, especially on my duty days. A couple of times I had to take the beast to Yokosuka from Zama. So not fun.”

“But you did it,” Akira said with a smile.

“Yup, I did it and no one was killed,” Ryo said. He looked at Dee. “Is there a story behind the flinging arms out part?”

Dee started to laugh. “Yeah. We were walking along a road and Yuki got a bit enthusiastic while telling us something and flung his arm out as a car was passing. The side view mirror of the car hit his arm. It wasn’t hard, but the poor American driver had pulled over the car and repeated ‘gomenasai’ and ‘sorry’ about a hundred times, almost flinging himself to the ground. I think he was more shaken than Yuki, who kept telling him he was fine and it was okay. I thought the poor guy was going to have heart failure of something.” He laughed more.

“That is why most Japanese do not use their hands very much when they speak,” Nobu joked. “However, there’s always exceptions. And I know Yuki enough to know that he speaks with his hands more than New Yorkers, you included Dee.” He winked at Dee and made Ryo laugh.

“Yes, he does. We kept telling him that when we all first met, but I noticed it got worse since then,” Dee said. “Or maybe it was just because he was in New York?”

Hoshi shook her head with an amused smile. “Not just because he was in New York. Tsubasa and Yuki have become friends since your wedding. Yuki’s noodle shop seems to be Tsubasa’s favorite place to eat, so they see each other a lot. So we had Yuki and Jae-Hwa over at times or saw them when we went to Tsubasa’s house for dinner a few times. If you cut Yuki’s hands off, he wouldn’t talk, I think.”

Dee started to laugh and smile, glad that the family he married into took the time to know his friends. It made him love this wonderful family he found himself part of more.
“We also saw Ken and Hide a few times too,” Nobu added. “Hide invited us to some special party he was hosting for some major advertising campaign.”

“Oh yeah, I remember Hide telling me that he landed the contract to host the party at his club for a big launch Kirin was having,” Dee said.

“Many Japanese are fascinated with America,” Hoshi said, “so it pays to have a club that plays American music when companies are looking for a touch of America in their launch parties.”

“It seems like it,” Dee said. “He even got this huge party for French models to hold their awards a few years back.”

“Being different can be the advantage,” Nobu agreed. “He also has his connections with the other clubs in Roppongi and gets complimentary VIP passes or discounted entry into some of the more popular clubs for anyone in our family who wants a night out.”

Dee nodded. “He has a partner who is a promoter, so he can get passes for just about anything in Tokyo,” Dee said. “He handles the club’s business, while his partner gets the bigger parties to rent out the club. Toshido is also forming a new idol group.”

“Is he?” Carol asked, excited. “What type?”

“He wants to mix girls and boys in the group. They are going to use the level above Club Born In the USA to perform. I hear they are practicing now and working on a single,” Dee explained.

“I did not know this,” Akira said. “That sounds very exciting.”

Dee nodded. “Hide said he’s working on getting us in for a rehearsal if we’re interested. He said that Toshido doesn’t have a problem with as many of us who wants to go, so we can basically bring the whole family if they can make it.”

“We’re going to see upcoming idols practice?” Carol almost screeched from excitement. “And you’re just telling us now, Dee?”
Ryo started to laugh with Dee.

“And here you go on about it since then?” Dee asked. “We were sparing Biks from that, Princess.”

Carol looked at Bikky. “You know?”

“Yeah. Before we left, Dad was talking to Hide and that’s when he told him about it,” Bikky admitted. “Pops said it’s best we keep this to ourselves until we get here and Dad speaks to Hide again.”

Ryo slipped an arm around Carol and smiled gently at her. “We didn’t want you to torture yourself, and us, for all that time.”

“I think sometime next week,” Dee said. “We’ll know more when we meet up with Hide and the others on Saturday. Meanwhile until then, you have everything else Japan has to offer to distract you. Also remember that it’s a new group. They don’t even have a single yet, so we don’t know how well they’ll do.”

“It doesn’t matter,” Carol said. “It’s idols! And we’ll get to see them from the very beginning, before everyone else. That’s so exciting.”

Hoshi nodded, smiling. “Yes, that is. I have to agree, and I hope I’m included in with the everyone because this is something I would love to see too.”

“It includes all of us here, and Obāsan’s other children and their families,” Dee said. “I mean, it’s not like Hide understands how some Japanese families work. He has a family much like this one.”

Ryo looked at Carol bouncing in her seat and then to his Aunt Hoshi and started to laugh. He stood up. “On that note, I think we need to let Carol walk off this mounting excitement of hers.”

Dee grinned devilishly as he also stood up. “Don’t worry about it, Princess. We’ll make sure you get to Harujuku before then.”
Carol just stood up as Dee spoke and turned to face him completely. “Are you joking? You mean I get to see all those awesome stores? For real?”

“Better than for real,” Ryo answered. “We’re letting you shop there. We might ask Obāsan and some of my other family to mail your new clothes when we’re getting ready to leave so we don’t take several days going through customs,” he joked with a wink to Dee, who laughed at Ryo.

Carol’s mouth dropped again and her eyes got wide. Finally, after a few seconds of silence, she exclaimed, “This is too much!”

“Let’s get out of the house before Carol implodes,” Nobu announced, heading for the entryway.

Ryo looked at Dee and Bikky. “See? At least she’ll be busy getting excited over other things here in Japan until then.”

“And we’re also going to try to get tickets for TKY52, aren’t we?” Carol asked.

“We’re going to try, Carol,” Dee said. “But we might not be so lucky. Remember Emiko said she had been trying for a while before they had to move to New York.”

“TKY52 is the most popular group in Japan right now, and everyone wants to see them, including the tourists,” Akira explained. “But we can all try, like we did for Emiko.”

“Why do they have to have a lottery system?” Carol said. “And we can’t send in our application no more than 4 days before the performance?”

“That’s how it works, I’m afraid,” Hoshi confirmed. “As hard as it is, it would be better than first come first serve and able to apply anytime. They would be booked solid months in advance that way.”

“That’s okay if we don’t get tickets, but we have to try,” Carol said. “Do you think it’s easier getting in for NGY52? Because if I had to choose, I would prefer to see them when we’re in Nagoya. My favorite idol transferred to NGY52 when they started it, because that’s where she’s from and wanted to live at home.”
“You might have better luck,” Hoshi said, “but you need to apply by email no more than two days before a performance. They’re not as popular as TKY52 yet, but they still are a main draw in Nagoya.”

“Two days!” Carol explained. “But we’re only going to be in Nagoya for two days.”

“That’s okay, Carol,” Dee said. “We can try for a performance on both nights from Tokyo before we leave. The worse is we don’t get any of them, and the best is we’ll be going to see them twice.”

“Oh, wouldn’t that be awesome if we did!”

“We’ll still also try for TKY52,” Ryo said. “We can pick a few nights so we have that many chances.”

“And if you don’t get it for next week, you can still try again when you come back to Tokyo after your trip,” Nobu said.

“That’s true.” She held up both arms, her fingers crossed. “I’m hoping for the best.”

“Gambatta!” Moriko exclaimed. “And take me and Hoshi with you.”

“Dee and I will let you take Carol and Bikky if we can’t get for everyone,” Ryo said.

“I don’t think it works like that,” Dee said, trying not to pout.

“I heard sometimes they will reply with how many tickets they can offer. You have about 6 hours to reply to the email, or you lose all the tickets,” Moriko said in Japanese.

Ryo pinched Dee. “Dee and I can do date night in Tokyo if needed,” he offered his aunts.

“Ouch! Yeah, sure. We can let you go with them instead of us if we can’t get enough. I listen to their music but it’s not like I have to go or know all their names,” Dee said.
“Or know who is who by their voices in the songs,” Bikky said, and smirked at Carol.

“You’re just picking on me now,” Carol grumped.

“No, we’re not,” Ryo said. “We’ll do our best, but no promises other than that. Okay?”

“You’re all sweet just for trying. At least I can say I can try, so that makes me happy,” Carol said.

“Weren’t we going out for a walk?” Nobu asked.

Akira looked around at everyone. “Does anyone need to change clothes?” she asked.

“Nah, we’re good Obāsan,” Ryo said. “We changed and washed up before we went into final approach, and we changed the chibis while we were settling in our place, so we’re ready to head out.”

“Then let’s go,” Akira said happily, looking forward to show her hometown to Bikky and Carol, and even to Dee who had earlier admitted he did not do too much walking around that area.

Ryo went over to the mats on the floor where the twins were amusing themselves with the mobiles that were part of the playset the mats came from and picked up Darin. “Come on, little man. Time to get ready to go out again.” He cuddled the baby boy to him, rubbing the little back and kissing the side of his head. Moriko got to Ryoko before Dee could and went over to the mats. “Dee, we should take some bottles with us just in case.”

Nobu held up the bottles from his place in the entryway. “I grabbed a couple before leaving the kitchen. Do you mind if I place them in the bag for you?”

“Not at all, thank you,” Dee replied with a smile. When they came back into the house, they anticipated going out after lunch and Ryo had set the bag repacked to go on a hook in the entryway. Since it was local, they decided to take just the one. They also had left the strollers in the entryway when they first entered the house.

“Ryo, you get to figure out what’s new since the last time you were here.”
“Really?” Ryo asked. “How am I supposed to remember? It’s been a while.” He looked at Dee. “Don’t go there,” he warned.

“He already did.” Nobu said as he put on his shoes. “Remember Dee pointed out a few shops on the way here that he remembered driving by going to the temple.”

“Including the ceramics shop that Moriko sells some of her cups and dishware to,” Akira said. “And considering how long she’s been selling to that shop, if you had stopped and went in, you might have picked up something from your future husband’s aunt.”

Dee’s mouth dropped. “But I did.” He looked at Ryo. “I have some tea cups that are in the cupboard with the other dishware I brought back from Japan.” He shrugged. “I had this thing for stores that looked like they sold handcrafted pottery. I figured it would be something more unique than the usual stuff sold in the department stores and if a shop fascinated me, I eventually stopped and went in just to look around.”

“Now I’m going to have someone go into our apartment and take a picture of the bottom,” Ryo said, sounding shocked.

“What?” Moriko asked, looking from Dee to Ryo. “You might have something I made in your collection?”

“Other than what you sent us as wedding presents?” Ryo asked. “Yes. Being that most of their stock has been from you, chances are Dee has some of your tea cups that he bought ten years ago. Before I met him.”

“Wouldn’t that be just amazing?” Carol asked.

“That would be cool if Dad had brought back some of Aunt Moriko’s tea cups,” Bikky agreed.

“I would say it was definitely fate that we’re all here right now,” Dee said, sounding amazed. He smiled at Ryo. “Buying my future husband’s aunt’s tea cups long before I met him. Now that’s something out of a novel.”
“One I’ll buy,” Ryo said with a laugh and took Dee’s hand. “That’s just another near miss between us before we met. And they all happened in Japan.”

“I’ll ask Elena next time she’s in the city, if she can go in and you can direct her of which ones to take a picture of,” Ryo said as he put on his shoes. Dee already had his on and was waiting with Nobu and Bikky.

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Dee strolled along the sidewalk holding Ryo’s hand. In front of them, Moriko and Hoshi were happily pushing the strollers, pointing out things to the babies as if they would understand. Thankfully they spoke loud enough so they could be heard by their group.

Life couldn’t be better than this, Dee thought as they walked toward the Kōtoku-ji temple. He was back in Japan, and holding hands with the love of his life, the man he married. He watched Bikky’s reactions, loving that they were able to show their son a country that meant so much to them. He was surrounded by their son’s girlfriend, who was also like a little sister to Dee, along with Ryo’s family. And seeming to lead the group were his infant twins in their strollers, looking around especially as they passed shops with more colorful storefronts. Ryo’s aunts seemed to understand that they were at the age to notice colors and would stop for a moment to let them look a bit before moving on. It occurred to Dee that even if the twins were two young to notice sites and places of interest, Japan had enough to hold an infant’s interest and get their attention. Between the colorful signs and storefronts to the lights at night, there was plenty to ‘show’ the twins during their time there.

Ryo had pointed out that lately when they went to Mitsuwa Marketplace, the twins seems to center on the very colorful packaging for a lot of the items on display. Once they took a walk at night in Times Square because they could, and the twins had the same reaction.

Ryoko was currently making cooing sounds as she reached out sometimes at something that caught her attention. Darin seemed content to be in his stroller, occasionally waving his arms and gurgling. They had accepted that Ryoko was going to develop faster than Darin and was assured by Dr. Needleman that it was nothing to worry about.

Hoshi and Moriko weren’t the only ones providing narratives as they walked. Nobu was pointing out some of places he liked to eat at, telling them what was best to order if they went there. Akira was not only pointing out shops and buildings but spots where she had a story to share about when Ryo was small.
With a happy sigh as she walked alongside Bikky with her arm through his while Carol walked alongside, Nobu in front of them and behind Ryo’s aunts and the twins, she said, “I remember walking this way with Ryo in his stroller for the first time. He wasn’t that much older than those two.” She looked back at Ryo. “But you stayed with us for almost a year. Your parents wanted to collect Japanese art to eventually take back to New York, and ended up running a store here for a while.”

“Do you remember where it was, Obāsan?” Ryo asked.

Akira nodded. “I remember very well. I’ll take you there. It’s a café now. That was your parents’ first business. They sold the business when they decided to go back to New York. It had a good reputation for a new business and they did very well with the sale. It most certainly helped them in setting up their new business. Six months later, they were back, collecting art to add to their collection to sell in New York. They stayed for another four months. That’s how it was for your first five years. When you were three, you stayed with me until you were five. Your parents would come and go throughout Asia obtaining items, and sometimes taking them back to New York. They had someone to run their new gallery in New York while they looked for items to stock. They never left you with me very long before returning and staying for a few weeks. Your parents couldn’t leave you for too long at that age, but it was much easier traveling through certain areas of Asia without a baby being it was for business.” Akira smiled fondly at the memories. It wasn’t a new story to Ryo or for his Aunts and Uncle, who were there during the time, but Akira was sharing with the newer members of her family if they didn’t know the whole story. “And that is how you ended up living in Japan for your first five years,” she concluded.

Ryo did notice some changes as they walked and said so to the group. He also remembered a few places still there after all the years. He also found he had a few stories to share from his time spend in Kamakura. Some included his parents when he was around Bikky’s age, a few was when he on his own and one story involving Army friends.

“I remember once one of the guys I knew on base saying he wanted to come to see Daibutsu, but had no idea how the get there. He claimed the maps they provided us to get around were bizarre and he couldn’t figure them out,” Ryo said as they walked.

“What?” Dee asked. “I thought they were damn easy to read, as long as they didn’t use a 7-11 are a landmark.”

Everyone laughed in agreement with Dee. “It’s sad that on some of those maps for directions, they could only find a 7-11,” Nobu said.
“This is true,” Akira agreed. “Ryo, Rei, please check any maps Bikky and Carol might get before sending them off on their own and make sure there are unique landmarks.”

“We’ll try, but we might need help if something we remember isn’t there anymore,” Ryo said and Dee nodded.

“Do your best,” Akira said. “It might be challenge sometimes. Things are changing so fast it’s hard to keep up in some areas of Tokyo.”

“I noticed a few food store chains that I’m not familiar with,” Dee said, “and we really didn’t hit up Tokyo yet.”

“There are new chains, yes,” Moriko agreed.

“You were saying before we went off track with maps and changes?” Dee said.

“I agree with you. I always found those maps easy to read, but there was always some Americans who couldn’t,” Ryo said. “I think it’s because they didn’t want to. They went to the tourist places because it was something to do but they didn’t really want to be in Japan, so they never tried to understand how the Japanese did some things.”

“I knew a few like that, mostly Navy, but there were a couple of students who were only going to school in Yokohama because their parents moved the family there and the students couldn’t afford moving out on their own yet, especially if it meant going back to America. They fought against anything that would make their lives easier because it was the Japanese way,” Dee explained.

“Yeah, I knew some Army families who were uprooted during high school to move to Japan because one or both of their parents were stationed here, and they were already well on their way to becoming like those boneheads I had to deal with instead of taking advantage of being in a different country and growing from it,” Ryo said. “Anyway, once these acquaintances figured I could read those maps they asked if I would come along and get them there.” He started to grin. “Only I didn’t use a map since I knew my way to my grandmother’s house from Camp Zama quite well, thank you.”

Everyone started to laugh. “What did they make of that?” Nobu asked.
“They seemed surprised and then asked me about it. When I told them that we had to pass my grandmother’s house, which I went to every other weekend at the least, they asked how did an American get along living here and why would they want to,” Ryo said. “That’s when they found out that the grandmother was Japanese and that made me Japanese too.”

“They didn’t know that you were Japanese, Pops?” Bikky asked.

“Apparently no, they didn’t until I told them when we got to Daibutsu,” Ryo said.

“They must be really stupid then,” Bikky remarked. “Because I noticed that you were Japanese, and Dad did too.”

“Well, when you don’t like something enough, you do tend not to notice it when it’s not that obvious that it smacks you,” Dee remarked quietly. “Remember that wacko at that hotel in England didn’t know you were Japanese until J.J. had to open his big mouth. After that, he did notice that you were Japanese.”

Ryo nodded and squeezed Dee’s hand. Their vacation in England still was a sore spot for them but they had survived so it wasn’t something they forgot or demanded not to be mentioned. “Those guys also seemed to take notice about that too, after that time, and then they started to tease me about it. I did my best to avoid them, but since we were in the same barracks it wasn’t that easy. They started to tell others, expecting them to treat me differently once they found out, which thankfully only those jerks seemed to have a problem with it. Actually, it wasn’t news to a lot of them, so basic reaction was ‘Yeah, so?’ Six months later two of them were sent to the Middle East.”

Dee snorted. “I wonder if they wished they were back in Japan after that.”

Ryo shrugged. “I hope they did. I know I would, but I never kept touch so who knows what became of them. The other one got himself in a lot of trouble a couple of months after our road trip and got discharged. So, I didn’t put up with them that long, considering.”

They made it up to the temple and a lot of photos were taken while they were there. They even managed to get someone to take a couple of full group photos in front of the Buddha, with Dee and Ryo in the middle, each holding a twin, with Bikky having to stand next to Ryo, since he was now
tall enough that if he stood in front of Ryo he would have blocked the baby Ryo was holding. Carol chose to stand in front of Bikky with his arms around her. Dee and Ryo were told to switch babies, so there was a family group shot with each of them holding both babies. They also got pictures with Akira between Dee and Ryo, holding a baby as the rest of the family surrounded them.

They spent an hour walking the grounds, going into the buildings and just sitting, enjoying a lovely fall day and people watching with the giant Buddha as the background. When they were ready to leave, they walked back toward the house on the other side of the road. Like on the way up, pictures were taken, especially of the twins and Bikky for their first time exploring Japan.

Nobu stopped them to get ice cream, and the two teens were amazed at the flavors available. There were the universal standard ones like chocolate, vanilla and strawberry, but some unusual ones. Nobu swore that even the normal flavors were nothing like they had before because that shop sold the best ice cream ever.

Dee snickered as Nobu was talking and when Ryo’s uncle looked him, Dee said in Japanese accented English, “Don’t tell me. This is a very famous Kamakura ice cream shop.”

Nobu’s mouth opened but no sound came out and he blushed a little while everyone else, including the shopkeeper laughed at Dee. “Well, yeah,” Nobu finally said. “You got that right.”

Dee winked at Nobu with a wide grin and then ordered the ginger ice cream, going into his own diatribe on how he had not had ginger ice cream since he had left Japan and was planning on having plenty of it during his time there.

“Fine, after you have ginger ice cream from all the different shops, you can tell us which is the very famous store that makes ginger ice cream,” Nobu challenged Dee with a teasing grin.

“Oh, that’s easy,” Dee remarked as he accepted the cup with the ice cream and had a spoonful. He let out a blissful sigh and closed his eyes for a moment. “Right now, it’s this place because here is the first time I had it since I left Japan all those years ago.”

Ryo groaned, since Dee answered Nobu in the same accent as before, completely losing his New York accent while speaking English. Normally that only happened whenever he was speaking in Japanese. “Oh great,” Ryo sighed. “Now I find out that Dee can also speak Engrish.” His family laughed with him as Dee stuck his tongue out and went back to eating his ice cream.

Carol decided to have the ginger ice cream just to see what Dee was talking about when he raved on about loving the flavor. Bikky decided to get the mochi red bean ice cream. Ryo chose to have the
matcha cheesecake, already knowing what green tea ice cream tasted like but not hearing of matcha cheesecake before. It was one of those shops that the owner liked to experiment and try to have unique items. After taking a small taste of it, he exclaimed loudly in the same accented way Dee had earlier that the shop was indeed a very famous ice cream place.

Ryo looked down at the babies and gave them a small smile. “Shame you can’t have any of this yet, kiddos, but then again good for me because I’m not sure I want to share.”

“Unless they have formula flavor for babies,” Dee quipped, completely enjoying himself eating his ice cream and having fun with family.

“Oh!” the man behind the counter exclaimed in Japanese. “I must work on that!”

Everyone started to laugh. Ryo looked at Bikky and Carol who were laughing too.

“Oh, c’mon Pops,” Bikky said. “I didn’t have to understand what he said to understand it.”

Carol nodded her head as she also seemed to be enjoying her ice cream. “He said something like he should do that.”

“Maybe we should start speaking Japanese around you two then?” Nobu asked, as he tapped Bikky lightly on his head.

Bikky started to frantically shake his head. “Please no. Kudasai. No. I wouldn’t know what you’re saying.”

“You seem to do fine when you want to,” Ryo pointed out.

“I can understand some things enough to get the gist of it but I don’t completely understand.”

“I think that’s a good start, young man,” Nobu said. “You too, young lady,” he added to Carol.

The group tucked into a corner, giving the chairs to Akira, Hoshi and Moriko while everyone else
stood and continued to have lively conversation along with teasing as they finished their ice cream. At one point, Moriko’s phone rang and after talking in rapid fire Japanese, she smiled at everyone. Most of them already had an idea going by Moriko’s side of the conversation, but Moriko announced that Takehide was home and asked where they were and if they were going to walk more. While they were at the temple it was decided to walk down to the train station and then head back up. Akira had promised Bikky that the next day they would go to the beach and walk around, even if it was too cold to go in the water. When Bikky started to protest wanting to see a Japanese beach that day, Akira said that it would be much cooler on the beach and they were not dressed for it. They would be the next day, and go in the morning.

Before they left the shop, Takehide entered and enthusiastically greeted Ryo, happy to see him again after so long, and meeting Ryo’s family. Once the exchanges were done, they left the shop to continue their exploring. As Dee walked out, he said to the shopkeeper, “I’ll be back.”

“You should try their twist soft serve,” Nobu said to Dee as they started to walk down the street. Dee and Ryo took over pushing the strollers from Nobu and Akira who had insisted on the honor from the temple. “They can even do ginger and matcha.”

Dee’s eyes went wide. “Oh yeah, I’ll be back.”

They continued to be a lively group as they headed toward the train station

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Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

The Laytners-MacLeans' first full day of sightseeing in Kamakura. Dee and Ryo are learning more about Carriers in Japan.

CHAPTER THREE

October 20, 2006

Kamakura, Kanagawa Prefecture

Japan

True to her word, Akira got everyone up early, and after they had something to eat and she made sure everyone was sufficiently dressed in layers, they piled into the van to go to the beach. Nobu had to work that day, having taken the day before off so he could be there to welcome the family to Japan and had scheduled meetings all that day, so it was up to Ryo and Dee to transport the family. Once they had decided they were going to Japan, Akira had made sure they applied right away to obtain international driver’s licenses so they would be able to drive in Japan.

Being that they had other places to go, Akira decided that it would be best to drive to the beach instead of walk. Ryo took over the driving duties for the first part of their day. It was not his first time driving on the trip because the night before, after some of Ryo’s family who had stopped by for dinner and welcomed them had left, and the twins were tucked in for the night, they decided to take Akira up on her offer to use her car and had gone into Yokosuka for a date night. The last date night, which was also their first since the twins were born, was when Ryo’s grandparents sent them off for a night out in the Hamptons.

The advantage of their night out had been that they both went through the comedy of getting used to driving on the left side of the road with the steering wheel on the right; just the two of them. There was no one else to tease them about it.

They did take a moment to appreciate that they were finally able to experience it together. Ryo drove them to Yokosuka, almost turning on the wrong side of the road and then getting confused with the left turn lights only once each. At least the control for the windshield wipers were on the dashboard.
as was normal for newer cars so there was no confusing the wipers with the turn signals anymore. He did have a little trouble getting used to shifting with his left hand and remembering the gear positions but it wasn’t a major problem and he was much more comfortable with driving stick in Japan by the time they arrived in Yokosuka.

Dee managed to have better luck, having no problem with turns and looked as if it was as natural to shift gears with his left hand as it was with his right. Then Ryo remembered that Dee had learned how to drive stick in Japan. He also was the one who had driven the rental car from the airport to the parking lot for the hotel they stayed at in England. Originally, they had planned for Ryo to drive to the airport but with everything that had happened at the hotel, Dee took over the driving back to the airport, so he had more recent experience driving on the other side of the road than they were used to.

They had first considered going into Tokyo or Yokohama, but it had been a long day and Yokosuka was much closer for when they decided to call it a night. They knew that they would be out and about early the next day so they did not want to stay out too late. It was great to be able to getaway, to be just a couple, strolling hand in hand and enjoy being in Japan again. As much as they loved having a family, it did feel like they had almost forgotten what it was like to do things just the two of them that were not errands and were starting to appreciate date nights.

They passed up finding a restaurant or café because they had more than enough for dinner, even with all the relatives who showed up by dinner. Dee finally realized why when Akira cooked, she made so much food. She was used to random relatives showing up just to spend some time with her. Of course, the night before was all about welcoming Ryo back to Japan and Dee finally getting to meet some of the family that he had been talking to on the phone for many months. Some of the visiting relatives had already met Dee when they came to New York for the wedding.

Also on the way back from their walk along the main road by Akira’s house, they stopped at the confectionary store near the house and picked up some things to have during the evening after dinner. As the others started to arrive, they also had picked up something for after dinner. By the time they left the house later that evening, they had no room to eat anything else, and just looked forward to walking off some of the food. They did not even care to grab a drink. They were content to find parking near the main gate of the Yokosuka Navy base and walk the streets along the water, looking at the ships docked and browsing some stores for a couple of hours before going back for the night.

There was not much to do at the beach in October, but they did take time to stroll along the surf a short way. Dee and Ryo each had a twin in a baby sling as they walked with Akira between them, offering her an arm. Bikky and Carol ran ahead of them, pants rolled up so they would not get too wet.

“You know, we should come back during the summer, even for a week,” Ryo said to Dee. “Bring your little grill with us and have a picnic on the beach. It would give the kids something to fully
appreciate the beach.”

“I think Bikky and Carol are appreciating it enough,” Dee said, his eyes ahead as he watched the teens laughing as they went along the surf.

“They do look like they are enjoying themselves,” Akira agreed, “so imagine how much fun they would have when it’s beach weather.”

Dee grinned as he looked at Akira. “How about we’ll come here for at least a week in the summer so we can enjoy the beach here if you join us for at least a week in our vacation home.”

“If we have it by then,” Ryo added, “but I’m going to back Dee up.”

“If it means have double the chance to see you all, then I accept,” Akira said brightly. “And when you get that vacation house, I definitely want to see it.”

“Good. We have a deal then,” Ryo said. He studied the beach in the comfortable silence. “I do see a few surfers getting some surfing in before the winter sets in,” Ryo observed.

“You will see a few surfers even during the winter months,” Akira replied, “but not as many in the warmer weather.”

Darin started to fret some as he snuggled against Dee. “Alrighty,” Dee said as he gently cupped the little dark head. “I think this one had enough fall surf for now.”

They stopped so Akira could remove the extra blankets they had packed in the baby bag and she fussed with covering Darin and tucking the blanket edges through the harnesses of the sling so it wouldn’t blow away. She turned to Ryo to do the same with Ryoko.

“Bikky!” Ryo called out. “Carol!” When the two teens turned in his direction, he said, “Time to head to our next stop. C’mon. The chibis are getting cold.”

“Awww…. We just got here,” Bikky complained but he started to walk back toward his fathers with Carol beside him.
“Yeah, we just got here,” Dee agreed. “As in Japan. You’ll be able to come back plenty of times. Don’t forget when we’re done taking you around some, you’ll be on your own. If you want to spend a whole day freezing your butts off on the beach, you’re more than welcome too. Just don’t come back sick.”

“Yeah, sure,” Bikky said. He stopped by the adults. “What’s the next stop?”

“We shall visit a few shrines until lunch. Moriko will be joining us for lunch,” Akira said as they started to walk across the sand toward the sidewalk. “She would like to come with us to Odawara Castle.”

“Oh, I can’t wait to see a real castle!” Carol exclaimed, clapping her hands.

“I know,” Akira said, smiling. “This is why we decided that you should see your first castle today.”

“Notice she said first, Princess,” Dee said grinning, “but not only.”

“How many others will we go to?” Bikky asked.

“We’ll be seeing quite a few during our road trip,” Ryo said.

“Cool!” Bikky said.

“I guess that is a vote yes on the castle today?” Akira asked.

“YES!” came from both teens.

“That’s a yes,” Ryo summed up with a laugh.
Akira had decided they were to spend the morning going to some of the more interesting temples in Kamakura. Their first stop was the Hokokuji Temple. Akira directed Ryo to turn off the main street to a small road that led to the temple grounds. As he started to go down the narrow road, Bikky suddenly sat forward, gripping onto the back of the passenger seat.

“Stop!” he screeched as pedestrians walked alongside the car. Ahead of them were people walking down the road toward the temple and others coming from it.

“What?” Akira asked, concerned.

“Why are we driving down this road. It’s made for people!”

Dee looked behind him as Ryo continued to slowly drive the van down the road, waiting for people to move to the side. “Relax, Biks. This is a road for cars.”

Carol sat next to Bikky, covering her eyes. “Are you sure about that?” she asked.

“Oh course,” Akira assured them. “This is a typical road in Japan. So far we have taken the newer, wider roads. You will encounter many of these roads while in Japan, and I trust that both of your fathers are used to them.” She looked at Dee.

“Yes,” Dee said. “Actually, this is a two-way street, and it’s not as bad as others that are lined with businesses. This is normal.”

“Look, there’s a parking lot! Can’t we park there and walk?” Bikky asked.

“We could,” Akira said, “but it is a bit of a walk and would make us late for lunch. That could also mean no time for the castle.”

“Then let’s go back to this temple one day when we have time to walk down this road,” Bikky
“Biks, Obaasan wants to share something that is very important to her today, so if it’s a choice between this temple and the castle, the castle will be another day,” Ryo said.

“Maybe the castle is important to her too,” Bikky commented, sounding hopeful as he glanced at Akira.

“Odawara Castle is indeed an important place I want to show you and Carol.” She looked over to Dee. “We can go and pick up Moriko and go to the castle then.”

Dee shook his head. “No way, Obaasan. He needs to get used to these roads because we’re not parking and walking every time we go somewhere. Besides, we’ll have to go down long stretches of roads like this just to drive places,” he said. “Biks, just lean back and relax. Maybe do like Carol and not look. We’ll be there before you know it. Besides, if this is our first place to see, then I think that means that Obaasan could not wait until she was able to show us. She took us to the beach first, because she knew that was important to you, so give this to Obaasan now.”

“Bikky, Dee’s right. We will have to go down streets like this just driving from one place to another. We can’t leave the car then because we’ll need to drive on that street to get where we’re going,” Ryo added. “Besides, it’s too late. I’m past the lot for the restaurant and we’re going to the temple.”

“No more lots, Biks,” Dee said. “Look at all the houses on this street.” He pointed to a car parked in a space in front of one of the houses. “People live here. People with cars, and they have to get home while driving. Look at the parked cars as we go by.”

“Fine, so they have to use streets like this to get home but we don’t. We don’t live down this street.”

“This is Japan,” Dee said. “Get used to it.”

“Ryo! Watch out for those people!” Bikky yelped as Ryo came up to a group of people, including some older women in kimono walking in the middle of the road. They started to move to the side as Ryo came closer to them.

“I see them,” Ryo assured him. “Don’t worry. This is not the first time I’ve driven down streets like this.”
They heard laughing behind Bikky, Carol and Akira to find both twins were up and laughing as they waved their hands around and kicked their feet.

“Oh geez,” Dee exclaimed, laughing. “I guess you find your brother is funny when he’s being silly.”

“Are they laughing?” Ryo asked, not daring to look away from where he was going.

“At least someone finds it funny,” Dee commented, and then started to laugh too.

Bikky turned behind him and reached out to tickle Darin’s foot, since the baby boy was closest to him. “Hey little bug, why are you laughing at me?” He stuck his tongue out at his brother and sister, making them laugh more.

Carol also turned around and the two continued to make the babies laugh more, starting to laugh themselves.

“Thank goodness for the twins,” Dee sighed and then chuckled. “Bikky loves making them laugh. Nice distraction there.”

“I love making them laugh too,” Akira said. “They have such wonderful laughs. The kind that happy babies have, and that makes me happy to hear.”

“I agree,” said Ryo. “I know we’re doing something right.”

“You’re giving them love, Ryo. You and Dei, Bikky and Carol and Maria, and everyone else in your extended family.”

“That includes you, Obaasan,” Ryo said and Dee nodded. “And now my family here.” He smiled. “Oh and look, there’s parking for the temple.”

“We made it!” Carol exclaimed happily as she clapped her hands, and made the twins laugh again.
Dee looked at Akira and grinned. “This is going to be an interesting trip.”

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They walked around the temple grounds for a while, going to several buildings. At first Bikky looked bored, but he did try to hide that from Akira, but not from Dee and Ryo. Akira started to take them around the grounds, telling them about the history of the temple. Once again, she had everyone spellbound as she spoke, including Ryo who had been to that temple several times and heard his grandmother talk about the history of the temple. Ryo knew enough about the temple to pitch in if he wanted to but he dared not break the spell his grandmother was weaving with her words. He had no doubt that by the time they left Japan, Bikky and Carol would have much knowledge on Japanese history.

It did not take them long to explore that temple, but then she led them on a path through a bamboo grove to a tea house where they enjoyed hot matcha. As they sat, Dee admitted that he had no idea why he did not explore more temples and shrines in Kamakura, especially since there were many others outside of Kamakura that he went to. He was known to find a place to pull over when he was driving if he saw something of interest and had to go check it out. He thanked Akira for giving him the chance to make up for it.

On the way back, there were less people on the road, but Bikky was still nervous. Just when Ryo had a little bit more to the main road, a car turned onto the road going in the opposite direction and Bikky covered his eyes. Ryo simply slowed down even more and when he noticed the turn blinkers go on the other car, indicating it wanted to pull into the lot for the restaurant on Ryo’s left, he stopped the car and allowed the other to turn into the lot. When he finally turned the car onto the main road, Bikky fell back in his seat, letting out a heavy sigh.

Once he had his wits about him again, he turned to Dee, who was still laughing. “I never want to go down a road like this with you driving, Dad,” he exclaimed.

Ryo chuckled as Dee grinned. “Too bad,” Ryo said. “Dee’s driving to Odawara Castle after lunch.”

“Obāsan!” Bikky exclaimed. “Can you teach me how to pray in the next temple?”

Dee stopped laughing and cuffed Bikky lightly in the back of his head. “Where do you think I
learned how to drive like I do?” he asked. “Do you remember us talking about how I didn’t drive until I got to Japan.”

“I’m taking the train then!” Bikky stated.

Finally taking pity on his son, Dee leaned forward and said, “Don’t worry, Biks. You get used to it. I had the same reaction the first time I was in a car with Ken. It gets better.”

“Yeah?” Bikky asked. He looked at Ryo. “How about you?”

“I grew up in a car going along these small roads,” Ryo replied. “I never had problem with it.”

“What he’s basically saying,” Dee said to Bikky, “is that he’s going to be the more manic driver out of the two of us.”

“Hey!” Ryo complained, starting to turn his head.

Akira tapped him lightly and pointed ahead of them. “Don’t look back.”

“Sorry,” Ryo sighed.

They went to another smaller temple and a shrine. Carol and especially Bikky were discovering that old buildings did not mean ruins or dirty molding stone structures. The temples and shrines around Kamakura were maintained, looking vibrant and beautiful. There were some with a long history, going back centuries but some of the buildings were replaced with newer ones because of either destruction during World War II or the Great Kanto Earthquake in the early 20th century. While walking the grounds, Akira and Ryo were focused on taking pictures or videos of the family with the gorgeous buildings in the background. Dee, who had the camera as Ryo took video, took photos of both family and capturing the beauty of the buildings along with the serene settings. Unlike the last time he was in Japan, he did not have to worry about buying film and getting the film developed. He took pictures of anything and everything he wanted with the digital camera. He had several more cards for the camera, purchased by Ryo before they left.

Ryo had handed him the cards before they left the house that earlier that morning with a knowing
Dee did not even try to deny it and accepted the cards with a kiss.

Ryo really could not talk that much because as Dee turned to get a picture of Ryo and his grandmother to find Ryo taking video of Bikky taking pictures of the shrine. Dee decided he had to complete the scenario and took photos of Ryo. He also caught Akira in the photos laughing as she noticed what was going on.

At the shrine, there were food stands along the main walkway before it branched off to the various lesser shrines and gardens. Once Bikky noticed it, he started for it, dragging Carol along.

“Hey Ryo!” Dee called out and started to smile when his husband noticed what Bikky was doing and shook his head.

Ryo and Akira came over to Dee, and together they walked over as Bikky bought vegetable korokke for him and Carol. They came up to Bikky and Ryo bopped Bikky on his head.

“You do know we’re going to have lunch after this, right?” Ryo asked Bikky, also looking at Carol.

“Yeah, but I figured it would take us a while to get there and we wanted a snack,” Bikky said.

“It’s all the places selling food, especially in a lot of the locations they are around here,” Dee said. “I mean, you can’t buy a snack inside St. Patrick’s Cathedral. Not that we don’t have food to go around New York, but I don’t think we have as many options either. Hot dogs and knishes basically.”

“Sausages too,” Akira pointed out.

Dee and Ryo shook their heads.

“I bought the most delicious sausage from a street vendor near Central Park,” Akira said.

“Yes, they do sell sausages, but they showed up suddenly one day and popped up all over the place.”
Sausage is not a New York food,” Dee insisted. “It’s like if suddenly they started having hot dog stands around here. Sure, you can buy them, but are they Japanese? No.”

Ryo started laughing. “Now Italian sausage on a grill with peppers and sausage in Little Italy or a street fair is different. Those have always been around too.”

Dee nodded his head in agreement and laughed. “That’s true,” he said.

“I’ll bet you won’t be complaining if they had takoyaki or ikayaki stands on the streets of New York,” Akira said.

“I might,” Dee replied with a smirk.

“What?” Akira asked, surprised.

“New York is not Japan, and there are now Japanese restaurants that have such delicacies, so I’m not doing without. Takoyaki stands would be like selling sausages in New York City. Those stands belong in Japan. When I see them, I know I’m in Japan and not New York.”

“Street festivals would be the exception,” Ryo said, seeming to agree with Dee.

“Yes, exactly. When they have those international food festivals, or something going on at the Buddhist Temples in New York and they have food booths, that’s okay. But selling ikayaki in Central Park? Oh hell no,” Dee said.

“Oh, I get it,” Akira said knowingly. “You’re a purist.” She started to laugh at the look on Dee’s face. As Ryo started to laugh, she looked at him. “You too. I also see that Bikky and Carol have finished eating their snacks, so do we want to go in the main shrine or go back to the car?”

Dee looked up the at the steps going to the red and gold trimmed building above them and down at Ryoko, who was snuggled up against him in the sling. “Maybe we should have taken the strollers,” he said.

“With those stairs?” Ryo asked. “We’d end up still having to carry the them and the strollers.”
“True,” Dee had to agree as Bikky and Carol came up to join them.

“This is your first full day here,” Akira said. “We don’t have to go inside all the buildings. I only insisted on the others because there was something famous and valuable inside.”

“Like that big wood statue, right?” Bikky asked.

“Exactly. Many of these have history but nothing as interesting especially if you have seen the interior of a few already, and we do have a long day today,” Akira said.

“But they’re still so beautiful on the inside,” Carol said. “And they’re not all the same.”

“No, they’re not,” Ryo said. “The elements might be the same, but they’re all unique and gorgeous.”

“I am so pleased you noticed that, Carol,” Akira said with a bright smile. “At least I do not feel like the only one here to notice that.”

“I always noticed that, Obaasan,” Ryo commented.

Akira laughed. “That’s because of me and your parents. Probably your great aunts and uncles had something to do with that too.”

“Basically, what she is saying, Ryo, is that you do not count,” Dee said with a laugh. Becoming serious, but still smiling he looked at Akira. “Obāsan, I would love to go inside any temple or shrine that you want.”

“And you will, but it’s not important this time. There will be plenty of stairs to climb at Odawara anyway,” Akira said.

Ryo started to laugh. When they all looked at him, he said, “I can understand wanting to buy something that you can’t get so readily on the streets of New York, so getting something is fine with me as long as we have an appetite when we sit down for a proper meal. And I’m not worried about
gaining weight either with all the walking and stairs we’re going to encounter while sightseeing.” He was looking at Bikky and Carol as he spoke.

“True,” Dee said thoughtfully. “Besides, I think it’s only the first few days anyway. By next week, it will just be an option that we have as we go about our days.”

“Does that mean you would like something from the stand before we go to the car, Dei?” Akira asked. “What about you, Ryo?”

“Do you want to go into the shrine?” Ryo asked Bikky and Carol.

“I would,” Carol said. “I want to see everything, please!”

“Then we’ll take on the stairs,” Ryo said looking at Dee for confirmation. “We’ll be good until lunch.”

“Yeah, let’s go and start on working off all the food we’ll end up eating by the end of today,” Dee said. He looked down and kissed Ryoko’s head. “Are you ready, little girl, for your first Japanese shrine?”

“She already did, Dad,” Bikky said. “We’ve been in all the other buildings.”

“Almost all of them,” Ryo corrected. “And we’re going to go into the main hall. The others are lower worship halls. There are prayer offers done at them, but you basically see a lot of people just looking and taking pictures. When we go up to the main building, I need to ask that everyone be on their best behavior.”

“You will see many people up there praying,” Akira added. “I do not expect everyone to pray, all I ask is that you give respect.”

“Just as is expected inside any house of worship,” said Dee. He looked at Carol. “Shinto has no prejudices, by the way. If you have no problem offering a prayer inside the shrine, it doesn’t matter who you worship. You are very welcome to do so. Just keep to the customary way of praying.”
Carol nodded. “I won’t have a problem with it. But what about you, Dee? We all know you’re Catholic.”

“I am, but Mother will also tell you that I’m a holiday worshipper.” He smiled. “Mother will also tell you to follow your heart. One of the things I love about my mom is that she doesn’t believe everyone with other beliefs are on their way to hell. I might have been baptized but she still allowed me to learn about other religions. While I won’t call myself Shinto, that doesn’t mean I have never worshipped in a Shinto Shrine or even a Buddhist temple, especially during my time in Japan. However, I did find a church near where we lived that I also went to regularly.”

“She’s really cool about stuff like that,” Bikky said. “When Dad approached her about not baptizing the chibis, she understood.”

“That doesn’t mean she didn’t send a few prayers of fortification for us the next time she went into St. Joe’s but that’s her business,” Dee said with a grin and a wink. “But she’s cool with us giving the chibis a broad experience in religions and letting them decide when they are old enough,” Dee said.

Akira was aware of their decision because she was there with Maria when Dee and Ryo had approached the nun about the subject of baptism. Dee had no problems being raised in the Catholic religion, but for his own children, after talking with Ryo, he realized he wanted them to make their own choices in religion. Just as they weren’t going to force Ryoko to play only with dolls and Darin with trucks. They did not want to box their children into gender roles or religion. Shortly after taking Bikky in, Ryo also had discovered that Bikky was actually raised in the Greek Orthodox church, which was the one his mother was raised in. He would explain the differences in various holidays and Ryo had started to try to incorporate some of them into their lives. They were a family consisting of three races, various religions with two fathers, who were also Carriers. They were not going to try to mold their kids into anything.

“And in the meanwhile, they’re exposed to Catholic because of Dee and Mother, and now they’re being exposed to Shinto because of Obāsan,” Ryo said. He also gave a small grin. “And I guess me, too.”


“Maybe a little bit,” Ryo admitted. “But I also take from the Japanese Buddhists. And some from Christians. As I said, I freelance.” He looked at Dee. “You were so sure about Shinto, huh? Even if I have nothing in the house to indicate I do worship as a Shinto.”

Dee pointed to Ryo’s heart. “The same way I say I’m Catholic even if the last time I was in a church
was when we took our guests to see St. Patrick’s Cathedral. Besides you eat meat, so it can’t be Buddhist.”

“You’re right,” Ryo agreed. “But if I did start putting up religious items we’d have a conglomeration going on.”

“Yeah, I know. Also, your parents seemed to raise you more traditional American for the most part. Meaning the child gets the mother’s religion. Then there’s your first five years basically living here for most of them, and in Obāsan’s house. Yeah, I figured Shinto.”

“Well then you’re smarter than you look,” Ryo quipped and then laughed at Dee’s face as Carol took a picture. “So do we still want to go into the main hall then?”

Heads nodded in agreement. “Okay, up the stairs we go,” Ryo said and looked up. “I have a feeling we’re all going to be overtaken by an 80-year-old. Sheesh!”

Akira cuffed Ryo and laughed. “I’ll hold you up if you need,” she said to her grandson and laughed more.

Together the family went up the stairs toward the main hall. Despite the teasing, Dee and Ryo had Akira between them, each offering her an arm. Also as expected, Bikky and Carol were waiting for them at the top of the stairs.

“You’re allowed to take photos of the outside of the buildings, but not inside this particular hall,” Obāsan warned them before entering.

“Dad’s probably out of space anyway,” Bikky remarked, and started to laugh.

“Dee has five more disks for his camera,” Ryo said with a smirk. “I know Dee, especially Dee with digital.”

Dee sighed. “Be nice,” he said. “I’m going forward now so if you want to keep on teasing me, you can stay here.” He held his arm out for Akira to take it.
With a smile, she bowed slightly and accepted his arm.

Ryo had one more laugh and then shooed Bikky and Carol to follow Dee and his grandmother until they stood before the last few stone steps leading to the front.

They stood off to the side, allowing Bikky and Carol to watch what the worshippers did. They also looked around at the inside of the building, seeming impressed. They already knew from Akira that the building they stood in was rebuilt in the early 19th century, replacing the original shrine that had burned down.

Then they followed Akira, Ryo and Dee as they approached the front. Akira reached out for a rope and pulled on it. A gong sounded, surprising Bikky and Carol. Akira looked over at and smiled encouraging to them. She took their hands and stood between them. Dee and Ryo decided to take each end and together they clapped their hands twice and then bowed. They held their hands together as if in prayer for a few seconds, waiting for Akira to clap once first. Bikky and Carol went next. Ryo held the pose for another couple of seconds and with a slight nod of his head, clapped his hands. Last was Dee. They all stepped back.

Akira lead them around to the side where there was a museum.

“Dee was actually praying,” Bikky pointed out.

Dee shrugged. “Pray is pray,” he announced. He stopped and looked at his family with a warm smile. “If you must know, right now, at this moment, I am willing to pray to any and all gods to give thanks for having the family I have. Everyone, including those somewhere around here in Japan that we’ll see later tonight and during our vacation, and everyone back home.” He cuddled Ryoko more. “And especially for us having Bikky and these two in our lives,” he said to Ryo.

“Amen,” Ryo intoned seriously. He moved to Dee’s side and leaned over to kiss him, careful not to make the babies bump heads.

“That’s going to be an awesome photo,” Carol exclaimed.

They moved apart to find that Carol, Akira and Bikky all were putting down their cameras.

Dee laughed. “And you keep calling me Japanese for taking photos,” he looked at Ryo.
“At least I am Japanese,” Akira said with a grin and laughed. “So is Ryo. There is one more shrine I would like to visit today, if you don’t mind. We’ll be meeting Moriko there and we’ll have lunch nearby. It is a shrine dedicated to Carriers. I had gone there many times since finding out about Dei, offering prayers for your pregnancy and a healthy baby. And then when I first found out about Darin, I had to go to pray for his well-being. I would love to take you there and present Ryoko and Darin to the kami of the shrine.”

Ryo was smiling warmly but he indicated both babies. “Not that we’re complaining, Obāsan, but now we know what happened. I think you prayed a little too much and that’s how we ended up with twins.”

Dee started to chuckle. “Yeah, we’re not complaining and if that’s what happened, then domo arigato gozaimasu, Obāsan. And yes, we would be honored to take the twins there today.”

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On the way to the next shrine, Akira told Ryo that they would pass the street where his parents had their first store and if he wanted to drive past it. Of course, he wanted, so she directed Ryo where to go.

“Oh, you have to be kidding me!” Bikky exclaimed in horror as Ryo turned down another extremely narrow road. “This is worse than that other one!”

“We told you, Bikky,” Dee said.

“Relax Biks,” Ryo said, grinning. “I’m not going to speed down the road. We might even stop so I can get my honorary Japanese husband to take a photo of the building.”

“Stop it,” Dee said, “or I might just not take the picture.”

“Do you not like the Japanese, Dei?” Akira asked in a teasing tone.
“I like them just fine, thank you, but I’m not Japanese.”

“That you know,” Ryo quipped, with a grin.

“Do I look Japanese to you?” he asked.

Ryo shrugged. “Sometimes.” He started to grin. “Especially when you have that camera in front of you,” he added, making everyone laugh. “Oh come on, Dee. We have no idea what the hell you are. And I’m guessing that there just might be a tiny bit of some type of Asian in your gene mix because I know Darin gets his looks from more than just me.”

“I noticed today that when Dee has his sunglasses on, he looks more Japanese than Ryo,” Carol said. “I mean he has that dark, straight hair. Just like most of the Japanese guys.”

“And Ryo has that light brown wavy hair,” Akira said. “He not only got that from his Scottish side, your grandfather contributed to that too, I’m afraid. You have the same hair as my Jordan.”

“That’s fine, Obāsan,” Ryo said concentrating on slowly moving the car without hitting people walking on the street. There was no sidewalk on the street. People walked out of a business into the street for most of the stores. “I’m trying not to hit people. Unless I get a high score for running down someone in kimono.”

“Oh my God!” Bikky exclaimed. “Why are there no sidewalks?”

“This is a two-way street, Biks,” Dee commented. He looked over at Akira. “And when do we finally get to hear more about Ryo’s grandfather?”

“I’ll take the albums out first chance we get and tell you more,” Akira said with a smile. She pointed a few stores ahead on the right. There was a café at the corner to a narrow alley. “There it is,” she said. “Next to the alley.”

“I see it. Dee, please when we pass get some pictures, and I swear I’ll never call you Japanese again,” Ryo said.
Dee laughed. “I already know how that’s not going to happen, unless I stop taking pictures. And I know you really want this one, so I’ll be taking pictures.”

“Thank you, Dee.”

Ryo slowed the car down even more than he was going. He gazed out the window as he came to a stop in front of it for a couple of seconds before starting to drive away.

“You know, we can always come back around here and find parking on another day,” Dee suggested.

“Yeah. I think I’d like that. Sure.” He passed the store, but Dee turned to get pictures from that angle until he couldn’t see it anymore.

As they approached the intersection, Bikky commented, “Please, please PLEASE let there be a real street we’re turning on!”

“What he said!” Carol added, covering her eyes and making the adults laugh.

Dee leaned back in his seat, laughing at Bikky. “Alrighty now, we’re going to have a lot of fun in Japan.”

Bikky just covered his eyes with both his hands, making Dee laugh again.

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They arrived at the shrine to find Moriko waiting at the entrance to the shrine’s grounds. Unlike the other places, it was pre-dominantly Carriers and Carrier families. The shrine grounds itself was much smaller and was built in 1929. It had a water purification basin and the shrine. The shrine was in the midst of cherry blossom trees. Ryo imagined that how it would look in the spring when the blossoms
They went with Akira to the temple, this time stopping by the water purification basin to purify themselves. At the front of the temple, they went through the ritual of praying. Bikky and Carol was expecting the gong, but Akira had Dee and Ryo pull the cord together. Akira quietly presented Darin and Ryoko invoking their full names, touching each baby as she spoke. Dee and Ryo had them in the slings. They decided it was easier for certain places, such as temples and shrines. The strollers wouldn’t be practical with all the steps that most of the larger ones had. There were enough benches to sit if they needed to rest. Akira also liked to have one of the babies at times too, and they could convince Bikky and Carol, if needed. They tried not to, wanting to allow the two to enjoy each new place they were exploring. Bikky was discovering that going to temples and shrines wasn’t boring and was absorbing any information given to him about where they were. It helped much that Akira had a way of talking and knew how to present it to keep Bikky’s attention and even get him to wanting more information.

Akira had explained that the presentation was not exactly a Shinto way, but an adaptation for Carriers. Once again Ryo heard about how Carriers were honored and revered, and how more shrines and temples were being built and dedicated in addition to the ones already in Japan. There were some customs unique to the Carrier temples.

It was a much different attitude toward Carriers than in the United States, and Ryo wondered if the country he considered home would ever have the same attitude. When he talked about it with Dee as they sat on a bench, watching as Akira and Moriko pointed out to Bikky and Carol various elements of the temple that was Carrier specific, Dee simply said, “If it doesn’t get better, we can always move here.”

He knew Dee wasn’t serious. They could never completely move from New York City, but Ryo was thinking that they could split their time if it ever came down to it. At least if the worst happened and they felt it too dangerous for their family, they could keep them with Akira and split their time. They would prefer to be with their children at all times, but keeping them safe would always be a first priority, and they had options now.

“How are they yours?” they heard a man ask in Japanese, “but are they yours?”

Dee and Ryo looked up to find a young couple standing before them, both Japanese. One of the men was very pregnant. Ryo smiled up at them. “Yes, they are our twins. My husband Carried them.” He indicated Dee as he spoke in Japanese.

“They are so sweet. May I ask their names?”
Dee smiled up at the men and replied, “This is Ryoko and this is Darin.”

“Ah, good names. Darin? That isn’t Japanese, is it?”

“No, we’re from New York City,” Ryo replied. “We’re here to visit with my grandmother.” He pointed to Akira. “She brought us to this shrine along with my aunt.”

“We’re also here with our other son,” Dee said, pointing to Bikky. “We adopted him before we knew we could have children of our own, but he’s still our son.”

“Oh nice!” the pregnant man exclaimed. “I am having twins too.”

“Congratulations,” Ryo said with a smile. “So are you both twins? Or have parents who are twins?”

“My father is. So are my siblings. I was the odd one out. It sometimes happens in my family line, but we suspected I would have twins if I got pregnant. Taichi, my husband, is not a Carrier, so we accepted we would have twins.”

Ryo looked at Dee, and then to the couple. “So, if a Carrier has twins, does that mean he’ll always have twins?”

Taichi nodded his head. “Yes. It is the twin gene. At least it is that way in Japan. Certain family lines will not only pass on the Carrier gene, but the twin gene. It is said that those families have the first Carriers in Japan as ancestors.”

“We didn’t know that,” Dee replied. “That’s interesting. From what we’ve been hearing bits and pieces of, it seems Carriers are different in Japan. Other than the overall attitude.”

“Oh yes. Carriers are very much respected in Japan. It is said that Carriers will protect the Human Race. It is a shame that other countries won’t accept Carriers like Japan,” Taichi said.

“We keep hoping that one day America will realize the error of their ways,” Ryo stated. “But I’m afraid that it’s only going to get worse before it gets better.”
“Unfortunately, that is the way it is with change,” the pregnant man said. “We should go, but we had to come over and see your adorable twins close-up. Enjoy your time in Japan.”

“Thank you,” Dee said, bowing his head. “We intend to. And congratulations on your twins.”

“May they bring you as much joy as ours bring us,” Ryo added, also bowing his head.

The two men bowed, the pregnant man as much as he could. “Thank you.”

Akira and Moriko came over after the two men walked away hand-in hand. “I see our little ones got some attention. I noticed others looking at them,” Akira said.

“Twins might not be as rare in Japan, but like Carriers, they are still extra special,” Moriko added.

“I think we should head for lunch now,” Akira said, “so we have time to do the castle and still make it to Tokyo in time for dinner.”

“Do you have reservations?” Ryo asked.

“Yes, I do. And I apologize, but our reservations are with your competition,” Akira replied.

“Competition?” Dee asked, looking confused.

“Our reservations are at the Odaiba Hilton,” Akira answered as they walked over to where the teens looked like they had made some new friends. Which was the reason why they sat and allowed Bikky and Carol on their own for a while. “Your hotel is a magnificent and very popular one. It attracts a lot of tourists who want to be near Roppongi and Ginza.”

They stopped by the teens. “Bikky, Carol. We need to leave now,” Ryo said.

“I’ll give you a call when we have free time,” Bikky said to the two boys and the girl around their
“Please. Talk to you later,” one of the boys said.

“Bye Bikky. Bye Carol. Ja ne!”

“Ja ne!” Bikky and Carol said as they followed the adults.

“Who was that?” Dee asked. “I sense Americans.”

“Their mother is Japanese and their father was in the Air Force,” Bikky said.

“Going to get together with them next week?” Ryo asked.

“If it’s okay with you, yeah.”

“I’m good with you going to do something together, but no going over houses unless we meet their parents, okay?” Dee said. “I know it’s safer in Japan, but I rather us not take chances.”

“I agree with Dee,” Ryo backed up his husband. “And Obāsan was telling us that we’re eating at enemy camp tonight.” He winked at his grandmother.

“What?” Bikky asked.

“Enemy camp?” Carol asked.

Dee started to laugh. “We’ve having dinner in a Hilton tonight,” he clarified.

“So?” Bikky asked. “Hiltons are nice.”
“Yes, they are, but we don’t own the Hilton,” Ryo reminded Bikky with a smirk.

“Oh! Okay. I guess it doesn’t bother you?”

“No, there’s plenty of people in Tokyo for all the hotels,” Ryo said.

“Besides, when the Hilton fills up, the overflow needs to go somewhere,” Dee quipped.

“Every hotel serves its own purpose in Tokyo,” Akira said. “Yours is popular for the Roppongi, Akasaka and Ginza areas. It’s also close to Shibuya. The Hilton we’re going to basically serves Daiba area. Your hotel does have some views of the bay and the Rainbow Bridge, but the featured views are Tokyo Tower and Roppongi Hills. I thought since Carol and Bikky wants to see Tokyo, we can have dinner overlooking Tokyo Bay and the bridge. It is much like having dinner at the River Café with the views of Manhattan.”

“Can’t complain about that,” Ryo said. “I’m looking forward to it.”

“Me too,” Dee agreed.

They walked to the car and started to get the twins buckled into the car seats.

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They sat in a café not far from the Carrier shrine and a popular spot for visitors to the shrine to stop for lunch. They ordered their lunch; sets of Japanese hamburger over rice covered with curry that came with miso soup and salad. They also added a couple of orders of pork and garlic gyoza made from scratch to split between them. As they ate, Dee and Ryo talked about the vast differences of Carriers in Japan and America.

“I’m starting to realize just how different Carriers here are here than in America,” Ryo said. “It’s not
just attitudes toward Carriers. It’s the Carriers themselves. It’s as if the Carriers are from a different line of Carriers. Do you think we can buy books? I mean about Carriers in Japan and not those books about the pregnancy itself.”

“You can find some of the history in a book store. I did not say much because I have learned through my life that seeing is much more than just taking someone’s word. I could tell you that things are better here, and I believe I have several times, but I knew you had to see it. I am so glad you are here for much longer than a week or two. It will give you a chance to experience what it is to be a Carrier in Japan during your time here,” Akira explained.

“We understand, Obāsan,” Dee said. “I would not have believed it to be like this, even if you did bring books for us to read.”

“We don’t get much with Carriers in Japan back home. Not the manga, or dramas,” Ryo said. “I’m guessing part of the blame is on the media companies, but I’m also guessing that in many ways Japanese are a private people.”

Akira nodded. “That is correct. We are taught not to discuss too much detail about Carriers to gaijin. I apologize, but I was raised to respect that. Had you decided to stay in Japan and change your citizenship, I would have felt free to talk. As much as I love you, Ryo, you were born in America and you chose to live in America. That makes you Japanese-American and as far as the Carrier subject is concerned, you are gaijin. I did give as much as I can in sharing what I could during my time with you. I am only sorry that it did not occur to you to pay more attention to what was going on around you during your time in the Army.”

“I do understand, and I should have paid more attention,” Ryo said. “To be honest, most men in the military didn’t care or had problems with them, so no one was coming back giving out secrets, especially if it means helping Carriers. I never thought about being a Carrier or even Carrying so I never paid much attention to it, even in New York, except what I needed to do my job.”

“Even if they talked, as your grandmother stated, it is something to be seen. You cannot comprehend how it is here for Carriers if you are in an environment like it is in America,” Moriko said in Japanese.

“I’m ashamed I ignored it too when I lived here,” Dee said, “but I’m definitely not now. As you said, we can try to use Japan as the model but it is something to be seen. Like Ryo, I never figured Carriers applied to me, so I only learned what did concern me in being a cop. I only started to become more aware once I found myself pregnant.”
“First clue that you were a Carrier, huh?” Moriko asked with amusement. “We do have some people even here in Japan that are oblivious to Carriers except that they exist. If it doesn’t concern you, you don’t pay much attention. It’s a universal concept. Even I tend to do that with things that do not interest me. Don’t beat yourself up over. I mean that to the two of you. Understand?”

“Listen to your Aunt Moriko,” Akira said with a gentle smile. “She speaks the truth.”


“I hear you both loud and clear. Thank you,” said Dee.

“Now shall we finish our lunch?” Akira asked.

“The gyoza is really delicious,” Ryo remarked.

“Oishii!” Bikky exclaimed enthusiastically as he picked up another gyoza with his chopsticks.

Everyone laughed and agreed.

“We might have Bikky speaking Japanese by the time we get back to New York,” Ryo said, smiling.

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Despite all the jabs at his driving from Bikky and Carol, Dee did not encounter any small streets along the way to the Odawara Castle. He chose to take the toll road that ran along the coast from Kamakura. They encountered some traffic, but they made it there in just over an hour. To Bikky’s disappointment, he went past the PA because of time. He promised Bikky that they would be going past it again during their vacation and they could stop at another time.

Bikky and Carol were impressed with the castle. They had seen Japanese castles in pictures, including those in Ryo’s and Dee’s photo albums, but it was nothing like being at one. They walked
the castle grounds first, taking pictures and video. Moriko took a picture of Dee and Ryo on the bridge each of them holding a baby instead of having the babies in their slings, with Akira between them with Bikky and Carol on each side of the adults. Photos were also taken of Bikky and Carol alone and with the babies, or Dee and Ryo and Ryo with Akira and Moriko, and any other combination they could think off. Not only were pictures taken on the beautiful bridges going over the moats, but everywhere. For once, Ryo was also too involved in getting photos they would love to look at again and again once they were back in New York to pick on Dee.

Once they were done with walking around the grounds, they did a thorough walkthrough of the buildings, stopping to admire the museum pieces. Once again, Bikky seemed captivated with the history surrounding them, asking questions and many of them had Ryo and Dee looking at Akira and Moriko for answers. Darin and Ryoko were starting to get fussy as they finished looking at everything, so they let Bikky and Carol to go exploring on their own while Dee, Ryo, Akira and Moriko sat at a bench near the castle, enjoying cold drinks from a vending machine while feeding the infants.

“You mentioned before that Carriers here seem to come from a different line than in America,” Akira started after some small talk. With Dee’s and Ryo’s attention, she continued, “What I am to tell you is not common knowledge in the U.S. It is not really talked about here. Carriers appear in our history books around the time of the first Carriers in the United States, but Carriers have been in Japan longer than any other country. When the first successful Carriers gave birth in that project, Japan already had many Carriers. The history is unclear, because as I mentioned, they are not in the history books prior to Carriers in America. All I can tell you is that Carriers were accepted into our society before I was born.”

“The first Carriers did not come from the Carrier project?” Dee asked amazed.

“No, they did not. I don’t know if the idea was borrowed or what, but it is highly probable that the multi-nation project came from the Japanese,” Moriko explained. “Also, the presence of Carriers already in Japan did not stop American forces to use their methods to produce more Carriers after Japanese surrender in WWII. That is when the real boom in Carriers here started. And why there are so many more Carriers here.”

“So that means there are two types of Carriers in Japan,” Ryo commented.

“Three if you consider those descendants of the original line who have children with those who has the implanted gene. They are similar but as you can see, there are differences. Some claim that the Japanese Carriers are a product of evolution rather than science. At least there are tales and legends that imply that, but there is not enough information available to the general population to know for sure,” Akira explained.
“What matters most to our society is not how Carriers came to be in Japan, but that they are part of our culture and very honored,” Moriko said. “They were also the ones who helped women step from the non-Carriers’ shadows, leading to the rights we have in Japan today.”

“I can understand why,” Dee said with a nod.

“So can I,” Ryo said. “That’s interesting information. Dee and I were able to read what is being claimed as the actual documentation from the Carrier project, and there was no mention of Japan. We’re led to believe Carriers started in Japan because of the war.”

“And I am sorry I continued to lead you to believe that until now.”

“That’s okay, Obāsan,” Ryo said. “Chances are if Dee didn’t get pregnant, if I made it here now for whatever reason I still wouldn’t have noticed. Besides, I am gaijin. I was born in New York City, I was mostly raised in New York and I’m an American citizen.” He smiled at his grandmother. “You know that Dee and I discussed possibly moving to Japan, but as much as we both love this country, we can’t move from New York.”

“Ryo’s right. And with me not even being any part Japanese, that definitely makes me gaijin,” Dee said.

“I still believe you have Asian in you,” Akira said. “Maybe even Japanese, but I guess that is something we’ll never know.”

“You may be gaijin, but you’re all family. Not just Ryo, but you too, Dee,” Moriko said with a smile. “And Bikky, Darin, Ryoko and even Carol. I am so glad you came here and I’m finally able to meet you. I’m looking forward to our time together.”

“Keep your eyes open and go to libraries and book stores since you both can read Japanese,” Akira said. “I don’t know if you can use Japan as a model, but with more knowledge on how things are here, you might be able to figure out a model that will work for America. Meanwhile, Ryo if you do Carry, even if you were born in America, you still have your mother’s Carrier genes, which come from both me and your grandfather. Ours is pre-war gene. Also you passed on those same genes to Darin and Ryoko, combined with Dei’s gene, which most likely came from the Carrier Project in the U.S. That means they have the 3rd Carrier gene. Dei, you went to school here and I see you adapted well to the culture during that time. It is still evident now. You made it a part of who you are now. Because of that, you are more than just family. To me, you are honorary Japanese. Now that you see how things are here, I am now willing to share what I do know and answer questions you might have as you read whatever you are able to get.”
“Thank you, Obāsan,” Ryo said, taking Dee’s hand and squeezing it.

“I am honored,” Dee said, a slight blush going across his face.

“Do you want to do another walk around before we leave?” Akira asked.

“I’m good,” Ryo said, having been to the castle many times. It was his first time in a decade but it brought back so many memories of his previous visits to Odawara Castle.

“We did a very complete walk around,” Dee said. “And it’s not my first time seeing this castle, so I suggest we find Bikky and Carol and head back to get ready for dinner.”

“We do have a little time but you can use that time to rest up a little before tonight’s adventures,” Akira said as Ryo took out his phone to call Bikky to head over to the bench.

“If we’re running you around too much, don’t be shy to speak up,” Moriko said with an amused smile.

“We’re fine with the pace. I suppose by Monday we might want to have a lazier schedule,” Ryo commented.

“We’ll have more time to kick back when we check into the hotel,” Dee said. “Because, except for coming over to your house when we can’t get you into Tokyo, we’ll be closer to what we want to see during that week.”

“We all know having you take us where you are taking us is very important to you, Obāsan,” Ryo said, “so it’s very important to us too. Bikky will tell you the same.”

“Besides, we’re having a blast,” said Dee. “All of us, so bring it on. I got to hear you talk with so much love about places in Kamakura, and now we’re getting a chance to see them with you. I can’t wait to see everything else like you promised us during your time in New York.”
“I’m glad you feel that way and consider yourself warned,” Akira said with a smile.

They continued to talk while they waited for Bikky and Carol to meet up with them.
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

The Laytner-MacLeans go to Tokyo for dinner and to meet some more of Ryo's Japanese family.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

CHAPTER FOUR

October 20, 2006

Odaiba Hilton Hotel

Daiba, Minato, Tokyo

Nobu took the wheel of the van again for their ride to Daiba, Tokyo, a manmade island across the Rainbow Bridge from central Tokyo. Bikky and Carol seemed captivated as they stared out the window as they drove from the house in Kamakura toward Tokyo. Ryo and Dee noticed that both teens had their cameras out and would take a picture of whatever interested them. When they entered Yokohama, Bikky asked if they would be going over the Yokohama Bay Bridge again and Nobu said they were taking a different route into Tokyo than the way from the airport and he was certain they would enjoy the ride much more than their trip the day before.

As Nobu approached the exit from the toll road, Dee pointed ahead and toward the left, exclaiming that they were about to drive past Yokohama National University. It was the first time that Dee had been so close to his college since he left about a decade ago, and the excitement coming from him was felt by everyone in the vehicle. They couldn’t see much from the highway because of the high barriers on each side of the road, but plans were made to walk around the campus the next day along with Dee’s friends.

When they got back to Akira’s, they did not use the time left to relax. They quickly got ready for dinner, including getting Bikky in a dress shirt and chinos instead of his usual style. Carol wore her usual style but she still looked dressed up in the skirt, blouse and shoes she chose, and had a fluffy warm fake fur jacket. Dee and Ryo wore dress casual, wearing comfortable slacks and shirts but with designer labels. They added sports jackets, also designer. The restaurant was casual and jackets were not required but they were going out with family for their first night out in Tokyo. Everyone going was dressing up. Akira had changed into one of her fancier kimonos for the occasion.
As they drove through Tokyo, Bikky and Carol practically plastered themselves to the van’s windows. When they first saw Tokyo Tower, Carol went crazy with excitement and started to take pictures. The teens had a great time getting their first glimpse of Tokyo. They even had the twins noisy but not in a cranky way. Apparently, their older brother and his girlfriend was amusing them.

Nobu drove over the Rainbow Bridge into Odaiba. After parking the van at the Hilton, they all went across from the Hilton into the park, where they walked around a little, watching the bridge start to light up as darkness fell, followed by the Tokyo skyline.

“We’ll see the Statue of Liberty and then we’ll head back to the hotel,” Nobu said.

Bikky looked at Nobu trying to figure out if he was serious. “Isn’t that back in NYC, Uncle Nobu?”

“The actual one is, yes,” Hoshi replied. “But there is a replica just down the walkway there. It’s much smaller, but it’s the Statue of Liberty. You can’t climb up it inside.”

“Maybe you can climb up to her head,” Takehide commented amused, looking at Bikky.

“Please, Uncle Takehide,” Ryo said with a sigh, “don’t give him any ideas.”

Everyone laughed as they walked toward the statue.

“It’s a replica of the Statue of Liberty,” Takehide said. “Like in New York, it’s a gift from France.”

“I saw it in the background of some Japanese dramas we watch, but I don’t remember it being here,” Ryo said.

“It was set up in 2000, after the last time both of you were here,” Moriko said.

“It was up before Emiko got married,” Nobu said, “but Ryo didn’t get to see Tokyo except for where the wedding was.”
Ryo nodded in agreement. “I really didn’t get to see much that last time. So that means I expect to see everything before we leave.”

“If you do miss anything, that means you’ll have to come back soon to see it,” Hoshi said.

“Please make my dad miss something so we come back,” Bikky exclaimed.

“Are you liking Tokyo, Bikky?” Takehide asked.

“I love it. I love Kamakura. I don’t want to leave!” Bikky stated.

“We’ll be back, Biks,” Ryo assured his son. “We have the money now. We even can have a private jet if it’s available. The only problem I can see with extended leaves is that your dad is basically the Chief of our unit now.”

Akira grabbed both Dee’s and Ryo’s arms and held them back. “Chotto motto,” she said, looking amazed. “I did not hear about this until now.”

Dee shrugged. “We’ve been a bit on the run since we got here. Ryo thought we should announce it over dinner with everyone together, but he just blew it.”

“Oh, a celebration meal!” Moriko exclaimed, clapping her hands. “That is wonderful news!” she added in Japanese.

Ryo started to laugh. “The mayor made an exception to the freeze on promotions for our unit. Dee made Lieutenant for the last test, and Rose put him in charge of our unit since Chief Smith will be going over to 1PP. I’ll be helping Dee run the unit.”

“Gambatte, Dee!” Nobu called out, prompting the others to repeat.

“When did you find out?” Akira asked, smiling. “That’s wonderful, Dei. I’m so proud of you.”

“Last Monday,” Dee said. “I was going to mention it to you on the phone but Ryo and I thought it
best to tell you the news in person since we wouldn’t have to wait long for that. Ryo is promoted too and he’s my second in command.”

“That’s wonderful news for the two of you!” Nobu exclaimed.

“We shall still announce this great news during dinner to the others,” Akira said. “Oh my boys! You two are running this very important unit. I am thrilled.” She looked at Dee slyly. “I don’t know how Maria kept in this great news.”

“She knew it was important to us to tell you in person,” Ryo said. “Of course, we stopped by the orphanage on the way home after work that day. Dee was called in that morning for a meeting that including us finding out about our promotions and then we had to be at City Hall. Dee ended up pretty much with us for the day.”

“Oh, I see the Statue of Liberty!” Bikky called out, pointing ahead of them.

“Oh go on,” Nobu said and then laughed as Bikky and Carol broke out in a run toward the statue.

“You would think they never saw the Statue of Liberty before,” Ryo said with amusement in his voice.

“Well, the last time we went to the statue, Bikky was in school,” Dee said.

“It’s not like we never went with him before,” Ryo commented. “And he’s seen it plenty of times in the harbor.”


“Yeah, I do have to admit I find it amusing that there’s one here,” said Dee.

They came to a stop before the statue.

“C’mon boys, get with your kids for picture time,” Hoshi called out. Both her and Moriko already
had their cameras out and Akira was taking out hers.

Dee also had the camera out and was taking pictures of Bikky and Carol as they looked up at the Tokyo Statue of Liberty.

“Just as soon as I can get the camera away from my husband, Aunt Hoshi,” Ryo remarked and laughed. “’C’mon Dee. Put the camera away and let’s get the chibis from their strollers. More family photos. I’m sure they will be enough taken that we won’t need any with our camera.”

Dee looked behind him to discover the three cameras ready to take pictures. He let out a laugh and as he put the camera in his bag, and said, “Well, I guess we don’t have a choice. ’C’mon, let’s get the chibis and get this going or else we might end up missing our reservation.”

“They wouldn’t dare,” Nobu said. “They’re willing to do anything for us to continue renting out their facilities for certain events after hearing that my nephew and his husband now own one of the premiere hotels in Roppongi Hills. So yes, Dee, we will have various family combo photos before we leave here.”

Ryo stared at his uncle and started to laugh. “You’re all too Japanese for me,” he teased, including Dee.

“Just pick a baby and shut up,” Dee said, and joined their relatives in laughing. He watched as Ryo picked up Darin, and then got Ryoko out of her stroller. He kissed his daughter’s nose as he lifted her. “Don’t listen to Papa, Koko. He’s more Japanese than us, even if you do have a pretty Japanese name. Yes, you do, sweetheart.” He kissed her nose again as the baby giggled and grabbed onto Dee’s jacket. She rubbed her head against Dee’s cheek, making him smile more.

“Bikky, Carol,” Ryo called out as the teens came around the bend after walking the path that went around the statue, “picture time. I apologize since they are my family and we’ll be doing this a lot while we’re in Japan.”

“It’s okay, Pops,” Bikky said. “I got used to it when they were in New York with us. And then there’s also Dad.”

“Hush brat,” Dee said as he went over to Bikky and Carol. “You’re growing so fast that your Pops may tease me now, he won’t be when he has those pictures when you’re off somewhere in college. Then he’ll thank me.”
Ryo looked at Dee, and then at Bikky, who was catching up to Carol in height and was going to be 16 on his next birthday. Dee was right. Before they knew it, Bikky would be in college and an adult. Then at least there would be all the pictures and video they took over the years since Ryo took him in. He looked over at Dee and smiled. “Point taken. Thank you.”

“You’re welcome. Now how about after they get a couple of pictures of us holding the chibis, we let Bikky and Carol have a go at holding them for the cameras?” Dee asked.

Ryo nodded and smiled more. “Yes. I think I’d like that very much.”

“Don’t I get a say?” Bikky asked.

“You don’t want to hold your brother or sister?” Ryo asked.

“Yeah. I just thought it would be cool if you asked us too. Then of course we’d say yes,” Bikky said.

Ryo spared a hand to cuff Bikky. “Smartass. So Biks, would you like to have some pictures taken by our crazy family with you holding one of your siblings?”

Bikky nodded his head, smirking up at Ryo. “Yes, Pops. I’d love to.”

Dee’s mouth was twitching even as his eyes narrowed. He definitely looked like he wanted to bop Bikky on the head and laugh. “Now that that is settled, make peace signs for the family,” he said as Ryo and Dee moved to stand on each side of Bikky and Carol.

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They were led outside of the Hilton’s rooftop restaurant to discover an outer corner was sectioned off. There long tables set up in a “U”, with starter place settings that looked nicer than the ones on the other tables. A couple of extra heat lamps were positioned around the tables.
“Oh wow! Look at the view!” Carol exclaimed, gazing out at the city lights of Tokyo. “It’s so pretty. Oh my God! This is Tokyo!”

“That is an impressive view,” Ryo had to agree. “C’mon Carol. I’m guessing you can look at the view all you like while we eat.”

“We’ll sit at the middle table,” Akira said, “so why don’t you and Bikky take seats on the corner so you can see the rest of Tokyo while you eat.”

“Yes please, Obāsan,” said Bikky. “This is awesome!”

Ryo managed to pull Carol along as he laughed. “Now you know you’re in Japan?” he asked with a laugh. “So what was yesterday and today all about?”

“I knew we were in Japan since yesterday, and I love seeing everything we did, but this is the first real good view of Tokyo,” Carol explained. “I still can’t believe we’re here. It’s all so wonderful!”

“Look at the bridge,” Bikky said as he walked along the other side of Ryo.

“We did go over that bridge, remember?” Nobu said amused. “We were also able to see the Rainbow Bridge and Tokyo from down in the park there.

“I know we did but that was different,” Bikky said. “You can see so much more of the city from here. This is so cool.”

“Like you don’t have a pretty impressive bridge or two in New York,” Moriko commented with a laugh.

“Yeah we do,” Bikky agreed, “but they’re not in Tokyo.”

“Meaning, Bikky’s glad we went on this trip,” Ryo said.
“And this is exactly why I decided we were going to have dinner here tonight,” Akira said. “Their food is very good, and they have something for everyone, but it was the view from here that I thought you would enjoy as you ate.”

“Thank you for thinking about that, Obāsan,” Carol said. “It’s just so amazing!”

“Yes, thank you Obāsan for getting the kids worked up,” Ryo said and then chuckled. “The view is pretty nice from here.”

“It’s like New York,” Dee said, “but not like New York. You know, back before I went to college I used to think there was nothing brighter than Times Square. And then I went to Shibuya.”

Ryo started to laugh. “I think most of Japan is brighter than Times Square. Some of those pachinko places can give Times Square a run.”

“You know, you’re right,” Dee said, laughing with Ryo as they continued to walk across the patio, urging Bikky and Carol to follow Akira to their table.

They were being led to the reserved corner by the hostess.

Carol looked back at Dee and Ryo. “Really? Brighter than Times Square?”

“You’ll see it for yourself, Princess. Now keep walking before I step over you,” Dee remarked.

“As if you would,” Carol said with a breezy laugh. “But again, thank you for including me.” She smiled at Dee and Ryo and then joined Bikky, who went ahead and was walking along with Akira, smiling at something she was saying.

“To think this is only day two of almost two months,” Dee said to Ryo. “I think I’m enjoying watching Bikky and Carol’s reactions most of all.”

“Yeah. I do too. I never got to really have that first time wonder with the Tokyo area, so I’m enjoying watching the kids have theirs,” Ryo said and hooked an arm around Dee’s. “Especially since I can’t have it with you.”
“Yes, I know Tokyo and most of the area very well, but I’m far from jaded. This is my first time in about 10 years. There is a lot that wasn’t here when I lived here,” Dee replied. “I’mm going to enjoy visiting more favorite spots and seeing the new ones.”

“I can do some of that,” Ryo replied. “But most of all, I’m just enjoying being here with you, Bikky and Carol, spending time with my family from here.”

With a bow, the hostess told them to please take a seat and then stood off to the side until everyone was settled.

Tsubasa and his wife, Kumi, was already seated at the table with their two little ones, Aya and Kento. Sitting with them were Takehide’s and Moriko’s oldest son, Soji and his wife, Naomi. Soji and Naomi were looking forward to their first child with Naomi being 4 months pregnant. Everyone who was already there were just having drinks as they waited for everyone to arrive.

Tsubasa indicated the two end seats next to them at the other corner than where Akira was indicating for Bikky and Carol. “Kumi thought that you and Dee would like to take those seats. It will be easier with the strollers.”

“Yes, it would be. That is very generous of you, Kumi,” Ryo said with a nod and a smile.

“We’ve been there ourselves,” Kumi said as Ryo and Dee took their seats.

“I’ll be glad when these two are a little older and can use the highchairs. Not that I’m wanting them to grow up too fast,” said Dee.

“I know that feeling too,” Kumi said with a laugh.

Akira took the center seat of the middle table and smiled at her family already seated close to her. “I am very much looking forward to tonight’s meal.”

“Bikky, Carol,” Moriko said. They the teens looked at her, she continued, “I managed to get some good photos of everyone with not only the statue, but the Rainbow Bridge behind you,” Moriko said.
“Oh cool,” said Bikky.

“Here comes more of our party,” Nobu said as he stood up. “More relatives that Dee hasn’t met yet and Ryo hasn’t seen in a long while.”

The newcomers were Takehide’s and Moriko’s oldest daughter Miyoko and her live-in lover, Harumi. They had Miyoko’s two children, Utako and Akio, from her first marriage, who they were raising together. Also arriving with them was Akira’s son, Kei, his wife Shiori, and their youngest daughter, Risa. Risa was currently going to school to be a fashion designer, and did modelling on the side.

Introductions were around and everyone sat down to eat. It might have been the first time Dee, Bikky and Carol met them, but they were far from strangers, especially for Dee because of the many phone calls from Japan. This trip was to finally meet the many wonderful people in Ryo’s extended family that Dee and Bikky had gotten to know over the phone in the last year.

Risa was 20, making her close to Carol’s age. Carol and Risa seemed to immediately hit it off, with the two in their own conversations about fashion and pop music. Risa was full of fashion tips and ideas for Carol. She even offered to take her and Bikky around Tokyo, showing them the fun spots for young people. Dee and Ryo took the time to get to know the other same sex couple in the Aoki family, who were also of the few people that they did not get to know very well with phone calls.

Akira suggested for the adults to order a variety of different dishes so everyone could pick and choose what they wanted. They could always reorder a couple more orders of something if it seems to be running low and was still in demand. It was the Japanese way to order and the diners would take some food of their choice from the plates to put on the small plates provided when the food was served. Akira, of course, knew what her family favorites were and made sure more than one order of those foods were ordered. She even made sure to include selections that the children would like.

Dee watched as Akira ordered, as other family members added to her order, and remembered the first time he went to a restaurant in Tokyo with some Japanese friends other than his roommates. It was pricier than he could afford, but it was where his other friends had wanted to go, so Dee had gone along. Just when he had decided on what he wanted within his budget, the waiter came over and his friends started to order. To Dee, it seemed as if they were ordering almost everything from the menu, and perhaps they were, some of them checking if Dee had something before, and telling him what it was and what they think he might like. That was when he discovered in places like the restaurant they were in nobody really ordered just for themselves.

It had been a communal meal, everyone picking from the main dish and placing a small amount of
everything on the little plate provided. It was like eating at a buffet, only having a spoon or two of everything. Dee had forgotten about what he had had in his mind to order and was busy learning about food he had never seen before in New York, even in the Japanese restaurants there. Some he did know because his Japanese friend’s mother would sometimes serve, whenever he was invited over for dinner or lunch, but for the most part John’s mother had adapted very well to American-style meals even before they had moved to New York, because his father was American military. Dee also had fun experimenting, deciding what he liked and what he could say he tried but didn’t care to have again. In retrospect, there was much more on his like list.

He had been too busy exploring the wonders of “real” Japanese cuisine to wonder how they were going to handle the bill until it came time to pay. The check, set in a small black lacquer tray, was placed on the table. One of his friends picked it up and Dee thought that the friend was going to be very generous and pay for it all, when he took out a calculator. A couple of minutes later, he announced that everyone should put in 4700 yen to cover the bill. Which was about 1700 yen more than Dee had in his wallet. He reaffirmed he knew the word “gomenasai” very well about then as he promised the friend who offered to cover him that Dee would pay him back the next week. The worst part to Dee was that he was still hungry when he got home and ended up raiding the ramen supply they kept in the house.

For a while, Dee had avoided going out like that again with those friends. At least when he went out to eat with his roommates, they hit up one of the less expensive shops or izakayas or ordered their own sets, usually ordering what they could afford. Ken and Hide always had more money than Dee and Yuki, having come from well-off families. Sometimes Ken or Hide would treat Dee and Yuki and they would go somewhere more expensive, usually to celebrate passing a difficult exam or finishing a term. However, by the time he left Japan, he had gone out with other Japanese friends and became accustomed to the habit of ordering a lot of food and then splitting the bill. He learned never to go out with a group of friends other than his roommates unless he had at least 10000 yen, just to be safe.

Dee and Ryo both seemed to have forgotten the practice but was reminded when the family had invaded New York for their wedding, but Ryo’s family had made it clear that they were not to pay for anything because of their wedding.

Dee realized that now, as he watched what was being ordered, and even finding both Ryo and himself also adding something missed to the orders, that the only thing that fazed him that night was that he wasn’t fazed by it at all. If he knew this family, since this was their first time getting together to have a fancy meal in Tokyo, they weren’t expecting him or Dee to pay, but if they did have to also chip in one the bill, Dee could very easily pay for all the food himself this time. If the family actually allowed him to do such a thing.

It was hard treating this family, both Ryo and Dee had discussed. The family seemed to insist on paying everything for Dee, Ryo and their family, Ryo’s family always finding a reason to say the meal was on them. At least one time during their stay in japan, Dee and Ryo had determined they were going to at least pay for themselves, Bikky and Carol, if not treat everyone. They just had to
figure out how. So far they had not spent anything on any food or snacks bought since they landed in Tokyo the day before. That included the convenience store hits for Bikky and Carol.

When the food arrived and everyone started to eat, Dee noticed that close to Bikky and Carol were okonomiyaki, pancakes made with wheat flour and cabbage, along with other fillings and pork belly slices. Akira also had some on her plate. After eating what she had on her plate, she looked over to Bikky, who was eating some himself.

“What do you say, Bikky?” she asked her great-grandson. “Is this as good as our okonomiyaki?”

Bikky shook his head, smiling at her. “It’s really good, but no, it’s not like ours,” he replied, making everyone laugh with delight.

Even Dee and Ryo had to agree. Whenever they ended up having okonomiyaki during Akira’s stay with them in New York, it was always Akira and Bikky in the kitchen, making the pancakes for them.

“I’ll have to admit, they do make the best okonomiyaki ever,” Ryo agreed. “Not that it’s going to stop me from ordering it while we’re out and about during our stay in Japan.”

“Make sure you order some in an okonomiyaki shop in Osaka,” Soji suggested to the visitors. “It’s different than in Tokyo. Its origin is from Osaka.”

“Oh, I know,” Dee agreed. “There was this shop in Osaka that I would say made my favorite okonomiyaki until I had Obāsan’s. Now it’s my second favorite.”

“Does that mean you know of a very famous okonomiyaki shop in Osaka then, Dee?” Nobu asked with a teasing glint in his eyes.

“Putting it that way, then yes. There is this very famous okonomiyaki shop that I love in Osaka,” Dee replied.

Ryo let out a chuckle. “It’s famous because it’s Dee’s favorite.”
“Exactly, Ryo,” Nobu replied with a knowing grin. “Honestly, I thought we raised you better than that.”

“Oh…. Well crap,” came from Ryo as everyone started to laugh. “In that case, I know a lot of different very famous shops around here.”

“I’m sure you do,” Akira said with a big smile. “Don’t let your uncle get to you like that.”

“It’s fine, Obāsan,” Ryo assured his grandmother. “Remember that I know Uncle Nobu very well.” He grinned at his uncle, who laughed in response.

“And to think that Kaito-san is the crazy one in this family,” Takehide remarked.

“Kaito-san?” Dee asked.

“He’s the magician in the family,” Ryo offered. “I’m sure I mentioned him a few times.”

“Oh!” Dee remarked. “The one always pulling something out of orifices!”

“That’s Kaito,” Akira said. “He’s my youngest brother.” She looked over at her eldest son and with a wicked grin that Dee knew very well and determined who Ryo got his from, she added, “Sometimes I think Nobu should be Kaito’s son, instead of mine.”

“You can be pretty crazy too, Mom,” Nobu replied. “Where do you think I got it from? Papa was pretty much the straight one in the family. It’s a wonder he survived in this family as long as he did.”

Akira had to laugh. “I was worried he wouldn’t stick around after I first introduced him to my family. When he called me the next day, I knew your father was going to be the one.”

Ryo grinned at Dee. “I could say the same thing about you, that you still married me after meeting some of this crazy family, but then again, I always figured you’d fit right in.”

Dee started to laugh. “You’re lucky I adore your family and taking that as a compliment.”
“Oh it is,” Moriko assured Dee. “The highest one ever. You do fit in with our family, Dee.

Nobu nodded his head, for once looking serious. “Mom named you Aoki on your wedding day. We Aokis pick only the special ones that she would do so.” He took his wife’s hand and smiled at her. “She did the same to my lovely Hoshi on our wedding day.”

“It still is one of the highlights of that magical day,” Dee replied. “When I got that visit from my three favorite ladies before the wedding, I didn’t think I was going to stop crying in time for the ceremony, I was so touched by it.”

“It was intended to make sure you knew you had family, Dee. And not just your most wonderful mother. I am honored to call Maria friend and family, too.”

“I’m honored to have you as family, too, Obāsan,” Dee affirmed. He looked around the table at all the relatives and his smile grew. “That goes for everyone. Including many of those who couldn’t make it tonight.”

“But you will see at your party next Saturday,” Akira said.

“I’m looking forward to it,” Dee said.

“Before we went off course with all the mushy stuff,” Kei said after a few minutes and everyone going back to eating, “I was going to ask if you were going to be near Fukouka during your road trip? Because if you love okonomiyaki, you need to get some in Fukouka.”

“Hakata!” Dee exclaimed, making Kei laugh and nod his head.

“Along the canal,” Kei said.

“I definitely intend to take Ryo and the kiddies along the canal for a meal one night,” Dee replied.

“Ryo, I take it you never made it to Fukouka?” Kei asked.
“Yet,” Ryo replied. “Dee told me that I will and we’ll be staying in Hakata. He’ll be the only expert once we go past Osaka and Kyoto. From the stories Dee had from his short time there, I’m looking forward to it. He can show me the famous spots for okonomiyaki and other favorite foods.” He grinned at Dee, who stuck his tongue out at Ryo, making the others laugh.

“How long were you in Fukouka, Dee?” Takehide asked.

“We stayed for two days the first time, but we managed to go back and stay for four days the next time. We also took the Shinkansen there the second time. I’m really looking forward to going there again.”

“Are we going to take the bullet train while we’re here?” Bikky asked.

“Maybe,” Ryo replied. “Originally, we considered landing in Nagoya and taking the Shinkansen into Tokyo but as nice as they are, your Dad and I decided we didn’t want to deal with anything longer than a short ride on the JR with the twins.”

“Perhaps we can plan a day trip to Nagano,” Moriko said. “We can take the Shinkansen there.”

“Moriko and I can even take Bikky and Carol for the day,” Hoshi suggested.

“It’s something to consider,” Ryo said. “If that’s what you want to do.”

“I can take the chibis that day,” Akira offered. “It would give you two a nice day to do something just the two of you.”

“A date day!” Moriko agreed.

Ryo looked at Dee. “I don’t know if we’re both ready to spend a full day from the chibis,” he replied, “but having some time to explore Tokyo on our own does sound tempting.”

“You can pick up your babies anytime you feel the need,” Akira assured them.
“And we’ll have your other son home in evening. We’ll leave right after dinner,” Toshi assured them.

“We’ll talk about it,” Dee replied. “I think we can make it happen. At the very least, it will give Bikky a chance to go on the Shinkansen if we don’t get to take a trip this time. So yes, we’ll seriously consider it.”

“Thank you, Aunt Moriko and Aunt Hoshi,” said Ryo. “I would never have asked but…..”

“Which is exactly why we are offering,” Hoshi said. “We know you, Ryo. Even if Dee had the idea, you never would have allowed him to ask either.”

“Did I tell you how wonderful you both are?” Dee asked with a wink. “And no, I wouldn’t have asked either. Yeah, I know. You knew that too.”

Both women giggled at Dee’s words.

Dee smiled at Akira. “And you never fail to amaze me more and more, Obāsan,” he said. “I doubt you’ll end up with our chibis as long as you’re probably hoping, but I promise Ryo and I will make the most of the time we have alone.” He looked over to Bikky and Carol, who were watching and listening intently. “I don’t know if it will be before or after our road trip, but if you’re up to it, I don’t have any problems with it.”

“I don’t either,” Ryo said. “So, do you two want to spend a day going up to Nagano with my aunts?”

“Yes,” Bikky replied as Carol nodded her head. “Especially if there were no plans to go to Nagano.”

“We want to see everything!” Carol exclaimed excited. “Thank you so much, everyone. That’s going to be so much fun.”

“Along with everything else you’ll be doing over the next two months,” Nobu commented with a laugh. “It’s so refreshing to have so much enthusiasm for things we tend to take for granted. I must thank you, Ryo and Dee, for bringing these two lovely children of yours.”
“Enjoy while you have it,” Ryo said, “because I don’t know what you’ll get with Darin and Ryoko since I intend that they’ll know Japan as they grow up. I don’t know if they’ll spend as much time as I did, especially during my younger years, but Dee and I do plan on coming here at least once or twice a year.”

“Then their enthusiasm will be from returning to Japan. Just like yours was when your parents started to bring you here once or twice a year,” Akira said. She smiled at Ryo. “And like Dee’s. He may not be full of wows but I can still feel his excitement at finally being back here after so much time. And you’re not exactly immune to being back here either.”

Ryo laughed and said, “If we start coming here as much as you’re hoping, aren’t you afraid that we’ll start taking things for granted like the rest of you?”

“I won’t allow it to happen,” Akira said returning Ryo’s smile. “Now, why don’t I take this time to finally lift the mystery about your grandfather for Dee and Bikky?”

Dee looked over to Akira with interest. Bikky stopped eating to give Akira his full attention. So did Carol.

“Don’t stop eating on our account,” said Nobu with a laugh. “Fill your plates again while you learn more about our strange family.”

“Nah,” Bikky said. “I’m good for now, Uncle Nobu.”

“There’s so much food on this table!” Carol exclaimed with a laugh.

“There was a lot of food, I think you’re both trying to say,” Akira said with a smile. “And there’s no problem with that. We have a lot of food at this table, and I don’t want to waste food. So don’t be shy and eat up.”

“I think Carol might be afraid of not fitting into her size when we hit up Harajuku,” Ryo said and laughed when Carol’s eyes went wide and her mouth formed a silent “No!”. “Eat what you want, don’t worry. There’s enough of us here to clean up this table.” He glanced over at Dee. “Besides, we have Dee.”
“Hey!” Dee retorted. Then he gave Ryo a rueful look. “But I promise to do my part in preventing food waste.”

When everyone stopped laughing, Akira waited while they went back to eating. She noticed Bikky had some tempura shrimp on the small clean plate that Tsubasa set for Bikky, while Carol nibbled on a piece of tempura squash.

“Dei, Bikky. I’m sure you keep hearing Ryo say he’s part Japanese because his mother was half.” When Dee and Bikky nodded their heads, she continued, “That’s not completely the truth. My Jordon did not look Japanese with his fair hair and light skin, but I assure you that I was not born an Aoki. Jordon, Ryo’s grandfather was the Aoki. His father was Japanese, sent to Australia to set up the new office for their freight business. He decided to stay in Sidney and run the office. Most of that decision was based on the Australian woman he fell in love with. They met in a Japanese society club as her father was half-Japanese. So Jordon is more than half-Japanese. That makes your mother three quarters Japanese. I would say you’re more than just part. Just as your uncles and aunt are.”

“Okay, almost half maybe,” Ryo admitted. “But Grandfather didn’t look Japanese at all. I remember that. And he made me call him Grandfather and not Ojiisan.”

Akira laughed. “It’s true that your grandfather’s parents didn’t adhere to many Japanese customs. They were more Australian in manner, which also explains why we tend not to have all the honorifics other Japanese families have when we’re in private, and even at times in public such as we are here tonight. I tried at first to keep all the customs, but finally settled for being happy that your mother and the rest of my children were exposed to some of the customs, even if they were all born in Japan.”

“It didn’t help matters when Mom moved us to San Diego because her father’s textile industry needed help,” Nobu said. He looked directly at Ryo. “And Ryo, if you ask me, Takehide, Kei or Satomi, we say we are Japanese. No half-gaijin for us here. Our father was the half, not me.”

Takehide and Kei nodded their heads in agreement. “Your mother preferred the American lifestyle to Japan, but she still loved Japan, as evident in all the time you lived here or came to visit us. Your mother became American when she married your father and decided to make her main residence in New York, but that never made her less Japanese,” Kei explained.

“Mom told me she spent some of her childhood in California, which is why she decided to go to college there.”

“UCLA is not something you ignore,” Akira agreed, “even if your mother was also accepted in
several prestigious universities here in Japan, the University of Tokyo being one of them. So I let her go.”

“At least one of us went to the University of Tokyo,” Nobu commented as he pointed to himself.

Akira nodded with a smile. “As long as you all were able to attend schools with great reputations, it did not matter to me where it was.” Giving Dee and Bikky her attention, she gestured to Kei. “Kei went to NYU. I believe that was because of all the things Raina and Frankie had to say about New York City. She might have spent plenty of time in Kamakura or traveling for their business but once Ryo’s mother graduated and moved to New York with her fiancé, New York became her home.”

Ryo nodded. “And after I started to spend more time in New York after I was five, you would always find a reason in one of the businesses to have to travel and spend time with us,” he remembered.

“That is true.”

“So the textile company is your family’s business and the shipping company is your husband’s?” Dee asked.

“Yes. Being that he was the oldest son, Jordon inherited the shipping company. His brother Julian ran things on the Australian end. Now Julian’s son, Steve, handles things down there and some of Nana’s, Jordon’s sister, children also work for the company. While all my children have financial claim in the business, it was Nobu and Takehide who followed their father’s path, and now run the company with the headquarters still in Tokyo. Tsubasa also is an executive for the company and being groomed to take over as CEO when Nobu can be convinced to finally retire. As for the textile company, I have a niece and nephew who run things now and we only have the one office in Tokyo but we have many warehouses throughout Japan.” She paused to have a drink of water and continued, “Jordon’s father was the only Aoki who made roots in Australia. The rest of Jordon’s family is here in Japan, now living all over the country, and they all look very Japanese. So did Jordon’s father, but my husband apparently got his looks more from his mother, who was three-quarters Australian and one quarter Japanese. She had light brown hair and blue eyes. The only thing Jordon had from the Aokis was his dark eyes. Ryo reminds me so much of his grandfather. You might have noticed most of the MacLeans have dark hair, except for a few, like Elena. I look at Ryo’s face and I see his mother and father, but when I look at him, many times it’s like looking at Jordon when he was Ryo’s age.”

“I would say that I got that from Mom then,” Ryo said with a smirk. “Even if she was all dark hair and dark eyes.”
Dee laughed as he looked at Ryo. “I always hear you say that your mother was half-Japanese, but when I look at the pictures you have of her, she looked very Japanese to me. Just as all your uncles do, and I’m assuming so does your Aunt Satomi. Then I look at you and it does take some Japanese radar to know you are.” He winked at Ryo with a grin.

“Yeah, that Japanese radar was up the day we met because you zoomed in on it almost immediately when many others have no clue,” Ryo said.

Bikky raised his hand. “I noticed it too that day even if I don’t have any type of Japanese radar. I just looked at your eyes and they seemed Japanese to me.”

“Well, you’re both more perceptive than most people then,” Ryo replied. “Most of my Army buddies had no clue unless I said something. Eddie and Kevin found out when I brought them to Obāsan’s for lunch one day that we went to the beach.”

Dee looked thoughtful as Ryo talked. “Well, that all makes sense now. You need to stop saying you’re only part Japanese. Overall looks aside, I see one very Japanese family here and apparently your grandfather’s family is also very Japanese.”

“They are. You will meet them too. I am still close to Jordon’s family,” Akira stated.

“Many of them are coming to your party next week,” Moriko said. “I already received their RSVPs. Along with many Hachimotos.”

“Hachimotos?” Dee asked.

Akira started to laugh. “That is my family name before I was married and became an Aoki. Yes, I also invited many of my own family to the party. They want to see Ryo again and meet his family.”

Ryo suddenly looked more interested. “Really? Some of your side of the family will come? Did you send an invitation to Momo-chan then? Are you even still in touch with her?”

“We have an address,” Moriko answered for Akira, “but we don’t really communicate much with Momo and her family. We still don’t have a family picture from her.”
“Sometimes I wonder if she made up that husband of hers,” Takehide commented. “The few times that she came to a family event, she came alone even if she has been married for some time now.”

“At Emiko’s wedding, she said that her husband was very pregnant and nesting, which is why he didn’t come,” Ryo commented.

Dee let out a heavy sigh. “I know that feeling. I wouldn’t blame the man if that’s how he felt,” making the others around him laugh.

“If there was actually a husband that was pregnant,” Takehide commented. “She had no pictures with her. That’s odd. Who does not have pictures of their spouse and children with them?”

“She said she didn’t think to bring any,” Ryo defended.

“She has a phone. Who does not have family photos on a phone?” Takehide insisted. “You two,” he said to Dee and Ryo. “I know you just got your phones yesterday but how many photos of your family do you have on those phone already? Even having a camera and camcorder along.”

“Well,” Ryo started. “We did want to test the cameras on our phones so I couldn’t help taking a picture of Dee, Bikky and the twins.”

“See? And what about Dee?” Takehide asked.

Ryo started to laugh after he rolled his eyes. “Dee should be Japanese. He already had to download from his phone to his computer.” He smiled sweetly at Ryo. “My Dee just can’t get enough of taking photos of his wonderful family.”

“I do have a wonderful family so why should I not want to have lots of photos of you all that we can all look at later?” Dee asked, frowning a little.

Ryo laughed again and kissed Dee. “Smile, love, because I’m sure someone at this table is taking pictures too, and you don’t want any of you frowning in Japan, do you?”

Dee started to chuckle. “You’re silly,” he said and kissed Ryo back. “Besides,” he said after he broke the kiss, “I already told you that even after living here for five years, I didn’t get near enough pictures because we didn’t have digital back then. I intend to go back to New York with pictures of everything I missed the first time around along with anything new.”
“Dee proves my point,” Takehide insisted. “So she had not even one photo of her husband and kids on her phone?”

“She said she cleaned her phone before going so she had room for pictures at the wedding,” Ryo said. “And she didn’t have kids yet anyway, with the hubby nesting at home and all before giving birth.”

“We’ll see if the mystery man shows up this time,” Moriko said, “because she did accept her invitation and RSVPed for two.”

“This should be interesting,” Takehide stated, amused.

“I hope she makes it. When we were kids, we were the best of friends during that time we were in Nagoya,” Ryo said. “I think we would have continued to be the best of friends if we had been able to see each other more and spend more time together.”

“You might have been married to Momo instead of the mystery man if you had more time together,” Kei said with a laugh. “And then we would never have had the pleasure of having Dee, Bikky, Carol and the twins at this table with us now. Be glad of how things turned out.”

It was Ryo’s turn to frown. “I never liked Momo like that. Besides, we were too young to think about stuff like that.”

“Yet, there was something there, even at five and six,” Kei replied.

“My first kiss was at six,” Dee commented, looking at Ryo.

“You were an early bloomer,” Ryo remarked with a laugh. “I just like Momo as a friend. I would like to see her again, so I’m glad she’s coming to the party. I think this time I’m going to tell her I want to stay in touch.”

“And I’m glad you know you’re stuck with me and the kiddos,” Dee commented.
“Dee, don’t worry. You’ll like Momo too. She just has this aura about her that makes it hard not to like her,” Ryo said.

That had heads from Ryo’s family nodding in agreement.

“I do have to agree with that,” Takehide said.

“My family’s nickname for her ever since she was young was Sunshine,” Akira said. “I am glad to hear she is coming, husband or not. I do not know why we never put more effort in keeping more in touch with her. Ryo, I think I will join you in making sure we stay in touch after the party.”

“It would be nice to meet the husband,” Tsubasa said.

“We shall see,” Nobu said with a nod.

Once the conversation ended, everyone went back to filling their now empty plates with more food while the other relatives at the table started to ask Dee, Bikky and Carol questions to get to know them better. In return, Dee and Bikky asked questions that came up about the family. Carol only answered questions, feeling too shy to ask about Ryo’s relatives since she was not really a family member, but was having fun getting to know Ryo’s family more, which in turn she was learning more about Ryo, while having a delicious dinner in Tokyo.

At one point during a pause in questions, Ryo leaned against Dee and smiled up at him. “Now you know more about my family, and next week I’m going to be glad I’m stuck with you, because otherwise I’m afraid after finally meeting so many of them, you might want to go running off.”

Dee laughed and lightly nipped Ryo’s nose. “Forget it. Never will happen. As you said, I still married you even after meeting both of your families. I’m ready to take on more.” He smiled and moved Ryo so he could kiss him properly.

“Good,” Ryo replied with a smile.
The rest of Ryo’s family smiled as they watched the still newlyweds, some of them nodding approval of the visiting couple and their family.

Around ten, when the dinner party ended, Akira suggested that Bikky, Carol and the twins would go home with her, Nobu, Hoshi, Takehide and Moriko. She also assured Tsubasa and Kumi that they will pick up their children from Kumi’s friend’s house on the way home. Last, she suggested that Dee and Ryo go with Tsubasa and Kumi for some late night fun. The two couples agreed that it was a good idea.

Dee and Ryo conceded to Tsubasa’s and Kumi’s decisions on where they would go for the evening. The only suggestion Dee turned down was going to Hide’s club that night. They were going to meet up with Hide and his other college friends the next day, and would be seeing the club at least a few times during their time in Japan. He already had accepted Hide’s invitation for him, Ryo and anyone else from the family to go to the Halloween party Hide was holding at his club the Sunday before Halloween. Both Dee and Ryo agreed it would be good to see what else was out there. They ended up going to a couple of clubs in Shibuya. Around 2 am, Tsubasa pulled up his car by Akira’s house. Instead of waking up their children, Tsubasa and Kumi had taken over one of the extra rooms, having previously planned to stay that night.

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Chapter End Notes

NOTES:
Some Japanese words:
Gambatte – Good luck!
Okonomiyaki – savory pancake with shredded cabbage, and usually seafood and pork belly but the literal meaning of okonomiyaki is “grilled as you like it”, so there are many variations. In this chapter they are having the seafood and pork belly version. It’s easy to make. I make it at least once every two weeks, but as good as I got at making it, it still never comes close to getting it from a street vendor or an okonomiyaki shop in Japan. And yes, there is a “very famous” okonomiyaki shop in Osaka – or there was in 1997, that even after all this time, I still had the best okonomiyaki ever. More on okonomiyaki here: justonecookbook.com/okonomiyaki
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

It's a day in Yokohama with Dee's friends.

CHAPTER FIVE

October 21, 2006

Aoki Residence

Kamakura, Japan

Once again, despite the busy day before and the late night, everyone was up early for that day’s adventures. Dee and Ryo had shooed Akira and Moriko out of the kitchen in the main house to make everyone an American breakfast of eggs, hash browns, bacon and biscuits.

Over breakfast, Tsubasa announced that he was going to join them for the planned sightseeing. He also wanted to spend more time with Ryo and his cousin’s family. He added with a pout, especially now that his sister, Emiko, got to see Ryo, Dee and their family all the time with her living in New York.

Kumi was going to meet up with them later on at Yuki’s noodle shop in Yokohama because she had some errands to run and then planned to drop her two children off with a friend who offered to look after them for the rest of the day until they returned sometime after dinner. She decided to keep the children with her for the morning so they wouldn’t be with her friend for the entire day.

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They had a full load in the van with Nobu, Tsubasa and Hoshi joining them. Nobu was given the rare chance to be a passenger as he allowed Ryo to drive to Sagamihara. Dee was told to also sit in
the front passenger next to Ryo. It was going to be Ryo’s tour, but many of the places Ryo was
taking them were also familiar to Dee. Dee was told to point out anything he recognized if Ryo
didn’t already.

Their first stop was Camp Zama, showing them the main gate and then driving the best he could
around the base. He shared some stories of his time at Camp Zama. He started to smile as Dee talked
about some of times he had gone with some Navy friends to the club on the base and shopping at the
base exchange. He then drove around Sagamihara and showed them various spots around the base
that he would frequent when off duty and not spending the time with his grandmother. Among stores
and places to eat, Ryo drove past the Odyaku-Sagamihara train station to point out his favorite place
to eat. He glanced at Dee, who was also smiling as they approached it, knowing it was also a favorite
of Dee’s.

Before they had a chance to point out the Korean BBQ restaurant, Bikky pointed out the window at
the store below it. “Look! It’s a Mr. Donut! They have Mr. Donut in Japan too? We don’t have as
many in New York anymore.”

Dee and Ryo started to laugh as the rest of the relatives nodded their heads.

“That’s because they all ended up here,” Dee remarked with a laugh.

“Believe it or not, but Mr. Donut is very popular,” Ryo explained. He looked at Dee with a smirk. “I
had forgotten about them so I was pretty surprised the first time I went off base to come to the
restaurant above.”

“This was my first Mr. Donut in Japan,” Dee said. “And yes, I reacted almost like Bikky. It seemed
more surprising than all the 7-11s around here.”

“You know,” Bikky said, “you’re right. It is.”

“Did you know that the Mr. Donuts headquarters is now in Japan?” Tsubasa asked.

“They are?” Carol asked.

“I think Emiko mentioned that,” Dee said.
“Do you want to go in one and get some curry donuts?” Nobu asked.

“Curry donuts?” Bikky asked, confused as Carol started to laugh.

“Just wait until we take him into a Denny’s,” Dee said to Ryo with a smirk.

“Denny’s too?” Carol asked.

“There’s Denny’s here, too?” Bikky asked, perking up. They had stopped at a Denny’s a couple of times on the way back from Ryo’s grandparents when it was late at night, and they had an early dinner. They also stopped at Bikky’s request over the years whenever they took a trip around the area.

“Like 7-11, the basics are the same but that’s where it stops. The menu here is much different,” Ryo explained.

“And the things that seems familiar, like omelets, aren’t like how we get them in the U.S. You’ll get a Japanese omelet with choices of Japanese filling, like what Obāsan makes for us,” Dee added. “Except for ham and cheese. But even that tastes different.”

“I want to go to a Denny’s,” Carol said, “just to see how different it is.”

“I guess you didn’t notice that McDonald’s sells hot dogs here,” Tsubasa stated with an amused smirk.

“What?” Bikky and Carol both stared at Ryo’s cousin.

“No way!” Bikky exclaimed. “I knew they had McDonald’s here, but they’re everywhere anyway so it’s not big surprise and the last place I want to hit up. But I didn’t know they had hot dogs.”

“I preferred the teriyaki burger over the hot dogs,” Dee said. “Whenever I went into McDonald’s I would order a teriyaki burger combo. I didn’t bother with Big Macs and all that, because that’s what
“But you did try the hot dogs?” Kumi asked.

Dee nodded. “Yes, I did, but that was one of the few things that the New Yorker in me came out. I don’t mind grilled hot dogs when I’m at a barbeque, but I really prefer the street vendor hot dogs.”

“Me too!” Tsubasa exclaimed enthusiastically. “I also miss White Castle.”

Dee and Ryo started to laugh. “Next time you come to New York, we’ll stop at White Castle when we leave the airport.”

Ryo spared Dee a glance. “You do know that we’ll have to take Bikky and Carol to Mos Burger too.”

“Oh yeah. I forgot about them, but now that you mention it, you’re right.” He looked back to Bikky and Carol. “Yes, I ordered teriyaki burgers from McDonald’s here, but the best teriyaki fast food burger is at Mos.”

“What’s that?” Bikky asked.

“It’s a Hawaiian hamburger chain that is pretty popular in Japan,” Tsubasa explained. “Dee’s right. The best teriyaki fast food burgers are at Mos Burgers. They also have some other interesting things on their menu that are good too.”

“Dads? How come we never have teriyaki burgers at home. You both make a lot of good Japanese food for us, but we always have the same normal hamburgers.”

“Unless it’s White Castle,” Tsubasa added, making the kids giggle.

“Got the hint, cousin,” Ryo commented with a smirk. “I don’t know, Bikky. We do make Japanese hamburgers sometimes. It is something to think about when we get back home.”
“I don’t want to think about going home yet,” Bikky exclaimed. “But the Japanese hamburgers you serve are with rice and gravy.”

“Sometimes curry instead of the gravy,” Carol added.

“But no hamburger buns on them,” Bikky added.

“We just got here, so don’t worry about it, sport,” Dee assured his son. “And I’ll make a note to find recipes for teriyaki burgers to make at home so I don’t forget.”

“Dee’s got it all under control. Now we just enjoy ourselves here in Japan for the next two months,” Ryo said with a smile.

“I’m already enjoying myself,” Carol said. “I still can’t believe that I’m here.”

“We’ll make sure it’s not your last time,” Dee said.

“So, we’ll go to Mos soon so we can try the teriyaki burgers?” Bikky asked. “I think I do want to go to McDonald’s here at least once to try theirs too.”

“Me too,” Carol said. “Then we can compare them. Is there anywhere else that sells them here?”

“A real good teriyaki burger will not only be marinated in teriyaki sauce,” Hoshi stated, “it also will have a slice of pineapple on it. Mos Burgers does it right. McDonald’s, does it right but I prefer Mos Burgers.”

“But if you want the very best teriyaki burgers, you need to let Hoshi make them,” Akira said. “Perhaps one night when we’re all home, she can make dinner for us, if she doesn’t mind. Or you can ask her to make dinner one night for you at the penthouse.”

“What Hoshi makes is real gourmet burgers, teriyaki and many other varieties, including some American classics,” Nobu stated.
“We were told that there’s an outdoor patio with a grill at the penthouse,” Ryo said. “Maybe one night when we’re all in Tokyo, I can convince you to make the burgers, Hoshi?”

“I would love to. You will be busy most nights until you go to the penthouse, so why don’t we pick an evening when you are in Tokyo?” Hoshi replied.

“It’s a date!” Ryo replied happily. “We would love to have everyone at our place for dinner. It won’t begin to repay everyone for your generosity here and in New York.”

“You don’t have to repay us, Ryo,” Tsubasa said. “You’re all family. That’s what we do.”

“I feel we don’t do enough back,” Ryo said.

“You do. We had a great time in New York, you’re here in Japan with us now, and you and your beautiful family are part of ours,” Akira stated. “It wasn’t that very long ago that I felt you were ready to distance yourself further away from us than you already were. That is no longer the case, and from what I feel from all of you, I believe you never will.”

“I’m sorry, Obāsan,” Ryo apologized. “It was wrong of me, I know. I’m just thankful that Dee and Bikky started to make me contact you more, and then when Dee got pregnant, it just felt right to open again.

“And that is why I am so thankful for you and your family now,” Akira stated. “So let us spoil you.”

“If you insist,” Ryo conceded and traded an amused glance with Dee.

Ryo had gone around the corner and a block down found a parking area. “Anyone want to walk around a little?” he asked. “Maybe get some donuts.”

“What about the Korean BBQ?” Carol asked.
“It’s too early. I don’t think it’s open yet,” Dee replied. “If you really want, we can come back for lunch or dinner one day. I wouldn’t mind going there again.”

“Me too,” said Ryo. “Okay, a little walking around and donuts, and then we’re off to Atsugi and Yamato.”

They walked around for a half hour and returned to the van with two dozen donuts. One dozen was the normal flavors expected from Americans and the other dozen were the Japanese varieties including curry donuts, green tea donuts, and donuts with red bean paste. They also had bought coffee and tea. Ryo stood by the passenger side as they waited while Tsubasa and Hoshi got Ryoko and Darin settled in the car seats, and looked at Dee. “Do you think you can get us to Atsugi by passing Pancho Villas?” he asked.

Dee started to grin. “I sure can.” He took the keys from Ryo.

“Good, then after we drive around Atsugi, you can take us to Yokohama,” said Ryo. “I was considering driving to Atsugi, but realized the best place by the front gate to pull over so we can switch would be the 7-11.” He looked over to Bikky. “And since we already have donuts, I’m not sure going into the 7-11 would be a good idea at this point.”

Dee started to laugh. It was their third day there, and already they had stopped a several 7-11s and some other convenience stores such as Lawsons, so Bikky and Carol could try something new that was not in the stores back in the U.S. “Maybe later tonight, we’ll let them hit one up again.”

“I’m sure we’ll encounter one in Yokohama while we’re walking around,” Ryo said with a grin as he got into the car and watched as Dee went around the front to get into the driver’s seat.

Dee let out a snort. “At least one for sure,” he said.

“What’s Pancho Villas?” Bikky asked after he got into the vehicle in the row behind Dee and Ryo.

“A Mexican restaurant,” Ryo replied. “It was pretty popular with the military crowds, and the local Japanese. They served only Mexican food there. They have a party room upstairs had with a traditional Japanese table and pillow. You had to take your shoes off before entering the room.”

“But it wasn’t traditional Japanese decorations in that room,” Dee added, with a laugh. “It was all
Mexican. Actually, the food was New Mexico Mexican than from Mexico. The owner was in the military and when he retired, his family decided to stay in Japan, so since he and his wife were from New Mexico, they decided to open a Mexican restaurant near the Army base. It was also close enough that the people from the Navy base would hit it up too.”

“And it seems it drew in some college students, both American and Japanese, from Yokohama,” Hoshi pointed out.

“That too,” Dee admitted, “but we would never had heard of it if it wasn’t for our friends from the Navy base. They’re the ones who took us to both Pancho Villas and the Korean BBQ for the first time.”

Ryo’s family had been to Pancho Villas many times while he was stationed at Camp Zama, and had seen all the places Ryo and Dee were driving past or stopping at many years ago, but she enjoyed watching her grandson as they visited all of Ryo’s favorite spots from the time and compared notes with his husband, who also had favorite places in the area. It was something special that they were finally able to share.

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Isogo Ward
Yokohama, Kanagawa
Japan

After they drove around the Atsugi Navy base, with Dee and Ryo pointing out more places in the area, Dee took them to nearby Yamato. Ryo finally had the fun of sitting back and watching Bikky freak out over the small streets that Dee went down to see if some of the places they would go to was still there. He could not stop from laughing himself silly, leaving it to the others to tell Bikky to calm down. Truth be told, Ryo didn’t want him to because he was so funny. Eventually Bikky would get accustomed to going down the small streets, and realize that both his fathers knew what they were doing as they navigated the van through those streets. That thought prompted Ryo to try out the video feature on his new cellphone and would record Bikky during his rants.

Carol also needed some getting used to the smaller streets in Japan, but she wasn’t as vocal as Bikky. She mostly widened her eyes and occasionally let out a little gasp. She was still amusing enough that
Ryo made sure to get some video of her too. He wanted to be able to look back at Bikky’s and Carol’s reactions to the small streets of Japan long after the two became as accustomed to driving down those streets as the rest of them were.

They did not make any stops in Yamato and after Dee and Ryo went past some of the places they had liked to go to, Dee drove into Yokohama, heading across the city toward the bay. He told everyone that they were going to Ken’s house, where Hide and Yuki were to also meet them. It was the same house that Dee had called home, along with Hide and Yuki during their college years. When they were close, Dee started to point out places where they would go to eat and their local stores, izakayas and other places. To Bikky’s dismay, Dee turned onto another small street. It wasn’t as busy as the ones in Yamato. It was mostly a residential road. They passed a few people walking along the road, but no cars until the road turned and there was a car heading in the opposite direction toward the main street. Bikky covered his eyes as he ducked his head. Carol also covered her eyes but peeked between her fingers to watch as Dee and the other driver expertly maneuver their vehicles past each other. He finally started to slow down and went past a big house in the back of a corner lot that had a lush garden. He pulled into the driveway of an unusual shaped house next to it.

With a wide grin, Dee turned to face everyone in the van and announced, “Well, here we are. Home sweet home!” He started to smirk as he turned to open the door on his side and get out. The smirk turned into a big smile when he noticed Ken standing on the small porch at the end of the path along the narrow house where the building finally widened. His wife, Ayumi, stood behind him with their youngest child and only daughter, one-year-old Emi, and smiled as she watched everyone get out of the car.

Ryo got out of the vehicle and watched as Dee spread his arms wide with a huge grin as he went down the path to meet Ken. “There’s no place like home!” he exclaimed and hugged his friend.

“It’s so great to see you back in Japan, Dee!” Ken exclaimed. He looked over to Ryo who stood near the two friends. “Ryo! I’m so glad to see you again.” He hugged Ryo as Dee went over to say hello to Ken’s wife and child.

Ryo looked at the house again, and then looked over to his family, who were looking at each other with amused looks. He started to turn back to the van to get the twins out, but Bikky and Carol already had them unbuckled and were bouncing them before handing them off to Nobu and Hoshi, who were standing on the sidewalk, giving the teens a chance to get out of the vehicle.

“So, this is the famous frat house in Yokohama?” Ryo asked as he came over to stand with his family. He smiled when Ryoko reached out toward him, so with an apologetic smile, he took his daughter from his aunt.

Ryo could see on his family’s faces what they would not dare say. At least Dee’s focus was on Ken
and his family. He was taking Emi from Ayumi, and the toddler seemed to be enjoying getting attention from Dee, even if it was the first time she was seeing him.

“We had some parties,” Dee replied, “but we really weren’t the happening spot.”

Ken shook his head. “Party time was going to Roppongi,” he said with a laugh. “This was where we would recover from too much party. Sometimes we would study too. This one here,” he indicated Dee, “would go out at least several times a week to roam around. Sometimes he’d go to Tokyo. Many times, at least one of us would go with him. Meaning most of the time we were home for studying and sleeping,” he added with a smirk.

“We did eat here too,” Dee reminded them. “Yuki and I couldn’t afford to eat out every night. Sometimes we cooked, and other times we would go to Lawsons near here when they marked down the food for the night. We’d get a really good dinner for less than 500 yen because it was ready to expire for the day.”

Ken laughed and smiled at Dee. “Many times, Dee and Yuki would bring back enough to feed all of us with many different things for about 1000 yen. Hide and I would try to give them some of their money back, but they would refuse. So, Ken and I would bring home a good meal for all of us sometimes, only it wouldn’t be the expiring stuff.”

“And it didn’t come from a Lawson’s or some other convenience store,” Dee added.

Dee looked back at Ryo’s family with amusement as they continued to study the house. The longest part of the two-level house had to be no more than five feet wide. The length of that part was about 15 feet long before the porch and the front door. It looked like it widened only by another 5 feet.

Everyone looked at Dee and then to the house.

Ken went over to greet everyone. After they were done with greeting, Ken led them to the walk. “Would you like a tour of the house?” Ken asked. He looked back as a compact SUV pulled up behind the van.

“I know it’s two stories, but it’s a bit, um… narrow,” Ryo commented as Hide and Yuki got out of the SUV and came over to everyone.

“Are we all going to fit at the same time?” Bikky asked.
Ken looked at Bikky and started to laugh. “We would fit very well.”

“It’s actually wider as it goes back,” Hide explained.

Yuki came over and first hugged Dee and then Ryo, welcoming them back to Japan. He went onto enthusiastically welcoming Bikky and Carol to Japan, asking them how they were liking Japan. Hide also welcomed the family, hugging Dee tightly.

“I can’t believe we’re all back here finally!” Yuki said.

“Shall we show Ryo’s family home sweet home?” Hide asked with a sly grin.

Ryo nodded. “Sure. I’m really looking forward to seeing Dee’s home in Japan.”

Ken led them to the door, where Ayumi greeted everyone and then moved back into the house taking their daughter along with her.

When they entered the house, they noticed that the back of the house was much wider than it looked. The opening to the long part of the house was more like ten feet on that end. “It’s not very noticeable on the outside, but the lot is actually on an angle. So is the house,” Yuki explained as everyone prepared to take their shoes off as they looked around the entryway and the open plan kitchen beyond.

Dee looked at his family, especially the older ones. He looked at Ken. “I can’t do this,” he said, indicating everyone else. Dee was standing off to the side of the entry, still in his boots.

“I know. We didn’t consider this part,” Ken agreed. “Chotto matte,” he called out.

“Why did we not consider this?” Hide asked, looking concerned.

“What? What’s the problem,” Yuki asked, also pausing in taking off his shoes.

“Don’t take your shoes off,” Dee said.
Ken stood before everyone and bowed deeply. “Gomenasai. This was all my idea,” he said. “The others thought it would be fun. We always did like this house.”

“But happy we didn’t live here,” Dee said.

“Nani?” was chorused by the Japanese family.

“What?” Carol asked.

“What are you talking about?” Bikky asked.

“Dee, is this the house the four of you shared during college?” Ryo asked.

Dee shook his head and also bowed. “Gomenasai. It would have been a fun joke but I don’t want everyone to remove their shoes only to have to put them back on in a few minutes before we take you to where we really lived.”

“You mean you didn’t live in this house?” Akira asked.

“No,” Ken said. “This is not my house. It is my neighbor’s. They agreed to let us use the house for a joke.”

“We would look at this house and wonder what it would be like for us if we lived here,” Yuki explained. “Especially for Dee, who is so tall.”

Dee nodded. “We finally got to know the people who lived here and asked to see the inside. Turns out it’s bigger than it looks from the outside.” He shrugged. “Chances are that I still would have had one of the rooms in the narrow part and those rooms are exactly as small as they seem outside.”

Yuki started to laugh. “We had Dee lay down in one of those rooms with a futon. I still have the pictures. His feet were sticking out of the door!”
The other men started to laugh as Dee groaned and then joined them.

“Oh? I want to see that picture,” Ryo remarked. “Yuki, please share when you have a chance.”

“Oh yes please,” Nobu said. “Yuki, you have been holding out on us.”

“I wanna see my dad unable to fit in a room!” Bikky said with a laugh. “Don’t you, Carol?”

“Yes,” she laughed.

“I think we can do better. We’re very close to the family who lives here,” Ken said. “So, whoever wants to get a tour of this unusual house, even for Japan, then continue taking your shoes off. We can even take the futon in that room and convince Dee to give it a try again.”

“Oh sheesh!” Dee commented, slapping his head and chuckling.

Ryo started to laugh as his family went back to removing their shoes, making comments in Japanese on wanting to see Dee in one of the smaller rooms as if he was sleeping. He had a feeling that Yuki wouldn’t need to share the photo he had because there would be many pictures taken by his family. He still wanted a copy of Yuki’s because it was of Dee back when he was in college.

Ken took them around the house, seeming to know more about the house than the rest of his friends, but he did live in one of the nearby houses in the years since he shared the house with his three friends and knew the family who lived there. They were shown the wider part of the house, that included on the second floor the master bedroom and the full bathroom. The bedroom had a balcony that looked out over the small garden. Also visible was the beautiful house on the corner lot that Dee drove past before pulling over by the house they were in. It was a large modern home but with a classic Japanese style. It had a large deck in the back and a smaller terraced patio on one corner of the roof. It was set in the back of the lot with a lot of garden. It did not have formal gardens like his grandmother’s house, but there was a small pond with a fountain and a garden bed of exotic flowers. There were a couple of low, squat palm trees on each side of the entry path going to the front patio. The house was mostly two levels but on the roof looked like a small room with the roof access door. The roof was artificial grass, with a patio set and benches.

As they continued their tour of the unusual house, Ryo’s family discovered that there was a third level in the back part of the house that was smaller than the first two levels, but was large enough to be another common area. With the sloping ceiling, Dee and Ryo would have to duck if they moved
from the middle section of the area. The back wall of that room was windows and a door that stepped out onto a patio big enough for a table and chairs with some space left. They were taken to the front of narrow part of the house and discovered that while the segment that opened to the small living room, was wider than the section seen from the street, the room was still narrow because of the narrow hallway going to the front rooms. The two rooms were set up as a nursery in the front and a child’s play space. The upstairs was set up the same way but looked to be tatami rooms, the front room having an ancestor shrine and a small water fountain. Ken explained that the family had a baby and a toddler. The man had Carried the baby, since he was a Carrier and felt it was his job to share bringing their children into the world, reminding Ryo once again how different the attitude on Carriers were in Japan. In New York, it seems only a few heterosexual men chose to Carry, and it was usually only because their wives were unable to conceive or carry to term.

Everyone was standing around in the area upstairs, that was above the living room and some of the kitchen and was set up like a common area with low chairs and pillows. Ken came over with a futon and handed it to Dee. “Go get comfortable in your room,” he said, indicating the room off the landing.

Dee looked at the rest of the family and shrugged. He nodded to Ken and then smiled at Ryo. “Don’t hurt yourself laughing too hard.”

“I won’t,” Ryo assured him with a smirk, “but I am concerned about Bikky.”

“Oh well, we’ll take our chances,” Dee said and stepped inside the room. Once inside, he knelt with the futon and rolled it out. There was only a foot on each side of the single futon. Then Dee went to lay down on it and rolled onto his back. His head was inches from the small ornate Japanese style chest that was against the furthest wall, and his feet stuck out from the room.

Ryo’s family started laughing and talking in Japanese.

“Oh wow!” Bikky laughed. “It’s true!” He started to laugh more.

Ryo couldn’t help but laugh too. After a few minutes, allowing anyone who wanted to take pictures to get them, and taking a few himself, Ryo went over to the doorway and bent down, as Dee sat up. He offered Dee his hand and helped him to his feet, being careful that neither of them hit their heads as Dee got to his feet. In that house, both Dee and Ryo hunched over more than in the rooms with lower ceilings in Ryo’s grandmother’s house, which thankfully was only in the extension.

With the tour over, they left the house, Ryo and Dee taking possession of their infant son and daughter. They stood on the sidewalk and Ryo looked around the area. The next house looked even
smaller with less bedrooms than the one they were just in, but at least from the outside, it looked like
the bedrooms could be long enough for Dee to stretch out in, but going by the house they had toured,
Ryo knew looks from the outside could be deceiving. Across the street were some more houses that
could not have more than two bedrooms. Further down the street, there were a couple of houses that
looked to be large enough to have four small bedrooms and could be Ken’s house. All the other
houses on that road were very large houses, indicating wealth. The road did bend, so Ryo could not
really see much of the houses further down the narrow winding road.

“Shall we go to my house now?” Ken asked with a smile. Ken’s wife had already left the house as
they started the tour of the inside and was waiting for everyone in their house.

“As interesting as seeing that house was, yes, I would love to see where Dei had lived during his
time in Japan,” Akira said as Nobu walked beside her. Dee allowed Ken to lead the pack, waiting for
everyone, including Bikky and Carol to start walking.

To their surprise, Ken was walking in the direction of the corner.

“Is it a far walk from here?” Nobu asked. “Will the van be okay parked there?”

Ken looked back at Dee. “After they get to the house, we’ll serve them tea while you park the van in
the carport.”

“Hai!” Dee called out and started to grin as the family realized that Ken was taking them through the
ornate wooden gate for the corner house.

Ryo looked at the house and gave Dee a double look. “You’re all joking again, right?” he asked.
“You didn’t live in that house?”

Dee nodded. “This is the house.”

“It’s huge!” Ryo exclaimed. “It doesn’t seem so big in the photos that you have from the time.”

“We never took pictures outside, and unfortunately I only took a few of us in the house,” Dee said.
“I never thought about taking pictures of where we lived at the time. I wanted pictures of everything
else around here. It was only after I got back to New York that I wished I had more pictures around
the house,” Dee said as they brought up the rear and entered the garden.
“Is that so?” Ryo asked and with a grin lifted the camera and started to take pictures of the house. “You’ll have plenty by the time you go back to New York this time.”

“I love you, too, Ryo,” Dee said as he leaned over to kiss Ryo’s cheek.

“I forgot that Ken’s family also is from money,” Ryo said. “I didn’t know what to expect, but I wasn’t expecting this.”

“It has four bedrooms,” Dee replied. “Nice size ones too but not as large as in Obāsan’s house. Except for Ken’s room, which is the master bedroom. But my feet didn’t stick out and I slept on a platform bed and not on the floor, and I was able to walk around in my room without bumping into furniture. So did Hide and Yuki. You’ll see soon enough.”

They walked along the main stone path leading from the gate to the entrance of the house. Ahead of them were Ryo’s family with Dee’s friends. Yuki and Hide had taken over holding the twins. To their left, along the side of the house they were previously in was a long carport with an overhead to protect vehicles parked from the sun. Parked in the carport was a mini-van and a sports car. There was room for one more vehicle under the carport. There was also a shed at the end of the carport with a path to the side and back garden. To their right was the large garden. In the center was the small pond and a fountain. Most of the garden had parklike grass with patches of colorful flowers.

“That’s all new,” Dee called out, indicating the flowers in the garden. “We had some annuals that we watered once in while, but we didn’t maintain the gardens,” he explained. He looked back at the vehicles and called out to Ken. “Oh hey! Looks like you finally got your Z!” he exclaimed about the black Nissan 300ZX.

“Yes, I did,” Ken replied with a smile. “That’s my personal car, so Ayumi can have the van to drive the kids around, but sometimes if she needs to go somewhere alone, she drives it too.”

“I always wanted a Z, but I ended up with an Accord,” Dee stated. “But hey, at least it got us places.”

“It did,” Hide said.

“Poor thing,” Ken added. “We drove it into the ground.”
“At least it lasted until you were getting ready to leave Japan, Dee,” Yuki said.

Dee nodded and with a smirk, said, “And while I still had two years’ insurance on it. That was a nice piece of change to do up my last few days in Japan in a big way.” He shrugged. “Well, big for me back then.”

“And you even picked up presents for your mother,” Yuki remembered.

“I almost got her a kimono, but then I knew she wouldn’t be wearing that very much, if at all. And she still has the tea set I got her on display in her room. Sometimes she will use it,” Dee said.

“Are you going to buy her a new one while you’re here?” Ken asked.

“I doubt it,” Dee said. “Back then, it was a big deal. I also got her a teapot for normal use. It lasted years, but by the time I noticed she could use a new one, I got one in Mitsuwa. I need to figure out something she would enjoy that we can’t get in Mitsuwa or one of the stores around us.”

“That’s true. We’ll try to think of some ideas for you too,” Yuki said.

“You have time to think it over,” Dee replied. “Who knows. Maybe I might find something on our road trip too.”

“You’re right,” Hide said.

“Why are we making these poor people wait around while we talk about cars?” Ken said. “Let’s go inside.”

“I enjoyed listening to the car discussion very much,” Nobu said.

“Yeah, me too,” Ryo said with a cryptic smile. “But I do want to see where my husband lived during his college years.”
Ryo’s family made a space so Dee and Ryo could join his friends at the front door. Dee took Ryoko from Yuki and cuddled his infant daughter. He looked back at everyone with a bright smile. “Well, time to show the family the place I called home for five years.” He adjusted his hold on Ryoko, and with Ryo next to him, now holding onto Darin he turned to face the front door again.

“Wow,” Dee muttered. “I can’t believe I’m back.”

“I must warn you that much has changed since we lived here,” Ken said.

Dee let out a chuckle. “I think that’s a little obvious judging by the front,” he said.

Ken opened the door and stepped aside for Dee to enter. “Welcome home, Dee,” he said with a smile.

“Holy hell,” Dee muttered as he gazed inside. “It looks different but it still feels the same.” Then with a huge grin, Dee went inside and called out, “Taidaima!”

“Okaeri!” Ayumi called out from the inside.

Ayumi had put Emi down for a nap while everyone toured the other house, and was in the kitchen preparing refreshments for the group. Ken’s and Ayumi’s oldest son, 6-year-old Hiroshi, was in school, while their 4-year-old son, Koji, was at a neighbor’s house until later that afternoon.

The house was as beautiful inside as it was from the outside. There were changes since the four shared the house. The biggest being it no longer screamed that four male college students were living there. It was not that they had trashed the house, but at times it would look unkempt and cluttered. Now all through the house were feminine touches that four male college students wouldn’t consider. There were also signs of children living in the house. All the furniture they had had long since been
Dee looked around the living room and gave a phony sniffle. “Aw,” he commented, “our house also grew up.”

Heads nodded in agreement. Ken had Ryo and his family settled in the living room while Dee went out to park the van behind Ken’s car under the carport. When Dee returned, the former roommates took Ryo and his family on a tour of the house, sharing some funny stories, or even touching, such as Hide proposing on the rooftop garden. Ryo could not help taking pictures of the room that was once Dee’s. Everything inside the room had changed, but there was still a platform bed that was new. Dee had Ken take a picture of him, Ryo and the kids inside the room. Bikky thought it was a little cheesy, but he went along with it because it was important to his dads. Besides, he thought it was cool to see where Dee had lived once.

At one point Bikky admitted that he was jealous of his dads because they both had places in Japan that they had called home.

Ryo managed to ruffle his hair before Bikky ducked away. “Depending on how we feel about the penthouse in our hotel, you might have somewhere that will be your Japanese home away from home.”

Bikky looked at Dee and Ryo. “Really?” he asked.

“We were told that the hotel chain’s owner lived in that penthouse with his husband and children. Grandfather said that now that the hotel is ours, then the penthouse is ours to do what we want. If we don’t like it, we can still make sure it’s available when we are in Japan. Plus, Obāsan’s house is now your home in Japan too. I don’t mind sharing.” Ryo smiled at Bikky.

“I didn’t think of that, but yeah, Obāsan’s house does feel like home already,” Bikky said.

Akira hugged Bikky. “I am very glad you feel that way, Bikky. My home is your home anytime. You don’t always have to be with your fathers either, if you want to come for a vacation and they are unable to.”

“Would you let me?” Bikky asked Dee and Ryo.
Dee shrugged. “I don’t see why not if you want to spend some vacation time here, especially if we’re both working.”

“You might have to fly commercial, because I don’t think we can get the jet for just one of us unless it’s an emergency,” Ryo said. “But at least we can afford to fly you here first class.”

“I’ll take it,” Bikky replied. “Could Carol come too if she’s free?”

“I don’t see why not,” Ryo said.

“Really?!!” Carol exclaimed, excited. “Oh, you two are just too sweet.”

“And yes, we’ll let your aunt know that we don’t mind,” Dee said.

“I think maybe we should send Elina with Carol, if we can get her to finally take a vacation.”

“She would love that,” Carol said, “but you’ll have to do a lot more talking to convince her she can go too.”

“We’ll handle her,” Ryo said. He shrugged. “Hell, maybe for a Christmas gift we should give her a trip to Paris or Rome. I heard her say she always wanted to go to those cities.”

“We should look into it,” Dee agreed. “I don’t have a problem with it.” He slipped his arm around Ryo’s waist. “C’mon, we’re heading up to the rooftop patio now. Ayumi has been making goodies for us this morning. Ken says we’re going to love her baking.”

“Let’s go then,” Ryo agreed and then laughed as Bikky quickly moved to stand behind Ken, who was waiting for everyone to gather and lead him up.

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They were all seated around the dining table on the roof, drinking green tea served by Ken’s wife along with slices of a banana and chocolate sponge cake roll and mochi she also made that morning.

“Yuki is the only who is still not married with children,” Hide said.

“I am working on the getting married part,” Yuki said with a smile. “Next summer or fall.”

“Speaking of,” Dee said, “how’s that going with it?

Both Ken and Hide rolled their eyes.

“It’s become complicated,” Yuki said with a sigh.

“Jae-Hwa’s parents are now saying they can’t afford to come to Japan so the wedding should be in Korea,” Ken explained.

“And there are others in Jae-Hwa’s family who say they already have other engagements and events planned, so we need to find a time when no one has anything planned,” Yuki said. “Once we figure out where we’re getting married.”

“Yuki, are you actually considering getting married in Korea?” Akira asked, studying the man she had gotten to know since the wedding.

Yuki shrugged with a neutral look on his face. “I don’t want to be married in Korea. Japan is my home, but Korea is Jae-Hwa’s. He has the right to want to be married there if he wants.”

“Sure,” Tsubasa agreed, “if that’s what he wants, but does he really want to?”

Yuki gave his friends a small amused smile and settled his gaze on the visiting Americans. “Jae-Hwa says he wants to elope in New York and avoid this whole mess. He does want to be married here. Japan is his home now. He just doesn’t want to tell his parents that, especially with all the noise his family is making now.”
“I never cared where my children got married,” Akira said. “When Ryo’s mother decided that she was American and wanted to marry in New York, I did not stop her.” She looked at Yuki. “It’s yours and Jae-Hwa’s wedding and every choice you make for it should be yours and no one else.”

“What if his family feels as if he disgraced them by being married in Japan?” Yuki asked. “We both worry about that.” He shook his head. “Running away to New York to get married sounds better and better the more we think about the situation. At least my family won’t turn their backs on me if we don’t get married in Japan.”

“No matter what they decide, it’s more than they can afford for a wedding.” Hide explained. “The main reason Jae-Hwa’s family wants the wedding in Seoul is so all his family can be there. Originally Jae-Hwa thought to bring over just his parents and close family. Now the whole family wants to be at the wedding, but most of them can’t afford to come to Japan. They have nothing against Yuki and the marriage, and they all want to be there for the wedding.”

“That would also mean they would need somewhere to stay, and that would be up to you and Jae-Hwa to provide accommodations, right?” Ryo asked. When Yuki let out a heavy sigh, Ryo added, “Or the other way around if the wedding is in Seoul?”

“Neither of us has rich family members who will pay for our wedding, including providing for any visiting guests. We were relieved when you and Dee said you’d handle your own travel when you come for the wedding. We just wanted something simple somewhere in Yokohama, or anywhere around the Tokyo Metropolitan area.”

Dee and Ryo exchanged amused looks and first started to smile and then laugh. “When Ryo and I got first started to plan our wedding, Ryo wasn’t sure he would get much, if any, from his family for it, so we decided on simple but beautiful, preferably in Manhattan but anywhere in New York City would have worked. Look what we ended up with,” Dee said. He took Ryo’s hand and squeezed it. “You saw what we ended up with, and we have no regrets.”

“If you did, I wouldn’t hesitate kicking you,” Yuki said with a laugh. “But as I said, neither of us has a rich relative to step in and help out with the wedding. My parents said they can help give us something very nice, and Jae-Hwa’s said they can help some but only if it’s in Seoul. We still want to get married, but now we don’t know when that will be.”

“Ken and I offered some of the costs as a wedding gift,” Hide said.
Once again, Dee and Ryo shared a look, and Ryo nodded slightly. “Yuki, you might not have a rich relative, but you have me and Dee as friends, and we happen to have access to an airline plus we own a hotel in Tokyo, and should have another right here in Yokohama and Seoul by next fall. We can charter a flight or two to get everyone where they need to be for the wedding. It doesn’t matter how many as long as we have advance notice. We can also offer hotel rooms for your guests who are travelling. And if you need, we can also offer facilities for the wedding if you like the hotel. That will be our wedding gift from me and Dee and our family.”

Yuki looked shocked with his wide dark eyes glistening with unshed tears. “That is too much. We couldn’t,” he said, his voice shaky.

“You could and you will,” Dee said in a tone that said no argument.

“Oh oh, Yuki,” Bikky commented. “You just got Dad’s ‘he’s not taking no for an answer’ voice. You have no choice.” He laughed along with Carol.

Ryo pointed to Bikky with a smirk. “You heard our kid. Give it up. Just figure out where and when and let us know. And with all the other help you’re getting as a gift, I suspect that while it might not be in the price range of our wedding, it’s still going to be every bit as beautiful and wonderful that you and Jae-Hwa want it to be.”

Yuki jumped up and started to hug Ryo and Dee, tears falling from his eyes. He went onto to also hug Bikky and Carol.

Hide started to laugh. “He did the same to me and Ken and our families when we told him what our wedding gift will be. Hell, I even offered him the club for the reception or an after-party if he wants.”

“If it’s here and you have guests from outside Japan, an after-party would be very nice,” Akira said. “I thought it was a lovely touch to Ryo’s and Dei’s wedding,” Akira said. “Of course, the club would be a great place for a reception too. It’s not far from the hotel.”

Hide nodded his head. “Yes. Between the hotel and the club, you have good options on the wedding.”

“If we have it in Tokyo,” Yuki said.
“But both you and Jae-Hwa want to be married here," Ken pointed out. “And Dee and Ryo said they’d help with getting all of Jae-Hwa’s family here.”

“There’s still telling his family that,” Yuki said.

“Will it be any worse than when Jae-Hwa said he was going to become a Japanese citizen? They did know that meant he would have to renounce Korea,” Tsubasa asked. “They might make a lot of noise at first and then realize that there’s a wedding.”

“And no financial stress,” Dee added.

“Exactly,” Ryo said. “I don’t intend to sound rude, but if they cannot be happy for Jae-Hwa, then he’s better without them.”

“Listen to my grandson,” Akira agreed. “He was going to marry Dei even if no one from his family was there. All he cared about was getting married to the love of his life. That most of his family came to their good senses and was there on that special day was a bonus.” She smiled. “I know he was worried about me, but there was no way I was going to miss his wedding, especially to a man that I could hear in his voice just how happy Dei made him. That’s all I want for Ryo, to be happy, and he is with his lovely family. Jae-Hwa’s parents might make noise at first, but I’ll bet they’ll be on the plane and be here for the wedding.”

“Plan what you and Jae-Hwa want for your wedding and know there will be people who love you two and will help you get it,” Ken said to his friend.

“Not to mention we’ll all be at the wedding, so at least someone will show up,” Dee said with a smile.

“You’re all just too generous!” Yuki exclaimed, tearing up again. “I don’t know if I can.”

“Yes, you can,” Dee said. “Yuki, you know through my life I’ve made my own family. You, Ken and Hide are part of that family. We’re not giving this to a friend, we’re gifting family.”

Ryo nodded his head with agreement. “You’re family to Dee, so that makes you family to me. Besides, it’s not going to break us. So we’re doing it.”
“Same here,” Ken said. “We’ve been family since we all moved into this house. And family helps with weddings, if needed. That’s what we’re doing.”

Hide gave Yuki a twisted grin. “Your only problem for your wedding is you stressing that someone else will have to provide the noodles because you are not making noodles for your own wedding, even if you have to settle for second best.”

Yuki started to laugh. “Yes, you’re all family to me, and I’m so thankful. And it has nothing to do with your wedding gifts. And Ryo, you are Dee’s family, so you and the rest of your family are mine. So, I humbly thank you all. I will take your words to heart and talk to Jae-Hwa. Now, that everyone got to see our home during college, is everyone ready for lunch?”

“Yes, we’ll have noodles,” Ken said, “but I hate to say that we’re going to the university first and then go to Yuki’s noodle shop.”

“We’re going sightseeing in Yokohama after too?” Carol asked.

“Yes,” Ryo said. “Today is Yokohama. All day. After dinner, Obāsan is going home with Uncle Nobu and Aunt Hoshi.”

“We’ll take the chibis back with us too,” Akira added.

“We’re going to let you kids go off on your own at that time if you want,” Dee said.
“Cool!” Bikky exclaimed, while Carol clapped with excitement.

“We’re going to be out pretty late but not that much after midnight, so if you can last that long, we can all go home together,” Ryo said. “If not, you can get a cab to go back to Obāsan’s. But call us if you do leave earlier. And if not, you better answer your phone when we call.”

“We will, but I think we can also figure out how to get back to Obāsan’s without a cab,” Bikky said.

“You haven’t been in anything but a car so far in Japan, so good luck trying to figure out your way,” Dee said. “We’ll be taking public transportation next week and once you have an idea of what it’s like, you can go off on your own. Hell, even I was confused my first time and I could read Japanese when I first arrived here and used to a complex transportation system.”

“Dee’s right, Biks. Give a day going around with locals and then you’re off on your own,” Ryo said.

Bikky pouted and nodded his head. “Yeah all right.”

“It’s cool that we’re going to be able to explore Yokohama on our own,” Carol reasoned. “I’ll make sure we’ll either go back with you or take a cab.”

“Wait!” Bikky exclaimed. “If you think we can’t get around the trains because we don’t know how to read Japanese, how are we going to tell a cab driver how to get to Obāsan’s?”

“You’ll be given a card before we cut you loose for a while,” Ryo said. “You’ll give it to the driver and he’ll get you home.”

“Huh?” Bikky asked.

“When I first arrived at Zama, they didn’t know I was also Japanese and they made me go to the Intercultural Relations class, and during the class, they handed us cards like what we have for you, and were instructed that if we got lost to get in a cab and give the driver the card. Many from the base found the card useful because they found themselves lost while they were still new to Japan.”

Dee started to laugh along with his friends. “They gave those cards to gaijin students when I first got
there, even if we were expected to be fluent in Japanese. Of course, that only got us to the campus, but my first few weeks I did stay in the temporary dorms, so that wouldn’t have been so bad if I got lost.”

“We got lost a few times finding this house when we first moved in,” Hide said with a laugh.

“That’s true,” Dee agreed. He looked at Bikky and Carol. “We still have time to work it all out since it won’t be until after dinner. Shall we head out now for some sightseeing?”

“Yes,” Akira said. “We have another long day.” She smiled at everyone.

“Funny but it doesn’t seem so much like long days since we got here,” Bikky said.

“That’s good,” Nobu said. “That means you’re having a good time.”

“I’m having an awesome time!” Bikky exclaimed.

“The best,” Carol agreed. “Bikky’s right. I do sleep good at night but the days don’t seem long enough.”

“And why we’re lucky to have such a nice long vacation here,” Ryo said.

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Hide offered his car to Tsubasa to drive to the Yokohama National University. It was impossible to fit everyone in one vehicle, including Akira’s family transport. Nobu and Hoshi decided to join Tsubasa in the car, allowing Ken, Hide and Yuki to join everyone else in the larger vehicle. Tsubasa suggested that they also take the twins, so outside the house, they took some time to get everyone situated between the two vehicles.

At the school they walked around some, the four friends reminiscing their time on the campus and
sharing stories. Of course, there were photos taken, of the four friends and of Dee with his family. Dee looked happy to be showing his family where he had gone to college and the usual hangouts on the university grounds. The stories told brought plenty of laughing. Everyone was having a great time.

Once they were done with walking around the campus, they headed into Central Yokohama. Yuki directed them to where he lived because there were several public parking lots close to him.

Once the vehicles were parked, Yuki led them to the 3-story red brick building where he had a small apartment on the second floor. It wasn’t a fancy building but it had a certain charm to it.

Dee studied the building with a smile. “It feels like a building in the Village,” he commented. “I like it.”

Ryo laughed. “It does look like something you would pick,” he said. “I like that it seems to have more balcony than the average affordable apartment has around here.”

“Oh yes,” Yuki said. “That was one of the points that made me decide on it. Plus, it’s only a couple of blocks from my shop.” He indicated the small restaurants on the ground floor. “I really wish one of these would move or close up. They have more room than my shop. I wouldn’t have to expand.”

“Ken and I keep telling you there are more than just these three spaces in Yokohama,” Hide said. “We said we’ll even put in to help you.”

“I like this area,” Yuki said. “It’s by the river and close to Chinatown. And this area is a very famous area for tourists and locals to look for food. And there’s a water taxi dock close too.”

“But there’s so much competition.” Ryo thought aloud and found everyone who lived in Japan staring at him. Dee, Bikky and Carol were looking on with amusement. Ryo noticed that Dee took a picture of the group.

“That’s what we told him at first,” Ken said, “but he was determined to start up where he is.”

“Yuki’s shop is the famous noodle shop in this area of Yokohama,” Hide added. “He did that with all the competition around here.”
“Yuki’s shop is the very famous noodle in all of the Kanto Plain,” Tsubasa exclaimed.

“Oh please,” Bikky complained. “All this talk of these famous noodles and I’m still waiting.”

Dee busted out in laughter and pointing at Bikky said, “I’m with Biks. Can we go have lunch now? I’ve been waiting a very long time to finally taste this famous noodle soup.”

“You had my noodle soup,” Yuki said. “At the party in New York.”

“I know. And they were amazing, but I want to have them in your very famous shop, kudasai,” Dee replied with a sweet smile and clasped his hands together. “Did you say it’s on that row of shops next to the river?”

“Yes, I did.”

“You do live close,” Dee said. He looked around and started to smile. “I used to love going there looking for food at times. Hell, I just love walking along the river and crossing all the bridges,” he added with a laugh. “Ah, it’s so good to be back in Yokohama!”

“Home sweet home, Dee?” Ryo asked with a smile.

“You could say that. Yokohama was my home for a few years so yes,” Dee replied.

“Well, you saw my Japanese home sweet home, so now it’s time to see yours,” Ryo said.

Yuki led everyone up to his apartment, where they waited for Kumi to arrive and join them for the rest of the day.

“I’m going to assume that Kumi knows where you live?” Dee asked as they sat in Yuki’s living room.
“We’ve been here several times,” Tsubasa asked. “She knows where to find us.”

When Kumi arrived a half hour later, she was full of apologies, exclaiming that she was stuck in traffic. They all assured her it was okay. They spent the time talking, listening to the four continue to reminisce about their college days, and catching Dee and Ryo up on how Dee’s friends and their families had become good friends of Ryo’s family since the wedding in March.

Tsubasa stood up to greet his wife, and looked back at the others. “So, it’s noodle time?” he asked.

“About time!” Bikky exclaimed, jumping up. “Oh, sorry, Kumi. No offense but they keep talking about these famous noodles and making me hungry.”

Kumi giggled and smiled at Bikky. “I understand. You really need to eat at Yuki’s shop, and I do apologize for making you wait. Shall we go? I had them before and I can’t wait.”

Ryo stood up after Dee and looked at Dee’s friend. “Yuki, do you want to lead the way?”

“If he doesn’t, I will,” Tsubasa said, making the others laugh.

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Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

The rest of their day in Yokohama. A video conference brings Dee and Ryo up to date on how things are going with their unit in New York.

CHAPTER SIX

October 21, 2006

Nakamura River Noodle World

Miyagawacho, Yokohama

Japan

There was something about having noodles in a noodle shop, Ryo thought. He had been away from Japan long enough to forget that until they found themselves in Yuki’s place. Not even the places that sold only Japanese noodles in New York came close. Most of them were very good, but there was an ambiance about a noodle shop in Japan. Even in Mitsuwa, the noodle stands were not the same. Even the Japanese tended to adapt to American ways of eating soup in a large shared eating area for all the various food shops in the food court.

Yuki’s place did seem small when they entered, but then he led them to the back and up the stairs to discover he had an upper floor. The main level was just counter seating. Like most of the other shops on that side of the street, he also had a patio big enough for six tables overlooking the Ooka River. It also seemed to be very popular. The shop was filled to capacity with people enjoying their lunch. Many of them greeted Yuki cheerfully as he walked toward the back. Yuki was all smiles and had even introduced Dee and his family to a couple of diners, telling them with excitement that Dee was Yuki’s roommate during college and he was happy to have Dee back in Japan for a while. There was also a line that went outside, waiting for a table or to get noodle soup to take away.

Yuki had tables reserved for them on the patio and a couple inside but next to the patio if someone did not want to sit outside. Bikky and Carol immediately went to one of the outside tables and started to look at the river, at the bridges so that traffic could cross the river. Not far from the stop, along the river was a stop for the water taxi that went along the Yokohama rivers.
“This is so cool!” Bikky exclaimed, to no surprise to any of the adults who had spent time with him since arriving in Japan.

“This is wonderful!” exclaimed Carol, wide eyes taking in everything. “And it smells so good here. I’m really getting hungry now.”

Yuki had grabbed the laminated menus that he kept for tourists who had trouble reading the menus on the wall that were in Japanese. He handed them to Bikky and Carol, and then with an apologetic smile said, “I know you both can read Japanese, but you might like to see what you’re getting.” He looked at Dee, “You did like to see what the food looked like before we went into places like this.”

Ryo noticed that they were the only ones who had menus. “Okay, now I feel really gaijin,” he commented.

“It’s not that,” Yuki said as everyone started to laugh.

“We all know what we want, since we’ve all been here many times before,” Tsubasa exclaimed.

“So now I feel gaijin and left out,” Ryo said.

“You wouldn’t if you decided to live here,” Nobu said to Ryo. He looked at Dee. “You too.”

Dee held his hands up. “I’m not saying anything. Except that I can’t make up my mind now.” He looked at Ryo. “Don’t worry, we’ll be regulars before we head back to New York because I know I’m coming back.”

“You didn’t even have your noodle soup yet,” Yuki said.

“Like you said, I already did have your noodles, and now I’ve seen your shop. This is going to be nothing less than amazing,” Dee said.

“Do I only get to choose just one soup?” Bikky asked. “Everything looks so good and like Carol said, it all smells so oishi!”
“Me too!” Carol exclaimed. “I can’t even make up my mind on which type of noodle to have. And then all the varieties of soups for the noodles.”

“Yuki will also make something not on the menu if he has the ingredients,” Kumi said.

“There’s enough choices already, including several of my favorites,” Dee commented.

“Everyone can order a large bowl of something different and I can give smaller soup bowls,” Yuki suggested. “That way you can taste more than one soup.”

“We did that the first time we all came here,” Akira stated. “I’m willing to do that too, if you want.” The others all let them know that they were willing to do that.

Dee, Ryo, Bikky and Carol quickly agreed to the suggestion, and then everyone figured out what each of them were going to order. They gave their orders to Yuki, and he excused himself to give the orders, promising to return soon and enjoy lunch with them. He had taken the day off but since he had two others working for him who knew how to prepare the noodles to Yuki’s standards along with a delivery girl, he kept the shop open.

While they waited for Yuki, Ryo watched Bikky and Carol and started to snicker as their eyes got wide and started to stare past everyone at their tables in surprise.

“Don’t stare, Bikky,” Ryo warned him but could not help chuckling. “It’s rude.”

Dee dropped his head and started to laugh.

“Everyone is slurping,” Carol said, sounding shocked.

“Yes, they are,” Ryo said. “It’s custom.”

“To eat noodles the Japanese way, you slurp your noodles into your mouth,” Akira explained.
“But whatever you do, do not slurp the broth all over the place,” Tsubasa added.

“Oh,” came from Carol.

Bikky looked at Dee and Ryo. “Do you slurp? I mean, I never seen you. But no one did that during our party during the summer?”

“I can eat noodles properly,” Dee said. “Oh, I used to. I might be out of practice since it’s been so long. We’ll find out soon enough. And no, we don’t do it at home because we’re Americans.”

“We didn’t at the party because most of us might have been Japanese, but not everyone. We did not want to alarm the non-Japanese during dinner,” Akira explained.

“But you could when you’re in our place,” Bikky said.

“Thank you, Bikky,” Akira said with a warm smile. “I think I will next time.”

“It takes practice, Biks,” Ryo said. “But I was raised slurping noodles. My Mom did not encourage it whenever we ate out and had Japanese when we weren’t in Japan. Then I did it in front of some Navy buds and knew I made a mistake, so I stopped. We can teach you, if you want.”

Bikky nodded. “I was shocked at first but I think it’s really cool. Can we do that at home in New York? No reason why we can’t, right?”

Dee shrugged. “Most of the time, sure. I’m just not sure about it in front of the MacLeans, should we ever find ourselves having noodle soup with them.”

“I know everyone seems to be on their best behavior around the MacLeans, but we also forget that Franklin-san has done business with Japanese companies,” Nobu said.

“Oh yeah, you’re right,” Ryo said. “And Grandfather is professional enough to respect customs native to the country he’s conducting business in. He’s been to Japan and most likely learned to slurp with the best of them so he doesn’t offend his business partners.”
“So, we can slurp?” Bikky asked.

“Once you learn how to do it properly and not have all of us showering in your broth,” Tsubasa remarked with a laugh.

“Or whipping your face with noodles,” Dee added.

Hide and Ken started to laugh. “Oh, we can tell you all about your dad learning how to do it properly,” Ken said to Bikky.

“Yes please,” Bikky said and looked at Dee, laughing.

“Go ahead and embarrass me,” Dee said to his friends. He looked at Bikky. “Just remember that by the time you can slurp properly, we’ll all have stories to tell about your time learning.”

Bikky grinned up at Dee. “Then it’s a good thing you can’t embarrass any girlfriends because Carol’s right here, and will learn with me.”

“That’s true, Dee, I’m afraid,” Carol said.

Ryo smirked. “There’s still always grandchildren, much later, but we’ll still remember to tell the kiddies about when their parents learned how to slurp.”

“You’re not right, Pops,” Bikky grumped.

“No, but I am the Papa.” Ryo replied, making everyone laugh.

“Tell you what, kiddo. When the chibis are old enough to eat noodle soup, we’ll let you teach them how to do it properly,” said Dee.

“Really? Cool!”
“First you need to learn yourself,” Ryo said.

Bikky looked down at Ryoko and Darin in their strollers. “Too bad you’re too little to try some noodle soup, but I bet you can smell it.”

Ryoko looked up at Bikky and smiled, while Darin giggled, waving his arms.

Yuki came back to the group. “Soup will be here shortly. What did I miss?”

Everyone started to laugh.

“Bikky and Carol discovered how noodle soup is best eaten in Japan,” Ken explained.

“Oh, I missed it. Did anyone get pictures?”

Tsubasa held up his phone. “I’m surprised Dee didn’t, but I got his back.”

And that was the biggest part of the ambience of going into a noodle shop in Japan that Ryo had been missing since the last time he got to eat noodles in Japan. He was happy that Bikky was open to more Japanese customs in their household to add to the few they had. He knew Dee would have no problem with it. He might call himself an Irish lad but it was obvious that he also adopted some of Japan’s cultures as his own, so Ryo knew he could get Dee to adopt a few more once they were back in New York. Since they had arrived in Japan, Ryo was seeing a side he only partially saw during their wedding and while his grandmother stayed with them. The last few days he was starting to see the Dee who had adapted very well to the culture while he lived in Japan, because he falling back into the habits from during his college days more and more with each day.

It was going to be very interesting when they returned to New York. Especially if Bikky seemed to want to continue with some ways. They were only in Japan for three days, but Bikky certainly was enjoying himself. So was Carol, and Ryo was very happy about that.

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After they had lunch at Yuki’s shop, everyone went sightseeing around Yokohama. For most of them, it was just walking around, and for Dee and Ryo it was finally seeing a familiar city and visiting some favorite spots. For Bikky and Carol, it was definitely sightseeing. Dee and Ryo hardly had a chance to handle the twins, because everyone was taking their turns with one of the babies. Even Bikky and Carol took their turn. Dee and Ryo had noticed that Bikky liked talking to the twins as they came across something new and usually would do something to cause an excited response from his baby siblings.

Later in the afternoon, they went to Chinatown and decided on having dinner there. Ken mentioned a restaurant that was the oldest in Yokohama, first opening its doors in the late 1800’s. It was extremely expensive with a great reputation. Dee mentioned always wanting to go there but even his friends with money did not go there. Dee’s friends knew that, which is why Ken started to talk about it.

Ryo decided that it was time for Dee to go. His family backed him up, saying they had been there several times and that they should have dinner there. Ryo had checked with Bikky and Carol, making sure they were okay with another upscale place to eat. Nobu had assured them that there would be plenty for the teens to pick from. Bikky was sold when he heard dim sum and roast pork, so it was settled.

The meal was delicious and even better because of everyone at the large table. There was laughing and talking. The laughter included the twins, with everyone including them, taking turns having them sit on laps. When the twins weren’t giggling because of the others, they kept everyone amused by banging the small toys that Hide had given them earlier in the day.

Dee could not help feeling stunned when the check arrived. Somehow, along with Ryo they had managed to convince the family that since this was considered their day, deciding where they were going, that they would also pick up the tab for the family. Dee also insisted that they pick up the tab for Yuki as well. Yuki was doing very well with the restaurant but he was also putting money away for his wedding and shop expansion. Dee had heard from Hide and Ken that they usually liked to help Yuki out whenever they did something. Dee decided that it was his turn to pay for Yuki. Especially after the amazing lunch they had and Yuki refused to charge them. He had to admit that the meal was worth every penny of the bill and would go there again. He was glad to finally have a chance to eat there.

After dinner, everyone went over to the waterfront and walked around for a while before Akira, Nobu and Hoshi went home, taking the twins with them. After they left, Dee and Ryo allowed Bikky and Carol to go off on their own. The remaining adults ended up staying around the
Dee and Ryo remembered that part of Yokohama being the Port of Yokohama. When Dee lived in Yokohama, they were still developing the area. The Landmark Tower and the amusement park including the ferris wheel were not new to Dee, but he had noticed that there were more rides than he remembered and had spread out more. There were many new buildings and towers there and others under construction. Dee’s friends explained that the area was no longer called the Port of Yokohama. It was the Minato Mirai 21 area. They were still further developing the area into a mini-city within a city the many new skyscrapers going along the waterfront going up to Yokohama Station and the area around the station.

The adults contented themselves with just walking around, pointing out to Dee and Ryo what was new. Instead of finding some place to drink alcohol, they settled on an upscale café in the area that had views of the bay and spend some of the time there, just talking while they had coffee and fancy pastries. After they left the café, they continued to walk around the developing complex, going into some of the tourisy shops that were still open until it was almost midnight.

Ryo called Bikky to find out they were by the rides, so the adults told the teens to stay where they were and meet them by the ferris wheel. Everyone managed to go for a ride on the ferris wheel before it shut down for the night. When they got off the ferris wheel, they took taxis to Yuki’s place, where they said goodnight to Yuki, Ken and Hide and got into the mini-van that Tsubasa’s wife driven earlier when she met up with everyone.

Tsubasa had dropped everyone off at Akira’s house. Both Tsubasa and Kumi said they had a great day, and were looking forward to their next adventure. Tsubasa had said it felt as if

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October 22, 2006

Enoshima Island

Kanagawa, Japan
Once again, they woke up early, and after having a quick breakfast of rice, miso soup and some fish, Akira stating that they would probably end up finding something to eat sometime in the morning, they went to Enoshima, which was an island off the coast near Kamakura and connected by a bridge. It was a more touristy resort area than even Kamakura, but since it was off season, it wasn’t as busy as it could be in the summer months. Still, there were tourists wanting to explore what Enoshima had along with locals who had favorite places to eat. The busiest places of all were the hot springs, along with the temples and shrines.

They decided to leave the twins at home that day because the plans for the afternoon was to go to the hot springs and they did not want to worry about someone always keeping an eye on the infants. Until then, the twins were with them almost everywhere they went because Dee and Ryo wanted to get pictures of their family during their first days of exploring Japan. Many of those pictures were to also be included in a baby photo album that documented the twins’ early lives.

They decided to take the train that day and do the walk from the station over the bridge, which was another reason to leave the twins at home. Ryo was concerned at first because it was a long walk from the station and then the walking around the island, but Akira cuffed him, stating that despite her age, she was not so fragile, and that walking as much as she did contributed to her still being as healthy as she was for her age.

Ryo had to give her that, so he simply leaned down to kiss her forehead and got ready to leave the house with his grandmother, Dee, Bikky and Carol.

Ryo had forgotten how beautiful a ride it was going along the coast. They had done it their first full day sightseeing along the way to Odawara Castle, but Dee did not have the luxury of appreciating the view, and Ryo had excited teens distracting him. Bikky and Carol were still excited, loving the electric train they were on. Dee and Ryo joined them in looking between the ocean on one side when they were along the coast, and the various homes and businesses on the other.

As the train approached Kamakurakoko-Mae station, Ryo pointed to a big white modern house with rounded towers and a large curved terrace on the second level, asking Akira if his Uncle Kaito still lived there with his family. Akira confirmed that he still did, and they would get a chance to see his house while they were in Japan. Nobody was home that day, with everyone who lived there were at the family home by Mt. Fuji until Friday. Dee, Bikky and Carol would get to meet him and his family at the party on Saturday.

They spent most of the day on Enoshima Island, going into the various shops and visiting the shrines and temples, including a shrine for Carriers. After lunch, they went to the large building they passed when they first got on the island to enjoy the onsen and other facilities in the building. After having another snack in the afternoon, Ryo decided he was glad they were doing all that walking and
mentioned it to Dee when they had a moment alone. Dee had agreed with him that all the walking they were doing countered all the food they had been eating since they arrived and decided not to stop putting in a lot of walking. Having the twins in their slings was also an advantage to always having them in their strollers. It was good for Darin and Ryoko, and it was also good for Dee and Ryo, and anyone else who carried the twins in slings, in burning extra calories.

When they were finished with the hot springs in the early evening, they went outside to meet Nobu who had offered to pick them up. Bikky and Carol were to go off with their new friends that they had met at the Carrier Shrine in Kamakura. Dee and Ryo did not meet the parents yet, but had found time to speak to them on the phone and agreed to Bikky and Carol doing something in the area. Dee and Ryo decided on an early night and spent the evening with family until they went to the guest house for the night.

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October 23, 2006
Aoki Residence
Kamakura
, Kanagawa Prefecture
Japan

It was a slow day. There was no wake-up, everyone getting up when they did. There was breakfast waiting when they woke up consisting of rice, miso soup, fish, tamagoyaki and pastries. The rest of the morning was spent walking around Kamakura, looking at the shops and the smaller shrines and temples. It was just Dee, Ryo, Bikky, Carol and the twins. Akira had meetings that day that she could not get out of. Nobu and Tsubasa were at work and even Moriko went back to her studio for the day.

As much as they enjoyed doing things with Ryo’s family, they knew that the family could not drop everything for two months. That was why they were not staying with Akira for their whole visit. Later in the week they would be checking into their hotel in Tokyo. They could let Ryo’s family go on with their days without being underfoot or the family feeling like they have to cater to them, but they will still be close enough to do things together.
They ended up having lunch in the restaurant in what was once Ryo’s parents’ store. After lunch, they headed to Yamato, where they did some walking around. They went into some stores to look around. Among the many food shops, it was mostly discount stores in the area they explored. Carol did manage to get some new clothes, mostly accessories and Bikky got some games for his Nintendo handheld. They all also had new CDs to add to their collections and some new anime DVDs. They got some crepes from a street stand after sharing an order of takoyaki and a norimaki roll, before going into a small mall where they walked around until it was time for them to head over to Sagamihara, where they met Ken, Hide and Yuki for dinner at Mori Mori Bon Bon.

Both Bikky and Carol were impressed with the grills on the tables and a selection of raw meats and vegetables to pick from.

“This is so neat,” Carol exclaimed as she placed her selections on the grill. Yuki took over adding the marinade and seasoning for everyone.

“Yeah, in New York, if we can pick our own food to be cooked, there’s still someone at a big grill who makes your food for you,” said Bikky.

“This is what Korean barbeque should be,” Dee said with a grin, as he watched Yuki. Yuki tended to do that whenever they went to that restaurant when they were in college.

“I do know there are Korean barbeques that you pick out your food and some chef comes over to make your meal on the grill on your table,” Ryo said.

“Yeah, the fancy expensive places in Tokyo,” Dee said. “What I loved about this place is that out of all the authentic barbeque places around here, this one is the only one where we can pick whatever we want, how much we want, and cook it up ourselves at our table.”

“All you can grill and eat too,” Ken commented.

“I wish we had something like this in New York,” Carol said. “My aunt would love it.”

“I wish we did too,” Ryo agreed.

At that moment, Ryoko let out a screech and smiled at everyone when they looked at her. Darin started to giggle, kicking his feet. Everyone started to laugh.
“Your little ones seem to agree with everyone,” Hide said.

“They wish they could join in with eating what we have on the table, instead of what’s in their bottles,” Ken added.

“True. We’ll take them back when they can enjoy the food,” Ryo stated. “But they’ve been doing that all day, taking turns. One will screech and the other will start giggling. I don’t know but it could be one of those twin things, them coordinating their ‘look at me’ moments or something.”

“I might be,” Ken said. “If nothing else, it shows how in synch they are with each other.”

“No kidding,” Dee said. “It scares me a little. They seem to be able to communicate with each other without saying a word. I know people accuse me and Ryo of doing that, but I think they’re going to surpass us.”

“I hear that with some twins, if one gets hurt, the other feels it,” Yuki said. “Can you imagine that?”

Dee shook his head. “No, I can’t. Not to that degree, at least,” he said. “But then Ryo is my partner, not my twin.” He stared at the two babies in their strollers, who were currently amusing each other batting at the dangling toys on the strollers. They were giggling and cooing as they took turns batting at a toy. “I don’t know if I can handle both of them acting like they’re hurt because one is.”

“We make sure neither of them get hurt,” Ryo said.

Hide and Ken started to laugh while Dee shook his head sadly. “Ryo, love, we can try to keep them from being hurt, but they are kids. There will be at least boo boos to tend to, no matter how careful we are.”

Hide nodded his head. “Listen to your wise husband. I once had the same expectations as you when Hiroko was born. So did Noriko. It was our parents, and Dee, who tried to tell us otherwise. We didn’t listen, but try as we did, there were bumps and bruises, a broken bone here and there. And then there was the collision with a coffee table.”

“We have our own drawer in our local emergency clinic,” Ken said.
“If I wasn’t around for some of the kiddie mishaps, I might have decided not to have any kids with this talk,” Yuki said, looking amused.

“I think I just did,” Carol said.

Dee grinned at Carol. “You will. In about ten years, at the least,” Dee said to her. “But by then, you’ll probably have gone through it all hanging out with us and the chibis.” He reached across the table and took Ryo’s hand. His husband started to look nervous. “Ryo, you can’t say you never had to give some first aid to any of the kids in the orphanage. Not to mention Bikky. The chibis are not going to be any different, because they’re kids. What we do is make sure the injuries are as minimal as possible. And nurture them when they are still hurting, no matter how short or long. Okay?” He leaned over and kissed Ryo. “We’ll be all right. We’ll all be all right. Okay?”

Ryo nodded, taking a deep breath. “If you insist.” He looked at Carol. “Hopefully, Dee’s right, and when it’s your turn, and yes, I agree with that being at least ten years.” He glanced in Bikky’s direction. All the adults were grinning as Bikky and Carol both were blushing. “Hopefully you’ll have enough experience not to be a nervous wreck like I am with your children.”

“I hope so too. Right now, I think that fifteen years is not enough time to be ready to handle this with my own kids,” Carol said.

Bikky nodded his head. “Yeah. I already get nervous with the chibis,” he said.

“That’s good,” Hide said. “That makes you a great big brother, and you’ll be a great father when it’s time.”

“In at least ten years,” Ken added with a grin. “Listen to your fathers.” He rubbed his hands together. “Enough about worrying about babies and let’s eat.”

Bikky watched as Yuki put his food on a plate and handed it to Bikky. Enthusiastically he clapped his hands together as he inhaled the aroma of his meal and exclaimed, “Itadakimasu!”

“Oh, he’s good!” Hide exclaimed as Yuki handed Carol her plate.
“We tend to do it a lot around Ryo’s grandmother,” Dee explained and smiled when Carol did the same as Bikky.

“We pretty much didn’t stop before sit down meals at home after she left,” Ryo said. “And then a few weeks later, here we are.”

Dee started to laugh. “We may never stop doing it at least for meals when we all sit down together. Hell, you should have seen Mother’s face the first time we sat down to eat after I came back from Japan. Habit took over. But as the years gone by I had almost forgotten about it until Ryo’s family invaded us for the wedding.”

“I had to admit that I forgot about it too, but when I was in Zama, I only did that whenever I was with my family. That would be mostly every other weekend, so I never fell into the habit. But now, it seems to be a habit.”

“Okay, we’re talking too much,” Dee commented with his plate in front of him. “Itadakimus!”

The rest followed Dee’s example, and for a while there was less talking as they ate. Once in a while, someone would say something to Darin and Ryoko to assure the babies that they weren’t being ignored.

After they left the restaurant, they walked around a little after getting some donuts from Mister Donut before Dee and Ryo had to head back to Akira’s house and settle in for the night. During dinner, Hide had firm plans to watch the upcoming idol group later in the week. By the time they got home, after listening to Carol, Dee and Ryo didn’t think Carol would be able to stand the wait until Friday.

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Once they got into the guest house, Dee turned on his laptop and set up the webcam and went into the video conference with their unit. It was 9 pm their time, which made it 8 am in New York, the time Rose preferred to hold the weekly updates.

While not on the agenda but was expected, everyone wanted to know how was their time so far in Japan. Dee and Ryo tried to keep it brief and let their emotions show they were having a great time.
“So, are you planning on coming back, or run our unit from Tokyo?” Ted asked with a laugh.

“Don’t tell me you guys started a betting pool on that answer?” Ryo asked, looking amused.

“Well, it did cross our minds,” Dana said, “but Andy would never let the Commissioner allow it.”

Rose smirked. “Like that would stop me if we wanted to.”

“So, what’s it going to be?” Drake asked.

“Depends,” Dee replied with a teasing grin, “on if the Commissioner would actually allow that to happen. I’m guessing it’s a no, and I figured that before seeing that look on his face right now, so yes, we will be back just before Christmas.”

“You better make it back in time for my holiday party,” Diana insisted.

“How do you plan to fit everyone I know you will invite into that apartment of yours?” Ryo asked.

“I fully intend to be moved into my new house by then,” Diana replied.

“First you need a house to move into,” J.J. commented. “You’ve been looking how long now?”

“I had the option of being picky because while my apartment is cozy and quaint, I do happen to like it very much. I can’t see myself deciding to make it permanent, but I do not mind living in it while I search.”

“Note how she said cozy and quaint,” Dee said. “It means small.”

“Well, it is small. Not what I’m used to but I do happen to like the layout,” Diana replied. “Besides, I’ve seen some pictures of Akira-san’s house and it’s hardly cozy.”
“We’re currently in the guest house, and this is very quaint,” Ryo replied with a smile.

“And cozy,” Dee added. “And for all the right reasons.”

“I’m putting a bid on a house. It’s been on the market for a while and because of that, the price was dropped significantly despite its status. My problem is that I was looking in the wrong places. I never considered looking outside of Manhattan, but because of Emiko, I found myself looking in Brooklyn.”

“Heaven forbid, Diana wants to buy a house in Brooklyn,” Rose sighed.

“If you came with me to look at the houses, you would not sound like that,” Diana said. “There are quite a few lovely mansions still in their original state in Brooklyn Heights.”

“Planning on putting bars on your windows?” Drake asked.

“Some sections of Brooklyn Heights are very upscale,” J.J. said. “Like along the Promenade.”

“Exactly. There’s a darling building that wasn’t divided up into lots of tiny apartments on Columbia Heights. And then there are some that were divided by floors, that if I got one shouldn’t be too hard to convert back into a single residence.”

“Do you really need a whole building?” Dee asked. “Why not take the biggest and best apartment and rent out the rest.”

Ryo, Dana and Rose started to laugh at Dee’s comment.

“What?” Dee asked. “I’m not wrong.”

“No, you are not,” Rose said in agreement. “And it’s only amusing on how your mind is now set on real estate. Of course, you would be thinking how to make money on the purchase.”
“To be fair, we did make a major purchase that we donated,” Dee commented. “And I don’t want to rip everyone off with rent.”

“No, you don’t,” Diana agreed. “And that will be your success if you rent in proper proportions.”

Dee nodded. “Yes, I do understand that there should be some apartments to rent at prime market rent if in a good location while also having some that are affordable. Which is why we’re going with auctions and that route in buying buildings.”

“What happened to flipping?” J.J. asked.

“Nothing. Yet. Barry and I are still working it out, along with Ryo’s grandfather. But for now, I’m not really thinking of buying up buildings around New York. And I’d really like to get back to my vacation, so good luck, Diana, on the bids. I hope you get something you’re really happy with.”

Rose let out a chuckle. “Well, ladies and gentlemen, that’s your superior’s way of saying let’s get down to business.” He looked around the squad room. “I’m assuming you can’t see everyone so I’m going to ask the newbies to step forward and stand in front of the camera. Our first order of business is for Detectives Laytner-MacLean, both of them, to see the new people in their unit.”

Rose introduced the newly transferred patrolmen from the 27th, along with the patrolmen and detectives who came from other precincts. There were twelve in total. There were familiar faces, faces that had proven themselves time and time again since Dee’s attack. There was Janet, and Riz among the uniforms from the 27th. There was also Ray Hernandez who, considering his start with Dee, Ryo should not have trusted at all after Hernandez’s ex-partner’s attack on Dee, but it was his call that alerted Chief Smith and Commissioner Rose that Sean Ferguson had Dee trapped in their office and planned to kill him and the unborn, what they knew now, twins. Since then, he became one of their fierce protectors, as if they needed it. He saw the anger and betrayal Hernandez felt that day and his fear for Dee and the baby. Ryo saw the genuine rage whenever Fernandez encountered Carrier hatred. Ryo found that he did trust Ray and was glad the police officer decided to join the new bureau.

“Not everyone is here permanently yet, because that will take another week or two for the paperwork to go through,” Rose explained, “but their precincts have them here on loan until then. We’re going to keep at these numbers for now. Only time will tell if we need more personnel in our unit.”

“We’re looking forward to working with everyone,” Ryo said and then with a smile added, “after we enjoy our vacation.”
Dee chuckled. “Looks like we really need to enjoy our time here because we’ll have our work cut out for us… just remembering all the new names.”

Everyone in the squad room laughed.

“I’m going to turn this meeting to Dr. Morgan who has updates on his team,” Rose stated.

Henry stood up from the folding chair between desks. Sitting next to him was a younger man who was tall and lanky with dark hair. Henry stood where Dee and Ryo could see him better. “Gentlemen, I’m pleased to hear that you are having a marvelous time in Japan. One day I hope to visit Japan again. I found it a fascinating and beautiful country.”

“You’ve been here before?” Ryo asked.

“Yeah, now that never came up, even when we mentioned our vacation,” Dee added.

“Yes, I have. It has been a while. Too long, perhaps. You both were so excited about your upcoming trip that I didn’t feel it was my place just then. I did plan on telling you after you returned,” Henry replied.

“I think you’ll need to amend that whenever you have vacation,” Dee said. “If you go to Tokyo, I can get you a great discount on a hotel room.”

Ryo smacked Dee, who started to laugh. “Don’t mind him. If you ever find yourself in Tokyo, you don’t have to worry about a hotel.” He looked at Dee, who nodded with a grin.

“I shall consider it. Unfortunately, I do not see having a chance for vacation for quite some time,” Henry said.

“Does this mean you are still the only M.E. for our bureau?” Ryo asked.

“For now, yes. I do have an assistant.” He held out his arm in the direction of the man who was
sitting next to him. “Lucas, please join me. Gentlemen, this is Lucas Wahl. He will be assisting me as he does his Fellowship.”


“Good luck keeping up with Henry,” Ryo stated with an impish grin. “But if you do, I promise you that you couldn’t find anyone better to do your Fellowship under. Welcome.

Dee nodded in agreement with Ryo. “We’re looking forward to working with you. Just not too much, mind you,” he added in a mock scold.

“I understand,” Lucas said.

Lucas sat down, but Henry remained standing. “Jim Campbell is currently busy or else he would have joined us. Our unit will have its own crime lab, headed by Jim. Between having its own M.E. and crime labs, we won’t be dependent on waiting for CSU and the Medical Examiner’s offices in the different boroughs to decide when to work on a Carrier case. We’ll have our own department in the new facility.”

Rose stood next to Henry. “Henry, of course, is the head of our medical examiner lab. Just like all the other department heads, Henry and Jim will be reporting to Dee.”

Ted started to laugh. “And that’s why Jim was so busy this morning, if you ask me.”

“I’m going to come back to New York eventually,” Dee said. “And even come back to work.”

The others started to laugh.

“You’re going to have your hands full,” Rose warned Dee. “Ryo, so are you. You’ll have to assist Dee in keeping this lot in line.”

Henry gave Rose a scandalized face. “You certainly do not include me. I am always ‘in line’,” he said.
“Of course, you are, Dr. Morgan, but you did get to know everyone else here,” Rose replied with a grin.

“Yes, I did.” Henry looked at the camera. “Dee, Ryo, best of luck when you return to work.”

“Hey!” Drake complained, making Diana, Dana and Andy laugh.

“We’re not that bad,” J.J. said.

“No idea where we got that reputation,” said Ted.

“And on my first day I’m coming in with a bottle of Tylenol,” Dee quipped. He watched as Henry sat down again. “Can we get on with the rest of the meeting now? I’m sure you don’t want to spend your entire morning in this meeting.”

“That would mean that Dee doesn’t want to spend the rest of his night in beautiful, exotic Japan stuff in a video conference,” Dana remarked.

“That, too,” Dee agreed. “What do you have for us, Commissioner?”

Rose moved so he was more visible to Dee and Ryo, turning slightly to include everyone gathered in the squad room. “As everyone knows, today the Anti-Carrier Coalition is holding their conference. We did manage to get their schedule from some undercover brothers in blue from the Chicago PD. Which leads me to announce that Chicago is taking example from us and is currently forming their own Carrier-Hate Crime Unit. They have some detectives who will be part of the unit managed to get invites to the conference. Dee, Ryo, I’m going to email you the agenda and any other information we get from our contacts in the conference.

From next to Dee, Ryo started to frown. Dee reached under the view of the webcam on the computer and squeezed Ryo’s hand reassuredly. “I’m going to trust that if these detectives are willing to leak what’s going on inside those doors, then they truly are Pro-Carrier,” Dee commented.

Rose nodded his head as he was staring at the TV screen in the squad room set up for the conference. “I take it you said that because of your husband’s scowl,” he said.
“I’m sorry, Commissioner, but I’m still not really over Ferguson’s betrayal,” Ryo said.

“I understand completely,” Rose said. “If I was in your position, I probably would have been feeling the same. It did rattle my sense of security which is why everyone who is on this team has been fully vetted, and I will continue to do so should we need to increase our numbers. I spoke to one of the detectives a couple of days ago. They both were more or less ordered to go in because they were the best men decided for the job. Neither of them are Carriers, to pass the testing phase of being admitted. They normally go undercover, which means they maintain low profiles. No social media pages, no websites, nothing that can be found for the ACC to obtain and mark them. However, both of them have had adverse reactions to Carrier crimes committed in Chicago. This one gentleman has a sister who lost their first child and as a result of the miscarriage, cannot have any more children. Unlike Ms. Ferguson, this woman found joy that her Carrier husband offered to Carry for them. He is currently Carrying their second child. The detective was sickened at the thought of acting like those in the ACC, but for the protection of his nephew and unborn niece, his sister and her family and all Carriers, he’ll do it.”

“The other detective also has a passionate story too?” Ryo asked.

“Not really, but being gay and African-American, he understands Civil Rights and finds the ACC an abomination that needs to be stopped. He comes from a family who has a history of participating in many Human Rights movements for generations. It was the way he was raised even if no one in his immediate family is a Carrier nor the Carrier-gene is in his family.”

Dee squeezed Ryo’s hand again. “I’m good with it,” he said and looked at Ryo.

“I guess with everything just said, I am too. Cautiously, that is,” Ryo replied.

“I’m also going to add that I am merely emailing you what we have as a courtesy to keep you both in loop while you’re on vacation, if you choose to. No one will find fault if you don’t read the updates until you are back in New York. You are on vacation. If it’s something that you do need to know, it will be marked as such or you will be receiving a phone call,” Rose explained.

“As much as it might be upsetting, it is a necessary evil,” Ryo admitted. “Staying blind to the situation will not help us.” He let out a sigh. “If only things can be like it is here.”

“I heard that Japan has a different attitude toward Carriers in a most positive way,” Rose said. He turned to look at Henry.
“I assume you were going by the unspoken silence rule about Japanese Carriers?” Ryo asked.

“I was respecting the Japanese wishes from the time I had spent in Japan. However, times are getting desperate and I am hoping the Japanese do not mind too much if we discuss some things and share with those who had never been to Japan. I thought that when you return, we could compare notes about Japan’s attitudes toward Carriers and brainstorm on what we might be able to use and how.”

“I am looking forward to it, Henry,” said Ryo.

Henry replied. “Might I assume the same about your silence on the matter since you gentlemen have both lived in Japan previously?”

“Actually, no,” Dee replied with a rueful grin. “I really wasn’t paying too much attention to Carriers. They were just there, like in New York. It was the new things that I didn’t see in New York that held most of my attention. I didn’t know back then just how important the Japanese Carriers would become to me one day.”

“Dee’s right,” Ryo agreed. “They weren’t of any special interest to me either. Like Dee said, they were just there. They were Japanese people. I knew some, I even watched a few kids from Carriers but back then, I never gave thought to it being that much different.”

“Of course, Henry would,” Dee commented, amused. “But one thing I know about Henry. In fact, it was the first thing I could say I knew for certain about Henry, and that is he observes everything around him. So, it doesn’t surprise me that you probably know more about Japanese Carriers than even we do, since we’ve only been in Japan for a few days now.”

“That might change by the time we get back to New York,” Ryo said. “Not only are we observing, but my grandmother and her family are willing to answer questions now that we have seen enough that we do have questions. They feel the way you do, Henry. My grandmother has seen what the situation is like in New York and she feels it has to change. If any information from here can help us in New York, and even America, then they are willing to open up.”

“Now you have me intrigued, but I’ll have to wait,” Rose said.

“It is also best to see how things progress as a result of the ACC’s conference,” Henry stated. “We would then know exactly what we are dealing with.”
“I agree,” said Dee. “I’d rather not spill all of Japan’s secrets, so best we know what we need to concentrate on.”

“I’m feeling left out,” J.J. said with a heavy sigh. “What about if we all went to Japan, then we all would know these Carrier secrets. What’s so special about Carriers in Japan, other than apparently they lack the prejudice we have here?”

“Play nice and we’ll answer your question when we get back,” Dee said.

Ted let out a snort. “Great. Now Dee is sounding like a boss. Wonderful.”

Dee started to laugh. “Get used to it. I’m not going to be your friend all the time. I would say that would mostly be when we’re off tour.”

Moans came from the members of the former Criminal Investigations unit, while Dana and Rose laughed.

“My, you are taking this serious,” Diana commented.

“That I am. This is a very important bureau and the issues are serious. I also have the Mayor’s trust in me leading this unit, or else she never would have lifted the promotion freeze. I also know some of you have the same trust from the Mayor that you will run your units with the same seriousness,” Dee said.

“Now that’s not fair,” Drake said, “but you’re right dammit. So we best get used to running things under the direction of the Baby Penguin and we’re good.”

“Oh God,” Dee sighed and then laughed. “Fine. It’s better than Walrus.”

“You keep calling your Mother a penguin and you are her chick,” Ryo replied. “I’m just sorry it won’t be just between us anymore.”
Everyone in the squad room started to laugh.

“Now that Dee and Ryo have met the newbies to the team and they are updated on our ears in Chicago, there really aren’t any other developments important enough to keep them from their vacation,” Rose said. “We’re just doing the same thing we were when you left, while I’m working out the logistics for our move and when exactly that will happen.”

“And to where?” Drake asked.

“I pretty much have an idea of where, but until I actually have the papers in hand stating that will be our headquarters, I rather keep it to myself.”

“You don’t want to jinx it, don’t you Berksie?” Diana said.

“That means the bigger location,” Ted said. “So, it’s gotta be the old academy location.”

“I neither confirm or deny that statement,” Rose said and then glared at Diana.

“That glare does,” Drake added.

“I don’t speak to Diana about it, so she knows just as much as you do,” Rose stated.

“And we know it’s going to be the academy,” J.J. commented.

“Hey now, don’t go pissing off the Commissioner,” Dee stated. “You know what he’s like. And then he pisses me off, and you really don’t want to piss me off. Especially if I’m on my vacation.”

Drake and Ted held their hands up in mock surrender. “Whatever you said, boss.”

“Fine, we’ll wait for the official announcement and then we can go, ‘I knew it!’ after,” J.J. added.
“I’m out of this, for the record,” Marty said looking at the camera and presumably at Dee. “Why don’t we let you both go back to enjoying your vacation?”

“Actually, we’re in for the night,” Dee said. “We’ve been on the go since we landed, and I’m not complaining, but we decided since there is nothing special planned for us tonight that we should make it an early night and relax.”

“What are your plans for tomorrow?” Diana asked

“We’re going to Shibuya and then we’re going to let Carol go shopping in Harajuku. And then depending on the time, let Bikky have his shopping spree in Akihabara. If we don’t have time tomorrow, then there will be another day,” Ryo replied.

“Speaking of Akihabara, we’re going to see if we can catch a performance of TKY52,” Dee said. “Carol would love to see them, and to be honest, so would the rest of us, Bikky included. We’re going to try, at least. I hear it’s not so easy.”

“Good luck,” Diana said. “And if you get in, take pictures! What else is planned for this week?”

“We also have dinner on a yakatabune tomorrow night,” Ryo said.

“A what?” Drake asked.

“A dinner cruise,” Henry explained.

“So why didn’t you say that?” Drake asked Ryo. “Going all Japanese on us.”

“There are dinner cruises in Tokyo and then there are yakatabune,” Dee explained. “When you see the pictures, you’ll see what makes yakatabune so awesome.”

Ryo chuckled. “We’re going to eat traditional Japanese style, with low tables and sitting on cushions, only on a traditional looking boat. You can always Google it, you know. Use images, and you’ll see. Then you’ll see our pictures.”
“Now you got me curious, so I’ll do that. Ted, look that up, will ya?” Drake asked.

“If I do, it’ll be for me, not because you think you can push me around,” Ted remarked.

“If you do, it’ll be off tour, right?” Dee asked with an amused grin.

Ted stared at the camera for a second and then catching on, nodded his head. “Oh yeah. You’re right.”

“That goes for everyone else,” Dee added, still looking amused. Deciding it was time to move away from that topic, Dee said, “We’re probably staying in Kamakura on Wednesday. There is still a lot to do and see around here. Ryo’s grandmother is so loving taking us around. Then on Thursday we’ll be checking into the hotel in Tokyo, where we’re staying until we take our road trip the first week of November.”

“Thursday night we have a performance at Kabukiza,” Ryo said. “I have a cousin who is following his father’s footsteps and is part of the theater company. They’re both in the current production at Kabukiza.”

“That sounds great,” J.J. exclaimed. “I caught a kabuki performance at Radio City a couple of years ago. I would love to someday see something at Kabukiza. You have to tell me all about it. Please give me a call when you have a chance after.”

“When we finally find some down time again,” said Dee. “Friday, we’re going to meet with Hide’s business partner at the club, and watch the idol group he’s forming practice. They’re doing a show run and invited family and friends to get their opinions. Carol is just beside herself because we’ll also be having dinner with the group.”

“Now I’m jealous,” Diana said with a pout.

“Don’t tell me you have a secret passion for idol groups too?” Ryo asked.

“It’s my guilty pleasure,” Diana agreed.
“Far from your only one,” Dee said softly but the mic picked it up and made everyone laugh while Diana scowled.

“I wouldn’t mind a chance like that,” J.J. said.

“Yes, thanks to Ryo’s family and the two of you allowing that music to be played in your apartment, J.J. is now making me crazy listening to that stuff,” Drake commented.

“Oh yeah. Sometimes he plays it in here,” Ted added.

“You say that like it’s a bad thing,” Dee said with a laugh. “Believe me, no one is pulling our arms when we put on music by idol groups. We may not be as enthusiastic as Carol and some of the females in Ryo’s family, but we do enjoy listening to it along with our other styles.”

“So, we’re really hoping to get tickets to see TKY52 for Carol,” Ryo said. “Not that Dee and I will mind,” he admitted and Dee nodded his head.

“What about Bikky?” J.J. asked.

“He’s okay with the music,” Dee replied. “But he is a teenaged boy. He’s going to enjoy it, even if he’ll try to act cool about it.”

“He’ll give himself away blushing,” Ryo commented with a smirk.

“He gets that from you,” Dee teased.

“Yes, he does. And I’m glad. As I said, he gives himself away.” Ryo’s smirk turned into an evil grin, making everyone laugh.

“Is it hard to get tickets for TKY?” J.J. asked.
“It’s a lottery, and there’s no amount of money that can help you get tickets,” Dee commented. “I know Carol really wants to see them, because they are the mothership of all those lettered idol groups. We have no time this week, but we’re going to start trying to get something starting with next Monday.”

“We’ll have just one shot with NGY52 when we’re in Nagoya,” Ryo said, “so if we could only get tickets for one, I’m hoping it’s them because Carol’s favorite member transferred to NGY52, so she says.”

“Oh yeah. Ayaka Fujioka,” J.J. commented. When everyone looked at him, he shrugged. “Well, I talk to her. And yes, she talks about her idol groups at times, and Ayaka really is her favorite idol. Carol said she transferred to NGY52 when they announced the formation of that group because she’s from Nagoya, and wanted to move back home with her father. She was only 16 at the time. She joined TKY52 at 14.”

“She wasn’t in Tokyo alone for that time, I hope,” Diana remarked.

“I don’t know. If Carol knew, she didn’t tell me that,” J.J. commented.

“I’m sure there was adult supervision of a minor,” Rose commented. “Have you seen your hotel yet?” Rose asked.

“We haven’t hit up that section of Tokyo yet,” Ryo replied. “We do plan to go there tomorrow, just to introduce ourselves and make sure the penthouse will be ready for us.”

“Aw, my boys have grown up,” Diana commented. “Look at how casual you say penthouse.”

“He said it, not me,” Dee remarked. “I’m still trying to wrap my head about this whole hotel thing. Once I can say our hotel without going into shock, I can start working on penthouse.” Chuckles went around the squad room. “Anyway folks, I’m sure you all have work to do, while we get ready for bed. Stay safe, everyone.”

Once goodbyes were done, Dee shut off the communication. He turned to Ryo with a grin. “What do you say to taking a nice soak?”

“The onsen yesterday wasn’t enough?” Ryo asked with a teasing smile.
“That was a completely different experience,” Dee replied. “I had forgotten what a great experience onsen are. We need to do that a few more times before going back to New York. I have to say that I also forgot how much I loved Japanese bathrooms. Especially in the larger houses, like the ones in this house and the main house.”

“Also like the one Ken has,” Ryo added. “I wish we could have a Japanese style bathroom.”

“Well,” Dee said thoughtfully, “when it’s time to get a bigger place, maybe we can see if we can have a Japanese style bathroom installed, even just for the master suite.”

“The master suite, huh?” Ryo asked amused. “And you’re still having trouble penthouse?”

“Hey, technically we already have a master suite,” Dee stated.

“I guess you’re right, but I’m thinking when we finally do go for a bigger place, it will have more of a master bedroom?”

Dee shrugged. “I guess it depends on what we settle on then.”

“Settle?” Ryo asked. “Dee, when the right time comes, we definitely do not have to settle. We can get exactly what we want. Well, out of what’s available at the time.”

“This is true.” He stood up and stretched, and then offered his hand to Ryo. “So, shall we take that soak?”

Ryo grinned up as he took Dee’s hand. “Depends.”

“On?” Dee asked.

“Well, we only have a couple of more days with no Bikky to worry about, and what I have in mind before we go to sleep just might require for us to have to take another soak.”
“Oh….” Dee’s grip on Ryo’s hand tightened and he pulled Ryo to his feet, and hugged him close. “Putting it that way, we can soak later.” He started to kiss Ryo’s neck.
CHAPTER SEVEN

October 24, 2006

Yokohama-Yokosuka Road

Kanagawa, Japan

After having a traditional Japanese breakfast made by Akira and Moriko, Moriko went to her studio to work. Hoshi announced that she was going shopping and wished everyone a good day. Nobu and Takehide got into Tsubasa’s car and headed into Tokyo for work. Akira had a board meeting later that day, and promised Dee and Ryo she would meet up with their family after she was done.

Dee and Ryo also planned a day in Tokyo for sightseeing and shopping. As Ryo drove the van to Tokyo, it started to rain.

“Aw man, it’s raining!” Bikky exclaimed. “That’s not going to be fun. And what about Tokyo Tower?”

Carol noticed that Ryo made no sign of heading back to Kamakura. In fact, he glanced at Dee and smirked.

“Yes, it will,” Ryo exclaimed. “It’s supposed to rain this morning and clear up in the afternoon.”

“So, we won’t be able to do anything until then,” Carol commented, sounding disappointed.
“I don’t mind getting rained on, but we can’t let the chibis get wet,” Bikky said, looking back at the twins in their car seats.

“They won’t be getting wet,” Dee assured them, “and we’re not going to sit inside our hotel all morning either.”

“We’re going to a hotel?” Carol asked, confused.

“Not to check in,” Ryo said, “but we are going to park at the hotel, go introduce ourselves and have a look around the hotel and maybe even see what the penthouse looks like. That way we know what to expect when we check in on Thursday.”

“Are we going to be touring the hotel all morning?” Bikky asked.

“Part of it,” Dee answered. “There are shops in the hotel that we can explore. I heard there is a mall in the lower levels of the hotel and another on hotel property.”

Ryo started to grin. “If it’s still raining when we are done with the hotel, we can take a shuttle to the Mori Tower and check out the mall there.”

“Wait a minute,” Carol exclaimed. “Are you saying that you both own a couple of malls?”

“We don’t own the stores,” Ryo said with a laugh. “And no, we’re not going into the stores, asking for free or discounted products, just because the malls are on L&M property, but we can explore them and see what we can spend money on.”

“What about Tokyo Tower?” Bikky asked. “I really want to see Tokyo Tower.”

“We’ll try, Bik,” Ryo replied. “Even if it stops raining, if it’s still cloudy, it doesn’t pay to go up to the observation deck, but I guess we can still do everything else, and then come back another day for a good view of Tokyo.”
“That sounds good to me,” Carol said with a smile. “I read that there are a lot of shopping and stuff to do.”

“And food booths,” Bikky added.

“You’re not going to manage to eat everything that looks good, no matter how hard you try,” Dee warned, looking back with a smirk.

“Listen to your father, Bikky,” Ryo commented. “He was here for five years and he still didn’t get to everything.”

Bikky started to laugh as Dee glared at Ryo before nodding his head. “Yeah, he’s right.”

“And I bet you tried really hard,” Bikky remarked and laughed.

“Well, I did have to watch my money. We cooked a lot at home,” Dee said. “And thinking back to those times, I’m not surprised that Yuki started to make his own noodles and start his shop up. He did a lot of cooking for us, and taught me how to cook more Japanese than I knew. It was mostly me and Yuki who made our food.”

“I do want to go back and have more noodle soup at Yuki’s place,” Carol said. “That was good.”

“Oh yeah! I want to go back for more noodle soup too,” Bikky agreed.

“We will,” Dee assured them. “We’re also planning on taking the subway to get around Tokyo.”

“I remember,” Bikky said. “I don’t mind. It’ll be really cool to take a subway not in New York.”

“Dee and I are hoping to make sure you know the system around all the Japanese. At least there are some signs in English,” Ryo explained. “After a couple of times, later this week, you two should be able to go off on your own from the hotel when you want.”

Ryoko chose that moment to let out a happy squeal, with Darin making cooing noises.
Bikky started to laugh. “Sounds like Ryoko wants to head off on the subway.”

“You want to ride the subway, baby girl?” Dee asked, laughing. “Don’t worry, we’ll be on the subway today.”

“We must be getting closer,” Ryo commented. “The traffic is getting worse.”

Dee laughed again. “Than it was from Kamakura? Another reason we won’t be taking the car to most places in Tokyo. Traffic can be worse than in New York. The trains might be crowded at times, but at least we’ll get there faster. It’s the same in Yokohama, you might have noticed.”

“Yeah, we left the car by Yuki’s place and did a lot of walking,” Bikky said. “I don’t mind. We’re from New York, so we either walk a lot or take trains.”

“New York is a lot like metropolitan cities in Japan in that aspect,” Dee agreed. “But in New York, the transit authority doesn’t hire people whose job is to push people onto trains.”

“Really?” Bikky asked, intrigued. “Do they do that all day?”

“Just for the morning and evening rush hours,” Ryo said. “We’ll be on the trains at least once during those times. Just keep in mind that no matter the time of the day and how many people are on the platform to get the trains, those doors are open for only one minute. That’s one minute for everyone to get on and off. Then the doors close and that’s it.”

“Whoa!” Bikky exclaimed. “If we’re not fast enough, we miss our stop or the train?”

“Yes,” Ryo replied.

“Have either of you ever missed your stop?” Carol asked.

“If the train was crowded, I would start getting myself closer to the doors a stop before mine, and then get in the traffic flow when the doors opened,” Dee replied.
“Many times, I didn’t have to worry about moving myself,” Ryo said with a laugh. “As Dee said, get in the flow and get carried off the train. Or on the train if you get yourself in the right spot. As long as the oshiya are behind you, you’re getting on the train. It might be extremely uncomfortable, but you’re going to be on the train.”

“Oh man, now you tell us this?” Bikky asked, his expression a combination of horror and fascination.

“What if you’re stuck in the way of the people getting off the next stop?” Carol asked.

“You try to start getting out of the way before then, and if you can’t, push like hell to get further in the train instead of being pushed off, because you might not make it back on,” Ryo said.

“I’ve seen people who stepped off a crowded train to let people off maintain a hold on one of the straps near the door in the train. Then the oshiya push them back in if they can’t do it on their own,” Dee added.

Ryo nodded his head in agreement. “I’ve seen it too. Usually if I was in Tokyo during rush hour, I had liberty that day and could wait for a less crowded train. Kevin and Eddie did decide one time that we just had to be in the push,” Ryo said with a chuckle. “They never did that again.”

“That sounds scary with babies,” Bikky said, looking back at his siblings.

“People do it when they have to, and Japanese people will take notice of it,” Dee said. “However, yes it still can get ugly, so we won’t have the chibis with us when we take a morning train. We’ll only be taking it so you say you did it.”

“It will be a morning when someone from my family will stay with Darin and Ryoko,” Ryo explained. “And we’ll meet up later in the morning somewhere in Tokyo.”

“Okay, that sounds better,” Bikky replied. “I don’t feel good having them in a situation like that, so I imagine you don’t.”

“No, that’s why it’s lucky we have money to take cabs if it’s too crowded to have them with us,”
Dee said.

Ryo smirked as he added, “It has been mentioned by Dee that he’s open to renting a car for a day to get around when the trains or walking will be inconvenient.”

“As in limos?” Bikky asked.

“We’ll see what we end up with,” Ryo said. “We don’t even know when that will be. Just something Dee brought up and I’m willing to go along with it.”

“You know, pushers are not unique to the big cities in Japan,” Dee commented. “New York was one of the first cities to have them in the early 1900’s. Not so much these days, however.”

Ryo spared a look at Dee, while Bikky started to grin and Carol giggled. Dee caught the reaction and shook his head. “Train pushers, you dorks. Not drug pushers.”

“Be specific, Dee,” Ryo joked, making Dee laugh.

“I knew what Dee meant, but it was still funny,” Carol said.

“I did too,” Bikky admitted, “but I had to go there, being Dad’s a cop and all.” He grinned at his fathers.

Carol looked out the window at whatever landscape she could see beyond the expressway barriers and smiled. “I really enjoyed all the places we went to so far, but I’m so excited that we’re finally going to Tokyo,” Carol said.

“We were in Tokyo already,” Ryo reminded her. “Remember we had dinner the other night there.”

“We also landed in Tokyo, Princess,” Dee added with a teasing grin.

“I know that,” Carol remarked. “I mean, I enjoyed that night we had dinner at that hotel, but I really want to explore more of Tokyo,” she explained.
“Like Tokyo Tower,” Bikky commented.

“Like I said, Biks, we’ll go today but we might not go up to the Observation deck today,” said Ryo.

As Bikky started to pout, Dee chuckled. “Today isn’t your only chance, kiddo. You can walk to it from our hotel.”

“Really?” Bikky asked. “How far a walk?”

“Fifteen minutes, if you don’t get distracted along the way,” Ryo replied.

“Oh. Okay, but I still can’t wait to see it.”

“And you will today,” Dee assured him.

“Where else are we going today?” Carol asked.

“We’re not sure yet,” Dee replied. “Ryo and I figured we’d work that out once we get settled. I think Shibuya might be a good start.” He looked back at Bikky with a grin. “After we go to Tokyo Tower.”

“Cool!” exclaimed Bikky. “I want to see Shibuya too.”

“I just want to see everything in Tokyo,” Carol said.

“Yeah, me too,” Bikky agreed.

“And we’ll have time to see it all,” Ryo said. “Just not all of it today. Don’t forget that we’re meeting Obāsan this afternoon after her meeting, and tonight we’re going on a dinner cruise.”
“I’m looking forward to it,” Carol said.

“It’s not like the dinner cruise we took in New York,” Ryo said. “I always loved whenever we went on a yukatabune cruise. My parents started taking me on them when I was a baby.” He smiled as he spared a glance in the rearview mirror at the twins in their car seats. “I’m glad that it looks like the chibis will have the same chance. And Biks, tonight will probably not be your last, so I hope you like it.”

“What’s it like?” Bikky asked.

Dee looked back again. “The inside of the boat has a low table and cushions and they make most of the food on the aft deck. It’s like eating in Obāsan’s family room but on the water.” Bikky looked at Dee with curiosity. “Yeah, I went on one before. Shortly after I got to Japan, the school organized a day out around Yokohama and another in Tokyo. The day in Tokyo ended with us having dinner on one of those boats. I’m really looking forward to having the chance to do it again.”

“We also have one next week, don’t we?” Bikky asked. “The one with the costumes?”

“It almost sounds like a Japanese Renaissance Faire on water, listening to Obāsan,” Carol added. “She said something about period clothing.”

Ryo started to laugh. “The period clothing is optional for dinner guests, but with Obāsan, she’s making it mandatory. All part of her experience, as you heard her say. We’re going to be in Edo period kimono for the night.”

“I wouldn’t mind wearing a kimono,” Carol said.

“I’m glad you think so, Carol,” Dee stated. “Because Obāsan intends for you to come back with a couple more.”

“What are we going to wear?” Bikky asked. “Do men wear kimono?”

“Everyone wore kimono back then, but men’s are different than women’s.” Ryo answered. “We’ll have pants, called hakama and jackets called haori. And it won’t be colorful like the women’s. Mostly browns and black, but we’ll look good. I know it. The cruise basically a dinner and entertainment, with some karaoke tossed in,” he explained.
“And it’s going to be on a ship fashioned after the ones the Samurai used in the Edo period,” Dee explained.

“Have you ever been on it?” Bikky asked.

Dee shook his head. “I’ve seen it but I never went on it.”

“You’ve been on it before, have you, Ryo?” Carol asked.

“Many times, and it doesn’t get old. Obāsan likes to hire it out for a private function at times, having everyone get dressed. She doesn’t do it all the time, because she wants it to be something different to do for the family to have fun. She hired the ship for next week, so it’ll just be us.”

“Us being Obāsan and her closer relatives,” Dee commented with a grin.

“That means a full boat,” Bikky commented with a laugh. “You have a real big family, Ryo. I never thought that when you took me in. And even for a while after.”

“Yeah, I know. I was a mess there for a while, and started to push everyone away, including my mother’s family,” Ryo admitted. “I was building a wall around me. I just wanted to be left alone.” With a wicked grin, he continued, “but then you and Dee came into my life and knocked that wall down.”

“We have been dealing with Obāsan and some of the cousins for the last couple of years,” Dee said.

“Yes,” Ryo said. “She did like the two of you already. Bikky, you were my son, so you were always family, especially after I said I wasn’t letting you go.” He indicated Dee. “She was charmed by Dee, too.” He spared Dee a quick glance with a sly grin and added, “I’m still trying to figure out how.”

“Hey!” Dee complained. “That’s because the first time I spoke to her on the phone, it was in Japanese.”
Ryo chuckled. “Yeah, she wasn’t expecting that. She didn’t know anything about where you went to college, or that you even knew Japanese enough to get into that college. She also already thought my being friends with you was good for me. So, of course, when she found out we were not just friends and making it legal, she was ecstatic. To her, the two of you are the best thing to happen to me, and she’s glad we’re family.” Ryo’s smile widened. “And I have to agree with her. I am so glad we are a family, one that is growing.”

Carol was wiping her eyes. “I’m so glad, too. I knew the three of you belonged together and would be an awesome family.”

Dee was grinning like a fool as he looked at first Ryo, and then Bikky. His gaze went to the twins, who were amusing themselves with the dangling toys Moriko had hung from the ceiling over the row where they put the twins. They were cooing and smiling as the colorful plastic objects spun and bounced. Now and then one of them would start giggling. He finally settled on Carol. “You’re family, too, Princess. Don’t forget that.”

“You heard Dee,” Ryo said.

“I’m glad of that, too,” Carol said. “I feel the same about all of you.” She turned to Bikky. “And who knows, maybe one day I’ll even have your last name.”

“We hope so, but even if that doesn’t happen, you’ll still always be family, Carol,” Ryo said.

“Thanks.” Carol smiled more as Bikky took her hand and held it.

Bikky glanced out the window on the driver’s side and exclaimed, “The bad thing about Japan is these high barriers along the expressways. You can’t see much unless there are taller buildings. Are we almost there now?”

“Bikky, we left about 20 minutes ago. You should know by now that it’s an hour ride to Tokyo.”

Dee looked to the back of the van again and laughed. “Just think in a few years, we’ll have those two joining in.”

“Bikky will be 18 by then,” Ryo commented.
“And your point is?” Bikky asked.

“Hopefully you’ll be old enough to stop asking that question,” Ryo replied.

Dee and Bikky shared a look, grinning, while Carol started to laugh.

“Like that worked with me!” Dee exclaimed and started to laugh.

“Well, you have a point then. So, when are you going to ask?” Ryo asked.

“Since I know we’ll be in Yokohama in about ten minutes, I don’t have to ask,” Dee replied and laughed. “It might have been a while and things have changed but this expressway sure didn’t.”

“Are we almost there?” Bikky asked.

“We’re almost in Yokohama, like Dee just said, and we’re heading to Tokyo,” Ryo commented. “It’s going to be a bit more before you start seeing some buildings over the barriers. Some very Japanese style buildings,” Ryo commented.

“Cool! This is a different way than the way we took back from that night in Tokyo, isn’t it?” Bikky asked.

Ryo started to laugh. “I have a different way of going to Tokyo than Nobu has. And he took a different way back that night we were in Tokyo than how we got there because of you and Carol. Even at night, you can see different things.”

“So this is your way of going into Tokyo?” Carol asked.

“Yes,” Ryo replied. “And tonight, we’ll see how Dee prefers to go from Tokyo to Kamakura.”

“You’ll see later tonight,” Dee said. “I guess it also depends on where we’re leaving from, if we end
“I don’t think we will,” Ryo said, “but you never know, especially if we’re meeting Obāsan later.”

“If it’s anything like her in New York, then that’s true,” Dee said with a laugh, making Bikky and Carol chuckle.

“That’s Obāsan, no matter where she’s at,” Ryo commented, also laughing. “But we love her for it.”

“Keeping us guessing helps keeps us on our toes,” Dee said. “I would say someone has to, but we already had Mother.” He winked at everyone.

“I guess they feel we need two of them for this lot,” Ryo said.

Dee started to laugh. “You might have a point there.”
Ryo pulled the van up to the front entrance of the hotel in Roppongi Hills, and the doorman came over to open the doors. Ryo gave the keys to the man and went over to give Dee a hand with getting the twins out of the van. Before they made it to the door, they were greeted by the hotel’s general manager, welcoming them to the hotel and bowing. The manager spoke in English and he escorted them to the front desk, pointing out the shops and restaurants on the main lobby level.

They were told that their penthouse was ready for them, and even if they were not going to officially check in until Thursday, the penthouse was not in use. When the general manager got word that Dee and Ryo were coming in that day, he had the penthouse ready for their use, instead of them taking over a small boardroom to store what they had brought with them, mostly for the twins for the day, as Ryo had requested when he called the hotel. Dee and Ryo had planned to store what was currently on a luggage rack in a boardroom. Instead, the manager had offered that once they got a tour of the hotel, they could use the penthouse, and it would remain theirs, unless they said otherwise.

The luggage rack was already on the way up to the penthouse, while they were taken through the various small shops, cafes and restaurants. Dee could not help comparing this situation to the time they had walked into the hotel in Atlanta as their first step on their honeymoon. In Atlanta, they were treated like outcasts because Dee was pregnant. Here in this hotel, it did not matter that the babies Dee and Ryo each had in a sling were Carried by Dee. There were many other men either pregnant or with their own children in the hotel as they toured it.

They saw the boardrooms and ballrooms. The manager gave them a quick rundown of the three levels of stores in the sublevels below the hotel, and how it had underground tunnels also with shops connecting the hotel with the other buildings on the property, very much like the underground shopping surrounding the major subway stations. They discovered they would be able to get to Roppongi Station underground. At least if it continued to rain, they could still get to the train station and go to another part of the city. And if it was still raining when they got there, chances are there would still be more underground shopping to keep everyone busy. Dee hoped they would be able to roam the streets at some point that day. The weather forecast did predict it would stop in the afternoon and clear up, which would be good for their dinner cruise.

They also were taken into some of the rooms that were not occupied. The hotel had both western rooms and Japanese style rooms to accommodate all types of visitors.

They made a stop at the restaurant and bar that was on the top floor before the extension where the penthouse was at. It boasted views of the area, but it was hard to see much because of the rain. Ryo pointed out to Bikky that the view wouldn’t be much better from the observation deck of Tokyo Tower if it was like that. Bikky agreed that if it didn’t stop raining before they had to get ready for the cruise, that they should go back to Tokyo Tower on another day when it was clearer so they could go to the top.
Finally, the general manager led them up to the very top floor. The penthouse was an extension from the roof, which was narrower than the rest of the hotel. It allowed for the outdoor terraces around the restaurant below. The elevator doors opened to an entryway paneled in dark wood. Along the wall near the elevator doors was a shoe rack. Across the entryway was a sliding paneled door with shoji windows and the frame the same wood as the walls. In a corner was a step tansu chest, on each step was a small flower arrangement. Along the wall next to the shoe rack were hooks with hangers for coats. The top of the shoe rack provided storage space. In some of the shoe spaces were slippers.

“It is up to you whether you want to take your shoes off or not,” the general manager stated as they entered the space. “This penthouse belonged to the previous owner of this hotel. He lived here with his family since he first bought the hotel.”

“He moved out already?” Ryo asked.

“I understand he bought a nice house in Hakone,” the GM said. “He wanted to retire and not have to worry about business again. Then your people show up, looking for a hotel.”

“And he had a chain throughout Japan and Korea he wanted to sell,” Dee commented.

“Yes. This hotel is the premiere hotel of the chain. The hotel in Osaka is also very nice, but this one is top of the line. The penthouse is yours now, of course, since you are the owners. You may do what you please with it. Shall I show you the rest?”

“Yes, please,” said Ryo.

“You can lock these doors, if you prefer, but the elevator should be security enough. A key card is needed for this floor. You will have all the cards. For anyone else, you can allow the elevator to access this floor from this panel. It’s a state of the art system with audio and video, so you can see who is calling you from the elevator.”

The manager led them to the sliding door and opened it to reveal the spacious living space. Most of the area had a wall of windows and glass doors looking out over Tokyo, including Tokyo Tower and beyond, glimpses of the bay. The doors led to a spacious patio. The patio had couches along the four foot walls bordering the penthouse, and a couple of tables and chairs. On one corner of the patio was a covered trellis over a table, chairs, and a couple of couches. There were lush potted trees and bamboo plants strategically placed on the patio. Near the trellis, was an outdoor grill and cooler.
Also sharing the open living space was the kitchen, which was more open and a little larger than theirs in New York. Behind the kitchen was a full dining room with a modern dining set to seat ten that was entered through a door at the start of a small hallway next to the kitchen. The manager explained that the table could be extended for four more seats. The extra chairs were along the walls and windows around the room. The dining room also had an outer wall of windows and a door to go onto the patio on that side. It was not as wide or long as the front patio, but it had some comfortable chairs and a hot tub. From that patio, they could enter the conservatory, or the covered patio, as the doorman claimed the previous owner called it. Except for the back wall, all the walls were windows, and the area had a comfortable couch and arm chairs among plenty of potted trees and plants. In the corner was a small Zen garden with a bamboo water fountain. The side patio was separated from the front patio by a utility room that was entered by a door at the end of the small hallway along the kitchen and dining room.

From the main living space, was a room on the far side opposite the kitchen that they were told was the tatami room, set up for tea ceremonies. It had cushions for seating, and unlike the rest of the penthouse with its modern furnishing, it had antique traditional Japanese furniture that had Dee exclaiming could they take something back to New York. Of course, he wasn’t serious, but it did make Ryo decide that he needed to show Dee some of the items in storage when they got back to New York, and maybe shop for something for their apartment while they were in Japan.

There were two hallways going off from the main living area leading to the back of the penthouse where the bedrooms were. In the hallway, next to the kitchen, was a walk-in cupboard that on one side stocked dry goods and a chest freezer. On one of the shelves on that side was a large rice storage unit and air tight containers for their use. There were packages of dashi stock, various dry noodles, dried seaweed and shitake mushrooms, along with other items found in a standard Japanese cupboard. The manager apologized that there were only Japanese goods. Both Dee and Ryo assured him that they were just fine with it and not to worry. He also offered for them to leave a list of what they might want to have and he would make sure it was there when they returned on Thursday. Ryo assured the manager that they would leave a list with the front desk before they left the hotel for the day. The other side had shelves to put whatever they might want to keep in there with some empty baskets and storage containers.

On the side of the hall were the walls to the entry room and the elevator but they could not be accessed from that hall.

Next to the cupboard in the hall was a door leading to the master bathroom, but they went past it to the next door which was to the master bedroom. They went into the spacious room with the large bed piled with thick mattresses and a step on each side to get into the bed. The bed had a dark wood ornate headboard with Japanese carvings. On each side of the bed were Japanese chests as end tables and a large antique trunk was set at the foot of the bed. Two large rectangular windows looked out to the patio in the back. Between the window was a two-seat chair with colorful fluffy pillows. In the center of the room was a rug in the same bright colors of the pillows and the bedding. In a corner were two shoji screens sectioning the corner off from the rest of the room. The manager explained that from what he was told, one of the other bedrooms would be too far for them to keep the babies
so he had them set up a crib in space, along with a small unit to keep some items for the babies close, and a changing table. To the right from the bedroom door was another door of window panes and they could see it was the bathroom. The bathroom was set up in typical Japanese fashion with the toilet off to one side behind a wall, set away from the bathing area with a sink and mirror on the opposite wall from the toilet. The bathing area had a tiled floor.

Dee started to smile more as his eyes set on the large corner spa bathtub that could fit three people comfortably. He started to imagine taking baths at the end of the day with Ryo in that tub. In the middle of the long wall was the shower, shower bench and a shelf close by to keep soap, washcloths and anything else needed. The Japanese did not wash themselves in the bathtub, using the shower and then using the tub to relax in. It was customary to end a day with a relaxing bath. Unlike bathrooms in the U.S., there was no shower fixture in the tub. The shower head and faucets were on a wall and the water ran to the tiled bathroom floor and down a nearby drain.

Back in the bedroom, they were escorted through the other window paned door into the covered patio that they had seen from the outside. Ryo smiled as he looked around.

“I think I like this a lot more than my grandparents’ conservatory,” Ryo commented, taking Dee’s hand.

Dee nodded. “It’s a lot greener than it looks outside.”

“I like it,” Bikky said. “I'll bet the babies will like it too.” He looked over to Darin, who was in a sling around Ryo, and smiled at the baby. “Right Darin?” He tickled the side of the baby boy’s face, making Darin laugh and start kicking his feet.

“Thanks, Biks,” Ryo said. “Nice plan to make your brother kick me.”

Dee started to laugh as he looked down at Ryoko, who he had in a sling. “What do you say, Koko? Do you think we can do bedtime stories in here?”

Ryo started to smile more. “I think I like that idea a lot. Biks, will you help out like you do sometimes? When you’re here for their bedtime?”

“When I’m here? Does that mean Carol and I can stay out late while we’re here?” Bikky asked.
“Yes it does,” Ryo said. “And you won’t have to be in until midnight.”

Dee grinned. “Your father and I discussed it, and we decided that if you call and ask nicely, we can extend it for an hour or two.”

“Really?” Bikky asked.

“Really,” Ryo agreed. “And you don’t have to tell us why. All we ask is that you tell us where you are. It is pretty much safe here. It’s easier to let you stay out late here than in New York.”

“Thanks Dads!” Bikky exclaimed.

“Yes, thank you so much,” said Carol happily. “Of course, if you want us to stay and watch the babies while you go out late, we can do that too.”

“We’ll keep that in mind, Princess. Thank you,” said Ryo. “Maybe we might for one night.”

They left the conservatory and headed back to the living area. On the other side of the entry was the second hall. There were no doors in that hall, but there was a step chest along one wall. It looked like there was a picture on the other wall, but had been removed. The manager explained that whatever was left in the penthouse now belonged to them, but there had been some original art and favorite pieces that the previous owner had taken when he moved his family out of the penthouse.

They came across another hall to the left. Down the hall were four bedrooms, two on each side of the hall. All the bedrooms were furnished with beds, dressers and wardrobes. At the end of the hall, past the hallway to the bedrooms were the toilet, bathroom and a walk-in closet.

Back in the living room, the manager insisted that they call for anything they needed, be it food, having their vehicle waiting outside the main entrance to the hotel, a cab or anything else they needed and then left.

“Does that mean if we wanted something from one of the restaurants but don’t want to go, we can call and ask for food?” Dee asked, looking amazed. Dee’s jaw had dropped and he started to look around the room in shock. “And this is ours?” he squeaked.
Ryo started to laugh as he guided Dee to one of the plush couches and sat him down. “Would one of you kids take Koko from Dee please?” He looked to noticed Bikky wandering around the room alternating with staring out the windows at the Tokyo vista. Shaking his head, he added, “Carol?”

“Yes, sure.” She went over to Dee and Ryo and helped get Ryoko from the sling and cuddled the baby to her. Ryoko smiled up at her, reaching for Carol’s dangling earrings. “No no, little girl,” she cooed. Looking at Ryo, she said, “I know Aunt Elina said I shouldn’t wear long earrings when around the babies, but with this being a huge outing in Tokyo and all, I couldn’t resist.”

“I understand, but be careful. We don’t want to end up spending our day in Tokyo sitting in a Tokyo emergency room because you got your ear ripped apart by super baby grip,” Dee managed to say, holding out his arms so he could take Ryoko from her. “We know you’re really good about jewelry around the babies normally. So, give her here and get the baby mats.” Looking up at Ryo, he said, “We can settle them on the floor while we set up the playpen and bassinettes.”

Ryo took Darin from his sling and sat down next to Dee, holding their infant son. “Are you okay?” he asked Dee.

“I’ll be okay. I know we were told we would have a penthouse for our use, but I wasn’t expecting this.” He glanced around again. “And nobody mentioned that this is ours.”

“I didn’t think about it, but it makes sense. This did belong to Hayashi-san, who lived here with his family, so it makes sense that they would assume we’d be taking it over too. I should probably check out if he had any other private residences in other hotels.”

“We should probably look into it, but he probably didn’t have permanent residences in the other cities. Still, he travelled a lot because of the chain, since he didn’t have a board like we do, so he probably had designated suites that they cleared when they knew he was coming,” Dee said. “Which means the reservations we have in the other cities means some fancy assed accommodations.”

Ryo chuckled and slipped an arm around Dee’s shoulders, leaning against him. “Get used to it.”

“This is ours,” Dee commented.

“It is, but we can decide what to do with it. I mean, we’re not moving to Tokyo, but I do admit that it’s nice to think we have a place without taking over Obāsan’s house whenever we want to come to Tokyo.”
“I guess we can let them use it while we’re not here. Leave the place like this,” Dee mentioned.

“Make sure they charge big,” Ryo said with a laugh. “We can sublet it too, I guess, as long as we know we’re not going to be in Tokyo.”

“I can always put a word in with Hide. They usually are responsible to hooking up celebrities with top rate hotel rooms. Especially the ones from the U.S. and Europe, who pay top dollar for the best.”

“Are you sure you want musicians in here?” Ryo asked.

“No, and I’ll tell Hide that, but they deal with more than musicians. Remember that Hide’s partner, Takahashi-san, is a promoter and deals with many types of celebrity events. Not all of them are held in the club.”

“Do they use hotels?” Ryo asked slyly. “Like ballrooms?”

“Yeah. Holy shit, yes, they do. I’m sure Hide is already thinking about it once I told him about this hotel.”

“Bikky, stop wandering around this place like a lost soul and come sit down.”

Carol already had the mats on the floor near the couch and was seated on another couch. “Wow. This place is beautiful! And so big!”

Dee and Ryo placed the babies on the mats and Bikky came over to sit on the floor near them to relax for a few minutes before unpacking what they would need for their day out in Tokyo.
Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

The Laytner-MacLeans spend a day in Tokyo and finally get to see the hotel that was recently bought for L-M International, the hotel chain that Ryo's grandparents gave Ryo and Dee as a gift when Ryoko and Darin were born.

Chapter Notes

This chapter has a popular idol group by the name I've given them for the TU universe. The name change is part because of an altered history of the group, but they still did many of their songs, perhaps out of order of the real world, and part for a reason later in the story.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

CHAPTER EIGHT

Tokyo New Crown Star Hotel

Roppongi Hills, Tokyo

Japan

Once they got temporarily settled in the penthouse, including allowing Bikky and Carol to pick their rooms when they checked in to stay on Thursday, they headed out to look at the shops in the hotel’s mall. Ryo stopped them for dango mochi and taiyaki. They just looked at what was in the shops, planning to return to the store if one of them decided they really wanted something while they were staying at the hotel. When they were done with the hotel mall, the hotel provided them with a shuttle to Mori tower and the shopping center in that area. They had Korean barbecue for lunch, settling for something more casual than when they ate out with family since arriving. Dee and Ryo allowed Bikky to choose where they ate, making sure the kids had something they wanted and enjoyed their meal. All four of them enjoyed their meal.

Shortly after they returned to the hotel, Akira called stating she just entered the hotel but needed to check with the events director about the upcoming party on Saturday night. They settled in the penthouse until Ryo’s grandmother joined them. The rain had cleared up while they had lunch, so shortly after Akira arrived, they headed to Tokyo Tower, much to Bikky’s and Carol’s excitement.
They could see Tokyo Tower from the living room of the penthouse and while they waited for Akira, Bikky and Carol sat on the patio, wistfully looking at it, when they weren’t pointing out whatever else seemed interesting enough to want to see it.

They looked around at the various shops and exhibits in Foot Town, which was the five-story building located at the base of the tower. Bikky and Carol wanted to buy some souvenirs at the time, but Ryo promised they could go back to the stores on their way out. When Bikky protested that they might forget, Dee snorted and commented that Bikky would not let them forget, but even if they did, they could always go back another day and buy what they wanted.

Once that was settled, they headed up to the Main Observatory, and walked around both floors. It was still cloudy from the earlier rain and the visibility was not very good. They were barely able to see Tokyo Harbor, and Roppongi Hills that day, but they still were able to take some pictures of the immediate area. They didn’t stay long at the Main Observatory, once again to Bikky’s protests. Akira reminded them that they would be staying within walking distance for several weeks and would have time to go back many times, if that was what they wanted whenever Dee and Ryo allowed him and Carol to go off on their own. That seemed to settle Bikky and they went back down to Foot Town, and the food court. They found a place to sit down, allowing Akira to have a late lunch, since she went right to the hotel after her meeting to firm details for the party she was holding on Saturday, and did not have lunch yet.

“Good thing we’ll be doing a lot of walking,” Ryo quipped and took some yakisoba from the plate near him and put on the smaller plate. Dee and Ryo decided to get a large order of yakisoba that they could all share. Bikky and Carol also had some chicken karaage. Akira insisted that Dee and Ryo also take some gyoza, even if they tried to assure her that they were already full from their lunch. Bikky and Carol she had no problem with convincing to have some gyoza. Ryo’s grandmother was not taking no for an answer, not wanting to make them sit and watch her eat, so the two men nibbled on the yakisoba and gyoza. She did turn to Darin and Ryoko who had started to giggle and make happy sounds at the faces Bikky was making at them as he ate. “You’re going to have to wait until you can have gyoza, little chibis.”

Ryo started to laugh as Dee commented, “Then you’re going to have to exercise as much as the rest of us when you’re about Obāsan, sweethearts,” to the infants, making Ryo laugh more, with Bikky and Carol joining in. Akira also chuckled.

After they ate, they allowed Bikky and Carol to do some shopping. It was mostly small items that they wanted. Bikky got what he wanted to take back to New York with him, reasoning that something might be gone by the time he went back at another time, but he planned to go back and buy things for his friends at home before leaving Japan.

Ryo suggested they go up on the roof for Foot Town before leaving and was glad when Bikky and Carol saw the mechanical rides, some large enough for adults. After putting money in, the animal
started to move, their direction controlled by a steering wheel. There were also two options for speed, but even at the fastest, they did not go very fast. All of them, except for Akira, went on the various animals when they were not being used, while Akira sat with Ryoko and Darin and took photos and video of her family enjoying themselves. She did manage to get pictures of each baby with one of their fathers while on an animal.

After they left Tokyo Tower, they walked around the area where there were several temples and shrines, including one of each for Carriers. Both Dee and Ryo were familiar with all of them and enjoyed watching as Bikky and Carol explored the grounds for the first time. They were ashamed to admit they had previously been to the Carrier ones many times, not realizing they were for Carriers.

They had time to explore one more area for a short while. They decided to get on the train to Harajuku and walk down Takeshita Street. It was the first time Bikky and Carol got to ride on the Tokyo train system and they were both excited. The adults were amused, because they had taken the Enoshima Electric Railway Line from Hase Station to Enoshima Station to get to Enoshima Island. Dee and Ryo decided to take the strollers for the twins but had the slings with them, and put the babies in them before getting on the train. From the laughing and sounds the twins were making, it seemed they were enjoying their first ride too. For Ryoko and Darin, it was their first ever train ride, because in New York, Dee and Ryo would drive whenever they had the babies with them.

The first train was underground, before they had to change at Yoyogi Station and get on the Yamanote Line which was a short one stop ride to Harajuku Station. As they transferred trains, Bikky and Carol noticed a building, exclaiming it reminded them of the Empire State Building. Dee and Ryo said they would try to go with them and walk around the area at some other time. Akira said that she planned to take them to the Meiji Shrine one day and they could also go to the NTT Docomo building on the same day. When they got on the second train, Bikky and Carol stared intently out the window watching all the buildings as they went by. At first, they were trying to look out both sides of the train, but Ryo assured them that they would be on that same stretch at least one more time during their stay, so they could see the other side on the way back. Bikky and Carol started to complain that they just got on the second train as it came into the station.

Akira decided they should walk along the platform to the entrance by Takeshita Street. Carol almost broke into a run once they left the station and saw the arch for Takeshita Street, but Ryo grabbed onto her hand, and Akira said if she rushed, she couldn’t appreciate it.

By the time they were ready to leave, they did some shopping and ate crepes. Carol had a crepe with strawberries and cream, Bikky had caramel apple, chocolate and cream, and Dee, Ryo and Akira all had red bean jam, strawberry and cream. Carol had several dresses and a couple of outfits. She was excited as they entered the penthouse, exclaiming she would be able to look like an idol while they were in Japan. She had one dress that she intended to wear on Friday when they went to join Hide and watch the idol group practice. Dee and Ryo bought some casual clothes for themselves, and even Bikky had some new clothes that were fashionable for teenage boys in Japan. Carol also got some socks with cute images on them in a shop that sold socks. Ryo could not help himself and bought some socks with Japanese food on them for Dee, knowing he wouldn’t buy them himself, but
would get kick out of wearing around the house.

When they left for the day, they did not plan to do as much shopping as they did, so they ended up taking a taxi back to the hotel.

In the evening, they discovered that Akira had reserved a stretch limo to take them to where they would board the yakatabune. Akira had booked for a private party and when they arrived, Ryo’s aunts and uncles were waiting for them, along with Tsubasa and Kumi without children. The only aunt that was not there was Satomi, who Ryo was to meet again and introduce her to her family on Saturday during the party because her and her husband Keizo lived in the Mt. Fuji area, where they owned a small traditional style inn along the lake. Takehide’s daughter, Miyoko, and her wife, Harumi, were also waiting with Miyoko’s two children.

Much to Carol’s delight, Risa also joined them that evening. Akira had also invited Hide, Ken and Yuki. Hide and his wife were among those waiting. They were taken inside to a patio overlooking the river while they waited for Ken, Yuki and Takehide’s two sons. It was still early and the boat was still being prepared, so they sat on the patio, enjoying drinks while they waited. From the patio, they were able see all the yakatabune from the various restaurants offering dinner cruises. Carol and Bikky stood by the railing, looking out and taking pictures with Risa joining them. Ken and his wife arrived with Yuki and Jae-Hwa just before they were to board the boat, blaming traffic. At least the restaurant had valet service, so they did not have to worry about finding somewhere to park.

Even though they had heard about it from Dee, Ryo, Akira and the rest of Ryo’s family, Bikky and Carol were still stunned when they boarded the yakatabune. There were two rows of low, traditional style tables on each side of the boat. The table was set with glassware and small plates and condiment dishes at each place and a cushion to sit on. The boat had paper lanterns along the outside deck, which they were told they were able to walk along, and there were benches outside on the bow. The rectangular boat had a wooden exterior and interior.

With the two rows, it made it easier for conversation among all the diners as they ate instead of one long table, even with the wide area between the rows of tables. Everyone was seated and one of the servers gave them a safety briefing in Japanese, which Akira repeated to Bikky and Carol. As the boat left the dock and made its way along the river toward Tokyo Bay, appetizers were bought out, the tables being filled with various food to pick and choose. By then, Bikky and Carol were used to the customary way of eating out in Japan, and filled the plates at their setting with small amounts of whatever they wanted, both of them daring to try a few new things they haven’t encountered yet.

For the first part of the cruise, traditional Japanese music played in the background while everyone ate and talked. When they got to Tokyo Bay, Dee and Ryo took Bikky and Carol out on the front deck so they could take pictures of the Rainbow Bridge as they went under it. Akira had also joined them and got a family shot with the bridge in the background. When they returned inside, the dishes from the first course was being cleared and soon more food was being bought out. There was
tempura, vegetables and fruit. Then came out sushi and sashimi boats.

When one of the boats was placed in front of Dee, Akira said, “This one is Dei’s. We will have to make sure they bring out another for the rest of us.” Everyone around them laughed as Dee turned slightly red but was grinning.

“Obāsan, you know me so well,” he drawled, making everyone laugh more.

Other types of fish and eel were also added to the tables and everyone started to eat again, while looking out the windows as the boat made its way toward the Sumida River. After each course, the guests had time to get up and walk around, go on the deck and mingle more. Bikky and Carol were always the first to go out once they were finished eating, with the other children and Risa joining them. Dee and Ryo usually left the twins with someone while they went out.

At one point, Dee had Darin on his lap while he ate and the baby started to reach out toward the food. “Hey, little man,” Dee said. “Are you saying you’re hungry already?”

“Look, he’s making grabby hands, Dee,” Ryo pointed out.

“He’s also chewing,” Hide added from the other side of the table.

“He is?” Dee asked and looked down again at his son. He turned the baby slightly so his face was looking up at Dee. “He is,” he exclaimed.

Bikky started to laugh. “I got pictures of him. Too bad we can’t give him something. He’s starting to look upset that he can’t have anything.”

“You know what that means, Dee,” Ken said.

“What?” Dee asked as Ryo also looked at Dee’s friend.

“It means he’s ready to start on solid food,” Hide answered. “That’s how I knew my kids were ready.”
Ken nodded his head in agreement.

Ryo looked at Akira. “Really?”

“Ken and Hide are correct. That means pretty soon, at least little Darin will be ready for his first solid food feeding,” Akira replied.

“Oh cool!” Bikky exclaimed.

“It means strained peas for you, Darin,” Dee replied. “Or something like that.”

Ryo looked down at Ryoko, who seemed content to lean against Ryo and watch everything. “How about you, young lady? Do you want to have some yummy strained peas soon too?”

Ryoko put her finger in her mouth and looked across the table at Bikky, who started to make funny faces at her, making the baby laugh.

“The jury is still out on that, I guess,” Dee replied.

“Give her time. They are at the age, but she might not be ready yet,” Akira said.

“But then again, she might start to follow after Darin soon enough if he keeps it up.”

Darin made another grab and managed to get his fingers in Dee’s small bowl of pickled vegetables, making everyone laugh.

“Alrighty then,” Dee exclaimed. “Since I can’t feed you anything on this table, I guess that means you get the wonderful bottle of formula. Aren’t you excited?” He looked at Ryo. “I also guess that means it’s also feeding time for Koko.”

“Might as well. She’ll be letting us know it’s time soon enough anyway,” Ryo replied.
They took the babies on the outside deck where they fed the babies as they watched the buildings on each side of the river go by.

“This is beautiful,” Dee sighed as he leaned against Ryo while Darin fed from his bottle. He glanced down on Ryo’s lap to see Ryoko was also happily drinking from her bottle.

“I could get used to this real easy,” Ryo replied. “I’m glad Obāsan thought of doing this.”

“I’m glad that she chartered the boat for a private party,” Dee replied. “I guess it might be fun just being a dinner guest. Probably like going to a restaurant but on water, but this is the second time I did this, and the second time it was a chartered cruise.”

“So you’re spoiled now,” Ryo quipped and chuckled. “I have to admit that I never did one of these that wasn’t a private chartered cruise, but then it was always Obāsan who booked them. And she can pull out enough family to fill one of the big yatabunes if she wanted to.”

“That’s true. I’m grateful that she invited my friends to join us,” Dee said.

“I think she does that so you don’t feel so lost being surrounded by just my family. Since you have friends here, she makes sure you have someone on your side, so to speak.”

“Not that I have any problem being around your family. I adore everyone, but I do enjoy getting to spend some extra time with my friends too while we’re here. I guess it doesn’t help that my friends also seem to be friends of your family too.”

“That’s what happens when you fly to New York together, I guess,” Ryo said, remembering how Tsubasa already was calling Dee’s friends his friends too by the time they arrived in New York the week before their wedding for their bachelor parties.

“I’m glad. Something tells me that I should feel left out that my friends get to see your family regularly while we’re in New York, but it just makes me happy that everyone is getting along. So, no complaints from me.”

“None from me too. That means there’s no chance that you’ll lose contact with them.”
“True, but I like to think that if we managed to stay in touch for ten years just through calls, letters and email, then it means that the four of us are friends for life,” Dee said.

“You have a point,” Ryo agreed. “And that makes me glad. Now you’ll get to see them at least a couple of times a year instead of waiting another ten years.”

“I’m looking forward to that, and your family too,” Dee said. “I feel like my family grew since you told Obāsan our news last year.” He smiled softly at Ryo. “And to think you were actually afraid to tell her.”

“I feel like an ass now.”

“Hey, it all worked out for the best and we have not only Obāsan, but most of your Japanese family as a regular part of our lives, even when we’re on opposite sides of the world.”

“That is so very true.” Ryo leaned over to kiss Dee. “I love you, Dee. I’m happy. I’m really so very happy now. Happier than I ever thought I could be since I lost my parents, and it’s all because of you.”

“I love you too,” Dee replied. “I would never have believed I would so many people to call my family, but I do now, and that’s because of you.”

Ryo chuckled. “Well, you do have a lot of brothers and sisters,” he teased, thinking about all the children in the orphanage.

“Yeah, I do, even if I never see most of them once they’re adopted or old enough to leave on their own,” Dee said. “But for the time they’re in the orphanage, they’re my siblings because they are Mother’s children, and I really don’t forget any of them.” He smiled warmly. “Yeah, I’m really happy too.”

They heard Bikky and Carol talking as they came on the deck. “Obāsan said that they are removing the dishes from this course and will be bringing out more food soon,” Bikky said as he stood before them.
“These two are almost finished,” Ryo replied, smiling at his oldest son. “We’ll be in shortly.”

“She also said that when we’re done with eating, we should be around Asasuka, where we turn around to go back. That’s when there will be karaoke and dancing,” Carol said.

“Oh good,” Dee commented. “That will help work off the meal tonight.”

Ryo and Bikky laughed. “Do we eat this much when we go out around New York?” Ryo asked.

“It’s because of everything here that isn’t so easily available here,” Dee replied.

Bikky shrugged. “Maybe we’ll stop in another week or two. Like when it becomes normal.” As Dee and Ryo nodded in agreement to him, he added, “Nah. I don’t want this to become normal. Any of this. It’s all too cool and awesome to become normal.”

“You like Japan then?” Ryo asked him.

“Yeah. I’m really glad we did this and for more than just a week or two,” Bikky replied.

“How about you, Carol?” Ryo asked.

“Oh yes, definitely,” Carol answered.

“What if we decided to move here?” Dee asked.

“I don’t think I’d mind, as long as we can go to New York sometimes,” Bikky replied. “I do love Kamakura and I can’t wait to see it in the summer, with the beaches and all, but if we did, I hope it’ll be Tokyo or Yokohama. Tokyo, I think, because we have such an awesome place to live here now.”

Dee and Ryo laughed. “Yes, we do have a pretty awesome place here now,” Dee agreed.
Carol looked at Dee and Ryo, suddenly looking serious. “You aren’t planning on moving here, are you? I mean, no way would my aunt allow me to move with you, if you wanted me, that is.”

“Lose that look, Princess, and give us your pretty smile. We’re not moving here, but yes, I think we’ll be coming here more often to give Ryo’s family a chance to see the twins as they grow up.”

“I also want you to really know Japan, Biks,” Ryo added. “And since we’re able, I would like Darin and Ryoko to grow up knowing both New York and Japan. But Dee’s right, we’re not moving, but we will come here whenever we’re able to, even if for a week or two at least a couple of times a year.”

“And you’re always welcome to join us whenever you are able to, Carol,” Dee said.

“You’re both too kind.” Carol gave them a shy smile. “I’m thinking that maybe if whatever college I go to has it, I might be interested in doing a semester here.”

“I want to do the same when I’m in college,” Bikky stated. “I think it would be really cool to go to school here. You’re so lucky, Dad. You got to do all your college here.”

“That’s because I wasn’t an exchange student and Yokohama National took international students full time,” Dee said. “I was also lucky to have Mother’s family pay for it. You’re both also lucky that we’ll pay for both of you if you want to study here for a semester, or maybe even going to college here.”

“Yeah, you know,” Ryo stated. “I’d miss you if you did do like Dee and go to college here, but I wouldn’t stop you, Bikky, if that’s what you want. We can afford it. But hell, I’d miss you if you went to college in New Haven.”

“Why would I want to go to New Haven for college?” Bikky asked, confused.

“I think Ryo meant that it’s pretty close to New York but he’ll miss you,” Carol said.

“There’s that,” Dee agreed with Carol, “but there’s also a nice little college there called Yale.”
They all looked as Ryo let out a snort. “Sorry, but I don’t think Yale gives basketball scholarships, but if they do, I’m willing to bet they still expect you to be super smart. Only the very best can get in Yale. I didn’t have a chance, even if I had a grandfather who was willing to pay if I was able to get in.”

“Oh, you would have gotten in if you wanted to,” Dee said. “And something tells me if Bikky said he wanted to, that would happen. I don’t see any university saying no to your grandfather.”

“Scary but true,” Ryo had to agree.

“But I don’t want to go to Yale. Or Harvard or any of those other preppy schools.”

“Any that you might think you want to go to?” Dee asked.

Bikky shrugged. “I dunno. Maybe NYU, and then I could still live at home. And I know they do exchange programs so I can take a semester here. And maybe UCLA would be cool, but I think I want to see if anyone offers me a basketball scholarship, so I’m not making any plans now.”

“For all we know you could end up in Indiana or something,” Dee said. “But you’ll still have a room with us for vacations.”

“If we’re not going to Japan for that time,” Ryo added. “But as long as we have that hotel, that room you picked today will also always be yours.”

“Cool!” Bikky replied and smiled.

“Okay, I think these two are done,” Ryo said. “Time to go and conquer the rest of dinner.”

When they returned inside, the food was being bought out. Various meat dishes were being bought out, from sliced Kobe beef to gyudon and a few nabe dishes. There was also tonkatsu pork and chicken, rolled beef and chicken with vegetables inside and various other beef, pork and chicken dishes. For all the courses, there was steamed rice and miso soup available. Sake, beer, green tea and soft drinks were also available throughout the evening.

The meal ended with selections of different cakes and custards looking like they came from the
fanciest cafes in Tokyo served in small portions so everyone could have more than one selection. There was also ice cream available upon request.

Everyone started to mingle more away from their seating once the meal was over. The traditional music was replaced by popular Japanese music and there was dancing between the tables and the front part inside the boat. Some of them dared karaoke, and Akira made sure that Dee, Ryo and Carol all sang at least one song. Ryo picked a song from his childhood, while Dee selected a popular song from the Oricon charts in the 80’s. Bikky managed to get out of having to sing, not knowing any songs in Japanese and too embarrassed to sing something in English, but still enjoyed watching everyone else, making sure there was plenty of pictures and videos, especially of his fathers when it was their turn. Carol chose a song from TKY52 that was one of her favorites, “Oogoe Diamond”, which made Dee look at Ryo with a wicked grin that Ryo returned while blushing. Carol did not know much Japanese to carry a conversation, but she did manage to learn the words to her favorite J-Pop songs and did very well. She turned beet red when everyone on the boat gave her a standing ovation when she was done.

Before they knew it, the boat was pulling in at the dock and the evening was over, and everyone was saying good night at the dock. Nobu went with Dee, Ryo and family back to the hotel, where they took whatever they needed for one more day in Kamakura from the penthouse and allowed Nobu to drive the van back to Akira’s house. Akira had already gone back home with the rest of her family who lived with her, taking Darin and Ryoko with her, planning to have the babies already settled for bed by the time the others made it back.

On the ride back, Nobu had stopped at another PA in Tokyo on the toll road, allowing Bikky and Carol to collect their stamps and explore a little before heading to Kamakura. Dee and Ryo were leaning against each other, comfortable in their seats and closed their eyes, ready for bed after the adventures of their long day, listening to Carol and Bikky talk about their day with Nobu. Both fell asleep by the time there were in Yokohama, with smiles on their faces.

They all definitely had a wonderful time in Tokyo and looked forward to many more days later in the week, especially after seeing where they would be staying.

OoOoOoO

October 25, 2006

Aoki Residence
Dee woke up late morning while Ryo was taking a shower. Ryo waited for Dee to shower and get dressed. When Dee entered the kitchen, Ryo had toast and coffee waiting for him.

They sat at the dinette set by the kitchen, deciding to have coffee and toast before heading over to the main house and join the others. Ryo had figured it was late enough that his grandmother already made breakfast for everyone else and didn’t want Akira to go through the extra trouble just because they woke up late.

“We’re missing babies,” Dee commented. “I assume Bikky took them to the main house?”

“I’m guessing so,” Ryo replied. “It was either Bikky, Carol or Obaasan. They most certainly did not leave on their own.” He smiled as he studied Dee, who was calmly drinking his coffee and took a bite of his toast. “You okay?”

“Yeah. If I wasn’t, I’d be rushing for the house. You?”

“The same. It’s not like it hadn’t happened before, even in New York.”

“Yeah. Either we really trust our family or we’re finally getting over it,” Dee said.

“You think so?” Ryo asked.

Dee lifted his coffee mug and had a drink before answering. “I think we are when we know our babies are with people we trust,” he replied. “Now leaving them in daycare or with a babysitter not in our family, I’m not sure. But we do need to start thinking about a nanny when we get back. I’ll be going back to work not long after, you know. I’m pretty sure I’m ready for it.”

“I think we need to make sure. At least we have Emiko willing to take them while we work until we find a nanny.” Ryo looked at Dee. “But it can’t be easy for her, starting a business with one small child not in school yet, and then taking on twin infants. I’m thinking that maybe when we look for a nanny, find one willing to take on four kids, so it will also give her some time to think just about Café Matcha. Her and Daito can go halves on paying the nanny, if they want, and if not, we’re still
going to have to pay for a nanny. So what if it’s a bit more for two more children? We can afford it.”

“I think that both Emiko and Daito were really helpful until we left for Japan, so I don’t mind if we pay the whole thing,” Dee replied.

“I’m glad you feel that way, because I keep thinking the same thing. It really made things easier for us, and I noticed the difference when they went back to Tokyo to pack up for their move. I’m grateful we had such a wonderful support system,” said Ryo.

“Me too. So, yes, we do need to start looking for a nanny, and we’re not going to take no for an answer to Emiko in getting the nanny to look after her kids too. That would also mean she wouldn’t have to always leave the café to pick up Shuuichi from kindergarten and have two kids hanging around while she works.”

“Sounds like we have a plan. We can start looking at CVs while we’re here. Nothing wrong with finding possibilities to check out further when we get back. We’ll be able to start meeting them and interviewing by the time we get back.”

“We can at least put out word for nannies. We can tell Mother when we talk to her. We’re still in agreement for her to put out word, right? Use the same services she uses to get help at the orphanage?”

“I agree. She would probably pre-screen before we get CVs, knowing her. She knows what she’s looking for and she knows us,” Ryo said.

“That is true.” Dee finished his coffee and sighed. “I think UCC is my favorite coffee. We should buy it regularly when we go to Mitsuwa. I missed it for a few years when I got back to New York before discovering Mitsuwa, along with other things, but I was only able to go shopping there once in a while.”

“Well now we can go every week or two to do normal shopping.”

“Whole Foods and Mitsuwa, huh?” Dee asked. “Yeah I can get on board with that. We still might have to hit up the Pathmark or Food Emporium or something for some normal things to stock in the cupboard.”
“True, but we’re not doing weekly shopping there. Okay?” Ryo asked.

“Okay.”

Ryo finished the last of his toast and coffee and looked at Dee. “Are we ready to hit up the main house and figure out what we’re doing today?”

“Sure. Hopefully we don’t walk in to find Obaasan making rice cereal or blending squash or something because Darin showed a sign that he’s getting ready to start on solids.”

Ryo laughed as he shook his head. “She might be excited but she went through enough children and grandchildren to know not to start feeding him tonight. Besides, Darin might have tried to grab at your food and made a chomping face, but he still can’t hold his head up enough yet. He’s getting there but not now.”

“Meanwhile Ryoko has started to sit up on her own for a while and keeps her head up really good in the last week. She would be the one ready to try solids on,” Dee said. “Are we going to give solids to each one as they are ready or do we wait until they are both ready?”

“I think we wait until they are both ready,” Ryo replied. He stood up and smiled down at Dee. “Ready to go see what we might have to deal with?”

Dee laughed as he stood up. “Probably the worst thing would be to pry babies from loving relatives, which isn’t so bad after all.”

OoOoOoO

They entered the house to find Nobu and Takehide getting ready for the office, Hoshi had left to go shopping, and Moriko was already in her shed working on her ceramics. Akira was clearing dishes from breakfast and smiled as they entered.

“Ohayo,” she greeted brightly.
“Ohayo,” Dee and Ryo replied in unison.

Takehide and Nobu said their hellos, wishing them a good day and left the house.

“So you want breakfast?” Akira asked.

“We had toast and coffee, Obāsan,” Ryo replied. “We’re good. Dee and I are planning to walk around a little soon and we can pick up something.” He noticed the twins in their playpen and smiled. “Look who’s awake,” he said. “Now how did they get here?”

“Bikky and Carol went in to check on them when we didn’t see you show up at breakfast and figured you’d want to sleep in, so they took the chibis out to stay with us,” Akira explained. “They are fed and dressed, in case you want to take them on your walk. Bikky and Carol left about a half hour ago. They are to meet their friends at the beach. Since you did not mention having any plans, I decided it was okay to let them go off on their own for a while. Bikky said he would call you later to check in. They are thinking of going to Yokohama with their friends this afternoon, but I said he would have to ask you first. Is that okay?” she asked.

“That’s fine, Obāsan. We’ve been running the kids all over the place to where we want to go since we got here, so I have no problem with them spending a day how they want,” Ryo replied, looking at Dee for confirmation.

“Sure. They know their way around Kamakura by now, and were exposed to the train system, so I’m good. I’m also thinking that since their friends grew up here, they would know how to get around too. I say when he calls and if they want to go to Yokohama, that’s cool. Let them have fun,” Dee replied.

“They took the bikes to the beach,” Akira said, watching as the two men went over to pick up a baby. “They could leave the bikes at the train station if they go to Yokohama.” With a teasing grin, she asked slyly, “I trust you know your way around here without getting lost?”

Ryo laughed and holding Darin went over to his grandmother and kissed her cheek. “Are you kidding? I grew up around here. I know it as well as I know New York.”

“It has been years before this trip,” she reminded him.
“I’m fine. Don’t worry. And while Dee did not do much walking around here when in college, but he does seem to know his way around. We’ll probably walk to Hase Station and back. Does that mean you don’t want to join us?” he asked.

“You boys also had been dragged around by me to all my favorite places. It’s good for the two of you to have some time to yourselves. If you prefer to make it a date day, I can watch the chibis. We’ll be here, watching dramas and anime.”

“You’re watching anime because of them?” Dee asked. “Please watch what you want and don’t worry about what they might like now.”

“Anime is very colorful, and some have music. It can be good for their stimuli.”

“That’s true,” Ryo agreed. “Just as long as your enjoying yourself.”

“Spending time with my darling grandbabies is all the enjoyment I need. Everything else is just a bonus,” she replied with a smile.

“Ryo and I were thinking about doing a date night tonight. It’s probably going to be our last until we come back from our road trip,” Dee said. “We don’t want to dump the chibis on you all day.”

Akira smiled at Dee. “Dei, I assure you it is no bother to have these darling little chibis all day.”

“I’m guessing you’re staying home today for the same reasons we slept in late,” Ryo said. “It was a late night to an extremely busy week. Figures that Bikky and Carol were up early and off running, while I’m up to a lazy day.”

Dee laughed. “For us, I’m willing to bet that the sake also kinda had something to do with our late morning, while the kids were off and running.”

“True,” Ryo said, “still, they’re both young and excited to be here, while we need a day to recharge.”
“At least that means still getting out a little. Any ideas where you plan to go for your date night?” Akira asked.

“Not sure,” Ryo replied as he placed Darin on the floor next to his sister. Dee was settled on the floor next to her and watching as she sat up on the floor, looking around. He put Darin down on his back and grabbed onto the baby’s hands. As Dee watched, he pulled the baby up into a sitting position. Dee had to place a hand behind his head to keep it from falling back too far and then watched as the baby moved his head up and kept it there as Ryo got him in place. He managed to keep his head up for a few minutes before it drooped forward.

“He’s getting there, but he’s not ready yet,” Dee commented.

Akira joined them, sitting on a cushion and watched them. “Even if Ryoko isn’t showing signs for solid food like Darin did last night, and this morning, she is closer to ready. I think by sometime next month, we could try solids on them. All I ask is if it does happen while you’re in Japan, that you wait until I am around. I can have Maria on Skype so she could be part of the big moment. Or if you wait until you’re back in New York, I can be on Skype.”

“Of course, Obāsan,” Ryo replied with a smile. “We would love to have both of you part of the big day, no matter where we are by then.” He looked at the twins who were still in a sitting position. “It does look like it’ll be in Japan. Dee and I need to figure out what will it be, but we have a few weeks, at least to work on that.”

“For now,” Dee added, “I think we need to start getting them used to high chairs. If we can do that, it will be easier when eating out.”

“Easier when eating period,” Ryo said. “Except when we’re having dinner traditional style around here, that is. But last night you had the right idea, which is why I did the same thing and put Ryoko on my lap.”

“You can put them on your laps, or you can also try to get them to sit up,” Akira suggested. “When we’re here, I can take out the seats with backs. Or just let them wiggle on their mats.”

“We can also just keep them in their basinet or playpen when we’re eating at home, no matter what type of table we’re eating at,” Dee said.

“That is possible too,” Akira said. “But they are getting to the age that it is healthy for their well-
being to be part of the family in normal activities.”

“Meaning joining us at the table when the family is eating,” Dee commented. “In the orphanage there really isn’t room for that, so the babies are in the nursery while the older kids eat. I didn’t think about a normal family during eating time.”

“That’s what I’m here for. Each and everyone one of my babies sat at the table with us, and passed that onto them when they got older. You were always at the table whenever we ate, Ryo. As was Tsubasa and all my other grandchildren. I didn’t say anything in New York because they were still too young to start sitting up.”

“And now they are, and getting ready to eat so now is the time to tell us about it,” Ryo said. “We do appreciate the parenting tips.”

“Between you and Mother, we’ll have no doubts about raising these two,” Dee said. “Thank you.”

“It is my job, Dei. No need to thank me.”

“Still, Obaasan, don’t ever think we aren’t grateful,” said Dee.

They sat with Akira for a half hour, playing with the twins before they headed out for a while. They walked to the Hase Station. Instead of finding a place to eat, they decided they could hold out, so they went into the station and waited for the train and got off at the Kamakura Station. They ended up walking along Komachi Street. The street was a major shopping street and open only for pedestrians. They found somewhere to eat and even did some shopping, including getting some things for friends and family back in New York. Bikky called while they were in a shop, saying he was having a great time with his friends and asked if he and Carol could go to Yokohama with them.

“Are they going to Yokohama?” Dee asked as Ryo closed the call.

“Yeah. He also said they are going to invade Yuki’s place for noodles,” Ryo said with a smirk. “Bikky didn’t say invade, but with seven teenagers, that seems like an invasion.” He started to laugh.

“Do you think I should call Yuki and give him a head’s up?” Dee asked, looking amused. “Or maybe it would be fun to see what happens when our son suddenly shows up with all his friends?”
“Yuki should be used to family invasions,” Ryo replied. “Just because it’s our son instead of my cousins doesn’t make it different. He’ll handle it.”

“Yeah, okay. You’re right,” Dee agreed, also looking amused. He looked at the time. “Should we start heading back or do you want to stay out a little longer?”

“I’m having fun,” Ryo replied. “It is like a date day. If you’re up to more walking, then I’ll call Obāsan and see if she’s up to keeping the chibis for a couple of hours more.”

“As long as she’s good with it,” Dee replied.

Ryo called his grandmother, and she sounded pleased to spend more time with the twins. Before hanging up, she told Ryo to call her if they were not going to be home for dinner, and she wouldn’t mind it if they did.

They walked around for a few more hours, looking at more temples and shrines, as well as shops. They walked down narrow residential streets, appreciating the styles of the buildings that was unique to Japan. It was a beautiful day and as much as they enjoyed doing things with their family, it was nice to have the time for themselves. Ryo suspected his grandmother felt the same way for them. She had mentioned it enough times while she was in New York, but it was only recently that they started to spend time away from the twins. His grandmother also felt that was good, and Ryo had to agree with her. It was another reason why Ryo was glad for this trip – they had taken a first step the last time they were at the MacLean estate, but they had taken more steps in Japan, even if it had been only a week and they had plenty of time with their family.

They got back to Akira’s house before it was time to start making dinner. Bikky and Carol arrived not long after, talking about their solo day out in Japan without adults. It was obvious they had a great day. Bikky and Carol continued to talk about their day throughout dinner, prompted by questions from the others in the house.

Later in the evening after they got the twins ready for bed, Dee and Ryo went out for drinks in Kamakura but did not stay out too late. Bikky and Carol decided to spend the rest of the night home with the adults.

Chapter End Notes
I really hope I described the yakatabune enough, but still, if you haven't seen one, you can go here: https://www.google.com/search?q=yakatabune&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwis2p7z2bLVAhXp6YMHTARBo6for images, and click on all if you want more information about them. I was lucky enough to experience a yakatabune cruise and hope to do so again when I go back to Japan for a vacation.

The NTT Docomo building broke ground just after I left Japan in 1997, but I came across it in a Shōgo Hamada video and then found it on Google Maps, and really looking forward to seeing it. Here is link: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NTT_Docomo_Yoyogi_Building.

If there's something mentioned in this chapter, or even a previous one that you want to know what it means, or what, where it is, let me know and I'll point you to it.
Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

The travellers get to watch a new idol band do a performance.

October 26, 2006
Laytner-MacLean Penthouse
Tokyo New Crown Star Hotel
Roppongi Hills, Tokyo, Japan

The next morning, they headed to Tokyo to check into the hotel. Not long before they left, their belongings were put into a van and taken to the hotel. Everything was in the penthouse when they arrived and the family spend some time putting everything away and getting used to the penthouse.

After having a light lunch brought up from one of the restaurants, they went to Shibuya for a couple of hours before going back to the hotel to get ready for the evening. Akira arrived with Nobu, Hoshi and Moriko. Moriko was going to stay at the penthouse to watch Ryoko and Darin, because it was previously decided that having the babies in the theater wasn’t a great idea. They took a cab to Ginza, where they were to meet with Akira’s nephew, Hachiro and his son, Kenichi.

Hachiro had spent all his adult life performing in kabuki, just as his father had, and eventually got into Kabukiza. He was delighted when at a young age, Kenichi said he wanted to become an actor in kabuki just like his father. Kenichi had even taken lessons from his father and grandfather since he was a child and was even invited to perform “Renjishi” with his father when he was ten. “Renjishi” is a dance of two lions, a father and cub, and it mostly performed by real life fathers and sons. The father had a long white mane and the son a long red one. The dance becomes a test of strength as they start whirling their hair around as part of the dance. He appeared on stage again at 13. It was a special performance where he was given his name that he would use in kabuki.

At age 20, Hachiro and his wife moved to Kyoto, where he got a job in a small kabuki hall, taking many of the leading roles. The year before, Kenichi auditioned for the Kabukiza and was hired, and moved back to Tokyo. The company was looking for another father and son team for “Renjishi”, which was one of the reasons Kenichi auditioned. Not only would he would get to perform on the stage of the most famous kabuki theater in Tokyo, but he would be able to perform with his father again, this time almost daily. Hachiro and Kenichi took center stage for “Renjishi”. In the other acts,
they took supporting actor parts, but each also had one act where they were the main character. Keniichi’s wife wasn’t happy about it and was upset when he auditioned. She had said she was not interested in moving back to Tokyo. She loved Kyoto and decided to stay. They never divorced, but they were very much living their own lives. They had a four-year-old son, Toma, and was the only reason Keniichi would come to Kyoto in the past year whenever he was able. Sometimes his son would stay with him in Tokyo, where he lived with Hachiro and his wife, Yoko. Both Hachiro and Keniichi would start giving Toma lessons, hoping that one day in the next few years, Keniichi would dance “Renjishi” with Toma.

When they arrived at the Kabukiza, Hachiro was waiting outside the theater. Keniichi arrived shortly after. They followed Hachiro and Keniichi inside, where Dee, Ryo, Bikky and Carol were given a tour and introduced to some of the other actors in the production before they went out to the lobby to meet with Akira, Nobu and Hoshi and waited with the other theater goers for the doors to open. Being that Akira, Nobu and Hoshi had already been given the tour and met the actors several times, Akira thought it best that only the visitors to Tokyo take the tour. Ryo, of course, had also done the tour a couple of times, once as a child and the other while he was station at Camp Zama, but Akira thought that Ryo would want to do the tour again with his uncle and cousin as his family got their first chance. Dee was no stranger to kabuki, but he never knew anyone on the inside to see behind the scenes. Dee had been looking forward to seeing kabuki again in Tokyo, but when he heard that they were getting a quick tour before the theater opened, he got excited.

During the tour Bikky and Carol expressed concern of not being able to understand what was going on, but Hachiro assured them that there were earphones available that translated and explained the action so non-Japanese speakers could follow along. He already had made arrangements for Bikky and Carol to receive the earphones when they entered the theater again for the performance. The translator did not talk through the entire performance, and the narrative was mostly timed during moments when there was no speech. It gave the opportunity of enjoying the performance in Japanese, but still understand what was said and to follow along with the action.

They were escorted back to the lobby to wait for when the doors would open. The adults got drinks while they waited and soft drinks for Bikky and Carol. Everyone enjoyed the acts so far, and much to Dee’s and Ryo’s surprise, Bikky did not get bored. The teen was laughing along with everyone else, and seemed mesmerized by the colorful costumes and make-up. He did joke once, saying that Dee most probably got interested in kabuki because of KISS. Dee gave him a look, stating that he was introduced to kabuki by Mother, of all people, who had interests in the arts of many cultures. Then he added, that it was the other way around. He started listening to the outrageous rock band because of the make-up they wore, which reminded him of kabuki. During the intermission after the second act, Akira and Ryo went to get bento boxes to bring back to their box for everyone to enjoy until the start of the third act. Dee and Nobu went to get drinks.

After the performance, they went to an upscale steak restaurant where they had drinks until Hachiro and his wife, Yoko, and Keniichi joined them for dinner. They all ordered wagyu beef sets. For once, even Bikky ordered the most expensive cut on the menu, and they managed to talk Carol into getting the same. The restaurant they went to was known for their wagyu Kobe beef, and each order was almost $100 in yen. They had the beef one night at Akira’s house, and the enjoyed the beef very
much, but the beef they had that night was elevated. As they finished their meal, Bikky asked if they
could come back to that restaurant again. Dee and Ryo quickly agreed that they definitely would.

After dinner, Dee and Ryo allowed Bikky and Carol to go off on their own for a while after
checking that they had their phones with them, and making them promise to call if they couldn’t find
their way back to the hotel. Akira insisted that Dee and Ryo stay out instead of going back to the
penthouse for the night.

Dee and Ryo decided to go back to the penthouse with Akira, Nobu and Hoshi, but did not go up
with Ryo’s family. They gave Akira one of their keycards to get into the penthouse and then walked
the few blocks to go to Hide’s club for a few hours.

Hide was surprised but pleased to see them, and led them into the VIP lounge. It was still early for
the club, but there were some customers having drinks and watching videos, or having a late dinner.
The kitchen in Hide’s club was open until midnight and prided itself on serving American style food.
Hide’s executive chef was from Los Angeles. She had studied in the Culinary Institute of America in
Los Angeles, before going first to France to study French cooking and then had an opportunity to go
to Japan to study the art of washoku cooking. Teresa fell in love with both Japan and one of her
fellow students, who was Japanese and decided to stay in Tokyo. Shortly after her decision to stay
after finishing her classes, she applied for a job to work the kitchen in Club Born in the USA. Hide
was so impressed with her credentials that he hired her as executive chef, requesting that she bring
the best of American bar food to his club.

About a half hour later, Yuki and Jae-Hwa arrived and joined them. Not long after, Ken arrived.
Hide, who had been dealing with some club business returned to the VIP lounge, but did not sit
down. Dee leaned over so Ryo could hear him as he spoke.

“Hey, me and the guys are going to get a little more practice in for Saturday night, if that’s okay with
you,” Dee said.

“Since everyone else is here, I guess Hide pulled Ken in from whatever he was doing?” Ryo asked.

“Probably. When we got here, Hide suggested that we practice a little and he was calling the other
two. We won’t be too long. Maybe a half hour.”

“Is that going to be enough time?” Ryo asked.
“All we need to do is make sure we aren’t stepping on each other’s feet or knocking someone over. We’re not going pro. We just want to have fun and maybe get some cheering from your family.”

Ryo laughed and briefly kissed Dee. “You just want to become a Japanese pop star, and since this is the closest you’ll get to it, go knock yourself out. I’ll hang out with Jae-Hwa until you’re all done. Take whatever time you need. We have all night.”

“Thanks, Ryo.” Dee smirked as Hide, Ken and Yuki started to laugh. He returned the kiss and stood up to join his friends, and they left the VIP area.

OoOoOoO

Dee and Ryo left as the late-night crowd started to trickle in and the music would get louder because they did not want Ryo’s family to head back to Kamakura so late, even if Nobu insisted it would be nothing new for them. Bikky and Carol were already back and getting ready for bed when they arrived in the penthouse and after the family left, decided the kids had a good idea. It was best for an early start the next day, wanting to go to other areas of Tokyo before it was time to head back to Hide’s club in the late afternoon and watch the idol group practice. Ryo suspected Carol wanted to get to bed early so the next day would arrive sooner and she could watch the idols do a run through of their show.

Dee did decide to talk to Maria before joining Ryo for a bath. The next morning they would check in with their friends in New York before spending the day showing Bikky and Carol around Tokyo.

OoOoOoO

October 27, 2006

Laytner-MacLean Penthouse
They had left the hotel in the early morning and spent the day walking some of the streets of Midtown and Asakasa, which included the area around Akasaka Palace. Akasaka Palace was built as an Imperial Palace for the Crown Prince in the early 20th century, and currently also known as the Guest State House, providing accommodations for visiting dignitaries. The main building was designed to resemble Buckingham Palace, looking out of place with its Western Neo-Baroque architecture style and being the only building in Japan having that style.

They went to the Toyokawa Inari Tokyo Betsuin, a Buddhist temple that was the Tokyo location, with the main temple in Toyokawa in Aichi Prefecture. They went up to Shinjuku for some shopping. Once again, Dee and Ryo let Bikky and Carol pick where to eat. The choice was an Italian café. Bikky and Carol decided they wanted to try Italian food in Tokyo. Ryo knew of some upscale restaurants that served Italian food more or less as they were used to, but this café wasn’t one of them. It was an affordable café that served whole pizza and some pasta dishes. Both Dee and Ryo were aware of what they were going to get at this place, and that was the Japanese version of Italian food, but Bikky and Carol seemed to have no idea.

At first while looking at the menu, which included pictures, both Bikky and Carol were amazed at many ingredients on the pizza, and while the two so far was adventurous in trying new food they did not encounter, they did not seem to try something so different from the type of pizza they were used to. They settled on a simple cheese pizza for the four to share, and couple of pasta dishes including with the pasta chicken parmesan and meatballs.

The pizza came out first and Dee started to smirk at the faces before him as Bikky and Carol looked at their pizza. He heard Ryo softly clear his throat and looked over to find Ryo smiling at him with a knowing look.

“Good?” Dee asked, still wearing a smirk.

Bikky shrugged as he swallowed his latest bite.

“It tastes weird,” Carol said. “Not what I was expecting.”

Ryo started to laugh suddenly, causing Darin and Ryoko to squeal with excitement and giggle.
“Do you two find it funny too?” Dee asked the twins, looking amused.

“Biks? What about you?” Ryo asked.

“It does taste weird. It’s not a bad weird, but it just doesn’t taste like what I thought it would,” Bikky replied. He studied his fathers. “You both knew it, didn’t you?”

“Did either of you eat here before?” Carol asked.

“No, not here,” Dee replied. “But places like this, yeah.”

“Same with me,” Ryo admitted. “If you want Italian food like you’re used to while in Japan, you need to eat in places that hired chefs who studied in Italy. This place serves the Japanese version of Italian, which is different.”

“I’ll say,” Carol agreed.

Dee chuckled and reached out to grab onto Darin’s fingers. Both infants were in highchairs at the table, and Darin was again reaching toward the table as if he wanted to grab the food. “Sorry, little guy. We’ll have to go through this again in a few years when you’re old enough,” he said to Darin.

Ryoko was content banging a plush cube that had caught her attention while they were looking at some stores earlier, so Dee and Ryo bought a cube for each baby. Ryoko had not let go of it yet, and found it a source of amusement, judging by the giggles and sounds coming from her. Darin kept a grip on his while he was in the stroller, but was willing to let go of it when he was lifted to be placed in the high chair. He seemed to be more interested in watching everyone as they ate.

Looking back to his oldest son, Dee said, “The secret ingredient for tomato sauce for most Japanese is catsup.”

“What? Really?” Bikky exclaimed, while Carol started to laugh. “How come Obāsan’s doesn’t take like this? I never saw her use catsup.”
Obāsan lived in California for around 15 years, and learned how to cook some dishes we have in America, especially like they do in Southern California,” Ryo replied. “And the ones she didn’t know, she makes her Japanese version for the family here in Japan, but while she was staying with us, remember she had me and Dee show her how to make some Italian dishes. Some were new dishes and others she needed a refresher course in. The reason was she wanted to serve Italian food like we have in New York to the family once in a while.”

“Oh, yeah. Oh yeah,” Bikky said thoughtfully. “She would be in the kitchen watching you cook.”

“And then we had her do some of the cooking too,” Dee added. “The trick is not to think of this as something you would have in New York. Just think of it as some new Japanese food. I think you’ll like it a whole lot more.”

“Did this happen to you, Dads?” Bikky asked both his fathers.

“No,” Ryo replied. “Actually, for me, it was the opposite. Even my Mom would still make Italian food like the Japanese do and I grew up eating it. She preferred it over the way Obāsan would make it, especially when we were living mostly in Kamakura. So, the first time I went over to a friend’s house to eat, it wasn’t what I was expecting. Especially since my friend’s family was Italian. Living in New York, I eventually got used to it, but I also remembered what to expect when you said you wanted to eat here.”

“I’m with the kids,” Dee said with a laugh. “I really thought I hated Italian food in Japan at first, but once I stopped thinking Italian and saw it as Japanese, I started to appreciate it.”

“We can afford to hit up a real Italian restaurant while we’re here, if you want, if you find yourself wanting a break from Japanese food,” Ryo stated.

“Maybe,” Bikky replied. “Just to say we had it, I guess. Just like I can say I had this and boy, it wasn’t what I was expecting!” He started to laugh and took his second slice from the platter and had a bite. “Yeah, okay. It still tastes weird, but I can’t say I hate it. It’s okay.”

“Just think that you’re having another Japanese meal in Tokyo when the rest of the food comes out,” Ryo suggested. “It’s really very good once you get past the differences.”

“I’ll do that,” Carol stated and finished her first slice.
Ryo put her second slice on her small platter. “Start with your second slice. As soon as they see the empty pizza pan, the rest of our food should be out soon.”

When they left the café, Bikky and Carol still wasn’t sure what to think of the food they had, but they said they were willing to give it another try during their stay, and if nothing else, at least they had the experience of having Japanese style Italian food. While they were willing to try everything, that did not mean they liked everything, and had come across some things they had no desire to eat again.

They walked around Shinjuku Station before getting on a train to head back to Roppongi Hills. As Carol got dressed in the dress she had been waiting to wear, Hoshi and Moriko arrived with Tsubasa and Kumi. Moriko’s daughter Miyoko met her mother at the hotel, bringing her fiancé, Harumi. Also, meeting them at the hotel was Risa, who was just as excited as Carol about the opportunity, and her brother Shusuke and his wife also joined them. The group was in a great mood as they walked to Hide’s club.

At the club, not only was Hide there, but Yuki with Jae-Hwa and Ken with his wife, along with a few other friends of theirs, including two that Dee also knew from college and was pleased to see them a day earlier than he expected. While planning the party, Akira had made sure that Yuki, Hide and Ken invited any friends of theirs from college and their families to the party the next evening, wanting Dee to have more friends of his present. She wanted him to meet the family, but did not want him to feel isolated surrounded by so many of Ryo’s relatives and hoped that having friends of his from his time in Japan would prevent that.

Hide led them from the club up the stairs to the hall they were going to use for the group’s performances. The hall was set up with rows of chairs for the guests and the back half had tables set up on platforms so anyone sitting at a table could see over the heads of those sitting in chairs. The hall was still not finished, but it already looked very nice. Over the tables was a balcony with more seats and along the sides, boxes were being finished. Hide pointed out what was finished and what still needed work. The seats still needed to be installed on the balcony, and in the back they were working on an area for standing room. Each box already had five chairs installed and there was going to be an oval table behind the chairs. The boxes were for groups willing to spend the money, and guests who had purchased a box for a performance could sit at the table or chairs. Food from the club’s kitchen could be ordered and delivered to the box, along with drinks. The menu was going to include the American items from the club’s menu, along with a Japanese menu. Hide was currently interviewing chefs for the Japanese menu.

The idols, who were called the Rainbow Over Roppongi, were behind the seats, gathered around Toshido, listening as he spoke. One look at the group and it was easy to pick them out as an idol group.

Carol’s mouth opened as she gazed at the idols. There were sixteen in the group, eight males and
eight females. Their age range seemed to go from 14 to young 20’s. They were all dressed as if for a real performance. No one had identical outfits. The girls had skirts and tops in the same style but in different colors and their accessories varied. Some had bows in their hair, while others had tiny top hats. Some of the girls wore colorful ties around their necks, and others wore scarves. Their stockings which went up to their thighs also varied, some in stripes, while others had solids with designs on them. They all wore the same style boots but in different colors to complement the colors of their shirts and tops. The jackets that were short in the front going to long in the back that completed their outfits were in the same style as the long coats the boys wore. Like the girls, the shirts and pants that the boys wore were in different colors. Some wore pullover shirts while others wore buttoned shirts, some had ties and others didn’t. They wore trainers instead of boots, in various colors. The shirts and pants were of individual tastes but what pulled them together as a group and tied them to the girls’ outfits were the long coats, each boy’s coat a different color. All the members’ clothes had some glitter and rhinestones, especially on the jackets and coats.

Toshido finished his talk and clapped his hands. The others cheered, throwing their hands up in the air. With a nod to his team, Toshido turned and upon noticing them, came over. With a big smile, he stopped before Dee. “You must be Dee-san” he said in heavily accented English. “I’ve seen pictures of you and was looking forward to finally meeting you. Hide speaks very highly of you.” He bowed before Dee and then held out his hand for a handshake. “Do you mind if I call you Dee-san? I feel like I know you.”

“You can call me just Dee, if you want,” Dee said returning the handshake. “I’ve heard a lot of good things about you, too.”

Dee introduced everyone with him to Toshido, except for Kumi and Tsubasa, who had met him at one of the events Hide had invited them to attend. Once the introductions were done, Toshido introduced each of the idols.

“Please make yourselves comfortable and hopefully enjoy our show,” Toshido said as he led the group to the front rows of the seats. He took out a pad and started to tear off sheets, handing them to everyone present. “If you do not mind, please fill this out after we are done. It will help us be ready for our opening in December. If there are some Christmas elements in today’s performance, please remember when our opening is.”

“After the show, I hope everyone can stay, because we will be providing a meal from the club’s kitchen, plus Yuki’s noodle soup,” Hide said. “I thought a little socializing with these up and coming stars would be good. Toshido is very excited for you to get to know the members of our soon-to-be big idols.”

Carol nodded her head vigorously, and then looked at Dee and Ryo in question.
“Yes, we would love to stay,” Ryo replied. “We didn’t make any plans for the rest of the day.”

“Yeah, we could always find something to do at the moment, if needed. So, we’re good,” Dee said.

“Please be truthful with your critiques. If there is room for improvement, we need to know,” Toshido requested.

“We’re here to help,” said Dee, “so we’ll be truthful, even if I might be painful.”

Toshido bowed. “We all thank you very much. Now if you will excuse me, I need to get the show started. Thank you again for coming.”

With another bow, he headed for the stage with the group following.

OoOoOoO

Rainbow Over Roppongi put on a fantastic show. They were lively, in step and pleasant as they danced and sang. All the members were excellent singers, making it known because each of them had a chance to sing solo for a few lines throughout the songs. The best thing about them was every member was having a good time as they went through the songs.

When they were done and the house lights came on, everyone felt like they had just witnessed a professional idol group doing a show for a large audience. Nobody was able to just sit and watch them. There was clapping and cheering throughout the performance and everyone was on their feet, cheering when the group finished the last number and did their bows. Anything they had to say about the performance being less than perfect was merely nitpicking, just to give Toshido some input other than how amazing the show was.

Ryo had even admitted so as he handed Toshido his completed critique form. Carol and the women happily agreed with Ryo. Dee asked them when was their CD scheduled to come out because he wanted it. Toshido gave a cryptic little smile for an answer and excused himself, stating that he would be back shortly with the members of Rainbow Over Roppongi.

Hide took everyone to the tables, where there were now place settings for a meal. Everyone was talking excitedly about the group they had just saw, all agreeing that they would pay to go see them again several times.
The group joined them at the tables, wearing street clothes and came over to talk to their guests. Many of them knew only a little English, but there were enough bi-linguals within their group to make conversation possible for Bikky and Carol.

As Hide’s wait staff entered bringing the first of their meal, Toshido joined them, his hands full of CD cases.

“Our mini-CD is done and waiting for next month’s release,” he said. “With some luck, we can produce interest to come to our show if we can get radio play. Even better would be to be on the Oricon chart, even if at the bottom.”

“Oh, I’m certain it will be at the top of the charts by the time you open,” Carol gushed. “I had trouble finding anything bad to say about them. And I just loved the songs. That is why I can’t wait for the CD to come out, because I want to buy it.”

Toshido smiled and bowed. “I thank you for your very kind words, Carol. But there is no need to buy them. When our full CD is done, I will make sure Dee gets copies to give to anyone who wants it.”

“I want Emiko to get one,” Ryo said. “Emiko is my cousin who moved to New York last month, but is still very much into Japanese pop music. I know she would love it and go to a show the next time she is in Tokyo.”

Tsubasa nodded his head in agreement. “Yes, my sister would love these songs very much.”

“If we are still open by then,” Toshido remarked humbly.

“You will,” Hoshi assured him. “Not only are they exceptionally good, but having boys and girls in a pop idol group is not very common, which makes them stand out. I look forward to seeing them have much success in the future.”

“I am glad you think so. Please, take one of our mini-CDs, compliments of our group. If there is anyone you think would like one, take extras, even if they live in America. The group will mostly perform only here at the hall, but it is my hope that they could have an international following, even if to buy their CDs,” Toshido explained.
“I’m going to make sure that at least all my friends at school hear it,” Carol said with a smile. “Oh, I can’t wait for Lass to hear it. I know she’s going to love it and be so jealous that I got to see them before their first big public performance. Thank you so much, Toshido-san!”

“I am going to make sure all my friends listen, and I know they will be buying the CD when it comes out,” Risa said. “And then we’ll all come to see them again next month when this place is open, Toshido-san. Thank you for sharing this.” She bowed to Toshido.

“It is I who thank you,” Toshido said humbly and returned her bow.

Hide came over to Dee, pulling him away from everyone else. “Dee, since you have no plans for the rest of the night, do you think Ryo would allow you to slip away for a while after we eat for some more practice? Tomorrow is the big night, you know.”

Dee laughed. “Yeah, but it won’t be our debut,” he said. “Well, it will be to the crowd at the party, but nothing we haven’t done before.”

“It’s been a long time,” Hide said with a smile. “We’ll consider this our reunion performance. One night only.”

Dee laughed more. “Gotcha. Yeah, sure. I’ll check with Ryo, but I’m sure he won’t have any problem with me slipping away for an hour or so. We’re thinking of cutting Bikky and Carol loose to do whatever they want for the rest of the night when things break off here.”

“Then why don’t you and Ryo come to my house for a while. I can show your husband embarrassing video of us from college,” Hide said.

“You still have them?” Dee asked. “Geez, I forgot that you and Ken took a lot of video during the time.”

“Still have those tapes from the camcorder,” Hide said. “I really should see about getting them digitalized. Then I can send them to you so you can have them. Ken also has his. I should ask if I can borrow them when I get mine converted to digital.”
“We have some of our karaoke nights on video, don’t we?” Dee asked.

“More than some,” Hide said. “And performances we did for school festivals.” Hide smiled at his friend. “And don’t forget our videos for our two big hits. And TV appearances.” He started to laugh. “You know, if we really wanted to, we could have been huge stars performing at stadiums and even Tokyo Dome by now.”

“Well, we were one hit wonders. Okay two hit wonders,” Dee replied, “but that wasn’t a bad thing. Unexpected for sure, but it was fun while it lasted. Yes, we could have gone on, if that was what we wanted.” He shrugged. “Oh well, we had our chance but blew it. But at least we get to perform once again in front of people tomorrow night.”

“That is true,” Hide said. “Which is fine with me.

“Let me talk to Ryo then,” Dee said. “I’ll let you know as soon as I get the okay from my better half. Oh, before I forget, remember that I never told Ryo or the rest of the family anything about our brush with fame.”

“I should leave out the singles tonight?” Hide asked.

“How about saving the videos for another time. We are planning to do one of our hits, so let’s see if anyone figures it out tomorrow night,” Dee suggested.

Hide started to laugh. “Oh, you never change, Dee,” he exclaimed. “Yes, I think I like that idea. It was ideas like that that made us top the Oricon charts.” He winked at Dee. “Then at some other time before you go back to New York, we’ll have video night.”

“How about if we have video night, I can see if I can reserve the media room in the hotel?” Dee asked. “It’s a nice little theater room with comfortable chairs, a big screen, nice sound system that can fit up to 50. We can even order food to be delivered.”

Hide nodded. “We can invite whoever from Ryo’s family and even some of our friends, if they want.”

“Ryo is looking at us funny, so I guess it’s time to join everyone else until it’s time to go rehearse,” Dee said.
Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

The chapter where Momo and Dafydd return to our story.

It's party time, and the family is in for a huge shock.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

CHAPTER TEN

October 28, 2016

Hard Rock Café

Roppongi, Minato

Japan

The night before, after they allowed Bikky and Carol to go off on their own, Dee and Ryo decided to go to a supermarket and get some groceries for the penthouse. They did not get too much, because they knew there would be eating out while they were out exploring Tokyo. There were also the restaurants in the hotel that they could eat in or order food up to the penthouse. As much as they enjoyed eating out, they knew there would be at least a couple of times that having a home-cooked meal while in the penthouse would be practical, so they got some groceries that the penthouse wasn’t already stocked with. They also decided that it would be nice to make breakfast the next morning.

So, when Bikky and Carol woke up and joined them in the kitchen, they discovered Dee and Ryo making chocolate chip macadamia pancakes with coconut syrup, along with fresh fruit and grilled ham steak. After having their breakfast on the patio, they got ready for the day. The family had plans to go out for a few hours, staying in the area, and then go back to the hotel to meet up with Akira and get ready for the party.

Since it was a clear, sunny day, their first stop was Tokyo Tower to go up to the Special Observatory, knowing Bikky and Carol were looking forward to it. They stopped first at the Main Observatory, having a second chance for photos from that floor. Visibility was the best it could be, and they were able to see most of Tokyo. The view was even better from the Special Observatory.
Judging from the excited exclamations coming from Bikky and Carol, they were extremely happy with the views that day. On the way down, Bikky and Carol wanted to stop on the Foot Town roof and ride the mechanical animals again for a while. This time Dee and Ryo did not go on any, but enjoyed watching the teens have fun and making sure there were plenty of pictures and videos.

From Tokyo Tower, they walked back to Roppongi to have lunch at the Hard Rock Café. Bikky and Carol wanted to go to a Hard Rock that was not in New York and kept asking about the one in Tokyo, so since they were in the area at lunch time, it seemed to be a good time to go in. Unfortunately, Dee and Ryo did not think that decision through. When they first entered, Darin started to get a little fussy, but then settled down. Ryoko woke up from her sleep when they entered. Right after they ordered their meals, Darin started to fret again and then started to cry. It set off Ryoko and both babies could not be consoled. With a sigh, Dee realized what was wrong and from the look on Ryo’s face, it was obvious his husband did too. The loud boisterous lunch crowd combined with the loud music seemed to be too much for both infants. Dee and Ryo ended up asking to get their food to go, telling Bikky and Carol they could stay and finish their lunch, and then meet them back at the hotel when they were finished. Ryo and Dee took the twins outside and waited until Carol came out to tell them their food was ready. Dee went inside with Carol to pick up his and Ryo’s lunch and pay the bill.

Dee and Ryo walked back to the hotel, knowing they would have to reheat their food but didn’t worry about it. They almost cancelled their meals and go to one of the other restaurants close by to have lunch and then meet Bikky and Carol, but they didn’t feel right cancelling since it was likely that their food was already being prepared.

Back at the penthouse, they settled in the conservatory with Darin and Ryoko happily in their bouncy chairs while they had their lunch. When Bikky and Carol called, they met the two in the hotel lobby to walk around the area some more, going on smaller side streets that both adults had not been on in a long time until it was time to go back to the hotel and meet Akira.

October 28, 2016

Tokyo New Crown Star Hotel

Minato Ward, Tokyo, Japan
Within the best and largest ballroom of the Tokyo New Crown Star Hotel, Ryo sat with Akira and some of his closest relatives at the table of honor.

The ballroom Akira had chosen for the party was unique to the other ballrooms in the hotel. The hotel managed to book many events and parties, making it the first choice of organizations and companies because of its unique shell design that many of the other hotels in Tokyo did not have. The hotel consisted of two buildings. The main building was 31 floors. Along with a 3-level lobby with various stores, it also had the suites and ultra-deluxe rooms, the boardrooms and even had 1 to 3-bedroom apartments for lease.

The second building was 29 floors plus the grand ballroom on the roof. It had regular and economy rooms. The mall extended into that building but on the first floor it also had an onsen for the guests. Anyone staying at the hotel could use it, but its main purpose was because the rooms in the second building only had showers in the rooms’ bathrooms.

On the roof of the second building was the shell shaped extension of the ballroom that started in the main building, connecting the two buildings, facing toward Tokyo Tower and Tokyo Bay, with beautiful views of the city.

Akira had booked only the shell portion of the ballroom for the party that was entered through a hallway going along the section in the main building. She could have booked the entire ballroom, but it would have been too large for the number of guests. The shell section was also a bit more than she needed, but when planning the party, she wanted it to be special. To find out the best ballroom in Tokyo was in the same hotel that Ryo and Dee owned was a plus. Had the best been somewhere else, that was where she would have booked for the party, along with a block of hotel rooms for the out of town guests. She requested the block to be in the second building with the cheaper rooms. The rooms were smaller, but still elegantly decorated. Upon arriving at the hotel that day, she discovered that the immediate family members were upgraded to the suites in the main building.

At the table of honor, some of Ryo’s cousins came over who were seeing the twins for the first time. Currently the twins were being passed around while Ryo’s female cousins exclaimed in Japanese and English on how cute and adorable they were. The men were making funny faces and noises when it was their turn to take one of the twins in their arms, talking to them in Japanese.

Ryo smirked as he heard once again how much Darin looked like Dee but Japanese.

Dee had been sitting next to him until a few minutes ago when Hide came up to him, saying that one of their college friends had just arrived at the ballroom and was with Yuki and Ken on the terrace. Dee had followed Hide across the large room to the wall of windows made to look like the shell’s opening, giving the amazing view of the city, to welcome one of his university friends. Akira had contacted Dee’s friends, inviting not only them but extending the invitation to any other friends from
their college days that they were still in touch with, and would like to see Dee again. Bikky and Carol were with the group of teens around their age that they befriended during their first week in Japan joined by some of the cousins who were their age. The teens knew English to make the new friendships go smoothly. There was one 12-year-old brother of one of the friends that Ryo noticed was trailing the group who did not know English but was heard saying he thought Bikky was cool. Ryo, Dee and Akira found it amusing.

Many of the guests at the party were not surprised that Dee was speaking Japanese, being that they had communicated with him at least once since Ryo announced he was getting married. The more distant family were the ones just meeting Dee & Bikky, and for a few it was their first-time meeting Ryo. Ryo had noted that only some of those relatives were surprised that Dee spoke Japanese.

Ryo was about to leave the twins in Akira’s watchful care to look for Dee and start making their rounds again among their guests. It was not that his grandmother would have to handle them by herself, which she had also done for them plenty of times in New York and even during their time so far in Japan. The twins were currently being passed around from one squealing or cooing relative to another. He had given Dee time to reacquaint himself with friends he had not seen for a long time before going out to grab his husband, but not before meeting more of Dee’s college friends. He noticed that Ken and Hide seemed to stage class reunions on the terrace. Not that Ryo could blame them. The inside of the ballroom was grand and with the special event lighting and décor for their party, the room was gorgeous, but it could not beat the view of Tokyo from the terrace. They had the same view from their penthouse but it was a few floors higher and more spectacular.

“Obāsan, please excuse me,” he said in Japanese as he stood up and bowed. Normally they were not so formal, but with so many other relatives around, Ryo decided it was best to show the relatives his deep respect for his grandmother. He did smirk a little when she rolled her eyes and gave him a slight wave. His grandmother was not really much for many customs whenever it was just the closer family members. Ryo always figured that it was his grandfather’s doing since he lived in Australia until he was sent to boarding school in Tokyo and decided to stay and went to the University of Tokyo. Then there were the years they had lived in California, moving back to Kamakura while Ryo’s mother was in college.

“You go find that husband of yours and make sure he gets to meet more of his new family,” she said with a smile. “Make sure you also introduce his friends to the family if he doesn’t. Dei is family now and his friends are our friends.”

Ryo returned her smile. “I could use the air for a bit anyway, and then we’ll make the rounds.”

“This is yours and Dei’s party, along with your family. You do not have to sit with me. Go around and enjoy yourself.”
“I am, Obāsan. This is wonderful. Thank you,” Ryo said. “I’ll see you in a little bit.” He glanced over to his daughter and son and smiled warmly, actually feeling like they were safe and felt secure enough to leave them as he went to the terrace.

He only took a couple of steps before he saw Bikky rushing in his way. “Pops!” Bikky called out, waving to get Ryo’s attention.

Ryo stood where he was, and waited while Bikky made his way to the table. He turned to look back at his grandmother, who was looking on in wonder with his uncles and aunts.

He heard Bikky constantly repeat, “Sumimasen,” as he made his way.

Nobu started to laugh. “He’ll have that word impressed to memory for life after this.”

Akira laughed along with her son and some other relatives with them at the table. The ones between Bikky and Ryo started to move to allow the excited teen to make his way to his father. Behind Bikky was an equally excited Carol.

“Pops!” Bikky exclaimed again as he came to a stop before Ryo.

“What is it, Biks?” Ryo asked.

“Where’s Dad?” Bikky asked, looking around the table.

“He’s on the terrace saying hello to another college buddy. Why? What’s going on?”

“You both have to see this!” Bikky said and Carol nodded her head from her place next to Bikky.

“Oh my God, Ryo! You have to see him!” Carol exclaimed.

“See who?” Ryo asked, wondering what got them so excited. He wondered if Bikky had finally met his Uncle Kaito, who was always pulling something out from behind someone’s ear or something, but it wasn’t something Bikky had never seen before with all the various street performers in New
“Oh, there’s Dad,” Bikky said, looking behind Ryo. He raised his hand and stood on his toes. “Dad! Come here!”

“What’s going on?” Ryo asked, now very curious on what had Bikky acting like this. So far on this trip, Bikky had managed to display most of the manners in the Japanese customs Ryo had prepped him on.

“Wait until Dad is here. It’s really about him.”

Dee made his way toward the table with some people Ryo did not know but guessed were the friends and their families. Dee had more gift bags, obviously given by his friends. There were a couple of Americans, who had decided to stay in Japan after college and had Japanese spouses.

Nobu pointed behind Ryo as Dee came over to the table, setting the gift bags with the others. Soon they were going to have someone run the gifts up to the penthouse to make room on the table. It was still early enough in the party that guests were still arriving.

“Mama, I see Momo across the room,” Nobu said in Japanese. “I was not sure she would be here.”

“She called in the RSVP saying she would be here with her husband. She was very excited to come here to see Ryo again and meet his family,” Moriko, who had handled the RSVPs, reminded her brother-in-law.

“She looks to be alone right now,” Nobu observed. “Maybe her husband had to use the toilet.” He shrugged.

“Or cancelled out again,” Moriko added with a sigh. “Every time we invite them to a family gathering she comes alone. Has anyone seen a picture of this mysterious husband of hers?”

Heads around the table shook while a few answered no.

“At least for Emiko’s wedding he had a good reason,” Akira said. “Maybe this time we’ll see
pictures of her family.”

“What is her husband’s name?” Satomi, who was Akira’s youngest, and one of the two children born in San Diego, asked.

“Not Japanese. A Welsh name I think. She did say that he’s half-Welsh,” Akira replied. “That should go over well with Ryo,” she added with amusement. “He’s just as proud of his Scottish heritage as he is his Japanese. The only reason he doesn’t tease Dei about being Irish is because he respects Maria too much.”

Dee turned toward the relatives at the table to start introducing his friends when Bikky called out, “Dad! I need to talk to you! Please?”

“Chotto matte,” Ryo said to Bikky, warning him to wait until Dee was finished introducing his friends. “Do you know what Dee is saying?” he asked, hoping to distract the teen.

“I’m recognizing stuff enough to get an idea of what they are saying,” Bikky replied.

“Me too,” Carol said with a smile.

Bikky started to smirk. “Besides, it’s pretty obvious he’s introducing the college buddies to the family, even if he’s talking in Japanese.”

“And how is that done?” Ryo asked.

Bikky indicated toward Dee. “What he’s saying.”

Takehide let out a guffaw and Nobu snorted, the family close to them laughing. Carol started to laugh too while Ryo let out a groan, but he had to smile at his son. “One of these years we’ll get you speaking Japanese instead of a few words here and there.”

“I am getting better at understanding,” Bikky insisted. “At least I recognize a few words.” He shrugged.
Dee turned to his family with a smile. To his friends, he said in English, “This is my family. Well most of them, but from the looks of it, you’ll have to fight the relatives to get close to the chibis.”

His friends laughed and Dee finished his introductions. Dee excused himself saying he should see what his son wanted. As his friends started to speak to the relatives at the table, Bikky grabbed Dee by his arm. “Dad! This is really important.”

Ryo let out a sigh. “Okay Bikky. Dee’s here. What has you so excited?”

Dee looked at Ryo in question and Ryo shrugged.

Bikky looked right at Dee. “We saw your twin!” he exclaimed.

Dee laughed. “Is this another Japanese dig at me now?” he asked, knowing that he, Bikky and Carol were the only gaijin who were family in a sea of Ryo’s Japanese relatives and acquaintances. At least there were a couple of his American friends who were living in Japan now at the party, with a couple more expected to arrive.

“No, seriously Dad,” Bikky insisted. “He looks just like Dee, except he’s Japanese.”

“He looks exactly like you, Dee,” Carol insisted. “Except his eyes are dark like Ryo’s, making him look real Japanese.”

“As opposed to fake Japanese?” Nobu had to ask, amused, making Hoshi giggle.

“Well,” Ryo commented looking at Dee, who like Ryo, had spent the better part of the week they had been in Japan speaking Japanese and observing various customs when they were out and about when he did not have to worry about Bikky or Carol understanding.

“He’s even your height,” Bikky said, “Which is tall for Japanese.”

“Not so real then,” Hoshi said to the others who were listening, making them laugh, including Dee’s
Dee stared at the two teens for a moment and Ryo had to laugh. “We’ve been hearing that so far about Darin, looking like Dee but Japanese.” He shrugged.

“Maybe not the height part,” Dee added, amused.

“That’s exactly it,” Bikky insisted. “If he had green eyes, this guy would be Dad!”

“Ryo, Dei, you have another guest coming over to say hello,” Akira called out in English.

“One of you might want to help your cousin Momo,” Nobu commented. “Her hands look terribly full.”

Ryo and Dee turned to find a tiny woman, who had to be no more than five feet, come up behind them. Her arms were loaded with the handles of many colorful gift bags of all sizes. She had a big smile, her dark eyes sparkling with excitement.

Dee was the closest to her and reached out. “Let me help,” he said in Japanese with a smile.

Momo looked from Ryo to Dee and her look changed to surprise. “Dafydd!” she exclaimed. “I thought you went back to our room for the mochi?” she replied in Japanese.

Dee blinked. “Excuse me?” he said in Japanese. “My name is Dee.” As he spoke, he took a step closer to her and started to take some of the bags off her arms to set on the table. Relatives moved bags and gift boxes already there to make room for the new ones.

“That’s the lady who was with Dee’s lookalike!” Carol exclaimed excited.

Staring up at Dee, it was obvious she realized it was not her husband and let out a little gasp. “Oh! Forgive me,” Momo said in English, bowing, blushing a little. “I thought you were my husband, Dafydd.” She giggled as she studied Dee in wonder. “You look just like him, except you have green eyes.” She had a Japanese accent, pronouncing the words in Japanese syllables, but it was easier to understand her than Moriko whenever Ryo’s aunt by marriage spoke in English.
“See?” Bikky insisted. “Even she said it.”

“Momo,” Akira greeted in English for Bikky and Carol, coming over to join them, “it is so nice to see you again. I am pleased that you made it. You remember your cousin Ryo? You saw him last at Emiko’s wedding. And this is his husband, Dei. And his oldest son, Bikky.”

Ryo smiled as he bowed to Momo. “I remember Momo. I also remember you being at the wedding without a husband,” he said to Momo.

Momo smiled at her cousin. “If you remember, Dafydd was in his ninth month of pregnancy and thought it unwise to travel. He convinced me to attend since I could be home in a few hours if something happened.” Her smile turned impish. “I also remember that at Emiko-san’s wedding, you did not have any children.”

Ryo started to laugh. “It wasn’t that long after her wedding that I took Bikky in because he needed somewhere to stay.” He shrugged. “I ended up adopting him. I loved him too much to give him up to someone else. Actually, Dee and I adopted him.”

“That’s wonderful, Ryo. And now you’re married with a baby too. Congratulations.”

“Dafydd?” Dee started and continued in Japanese. “That’s Welsh, isn’t it?”

“It is,” Momo replied. “My husband is half-Welsh, even if he insists that he’s just Japanese.” She gave another little eye roll to show what she thought about that. “He’s so silly sometimes, but I love him anyway.”

Ryo let out a loud put-upon sigh. “I know how you feel, Momo.” He fought not to smile but his dark eyes twinkled impishly in the room’s lighting.

“Hey!” Dee complained, turning his head to glare at Ryo.

“Well….” Ryo replied and gave a grin to match the look in his eyes. “It fit.”
Dee leaned close to whisper in English, “I’ll get you for that when we’re away from your family.”

“Looking forward to it,” was Ryo’s reply.

Dee growled, causing the other females close to them to giggle behind their hands. Dee’s attention went back to Momo. “He can’t be all Japanese with a name like Dafydd,” he commented.

“Since I know nothing of how the Welsh are, I assure you I am very much Japanese,” a new voice joined them speaking in Japanese from behind Momo.

Everyone’s attention went to the newcomer, who now stood behind his wife, holding onto a gold, black and red medium sized gift bag with the name of a confectionary shop along with the designs. Judging by the bag, the shop had to be an expensive one. He was setting it down with the other bags that Dee had helped Momo put on the table. He turned back to Dee, giving him his full attention, his dark eyes seeming to dare Dee to say more. Once his eyes settled on Dee, he froze, eyes wide and seeming as if he was looking at a ghost.

Ryo’s and Dee’s mouths dropped as they looked at Momo’s husband. Akira, Nobu & Hoshi stared at the newcomer in astonishment. Dafydd also had the rest of the group’s attention as the Japanese relatives jittered in Japanese and giggled as they looked on. Some of the women covered their mouths with their hands as they giggled. They were looking down so not to be rude, but would move their eyes so they could get another glance at the two men who looked incredibly alike.

Dafydd was also staring at Dee, his dark midnight eyes studying Dee’s dark green ones.

“I told you!” Bikky exclaimed into the sudden silence of the group that until a few seconds ago was making a lot of noise.

Nobu shook his head. “Well, Dafydd does look Japanese,” he stated, studying the newcomer.

“And like Dee,” Hoshi added.

Akira continued to stare in amazement and moved closer to the two men. “I know that they say everyone has a twin, but this is unbelievable.” She moved to stand between the two couples. She continued to study the two men who could pass for the other except for eye color. “They even have similar hair styles,” she said. She stood before Dafydd and with her hands crossed before her, she

It was Dafydd’s turn to bow. “I am Fujioka Dafydd, Momo’s husband. Hajimemashite.”

Akira turned to Dee and Ryo. “This one here,” she said indicating Ryo, “is my grandson, Ryo Laytner-MacLean, and his husband Dei Laytner-MacLean.”

Ryo bowed to Dafydd and went into the formal Japanese greeting. He looked to Dee as Dafydd returned the greeting and ended with a bow. Dafydd’s dark eyes also immediately went to Dee.

Dee seemed to pull himself from his shock. “Oh, me?” he stammered in English.

“I can speak English, if it helps,” Dafydd said in English, speaking slowly and loud. He had a smirk as he finished.

“Gomenasai,” said Dee, getting his mind back, bowing slightly as he spoke. He continued in Japanese, “I can speak Japanese, if it helps.” He returned the smirk as he looked at his lookalike.

Ryo rolled his eyes. Figures, he thought. Dee always did get on the defensive when someone reminded him of himself, even when he couldn’t admit it. But those other people did not even come close to the man before them. He even had the same smirk as Dee.

Dee introduced himself in Japanese with another bow, and then turned to indicate Bikky. “This is our son, Bikky,” Dee introduced, “and his girlfriend, Carol.”

Bikky stuttered only a little as he greeted the husband of a distant relative of Ryo’s, who happened to look exactly like his other father. As Bikky and Carol exchanged greetings, Akira grabbed onto Dee’s arm and leaned in so Ryo could also hear. “I am amazed,” she exclaimed.

“Dee, be nice,” Ryo warned, certain that Dee’s defenses were up.

Momo grabbed Dafydd by the hand and pulled him over to Dee and Ryo. “Akira-san,” she started, “forgive my rudeness,” she said in Japanese with a bow.
“You were not rude,” Akira assured her. “We were all just a little shocked for a moment.”

“A little?” Bikky asked.

“A moment?” came from Dee. He did a double take as he realized Akira was speaking in Japanese. Once Ryo came to the same realization, he also stared at their son.

Bikky shrugged. “I guess I got the gist of it. I do know what sukoshi means. I did say I can understand a little, didn’t I?”

Ryo started to laugh as Dee ruffled his hair. “He’s getting better at this,” Dee said as Ryo nodded with approval.

“Ryo-san, please accept my apology.” Momo once again held onto some of the bags that Dee had taken from her and held them up by both hands in offer as she bowed. In her heavily accented English, she continued, “Also please accept this gift.”

Ryo accepted the gift bag from her with a bow. “No need to apologize and thank you.” He smiled at her.

“This gift?” Dafydd asked in Japanese, sounding sarcastic. “As in just one?”

Ryo smirked and shook his head. “Dear god, there’s two of them. And they’re both related to me.”

Bikky and Carol started to laugh after Dafydd spoke. “Oh! I understand that!” Bikky exclaimed.

“Me too,” Carol laughed, her eyes still transfixed on the two men who looked alike.

Akira laughed at what Ryo muttered in English. “At least one is a distant relative,” she said, as Momo exchanged words with her husband, telling him to behave himself. She glanced at Dafydd and added, “I hope.” She giggled as they turned back to Momo and Dafydd and heard Momo.
“Forgive my husband,” Momo said with another bow. “He sometimes can be quite rude for a Japanese. It must be the Welsh in him.”

Akira waved off the apology with a smile. “No need. He is quite amusing,” she said and gazed lovingly at Dee.

“What?” Dee asked making everyone laugh.

Ryo hugged him and kissed his cheek. “You can be quite amusing too, sweetheart,” Ryo said to Dee with a laugh.

“Now you’re pushing for the couch,” Dee warned into Ryo’s ear.

Ryo laughed. “As if,” he said giving Dee a sly grin.

Momo held up another shopping bag by the handle in both hands toward Dee and bowed. “Please accept this gift. Welcome to Japan, Dee-san. I hope you are enjoying your stay here very much.”

Dee accepted the bag with a bow. “Please, it’s Dee. I am told we are all family, ne?”

“Hai!” she said with a bow and a big smile. “You may do the same, Dee.”

“Thank you for your gift,” Dee replied in Japanese with a bow.

She held out another bag toward Akira and bowed deeply. “Please accept this gift. Thank you for inviting us to this wonderful party.”

Akira accepted and bowed as she said, “Thank you, for your gift and for coming to my party.” She glanced over to Dafydd, and with a wicked grin, added, “And for finally bringing your very handsome husband to join us.”

Momo blushed and giggled. “He had no excuse not to, so I told him he was going.”
“You weren’t taking no for an answer this time?” Ryo asked.

“He had no choice,” Momo simply replied with a pleasant smile. She held out another colorful bag toward Bikky with a bow. “Bikky, please accept this gift as a welcome to Japan.”

Bikky bowed as he accepted the gift, blushing a little, making Ryo look on with pride and Dee held back a laugh but he still grinned at their son with amusement. “Domo arigato gozaimasu,” Bikky managed to say without stammering.

“I understand this is your first time to Japan,” Momo stated. “And yours too, Carol.”

“Hai!” Bikky replied. “Watashi… uh… um ano…. Ah hell, daisuki desu!” He smiled at Momo.

Carol nodded her head. “Hai. I love Japan so much!” she said in halting Japanese that made Bikky look up at her first to glare, and then to smile and laugh.

Dee and Ryo shared a look, both men impressed with Carol’s reply. Akira clasped her hands together and smiled.

Still smiling, Momo offered a bag to Carol. “This is for you, Carol. I understand that Ryo and Dee consider you family, so we are family too.”

Carol blushed prettily as she returned Momo’s bow and accepted the bag. “Arigato gozaimasu, Momo-san. It is very kind of you.”

Momo smiled at Carol and Bikky. “I am happy to hear you are enjoying your time in Japan,” she said in English. She nudged her husband, who was standing next to her, watching with an amused look on his face. “Go on, Dafydd,” she continued in English.

“Oh! Me?” he asked.

“Oh geez,” Ryo sighed and started to laugh with the others. Even Dee had to laugh at that one.
Blushing, Dafydd picked up several larger shopping bags along with the bag he arrived with and came forward.

Ryo whispered, “He even blushes like you.” He gave Dee a wicked grin.

“All you behave,” Dee warned.

“Ryo-san and Dee-san,” he said as he held up the bag with the mochi. “Welcome to Japan. Please enjoy some mochi from a very famous shop in Nagoya.”

Dee’s eyes lit up as he accepted the bag from his lookalike. “Mochi! Thank you very much!” he exclaimed and bowed.

“All he has Dee on his side,” Hoshi said with giggle.

“As if there isn’t mochi all over this room,” Nobu commented amused, “even if that certainly looks like the very good stuff.”

“If it’s that good, I doubt Ryo’s getting any of it,” Hoshi said with a laugh, making her family laugh more.

Dafydd smirked a little hearing Ryo’s aunt and uncle talk. He held out the remaining bags and said, “Please accept these gifts for your little one. I fear my wife could not make up her mind and nearly bought out the store.” He bowed as he held out the bags.

Dee and Ryo each took bags from him and took a quick peak inside. “Oh, Little Twin Stars!” Dee exclaimed happily. “Thank you very much!” he said, bowing.

“Yes, thank you,” Ryo echoed. “This is very thoughtful.” He also bowed to first his cousin’s husband and then to Momo. He reached into the bag and pulled out a hat. “Oh Dee, look! Little Twin Stars hats.” He pulled out another hat. “One for Kiki and one for Lala!”
Dee looked up from his inspection of a bag full of Little Twin Stars plushies and his eyes lit up more than they already were. “Oh my God, I love them!”

Momo was beaming with happiness at the excitement her gifts gave her cousin and his very handsome husband. This she could admit to, because she also found her own husband very handsome. “I am so glad you like it, Ryo-san.”

“Momo-san, please, like Dee requested, I am just Ryo, since we are family.” He grinned at her as she blushed. “We used to play together when my family was in Nagoya or yours came to Kamakura.”

“I remember. Of course, we are family and childhood friends. Please call me Momo.”

Ryo smiled at her more. “I guess you didn’t hear the big news, so I think you will be happy that you got more than one gift. Come say hello to our twins.”

Momo blinked. “Twins?” she asked. “But that is very rare in America.”

Dafydd did a double take when he heard. “I heard in America that both parents have to be twins to have twins. But no one mentioned you having a twin,” he said to Ryo.

“I’m not. I’m an only child,” Ryo replied. “It was explained to us that way, but we were also told that if the Carrier’s both parents were twins, he could pass it on.”

“But chances are that would mean the Carrier would be a twin,” Momo stated. She stared at Dafydd and Dee as Ryo led them around the table to where he last had seen the infants.

Dee shrugged. “Most likely, but not necessary, from how my doctor explained it.”

“Are you a twin, Laytner-MacLean-san?” Dafydd asked Dee as they passed Hoshi.

Ryo’s aunt started to laugh. “He is now,” she exclaimed and laughed more with her family. Everyone at the table were all highly amused at the situation.
Dee smirked as he winked at his aunt by marriage, and then looking back at Dafydd, he shrugged. “I don’t know. I could be.”

“You don’t know?” Momo asked.

Dee shook his head. “Look, if I tell you now, you’ll only start feeling sorry for me. Generally, I don’t like people feeling sorry for me. I have no complaints on how my life was.” He smiled at her. “But maybe away from the party, if we find time, I’ll be happy to tell you more about me. After all, Ryo tells me that you’re family.”

“I think I would like that very much,” she said and blushed again when Dee winked at her.

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Chapter End Notes

What do you think? Hopefully I can get some thoughts on what's going on here. :)

Just in case the Japanese used in this chapter throws some of you off:

sumimasen - "Excuse me"
chotto matte - "Just one second"
hajimemashite - "Nice to meet you for the first time"
dōzo yoroshiku - "Please be kind to me"
gomenasai - "I'm sorry"
sukoshi - little or few
watashi - I
ano - Umm
daisuki - like a lot
desu - is
arigato gozaimasu - "Thank you very much"
Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

At a party Akira threw for the family to greet Ryo, Dee and their family, Dee is confronted with something he always believed he never wanted to. His life, and his family's might never be the same after that night.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

October 28, 2016

Tokyo New Crown Star Hotel

Minato Ward, Tokyo, Japan

“Here they are,” Dee announced.

“Oh! Kawaii!!!” Momo exclaimed. “They are so precious. Yes, I can see they are twins.” She happily accepted Ryoko who was placed in her arms, while Darin was offered to Dafydd.

“I also see both of you in them.” She smiled down at Ryoko, who reached out toward her face. Momo kissed the little hand and moved her head so Ryoko could touch her nose. “This little girl looks more like my cousin including her hair color but she has Dee’s eyes.”

“That is Ryoko,” Dee said with a proud smile. “She is the one we were expecting when I was pregnant. The little guy there with your husband was a last-minute surprise.”

“This is Darin,” Ryo presented also with a smile only a proud father can have. “It was a shock when he was born, but we can’t see life without him now.”

“He is so sweet,” Dafydd said softly, looking down at the baby boy. “He looks very Japanese, but he also looks like your husband.”
Momo looked over as Ryo laughed. “We’ve been hearing that a lot, especially since we came to Japan,” Ryo said.

“He has your eyes,” Momo said to Ryo.

Darin was cooing at Dafydd. “He looks a lot like Kiyoshi and Tatsuya when they were his age. Such a precious little one.” For the first time since meeting him, Dafydd had lost the abrupt manner and was all tenderness. “You said he was a surprise. Did you not know you were Carrying twins?” he asked Dee.

“He’s our little ninja chibi,” Dee replied. “I had three ultrasounds, one 3D, and he still managed to avoid detection. We all thought I was just having too many craving munchies when it turned out the extra weight was that little guy there.” Dee smiled softly thinking back to his birth. At the time it was terrifying, especially once he realized there was a second baby and then almost losing him, but now Dee was able to look back to that moment when Darin made his first appearance in their lives with warmth.

“Three?” Momo asked in surprised.

“I watched one of those ultrasounds be performed over internet connection,” Akira said. “There was no sign of this one, but everyone is very happy that he’s with us, along with his sister.”

“That had to be a huge shock,” Momo said. “Babies are expensive and to suddenly find yourself with two, that can be scary.”

“We were worried about money,” Ryo admitted, “even if Dee and I do get paid very well in our jobs, but we worked it out. I think overall, I was more worried about taking care of two at the same time.” He looked down at blushed a little. “I still am, I’m afraid.”

“You’re getting better at it,” Dee assured him.

They got Momo and Dafydd to settle the babies in the strollers and then took out the toys from the shopping bags to show the twins. Both babies squealed and reached out, making the adults laugh. Dee and Ryo each had one of the hats and put them on the infants and after posing with them while the relatives took photos, they joined the relatives to take their own photos, some with Momo and Dafydd with the twins, before taking off the hats while they were indoors, but the hats would be on
again when they were outdoors in the cooler weather, especially when they would be doing more walking than driving in a car.

Bikky and Carol had gone back to go along with the other teens and get more food. Bikky was still fascinated by the Japanese man who looked so much like one of his fathers, but since all they were doing was taking pictures and small talk, he decided to let the adults do what they do, while he joined his friends for a while.

After talking a little, Ryo held out his hand toward his and Dee’s empty chairs. “Please sit and enjoy yourselves. Obāsan will be telling us soon to get back out and mingle so we better go before she tells us.”

“Are you taking Ryoko and Darin with you?” Momo asked. “I do love that one of the babies have a Japanese first name,” Dee replied, “but since we’re Americans, we gave them both middle names. This is Ryoko Marie Laytner-MacLean and that is Darin Frances Laytner-MacLean.”

Dafydd laughed. “My father tells me many times that my Welsh father wanted to give us middle names, but my father said having a Welsh given name was enough. So, my brother and I do not have middle names.”

“It sounds like your fathers did what we did,” Dee said. “Mixed heritage, so one baby has a Japanese name and the other non-Japanese name.”

“We were set on Ryoko when we thought we were only having a girl,” Ryo reminded Dee. “When we realized we also had a boy, I let our older son pick out a name and he came up with Darin. Bikky doesn’t know too many Japanese names that weren’t already taken by family.”

Dee let out a snort. “I was still knocked out when Darin got his name. I woke up to find I also had a son named Darin.” He winked at Dee. “Biks did a good job with the name, didn’t he?”

Ryo nodded. “To answer your other question before we got sidetracked with names, they’re staying here. This is their table to hold court at, and they’re doing very well,” he said with a laugh. “I have my uncles and aunts here to watch to make sure none of my other relatives decide they want to take an extremely cute baby, or two, home with them.” He smiled at his relatives that he was the closest to that were seated at that table and a couple around the table. “We’ll talk again, I’m sure.” He bowed
to Momo and Dafydd.

“It’s nice meeting you,” Dee said, “and what my husband said.”

As they were starting to walk away from the table, Yuki came over to them. He caught a look at Dafydd who was holding out a chair for his wife and his mouth dropped. Wide eyes stared at Dee as his jaw started to work as if he was trying to figure out how to form words.

Dee grabbed Yuki by his arm, while Ryo took the other arm and they backed the Japanese man away from the table. “You’re looking for me?” Dee asked in Japanese.

“Yes. Kenji-san and his family just arrived. Also Peter is here.”

Dee looked surprised. “Peter, from Atsugi base?” he asked.

“Yes. He got out of the Navy while still in Japan and stayed. He has Machiko and their family with him.”

“Oh, let’s go say hello to them,” Dee said. To Ryo, “You can meet the others you didn’t get a chance to yet.”

“I do want to meet this Peter,” Ryo said with a laugh as they walked across the ballroom to the terrace. “You really did know Americans too while here.”

“Yes, I had some American friends, including a few others who went to school with us,” Dee said. “A couple of them are already here.”

“Dee?” Yuki asked. “Did you notice that one man who looks just like you?”

“Yes I did, Yuki. I don’t want to talk about it.” He led them out to the terrace to greet the newcomers and introduce Ryo to his other Japanese classmates and friends that he had not heard from since he left Japan.
Ryo stared after Dee in concern, having a weird feeling about Dee and his cousin’s husband, who went by Dafydd Fujioka.

**OoOoOoO**

They spent some time on the terrace with Dee’s classmates and their families along with some of Ryo’s cousins, talking about since the last time they saw each other, general things about their lives, funny stories about children, careers and small talk. Dee should have been surprised, but by then was not when he discovered several of his male Japanese classmates had also Carried children as well as their wives.

From the time spent with Akira and the rest of Ryo’s family, and meeting others since they arrived the week before, Dee had come to the conclusion that Japanese men did not discuss being Carriers because it was a given in society, and that non-Carrier were actually the minority in Japan. Japanese men were more likely to mention not being Carriers, and not with the relief that many men would have stating the same in America. Being a Carrier in Japan was not a big issue of discussion and debate, rather is was just a fact of life that was generally accepted. What Dee did find amusing is with the majority of men being Carriers, it was still an honor to Carry children and something that was looked up to and respected. Not that woman having children were diminished in any way. The Japanese tended to see bringing a new life into the world as something to be honored, whether by women or men, and were given due respect. There were fertility temples and shrines designated for women and for men, and even some for both.

Carriers was not as common a term in Japan as it was outside the country. Carriers, Dee had learned, was a term to designate men who were what was considered outside the norm of many other societies. It was introduced with the start of the project that worked on the concept of Carriers. From the start, it marked the men who were different because they were able to conceive and carry children. The temples and shrines for male pregnancies had the word Carrier in English, and used for outsiders, or gaijin, while in Japanese the term for such places translated into men who give birth.

They had learned during their one of their shopping sprees without Ryo’s family, and going into bookstores that one did not ask for books about Carriers. In fact, the first store they had asked, they had gotten strange looks from the store clerk, and while the clerk continued to be helpful and professional, the two men were able to feel as if they had done something taboo. Of course, they were told that there were no books on Carriers, but were shown where the books on childbirth were. There were books on childbirth in general, and mentioning where there would be differences between men and women giving birth, and where there were no differences, was for all. There were books and magazines focused on woman, and others on men, but only to focus more on the things during pregnancy that were unique to the gender that was pregnant along with interests that the gender would more likely have that the other wouldn’t. They did not buy anything in that store, but
knew where to go in the next bookstore and had made some purchases. Thankfully, the clerk ringing up their sales did not give them any looks as if gaijin were trying to take secrets outside of Japan, which both Dee and Ryo had worries about. When they told Akira about the first store, she apologized for not thinking of taking them into a bookstore during their outings with her and saving them the embarrassment by showing them where to go.

It felt like a whole new world to Ryo and Dee concerning Carriers, after all they had learned since discovering that Dee was pregnant. Now Dee and Ryo were learning even more about male pregnancies in Japan from talking to Dee’s friends from the time he was in college.

Ryo seemed to hit it off with Dee’s friends as they continued to talk on the terrace. They were having a good time. Trips were made to the outdoor grills for food as they talked. Eventually the group migrated inside to mingle with the other guests.

Dee was highly amused, but not surprised that whenever Yuki, Ken, Hide and Jae-Hwa was introduced to someone, they handed out a business card that not only had their business information, but it also had a code for a discount. It was traditional to hand out business cards with introductions, but only a few of Ryo’s family gave out cards that night being they were all family. Friends of friends that were invited did give out cards.

Dee and Ryo stopped by their table to check in on the twins, finding Bikky and Carol showing them off to their new friends. Dee’s friends who had not seen them yet were given time to hold them and present gifts. The table that the family sat as they watched the babies as relatives and friends came over to see them, was now almost filled with gift bags and brightly wrapped small packages tied with Japanese cord ribbon in intricate bows. A table next to it was also filled with bags and packages that were presented to Akira upon arriving and greeting her.

Dee had introduced his friends to his relatives by marriage and after getting some food pulled up a chair to sit near the twins and watched as Ryo did the same. They felt it was time to play the proud fathers that they were to well-wishers for a while. Carol and Bikky excused themselves along with their friends. Not long after, Dee had caught sight of Bikky in the corner of the ballroom set up with the latest video games on large screens and even had some arcade game machines. The video games were in Japanese, but the Japanese teenagers were happy to help him understand, and at times when needed, translate. A couple of the older children of Dee’s friends had joined them. Bikky seemed especially fascinated by Peter’s son who was slightly darker in color than him but also looked Japanese. Peter was African-American and his children got his skin coloring with Michiko’s eyes. Carol was on the dance floor with several girls around her age dancing to the pop music that was playing.

There were people of all ages dancing to the music. Dee and Ryo had already joined the dancers for a couple of songs as they made their way around the ballroom. Dee was certain that there would be a lot more dancing as the evening progressed.
Dee worried about the latter part of the evening when the karaoke machine was turned on. Dee had already been told during the week they had been in Japan by several cousins who had done karaoke with him before that he was expected to sing several songs. At least Dee met up with Hide, Yuki and Ken a few times during the week and managed to work out a routine to a few songs that were their favorites to do in front of an audience while they were in college, and one very special song, planning to do more than just sing.

At the moment, Hide and his wife also sat at the table. Akira had decided on buffet style, allowing the guests to eat what they want and when instead of a sit-down meal. Their children sat at a nearby table with other children 12 years and younger with Ken’s children. Ken and his wife were playing pachinko which was set up off to the side of the ballroom near the terrace.

Also at the table, besides Akira, Nobu and Hoshi was Akira’s daughter, Ryo’s Aunt Satomi and her husband, Keizo. Satomi was Akira’s youngest, and the second of two children who were born in America while they lived in San Diego, California. Satomi and Keizo lived at Lake Kawaguchi near Mt. Fuji, and ran a lakeside hotel that boasted a view of Mt. Fuji, with an award-winning restaurant, and onsen hot springs. They had made Dee and Ryo promise to stop at the inn after they explored the Mt. Fuji area. Ryo was planning of going there for a few days after they returned from their trip. It was not climbing season, but they still would be able to get to the 5th Station of the mountain and do some hiking. It wouldn’t be to the top, but at least Bikky and Carol could go back to New York and say they were on Mt. Fuji. Both Dee and Ryo were hoping to make a trip to Japan during climbing season, when the guides were on the mountain and all the facilities were open.

OoOoOoO

Dee was on the terrace, once again gazing out at the lights of Tokyo beyond, still finding it hard that he was back, even after being there a little over a week. He was completely loving their extended vacation and could see Ryo was too. Bikky and Carol were certainly having an adventure of a lifetime, and he was glad that they had the means that this was not to be their only trip. He looked up to the floors of the main building, up to the roof and smiled. The penthouse on that roof was now his Tokyo home, the place that he had decided with Ryo and Bikky would be the place they could always come to whenever they were in Tokyo without always having to impose on Ryo’s grandmother. Not that Akira would ever say it was imposing.

He heard footsteps behind him and he turned to find Momo approaching him, pulling her husband along. Dee studied them, getting that nagging feeling that he had been pushing back ever since he had met Ryo’s distant cousin and her husband. He felt bad because since then, he had been doing his best to avoid them. He wasn’t completely successful, especially with running into Momo.
He knew from Ryo that even though they had only met twice as adults, and spent time together as children, each time they were together, they always hit it off well. That night was no exception and Dee could also see that Momo admired Ryo. They seemed to be bonding since her arrival. Earlier Ryo mentioned casually as they made their rounds about the room that he would love to have breakfast or lunch with them the next day. Dee thought he would love to get to know Momo more. He also tried to deny the feeling that he needed to get to know the Japanese-Welshman she had married better.

Momo suggested they drop the honorifics, stating that she may be just a distant cousin of Ryo’s, but they were still family. He agreed because he did feel comfortable around her. He felt much more at ease around Momo than he did around Dafydd, and when Momo had suggested the two men drop honorifics for the same reasons her and Dee agreed, Dee turned it down. He knew he was not so tactful about it and the other man looked stunned because he had quickly agreed with his wife before Dee shot down the idea. He just did not feel comfortable with Dafydd as he did with Momo. In fact, the man put him on edge. He wanted to start screaming and yelling at Dafydd. Despite feeling that way, he had a nagging feeling in his gut that he needed to get closer to Dafydd and that feeling, quite frankly, pissed him off, making him want to connect his fist to the face that looked so much like his. He dared not examine why because he already knew the reason but was not ready to accept it. His instincts were telling him that Dafydd represented something that he never wanted to know.

Basically, he knew he had to address the elephant in the room first, but that was not the night to do it because he feared that things would get very ugly fast between him and Dafydd, and he did not want Ryo’s family to be subjected to such a display.

Despite the warm, friendly smile Momo gave him, Dee could see on her face that she believed otherwise. Somehow this time as she approached him, Dee could see she was acting the same way he would when approaching a perp but not wanting to set him off and have him flee before he had a chance to collar said perp. Dee gritted his teeth because he did not like being in the position of a perp, and being treated that way by someone who kept insisting that they were family.

Momo stopped before Dee and bowed. Dee managed to return the smile and bow back. “Are you having fun, I hope,” he asked in Japanese.

“Yes, very much so,” she replied. “Thank you. I am so glad that I decided we had to go to this party.”

Dee looked next to Momo and locked eyes with the man standing before him. Dafydd looked like he would rather be anywhere else, but his wife gave him no choice. He seemed twitchy and uneasy, and even sad, as he stood, folding and unfolding his arms. When his arms were not folded, he looked as if he had no idea what to do with them. “What about you, Fujioka-san?” he asked, daring to make
eye contact with the other man.

Dafydd nodded. He started to answer, but ended up clearing his throat first. “It’s not boring,” he finally replied. “Far from it.”

Dee knew he had made a mistake with the eye contact and suddenly felt very uncomfortable when Dafydd’s dark eyes met his again and seemed to stare into his very soul.

Only Ryo had dared to look at him like that. And Jess. And Mother.

Dee sharply broke the look and turned to gaze out again across the lights of Tokyo toward Tokyo Tower.

He could feel Momo move slightly from behind him and Dafydd let out a pained sound. It seemed that Momo elbowed him or pinched him. Obviously to prompt her husband into speaking again.

“I heard you went to university in Yokohama,” Dafydd commented, sounding as if he was awkwardly pushing for conversation, confirming Dee’s feeling. Dee also felt from the tone that he was also looking for information.


“I…I went to New York University,” Dafydd offered. “My family did not understand why I would want to live in New York, but they helped me anyway.” He smiled warmly. “I have a great family.”

Dee nodded. “I know what you mean. Especially my mother. I know even being as open-minded as she is, there were times she didn’t understand why I would want to do things, but as long as it didn’t hurt anyone and wasn’t illegal, she supported me.

“I also got into more than my share of trouble and if she found out, I was punished.” Dee found himself going on about Mother, having a need to praise the woman who had raised him to these people he had just met a couple of hours ago. “But I knew she loved me no less. I was definitely heading down the wrong path at one point, but between her and my dad, they got me on the right track.” He finally turned back toward Dafydd and Momo.
“They must have,” Momo said. “Other than impressing Ryo’s family, I hear that you’re a detective.”

“I am. That’s how I met Ryo. He was assigned as my partner.” Dee’s smile grew. “And we’ve been partners ever since. Always will be.”

Momo hugged Dafydd with a smile of her own. “I know exactly how you feel, only Dafydd wasn’t assigned to me as my partner. We did work together a lot.”

“Really? You worked together when you met?”

“I’m also a detective,” Dafydd said. “For the Aichi Prefecture police in Nagoya. I was in uniform when I met Momo. She was a crime lab technician in Nagoya.” He smiled proudly at his wife. “She is now Chief of the Forensics Crime Lab and I am a leading detective over a unit in Criminal Investigations.”

Dee opened his mouth but closed it when he heard Ryo’s voice come from across the terrace, “So there you are.” The three looked to find Ryo approaching. As Ryo got closer, he started to look concerned as he studied the small group before him. His eyes fixed on Dee, and Dee knew that Ryo must be thinking that he had the deer in the headlights type of look on his face, despite trying to keep his face neutral, which was becoming harder with every passing second in Dafydd’s presence.

“Just getting some fresh air and getting to know your cousin Momo more,” Dee replied.

“And Dafydd too,” Momo pointed out, giving Dee a pointed look, as she grabbed onto Dafydd’s arm, holding it tight enough to make the man let out a little yelp, making sure her husband had no chance of fleeing. Dee, despite not being held, had no chance of leaving either. Not without knocking someone down, as he was effectively surrounded by Dafydd, Momo and now Ryo.

Changing his tactics, Dee gave her a roguish wink and smile that made her blush furiously and Dafydd frown at his wife’s reaction. He also noticed that Ryo’s mouth was staring in curiously as Dee just blatantly flirted with his cousin, in front of the cousin’s husband. “Of course. To know you means to also know your significant other.” To Ryo he said, “They were just telling me they work for the police in Nagoya.” Now that Ryo was there, he was hoping that Ryo would pick up the diversion and help him avoid what was obviously on Momo’s mind as she dragged her husband to corner Dee. His eyes met Ryo’s, silently pleading for help.

“I did hear that you’re a detective, Dafydd,” Ryo said after giving ever so slightly a nod to Dee,
then gazing at the other man with them. “Are you also, Momo? I heard that you also work for the Aichi Prefecture police.”

“I work in the Crime Lab,” she replied.

“She’s Chief of Forensics,” Dafydd said proudly.

“That’s wonderful, Momo,” Ryo said with a smile, genuinely taking interest in this new fact about his cousin. “I take it you like your work?”

“Oh yes. It is very fascinating.”

“I would imagine you’re not as busy as our crime labs,” Dee commented, not only interested hearing more about Momo’s work, but also seeing it as a great deflection from her original reason for coming over to him with Dafydd.

“I keep busy enough. Because major crime is low, we get to fully work on the smaller cases,” Momo replied. “But that doesn’t mean we don’t have any major crime. When we do, it’s something to keep us all busy until someone is arrested.”

“Nagoya does have more criminal activity comparing to the Tokyo area for some reason, but I guess it’s still much lower compared to New York City,” said Dafydd. “I work in the entertainment district and it keeps me busy. Especially with gaijin. The petty thieves tend to target tourists. We do what we can to catch the thief and return what was stolen. We’re not always successful, but we are enough. Makes for good relations with the tourist board.”

“I think that’s universal,” Ryo said. “Petty thieves in New York tend to target tourists more.”

“I agree,” Dafydd said with a nod. “Laytner-MacLean-san, I also overheard that your mother is a nun.”

Dee suddenly looked uncomfortable. “Yes. She runs the orphanage that Jess, the man who became my father, brought me to when he found me.”
Momo studied both men. “Forgive my directness,” she said sharply, her eyes now on her husband. “But we cannot fully enjoy ourselves until we address the obvious.”

Dafydd let out a snort. “You? Direct? I would never think it,” he teased. He let out a heavy sigh. “But this time I will save my wife from being her usual bold self.” He looked at Dee as he reached in his pocket and started to remove his phone. “My father at first insisted I not go to NYU. He hates New York City, but the reason why actually had started in Nagoya. My granddad hates both Nagoya and New York, which is why he moved back to Cardiff. “

“W-what happened?” Dee asked, seeing the sudden dark shadows in Dafydd’s eyes. He could feel the hurt emanating from the man before him and it made Dee ache for him. Ryo slipped an arm around Dee when he shivered.

“My Tad was killed in New York, and my twin brother who was with him was never found. It is my family’s belief that my twin was also killed. There was a hit on my Tad.” His eyes once again met Dee’s with the same piercing gaze as before. “I always believed otherwise. A twin senses these things,” he said softly. “Carrier twins, more so. In my family, there is talk that twins have a psychic bond never to be severed. I believe I would know if Daisuke is dead.” In a stronger voice, he continued, “And I also believe I would know my twin when I meet him.” He opened his phone and scrolled through the photo gallery in the sudden silence. “That is why I went to New York for school, thinking he had to have been found and cared for and living in New York. I was hoping to find him, somehow. Which was silly because of how big New York is, but I went to school there believing that twin sense would lead me to him.” He held his phone out. “Please, look.”

It was a picture of two men, one Japanese, one Welsh, looking happy as they held two infants. “My family,” Dafydd said. “If you look closer, you can figure out which one is me and which is Daisuke. Like your Darin, I am the one who looked more Japanese and yet you can see we look alike. Probably more than your Darin and Ryoko because they are fraternal twins. We are near identical, except the eye color made me look more Japanese. Daisuke had dark green eyes like my Tad. Like you and your Ryoko.”

Dee shook his head as he stared at the photo, as if in denial. “I-is… umm… are there any other pictures?” he stammered.

Both Dafydd and Ryo let out snorts and Momo laughed.

“We are Japanese,” Dafydd said. “Of course, there were lots of photos taken in the short time we were a family.” He suddenly lost his humor. “Enough to last a lifetime, my father says.”
Ryo nudged Dee in his side. “I keep telling you that you take too many photos.” Despite his teasing words, he looked at Dee in concern and was hoping for a little humor to help relieve the tsunami of emotions that threatened to overwhelm Dee.

Dee gave a small smile. “Yeah, you do.” Suddenly looking confused he added, “You keep accusing me of being Japanese because of it.” He started to frown as he looked back at Dafydd.

“Well,” Ryo said, indicating Dafydd’s phone as the other man looked through his photos. “I hate to quote Andy, but we don’t know that yet. We need more facts before coming to a conclusion.” Ryo seemed to understand exactly what Dee had meant by his reply, and that didn’t surprise Dee at all. It was how they worked on the job and in their personal lives. Sometimes it was scary that they knew each other so well, but Dee wouldn’t want it any other way. Now he was terrified because he feared there was an even deeper bond than the one he had with Ryo. Not only was that a scary thought to Dee, but he also knew it would mean learning things that he never had any desire to learn, like learning about horrible people that Dee never wanted to know about.

“I am a detective, too,” Dafydd reminded Ryo, “and I have been collecting facts all evening. I have enough facts. Momo’s job is also collecting facts and making a conclusion.” He stared at Dee. “Plus, I have twin sense.” His attention when back to Dee, and as his dark eyes met Dee’s green ones, he stood straight, no longer seeming uneasy. There still was pain and so much agony reflected in those dark eyes. “I see my twin before me,” he proclaimed firmly. He thrust his phone in Dee’s direction so he could see the photo displayed on the screen. It was a close-up of the infant twins, limbs entangled and looking at the camera. “What do you think, Daisuke? What do you see?” The questions started strong, but his voice quivereded as he called Dee his twin brother’s name and ended with a small sob.

Dee’s eyes went wide as the nagging feeling he fought hard to ignore come to the surface. “I… I see….” His eyes went from the photo to meet Dafydd’s. Tears started to glisten in his eyes. As the tears started to fall, he exclaimed, “Oh my God!” More tears fell. “OH MY GOD!!! I see… I see us. You and me.” His hand went to cover his mouth as he stared at the man before him with wide, glistening eyes.

Ryo, unable to get a good look at the photo, looked concerned. “Are you saying this is twin sense?” he asked. It looked as if Ryo was also having to face facts that he had been ignoring or denying since he had finally met his cousin’s husband earlier that evening.

Dee nodded, wiping at his tears. “Yes.” To Dafydd, he added, “I look at you, and I see my twin. I also see facts in the photo. That’s me in these photos. If I send this picture to Mother without saying anything, she will tell you that is me. But even, more, that baby carrier in the background. The one with the ‘D’ on it. That’s how I was named Dee. Mother will also tell you that she still has that carrier. It survived the blast and she still has it.”
Ryo looked stricken by the time Dee finished speaking. He took the phone from Dafydd and was able to have a better look at the photo. “Oh God,” he uttered. He had seen enough baby photos of Dee from Mother to know Dee as a baby. “That is you. What about the baby carrier?” He looked at Dafydd.

“My family’s business is children’s items. Baby carriers are included. Those were made special, a prototype and more advanced. My parents already had our names, so the ‘D’s were added to personalize them. And yes, the baby carriers were used when my parents went on the run to America.”

“May I?” Dee asked, his voice rough. He cleared his throat. “Could you send me that photo? Maybe a few others?”

Ryo slipped his arm around Dee and held him in silent support.

“Of course,” Dafydd replied. “You have every right to them as I do.”

Dee wiped his eyes again. “I’m sorry.” He took a deep breath, trembling a little. “I need to be alone for a bit. Ryo can give you my number.”

OoOoOoO
Ryo deals with Dafydd, his cousin Momo, and the huge shock of the evening.

CHAPTER TWELVE

October 28, 2006
Tokyo New Crown Star Hotel
Minato Ward, Tokyo, Japan

Ryo looked at Dee in question.

“Please?” Dee pleaded in English. “I need some time to process this. I always said I never wanted to know. I never wanted to find out who was the monster or monsters who left me in an alley alongside a garbage dumpster. I never wanted to know who my biological parents were.” He shook his head. “But I know now.”

“They weren’t monsters,” Dafydd assured Dee, also in English.

Ryo decided that while he still held onto Dafydd’s phone to send the picture to Dee’s phone. He’ll let Dafydd decide what else to share since he’ll have Dee’s number on his phone. He was hurt at first, but then he realized he knew why Dee had to be alone and would give it to him, for a little while anyway. Along with the picture, because he also had a good idea why Dee requested it.

If it helped Dee reconcile his feelings with the night’s huge discovery, then he had to let Dee have his space for a while. Ryo believed he knew Dee well enough to know when exactly was the right time to call a stop to Dee being alone. He also knew his husband enough to know he wouldn’t be completely alone as long as he had a phone nearby. Then the more Ryo thought out it, he realized that he needed to work his way through his own shock of discovering that his distant cousin who he had intended to finally get to know better was married to Dee’s twin brother, and knew Dee’s biological family.
“Our parents loved both of us very much,” Dafydd was saying to Dee, “and Papa was heartbroken when he lost you both. To this day, he still wonders what you would be doing if you were alive. You had two parents who loved you very much. When you are ready, I will tell you what we know about what had happened on that day we lost you and Tad.”

Dee nodded. “Thank you. Excuse me.” He squeezed Ryo’s arm and gave him a small, watery smile. “Ryo, tell Obāsan that I’ll be back before karaoke. I’m sorry for running out for a while, but I need to. I can’t continue the party like this.”

“Let me know if you need something, Dee,” Ryo said as Dee started to walk away.

“I will.”

As Dee quickly left the terrace, Momo asked Ryo, “Do you have a room at this hotel for the night? Or are you going back to Kamakura after the party?”

“We’ve been staying here since Thursday,” Ryo replied. “Will you be staying here tomorrow night too?”

“Yes, we are. It was most generous of Akira-san to give us two nights in such a nice hotel,” Momo said.

“We are staying in Tokyo until Friday, so tomorrow we will look for another hotel,” Dafydd commented.

“Do you not like this hotel?” Ryo asked.

“Oh, we like this hotel very much, but staying here until Friday will put a big dent in our savings that I would rather not spend,” Dafydd said. “Especially because I know Momo will hit up Harajuku and Ginza while we are here.”

Momo giggled. “You worry too much, Dafydd. I want to go shopping but we will not be broke.” She gave him a flirty smile. “I plan to get some new clothes for work. It is important to dress my position at times. Just as it is yours. There are times when the Lead Detective can’t get away with
wearing a hoodie."

Ryo had to smile at the exchange. It reminded him of discussions he had over the years with Dee, only back then, he was the one not so willing to spend money unnecessarily and preferring to save it. Lately it seemed Dee was the one hesitant to spend, wanting to save. Ryo did understand that now that they were rich, that it did not mean go crazy and spend more than they were getting, but he also knew that they were able to spend more money than they were used to now. He was also amused that it seemed Dee’s brother had the same preferred fashion sense for work when he could get away with it.

“Momo, did my grandmother tell you that when the twins were born, my other grandparents gave me and Dee a hotel chain as a gift?”

“No, she did not,” Momo replied, looking stunned.

“That’s some gift!” Dafydd exclaimed, his eyes wide with shock.

“They recently bought this hotel a couple of months ago, so they did not get to do the name change yet, but Dee and I own this hotel. We have a penthouse on the top floor that we decided to make our Tokyo apartment. I love being with my grandmother but I don’t want to impose on her all the time.”

“I understand,” Dafydd said. “That is why we finally bought a house when our twins were born. Until then we lived with my father. His house seems to be always full. He remarried and had more children, and now even has some more grandchildren. Momo and I chose to have our own place and give our rooms in my father’s house for visiting relatives.”

“Sometimes my grandmother’s house can be like that. Anyway, being that it looks like you’re now much closer family than we thought, I want to offer you a room upgrade and you can stay as long as you like. It’s on me and your brother.”

“We couldn’t!” Dafydd exclaimed. “That’s not why…” He looked horrified that someone could consider it to be his motive.

“I know why you did it, and I know our money isn’t the reason,” Ryo assured him. He leaned against the wall and folded his arms. “All the facts do say that Dee is your lost twin. Hell, even I can see it’s him in the photos, but we should make absolutely sure. Especially before you go to your father. I am going to convince Dee to a DNA test.”
“It might be wrong of me, so if Dee chooses not to know the results I will respect that, but it’s already being worked on,” Momo said.

“What?” Ryo asked, surprised.

“Once we had enough facts, mostly learning how Dee was found as an infant in Manhattan, I called a friend at work. With Dafydd and Dee both being in law enforcement, Hana could pull their DNA samples to match them. We have worked with the NYPD before, so it won’t be the first time and raise flags requesting a DNA sample. She will have to pay a visit to Dafydd’s father and get a sample from him. She promised she’ll be discreet,” Momo explained.

Ryo stared at his cousin, who it just dawned on him, was now his sister-in-law. “I guess there’s advantages to working in Forensics.”

“Yes, there is. She'll get it done as soon as she can and get back to me, but it’s better than waiting until we get home or having them pay to get a test around here.”

“I would say that’s covered then. So, I’m not taking no for an answer. Momo, we were already family, but you are my sister-in-law. Let us do this for you.”

Momo looked a little stunned, as if she also just realized the change in her relations to Ryo. “If you insist,” Momo said, hesitantly. She glanced up at her husband.

“Besides,” Ryo stared, now looking at Dafydd and speaking to him, “you have a brother you never knew but spent your whole life wanting to. With all of us in the same hotel, we could make time for you to start doing that.”

“He makes sense, Dafydd,” Momo said.

“He does,” Dafydd agreed. “Okay, we’ll take your very most generous offer. Thank you.” He bowed to Ryo.

“We’ll have to work on that,” Ryo said, amused. “I need to speak to my grandmother and check in on Dee. He’ll have enough time to be alone by then.”
“Did he really not want to know who his parents were?” Momo asked.

“You heard what he had always believed of his parents. He was found in January in an alleyway by a dumpster. He figured his parents didn’t want him and left him there to die. To him, his parents were monsters, horrible people, and he never wanted to know who could do such a thing to a baby. Especially since the baby was him.”

“Buy Dafydd told him they weren’t monsters,” Momo stated, looking disturbed that someone could think such a thing about her father-in-law, who she obviously knew very well.

“We know that now,” Ryo agreed. “But all his life until tonight, that is what he believed, and now he needs time to switch his mindset.” Ryo started to smirk as he gazed at his new in-laws. “Daisuke?” he asked. “Dee’s birth name is Daisuke? That’s what the ‘D’ stands for?”


“Holy crap!” Ryo exclaimed and started to laugh. “Dee’s more Japanese than I am!” he stopped laughing. “Oh shit, Dee’s more Japanese than I am.” He slapped his forehead as he gazed upward at the sky for a moment.

It was all such an incredible thing to happen and all the facts behind it were just as incredible. To think, Dee’s twin brother had been in his family even before he had met Dee. And now this new realization on top of everything else. It was overwhelming, but for him, it was a very good thing. Especially learning that Dee’s biological parents could never consider dumping Dee as what had happened, and that something beyond their control took their beloved infant son away from them. There was a man still mourning the loss of his son on the inside. That had to be a terrible thing to deal with for all these years, and Ryo vowed he would do everything he could to finally relieve that man of the pain.

Momo started to laugh at her cousin’s reaction. “Only by a little bit, if any. Or do you keep forgetting that your Australian grandfather was an Aoki?”

“My mother kept saying she was half-Japanese, so it’s in my head, but I know my grandfather was Japanese-Australian.” Ryo shook his head again. “Holy crap, Dee’s Japanese! And bloody Welsh!” He looked at Dafydd. “No American at all?”
“He’s only American because he lived there most of his life,” Dafydd said. “I went to school in New York, hoping to have a chance to run into him. Meanwhile he was in Yokohama at that time. I never had a chance.”

“It’s a much better not having the chance than if he was really dead, wouldn’t you say?” Ryo commented.

“Yes, you are correct. It is.”

“You seem awfully calm for someone who found his long-lost brother finally,” Ryo observed. “I mean, even I’m having a small freak out over this.”

Momo giggled and gave him a teasing look. “Are you sure that you’re not freaking out over learning your husband just might be a tad bit more Japanese than you are?”

“Momo,” Ryo warned and laughed again. “That’s just a small part of it. I mean, geez…. ” He stared at Dafydd. “It’s all just so unbelievable. It’s as if life as Dee and I knew it changed tonight, and it will never be the same again. Even more than getting all that money from my dad’s parents. This is what is going to change us drastically.”

“I don’t think it sunk in yet. I mean, I know Dee is my twin brother, but I’m still not believing I finally found him. It seems unreal. And at a party I tried to talk Momo out of going to.” He ran his hand through his hair, very much like Dee did. “I’m sure it’ll hit at some point, and it will be like a bomb hit me.”

“I’ll be there for you,” Momo assured him.

“I know you will be,” Dafydd replied, giving his wife a loving smile.

“Speaking about being there for your spouse,” Ryo said, “let’s go pull my grandmother to the side and let her know what’s going on.”

As they headed back to the ballroom to find Akira, Ryo called the front desk and arranged for a new room for Dafydd and Momo. He managed to get them one of the best suites in the hotel and told them they could change rooms that night once they got the key card from the front desk.
After checking in at the table of honor, Ryo discovered that his grandmother was not there. Satomi pointed to the dance floor with amusement. “Look at the dancers, Ryo,” she said.

Ryo turned to get a better view of the dance floor and shook his head. “I should have known better,” he sighed and then smiled. “It is something else she has in common with Mother.” As his relatives who had met Maria agreed with him and laughed, he turned to Dafydd and Momo. “Dee’s mom loves to dance. She’s the reason that Dee can pretty much dance to anything. That woman will always be dancing. If they ever should put her in a wheelchair, she’ll be rolling over us.”

Tsubasa added, “And if Obāsan needs a chair too, we’ll really be in trouble.”

Ryo sighed. “We’ll definitely have to keep them away from each other if there’s dancing involved.”

“We already have to,” Nobu added, amused, making everyone laugh more.

“Ryo-san,” Dafydd said uncertainly. When Ryo gave him his attention, he said, “Are you sure it’s okay to tell your grandmother? Shouldn’t that be Dai… Dee’s job? I mean, he might want to be the one to tell anyone, especially for the first time outside of us.”

“Oh, if I know my husband, someone already knows. And she’s probably giving him an earful right now, but since he’s also stubborn, I should tell Obāsan because she might have to back Mother up in getting Dee in the mood to come back to the party. And get to know his brother more. Besides, he probably also knows I’m going to tell Obāsan to explain his disappearance. He won’t mind.”

Ryo knew that his grandmother had become the second most important woman in Dee’s life, and that he saw her as the grandmother he never had. Which made her the second person after Mother that Dee would want to know anything eventful that happened in his life.

He waited until the song ended and then having Momo and Dafydd to wait for him, he went on the dance floor to get his grandmother. “Obāsan, I need to talk to you,” he said, putting her arm through
his and guiding her off the dance floor. “I also upgraded Momo’s room. Would you please join us as we change their rooms?”

“What is this about?” She looked at Ryo and studied him, and then she looked over to Momo and her husband who looked so much like her grandson-in-law that she feared, even knowing Dee as well as she did, she could mix them up at times. “Is there a reason you suddenly upgraded the room?”

“Yes, Dafydd has something to do with the room upgrade, and you probably will not be surprised either, but we need to speak to you alone.”

“Is Dei all right?” Akira asked, looking concerned. She suddenly looked as if she wanted to find Dee to give him comfort and support. To Akira, Dee had become more than her grandson’s husband. He had become one of her grandsons. When she had told Dee that he was an Aoki before the wedding ceremony, she had meant it. As far as Akira was concerned, Dee, like Ryo, was an Aoki and part of the family that she loved so much.

“He will be,” Ryo said.

Akira allowed Ryo to guide her out of the ballroom with Momo and Dafydd following. Outside the ballroom, Ryo asked, “Will it be a big inconvenience if we get you in your new room now?”

“We did not have time to unpack except to change from our travel clothes. By the time we got into Tokyo and got over to the hotel, the party already started. So, we grabbed quick showers and changed our clothes,” Momo replied, indicating the pretty dark blue cocktail dress that must have cost a small fortune.

Ryo wasn’t great with picking out designers for women’s clothes, but he was certain it was by some designer. They usually left that ability to Diana and J.J. when it was needed on the job. Outside the job, Ryo never thought it something important he needed to know. Judging by the design, he did dare to guess it had to be a famous Japanese designer, because the dress was more in the Japanese cut than of European or American design. Her shoes, Ryo knew were Prada. Meaning that she not only spent quite a bit of money buying gifts to bring to the party, but she also put a small dent in their savings to have something special to wear.

It also meant that they did have a nice amount of money in the bank but Dafydd just liked to save money and watch the amount grow. He could identify with Dafydd on that, even if lately Dee had been the one less likely to spend a small fortune on little things for himself. On the other hand, Dee was also most likely the one to loosen the purse strings a little when it came to Bikky and, to be
honest, Ryo could not blame his husband now that they were in a position to give their son more than they had already provided for him. But Ryo also believed that Bikky needed the learn the value of money at the same time.

Dafydd was in a dark burnt orange suit and mustard yellow shirt that were of better quality but definitely was bought off the rack. Dafydd most likely had paid enough for it, but not anywhere close to how much Ryo had dropped for the blue pinstripe suit he was wearing. He had to smirk as he noticed that the silk tie which was in a perfect knot when he first met Dafydd was now loose and one tug away from becoming completely undone. Just like his twin, Ryo mused.

Dee had originally wanted to dress in business casual, knowing it was a big deal to Akira and that many of their guests were going to dress up for the occasion. Some of the older females had arrived wearing kimono, and even Akira was in one of her better kimono, as she would for special family events. It was the reason Ryo insisted that business casual wouldn’t be good enough and insisted that they wear one of the new suits they had bought while shopping in Shibuya. The suits were also off the rack but they did have to withstand some measuring and come back to pick up their suits later before leaving Shibuya.

“We really weren’t going to fully unpack anyway because we were thinking we would only be here until Monday morning,” Dafydd added.

“That is also true,” Momo agreed.

They went down to the lobby to pick up the keycard for their new room and then up to Momo’s and Dafydd’s room, which was one of the standard kings, and was located in the second building. The ballroom started in the main building and crossed over the 20-foot gap between both buildings to the roof of that building. The main building was taller by a few floors, including the penthouse and had more expensive accommodations, along with apartments that were leased out for long and short term.

The second building, attached to the main one by not only the ballroom on the roof of one of the wings, but by bridges going between both buildings on certain floors, had the economy and standard rooms. Also on the first floor of the wing with the economy rooms, there was a small onsen for use by guests. It was nothing like the one they went to on Enoshima Island or the one they heard about in Obaiba, but it was nice. If they didn’t have their own spa tub in the master bathroom, along with the hot tub on the patio next to the conservatory, Ryo would have been tempted to use the onsen one of the days they were in Tokyo. The reason for the onsen was because the economy rooms only had showers in the rooms, so the onsen gave the guests a chance to take a bath if they wanted.

Dafydd’s and Momo’s room were among the block of standard rooms which were in the other wing of the U-shaped building that Akira had booked – and had paid for, insisting on not only paying but not accepting the discount that was offered. She said if she ever needed just one or two rooms, she
would consider at least the discount, if not the complimentary stay, but with the number of rooms she had blocked for the party, it meant those rooms would not be available and the hotel would be losing out on business if she did not pay. Akira did accept discounts on the ballroom use and catering facilities, but again, she still insisted to pay.

Inside the room, they sat down and Dafydd offered Akira and Ryo a bottle of water. Ryo turned it down but Akira accepted with a smile.

Momo looked at Dafydd and Ryo. “Maybe you would like something much stronger than water?” she asked, and with a wicked grin, added, “And I don’t mean Japanese coffee.”

“No thank you,” Dafydd said. “I need to stay clear-headed tonight. I need to remember this night forever. No matter which way it turns out.”

Ryo let out a heavy sigh and then a grunt. “If I do, it won’t be just one, and yes, I need to remain clear-headed too, to make sure Dee doesn’t do anything stupid.”

“So, is there a reason why you look so much like my grandson’s husband?” Akira asked.

“Yes, Akira-san. There is,” Dafydd said with a slight bow and then drank from his bottle of water.

“I am aware of the many personal questions you were asking me and the family about Dei. Not that we minded if you were hoping to do good with it,” Akira said.

“Forgive us,” Momo begged, bowing from her seat, and blushing. “I know it was very rude of us to ask such questions about someone we just met, but we had to know at least if Dee was raised by his biological parents, and then once we found out how he was found and raised in an orphanage by Mother Lane-san, we could not help asking more questions. We meant no harm.”

Akira reached across to pat Momo’s hand. “It is okay. Considering the circumstances, you were not rude.” She smiled as Momo looked up at her. “Besides, you were always the straightforward one out of the females on my side. It is one of the qualities that I have always admired about you. You remind me much of myself and my daughters, especially Ryo’s mother. Do not change, and do not ever apologize for being who you are.”

“Thank you, Akira-san,” Momo said with a smile.
“I think we’re about to get to the part where I will insist that you and your husband start calling me Obāsan, just as the rest of my grandchildren and great-grandchildren, even if they are so by marriage,” Akira said with a warm smile. “No matter which way tonight goes,” she paraphrased Dafydd’s earlier comment.

“I don’t know how much good it did,” Dafydd said looking down. “I looked for so long to find my brother and now that I found him, I fear he will reject me.”

Akira gave him a kind smile and then remained silent for a few seconds, thinking, filling the pause by drinking some water. “I think,” she started, “that it’s a shock for poor Dei. Probably the last thing he expected when he planned this trip was to find his biological family. Especially since he was not inclined to look for them all his life. I think after all the shock wears down and he accepts it – and he will, if I know Maria – he will be happy to find out he’s not so gaijin after all. Not that I ever saw him as such, but now it’s official.”

Momo and Ryo laughed.

Akira gave Dafydd a wicked grin. “Remember that not only his mother, but he will also have me to deal with if he tries to pass up this wonderful gift that he was given tonight.”

“How could I not?” she asked. “As I just said, this is a gift for Dei, and for you and your family, Dafydd. I don’t know your father yet, but I can understand the pain of losing a child. Parents should never outlive their children. There is a part of me that will forever grieve the loss of Ryo’s mother, no matter how happy and content I am otherwise with life. To lose an infant is another level of grief. It won’t take away the decades of pain tucked inside your father over losing one of his sons, but we can work on filling that hole that is empty with finally knowing the man his child had become.” She smiled warmly at Dafydd. “Chances like this do not happen often, and I will remind Dei of that when I get my chance.”

She paused again for another drink of water. “You need to understand his side and let him have his moment before making him see the truth for what it is. For one, the reason Dei never wanted to know his biological family is because of what he believed they had done to him as an infant. He probably also has this silly notion that by gaining a biological family will mean swapping out the family he has always known. He just needs to get past that he has more than just Mother and Jess as parents,” Akira said. “He should know better by now after raising Bikky the way you and Dei are,” she added to Ryo, referring to how they never wanted to replace Bikky’s mother and father, but rather be two additional parents to love and nurture the boy. “Ryo, are you planning on going to be
there for your husband?”

“I will, but I’m thinking he might need someone else more after he’s done speaking to Mother,” Ryo said. “Obāsan, I know you’re wanting to know all the details, but could I convince you to speak to Dee now? He’s had enough time to brood and hopefully is talking to Mother now. I’ll be there as soon as I get the in-laws settled.”

Akira stood up and hugged Ryo. “You don’t have to convince me. Of course, I will talk to Dei.” She started to leave the room and stopped to look back. “I still expect details from all of you later.” She smiled and left the room.

Momo had been packing their travel clothes and toiletries they had used into their suitcases. She sat on the bed when she was done. “Is Akira-san and Dee actually that close?” she asked.

“Yes, they are. They adore each other, and they became closer during the time Obāsan spent with us after the twins were born. I had company missing her after she left New York. Dee and Bikky both were as miserable as I was to see her leave. After Mother, Obāsan is the woman that Dee respects and trusts the most.”

“She is more like grandmother than grandmother-in-law?” Dafydd asked, changing into English to make sure he got his question across.

“Yes, she is. And being as she is an authority figure that Dee respects, she is the best one to talk to Dee after he talks to Mother,” Ryo said. “Have you been sending Dee anymore photos you might have there on your phone?”

“Yes, I sent him everything I have on my phone. I sent a few while you were talking to Akira-san in the ballroom,” Dafydd answered.

“Good,” Ryo stated with a satisfied nod. He was amused at how his family always mentioned that Momo never had any photos of her family with her, even on her phone whenever she showed up at a family event, only for her mysterious husband to finally show up with her, and having not only photos of their family as it was now, but many photos of his family before he lost one of his fathers and twin brother. Meaning he had taken the time to scan his favorite photos to have with him everywhere he took his phone, which would be almost everywhere. He smiled encouraging at Dafydd. “Come on, let’s get you in your new suite, and then see how your brother is doing.”
Despite his worries, Dafydd had to smile. “My brother. My twin brother! He’s here! Everyone thought I was crazy, but I was right. I was right and I finally found Daisuke.” His eyes started to water again, and despite his fears of being rejected by that brother, one could see the pure joy and excitement of finally finding his brother. Momo hugged him and kissed his cheek, smiling with happiness, too.

“I’m sorry to inform you, but I’m going to have a lot of fun with that,” Ryo said with an evil smirk.

“With what? My twin’s name?”

“Oh yes. While we go upstairs let me tell you how it was because of Dee that all my friends and co-workers call me Ryo. Before I met him, I went by my first name, Randy, and was only Ryo to my Japanese family.” He picked up a suitcase from the bed. “Now whenever someone calls me Randy, it feels strange. Unless it’s coming from my father’s family and even sometimes then. And it’s all Daisuke’s fault.” He started to laugh. “Daisuke Fujioka. That’s a great name!” he exclaimed sincerely and making both Dafydd and Momo smile brightly. Ryo already had seen the family pride Dafydd had, and that included his family name. “I’m going to make sure he knows it.” He winked at Dafydd and Momo, the smirk turning into a warm smile.

Momo and Dafydd laughed and followed Ryo out of the room, each with a suitcase. Dafydd also had their carry-on and Momo had her purse. On the way to the suite, Ryo told them in greater detail about when he had first met Dee, and how Dee had figured he was Japanese and insisted on knowing his Japanese name and started to call him Ryo.
Chapter 13

Chapter Summary

Dee deals with the big discovery, and talks to the one person who had always been able to help Dee see sense in confusing situations.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

October 28, 2016

Laytner-MacLean Penthouse

Tokyo New Crown Star Hotel

Minato Ward, Tokyo, Japan

Dee entered the penthouse and stopped for a moment in the entryway, letting the elevator doors slide closed behind him. He removed his boots and left them with the other shoes on a rack near the door. He went across the hardwood entryway and opened the sliding door leading into the living room. Once inside he started to pace, running his hands through his hair. From his jacket pocket, he felt his phone vibrate to signify he received another text. He was certain it was another photo from Dafydd’s gallery on his mobile phone.

He went into the kitchen, and then opened the fridge and grabbed a bottle of Asahi beer. After taking a long drink from it, he headed back into the living room and stood there for a while, holding his beer but not taking another drink from it. He stood still, as if in shock.

The money, this Tokyo penthouse that he found out he owned with Ryo, the extended vacation in Japan that once would have been out of their reach. It was all already too much and he was still trying to reconcile all the recent changes that came with the huge change when Ryoko and Darin were born four months ago.

He shook his head in disbelief as he stared out at the lights of Tokyo and the Tokyo Tower beyond the living room doors and windows.
He had a brother. He had a twin brother, who was very Japanese, but also half-Welsh, with a very Welsh given name. That made him Japanese and Welsh.

He shook his head again and ran his free hand through his hair.

He had two biological fathers who apparently loved him very much, if Dafydd was telling the truth. He took his phone out and finally looked at his texts. Just as he thought, he had photos of two infant babies, some of the photos with one or both of their fathers. One of the photos had them as newborns with the northwest tower of Nagoya Castle and its park setting in the background. It did not look like they were on the castle grounds, but they were somewhere that it was visible. Dafydd’s text said: Outside of home.

Dee’s mouth formed the word “Wow” but made no sound. His fathers had lived basically across from the castle grounds.

His fathers.

It surprised him how easy the thought had formed, and it sounded so strange. He had only known one father and that was Jess. Being that he knew virtually nothing about his biological parents except that one was Japanese and the other was Welsh, they had lived in Nagoya across from the castle and that the Japanese father’s last name was Fujioka, he still basically knew just one father.

He went onto the terrace and set the beer on a table and lit one of the heater lamps, which also provided some light because he did not turn on any of the patio lights. There were a few lights on the walls of the penthouse that automatically came on when it started to get dark and went off with the daylight, but did not reach the table he was at near the patio wall.

He scrolled through his text messages until he found the first photo that he received. The same one that he had to admit that it was him in the photo. He attached it to a text to Mother and added, “I need your wise advice. Love you, Dee.”

He sat in the chair at the table and waited to give Mother time to get the text. It was 8:30 pm, which made it 7:30 in the morning in New York. Mother would be up and already well into her day by then. The woman woke up at 6 am, and after having her morning coffee in her room and getting dressed, she would drag some of the older orphans out of bed to assist her in preparing for breakfast. The other daytime care providers started arriving between 8 and 9.
He sipped his beer as he waited a few more minutes before calling her. Before he had a chance to pick up his phone, it started ringing. The display showed it was Mother. He had to smile. He should have known she would beat him to calling, even if it was an international call on her own plan. Which he had every intention of paying her cell phone bill for the time he was in Japan, even if he did not have the money he now had.

“Mother,” he greeted, “I was just about to call you.”

Getting right to the point, she asked, “What’s going on, Dee? Who is that other baby that looks like you?”

He had to smile again. He knew his mother would know it was him in the photo, and very likely knew which baby was him. Even if he knew without a doubt that he was one of the babies, but Mother just confirmed it, which made it a little more real for him.

“What’s your opinion of the other baby?” he asked.

“I’ll admit that I had to look closer at the photo to figure out which one was you,” Mother replied. “When I got a better look at your eyes, I knew it was you. The two of you look near identical except for eye color and that he looks very Japanese. Or should I say more. I have to share Rick’s and Ryo’s opinion that there had to be some Asian in you. I thought more Filipino because of your skin tone, but I couldn’t be sure. When the opportunity for you to learn Japanese when you were younger arose, I decided to take the chance. At least you would be able to speak an Asian language. Actually, the other baby looks a lot like Darin.”

Dee nodded even if he knew she couldn’t see. “I think so too, but that other baby is not Darin. Obviously.” He let out a small chuckle.

“I could have told you that is not Darin even if that baby was alone in the photo. I know my precious grandson by now. I also know he’s not you, no matter how much alike your son is to when you were an infant. I already know that.” She paused and took a deep breath. “I’m babbling. I’m sorry Dee. I’m just so excited.”

“Now I know where I get that from,” Dee muttered with amusement.

“Just because you’re halfway across the world doesn’t mean I won’t remember to tug your ear when you get home. I have tick marks on my message board in my room.”
“Mother!” Dee exclaimed, making her laugh.

When she stopped laughing, she took a deep breath and suddenly exclaimed, “My goodness, Dee! I dare not say what I think because it is too good to believe.”

“You think it’s good?” Dee asked, sounding confused. “That good?”

“That you have a brother? And that you found him? Are you daft, lad?” She started to laugh, the sound filled with joy. Dee knew how happy the news made her because her voice started to take on the Irish lilt of her family, and then there her last question. “Dee, my darling son. This is joyous news. It gladdens my heart so much thinking about it. Perhaps you can find out what actually had happened.”

“I don’t know everything, but from the little I do, it seems I was wrong about my biological parents. And, actually, he found me. Apparently, he’s been hoping to find me practically all of his life.”

“You walked away from him, didn’t you?” she asked, her tone changing to concern. Dee could tell she was gearing up to lecture him, depending on his reply. “Oh Dee….”

“It’s okay, Mother,” Dee assured her. “I left Ryo with them. Him and his wife, that is. He’s kinda related to Ryo. He’s married to this distant cousin of Ryo’s. A very distant cousin.”

“Not so much anymore,” Maria stated with amusement.

“You can be certain of that? No doubts? Worries of someone after our money?”

“Are you worried about that last?”

“No,” Dee replied. “Our money is still too new. If he was, he would have had to have surgery to look like me and there still would have been signs of that healing.”

“I knew you would have already figured that out. Ryo most likely would have too and you would
have heard from him about it by now if he had concerns about that. So, no worries of him being after your money,” Mother said. “So next, do you believe this is your twin brother?”

“Yeah. I mean, I know that’s me in the photo and it’s obviously a photo of twins, so at least the other baby in the photo is my twin.” Dee’s phone vibrated as he spoke and he looked to see he received another text. “Hold on, Mother. I got another text.”

Dee put Mother on hold to check his messages to find another photo from the number that he figured was Dafydd’s cell phone. He forwarded it to Mother’s cell phone and went back to the call. “Mother, I just sent you another picture. This one has more of another reason I know it’s me.”

It was a picture of the twins in the baby carriers outside of an airport terminal. In the background was a control tower and a unique structure that Dee knew was the theme building at LAX. It had been almost a year ago that they were in the airport working a case. It was just after finding out that Dee was pregnant. He smiled, remembering how it felt so far away until he gave birth and now he had not one but two beautiful babies that were almost four months old.

The reason he decided to forward it to Mother was because of the better detail of the baby carriers.

“Oh Dee!” she gasped after some silence as she retrieved the text. “I thought the baby carrier in the background of the other photo seemed familiar. You were found in the same one when Jess found you.”

“I know. This is a much better shot of the carriers. Since both our names started with “D”, the initial was imprinted on the front,” Dee explained.

“Yes. That’s the only clue I had to a potential name. I wasn’t sure if it was a first or last name, but I used what I had,” Mother reminisced fondly, retelling a story Dee knew very well but would never tire of hearing her say it. There were many stories of hers that Dee never minded hearing again.

He had to smile again.

“Did you at least find out what the “D” was for?” Mother asked.

Dee let out a little laugh. “Yeah, I did. The ‘D’s are for Dafydd and Daisuke. That’s why we both had that initial on our baby carriers. It wasn’t for a family name.”
“Really?” Now she sounded really intrigued. “And which one is you?”

“It’s....” He paused, suddenly needing to take a deep breath he felt as if a small bomb went off inside his mind. It finally hit him that he actually had a birth name now, and oh, what a name it was! “Wow,” he exclaimed. “I should be surprised, but actually I’m not. Just very amused, when I’m not in shock that I finally know it. It’s Daisuke. Most likely Daisuke Fujioka, since that’s Dafydd’s last name.”

He heard laughter coming from Mother’s side. “Japanese?” she asked. “My darling boy is Japanese? Is this why I allowed my family to pay for you to go to college in Japan?” she asked in a teasing tone.

“Half Japanese, Mother,” Dee corrected her, but he was smiling at her reaction. “Notice that the other name is Dafydd.”

“Yes, that is very Welsh. Spencer would be amused with that.”

Dee had to laugh. His cousin Spencer was born in Ireland but his father was Welsh and when he divorced Spencer’s mother, he moved back to Swansea. When Spencer turned 18, he chose to live near his father and embraced more of his Welsh half. Before that he had considered himself Irish. He still lived in Swansea with his family. “Yes, he would be. I’ll be sure to tell him next time we talk.”

“If you don’t, I will,” Mother warned him.

He had put the call on speaker as they talked, so he wouldn’t have to make her wait while going through his text messages. He found what he was looking for and sent it to her. It was the first one he had received from Dafydd’s phone. He received it as he was excusing himself to flee from the terrace, knowing it had to have been Ryo who sent it, because his husband was holding Dafydd’s phone at the time.

He shook his head as he scrolled through the photos he had received since then. Photos of his life before he became Dee Laytner, native New Yorker.

“The latest one is a family portrait,” he said to Mother.
“You have two fathers,” she stated. “Well, we did suspect that after the twins were born. Now we know it’s true. Oh yes, I do see both men in the two of you.” She paused, as if gathering her thoughts. “Dee, sweetheart. You should be happy. I should hear that in your voice when you speak. You should be at that party of yours celebrating and then telling me all about it tomorrow. Especially if you know they did not dump you just to get rid of you. And even if that had been true, which it’s not, you still have a twin brother. One who is innocent of whatever was previously believed. After all, he could not have done the dumping.”

“No. No, you’re right. As always. From what I know, they didn’t leave me. It seems it wasn’t them. Dafydd mentioned something about going on the run, but I don’t know the details yet, but I’m sure I’ll find out.”

“Dee, I know parental love when I see it, and those two men loved you and your brother too much to deliberately leave you out like that.”

Dee looked at the photo again. “Yeah, I know,” he said softly. “As I said, I don’t know too much of what happened, but I do know they are not the monsters I thought they were. I think I was taken from them.”

“Then what is holding you back?” she asked. “Dee, you have what I have always prayed for you. You have a history. You have a heritage.”

“I already have a heritage,” Dee blurted out. “I’m Irish!”

“Because of me,” she reminded him. “That’s my heritage, Dee, but not yours. I shared it with you because that was all I had and I needed to fill that void for you. You were the only child that I did that for and that’s how I knew I had to find a way to adopt you. You’re welcome to still keep it, but if you do add it to your actual heritage. Just as you did along your life to give yourself an identity. You didn’t lose, Dee. You gained. You gained so much more than you did when you woke up this morning. Give thanks for this blessed gift and rejoice my darling boy.”

“I know you’re right, Mother. No matter how this goes, you will always be my Mom,” Dee said warmly.

“I certainly hope so, because you will always be my son. My pride and joy and my miracle. I just have to share you more now. I already had with Jess since he is your Dad. Now you have two more fathers. I can do that because I only want the best for you. And this is best for you, even if you have it in your mind that it is not. Start working on believing how good this is.”
“If you insist. It’s going to take time,” he admitted.

“If you need my blessing, Dee, then you have it and you lost nothing with me.”

Dee took a deep breath, feeling tears sting his eyes, and then exhaled slowly. “I didn’t know that was what I needed, but now that you say that, yeah, I really needed it.”

“Oh Dee. I wish I was there to hug you but I guess I’m going to have to ask Akira to do that for me.” She fell silent for a few seconds and Dee figured she was looking at the photos again. “May I also remind you that among the cultures you collected and adapted to shape you is Japanese? That now it’s not just adapted. That wonderful, rich culture that you love so much is really yours, Dee. People can’t look at you oddly when they realize you have such a strong fascination with Japan. It’s only natural for you to feel affinity for a country that is part of your heritage.” She let out an amused sigh. “I suppose now that it is the same for your interest in Wales, other than it is where the new series of Doctor Who is being filmed.”

The tears were falling, but Dee was smiling. “I love you, Mom,” he said full of feeling.

“I love you, too, Dee.” With a mischievous tone to her voice, she added, “Or should I say, Daisuke.”

“Mother!” Dee exclaimed and then laughed with her. “It still doesn’t feel real,” he said when the laughed stopped.

“Now that’s going to take time. That’s a lot to take in suddenly,” she admitted. “I can’t tell you how much, but I can tell you that ignoring it or willing for it to go away will only prevent it from happening. And this is something that you want to happen.”

“Hint taken, Mother. Again.”

Dee stood up and went to lean on the railing, looking out at Tokyo lights. His phone vibrated again. When Dee saw the latest photo, he had to smile because he was certain he knew what Mother’s reaction would be. He sent the photo to her phone.

“Oh, my Sweet Lord!” Mother exclaimed joyously. “Dee, I love this so much!” She didn’t
disappoint Dee. “I think I will have this printed up and buy a frame for it. I want it with your other pictures in my room.”

Dee laughed. It was further validation for him. The photo was of Dee and Dafydd with their fathers on their Naming Day. Dee had figured that it was when he saw the photo but the text included from Dafydd confirmed it. “How about I buy some frames for you from here?” he asked.

“I would love that. It would be perfect. And please get more than one, if you can. I think I will have also have the others printed too. Oh, do you think I can have Carol make me one of her wonderful photo books with pictures of you before you were taken from your family? This is a part of who you are, Dee, and I need a new album to go with your others.”

Dee started to laugh again, feeling much better than before he answered the phone, but then there was a reason why he went to her first. It didn’t matter that he was a grown man with a family of his own, his mother would always be there with the right things to say to make him feel better. He loved her more than he already did for it.

“Don’t worry about getting prints, Mother. Let me know which ones you like and I’ll take care of it here. I’ll even have them expressed to you if you can’t wait for us to return in December.”

“I’m sure you have a lot going on to take that time….” Mother started.

“Nothing so important that I can’t take the time to make sure I get the perfect gift from Japan from you,” Dee assured her. “Besides, it’s not like I’m going to develop the prints myself or anything. It’s no problem at all. And yes, I will ask Carol if she can work on one of her photo albums when we get back to New York. I couldn’t ask her to work on one while we’re here. I think both her and Bikky basically show up wherever we’re staying just to sleep.”

“I better get pictures of the two of you now,” Mother was saying. “And when can I meet your brother?”

He turned when he heard the door to the living room slide open and saw Akira enter. “That depends,” he replied to Mother after nodding his acknowledgment to Akira and giving a slight wave with his free hand. He headed back into the living room. As he walked, he asked into the phone, “When can you come to Japan?”

“Oh Dee, I can’t go to Japan,” Mother said.
“Tell Maria I said hello,” Akira said knowingly with a grin as Dee stopped before her.

“Am I being tag-teamed?” Dee asked both women.

Both women laughed. “I did get a text from Maria, but she did not mention that I had to see you right now. I was already up here when I received her text. I do admit that both Ryo and I knew you would be talking to your Mother,” Akira said.

“You got a text from my Mom. Tonight?” Dee asked.

“Oh, it was not that long ago.” Her dark eyes looked up at him in a firm look. She had the ability that while Dee towered over her, she had some stares that made him feel as if it was him who was smaller. “It was some time after you ran away from your twin brother, leaving Ryo to deal with it.” Her eyes softened and she gave Dee a patient smile. “I understand you’re in shock, but I’m sure your Mom convinced you that this is a good thing.”

“I’m going to get it from Obāsan now, aren’t I?” Dee asked.

“She’s there with you, and I’m not,” Maria said. “I knew she would be wanting to see how you are doing.”

“And you know she will pick on any loose ends,” Dee stated.

“I will tell you what your Mom said in her text,” Akira offered.

“Yeah? Really?”

“Hai.” With a warm smile, she reached out and hugged Dee tightly. “This is from your Mom because she is unable to right now and she didn’t want it to wait until you returned home.”

“Oh.”
Akira hugged him again. “And this is from me. There will be another later tonight and many times after that no matter what happens tonight. However, I would really love to see you and Dafydd hugging before the night is done.”

“I can promise that I’ll do my best. I do want more information from him, if for nothing else but to report back to Mother.”

“Don’t blame it on me, Dee,” Mother’s voice came from the speaker. “If you get to know him, it’s going to be because you want to.”

“I understand, Mom.” Looking at Akira, he said to Maria, “Yes. I think I do want to know more about what happened. About him and my family. I’m not sure what I’m going to do with that information.”

“Baby steps, Dee,” Maria and Akira said at the same time and then both women laughed.

“Oh, you should see the look on his face, Maria,” Akira said and laughed more as she hugged him again.

“So, where’s my husband?” Dee asked.

“He’s helping Dafydd and Momo settle in their new room,” Akira explained. “They were planning to stay in Tokyo for the week for a getaway and mentioned looking for another hotel more in their price range after tomorrow night, so Ryo decided that his brother-in-law and his wife deserved one of the better suites this hotel has to offer.”

Dee started to smile. “You do know that is just one of the many things I love about him.”

“They should be up here shortly,” Akira offered.

“What about the party?” Dee asked.

“The party has at least three more hours. We still have another hour before karaoke,” Akira said.
“Will you stay?” Dee requested. “I would really feel better knowing that you’re here while I talk to him.”

“Where are the chibis?” Maria asked.

“Safe with Ryo’s family, I’m sure,” Dee replied. “They’ve been watching over those two like hawks all night.”

“That is true, Maria. My sons and daughter along with their spouses are enjoying having the chance to watch them,” Akira said. “So, you talk a little bit,” she said to Dee. “Ryo and I will be here for you, and I’m sure Dafydd will have Momo. It may not be a shock for him that he is a twin and suddenly has a family history, but I don’t think he was expecting to find his long lost, believed to be dead twin brother at tonight’s party.”

“The poor dear must be in his own state of shock,” Maria agreed.

Dee nodded. “Yeah, huh?” Leave it to those two to give him the full perspective.

“At least talk for a little bit. Even a half hour, and then take some time tomorrow to get to know each other more. Get to know your family more, Dei.”

“You’re right, Obāsan. Mother, you too. I love you both and I’m so thankful for having you in my life.”

“You’re going to be okay, Dee. Remember that you gained big time tonight, and I want pictures of you and your twin brother by the end of the night, which is daytime for me. Now go call your husband and brother. Akira will stay with you, I’m sure.”

“Your mother is correct, Dei. I will be here for you tonight and any time after as you get to know more about your family, and even yourself,” Akira assured him.

“I appreciate it, Obāsan,” Dee said. “Now before I let you go off to your other children, Mother, I want you to consider my question.”
“Question?” Maria asked.

“You asked when can you meet Dafydd and I asked you want you can come to Japan.”

“Oh, I can’t drop everything to run off to Japan, as much as I would love to,” Maria replied.

“I’m not asking you to stay as long as we are. Just for a few days, even a couple,” Dee said.

“I don’t know,” Maria hedged.

“Why don’t we see what becomes of tonight?” Akira suggested. “Even if we don’t get Maria here, we can work on getting Dafydd and Momo to New York for a little holiday.”

Dee shrugged. “I don’t know what’s going to happen, but I do promise I’m going to at least talk to him tonight. Now that I got this far, there’s questions I have.”

“I’m sure you do. Maria, I’ll take care of your baby boy, and make sure he doesn’t make any wrong choices. Don’t you worry about us, and be prepared for some pictures. I promise there will be a few pictures soon.”

“If I can’t be there, there’s no one else I would want to be there with Dee. I trust you,” Maria said.

“I’ll talk to you later, Mother. If not, then tomorrow and let you know how it went,” Dee said. “I love you, Mom.”

“I love you too, darling. I’m looking forward to hearing how it went. Have fun, Dee.”

“I know I will with everything else, but I do promise to try my best with Dafydd,” Dee said.

“You better, Dee Lane Laytner!” Maria demanded. “I shall talk to you later.” And she hung up.
“Damn, she always gets the last word,” Dee sighed, making Akira laugh. He dialed Ryo’s cell and waited for Ryo to answer, telling him that it was okay for him to bring Dafydd and Momo up to their penthouse.

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Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

Dee learns more on how he ended up abandoned in an alley in New York City as an infant.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

October 28, 2016

Laytner-MacLean Penthouse

Tokyo New Crown Star Hotel

Minato Ward, Tokyo, Japan

Ryo stepped off the elevator in the entryway and turned to watch as his cousin Momo exited with her husband, Dafydd. Ryo shook his head, once again reminding himself that Momo was not just a distant cousin of his on his grandmother’s side anymore. She was now his sister-in-law. Well, he supposed that she became his sister-in-law in March when he had married Dee, but they didn’t know about Dafydd then.

There was going to be a lot of retraining of thoughts after the evening’s revelation. He could only imagine what Dee was feeling, but he knew it had to be stronger than what he was going through. Though he was doing what he could to support his husband, he was going through his own meltdown on the inside. He was shocked and amused at the same time. He was also happy for his husband, after finding out that Dee’s biological parents weren’t as horrible as Dee had led everyone to believe.

He was also worried and concerned for his husband, hoping that Dee wouldn’t turn his back on his own twin brother and the rest of their family. He understood why Dee would do so and just could not support his husband, especially knowing that Dee would be wrong in his reasons. Ryo had to join with his grandmother in helping Dee see that he did not have to trade one set of parents for another. He was already absolutely certain that Mother would be feeling the same way, and had already most likely said so.
Ryo also hoped that Dee would not feel as if Ryo was going against him, or betraying his trust. Their vacation so far had been perfect, with only the minimal bickering between them at times over small stuff, as was normal for a well-adjusted couple in love. The last he wanted was a rift to come between them over one of the guests of the party his grandmother went through so much trouble to throw for them, and it was not his fault that the guest happened to be married to one of his cousins on his grandmother’s side.

Also, if Ryo was completely honest with himself, he was also a tad bit annoyed. He was annoyed that Dee turned out to be a bit more Japanese than he was, and even had a completely Japanese name. He knew that he was being silly, because the difference was only a fraction and that basically they were both half-Japanese and half-British. Dee still was not Scottish, which Ryo felt was a shame, but that was only his Scottish pride making him feel so.

It was only a small negative in what was otherwise a monumentally amazing discovery that night, and he was going to do his part in making sure Dee knew just how lucky he was to be given such a gift. His grandmother was right earlier when they were in Dafydd’s and Momo’s room. What had happened that evening was a wonderful gift, for both Dee and Dafydd. And, for their father, who Ryo was still yet to know more about.

Ryo also had questions, but decided it was best to wait until they were with Dee. Some of Ryo’s questions were very likely the same ones Dee would have and it was Dee’s right to ask first about his biological family.

They all removed their shoes and placed them on the shelves. Ryo indicated the extra slippers they kept in case any guests preferred to wear them. “Please,” he said in Japanese. “I don’t know if you prefer to wear them, but you’re very welcome to.”

“We’re fine with socks, if that’s okay with you,” Momo said.

Dafydd had agreed with his wife after he commented enthusiastically on how big and fancy their new accommodations were. And they were only in the entryway.

Momo rolled her eyes and gave her husband a patient smile, giving Ryo the impression that this had happened many times in the past, and was able to sympathize with Momo.
“Whatever you’re most comfortable with. Dee and I prefer to go barefoot once we’re in for the night.”

Finally, Dafydd’s attention went from the room and looked at Ryo in curiosity. “Is that only why you’re here in Japan?”

Ryo shook his head. “No. We usually lose shoes at the door in New York. It was a habit we both had when we met so it was a mutual decision to carry out the ‘no shoes in the apartment’ rule when we moved in together. Sometimes we have to remind Bikky and Carol about it.” He smiled at the two when he noticed they were all without their shoes. “Ready?” he asked.

“Yes,” Momo replied, taking her husband’s hand. “Come on, Dafydd.”

“What if he decides he wants nothing to do with me?” Dafydd asked, the pain in his eyes.

“It’s not going to happen,” Ryo assured him knowing Maria and his grandmother. He opened the door and poked his head in. “Hello. Can we come in?” He saw Dee and his grandmother sitting on one of the couches in the living room.

Dee stood up. “Yeah. Bring them in.” He looked nervous, but had a determined expression on his face.

Ryo opened the door all the way and entered, moving aside to allow Momo and Dafydd to enter.

“Welcome,” Dee greeted, still looking nervous when he saw Dafydd. “Please, make yourselves comfortable.”

“Wow!” Dafydd exclaimed in Japanese. “This is so nice! Extra fancy. Look at the view!” He rushed over to the wall of windows with the view of Tokyo Tower and the lights of Tokyo. “And that patio is huge! Wow!”

Momo shook her head with amusement. “He acts like his grandparents don’t have fancy things,” she said with a laugh as she sat down on the couch across from Dee and Akira. She looked at Dee. “Your father has a pretty big house – the same house that Dafydd grew up in, I should add.” She started to laugh at her husband’s expense.
Ryo snorted and looked at Dee. “Yup, he’s your brother,” he commented, “only you grew up in the orphanage.” To Momo, he said, “Dee acts like that every time we enter some place upscale for the first time. Hopefully by now, he’s used to this apartment.”

“He better be,” Akira stated. “It is your Tokyo home now.”

“You live here?” Momo asked, amazed.

“Whenever we’re in Tokyo and not staying in Kamakura with my grandmother, this will be our apartment. We decided that yesterday,” Ryo stated. “We were already planning on coming to Japan a little more often than once a year and it’s nice to have a place to settle down. Then we discovered that because we own the hotel, that we also own this penthouse, which was the previous hotel owner’s home. Would you like something to drink?”

“No thank you. We’re good for now,” Momo said. “Dafydd, stop gawking and get over here.”

“It’s fine,” Dee said with a chuckle. He looked at Ryo. “Do we really sound like that?”

“It does sound familiar,” Ryo said. “It’s making me think it’s a genetic flaw.”

“Flaw?” Dee asked. “I would hardly call it a flaw. I never want to get too comfortable with luxury.”

“Why is that?” Momo asked as Dafydd finally tore himself from the view and came over to sit down next to his wife.

“He’s afraid that he’ll start acting like everyone is below him,” Dafydd replied. He shrugged. “I know that it’s not true and that shouldn’t be a concern, but I also understand his inability to stop thinking that way.”

Dee stared at Dafydd for a few seconds. “I never took the time to think about it, but yeah, you’re right. Anyway, we’re waiting for Bikky, and most likely Carol.” When Ryo looked at him, he explained, “This concerns Bikky too, and he’s going to have questions. I figured let him get the answers with us, and ask any that he might have. I was going to insist only him, but then thought about the questioning we’ll get from Carol so might as well include her. She’s pretty much family...
anyway. I called Nobu-san and asked if he could send them up. So, we’re waiting.”

“That sounds fair,” Dafydd said. “After all, Bikky is my nephew.”

Dee nodded. “Yeah. He is your nephew.” He smiled at the man who looked exactly like him except for the eye color, glad that Dafydd accepted Bikky as part of the family. That was definitely points in Dafydd’s favor, as far as Dee was concerned.

“Oh, my goodness!” Momo exclaimed. “That means that those two little darlings are also your niece and nephew, Dafydd. Isn’t it lucky we got all those gifts for them and for Bikky? And here you thought I was going overboard.”

Dafydd started to laugh. “You still did go a little overboard, but it’s okay. You’re right. Okay, I admit now that I am glad we spent a small fortune from our savings for presents for everyone in your cousin’s family.”

“I find it funny that Ryo’s gaijin family turned out to be your twin and his family,” Momo said and started to laugh.

“Gaijin family?” Dee asked. “Don’t tell me you’re one of those who are prejudiced about non-Japanese?”

“I didn’t mean it as an insult. I just pointed out while we were shopping that Momo’s cousin isn’t full Japanese and his family wasn’t at all.” He shrugged. “Or so I believed at the time. I was just trying to get out of spending so much money on something that is Japanese custom,” Dafydd explained. “But the custom usually involves buying something small, like mochi or something.”

“There were children involved,” Momo argued. “That means you buy things for the children. Besides, the babies can’t have mochi yet, and I wasn’t sure if Bikky liked any Japanese food. It was safer to buy things that children could use and enjoy.”

“Gee thanks,” Ryo commented to Dafydd. “Considering you’re half-Japanese yourself.”

“He over-compensates,” Momo explained. “He acts like he’s super Japanese. He likes to forget that he is half-Welsh. Ask him and he’s more Japanese than all the Japanese people in the world,” she said, only half-teasing her husband.
“Were you teased when you were younger?” Dee asked as Dafydd started to frown at what Momo said.

“Yes. I was. Because I was also Welsh and had only one parent. Some of the kids did not care that I was born in Nagoya and looked Japanese. I was still gaijin to them, and some of them were cruel about it. It also didn’t help that my name is Dafydd. That alone earned me a few shiners and bruises. It didn’t stop when my father remarried. It made it worse because my stepfather is Japanese, so are my younger siblings. I am the only one not full Japanese in my family,” Dafydd admitted uneasily.

Dee stared at the other man thoughtfully, and then looking like he had come to a conclusion, he stood up and walked over to stop before Dafydd. He rested a hand on the other man’s shoulder. “Not anymore,” Dee said softly.

Dafydd looked up to Dee, meeting his eyes. “Yes, you are right. Thank you.”

They all looked up as the door slid open and Bikky and Carol came in.

“Hey, what’s going on? Uncle Nobu said you guys wanted to talk to me up here,” Bikky asked. He noticed the others with his dads and added, “Are we moving the party up here?”

“Bikky, Carol, come over here and sit down,” Ryo said.

“Let’s try not to take too long,” Dee commented as he went back to the other couch and sat down next to Ryo. “We still have karaoke and I’m thinking no one here wants to miss that.”

Akira stood from the couch. “I am going to be on the terrace,” she said. “I am only here as an observer because Dei requested that I stay here, but if I am sitting among everyone it will be easy to draw me into conversation. It will also be easy for me to speak up. This is to be a discussion amongst yourselves and I will only interfere if I feel that is not going well. So please excuse me.”

“Don’t you want to know what’s going on?” Ryo asked.

“I will be able to hear everything with the doors open,” she said. She went on the terrace and sat in a chair against the windows, next to the open door.
“Is this about him?” Bikky asked as he sat down on the floor by the couch near his fathers and pointed at Dafydd.

Carol sat down in one of the comfortable chairs. “Does this mean there’s a reason why he looks so much like you, Dee?” she asked.

“Yeah, it’s about him,” Dee replied. “Bikky, I want you to say hello to your Uncle Dafydd and Aunt Momo.”

Momo started to smile and Dafydd looked relieved. Carol’s eyes went wide and she let out a squeal.

“Really?” Bikky asked. He peered closer at the two men who looked alike. “Are you just going by how much alike you look?”

“No,” Dee replied. “We talked and realized that we are twins.” He held out his phone that he was holding and showed Bikky the photo he had up. “See those babies? That one is me, and the other is Dafydd. I know what I looked like as a baby thanks to Mother and her photos, so does Ryo. Even more important, Mother confirmed it.”

“You spoke to Grandma?” Bikky asked.

“Yup. I needed both confirmation and guidance so I called her,” Dee said. “Not only is it me in the pictures that Dafydd has, but the baby carrier I was found in is also in the pictures. So yeah, we’re pretty much certain.” He looked at Dafydd. “I suppose we should take a DNA test to confirm it and make it official. Also, I request that we speak in English because my son and his girlfriend do not know enough Japanese to follow us.”

Momo gave Dee a gentle smile and started to speak in English. “I’m afraid that’s already being worked on. I called in a favor once Dafydd and I were pretty sure that you were the twin he was looking for. I did it for Dafydd, deciding that I would give you the choice of knowing the results of not.”

“That’s right, you head a forensics lab,” Dee mused. “So, did you slip a glass I was drinking from into your purse?”
“She didn’t have to,” Dafydd said. “Since we’re both police, then our DNA is on file. Of course, if we choose to add additional items to cross reference, we can do that too.”

“I’m having a type match done between the both of you,” Momo explained. “I also have a friend who is welcome into your father’s home to try to get something of your father’s, to match you to him.”

Dafydd let out a heavy sigh. “I’m sure we’ll have enough evidence with those tests, but I think we should do just one more test before I tell our father that you are alive, but that might have to wait until we are back in Nagoya. I am not so sure that Hana will be able to get that on her own.”

“What’s that?” Ryo asked.

“Papa still has the shirt that was sent to our grandparents’ house shortly after you and Tad went missing. That is Tad’s parents. The Welsh ones. Papa had Ojiisan convince our other grandfather to remove it before calling the police. He must have done a good job convincing, because when he got back to Japan, Ojiisan had the shirt bagged and in a special wood box for him. Papa tucked it in a bigger box with your stuff and put it in storage. To him, it’s the last thing you were wearing when you were alive. At least that’s Papa’s thinking. He never threw out anything that had belonged to you. He never had the heart. He says it would feel as if he was throwing you away, and that’s something that he would never do,” Dafydd explained. “If we can match the DNA on it to that of the baby carrier your mother has, that would be the least irrefutable proof that you are his missing son.”

Dee shivered. “Uh… I assure you that wasn’t the last thing.”

Ryo shook his head with amusement. “Don’t mind him. Anyway, I think this is where we start getting to the part on how did Dee as an infant ended up on his own. What makes your father believe that his, uh, first husband and one of his sons is dead?”

Dafydd’s eyes went to Bikky and Carol. “Perhaps this is a story best not told in front of young ones,” he said cautiously in Japanese.

“They can handle it,” Ryo said in English, aware of Bikky and Carol staring at him and Dee, wondering what was said. “Unfortunately, they both saw more than they should at their ages. Bikky saw his father shot.” He placed a comforting hand on his son’s shoulder. “That is how I ended up taking Bikky home. His father was my first case with Dee. I couldn’t allow him to be put into the system.”
Dee let out a snort. “And if Carol didn’t already have someone to take care of her, chances are Bikky and Carol would be brother and sister now, instead of girlfriend and boyfriend.”

“Did you really? And he was the son of a… victim?” Momo asked, amazed.

“Yeah, he was a victim, but he was also a perp,” Dee replied, “but I prefer not to rehash that part of our lives in front of Bikky. Besides, we’re all here for other answers. Then, later on, we can get to know each other more.” He lightly touched Bikky’s head. “Biks can tell you what he wants and when.”

Dafydd bowed his head. “Gomenasai. We did not mean to upset anyone.”

“It’s okay. I miss my father but now I have two fathers and I’m happy,” Bikky assured Dafydd and Momo.

“So, on that topic, what happened?” Dee asked. “What makes your father….”

“Our father,” Dafydd corrected.

“Okay, what makes our father believe that our other father is dead? And that I was killed too.”

“From what I was told, Papa was planning to go to New York after Tad missed calling to check in. Papa was in San Diego with me at the time. Papa was getting ready to leave for the airport and get a ticket to New York when he got a call from Grandtad. The was a box left at the door. The box… Well, the box had a hand in it. A hand wrapped in a baby’s shirt. One of your shirts. Grandtad and Nan knew that it was your shirt. They also called our other grandparents who came over right away. At least that’s what Papa told me. There was a note simply stating, “They’re dead”. The police were called in and it was confirmed it was Tad’s hand. There was blood also on your shirt, but nothing was ever confirmed because the police never got the shirt. I’ve been tempted for years to test the shirt now that we are in the position to do so, but I just never had the heart. Now I have good reason, and that is to match your baby shirt to you, one very much alive man.”

“I’m surprised that you waited so long, with having a wife in forensics,” Ryo commented.

“I was afraid. I know what I felt, and that you were still alive. That’s what kept me going, gave me hope that one day we would have this moment. I was afraid that if I ran tests on the blood and it was
yours then, despite what I felt, it might be proof that you were dead.”

“Please,” Dee said through gritted teeth. “Stop saying I’m dead. Here I am!”

Ryo tried not to laugh and fought to put on a sympathetic face. He slipped an arm around Dee’s shoulder. “We all know that, so let the man speak. We are discussing what happened when you were a baby and they didn’t know better back then.”

Dee took a deep breath and shuddered. “Yeah, I know but it’s still creepy.”

“I am sorry,” Dafydd said, bowing. “But I am just stating facts. I am very much aware that I was right all along and that I finally found you. You do want answers, yes?”

Dee nodded his head. “I’m sorry, too. I can deal with murder scenes but I still can get freaked out over things too close to home, if you know what I mean.”

“Yes, I do,” said Dafydd.

“Now,” Dee started, “I do want to know how come I was in New York with one of our fathers and you were in San Diego with the other. You mentioned earlier something about being on the run. We’ll get back to that, but first there are two questions that I really need to know first. I guess they are the two questions that all my life I would have asked despite how I felt about my biological parents. That I really wanted answers to.”

“Please. We can do this your way. What are your questions?” Dafydd asked.

“When were we born?” Dee asked breathlessly. He grabbed onto Ryo’s hand.

Ryo squeezed his hand comfortingly, giving Dee a gentle smile.

Bikky looked up at his fathers, and then hugged onto Dee’s leg tighter as he looked over at Dafydd with anticipation. Carol sat up straighter, holding her breath, her eyes wide as she also went from looking at Dee to Dafydd.
Even Akira, leaned over, her head and shoulders visible through the doors.

“September 23, 1974,” Dafydd replied. “You are older than me by 2 minutes and 15 seconds.”

Ryo started to grin as Bikky stared up at his fathers. “Shame we missed it by a month,” he said to Dee. “Next year, on September 23rd, we are going to have the birthday party to outdo birthdays.”

“I have a birthday,” Dee muttered. “Oh wow. Damn, I have a birthday.” He started to smile. “I have a real friggin’ birthday!”

“Did you celebrate anything?” Momo asked.

“My Finding Day,” Dee replied. “January 19th. That was the day Jess found me in the alley, so since they couldn’t find any other date to indicate a birthday for me, that was the date we usually celebrated.”

“This is a silly question at this point, but since we’re working on getting all proof to indicate that you are twins, does that date fall in with the timeline of when Daisuke went missing?” Ryo asked, unable to resist his smirk as he referred to Dee’s name as an infant.

“It does,” Dafydd replied. “The box showed up on January 22nd, so given the time to get it to Japan and the time difference, yes, it does relate to the timeline.” He looked at his wife, who was writing in a small notebook. “What are you doing?”

“Recording facts. As Ryo said, we’ll need all the facts possible, even if the DNA tests prove positive. I know your father, Dafydd. You get your stubbornness from him.”

“Well now, looks like we can stop blaming poor Mother now,” Ryo said with a laugh to Dee.

“I’m sure she’ll be happy to know that even if she was willing to take the blame,” Dee said amused. “One answer down then, one to go. Where were we born? I think I figured that one out, but best to confirm it.”
“Where do you think we were born?” Dafydd asked.

Dee looked at Ryo and smirked, before he looked back to his brother. “Nagoya.”

“You are correct. We were born in a hospital in downtown Nagoya.”

Dee covered his face and let out a little laugh. “Holy shit, I was born in Japan,” he said, as Bikky started to laugh.

“You were born in Nagoya?” Bikky asked. “Not New York?”

“You mean you’re not Mr. Super Native New Yorker?” Carol asked.

Ryo gave Carol a double take and then he started to laugh. Momo let out a surprised sound and also started to laugh. Dee and Dafydd stared at them, wondering what the others found so funny. 
“Sheesh,” Ryo said, “You two are twins.” He snorted and then started to laugh again, making the others laugh more. “Look, Dafydd is Mr. Super Japanese, and Carol is right about you.” He started to smirk. “Meanwhile, if you were born in Nagoya, that makes you native Japanese,” he pointed out.

“Hoo boy, that’s going to take some time to wrap my head around,” Dee remarked. “One of our dads is obviously Japanese, and another was Welsh, right?”

“Yes. Tad’s parents moved here because of work when he was 13. Our fathers went to Meijo University, where they met. Six months later, Dad was pregnant, so they got married.”

“I have a question, if you don’t mind,” Ryo said.

“What’s that?” Dafydd asked.

“If you’re Japanese and Welsh, then where do your complexions come from?” Ryo asked.

“That is easy. One of our ancestors in Wales married a woman of Indian descent. Our great-great grandparents, I believe. I will have to check into it again when we get home. That sometimes shows
up in generations since. Tad looked as pale as Welshmen get, but our many times great grandmother showed up in us. I guess add to the Japanese genes, we are not as brown as our ancestor and her family. At least that is how Grandtad explains it.”

They heard an amused snort come from the terrace, which made Ryo chuckle. “That does make sense.”

Dee lifted his arm and inspected it. “Basically, that means on the Welsh side we’re also part Indian.”

“Decent only. That ancestor’s family lived in Cardiff for several generations, so they are Welsh,” Dafydd corrected.

“But Dee’s right, Dafydd,” Momo said. “There is some Indian in you too, even if Welsh.” When Dafydd stared at her, she let out a sigh. “I know, I know, you’re Japanese. But your brother deserves to know his heritage, so you are talking about the Welsh side.”

“And I thank him for it,” Dee said, “as much as it might pain him to do so.” He started to smirk, especially when Dafydd frowned at him.

Ryo poked Dee. “You’re just as bad as your brother, you know,” he commented.

“How do you figure that?” Dee asked.

“You’re Japanese, Welsh and even some Indian, but you call yourself American. There’s nothing American in you. You weren’t even born there,” Ryo pointed out.

“But I lived there for almost all my life, believing I had to have been born in New York, and if not, I never considered I was born out of the country,” He rubbed his forehead. “Okay, I think I’m getting a headache thinking about it. Now that I have answers to the two main questions, and even some additional information, I’ll get back to that later. Let’s go back to how I ended up in an alleyway in New York City from Nagoya.” He looked at Dafydd in curiosity.

Dafydd let out a heavy sigh. “It all started when Grandtad made a mistake before our fathers met,” he replied. “He came to Nagoya because his job sent him there. It was an importing company, bringing in regional food products to Wales. The home office in Cardiff wanted some natives in executive positions on the Japanese side, and Grandtad was selected. Eventually he resigned from the
company, wanting to have his own business. He took out a loan, not paying much attention who he was borrowing from.”

“Oh God,” Ryo uttered. “Don’t tell me. Yakuza.”

“Exactly,” Dafydd confirmed. “He didn’t realize it at that time. They came across as a very legit company, but then that’s what happens sometimes when you don’t go through a bank and call a number in an ad in a local newspaper. He did try banks, but being he was only in Japan on a work Visa and just undergoing the process to become a citizen, he was turned down. Now he wishes that he had waited to quit after he became a Japanese citizen. You see, he loved Japan. So did Nan. They wanted to stay here, never go back to Wales. They had both started the process to become citizens, but as it takes years, Grandtad didn’t want to wait that long to be on his own. So he quit. He tried to start his own business using the money he had but he was losing more than he was making. So he started to apply for business loans and any type of loans and was being denied. Finally, he was worried about rent and got desperate. He was reading a local paper and noticed the ad. It basically said no one would be turned down. So he called the number and got a loan. At first, he was able to make payments, but during the time that father was pregnant, he started to have problems when the business went under. He had to take a job just to pay the bills and have food. He moved him and grandmother into a smaller apartment but he couldn’t make the full payments on the loan.”

“So, the ugly yakuza boss threatened him?” Ryo ventured.

“This boss believed in making the offender suffer by taking everything away from him. We were already born. Grandtad perceived the threat to include everyone in the family. As it turns out, it seems they were only after Tad and Nan. The mark was called off several days after the box arrived and Nan was shot. The specifics to the case, I don’t know. Grandtad isn’t talking about it. You understand that back then, the police in Nagoya did not go after the yakuza. Once they discovered it was a yakuza hit, and that they were done, it was dropped. Especially with Grandtad leaving Japan. After Nan’s funeral, he packed a suitcase and went back to Cardiff.”

“So that explains how the whole mess happened. When you said originally they believed it included everyone, our fathers thought it included both of them and us?” Dee asked.

“Yes. Our grandparents, Papa’s parents, the Japanese ones, gave them the money to get out of Japan for a while. They believed it was best. When they arrived at LAX, our fathers thought it best to split up.” Dafydd shrugged. “I don’t know, it doesn’t sound like the best of ideas. Even Papa admits it now, but they were young and scared and on their own in a foreign country with two infants. The logic was that if there were any yakuza in America looking for them, they were looking for two men with twins, so they split up. Since Papa is obviously Japanese, he went to San Diego because he heard there are many Japanese there. Tad went to New York because… well, because it is New York. They figured in a city that big, Tad could get hidden. He got a room in a residential hotel in Queens. That’s what Papa said. In Sunnyside.”
“There is a Sunnyside, Queens, in New York,” Dee said.

Dafydd nodded. “Every day for almost a week, Papa and Tad would call each other, check in. They had no idea how long they were to live apart like that and if they would ever be able to come back to Japan. Then one day, when Tad missed his check in time, Papa tried calling him and there was no answer. He tried again an hour later, and kept trying for two days. By then he had contacted both of our grandparents, saying he couldn’t reach Papa. And the next day, as he was getting ready to fly to New York, Nan called. She was in tears and told him about the box. Several days later, she was dead too. Granddad was told his debt was paid with his son’s, his grandson’s and his wife’s lives. That’s when he called Papa’s grandparents and said he believed it was safe for us to return to Japan. Just to be on the safe side, Papa was told to stay in San Diego for a while. We finally returned to Japan just after I was one.”

“They killed your father and cut off his hand as proof of his death?” Ryo asked as Dee sat next to Ryo, stunned to hear the story of how he ended up separated from his parents.

“The hand was….” Dafydd gazed at Bikky and then Carol in concern.

“Go on, I can take it,” Bikky said. By then he was sitting between Dee’s legs, still on the floor before the couch. He had one arm wrapped around Dee’s leg.

“Yes, it’s okay,” Carol said.

“The hand was wrapped in Daisuke’s shirt. Tad was never heard from again, so it’s very likely that he was killed. I guess that family had good connections in New York and they found Tad.”

“Or he was being followed,’ Dee commented.

“That could be possible too,” Dafydd agreed. “And since they were only after him, they never went after Papa and me.”

“Whoever killed him, did what? Lie about me? Left me in an alley for dead and used the shirt I was wearing as proof of death or something?” Dee asked.
“It seems that way, but why you were spared, I guess we’ll never know. I’m just glad that you were,” Dafydd said.

“Maybe the hitman did not believe in killing kids or babies,” Ryo mused. “I’ve seen it before.”

“So have I,” Momo said.

“I have too, but I never considered it for Daisuke,” Dafydd said.

“I guess you didn’t have probable cause for it until tonight,” said Dee, “but yeah, that’s possible. Or it’s likely that the hitman in New York was unable to kill babies in such a cold-blooded way and left me to give me a chance. Whether I survived or not, would be up to nature and not him. Considering it was freezing cold that day, I was lucky Jess found me when he did. I was already sick and spent the first week under Mother’s care in the hospital before she was finally able to take me home. If Jess didn’t come around when he did, come that night, I doubt I would have been alive.” He leaned forward, resting a hand on Bikky’s shoulder. “Until I was around six, I was a sickly child. The doctors contributed it to my being left outside for as long as I was back then.”

“Technically, if you think about it, when the hitman said that he killed Daisuke Fujioka, he was telling the truth,” Ryo said quietly. When he had everyone’s attention he continued. “He was left in an alley with no clue to who he was, where he came from, with the only clue being the initial ‘D’. He stopped being Daisuke Fujioka, Japanese national, half Welsh. That day, he started on the road of being Dee Laytner, native New Yorker, American. That pretty much killed Daisuke Fujioka.”

Dafydd sadly nodded his head. “Yes. You are correct.” Momo had his hand in hers and she squeezed it in a comforting manner.

“That may be true,” Dee said as he patted Bikky to move and stood up. “I doubt I can ever be Daisuke Fujioka, but I guess I still am a Fujioka by birth, so if you will have me, Dee Laytner can still be your twin brother.” He stood before Dafydd. “Think we can do that?”

“Hai! Yes,” Dafydd said. His eyes started to water. “No matter what name you go by, what nationality you claim, you are still my twin brother. They did not kill that.” He stood up and let out a sob. “I found you. Oh my god, I really found you!” He wrapped his arms around Dee and hugged him tight.
An unexpected turn of events since I started posting this story opened a chance for me to go to Japan for a nice long vacation. Not as long as the Laytner-MacLeans is, but 5 weeks is a nice long time. I'm leaving next Monday, so it's very likely that I'll be posting the next chapter from Japan. It's already been sent to my beta, but I have a lot to do during this week to prepare for my 5 week adventure to Japan. I'm so excited! I've been wanting to go back since I left 20 years ago. :)
Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

Dee gets to know Dafydd more. The reunited twins already start bonding.

Chapter Notes

Konba wa everyone! I'm posting this chapter from Nagoya, which considering circumstances, I thought it would be fitting..

I hope to get the next chapter off to my beta in a day or two, so hopefully I can post again when I'm back in Tokyo, actually Yokohama, where I have an apartment that I'll be staying for a week. It's 3 train stops from what was my local station 20 years ago when I lived in Japan. I just got to Nagoya this afternoon, and only was able to go around the area, which includes Oasis 21, and the Sunshine Sakae building where SKE48 performs. Unfortunately no performances are scheduled during my time in Nagoya, but I plan to go to the cafe tomorrow.

If anyone is interested in the pictures of my Japan trip, they are on Facebook. You can find me on Facebook as Gena Durrell. If you check out the pictures, let me know. :)

Anyway, enough of Nagoya and on to the next chapter of the store. I hope everyone is enjoying it so far. Thanks for reading!

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

October 28, 2016

Laytner-MacLean Penthouse

Tokyo New Crown Star Hotel

Minato Ward, Tokyo, Japan

Dee returned the hugs, finding that he was also weeping. He never thought it was important to him to find any of his biological family, but now that he was hugging a man who looked exactly like him,
except for his eye color, the man who gave him a real birthday and a heritage, he could not help feeling happy. It helped to finally learn that he was never unwanted. Dafydd had spent basically his entire life waiting and hoping to find him. He had a father who never wanted to lose him, but believed he had been killed along with his other father. He felt a strong need to get to know this man who was basically a stranger, but was family. Once he opened up and accepted Dafydd as his twin brother, he was starting to understand what a twin bond was.

Ryo was wiping his eyes and had company since Carol and Momo were too. Bikky was gazing up at the two men with wonder, his eyes glistening with unshed tears. Akira entered the living room, also brushing away tears. She was holding her phone when she entered.

She rushed up to the two men as they finally pulled away. “Oh, my darling boys!” she exclaimed as she pulled Dee into a fierce hug. “I’m so happy for you, Dei.” She also flung out an arm to embrace Dafydd. “Welcome to the family, Dafydd.” She looked back at a smiling Momo. “More than you already are.” She smiled at Momo.

“Yes, they are,” Ryo agreed. “Dafydd and Momo are my brother-in-law and sister-in-law.” He stood up and held his hand out toward Dafydd when Akira finally pulled away. “Please accept this very American way of welcoming you to the family,” he said with a smile.

Dafydd accepted Ryo’s hand and shook before finding himself being reeled in for a hug.

Akira smiled at Dee and held her phone out for him. “I already sent this to your Mother. Hopefully that won’t be the last photo I’ll be sending her?”

Dee shook his head. “No, it won’t be. Hey Dafydd, can I convince you to step out onto the terrace so that Obāsan can take a picture of us showing both our faces? And then I think a group shot would be nice too.”

“I can take that one,” Carol volunteered.

“You don’t want to be in it?” Akira asked her.

“You’re more family than I am, and you should be in the photo,” Carol explained logically.

“Only if then I can take one with you in it,” Akira countered.
Ryo slipped his arm around Dee’s waist and pulled him close. “You have a twin brother. I can’t believe it, but I think that’s great.” He gave his husband a sly smile. “So, are you going to get mad at me anymore whenever I call you Japanese?” He laughed as Dee’s mouth dropped and stared at him, and then leaned over to lightly kiss Dee. “You’re so cute. You do know you don’t have to be taking photos for me to do it anymore. Holy shit, Dee. I can’t believe it!” He hugged Dee again, laughing with glee.

“That makes two of us,” Dee replied, “and no, I guess I can’t get mad at you anymore.” He pulled Ryo in for a bigger kiss. “Okay, picture time!” He pointed a finger at Ryo, who was grinning. “Behave and don’t scare the new relatives off.”

Going over to his newly found twin, he slipped an arm around Dafydd’s shoulder. “C’mon bro. I promised my mom pictures of the two of us.”

“I would like to know your mother,” Dafydd said as they went onto the terrace. “Also do you think there is a chance you would meet our father?”

“I need just a little time for it to fully settle,” Dee replied. “Besides, we need to have undeniable proof for you to give him to believe I survived. Once he accepts it, I’ll be willing to give the last proof. Actually, we are supposed to be in Nagoya next Monday. Ryo and I planned a trip across Japan, so that Bikky and Carol can see more than just the Tokyo area. Nagoya is our first stop.”

“We’re going back on Friday, so please let me know when you arrive in Nagoya. Depending on when we get the tests done, I can present you to Dad. And our stepfather.” Dafydd smiled at Dee. “We have seven half-brothers and sisters, you know.”

“Seven?!?” Dee exclaimed, eyes wide with shock. “Holy crap! That’s a big friggin’ family!” He ran his hand through his hair in a nervous gesture.

Ryo started to laugh. “Oh crap, Dee! It’s a good thing you’re used to many siblings,” he commented as he looked at Dee with an amused glance.

“No shit,” Dee exhaled. “Hey, by the way, what’s our fathers’ names?” he asked his newfound twin brother.

“Oh! Sorry. I forgot I never said. Papa’s name is Saburo Fujioka. Tad’s was Alun Jones but he took
Fujioka when he married Papa. He said since they were in Japan, it was best to take Papa’s family name. Our stepfather’s name is Yoshio Hayashida-Fujioka. But all our brothers and sisters just have Fujioka for their family name. Many times, Chichi will also go by just Fujioka. Chichi is what all of us call our stepfather, ‘our’ as in mine and yours, but he’s our siblings’ father. He had me calling him that shortly after Papa decided to marry him. Along with Papa, he’s the only other father I know. I don’t remember Tad, and only know him from what Papa told me.”

Dee nodded. “I understand.”

“Dei, Dafydd, say chizu,” Akira called out.

Dafydd held up the hand not hugging Dee in a peace sign. Dee noticed it and with a wicked grin did the same. Everyone laughed as Akira took the photo.

“What are your stepsiblings’ names?” Ryo asked as he stood close to them with Bikky.

Bikky was staring at Dee and Dafydd with big blue eyes, the amazement he was feeling clear on his face. “Wow! That would mean I have more uncles and aunts!”

“And many cousins, Bikky,” Momo happily added.

“Jirou is the oldest after us,” Dafydd started. “He’s 27. Tomoko is 25. Naoki and Tsukiko are twins. Papa carried them, so we weren’t surprised when we found out that he was having twins. They’re 26. Koji and Tomiji are 23, and then there’s Ayaka, who is 20. Chichi Carried Jirou, Tomoko and Ayaka, and of course, Papa also carried Koji and Tomiji .”

“I can give Dee a cheat sheet on his family,” Momo offered.

“Momo is also the family note taker. She’s always taking notes, making lists. She feels we would just lose track of everything if she doesn’t. Not just me, Momo and our twins, but our whole family – Chichi, Papa, our siblings, their families, her parents and siblings. Everyone, even our grandparents,” Dafydd said. “But it keeps her happy so we let her.” He smiled sweetly at his wife.

“I’m thankful you’re not that bad,” Dee said to Ryo.
“I remember someone else who took a lot of notes for his wedding and during his pregnancy,” Ryo replied sweetly.

“I was pregnant at the time,” Dee commented. “Hey, wait. You said you weren’t surprised that our father was Carrying twins? And he Carried us? And a third set? I had twins, you had twins. I sense a pattern here.”

“You do. Carriers in our family line have always had twins. Once in a while more. It has always been that way since the first male pregnancy in our family. Females along the line pass on not only the Carrier gene, but the twins gene. Now that I know you are my brother, it doesn’t surprise me that you gave birth to twins.”

“Will I have twins again if I get pregnant?” Dee asked.

“You will most likely have at least twins every time you get pregnant. That is why we have such a big family. All our relatives have big families. At least four, much more when both partners give birth. Momo cannot get pregnant, so having children is up to me. That means, we’ll jump from two to four next time I get pregnant. And we do want more than two, so we get more twins.”

Dee looked at Ryo. “You’re definitely up next then, and the time after should we decide, unless we’re ready for more twins.”

“No kidding. I’ll bet Vince is going to be shocked when he hears this,” said Ryo.

“Who is that?” Dafydd asked.

“My MOP,” Dee replied. At Dafydd’s blank look, he added, “Male obstetrics practitioner. MOP for short.”

“Ah, a baby doctor?” Dafydd asked. “Yes, I do remember one of my friends in New York use that term when he got pregnant.”

“Yeah. What do you call them in Japan?” Dee asked.

“Obstetrics practitioner. Here in Japan, we do not have special doctors for Carriers. A doctor who
specializes in pregnancies see both male and female. They are trained to handle everyone,” Dafydd replied.

“We don’t have special doctors, or hospitals or medical offices for Carriers. It’s integrated,” Momo added.

“Seems like things are way different than we first thought,” Dee said to Ryo.

“You’re telling me.” Ryo looked at his grandmother. “A lot of stuff not shared because I’m gaijin because I live in America.”

“I ask forgiveness again,” Akira said. “But Dei was pregnant in New York, so I don’t see how it would have helped knowing how Carrier pregnancies are handled in Japan. You needed to concentrate on Dei’s pregnancy in New York, with your very wonderful Doctor. You had one of the very best doctors there are in America, you know. I had no worries that Dei wasn’t being given the best care possible, even by Japanese standards.” She gave them a little grin. “His equipment was below par, but he had to work with what’s available to him in America. I did notice that he had the best equipment available in American.”

“What you’re saying is if I had an ultrasound in Japan, we would have known about Darin from the start?” Dee asked.

“We have ultrasound machines to get past the uterine lining and get images just like females get,” Momo said.

“We had no reason to think that Dei was having twins,” Akira stated. “And since you live in New York and already had Dr. Siworski, there was no reason to mention it. Besides, I could have never got you to Japan then.” She looked directly at Dee. “Wasn’t Japan vetoed as a honeymoon destination because Dei would not have handled the flight?”

Dee nodded his head. “Oh yeah. We had to break up our journey to the Bahamas because I couldn’t handle flying very well while pregnant. I would have loved to have gone to Japan, but it was out of the question then.”

“I understand, Obāsan,” Ryo said with a loving smile directed at his grandmother, so she knew he was not mad. “But we could use Japan as a model for the U.S.”
“You could,” Dafydd agreed, “but I suspect it will take years and there will always still be all those people who feel that Carriers are a danger to the Human Race. They will never comprehend that Carriers are meant to save the Human Race.”

“What do you mean, save?” Dee asked.

“It is a prophecy from the time of the first Carriers, but nothing to worry about. As long as there are Carriers, humans will continue to thrive,” Dafydd said.

“It may be slow work, and we only have the ears of the New York mayor listening to us, but it can be a start,” Dee said.

“First you must know all there is to know about Carriers in Japan, and that is not as easy as you might be thinking,” Akira said. “There is much about the origins that we do not know.”

“There are not too many who know the origins in America either,” Ryo said. “For now. Those Anti-Carrier groups have documents from the original project and are threatening to make them public. I don’t know just how authentic those documents are because there are some incredible things that can create mass panic.” He shrugged his shoulders. “Even if it’s a bunch of crap, there are people who will believe it and believe that Carriers must be eliminated.”

Dafydd sighed. “People will always fear what they do not understand,” he said. “You also have one other obstacle. And that is, you probably will have to get Japan to open up more about male pregnancies here, and that’s not likely to happen anytime soon. In fact, I believe the more our government sees what is going on outside Japan, the more likely they will tighten their secrets.”

“Enough of the doom and gloom,” Momo said. “This is a celebration.”

“Yeah, you’re right, Momo,” Ryo said. “And we should be getting back to the party soon. Someone is going to notice that the hostess and the guests of honor are missing. Besides, I want to check in on the chibis.”

“I really love how you call your twins chibis,” Momo said with a giggle.

Ryo pointed to Dee. “He started it. Figures. That was your Japanese half making a show.” He smirked. “But I did fall into it fast enough.”
“I wonder what you would have called them if you were pregnant in Japan, Dad,” Bikky said.

“Probably not chibis, I guess,” Dee replied. He started to grin. “Kewpies!”

Ryo groaned. “On that note, can we get the group shots?”

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Once they were done taking the pictures, Ryo said, “I have just one more thing and it shouldn’t take long.” He led everyone back into the living room.

Dee’s phone rang and he answered it. “Tell them we’ll be there shortly. Don’t worry, they won’t dare start karaoke without the guests of honor and hostess there.” To everyone in the penthouse, he said, “That was Hide, wondering where we disappeared to. Seems the natives are getting itchy for karaoke.”

He looked over to find Ryo carrying a tray and going over to one of the living room tables. “What are you up to?”

“While we were out around town, remember that I decided to buy this good sake? I don’t know why, but I was thinking to toast having this apartment in Tokyo or something. But I have something better,” he said as he opened the bottle and started to pour into the small crystal sake cups that they found in the apartment on the bar. “Shall we toast the two long lost brothers finally reunited?”

“I’ll drink to that!” Dafydd agreed with a wide smile.

Ryo started to hand out the cups, starting with Akira, then Dee, Dafydd and Momo, finally he looked at Bikky and Carol. “Oh what the hell? This is a very special occasion, so having a little sake won’t hurt.” The cups he handed to Bikky and Carol had half the sake he poured for the adults. “Besides, Bikky has a new uncle and aunt.”
Dee let out a mock sigh. “As if he doesn’t have enough of them here in Japan,” and then let out a chuckle.

“And they are all from Ryo’s side. Now it’s from your family,” Akira said. She raised her cup and smiled at the brothers standing next to each other, their spouses on each side. “To Dei and Dafydd,” she intoned.

Before everyone got to raise their cups, Ryo added, “Daisuke and Dafydd.” He grinned devilishly at Dee, and then called out “Kanpai!”

Everyone followed him and drank the sake.

“Now we karaoke,” Akira announced.

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When they all returned to the party, Dee and Ryo immediately went over to where Darin and Ryoko were. “Any problems?” Dee asked as he picked up Ryoko.

“Nothing we couldn’t handle, being you made sure there were bottles here,” Hoshi replied.

Ryo had Darin and nuzzled the side of his face. “Are you having fun tonight, little man?”

Dee came over to stand next to Ryo. Dafydd followed him. “I think we need to consider letting them try to sleep soon,” he said. “They’ve been up later than they’re used to.”

“They have been sleeping on and off since the party started,” Nobu assured them. “And when they are ready to sleep, they’ll let us know.”

“I’m just worried that all the screeching that will be going on will scare them,” Ryo quipped. He held out Darin so Momo can see him better.
Dee did the same to Dafydd. “I know you two already saw them, but things were a little different then. Way back…. Not that long ago. So, Dafydd, this is your niece, Ryoko and that is your nephew, Darin. Momo, that means they are also your niece and nephew.” Dee handed Ryoko to his brother, as Ryo gave Darin to Momo.

With a grin, Dee found his camera on the table and picked it up. “Smile you two. Pictures for the family photo album.”

Ryo rolled his eyes and laughed.


Ryo started to laugh as Dee took a few photos of his infant son and daughter with Dafydd and Momo. “Besides,” Dee added, “if I know Mother, she will want these pictures for her collection.”

Ryo had to agree with Dee. “That’s true. Okay, you have all the right reasons to go camera crazy.” He leaned over to kiss Dee’s check.

“What’s going on?” Nobu asked Ryo.

“Uncle Nobu, look at Dee and Dafydd and then you tell me what’s going on,” Ryo replied, sounding highly amused.

Nobu and Hoshi shared a look before Hoshi asked, “There are more reasons than looking alike?”

Ryo nodded. “Plenty. Dafydd had a twin brother who was taken from his family who was the age Dee was when he was found, for starters. The last location of the missing baby was in New York. Plus, Dafydd has baby photos of him and his twin on his phone and not only do we see Dee as an infant in them, but Dee’s mom confirmed it’s him. We’re still having DNA tests done, but we don’t doubt they are brothers.”

“Dee found his family?” Takehide asked, astonishment in his voice.
“Dafydd actually came here with family photos on his phone?” Satomi asked in amusement.

Nobu coughed to cover his laugh, while Hoshi covered her mouth, her shoulders shaking as she tried not to start laughing.

“More like Dee’s family found him,” Ryo said with a laugh, ignoring what Satomi said and the reactions to her comment. No one knew what Momo’s husband looked like, because the few times she showed up at a family occasion, she had no photos of Dafydd, or any of her family on the phone. Ryo did understand their amazement, but he was not going to acknowledge it then. Besides, he was so happy that Dafydd carried photos of his family from when he was an infant. “That also makes Momo my sister-in-law,” he announced.

“Now that’s a family upgrade you don’t see often,” Nobu said with a laugh. “Oh, we must celebrate then! I assume it’s a celebration, looking at Dee and Dafydd.”

“Yes, it is. Dee balked some at first, but if he didn’t he wouldn’t be Dee. Between Mother and Obāsan, he’s okay now and looking forward to getting to know his brother more. We’re even hoping we can meet the rest of his family when we go to Nagoya.”

Hoshi jumped up out of her seat and rushed over to Dee, hugging him.

Dee started to laugh as he hugged his aunt by marriage back. “I guess you heard the news.”

“We were wondering if that was the reason everyone disappeared for a while. You two look too much alike not to be related,” Hoshi said happily.

“Yeah. That was the reason.” Dee reached out to pull Dafydd close, the other man now holding Ryoko. “This is my twin brother, Dafydd.”

Although he had already met Hoshi, Dafydd still bowed and greeted her in Japanese.

“If I am Dee’s aunt, then that makes me your aunt too,” Hoshi gushed.

“Oh my, they do look so much alike,” Kumi said, coming over to join them. “I wonder if you both
wore the same type sunglasses?"

“We’ll work on that tomorrow, Kumi,” Ryo said with a laugh as he watched his cousin hug both men.

Akira came over to them, all smiles. “Dei, Dafydd, do you mind if before we start karaoke, we make an announcement about this wonderful news?”

“I don’t mind if he doesn’t,” Dafydd replied.

Dee looked around the ballroom at everyone dancing, playing games, drinking and eating and talking. “I don’t know if this crowd needs anything more to celebrate,” he teased. “Looks like everyone is having a blast already.” He grinned at Akira. “But if you feel they can stand more, then I don’t mind.”

Akira came over and kissed Dee’s cheek. She reached out to grab Dafydd’s arm and pulled him closer to give him a one-armed hug.

Tsubasa came over while everyone was talking. As Akira started toward the stage for karaoke, still having a hold on each brother, he exclaimed, “Whoa! Wait! I heard that Dafydd-san is Japanese and Welsh. Well, he obviously looks Japanese.” He looked at Dee, who had stopped with Akira and Dafydd, and was looking at the group they started to leave behind. “Does that mean you are too?”


“That’s what I’m told,” Dee replied. “I was also told I was born in Nagoya.”

“How did you end up in New York?” Tsubasa asked, looking shocked.

“That’s a long story that you’ll have to wait another day for,” Ryo replied.

“Everybody will know,” Dee assured them. “Most likely the next time we have a meal together,” he added with a laugh.
"We do have the dinner cruise Thursday evening," Akira said. "If I can’t work out something before, than I expect we’ll have that discussion then. Dafydd and Momo, since you will still be in Tokyo on Thursday, I expect to see you too at Hinode Pier at 6:30." She finally walked away.

Ryo looked at his new in-laws and laughed. "That’s us being told," he commented. "Welcome to the Aoki family."

"Yeah, you won’t have a choice, but I promise you won’t regret it," Dee said warmly. "I’ve felt nothing but love and acceptance from the family the moment they knew about me. And it only increased once they found out that Ryo was getting married to me."

"I am looking forward to it," Dafydd said sincerely.

They all winced at the squawk of a microphone. Dee suddenly started to look around the ballroom. "Oh geez, I have some friends who are going to go into shock."

"Don’t you need to find the rest of your group anyway and get ready?" Ryo asked.

"We have time. We figure to let most of the relatives get their chance," Dee said. "I also hear we are not the only ones planning what we are."

"What are you planning?" Momo asked.

"Dee and his friends from college have been practicing a few songs from their college days, and have outfits to wear while they are singing," Ryo said. "And never mind taking pictures. I have video." He grinned. "Maybe I can get them to play it at the precinct holiday party."

"Oh no you wouldn’t," Dee insisted.

"Oh yes, I would. You know they ask everyone for pictures and video from vacations, weddings, babies being born. Oh hell, we’re going to be in that reel a lot!" Ryo said with a laugh.
“Oh wow. Now that you think about it,” Dee remarked. “Since January, we got married, went on a honeymoon to Jamaica, had twins and vacationed in Japan. It’s been a busy year.”

“Now you can add discover you have a twin brother and five other siblings,” Ryo pointed out.

“Holy crap,” Dee commented.

“We already sent pictures and video clips from our honeymoon and the twins’ births. Diana and Janet said our wedding is covered because of the DVD we included in our thank you cards. We sent J.J. some photos from our trip so far, and once we are ready to tell everyone about Dafydd, we can send them some more video and photos of the two of you, with a little more of us in Japan.”

“They’ll need just a reel for us and then one for everyone else,” Dee commented. “Sheesh!”

“It’s been a great year for us,” Ryo said, hugging Dee with one arm and kissed his cheek sweetly.

Dee started to smile again. “Yeah, it has.” He moved his head to capture Ryo’s lips for a brief kiss. “Thank you.”

“Thank you,” Ryo returned, grinning at Dee and rubbed his nose against Dee’s.

They stopped talking when Akira asked for everyone’s attention from the stage. Ryo moved away from Dee to reach out toward Dafydd to take Ryoko from him. “I suspect that you and Daisuke will be expected to come to the stage and wow everyone.”

“You’re having fun, aren’t you?” Dee asked Ryo.

Ryo gave Dee an exaggerated nod. “Oh yes. I am very much. Revenge is mine!” He started to laugh. “Just remember I was Randy in New York until you insisted on knowing my Japanese name.”

Dee shook his head. “I’m doomed.”

Akira was thanking everyone for coming to the party and welcoming her grandson and his family to
Japan. “When I organized this party, I was aware that it will also be a family reunion. Many of us who do not see each other often, but are still family, are here and for that we are thankful. What I did not expect was a family reunited. My grandson Ryo’s husband arrived at this party not knowing his biological family, being found in New York and raised by the most delightful woman who I am proud and honored to call friend and family. But tonight, we all had a bit of a shock and now I am honored to say that Dei discovered he has a twin brother, who is our Momo’s husband, Dafydd Fujioka. If I had seen pictures of Dafydd before today we would have known sooner. But we didn’t, so that makes tonight’s party even more special. May I ask the newly reunited twins to come up here so we can all wish them well?”

“And that’s our cue,” Dee said loudly so Dafydd could hear him as everyone in the ballroom started to cheer. Unfortunately, that caused the twins to start crying.

“Go ahead,” Ryo insisted, holding Ryoko. “We got them. Don’t worry.” Hoshi and Kumi were already at Ryo’s and Momo’s sides, ready to lend a hand if needed.

Dee gave a glance at the infants and Ryo and then nodded to Dafydd. Together they walked to the stage and got on it to stand beside Akira. They endured the picture taking and best wishes called out for a few minutes until Akira motioned for everyone to calm down. She leaned over to whisper to both men and then spoke into the mic. “We thank you all.” She bowed along with Dee and Dafydd. “And now,” she held the mic toward the two men.

“It’s karaoke time!” they yelled out.

Relatives had been signing up all evening, as the sign-up sheet had been available when the first guests started to arrive, and the DJ called up the first ones on the list. Dee and Dafydd escorted Akira off the stage and went back to their table.

“Moriko will be taking the twins up to the penthouse. You might have noticed she likes to go to sleep early and we’re keeping her up. So, she’ll watch them until the party is over,” Akira said to Dee and Ryo. “Would you two like to go up and get them settled for the night?”

“We’ll have some time before it’s your turn to go up,” Ryo said to Dee.

“Aren’t you going to sing?” Momo asked.

“Yeah, I’m signed up too, but we still have some time.” He smirked at his cousin. “One of the
advantages of being a guest of honor at this party is that Dee and I are already signed up and we can go up whenever we feel like cutting the line.”

Dee let out a chuckle. “Exactly. Which is why we’re going to let the others have their chance for a while. Besides, if people start going up more than once already, or even do two songs at a time, it will help us decide how we’re going to do things. We’re going to do at least two songs.”

“You and half the other people in this room from what I’ve been hearing tonight,” Dafydd said.

“That is true,” Akira stated, “but as Ryo and Dei are the guests of honor, they can do as many songs as they please. Besides, I heard them both sing and those who didn’t hear them yet, will enjoy watching them.”

“Maybe Dee, Obāsan,” Ryo said. “I wouldn’t torture our relatives past one song.” He gave his grandmother a teasing grin.

“You don’t give yourself enough credit, Ryo,” Dee argued. “You can sing very well.”

“Dei’s right,” Akira agreed. “You do have a lovely voice. Just because Dei can sing better than you doesn’t mean you can’t sing. As he said, you can sing very well. It’s just that he can do it a little better. That is all.”

“I wouldn’t say I can sing better,” Dee remarked, humbled by Akira’s praise. “It’s just that you all put up with me keep coming back to sing something else.” He shrugged. “I can never settle on what I want to sing, so I keep signing up until they make me stop.”

Kumi laughed and smiled at Dee. “And at least around this family, we never made you stop yet. That’s because we love to listen to you sing.” She looked over at her cousin. “We also love listening to you, Ryo, but you never do enough.”

“I’m doing just one tonight. Sorry,” Ryo said with a crooked smile.

“Two. Please?” Kumi pleaded, putting her hands together and looking up at him with big eyes.
“Oh yes, Ryo. Do two please!” they had Carol joining in.

Dee stood behind Carol, leaning over her shoulder and mimicked Kumi. “Please, Ryo. I want to hear you sing again.”

Momo and Dafydd started to laugh, along with the rest of the relatives who were near them.

“All right. I’ll think about it. Okay?” Ryo said, trying not to laugh.

Dee straightened up to his full height and with a serious look intoned, “Do not think. Do!”

Which had Ryo groaning and the rest of the family laughing.

“Bikky, you are going to do a song, even if I have to drag you up and do one with me,” Akira said with a wicked grin.

“I don’t karaoke, Obāsan,” Bikky said, eyes wide.

“You do when your fathers have you join them,” Takehide pointed out.

“Oh wonderful!” Akira exclaimed. “Then we can get Ryo do sing a second song, and Bikky to do just one.” She smiled at the family, her hands clasped before her and gave them an expectant look.

Ryo and Bikky groaned in defeat while Dee started to laugh, along with the other relatives surrounding them.

“Better decide on which song we’re all going to do,” Dee said with a grin.

“Oh cool! I get to see Bikky do karaoke again. Sugoi!” Carol exclaimed.

“I knew it! I knew it!” they heard Yuki yell as Dee’s friends came over to the table.
“You’ve been holding out on us, Dee?” Hide asked, looking shocked.

Dee started to laugh. “Sorry, but I didn’t know until tonight. And I need to help with getting the chibis settled for bed, so you’ll have to settle for questioning Dafydd until I get back,” he said. He grabbed his brother by his arm and pulled him between himself and his friends. “Say hi to my friends, Dafydd. Friends, say hi to the twin brother.” He chuckled as he took a step back. “Dafydd, these guys were my family in Japan, and they still are.” To his ex-roommates, he said, “Don’t scare off my brother and his wife while I’m gone.” He grinned at everyone.

“Fine, we’ll accept getting to know your twin brother, but we’re still going to grill you when you get back,” Ken said.

“Yeah, I know. Just remember that we also have some singing to do.”

“We’ll grill him as we get changed for our songs,” Hide suggested and the other two Japanese men nodded their heads. “Go take care of your little ones. We’ll still be here.”

“Thanks for the warning,” Dee said with a laugh as he took Darin from Momo and followed Ryo and Moriko out of the ballroom. He noticed that as they left, Dafydd and Momo were surrounded by his friends and their families.

He felt sorry for poor Dafydd and Momo. Then he realized that he should also feel sorry for himself, because he never knew what his friends were going to tell Dafydd, who he still had a lot of getting to know and the other way around.

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Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

Karaoke time at the party brings new surprises to Ryo and his family.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

October 28, 2016

Tokyo New Crown Star Hotel

Minato Ward, Tokyo, Japan

Ryo returned to the ballroom to find karaoke had started. A couple of his second cousins on the Aoki side of his family were on the stage and singing “Morning Coffee” by Morning Musume. They were dressed like idols and did a decent job of singing and dancing, if reactions from the crowd of relatives and friends of the family were any indication. He noticed Bikky with Nobu, and wondering where Carol was, he looked around the room to find her in a corner with others who were waiting their turn to the stage, looking nervous while Rina spoke to her. He was surprised to see her there, unless she was just there to talk to Rina. Carol had a nice singing voice, but she was usually too shy to sing karaoke. Once in a while, whenever they would put on the karaoke machine that was a wedding gift from family, she would join them. Among family was fine. Daito had also told them about a karaoke studio near Times Square, where they had studios to rent, with comfortable couches and chairs, along with tables. Those renting the studios were able to order food and drinks which was bought to the studios, but otherwise it was private. The time they went with Emiko and Daito, it took a lot of pleading from everyone to get Carol to sing a song with Emiko.

Bikky and Nobu came over to him. “Carol and Rina are going to do a TKY52 song,” Bikky remarked, looking amused. “Rina talked her into it. Rina told Carol that she might regret not doing it.”

“Rina tried to talk Bikky into it too, but failed,” Nobu said. “What about you? When are you going to take your turn?”
Ryo shrugged. “I really have no business torturing family,” he commented.

“You’re so lying, Ryo,” Bikky said. “You do karaoke and you can sing. You did on the yakatabune cruise.”

“You did,” Nobu agreed.

“You also did that song at the wedding,” Bikky pointed out.

Nobu nodded in agreement. “You did a wonderful job with that song.”

“That was different. I really needed to do something special because of all the situations,” Ryo explained.

“Before you went up with Dee to tuck the chibis in, you told everyone you were already doing one song and you promised to think about doing a second,” Nobu said. He looked at Bikky. “Carol was one of the people he made that promise to.”

Ryo started to laugh. “Oh, go ahead and spoil my fun, why don’t you,” he said to his uncle. “Actually, I am still signed up, but I’m just waiting for a good place to cut in. That area is for people who changed and plan to put on a performance, which is why I am surprised Carol is there.”

“She’s wearing one of those outfits that you and Dad bought her in Harajuku, so she’s dressed up enough,” Bikky said. “She does look like an idol.”

“‘Yes, she does. So does Rina,’” Ryo said. He looked at his uncle. “And what are you singing, Uncle Nobu?”

“Something that will put the kids to sleep, I’m sure,” Nobu said. “I asked to be put further down the list. Let the kids have fun with the new and popular songs before the old people take over with the boring music.” He grinned at Ryo and Bikky.
“You’re not that old, Uncle Nobu,” Bikky said, making Ryo and Nobu laugh.

“I’m not? I’m just a little old?” Nobu asked.

“Geez, I didn’t mean it like that,” Bikky said. “Honestly!”

“Of course, you didn’t,” Nobu replied with a wicked grin and laughed.

“Keep making comments like that and Uncle Nobu will start talking to you in Japanese,” Ryo teased.

“Good idea!” Nobu remarked and ruffled Bikky’s hair. “Let’s see you figure out how to tease me in Japanese one day.”

“How about just starting with konnichi wa?” Bikky asked.

“It’s evening, Bikky,” Ryo reminded him.

“Oh! Um… komba wa then.”

Ryo and Nobu started to laugh. With a teasing grin, Ryo said to Bikky, “Instead of ‘um’, Japanese say ‘ano’. Don’t you listen to your family here?”

Bikky gave a pained look. “Yeah, I did notice but I figure that’s just a Japanese thing and since I’m not Japanese, I don’t have to even if I can speak Japanese.”

Pointing to Ryo, Nobu said, “Your dad uses ‘ano’ when he’s speaking Japanese, and ‘um’ and ‘err’ when he’s speaking English.”

“He’s Japanese,” Nobu replied. “I noticed your Dad does the same.”

“He’s Japanese, too,” Bikky remarked amused.
Nobu blinked and then started to laugh with Ryo. “Point taken, but that’s new enough for me to forget it. That’s going to take some getting used to. But Dee’s been using ‘ano’ when speaking Japanese much longer than he knew that he was half-Japanese.”

“Yeah, okay. I guess you’re right, Uncle Nobu. I’m going to start taking Japanese in my new semester,” Bikky said, “and my dads said they are going help me with my homework;”

“Good. Please call me sometimes and I’ll give your fathers a break that day,” Nobu said. “It will be my honor to help you with your Japanese.”

Bikky smiled at Nobu. “I would like that, Uncle Nobu. Domo arigato gozaimasu.”

Ryo started to smirk. He shared a look with his uncle. He was grateful for some help with Bikky learning the language from the family in Japan, but he also suspected that Nobu thought they might go easy on Bikky, but he wouldn’t. For now, it was vacation time, and his helping Bikky here and there with Japanese he would need while he was in Japan was easy-going, because vacation is time for fun. That would change when it was for school work. Ryo knew his uncle to work very hard, but when it was playtime, he played just as hard. Bikky only saw the Nobu who was off work, but would eventually learn how his uncle can be when it came to work and school.

Various family and friends took turns to sing songs from classics to the latest pop songs. Many of his older relatives did songs in the Enka style, ranging from older songs to ones recently released. Ryo was in a group of his closest aunts, uncles, and cousins and were joined by Dee’s college friends and their families. Some of his family sat at their table which was right off the dance floor. Momo and Dafydd joined them at the table. Even though Momo was his cousin, Ryo realized that she was more Dee’s family than his now, but it made her a closer relative by marriage, so he wasn’t complaining. Especially since for the first time, Dee had family by birth in the large group of his relatives. As he talked to Momo and Dafydd as the evening went on, he suspected that at some point during their time in Nagoya, it would be him being surrounded by Dee’s family.

That had happened before when the Lane family came to New York for their wedding, but as much as they embraced Dee as one of their own, they were Dee’s adopted family. In Nagoya, they were going to hopefully meet more of Dee’s biological family. At least the Japanese side. Because of the circumstances that had separated Dee from his surviving father and the rest of his family, Ryo wasn’t very hopeful that they would know more of the Welsh side than what Dafydd knew from Saburo. One thing Ryo knew was that they would definitely take that trip to Cardiff that they had been talking about, especially while watching Doctor Who, which was filmed there. Now it was more than a location where their favorite show was filmed, it was part of Dee’s heritage as much as Japan now was. Dee’s Welsh family came from Cardiff, and Ryo decided that they had to go there, even if chances were they would not be meeting any of Dee’s family.
Carol and Risa had wowed everyone with their version of “Oogoe Diamond” by TKY52. Dee had come over to the family table by then and stood with Ryo, giving each other loving glances in between watching the two young women with big smiles. Dee would sing it to Ryo whenever they heard it, saying it once could have been one of his songs to Ryo. It was a favorite of theirs, and it was on the playlist of songs played at their wedding when the band was on a break. They were the loudest to cheer the two when they were done, which was no small feat because everyone else was cheering pretty loud too.

Four of Ryo’s female cousins from Akira’s family came up. They were also dressed like idols and did “Memory Seishun No Hikari” from Morning Musume. They had worked out a routine and were dancing while they sang.

Most of Ryo’s younger female cousins sang some from popular idols, such as TKY52 and its sister groups, while his older female cousins did Morning Musume and the other groups part of the Hello Project. Some of them also did enka songs, including Aiko, who was Kennichi’s younger sister and was aspiring to become an enka singer. The majority of the younger male cousins did rock songs from X-Japan, Mr. Children, Dir En Grey and Glay. SMAP and L’Arc En Ciel were other popular choices.

The older relatives did more traditional and easy listening songs. They didn’t put on performances, but a few did a spectacular job singing and had everyone’s attention on them. Kennichi and Hachiro did a wonderful father and son performance.

Dee and Ryo were sitting at the table again when Nobu came up to the stage. Ryo thought he knew his uncle and was expecting a slow or an older song, just as Nobu said he would do. Nobu surprised Ryo, and most of the family, when he started to sing “Beach Time” by Tube. Dee started to chuckle. When Ryo looked at him, Dee commented, “Who do I say that Maeda Nobutera reminds me of?”

“Oh crap!” Ryo exclaimed and started to laugh. Whenever they had done karaoke as a family, Nobu would pick mellow songs to sing. Ryo wasn’t surprised that his uncle liked Tube. He knew Nobu liked the band, and others from the 80’s, and had even gone to concerts. He could sometimes still be caught wearing a Tube shirt he had bought at a concert in the early 90’s. It was one of the things Dee and Nobu had bonded with around the time of the wedding, because Tube was Dee’s favorite Japanese band. Ryo was more surprised to finally see Nobu sing something more upbeat at karaoke.

“I knew your uncle can sing, but damn, Uncle Nobu has the moves too,” said Dee.

“This is fun,” Bikky said. “I want to say that he’s funny, but he’s actually good.”
Dee and Ryo nodded their heads in agreement and went back to enjoying Nobu’s song.

Takehide was already at the side of the stage, waiting for his older brother to finish singing, appearing to be enjoying the entertainment. When Nobu’s song was done, it went right into Takehide’s song. Takehide jumped on the stage, dressed in a red, white and blue outfit and started to sing, “Young Man” by Hideki Saijo, which was a Japanese version of the Village People’s “YMCA”. It was a hit on the Japanese charts, along with the original “YMCA” in 1979. Everyone was clapping and cheering the man who was bouncing around the stage while singing the upbeat song. He even managed to get some relatives to join him on the stage, dancing in the background.

Dafydd groaned before laughing and joining in the hand clapping. Everyone at their table stood up and moved closer to the dance floor. Of course, everyone in the ballroom were spelling out Y-M-C-A during the chorus. Bikky was laughing hysterically by the end of song.

“Oh my God!” he exclaimed, still laughing. “Even in Japan, a party isn’t a party without YMCA!” He started to laugh more. “That was freakin’ awesome!”

“Yes, that was,” Dee agreed, starting to laugh too. “Damn, I hope your aunt is going to do something slower, because I think we all need to catch our breaths after your uncles’ songs.”

“You’re telling me. Wow,” Ryo remarked, smiling.

Hide came up to their group. “C’mon Daisuke, we need to get ready for our song.”

Ryo snorted and Dafydd started to laugh.

“Don’t tease him,” Momo said, looking amused.

“I should never have told you guys that,” Dee commented. He looked at his family. “Gotta get ready, I guess. I only hope that we are half as good as your uncles, because Bikky’s right. That was freakin’ awesome.” He leaned over to kiss Ryo briefly. “See everyone on the other side.” He winked and walked away with Hide.

The relatives and friends continued to come up and do songs of all genres of Japanese music and
even a few favorites from American and British acts. Ryo stood with Bikky, Carol, Momo and Dafydd. Ayumi, Jae-Hwa and Noriko came over to join them. Nobu and Tsubasa also came over. Akira was with her nephew, Kuniaki, who was Ryochi’s son and his wife, Yui, talking to them while Kaito, was on the stage. A few more relatives took the stage in groups, and put on performances. That was one of the many things Ryo loved about his Japanese relatives. They knew how to have fun. Just singing into a microphone wasn’t enough for some of them. Dee had heard enough from the family to get with his friends and join in on the fun. That was also one of the many things he loved about Dee too.

When he noticed Dee and his friends come on stage, Ryo started to cheer loudly, causing everyone around him to join in. Dafydd also was cheering his newly found twin brother on, staring at the stage with wonder and awe. Ryo could only imagine what Dafydd was feeling whenever he looked at Dee, because he came to a party he did not want to attend and only did at his wife’s insistence and ended up living a dream that evening.

Ryo also had noticed the excited screams and cheers when the four came on the stage from several places around the ballroom. It wasn’t from his family, even if those from his family who knew Dee did cheer for them. Nobu had noticed one of Dee’s other college friends, who sat at a nearby table and had jumped up while screaming and stayed on his feet. He pointed to the excited Japanese man when Ryo and others of their family looked at him.

Ryo had no idea what song they were going to do, but was pleased when they started to sing “Kimi Ga Iru Dake De”, translated in English “Your Very Existence” by Kome Kome Club. They all had knee length glittery jackets that flared with their moves over pullover shirts. Dee and Yuki did most of the singing, while Ken and Hide did the harmonies, but each of them had a couple of lines to sing solo.

Ryo took his attention from Dee and his friends long enough to look at the man who looked like his husband standing next to him. Dafydd had his arm around Momo’s shoulders, holding her close. He had a huge smile as he watched his long-lost twin sing the classic Japanese pop song from the early 90’s. His mouth moved to the words as he swayed him and Momo to the music. When they were done and were leaving the stage, the friend who had been cheering loudly through the entire song came over to their table, looking to be very excited.

“I can’t believe they reunited!” Takeshi, the friend, exclaimed to their group.

“Reunited?” Ryo asked.

“Daigaku Dudes,” the friend replied. “They were a very famous boy band when they were in college.”
“Really?” Dafydd asked, interested.

Ryo looked surprised too, but his mouth twisted into a smirk. “I mean no offense, being that I obviously have a very Japanese family, but I learned to take the term ‘very famous’ with a grain of salt when it comes to the Japanese.”

Dafydd started to laugh and Momo giggled. “This is true,” Momo admitted.

“They played all the universities around here, and even in some clubs,” Takeshi explained. “They even performed on U.S. military bases. They could have been signed and made it really big after graduation, but Dee said he had to go back to New York, and the others didn’t want to do it without Dee. Many people knew of them.

“Are you kidding?” Ryo asked, amazed.

“My dad was a Japanese pop star?” Bikky asked, intrigued.

“They could have been,” Takeshi replied. “They did mostly cover songs. They were offered a chance to record a single. A friend wrote a couple of songs for them, and they got permission to include their Japanese version of NSYNC’s “It’s Gonna Be Me”.

Bikky’s eyes went wide and then he started to laugh hysterically.

“Holy shit!” Ryo exclaimed. “I know that song! I mean the Japanese version.”

“I know that song too,” Dafydd said. “Both versions.” His eyes went wide with shock.

Carol squeed with excitement. “Oh my God! Dee and his friends recorded?”

Ryo looked at Carol. “More than recorded. I think the NSYNC song peaked in the top five, if I remember what Emiko said. It’s one of her favorite Japanese hits, and she talked about it for some time.”
“It peaked at #3 on the Oricon charts. It was on the charts for many months,” Dafydd said. “I remember coming back to Japan and my brothers and sisters driving me crazy with the song.” Dafydd gave a lopsided song. “It was an NSYNC song. I wasn’t going to admit to liking it even if it was in Japanese. It’s the only NSYNC song I like, but it wasn’t NSYNC who sang it.”

Momo grabbed her husband’s arm. “Oh Dafydd! That was your twin when you listened to it.”

“I know. Now I understand why I liked it so much even if I didn’t like the original group and none of their songs, including that one. Yes, I actually put it on just because I liked it and wanted to hear it.”

“Dee did most of the vocals on that one. Just like most of their songs, Hide and Ken preferred to stick to harmonies and background,” Takeshi informed them.

Bikky was still laughing and Carol was still squeezing. Ryo shook his head and then clasped a hand on Takeshi’s shoulder. “Dude, we need to talk later. Dee has never mentioned any of this.”

Takeshi started to laugh. “They did the single just to say they did, but the success of two of their songs lead them to a recording offer.”

“I take it they turned it down,” Dafydd said.

“Yes, I’ll tell you later, if you can’t get Dee to mention it.”

The four friends still stayed by the stage with the few others who dared to do another song.

Dafydd was called up two songs later and did “Honey” by L’Arc En Ciel. Ryo realized that he should not have been surprised that Dafydd sang as well as Dee, but he didn’t sound exactly like Dee. For one, even if he spoke English very well, he still pronounced some words with Japanese pronunciation and definitely had a Japanese accent. But then, Ryo noticed that Dee had a few words that he pronounced the Japanese way, even in New York, but Dee had explained that was because the first time he heard them was in Japan, like karaoke. He never bothered to use the American or New York way of pronouncing those few words. Dee also had a heavy New York accent except when he was speaking Japanese. He never sounded like a New Yorker speaking Japanese or when he used Japanese words in an otherwise English sentence.
Ryo listened as Dafydd spoke to Nobu after his song, and was relieved when he realized the twin brothers had slightly different pitches. Enough that when they were both speaking Japanese, someone who knew them well would be able to tell them apart by their voices. When they spoke English, it was very obvious to tell them apart, even if they didn’t have different pitches.

Momo was able to carry a tune, Ryo knew, but Dafydd was a much better singer. She still got a lot of cheers and applauding for her version of “Can’t You See?” by Zard. Carol had never heard that song before and was surprised to see Ryo and Bikky moving in time to the song, especially the chorus.

“You know this song?” Carol asked them.

Bikky nodded his head. “That’s what you get for not watching Dragonball Z,” he said with a laugh. “It’s one of the ending songs.”

“Oh…. I like this song a lot. I would love to hear the original.”

“Dee has it on CD,” Ryo replied. “But we’ll make sure to pick up Zard’s best CD when we’re shopping. I think you’ll like most of the songs on it.”

“Awesome. Thank you, Ryo.”

“Have you heard any other songs you like but didn’t know before tonight?” Ryo asked her.

“Yes. And on Tuesday night too, when we did karaoke on the yakatabune. I asked who sang it after and I’m making a list.”

“Good. Then when we’re in Shibuya, we’ll go to HMV and Tower Records and see what we can do about that list,” Ryo said. “I want to go CD shopping anyway.” He smiled at Carol. “I have my own list. There are some songs I like that my cousins didn’t send me the CDs yet.”

“So do I,” Bikky added.
“I know Dee has a couple of songs he wants to get, so we were planning on going to HMV and Tower Records anyway,” Ryo said. He started to laugh. “Actually Dee wants to go back into Yokohama and go to the used CD store he used to go to. His friends said it’s still there, so, we’ll be hitting that shop up too.”

When Momo came over to join them, Dafydd pulled her into his arms and kissed her. “You were wonderful, baby,” he said to his wife with a loving smile.

“Yes, she was,” Ryo had to agree. “You really did that song justice.”

“I loved that song. It was awesome,” Carol said to Momo. “Thank you for singing it.”

“Ryo promised to get her the Zard CD that it’s on,” Dafydd said. “You managed to do a song that was new to Carol.” He grinned at Carol. “And in the short time that I’ve known her, I get the impression that wasn’t easy to do.”

Ryo started to laugh. “Oh, you have no idea! Once the family here found out that she’s interested in Japanese pop music, they have been supplying her.”

“I don’t know all songs, but I want to know as many as I can,” Carol said. “I had a friend in school whose father is in the Army and he was stationed in Japan for a couple of years. She bought back some CDs and would play them during breaks. I loved them. My aunt managed to get a few CDs for me, but it was after I met Ryo and Dee that my collection started to grow. They both had the Japan connection to music.” She laughed. “They have always been so wonderful to me.” She hugged Ryo.

Dafydd and Momo laughed, sharing a look. “I’m glad you have Ryo and Dee in your life then,” Momo said with a smile. “I’m glad I have Ryo and Dee in my life,” she exclaimed happily, hugging Dafydd. “To think that since the last time I saw you, you met and married Dafydd’s twin brother.”

“To think you were married to Dee’s twin brother the last time we met, even if I didn’t know Dee yet,” Ryo said and laughed.

After another older relative finished their song, Ryo’s name was called. The group with him started to cheer and clap as Ryo tried not to blush too hard as he made his way up to the stage. As the music started, Ryo looked directly at Dee, who stood at the side of the stage with his friends and smiled.
Recognizing the song, Dee’s smile started to grow as Ryo started to sing Misia’s “Everything”.

Ryo heard Dee’s cheers the loudest when he was done, even if the ones he left at the table were also making a lot of noise.

When he went back to the table as a younger cousin was called up and started to sing, “Linear Motor Girl” by Perfume, his closest family clapped and cheered him before giving their attention to the young woman on the stage.

“It looks like Daigaku Dudes are doing another song,” Hoshi said to them when the cousin was done.

“Oh yes!” Ryo exclaimed with a grin.

“Daisuke’s Daigaku Dudes,” Nobu commented and laughed, making the others around him join in.

The four came back on the stage. Hide and Ken took spots behind Dee and Yuki, and a little to the side so they were visible. Dee spoke into the mic, “Thank you for putting up with us again. Please listen to our song.” He bowed to the cheers.

The music started up and Dafydd started to cheer. “Oh! Papa is going to be so happy!” he exclaimed. “This is one of his favorite songs!”

“It’s Dee’s too,” Ryo said with a laugh. “Oh shit!” he exclaimed.

Everyone laughed as Dee started to sing the first verse of “J-Boy” by Shōgo Hamada while clapping along.

“Yup, that’s Dad’s song,” Bikky remarked.

Ryo looked at him.

“Dad told me what the song is about once. He doesn’t really like wearing suits to work, you know.”
“Gotcha,” Ryo said. He knew that the times Dee wore a suit when he did not was for him since Dee knew how much Ryo loved how his husband looked in a suit, especially the better ones they were able to afford lately. He pulled Bikky close to him as Yuki started to sing the next verse.

During the second chorus, Dee was singing lead and came to the part where the words were, “I’m… a J-Boy.” His voice caught and shook a little and his face flushed.

“And it just hit,” Takehide said, highly amused.

“Oh Dei,” Akira sighed aloud happily as she joined them. “I think this is going to be a wonderful thing for him.” She looked at Dafydd. “And you too, Dafydd.”

“I know it is,” Dafydd said.

When they were done, people were calling for them to do another song. Dee looked at the other three, and Hide signaled to the woman handling the music. She smiled and nodded her head. The music started. Yuki, Hide and Ken hummed the beginning and then Dee broke into “Season in the Sun” by TUBE, which seemed to delight the gathered extended family and friends.

Dee’s friend said, “They would do all three songs, but with a band backing them up.”

“Please tell me there is video!” Nobu exclaimed.

“I’m sure there is, and we’re getting it,” Akira stated with a knowing smile.

“Damn, Dee can sing!” Carol exclaimed.

Ryo was laughing. “Dee can move. Look at those moves!”

“Just like Maeda-san would do during TV appearances,” Peter, who had also joined them as he enjoyed seeing his friends’ group perform again, said.
“Yes. You are right,” Nobu agreed. “Dee does have early Maeda-san’s moves.”

“I would love a private show,” Ryo said, not realizing he said aloud. “Oh crap!” He covered his mouth and blushed while the adults around him laughed.

“Pops!” Bikky exclaimed. “I need brain bleach now!”

Akira hugged him and rested her head against his arm. “I’m sure Dei would if you asked.”

“Obāsan!” Ryo exclaimed, blushing more, but decided that his grandmother was right and when they didn’t have kids in close quarters, he was going to do just that. They had the song on CD and he did love the moves that Dee was making. And Dee’s voice during that one particular song, the way he hit certain notes, was doing things to him that he was wishing he was not in a room filled with about 75 relatives and friends.

Dee ended the song and said, “Thank you,” and bowed, along with Ken, Hide and Yuki. This time they made their way from the stage to join their loved ones.

Ryo pulled Dee into a hug, much like Dafydd had done with Momo after her song, and said in English, “You have some ‘splaining to do, Mister.”


Ryo looked over at Dee’s two friends who had joined them. “I’ve been learning some new things about you and your roommates during your college years. Japanese Pop Star? Really?”

Bikky and Carol started to laugh, along with everyone else around them.

“Oh. I didn’t think someone would talk,” Dee said.

“Oh yes, someone did,” Ryo said.

“Your friend is most generous, Dei,” Akira said, looking amused. “He is going to make me copies of
the videos he has. Your other friend, Peter, has also offered to make copies of whatever he has.”

“Obāsan said we’re having a viewing party one night!” Bikky exclaimed.

“Oh shit.”

“Oh shit is right,” Nobu said. “Why did you not mention that you had a #3 hit on Oricon?”

“We were just a two-hit wonder,” Hide said, coming to Dee’s defense. “We did it all for fun and it was extra money.”

“You could have had many more,” Takeshi said. “If Dee decided to stay in Japan, even if for a few more years.”

“I would have if the others wanted to go for it,” Dee said as Takehide came from the bar and gave each of the former roommates a beer.

“You deserved this. It was obvious you were the professional group of the night,” Takehide said.

“About ten years ago,” Dee commented, “but thank you.” He lifted the beer in salute to Takehide. “I really need it now that Takeshi-san and Peter spilled the beans.” Looking at Hide, Yuki and Ken, he exclaimed, “Kanpai!”

The other three replied back, lifting their bottles.

“Popular belief is that we didn’t sign because Dee didn’t want to stay in Japan after graduation,” Hide said. “But like he said, if the three of us wanted to sign the contract, he would have stayed in Japan, or negotiated to go between New York and Tokyo. He wouldn’t have been the first Japanese pop star to record in Japan and do tours and appearances while living in New York.”

“Who did that?” Carol asked.

“Hikaru Utada,” Momo replied. “She was born in New York City.”
“Hiki is a New Yorker?” Carol asked amazed, looking at Dee and Ryo. “Did you know that?”

“Yes, we did,” Ryo said. “She also went to Columbia University.”

“She did live between New York and Tokyo over the years,” Dee said. “But yes, she was living in New York when she did her first album.” He looked at Hide. “Which was also around the time that we were offered the contact.”

“So, if Dee was willing, then what really happened?” Peter asked.

Dee shrugged. “I really didn’t want a career as a singer, in Japan or America, but I wasn’t going to kill the deal if they wanted it.”

“But we didn’t,” Yuki replied. “We did it for fun for college. Which is why we did the make-up for promotion and the appearances we got roped into doing as a result of the singles.”

“We also needed to graduate from university, too. The promotions and tour took us away from studies for over a semester.”

“Which is why it took us five years to graduate,” Dee stated. “We lost one complete semester promoting and touring, and then we couldn’t just start classes in the middle of the next semester, so we had to wait it out until the new semester after started.”

“We took the KISS route,” Ken explained, “only we went more kabuki than characters. It was to preserve our privacy. We really didn’t expect to see anything even at the bottom of the Oricon charts.”

“We did have a great song written for us,” Dee said. “I’m sure that was a huge part of the appeal that made it chart.”

“What’s with the NSYNC song?” Dafydd asked.
Dee, Hide and Ken started to laugh. “Yuki was a NSYNC fan. The rest of us couldn’t care less about them. But then they went and did “It’s Gonna Be Me” and we found we liked it. A lot. It reminded us much of the type of songs the boy bands did here at the time,” Dee explained.

“Yuki asked if we could do it, since we did have some American songs in our set,” Ken said. “Then one night shortly after, Dee decided to translate the words in Japanese and we gave it a try. This was around the time that we were figuring out what to do for the single.”

“We gave it a try with the Japanese lyrics and we really liked it,” Yuki said. “I liked it more than the original. So Hide’s friend managed to get us the rights to record it. It was just for fun, especially doing that version of the song. Imagine our surprise when that hit the top of the charts.” He laughed.

“That friend was Toshido-san’s younger brother, by the way,” Dee said.

“That’s how I met Toshido. I wanted a career in music, but not as a singer,” Hide explained. “Besides, I was getting married right after graduation and if we signed that would have meant recording, more tours and appearances. I didn’t want to keep having to travel and leave Noriko at home. Yuki wanted a career with food.”

“My parents made me promise to go to university first and graduate and then go to culinary school, if I still wanted it,” Yuki explained. “I would have to pay for it myself, too, and I did pay for the chef schooling after graduation. Being famous for a while was fun but not what I really wanted to do.”

“What about Ken?” Akira asked.

Ken shrugged and grinned. “I’m more a J-Boy,” he stated. “I wanted the corporate job, looking at upper management someday.”

“He wanted the suit, and all,” Dee remarked with a laugh.

“Oh, don’t tease, Daisuke. All you wanted was to wear a uniform. Just like a suit is in Japan,” Ken remarked with a smirk.

“Almost everything is a uniform in Japan,” Dee teased. “But sure. I’m guilty. I wanted to one day become a detective, and to do that I had to start as a cop and if that meant the uniform, so be it. And to be honest, I might hate suits, and when I have to, it’s a pain in the ass to put it on, but when I do
have to wear my uniform for something, I am proud to wear it.”

“Except when you suddenly find yourself going from plainclothes to a uniform to work traffic as a punishment. No, that wasn’t fun,” Ryo remarked.

“Are you ever going to forget about that?” Dee asked.

“That you set off a bomb that blew up a precinct? No. We’re lucky that was all you got,” Ryo said.

“I just wanted my wallet,” Dee commented. “And I didn’t plant the damn thing. Besides, it was set to go off eventually anyway, even if I didn’t go back for it. At least everyone got out.”

“That’s true,” Ryo had to agree. “It was your reputation at the time that got us in trouble.” He started to grin. “Aw, you grew up because now you’re Chief of our brand-new bureau.”

“He also became Japanese,” Nobu quipped.

Dee laughed with everyone else. “I guess I was always half-Japanese, only I didn’t know it until tonight. They’re going to shit back home.”

“I find it amazing that Dee is very American, except for when he’s in Japan, but he’s not American,” Ryo said.

“This is very true,” Hoshi agreed. “I think we need something to toast with because our family just grew a little tonight.” She smiled warmly at Dafydd, who blushed a little, but looked very pleased with being accepted into Ryo’s family by being Dee’s brother. To Dafydd, it meant that Dee had a family who loved him, and it made him happy. He hoped that Dee would eventually also have his own birth family loving him too, as he had.

“If I know my husband’s family, then two families are going to eventually become one,” said Momo.

“Wonderful!” Akira exclaimed. “There’s no such thing as too much family.”
“Obāsan, you did meet my father’s family, didn’t you?” Ryo asked.

“You just pay no mind to those fools who have antiquated views. At least your grandparents and some of the older relatives came around,” Akira replied. “I appreciate all they did for me when Darin and Ryoko were born. A year ago, I never would have thought that Franklin would go through so much trouble for me, and I am most thankful to have both Franklin and Estelle as family and friend now.”

“I am glad, too, Obāsan,” Ryo said.

“Takehide and I are going to the bar to get more drinks. Hoshi is right. I think a bottle of the best sake they have tonight is proper,” Nobu said and left the group with his younger brother.

The rest of the group went back to the tables to sit for a while and relax while they watched those who were still doing karaoke. Most of the singers by then were coming back for their second or third time, including some of the ones who were performing during the songs.

OoOoOoO

Chapter End Notes

Happy New Year! I'm back from Japan. Five weeks seems like such a long time, and it did when I arrived in Tokyo, but now it feels like it all went by so fast. If only I can finish writing the rest of the Laytner-MacLean's vacation in Japan so quickly. The trip did help me with inspiration and ideas, including the for The Unexpected VI, but first I need to finish this.

I want to also remind everyone that since this is an alternate universe Japan, there are differences from real Japan, such as when things were built/opened, bands started and songs released from the real world. Obviously there are changes in the U.S. too, with a slightly different history, mostly the Carrier project, so some things in this universe happen at other times, along with some other changes. With that said, I do try to keep both Japan and America familiar, yet different. Because of my recent time in Japan, I realized that I want to change some things on chapters already posted and will work on
them when I have a chance. Right now going forward to finish this story is more important.

I hope you enjoyed this chapter. I'm going to get the next chapter ready to be sent to my beta, Milady Dragon, so hopefully now that I'm home and not running all over Japan, I can get it posted in a couple of weeks.
Chapter 17

Chapter Summary

Dee is dealing with the aftermath of meeting the twin brother he never knew he had.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Laytner-MacLean Penthouse

Tokyo New Crown Star Hotel

Roppongi Hills, Tokyo

It was going on midnight by the time karaoke was winding down. By then Dee, with some help from Ryo’s family, managed to get Bikky and Ryo on the stage, and they sang “Melisa” by Porno Graffiti. Dee decided on that song because it was the closing song of Fullmetal Alchemist and he knew Bikky knew most of the words even if he didn’t know what most of the words meant. Ryo also knew the words, so it was the best selection for their family song. After Bikky scrambled from the stage when they were done, Dee kept Ryo on the stage. Dee had also signed up him and Ryo for a duet, also picking a song for them. Ryo’s eyes got soft and his smile warm as he recognized the opening music to “Precious One” from Kat-Tun. After a few more relatives took a last turn in singing, Dee and his friends came up to do a third song, much to the delight of not only their friends, but the rest of the party goers, bringing everyone to their feet with their version of “It’s My Soul” by Kanjani8.

After the last of the songs were done, the DJ who was handling the karaoke music asked if anyone else wanted to come up and sing. Some of Dee’s college friends and the sailors he had made friends with started to chant “It’s Gonna Be Me.” The relatives and friends of the family realized what song that was and joined in, many of them still not having any idea that one of their own, who was also one of the guests of honor, was the singer for the song. All the guest knew was that the four were without a doubt the most entertaining of the singers and glad to have them do one final song.

Dee was sitting at the table with Ryo, Dafydd, Momo and his friends, looking amused. “They’re not tired of us yet?” he asked everyone at the table.

“Are you up to it?” Hide asked. “We did rehearse it.”
“Sure,” said Yuki.

Dee started to chuckle. “We should have put on the make-up then.”

“That would have been a big shock for most of the family,” Hoshi said.

“It’s still going to be a shock when they realize the singing will sound exactly as they know it,” Nobu said.

“This is going to be so cool! Dad, you guys have to do it,” Bikky said. “I don’t know the Japanese version, but this is a good way for me to hear it.” He was sitting with the family because most of the other kids had already left the party to go to bed. Carol was also at the table, enjoying talking to Risa and Momo, who she wanted to get to know more since she was now a part of their family.

“Yes, Dee. I don’t know the Japanese version, but I want to hear you do it,” said Carol. She looked at Hide, Ken and Yuki. “I want to hear all of you again. I think you’re great. It’s no surprise you charted.”

Heads nodded around the table in agreement with Carol.

“Encore! Encore!” Peter came over chanting.

The four, still dressed in their outfits from before minus the jackets, stood up and grabbed their jackets. Dee kissed Ryo. “Gotta go to work, I guess,” he quipped.

“Maybe you guys should do a reunion single just for fun,” Takehide said.

“Yes, Uncle Takehide,” Dee said. “We’ll talk about that. Next year maybe.” He grinned at his uncle by marriage and then at the rest of the family sitting with him.

“My twin brother, the male idol,” Dafydd said, fanning himself. He was teasing Dee, but it was obvious in his eyes that he was proud of Dee’s short brush with fame.
Dee went over to the person handling the songs, and was also the MC, introducing people. She looked surprised at what Dee told her, and then lowered her head as she covered her mouth.

“I think she knows who they are when they go by their band name,” Nobu observed. “I think that’s what he told her.”

“The way she’s blushing and now looking at Dee, I hope that’s all he told her,” Ryo commented.

As the four went on the stage, instead of announcing them by their individual names, she welcomed Daigaku Dudes to do their hit song. She started the music as most of the remaining relatives who did not yet hear that Dee and his college friends were the group to record the song react. Many of them knew the song and the group’s name.

Everyone was on their feet, many moving to the dance floor to stand before the stage as they went into the song. Noriko started to laugh as she pointed to one of Ryo’s cousins to the others around her.

“Hey look, Michiko looks like she’s going to faint,” Ryo commented, noticing where Noriko was pointing.

“This is fun,” Nobu said with a wicked grin.

“Yes it is!” Bikky agreed and then cheered his father and friends on.

“OMG! It is the same song only in Japanese!” Carol exclaimed. “Like ‘Young Man’, that Uncle Takehide did.”

“It is,” Ryo said, looking at Dee again, pride evident on his face and he let out a loud whistle that made Dee’s head turn in his direction. Dee started to grin more than he already was while singing, now directly at Ryo and pointed to him as he sang the line, “It’s gonna be me”, and winked at Ryo.

“Well damn,” Ryo remarked.
Ryo was glad that he didn’t have to worry about pictures or video because he was assured that it was all being professionally recorded by someone Akira had hired for the party and he would definitely be getting copies of all songs sung by him, Dee and Carol, unedited, along with the party video.

It was the last song of the night, and the four took a while to finally return to the table. When they finally sat down, some of the relatives still following them, Dee shook his head. “I haven’t done that in a long time.”

“What’s that?” Ryo asked.

“Autographs.”

“How did you sign your name back then?”

“In Katakana, the same I just did for them now,” Dee said, laughing. “It’s a bit freaky, being these are people I’ve been talking to all evening, and even partied with some of them on the yakatabune, and now they are acting like I’m some big star.”

“You were,” Peter reminded them. “And for people who still listen and love that song, you still are.”

“My grandson by marriage, the very famous Japanese pop star,” Akira said, laughing. “Dei, I am so proud of you. And the rest of you. I should be mad that all this time and no one said anything until tonight.”

“I don’t think anyone would have said anything tonight if it wasn’t for Peter,” Hoshi commented.

“Probably,” Dee admitted, “but perhaps eventually I would have mentioned it.”

The party started to break up soon after, the remaining guests going over to say their goodnights, making Ryo and Dee promise to see them again before they left Japan. Some said to Dafydd that they wanted to see him again soon and get to know him better, and thanking Momo for finally bringing her husband to an event. Some of the females were still giggling and excited over finding out about that Dee was the lead singer for Daigaku Dudes.
Takehide, Nobu and Hoshi took their leave and headed for their suites. Dee’s friends also left, stating they’ll be in touch in a couple of days.

Akira stayed behind with Ryo and Dee until the last guest left. Bikky and Carol went up with Risa while the adults were saying their goodbyes. The only other ones left were Akira, Dafydd and Momo. During the evening, all the gifts had been taken up to their rooms so there was nothing left for them to take with them. The five left the empty ballroom and went up to their suites together.

Ryo and Dee said good night to Akira first, and then as Dafydd and Momo started to follow Akira to their suite on the same floor, Dee reached out and grabbed Dafydd to hug him hard. “I just have to make sure this is real before saying goodnight,” Dee said to his new-found brother.

“I’m glad, because I needed it, too. I’ve waited all my life for this. I still can’t believe it,” Dafydd said.

“Give us a call in the morning,” Ryo said. “You are welcome to join us for any or all of the day tomorrow.”

“Your grandmother already told us that we’re going to the Halloween parade with everyone tomorrow,” Dafydd said to Ryo.

“Good. That’s you becoming family then,” Dee said, still in a hug with Dafydd, who suddenly had an even tighter grip on Dee than Dee had on him. “But as much as I’m enjoying this, you’re going to have to let up a little if you want me around past tonight.”


“We’ll talk tomorrow about what next, including confirming that we are twins,” said Dee.

Ryo laughed. “Hell, I’m confirming it by looking at you two.” He hugged Momo. “You can ask Dee, but I really did intend to make sure we stay in touch this time. It looks like we don’t have a choice now.”

“Yes, it does,” Momo said, smiling up at Ryo. “And that makes me happy. Even happier is the reason why. I know what this means to Dafydd.” She hugged him again. “Goodnight, Ryo. I’ll see you tomorrow.”
“Enjoy the suite,” Ryo said with a grin.

“Oh, and thank you for that!”

“I wasn’t hinting for you to do that, and it had to be. You are married to the twin brother of one of the owners of this hotel. There is no way you’re going to stay in one of the smaller rooms.”

“It was still a very nice room. Not as small as some hotel rooms we stayed in, but I think I’m going to take advantage of the suite.”

Dee came over to hug Momo. “Just remember that you always have a place to stay in Tokyo now, at no cost. Just contact one of us and we’ll set things up. Hell, if we’re not in Tokyo, we’ll even let you stay in our penthouse.”

“You are now my favorite brother by marriage,” Momo said with a laugh as she returned the hug. “I’m just so glad how everything worked out. I’m looking forward to getting to know you a lot better, Dee.”

“The same here. We’ll start tomorrow morning, whenever you two are up to leaving the suite. We don’t have to be anywhere until after lunch.”

Dee and Ryo watched as Dafydd and Momo walked down the corridor for their suite and then waited for the elevator to stop to go up to their penthouse.

OoOoOoO

October 29, 2006

Laytner-MacLean Penthouse
When Ryo woke up the next morning, he wasn’t all that surprised to discover he was alone in the bed. Between two babies and the discovery the night before, Dee was certain to already be up. As he left the bedroom, wearing just the evening yukata Akira had given him, he could smell the aroma of fresh brewed coffee wafting through the hallway. At the end of the hall was the open kitchen to the left and the living room to the right. Bikky and Carol were also up and on one of the couches near the large flat screen TV on the wall and watching some anime show. There was no closed caption in English, so Ryo highly doubted that the teens understood much of what was being said but they were compensating by coming up with their own dialogue and laughing themselves silly over it at times.

Ryo could not help smiling as he poured coffee in the mug waiting for him near the coffee maker. For a few minutes, he was content to lean against a counter and as he drank his coffee, he watched Bikky and Carol. He was able to see Dee sitting on one of the cushioned built in benches along the side of the terrace with both twins in their bouncy chairs. He was drinking coffee and reading a newspaper. Ryo started to grin more when he realized that Dee had the babies dressed warmer because they were outdoors but not as bundled as if they were walking along the streets. The terrace could get chilly but not as cold, and Ryo could also see that Dee had the heating lamps closest to where he was sitting were on. Ryo also noticed that the twins had their Little Twin Stars hats on and had to smile again.

“Ohayo,” Ryo greeted as he approached Bikky and Carol.

“Ohay,” the two greeted back.

“I’m surprised we’re all up so early after last night,” Ryo said. “Except for Dee.”

“Yeah, he always wakes up early when something is on his mind, doesn’t he?” Bikky asked. “But he was still sleeping when I got up.”

“Looks like I’m the last one to wake up,” Ryo commented.

“It’s okay, Pops,” Bikky remarked. “Someone has to be. I woke Carol up when the chibis started to fuss. Dad was still sleeping, so we decided to take care of them and let you both sleep in.” They had
decided to leave the twins in the room Moriko used until Takehide woke her up to go to their suite. Bikky had taken the baby monitor in his room, which was next to where the twins were by the time Dee and Ryo had come up to the suite.

Carol nodded her head. “Bikky and I fed them after I got them changed. Dee got them dressed when he woke up.”

“How long has Dee been awake?” Ryo asked.

“Long enough. He made us a snack until we decide what to do for breakfast and then made a couple of calls. We got to talk to Grandma,” Bikky replied.

“I hope you told her you were having fun here,” Ryo said with a small smile.

“Of course, I did. This trip is so cool!” Bikky exclaimed. “And then Grandma asked how I felt about Uncle Dafydd. I told her it’s cool that Dad has a brother now and promised that I’ll help her get him to New York to meet him.”

“I’m sure we can arrange for Dafydd and Momo to visit us,” Ryo replied. “If we’re paying for everything, then they have no excuse.”

“That’s true,” Bikky said. “It’s nice having money.” He grinned at Ryo.

“Yeah it is,” Ryo agreed. “If we didn’t, I doubt we would have made this trip anytime soon or if we did, have the time to let Obāsan throw us a party like last night. And then who knows when I would have seen Momo again and finally meet her husband.”

“That’s freaky that Dad’s twin was already in your family before you two met,” Bikky commented, looking thoughtful. “I mean, Dafydd and Momo have been together for ten years.”

“But not married for that long, but yes, now that you mention it, Momo did get married before I met Dee. Yes, I have to agree with you.”

Ryo let the two go back to watching TV and went out to the terrace. Dee looked up with a smile.
“Ohayo gozaimus!” he greeted cheerfully.

“Ohayo,” Ryo said with a chuckle. He leaned down to kiss Dee and then sat next to him. “What are we going to do when we get back to New York?” he asked.

“It’s probably because of where we are and the people we’re around,” Dee replied, “but if it doesn’t stop when we get home, does it matter? After all, what we do in our home is our business.”

“That’s true. And with two of us part Japanese, why not embrace a little more culture.” Ryo looked at their infants, and studied Darin. “Even Uncle Rick was convinced you had to have some Asian because of Darin. He looks too Japanese to come from just me.”

“Maybe,” Dee replied, “but genetics can be really weird. Odd things can show up strongly when you less suspect. Look at Bikky. Considering he got his father’s skin tone, you wouldn’t think he would have his mother’s blonde hair and blue eyes, but he does.”

“Yeah, you’re right, but still knowing what we know, Darin takes after you. His eyes most likely come from the two of us.”

Dee chuckled. “So, does that mean our little girl is mostly you?”

“Except for her eyes, of course,” Ryo said. He smiled as Ryoko started to reach her arms out toward Ryo and Darin started to coo, looking up at Ryo. “What really sucks with having twins is when they both want your attention and you have to decide which to pick up first.”

Dee reached over and removed Darin from his bouncy chair and settled the baby on his lap while Ryo got Ryoko. With Dee sitting next to him, Ryo was able to kiss Darin’s head and rub his cheek against the baby’s after kissing Ryoko and settling her.

“They’re both really getting better with keeping their heads up while sitting, aren’t they?” Dee asked as he watched Darin grab a fistful of the material of Ryo’s yukata.

“They’re also getting better at lifting their heads when we have them on their bellies,” Ryo said. “Before we know it, they’ll be off and crawling,” he added with a chuckle.
“Don’t remind me,” Dee said and then laughed. “Ryoko is coming damn close to turning all the way.”

“I’ve noticed. She’s going to be successful any day now,” Ryo said with a smile, and kissed Ryoko’s head.

“And then we have this one wanting to grab food from the table,” Dee said bouncing Darin. “I think they’re going to be on solids while we’re here in Japan.”

“I know that will make Obaasan happy, but we also have to make sure we have Mother on a web call for their first solid feeding,” Ryo said.

“She’ll never forgive us if she misses out on that,” Dee remarked. “And I wouldn’t want either Mother or Obaasan to miss it.”

“I’m sure Grandma would want to know too, but she doesn’t have to watch as we feed them for the first time, but it’ll be a good idea to let her know soon after, and by the next time we visit, to let her know which foods we’re feeding them so she can have it on hand,” said Ryo.

“You’re probably right. I’m also thinking your grandparents should also know about Dafydd as soon as we’re able to tell them. I don’t think it will go over very well if they found out we waited too long to let them know something so big,” Dee said.

“Oh yeah. We’ll have to let them know next time I check in with them,” Ryo agreed.

They sat for a few minutes in silence, with the babies in their laps and drank their coffee, gazing at the view beyond the terrace.

“This is nice,” Ryo sighed.

“I can get used to this too easy,” Dee admitted. “Do you think something like would have the same appeal in Manhattan?”

“I think so, even without the view of Tokyo Tower, but do we really want something like a
penthouse to raise a family in when it’s time to get something bigger?” Ryo asked.

“I’m not sure, but it can be an option. At least it would keep us in Manhattan,” Dee replied.

“That’s true.”

“Oh, speaking of buying new homes, Diana said that she’s signing on that townhouse in Brooklyn Heights tomorrow,” Dee said.

“You spoke to Diana?” Ryo asked.

“I called her to ask a favor, and then we just started talking. I ended up telling her about Dafydd because that’s what the favor was.” At Ryo’s questioning look, he said, “When I spoke to Mother, she said that she was willing to allow someone to take a DNA sample from the baby carrier I was found in. Mother was going to get it out of storage after she hung up. Now we know they will lift mine off it, but if they match that sample to the shirt that they are trying to get from Dafydd’s father’s house, then that should be enough proof for Dafydd to convince his dad that I am who we figured out I am. So I asked Diana to meet with Mother and take the sample.”

“Why Diana?” Ryo asked.

“Because she’s FBI. I’m leaving the precinct out of things for now. She’ll express it to the address Momo gave us last night, so her friend can do the testing this week. She’s also going to look into cases in Queens around the time I was found. Maybe we might find out more information about what had happened to Alun and even how I ended up where I did if we were staying in Sunnyside at the time.” Dee shrugged. “Who knows. Maybe nothing would come of it, but even if we can get some type of clue, with advances in forensics since then, we could possible get some answers.”

“Does it matter at this point?” Ryo asked.

“It does to Dafydd,” Dee said. “I also spoke to him after I woke up. He also believes it would for Saburo. The only reason he never looked further into it was because he was told to stay in San Diego and away from New York. And because it was yakuza, he didn’t even dare pick up the phone and call the police in New York, asking questions.” Dee shrugged. “Besides, he believed both of us were dead, so there was no reason to look. Yeah, he moved on and remarried and had more children and according to Dafydd seems for the most part happy and content with life, but Dafydd also said that sometimes he looks at his father, and he knows that he needs some closure. The more we talked
about it, the more I agree. Just call it detective’s instinct. Dafydd’s been wanting to look into it but never had the resources. He did do some asking around the hotel Alun was staying at, but what little he did find out there wasn’t much a college student from Japan was able to do. So he wrote what he learned in a notebook and when he got back to Japan, decided to join the police. He still couldn’t do much about it, but I can, especially with our new unit.”

“Well, putting it that way, you know I’ll support you with this.” Ryo gave Dee a little grin. “And maybe doing this just might get you to stop calling your birth father by his given name.”

“I can’t help it. I didn’t even meet the man yet, and you want me to start calling him father? Seriously?”

“I’m not blaming you now, but hopefully you will meet him when we go to Nagoya.”

Dee let out a heavy sigh. “I guess our plans for our time in Nagoya have changed somewhat.”

“Yeah, they did, but we’ll deal. Dafydd did promise to take us around if we went there, so sightseeing is still in and by a local would be a bonus. I really don’t know much about Nagoya. I only went there once.”

“I went there a few times, but I don’t know it like I know this area.”

“Ask me, I think you need to know it very well. You might not be a local, but you are a native. Daisuke!” Ryo teased.

“Don’t start so early,” Dee warned. “It’s making me think about stuff that’s giving me a headache.”

“Like?” Ryo asked.

“Like my passport. It’s false.”

“It’s not false because it was true at the time that you applied for it.”
“Right. I didn’t know, but now I do. If they ask that place of birth question now, I’ll be lying if I answer New York. Yes, I grew up in New York and I am American, but now I know that I’m also a Japanese National.”

“I would say you’re American because of citizenship. When Mother filed your paperwork, that made you a citizen in New York and American. So as far as citizenship goes, your passport is not false. No one is going to nab you off the plane and into a holding cell when we go home. The rest of it we’ll figure out at some point. It doesn’t have to be now.” He spared an arm from holding Ryoko and squeezed Dee’s arm. “So, are we having breakfast with your brother and my cousin?” he asked.

“Yeah. They should be here soon, and we’ll figure out what we’re doing. Then after breakfast, I figure we should check in with Obāsan. We do have that parade later today.”

“You figure? I’ll bet she called you to see how you were doing this morning,” Ryo accused.

“You know your grandmother,” Dee replied and laugh. “Yeah, she did. She told me that we should spend the morning with Dafydd and Momo, get to know them more. Then check in with her on if we’re meeting for lunch or not. We definitely have the parade in Shinjuku later today with her. Alrighty, I think we spent enough time outside. Time to warm you chibis up,” Dee said with a smile. “We’ve been out here for a while.”

“From what I saw, it seems they were enjoying it,” Ryo said.

“When we were having problems with Darin, taking him outside seemed to settle him,” Dee reminded Ryo. “They were a little fussy even though they were fed and changed. I figured they just needed a change of view.”

“Something we can’t do so readily back home,” Ryo said.

“Enjoy while we have it,” Dee commented as he stood up. “I think we should finish getting dressed before we get visitors.”

“You’re right,” said Ryo as he also stood up.

They went inside and settled the babies on their mats near Bikky and Carol and went to get dressed for the day.
When Dafydd and Momo arrived, they had a box of pastries that they explained they got in the pastry store in the mall attached to the hotel. Before then Dee and Ryo were deciding if they wanted a Western breakfast that they would cook or if they wanted Japanese, in which case they could all go to one of the restaurants. The box of pastries decided if for them, and Ryo put on more coffee. Some of the pastries had cheese and egg, with Japanese bacon or sausage in them, so they were good enough for a meal.

Bikky and Carol were enjoying the odd varieties of pastries. They each selected two different ones and then cut them in half so the two could try all four. After they ate, Bikky and Carol asked if they could go off on their own until lunch.

Ryo looked at Dee and then asked, “Bikky, wouldn’t you like to get to know your uncle and aunt?”

“I would love to, but maybe Dad and Uncle Dafydd doesn’t need a full house at first for a while. We can all have lunch and maybe they can go with us to the Halloween Parade later.”

“Well,” Dee started, “if you don’t mind, I’m okay with that.”

“If you’re good then so I am. Do you need more money?” Ryo asked Bikky.

“Nah. We’re good for now.”

“Don’t forget to take your phones,” Dee said. “And if you get lost, call. Okay?”

“Sure, but I don’t think we’re going far. Carol and I were thinking of going up on Tokyo Tower again, maybe go through the shops a little more.”

“Alrighty. If you get bored and decide to go somewhere else, let us know, even if just a text,” Ryo
They watched as Bikky and Carol pack their rucksacks with their cameras and other items they felt were important. “See everyone later,” Carol called out by the door.

“Bye Dads! Bye Uncle Dafydd and Aunt Momo!” came from Bikky as he slid open the door and then closed it behind them.

“I think he does like you, but he’s also probably trying to get used to the concept,” Ryo said to Dafydd. “Hell, I’m trying to get used to it and I’m looking at you.”

“I’ll bet there was a lot of relief in there too,” Ryo said quietly. “After hearing everyone say your twin was dead, but you believed he was still alive for so long. I’ll bet that was wearing on you.”

“You were right about that too. You just never accounted for vacations to Japan,” Dee said with a smile.

“You might be American now, but I’m happy to know that you know Japanese. It’s like that one part of Daisuke still exists,” said Dafydd. “I know that sounds silly. You’re him, even if you’re Dee now. Dee Laytner-McLean. But I was thinking about what Ryo said, and he’s right. Those bastards did kill Daisuke Fujioka, but I’m pretty damn glad that Dee Laytner was born that day.” He grabbed Dee’s hand and clenched it. “I think I’m glad that your son is so perceptive. I wouldn’t feel
comfortable right now if he was.”

“Yeah, Bikky’s a smart one,” Ryo said and then sighed, “Even if we have to work hard on seeing that in his grades.” He looked to find tears rolling down Dee’s cheeks as he returned to squeeze to his brother’s hand. “Just us being here gives those two a chance to cry it all out,” he said to Momo and winked.

She covered her mouth and started to giggle. “Maybe we should let those two be alone for a while to talk and get the emotions out. Is there somewhere we can sit and catch up?”

“There’s the terrace,” Ryo replied. “Or if it’s too brisk for you even with the heating lamps, we have a covered patio that’s pretty comfortable.”

“I think the patio. We will be out enough later. I told Dafydd that I was perfectly happy to change our sightseeing plans whenever we are welcome to join you and your family.”

“Hey brothers,” Ryo said. “I’m going to take the rest of the coffee and head into the den with Momo. You two can have some catch up in private.” He started to pour the coffee from the pot into an electric carafe that when plugged in kept the contents hot. “You’ll have to make more coffee when you need it. Play nice, you two.”

“Thank you, Ryo,” Dafydd said. “You are a good brother-in-law. I’m glad you’re my twin’s husband.”

“I really like your wife, but I admit I’m biased as she is also my cousin,” Ryo said with a wink.

“I’m glad Momo is your wife, because if she wasn’t, you wouldn’t have been at the party last night,” Dee said.

“That’s true too,” Ryo said. “Come on, Momo. Let’s leave these two alone for a while.”
Chapter Summary

A family outing to a Halloween parade in Shinjuku, allowing Dee to discover more about his biological family.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

October 29, 2006

Shinjuku Takashimaya

Shinjuku, Tokyo

Japan

The group found a spot along the narrow sidewalk going along a storefront across Meiji Dori from the Shinjuku Takashimaya, watching the rest of the parade go by. Akira did not disappoint with the costumes, giving her family a chance to cosplay.

Carol’s outfit was not made by Akira, knowing that Dee and Ryo were going to take her shopping in stores where she could buy clothes including the Lolita fashion. She was wearing one of her new outfits, a white dress with pink trimmings and lacing. On her face was a shimmery white make-up base and her make-up was also glittery in a rainbow of colors. With Momo’s help, she added long anime style eyelashes and did her long hair up in side ponytails, accented with various hair decorations.

Dee and Ryo were wearing the blue military outfits from Fullmetal Alchemist. Bikky got a lot of attention with his long blonde hair pulled back and braided, cosplaying as Edward Elric, complete with the metal arm. Nobu and Takehide had worked on the armor that Bikky was able to slide his arm in and looked realistic.
Darin was dressed in a little one-piece outfit including a hood to make him look like Alphonse Elric, since he was Bikky’s little brother. Tied around his waist over the outfit was a white breech cloth. Because of his age, even plastic made to look like armor was not a good idea, but Akira had done amazing work with the cloth onesie. The hood even had a long strain of white thread. Everyone who looked at Darin got a kick out of him, knowing exactly who he was. Ryoko was not dressed as someone from Fullmetal Alchemist, because Akira, Dee and Ryo decided there were no females in the anime that could be a good costume for an infant. She was wearing a yellow one-piece hooded Pikachu outfit. The two babies looked adorable and Dee and Ryo were able to see the love that went into the attention to detail on the outfits. Yet they were not as complex as the other costumes she made in the time that she had gone back to Japan.

Akira had an extra uniform as a back-up, because that was her way, so since Dafydd was Dee’s size, she convinced him to put it on. Momo had packed a sailor style dress, knowing they were going to be in Tokyo on Halloween and heard about the street festival in Roppongi. She pulled her hair back with a big red bow and also paled her face. She managed to find a set of plastic fangs in a 100 yen store they passed during the day and fake blood. She called herself the Sailor Vampire girl.

Bikky might have been getting most of the attention, followed by the twins and the girls, but Akira’s attention kept going back to the older twins, amazed with Dee and Dafydd in identical clothing and wearing the same style sunglasses that they had picked up while they were out. They were even both left-handed, so it was really hard to tell them apart if she did not know Dee was the one holding the handle bars of the stroller Ryoko was in. She had taken plenty of pictures of the two, including as they walked in the parade, intending to send them to Maria once she got back to the penthouse later that night.

The first part of the day started on the lazy side with Ryo and Momo catching up, allowing Dee and Dafydd to talk. The two brothers talked about themselves. They discovered that they shared some of the same bands, both American and Japanese and further bonded over them. They compared notes on anime and TV series. Ryo had to laugh when later Dee exclaimed that Dafydd liked Doctor Who, and how he was waiting for the new spin-off series to air in Japan. Ryo assured them that his relatives in Scotland were sending them a copy of it on DVD and hoped to have it before Dafydd and Momo had to go back to Nagoya.

Bikky and Carol came back to the penthouse not long after Akira arrived, and they all decided to go out and find something in the area for lunch. While they were out, they did some quick shopping for last minute items for the costumes. Once back at the hotel, everyone got ready for the parade and met back at the penthouse.

Tsubasa, Kumi and their two children met them in the hotel lobby, and everyone decided to take the train to Shinjuku. Like New York City, sometimes the subway can be an inconvenience and other times a blessing. Considering all the activities of the day, nobody complained about the trains. Getting around that part of the city in a car was going to be impossible.
The parade was now coming to an end. They were going to walk around some, heading in the direction of where they were going to have dinner. Tsubasa had made the reservations for their group. When they arrived at the trendy restaurant, Nobu and Hoshi were waiting to join them for dinner.

Once settled at their table, Tsubasa looked at Dee and Ryo. “Did you enjoy your first Halloween in Tokyo?” he asked.

“Very much so,” Ryo said. “It reminded me a lot of the Halloween parade in Greenwich Village, but there were also a lot of differences. It was fun.”

Dee nodded his head. “And to think, today’s not Halloween.”

Everyone laughed at Dee.

“It was very Japanese,” Bikky replied. “Even if there were some American characters.”

“But mostly Japanese type costumes,” Carol added. “It was a lot of fun.”

“I’m glad to hear that,” Akira stated with a smile toward Bikky and Carol. “Bikky, you got much attention today.”

“That’s because my costume is so awesome. Thank you, Obāsan,” Bikky said. “Thank you too, Uncle Nobu. I guess I should thank Uncle Takehide again too, when I see him again.”

“You’re very welcome, Bikky,” Nobu said with a smile. “Takehide and I had a lot of fun making the arm for you. I’m very happy it came out as we hoped.”

“I’ll bet that Bikky could win a contest if he entered,” Momo remarked. “I took plenty of pictures of you today.”

“She took plenty of pictures of everyone,” Dafydd said with a laugh. “So did I.”
“Me too,” Dee agreed. “I think we all looked awesome, and that’s thanks to you, Obāsan. It’s a good thing you made that extra costume.”

“If she didn’t, I had a ninja costume packed, but I was unable to pass up this costume. Much more detail than a ninja,” Dafydd said.

“I hear on Halloween night you’ll be attending a big party in Ginza,” Nobu commented.

“We were invited to some big shindig,” Dee replied.

“Hide said it’s like a cosplay masquerade party,” Ryo explained. “We’ll wear the same costumes but we’re going to have to wear masks for most of the evening.”

“And you have the party at Hide’s club tonight,” Hoshi said. “That should be fun.”

“I’m looking forward to it,” Dee said. “At least his club is only a few blocks from the hotel.”

“Are we all going back to the hotel after this?” Tsubasa asked.

“Yes,” Akira said. “Then Nobu and Hoshi and I will take charge of all the children of the parents going out tonight. We’ll be in the penthouse.” She looked over to Dafydd, who sat next to Dee, and Momo who sat across from Dafydd, next to Ryo. “I know you liked your costume very much, but did you have fun at the parade today?”

“We did,” Dafydd said. “Now I really wish we had our sons here with us. They would have loved it. Halloween isn’t as big in Nagoya as it is here. Not yet, anyway. There are some clubs that hold costume parties, but it’s mostly for adults. There is one event for children. Our boys will go this year with my siblings and their children.”

“I hear there is one huge party that’s been going on the last few years,” Tsubasa said.

“Ah yes, that would be the Absolute Halloween,” Momo replied. “Many clubs in the same district
hold events and a wristband will get you into all of them. It’s like a huge street party.”

“As much as I have enjoyed taking our boys to the big children’s party the last few years, I am glad that I am not in Nagoya this week. The last three years I ended up having to work the night of the Absolute party and it’s no fun. I think it would be if I was there to party, but it not having to work.”

“I can imagine,” Dee replied. “I always hate when we get holiday duty. It’s the worst. Thankfully, Ryo and I can request holidays off before the newbies, so we can pick and choose. I’d much rather be at a party somewhere inside than in the middle of Times Square on New Year’s Eve.”

“Oh, I would love to go to Times Square for New Year’s Eve, one of these years,” Momo said. “I keep telling Dafydd it’s not fair that he has done it but not me.”

“Oh yeah, you were in New York for several years,” Ryo commented to Dafydd. “So you went to Times Square for New Year’s Eve?”

“Yes. My first year in New York, I went with some school friends. I can say that I did it, but unfortunately for my poor Momo, I have no desire to do it again.”

“I wouldn’t mind doing it again,” Bikky said. “It was fun!”

Dee laughed. “Shame you couldn’t go last year, huh?”

“If we didn’t have all that big deal of you and Pops shocking your friends and co-workers with all your big announcements, I would have asked if Carol and I could have gone to Times Square instead,” Bikky said.

“I think I liked the party we had last year better,” Carol said. “It was much warmer, and I liked not being crushed.”

“We’ll be in Times Square this year,” Ryo announced.

Bikky’s eyes went wide. “Really? We’re going? With the chibis too?”
“With the chibis too,” Ryo confirmed. “Grandma and Grandfather decided to have a New Year’s party this year. They rented out a ballroom in one of the hotels by 1 Times Square. They’ll be inviting mostly our friends and some closer relatives. We’ll have the ball right outside the ballroom.”

“Now that I can do,” Carol said. “Times Square and being warm. That sounds so exciting.”

“Indeed, it does,” Momo said. “Maybe one year I can convince Dafydd to do Times Square on New Year’s Eve again.”

“Shame you can’t make it this year,” Dee mused. “Or can you?” He gazed at his brother.

“I would love to, especially since it sounds like Momo can have her one big wish while we stay warm and safe, but our grandfather expects all of us to help out at the shrine New Year’s Eve. There is always a festival until late evening, but the tea house stays open until after midnight. Then we are busy with everyone coming for New Year prayers. Then we help with cleaning up. The next day our grandparents host a big New Year dinner for the family,” He shrugged. “Maybe next year, if we say something early enough we might be able to get out of it, but not this year.”

“That’s a shame,” Dee said. “Now that I have the thought in my head, I really think I would like the idea of us being together to see in the new year.”

“Oh wow, yeah,” Ryo remarked. “That would be great.”

“Yes, I agree,” Dafydd said. “We’ll just have to call each other. That’s better than nothing.” He started to smile brightly. “This year I can actually call my twin and wish him a happy New Year. Even that makes me very happy.”

“I think that starting with next New Year’s, you both need to take turns on which family you spend the day with. One year in Japan, the next in New York,” Akira suggested.

Ryo started to laugh. “Hey now, that’s more obligations to be in Japan, isn’t it?”

Dee let out a heavy sigh. “We really need to get Drake and one of the other guys up to par. I’m going to need someone I can rely on to run the unit during the times we’re in Japan.”
“We’ll get it done,” Ryo assured Dee. “Because I do like the idea of spending more than one week and a few days here and there in Japan, especially now that we have our own place in Tokyo.”

“There’s that too. And then we’ll want to spend some time in our beach house during the summer, but we can do that on days off, I guess,” Dee said.

“Beach house?” Dafydd asked. “You have a beach house?”

“Not yet, but Ryo and I have been looking into buying a house on Fire Island.”

“Oh, I know Fire Island. I went there with friends from college during the summer. We stayed at the Beach Hotel in Cherry Grove one time, and then we were able to stay for a week in a house in the Fire Island Pines,” said Dafydd.

“We’re looking to buy in the Fire Island Pines,” Ryo said. “Preferably beachfront, or so your brother insists. It would be nice to step off the deck onto the beach, I have to agree.”

“I didn’t dare say anything yesterday. I did not feel comfortable, but Ryo, your grandparents must be very rich to give you a hotel chain for a present,” Momo said. “Does that mean you’re both also very rich now?”

“The hotel chain gives us a nice monthly deposit into our accounts,” Ryo explained, “but my grandfather also gave me my father’s and my share of the family money. They also included Dee and gave him a cruise line. I don’t know when we’ll be able to experience one of the ships like we are the hotels.”

“Ryo’s grandparents on his father’s side has much more money than our family,” Akira said. “I was always disappointed that Ryo never got his share, so I’m glad that is all worked out now. I’m happy for him and Dei. I’m especially happy that they cannot use the excuse that they cannot afford to come to Japan. That means we’ll all be seeing them several times a year. Of course, I had promised that I should go to New York in between their Japan trips.”

“That sounds wonderful,” Momo exclaimed. “It all seems very exciting.”
Dee let out a chuckle. “Until yesterday, I think I was still slowly coming out of the shock of us being millionaires now. But after the party last night, I think that wore off because discovering I had a twin brother is much more of a shock than getting money from Ryo’s family.”

“Then there’s the little fact that you’re half-Japanese, huh Daisuke?” Ryo asked with a wicked grin.

Everyone laughed at Dee, who let out a groan. “I deserve it,” Dee admitted. “Isn’t that right, Randy?”

Ryo stared at Dee in amazement and then started to laugh. “Oh God! I think that’s the first time you ever called me Randy!”

“Dee never called you by your first name?” Hoshi asked.

Ryo shook his head. “No. Right after we met, he asked me if I was Japanese and what was my Japanese name. So I told him. And he started to call me Ryo. He’ll introduce me to others when we’re on the job as Randy, but he never directly called me it. Always Ryo. Until now.” He smiled at Dee. “I think I like how you say Ryo better than Randy now that I heard it.”

“I think I like calling you Ryo better too, but I’ve always known that.”

“So basically, that means if no one was recording this, we’ll never hear Dee call Ryo that again?” Carol asked.

“Yup!” Dee quickly said, making everyone laugh again.

Someone’s cell phone started to ring, and Dafydd pulled his out of his pocket. “Momo, it’s Papa.” He looked next to him at Dee as he answered the phone. “Moshi moshi,” he answered. “Papa,” he continued in Japanese, “Oh! I’m so sorry. Yes, we are having fun, but we did not mean to forget the twins’ bedtime.” He looked at Momo. “We are having dinner with Akira-san’s family. Please wait a moment.” He started to get up. “If you will excuse me, Momo and I need to take this call. I completely forgot we promised to talk to our boys every night at bedtime.”

“Of course,” Akira said. “You get those boys settled for sleep. Your food will still be here.”
Dafydd put his hand on Dee’s shoulder and softly said, “Dee, please join us.”

Dee looked at Dafydd as if he was crazy. Dafydd put the call on hold. “I’m not going to tell him, but so Momo and I can both talk to our boys, I would like to put the call on speaker phone. I would love for you to hear your nephews’ and father’s voices. Please.”

“Go ahead, Dee,” Ryo urged him.

“Fine.” Dee stood up. “If you will also excuse me.”

Dee followed Dafydd as he went back to talking to his father in Japanese and headed out of the restaurant into the hallway. Momo walked next to Dee.

Once they were in the hall, Dafydd went to the end and put the call on speaker. “I have Momo listening now, Papa,” he said.

“Are you enjoying time with your family, Momo?” a man’s voice came from the phone in Japanese.

Even expecting it, Dee could not stop his eyes from going wide and his mouth dropped. This was the man who had carried him and given birth to him speaking. It seemed even more surreal to Dee, who was still getting his head wrapped around having a twin brother.

“Oh yes, we are having very much fun,” Momo said, her eyes on Dee.

Dee realized that both Momo and Dafydd were staring at him with small secret smiles on their faces.

“You didn’t seem so happy to go, Dafydd. Are you really enjoying your time in Tokyo?” Saburo asked.

“Papa, I am so glad I have such a stubborn woman for a wife, because I am having the time of my life,” Dafydd said as he smiled at Dee.

Dee returned the smile, his face showing the wonder as he listened to Saburo.
“I am very glad to hear that.” Saburo paused and then stated, “Your sons are now listening, and they want to speak to you, if their jumping up and down and crawling over me is any indication.” Saburo laughed.

“Papa!” a young voice exclaimed through the phone.

“Tatsuya, do you miss us?” Dafydd asked.

“Not yet,” the child replied.

Dee had to turn and cover his mouth to keep from laughing aloud. The look on Dafydd’s face was hilarious. Momo was laughing at both her husband and her son. “Oh, Tatsuya. I love you too,” she replied.

“Love you,” said a different voice.

“Oh, so you love us, Kiyoshi, but Tatsuya doesn’t?” Dafydd asked with amusement in his voice.

“I do love you, Papa,” Tatsuya exclaimed. “Oobaa and Oojii took us to their house until Ojiisan took us home.”

“Yoshio and I had to go into the store for a few hours today, so my mother offered to take them until we were free,” Saburo explained.

“Oh, that explains why you don’t miss us yet,” Momo remarked with a laugh.

“We helped clean the shrine,” Kiyoshi exclaimed.

Dafydd chuckled and leaned over to whisper in Dee’s ear in English. “Oobaa and Oojii are what they call our grandparents.”

Dee nodded. “Shrine?” he asked softly.
Dafydd pulled Dee a few feet away from Momo who had the phone and was teasing the boys about helping. “Our great uncle Takahiro, Ojiisan’s twin, runs the most famous Carrier shrine in Nagoya. We have Carriers from all over Japan come to visit the shrine asking for the blessing of the Carrier Kami. For many Japanese Carriers, it is like a pilgrimage and feel they must visit the shrine at least once in their lives.”

Dee nodded, once again feeling overwhelmed. He was listening to his nephews talk to their mother while his twin brother just told him that his family was connected to a major Carrier shrine because of a great-uncle who apparently was a Shinto priest.

“Are you all Shinto then?” Dee asked.

Dafydd nodded.

“Papa! Are you still there?” Kiyoshi asked.

“Yes, I’m here. I’m just listening and letting Mama have all the fun,” Dafydd replied, going over to join Momo.

Dee smiled, suddenly wishing he could speak to his nephews and father, but he couldn’t yet.

“I heard you talking,” Tatsuya said. “Who are you talking too, Papa?”

Momo chuckled. “My cousin Ryo’s husband,” she replied.

“He’s from America too?” Kiyoshi asked. “You said your cousin was coming to Japan from America.”

“He’s married to my cousin, so I hope he came here from America too,” Momo said with a laugh. “Do you want to say hello to Dee-san?” she asked.

“I never met an American,” Kiyoshi said. “My English is not very good.”
Momo gestured with her hand for Dee to speak.


“YAY! I’m speaking to an American!” Kiyoshi exclaimed. “Ojiisan, Dee-san’s an American!”

“I want to see hello to Dee-san too!” Tatsuya said. “Hello Dee-san. I’m Tatsuya!”

“Hello Tatsuya. And Kiyoshi,” Dee replied, amused. “How are you?”

“I’m good, thank you, Dee-san,” Tatsuya replied.

“Are you having fun in Tokyo, too, Dee-san?” Kiyoshi asked.

“Yes, I am. I am having lots of fun.”

“Have you been to Nagoya?” Tatsuya asked. “It’s very pretty here.”

“We have a big shrine!” Kiyoshi exclaimed proudly.

With a huge grin, Dee replied, “I’ve been to Nagoya a few times. I agree, it is very pretty.”

“Were you here recently then?” Kiyoshi asked.

“Not yet on this trip. I went to Nagoya when I lived in Japan for school.”

“Oh, then you’re not that American,” Kiyoshi commented, almost sounding disappointed.
Dee looked at Dafydd. “That’s me being told,” he said softly in English, making Dafydd and Momo laugh more than they were.

“Dee-san went to college in Yokohama a long time ago,” Momo explained, “but then he moved back to New York.”

Dee gave Momo a look. “Make me sound old, why don’t you?” he asked.

“They think you’re the first American they spoke to,” Dafydd said, sounding amused. “But they’ll talk to anyone for as long as they have been talking and chatted up American tourists.”

“Oh well, then it’s my turn to sound disappointed then,” Dee said with a chuckle. “Kiyoshi, Tatsuya, I hear it’s your bedtime, so I’m going to let your parents say goodnight to you. It’s been nice talking to you.”

“Yes! Bye Dee-san,” Tatsuya said. “I hope we talk again.”

“Say hello to New York for us,” Kiyoshi said. “Bye!”

Dee chuckled as he put a hand on Dafydd’s shoulder and smiled at both with him. “Thanks,” he mouthed and headed back into the restaurant leaving Dafydd and Momo to tuck their boys in over the phone.

Dee sat down at the table again, and wiped his eyes.

“Everything okay,” Ryo asked.

Dee nodded. “Yeah. I’m good. I just heard my father’s voice and got to talk to my nephews. They didn’t know I was their uncle, but…. I can’t wait to meet those little bugs.” He smiled warmly. “And I also found out a few more things about my family. You know, I need to ask Dafydd what the grandparents’ names are.”
“That would be a good idea,” Akira agreed. “I’m so glad you got to speak to someone else from your family. I hope everything works out that you could meet them when you are in Nagoya next week.”

“Me too,” Dee said.

“If they aren’t, I think we’ll push Nagoya off until the end of our trip. Everything should be settled by then if it isn’t by next week,” Ryo said. “We’ll probably stay in Nagoya for a few extra days, depending on how the family reunion goes. I don’t think it’s right for Dee and his father to only have two or three days after all this time.” He smiled at Dee. “I’m willing to rearrange things this week so you can spend time with your brother and any other time during our stay to give you time to know your family.”

Momo and Dafydd returned to the restaurant and sat down.

“Are the kiddies tucked in?” Dee asked with a smile, still not believing that he had two nephews and had spoken to them.

Dafydd nodded with a chuckle as Momo looked at Dee with an impish grin. “We couldn’t get them to go to sleep until we promised that you would visit them when you’re in Nagoya, Dee. You made an impression on them from just short time you talked.”

“They may not know the truth, but they do,” Dafydd said cryptically. “Twins aren’t the only ones with extra perception in our family. Twins just have the strongest. Your nephews sense there is something special about you. I hope you don’t mind, but no matter when we are able to tell the family, you’re still going to be in Nagoya next week.” He shrugged. “They really want to meet you.”

“I want to meet them too,” Dee said.

“We’ll make time,” Ryo assured him. “But hopefully you’ll be meeting them as their uncle.”

“As soon as the sample is received, I was assured that the DNA matching will be completed as soon as possible. A day or two at most,” Momo said.

“Diana said she was going to express it, so it should be at your lab sometime tomorrow, or Tuesday the latest,” Dee said.
“Good. Then we should have all the confirmation we need before we leave Tokyo,” Dafydd said. “I really don’t want to introduce Dee as a distant cousin only to later tell them we lied and that’s he’s really their uncle.”

“Actually, that already happened, but at least it was during a phone call and not to their little faces,” said Dee.

“Which is not so bad,” Momo said. “It really doesn’t matter what your father does. I made up my mind that when you meet our boys, it will be as their uncle. The rest of the family can make up their minds what they want to do, but my boys, my rule.”

Dafydd smirked. “She’s the one who decided she wanted me. Does anyone doubt that I didn’t have a chance?”

Ryo grinned at his cousin, turned sister-in-law. “I don’t doubt it, but I will say I’m glad.”

Dafydd put his arm around his wife’s shoulders and pulled her close. “First, I get the love of my life, and then when I think I can’t be anymore grateful to her, I find my twin brother. All because Momo decided that I was the one for her.”

Ryo chuckled. “It’s all Dee that he ended up with me, because he decided I was the one for him and didn’t give up until he made me realize that he was the only one for me.” With a teasing grin, he said to Dee, “You only wanted me because your twin sense was directing me.”

“Hey, I didn’t know I was a twin so that’s not true.”

“I will not doubt that Dei wanted you for you, but I will not dismiss twin sense. I have heard of some stories of pretty incredible bonds between twins even at great distances. You might not have known you were a twin, but your subconscious did,” Akira said.

“That explains why you ended up speaking Japanese fluently by the time you were in high school and had a desire to go to Japan,” Tsubasa pointed out.

“There’s twin sense, and I’m sure that must have been a major reason why you felt an affinity with
Japan since you were young,” Ryo said. “I mean, your subconscious might have been reaching for Dafydd. But you were also born here and a few months later, you were taken away from here.”

“I love New York,” Dee blurted out. He shrugged. “And well, yeah, I love Japan too. I had a chance to stay at least a few years more. I had other job opportunities besides the recording contract, but I went back to New York because for one, I knew I could never be a cop in Japan.”

Nobu laughed. “So you thought back then.”

“What? Oh wow, yeah, but there’s still two and the biggest reason” Dee said. “I can’t leave Mother. If I was able to convince her to move here, I might have considered it.”

“Then it’s a good thing you love New York,” Dafydd said. “I do want to meet your mother. She sounds wonderful.”

“She is,” Dee said with a loving smile. “And we’ll make it happen somehow. I want you to meet her too. Plus, she’s anxious to meet you.” He looked at Momo. “Both of you.”

“I believe our family will accept you,” Dafydd said. “Well, maybe Ojiisan might protest a little. Papa will most likely react with disbelief but once he believes you are his son, he’ll embrace you into the family. So will our stepfather and siblings. I think Ayaka will be the most excited. She is the only one in the family who encourages me. She’ll even insist being there when you show up, even if means begging out of a show.”

“A show?” Ryo asked. “Is Ayaka a performer?”

Dafydd nodded with a small smile. “She is,” he replied. He said no more and waited to see if anyone at the table would make the connection.

“No way!” Hoshi exclaimed, her eyes wide.

This was followed by Carol’s cry of “Oh my God!!!” Everyone else except for Dafydd and Momo stared at the two, waiting for them to enlighten them.
Carol stared at Dee, Ryo and Bikky as if they were stupid. “TKY’s sister group, NGY52 is based in Nagoya. There’s an Ayaka Fujioka in the group. She’s the co-Leader of Team K, she started with TKY52 until they announced the startup of NGY52 and transferred back to her home city,” Carol blurted out. “She was one of my favorites in TKY52. Even more than just checking out a sister group to TKY52, I followed NGY52 because of Ayaka.” Carol stared at Dee and Ryo as if they were crazy. “I know you know the music.”

“Yes, we listen but we’re not Wota,” Ryo replied. “I can rattle off a few song titles, and so can Dee, but not names of members. Sorry.”

“I guess there’s one member you’ll remember now,” Momo replied with a chuckle.

“Oh my God, Dee! You have a sister in NGY! That’s amazing.” She smiled at Dafydd. “So we’ll meet her?”

Dafydd laughed. “If I know Ayaka, she’ll probably be the first one in the family you’ll meet. Just don’t faint.”

“One thing to remember,” Momo added. “Her English is not as good as ours. She speaks it only a little.”

“Excited screeching needs no translation,” Dee remarked amused. “Which is most likely what Ayaka will get from Carol.”

“If there is something that you need to say to Ayaka, you will have enough people around to interpret for you,” Dafydd said but smirked at his brother’s comment. “At least Hoshi-san speaks Japanese.”

“Yes, but I will not be in Nagoya,” Hoshi commented.

“You will meet her,” Dafydd said. “As was said earlier, you are all family. It is proper that you meet the rest of the family.”

“This is all so exciting, add to everything else that is happening around here,” Akira said. “I am still so happy for both of you,” she said to Dee and Dafydd.
Nobu smiled and lifted his sake glass and exclaimed, “Kapaiii!”

Everyone else joined in and went back to finishing their meal. At times they would laugh or comment on Carol’s excitement.

After dinner, the elder family members went back to the hotel, taking the young children with them. Bikky and Carol were allowed to stay out to explore Tokyo at night. Meanwhile, Dee, Ryo, Tsubasa, Kumi, Dafydd and Momo headed off to Hide’s club for the rest of the evening, where they met up with Dee’s friends and their spouses. Hide had a section of the VIP lounge reserved for everyone. For most of the time in the club, they had the VIP lounge to themselves, but to Dafydd’s and Momo’s surprise, there were a couple of singers and actors that they recognized who came in and stayed a while, and by the end of the night had talked to.

OoOoOoO

Chapter End Notes

Just in case anyone is wondering what ‘Wota’ is, from the Urban Dictionary: A Wota is an obsessive fan of a Japanese idol or idol group. Wotas tend to fawn over groups such as AKB48, Hello! Project (Morning Musume, Berryz Koubou, C-ute), Idolling, Perfume, etc.

AKB48 is TKY52 in this universe, and their sister group, SKE48 is NGY52. The group names were altered because I changed their histories up some, including when formed, when singles were released, as well has have fictional members to the groups. Most single names are the same.
Ryo’s family took over the penthouse for breakfast, utilizing the kitchen and dining room. Nobu, Takehide and Keizo, Satori’s husband, carried cloth shopping bags filled with items to make breakfast for everyone, while Akira, Hoshi and Moriko did the cooking, pulling in Bikky and Carol to assist. Dee and Ryo took the rest of the relatives out on the patio, along with the twins, having coffee until Akira called them in for breakfast. Dee had sent a text to Dafydd that he and Momo were welcome to join in, but Dafydd replied that they were going to relax in their “very wonderful suite” and would text him later.

Dee smirked when he saw the reply from his brother and showed it to Ryo with a knowing grin. “They did say this is a second honeymoon,” Dee remarked and laughed.

“We also had a late night and I’m sure it was still at least an emotional night double than it was for you,” Ryo remarked.
“Spoilsport,” Dee commented.

“I’m sure Momo is doing what she can to help Dafydd settle down,” Ryo added with a grin. “And if your twin brother is anything like you, then Momo is probably taking the same measures that I do.” He grinned widened and he leered at Dee. “Meaning they are both probably having fun and we shouldn’t text them anymore until we hear from them.”

Dee stared at Ryo for a moment and then started to laugh, pulling his husband in for a hug.

Dee and Ryo discovered that Akira had called down to the front desk requesting enough tableware for everyone, and after they were done, she had Ryo call to have it removed. Dee was impressed that they could have dirty dishes be taken away with a phone call, but Ryo put a stop to what he was thinking, stating that unless they had another large group over for a meal, they would do their own dishes. Ryo even mentioned that they should shop for more tableware, enough to accommodate a large family meal, especially since now they also had the possibility of Dee’s family in Nagoya coming for a visit whenever Dee and Ryo were in Tokyo. At the very least, there would be Dafydd and Momo with their two sons. He suggested they look around, including in their travels. If they decided to get something they saw in another city, they could always order if they didn’t buy anything while they are there.

Shortly after the dishes were taken away, Ryo’s family left to go back to their homes, once again leaving Dee, Ryo and the kids on their own in Tokyo. Bikky and Carol left shortly after to meet up with the friends they had made. It was going to be a quiet day with nothing planned. There were still some Halloween celebrations going on around Tokyo later that day that they were considering going to later.

Dee and Ryo were sitting on the terrace with the twins, discussing what they wanted to do with the rest of the day, but did not make any firm plans until they checked with Dafydd and Momo on what they wanted to do. As much as Dee wanted to get to know his twin brother more, he also would understand if Dafydd and Momo wanted to go off on their own for a while. Originally the couple had planned the week to not only do things in Tokyo but as a second honeymoon.

Dee got a text message from Dafydd that they were on their way up, so he went inside to let them into the penthouse. He met them in the entry as the elevator opened.

As Dee served coffee, Dafydd went over to Dee. “I looked up your name online,” he said in Japanese. “I am impressed. You’re a big hero there in New York with Carrier rights. That would go over well with Ojiisan. He is always saying how disappointed he is with how Americans treat Carriers.”
“I was just pregnant at the right place at the right time,” Dee remarked modestly. “I probably wouldn’t have been thrust into the spotlight if it wasn’t for the Carrier serial killer case. They made a mistake when the killer decided to throw my name in the mix.”

Dafydd nodded his head. “I read all about that too. Actually, I’ve been reading about you all morning and I’m still not finished. I heard about that case but only in passing. Mostly about how all those Carriers were killed. I know I should have read more about it, but it wasn’t happening in Nagoya, so I never looked for details. But I’m willing to bet the moment I say your name to Ojiisan, he will know exactly who you are. Ojiisan is like that, Dee. He’s very big on Carrier Affairs not just in Japan but all over. He spends as much time following how the various countries treat their Carriers as being CEO of the family’s business.”

“I’m just a small player in this world,” Dee stated. “Besides, if he knew that much then he would have stumbled across a photo of me. Don’t you think that would have raised questions?” he asked.

Dafydd stared at Dee. “I don’t know. Maybe a photo never came up. Or he just thought you just looked like me but never thought beyond it. He does, after all, believe that you didn’t survive the hit on Tad.”

“Maybe,” Dee said. “Anyway, I guess we’ll find out when you tell him the news.”

Dafydd started to frown. “I don’t think he wouldn’t say anything if he believed it was you. At least I hope he wouldn’t. It was no secret to him that I believed you had survived and was alive out there somehow.”

Dee waved it off. “I’m sure he didn’t even come across me in his reading.” He handed Dafydd a coffee mug, the coffee prepared the way he knew his brother liked it, which was just like how he did. Dafydd thanked him and held out his other hand.

“I can take Momo’s.”

“Great. Then I don’t have to wobble a tray with coffee,” Dee said with a smile and took Ryo’s cup with his.

“Is our grandfather into child products too?” Dee asked as they walked to the terrace where Momo had joined Ryo. She had Darin on her lap and was bouncing him as the baby boy laughed.
No. The children’s items and stores are a small company that Obāsan started and now Papa runs. When he met Tad, he was working in the shop and then when Obāsan retired, Papa took over. Ojiisan runs the company that was left to him by his father.” Dafydd sat down and placed Momo’s coffee on the table.

Ryo was looking at him with interest, hearing what Dafydd said about this family’s companies. “What type of business does your ojiisan own?” he asked.

“Communications. It was founded by his ojiisan. He runs GPN telecommunications,” Dafydd said.

Ryo and Dee both glanced down at their cell phones on the table, knowing that was the provider they had chosen for their phones while in Japan.

“That’s Japan’s biggest telecommunications provider,” Dee exclaimed, trying not to squeak as he spoke.

“Yes, it is. Ojiisan is loaded, but as it is the way with our family going far back with our ancestors, we do not see the money. He will help when he knows we really need it. Many times he knows us well enough to come up and ask how much. He helped us buy our house when he found out we were looking but couldn’t afford what we felt we really needed. As I mentioned before, we want more children but did not want to be selling and buying houses every I get pregnant. So Ojiisan stepped in and gave us the money to get what we wanted. He’s like that,” Dafydd explained. “Besides, when you meet him, you’ll see that he does live well but not what you would expect of a man who owns the company he does. He also does not hesitate to use family power if any of us needed. He says it is his responsibility to look after his family.”

“I understand. My Japanese family is much the same. Not like the American family who has family shares and an inner circle. Not that I’m complaining about the money my grandparents gave us, but it’s all so confusing with inner family and outer family and all these relatives claiming it’s their right to family money,” said Ryo. “But it’s the way with many of the wealthy families in American. It’s so uncomplicated with Obāsan’s money. It’s hers. My grandfather inherited the shipping company from his father. Of course, his siblings got some of the money, but they have no further claims except for one of my uncles, who runs the Australian side of things.”

“Nobu-san and Takehide-san now run things in Japan?” Momo asked. “I heard them talking.”

“Mostly it’s Uncle Nobu,” Ryo replied. “He’s the CEO and President. Uncle Takehide is a VP in charge of Logistics. Tsubasa is a VP in Operations. When Uncle Nobu retires, Tsubasa will get the company. No one else has a claim to family money. Not even me. It doesn’t stop Obāsan from
helping out if she feels we need it.”

“Or even when we don’t,” Dee added, amused. “We can never seem to pay whenever she’s around. Even in New York, when we went grocery shopping, she insisted on paying. And she knows we’re not hurting for money.”

“That’s true,” Ryo said with a laugh. “But anyway, I do understand how your family works. I’m not that gaijin.”

Dafydd blushed slightly. “No. You’re not gaijin. You may be American, but you are also very Japanese.” He looked at Dee. “Even not knowing you are Japanese all these years and raised American, you’re not gaijin either, Dee.”

“I’m still processing that,” Dee said. “It will take some time to completely grasp it.”

“That’s very understandable,” Momo said. “That must be a huge shock.”

“Yes, it is.” Dee started to grin. “But I’m also sure it will be a big shock to our friends and family. Diana dropped the phone when I told her, but she promised not to say a word to anyone, not even our Commissioner, who is also her boyfriend, because I want to be the one to tell him. So far, the only people in New York who knows about this is Mother and Diana. Then our Commissioner when I get a chance to call him at a decent time in New York.”

“Hopefully before the briefing that we’re going to miss,” Ryo pointed out.

Dee nodded. “Yes, before then. That’s the plan. Then it will be just the three for now.”

“When do you plan to tell your other family and friends?” Dafydd asked. “When you get back to New York?”

“No, I’ll break the news during a video meeting, I suppose,” Dee said. “I’m really waiting until we break the news to the family in Nagoya,” Dee replied. “Diana only knows because I felt she was the best one to do what we needed her to, otherwise I would have said nothing.” He shrugged. “Of course, there is Ryo’s Japanese family in the know, but that couldn’t have been helped.”
“I am extremely grateful to your family, Ryo. They have been most accepting and supportive of everything,” Dafydd said.

“Oh, and did you know that your family has been most accepting and supportive the day before the party?” Ryo said. “And also remember that since you are part of the family, you are expected to join us for the dinner cruise on Thursday.”

“Yes, I will remember.” He looked at Momo. “We’re going to have to find some traditional clothing. We didn’t think to pack anything.”

“If you can’t find anything, I’m sure Obāsan will bring something for both of you to wear,” Ryo said. “I know she said it’s optional, but with the rest of the family dressing up, she wouldn’t want anyone to feel left out. Which is why she said that she’ll handle our garb. She’ll take care of you too. I’m sure you’ll be getting a call on Wednesday asking if you found something yet.”

“But until then, what are your plans for today?” Dee asked.

“We did want to go up Tokyo Tower this week, so we thought we could start there,” Momo replied. “Then we’ll take it from there.”

“We were thinking of going to Asakusa this afternoon,” Ryo said. “We’ll meet up with Bikky and Carol and check out the temple there, and maybe the Skytree.”

“Yeah, that’s new for me.” Dee glanced out beyond the terrace and shook his head. “Roppongi Hills is new to me too,” he added with a laugh. “I’ve been away long enough that there is a lot that’s familiar and a lot that I want to see for the first time.”

Momo started to laugh. “It’s been two years since we’ve been to Tokyo and there are new things we want to see along with favorite places. The Sensōji and Skytree sounds good to me. Have you done Tokyo Tower yet?”

Ryo and Dee laughed. “It was one of the first things we did after checking in the hotel. We went a couple of times, including the afternoon before the party, and then went to eat at the Hard Rock,” Ryo explained.

“We didn’t stay long at the Hard Rock because the chibis were not happy with the loud music, so went ended up getting Ryo’s and my orders to go. We let the kids stay while we took the little ones
back to the penthouse,” Dee commented. “I think Bikky and Carol like Tokyo Tower a lot because they’ve been there a few more times than us.”

“We probably will end up grabbing a snack there if not a meal, because there are some very good food places,” Dafydd said.

“That’s the main reason why we’ve been there several times,” Ryo said.

Dee was scrolling through his phone and held it out for Momo and Dafydd to see. “I don’t know how we did it, but we managed to get Bikky on the mechanical animals and take pictures of it. Carol was easier, except we need to convince her not to wear short skirts when we’re sightseeing. Thankfully no wardrobe malfunctions yet.”

“Oh, that is great!” Momo exclaimed. “Bikky looks so happy too. This must be a trip of a lifetime for him.”

“Ever since I took him in, Biks was interested in Japan, but I don’t think he thought we’d ever go. My first vacation was to England. Dee did mention Japan, but it was going to be more expensive than England, and I really did want to get Bikky out of New York,” Ryo explained. He stared at Dee. “But someone bribed the kid to stay home.”

“Like he listened after taking my money,” Dee commented and then laughed. “Oh, I wanted to strangle him when we discovered him and Carol there, but now it’s just so funny.”

Ryo smiled warmly. “You and Bikky have gone a long way since then. I think that’s when it started. It was the first time I saw you two bond and even go against me together.”

“It was a long road, but I’m so glad we both stuck it out, because now I have a son that I’m so damn proud of,” Dee said.

“That’s wonderful,” Dafydd said. “You have a good life, and I can see it has been so before the money and that makes me happy.”

“I’m pretty happy myself.” Dee leaned forward, his eyes on Dafydd. “You know, I never wanted to find my biological family, which is why it wasn’t just shock the other night. I almost pushed you away, but after speaking to my Mom, she made me realize that I was curious. Once I opened myself
to sitting down and giving you a chance.” He shrugged. “I know some of it was twin sense at the beginning, but the more I listened to you and got to know you, I know I want you in my life. I fully accept you as my twin brother and your family as mine. I’m looking forward to getting to know them. I think I’m even happier than I was when I arrived here, and I never thought that would be possible.”

“That’s understandable. From what I’ve seen so far, you already have a great family,” Dafydd said.

“I honestly believe that I couldn’t have it all – if I actually wanted something to do with my biological family. You know what I had always believed. It never occurred to any of us that it was beyond my parents control. Maybe for others when I’m working a case, but I never gave thought about it for me. Anyway, the Penguin was right. I didn’t lose anything. I only gained. My family increased and there’s a chance it will grow more.”

“Penguin?” Dafydd asked.

Momo looked confused for a moment before she started to laugh. “Your mom’s a nun, right? That’s what I heard from the family.”

“She is. She’s mostly always in her habit – all black and white.” Dee grinned, his eyes twinkling impishly. “And she has a waddle.”

“Oh Penguin!” Dafydd exclaimed and laughed.

“It’s a term of endearment,” Ryo explained. “He even got me in the habit of calling her that sometimes. The kids living in the orphanage gives her penguins for gifts. And it’s all Dee’s fault.”

“That’s sweet,” Momo said.

“Like me when I first met you, Dafydd, she fought it hard. For years, until she realized just how sweet it really was. I told her then that if I didn’t love her to bits, I wouldn’t call her that. Apparently, it’s the same with the kids.”

Ryo started to smirk. “Makes me wonder what she will do if the new residents pick up on it. I mean, they’re not cute little kids.”
“New residents?” Momo asked.

“Yeah. Along with the orphanage, she is also taking on a safe house for Carriers, especially the younger unmarried ones with nowhere to go. We just bought a building that we’re going to move her and kids into. One part of the complex will be the orphanage, while the other will be a Carrier home.”

“You mean they don’t have anything like that yet?” Dafydd asked.

“Not in New York City,” Ryo replied. “We heard that California cities have them or opening them, and decided New York needs to get its act together too. After all, it is supposed to be a Carrier Friendly Zone. We have a mayor who is willing, but needs the funding to put a few things into play. We’re helping her whenever we can to do something about the shortcomings.”

“Is that the Mayor who lost her son to that Carrier killer?” Momo asked.

“That’s Mayor Blum,” Dee replied. “We had just met Gilbert, but he was quickly becoming a good friend of ours.”

“The biggest mistake was the perp thinking that by killing Gilbert it would make the mayor back off. Instead she’s in the battle all the way to make sure Carriers in New York are protected,” Ryo said.

“That is a shame that she had to lose her son,” Momo said.

“Loss of life just because someone is a Carrier and choose to Carry is just wrong,” Dafydd spat out, disgusted that people can treat Carriers like that.

“That is the attitude most of New York has,” Dee said. “Thankfully.”

Everyone fell silent for a while, Momo still cradling a now sleeping Darin. Ryoko was also asleep in her stroller.

“Hey, I just realized something,” Ryo said, changing the subject to something more pleasant.
“What’s that?” Dee asked.

“This is the longest we all got to speak in Japanese,” Ryo replied. “We’ve been speaking Japanese since Dafydd and Momo arrived.”

“That’s because we don’t have to worry about Bikky and Carol since they’re somewhere having fun,” Dee said. He looked at his brother and sister-in-law. “We plan to meet up with the kids in Asakusa, so it will be mostly English again whenever they’re with us.”


Ryo started to laugh. “Obāsan gave Bikky until he’s 18 and then she’s going to speak mostly Japanese around him. Carol has more leeway but she’s also learning. Chances are she’ll be speaking it before Biks, but it will also push him more to learn if she does.”

“I take it we’re all going to Tokyo Tower for a bit and then after lunch making our way up to Asakusa?” Dee asked.

“That sounds good to me,” Dafydd said.

“We just need to get the chibis changed. They’re fine like this on the terrace, especially since we have the heating lamps, but we need to layer them up before running around Tokyo.”

“Do you like kabuki?” Dafydd asked. “Momo and I were hoping to catch a performance this week, but it looks like everything at the Kabukiza is sold out for the week.”

Ryo started to smile. “I’ll make you a deal. You have a sister who is in a popular idol group and I have a young lady who would love to see her perform, meanwhile I have cousins who are actors at Kabukiza. They got us tickets last week and we even got the grand backstage tour. I’m pretty sure I can get tickets for at least you and Momo. After all, not only are you my in-laws, but Momo, you are also Shichirou’s cousin.”

“Distant cousin,” Momo stated.
“Not so much anymore if you’re my sister-in-law,” Ryo said with a smile.

“I can do that, then I can get Carol to see also TKY here in Tokyo as well as NGY in Nagoya,”

“We’ll have to weigh Carol down,” Ryo said with a laugh. “You should have seen her last week when we went to see an idol group that hadn’t even debuted yet rehearse.”

Dee started to laugh. “Bikky may play it down and not show as much excitement as everything else but I know he’ll get a kick out of it. We’ll make him a wota yet,” he remarked with an evil smirk.

“I think you need to give Biks an example and don’t go acting like you’re not jumping up and down with excitement yourself,” Ryo commented with a smirk.

“Hey, give me a break here. I’m trying not to think too much on it, because having a sister in SKE just might make me faint,” Dee remarked, making Dafydd and Momo break out in laughter along with Ryo.

“Ayaka will be very pleased to know that,” Momo said. “Are we getting the chibis ready for a day out in Tokyo?” she asked.

“Would you like to give us a hand?” Ryo asked, also looking at Dafydd. He started to smile as he took Dee by his hand.

“Yes, please. I would love to. Wouldn’t you, Dafydd?”

“Let’s show the newbies how it’s done,” Dafydd replied with a smirk. He helped Momo, who still had Darin, to her feet and then picked up Ryoko from the stroller and headed inside.

“Let’s learn from the pros then,” Dee said with a laugh.

“You really didn’t get to tell him much about your life in the orphanage, did you?” Ryo asked amused.
Ryo stood with Momo, laughing so hard his stomach started to hurt. It was hard to keep the camcorder still. Momo was having the same problem as she took pictures of the reunited brothers, pretending to do battle with each other while riding on mechanical pandas. Dee also had Darin in a sling, and Dafydd had Ryoko. The babies looked like they were enjoying their first ride. They were smiling and laughing, little hands reaching out and feet kicking. Ryo had gotten great video of them. Both men were also trying to take pictures and videos with their phones.

That didn’t escape Ryo’s notice and called out, “Oh geez, Dee. Dafydd is giving you competition there. Figures he would be just as camera crazy as you.”

“Yeah,” Dee drawled out in English. “And he’s Japanese.” He gave Ryo a sly smile, dark green eyes twinkling with delight.

“And apparently, I’ve been calling it right all these years about you,” Ryo shot back and started to laugh.

A few minutes later Ryo realized that the pandas were heading toward him and Momo, the same wicked look on Dee’s and Dafydd’s face. Ryo grabbed Momo by her arm. “I think we have to move.”

“Oh yes. Run!” Momo replied and the two took off together. They did not break out in a full run, mostly for safety of the other people on the roof of Foot Town with them, but it also would be no fun to outrun their pursuers. At times they managed to get in close enough, with funny faces, making Darin and Ryoko screech and then start laughing again.

At one-point Ryo had to stop running to get video of Darin, who was squealing with excitement,
clenching onto Dee, rocking back and forth as he kicked Dee. It caused Dee to yelp and exclaim that he’s not a horse and they don’t kick pandas. There was also Ryoko who was babbling as she looked around at everything going by and then stare up at Dafydd and let out an excited screech, grabbing onto him, and then laughing. It was one of those moments that would have been a shame not to have on video. It was so adorable and funny that Ryo imagined it could get at least airplay on America’s Funniest Videos. If nothing else, it would be one of those videos their family would enjoy long past Ryoko’s and Darin’s childhoods. He couldn’t wait to show the video to Bikky, who would definitely get a good laugh from it.

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Asakusa Station
Taito, Tokyo
Japan

They met up with Bikky and Carol outside of Asakusa station. Ryo had sent Bikky a text, telling him that they were outside the north gate of the station. Both Bikky and Carol were able to read the kanji for north, south, east and west, so no one worried about them coming out of the wrong gate. If by chance they did get turned around, at least they had their cell phones to call Dee or Ryo, who would navigate them out.

When Bikky and Carol joined them, they crossed the street and went into Mos Burgers for a lunch of teriyaki hamburgers, fries and soft drinks.

“What do you think, Bikky?” Ryo asked. “Is any good to you?”

Bikky nodded with his mouth full.

“It’s very oishi!” Carol exclaimed.

“Hai!” Bikky said after swallowing. “I love teriyaki beef, so a burger with teriyaki is really yummy!”
“Dee and I both agree that Mos makes the best teriyaki burgers, but we can try the McDonald’s ones,” Ryo said.

Dee laughed as he looked at the faces Bikky and Carol made. He had noticed that the two would point out American chains such as Starbucks, KFC, Pizza Hut and many others, but they never suggested going to any of those places for a meal, preferring Japanese and other Asian food to eat. Dee had figured that they could have those American chains any time once they got back to New York, so they were enjoying the local foods while in Japan. Bikky seemed to enjoy eating in the better restaurants, no matter how posh since they landed in Japan, but he really liked the street food the best, willing to try everything at least once. He didn’t like everything he tried, but he liked enough. Dee had to agree with Bikky. Even though Ryo and Dee were able to make most street food and it would come out very good, it still didn’t compare to getting the food from stands on the streets and small shops on the streets of Japan. Dee had eaten some great meals in the fancier places, but was still enjoying the street food.

“They do have teriyaki burgers and some other things you can’t get in a McDonald’s back in New York,” Dafydd said to the doubting teens.

“I like the shrimp burgers in McDonald’s,” Dee said.

“Oh yeah, I love them too,” Ryo agreed. “But my favorite is Lotteria.”

“They do great burgers,” Dee had to agreed. “Well, that’s one more place we need to take the kiddies to experience Japanese food.”

“Yes, please,” Bikky said, his mouth full.

“We passed Lotteria, didn’t we?” Carol asked.

“Many times,” Ryo said, “but we usually already had meal plans, but we’ll make it to at least one during our time here. And swallow first before talking, please, Bikky.”

“Sorry,” Bikky said.
“McDonald’s and other American chains have a couple of special items for Halloween that you’ll never find in America.”

“Really?” Bikky asked.

“Really,” Dafydd replied. “I know you saw some of the Halloween desserts in the sweets shops, but you’ll find fun special menu items in many places, including the American chains.”

“And then after Halloween, they change out the food for Christmas treats,” Momo added.

“Oh nice,” Carol said. “We’re going to be here for some of the Christmas Season.”

Bikky nodded his head. “So, we need to find the Halloween treats before they go away, and then we’ll have the Christmas ones. I’m looking forward to it.”

Ryo groaned. “As if we’re not eating enough here.”

Dee looked from Bikky and Carol, to Momo, Dafydd and then Ryo. “Does that mean we’re taking Bikky and Carol to McDonalds here in Japan?” he asked.

“And Thirty-One, Starbucks, Burger King,” Momo added with an amused smile.

“And then there are the Japanese specialties,” Dafydd said. “We heard that in Roppongi Hills mall there are plenty Halloween foods.”

Bikky looked at Dee and Ryo. “Can we go back to the mall and go find the Halloween Foods?” he asked.

“There’s also the Monster Café. They serve fun foods all year round, but they get extra creative in Halloween,” Momo said. “That’s in Shinjuku.”

“Oh, and there are also the Maid Cafes, especially in Akihabara,” Dafydd offered. “I’ll bet at least one of them have fun food for Halloween too.”
Ryo started to laugh. “And then hopefully we’ll do other things around here besides eat,” he said.

“Yeah, I’m starting to foresee a lot more walking than what we’ve been doing if we do all that,” Dee said. “Find more places with a lot of stairs to get to it.”

“Hell, we just might start walking to locations instead of taking the trains,” Ryo joked.

“Just remember all the stairs to get to trains,” Dee reminded Ryo. “Not to mention going across the city to change train lines.”

“Oh yeah, right. Okay, we can take trains then,” Ryo agreed with a nod.

“But we only have a few days left in Tokyo, and we have most of them planned,” Bikky pointed out with a frown.

Dafydd smiled at Bikky and Carol, who started to look disappointed. “While Halloween celebrations are just catching on in Nagoya, many places to eat also serve fun Halloween food. And we also have McDonald’s.”

“Yeah, but it will be past Halloween by the time we are in Nagoya,” Bikky commented.

“They still serve the special Halloween food for about a week after,” Momo said. “And then we start seeing the Christmas food.”

“I’m sure they’ll have it next year,” Ryo assured his son, “and we can go for at least week just to seek out Halloween goodies. You’ll be on school holiday again, and we can afford it. Plus, we have the penthouse here now.”

“Really?” Bikky asked. “And we can still come back here during the summer so we can see Kamakura in the summer?”

“Yes, we can,” Dee replied. “We did promise Obāsan that we’d come for a week then.”
Ryo nodded his head in agreement. “We did.”

“Oh cool!” came from Bikky.

“Are you sure you won’t be sick of Japan by the time we leave in December?”

“No. Not in the least.”

“On that note,” said Ryo, “if we’re done here, are we ready to go to Sensōji Temple?”

“How far are we from it?” Carol asked.

“Not far,” Ryo replied. “Just a few blocks. We’re going right to the temple. After, we can do Nakamise. We’re not going to stop and buy everything,” he said, looking at Carol and Bikky.

“Remember that if you see something and we don’t stop, you can always come back when you’re on your own,” Dee said.

“We’ll probably come back for more exploring when we get back to Tokyo after our trip,” Ryo pointed out. “There is still plenty of time to see everything you want. Don’t rush it. Just enjoy it.”

“You’re right, Ryo. And I am enjoying it,” Carol said.

“Yeah. Okay,” said Bikky. “And I agree with Carol. I am enjoying it.”

“Good. Now let’s head out. We can’t see Asakusa sitting in a Mos Burger,” Dee said.

As they got up to leave, Bikky asked, “Are we also going to Sky tree?”
“That depends on how much time we spend looking at all the shops,” Ryo replied.

“Oh. Okay. We get the train there from this station, right? I thought I saw something for the Skytree in there.”

“Yup, we have to come back here,” Dee affirmed.

“Hey Carol. Definitely don’t get crazy looking at all the shopping,” Bikky said, making the adults smile while Carol looked back to frown at Bikky.

“Oh hey,” Dee commented as Ryo led them down the street. “I think that’s the first time I saw Carol frown since we landed.”

“I think you’re right Dee,” Ryo replied with a laugh. “Yeah, but it was for only a moment. Carol, remember you can come back and be more thorough at another time.”

“I don’t think there is enough time in a lifetime to the thorough with all the shopping in Tokyo,” Dafydd said.

Momo laughed as she grabbed onto Dafydd’s arm. “We can still try. Isn’t that right, Carol?”

“Yes. That is right.”

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They spend time walking around Sensōji. They explored the various buildings on the temple grounds, including going inside the main hall. At Hōzōmon Gate, they took some pictures and then walked along the Nakamise shopping street from the temple back toward Kaminarimon Dori. Carol managed to buy a Japanese umbrella along the way, while Dafydd and Momo bought some gifts to take back for their family. Ryo suggested to Dee that they should start thinking of things to bring for Dee’s family, too. It was proper to bring gifts when visiting, and this would be a very special visit with Dee meeting his family for the first time. Ryo bought several large shopping bags that they
could put their purchases in and carry easily. Ryo and Dee did have a place to put their bags on the back to the strollers. They also were walking away eating dango mochi.

They stopped a Kaminarimon Gate to take some pictures. Dee pointed to the left side of the gate at one of the two statues inside each side of the red and gold gate, seen through grated mess with large holes. With a grin, Dee stated, “This is the god of thunder, and over there is his brother, the god of lightning.”

With a grin, Ryo asked, “Does that make the god of lightning Loki?”

Bikky started to laugh. “This guy here doesn’t look like Thor.”

“The first time I came here and Hide said it was the god of thunder, I stood right where I’m standing now and started singing “God of Thunder.”

“Don’t tell me,” Momo teased, “that started your singing career?”

Dee glared at Momo while everyone else laughed. “No. Not really. The other three did join in. The Japanese in the area looked at us like we were crazy gaijin, even if there were three Japanese in our group. One of our other friends had her camcorder and got us singing. We did realize that we sounded good together, so for a while after that we would do a lot of group karaoke.”

“Meaning it starting their singing careers,” Carol said with a laugh.

“Okay. If you look at it that way, yeah, that was the start of us singing in contests at school and then getting an act together,” Dee said.

“All you saw at the time was paying homage to,” Ryo said and then deepened his voice and dramatically intoned, “The God of Thunder.”

“Yeah. Exactly.”

With a smirk, Ryo slyly stated, “Gene Simmons was a comic fan. Chances are he wrote the song with Thor in mind.”
Dee made a face at Ryo. “Paul Stanley actually wrote it,” Dee commented with a satisfied smile. “I win!”

Ryo groaned. “Well I tried, but then I’m not the KISS geek.”

“No, but there are many other things you’re a geek about.”

“Some you share with me, so shut up.”

Dee started to laugh, along with everyone else. “Anyway, that’s how I see it. To be honest, I don’t even know these two guys’ names. Just the god of thunder and god of lightning.” He shrugged. “If Obāsan was here, she’d give us all the information.”

“Yeah, she told me several times, but I forgot. I think we need to get her here with us and give the kids a history lesson. Maybe it might stick with them.” Ryo looked at Bikky and smiled. “Biks has been becoming an encyclopedia on Japanese history lately.”

“Maybe if Obāsan is here with us, you’ll both finally remember it too,” Bikky said with a laugh.

“Or if you do, we’ll remind you,” Carol added and also laughed.

Dee looked at Dafydd and Momo. “You both seem well versed in Japanese history with Shinto priests in the family. Do you know their names?”

“I know this is the Thunder Gate, translated in English,” Momo said. “Kaminarimon is the Japanese name.”

“It’s actually redundant to add gate after Kaminarimon,” Ryo stated to Bikky and Carol. “Do you know why?”

“I know!” Bikky exclaimed. “Mon means Gate, so kaminari probably means thunder.”
Dee and Ryo smiled at him. “You’re correct,” Dee said.

“So this Thunder God’s name is not Kaminari?” Bikky asked.

“Fujin,” Dafydd said pointing to the statue on the left, “and Raijin,” he pointed to the statue on the right side.

“We need to get Obāsan here, so she can give us a full history without looking stupid and asking people,” Bikky said.

“She is planning to take us to Kappabashi this week,” Ryo said. “We can easily come here after.”

“Unless she wants to backtrack toward Ueno Park, chances are that we’ll be taking one of the subway stations around here,” Dee said. “Meaning we can get her here and ask her questions.”

Ryo started to laugh. “Get her here and no one will have to ask questions.”

“True,” Dee replied, making Momo and Dafydd laugh.


“Chikatetsu,” Bikky replied.

“He cheated. There’s a sign by the entrance over there,” Carol said with a pout.

Dee and Ryo looked where Carol pointed and chuckled. “If Bikky can read the kanji to answer, then he gets bonus points,” Ryo said.

“I do know the kanji for subway, park, and library,” Bikky admitted.

“Great, now we’ll work on you writing it.”
Bikky made a horrified face that made everyone laugh.

“You’re going to need to do more than just speak and read it, Biks,” Ryo commented.

“And speaking of subway, we should be making our way toward Asakusa Station, so we can go to the Skytree,” Dafydd stated.

“Oh yeah, let’s go!” Bikky said.

As they headed along Kaminarimon Dori back toward Asakusa Station, Bikky’s mouth dropped and he pointed down the street. “What’s that gold thing over there?” he asked.

“Oh, that is different,” Carol exclaimed.

Dee and Ryo started to laugh. “It looks like Bikky found the Asahi Building,” Ryo said to Dee.

“Yeah, no kidding. That was about my reaction the first time I saw it,” Dee said.

“Did anyone tell you what else they call that?” Ryo asked slyly.

Dee started to laugh more as Bikky and Carol looked at them in curiosity.

“Oh, I know what you mean,” Dafydd said, laughing.

“I don’t know who started calling it that,” Momo added. “I’m not sure if it was someone Japanese, or the American military. When Dafydd first told me, I tried looking up more about it.”

Dee shrugged. “It could be either, but if it was someone American, some of the Japanese seemed to pick up calling it that too.”
Momo nudged her husband in his side and with an amused look said, “Once Dafydd had to do something with his grandfather while I went here for some shopping, and he said that we’ll meet near Godzilla’s turd.”

Bikky’s mouth dropped even more than when he first saw the gold drop on the top of the black building on the other side of the Sumida and then started to laugh. “That’s awesome!”

Dee smirked. “I always thought it looked like something else of Godzilla’s,” he commented low to the adults.

“Ew!” Momo commented and started to blush.

Dafydd stared ahead, canting his head slightly to the left and then to the right. “You know, I can see that more than a turd.”

“Ew Uncle Dafydd!” Bikky exclaimed.

Ryo elbowed Dee. “That’s your fault. Even if I have to agree with you.”

“Momo agrees too,” Dee said, “because if she didn’t, then she never would have blushed.”

“Lalalala….” Bikky started.

“I need brain bleach,” Carol commented, “because I can never look at that again.”

Ryo elbowed Dee again. “You could have saved that particular comment for when we were away from the kids.” He looked down at Ryoko in her stroller. “I hope you’re not listening to your Daddy, sweetheart. He’s being bad.” Looking over to Darin in his stroller, who seemed to be fascinated with everything closer to them, he added, “You too, little man.” He shrugged. “I guess the real you was bound to show up eventually. You’ve been way too polite since we landed in Japan.”

Dee shrugged and grinned. “I’ve always been the real me,” he commented. “I’m just more polite in
Japanese, is all. But since we’re talking in English.”

“I wish you said that in Japanese, thank you,” Carol said.

“Just go back to Godzilla’s turd, Princess,” Dafydd said with a laugh. “Everyone chant, ‘Godzilla’s
turd, Godzilla’s turd.’”

Momo rolled her eyes as Bikky and Carol followed Dafydd’s instructions, with Dee joining in.
“Great. Like that doesn’t bring attention to us.”

“They’ll get tired eventually,” Ryo said to her. “Soon, I hope.”

“Me too.”

The chanting stopped before they reached their destination, which was not far from Kaminarimon,
and were laughing at some general silliness. They did not care that some Japanese stared at them in
not a good way. At least there were others who giggled as they passed, or looked amused. They
were not the only group enjoying themselves on their outing. Even if Dafydd was a new addition,
and Ryo still had a lot to learn about his distant cousin turned sister-in-law, it was obvious that they
were all comfortable with each other, and were making memories.

They went down into the Asakusa Underground Station, looking at the various shops while heading
for the trains and got on the Skytree Line.

The lines to go up the tower were longer than Tokyo Tower. There were no special considerations
for parents with babies in strollers. Eventually they made it up to Tembo Deck on the 350th floor.
Much like the Tokyo Tower, it was a large open space with walls of windows. The space was wider
than Tokyo Tower, and the windows overlooking Tokyo were sloped going in from the top to the
bottom. After they walked around the deck, enjoying the view and taking pictures. Ryo could not
tease Dee, because they were all taking many photos and video. At one point everyone got a laugh
when as Ryo was taking pictures of Bikky and Carol with Ryoko and Darin, Dee exclaimed in
Japanese, “Hey! You are really Japanese!”

When they were done with the Tembo Deck, they went to the counter to purchase tickets to go up to
the Tembo Galleria, that was 100 floors up on the 450th floor. They managed to get an elevator
going up to themselves, and enjoyed the ride up as the elevator up to the Tembo Galleria had glass
walls and for one section that was more like a glass tube enclosing the elevator car. They were able
to watch as Tokyo got further away as they went up. The Tembo Galleria was like a ramp, starting on the 445th floor, where they got off the elevator, going in an upward spiral around the deck to Sorakara Point on the 450th floor, bathed in neon lighting, giving it a futuristic feeling. Along the way up, they stopped to wait on the line for a commemorative photo taking by a professional photographer with Tokyo as the background, and a small-scale Skytree model. Once they took the professional photo, the photographer took their cameras and phones and took additional photos of the happy group.

They went slowly along the ramp up to Sorakara Point, taking time to take pictures and point out places and things around Tokyo from their high vantage point. It was the highest that Carol, Bikky and Momo had been. The Tembo Galleria deck was higher than the Empire State Building, which was the tallest building both Bikky and Carol had been in. They had spent time looking out at the views, taking pictures of views and each other with Tokyo sprawling behind them.

From the 450th floor, they took the elevator down to the 345th floor. They stopped at the restaurant for a snack after they walked around. They had to take stairs down to the 340th floor, where they waited on another line to get a commemorative photo of their group, also taken by a professional photographer, this time standing on a glass floor. The photo was taken from above them, showing the ground far below where they stood. Once again, the photographer took their cameras and phones, but could not take those pictures from above. She did do a very good job of making sure anyone who looked at the photos knew they were standing on glass, getting a little of the ground in the photos.

They decided to hit the Skytree shop on the lower levels, not wanting to juggle more shopping bags and two infants, who were now in slings, Darin with Ryo and Ryoko with Dee, while Dafydd held the folded strollers.

They were approaching Asakusa Station with Bikky and Carol still talking excitedly about the Skytree.

At Asakusa Station they walked back to Kaminarimon Dori to walk a little over the bridge going over the Sumida River to take some pictures along the river and of the Asahi Beer Tower just on the Sumida side of the bridge.

Bikky noticed the sleek silver and glass boat that was more curves than angles approach a pier on the Asakusa side of the Sumida River not far from Kaminarimon Dori. “Look! That boat looks like it’s from the future!”

“Oh wow. Can we go down there and try to see one close up?” Carol asked.
“I think they are water buses,” Dafydd said.

Dee looked at his brother. “They are? Ryo, how do you feel about going by boat back instead of train? We already know the chibis enjoy being on the water.”

Ryo started to laugh. “As if we don’t have another cruise on Thursday. But if you all want to take a water taxi back down to Minato, I’m okay with it.”

“Awesome! Thank you, Pops!” Bikky exclaimed.

“Hold on a moment, sport. Dafydd and Momo didn’t say if they are interested,” Dee said.

Dafydd and Momo started to laugh. “Even if we weren’t getting those puppy dog faces from those two, I still would have said yes,” Momo said.

“And if Momo said yes, then I say yes,” Dafydd replied with a grin. “Besides I want to go on it, even if we do have the dinner cruise. That will be toward the evening, but it’s still day. We can get lots of pictures of Tokyo.”

Ryo started to laugh as he leaned against Dee. “Like we didn’t get lots of pictures of Tokyo up on the Skytree, and even pictures of Mt. Fuji.”

“That’s the view from above,” Dee reasoned. “Now we get from the river. And yes, I did take some photos last week from the river, but it was night. And like Dafydd said, it’s day now, plus we could pay more attention to the landscape going by then we did while eating and talking to the family.”

Ryo looked from Dee to Dafydd with a wicked grin. “Yup, you are twins all right. Fine, go ahead you two,” he said to Bikky and Carol. “You can start jumping up and down with excitement now, but don’t take too long or else we’ll never get down to the piers.”

“I can do both,” Bikky said and started to jump away from them in the direction they had come from.
“Me too!” Carol exclaimed.

“I’m not jumping,” Ryo remarked, but he decided it was best to start pushing Darin’s stroller and follow the teens.

“Uh uh,” Dee commented, following Ryo with Ryoko in her stroller. “Walking is good enough for me and Darin.”

“Nope,” Dafydd added, offering his arm to Momo. “But I agree with getting down there and checking out the schedule and where are the stops. Even if it doesn’t go to Hinode Pier or somewhere close to Minato, we can always take the train or bus from where it does stop.”

Momo nodded her head in agreement. “I am content with just walking. Fast,” Momo said and gave Dafydd a wicked grin.

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They discovered that the boat they saw was the Himiko, which was already boarding and heading for Odaiba. There were many other boats going to Hinode Pier, but only the Hotaluna and Himiko had the sleek silver and glass futuristic style. They lucked out when they found out that the next boat to Hinode Pier was the Hotaluna, and due to arrive in 15 minutes and they were still selling tickets for it. They got their tickets at the ticket machine using their SUICA cards, which they all had to pay for most of the public transportation, and headed up the stairs to the waiting area reserved for passengers of the Himiko and Hotaluna. Being that the two boats were the premiere boats of the cruise line and attracted more tourists, the waiting area for them were on the level above the general waiting area for the other. When they reached the area, the Himiko was starting to pull away from the pier for its trip to Odaiba.

Pictures were taken of the Himiko until it was no longer in sight. A minute later, the Hotaluna appeared, approaching the pier. The Hotaluna was of the same futuristic style as the Himiko, but it was wider and larger, with an outside deck on the top. Currently there was no one on the deck, but they heard from others waiting that once they were on their way, the hatch to the outside deck would be opened. Ryo and Momo started to laugh as Dee, Dafydd and Bikky took pictures of it, as if they weren’t going to be closer.
It wasn’t long before they were led down a ramp to the pier side. There were many people already waiting and more arrived behind them. They waited in a line along the ramp, watching as the boat was docked and passengers got off. Then everyone got the signal to come on the pier to board the boat. Ryo decided to take the rear, handing off the stroller with Darin to Dafydd. Ryo decided to do a video of their group as they came off the ramp and boarded the boat, getting everyone’s reactions, including his own as they got closer to it and then finally saw the interior. He noticed that Bikky was also using the video on his phone.

Bikky took more pictures and video inside the boat than the sights going along the river. Dee and Dafydd took pictures inside and outside the boat, also including the family, while Ryo and Momo took pictures of the family and various sights as the boat went along the Sumida. At one point, Ryo ended up taking another video because Bikky was so amusing. He also couldn’t resist getting some of Dee and Dafydd because they were equally amusing. Ryo was happy at the moment, because it was further proof of Dee accepting his newfound brother in his life. That made it very possible that he would be open to meeting his father and the rest of the family when they could while they were in Nagoya.

Watching the two brothers, Ryo started to form a plan to convince Dafydd and Momo to stay in Tokyo for a couple of more days than planned. They wouldn’t have to worry about the extra cost of the hotel for those days, since they were staying in their suite as his and Dee’s guests. He would also talk to Dee and Bikky about starting their trip a day earlier, leaving early Sunday morning, instead of on Monday. They would have the room for the two-extra people in the van. He knew Dafydd and Momo did not have return tickets on the Shinkansen, because it wasn’t normal to get round trip tickets. There were no discounts for round trip, and getting tickets were usually quick and easy that it wasn’t a big deal getting them. He thought that the more time Dee and Dafydd had, the better it would be for them, because eventually they would be off on their own, away from Nagoya and later have to go back to New York, putting the reunited twins halfway across the world from each other. Hell, if Dafydd and Momo didn’t have lives of their own in Nagoya and two young boys in school, he would have suggested they hit the road with them for the road trip around Japan. He knew that wasn’t going to be possible, so he decided to extend their time in Nagoya, and plan another stop for a few more days before heading back to Tokyo.

They got off the boat at Hinode Pier, where Dee pointed out the boat they were going to be on for the dinner cruise in a couple of days. It wasn’t planned to be at the same pier where the Atakemaru was moored, but it was fun to watch as Bikky and Carol saw the boat for the first time. Both teens commented on how they couldn’t wait to see the inside. From the pier, they took the train back to the hotel, where Ryo called the concierge with their dinner orders from one of the restaurants in the hotel. While going over the menus for the restaurant for the first time, Bikky and Carol were happy to find that there were special meals and desserts for Halloween. The adults joined in and everyone had interesting looking meals going from bizarre to cute.

While they waited for their food, it gave everyone a chance to take showers and start getting ready for their evening. Dafydd and Momo went back to their suite to shower and get their costumes before going back to the penthouse. They ate dinner on the patio and not very long after they were done,
and the dishes were on their way back down, Nobu and Tsubasa arrived, coming from work. Nobu
stayed to babysit Darin and Ryoko, while everyone else went out to join in on the Halloween
celebrations in Roppongi. They met up with Kumi, and Dee’s friends, along with some of Ryo’s
cousins who lived in Tokyo for a fun night out. Bikky and Carol were allowed to go off on their
own, but ended up staying with the others that evening, because they were enjoying being with all
the adults.

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Chapter End Notes

The Skytree was opened to the public in May 2012, but in this universe it's already built
and open. As a reminder, there is a lot of that in this universe. I started writing The
Unexpected in the end of 2005, and decided as part of the changes in the Unexpected
universe will include some things that are around now. Another note about the Skytree
is the floors are actually the height in meters. I guess since it's really a tower instead of
an actual building, that's how they go. All I know is the elevator took us to the Tembo
Deck on the 350th floor, and all the brochures I picked up state the floors that way.

I have pictures of the places mentioned in this chapter from back when I lived in Japan
and my recent trip at the end of last year, including the Mos Burger they ate in. Having
already written this chapter, I couldn't resist taking some pictures outside and inside
while I grabbed a meal before heading to the Skytree. When I have more time, I plan to
make a photo album on Google with anything referenced in this story.
Chapter 20

Chapter Summary

Momo gets an important phone call.

CHAPTER TWENTY

October 31, 2006
Ikebukuro, Tokyo
Japan

The Laytner-MacLeans, along with Dafydd and Momo, went to Akihabara and Ikebukuro for the day. They spent the morning in Ikebukuro and could not help picking up some things for themselves while there. There were many stores selling not only manga and anime, but various merchandise. They even spent time going through a couple of the department stores around Ikebukuro and Akihabara stations.

The first stop for the day was Ikebukuro where they were going to spend the morning. Once they approached the area near Sunshine City where most of the anime and manga stores were, Ryo and Dee allowed Bikky and Carol to go their separate ways for an hour. Separate meant Carol went off on her own, and Bikky went to stores that interested him. Dee and Ryo figured that Carol might want to pick up some things but would be too shy having the others around, so they thought it best to give Carol money and let her do some shopping on her own. They didn’t want Bikky to feel like he couldn’t be trusted on his own, so for the hour they allowed Carol to shop, Bikky was allowed to go off on his own, also giving him money.

In one store, Dee and Ryo caught Momo picking up doujinshi. She started to blush furiously, starting to shove her selections back as the two approached her with wide knowing grins. Ryo stopped her with a laugh.

“Don’t worry about it,” Ryo assured her.
“We’re used to Ryo’s other female cousins,” Dee added. “They even send us yaoi.”

“They figure since we’re two ‘bishies’ then we want to read about other men,” Ryo added, grinning.

“Some of it is very good,” Dee admitted with a laugh. He indicated the yaoi section they were standing before. “Carry on.” He looked at Ryo. “Even if she’s my sister-in-law, which makes her yours, Momo is still also one of your cousins.”

“Not one of the hyper crazy ones, thank goodness,” Ryo said and smiled at her.

“No, I’m one of the calm ones but you haven’t met Dafydd’s and Dee’s family yet. Including some of your sisters, Dee,” Momo said. “We have shops like this in Nagoya, but your sisters would never forgive me not bringing them doujinshi from Tokyo.”

“Don’t tell me. Ayaka is on the top of that list,” Dee quipped.

“She’s young and excitable, yes,” Momo said and laughed. “Did you come over here to embarrass me, or are you looking for something in this section?”

Ryo started to blush as Dee started to laugh.

“He’s looking for some doujinshi from sci-fi shows and superheroes,” Dee stated. “But if it’s something I like, I’ll read it too.” He shrugged. “I also thought J.J. would enjoy some yaoi, even if he can’t read Japanese.”

“Don’t tell me,” Momo said amused, “he likes looking at the pretty drawings.”

“Exactly,” Dee said with a grin. “What’s my brother up to?”

“Going through the anime section,” Momo replied. “Most likely something new for our boys, as well as something for him.”

“No hentai?” Ryo asked slyly, his eyes on Dee. He started to grin.
“Oh that too, but he has to lock it up. Our boys tend to ‘find things’,” Momo said, also starting to blush.

“Does Dafydd blush too over the mention of hentai?” Dee asked.

Momo looked directly at him and with a knowing grin, said, “You tell me. You’re his twin brother.”

Ryo started to laugh. He leaned into Dee and put his lips near his ears. “Why don’t you find your brother, and pick out something for us?”

Dee turned his head as Momo started to giggle covering her mouth with her free hand. He smiled at Ryo. “I’ll find something good. If not, we’re still going to Akihabara this afternoon.” He kissed Ryo and smiled at Momo. “See you soon. Make sure my husband picks out some good yaoi.”

“If I see something for J.J., I’ll get it too,” Ryo said.

“Don’t forget Emiko,” Dee said. “She loves living in New York, but we don’t have stores like this that she could go to.”

Ryo started to laugh. “Oh yeah, Emiko was one of the crazy cousins who would send us yaoi. You’re right. We should bring something back for her.”

“Even before Akihabara, there are still many stores here in Ikebukuro,” Momo reminded them.

“And we also have just an hour before meeting up with Bikky and Carol at Central Park,” Ryo said with a wicked grin.

Dee started to laugh. “You like saying that, don’t you?”

“I notice he conveniently leaves out the Higashi-Ikebukuro part,” Momo said with a grin.
“It’s also about the size of a patch of The Central Park,” Dee said. “You know, the big one in New York?”

Momo laughed and then asked Dee, “Have you come across our Central Park in Nagoya?”

“Oh yeah, I forgot about that,” Dee commented. “It’s where Nagoya TV Tower is, right?”

“Yes, it is,” Momo said, sounding pleased. “I am glad that you know some of Nagoya. That makes your brother very happy, and will most likely do the same with your father.”

“If/when he decides to meet me,” Dee said.

“If not immediately, I am certain once he gets used to the idea, he will need to meet you,” Momo assured Dee.

“I hope so, because listening to you and Dafydd talk about him, I find myself getting anxious to finally meet my biological father and stepfather.” He smiled warmly at Momo. “Until then I’m going to find my brother and see what trouble we can get into.” With a grin, Dee excused himself to find his brother. He made the search easy by texting Dafydd, asking which floor he was on.

The park where they were all to meet was a short walk from the Maid Café where they planned to have dessert and see what all the fuss was about. Except for Momo, it was everyone’s first time going to one, including Dafydd. For the half hour they were at the café, they had a fun time, but Momo said there were better ones in Akihabara, and she would have to make a trip back to Tokyo after the road trip and take them to one or two.

A maid café in Akihabara that day was out, because they already had sweets at the café they went to, and because there was a debate between Bikky and Carol on where to have lunch. Carol wanted to go to the TKY52 Café, while Bikky wanted the Gundam Café.

Dafydd had mentioned that morning before they left the penthouse, that he could get them in for a performance of TKY52, but Ryo was concerned with the time and promised Carol that when they got back from the road trip, they could go see them. Maybe Dafydd and Momo would come into Tokyo so they could all go together, but if they couldn’t, Dafydd assured Carol that by the time they returned, that Dee would be able to get them all in.
After checking with Dafydd and Momo if it was okay that they ate where the teens wanted to go, Ryo decided that lunch would be at the TKY52 Café and dinner would be at the Gundam Café. Dafydd warned them that they wouldn’t be having a full meal, and they might be getting some street food in the afternoon, and later in the evening. That did not seem to be a problem with the others.

After they left the Maid Café, the group looked at the stores at Sunshine City before going back to the train station to go to Akihabara.

There was a lot of shopping in Akihabara, and not just anime and manga related. Carol was wowed by all the various maid cafes there, wanting to go to every one of them. She let Bikky know that on one of their ventures on their own, they had to go back to Akihabara and go to at least one of them. Momo said that if not during this trip, then the next time they were in Tokyo, she would come with some of the other females in the family and they could all go and give the men a break. Dee and Ryo found it amusing, and would not mind going to one or two more as a family outing, but it was obvious they had no intention to go to all the maid cafes. They were still open to checking out other various theme cafes before going back to New York. Bikky admitted to having fun, but he felt that he had seen everything he needed by going to the one that morning.

At the TKY52 Café, Carol was surprised that Ayaka still had a menu item, and ordered it. After Dee saw what it was, he ordered it too, not because it was his sister’s choice, but he couldn’t wait until they were in Nagoya to have kishimen soup, with a side of tenmusu. Dafydd was right that the café did not serve full meal sets. Dee, Ryo and Dafydd also ended up moving to the other side of the café where the music was not so loud because Darin and Ryoko started to cry while sitting in a room that looked like a theater, and played TKY52 videos, along with some of its sister groups, at a loud volume. Momo stayed with Carol and Bikky, mainly for Carol. Bikky was more interested in his food, but was enjoying the videos. Carol was soaking in everything, from the writings on the walls from various members, to the items pertaining to the group and even some stage costumes on display. Momo read the messages written on the wall for Carol, because most were written in Japanese.

There were still videos being played in the other room, but at a lower volume. The room looked more like a normal café, except for the TKY52 memorabilia.

Once they were done with their lunch, the group went back to shopping. Dee and Ryo were open to allowing Bikky and Carol to go off on their own again for an hour. Momo then asked Carol if she minded if they went to the stores together, and Carol quickly agreed. As Momo and Carol left, agreeing to meet at a coffee shop near the train station, Bikky decided that he wanted to spend more time with his new uncle and fathers and stayed with the adults and his baby siblings.

They found their way to the Gundam Café to discover the main item on the menu were hot dogs. Dee, Dafydd and Bikky spent more time in the gift shop than the group did in the café. While the three went through the small but well supplied store of Gundam merchandise, Carol was allowed to go back to the TKY52 Café to do shopping in their gift shop. Ryo and Momo took the twins to a
coffee shop a couple of stores down from the two cafes to watch for their ride. When he saw it arrive, he texted Carol and Dee to meet him and Momo outside.

Dee, Ryo and the twins, and Momo and Dafydd took a hired minibus back to the hotel to rest up a bit before having to go out again that evening. Earlier as they had lunch, Ryo realized how many bags they had, and knew there was more shopping before dinner in the Gundam Café, he called his grandmother, asking how they could get a minibus to meet them. Akira did not give them the number to one of the companies she would call; instead she told them to call their hotel and request a ride back to the hotel. The hotel should have various sized vehicles for request by VIP guests, and that there was no bigger VIP than hotel owners. Ryo had Dee make the call, wanting him to get more comfortable with them owning the hotel and made arrangements for a van or small size bus to meet them outside the Gundam Café.

Bikky and Carol were allowed to go off on their own for the rest of the evening and decided to stay in Akihabara to explore more. Bikky had called their friends before they ate dinner and the friends were on their way to meet up with Bikky and Carol.

Dee and Ryo got Ryoko and Darin settled for bed and then took quick showers. Dafydd and Momo went back to their suite for a while. Ryo was still in the shower when Takehide, Tsubasa and Kimi arrived. Takehide was designated babysitter that night while everyone else went to Ginza dressed in costume for the masquerade ball.

It was going on 3 am by the time Dee and Ryo found their way back to the penthouse. Bikky and Carol were already asleep, as was Takehide in one of the extra rooms. Tsubasa and Kumi wanted to see if they could get a room in the hotel because of the hour, and Tsubasa needing to be in work early the next morning, but Ryo insisted that they take another bedroom. Takehide and Tsubasa had clean suits to put on for work, while Kumi packed an overnight night bag, just in case.

OoOoOoO

November 1, 2006

Laytner-MacLean Penthouse

Tokyo New Crown Star Hotel

Roppongi Hills, Tokyo, Japan
When Dee and Ryo work up late that morning, Bikky and Carol were already up. They had also changed Darin and Ryoko and fed them and the four were in the living room, watching a morning variety show on TV.

“Ohayo,” Bikky greeted as Dee made his way into the kitchen.

“Ohayo,” Dee greeted back. “I take it the chibis are settled for the morning?”

“Yup. They’re both dressed and ready for today,” Bikky said. “They’re having a great time, you know.”

Dee walked over to the couches set up before the large flatscreen TV and started to laugh. Darin and Ryoko were on their mats. Darin was busy trying to grab one of his feet and was finding amusement with it, while Ryoko was hitting the toys on her playmat and laughing at the lights.

“I can see that,” Dee commented. “Hey, Koko is lifting her head much better now. She just almost sat up there.”

“We had them on their tummies for a bit,” Carol said. “Darin is lifting his head more and was trying to roll over. He didn’t succeed but he was trying.”

“And we thought for a moment that Koko was going to lift off and start crawling,” Bikky said. “It was funny. I got video too.”

“I want to see it,” Dee remarked, smiling down at the wiggling babies.

“I think they also like this show,” Bikky said. “They were laughing with us when we had them on our laps.”

Dee grinned at his son. “Are you sure they weren’t just laughing because you were laughing?”

“Maybe, but this show also has a lot of color on it,” Bikky said. “And that does amuse them.”
“There was also singing,” Carol added. “They had some pop group on that I couldn’t catch who they were but I want to find out. They were good.”

“I noticed that there’s coffee,” Dee said.

“Yeah. Carol made coffee, while I ran down and got us some pastries from the shop in the lobby,” Bikky said.

Dee went back over to the kitchen where there was a colorful box on the counter. He peered in and noticed there were three pastries left. “And how many did you two eat?” he asked, realizing that they were more Halloween theme sweets.

“Oh, um… well, you don’t have to worry about us being hungry right now,” Bikky replied. “We meant to leave more in case Uncle Dafydd and Aunt Momo wanted something, but they were so good.”

“How come Japanese cakes and stuff taste so different?” Carol asked. “Different but very yummy.”

“A lot of them are made with wheat flour,” Dee replied as he poured his coffee. He also noticed a note from Kumi on the counter.

“There are also all those different types of break with lots of weird stuff on it that we don’t think about in New York,” Bikky said. “But they’re good. Who would think of fish sausage and cheese and vegetables on bread back home?”

“Who would think of fish sausages,” Carol added with a giggle. “But it’s all so good.”

“Yup,” Bikky said, nodding his head. “You think we can get Emiko to sell some of that weird bread at her café?”

Dee shrugged. “I don’t know Bikky. She’s not opening a Japanese bread shop, you know. It’s a matcha café.”

“But she said she’s also serving coffee and some treats to go with the drinks. It would be cool if she
“I don’t think Emiko knows how to make them and I’m sure it’s a lot of work. She would have to find someone who can make them and at this point that might be a little too much.” He looked at Bikky and smiled. “Maybe after we see how things are going with the café we can explore the idea a little more.”

“Okay. I hope she does okay with the café. She’s really excited about it,” Bikky said. “I’m glad she’s not opening until we’re back in New York. We are going to her opening, right?”

“We’ll be there for a short while,” Dee assured his son. “But then we head off to work and school and make room for paying customers. Remember it’s not that big of a space and it’ll be too cold in January for the outdoor tables. I’m guessing that both Takehide and Tsubasa are long gone to work,” Dee commented as he started to read the note. It said that she had to go back to Kamakura and that she would see everyone the next night for the dinner cruise.

“They were gone already when I woke up,” Carol said. “So was Kumi.” She looked back toward the kitchen. “You found her note?”

“Yup. I kinda figured that everyone would be gone by now. Those Japanese run damn early, no matter what time they get to bed,” Dee said. He grabbed a pastry and sat on one of the chairs at the counter.

Bikky and Carol started to laugh.

“What’s so funny?” Dee asked.

“Both you and Ryo are Japanese,” Carol pointed out. “And you just woke up. And Ryo is still sleeping?” she asked.

“We’re both half-Japanese, thank you, which accounts for us not being up at the crack of dawn after getting in at 3 am,” Dee replied. “And Ryo was taking a shower, so I decided to come out here and investigate. Especially since we had babies in one of the guest rooms last night.”

When they got back, they found out that Takehide had taken the twins into the room with him, settling them in the extra crib. Which was how Bikky and Carol ended up with them without
disturbing Dee and Ryo in their room.

“What are we doing today?” Bikky asked.

“I’m not sure except that Obāsan called last night before we left for the party that she has a board meeting today and that she wanted to meet up with us after. So, whatever we do, we’ll probably be close to Nihonbashi until she calls.”

“Are Uncle Dafydd and Aunt Momo joining us again today?”

“I don’t know, Biks,” Dee replied. “This week was supposed to be their second honeymoon, but most of the time that they weren’t sleeping, they’ve been with us.”

“I think spending time with a long-lost twin brother that you weren’t expecting to find trumps over exploring Tokyo just the two of them,” Carol said.

“Besides, they’re still all mushy and stuff together when they’re with us anyway,” Bikky said. “Just like you and Pops.”

Dee started to chuckle. “Yeah, they are. That’s good. That means they are happy together. Just like me and your Pops.”

Ryo entered the room, dressed in jeans and a puller hoodie. “Ohayo gozaimasu!” he greeted. The others replied back.

With a smile Dee went over to lightly kiss Ryo and poured him a cup of coffee. “The kiddos were kind enough to leave us some Halloweeny pastries.”

Ryo looked in the box, considered the size and gave his attention to the kids. “I guess you tried several of them already.”

“We split them, so Carol and I could both get a taste from each one.”
“So, of course that means you had less because you cut them in half?” Dee asked, amused.

“Yes, we did,” Bikky replied.

Dee leaned closer to Ryo and said low, “We need to work harder on Bikky’s math. Carol’s too.”

Ryo chuckled and nodded his head in agreement. He took one of the pastries and asked Dee, “Do you want to share this with me?”

“I’m guessing that you two already had something like these?” Dee asked Carol and Bikky.

“Yes, we did,” Carol replied. “We got two of those, so we already tried them. They’re all so yummy!”

“I guess we share,” Ryo said to Dee and went to take out a knife from a drawer in the kitchen.

“They do look good,” Dee commented as he watched Ryo cut one of the pastries in half and sat down next to Dee.

After they ate the pastry, Ryo stood up and went to join the kids. “What are we doing for breakfast, besides sweets?” Ryo asked. “We can’t have you two survive on junk food, you know. Even if this stuff is a little healthier than their American counterparts.”

“Pancakes!” Bikky exclaimed. “Do we any of those Hawaiian ones you got from that LaMancha store?”

Dee started to laugh. “At least he knows “The Man of LaMancha,” he said to Ryo.

“Only because we watched that movie, I’m sure,” Ryo said. “I don’t remember him reading the book.”

Bikky nodded his head. “Yup. The movie was pretty good even if it’s an old one.”
“Sometimes the old movies are much better,” Ryo said. “Anyway, I think what you want are the macadamia nut pancake mix that we picked up in Don Quijote.”

“Yeah, them. The ones with the chocolate chips too.”

“Yeah, we still have a couple of packets left,” Dee said. “Do you want coconut syrup?” he asked.

“Only if you make it, Dee,” Carol exclaimed. “But I only want two please. I’m still full on cake.”

Ryo chuckled and said to Dee, “I’ll start on the pancake batter, while you get the syrup going.”

“First, I need to make sure we still have corn syrup left,” Dee commented. He watched as Ryo bent down to pick up Ryoko, who squealed with excitement when she noticed Ryo and extended her arms.

Carol and Bikky were laughing. “Both of them started moving their heads when you started to talk, Ryo,” Carol said.

“Yeah, they couldn’t find where Papa was,” Bikky added. “They were too busy amusing themselves to notice when Dad was by the couch,” he added with a laugh.

“Dee was talking a lot softer than he usually does,” Carol said with a giggle, earning a glare from Dee, which made her giggle more.

“They had a couple of good bands play at the ball last night,” Ryo said with a grin. “Bands that your dad likes, so he did a lot of yelling during the sets.”

“So did you,” Dee remarked. “You knew them too.”

“Fine. Busted,” Ryo said, rolling his eyes but smiled at Dee.
“Were they American bands?” Bikky asked. “I know Hide prefers American bands.”

Dee shook his head. “Hide didn’t put on the ball. He just had good connections to get us all tickets,” he explained.

Dee joined Bikky and ended up picking up Darin. “Okay, now that I’m more awake, I can handle chibi-bits,” he said and started to kiss all over Darin’s face, making the baby boy laugh and squirm in Dee’s arms and grabbed a fistful of Dee’s shirt in one hand.

Ryoko was looking at Dee with a smile, babbling happily, and then suddenly jerked her head to look at Ryo. She started to move her lips in something that could have been a pucker.

“Oh sweetie! Are you trying to give kissies?” Ryo puckered his lips to imitate his daughter and kissed her tiny lips. Ryoko squealed happily with a big smile.

“What’s going on over there?” Dee asked, as he tickled Darin’s feet making him screech and laugh, kicking his feet.

“Koko puckered her lips for a kiss. Well, at least it was a start. At least I recognized it as a kiss,” Ryo said and laughed.

Dee moved his head closer. “Does my little girl want kisses like her brother got?” He puckered his lips.

Ryoko looked at Dee, her eyes wide and after giving him a smile, she puckered her lips again.

“You do want kissies!” Ryo exclaimed with a laugh and watched as she got excited again after Dee kissed her.

“Oh, that’s so adorable!” Carol exclaimed. “And I got a picture.” She held up her phone as she smiled at them. “Bikky was giving them kisses before, and she tried to pucker her lips, but couldn’t do it.”

“So you got her started?” Ryo asked happily. He looked back to Ryoko. “Did you want to give your
“big brother a kiss for being so good to you, sweetheart?”

“I did get all of this on video,” Bikky said with a smile. “Also her first attempt. You can see it later.”

“Yes, please,” Dee said. “Thanks for keeping up with the chibis firsts, Biks.”

“They are starting to get funny,” Bikky said. “Before they were kinda boring. Really cute, but boring.”

“Boring?” Ryo asked. “How can you call all those sleepless night with babies wailing their heads off boring?”

“Besides that, but then all they did was eat, cry and sleep. Now they are doing silly things,” Bikky explained.

Dee started to chuckle. “Yeah you’re right. They are getting silly but in a good way.” He smiled down at Darin, who rested his head against Dee’s chest, still clenching his shirt and looking at Ryo.

“Why don’t we get these two settled in their bouncy chairs and get the pancakes going?” Ryo suggested.

“Biks, Carol? Can I get you two get that electric grill set up?”

“Are we going to have to cook them too?” Bikky asked.

“Well, let’s see. I’m making the syrup, your dad is making the pancake batter. So, yes, you two will be making the pancakes for us. It’s called a family venture,” Dee said.

“Not the first time,” Ryo replied smiling as he bounced Ryoko, who was waving her arms around and smiling. “Besides, Biks, you can cook up some pretty nice pancakes. You too, Carol.”

“Can we go on the patio?” Carol asked. “We won’t be so cramped.”
“Oh yeah! Please, can we?” Bikky asked.

Dee and Ryo shared a look. “Sure. Get the grill set up under the pagoda,” Ryo said. “We’ll bring everything out.”

“We’ll even get the chibis ready for the outdoors too,” Bikky said.

“You can put on the heating lamps. I know it's not really cold, but let’s keep everyone comfortable while we’re eating,” Ryo said.

“Besides, we don’t want the pancakes to start cooling off before we can start eating them,” Dee added with a wink.

OoOoOoO

As they were making pancakes, recruiting Bikky and Carol into manning the griddles, Dee had sent a text to Dafydd about their breakfast plans, and if they wanted to join, they were welcome. If they didn’t, then he would understand, and they could text him when they wanted to meet up. Dafydd replied almost immediately that they were getting ready for the day and they would be coming up shortly.

Dee and Ryo decided on a slow breakfast at the penthouse because it was late in the morning and being they would have to be at the Chikaiki headquarters building in Nihonbashi by noon, it didn’t pay to do anything else until it was time to leave.

Dafydd and Momo arrived just as the kids were getting the second batch of pancakes cooking. Ryo had taken out some fresh fruit to go with it, and Dee had made coffee, and a small clay pot of tea for Carol. Momo giggled with excitement when she noticed the twins once again had their Little Twin Stars hats on along with warm onesies. She smiled brightly, as did Dafydd when Ryoko and Darin noticed them come over and started to reach out their arms, squealing happily.

Dee hugged Ryo and was also smiling, happy that the twins recognized their uncle and aunt. Ryo kissed Dee’s cheek and watched happily as Dafydd and Momo picked up the babies and started to talk to them in Japanese.
As they ate, Dee said to Bikky and Carol, “What did you two do with your friends last night?”

Bikky nearly dropped his coffee mug and immediately set it on the table. “Oh my God! I can’t believe I forgot about until now! They took us to Odaiba, to this awesome arcade type place there.”

“Only it’s more than an arcade,” Carol added, also perking up. “They had rides and stuff, along with the games.”

“They had a rollercoaster,” Bikky exclaimed. “Inside! They had a roller coaster and a lot of other cool rides. I got Carol and me their pay one price passes. It was cheaper because we were there after 4. We stayed until they closed.”

“We gave you money so you can have fun while you’re out,” Ryo assured Bikky. “Just let us know when you’re running low.”

“It’s called Joypolis. I want to go there again,” Bikky said. “Several times. No, more than that. Dad! You and Uncle Dafydd have to see it. Pops, you too, but I know that you’re only into video games because of me.”

“And what about me?” Momo asked. “Shall I stay at home with Darin and Ryoko?” she asked with a teasing smile.

“I didn’t mean to leave you out, Aunt Momo,” Bikky said. “Of course, you can come.”

“We can take pictures of the others as they make fools of themselves,” Carol said to Momo.

“Did you last night?” Momo asked.

Carol nodded. “Oh yes! And video,” she replied.

“Awesome,” Dee said. “More for the huge video watching party when we get back to New York.”

“What about before, so the rest of us in Japan can watch it too?” Dafydd asked.
“Well, okay, we’ll see if we can pull something together,” Dee said. “And I think I want to check out this Joypolis. I don’t know if we’ll have time before we leave Tokyo. If not, maybe when we get back. We’ll have a couple of weeks that shouldn’t be as frantic as these last two.”

“Oh, they also have a takoyaki museum,” Bikky exclaimed. “We did that too. That was awesome! When are we going to the ramen museum that Yuki was talking about?”

“Also, when we get back from seeing more of Japan than the Tokyo area,” Ryo said. “What I want to know is when are we going to get to watch those videos of Daigaku Dudes?” he asked with a smirk.

“I want to watch them too! Let me know, and we’ll come down to Tokyo for a night,” Dafydd said. “If you make it a weekend, we can bring our boys with us.”

Dee started to blush a little. “Yeah, sure. I’ll get with Hide and see if we can pull something together.”

“We can take out one of the theatre rooms here in the hotel,” Ryo said. “I’m sure if there’s one open they’ll let us use it.”

“Oh geez,” Dee sighed as the others started to look excited, trying to work out plans.”

“Wait, whoa!” Dee said. “I still have to get with Hide. Maybe even Yuki first.”

“At the party, Hide said that he was going to pull everything together,” Dafydd said.

“He did,” Ryo agreed. “And he has access to professional equipment and people to work on it. He said that too to Obāsan.”

“Maybe we can make sure they’ll all together with a band and they can also do a mini concert?” Momo asked.
“Oh boy,” came from Dee and he picked Ryoko up from her bouncy chair and got busy with amusing his daughter.

“Did you make a lot of money on the single?” Dafydd asked.

Dee shrugged. “We did okay,” he said. “We probably could have done a lot better if we had better representation. We don’t get royalties. NSYNC does, but we signed a bad deal so we don’t. I’ve been seeing a few hundred dollars a year from the other single, but I set up direct deposit to the orphanage’s account. It’s not like we were expecting to even hit the bottom of the Oricon charts, so we weren’t looking for a great deal. It was just for fun, and imagine our surprise when we heard ourselves everywhere on the radio and suddenly had to do interviews and a tour.” He shrugged again. “But like I said, the money was okay. It was a little easier for the rest of my time here, and I was able to send a nice amount to the orphanage’s funds.” He grinned a little. “I knew if I sent a check to the Penguin, she would never have cashed it, insisting I keep my money. So I sent it as an anonymous donation, with Barry’s help.”

Ryo had to chuckle. “Yeah, that sounds about right for both you and Mother.”

“That is very honorable,” Dafydd said with pride in his voice. “The only reason Ayaka doesn’t give money to our grandparents and parents is because they don’t need it. Papa and Chichi are doing very well with Obāsan’s business, and well, Ojiisan owns the biggest communications network in Japan.”

“Yeah, it sounds like we don’t have to toss any money to them,” Dee said thoughtfully.

“They are more likely to toss money to us when they think we need it, especially Obāsan and Ojiisan. They even give money to Ayaka, even if she’s one of the highest paid idols in Japan. They tell her that she’s young and should put her money away until later. They offered to pay for an apartment, or if she wanted, a house, but Ayaka likes still living at home. Papa and Chichi likes having her living there, too.”

“I guess they still see her as young, poor little Ayaka,” Dee chuckled.

“Speaking of Ayaka,” Dafydd started, “she’s the only one in the family who supported me in finding you. She believed me when I said I knew you weren’t killed and hoped with me that one day I’ll find you.”

Momo hugged her husband’s arm. “And you did.” She pulled away slightly to slap the same arm.
“And she’s not the only one in the family. I just wasn’t expecting to find him in my family.”

“I wasn’t either, but it does not matter as long as I finally found my twin brother.” Dafydd smiled warmly at Dee. “There have been times since Saturday that when I’m with you, I feel as if we’ve been together all our lives.” he said to Dee.

Dee shrugged and gave Dafydd a sloppy smile. “For someone who never cared to learn about his biological family, I catch myself at times over the last few days that I can’t picture life without you,” he admitted. “I also feel like you’ve always been with me. In fact, I think we need to compare injuries.”

“Oh, don’t start now,” Ryo said laughing, “especially with Dee. We’ll never get to meet with Obāsan on time.”

Momo started to laugh too. “Oh, I understand what you mean after talking to Dafydd’s fathers about when he was younger.” She looked at Dafydd in wonder. “There were a couple of times during the summer,” she mused.

“Did you feel like you were going into labor, Uncle Dafydd?” Bikky asked. “Or being cut open?”

“Reading up on your Dad, yes, I did realize I felt achy, sometimes in pain. That is why I believed you were alive. When I was five years old, suddenly I felt like I broke my arm, and kept crying and insisting I broke it. When the pain subsided, but still ached for a few more days, I wondered if my twin was out there somewhere and broke his arm. That’s one of the ways I felt it.” He let out a heavy sigh. “But Papa was so certain that you were killed with Tad, that he never saw it for what it was.”

Ryo was staring at Dee. “You did break your arm when you were five. I remember Mother telling me that when I first met her.”

“Yeah,” Dee replied to Ryo and Dafydd. “I fell out of the window at the orphanage.”

“That does not surprise me. The broken arm. It does worry me that you had to fall out of a window to do it,” Dafydd said.

“Then we best not compare notes on injuries or you’ll be awake at nights,” Dee said. He looked around the table and noticed everyone was done. “We don’t have to share everything at once. A little
at a time, at least. Especially now that I’m thinking back and remembering weird aches and pains through my life.”

“I think that is the best idea,” Momo said in agreement.

Dee smiled at her. “I think so too.” He started to stand. “I think it’s time to get the dishes inside and start getting ready to meet Obāsan and let her take us to lunch.”

Ryo snorted. “Yup, as if we couldn’t afford lunch.” He winked at Dafydd and Momo, who started to laugh.

“I just hope we don’t go somewhere with that weird fancy stuff on tiny little plates,” Bikky said.

Ryo ruffled his son’s hair as he stood up to help Dee with the dishes. “Don’t worry if you’re still hungry when you leave. That means more room for all the street food we’ll come across during our adventures.”

“That’s true,” Bikky agreed. “Okay, she can take us where we want, but then I want to find another rolled okonomiyaki stand.”

Everyone laughed as they brought the dishes into the penthouse.

OoOoOoO

Chikaiki Transport’s main headquarters in Nihonbashi was located in a 15-floor building a block away from Tokyo Station. The building with a curved front was purchased by Jordon Aoki’s grandfather but only the top five floors were used for the company. The other floors were leased out to other companies. The first floor consisted of the building lobby, and elevators and stairs to access the other floors, and a clothing store and Tully’s coffee shop.

It was the first time Bikky and Carol got to see Tokyo Station and it took some promises from Dee and Ryo that they would have a chance to explore later in the day to navigate through the extensive
station toward the Nihonbashi exit without stopping to look at the many stops along the way. They did get turned around once while getting to the east side of the station. It was so long for Dee and Ryo and Tokyo Station is so large, both the building and the confusing maze of underground shopping and tunnels, and Dafydd and Momo had only been in the station to get off the Shinkansen and always took the same way out on the Marunouchi side to get a taxi to their hotel and did not know how to get across the station to the Nihonbashi side.

Once out of the station, Ryo did remember the short walk to the building. They found Akira waiting for them in the lobby, sitting in a chair and drinking tea from Tully’s. She smiled when they came over to her and accepted Dafydd’s hand to assist her to stand up, since Ryo had Ryoko in her sling and Dee had Darin.

“Were you waiting long, Obāsan?” Ryo asked after she thanked Dafydd and greeted him with a hug and kiss. She did the same to Momo.

“Not too long,” she said after greeting the rest of her family. “I thought you might get distracted in Tokyo Station,” she replied, looking at Bikky and Carol and giving them a wink.

“Actually,” Dee started ruefully, “we got lost.”

“We didn’t get too lost, Dee,” Momo corrected him. “Only that you and Ryo couldn’t decide which way to go at one point, and we ended up going both ways.”

Bikky started to laugh. “And they were both wrong. Uncle Dafydd found the right way to get on the other side of the tracks.”

“Really?” Akira asked, amused as she led them to the elevators. “And here I was thinking Dee and Ryo were able to read Japanese.”

“We do,” Ryo said. “But the signs said everything but Nihonbashi, and we forgot which buildings were on this side of the station.”

“To be fair to them, the signs to the east exit did not lead to the east side of the tracks,” Momo said.

“Not the mention that we didn’t have all those buildings on the Yaesu side during my time here,” Dee added. “It’s all new.”
“That’s because the building called Tokyo Station is the red brick building on the Marunouchi side of the tracks,” Akira stated, still amused as they waited for an elevator.

“To be honest, I’ve been through the station tons of times, changing trains but it’s all been underground,” Dee said. “I think I saw the red building twice only because I ventured that far from the Imperial Palace, just looking around.”

“I remember the building, but I keep forgetting that the exit signs pertain only to the station building and not the entire station,” Ryo explained, looking embarrassed.

“I thought I raised you better during your times in Japan,” Akira said with a laugh, as the elevator doors opened.

OoOoOoO

Akira took them up to a tour of the company, taking pleasure in introducing the newest members of her family to the staff. Many longtime employees remembered Ryo and was happy to see he had a family of his own now. Others were amazed at seeing Dee and Dafydd.

It was an enjoyable visit, even Bikky seemed to enjoy seeing the different departments of the company. They also got to see Nobu, Takehide and Tsubasa at work in their offices. The three men joined them when they left to have lunch near the building. After lunch the three men went back to work, and Akira expertly led them through to Tokyo Station to exit the main entrance.

Because of what she heard of their adventures through the station, Akira stopped them outside to take some photos. Dee and Ryo made sure there were pictures of her with Bikky, Darin and Ryoko. Akira also got a few pictures of just Dee and Dafydd with the red brick station in the background.

From there, they walked through Marunouchi, taking their time and then to the Imperial Garden that was open to the public, along with exploring the Imperial Palace area. At the Wadakura Fountain Park, Carol got excited because of a building across the moat that she called a small castle.
Ryo had to chuckle as Dee snorted. Dafydd said, “That’s a gatehouse.”

“Didn’t you hear when Obāsan said the palace is behind all those buildings and trees?” Bikky asked her. “We can’t see it.”

“Bikky, be nice,” Ryo warned him.

Carol pouted slightly. “She also said it didn’t look like a castle,” she said. She sounded disappointed.

“No, you can’t see the Imperial Palace from any of the public parks here,” Dafydd said. “You could see more if you were staying in that hotel.” He pointed to the Palace Hotel set on a corner of the other moat going around the fountain park that remained from Edo Castle and surrounded the inner Imperial Palace grounds. “I remember going with our grandparents to see the Palace and we stayed in that hotel.”

“We went on grounds once when they opened the palace gates the day after New Year’s Day,” Dee said.

“You went inside the Imperial Palace, Dee?” Carol asked.

“No, we went on the grounds outside the palace complex and watched the Emperor and Empress make an appearance on a covered balcony,” Dee replied. “We got up at some ungodly hour to come here and then stood on a long line for a couple of hours before they started to let people in. Then we went through a checkpoint at the parks over there, which took a while, only to get on another long line and a few hours later, we were taken inside the gates.”

Dafydd smirked and nodded his head in agreement with his twin as Bikky looked at him. “Yes, they do that on January 2nd and on the Emperor’s birthday,” he said to Bikky.

“Dafydd is correct,” Akira said. “Unfortunately, you will be back in New York for both dates.”

“We can plan a trip to be here on one of the two days the Palace Grounds are open,” Ryo said. “Maybe we can even make a reservation for the ground tour of the grounds. That doesn’t mean inside, but it does get us beyond the gates.”
“Can we do a tour this trip?” Bikky asked.

“Well,” Ryo started and looked at Dee, who shrugged. They both looked at Akira.

“It depends on if you have time when you get back from your trip,” Akira said. “When you get back, we can see if it’s possible.”

“I’m good with a tour,” Dee said, “but I already waited hours to get inside the gates, so whenever we’re in town to let the kids go see the Emperor wave, I hope you don’t mind if I beg out of it.”

“We’ll see when the time comes,” Ryo said. “Save your thoughts until then, especially since it’s going to be over a year until the next chance we’ll have to be here on one of those days.” He gave Dee a meaningful look.

Dee sighed heavily. “Fine. You’re right.”

They continued to walk south along Hibiya Dori, which was the street that ran along the palace grounds to Hibiya Park. From Hibiya Park, Akira led them the few blocks east. Bikky started to get excited and rushed ahead of everyone when he noticed the statue of Godzilla in a square. Ryo, Akira, Carol and Momo started to laugh as Dee and Dafydd were right behind Bikky.

Their next stop was walking around Ginza, where they not only looked around but did more shopping, including the Hakuhinkan Toy Park. Bikky’s went wide as he looked around the store, and then stared at Akira when she explained that there were 4 floors.

“Wow! This place looks cooler than FAO Schwartz!” Bikky exclaimed.

“This does look like a fun store,” Carol agreed.

“They have everything here for any age,” Dee said with a grin. “I should know. Me and my friends would come here once in a while and spend more than we should have.”
“Why don’t you look around and if you see something, let us know,” Ryo said. “We can’t buy the entire store out, but you can get a few things.”

“Really?” Bikky asked.

“Really. Carol, you too,” Dee said.

“You may also pick out a couple of things from me,” Akira added.

“I don’t really need anything,” Carol said, “but can I help pick out things for Darin and Ryoko? You were going to get them something, right?”

“Of course, we are,” Akira replied. “If I get my way, everybody is leaving with something new.” She gave all the adults a pointed look. “Everybody.”

Before anyone had a chance to protest, Momo’s phone rang and she looked at the caller ID and gestured to everyone. She answered the phone, greeting Hana, her friend who was handling the DNA test, looking around.

Akira started to move them toward a near empty space near the elevators while Momo made small talk until they were in a better spot so she could put the call on speaker phone. “Dee, Ryo,” she Momo said, “this is my friend, Hana-san. She is in charge of the DNA forensics lab. She is the best there is with DNA,” and then slyly she added, “and yes, she is one of my subordinates.”

“They were friends long before Momo’s promotion,” Dafydd added helpfully.

“Her English is not so good, so apologies to Bikky and Carol,” Momo explained. “Hana, Dee and Ryo both speak very good Japanese, like natives.”

“I can give the actual results in English,” Hana said in Japanese, “but the specific details will have to be in Japanese.”

“That is fine, Hana-san,” Dee said in Japanese, sharing a look with Dafydd, who was standing next to him. “Thank you so much for doing this.”
“What’s going on?” Bikky asked, not understanding much of what was being said.

“Momo’s friend is going to give the DNA results,” Ryo explained. “She said that she can give the general results in English so we can all hear it together, but the details will have to be in Japanese.”

“We’ll fill you in after,” Dee assured Bikky.

“Maybe I should go somewhere else for now,” Carol said.

Akira grabbed onto her arm. “Why?”

“You’re family, Princess,” Dee said. “You were with us when I first met Dafydd and then later, when we talked more. You’re in this with us.”

“Oh definitely,” Ryo agreed as he hugged her.

“Yeah, Carol, you’re stuck with us,” Bikky said and stuck his tongue out at her.

Carol laughed and stuck hers out at him. “All right. You’re all so wonderful and I love you for it.”

With a warm smile, Dafydd said in Japanese, “Hana-san, forgive us but my brother and his family are very wonderful people.”

“That makes me very happy. Now are you interested in hearing some news that might make you very happy too?”

“Might?” Dee asked, starting to frown a little.

Dafydd laughed as he slipped an arm around Dee’s shoulders. “Relax, Dee. She’s teasing us,” he said in English.
“Yeah, Dad. We already know the results. It’s too obvious,” Bikky spoke. “It’s pretty certain that Uncle Dafydd is… well, my Uncle Dafydd.”

Dee started to chuckle as he winked at Bikky. “Yeah, that is pretty obvious, but still….” He looked nervously at Dafydd, who hugged him close to him.

“We need to make this official, Biks,” Ryo reminded him. “That way there is no doubt when they tell their father.”

“Oh, Gomenaizai, Hana-san. You can give my dad and uncle the results, please,” said Bikky.

Hana laughed over the phone. “It sounds like Dee-san has a very lovely family,” she said in slow, broken English with a heavy accent. “I shall, what they say, cut to the chase.” In Japanese, she added, “and then all the details and any questions you might have. If Bikky and Carol has any, you can translate if I do not understand or cannot answer in English. Yes?”

“Yes, thank you,” Dee replied, as he glanced nervously at Ryo and Akira. Even Dafydd was starting to look a little nervous, but Momo continued to smile at them.

There was no doubt that they were twins, but the slightest mismatch could make it hard for Dafydd to convince the family that his twin brother had survived. He squeezed Dee’s shoulder and Dee hugged him in assurance.

“Okay,” Hana said in English, “it is 100% match that Dee Laytner-MacLean is Daisuke Fujioka. Also, which is most remarkable, but proves Dee is a Fujioka, Dee-san’s DNA matches Dafydd-san’s almost exactly, except for eye color.”

“That sounds right,” Ryo commented as he watched the two men hug each other.

Momo giggled. “That is pretty obvious since Dee has the most amazing dark green eyes. Which are like Alun-san’s, from what I’ve seen in photos.”

Dafydd nodded. “I only know what Tad looks like from photos and home movies, but I’m certain Papa will say that Dee has Tad’s eyes. Papa already mentioned many times that I got his eyes and
Daisuke got Tad’s.”

“So it’s official now?” Bikky asked. “Dad and Uncle Dafydd are twins, right?”

“Hai! Yes!” Momo exclaimed happily as Carol rushed over to hug the two men.

“That’s so awesome, Dee,” Carol gushed. “I’m so happy for you and Dafydd!”

“For Momo, too,” Ryo said. “She just got a major upgrade in the family.”

Momo giggled, blushing a little. “That pleases me. I like your family a lot,” she said, indicating the Laytner-MacLeans. She kissed Dee’s cheek. “Welcome to the Fujiokas, Dee.” She moved so she could briefly kiss Dafydd’s lips. “Congratulations, Dafydd. You did it! You found Daisuke.

Dafydd released his hold on Dee to pull Momo in for a hug and kissed her back. “No,” he disagreed. “It was you who insisted we come here for the party.”

Ryo moved closer so he could hug and kiss Dee. With a smile, he said to his husband, “It looks like you have a twin brother, Dee. Along with a pretty big family.

“Our family is huge,” Dafydd corrected and started to laugh. “And that’s just Fujiokas. There is Chichi’s family. Oh, and Obāsan’s.”

Ryo started to laugh. “Meaning that all our family is now massive.” Looking at Momo and Dafydd, he continued, “You both know Obāsan’s collective family accepts you too. And I know the Lanes enough that they will too once they hear the news.”

“That’s Mother’s family,” Dee informed them. “She’s waiting until we tell our father before letting the rest of her family know the news. And don’t forget the MacLeans.” He shrugged. “Well, most of them anyway. Maybe with this news, the dinosaurs will shrivel up and blow away.”

Ryo stared at Dee and started to laugh. “You know, sometimes you sound like Grandma when it comes to the MacLeans.”
“Because she is a wise woman,” Dee replied.

“Yes, she is,” Ryo had to agree.

In Japanese, Hana said, “Dee-san, may I ask you a question? Forgive me, but I am curious, and since I am a family friend, I need to ask. If this is too personal just tell me and I will understand. I will not be offended if you do not want to answer.”

“You could always ask, Hana-san,” Dee replied in Japanese, still smiling. “But you are asking me while I’m in an extremely good mood.

“From what I was told you never requested a DNA test,” Hana started. “I know the standard procedure these days is to file a DNA sample for found children who appear to be abandoned in hopes to locate parents, but back when you were an infant, DNA was not part of the procedure.”

“No. DNA research was not as advanced as it has become since then,” Dee agreed.

“However, as DNA matching became common practice to determine race, you never requested it, which would have been your right. Why did you not?” Hana asked.

“To be honest, Hana-san, until Saturday night, I never wanted to know anything about my biological parents,” Dee replied. “I mean, I was found in an alley near a dumpster in the winter. I always believed I wasn’t wanted, that my parents or a parent felt I was not worth going through giving me up for adoption if they couldn’t keep me. I can understand that maybe someone is too young to raise a child to give the baby up, but there are proper channels to do so. Even if Safe Haven was not in play back then, no baby was ever turned away from being dumped at a police or fire station. So, you can see why as soon as I was old enough, I felt that my biological parents were monsters. I’ve been a cop for most of the time since I returned to New York from college and allowed them to take a DNA sample, but seeing what I’ve seen as a cop, it only affirmed my opinion, and I never allowed them to run any testing. It was just there since it was required of me because I’m an LEO.”

“That is understandable,” Hana agreed. “Even here in Japan, we’ve seen more than our share of parents mishandling unwanted children. Unfortunately, it is one of the main reasons to keep our labs busy. We match found children to parents so they can deal with the consequences.”

“That is what we do in New York too,” Ryo said. “Unfortunately, not everyone comes up as a hit in
our DNA database. Especially if the parents are not New York residents.”

“Yeah, not everyone is required to submit DNA, but even for those that do not match, we can at least have a lead in finding parents,” said Dee. “We had some cases where we had to locate family with our unit before the unit became Carrier based. Now, unless a child’s test came back as a Carrier, there are other units to work on it. My mother has required all children who come into her orphanage to submit DNA samples, for her files as well as for the police.”

“This is another reason my brother did not have any desire to locate his biological family,” Dafydd added. “He had a family. One that loved him. He had a father until he was 15, and still has a very loving and most wonderful mother. She even accepted me as her son just because I am Dee’s brother.”

“She sounds wonderful. I am glad that you had a family,” said Hana.

“It wasn’t a conventional family,” Dee admitted. “For one thing, Mother lived in the orphanage, so even after she was able to adopt me, we still lived there. I did not accept anything special just because I was her legal son, and chose to remain in the dormitory with the other boys my age. Jess, my dad, had his own place, but it was always open to me. Sometimes I stayed there. I did have a room there. It wasn’t big, but it was mine. He was never able to legally adopt me. Things were different then than when Ryo took Bikky in and was able to adopt him. Back then, with Jess being divorced and a cop, the situation was considered unsteady for a child. So he was only able to let me stay over here and there with Mother’s permission.”

“One more question, please,” said Hana.

“Sure,” Dee agreed.

Ryo laughed. “I guess it’s obvious that he has no problem answering your questions.”

“I am not complaining. It means I am getting to know Dafydd’s twin brother more, and since Dafydd and Momo are both friends of my family, this is important to me.”

“As her and her family are of ours,” Momo added.

“So ask away.”
“I think I have already connected the answer but to confirm, why did you not at least request a test to determine race?” Hana asked.

“Because it would cause me to raise questions about my biological parents, and thinking of them what I had, I really didn’t want to. You know how it works sometimes. Knowing my race, whether I wanted them to or not, sometimes questions would be on my mind no matter how hard I tried not to,” Dee replied.

“Yes. That is what I thought. Of course, I ran the full spectrum of your DNA. As Momo-san said, the more we have, the better to convince Saburo-san that you are his presumed dead child. If you want, I can give you the other results.”

Dee shared a look with Dafydd. “Only if you wish,” Dafydd said to Dee. “I will ask her for everything at a time that you are not around if you do not want to know.”

“It’s okay. I don’t think that of my biological parents anymore. I was wrong to think what I had of them, and regret that I will never get to know one of my fathers,” Dee replied, clasping a hand on Dafydd’s shoulder.

Hana went on to explain in Japanese, while Akira continued to translate for Bikky and Carol. When she was done, there was no doubt of who Dee was. His race not only was Welsh and Japanese, with a very small percentage of Indian, but it matched Dafydd’s exactly for race. She determined that despite the difference in eye color that they are identical twins. The DNA sample from Dee’s baby shirt matched the DNA sample taken from the baby carrier, and also matched with Dee. The paternity testing came back that both Saburo Fujioka and Alun Jones are the biological fathers to both Dafydd and Dee. Matching both men to Dafydd might have been unnecessary not only because there was no doubt who Dafydd’s fathers were, but by adding that information was Hana’s way of being completely thorough in her job.

Everyone thanked Hana for everything that she had done. Hana assured them that she will leave all the paperwork in Dafydd’s study in their house. Saburo was watching the twins, but Hana had offered to make sure Momo’s flowers were tended to a couple of times during the week, so she was given the key to their house. That way, they did not have to stop at police headquarters before going to see Saburo and tell him the news.

Once Momo hung up the call, they finished their exploring the store, everyone in great spirits. Both Bikky and Carol ended up with more than Dee and Ryo originally planned to buy at the time. Besides, Dee and Ryo, of course, Akira insisted on spoiling her great-grandchildren, including Carol. Then Dafydd decided that he had to celebrate that Bikky, Ryoko and Darin were officially his
nephews and niece and insisted on buying a few things for them and Carol, because he did not want her to feel left out.

When they were finished with buying, Akira took them to the top floor that had several restaurants for an early dinner. Plans were already made for that evening, with Dee and Ryo taking Dafydd and Momo to kabuki. Akira had managed to get them tickets when she heard that Dafydd and Momo had wished to catch a performance while in Tokyo but did not think of buying ahead online from Nagoya. Bikky and Carol declined to go when she had first asked before contacting her nephew, and they explained that they had a great time when they went but it was okay if they did not go again. Ryo was already talking about getting tickets to catch a couple of acts of a performance in Kyoto or Osaka.

Bikky, Carol and the twins were to go back to Kamakura with Akira and spend the night there. Nobu had offered to bring them back to the penthouse on the way to the office in the morning. At first both Dee and Ryo protested having their family so far away from them for a night. Akira laughed and pointed out that Kamakura was not across the ocean from Tokyo, and if anxieties proved too much they were welcome to hire a car to take them to her house and collect their family at any time during the night. She had then reminded them that part of the trip was to help them with separation anxieties from their family. They were getting better, but they were still to leave all three children overnight. She continued that it would be with trusted family and not strangers. Finally Dee and Ryo had to agree with her and made plans for when they took Dafydd and Momo to see kabuki.

When they left Akira, Bikky, Carol and the twins, they heard Akira telling them that they would be stopping at Yuki’s place in Yokohama for noodle soup on the way back to her house, since Tsubasa would be meeting them after he was done with work and driving them to Kamakura.

OoOoOoO
Dee and Ryo learn more about the Fujiokas and about Carriers in Japan.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

November 2, 2006

Ginza, Tokyo

Japan

The two couples had a great time that night, especially with the confirmed knowledge that Dee and Dafydd were twins. Since they had eaten early, after they got out of the performance, they found an izakaya near the Kabukiza for a light meal.

“I can’t believe your cousin took the time before the performance to give us a tour,” Dafydd said.

“Obāsan might have set it up, it also had a lot to do with Momo, since she is family on the Hachimoto side,” Ryo said. “Anyway, I’m glad you enjoyed yourself.”

“A good way to celebrate our good news,” Dafydd said.

Ryo started to laugh. “Be prepared for tomorrow night, because I suspect that tomorrow night’s dinner cruise will be something of a celebration party, if I know my grandmother.”

“Your cousin did say that he will see us tomorrow night, along with his wife and father,” Dafydd said.

“Yeah, some of Obāsan’s side, the ones she is closer to, will join us tomorrow,” Ryo replied.
“Will your friends also be joining us, Dee?” Dafydd asked.

“Yeah. They were asked. Word has that at Obāsan’s request, Yuki will be supplying the ramen for the soup course,” Dee said. “But he won’t be making the soup. The ship’s kitchen staff will accept the noodle delivery for this cruise but that’s it. He’s still just a guest on the ship.”

“As he should be. I hope we can make time to visit his noodle shop in Yokohama, but I don’t think we’ll have time by Friday,” Dafydd commented.

“About that,” Ryo started slyly as their food arrived. They all paused to appreciate the plates set before them and waited while sake was poured into short clear glasses that were set inside wooden boxes. The sake was poured in each glass until it spilled over the brim and into the box. The bottle was left on the table and they all thanked the server. The first of their orders, various pickled vegetables, was then brought to their table by a second waiter.

Dee and Ryo realized that they just automatically clasped their hands together as if in prayer and exclaimed “Itadakimasu” in time with Dafydd and Momo. Ryo could not help noticing the pleased smile that grew on Dafydd’s face.

Once again, since they had left Bikky and Carol with Akira and did not have to worry about language barriers, the four easily fell into speaking Japanese and had been since.

“You were saying something Ryo?” Momo asked.

Ryo nodded. “Yes. Dee and I were talking last night. Bikky too. We have an offer that we all hope that you will accept.”

“What’s that?” Dafydd asked.

Ryo stared at Dee, signaling that it was his turn to speak. Dee nodded, looking down for a moment and then looked up to meet his brother’s eyes. “First, we are correct that you are expected to return to work on Monday, yes?”

“Yes. That’s correct,” Dafydd agreed.
“Which is why Hana insisted on leaving the results in our house. If we come in Friday night or Saturday to pick them up, we might be asked to work. Which if we didn’t have the situation we have, we might have agreed to come in.”

“Then if you’re not in Nagoya until Sunday, then if they call anyway, you definitely can’t come in,” Ryo said and then added with a sigh. “I know this from experience. We have normal hours for the most part, but there are times we get calls outside a tour and we have to take it and come in.”

“Unless we’re not in New York City, which then they have to wait until we can get back,” Dee added. “We’ve been assured that we won’t get such calls while we are in Japan, but in return we have agreed to video conference calls once a week to get updates on what’s happening with our unit, and anything important we should know about the Carrier situation. Except we didn’t call this week. I did email the Commissioner Monday and Diana, our friend who got the sample from Mother, also filled him in on our interesting situation.”

“Dee then spoke to him Monday night before we got ready for bed. Our Commissioner understands that it would be hard for Dee to keep this news to himself if he saw our co-workers, who are also our friends, and agreed that your father should be the next person to know. I know Dee hated bringing one more person into the secret, but it was necessary.”

“Commissioner Rose told me that he would come up with a reason why we couldn’t conference in and that they’ll hear from us again this upcoming Monday morning, which is Monday evening for us,” Dee said. “We’re also not taking calls from our friends until Monday night.”

“That’s obvious from the voicemail that you have this week,” Momo stated with a laugh. “That you are having tons of fun and too many places to be and that you will get in touch once things slow down some.”

Dee and Ryo smiled. “We even had Bikky change it too, just in case someone tries to call him.”

“Your work has Bikky’s number?” Dafydd asked amazed.

“Only Mother, our Commissioner, Carol’s aunt, Ryo’s grandparents, Emiko, who is Ryo’s cousin who lives in New York, and my friend Barry has the number to his burner phone. Only Mother and the Commissioner knows the truth,” Dee explained as they started to eat.
“Carol didn’t change hers. Would they try to call her?” Momo asked.

“The only one back in America who has her number is her aunt. Everyone else who has it is in Japan,” Ryo explained. “And it’s a little hard for her not to say anything, but not as bad as if Dee or I spoke to someone, so she does call her aunt every other night. We insist she does, no matter what we are doing, because it was kind of her aunt to allow her to join us for so long a trip, and we make sure they get to talk.”

“That is so sweet,” Momo said with a smile.

“It’s killing her,” Dee said with a laugh. “When we’re around, we can see on her face that she wants to burst out exclaiming that I have a twin brother who is Ayaka Fujioka’s brother too.”

“True,” Ryo stated. “But she’s keeping good on her promise to us.”

“Speaking of Ayaka,” Dafydd said. “I hope that you do not mind that tomorrow morning I call her. I already sent her a text tonight that I have big news but don’t have time to talk to her until tomorrow. I have to tell someone, and she has always been on my side and supported me in believing that you are alive. I’m hoping that we can also have her with us when I tell Papa, but first I need to have her get used to the news.”

“If it’s that important to you, then yes, please tell her,” Dee stated.

“It is. I know she will be most excited when she hears that I actually found my twin brother and that he’ll be in Nagoya on Monday. I know she will want to meet you first chance she has,” Dafydd stated.

Momo covered Dafydd’s hand with hers and smiled at Dee and Ryo. “Despite Dafydd being the oldest and Ayaka being the youngest, they are the closest siblings. Tomoko is pretty close to Ayaka too but that’s because they were roommates in Tokyo while Ayaka was in TKY52.”

“We are a close family, but obviously some siblings form closer bonds,” Dafydd explained.

“I am looking forward to meeting them,” Dee said. “Though it is most likely you and I who will be the closest, especially with me being halfway around the world from the rest of you.”
“I am certain that it won’t be just me and Ayaka reaching out to you when you go back to New York. You’ll feel like we’re with you. I promise,” Dafydd said.

“Once you convince our father that I’m alive,” Dee said. “And getting back on track on our proposition. We are hoping that we can convince you to stay until Sunday morning. In return, we’ll push up our trip by a day and leave for Nagoya on Sunday morning so we can all go together.”

“I don’t know,” Momo said, looking at Dafydd in question. “We already told Papa that we’re taking the 5 o’clock shinkansen back to Nagoya on Friday. He’ll be waiting at the station.”

“Can you tell him your plans changed?” Ryo asked. “It’s only two more days, and you don’t have to worry about a hotel for the extra days.”

“I’m not sure if you’re one of those rare people in Japan who buy round trip on the Shinkansen, so if you are, we’ll even pay you back the money for your tickets on the shinkansen,” Dee offered. “We don’t want you to waste your money because of us. We’ll even cover for anything else during the time that might fall out of your budget from staying the extra days.”

“Do not worry about the shinkansen,” Dafydd assured them. “We are like normal Japanese and do not get round trip. And if we did, it wouldn’t cost us, unlike most Japanese. We have special yearly multi-passes. We can use it at anytime for the shinkansen between Narita and Nagasaki, along with local transit.”

“Oh, I thought you were using a SUICA card,” Dee commented. “Ojiisan always gives us a new one every New Year’s Day.”

“We don’t need to use a SUICA card,” Dafydd said, “but it works the same way, so I can see why you believed we were using one.

Momo sighed and then giggled. “I think that is not because it is a New Year’s Day gift, but so that he remembers when our passes will expire. He gives them to everyone in our family, and it is probably easier to remember.”

“This is true,” Dafydd agreed. “I am also willing to bet that was Obāsan’s idea so that she doesn’t have to keep another chart for Ojiisan.” He started to laugh and then took a sip of sake. He started to look serious. “I would love to take you up on your offer, but we also have two sons who are
expecting us to be home. This is the first time we’ve been away from them for so long.”

“Yes, we did hear you tell them that when you spoke to them before going into the theater,” Ryo said.

“But you can always tell them tomorrow that something came up and you’ll be back on Sunday. If we leave early enough, it can be before lunch,” Dee suggested.

“What would we say came up?” Dafydd asked.

Momo started to laugh as he took Dafydd’s hand. “We can always say that Akira-san got our return date mixed up and made plans for us that are very important to her.” She winked at Ryo. “My family can vouch that she does like to do that, and that it is very hard to say no to her because you want to make her happy.”

Both Ryo and Dee nodded in agreement. “That is so very true. Not even Bikky dares to complain when she plans our days,” Ryo stated. “If it’s important to her, then it becomes important to us.”

“Like our dinner cruise tomorrow,” Dafydd said, laughing.

“Exactly,” said Ryo.

“I’m still not sure. We really should go back on Friday.”

“And then what?” Ryo dared to ask. “Do you tell your father that night? Or somehow keep it in until Sunday or Monday? You’ll already be back to work by Monday and we’ll be arriving while you’re at work and will have to wait.”

“Should you tell him Friday,” Dee stared, “and I believe that Hana-san has been extremely thorough in her matching that he cannot deny the truth, and believes you? And he reacts positively to the news, just as you believe he will? Then what? Make the poor man wait until we get in on Monday and wait for someone to guide us to where we’ll meet with him?”

“Can’t you still leave on Sunday even if we return on Friday?” Dafydd asked.
“Not negotiable, bro,” Dee remarked with a wicked grin. “Either you go back Friday and we arrive Monday or we all arrive on Sunday. You can tell him that day, and if he wants to meet me, all he has to wait is however long it will take us from the hotel to wherever he wants to meet.”

Momo squeezed Dafydd’s hand. “I think they have a good point. Besides, it would give you two more days with Dee. I would think you would want to spend all the time you could with him while he’s in Japan before you’re both halfway across the world from each other.”

Dee nodded in agreement. “There’s that too. I’m not willing to let you out of my sight for more than for sleeping. I’m still getting used to this. When you go back to your room, it starts feeling surreal to me that you exist and that I have a biological family who didn’t toss me out with the trash.”

Dafydd reached across the table to grab Dee’s hands in his. “I am so sorry that all this time that is the way you felt when it is very much the opposite. I do have a request when you first meet Papa.”

“I know,” Dee replied with a small smile. “Mother already gave me that speech. I don’t want him feeling any worse than he already does, so I won’t put it like that around him. Not right away, anyway. Maybe one day when he seems to be ready.”

“I’m sure once he hears the details of how your Dad found you, he will get the idea anyway. He will be very happy, but yes, he will also feel bad on how you were found.”

“This is going to be a day for celebrating,” Momo stated, “so we must do everything to make sure he remembers that.”

Dafydd, Dee and Ryo all nodded their heads and made sounds of agreement.

“What about our suite?” Momo said. “From what I see, that hotel usually doesn’t have many empty rooms, and I’m sure the suites are popular for visiting company executives. Did you check if it’s going to be available? Please don’t bump anyone from an expected room for us.”

“Does that mean you’re going to stay?” Dee asked hopefully.

“We’re considering it,” Momo said for her and Dafydd, who looked at his wife in surprise. She gave
him a pointed look, and he nodded his head in agreement with her.

Dee and Ryo started to grin more.

“No, I forgot to check the suite’s availability, but we can always find you another room, if necessary,” Ryo replied.

“Or come Friday morning, you pack out your room and bring everything up to the penthouse,” Dee offered. “I think we’ve become close enough by now that we can stay under the same roof, and we have enough rooms to offer you one.”

“Oh, I think I like that better,” Ryo agreed. “And we’ll give you a room where you’ll have privacy for the second honeymoon part,” he added with a wink, making Momo blush and Dafydd chuckle.

“Yeah. That penthouse might have many Japanese features, but the one Japanese thing it does not have is paper thin walls in some of the rooms,” Dee said. With a wicked grin. “We gave the rooms with the thin walls to Bikky and Carol, of course. But for you two, we’ll give you one of the bedrooms that offer privacy.”

“I guess,” Dafydd finally started to relent, “that if we had good enough reason, Papa will keep the boys for another two nights. And if he has plans, someone will be able to take them with no problem. If nothing else, I know Obāsan would never allow them to be unsupervised and take them with her and Ojiisan until we get back.”

“You can call Papa tomorrow morning,” Momo decided for them. “We thank you both for all your generosity,” she said to Dee and Ryo with a warm smile.

“No need,” Dee assured her, with his own warm smile. “You’re family.” He said as if that was all the answer he needed as Ryo nodded in agreement.

Tears started to well up in Dafydd’s eyes and he nodded.

It was all the answer Dafydd needed to hear.
The next day Tsubasa arrived at the penthouse early bringing Bikky, Ryoko, Darin and Carol back. Dee and Ryo experienced a little anxiety once they returned to the empty penthouse. They almost called Akira, saying they were heading into Kamakura to pick up their family, but managed to keep it to a phone call to Bikky asking if everyone was okay. Bikky told them how Akira allowed him and Carol to go out for a while, so they walked down to the beach. When they got back to Akira’s house, they helped with getting Ryoko and Darin ready for bed. Takehide’s and Moriko’s daughter Miyoko came over with her partner Harumi and the children, Utako and Akio. They played board games until Miyoko and her family left. The games were in Japanese, but everyone was willing to help Bikky and Carol. Bikky told Dee and Ryo that he now recognized a few more kanji and learned some new words, and so did Carol.

When they got off the phone with Bikky they felt much better about the kids in Kamakura for the night. Whatever lingering doubt that might have remained in their minds were handled by the two men deciding to take advantage of having the penthouse to themselves. They ended up going to sleep much later than they should considering the early call.

They were still waking up when Tsubasa arrived with the family, but still managed to be ready for the day when Dafydd and Momo came up to the penthouse. They sat on the patio for a while over coffee and the pastries that Momo and Dafydd always brought with them when arriving at the penthouse in the morning.

“I called Ayaka first thing this morning and asked when she was leaving the house. I didn’t want to tell her with Papa and Chichi there. Thankfully, they both already had left to take Tatsuya and Kioshi to our grandparents for the day. Ayaka was getting ready to leave for practice.”

He paused and looked over toward Carol, who let out a little strained squeal of excitement when Ayaka was mentioned. It was also obvious that she was restraining herself and from the blush dusting her face, she did not mean to let even that much out.

Dafydd smiled at her. “It’s okay, Carol. You may get excited if you want.”

Momo giggled. “I think that it’s a good idea that she doesn’t hold it in or she might burst,” she teased, winking at Carol, who blushed more. “I have friends who were the same when they first found out who one of my sisters by marriage is.”
Dafydd grinned. “I have a friend who has known me for several years now, and his wife still gets giggly and excited when I mention Ayaka.”

This time Momo laughed loudly and did not bother to cover her mouth as she laughed. Ryo had always known that his cousin, at times, acted like the typical Japanese female, but there were also times that one could see her inner strength and independence from her actions and she did not care who saw her acting not as expected as a Japanese woman.

“You should have seen when we invited them for dinner one night, and also had Ayaka over. I thought she was going to faint,” Momo exclaimed, and laughed more.

“Several times over the evening,” Dafydd added, also laughing. “Anyway, I told her about you. It was a good thing Papa and Chichi weren’t home because she screamed. She is almost ready to board a train to Tokyo instead of going to work. I told her that we are changing our plans and coming back to Nagoya on Sunday, and that you will be with us. I convinced her to wait until Sunday and not to say anything to Papa and Chichi until I can speak to Papa. I hope she can do that. She cried and laughed, she is so excited.”

“Hopefully after a day of practice and two shows, she’ll work off some of her excitement,” Momo said.

“I hope so,” said Dafydd.

“I’m guessing that means you are definitely staying here until Sunday?” Ryo asked.

“Yes. After I spoke to Ayaka, I called Papa and said that Obāsan made plans that she would love to have Momo be part of. Momo convinced him that she really wants to be part of it. I also said that Momo’s cousin and his family already had plans to go to Nagoya so we are getting a ride with them, so Papa doesn’t have to meet us at the train station. He was okay with it after we talked to our sons and explained that we will be returning later. Tatsuya and Kiyoshi are now excitedly waiting for the big surprise we are coming back to Nagoya with,” Dafydd explained with a smile.

“The big surprise is you, of course,” Momo said to Dee.

“I think that maybe we should get something that could be considered a big surprise to the tiny mites, just in case I’m not that much of a surprise to them,” Dee stated.
“Several times this week, when we call to speak to our sons, they have asked how you are doing, and if you will be coming to Nagoya while you are in Japan,” said Momo. “You will be a surprise.”

“If Papa doesn’t tell them that we are driving in with Ryo and his family,” Dafydd said. “They know Dee is married to your cousin, remember?”

“At least the big surprise will be who Dee really is,” Momo said.

“Yes, you are correct.”

They talked for another half hour, including Bikky and Carol before they decided to leave the hotel.

They went to Yokohama for the day. Since they had extra days with Dafydd and Momo in Tokyo, Dee decided it would be a good day for Yokohama, especially when earlier Akira had called and told them whatever she had planned for the day before the dinner cruise had to be postponed because she had more to get done that day than she expected. Once she found out that Dafydd and Momo were staying, she sounded pleased since her original plans were with their return to Nagoya in mind and was disappointed she would not be able to take them that day. She decided to move her plans to Friday since there were no trains to catch that day.

Dafydd had asked if they could see where Dee had lived while he was in college. Before leaving, Dee called Ken, letting him know they were going to be in Yokohama and doing a drive-by, since Tsubasa had taken the van to Tokyo that morning and left it for Dee’s and Ryo’s use for the day, and took the subway to his office.

As Dee drove the van past the house, looking for a parking spot, Ayumi was sitting in the garden watching for them. She stood up and indicated for Dee to pull into the driveway, going over to open the gate. She helped with getting Ryoko and Darin out of the car, greeting Bikky and Carol, who had started to unbuckle the infants. Then after greeting everyone else, she invited them into the house.

Ayumi offered a tour for Dafydd and Momo, who eagerly accepted it. Ayumi had turned to Dee and insisted that he give the tour, drawing from his time living there. As Dee showed Dafydd and Momo around the house, including some stories from his college days, he realized how important this was to Dafydd. Sure, he saw the penthouse, but while it was now Dee’s Tokyo home, they were still yet to make changes to make it theirs. The penthouse was still a penthouse in a hotel in Roppongi Hills, all décor having been left by the previous owner. While the house was changed in the years since Dee had lived there, he still had a history there and was able to describe how things were. The house had also been Dee’s primary residence once. He left for college before he turned 18, and even with Maria
adopting him, he still could not remain at the orphanage upon becoming 18. Since he had no address in New York, the address he used in Yokohama was his primary residence. It meant a lot to Dafydd to see and hear about the life Dee had in Japan.

As they talked on the roof patio over tea and homemade cheese sponge cake with fresh whipped cream and fruit, Dafydd admitted that it was warming to him knowing that his brother, who was born in Japan and had his life growing up in Japan taken away from him, still managed to live in Japan for a while. Ayumi’s 6-year-old son was in school and her younger son and daughter were at a neighbor’s house for the time, so she joined them went they left the house and go to Yuki’s shop for lunch.

Yuki had already received a call to expect them and he greeted everyone louder than normal when they entered. He rushed around from the counter, escorting them toward the stairs to go to the second level, where they found a couple of tables pulled together waiting for them on the patio, along with two highchairs. Yuki explained that he knew they were still feeding from the bottle, but that they looked ready to sit in high chairs and be part of activities as they ate, instead of being in their strollers. Yuki then apologized, saying that they were busier than usual at that time and he was needed in the kitchen.

After everyone assured Yuki that they understood and that he should take care of business, Dee’s friend headed back to the kitchen with their orders. As they waited for their soup, Dafydd and Momo got to know Ayumi more. Ken couldn’t get away from his office for lunch, but Ayumi still wanted to get out of the house for a while and spend some time with adults, which was why she went with them. She explained that when she left them, she had some shopping and other errands to run. She would probably be done in time to pick up Hiroshi from school before having get Koji and Emi from her neighbor.

Dee and Ryo realized as the soup started to arrive that since both infants had the ability to now sit in the chairs, they needed to start using them whenever they were able. The high chairs they had received as gifts when Darin and Ryoko were born were back in New York. They would have to look into high chairs for the penthouse, but since they were in Tokyo for just a few more days, they decided it would be best to worry about it when they got back to Tokyo. Dafydd overhead them discussing it and said that it was very likely they would be returning to Tokyo with two travel high chairs, if he knew his family. Momo had started to laugh and said they still had Tatsuya’s and Kiyoshi’s chairs that they could use and would be easy to take along with them for the rest of the trip and to take back to Tokyo, if Dee’s and Dafydd’s father didn’t insist on giving them new chairs from the store.

When Dee asked about when they were planning to have more children, he learned something else new about Japanese Carriers, which meant learning more about himself as a Carrier.

“We’re waiting for another year or two,” Dafydd said. “After I had Tatsuya and Kiyoshi, we became
career minded. Yes, we had our twins, but we’re still there for them while moving up in our careers. Having four would have made it impossible. We would have had to sacrifice something and that wasn’t an option at the time. Now, we got where we wanted to be but we’re still letting things settle down before going for another set of twins. So, we think maybe in another year or two.”

“Isn’t there an age limit when you can’t have any more children?” Ryo asked. “I was told I’m pushing it waiting but we want the twins to be at least one or two before trying for another. Our MOP suggested that I start going through the treatments no longer than a year from now, or it will be too late.”

“That may be true for American Carriers, as they were developed from the Carrier Project, but many Japanese Carriers come from another line,” Dafydd explained.

“But that’s what the American MOP said to Ryo-san,” Ayumi stated, “because that is all they know. There are Carriers in his family. They are not a Carrier dominate family, but there are enough that that’s where the gene came from.”

“As far as we can tell, the gene came from my mother’s side,” Ryo said. “Ayumi is correct that the Hashimoto family is not Carrier dominate, which is Obāsan’s family, but Aoki, which is my grandfather’s family, is, so I found out at the party Saturday night. I’ve been more in touch with the Hashimoto side than the Aoki, so I never knew that many of my male relatives gave birth.” He shrugged. “I guess since I’m in Japan with two children that my husband gave birth to, they opened up more. Besides, Carriers never came up in my limited communication with that side of the family. It’s like a completely different world here in Japan than in America when it comes to Carriers.”

Ayumi laughed. “Japan’s best kept secret in plain sight.”

“You’re telling me,” Dee said, sounding amazed. He looked thoughtful for a moment. “From what they’ve told us in the U.S., many of the Carriers in the world came from that Project, including in Japan.” He shrugged. “It’s even in the official documentation of the project’s original mission.”

Dafydd, Momo and Ayumi started to laugh.

“The Americans believe that Carriers came to Japan as a result of the Carrier Project and that Japan joined the project as one of the countries willing to have Carriers,” Dafydd started to explain. “Japanese are also aware that during the occupation at the end of World War II that the US government was administering the advanced experimental treatments to the Japanese in Japan, as they had been administrating in the camps set up around America to detain Japanese-Americans. Of course, Americans believe that they gave Japan Carriers, but that is not true. It is Japan who gave
Carriers to the world. Carriers were in Japan before the project and it was our government who offered the opportunity. Our government might have made it seem like we had scientists who were close to discovering the secret of how to make male pregnancies possible, and no one questioned it.”

“My grandmother did mention that there were Carriers in Japan before the project but the origins are unclear,” Ryo said. “That they were around when she was born.”

“There is nothing in our history books on how long Carriers were in Japan or how they came to be, but I do know they go back at many generations before the project in America,” Momo stated.

“So Japan sent some scientists to the US under the guise that they were about to stumble onto the possibility of male pregnancies and wanted America’s help?” Ryo asked.

“And made sure to invite other governments who were open to the possibility,” Dee added.

“That’s correct,” said Dafydd. “I’ve been told many times by Ojiisan that Carriers were Japan’s gift to the world.”

Dee started to frown. “I’m willing to bet that he’s probably not very happy with how Carriers are being treated outside of Japan.”

“No, he’s not,” Dafydd replied. “Especially the Americans. There are some countries that treat their Carriers almost like in Japan. England, Wales, Spain and Greece all do not have the same issues that other countries have. America is better than some others, but it’s still sad to hear some of the news coming from there. Ojiisan said he expects better of Americans. At first he was proud of them when they were the first country other than Japan to make laws protecting Carriers.”

Dee was still frowning. “But it wasn’t enough,” he said softly.

Dafydd reached over to place a hand on Dee’s shoulder. “Yes, it’s bad but you should be proud of what you’re doing about it.”

“Some people just sit back and complain about it and allow things go wrong,” Momo said. “But not you and Ryo, your co-workers and your friends.”
“I was surprised to read that your grandfather was involved,” Dafydd said. “The MacLeans had a reputation of being extremely anti-Carrier.”

Ryo started to laugh. “Yes, he was. But after he found out about Dee and he had time to think about it, and after my grandmother gave him a good talking to, he actually started to research more about Carriers. He finally came around, naming our twins as MacLean heirs. The more he got excited about the pregnancy, the more he got involved in the pregnancy, the more he started to rally for Carriers.”

“Since getting to know him better, I realized that he’s about family. The MacLeans now had a Carrier in the family, and he took up the fight to protect his great-grandchildren,” Dee said.

“Yeah, Grandpa MacLean has a lot of family pride,” Bikky spoke up. “He told me that pride means not letting family traditions get stale. When Pops announced he was getting married to the man who was Carrying his child, Grandpa took a while but he realized it was time to update the family.”

“Update the family?” Ryo asked surprised.

“Yeah, his words,” Bikky said. “The MacLeans needed to be in the 21st century.”

“I did hear him say that,” Dee agreed.

“For many years, Franklin MacLean has been trying to get the GPN to go international, but Ojiisan wanted nothing to do with someone who was Anti-Carrier, so he keeps turning him down,” said Dafydd. “I doubt he will ever allow Americans to have access to the network. With everything going on outside Japan concerning Carriers, I doubt Ojiisan will ever let it go international. Not even to the UK.”

Dee let out a frustrated sigh. “It’s easy to see that the network is far more advanced. I found I can do things with this phone that I was never able to do. I also found that true with the phone I had during college but this goes beyond that.”

“It’s the leading communications network in Japan and many international companies are trying to form partnerships to bring the network into their countries,” Momo said.

“It’s very likely the best communications network in the world,” Ryo commented. “My family here
refuses to consider any other company, especially for their businesses. Which is why my grandfather
probably wants an in on it so badly.”

Dee nodded his head in agreement. “I can understand why there is international interest,” he said.
“But I can also understand our grandfather’s reluctance. I wouldn’t want the ACC using it for their
means.”

“Oh, you say that to Ojisan, and you’ll have him definitely on your side,” Dafydd exclaimed
laughing.

“Going back to the project,” Dee started. “The Japanese scientists came to the project not to get help
in cracking the secret, but to give the method to other countries?”

“Not exactly,” Dafydd stated. “They pitched the idea to the governments involved and came to the
project only to guide the other governments into figuring out how to do it. That is why the Carriers
from that Project have different genetics than Japanese ones. And why the scientists from the other
countries believe that it was them who brought Carriers into the world. The Japanese were very
discreet, allowing others to know how to make it possible with just some gentle nudging toward the
end results.”

Ryo stared at Dafydd with curiosity, leaning forward. “You seem to know a lot about this secret
project,” he observed.

Dafydd started to laugh. “It’s not so secret in Japan, especially in our family. Two of the scientists
were twins.” He looked at Ryo and then at Dee. “Those two scientists were Fujiokas.” When Dee
seemed shocked, he started to chuckle. “They were our ancestors. One was our great grandfather,
and the other our great uncle.”

Bikky’s eyes were wide and Carol looked amazed. “Oh wow!” Bikky exclaimed in the sudden
shocked silence. “Dad, you had family on that project!”

Ayumi looked at Dee who was still looking stunned and started to laugh. “Wait until I tell Ken this!”
she exclaimed gleefully.

“Yeah, huh?” Dee asked, still looking astonished. He seemed in thought. “Holy crap. When I read
the report, I really didn’t put much effort in remembering names, basically because some other things
in the report was just a lot of crap. It felt like they had altered the original documents in an attempt to
make Carriers look bad.” A dawning realization came to Dee’s face. “Now I remember, the name Fujioka was mentioned.”

Bikky started to laugh, causing everyone to look at him. “Sorry,” Bikky said, but was still laughing.

“What’s so funny, Biks?” Ryo asked.

“Yeah, how about sharing with the rest of us?” Dee asked.

“It’s just that until you got knocked up by accident, you never thought about getting pregnant, or even getting Pops pregnant,” Bikky started.

“Bikky, don’t be rude,” Ryo warned.

“Oh yeah. Besides they might not understand what that means, huh?” Bikky asked.

Dafydd smirked as he looked directly at Bikky. “I know what knocked up means. Momo does too.”

“Oh, I keep forgetting that you went to school in New York,” Bikky said, looking slightly embarrassed. “Sorry, Uncle Dafydd and Aunt Momo. I don’t mean to insult.”

“I’m sure it’s not what you want your fathers want you to say, but I do understand what you mean,” Dafydd said. “I know a lot of English slang, especially used in New York.”

“I do what know what Bikky found so funny,” Momo stated, looking amused and giggling a little.

Ayumi was also laughing and nodded her head in agreement with Momo. “I do too,” she said.

“Oh, well, it was really shocking to find out Dad was pregnant, even more than if it was Pops. But he went onto become a local hero and learning all sorts of stuff about Carriers,” Bikky said. “Now we find out that Dad’s family were involved with that project.”
Carol shook her head slowly. “Wow, talk about destiny or something. It’s like you were destined to get pregnant eventually.”

“Well, yeah. That’s going through my mind too,” Dee said.

Momo gave Dafydd a nervous look. “It does feel like that, especially now,” she said.

Dafydd shook his head. “Nah. No way,” he said, almost sounding like a New York accent. He shrugged. “It’s just a myth. No truth to it,” he said to his wife.

“I know, but some of it does fit the two of you,” Momo stated.

“What are you two talking about?” Dee asked.

“A Japanese folklore,” Dafydd replied. “It is confusing because there are two versions. One version twins separated at birth are reunited and save the world. The other version is that those twins destroy the world.”

“I’m sure there are many twins separated and reunited and nothing like that becomes of them. Even in Japan,” Ryo said.

“That’s the realist talking,” Dee commented, amused. “I expect that from Ryo.” As Ryo started to open his mouth, Dee quickly added, “This time, I have to agree with my husband. Besides, I don’t believe that I’m so important in the grand scheme of things to affect the Earth one way or another. I’m still struggling with helping protect the Carriers in New York, and I can’t do that alone anyway. There’s more than my unit involved. I have family and friends also doing their parts. I’m just a detective who was in the right place, or wrong at times, at the right time during my pregnancy to end up in the spotlight. That’s all.”

Dafydd nodded. “Me too. I am just a detective, but I can’t say I was tossed in the spotlight during my pregnancy. I, too, am just a small player in the world.” He let out a sigh. “Ojiisan believes it is our family that the story came from. We might hear more of the folklore from him.”

Momo let out a small laugh. “Dafydd, your Ojiisan believes that your family is the most important in Japan.”
“He does have enough government connections to make me believe he is important, but I believe that is from the communications company. He is a very influential person in Japan and does have ties to the Imperial family, but the most important person in Japan? I don’t think so,” Dafydd said. To Dee, he said, “Ojiisan is always talking about Fujioka origins that can mean that Carriers originated from our ancestors, but as far as I’m able to find, there is no history on our family before the early 1900’s. Even Papa could not find anything. What is there feels like something is missing. But, besides the twin gene, which many believe comes from the original Carriers in Japan, there is land in our family. We have several islands off the Ise Peninsula and large areas of land also around the Ise Peninsula. We can all benefit from the islands, always there is a place to stay for free, but only Ojiisan and his twin see any money made.”

“Then it means that one of your ancestors was at least a daimyō,” Ryo said knowingly, “and managed to maintain a small foothold of land after government did away with them and took most of their land. There was one on the Hachimoto side of my family. He wasn’t a very powerful one, but he was one in the Mt. Fuji area. He managed to keep a small area of land. I’m pretty sure there was a payoff of some sort, or at least a barter. That area is now a family resort for the Hachimoto family, and of course, Obāsan opened it to the Aoki family side. I have relatives, many who were at the party Saturday night, who live there.”

“I remember Obāsan telling us about it when she was in New York,” Dee said. “And then I learned more about it during the party.”

“Depending on when we get back from our trip, we might go there for a few days. It might be too late to climb Mt. Fuji to the summit, but we can still do some nice walking on some of the mountain. If for nothing else, it is a very pretty sight,” Ryo said.

“It is very pretty,” Momo agreed. “I went there with my family several times, just for a little respite. It’s been years since we went. I took Dafydd there once before we were married.”

“We climbed Mt. Fuji,” Dafydd added. “We stayed for a couple of days before and after. Who maintains ownership of the land now?”

“Obāsan,” Ryo replied. “She inherited just about everything from the Hachimotos, along with everything that was my grandfather’s.”

“Wow,” Momo said in amazement. “I’m just thinking that she told us that she doesn’t have as much wealth as your father’s parents, which makes me wonder just how much do they have?”
Ryo took out his phone and after going through the gallery, he found a picture and held it out. “This is my grandparents’ house in the Hamptons,” he said.

“Whoa!” Dafydd exclaimed as he looked at the photo. “That’s so big! How many of your family live there?”

Momo rolled her eyes and giggled as she shared an amused look with Ryo.

Dee smirked and replied for Ryo, “Just his grandparents. If you don’t count the staff.”

“They don’t live with Grandma and Grandfather,” Ryo corrected Dee. “And it’s only five for different tasks around the house.”

“They live there alone then? Whoa!” Dafydd exclaimed. “Ojiisan’s house is smaller. It’s large but not that large. My grandparents share it with his twin and his husband. One of Papa’s younger sisters, Miyako, also lives there with her husband and their youngest daughter. That’s also the house that Papa grew up in with all his siblings.”

Momo leaned back in her chair so she could make a gesture, spreading her arms and mouthed, “It’s huge,” about Dafydd’s grandparents’ house. Dee shook his head amused, while Ayumi covered her mouth and giggled. Bikky started to laugh.

Ryo smiled with amusement as Dafydd started to look confused. “What’s so funny?” He looked back to Momo. “What did you do?”

Momo gave him an innocent look. “Nothing, but I am curious to everyone’s reactions when they see your grandparents’ house.”

“I’m sure they’ll see it. Papa will most likely want to take Dee to meet our grandparents and see the shrine.”

“About your grandparents’ house, Ryo” Momo asked a little too politely.

Ryo managed to stifle his laugh. “They do keep rooms for us for when we visit and stay over, and
also for my Aunt Elena and her family,” Ryo said.

“So it’s like you have your own rooms in the house?” Momo asked.

Ryo nodded his head. “Exactly like that,” he replied. “No one else uses those rooms. They have extra rooms not in use and the guest house for anyone else who stays with them.”

“Whoa!” Dafydd repeated, looking stunned. “That’s a lot of rooms!”

“I might regret asking, but I guess I should be prepared, just in case,” Dee started. “Just how many siblings does our father have?”

“Ten,” Dafydd replied. “I warned you that we have a huge family.”

“You’re telling me!” Dee exclaimed, as he paled slightly for a moment. “And I suppose all of our aunts and uncles have large families too?”

“We have many many cousins,” Dafydd said. “That also means that we are behind.” He laughed as he looked over at Bikky, who had a shocked look on his face. “At least you’re one up on me, because you have three children.”

“But the next time you get pregnant that will make four,” Ryo pointed out.

“And you are planning on getting pregnant too, yes?” Momo asked. “That would make you even.”

Ryo and Dee shared a look and Dee leaned back in his seat as if gathering his wits about him. “I’m not sure if we’re going for more than 4,” Dee said. “I hope there isn’t this unspoken Fujioka law about having more than 5 kids or something.”

Ryo looked at Bikky. “And how would you feel is we had a large family like the rest of Dee’s relatives?”

“It’s the pregnancies that scare me,” Bikky said, “but I guess I might be living somewhere else while
you two are still having babies and all.”

“That’s true,” Ryo agreed. “I don’t think we’ll go that far with kids, so hopefully we aren’t breaking some family code or something.”

Dafydd started to laugh. “Most of my relatives have large families because you have two spouses both having babies, and if it’s a Fujioka male, then it’s twins for each pregnancy. But no one is going to ban you from the family just because you only have four children. Or even just the three you have now.”

Carol giggled and said, “Maybe they give bonus points for you helping out Mother with all the kids in the orphanage?”

“Now there’s a thought,” Dee agreed and laughed.

“It is very honorable to help your mother as you do,” Dafydd stated. “In a way, you already have a large family. That makes me happy.”

Dee sighed. “And it’s going to get much larger.”

Ayumi leaned over to hug Dee. “Oh Dee, I’m so happy for you. You will introduce me and Ken to some of your family, besides your twin and his wife,” she said with a smile for Dafydd and Momo. “I am also pleased to be part of your day as you learn more about this large family you have in Nagoya.”

“If I can get them to Tokyo, I’ll make sure you, Ken and the others get to meet my family,” Dee assured one of his best friends’ wife as he returned the hug.

Dee realized that once again they seemed to have lost the original train of thought for their discussion, but there was so much to learn in making up for lost time, that many of the conversations just jumped from one topic to another until they ended up far from the original subject. All least he had a little more information on Carriers, that was not in the books and magazines, along with learning more about his family that he was yet to meet. He also knew that he still had some years yet, in case he changed his mind about getting pregnant again and having another set of twins. He doubted that he would, but then this time last year, he believed that Bikky would be his and Ryo’s only child.
As they were finishing their meals, Yuki came up to sit with them until they were done. There was finally a lull in business and he decided to spend it with his friends until they were ready to leave.

Dafydd and Momo complimented Yuki on the meal, and Dafydd asked if he would be interested in opening a shop in Nagoya. It made Yuki laugh and thank them, but stated that Nagoya was not on the expansion plan and that he wanted to stay in Yokohama for now. If he did go outside of Yokohama, it would be Tokyo and Kamakura that he would consider opening shops in.
Chapter 22

Chapter Summary

It's time for a dinner cruise with Akira's family on Edo period style cruise ship.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

November 2, 2006

Laytener-MacLean Penthouse

Minato Ward, Tokyo

Japan

The penthouse was used as a staging area for those going on the dinner cruise and did not live in Tokyo to meet and get changed into kimono fashioned after the style during the Edo period. The other relatives chose fashions for merchants, middle class and court. Akira, of course, was dressed as a woman of the court, and provided wear for Dee, Ryo and Dafydd as Samurai Feudal Lords. Bikky was the son of a Lord, and Carol as his consort. Momo was also dressed in wear of a Samurai’s wife. The outfits were as authentic as Ryo remembered, with only the fact that the material was new. The cloth for the clothing was created under Akira’s guidance by Hashimoto Textiles and was then hand sewn exactly as the stitching had been during the Edo Period.

Ryo was reminded on how his mother became interested in antiques. Akira was always interested in history, especially that of Japan. From a child, Akira would study everything from the past she was able to get her hands on, and for what she couldn’t, there were books, museums, libraries and any place else she could think of. As she was groomed for the textile business and to one day run the business, Akira studied period clothing, but she was still interested in other items from the past. Ryo’s mother shared that interest and it led into a career once she had finished from art school at UCLA.

The clothes Akira provided would have had the SCA drooling and aching to get their hands on such
garments. What his grandmother had provided was beyond anything the SCA’s craftsmen and women could provide. Many of his relatives bought wear that was gifted to them from previous cruises aboard the ship styled after the ships Samurai Feudal Lords would own during the Edo Period.

Ryo was not surprised when Akira gave him the outfit he had worn for the parties she had held during his time at Camp Zama. The outfits she gave that night to Dee, Dafydd, Momo, Bikky and Carol were theirs to keep. Ryo was not sure if they would decide to take them back to New York with them, and hoped to remember to bring them every time they came to Tokyo, or to leave in the penthouse. They still had time to work it out.

Momo and Carol looked beautiful in their kimono, and having their hair and make-up done as it was during the Edo period. Their faces were set in a whitish foundation, with eyes and eyebrows lined in black and dabs of red eyeshadow in the corner of their eyes. Hair accessories were added. The make-up artist that Akira had hired had done such a great job at how she handled Carol’s eyes that the young woman almost looked Japanese when they were done. They had even used a rinse out dye on Carol’s hair, turning her long golden locks into black, and then styling her hair onto a style worn during the Edo period. Risa was with them when they came out of the room designated for women’s make-up and hair, also completely ready.

Ryo took a picture of the three women and then of just Carol to send to Elina with the text, ‘Look what we have done to your niece.’ He showed it to Carol before sending and she laughed and reached out to press the Send button on Ryo’s phone. Then she lifted the fan and giggled behind it, looking coyly up at Ryo, who promptly got that moment on camera. Dee would be so proud of him.

Speaking of, Dee was nowhere to be found yet. Dafydd was also not among those who were ready. They were waiting for just a few more relatives and friends to be ready. The family who lived in Tokyo were to meet everyone at Hinode Pier. Dee’s friends and their families were also going to meet them at the pier.

A few minutes later, his grandmother was standing by the kitchen with a camera and facing down the hall toward the master bedroom. Ryo assumed she was waiting for the twin brothers to come out of the master bedroom, where their transformation as Edo Samurai Lords was happening. His grandmother let out a happy gasp of excitement as she started to take pictures.

Ryo grabbed Momo and pulled her toward Akira, wanting to see the twin brothers.

Ryo was shocked. He shouldn’t have been. After all, they were told as a result of the DNA testing that Dee and Dafydd were near identical twins, with just their eye color being different.
Momo looked up at Ryo after staring at her husband and his brother. “Ohhh… this might be difficult tonight!” she exclaimed.

Ryo stood, with his jaw hanging as both men came to a stop before them. They even had the same smirk, the bastards, Ryo thought as he continued to stare at them.

Both men had the same dark eyes and their dark hair done in the same style as the Feudal Lords. Their garments were also of the same colors.

“Maybe I should have given them different colors,” Akira mused.

“I have a feeling that Bikky, Ryoko and I are going to be the only gaijin on the ship tonight,” Ryo sighed.

Both men laughed, but only one said, “I told you that you should let them color your hair.”

Ryo stared at the twin who spoke and then shook his head. “No, you didn’t tell me, Dafydd. Dee told me that.” He stared at the twin who was still silent.

Until he started to laugh. “Damn, you’re good! Okay, busted,” Dee said.

“I just know you that well,” Ryo commented. “And I would know your voice anywhere, and that,” he pointed to Dafydd, “was not it.”


“I knew it was you the moment you opened your big mouth,” Momo quipped with a teasing grin.

“That is the only way we’re going to be able to know who is who,” Akira said. “I shall not call either of you by name until you speak for the rest of the night.”

“What if it’s something that you need to say to just Dee?” Dafydd asked.
“I’ll start with a general question to get you talking,” Akira replied knowingly.

Dee went over to Ryo. “You look great,” he said, lightly kissing Ryo. “You don’t look gaijin even with your natural hair color. Poor Bikky.”

“And Ryoko,” Ryo added.

Dee shook his head. “Nah. Ryoko has enough of you, and I guess me, in her that you can tell that she’s Japanese. Just not as much as Darin does. That little man looks Japanese.”

“Just like you and Dafydd, huh, Daisuke?” Ryo commented and leaned in to kiss Dee before he could comment. “Come on. We should join everyone else.” He smiled at Akira.

“I am so glad I insisted on period garment for tonight’s cruise,” she stated as they walked into the living room to join the other relatives, who were waiting. “This is definitely a picture moment.”

“I definitely need to make sure we have the camcorder with us tonight,” Ryo agreed. He nudged Dee slightly. “Mother needs videos of her two favorite sets of twins.”

They started to mingle with the others waiting for the last few to be ready, many of them commenting about Dee and Dafydd. It was already obvious that they were twins, but that night many of the relatives feared getting them confused. Ryo grabbed Dee by his arm and pointed. Dee started to grin as Bikky came down the hallway from his bedroom.

Like Ryo, he did not let them color his hair, but he entered the living room with a swagger. Carol let out a little gasp, while Dee, Ryo, Akira, Dafydd, Momo and Hoshi took photos. Tsubasa and Kimi had their cameras lifted but looked at Nobu, who had started to laugh and decided there would be enough pictures to ask for someone to share.

“There’s our Samurai son,” Dee said with a grin.

“Carol, get over by Bikky,” Ryo said. “Let’s get a picture of the two of you.”
“I’m sure we’ll have many pictures of Bikky and Carol with Tokyo as a backdrop during the cruise,” Takehide commented amused.

“Takehide, you are right,” Akira exclaimed. “Bikky and Carol, go stand by the window. I would say on the patio but Takehide looks like he’s going to start rushing us out.”

“It’s almost time to leave,” Takehide stated.

“The bus isn’t here yet,” Moriko reminded her husband.

“We should already be downstairs waiting,” Takehide said. He looked at Akira. “Did you not say that this morning?”

“I did, but I was not thinking about moments like this,” Akira said. “Now that we’re here, I will not forgive myself if I do not have proper first photos of Bikky and Carol together.” She turned to look at Ryo and Dee. “And also, of Ryo and Dei together. I’m afraid I was so stunned with Dei and Dafydd, I did not get a photo of Dei and Ryo together. So be prepared to go over by Bikky and Carol as soon as I take a couple of pictures of them,” she said.

“But she has pictures of Ryo alone, of Darin and Ryoko, Carol, Dee, everyone else as they joined us,” Moriko said in Japanese with a laugh.

“Obāsan, is the bus calling here or you?” Ryo asked, as Akira finished the photos of Bikky and Carol and signaled for Dee and Ryo to join the two.

“If we are not downstairs when it arrives, the driver will call me,” she replied. “We all can’t fit in the elevator, so anyone who is not taking pictures can start going down. Nobu, Takehide, go on. There will be a photo share for everyone part of tonight.”

Akira wasn’t the only one who was taking photos. Quickly after a minute, Bikky and Carol moved away so Akira, and everyone else with their cameras up, took a few pictures of Dee and Ryo together.

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Everyone was gathered in the lobby, getting looks, especially from the foreign guests, enjoying the sight of the large group dressed in Edo style clothing. They noticed some people taking photos of them, and one American family asked if some of their group would pose with their children.

Akira got a call from the limo bus as she watched Dee and Dafydd pose with an American couple. The twin Samurai brothers seemed to be the center of attention. After them were the children of various ages with them. She got Nobu to help her excuse everyone from people wanting photos and get them out of the hotel and onto the bus.

The bus was a complete contrast to the group dressed in Edo style clothing with its neon lights and sleek modern seats and tables. Dee leaned over and commented to Ryo that the bus for his bachelor’s party was nice, but the one they were on was much more. Bikky commented that he felt like he was inside a really bright pachinko parlor, which made everyone laugh.

When they departed from the bus at Hinode Pier, most of the other guests were waiting. They still had time before the ship was to depart. As the hostess, who was dressed like a geisha, escorted everyone to the waiting area, she explained that the crew was in final preparations and would be boarding shortly. She also explained that since the ship was hired out for a private function, they would wait until Akira gave word that everyone was aboard. Those who arrived after they boarded would be escorted directly onto the ship.

The waiting room had long plastic benches and unlike the other yakatabune from the week before, it did not offer beverages, except from what was offered in the vending machines along one wall.

Yuki, Hide and Ken were already there waiting with Ryo’s family. Yuki had Jae-Hwa with him, while Ken and Hide had their families. Ken and his family, along with Yuki and Jae-Hwa had met at Hide’s home where they all got dressed in the period clothing that Akira had provided, including the children, even the infants. When they were ready to leave, they took the bus Ryo’s grandmother had provided to the group.

They only waited about ten minutes before another young woman dressed as a geisha led them onto the ship and to the upper deck. The guests realized that there was a very un-Edo period cocktail hour for them on the Upper Deck. His grandmother smiled at him and Dee and led them over toward a bar in a sectioned off area of the space for drinks and then to mingle with the rest of the family and friends.

Many of the family came up to Dee and Dafydd, once again congratulating them for finding each other and commenting on just how identical they were that night. Ryo was amazed every time he looked at them. For once, Dee did not look less Japanese than his twin brother with the Welsh name.
Dee had effectively fit in with the rest of Ryo’s Japanese family, along with Dafydd.

Ryo had to smile as his gaze went to Bikky, who along with Carol, had joined the rest of the younger members of the family. Despite his hair and skin color, Ryo had to admit that Bikky had integrated himself as a younger member of his family. He had new friends, both within his family and ones he had made on his own.

So far this trip to Japan had gone exceptionally well for them. Adding that Dee now had a biological family of his own, especially a twin brother that he had become extremely close to in the five days since that faithful encounter, the trip had been much more than Ryo had anticipated once he and Dee had made the decision to go.

Once the last of the family arrived, his grandmother gave word that everyone was present. They remained on the upper deck as the ship cleared the pier and made its way in Tokyo Bay.

Momo came up to Ryo, all smiles. “I take it that you are enjoying yourself so far?” he asked his cousin turned sister-in-law.

“It’s like it’s still Halloween,” Momo said with a laugh. “Everyone looks great.” She pointed to Bikky. “Even Bikky is pulling it off and that’s great. He looks like he’s enjoying himself.”

“I think Obāsan had him looking forward to tonight since she first mentioned it in New York,” Ryo said with a laugh. “I’m glad that so far, it seems to be up to his expectation.”

Momo started to laugh as she hugged Ryo’s arm. “I think this entire trip as been beyond Bikky’s expectation. He’s just so happy and enthusiastic about everything that I take for granted. It’s refreshing.”

Ryo had to nod in agreement with Momo. “Dee and I talked about a few nights ago. We haven’t seen Bikky so excited about almost everything, which is another reason why we’re glad we decided to come here. Dee and I are really happy to be back, but yeah, it’s revisiting what was basically once home to the both of us. So, in one way, we’re really excited to be back, but there are things we are taking for granted, I hate to admit. Even Dee, but it’s because we just fell back into old habits.”

“Yes. One thing that makes Dafydd very happy is that Dee is very much Japanese, even if he insists he’s a New Yorker. Yes, I agree he’s American and probably acts different when you’re home, and but he fits in here. The same with you.”
“Yeah, Dee’s different in New York,” Ryo said with a laugh. “He’s not as rude here as he can be in New York. It’s like he respects Japanese culture that much. Not to say that we don’t have our moments while it’s just our family inside the penthouse.” Ryo looked thoughtful. “But you know, I think Dee has definitely been an influence on Bikky during our time in Japan, because Bikky is also showing incredible restraint, when back in New York he would be outright rude too.”

“Japan is good for your family,” Momo stated.

“I’m just afraid we’ll all be making up for that once we’re back in New York,” Ryo said with a sigh.

“I know that Dafydd and Dee are twins, but I am shocked tonight. I still don’t dare to assume which one is which until one of them speaks,” Momo said. “I have taken many photos to show my father-in-law after we tell him this great news. I also have sent a few to Mama-san Maria.”

Ryo started to grin. “So have I. She is shocked but loving the updates she’s getting tonight. Or morning for her.”

“I am happy for Carol, too,” Momo said. “She is also so happy to be here.”

“I’ve also been sending pictures of Carol to her aunt tonight,” Ryo said. “Carol checks in with her regularly, but she does enjoy getting updates through the day from me and Dee.”

Kennichi came up to them, with his sister Aiko. “I’m so glad we get to have one of these parties with you again, Ryo,” he said. “And we finally get Momo and her mysterious husband.”

Aiko started to laugh. “It’s amazing that the big mystery of Momo’s husband also answered a big mystery of where your husband came from,” she said to Ryo.

“Were you betting that I was making Dafydd up?” Momo asked with a teasing grin.

Aiko made an innocent face. “Not me,” she said, and then glanced slyly at her brother.

Kennichi held his hand up. “I’m sorry. But you have to know some of the family believed that there
was no husband. You never had pictures of him or your family in Nagoya. I’m glad to know that we were wrong. Dafydd is very nice, and he makes Ryo’s husband happy.”

Ryo started to laugh. “Dafydd certainly made up for Momo’s lack of pictures. He had enough of them on his phone, including baby pictures of him and his twin brother. And fathers. And other siblings and children.”

Momo grinned as she held out her phone. “Here is a photo of my husband.”

Ryo, Kennichi and Aiko looked at the photo and laughed. “Great family photo there,” Kennichi said.

“Dee and Ryo also look great in that photo. So does Bikky and Carol,” Aiko added with a laugh.

Momo smiled at them. “I do have a habit of emptying my phone of photos when I travel so I have enough room for photos I take. I am especially happy because I have so many great pictures of Dafydd and his twin brother, and Dee’s family. But Dafydd always carries some photos of the time before his twin disappeared, hoping that one day he would encounter Daisuke and use the photos to prove they are brothers.”

“And he did just that,” Ryo remarked, beaming brightly. “The pictures he carries certainly convinced both Dee and his mother that Dafydd is Dee’s twin brother.”

“I think it’s so wonderful that the day finally came for Dafydd,” Aiko said.

“It’s been Dafydd’s lifelong quest to find his twin brother. Dee kicked back at first, and after hearing how he was found, I can’t blame him, but once he found out the truth, and his mother talked to him, he started to be okay with the idea,” Momo explained happily.

Ryo nodded his head. “Now he can’t see his life without Dafydd in it.” He smiled at his cousin. “Every day we watch them get closer. And every day Momo and I seem to get closer too.”

Momo giggled. “Well, I am your sister-in-law. I hear it is good practice to be in good standing with your in-laws.”
Ryo hugged Momo, laughing. “I agree. I am not complaining that we are actually closer than we believed.”

“Me too,” Momo stated.

“Oh, it looks like Darin is becoming a handful for Bikky,” Ryo said. “I better go rescue him. They should be letting us to go to the dining room in a few minutes anyway.”

“Oh, I see my son is with yours too,” Kennichi said with a laugh. “Since tomorrow is Culture Day, I managed to bring him to Tokyo today instead of Saturday morning. He was looking forward to tonight.”

Ryo looked over to the kids with Bikky and Carol and smiled. “Which one is he?”

“The little one with Tsubasa’s two,” Kennichi replied, pointing to a little boy of 4 years old, who was laughing along with his cousins at Bikky trying to get Darin from fretting. The infant wasn’t crying yet, but looked like he would be soon and Bikky was trying all the funny faces that would normally get the babies laughing. It was working with Ryoko, who was in Carol’s arms and laughing at her older brother, trying to reach out to him. Carol was standing next to Bikky and saying something to him. Bikky caught Ryo looking at them, and shook his head to whatever Carol said, but gave Ryo a pleading look which made Ryo chuckle.

“And that is a face crying out for help,” Ryo commented. “Excuse me. I’ll also make sure to say hello to Toma.”

Ryo headed across the deck toward Bikky and Carol, who were with Risa and some of the other younger cousins. Dee and Dafydd were on the other side of the deck, talking to some of Ryo’s relatives. Momo continued to talk to Kennichi and Aiko, being joined by Hide and his wife and some relatives.

“Pops!” Bikky exclaimed. “I don’t know what’s wrong with Darin.”

Ryo took the baby from his son’s arms and cuddled him close. He held a finger toward Darin’s mouth, and the infant started to suck on the finger. Ryo chuckled as he bounced Darin. “Okay little man. I guess all the excitement made you hungry earlier than usual.”
“Oh,” Bikky said. “Do you want me to get a bottle from Dad?”

Ryo noticed one of the geishas enter the upper deck from the stairwell leading to the lower deck. “Don’t worry. We’re about to be summoned below deck,” he said to Bikky. He kissed the side of Darin’s head. “Hang in there for a few more moments, and then after you eat, we’ll let you put your fingers in my food. You just can’t eat it but you can play with it and get used to the texture.” He kissed Darin again, and this time instead of fretting, Darin giggled and grabbed onto Ryo’s shirt on his shoulders and rubbed his face against Ryo’s cheek. “That’s my good boy. Do you want baby kisses?” He puckered his lips and watched as Darin puckered his. Darin laughed with glee when Ryo kissed him.

Exactly as he expected, all the guests were called to go down to the lower deck. Their hostess added that they were welcome to come back up at any time, along with the outer decks. Ryo gestured for the group of children to start moving toward the stairs and smiled as Dee came over to join them. He took Ryoko from Carol, who already was reaching out toward him, with a happy squeal. Once in Dee’s arms, she puckered her lips. Dee started to laugh and kissed her, making her squeal again. She leaned over toward Ryo and puckered again.

With a huge grin, Ryo leaned over to kiss her. “I love you, baby girl,” he said as she happily squealed again. “Now let’s go get dinner. Your brother is hungry.”

Dee looked at Ryo. “Already?” he asked. He studied Ryoko, who just seemed content to be the center of attention.

“Yeah, he’s ready for his bottle.” Ryo smiled as he looked at Darin, who was now cuddled up against him and happily babbling and cooing. “I did promise that he could play with some of my food.”

“He’s already gotten his fingers in food,” Dee said with a laugh as they started down the stairs. They guided the rest of the younger children, glad to see older children taking the hands of the younger ones.

“Bikky, do you mind helping Toma get down the stairs please?” Ryo asked as he came up to the little boy and smiled down at him.

“Okay,” Bikky said. “He’s Kennichi’s rugrat, isn’t he?”
“Yes, he is,” Ryo replied as Bikky reached out to take Toma’s little hand in his. Toma started to smile more as he looked up at Bikky.

“Looks like Bikky has a new friend,” Dee said in Japanese with a laugh. “Isn’t that so, Toma?”

“Hai!” the little boy exclaimed, and then started to smile more as Carol came over to take his other hand.

“He’s cool to hang out with us, if he wants,” Bikky said. “And yes, Dad, I understood you. Just don’t ask me to repeat it all.”

“Understanding is half the battle, Biks,” Dee said with a grin.

The lower deck was set up with long low tables in the front half before the stage with an aisle in the center going to the back. There was a small open space and then there were boxes with ornate beams on each corner and polished wood. Inside each box was a table and chairs to seat six. They ran lengthwise along the deck, so everyone sitting at them was able to see the stage. There were two rows of eight boxes going across the deck. The ship broke from Edo Period custom with those tables because of the many foreign guests the ship had, who might not feel comfortable sitting on the floor for dinner.

There was no assigned seating, allowing everyone to sit where they wanted, but Akira was already at a low table in the front when Dee and Ryo entered, and she waved for them to join her. Nobu, Hoshi, Takehide, Moriko, Tsubasa and Kumi also joined them at the front table. Carol, Bikky and Tsubasa’s two young ones were also to be seated with them. Kenichi, Aiko and her boyfriend, Hachiro and his wife, Yoko, all took the table next to theirs. There was a place for Toma, who said thank you to Bikky and Carol and joined his father for a while. There were still two more places at the table Akira stood by, and with a smile, Akira waved again when Dafydd and Momo entered the deck.

Ryo already had taken a bottle out of the bag that Dee was carrying when they were upstairs and started to feed Darin once he was settled at the table and had Darin in his lap. The baby no longer seemed fretful as he happily drank from his bottle, his dark eyes looking up at Ryo. Ryoko didn’t seem to be hungry, but since Darin was getting fed, Dee decided that to take out a bottle for Ryoko. Once he placed the bottle’s nipple near her mouth, she had no problem starting to feed, which made Dee and Ryo laugh.
“I’m surprised to see you and your brother separated,” Akira said with a teasing grin as Dafydd and Momo joined them.

“We’re just twins, Obāsan,” Dee said, looking amused, “not joined at the hip.”

“Since you two sat down and talked on Saturday, sometimes I had to check that you are not,” Akira replied. Now that the closest of her family were at the table, she started to sit.

“We’re not that bad,” Dafydd said. He looked around the table, and then at Dee. “Are we?”

“You are,” Nobu said, “but that’s not a bad thing. You have a lot of catching up to do, and no one is going to find fault with it.”

“Thank you, Uncle Nobu,” Dee said with a grin.

“Besides, when Dee noticed it was almost time to go down, he wanted to get Ryoko. He also noticed that Darin was fussing a bit when Ryo first went over to them. So I went to find Momo, hoping we could find a seat together.”

Akira gazed at Dafydd and Momo. “Dafydd, you are Dei’s twin brother, you and Momo will always have a seat at my table, along with Ryo, Dei and their family.”

Dafydd started to blush a little but looked pleased. “I am honored. I am just happy that I have finally found my twin after so long.”

“Well you have,” Takehide stated, “and he comes with a family, including us. So of course, that makes you part of our family too.”

“Thank you. I am so glad that Dee has managed to still have a wonderful family.”

“Which will grow once you tell your father the big news,” Moriko said.

“I heard that you have decided not to go back to Nagoya tomorrow night,” Akira said.
“That is correct. I called my father earlier and he had assured me that he has no problem keeping our sons for a couple of extra nights. We spoke to our boys and they understand. I also believe that they are anxiously waiting to see what the big surprise we will have when we return home on Sunday,” Dafydd explained. “I also spoke to Ayaka and she is very happy that she will get to meet Dee a day early.”

Everyone started to chuckle at the muffled squee that came from Carol when Ayaka was mentioned. Dee gave her an apologetic smile. “I’m sorry to say, Princess, that I was with Dafydd when he made another call and got to speak to her. She is also looking forward to meeting you, too. And Bikky and Ryo, of course.”

“You talked to her about me?” Carol exclaimed.

Momo laughed. “We already had told her about you, along with all of Dee’s family when Dafydd called her with the good news. You are part of this family, yes? So we’re going to talk about you to Ayaka, and any of the rest of Dafydd’s and Dee’s family when we are able.”

Carol started to blush deeply, making everyone laugh.

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There was talking and laughter once everyone was seated. At the table behind theirs, Yuki, Jae-Hwa, Hide, Ken and their families were seated, and were pulled into the conversation with not only everyone at Akira’s table, but the other tables around them. No one seemed inclined to keep conversation at just their table, turning around or leaning over to speak to someone at another table. There were some people standing as they got up to walk over to a table too far to lean over to talk to a relative. It was a lively crowd, the enka music being played low almost drowned out. For many of Ryo’s family on the dinner cruise, it was their first time to talk more with Ken, Hide and Yuki after their big reveal at the party that along with Dee, were Daigaku Dudes and were interested in their chance to get to know the members of a group who sang one of their favorite songs.

Everyone seemed to settle down at their own tables once the first course started to arrive from the ship’s kitchens. Outside the ship’s large windows, the skyline of Tokyo went by on both sides of the river. They were told that the show was going to start once the third course was served, and there would be time between the courses if anyone wanted to go to an outside deck to take pictures or just
Dee and Ryo did go outside a few times for a few minutes, as did the rest of the family. The show was a Kabuki style performance, but unlike kabuki where all the actors were men, the show on the ship had men and women in the cast. Bikky and Carol seemed to enjoy it, even if there was no translator. Later Bikky stated that their faces and gestures were funny enough and he was able to understand a little of what was said. Carol agreed, saying she just enjoyed watching the dancing and the acting.

There was a part in the show where the performers randomly picked someone from the diners to bring on stage and get them involved in a small skit. No one was really surprised when one of the women came over and coaxed Dee and Dafydd on the stage with them, making them join in on a “Samurai Dance, except for Dee and Dafydd, who seemed shocked as they were guided to join the entertainer on the stage by 2 geishas. Bikky and Carol were especially amused by the skit. Momo, who had taken Ryoko from Dee, had the baby’s tiny arms and made her clap, while Ryoko laughed at this new game. Ryo decided to do with same with Darin.

In the second act of the show, some of the children were brought up to the stage to perform in a dance. Much to his chagrin, Bikky was among the chosen. He seemed nervous at first, but once he realized it was an easy dance they were being taught, he started to enjoy himself, some of his swagger coming out near the end.

Darin managed to get his fingers in Ryo’s miso soup and some of his dinner while making a chomping face, making everyone laugh. The baby laughed and attempted to get his fingers in another dish nearby. Bikky ended up with Ryoko while Dee helped Ryo clean a laughing Darin, who seemed very amused by the whole thing, much to the amusement of their relatives. At one point during the show, Ryoko must have found something amusing enough to squeal loud enough that she was heard on the stage. Being that there was a lot of improvising in the shows, and actors waiting for something said being heard onstage, one of the actors said something toward her and then went on for a few minutes telling a funny story about a baby.

In the last half hour as the ship made its way back toward Hinode Pier, the music played was louder and by popular groups and artists, opening up dancing in the open space before the high tables, and on one of the outer decks. Family members took turns taking Ryoko and Darin a few times so that Dee and Ryo, and Bikky and Carol were able to dance to a couple of songs. The ship sailed past Hinode Pier to head toward Odaiba, going under the Rainbow Bridge. Akira managed to have pictures taken on the deck as they approached the bridge and went under it. Dee managed to give his camera to someone on the crew to take photos, so he did not have to wait for the photo share. He already had pictures he was sending from his phone to Mother.

Dee was not sure if he was relieved or disappointed that there was no karaoke during the cruise, but between the show, the dancing and mingling with relatives and friends, he decided it did not matter,
because it was a very pleasant and memorable time. He would not mind doing this type of cruise again, especially with those present.

Once they were off the ship, everyone discovered why the end time they were given was a couple of hours later than the time they got off the ship. The buses that were provided for everyone to get to the pier were waiting, along with one extra to accommodate the people who had driven to the pier. They were all told that it did not matter which bus they got on. Instead of going back to the hotel or to homes to drop people off, the buses took them to Shibuya. Once everyone was off the buses, Akira led them into a building and instructed them to take the elevators up to the 6th floor. There they entered a luxury karaoke center where Akira had reserved a large party studio. For the next hour and a half, anyone who wanted to sing had a chance. Dee, Ken, Yuki and Hide ended up doing their two hits after everyone started a chant of “Daigaku Dudes” at one point. They all also got to sing solo. The family also got Dee and Dafydd to sing, and they did Tube’s “Season In the Sun”. Momo made sure to get the entire song on video, because she knew how much it would mean to her father-in-law, since his favorite band was Tube, and had passed that love of their music onto Dafydd, and a few of his other children. Dafydd had been extremely happy and excited once he found out that Dee’s favorite Japanese band was also Tube. Ryo had decided to also get it on video from a different view.

When the tired, but happy, group of relatives and friends left the building, they were told which buses they were to get on. One bus was bound to Hinode Pier so those who drove there could get their cars, and then to drop off those in Tokyo who were picked up by bus earlier that evening, while another went back to the hotel.

Inside the hotel lobby, some of the family said their good nights, and thanked Akira for a wonderful night out and went to the hotel garage and their cars for the drives home. Others had taken rooms out in the hotel to stay the night before venturing home the next day.

The next day was Culture Day. It was a national holiday and a day off for schools and many businesses. It was the reason Akira had planned the cruise for that evening, knowing that many of her relatives and family friends did not have to be somewhere early in the morning.

Akira and family were staying overnight in the hotel. Everyone went up to the penthouse for a while. Ryo made green tea while Dee put out a box of rice crackers they had received among the many gifts on Saturday night. The mochi that Dafydd had bought in Nagoya was long gone. Dee wasn’t the only one who loved mochi in their family, and Ryo made Dafydd and Momo promise to take them to the shop when they were in Nagoya, so they could buy more. Both Dee and Ryo were able to make various types of mochi, as could Akira and Ryo’s aunts and uncles, but there was something about that mochi was different and the best they had. Which said a lot, considering Dee and Ryo had mochi from many various places in Japan and New York.

After having a cup of tea and some small talk, rehashing the evening, everyone started to excuse themselves to go to their rooms for the night. The twins were already tucked in for the night, Dee and
Ryo deciding to quickly change them into their night clothes and to bathe them in the morning. Once the last of the family left the penthouse, Bikky and Carol excused themselves to get ready for bed, saying their good nights. Dee and Ryo headed for their room, but after getting changed, decided on a nightcap in the covered patio before getting into bed.
Chapter 23

Chapter Summary

Dee continues to bond with Dafydd. Dee and Ryo discover a hobby Carol has been keeping secret and that Bikky helps her, revealing a hidden talent no one knew Bikky had. All this while spending a day at Ueno Park for Culture Day.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

November 3, 2006

Laytner-MacLean Penthouse

Tokyo New Crown Star Hotel

Minato Ward, Tokyo, Japan

The next morning, Dee and Ryo hosted breakfast for the relatives who stayed overnight. They provided the dining room while Akira ordered the food to be brought up by one of the restaurants in the hotel. After they ate, everyone except Akira, Tsubasa, Kumi and their two children left to drive back to Kamakura.

Dafydd and Momo were also included in the family breakfast. They arrived at the penthouse with their luggage, already checked out of the suite they were staying in for the week. While Akira was busy seeing that breakfast was being set up, Dee led his brother and sister-in-law away from the madness to show them their room. He gave them the room next to Carol. The room was in the corner of the penthouse and had a large window overlooking the back terrace. The view beyond the terrace went northwest across the Tokyo Metropolitan Expressway toward Shinjuku, including the GPN building. Beyond, Mt. Fuji was visible. Dafydd exclaimed how much he loved the room because of the view. Dee left them to get settled in before joining the rest of the family for breakfast.

When lunch was finished, shortly after the others left, Ryo asked his grandmother and cousins if they had any idea on how they were going to spend the day.

Tsubasa laughed. “Of course, Obāsan has ideas.”
Akira smiled from her seat on the couch, where she was cuddling Darin, with Kumi next to her with Ryoko. “I had ideas for a while, but I wasn’t certain until I knew where we would all be today. Also when I first started to think about what we would do today, I had no idea about Dafydd, so I made some adjustments.”

“You don’t have to worry about what we would be interested in,” Dafydd said. “We’re used to being in Nagoya on Culture Day, so whatever we go in Tokyo or even Yokohama, Momo and I are looking forward to it.”

“Have you ever been in Tokyo on Culture Day?” Tsubasa asked.

“This is my first time,” Momo stated, “but Dafydd has been.”

“I have been in Tokyo on Culture Day several times growing up, but the last time I was sixteen. We did not get around the city very much.” He looked at Dee. “Ojiisan was awarded a medal by the Emperor that time. Two times before that was for one of our uncles and when I was very young, our great-grandfather received a medal.”

Everyone looked at Dafydd in amazement. Dee seemed shocked. The only ones who didn’t seem to be as amazed was Bikky and Carol, who looked confused.

“I don’t get it,” Bikky stated, looking at Ryo and Dee, hoping for an explanation.

“So hearing that my grandfather, great-grandfather and uncles all received medals presented by the Emperor of Japan doesn’t sound impressive?” Dee asked.

“Put it that way, wow,” Bikky commented.

Looking at Dafydd, Dee asked, “And what the hell type of family do we have?”

Dafydd laughed. “Communications is vital in Japan. It helps us maintain being leaders in technology. There are many ways the GPN had helped Japan, along with making many contributions. So those in our family who were leaders in the company has been honored by being among those who the Emperor awarded metals to on Culture Day.”
Now Bikky looked impressed. “Wow. Does that mean you met the Emperor, Uncle Dafydd?”

“Several times,” Dafydd admitted. “Momo met him and the Empress once. Our grandfather had some function with the Emperor, and he bought me and Momo along. We mostly spent the time sightseeing and shopping in Tokyo, but we were invited to have dinner with the Imperial Family.”

“It sounds like we have a pretty important family,” Dee commented.

“It’s mostly Ojiisan and his brothers. Papa and Uncle Kennosuke, Papa’s twin, chose not to go into the communications business or being a Shinto Priest. It doesn’t matter since Ojiisan and his twin still run the family operations on his side. Papa has taken over Obāsan’s business and Uncle Kennosuke runs an offshoot business. Since Ojiisan’s oldest male twins did not take their places as they should have, then it should have been us, being the oldest male twins. Since everyone believes that you were killed with Tad, that took me out of the running.” Dafydd shrugged. “I wanted to become a cop, so it didn’t matter.” He grinned at Dee. “Are you interested in becoming a CEO of a major communications company or a Shinto priest.”

Dee let out a snort. “I’m Catholic,” he stated. “Besides, I already own a hotel chain and cruise line, without having to be a CEO. And I love being a detective. I don’t have to work anymore, but I choose to.”

“Even if we do take extended vacations here and there,” Ryo added with a smile. “Dee and I both could quit now. If we did, that could give Dee more time on starting his real estate business with Barry, but he’s doing it in his free time. That’s because we love what we do, and now with all the changes, we also believe in what we do more than ever.”

Dee nodded. “Exactly. We have a purpose, as impossible as it might seem, but we’re not walking away yet. So yeah, not really interested in running a communications company or becoming a Shinto Priest, even if I am very interested in seeing the shrine.”

“That means despite coming from very influential families, we still have three detectives and one forensics chief,” Akira said with a proud smile.

“Two of the detectives are Leading Detectives for their units, Obaasan,” Ryo said.

“And the other is second leading,” Tsubasa added.
“This is true,” Akira said. With a smile, she stood up, still holding onto Darin. “Shall we get ready for our day? Considering what you will be doing on Sunday, I decided to add a certain destination to the day. And you still plan to go to Odaiba tonight?”

“Yes we do, Obaasan,” Ryo replied. “We promised Bikky last night that we’d go to Joypolis, and if we have time, do a little looking around. If we don’t, there’s still time when we get back to Tokyo. But Bikky wants Dafydd with us, so tonight we go since tomorrow is going to be an early night. Do you want to get the chibis ready?”

“I do, and Momo will give me a hand, so the rest of you can make sure you’re ready.”

“Dee and I will make sure the chibi bag is restocked, so don’t worry about that,” said Ryo.

“You’re getting very good at it now, aren’t you?” Kumi asked.

“We’ve done it enough times by now,” Dee said. “Biks, Carol, go get ready to go out.”

“Okay, Dee,” Carol said, getting up from the chair she sat in and headed for her room. Bikky got up after her and followed Carol.

OoOoOoO

**Ueno Park**

**Taito, Tokyo**

**Japan**

Akira led the group from Ueno Station to the park where there was a festival being held that day. Lined along the walkways in the park were booths set up selling various wares and food. There was also performers of many types. They stopped to watch Taiko drummers perform, and women in kimono doing traditional dances. There were anime and manga costumed characters along with Hello Kitty and idol groups hoping for their big shot doing songs. They walked along the park going from Ueno Station toward the ponds, stopping for anything that caught any of the group’s attention.
It was going on 11:30 when they finally reached the ponds, to find the pathways going along the ponds had more booths and attractions. Everyone in their group had bags with purchases, buying items that probably would not be available anywhere else and for only that day. Nobody was hungry yet because they had bought food to share among the group as they enjoyed the festival. The adults realized where Akira was taking them, but did not say anything to the children. Bikky and Carol were helping keep an eye on Tsubasa’s and Kumi’s children, Aya and Kento.

Akira took them along the walkway that went between two ponds. The pond on the right was filled with lotus plants. Bikky and Carol were fascinated for a few minutes until Carol caught sight of a boat in the pond to the left.

“Oh wow! Look at that boat!” she exclaimed as she held onto Kento’s hand.

“Look at all the boats!” Bikky added. “Look Dads! Duck boats!”

The two younger children got caught up in the excitement, clapping and laughing. “Duck boat!” Aya exclaimed, also pointing.

“Yes, duck boats,” Dee remarked laughing. “Funny but that was my reaction too when I first noticed them, and I was all of 18 at the time.”

Ryo started to open his mouth, an impish light in his eyes but Dee pointed to him and said first, “Don’t go there, Ryo. Besides, you might be right.”

“I understand, Ryo,” Momo stated, her eyes on her husband. “Our husbands definitely are twins, are they not?”

“Yes they are,” Ryo agreed, smirking at Dee. “At least you’re not alone anymore. You have Dafydd to share certain immaturities with.”

“You went there!” Dee exclaimed.

“Yes, I did,” Ryo remarked. He looked at Akira, who was laughing along with Tsubasa and Kumi. “And are we going there?”
Akira nodded. “I thought that not only would Bikky and Carol enjoy the festival but they would enjoy the boats.”

“Obāsan, I think we all enjoyed the festival,” Tsubasa said. “And I love the duck boats. So does Kumi and the kids.”

“Duck boat,” Kento exclaimed, clapping and smiling.

“I didn’t know they had them in Tokyo,” Momo said smiling, hugging onto Dafydd’s arm.

“I did hear about them but forgot,” Dafydd said. “This is our first time to Ueno Park.” To Momo, he added, “Next time we bring Tatsuya and Kiyoshi, we have to take them here. They would love it.”

“Oh, they would. Especially Kiyoshi,” Momo agreed. To the group, she said, “Ducks are his thing. He just loves ducks. The lake at the Higashiyama Zoo has the same boats, and our boys always insist that we take one out.”

“Looks like these two are the same,” Dafydd said, laughing at Aya and Kento.

“Can we go on a boat today?” Bikky asked.

Akira nodded. “I thought you would like to. I’ll find a place to sit with the chibis where we can enjoy the festival and watch for you on the water. The rest of you go get a boat and I’ll meet you in an hour.”

Dee and Ryo rented a duck boat for them, Bikky and Carol. Tsubasa and Kimi also rented one for their family. Dafydd and Momo decided on a two-person pedal boat, saying it was going to be enjoyable enough being in the pond and that the duck boat would be much more appreciated when they returned to Tokyo with their twin boys.

Tsubasa and Kumi were the first ones to notice Akira sitting on a bench overlooking the pond. She had Darin on her lap, expertly handling both the infant and her camera. Ryoko was in the stroller,
looking up at her great-grandmother and twin brother, and then moving her head when Tsubasa called out when he got the boat close to where Akira was sitting. Aya and Kento also called out, waving madly. It made both babies on the shore start laughing. Darin made an attempt to wave with his left hand, or so it seemed because then both hands just started to wave in his excited way. Ryoko was smiling and laughing as her attention went to her aunt, uncle and excited cousins. Akira started to help Darin make a proper wave at everyone. Kumi was taking pictures of Akira with the twins.

Dee and Ryo got their boat over by Tsubasa and the infants seemed to have noticed their daddies and big brother because they got more excited.

Every time one of the boats came close to the bench, Akira would have one of the twins wave, the babies getting excited seeing one of their family, especially Dee, Ryo, Bikky and Carol. Throughout the hour, Akira took turns with a twin on her lap and helping the infant wave as one of their family came close. Whenever Tsubasa came close, Kento and Aya would also get excited, waving and sometimes calling out, “Obaasan!” and “Hi Ryoko and Darin!”, getting more reactions from the excited babies.

At one point, Dafydd and Dee decided to race each other across the pond. Tsubasa decided to join in and managed to get across the pond first. Having three boats on the pond was more entertaining than if they had managed to find a boat large enough to fit everyone. There seemed to be some friendly competition between both brothers and cousins, especially when Ryo took over the steering, and he and Tsubasa almost turned their boats into bumper boats. It got them a warning from one of the workers at the boathouse. Everyone had a good laugh over it, including Akira from the bench.

When the group was done with boating, they crossed the bridge that divided the pond on the other side on the walkway. The walkway wound between the pond, making it two ponds, the one for the boats and the other further divided by the bridge, with the duck pond on one side and the lily pond on the other. On the other side of the bridge was a Buddhist temple. It was a 3-tier round pagoda of red and gold, the temple grounds set apart from the park by a path going from the park to the temple.

Akira wanted family pictures at the temples. They managed to get a couple to take pictures of everyone. The couple was nice enough to take pictures with all the cameras from their group. In return, Dafydd offered to take a few pictures of them. Then the couple requested if they could take a picture with the two sets of twins. Dee and Dafydd were each given an infant and they posed with the couple.

The couple ended up walking with them as they explored the temple grounds, and then back to the
park to take in the area of the festival close to the temple. It was the last section that they did not explore yet. They got to know the young couple along the way.

With a wicked grin, Dafydd decided to tease his brother, unable to resist. “They only asked to pose with me and your twins because they were embarrassed to ask just you.”

“What?” Dee asked. “Why would they want to do that.”

“Because you are famous,” Dafydd replied with a grin, making the others in their group start to chuckle.

“Was,” Dee corrected him. “And they wouldn’t know what I look like anyway, because we hid our faces. Remember?”

Bikky started to laugh. “Dad was kabuki man!” he exclaimed.

The couple looked confused, but amused as they knew it was teasing. “Should we know you?” the woman asked.


“Oh! Daigaku Dudes!” the woman exclaimed, getting excited.

“One of the main singers, that’s my dad,” Bikky said proudly.

“You’re D?” the man asked.

“Guilty,” Dee replied. To maintain their privacy when they gained their unexpected popularity, they not only wore kabuki-like make-up but they were known by the first initial of their given names with no last names.

“Oh!” the woman exclaimed. “I still listen to that song. May I have your autograph?”
With a bow, the man said, “It would be my great honor to shake your hand.”

The family started to laugh as Dee started to blush. The woman took out a small notepad so Dee could sign his name. Or in his case, initial. It took him a few seconds to remember how he did it, and then wrote the katakana character for “de” and added a quick small sketch of a cartoon face resembling the make-up he wore. When he gave the book back and gave the woman a hug, he shook the man’s hand. Dafydd took a picture of the couple with Dee with their camera, while others in their group were also taking pictures.

Shortly after, the couple was to continue to other areas of the festival, while the group was heading in the direction to exit the park. They said their goodbyes and went their separate ways.

Once away from the couple, and walking down toward the street, Dee turned to Dafydd. “What the hell, dude?” he asked in English.

Dafydd started to laugh, the others with them joining in. He shrugged and said, “I couldn’t help it. You do realize that Ayaka is no longer the only celebrity in the family?”

“I’m not famous anymore,” Dee replied. “I haven’t been for a decade.”

“I beg to differ,” Kumi said with an amused smile. “Did you see their faces when they realized who you were?” she asked Dee. “They knew the group’s name. She knew you were D.”

“Okay, I’ll give you the group name, but she already knew my name was Dee. It didn’t take much to make the connection.”

“Except that she obviously knew what each of you went by to make that connection,” Ryo said. He looked a little sheepish. “I remember the song and the group name, but to be honest, I never knew individual members. But she liked you guys enough to make the effort back then and remembered it. That’s something.”


“Except private parties,” Akira stated with a sly smile, making everyone laugh.
“That does not matter,” said Momo. “That song is still played on the radio.”

“And played in clubs too,” Tsubasa added. “Not Hide’s club, which is ironic.”

“I think it would be ironic if he actually played Japanese music in his club,” Ryo stated, “but I understand what you mean.” He chuckled a little. “Maybe that’s why he went with American rock so he wouldn’t have to play his singles.”

“Nah,” Dee said. “Hide always liked American rock more than Japanese popular. So it didn’t surprise me when I found out that he was going to open a club that played only American and British rock.”

“What about EZO?” Dafydd asked with a grin.

Dee let out a laugh. “Only the songs from the American album they put out, and that’s because more than just it’s an American release. It’s because Gene Simmons produced it.”

With a smile, Tsubasa said, “I did notice a few KISS songs played at the club.”

“I met Hide through Yuki, but I think Hide and I bonded through the love of rock music, especially KISS,” Dee said. “So yeah, I convinced him to play those EZO songs.”

“Dee, I guess I should tell you that I found some Daigaku Dudes videos on YouTube,” Carol said with a smile. “You guys were awesome!”

Bikky nodded in agreement. “Who would have thought you could be a cool pop idol,” he said.

“Gee, thanks Biks,” Dee remarked, frowning a little.

Ryo put his arm around Dee’s waist. “Oh come on, Dee, take the compliment from your son.”
“That’s a compliment?” Dee asked as he looked at his oldest son.

Bikky started to laugh. “Hell yes, that’s a compliment,” he said. “You’re my dad, you’re not supposed to be that cool.”

Everyone except Dee started to laugh at Bikky’s reply, Dee finally joining in a few seconds later. “Yeah, I guess you have a point,” he admitted. “Hey wait,” he said as he looked at both Bikky and Carol. “What’s YouTube?”

“It’s a video website,” Dafydd replied. “People can upload personal videos to share with friends, or make it public so anyone can watch them.”

“That’s how it started,” Carol stated, “but there’s more now.”

“We watch anime on it. People add subtitles in English for anime not available with English dubs,” Bikky said.

“People are also starting to upload instructional videos on different things,” Carol added. “It’s really starting to grow since it started. There are also people doing video blogs.” She started to blush when she realized she had the adults’ attention. “I started doing videos about fashion and music and cool things in my life.”

“She’s also been doing videos about our trip,” Bikky added.

“Just me and Bikky and our friends is all I uploaded so far,” Carol said. “I have a lot of videos that I didn’t upload yet because it has all of you in them. I was waiting for a good time to bring it up and get your permission. That includes the others in your family, Ryo. And Dee’s friends and their families. I do have a few videos before we met Dafydd and Momo uploaded set for only Aunt Elina to see. It makes her happy to watch them.”

“Sounds like Elina is somewhat filled in on our trip other than just the photos we are sending her,” Dee said. “Is there anyway I can upload video for Mother to watch?”

Bikky nodded his head. “I can do that and send her the link if you want.”
“I want. You know Mother would love that. And then when everyone knows about Dafydd and the Fujiokas, we can let others see them too.”

“I know Aunt Elena and my grandparents would love to see them, when we can let them,” Ryo said. He looked at Carol. “Why didn’t you ask already? I want to know more about this website. If it’s what I’m thinking it is, I would love to upload some videos so we can get the people back home off our backs about waiting until we get home.”

“I have videos of our family on YouTube,” Dafydd said. “You can share videos with family of Bikky and the twins. I found out about it from Ayaka because TKY52 and NGY52 have channels with videos from both groups. Many others from our family also share videos on it now.”

“I need to check it out then,” Ryo said and looked at Dee, who nodded. “So why didn’t you bring this up already, Carol?”

“She gets embarrassed and doesn’t say anything,” Bikky stated.

“I think if there was ever a perfect time to bring it up, it would be now,” Carol stated. “So here I am saying something, and now you know.” She stuck her tongue out at Bikky and giggled.

Ryo was looking at Bikky and Carol before answering. “I think I would like to see some of the videos on your channel first before allowing you to upload anything from our family.”

“I doubt she’s doing anything wrong,” Dee said, “but now that you mention it, I’m curious to see what you do have up there, Princess.”

“Sure, you’re all welcome to see what I have. Obviously Aunt Elina knows about it, and even did a few videos with me.” She smiled warmly at Dee and Ryo. “Like when we had our girls’ day before my birthday. People seem to love when I include her when we do things together.”

“Now I’m really curious,” Ryo said. “I wish you told us about it sooner, both about this website and your videos. I would love to see them and I’m certain there would be no problem with uploading videos with us.”

Dafydd looked at Momo who smiled as she nodded her head. “You have our permission, Carol,” Dafydd said with a smile. “And we would love to see what you have too. I might even tell Ayaka
about your channel.”

Everyone laughed as Carol let out a squeak as she turned a deep red. “Oh, I’m sure she won’t be interested in what I have.”

Momo put an arm around Carol’s shoulders and pulled her close. “Yes, Ayaka is one of the most popular members of TKY and NGY but when she’s not busy being an idol, she’s just a young woman who still lives at home with her fathers and enjoys doing normal things that girls do.”

“This is true,” Dafydd said. “That might burst your bubble some, but you are going to get to know her as a member of the family. I mean, you’re Dee’s and Ryo’s family, which makes you ours too, including Ayaka’s. I’ll bet she’ll agree to do a video with you.”

Dee broke out in laughter. “Easy brother or else one of us men will have to carry the Princess when she passes out. Give her things like that in small doses.”

“You’re not kidding,” Bikky said, who stood on the other side of Carol, slipping his arm around her waist to help Momo support her. “Don’t say things like that to her unless she’s sitting down.”

“You may be right. Sorry, Princess,” said Dafydd. Looking at Bikky, he asked, “Do you have a channel, Bikky?”

“Nah. I don’t have one but I let her include me in some videos. We’ve been doing videos of things around here together,” Bikky replied.

“Now that we know, can we be involved?” Ryo asked.

“Oh, but I have been involving you, but we need your permission to let others see them,” Carol said.

“I think Ryo meant to be actively involved instead of filming us on the sly,” Dee said with a sly grin. “Of course anything involving Dafydd will have to wait until after he tells our father. If you have anything with Momo that seems safe, I’m sure you can upload before then. After all, she is Ryo’s cousin.”
“Oh. Yeah, sure. We can do that. Whoever wants to do a video, I’ll be happy to. You might be a big hit because you are popular in the Carrier Community,” Carol replied.

“And a pop idol,” Dafydd added in a low tone, but everyone heard it and started to laugh.

“I give up,” Dee sighed.

“Good. ‘Cause you’ll never win, now that we know about this,” said Ryo, and then with an impish grin he added, “Daisuke.”

“He did say it was just an initial,” Tsubasa commented. “So that’s what “D” the pop idol’s name is.”

“Daisuke!” Bikky exclaimed joyfully and then laughed.

“You’re all having too much fun at my expense,” Dee grumped.

Ryo rubbed Dee’s back. “Only because we love you, Dee.”

“Even though you didn’t say it, I still heard it.”

Ryo grinned at him. “That’s because I love you more.”

Dee groaned and then finally chuckled. Clearing his throat, he said, “Okay, Randy. It’s only fair.”

Ryo pulled away. “No!” he remarked. “That just sounds so wrong.” He reached out and pinched Dee’s ass. “And that’s all because of you.”

“Yeah, it does.”

“Then I’m glad I got it on video,” Bikky remarked. “Just in case that really is the last time Dad ever calls you Randy, Pops.”
Ryo made a face and Dee started to laugh. “Boy, can I do something very well or what?” Dee asked, looking amused.

“You know that could be you some years down the line, Dee, if Ryo persisted,” Carol pointed out.

Ryo shook his head. “Nah. Unless Dee decides to change his name, I’m not going to push it.” He started to grin. “At least right now I don’t want J.J. or Drake or any of the others call you anything else but Dee.” Glancing over at Dafydd for a second before his attention going back to Dee, he added, “Your family calling you Daisuke is whole other thing, and if that’s what makes them comfortable, I hope you allow them.” He leaned closer and in a low voice stated, “I think for now, when we are back in New York, it will be my special name for you. A little change off from Penguin baby here and there.”

“Pops! Eww!” Bikky exclaimed.

“Penguin Baby?” Dafydd asked.

Akira started to smile. “Dee’s mother is a nun.”


“Bikky, it may be a term of endearment but those of us who have spent any significant time in your apartment or with you have heard it,” Akira said. “Leave your dads alone.”

As they talked, they walked down a small street and passed park side hotels toward Chou Dori. Akira led them to a small plaza at the intersection with Chou Dori.

Carol was the first to notice why Akira had them walk along that side. Pointing to the plaza, she exclaimed, “Oh how kawaii!” She lifted her camera and started to take pictures of the two panda shrubs.

“Oh!” Momo exclaimed. “I never saw them before.”
Ryo smiled at Dee after the two looked at the pandas. “I think we need pictures of the chibis with the pandas.”

Dee nodded in agreement. “I wouldn’t mind family photos too.”

“I agree with both of you,” Akira said, smiling. “Which is why I made sure we passed them instead of cutting through the station as you expected us to do.”

“I would have gone through the station,” Dee admitted, “but I didn’t know about these cute little dudes there.” With a wicked grin, he looked at his brother. “Dafydd, shall we get some family photos here?”

Dafydd studied Dee’s twinkling eyes for a split second and making his twin’s smile, replied, “Yes, Daisuke. Let’s be Japanese.”

Ryo’s mouth hung and then he broke out in laughter. Akira, Tsubasa, Kumi and Momo joined them.

Bikky and Carol were already taking pictures.

Ryo slipped his hand around Dee’s arm. “Okay, Daisuke and Dafydd. Let’s get some pictures.”

They spent some time taking pictures. Not only did they make sure there were pictures of just Dee and Dafydd and then Ryoko and Darin with their fathers by the panda bushes, but all the kids, with Bikky and Carol with the twins for one picture and then added Aya and Kento for another.

After the family got their pictures, Dafydd looked at Carol. “Did you take any video?”

“Yeah, I did take some video,” Carol replied.

Catching on with what his brother meant, Dee added, “Since the cat’s out of the bag now, if there’s anything you want to do video for your channel, go ahead.”
“And include anyone you think you want for that segment,” Bikky said. “Maybe even for once we can get one of them to do the video.”

“That would put you in the full video with me,” Carol stated.

Bikky shrugged.

Tsubasa laughed and held out his hand in Carol’s direction. “Hand over the camera, Princess. I’ll do the video.”

“Are you sure?” Carol asked.

“Yes,” came from the adults. The reaction caused Darin and Ryoko to start squealing and babbling happily, as if they were also replying, making everyone laugh.

They took another five minutes as Carol did a video with Tsubasa filming. She had Bikky join with her as they talked about their time since the last video, which they did on the outer deck of the Atakemaru the night before. Carol then went into reminding her regular viewers on how during the week it was confirmed that Dee had a twin brother and then had Bikky introduce his dad and uncle and asked them to join them. Carol and Bikky asked the two questions that they already knew but thought it would be good content for the video and even asked a few questions that drew out the emotions from the two reunited twins. They ended the video stating that hopefully the following week there will be video of a family reunited.

The others who watched the last segment of the video were wiping their eyes as they smiled.

“That was beautiful,” Akira exclaimed as she went over to hug both brothers and kissing their cheeks. “My darlings. That will be very gorgeous content for the internet.”

Both Dee and Dafydd nodded. “Yeah, I think it might,” Dee replied and then looking at Carol, added, “Hopefully we don’t bore viewers, especially when the tears started.”

Dafydd started to laugh. “Yeah, he’s right. Who wants to watch two grown men start to cry on video?”
“You’ll be surprised,” Carol said.

“She’s right, Dafydd,” Momo agreed. “I’ve seen some powerful stuff on YouTube. And it draws viewers.”

“I didn’t do it to pull in views,” Carol blurted out, “but I’ve been really wanting to finally do a video with the two of you since Saturday because as awesome as everything has been since we got here, you and Dafydd meeting at the party had to be the very best part of this trip.”

“You know what, Princess?” Dee asked, as he put an arm around her and guided her as everyone started to walk away from the plaza to the curb. “I think so too,” he said with a warm, watery smile and looked over at Dafydd.

Dafydd bowed slightly toward Carol, and Bikky. “I was my honor to do that video and tell the world about how I had finally found my long-lost brother that my family thinks is dead.”

“Maybe we can do a little longer video at some point?” Bikky asked. “Like at the penthouse? Or even in Nagoya would be cool. Uncle Dafydd can show us around his favorite places.”

Dafydd’s eyes suddenly looked sad for a moment before the sparkle that was almost like Dee’s but his own, yet just as telling as the one his brother’s eyes would get when he was excited or extremely happy. “I would very much love to show you places that I would go, wishing I had my twin with me.”

“And you would finally have him with you,” Kumi said warmly. “I think that would be an awesome video, whether it’s uploaded to a website or for just family.”

“This is something that I think should be shared,” Dee commented. “And I would love to be part of that.” He looked over to Dafydd with a smile. “What do you say? Do you want to show those places in a video and then have your twin show up?”

Dafydd nodded. “Yes. Just to be able to watch it over and over again to make me believe that it had happened.” He indicated Dee. “There are still times that I look at you and can’t believe we’ve been doing everything we had this week together.”

“Yeah, I understand,” Dee said.
The group walked up the short way on Chou Dori and then crossed the street and continued to walk under the train tracks to the other side of the station.

Akira had told the group that they were going to Asasuka for lunch, and then she thought they could go to Shibamata for a while.

With a sly grin, she watched as questioning looks came to the adults’ faces, except for Tsubasa and Kumi.

“Shibamata?” Ryo asked. “Where’s that? Have I ever been there before?”

“Yes, several times when you were young,” Akira replied, “but we never went while you were stationed at Zama. I’m sure once we get there, you will remember it.”

“It’s the first time I heard of it,” Dee stated.

“I think you will like it. So will Bikky and Carol,” Kumi said.

“I also think that Dafydd and Dee will be able to find special omiyage for their fathers and family in Nagoya,” Akira said. She looked at Dee.

“I hope so,” Ryo said. “Dee and I were talking about what we should bring for Dee’s first visit to his father’s house.”

“I am certain you will find something at Shibamata,” Tsubasa said. “You might even had trouble deciding on just one or two things.”

Dee and Ryo looked at Dafydd and Momo. Dafydd nodded and with a smile, he said, “Shibamata it is. I am looking forward.”

“But lunch first?” Bikky asked.
“Yes,” Akira assured him. “Lunch first. Shall we?”

“Lead the way,” Ryo said with a laugh as several others simply replied “Hai!” He was especially amused at how natural it came from Bikky and Carol.

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They walked along Asakusa Dori from Ueno Dori toward the Sumida River. There wasn’t anything special on the blocks they walked along, but Bikky and Carol still enjoyed the Japanese architecture, from the more traditional styles were wedged in between the new modern buildings. Many of the modern buildings would have a unique feature setting it apart from the other buildings, and many were unlike the designs back in New York. It most certainly did not feel like they were walking down a street in New York, even if Asakusa Dori was a wide two-way street with two lanes each way.

The two still could not get over the decorative railing that went along the curbs with breaks only where crossing or loading zones were permitted. Along with the Japanese architecture, each street they walked down was like an adventure to them. They had stopped giggling at the people who wore surgical masks, but the two still found it fascinating. Bikky and Carol loved people watching in New York, especially the tourists, but now they were the tourists in this fascination culture, and they seemed to absorb everything in, from the fashions to the hair styles to the culture. Through them, Dee started to see the streets again with new eyes. Even streets he was familiar with that did have new buildings since he was last there, they were still familiar enough to him. Listening to Bikky and Carol and feeling their enthusiasm made Dee look at things differently. He already appreciated being back in Japan, but having the two with them made Dee appreciate things more, while still in a familiar comfort zone of being back in places he had once considered home.

He knew Ryo felt the same way, and was so glad that they had decided on this trip, wanting to show Bikky Japan. They were glad that Carol was able to join them, because they both knew that Bikky having Carol with him on this great adventure made the trip even better for him.

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Chapter 24

Chapter Summary

Akira takes the family on an outing for Culture Day. The next day Dee, Ryo and family along with Dafydd and Momo are on their own for their last day in Tokyo before heading for Nagoya.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

November 3, 2006

Kappabashi, Asasuka

Tokyo, Japan

The group came to an intersection and as they waited for the light to change so they could cross, they heard Carol let out a gasp.

“Look at the teacups!” she exclaimed, pointing to the corner diagonal from them.

When Dee looked at Akira, who was leading the group on the day’s expedition, she had a knowing smile.

Tsubasa and Kumi were laughing quietly.

“Mama, are we getting tea inside the tea cups again?” Aya asked expectedly.
“Are we, Papa?” Kento asked, clapping his hands.

Dee started to chuckle as Ryo held his hand down with fingers outstretched. With a sly smile, Ryo started to countdown with his fingers.

“Oh, kawaii!” Momo exclaimed, also looking at what had Carol’s attention. “I need pictures.” She looked up at Dafydd when he started to laugh. “You knew about this?” she asked her husband.

Dafydd nodded. “Hai. I’ve been here a few times, but I always forget until I see it again.”

“Holy wow! It’s a big chef!” Bikky exclaimed, causing Ryo and Dee to start laughing as Ryo had just put his hand into a fist at zero when Bikky spoke.

“You can all take as many pictures as you want,” Akira stated as they crossed the street, “once we finish crossing the street.”

“Obāsan, are we having tea now?” Tsubasa asked, as he quickly scooped Kento up to carry him the rest of the way across the street. The child kept stopping to jump up and down while clapping his hands in the middle of the street.

“I didn’t plan on it until your little ones reminded me that they like to have tea when we are here,” Akira replied and laughed. To everyone else she said, “The tea cups are actually balconies. They are also advertisements for the shop on the ground floor that sells café supplies, including many types of cups for tea and coffee.” Looking at Bikky and Carol, she swept her hand to indicate the stretch of street ahead of them. “This is Kitchen Town, or better known here as Kappabashi. It is a very famous place to buy equipment for any food service. Most of the shops along this street sell pots, pans, equipment, tableware and everything else you need to run a food service shop. We won’t find much food to eat along this street. This shop is one of the exceptions. In the back to the store, there are stairs to take you up to the floor above it, and a café. You can also buy loose tea and coffee beans, mostly imported from Europe and America.”

“Aya and Kento love to go to the café for tea because it also has a cup balcony,” Kumi explained. “Sometimes we’re lucky and can get the table on the balcony, but most time we don’t really have tea inside the cup. To them, having tea anywhere in the café is having tea in a tea cup, and they get really excited when we can get that table.”

“Our group is too large to get that table if it is available,” Tsubasa commented, and then laughed.
“Sometimes our little bugs use their cute chibi faces on whoever is eating there and get invited on the balcony for a few minutes.” He hugged Kento, who he was still carrying and kissed the boy’s head, causing the child to hug him while laughing happily.

“I was so horrified the first time they did that,” Kumi admitted. “But then it started to get funny. I have many videos of them in the café.”

“I might use them to get Ryo, Dei, Bikky and the chibis on the balcony for a family photo,” Akira said with a wicked grin. “We can get a light lunch to hold us until we get to Shibamata, instead of having lunch in Asasuka. I hope no one is starving.”

Ryo looked at his grandmother and asked, “Did you have anywhere planned for us to eat here? Because if you had somewhere special, we should just order tea to make my little cousins happy and then we can get an actual meal.”

Akira shook her head. “I had no particular place in mind. I thought we would walk around and when we see some place that interests us, we would go in to eat. I was not considering having a meal in Shibamata, but if we do, I do have somewhere in mind to be our meal destination.”

Dee and Ryo looked at each other and with a slight nod to each other, gave their attention to the rest of their group.

Dafydd shrugged. “It doesn’t matter to me. I am a little hungry, but a snack will be good enough for now.”

“Me too,” Momo stated.

Tsubasa smiled. “As long as the little ones can say they had tea in the tea cups again, I’m good with holding off until Shibamata.” He looked over to Kumi, who nodded in agreement. “What about you, Carol?” he asked.

“I’m just happy to be here, looking at the pretty balconies, so I’m good with whatever everyone else wants to do,” Carol replied.

“Tea cups, it is,” Dee decided for the group, grinning at his youngest cousins by marriage and lightly patting Aya’s head. Kumi stood close to Dee, with Aya between them. “Besides, if we stop here and
then make another stop in Asakusa, we might not make it to Shibamata with time to explore.”

“That is also very true, Dei,” Akira agreed. “So we have a light meal here. Even if we do not go into
the restaurant at Shibamata, there is still plenty of shops with delicious street food to enjoy.”

Aya looked up at Dee, jumping up and down with a smile. “Arigato, Cousin Dee!” she exclaimed.

Ryo laughed. “That makes it worth the decision. Let’s go have some tea.” He grinned Kento, who
clapped his heads, smiling. “I have to admit that after walking around the festival, I’m thankful for
the light meal just now. I don’t think I’m ready for anything heavy yet.”

“We did walk off whatever we did eat there,” Dafydd pointed out.

Dee nodded in agreement with his twin. “We also peddled it off,” he added.

Both Dafydd and Bikky nodded to what Dee said.

Shaking her head with amusement, Kumi said, “Between here and Asasuka Station, there is street
food within a block or two if we do not directly pass something. No one will starve before we get to
Shibamata,” she assured Dee, Bikky and Dafydd.

Ryo started laughing. “I swear, you two are definitely twins,” he commented to Dee and Dafydd.
“You both can eat your weight, and what sucks is you don’t show it.”

“You said otherwise when I was pregnant,” Dee pointed out with a pout.

“Well, we didn’t know you were having twins at the time. Now that we know about Darin,” Ryo
said.

“Meaning I really didn’t have to cut down since I was eating for two,” Dee quipped.

“Oh, you weren’t starving,” Ryo stated and then laughed again.
“The cup balconies are cool, but I like the big chef head.” Bikky said as they started to walk again, going to the curb and wait for the light to change so they could cross Asasuka Dori.

“That’s a restaurant supply store,” Dee explained. “Yuki dragged me here enough times so he could look at what he would buy when he opened his shop. There’s a lot of stores here that are popular, but they are mostly dishes, utensils and stuff like that. This store sells a lot of the equipment like stoves, refrigeration units and anything else for an industrial kitchen. It is the most famous for restaurant owners to go to.”

“Dei is correct,” Akira said to Bikky.

“So, it’s like the Restaurant Depot back home?” Carol asked.

“Yeah,” said Dee. “It’s not as large as Restaurant Depot, but believe me, you can buy stuff from that store that you can’t find in Restaurant Depot.”

“I don’t think they even think some of the stuff they sell in the store across the street exists unless they are familiar with Japan,” Ryo said.

“That’s true,” Dee agreed.

Ryo looked at Dee and his grandmother and with a teasing grin said, “Excuse me, you two, but I have to ask, when you say this place is famous, is it famous famous or Japanese ‘famous’?”

“Both,” Dee, Akira, Tsubasa and Kumi replied at the same time, making Ryo, Dafydd and Momo laugh. Bikky and Carol joined in. Kento and Aya started to laugh because all the adults were.

“You should know that, baka,” Akira said to Ryo, gazing at him in amusement.

Ryo shrugged. “Sorry, I had to ask.”

Once they crossed the street, the group stopped again and pulled over so more pictures could be
“The chef dude doesn’t look Japanese,” Bikky commented as he took a few pictures with the camera Dee and Ryo had given him before they left New York for Japan. “So, no balconies? Not even his mouth?”

The adults chuckled.

“That would be fun,” Tsubasa said to Bikky. “But sorry, no balconies there. It’s just a display to find the store and nothing else. No one goes up there.”

“Don’t even think of it, bud,” Ryo warned Bikky.

“Aw man,” Bikky exclaimed, looking slightly disappointed.

“You’ll get over it, kiddo,” said Dee. “So light meal then?” he asked the group.

“Did everyone get the pictures they wanted?” Akira asked. “I did bring us to this intersection thinking Bikky and Carol would find it interesting.”

“We do,” Carol said. “Thank you, Obāsan.”

“Yeah, Obāsan,” Bikky stated. “This is very cool. And I got some pictures.” With a teasing look, he added, “I’m not like my dad.”

“Hey,” Dee commented. “I only took a couple, mostly of all of you with the buildings in the background.”

“Carol, would you like to do a video?” Akira asked her.

“Can I??
“Go ahead,” Akira replied with a smile. “I look forward to watching it, along with your other videos.”

Bikky took over making the video, while Carol decided that since the corner was also new to Momo, to have her “co-host”. They shared their thoughts about the corner, and then asked everyone who had been there before about it. Carol even included the little ones, who enthusiastically exclaimed in both English and Japanese that they were excited to have tea in the tea cups again, and that they usually did after going on the duck boats.

Dee talked about his experiences going window shopping with Yuki and then going for tea and a snack in the tea shop. He ended with how Yuki did go to the Chef store first to start picking out things for his noodle shop when he was opening it. Dee wished he was able to be with Yuki on that trip, but at least Yuki had Hide and Ken with him, and they’d sent Dee pictures and video. He added that Hide had also shopped there for the kitchen of his club when he was opening it. Both men still shopped there.

Dafydd told about how Saburo and Yoshio took him for tea in the café a couple of times when he was younger, and then later when he was older he would take Tomoko and Ayaka when he visited them in Tokyo during the time his younger sisters lived there.

Once everyone was done with telling stories with one of the shops in the background, they went to the café. Carol had her first snow strawberry sandwich. To Bikky’s delight, they had yakisoba sandwiches, so he ordered one. Tsubasa ordered a snow strawberry sandwich for Aya and Kento to share. All the adults ordered either pork or chicken katsu sandwiches. Their sandwiches came with a cabbage and carrot salad with ginger dressing, while Carol and the children received fresh fruit in a parfait cup with choices of ginger and raspberry syrups.

When they were done, Akira got up and went over to the male couple eating on the balcony with their daughter. She spoke to them for a few minutes, and then bowed and returned to their table with a smile.

“I am going outside now. Everyone will stay here. Give me your cameras. Ryo, I will call you when I am ready. They said that they will allow you on the balcony so I can take pictures.”

Tsubasa and Ryo started to laugh, knowing their grandmother well.

After Akira left, Dafydd asked Dee, “Is that us being told again because we are also family?”
Before the elder woman left, Dafydd and Momo had offered to assist Akira with the pictures, and she had made it very clear that they were to be in the pictures too, and she took their camera with the others.

With a laugh, Ryo replied, “You’re family now, Dafydd. Get used to it. Ask your twin.”

“I know exactly how you feel. I was there once,” Dee replied.

“Tell me about it,” Bikky added, making everyone laugh. “But we love her.”

“Yes, we do,” Dee agreed.

“I can see why,” Dafydd admitted.

They continued to sit at their table until Akira called. The couple said they were done anyway and was just sitting there holding the table until they were ready to take pictures.

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They ended up in the Chef store. Dee and Ryo picked out some pots and pans to be delivered to the penthouse.

As they walked along the street toward Kaminarimon Dori, Dee and Ryo managed to find some tea and sake cup sets that they liked and even some everyday dishes to start their collection to be able to cook and serve their family at the penthouse. It was a start, but they also wanted to look during their travels. The nice thing about Japanese tableware is nothing was expected to match. They just needed to have enough dishware in various sizes and the correct type of bowl to serve certain foods to accommodate any guests they would be entertaining.

Momo also picked up some dishes and cups that were promised to be delivered by the next day to the penthouse after Dee spoke to the shops’ clerks to have them added to their deliveries.
They ended up at the Hanayashiki Amusement Park for a while, allowing Bikky and Carol to take Tsubasa’s kids on a few rides. Akira explained how it is claimed to be the oldest amusement park in Japan, dating back to the late Edo period. Bikky and Carol were happy to see the big electrical panda rides at the park. The adults also took time on them while Bikky and Carol took Aya and Kento on the other rides.

Dee realized that as much as he didn’t want the twins to grow up too quickly, he could not wait until they were old enough to take them on rides. At least for now, he had Ryoko with him on the panda, while Ryo had Darin, as Akira got it on video, along with some video of the kids on the rides.

When they left the amusement park, they entered the sublevel shopping street close to the park, to get to the train. Despite the expected deliveries, they all still had bags and added a few more items to Bikky’s and Carol’s by the time they reached the train platform.

At Shibamata Station, Akira led them the short distance to a pedestrian street lined with restaurants and shops, many that specialized in a particular food, such as rice crackers or mochi. The shops offered gift sets to use as omiyage, which why Akira felt it was a good place to take Dafydd and Momo to get the last of their gifts to give to family and friends in Nagoya. She also thought it would be a good thing for Dee and Dafydd select something together to present to their father for Dee’s first meeting with Saburo Fujioka. There were also some other shops that sold non-food souvenirs. The wooden buildings were more traditional in design, the facades of the shops giving into the illusion of Old Tokyo before modernization took down many older buildings all over the city.

Shibamata managed to avoid the brunt of bombings on Tokyo during World War II. What was damaged was repaired to its original splendor, just as whatever buildings were damaged in the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923. Very few buildings were taken down over time and was in need of being razed, the new buildings were in the old Edo style architecture. Renovations involved upgrading the restoration of old buildings to look like its original glory.

Dee hoped that modernization would never find its way to this area. Some areas were not meant to be replaced by shiny, tall modern buildings. There were areas in New York he felt the same, like the Seaport area.
As he made his way through Tokyo and Yokohama, he realized that some older buildings he had in photos from his time in college were now replaced by new, ultra-modern buildings. Even some of the older single-family homes were replaced.

Carol was filming as they walked down the long stretch of street lined with various shops that led to the entrance of a temple, and Akira was explaining to Carol and Bikky how this was also a movie street. It was the setting for a popular Japanese film series, and how it was also used for period scenes or for the atmosphere during a contemporary scene. When they came from the train tracks, there was a square at the Shibamata Station, and Akira pointed out the statue of Tora-san, the lead character of the popular movie series that ran from 1969 to 1995, and another of his sister, Sakura. Dafydd remembered some of the movies, having watched them with his father, and had to have pictures and video of everyone with the statues to show his father.

Dafydd, Dee and Momo, along with Bikky and Carol were the only ones who were there for the first time. Once they reached the street, Ryo exclaimed that he did remember it, but it had been a very long time since he was last there. Dee decided that he certainly wanted to come back again.

Dafydd leaned toward Dee and asked, “Does Akira-san know everything in Japan?”

Ryo heard him and chuckled. “She is a huge history nerd, so there’s a lot she can tell you about, but she knows the most about the Kanto plain area. Of course, you realize she knows the most or have stories to share on the places she chooses to take us?”

Momo started to giggle as Dafydd exclaimed, “Oh!” and gave a sheepish look, making Dee also laugh.

“She’ll do the same if you let her take you around New York, you know,” Dee said and laughed again.

“Oh yeah,” Ryo remarked with a grin. “She still managed to do that to us when we let her take us places while she stayed with us in New York.”

“Hell, she did it at Mitsuwa,” Dee added, laughing more. “Giving us the history of the company, even if it is an American company.”

“What’s Mitsuwa?” Momo asked.
“Our local Japanese supermarket,” Ryo replied. “Marketplace, actually. Besides the full-size supermarket, there are also smaller shops selling tableware, there’s a health and beauty store, another selling appliances, then there’s popular culture, and there’s a Kinokuniya book store. It’s pretty much one stop Japanese shopping outside of Japan.”

“We go there every other week or so for our Japanese shopping,” Dee said. “They also have a food court, all the shops having the main restaurants that are famous in Tokyo and Osaka. It’s also across the Hudson River in New Jersey, but you can eat with a beautiful view of the New York skyline.”

“Is that new?” Dafydd asked. “You mean there was this big Japanese marketplace just across the Hudson and I didn’t know about it? I mean, I enjoyed the food, especially the pizza, once I got used to New York pizza, and the knishes and stuff, but when I found a Japanese place, it just didn’t taste the same.”

“Oh, there’s some good places now,” Ryo said, “but that’s also only in the last few years. We have this ramen shop that opened a couple of blocks from us that we love.” He started to smirk. “It’s just like getting ramen here, except we don’t slurp noodles in New York.”

Dee started to laugh. “You should have seen Bikky’s reaction the first time we went to have soup at Yuki’s shop. It was hilarious.”

Ryo also laughed. “He was amusing. I wish we got it on video.”

“Yes, nobody slurps in New York, or drink miso soup from the bowl. Not even the Japanese,” Dafydd said. “Even I stopped shortly after I got there.”

“The family I knew when I was growing up did only in their home. That’s how I learned,” Dee explained. “But I was also told that was the only place I was allowed. They are also the ones who taught me Japanese,” he added to his brother. “Anyway, Mitsuwa wasn’t open when you went to college. It opened around 2000. I’m not sure exactly. We noticed it a couple of years ago, driving along the Hudson coming back from a friend’s house and went in to investigate.”

“Ask Obāsan,” Ryo remarked and chuckled. “I forgot what she said.”

“Me too,” said Dee, looking amazed.
“She’ll even tell you about San Diego, Los Angeles and many of the cities between the two,” Ryo said.

“I lived in San Diego, but I was too young to remember,” Dafydd commented. “But Papa took a lot of pictures that he gave me copies when I got older.”


“Yes, I do,” replied Dafydd. “Most of it.”

They started to laugh, and continued to talk as they took in the various shops until Carol and Bikky were done with their video. Carol said she wanted to do more but, on the way, back and include anyone else who wanted to help her with it.

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Their destination was not the temple, but once they came to the end of the long stretch of shops, Dee and Ryo, along with Dafydd and Momo, decided that they wanted to explore the temple and the grounds for a little while. Bikky and Carol had no complaints. It seemed that the two were up to looking at everything Japanese, and they never seemed to be bored. The first day of going to shrines and temples in Kamakura, they did seem a little bored, but by the end of the day, they realized that while there were similarities, each shrine and temple were unique and had their own special features that were worth seeing.

Along the way back from the temple they stopped for lunch at the restaurant Akira had mentioned that was very famous because some of the series was filmed in it, and then went over to the shop where Dee and Dafydd wanted to buy some rice crackers as a gift for their father. The shop clerk offered to make a gift box for them, allowing the twin brothers to pick out what they wanted in the box in the colorful box with the shop’s name on it. Ryo watched as then, both Dee and Dafydd took out yen and each of them paid half of the cost.

They had done some other shopping on the return walk, allowing Dafydd and Momo to pick up small gifts as omiyage to bring back for other family and friends. At a confection store, again Dee and Dafydd bought a small gift box for Ayaka. They had also bought fresh mochi, rice crackers and green tea soft serve ice cream cones to eat along the way. By the time they arrived at the train station, they all had more shopping bags. Dee and Ryo also picked up items for others in Dafydd’s and
Dee’s family. They had no idea who they would be meeting, so they selected some general snack gifts that are generally liked by the average Japanese person. Dafydd and Momo assured that everyone in their family would happily receive one of the gifts.

JOYPOLIS

DECKS, ODAIBA

TOKYO, JAPAN

Akira stayed at the penthouse watching Ryoko, Darin, Kento and Aya. When they left her, she looked like she was about to have the evening of her life, being able to spend time with four of her great-grandchildren.

Dee and Ryo, along with Bikky and Carol, Tsubasa and Kumi, and Dafydd and Momo all headed by train to Odaiba. For Dee and Ryo, it was their second time going to Odaiba, and their first to further investigate beyond the area by the Hilton Hotel, and the Statue of Liberty. That time they were also in a van driven by Nobu to an area that the last time both spent any significant time in Japan was not a place to attract tourists with warehouses and some office buildings. Dafydd and Momo had never been to Odaiba before for the same reasons at first, and then time during a visit did not allow them to explore. Bikky and Carol had gone earlier in the week with their friends, but after meeting their friends in Akihabara, they went up to Asakusa and took the Himiko down to Odaiba. One of the friend’s father had met them outside of Joypolis and drove Carol and Bikky to the hotel before taking the other children home. This trip to Odaiba was also their first time taking the train.

They took the Hibiya line from the Roppongi Station to Ginza, where they transferred for the Ginza line to Shimbashi Station. Tsubasa and Kumi led the group from the main entrance of Shimbashi Station for a short walk to the newer and smaller station for the Yurikamome Line, which would take them to Odaiba. Tsubasa further led them along the walled platform to the very first sliding doors the wall.

“Wow, we can sure use walls like they have at a lot of stations here back in New York,” Ryo
exclaimed, looking at the high wall.

“This is the first full wall I’ve seen,” Dee said, “but I agree. It is a solution to keeping people from falling onto the tracks.”

“Were there a lot of people pushed on tracks before the walls?” Carol asked.

“Mostly accidental here in Japan,” Dee answered. “That or jumpers. You see how crowded these platforms are, and how hard it is to pass along the edge of platforms that don’t have walls. I remember lots of people accidently pushed, or losing footing and falling on the tracks. There are also a lot of people who for one reason or another felt as if they disgraced their families and decide jumping in front of a train was the better option. I see they started to do something about that in the last ten years.”

“I noticed on the information boards that there are still delays because of passengers falling on tracks since we arrived,” Ryo said.

“Walls along the platforms are still an ongoing project, but I believe that most, if not all, train platforms will end up with walls to prevent passengers from going on the tracks,” Tsubasa said.

Bikky looked across the track at the long line of people waiting for the next train to pull into the station. They were the only ones lining up on that side of the platform. “Tsubasa, how come we’re not taking the next train?” He pointed to the lines of people along the platform.

“Aren’t they going the other way?” Carol asked.

Bikky shook his head. “Nah. The tracks end on both sides at this station. See?” He pointed far down to the other end of the platform. “Trains don’t go in that direction.”

“Bikky’s right,” Tsubasa told Carol. “We could take the next train, but there are already too many people waiting for it. We’re not on a schedule and do not need to be there at a specific time, so since it’ll only be another 5 minutes before the next train comes in, we’ll wait. Besides, we’re going to be the first ones in the first car.” He smiled at Bikky and Carol. “Trust me, you want to be in the front of the train.”

“Why?”
“You’ll see when we get in. You and Carol can take two of the front seats in the car,” Tsubasa answered. “And your dads can argue over who gets the third one.”

“Unless one of them sits in the other’s lap,” Kumi added with a giggle. She looked over at Dafydd and Momo. “I think Dee and Ryo can argue with Dafydd and Momo over who gets that seat.”

Dafydd looked at Kumi intrigued. “What’s so special about those seats?”

“Our two rugrats love sitting in the front when we take the train into Odaiba,” Tsubasa explained. “And when they’re not with us, Kumi and I still take the front seats. It’s all going to be your first time taking this way to Odaiba and you want the view in the front.”

“We’re able to look out the door or something past the train operator?” Carol asked.

Tsubasa started to answer and paused while the train pulled into the station on the other side of the platform. They were still the only ones lined up waiting for the next train as people coming up to the platform from the stairs and escalators rushed to catch the train coming in. A young couple with a small child came out of the elevator that was behind them and decided to get on the line behind them.

Dee started to chuckle. “The one thing I was never able to understand about the Japanese is the extreme need to get into the next train, even if it means squeezing into a car with no space. Especially since for most lines, you don’t wait longer than five or ten minutes before the next car. The only times I squeezed myself into a crowded car was because I was really late for a class or important meeting. Thankfully I drove to school most of the time. But when the car was in the shop, it was trains for us.”

Dafydd shrugged. “That’s the one thing I’m at a lost for too, I confess. We Japanese tend to be punctual, meaning we aim to get somewhere early. I also found myself having time to wait for the next train if the one coming in was too crowded. I give myself extra time to get to work, and should I get there early, then I have some time to relax before it’s time to start work.”

Ryo smirked. “In New York, we had to squeeze into many crowded trains because we did not have the luxury of waiting for the next one going into work.” He gently poked Dee in the ribs. “Your brother tended to wake up late until the last year or so.”

Dee groaned. “So I liked my beauty sleep,” he commented with a shrug. “Seriously, I think I was
falling into a rut. Ever since Ryo and Bikky moved in, things started to get more interesting. Now I find myself needing to be up to help get Bikky out of bed for school.”

Bikky stuck his tongue out at Dee, who started to laugh. “Well, I still have beauty to sleep late in for,” he quipped to his father.

Dee shook his fist toward Bikky as he let out a growl. “What are you saying there?”

“Enough,” Ryo cut in. “Ironically, now that he’s on a school break, Bikky seems to have no trouble getting out of bed early the last couple of weeks, no matter what time he went to sleep,” Ryo remarked amused.

“There’s just so much to do since we got to Japan, who has time to sleep?” Bikky commented.

“Just make sure you sleep good to keep up the energy to get around,” Ryo said.

“Yeah, I am. I’m sleeping really good when I go to bed, but I don’t want to sleep in when we can be doing things, even if it’s hanging with Obāsan in her house, or sitting on the terrace at the penthouse. That’s some view of Tokyo.”

“Yes, it is,” Carol agreed. “You can’t see everything you can from Tokyo Tower or the Skytree, but it is a pretty view. You can even see the Rainbow Bridge at night.”

“Yup, I have to agree,” Dee said. “I do like sitting on the terrace in between our adventures during the day, and to end a long day before going to sleep.”

As they talked the train pulled in on their side of the platform, which now had lines of people going along the platform. The train on the other side started to close its doors and pull out of the station.

The doors slid open as the train’s doors also opened. As soon as the last passenger exited the train, Tsubasa ushered them inside going directly to the front of the train, offering the two seats on the right side of the car to Bikky and Carol.

Dee’s eyes opened as wide as the teens, but he quickly came to agreement with Ryo and Dafydd that
Momo or Kumi should take the single seat in the very front on the left side. Kumi offered it to Momo. Dafydd stood in the space behind the seat, while Dee and Ryo took up the spots behind Bikky and Carol.

Tsubasa and Kumi stood in the space between those standing.

“Where’s the train operator?” Carol asked. Ahead of the seats was a large glass window looking out ahead of the train, making it easy to see where they were going.

“The unique feature of the Yurikamome line is that the trains are operated by computers,” Kumi explained. “And a beautiful ride to Odaiba.”

“Going there on that fancy boat was a really cool ride too,” Bikky said, “but this looks very cool too.”

“I think I’m going to enjoy this ride very much,” Ryo said with a smile. He had the camcorder up and already had started filming.

“Is this a monorail?” Carol asked.

“No, it’s a normal train, with two rail tracks, while a monorail has only one rail. This train is just controlled by a computer along the tracks,” Tsubasa explained. “Meaning we get to sit here and look out the front window of the train instead of an operator.”

Bikky, Carol, Dee and Momo took advantage of their where they were settled for the ride to Odaiba, taking pictures as the train went along the tracks toward Odaiba, promising to share with anyone else who wanted photos. Dafydd took a few from his place, including others in their group, while Tsubasa and Kumi looked on in amusement. Kumi decided to take a few pictures of the others during the ride to share with the family.

Tsubasa allowed the two young children who had stood in line behind them with their fathers in front of him and Kumi so they could stand by the window. Tsubasa assured their fathers that he would make sure they were safe, but Dee saw that Momo and even Bikky, who sat on the end seat had an eye on them.

Momo started to talk to young children in Japanese, making them smile and giggle. She introduced them to Bikky and Carol. The two children started to excitedly chatter in Japanese to Bikky and Carol, who basically kept repeating “Hai!” and “So desu ka?” to the children. Bikky also made
faces, making the little ones laugh before their attention went back to looking out the window, and taking pictures. Dee made sure he got a few pictures of Bikky and Carol with them, and looked over at Ryo, who nodded a Dee with a grin, meaning he also caught the exchange on video.

The train went over the Rainbow Bridge, and they got off at the Odaiba-Kaihinkoen stop, which was the first one in Odaiba. They went into Decks and found a restaurant on the seaside half of the mall that served tonkatsu and had tables on the deck overlooking the bay, enjoying deep fried pork cutlets and shrimp for dinner before going to Joypolis.

When they entered Joypolis, Ryo and Momo started to laugh at the expressions on the twin brothers’ faces. Dee and Dafydd looked around at the open area with a stage on the first floor and then upward at the dark interior lit by areas of bright lights from the many attractions along the three floors of the amusement center. To their left was an escalator lit with neon lights going up to the second floor.

“Whoa!” Dafydd exclaimed as a roller coaster car came rushing along the track over them.

“What the hell?” Dee exclaimed.

“Now that is pretty awesome,” Ryo had to admit, starting to grin widely. “I think I understand why Bikky insisted that Dee and Dafydd had to come here with him, but I’m glad I was also invited to come along.”

“Oh yes,” Momo agreed. “I think we’re all going to have a very fun night.”

Ryo was glad he was talked into getting a full passport ticket for the evening. They entered after 5 pm, so the tickets were discounted. Tsubasa and Kumi suggested that they start at the 3rd floor and work their way down. They went on all the VR simulated rides on the third floor, taking a break when they were almost done with the rides on that floor to get ice cream cones and dorayaki, along with drinks at the Frame Café, and sat at a table near the window, again appreciating the view of Tokyo Bay with the Rainbow Bridge lit in all its brilliance, with the Tokyo skyline including the brightly lit orange of Tokyo Tower.

“Tokyo is a beautiful city,” Ryo sighed happily as they enjoyed their snack.

Dee nodded his head. “I hate to admit it, but there are a lot of things that are more fascinating than New York, but New York has its own unique beauty to it.”
“New York is great,” said Bikky, “but Tokyo is greater. All of it, including Kamakura.”

“You’re just saying that for Obaasan, who is not here, Bikky,” said Ryo.

“I didn’t say it for her. There’s so much cool stuff to explore in Kamakura. We still have areas to explore, right?” Bikky asked. “And we have to go back to Enoshima too!”

Ryo nodded. “Yes. When we come back from our road trip, we’ll be staying with Obaasan for a few days before going back to the penthouse.”

“We also have a trip to Hakone and Mt. Fuji planned when we get back,” Dee added. He smiled at his brother before continuing speaking to Bikky. “I think you’re also going to like Nagoya a lot. There’s a lot of fun things to do there, too. A lot of interesting places with history.”

“I guess you liked Nagoya enough to go back a few more times,” Momo commented.

“Yeah, it’s an interesting city,” Dee stated. “Besides the Tokyo Metropolitan area, I think Nagoya is my favorite city.” He grinned at Ryo. “And I’m not just saying that for Dafydd. I know I still have things I want to see in Nagoya if they’re still there, and there’s probably a lot new. So yeah, after Tokyo, it’s Nagoya and then Hakata.” Looking at Bikky and Carol, “Not to say there’s nothing in the other cities we’re going to.”

“Japan has so much to offer, whether it’s in a city or rural area. There are some areas I’ve been hearing about that we can stop to explore for a couple of hours on our road trip,” Ryo added.

“I want to see it all,” Carol said, enthusiastically.

“Me too,” added Bikky. He looked at Dafydd. “You’re going to show us all the cool places in Nagoya when we get there, aren’t you, Uncle Dafydd?”

“In between meeting your family, yes, I would love to,” Dafydd replied. “But I think your dad would like to see some places again and share them with you. I also think that your grandfather will want to take you all to some places.”
“That’s cool. If your father has places like Obāsan has, I’m going to like it a lot,” Bikky said. He smiled at Dee. “Of course, I want to see some of your favorite places in your birth city, Dad.”

“I’m still getting used to that,” said Dee, “even if I feel like I’ve known Dafydd all my life. Which is strange because I’m still learning things about him and our family.” He patted Dafydd’s shoulder and then finished his beer. Starting to stand up, he said, “We better get back to the fun, if we have any chance of getting through everything tonight.”

He waited a few minutes while Carol and Momo finished the last of their matcha ice cream cones and went back to finishing the rides on the 3rd floor.

On the 2nd floor, they noticed the D-Lounge and a massive screen on a wall. “What the hell is that?” Dee asked.

Bikky and Carol started to laugh. “You’ll see. Let’s go.”

They looked at the others to find Momo and Kumi were before another video display. Momo and Kumi were on the screen, along with an animated character that looked like an idol. The two women were trying to follow the instructions from the character, doing some dance routines.

“I’m surprised you’re not there with them,” Tsubasa said to Carol.

“Oh, I did it already,” Carol said. “She kicks if you don’t get it right.”

Dee started to laugh. “I don’t think you were really kicked, Princess.”

“No, but it was annoying. Bikky jumped in and started pushing her around.”

“I tried to, but it’s hard trying to push air,” Bikky commented with a huff and then laughed.

“She got the best of us,” Carol sighed and also laughed. “But we did have a lot of fun too. I just thought to let them have their fun.”
“Kumi has to do it every time we came here,” Tsubasa stated. “She’s determined to get it all right one day.” With a wicked grin, he added, “What I would really love to see is the twin brothers give it a try.”

Dee stared at his first cousin by marriage while Dafydd looked horrified. Dee let out a laugh. “If I get enough cocktails in me, I might be willing, but I’m not too sure about embarrassing myself in front of the kids.”

“Too late, Dad,” Bikky remarked.

“Biks!” Dee yelped, while Tsubasa and Ryo laughed.

“It’s true,” Bikky said. “So what’s one more. Go on, Dad. I’ll let you see video that Carol took of me in front of that.”

“You did it?” Ryo asked in shock. “And let Carol take video?”

“She has ways of talking me into things sometimes,” Bikky admitted, “and I didn’t let her. She just did and was sneaky about it.” He shrugged. “At least she can’t add some footage into one of her videos for You Tube. At least not while we’re still in Japan, since I’m the only one who can add footage while we’re here.”

Ryo raised an eyebrow as he looked at Dee. “Is that so? I would love for us to sit down one day soon and you show me and your dad what you can do with video editing.”

Dee smiled. “Yeah, if you’re really good and enjoy it, we could consider getting you a better laptop with a good graphics card for video.”

“I would love a desktop,” Bikky said. “I know it’s not practical when we’re travelling, but I do like it a lot. I would also love to learn more about animation.”

That got both Dee and Ryo sharing surprised but pleased expressions. “A desktop it is, then. You’ll need something good for school anyway. We can even start looking while we’re still in Japan. I doubt it’ll be any trouble taking it home on the plane,” Ryo said.
“Oh cool! Thanks Pops! You too, Dad. You do know I started to get interested in it watching you do those graphics.”

Dee shrugged. “They’re just for fun. I find it relaxing working on something, especially around the time of challenging cases.”

“I can see why,” Bikky agreed.

“Well, we’re learning a lot on this trip about the kiddos’ hidden talents,” Dee remarked and smiled.

“They offer animation classes at school, and I was hoping to try to get in the introduction class this semester.” He looked at Ryo and Dee, “If there’s an opening, I’m going to need a signed permission slip.”

Dee and Ryo looked at each other and smiled. “If this is something you enjoy, and you’ll do your best, then you have our permission,” said Ryo.

“And support,” Dee added with a smile. “That’s a good career if basketball doesn’t pan out.”

“Awesome. Thanks Dads!” said Bikky.

Momo and Kumi came over to join the group. “What did we miss?” Kumi asked.

“That Dee and Ryo have some talented teens in their family,” Dafydd said with a laugh.

“Speaking of video,” Tsubasa said. He held up his phone. “There is video of you two with that crazy anime character.”

“You didn’t!” Momo exclaimed, covering her cheeks with her hands to cover her blush.

“I did,” Tsubasa remarked with a wicked smile. “And you and Dafydd will get a copy. Don’t you
worry. Dee, Ryo, I’ll send you a copy too.” He winked at his cousin and his cousin’s husband.

“Now Dad and Uncle Dafydd,” Bikky said, giving the brothers a pleading look.

“Dee and Dafydd are going to try it?” Carol asked, amazed.

“Not yet,” Dee said and Dafydd nodded. “Maybe if there’s time after everything else on this floor before we go down.”

Dafydd stared at Dee. “You’re joking?”

“Let’s hope we’re running out of time,” Dee said. “Now about those things on that screen that look like alien walruses.”

Ryo started to laugh. “Thanks, Dee. Now I’m thinking about Chief Smith. And that is all your fault.”

He shrugged, and to the others who did not know the in joke said, “I used to refer to our Chief as a walrus. It kinda caught on. Even Ryo slipped up a few times eventually.”

“As I said, all your fault.”

“What is it with you and animals?” Momo asked amused.

“What is it about Dee and getting people called by something other than they go by?” Ryo added. He smiled at Dee and then leaned in for a brief kiss. “But I’ll keep you anyway, Daisuke.”

“Oh oh,” Kumi remarked. “I think Dee’s unit will be calling him Daisuke, if Ryo gets his way.”

“Nah. Not going to happen,” Ryo said. “Unless that’s what Dee might eventually decide. Until then, that’s my thing to call him that. Other than his natural family who will most likely insist on calling him that.” He looked at Dee. “You know how stubborn the older generations can be.”
“I do. I know your father’s family,” Dee quipped. “Mother already warned me about it.”

As they spoke, they went further into the D-Lounge. Ryo looked at the name over the small food counter and laughed. “Hey, Dafydd and Daisuke, it’s the D-Lounge.”

Everyone laughed with Ryo. “It doesn’t matter whether it’s Dee or Daisue,” said Dafydd, “but if you’re talking about me and my twin here, then it’s Double D to you.”

“Oh shit, Dafydd,” Dee commented as the group laughed more. “I’m not sure I want the guys in my unit hear that.”

Dafydd suddenly looked serious. “You’re right. I wouldn’t want mine either, but I couldn’t resist. So are those human faces on those weird things?”

“They’re manatees, not walruses,” Tsubasa informed them.

Dee took another look at the screen. “Oh yeah, you’re right. They are. So Biks, gonna show us what we need to do?”

“Yeah, watch,” Bikky said with a smile, and went over to the side of the large video screen and stood in a spot on the floor a few feet away from the wall. “See? You scan your face. Like this.” A digital display indicated that it had successfully scanned Bikky’s face. “And then you wait for your face to appear on one of those creatures, umm, manatees.”

They all ended up scanning their faces and sat in the lounge for a while, laughing as their faces showed up on the manatees, appearing to swim through water and do flips. Dee, Dafydd, Tsubasa and Bikky scanned their faces a second time, making silly faces during the scan.

Because of the length of some of the lines, they realized they could never do everything in the indoor theme park, so they skipped a few attractions, and went down to the first floor and got on the line for the roller coaster. It wasn’t the most thrilling coaster they had been on, but being that it was all indoor, with the cars zooming along a track over the people on the first level, and past those watching from the second and third levels as the track went up and down in hills and also included several loops in a corkscrew spiral, the car going upside down for a few seconds in each loop, it was an exciting ride and everyone had fun. It even got Carol and Momo to let out a few screams during the ride.
After the roller coaster, they went on the Half Pipe ride. Instead of being split up, when they reached the front of the line, the group allowed others behind them to go ahead until all eight were able to take up all four tracks. Dee noticed Ryo talking to the first person behind them for the next round and handing the man the camcorder. Dee started to grin because Dafydd or Momo seemed to notice the exchange.

It was Dee and Ryo on one track, Momo and Dafydd next to them at the end, Bikky and Carol at the track on the other side of Dee and Ryo, and Tsubasa and Kumi next to Bikky and Carol on the other end. It was a standing ride, each person on a track standing on what looked like a long skateboard. The trick was to get the board to go as high as they could along the half circle track. The higher you went, the more points you got. A little competition was added with each ride by the team able to get the most points received prizes, along with their track lighting up and the video screen that played the action on that track for all watching to see also had a colorful display and the flashing words ‘WINNER’. Tsubasa and Kumi won their round, but being they had won on the ride many times before, they gave their prizes to Bikky and Carol.

Next, the group went up to the second level again and settled around the race car attraction. Dee and Dafydd competed against each other and another man, while the others watched. The attraction had actual race cars that moved side to side and bounced along with the direction the drivers turned the steering wheel while a race track was on the large video screen before the vehicles. Dafydd came in first place, while Dee came in second and the other man came in last. Dafydd was given a prize for winning as they exited the attraction.

Dee was surprised when Ryo passed up the race cars and got on the line for a jet fighter simulation. With a grin, Dee got on the line with him, Dafydd and Tsubasa following. It was also another race with a winner at the end of the round. Dee should not have been surprised when Ryo won, and then Dee endured the ribbing from everyone for almost crashing his jet and coming in last.

They spent the rest of the evening until almost closing playing the various arcade games. Tsubasa, Kumi, Dafydd and Momo had proven very adept in playing the UFO game, where the object was to get prizes to drop in a slot. Being that they lived in Japan, they played the games often, especially having young children who would enjoy their prizes. Both couples also said that their children enjoyed watching them, pointing out what they hoped their parents would win and cheer them on. The prizes included small and large plushies to anime action figures that were not cheap if bought in stores. Both couples ended up with plastic shopping bags provided by a worker filled with prizes they won. They did spend quite a bit of money but the collected prizes in their bags would cost many times more if bought in stores. Dee, along with guidance from Dafydd and Tsubasa, also managed to get a bag half-filled with action figures and a figure from a popular idol anime. He decided he was definitely going to hit up those games again during their time in Japan and hopefully get almost as good as the others were. Ryo didn’t have much luck, but there was a determination on his face that said Dee was going to have company.

Dee let Carol know the idol figure was hers when they got back to the penthouse, while Bikky could choose something he liked. The others would most likely end up on display somewhere in their
lounge back in New York, so the whole family could enjoy it. Tsubasa and Kumi explained how Bikky and Carol could choose something from their bags, but since Kento and Aya knew where they were going that night, would be expecting their parents to bring something back for them. The prizes for Kento and Aya were obviously for younger children and was not anything Bikky and Carol would be interested in. Whatever was left after Bikky and Carol made their selections would go to the collection Tsubasa and Kumi had on display through their halls and in the family room of their house. Dafydd and Momo were careful to select items to win that Bikky and Carol would like and said that Bikky and Carol could divide up their winnings when they got back to the penthouse, much to Bikky’s and Carol’s excitement.

In the time approaching closing time, the lines thinned out, so they went back to take in a couple of more attractions. There were lockers where they were able to stash their prizes as they continued to go on attractions until it was closing time.

As they left Joypolis, Dee promised Bikky that they would go back again once they were back in Tokyo. Dafydd added that if he had enough warning when they were going that he and Momo would come into Tokyo for the day along with their sons. They were old enough to be able to enjoy many of the attractions, and Momo would take them to play arcade games while everyone else went on the rides they were too young for, or did not reach the height requirement. Kumi added that she would join Momo because she hoped her and Tsubasa could join on that adventure and bring their two children along and get to know their cousins by marriage.

Before getting on the train, they walked to Aqua City, which was another mall next to Decks. Almost everything but a few late night cafes was closed, but the group decided they wanted to walk along the boardwalk on the sea side of the mall, appreciating the view as they engaged in small talk. They sat on the promenade between Aqua City and the Hilton after walking on the ramp that went around the Statue of Liberty, adding to the family photos by the statue.

Finally, the tired group got on the train at the Odaiba Station, which was near the promenade and went back to the penthouse to settle in. Akira was already asleep and had the twins in the room with her. Bikky and Carol said their goodnights and got ready for bed. The adults decided to go on the terrace for a while, enjoying a nightcap and each other’s company.

November 4, 2006
The next day their guests woke to find Dee and Ryo in the kitchen making an American style breakfast of scrambled eggs and pancakes with bacon and ham for everyone. There were also pastries from the bakery Dafydd and Momo would stop in during the week before arriving at the penthouse. Bikky and Carol had gone to the bakery since they were the first ones up besides Akira. Earlier, when Dee and Ryo came out of the master bedroom, they found Akira getting Darin and Ryoko ready for the day.

After breakfast, Ryo’s family got ready to go back to Kamakura. Before leaving, Akira pulled Dee to the side, making sure he was really fine with meeting his biological father and his stepfather. She had no doubt about how Dee felt about his brother, but was still concerned about how Dee felt about his father and potentially meeting the rest of his large family. Dee let her know that he had no grand notions about how meeting his father would go, and was also prepared on not meeting him, if it came to it. If he did get to meet Saburo and his stepfather, Yoshio, he was okay with it. He knew that he was not abandoned by his parents. And if everything didn’t go right with meeting his family, he still had Dafydd, who, by then, he could not imagine his brother not being a part of his life going forward.

Once Akira was satisfied, she made him promise to call if he needed someone to speak to, letting him know that she would be on the next shinkansen if he needed, since Maria could not be with him while he was in Japan. Dee hugged and kissed the woman he saw as his grandmother, showing his gratitude.

Before she left, she had big hugs, once again welcoming Dafydd to their family and letting Momo know that both of them could contact her at any time. She also expected to hear from Dafydd’s father, especially if he accepted Dee as his son.

When Ryo’s family left, the rest of them decided to settle in the living room for a bit and watch TV while they had more coffee and nibbled on the leftover pastries. Ryoko and Darin were in their bouncy chairs, adding to their entertainment as the infants made cooing sounds, laughed when someone laughed and attempted to chatter.

They eventually made their way to Hamarikyu Gardens shortly just before noon, taking the train. They chose the park because it was close to Tsujiki Market, which was their next stop. The park also was a historical landmark, dating back to the Edo period, belonging to the Imperial family. It was an enjoyable time for all, with Bikky and Carol absorbing more culture and history of Japan thanks to
the guide provided at the entrance. Bikky seemed very amused at what seemed to be the main attraction of the park which was a 300-year-old pine tree. There were signs all over the park in Japanese and English directing visitors of the park toward the tree. There was also a pier for the water buses that were going to or coming from Hinode Pier. While they were at the pier, they noticed one of the other boats from the line besides the Himiko and Hotaluna boarding passengers.

As interested as the kids were with the park, they were much more fascinated with the strange looking building they saw a few blocks up while walking from the Shiodome Station and crossing Kaigan Dori to the park’s entrance. The building was comprised of two towers, both no higher than 15 floors. Most of the floors consisted of concrete pre-fab blocks. Both Dee and Ryo explained it was the Nakagin Capsule Tower, but it was not like the other capsule hotels around Japan. They were small cubicles and some of the capsules were rented or owned for people to live in, while others were used for office space. The rest were used as a hotel. Dafydd remarked that he heard about it and seen pictures of it, but it was his first time to see it, with Momo agreeing with her husband. They were amazed they had missed it during their previous times in Tokyo since it was close to Ginza, where they had been many times.

When they were done with the park, it was decided to take the long way to Tsujiki Market, and they walked over to the Nakagin Capsule Tower for a closer look before going onto the seafood market area.

Tsujiki Market not only had all varieties of seafood available, but many shops and stalls along the streets in the area sold many different types of food, offering a sample of the best of Japanese specialties from not only Tokyo, but other areas of Japan. Depending on the shop, fish was sold whole, cleaned or filleted. There were also packages of fish in blocks and fillets or cut for sushi and sashimi.

Instead of finding a restaurant for a lunch of sushi, they decided to explore the streets of the outer market area, and bought whatever looked good to them from the places with grills or frying pans, selling meat and seafood skewers, okonomiyaki, takoyaki and ikayaki and many other foods that were new to even the adults. They even found a booth selling tebasaki chicken and tenmusu, which were both Nagoya specialties. Ryo said that they had both at a food fair at Mitsuwa once, and that Dee was able to make a decent tenmusu at times. Tenmusu was onigiri wrapped in seaweed, but were smaller than the typical size onigiri and on the top of the ball, sticking out of the seaweed wrapping was a small tempura shrimp. The one thing Ryo had heard about, and was sure he had but could not remember, was kishimen noodles, and was looking forward to having them during their time in Nagoya. Dee was anxiously waiting for when he could have them again, since there were no kishimen in New York or Mitsuwa.

When the group had collected enough various foods, they went inside the main market and found an area with tables near a cluster of small restaurants and waited until a table opened. Once seated, Ryo handed out chopsticks and small paper plates he managed to get at one of the supplies stalls they passed, as the rest of the group opened the various containers, so everyone could pick and choose what to put on their plates. There were vending machines close by so everyone could get a drink,
and they enjoyed their lunch.

After lunch, they walked around more. They went into a couple of tableware stores in the area and picked out some more tableware for the penthouse, allowing Bikky and Carol to pick some things they liked. By the time they were done with the market, they had shopping bags filled with fresh fillets and slices of various fish, along with octopus, whole squid, shrimp and other seafood, as well as fresh and pickled vegetables.

They returned to the penthouse by 5 pm. It was already decided by the time they had finished lunch that they were going to stay in for the evening. The additional food shopping was for their dinner.

Everyone was going to make something to contribute to dinner. Momo was going to broil the whole fish she selected at the market various ways, and make a couple of hot vegetable dishes. Dafydd decided on making a seafood rice casserole, and prepared the liquid for the shabu shabu hot pot. Dee was to make pork garlic gyozas and ikayaki, and while shopping, Dafydd talked his brother into also making temmusu. Ryo planned to make eel and sea urchin dishes. Bikky offered to make okonomiyaki and along with Dee’s and Dafydd’s guidance, takoyaki. Carol was making yakisoba. They had picked up pickled cucumber slices and eggplant. Everyone was going to work together on the cutting and prepping ingredients, so it would be ready once the cooking started.

First, they were going to relax for an hour before getting dinner going. Ryo did pull the larger rice cooker from its place in the cupboard and put the rice on, while Dee got drinks for everyone. Dafydd and Momo offered to help, but Ryo said they would have enough to do once they started dinner. Momo pointed out that so would Dee and Ryo, and insisted they handle the dishes when they were done and was not taking no for an answer, including Dafydd, who looked horrified at the prospect of just the two of them talking on all the tableware and cookware.

Once everyone was settled in the living room, watching TV, Carol excused herself to get changed into something more comfortable to lounge around for the night. While she was in her room, Dafydd’s phone rang.

It was Ayaka, checking if Dafydd and Momo were still returning to Nagoya the next day with Dee. Dafydd handed the phone to Dee, telling him to calm his sister down, and assure her that they would all be in Nagoya the next day. It did not even occur to Dee that he was speaking to a top Japanese celebrity, already overwhelmed that the excited young woman talking to him in Japanese was his baby sister. She was the youngest of nine siblings and that because he was born a few minutes before Dafydd, he was the oldest sibling of the nine. He couldn’t have been more in awe of that thought even if she had been a favorite celebrity of his.

He was reminded of who she was when she mentioned she only had a few minutes because she was getting ready to go onstage. He thought about Carol in the other room, and Ryo started to get up to
get her when he realized who Dee and Dafydd were talking to, but Dee repeated that she only had a
couple of minutes. Dee gave her the time they were aiming to get to the hotel, and that he could not
wait to meet her. Ayaka also stated that she also could not wait to meet Dee and his family. She hung
up after adding to tell Carol that she said hello, and could not wait to meet her too.

By the time Carol joined them, it was decided not to say anything about the call to her until they
were in Nagoya.

Chapter End Notes

I have to make an online photo album on all the places and things mentioned in this
story. When I finally get it together, I'll provide a link for anyone interested.
Or if anyone wants to just see my pictures, you can look at them here:
https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipM37vQlwl4FllveZhMNLw6kKMkStwvgGvNBYD41yV8
key=R2RhbkdGbE1aTExUT2ZNVVVaGNwX1h4SFI5M2pR . There might be
some selfies - don't get scared. I don't do good selfies, but I did want some pictures of
me at the places I've been. LOL!
Chapter 25

Chapter Summary

The Laytnetr-MacLeans are in Nagoya, along with Dafydd and Momo. Dee gets to meet another family member.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

November 5, 2006

Nagoya Sakae Blossom Hotel

Sakae, Nagoya Aichi

Japan

The ride to Nagoya from Tokyo was not bad. They hit a few spots of traffic on the toll road and had to make a couple of stops so that Bikky and Carol could collect more toll road stamps, but thanks to their extremely early start, it was still morning when they arrived.

Ryo was glad they were able to convince Dafydd and Momo to stay in Tokyo until Sunday morning and drive in with them. It seemed to make the ride shorter. Over the week since the party, Ryo watched as Dee and Dafydd become closer. Dee had shaken off his initial impulse to fight the idea and embraced having a twin brother with joy. At times it seemed as if the two were trying to catch up on the 30 years they were separated. Ryo had only heard about twin bonds until Ryoko and Darin were born and in the last few months saw the bond in action with the infants. Seeing it between adults was something different. Ever since the results of the DNA testing confirmed that Dee was the missing Daisuke Fujioka, there were times when the reunited twins acted as if they had been together all their lives.

They were currently in the luxury suite of the Nagoya Sakae Blossom Hotel, one of the newest hotels acquired for L-M International Hotels. It was an impressive hotel but on a smaller scale than the hotels Dee and Ryo had seen so far that were part of the chain. The hotel in Osaka was more of the caliber of the one in Tokyo from the information Estelle had given them when they were planning the trip. However, it was still 4 star hotel, and it was in Sakae, the entertainment district of
Nagoya. There were no large rooftop penthouses like the one they had in the Tokyo hotel, but they
did take over a split-level suite on the upper floors. Even with the full-size rooms, it felt a little
 cramped compared to the penthouse in Tokyo and Akira’s house, but was to be only for a few days.
The suite a living room/dining room combo, a small kitchen and two small bedrooms, and upstairs
was the master suite with a large bedroom, en suite bathroom with a large onsen style bathtub and a
sitting area that looked down to the first level. A crib was provided and set up in the sitting area.
Currently they had the travel playpen set up in the living area on the first floor, where the infants
were

Dafydd and Momo were to take a cab from the hotel to their house and pick up the DNA test results
Hana had left for them. From there, they would be able to drive their mini-van to Saburo’s house to
deliver their discovery while in Tokyo. Everyone mutually decided it would be best for Dafydd to
break the news about Dee first and then call for them to join them at the house. It was also a
possibility that his father might not take the news well at first and it would be best for Dee to stay
away until Saburo was ready to meet his long-lost son.

Just before Dee called down to the concierge to get a taxi for Dafydd and Momo, Dafydd’s phone
started to ring.

“Moshi moshi,” he answered the phone in Japanese. “Ah, Ayaka. Yes, we’re in Nagoya now. I was
going to call you when we got to Papa’s house.” He started to laugh, not only at what his sister was
saying, but at the look on the faces of his family with him in the room. “You didn’t… Yes. If you
insist. We’re at the hotel.” He looked at Dee and let out a sigh. Still in Japanese, he said to his
brother. “It’s Ayaka. She apparently cleared some time begging a family emergency and is free right
now. She’s approaching the hotel now.”

Ryo started to chuckle as he glanced at Carol, who looked on with interest when she heard the name
mentioned but did not seem to know what else was being said. “Good thing she’s sitting down,” he
said about Carol.

“No kidding,” said Dee and rolled his eyes. “I guess I have a crazy, excitable younger sister to your
crazy cousins,” and chuckled. Bikky looked at his fathers with curiosity. “Tell her to come up,” said
Dee, his eyes on Carol with a wicked grin. He reached from his place on the couch for the house
phone. “I’ll call the front desk and tell them to give her a key card to get on the floor. And then we
prepare Carol.”

Momo started to laugh as she sat down next to Carol.

“What’s going on?” Carol asked.
“Dafydd’s and Dee’s sister is coming up here to meet Dee. I guess she couldn’t wait until after Dafydd spoke to his father.”

“What?!! Here? Now? Oh my God! I’m a mess.”

“You look fine,” Bikky assured her.

“Fine isn’t good enough!” Carol insisted in a panic. “I had an outfit all picked out and was going to change into it before we left to meet Dee’s family.”

“So you’ll change into it before we go,” Bikky commented with a shrug.

“But it’s Ayaka Fujioka!” Carol exclaimed. She looked over to Dafydd, who started to laugh.

“Yes, that is Carol. She’s very excited to meet you,” Dafydd said slowly in English so Carol understood what he said but also making sure Ayaka also understood him.

“Princess, calm down. Don’t give yourself a stroke before you meet her,” Dee said with a grin. “Besides, she’s just my sister.”

Ryo opened a bottle of milk tea and handed it to Dee. “Just don’t drop it when you realize what you just said.”

“Hush. And make sure the Princess has something to drink too.”

Ryo snorted and in Japanese said, “I think she’s going to need something stronger than bottled milk tea but she can’t have it.”

Dafydd and Dee both chuckled. Dafydd hung up the phone as Dee called the front desk, requesting for Ayaka to be given a key card for their floor.

“Did you give her the room number?” Ryo asked Dafydd. “I couldn’t hear with all the screeching going on here.”
“I wasn’t screeching,” Carol said primly.

“No, you were screaming,” Bikky said. “It’s a good thing you didn’t wake my brother and sister.”

“Oh!” Carol exclaimed as she suddenly remembered they had sleeping babies in the suite.

“I think the last part of the ride knocked them out,” Dee commented, looking at the sleeping babies in the travel playpen set up next to the coffee table.

“We were going to wake them up soon anyway,” Ryo said. “Especially now that we’re expecting Ayaka any minute. Don’t worry, Carol.”

Carol’s eyes got wide as she started to look more panicked during Ryo’s second statement. She let out a pitiful moan.

“Carol, if it’s that important, I’ll help you get ready before meeting Ayaka,” Momo offered.

“Would you?” she asked.

“Of course. Let’s go.” Momo stood up and accepted the two bottles of milk tea that Ryo held out for her and Carol with a smile and ushered Carol into her room.

Dee, Dafydd, Ryo and Bikky relaxed in the lounge, as they drank the milk tea Ryo had picked up when they made their last rest area stop, along with some various snacks as they waited for Ayaka to arrive.

OoOoOoOoO

“Actually I didn’t tell her the room,” Dafydd admitted, looking at Dee in concern.
“We’re good,” Dee assured him. “They’ll give her the suite number with the key card to get on this floor.’

‘And in the small chance they don’t, she has one of four doors to knock on when she gets on this floor,” Ryo added. “Or she can call, and we’ll open a door and wave.’

“This is true,” Dafydd said. He leaned back in the cushioned chair and let out a happy sigh. “This is all too good to be happening. I’m waiting for Ayaka to show up, so she can meet her brother. This makes me so happy, but I will be happiest of all when I see you and Papa hug.”

“That might not happen today,” Dee warned him cautiously. “I have no doubt that eventually he’ll want to meet me, but it’s going to be a huge shock to him at first. I know what I’m still going through with meeting you, so I can only imagine that it would about a hundred times more of shock to him.”

“Dafydd, any initial rejection from him should not be taken the wrong way. If that happens, give him time to get used to the idea,” Ryo reminded him.

“I understand. I already was told that by both Momo and Mama-san,” Dafydd said, referring to Maria by the term he had started to call her during the week.

He had spoken to her every day, with Maria calling him. Sometimes he was with Dee and Dee called her so they could all talk, other times she called just to speak to him and get to know her son’s twin brother. She started to consider him a son because he was Dee’s twin, and eventually Dafydd decided to switch from calling her Mother Lane-san to Mama-san. He had admitted that because he was raised by two fathers, he had room in his life to accept Dee’s mother as his. Dee had been happy to share. Dafydd was also looking forward to finally join in with speaking to some of the kids at the orphanage with Dee. A couple of times while Dee was on the phone with Maria, she would put the call on speaker so Dee could talk to the children. Dee also had his cell phone on speaker so everyone could hear, and allowed Ryo and Bikky to join in if they wanted. It had warmed Dafydd as he listened to those calls. Even if most of the children at the orphanage had come and gone, most times to never be heard from again once they left the orphanage, at the time they were there, they all had an older brother who helped in making sure they were happy and felt loved and nourished. During the time they lived in the orphanage, they were part of Dee’s family.

Even separated from his own biological family, his twin was never alone and managed to collect a large family of his own. It made Dafydd very happy to learn this about his brother. If Dee couldn’t have been raised by his father with his family in Nagoya, Dafydd couldn’t think of anything better for his twin. He had Maria to thank for that and he was eternally grateful to the loving and kind nun for all she had done. Now it seemed that not only was Dee’s family expanding to include his
biological family, Dafydd’s family was too. Being that they both managed to have large families, they were going to be blessed with having one extremely large family. That also made Dafydd happy.

“I learned with experience that Mother always has very sage advice,” Dee commented.

“I believe you,” Dafydd admitted. “And I will not give up on Papa if he doesn’t accept you right away. And until he does, I accept you. So does Momo, and apparently so does Ayaka, if her taking today off to meet you is any indication.”

“Hey everyone,” Bikky said. “You do know I have no idea what’s being said, right?”

“Incentive to learn Japanese,” Ryo said in English with a laugh.

“Geez,” Dee commented. “I didn’t realize we were speaking in Japanese. Sorry, Biks.”

“It’s becoming natural to you being here, isn’t it?” Dafydd asked.

“Again,” Dee replied. “When I was in college, the only time I spoke in English was when we were with our American friends. Otherwise it was Japanese.”

“You got to speak it more than I did, since I lived on base,” Ryo admitted, “but weekends with Obāsan and when I was off base alone or with Japanese friends, I did speak in Japanese. I’m just used to switching back and forth. It seemed to be the way in my family.” Ryo shrugged.

“I kinda got used to switching having Obāsan staying with us,” Dee said.

“Hey Pops, I have a question.”

“What’s that, Biks?” Ryo asked.

“Did your Dad speak Japanese?”
“He learned after meeting Mom. He was never as fluent but yes, he was able to communicate while we lived in Japan,” Ryo replied.

“I guess he had to if they had a business in Kamakura,” Dee said.

“That’s true, but I guess Mom could have done all the talking, leaving Dad as a silent partner,” Ryo remarked with a small grin. “We mostly spoke English when we moved back to New York, but he was able to join us whenever Mom would start talking to me in Japanese. I think she did that to make sure we didn’t forget it. Or that she wouldn’t forget it. Even if when Obaasan or the rest of the family here called, they spoke to me and Mom in Japanese. They would speak to Dad in English.” Ryo grinned at Dee. “That says a lot about your fluency that they easily started to speak in Japanese to you.”

Dafydd could not help his grin hearing it.

“I learned as a child, so it was easier than for your Dad. What are they doing in there?” Dee asked, looking toward the door of the bedroom Carol was using during their stay in Nagoya.

“It does take a bit to dress like an idol,” Dafydd said. “I am also guessing that Carol wants to look perfect when she meets Ayaka.” He shrugged. “Even if she’s just our sister,” he added, looking at Dee.

“I’m still waiting for it to hit Dee,” Ryo said with a laugh.

“Me too!” Bikky agreed also laughing.

“I think my mind is on how Saburo is going to take the news and meeting family,” Dee replied. “She may be in NGY52 but right now to me, she’s a sister I never met but will very soon.”

“Oh shoot!” Bikky exclaimed. “She’s my aunt, isn’t she? I mean, if she’s your sister, Dad. Right Uncle Dafydd?”

“Right Bikky. She’s your aunt as I’m your uncle,” Dafydd replied.
“Oh, now that’s really cool,” Bikky said. “Sorry Pops. It’s exciting having akabuki stars in the family too. And even if you were an idol once, Dad, that was long ago, even if people still listen to your song.”

“But not as much as having someone from a current famous idol group as your Dad’s sister. Yes, I understand. I’ll admit that it is really exciting news,” Ryo said. He looked at Dee. “I just thought of something. When Emiko finds out, I think they’ll hear her shriek all the way in Jersey City.”

Dee started to laugh. “Oh shit! You’re right. She bonded with Carol because they both love idol groups and NGY52 is right up there with TKY52. Now that’s going to be fun. After today we can start letting the family back in New York know about my family. I think that J.J. will freak some too when he finds out.”

“Oh no!” Ryo exclaimed, slapping his forehead. “He’s going to develop a new obsession with you, if only to meet your sister. I feel sorry for poor Drake. I hope they survive this.”

“They better,” Dee insisted, “because he better not. And he’ll only meet my sister after he realizes that my twin brother and any other siblings I meet by then are all just as important to me.”

Dafydd shrugged. “I’m just a detective. That won’t be a big deal to your friend since he’s also a detective. Ayaka is the big star of our family and we’re all very proud of her. The rest of us have boring jobs, except maybe Naoki. He’s going to voiceover school. He wants to do anime.”

“Now that’s very cool too,” Bikky said. “Hey Dad, did you ever think that you could have such an interesting family?”

Dee let out a nervous laugh. “I never thought I could have even a boring family in Nagoya.”

They all looked at the door when they heard a knock. Dee jumped up, suddenly looking both nervous and excited. He pulled down the stylish but comfortable pullover he was wearing. It was one of his purchases on their shopping spree in Shinjuku. He looked over at Dafydd as Ryo started to stand up. “Dafydd, why don’t you let her in. Please?”

Dafydd studied his twin for a moment, and noted the nerves and excitement really had nothing to do with Ayaka being an idol and everything to do with Dee meeting another sibling he never knew he had until recently. He patted his brother’s shoulder in a comforting fashion. “Relax, Dee. She already loves you, which is why she probably couldn’t wait until tonight.”
Ryo came over to stand next to Dee and slipped his arm around his husband’s waist. With a warm smile, he said, “Look at it this way. At least that will be one less family member to meet later.”

Dee let out a deep sigh as Dafydd walked to the door. “You know, in a way I hope I end up meeting them one by one. I mean not everyone could drop everything to rush over to Saburo’s house tonight. Right? Get used to them and all. There are still times that I have to remind myself that Dafydd is my twin. Geez, we never figured out that our time in Nagoya would be like this. Assuming I’m accepted by the rest of the family, that is.”

“If nothing else, I know there will be some family coming over to my house or here, if Papa isn’t ready to meet you yet. I’m still going to send out text messages to everyone after I tell Papa, if he doesn’t, and let them know where we can be found,” Dafydd stated, knowing some of the family would still be curious. It might even help ease his father in wanting to meet Dee if it didn’t happen that day.

“I think it’s all really cool,” Bikky said from his place on the couch, looking excited. He got up and went by the door to the bedroom Carol was using for their stay. “Carol, she’s here,” he called out. A squeal came from the other side of the door followed by Momo’s laughter.

They all laughed at Carol’s reaction.

“We’re almost ready, Bikky,” Momo called out.

Dafydd looked back at Dee. “Ready?”

Ayaka knocked again.

“Even if I wasn’t, you best let her in before she takes down the door,” Dee quipped, making them laugh again.

“At least you don’t have to pay for damages,” Dafydd teased.

“It’s our hotel, we’ll end up paying for repairs somehow,” Dee remarked.
“True. Wait. Before I forget,” he said and took his phone out from his pocket and turned on the video app. “Ayaka and Dee are about to meet for the first time,” he said, filming the door.

He opened the door and the room was filled with a gleeful shriek. He found himself being hugged by Ayaka. “This is so wonderful!” she exclaimed in Japanese as she hugged him. “I’m so happy for you! And for me too, because I get to meet your twin finally.” She peered around Dafydd and squealed with joy when she saw Dee. “I know I saw pictures, but this is still amazing.” She rushed from Dafydd toward Dee, who appeared to be bracing himself for the impact of Ayaka pouncing him. Dafydd was glad he managed to keep a hold on his phone and immediately turned to get the event on video.

Dee managed to keep them both on their feet as he wrapped his arms around the excited woman. Dafydd closed the door and started to laugh. He was still filming.

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Ryo took a few steps back to avoid being caught up in the collision and started to laugh as he watched NGY52’s Ayaka Fujioka latch herself to his husband as if she was an excited fan herself. She was in jeans and an oversized shirt with a hood. She had a NY Mets baseball cap on her head. “Boy, I think J.J.’s glomps actually came in handy,” he remarked with a laugh. “That could have been painful otherwise.”

Dee started to laugh more than he already was as he hugged Ayaka as tightly as she was hugging him.

“Dee!” she exclaimed looking up at him. “I am so very happy to meet you,” she said in Japanese, tears in her dark eyes. “I had always believed Dafydd that his twin was alive and hoped with him that one day we would meet.” She hugged him again. “Welcome home to Nagoya, Daisuke!” She started to cry. “I can’t believe today is the day. I’m so happy! Papa is going to be so shocked, but he’ll also be so happy. I can’t wait until Dee finally gets to meet his father. This is a wonderful day!” She hugged him tighter.

Dee’s dark green eyes were already glistening but as she spoke, tears started to fall. His eyes glittered more like emeralds. He leaned down to kiss her forehead with a tender smile. “Hello Ayaka,” he replied, also in Japanese. “I am also very happy to finally meet you. Thank you also for believing
Dafydd and supporting him.” Dee hugged his sister again.

The united siblings finally pulled apart. Dee wiped his eyes with a finger as he turned her to face Ryo. “Ayaka, this is my husband, Ryo.”

With a laugh, Dafydd added, “His first name really is Randy. Ryo is his middle name, but Dee insisted on calling him Ryo.”

Ryo grinned. “Which means I’m not really Randy so much anymore, so please call me Ryo.”

Ayaka went over to hug Ryo. “I am so pleased to meet you.” She studied him with a grin. “My brother has good taste.”

“I do, don’t I?” Dee agreed with a smile.

“Wow,” Ryo said, having her stand in front of him was different than her pictures – the family ones Dafydd showed them as well as the ones he had seen in magazines, on CD cases and the internet. “The family resemblance is remarkable.” He glanced at Dee. “I don’t know why we never teased you about looking a lot like Ayaka.”

“Who would have thought she was my sister if you did?” Dee asked in amazement as he stared at his sister. “He always said that Gackt reminded him of me,” Dee said to Dafydd and Ayaka.

“Yes!” Ayaka said, laughing. “Dafydd heard that many times. You both look a lot like him, but no family resemblance there.”

“Unfortunately, there is no Fujioka blood in Gackt. Ayaka is the biggest celebrity in our family,” Dafydd said with a teasing glint in his eyes as he looked at his youngest sister. He winked at Dee. At Dee’s request, he did not tell her about Dee’s brush with fame during his college days. Yet.

It was a matter of time before she found out. If it wasn’t from Dafydd, the rest of them loved teasing Dee about it since they found out.

“I am happy to meet another of my husband’s siblings,” Ryo said to Ayaka, returning her
enthusiastic hug. “I look forward to getting to know you more.”

“Me too,” Ayaka agreed with a smile as they broke the hug.

Dee put his arm around Ayaka’s shoulder and turned her to Bikky. “Ayaka, this is my son, Bikky.”

“Bikky! Oh yes, Dafydd and Momo has told me all about you.” She rushed over to hug Bikky.

Dee leaned close to whisper to Ryo as they watched Ayaka hug Bikky tightly. “She reminds me of someone that it’s also good we know so we’re used to this.”

“Huh?” Ryo asked.

“Elena.”

“Oh shit, you’re right!” Ryo said, laughing. “That should be a fun meeting.”

“Let’s have Ayaka, Emiko and Elena meet at the same time.”

“And you call me evil,” Ryo remarked. “I say toss in Diana and you have a deal.”

Dee started to laugh as Dafydd watched Ayaka and Bikky, smiling brightly. “We can always add JJ.”

Ryo laughed harder.

“Hey Dads, Uncle,” Bikky called out nervously. “A little help here please? I know she is happy to meet me, but I don’t know what else she said.

“She said that me and Momo told her all about you,” Dafydd replied.
“I’m screwed now, aren’t I?” Bikky asked.

Dafydd started to laugh. “Not at all. We think you’re a great kid and honored to have you as our nephew,” he assured Bikky.

Ryo moved closer to Bikky and Ayaka and was translating what Dafydd was saying to Bikky for Ayaka.

She nodded her head and hugged him again. “I am looking forward to know you,” she said slowly in heavily accented broken English.

“So am I,” Bikky replied. “I mean to know you.” He smiled at her. “Gomenasai,” he said carefully, trying to remember what he did know in Japanese. “Uh, watashi no Nihongo, um…. Sucks.”

Dee and Dafydd broke out in laughter and Dee reached over to ruffle Bikky’s hair with a smile. Ryo didn’t know if he should laugh or cover his face. He gave into laughing as Ayaka hugged him again.

“Dijobo, Bikky,” she said. “My English sucks too.”

Bikky broke out into a wide smile and laughed.

Ryo knew that Bikky definitely liked his new aunt now.

“You may call her Aunt Ayaka, or just Ayaka,” Dafydd said to Bikky. “You have too many aunts in our family to call anyone Obasan. We are very traditional Japanese in many ways, but in many others, like Ryo’s family, we are not. Especially for family. You will learn that soon. It is the smaller families that tend to stick to traditional honorifics. Larger but very close families, we do not.”

“I noticed that with Ryo’s family and the families of some of the kids we got to know in Kamakura,” Bikky said.

Ryo found it endearing that it was Dafydd who was speaking to Bikky in English while he was
softly translating in Japanese to Ayaka.

“Are we missing someone?” Ayaka asked in Japanese, looking around the room. “Where is Carol? I am also looking forward to meeting her.”

Everyone started to laugh. With a grin, Dee said in Japanese, “She had a special outfit picked out to meet you, but she wasn’t expecting to meet you so soon. She was still in travel clothes when we found out you were coming over to join us. Momo is helping her get dressed.”

“And to remind her to breathe,” Ryo added.

“That too,” Dee agreed with a grin.

“She did not have to go through the trouble. I will accept her no matter what she is wearing, but now that I know, I will make sure to mention how much I love her outfit,” Ayaka said.

“That would make her even more happy,” Dee said. “She’s like our little sister and daughter rolled into one. And hopefully years from now, she’ll be our daughter-in-law.”

“She’s their Princess,” Dafydd added with a warm smile.

“Yours too,” Dee said. “I’ve heard you call her that a few times.”

“I understand why you do,” Dafydd said.

“While we wait, can I see the babies?” Ayaka asked.

“Oh sure. They’re over there by the coffee table,” Dee replied. “I think car travel really knocks them out. They’re usually up around this time of the day, and I’m surprised all our excitement didn’t wake them.”

Ayaka went over to the cot and looked in to find the two babies cuddled together. “Oh! Kawaii!” she exclaimed.
Ryoko opened her eyes and looked up.

“The little girl is awake,” she informed them.

Dee looked over his sister’s shoulder. Ryoko noticed him and stretched her arms out with a huge smile. The sound she made caused Darin to move his arm, hitting his sister’s side. Dee laughed. “Yup, Ryoko is awake, and soon so will be Darin.” He moved Ayaka gently so he could reach down and pick up Ryoko. “Hello there, baby girl. Someone very special wants to meet you, sweetheart.” He kissed Ryoko’s face as she smiled and squirmed happily in Dee’s arms, starting to babble happily. Dee held the baby out to his sister. “Ayaka, this is your niece, Ryoko.”

Ayaka took Ryoko from Dee and cuddled her. “So sweet. Hello Ryoko. I am your Aunt Ayaka and I’m so happy to meet you.” She kissed Ryoko’s face. “You are such a beautiful little girl.”

“She looks more like Ryo,” Dee said with a smile.

“She does, but she has your eyes, including your color.”

Dee chuckled. “As I found out recently, she takes after me in another way.”

“What’s that?” Ryo asked.

“She looks less Japanese than her brother, even if they are twins,” Dee replied.

“You know, that’s very true,” Ryo replied with a laugh. “But I can’t say Darin takes after me that way, since I always thought you looked more Asian than I did. We just didn’t know what type of Asian until now.”

Dee looked down when he heard a gurgle come from the cot and noticed Darin kicking his legs and stretching his arms out, making cooing sounds. “Are you wanting to meet your Aunt Ayaka too, little man?” he asked as he bend down to pick Darin up. “Look at you all excited,” he exclaimed as he kissed the baby’s nose, making Darin giggle.
Ryo took Ryoko from Ayaka, promising her that she could hold the baby again later if she wanted. Dee held Darin for her to take him. “And this is our little ninja, Darin.”

“Oh! He looks so much like you, Dee, except he has Ryo’s eyes. He’s so sweet too.” She cuddled him and kissed his forehead. “Hello little Darin. I am happy to meet you.” She started to smile. “You look so much like your Daddy and Uncle Dafydd. You are such a handsome little man. Yes, you are.” Darin smiled up at her and reached out for her hair.

Ryo laughed. “Darin seems to respond faster to new people than Ryoko, even if she’s the little attention hog.”

“He’s probably making up for all the time he was forced to hide during my pregnancy,” Dee remarked amused as he watched his son react to Ayaka.

“I think you have a new fan,” Ryo said with a laugh as he rocked Ryoko.

From behind them, they heard a small but excited squeak. They all turned to find Carol and Momo in the lounge. Carol was in one of her idol style dresses that they had paid a small fortune for, but it was her favorite. She had worn it when they went to meet Hide and his business partner’s newly formed idol group. This was the second time she had put it on, already deciding on what she was going wear upon learning that Dee had a half-sister, who was also her favorite idol. She was also wearing make-up and had her hair up in two high ponytails, done up with bows. It was obvious that Momo had helped her with her make-up and hair because it was different than she usually wore it and more like the other time Momo had offered to do her make-up and hair. Carol looked like she could have been an idol.

Carol was frozen in her place, staring at Ayaka with wide eyes. She let out a little whimper when Ayaka looked at her and smiled.

Bikky started to laugh at his girlfriend. “Go on. She doesn’t bite, she’s just my aunt.”

Dee snorted and then chuckled along with Ryo and Dafydd.

Momo started to urge Carol forward, but Ayaka had handed Darin back to Dee and was already starting across the room. “Hello Carol!” she greeted with a big smile. “It is very good to meet you,” she said in her broken English. In Japanese, she continued, “Sugoi! What a lovely outfit you’re wearing. You could be an idol. Maybe we can karaoke later?”
Ryo grinned. “Carol, Dee’s sister said that she loves your outfit and that you could be an idol. She is hoping for a chance to do karaoke with her later.”

Carol blushed as bright red and bowed deeply. “Domo arigato gozaimasu. It is an honor to meet you.”

“The honor is all mine,” Ayaka replied, returning the bow.

“How about everyone sitting down and relaxing,” Ryo suggested, going over to Carol and started to move her to the couch. “Dafydd and Momo, perhaps you would like to finish your tea before you have to leave? Ayaka, would you like a bottle of milk tea?”

“We bought a lot of the stuff since Bikky discovered he actually loves it,” Dee said with a laugh. “Back in New York he hardly touched it whenever we brought some during out Japanese shopping.”

Ayaka nodded. “That would be nice. Thank you.” She sat next to Dee on the couch, with Dafydd sitting on her other side. He had taken Darin from Dee, and was now cuddled happily in Dafydd’s lap, clenching the soft penguin plushie that Akira had bought during their travels. Dafydd had taken it from the travel cot after he took Darin from his brother.

Ryo handed her the bottle and sat on the loveseat against the wall, next to Momo, who had Ryoko on her lap. Ryo could not help taking a photo of the three siblings. He was still amazed that when he saw photos of her, he never realized just how much she looked like Dee. Watching the three sit together and start to talk, there was no denying that they were family.

Once again, Ryo was so happy for Dee that he found his biological family, and again amazed that it was during their family vacation to Japan.

Dafydd and Momo stayed for another half hour. It didn’t have to be said, but other than enjoying time with present company, they were waiting until they felt everyone was comfortable before leaving.

Once they left, Dee and Ryo continued to talk to Ayaka, getting to know her more. She was easy to like and the two men adored her right away. Since she was older than Carol by only two years, even with interpreting, they hit it off right away too. She was also good with putting people at ease. At
first Carol was completely starstruck and in full fangirl mode, but it wasn’t long after they sat down and started to talk, Carol saw her more as a new friend and part of the family. Ayaka reminded Ryo of Carol in a lot of ways, so even if she wasn’t Dee’s younger half-sister, he was certain that he would still have brotherly feelings toward her, and was certain Dee was feeling the same way. Bikky also seemed to like her, being responsive to her, even if most of her questions were being repeated in English by Dee or Ryo. His replies were enthusiastic, and he kept smiling.

She didn’t concentrate on just Dee, wanting to know all of them. Dee wasn’t a single unit, he came with a family and it was as if to know all of them, was to know her brother. Ryo liked that about her. He could also saw when her interest in the rest of them was genuine. She was thrilled to have more family members. Her support of Dafydd’s belief was also obvious, and she was just over the moon knowing that he had been right all along.

She also did make an effort to speak English. Dafydd said that she understood English better than speaking it, and that he suspected that she really did know more if she could understand but was afraid to carry a full conversation in English for fear of messing up the sentence structure or badly mispronouncing a word. Yet, she did her best so they did not have to translate everything she said to Bikky and Carol.

“Do you have a performance today?” Ryo asked for Carol.

“Not today. As soon as Dafydd told me about Dee and that he was coming here today, I managed to get the whole day off. Meeting a long-lost brother is a family emergency. I don’t have to practice tomorrow and no other events scheduled, so I’m free for most of the day, but I do have a performance in the evening. I hope you can all come to it.”

“It depends on the rest of your family, if they accept me, but we would love to, if we could,” Dee replied. He relayed what was said to Bikky and Carol.

Bikky nodded his head. “Yes! I hope we can ‘cause that would be so cool.”

Carol just let out a little squee.

“We tried to get tickets for TKY52,” Dee explained, “but we weren’t so lucky being picked by the lottery system. We promised Carol that we would try for NGY62 and then maybe even try again for TKY when we’re back in Tokyo. That was before we met Dafydd. Carol said she would still love to see TKY if we could, but if we lucked out with NGY, she would be satisfied.” With a grin, he winked at Carol. “After all, her favorite TKY member transferred to NGY.”
“Dafydd could have gotten you into TKY,” Ayaka said.

“He did mention that, but we decided to wait until we got back to Tokyo.”

“Oh yes. I’ll make sure you get in,” she said. “Now you have the same privileges as Dafydd because you are my brother. Tell Carol that I am honored to be her favorite. She is now my favorite fan.”

After Dee translated what Ayaka said and watched as Carol turned a deep red again as she smiled brightly, Ayaka asked, “Can I take you out for lunch while we wait?”

“We were talking about walking around the area and get lunch while we were out,” Dee said to his sister in Japanese.

“I would like to take you to the café at the theater,” Ayaka said.

“But won’t you get surrounded by fans?” Ryo asked, concerned.

“I’ll be okay,” she assured them. “I would really love to take you. Then I can show you around the area if you are up to it until we hear from Dafydd.”

Dee and Ryo looked at each other. “Let’s go then,” Ryo said.

“Okay,” Dee said in English. “Kids, we’re all going out for lunch, so let’s get ready. We’re going to the SKE Café.”

“Awesome!” Carol exclaimed.

“Cool!” came from Bikky.
The building that had the theater where NGY52 performed was a block away. They had passed the building on the way to the hotel earlier that morning and Bikky and Carol got a kick out of the ferris wheel at the front of the building. As they approached the building with Ayaka, Bikky and Carol slowed down, staring up at the big wheel.

“We can come back later and take pictures, do a video and take a ride,” Dee said, moving them along, “but let’s not bring attention to ourselves in front of where NGY plays with a fan favorite with us.”


“It’s fine,” she said. “I am hungry so I want to get to the café and I’m sure everyone else is ready for a meal despite the road food.” She spoke in both English when she knew a word and Japanese when she didn’t. It was enough for Bikky and Carol to understand her. “Maybe while you’re in Nagoya, we can take a ride sometime?” This time she spoke in Japanese, but her gestures were also enough to understand.
“Yeah, I’d like that. Right, Carol?” Bikky asked.

“I would love to take a ride on it,” Carol said.

“Okay. Let’s go eat,” Bikky said.

Ryo and Dee grinned at each other, and made sure everyone kept moving inside the building and on the escalator, following Ayaka’s lead up to the café.

On the floor of the theater the NGY52 Café was also located. It was in the front half of the building and accessible by the escalators and elevators in the shopping center. The fans going into a performance would use the entrance in the back of the building. When they arrived, they discovered that Ayaka was not worried about fans while they ate because the café was closed for a private event. The event was for the rest of the N team, which was the leading group and the one Ayaka belonged to, along with some of her closest friends from the other teams who were not currently inside the theater, starting their performance gathered to have lunch with Ayaka and her new family.

“I guess they are good with her taking the day off,” Dee commented amused as they entered the café.

“Tell me about it,” said Ryo. “Carol, are you okay?”

“No,” replied Carol. “I think I’m going to faint.” She should have been wanting to be inside the theater, watching the team that had the stage perform, but she had her favorite member and her favorite team, along with a few others who were not in the team currently performing, right there in the café for a private lunch held in honor of Ayaka’s long lost brother returning to Nagoya. Carol still couldn’t believe that Ayaka was Dee’s half-sister. And since she considered Ryo and Dee family, that meant she now had Ayaka Fujioka as part of that family. It was unreal.

Dee slung an arm around her shoulders and with a grin said, “If you faint, you won’t meet anyone.”

“I’ll try to remember that,” Carol replied, and took a deep breath while leaning against Dee for support.

Ryo came to Carol’s other side and grinned at Dee. “If she goes down, it’s your fault, you know. Ayaka is your sister.”
“She’ll be fine,” Dee assured Ryo and laughed.

Suddenly they found themselves surrounded by the women who were sitting as they waited for Ayaka to arrive with her brother. Dee was embraced and hugged, being told “Welcome home,” in Japanese and English, and then they went on to hug the rest of them as they were introduced by Ayaka.

Thankfully some of the girls knew enough English to talk to Carol and Bikky, and were able to help translate for the girls whose English was not so good.

After the very warm and enthusiastic welcome, everyone went to be seated for lunch. Dee had his arm around Ryo’s waist and watched as the twins were being cuddled by some of the girls. Dee leaned over to say to Ryo, “This is beyond unbelievable.”

Carol had to agree. Her and Bikky were seated at a table next to the one designated for Dee and Ryo and Ayaka, so they were all able to talk, but still had room for some of the girls to sit with them.

Ryo laughed as he looked around, noticing Ayaka was also being hugged. “In a way, this is Ayaka’s extended family, so it does make sense that they would want to meet you. I guess we should sit. It looks like there’s a table in the center for you.” He laughed again as they walked to the table next to Carol and Bikky.

As they were seated, Dee said, “I’m just thinking about Saburo. I did try to limit who knew before him, but between your family, which couldn’t be helped considering the circumstances of my meeting Dafydd, and everyone here, that number is getting larger. Plus, there’s Diana, Mother and Rose.”

“Of course, Mother had to know, and without Diana, Dafydd wouldn’t have all the confirmation he has with him to speak to your father,” said Ryo. “And the Commissioner needed to know why we didn’t make last week’s video conference.”
“Speaking of Dafydd, I wonder how that’s going? Or even if it’s going yet?” Dee remarked.

“They did say they were going to stop at home first to drop off their luggage and take their own car to your father’s house,” Ryo reminded Dee.

“So, it could be a while. Oh well, at least this will help with keeping my mind off things until I hear from Dafydd.”

Ryo started to laugh as he looked around. “Look at Carol. She’s glowing.” Carol was currently in a conversation with some of the girls.

“Yeah, she is. I guess we should be thankful Momo helped her get dressed in that outfit. Except for not looking Japanese, she fits in.”

“Hell, I can’t blame Carol. Even I’m pretty excited by this,” Ryo said in Japanese as Ayaka came over to sit next to Dee. Ryo smiled at her. “But she does look good. I managed to get some pictures of her. Of Bikky too.”

“Oh yeah,” Dee agreed with a laugh. “He lost some of his cool about idols. Hell, he’s blushing.” Dee laughed more.

“There are pictures being taken, so don’t be afraid to take pictures,” Ayaka said in Japanese. “My friends said they will send all their pictures to me, so I can get them to you.”

“Now that would be cool,” Dee remarked. “And very appreciated.”

“Wow,” said Ryo. “When we promised Carol that we’d do what we could to see NGY while we were here, I never figured it would be like this.” Ryo looked at Dee with amusement. “You’re going to be her hero for life, you know. NGY’s brother.”

Ayaka laughed. “NGY’s brother. Yes!” She hugged Dee again.

“Just remember that I had nothing to do with this except to meet one of my sisters,” Dee reminded Ryo.
“I didn’t do this,” Ayaka said. “All I did was mention why I needed today off and soon after I was told that I was to take you here for lunch so they could all meet you.”

“I was telling Dee that they must be extended family to you,” Ryo said.

“Yes, they are. Especially those on my team. We’ve been through a lot together. Many of the girls here were on NGY from the start.”

One of the girls leaned over Ayaka’s shoulder. “And then a couple of us transferred over with her from TKY. And I’m not from Nagoya.” She laughed.

“No, but you are from Kobe, so you’re much closer to home than Tokyo, Ryoha,” a second girl who came over to stand next to Ryoha said. “Me, I’m from Fukouka, but I didn’t transfer to be closer to home. I just thought that it would be interesting to start a new group again.”

“Miyako was chosen for TKY in the first round with me,” Ayaka explained to Dee and Ryo.

Another girl, Hanako, sat with Bikky and Carol, and was translating what was being said.

“Someone had to make sure Ayaka doesn’t let one of her many admiring male fans too close,” Miyako teased and laughed.

“That’s really true then?” Dee asked. “You’re not allowed to date?”

“No, we’re not. I’ll explain it more when we’re in a more quiet setting and have the time,” Ayaka said. “And it’s not like how it was just insinuated. I don’t have time for boys anyway. When I graduate, I’ll be able to have boyfriends, but that won’t be for at least a couple of more years. I should be in college before I’m 25. At least, that is my plan, and get a degree in case my solo career doesn’t go as well as I hope. So maybe I won’t have a boyfriend then either until I have a college degree.”

“That does sound like a solid plan,” Ryo said.
“I don’t want to be that much older than the average student. I also don’t want to be one of those trying to be an idol until they’re in their 30’s. I see 25 as a good age to get out and do other things. That’s the oldest I’ll go, but if I have a good reason, it could be before 25.”

“It looks like you know what you want to do then,” Dee said. “I’m glad. But once you graduate from NGY, I suggest taking a little time for a boyfriend here and there. Just not that serious,” he warned with an amused grin. “And I expect to speak to him before the first date. Probably Dafydd at least will want to join me.”

Ayaka started to laugh. “Oh no! That means I’ll have all my older brothers and two fathers. I’ll never have a boyfriend!” she exclaimed.

Another of the girls came over from one of the other tables. “Is everyone having fun?” Sayuri asked as she hugged first Ayaka, and then Dee. “I am so happy for you and Dafydd, Ayaka. And for your Papa-san, whenever he finds out.”

“Dafydd should be going over to tell him soon.” Ayaka took out her phone. “He just texted me that they got home and should be leaving for Papa’s house soon.”

“I am definitely enjoying this,” Dee said, smiling up at her. “I’m also emailing from my phonr, I’m afraid,” he admitted. Looking at Ayaka, he said, “I’ve been sending a few pictures to my mother. She really doesn’t know who you all are, but she knows we listen to your music. But NGY aside, she would really love to talk to you today, if time permits.”

“We will make time,” Ayaka assured Dee. “I would love to talk to her. After all, she took you in and kept you safe, so you could be here today. I love her already for that.”

Dee was beaming as she spoke. “I know you said you had nothing to do with it, but thank you for today so far. I think they wouldn’t have done this if you weren’t so excited about it. And thank you.” He looked at the other girls. “And thank you for loving my sister this much.”

“We just had to meet you. You are right. That was all she was able to talk about when Dafydd called her on Thursday and then said you were going to be here today. She was so excited, she almost couldn’t do the performance.”

Another girl joined them, hooking her arm through the first girl. “But we pulled her through, as usual.” She smiled at Ayaka and they all laughed. “So, because of Ayaka-san’s excitement, consider
“This is so very kind of everyone,” Dee said, as his eyes filled with tears. He stared at Ayaka as if he was seeing her for the first time. “My God! You are my sister. I have a sister. Holy God! And I was born here.”

Ayaka’s eyes were also glittering as she took Dee’s hands in hers. “Yes, I am your sister, and you were born here. No matter where else you live, Nagoya will always be your home.”

“I think I love Nagoya,” Ryo said as he slipped an arm around Dee’s shoulders.

“Yeah?” Dee asked.

“Yeah. How can I not love the city you were born in?” He gave Dee a loving smile. The women around them squealed and hid their mouths behind their hands as they laughed with joy.

“Fangirls,” Dee said with a laugh. “Guess I still have a reason to love New York then,” he added and smiled at Ryo.

“KISS! KISS! KISS!” the girls started to chant.

“No, NGY52,” Dee quipped. “KISS isn’t here.”

They all laughed and then cheered when Ryo turned Dee’s head. “Dee, shut up,” and then kissed Dee.

“Remember that you might have been born here, but you were raised in New York, so that still makes it home,” Ryo said with a loving smile.

“That’s not a bad deal,” Dee said. “Having two homes. I could live with that.”

“So could I,” Ryo agreed and kissed Dee again. “If you count Tokyo, make it three.”
“Oh yeah, I think that penthouse became the first of our vacation homes.”

“Really? The first?” Ryo asked in a teasing tone.

“I still want the house in the Pines,” Dee said. “Especially since we didn’t have to buy the penthouse. And any taxes will be filed along with the hotel through the corporation.” He smiled and leaned in to kiss Ryo a little deeper.

Ryo placed his hand on Dee’s head and returned the kiss.

“Dads!” Bikky called out. “You’re making all the girls blush!”

“We don’t mind,” one of the girls who knew English called out, making everyone nod their heads and laugh.

Their lunch was served, and everyone settled down to eat. The talking did not cease. Carol was full of questions about NGY52 and about the life of idols in general, and Ayaka and the other girls were happy to answer. The girls also had their own questions about the newcomers and New York City, especially Ayaka, so nobody stopped talking because they were eating.

Halfway through their lunch, Ryo exclaimed, “Holy crap!”

“What?” Dee asked.

“Our wedding,” came Ryo’s reply. “Remember some of the songs we played when the band went on break? The ones we didn’t dare ask the band to learn? Especially the one song you said was your song to me because it made you think of your pursuit? The one that we already give those glances to each other every time Carol sang it for karaoke?”

“Oh hell,” Dee commented with a laugh. “Oogoe Diamond,” he said to Ayaka with a smile. “That’s a special song for us, and we had to have it played during our reception.”
Ayaka and her friends laughed. “Yes. I sang on the recording of that song when I was in TKY. I sometimes still get to sing it when we do special shows.”

“Then there’s Ryo’s song pick to me,” Dee said.

“What is that?” Ayaka asked.

“Heart Gata Virus,” Ryo replied. “We played that, too, at our wedding.”

“That was the last song I did with TKY before coming back to Nagoya and joining NGY,” Ayaka replied with a big smile.

“This puts a new spin on those songs when we watch the wedding video again,” Ryo remarked.

“They did video for the full songs because Ryo and I were dancing and singing to each other. Not in mics for all to hear, like Ryo did with one song. But any song we said was special and we danced to, they took video of the entire song.”

“My Aunt Elena and her husband are journalists. She does a lot of the photography and video herself, but they also have a camera crew. She asked them to do all the video and photos for our wedding, so they really added a special touch to them.”

“And too way more video than what’s normal,” Dee added. “Not that we’re complaining. They gave us the edited version, so we were able to send out DVDs with our thank you’s, and then they also gave us the full raw version. That gives us options to make some other edits of our wedding, if we like.”

Ayaka and her friends laughed. “I want to see both one day,” Ayaka said.

“That’s what Dafydd and Momo said,” Dee told her. “Apparently, we’re coming back for an extended weekend early next year, so we can watch each other’s wedding videos together. If we don’t get them to come to New York.”

“Come here so I can join you,” Ayaka said.
“We’ll work something out,” Dee promised his sister with a smile.

Dee’s cell phone started to ring. Looking at the display, he said to Ryo, “It’s J.J.”

“What does he want?” Ryo asked.

Dee shrugged. “I have to take this,” he said to Ayaka. “Excuse me.” To J.J., he said, “What’s up? Kinda busy here so we need to keep this short.”

“Too busy for your friends?” J.J. asked. Dee was able to hear the pout even if he couldn’t see it. “You missed last week’s meeting and you haven’t checked in with me or Drake all week, as you and Ryo promised. The last we heard from you was when you checked into the hotel in Tokyo. Nothing since. Not even a text with just a picture.”

“Yeah, sorry, J.J., but we are busy. We didn’t come all the way to Japan to sit in a hotel room or house all the time. Turns out that means being on the go until it’s almost time to drop into bed. Whenever I did find a moment, I contacted Mother. Surely you can understand that?”

“I just thought you could have taken the time at least once to call last week. And join the team for our weekly updates.”

“Rose knew we weren’t going to be able to join everyone. We had plans for Monday night and wasn’t near a computer.”

“You’re in Japan! I imagine there are computers everywhere there,” J.J. complained.

“Yes, there are, but it’s not that easy. We can’t just log into one in an internet café and discuss police business.”

“What about this week’s?” J.J. asked. “Do you have any plans that would keep you away from your laptop on Monday?”

“Dunno, J.J.,” Dee answered. “We might be busy tomorrow night. I told Rose that, too. He’s been sending us updates on development but so far it seems quiet in New York. He said he really doesn’t need us unless there is something major that he would like our input on with the team.”
“Yes, it’s quiet here, until they make certain things public,” J.J. said. “Henry doesn’t seem happy
with that document. He says he might have more information if he can find a notebook. Apparently,
he had a grandfather or someone who was on the project. Henry is going through what he has from
the grandfather, hoping to find notes or something.”

“That would be helpful,” Dee had to agree. “Especially if it can counter any panic.”

It seems he was not the only one with an ancestor on the project, Dee thought. He wasn’t going to
say anything until when they had a chance to sit down for a video conference. Not that having a
great-grandfather and great-uncle on the project opened him up to information they did not have.
Maybe when, if, he met his grandfather, he might have a chance to eventually ask questions.
However, Dee and Ryo both agreed that once Saburo knew about Dee, it would be a good idea not
to keep that fact hidden. Dafydd had no problem with the idea either when they talked to him about it
and had agreed to join them for the video conference. He had even had gone into a store in Tokyo
and managed to find a pair of tinted contact lenses that was almost the green of Dee’s eyes and
planned to wear them for at least part of the conference. They were still working out exactly how it
was going to work, but it seemed very likely that Dafydd was going to sit in with Ryo at the
beginning, pretending that he was Dee. One thing was certain was that they would definitely do a
video conference the next night.

However, J.J. didn’t need to know that yet.

“Hopefully.”

“How is everyone?” Dee gave in, knowing J.J. was expecting him to ask.

“We’re busy enough. We’ll be moving next month. Rose said last Monday that he has the old
academy building secured now that they moved the academy into a newer, bigger building.”

“He did tell us that in his updates,” Dee stated. “That’s good that he got that building instead of the
one in the Bronx. Much closer for some of us.”

“You should hear Ted and Marty moan about it, because the Bronx would still be a little further for
them to travel than here, but not as far as the old academy building.”

“For years you, me, Ryo and even Drake were the ones who had something of a commute to get to
work. Well, maybe Marty, but that’s what you get for moving to New Jersey. Now it’s time to switch things up,” Dee said. “I’m sure Marty isn’t bitching as much as Ted, but Ted does have options to find a place closer to the new building if he wanted to.”

“That’s true,” J.J. said. “Where are you? It’s noisy there.”

Dee looked around at all the NGY52 members, wishing he could tell J.J. everything, but he couldn’t yet. Soon, but not until he knew Saburo Fujioka knew the truth of what had become of his infant son. “We’re at the NGY52 café,” he settled for some of the truth. “It’s only a block from our hotel, so we decided to start here with sightseeing and grab some lunch. I think a performance just let out, so it’s pretty hopping here.”

“Shame you can’t see any of NGY members,” J.J. commented wistfully.

Dee looked around the table he sat at as he choked down his laughter. He looked around the café and grinned. “Yeah, that is a shame,” he remarked and winked at Ayaka.

Next to him, Ryo covered his mouth to keep from laughing loudly because he was leaning on Dee so he could hear what J.J. was saying.

“Do you think you’ll see them perform while you’re there?” J.J. asked.

“Yes,” Dee replied, smiling again at Ayaka. “We managed to secure tickets for tomorrow night. That’s why we might not make the meeting. It depends on when we can get back to the hotel because we also have other things planned for the night.”

“Oh, that’s awesome, Dee! I’ll bet Carol is excited.”

“You have no idea,” he commented, his eyes now on Carol and Bikky. They were not at their table because Bikky was watching with amusement as the girls they were sitting with were showing Carol some of their dance steps. Currently she was dancing with three members of NGY52, while a 4th clapped in time to the song she was singing. Another girl looked to be making a video with her phone. Dee couldn’t hear the singing over the talking, which was a good thing, because if he was able to hear it, then J.J. might, and then he might end up having to tell the truth.

He was aching to tell J.J. what was really happening, but to do so would mean explaining how they
ended up having a lunch party with NGY52. That would include explaining that he had a sister in the group and that he had met him through his twin brother. He couldn’t do that yet. Maybe if J.J. had called him a few hours later, he could tell everything.

Then again, maybe not. There were people who were family or like family who should learn the truth first. Yes, J.J. and the others were friends, very close friends, but Barry was an even closer friend and Dee considered him a brother. Barry deserved to know before the others that he was no longer Dee’s only brother, and there were now biological siblings including an identical twin brother. Ryo’s grandparents also deserved to be among the first to know too. Dee and Ryo knew later that night they would have to work out the order and start making those calls.

“I know she’s hoping to meet Ayaka Fujioka,” J.J. went on. “Do you think that she would? Or even any of the other members.”

Ryo pulled away from Dee and jumped to his feet. He quickly walked away from the table so he could start laughing.

Dee hated his husband at that moment because he needed to put the phone down and have a good laugh himself. His mouth was twitching as he fought down the laugh. “I think that might be very possible,” Dee managed to say, once again smiling at his sister and trying hard not to laugh. “Look J.J., I know you want to know everything that we’re doing in detail, but I don’t have the time, and I really need to go right now. I will check in later this week if we can’t do a video conference tomorrow night. Well tomorrow night for us.”

“Promise?” J.J. asked.

“Yeah. Promise.”

“Fine. Have fun then. But really try to join us in a video conference, because I want to hear all about the show in detail.”

“I don’t know if Rose will give us time for full details, J.J. And we are having tons of fun,” Dee replied. “Talk to you later.” He disconnected the call and dropped his head on his arms as he was finally able to have the laugh he needed.

“That sounds like it was a fun call,” Ayaka stated in Japanese, looking very amused.

Dee lifted his head and nodded at his sister, wearing a huge silly grin. He looked up at Ryo, who had
come back to the table but was still standing. “Hey, how the hell does he know who Carol’s favorite is when we didn’t?”

“We did know,” Ryo replied. “We just never remembered her name. I don’t think that’s going to be a problem anymore.” He started laughing again.

“I don’t think so.” Dee winked at Ayaka. “It’s going to be very hard to forget her name.”

“What happened?” Ayaka asked, curious.

“Your name was mentioned by J.J. He said something about knowing Carol was hoping to meet you,” Dee explained.

“Too late,” Ayaka said with a laugh.

“Yeah.” Ryo started to grin wickedly. “Hey Dee, maybe sometime today, I’ll send J.J. a picture of Bikky, Carol and Ayaka with a text saying that the details will be coming soon.”

Dee started to laugh again. “Yes, that would be fun.”

With a smile, Ayaka asked, “Friend of yours?”

“Friend, co-worker,” Dee replied.

“Subordinate to you, Chief,” Ryo remarked as he took his seat again.

“Oh right. But that really won’t be official until I come back to work.” To Ayaka, he added, “I’m still on baby leave, but I recently got a promotion, so when I go back to work, I’ll be in charge of our unit.”

“That’s so great, Dee!” Ayaka exclaimed. “Kanpai!” She held up her glass with sparkling water.
“Thank you.”

“So about J.J.?” she asked.

Dee took a deep breath. “J.J. and I were in the same class at the police academy.”

“There’s a whole history there that if we ever have enough time, we can tell you,” Ryo added, looking amused.

“And bringing up bad memories? No thanks,” Dee said with a huff.

“Your sister deserves to know the good and the bad of her brother’s life. Besides, if it wasn’t for J.J., you might not have survived meeting your sister without injury,” Ryo said and then started to laugh.

Dee sighed. “One day, maybe. You still have more good to know first. So, speaking of,” Dee dialed a number on his cell. “Did I wake you?” he asked when he heard the call pick up.

“I was getting ready for bed, but knowing what today is for you, I don’t think I can sleep until I hear how that went, darling. How is it going? Did you meet your father yet?”

Dee put the call on speaker. “It’s a little loud here. We’re at a café in the building where NGY52 plays. Sending you a photo.” He selected one of him, Dafydd and Ayaka from the hotel. “Say hello to my sister Ayaka. I’m afraid that she knows only a little English.”

“Then I’m really glad that I encouraged you to learn Japanese, so now you can talk to your sister,” Maria said with a laugh.

“You didn’t know that then.” Dee teased.

“No. But I do believe in faith.”

“So do I, Mom. I take it that you didn’t check your email yet. I didn’t want to flood your phone with text messages with photos attached, so I’ve been sending you pictures in email.”
“Oh, now I’ll have to check my email before I go to bed. Are they more pictures of your sister?”

“Yes, there are more pictures of Ayaka, and Dafydd along with Bikky and the chibis. Also some of my sister’s team members, since we’re having lunch with her. Remember that I told you she’s in an idol group and that she’s the one Carol is always talking about from NGY52. So we’re having lunch with not only Ayaka but a lot of member from NGY52.”

“What? Oh, that is delightful. I’ll bet Carol is having the time of her life. And hopefully so are you with meeting your sister.”

“Ayaka’s wonderful, Mom. She took us here to the NGY52 café. The other girls decided to throw a party for her, and so they can meet me. It’s also a welcome home to Nagoya for me. We’re having a blast while we wait. We’re still waiting to hear from Dafydd on how that went with our father, but Ayaka came to the hotel and is keeping us busy until we hear from Dafydd.” Dee held out the phone toward Ayaka.

“Hello Mother Lane-san,” Ayaka said in English. “It is very happy to meet you.”

“You are Dee’s sister? Oh! How wonderful! Hello Ayaka. Thank you for meeting him today.”

“He is my brother,” she said and then with an apologetic look at Dee, continued in Japanese, repeating what she had said earlier in the hotel about Mother and Dee repeated it in English.

“It was my joy and pleasure,” Mother said happily. “It still is.”

Ayaka smiled. “I understand,” she said in English.

They spoke for a few more minutes with Dee translating most of the conversation. Before Dee ended the call, Mother asked again how Carol was doing having many members of her favorite group there.

“Oh, she’s going to be talking about this for months,” Dee said with a laugh. “Even if NGY is, by extension, family now. At least that’s how they’re making us feel. There is one member who really is. I wish I could let her call Elina now, but until I hear from Dafydd, I’m still trying to keep the number of people who knows down as much as I could. Even if the number jumped up by almost
“Soon, darling,” Mother assured him. “He’s going to find out shortly, and then you can tell anyone and everyone you want about this wonderful news. No matter how it goes, your secret will no longer have to be a secret. Especially with a sister and twin brother who accepts you. But I have faith in Saburo, darling. He is a father who had lost his son that he loved very much. Even after all this time. Once he can believe that you were not killed with your other father on that horrid day, I know he will embrace you as his son.”

She paused and let out a small sigh. “Dee, listen to me, sweetheart. I think that, even if only just for him, be Daisuke and not Dee. Just at first, until he is used to having you back. It will make it easier on him if he can still call you by the name he gave you. Reunions between a parent and a child who was raised by a different name, it is easier when the child allows to be called by his given name at birth. For Dafydd and Ayaka it’s easier to call you Dee because they did not name you.”

“But… you chose Dee for me. You also named me,” Dee insisted.

“I did not give birth to you, even if I forget that fact at times. I picked Dee, because it’s an initial, and I hoped was a placeholder. I really felt that your name started with a D because of the baby carrier you were found in, so if I couldn’t find out what that was, I could at least come close. You can use Dee to everyone else in your family, except for your father and perhaps your grandparents.”

“Understood, Mom. I will consider it,” Dee said. “I love you.”

“I love you, too. And do not be afraid of waking me if you need to talk for whatever reason. I’ll always be there for you. Remember Dee, nothing will change between us just because you also have your biological father.”

Ryo smiled as he listened and leaned close to say to Ayaka in Japanese, “She assured Dee that she will always be his mother even if he now has his father. Dee was afraid of losing her, but if you ask, I think their bond will grow stronger from this.”

Ayaka nodded her head. “I thank you for translating, Ryo. And I agree. I know love when I hear it. Dee has a mother, father and stepfather now.”

Ryo hugged her.
“Thanks, Mom,” Dee said.

“I would also love to speak to your father, if you get to meet him today. I don’t care if you have to
wake me. I probably won’t be getting much sleep tonight anyway until I know how everything went.
So please keep me updated.”

“I will, Mom,” Dee assured her.

“Have a good day, Dee. I really hope everything goes well with your father. It’s nice to talk to you,
Ayaka. I hope we meet soon.”

“Me too. Sayonara Mama-san,” Ayaka called out, making Dee laugh.

“And that is my mother,” he announced as he disconnected the call.

Ayaka hugged him. “I love her more. She’s wonderful, Dee.”

Dee hugged her back and then started to finish his lunch.

From the café, Ayaka led them down one more block to show them Oasis 21. It was an odd shaped
structure with what looked like an elevated flying disk, which was referred to as the spaceship.
Below it was an open space with several levels. On one level was the bus station, where one could
catch many of the city buses that went through the Sakae area, along with some coach buses for
surrounding areas in the Aichi Prefecture, the airport and even other cities. There were a couple of
cafes and snack shops also on that level. On the level below it were shops and restaurants, as well as
entrances to the subway lines and the underground shopping streets.

Being that they had just ate, everyone agreed they would check out the shops at some other time, but
it was still a good place for photos, especially with Nagoya TV tower across the street. Ayaka led
them up to the spaceship deck of Oasis 21. At the top of the oval shaped disk was a path going
around the outer edge. While it wasn’t as high as the Nagoya TV Tower across the street, it still had
nice views of the immediate area of Sakae. They were taking a slow stroll, taking landscape and family photos when Dee’s phone started to ring.

“It’s Dafydd,” he announced as he checked the caller ID, and then answered the call. “Moshi, moshi.”

“Dee!” Dafydd exclaimed, sounding breathless. “Where are you now?”

“Ayaka took us to Oasis 21,” he replied. “Did you tell him?”

“Yes. I did. I started with showing him a picture of the two of us together. I think he knew then. I saw for the first time in my life hope in his eyes as he looked at the picture, and then showed him a few more of us together. We took a little longer to get to Papa’s house, because Momo thought we should stop and print up some photos, thinking it would be better than showing him what we had on our phones. That way we were able to print up some photos from the night of the party, along with some others during the week. Then I took out the DNA reports and let him read them. Dee, he started to cry before he was finished reading it. So did Chichi. He is so happy for Papa, that he started to cry too. Papa believes us. He knows who you are and…”

“Daisuke?” he heard his father’s voice ask. It was the same voice he heard that night after the Halloween parade in Shinjuku, but it was shaking. Unlike the night when the voice was strong and confident, the man sounded shaken and broken, but did not lose his hope.

“Hai!” Dee replied, and then without thinking added, “But my name is Dee now.” Only after he said it, he remembered what Mother had told him and wanted to kick himself. He knew Mother was right and he should be taking her advice. She had never steered him wrong before. “Yeah, um, but it’s okay to call me Daisuke,” he corrected.

“Daisuke, Dee, whatever, it doesn’t matter what name you use. You are my son. I thought you were dead!” He started to cry again. “Oh, my son, I thought they killed you with Alun. But you’re alive! And you’re in Nagoya now, yes?”

Dee signaled to everyone that they were leaving. “Yes. We’re at Oasis 21.”

“Come here, now!” Saburo insisted, his voice cracking. “Please come home and let me hold my baby boy again.”
“We’re on our way,” Dee assured Saburo. His own eyes stung with tears that started to fall. His birth father wanted him all these years. He could feel the emotion coming from the older man, and knowing his existence caused it, filled him with a warmth of a new kind. Mother could fill him with the warmth of a mother’s love, and Jess had provided the warmth of a father’s love. Each one felt different to Dee, each one representing each of the two people he saw as his parents. Now there was a third warmth filling him, and it was the love of another father. Just like Mother had promised him, he was not losing anything with this. He was not going to lose Mother, or the years he had with Jess. They were still his parents, but it had grown. Even without meeting the man, just from listening to him, he knew he had another father.

“Do you know where you’re going?” Saburo asked. He heard Dafydd laugh and mutter that his father was ‘baka’.

“Dafydd gave me the address before we got to Nagoya, but Ayaka is with us and I hope she knows where she lives.”

Ayaka squealed and Saburo laughed. “That sounds like my youngest daughter. I guess she has no complaints about another brother.”

Ayaka hugged Dee’s arm. “Not at all, Papa. I’ll get Dee and his family home very soon.” She started to pull Dee in the direction toward the elevator. They still had to walk back to the hotel where they left their van. “Hurry!” she insisted. “We need to get to Papa’s house. Dee needs to meet Papa! Papa needs to see Dee again!” She squealed with excitement, practically skipping as she pulled Dee.

Ryo started to laugh with joy as Carol clapped her hands, her eyes filling with joy. Bikky was smiling brightly and was also bristling with excitement, his blue eyes wide and bright. Dee knew that by getting to know Dafydd during the last week, that this meeting had become very important to Bikky, too.

“I can’t wait to see you. My goodness, you’re going to be home soon,” Saburo said.

“Papa, sit down and take a few deep breaths. I know you’re excited, but learn how to breathe before he gets here. Chichi, here take these tissues and sit with Papa and get yourselves under control.” A few seconds later, Dafydd’s voice came in louder. “I’m back. He just suddenly got too emotional. He’s insisting that Chichi start calling the family because Papa’s too emotional to make sense, but that poor man is crying his eyes out too. And I have to admit that it feels great!” Dafydd laughed with joy. “I can’t believe this is happening! I have my twin brother back, and Papa believes me!” Dafydd’s voice caught and a little sob escaped, letting Dee know that their fathers were not the only ones crying with happiness there.
Dee laughed and looked back to find Ryo was practically behind them pushing the double stroller they had taken with them. Carol and Bikky were beside him as they rushed along. “They’re both going to be okay, I hope,” he said to Dafydd.

“Oh, no way Papa is going to miss out meeting you, so don’t worry about him. There is a strong chance that I will finally get the crying under control in time for you to arrive and then we start all over again. And it’s also possible that both you and me might be joining them.”

“I have this feeling that it’s more than just possible for me,” Dee admitted. “I always thought I’d be kicking and fighting every step if I ever had the chance to meet my biological parents, but now that the moment is here, all I can think is that Ayaka isn’t moving us fast enough.”

Ayaka started to giggle. Dee heard his father say something to Dafydd but he couldn’t make out exactly what was said. He assumed Saburo was sitting across the room from where Dafydd was. “Okay, I think we’re having a party tonight. After we visit the family shrine, I’m told. Papa wants to send thanks for your return. We’ll probably then take over a restaurant or order out. I don’t see how that amount of food can be prepared in the time we have to feed the whole family, even if Tomoko takes control of dinner tonight. I’ll let you go so you can get here. See you in a little bit.”

“Yeah. Take care of our father,” Dee said and disconnected the phone.

With a grin, Dee said, “Bikky, Darin, Ryoko? You guys ready to meet your grandfather?”

“Yes!” Bikky replied. “Especially if it makes you happy.”

“It does, so let’s go.”
Chapter 27

Chapter Summary

Dee meets his father.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

Castle Area

Nagoya, Japan

November 5, 2006

Ryo insisted on doing the driving. Dee breaking speed records was one concern, assuming he was able to handle the vehicle. Once they approached the vehicle, it hit Dee what they were doing. He was about to meet the man who brought him into the world. A man who had wanted his baby very much and even if Saburo went on to have a good life, who was a kind, warm and happy man, it was obvious that losing one of his twin infants took its toll on him judging from his reaction upon learning that his son was not killed and went on to live a good life himself.

Any hesitation Dee might have felt just before meeting his father was wiped away during that phone call. By the time Dee had hung up, he had no doubt that he had been wrong all these years about his parents and was anxious to meet his father. Ryo was ecstatic. He was so happy for his husband.

Sitting in the front passenger seat, Ayaka directed Ryo to drive down the street the hotel was on toward Nagoya Station. Dee was sitting behind Ryo. By the time the hotel valet pulled the van up for them, Ayaka had received a text from Dafydd. She was to make sure Dee was sitting on the right side of the vehicle, because if he wasn’t, Dafydd feared their father rushing into traffic to get to Dee. She was pointing out things to them, some popular spots and some personal ones. As Ryo crossed a bridge over a small river, Ayaka stated that Dafydd was usually called to investigate crimes in the area around the river.

“I don’t remember this,” Ryo said.
“I remember it, but I never really got to explore the area,” Dee said.

“We’ll have to change that for both of you, and make sure Bikky and Carol never say such things. Then in a few years we’ll start working on your twins,” Ayaka stated.

Dee looked at his family. “We don’t stand a chance, kids.”

“You should know it very well, Dee,” Carol said. “If you can’t live here, you should at least know your home city like the back of your hand.”

“You’re probably right.” Dee grinned at Carol.

Ryo continued to follow Ayaka’s directions.

“We’re almost there,” Ayaka stated after Ryo made another turn.

Several blocks later, Ryo drove past a large hotel. “Hey, maybe Grandfather should have bought the Westin,” he mused. “It seems closer to your father’s house than our hotel.”

“It’s a short walk from Papa’s house,” Ayaka informed them.

Dee shrugged. “Like your grandfather could have known that I would be meeting my biological father on this trip. And live a short walk from this hotel.” He let out a chuckle. “But this does seem more like the type of hotel he would consider. Maybe it wasn’t for sale and I know your Grandfather wanted the chain he bought from Hayashi-san to have hotels in major cities in Asia, Japan especially. It was a good start to a presence in Japan and Asia.”

Ryo let out a laugh. “You know my Grandfather. Do you think that would stop him?”

“Yeah, you’re right. It wouldn’t stop him. Nor do I think that he would hire people to run the business who would let that stop them. Depending on how today goes, I’m up to having them check it out, but only to keep a watch on when it goes up for sale, if it ever does.”
“I’m good with that,” Ryo said in agreement.

“Dafydd did mention you own a hotel chain,” Ayaka said. “That’s so wonderful. That you also own the hotel you’re staying in.”

“Yes we do,” Dee said. “But I think we got too used to the penthouse in the hotel in Tokyo. We’re feeling a little cramped here.”

“The hotels in Japan are still going through conversion,” Ryo explained, “but soon when you pass that hotel, it will have the L-M sign on it.”

“For Laytner-MacLean?” she asked.

“Yup. Exactly that,” Dee replied with a grin.

“This hotel is very close to our house. Up there is an intersection. Just before we get there, we’ll be going behind the house,” Ayaka stated in Japanese. “His garden is along the river.” Then in English, she exclaimed, as she pointed at the house, “Oh, look, there it is!” Going back to Japanese, she said, “I’m sorry. I don’t think I’ve been this excited going home in a long time. At the intersection, make a right, and then immediately one more right.”

“Oh wow,” Bikky exclaimed, looking at where Ayaka had pointed. He was sitting next to Dee. “This is amazing! We’re really going to meet your father, Dad!”

Carol latched onto Dee from her seat behind him and hugged him. “I’m so excited for you, Dee.”

Dee watched as they drove past the back of a three-level brick house in the front and what looked like a two level extension in the back. He couldn’t be certain because the lower two levels of the house were mostly obscured by a stone fence along the river bank, and trees.

“Even after accepting that Dafydd is my twin brother, and yes, I accept that you are my half-sister, I still can’t believe this,” Dee uttered. “This is unbelievable.”

“In a good way, I hope,” Ryo said.
“Yes, it is, but doesn’t make it any less unbelievable,” Dee replied. “Wow.”

Ryo reached the intersection and made the first turn, crossing over the river and then made the second turn. He started to laugh. “Well, I don’t think I need which house pointed out to me from this side.”

Dee looked ahead and laughed too. Bikky, Carol and Ayaka also were laughing. Dafydd stood outside a beige brick house watching as a man who looked like he could be an older brother of Dafydd’s and Dee’s stood near the curb, anxiously looking down the street.

Ayaka held up a small camera and exclaimed in Japanese, “Papa really wants to meet you, Dee. I am going to try to get as much of this on video.”

“Thank you, Ayaka,” Dee said, staring out the windshield, his eyes on the man.

“Oh look, there’s the castle tower from the photos of you and Dafydd as babies,” Carol exclaimed.

“Yup, there it is,” Dee commented. “To think I was there. I mean other than as a baby.”

“What the hell is Dafydd signaling?” Ryo asked, slowing down the van before reaching the house next to Saburo’s. That house was the last one on the street. Next to it was a parking lot that fit maybe six vehicles and a sign in Japanese stating it was private parking. Next to the lot at the very end of the street was a small park that had an inverted stone arch that reminded Ryo of the curves on top of older buildings in Japan, especially castles. On each end of the arch were statues of koi fish. He did know that Nagoya Castle had the same statues only larger and gold on each end of the main building’s roof.

To Ryo, it felt as if Saburo started to jump with impatience when he slowed the vehicle

“I think he wants you to pull the van on the sidewalk,” Dee commented.

“Calm down, Biks,” Ryo said as he approached the car port for the house next door. Dafydd was directing him to go on the sidewalk using the driveway for the neighbor’s carport and swing around to go on the sidewalk. “There’s not enough room to park at the curb here, so that’s out.”

“Dafydd sent me a text. He thought it best that you park in front of Papa’s garage,” Ayaka said to Ryo. “Both Papa’s and Chichi’s cars are in the garage. I guess you could use Jirou’s spot, but when he comes home he’ll have to park in the visitors’ lot.”

“That lot we just passed is family parking,” Dee surmised and laughed.

“Yes,” Ayaka confirmed with a smile.

Following Dafydd’s hand signals, Ryo pulled the van onto the sidewalk and along the double car garage doors, as Dafydd pulled his father out of the way so Ryo could pull the van into place and park without running over Dee’s and Dafydd’s poor anxious father. No, that wouldn’t do at all, Ryo thought, and went even slower, making sure not to hit Saburo or Dafydd. Ryo had just come to a full stop when Saburo was reaching for the door where Dee was sitting. His face was streaked with tears, and it was obvious he was sobbing. His eyes grew wide with amazement when he looked in the window at Dee, his free hand coming up to his mouth. Dafydd came behind him, rubbing his father’s back in an effort to calm him down.

But how do you calm a man who was about to meet the son he had believed to be dead for the past 33 years?

“I’m guessing you’re very welcome here, Dee,” Ryo commented as he shut the car off.

“You think?” Bikky said with a laugh.

Dee was suddenly too stunned to comment as he stared at the man looking into the window. This was the moment that Dee had always dreaded all his life, until recently when he discovered his parents weren’t the monsters he had always believed them to be. The man looking in was his father who was in near hysterics, wanting to see him again after all these years.
This was Dee’s first glimpse at his father. His father! The man who had Carried him and brought him and Dafydd into this world. Dee couldn’t describe his feelings at that moment, only that unlike what he had once believed for so long, he couldn’t wait to open the door and meet his father.

He opened the door at the same time Saburo flung it open, and he hardly got out of the vehicle before he was tightly hugged by the sobbing man before him.

Saburo pulled away enough to study Dee’s face and his tears flowed more. “Daisuke! Oh my Daisuke! It’s you!” He hugged Dee again. “My Daisuke! You’ve come home!”

Dee found the only thing he was able to do was hug his father. He squeezed his eyes shut against the tears threatening to fall.

He heard Dafydd’s amused voice approach them. “Papa, let him breathe. He needs to keep breathing to stay alive.”

Saburo pulled away from Dee to look at the son who had been with him all his life with an upset frown. “Do not joke like that. It’s not funny.”

“Sorry, Papa, but I was afraid you would break some ribs.”

Dee let out a laugh and hugged his brother. “It’s okay, Dafydd. I’m good. It’s okay,” he said in Japanese. He looked at the man who was his father. “It’s okay.” He released Dafydd and hugged Saburo. Now it was his turn to be overcome as he felt the love pour from the other man.

Starting to smile again, Saburo hugged Dee back. “Call me Papa, Daisuke,” Saburo said. “Sorry, you said your name is Dee now?”

Dee shook his head. “Yes, but it doesn’t matter. It’s an initial,” he found himself repeating what Maria had told him. “A place holder. For you, I can be Daisuke. A very wise woman is right.” He hugged his father again, knowing it felt right. It all felt right. Just as when he accepted that Dafydd was his twin brother, he knew this was without a doubt the man who had given birth to him. A man that for most of Dee’s life had believed he had died along with his other father, and had been mourning for his lost infant all these years.

Saburo reached out an arm and pulled Dafydd into the hug. “My boys. Both of my beautiful boys are
together in my arms again. I never believed it would be possible.”

“And here we are,” Dafydd said with a smile. “I knew he was alive, but I started to despair I would ever find Daisuke.”

“Well, you did, Dafydd,” said Dee.

“Thank you, Dafydd! Thank you for believing no matter what I said to you. You brought Daisuke back to us.”

“Papa, how about we go inside the house? Show Dee where he was born? Hey look, Dee’s family.”

Dee started to laugh at his twin’s obvious attempt at distracting their father, so the older man would loosen his death grip on the two. Saburo pulled away from them, but still kept a hand on each twin. The three looked to find Ryo, Bikky and Carol looking amused. Ryo was holding Ryoko and Bikky was holding Darin. Ayaka stood with them, sniffling as she continued to get the momentous event on video.

“Papa, I’m so happy for you,” she exclaimed, the joy in her voice. “I’m happy for us.”

“This is my family,” Dee said in English with a watery smile. “My husband Ryo, our son Bikky and the twins, Ryoko and Darin. And this is Carol, who is part of our family.”

Saburo went from Dee and Dafydd came over to stand before Ryo. Ryo bowed before the older man.

“Hijimemashite,” Ryo intoned. “Ryo desu. Dozo yoroshiku. I am pleased to meet my husband’s father.”

Saburo returned the bow, and then grinned. “No need to be so formal. We are family, yes? It is a pleasure to meet the husband of my son. Welcome to our family, Ryo.” Saburo hugged Ryo carefully. “And this is little Ryoko?” he asked.

“Yes. This is your granddaughter, Ryoko,” Ryo replied with a big smile.
Saburo caressed Ryoko’s cheek. “Hello Ryoko. I am honored to meet my sweet little granddaughter. My Daisuke’s daughter.” He leaned over to kiss the baby’s head. Ryoko looked up at him and reached out, letting out a giggle. “Ah, she’s sweet. I do hope I get the pleasure of seeing her grow up along with her twin brother. She looks more like you, doesn’t she, Ryo? Yet, I still see my Daisuke in her, especially his eyes, which are also the same color as Daisuke’s Tad. But she still takes mostly after you.” To Ryoko, he said, “You’re a beautiful akachan.” He kissed Ryoko again and laughed as she managed to get a grip on his shirt.

Ryo also laughed and said, “You have to watch this one and her brother. If they like you, then manage to get a good grip, hoping to keep you around.”

“So Ryoko likes me? That makes me happy, because I already love this akachan.”

Dee cleared his throat and said, “Yes, even with us living in New York, if you want, you will definitely be a part of your grandchildren’s lives.”

“I missed my chance with you, Daisuke, but at least I can watch your little ones grow up. I am glad you and Dafydd didn’t find each other when these two are already grown.” Saburo looked down and smiled at Ryoko while caressing her cheek as the infant smiled up at him.

With a chuckle, Ryo pried Ryoko’s tiny hand from Saburo’s shirt. “C’mon sweetheart. Let Ojiisan go say hello to Bikky and Darin.”

Ryoko let out a squeal of protest as Saburo started to move away, and then cuddled into Ryo, her eyes still on her grandfather.

“Aw,” Ryo sighed and kissed her head, cuddling her closer. “There will be plenty of attention from Ojiisan. In a little while, he can even hold you, but you’ll have to take turns with Darin. Okay, sweetheart?” He lifted her slightly so he could kiss her nose and smiled when she puckered her lips to kiss Ryo back.

Saburo saw it and laughed with joy. “I hope I can get some baby kisses from my beautiful granddaughter later.”

“You will, if her reaction to you is any indication,” Dee assured his father. He wiped the tears on his cheeks, smiling at the scene before him. Dafydd stood next to him, with an arm slung around his shoulder and a huge watery smile.
Saburo looked over to Bikky and Darin. “And you are Bikky, ne?” he asked Bikky.

“Yes, sir. Hajimemashite,” Bikky replied and bowed slightly. “I am really excited meeting my Dad’s father.”

“I am very honored to meet you, Bikky,” Saburo said with a bow. “Dafydd told me about you. You are my son’s son, so that makes you my grandson. Please call me Ojiisan.” He reached out to carefully hug Bikky. “There will be a better hug later when we do not have to worry about crushing your brother. Okay?”

“Okay, Ojiisan,” Bikky replied. He glanced in Dee’s direction.

Dee nodded his head and left Dafydd’s side to join his family. Dafydd stood close, with Ayaka next to him. Both were smiling as they watched. Ayaka continued to get the event on video.

Dee slipped an arm around Ryo. “Yes, Biks. You now have an Ojiisan,” he said.

Bikky held up Darin. “The three of us now has an Ojiisan. Right, Darin?” he asked the baby in his arms.

“Hello Darin. What a handsome akachan you are. I definitely see Fujioka genes in you.” He leaned over to kiss Darin’s head. “Like your sister, I look forward to seeing you grow up. And to hold you many many times.” He smiled down when Darin let out a happy sound, starting to wave his hands and wiggling in the sling. “Oh, this one looks like you, Daisuke,” Saburo stated with a smile. “Actually, he looks more like Dafydd when you both were Darin’s age because of his eye color.” He suddenly looked sad. “Daisuke was around the same age when I lost him.”

Dee left Ryo’s side to hug his father. “I’m sorry. I never knew.” He let out a sob. “I spend my life believing I was unwanted by my parents and convinced myself I never wanted to know who they were. I’m sorry for believing that. I am so happy to be here today and finally meet you.”

“Okay, okay, time for everyone to go inside,” Dafydd stated, gently prying Dee off Saburo.

“It wasn’t your fault. I can understand why you believed it. I just hope I can change your mind so
I’m able to get to know the man my missing son became along with his wonderful family.”

“Of course,” Dee said. He hugged Bikky to him as Dafydd smiled at them. “I want us to be family, if you will have us.”

“Momo should have tea ready for us,” Dafydd said, leading his father through the gate. Beyond the gate was a flight of stairs leading to a wood and stained glass front door. On the street level next to the gate was another gated door next to the garage doors. “Everyone, please come in. This is your home.”

“We have presents,” Ryo said.

“I’ll get them after we get settled inside,” Dafydd offered. “Are they still in the same spot you put them when we left Tokyo?”

Ryo nodded. “Yes. Thank you.”

Just as Dafydd started up the stairs, Saburo twisted away from Dafydd’s hold and went back to Dee. “Please, let me escort Daisuke home again.”

“Sure, Papa,” Dafydd said with a watery smile. He moved aside to let Dee come to Saburo’s side.

“And you, please call me Papa,” Saburo insisted, his arm around Dee and holding him close. “You are my son, I am your Papa.” Saburo smiled warmly at Dee as they started up the stairs. “I remember the first time I entered our home with you in my arms. Your Tad had Dafydd, and I had you when we all came home from the hospital where you and Dafydd were born. Your grandmother was fussing because I insisted on carrying one of you in, but she thought I wasn’t up to it. I proved to her that I was. Carried you all the way into the house.”

Dafydd started to laugh. “And then nearly dropped him on the floor near the crib, listening to Obāsan tell the story.”

“At least I got him in the house,” Saburo remarked, flushing at the memory. “And your grandmother, as much as it pained me to admit at the time, was right there to take you from me before I did drop you. Your grandfather then made sure I was sitting down. I wasn’t allowed to walk around holding either of you for a few more days. Not only your grandparents doing, but your Tad’s.”
“Papa, you can tell stories inside, but right now you’re holding up progress,” Dafydd called from behind. “And speaking of dropping babies, it gets tiring holding Dee’s little ones while standing around on stairs.”

Dee and Saburo looked behind them to find they were standing in the middle of the flight of stairs. Ryo was behind them, still holding Ryoko, while Dafydd was now holding Darin with Bikky next to him. Last was Ayaka, who was still filming the reunion.

“Oh! Sumimasen, but remember that this is something I never expected to be doing today, or even ever,” Saburo said.

“We know, Papa,” Dafydd said lovingly. “Just get him in the house already.”

The tone of Dafydd’s voice made everyone laugh as Saburo led Dee up the last few steps to the front door.

Standing before the dark wood door with a four-pane window in the top half and a semi-circle stained glass depiction of a field with bright flowers above it, Saburo turned to look at Dee with a big, watery smile. “Welcome home, my Daisuke,” he stated and he opened the door. Together, they went through the door into the entry.

Dee looked around at the space. Saburo moved them further into the area so the others could enter.

Everyone took off their shoes and placed them in an empty slot in the shoe cabinet built along one wall. The area was large enough for everyone not to feel cramped as they removed their shoes.

Two steps up led them into the main room. The entire first half was the living room, making it a large space. Being the house was double width, it was wide and long. One side of the room had traditional furnishings, along with cushions and a low table. The other side had modern leather couches and comfortable easy chairs. Dee figured it could easily fit a large gathering. On the long wall going from front to back was a big screen flat TV. The cabinet under it had stereo equipment. It was all state of art electronics, even for Japanese standards. Toward the back was a section with dark wood carved panels and carved posts made of the same wood. The panels were no more than two and a half feet high by three feet long. Dee was able to see into the area to what seemed to be a formal dining area. The low table set in the middle was black lacquer. On both sides of the table were comfortable looking cushioned zaisu chairs. Along the wall was a large wooden unit that Dee assumed was where the dinnerware was stored. He could see potted ferns in the corners and flower arrangements on the table.
“Why don’t we sit and get it all out, then Papa can take you on a tour of the house.” Dafydd said in English. “Papa, remember we’re speaking in English for Bikky and Carol.” He looked over at his sister. “Some of us will have to do the best they can.”

Dafydd helped Ryo take out the mats from the large baby bag Ryo grabbed from the van, and got Ryoko and Darin settled.

“I will work on better English so I may speak to my nephew and new friend Carol,” Ayaka said in broken English and a smile.

“I guess I should be working harder on my Japanese now,” Bikky said. “I mean I now have two half-Japanese dads.”

“That makes one whole Japanese,” Saburo joked.

Dee blinked and then started to laugh, hearing everyone else also laugh. “From our little outing, it seems they worked out a way to communicate some of the time.” With a grin, he added, “By mixing Japanese and English.”

“There’s still times we can’t understand each other, but it works a little. At least we don’t need someone translating all the time,” said Bikky as Ayaka and Carol nodded.

“Whatever works,” Saburo said. “Please, sit wherever you please. When we all gather some take the furniture while others prefer low table and floor chairs.” Looking at Bikky, he said, “In Japanese, we call the floor chairs zaisu.”

“Zaisu,” Bikky repeated and smiled. “Yes, zaisu kudasai. Floor is cool,” Bikky said. “I like sitting on the floor at home when I’m watching TV… um… terebi with my dads. But we don’t have zaisu.”

“But we have enough zabuton, if your butt should ever start hurting,” Dee said with a wink.

At Bikky’s confused stare, Ryo said, “The floor cushions we got from my family for wedding gifts.”
“Oh, those! Yeah, sometimes it’s better to use them while watching a movie,” Bikky said.

“I don’t mind the floor,” Carol said. “These are lovely cushions,” she complimented, picking up a cushion. “They are almost too pretty to sit on.”

“That’s what we said about the ones we got for a wedding present from my family, which is why they are on our couch,” Ryo said with a chuckle. “Unless Bikky needs cushioning sitting on the floor.”

Saburo laughed. “Please use them. The special ones are put away, and I can always get more to replace these. They are for comfort so please.” He sat down on a cushion at the low table. “You may use zabuton or zaisu, for your comfort. Or even both. Everyone has their own preference.”

With a smirk, Dafydd looked down at Bikky and asked, “Perhaps you would also like a kyousoku too?”

Dee and Ryo started to laugh at Bikky’s look.

Dafydd held up what looked like an arm rest taken off a chair. “Japanese arm rest.”

“Oh. Nah, I’m good, Uncle Dafydd. Thank you. Obāsan has those too, but they use English words for these things,” said Bikky.

“Around you, they do,” Dee said. “Except for Aunt Moriko. She forgets the English words for furniture a lot and uses the Japanese ones. We need to get your ears used to picking up this stuff to remember.”

“But since even Obāsan wants you to learn Japanese, I think I’m going to tell her they should start using the Japanese terms around you when we’re at her house,” Ryo added.

“Oh man! Can’t we start slowly?” Bikky asked his fathers as Saburo and Dafydd watched with amusement.

“That is slowly, kiddo,” Dee said and laughed.
“Welcome to Japan,” Dafydd commented with a smirk. “Does anyone want a zaisu instead of using just zabuton?” he asked. When everyone shook their heads and started to sit using the cushions, he sat next to his father and looked over at Dee with a smile. Dee sat down on Saburo’s other side, knowing the older man needed the closeness. Ryo sat down on a cushion by Dee, rubbing his back gently.

Dee wasn’t surprised that Ryo knew he was still overwhelmed with meeting his father even if he was doing his best not to show it. If he ever imagined meeting his biological father, this would not be how it would have gone. He was feeling things for this man that he never expected to feel.

Momo entered the room from the back end, which Dee figured was the kitchen, carrying a tray with a teapot and tea cups.

“We’re going to have some of rice cakes we brought back from Tokyo to go with tea,” Dafydd said to his father.

“You know better,” Saburo scolded Dafydd. “There are always snacks in this house.”

Dafydd grinned. “For all the children, yes there is. But Obāsan …. Akira-san took us to Shibamata and there was a famous rice cracker shop.”

“Dafydd and Dee decided to get some crackers to have for just this occasion,” Momo added with a smile. “They bought it together.”

Saburo noticed the bright box the shopkeeper packed the rice crackers in on the table that Dee guessed wasn’t on it before Saburo decided that he had to go outside to wait. He knew Dafydd took the crackers along with the other gifts Dafydd and Momo bought for their family while in Tokyo. The older man looked in the box to find individual wrapped packages of various kinds of rice crackers. “These look like they are very expensive ones,” he observed.

“I know you better, Papa,” Dafydd said with a grin as he winked at Dee. “Wouldn’t you rather have these to serve to Daisuke and his family for their first visit to this house.”

“Ah! Of course. You are very right. Thank you, Dafydd.” He looked at his guests. “Daisuke, thank you too. That was most thoughtful of you both. We now have very special crackers to have with tea for this most important and wonderful occasion.” To Momo, he asked, “Did you use the special tea
“Yes, Papa. Actually I used the tea leaves Dafydd and I brought back from Tokyo for you from the shop you love,” Momo said. “I wouldn’t expect to use anything else this time.”

Bikky and Carol were sitting on the floor near the table. On the floor before them, Ryo and Dafydd had set out the playmats for the twins, who were happily amusing themselves.

“Your stepfather should be home soon. He thought it would be best to take the children out for a while. He should be back shortly, along with your brother’s two sons,” Saburo said to Dee with a smile on his face. His eyes shone as he stared in amazement at his long lost, thought for dead son. “Your other brothers and sisters have assured me that they will try to be here as soon as they are able. Jirou lives in the house next door with his family, but they went to Osu for a Sunday outing.”

He suddenly moved forward and enveloped Dee in a tight hug. “Oh, my Daisuke. My baby boy. You’re alive and you’re here.” He started to cry again.

Dee hugged his father. “Yes,” he whispered, tears filling his eyes. “I’m here. With you, in my seika.”

“Yes,” Saburo stated, nodding his head. “Yes, this is your seika.”

Bikky looked at Ryo in question. “Huh? What’s a seika?” he asked.

“Home of birth,” Ryo explained. “This is the house that Dee and Dafydd were born in. Well, maybe not literally.” He looked over to Dafydd. “You said you both were born in a hospital downtown, right?”

“Hai. That’s right. But Papa and Tad lived in this house when we were born, and this is the house they brought us home from the hospital to. So this is our seika,” Dafydd explained to Bikky.

Saburo pulled away from Dee, wiping his face. “Sumimasen,” he commented. “Please forgive this old fool for not being able to stop crying.”

Dee smiled tenderly at the man, who still sat close to Dee. “Whatever for? I don’t see anyone old or a
fool,” he said. His voice caught as he spoke. He knew without a doubt that his father had loved him very much and was still hurting inside all these years since Dee was taken from him. Even if Saburo had managed to find love again and have more children, it was obvious that there was still a part of him who grieved for the baby taken from him. Any preconceptions Dee had about his biological parents and how he had ended up in that alley were being stripped away as he watched Saburo.

He pulled Saburo in for a tender hug. “It must have been very hard for you.”

“You have no idea,” Saburo said. “I believed you were also killed along with your Tad. I never dared to believe that I would have this moment.” He smiled at Dee and then looked past Dee to Ryo and Bikky. “And you have your family with you.”

“Including grandbabies,” Dee said, looking to the twins on their mats by Bikky and Carol.

“I see both you and your husband in them,” Saburo said. “Bikky, once I can stop crying, I want to talk with you more.”

“I would like that,” Bikky said smiling. He looked at Dee and smiled more. “This is so great!” he exclaimed. “Holy wow! I can’t believe I have another grandfather! Wow!”

Dee and Ryo started to laugh along with Dafydd and Momo.

“And how many grandfathers do you have, Bikky?” Saburo asked, looking amused.

“Just one actually,” Bikky replied, looking embarrassed. “You. There’s great-grandfather MacLean, but I call him Grandpa. And I never met him, but I heard a lot about…. ” Bikky suddenly went silent and looked at Dee nervously.

Dee smiled at Bikky. “He means Jess, the man I call my Dad,” Dee explained to Saburo. “He’s the cop who found me, but he couldn’t stay away, so even if I never lived with him, he was my Dad. He was killed when I was 15, but I told Bikky stories about him.”

Saburo nodded and smiled at Dee. “Do not be embarrassed to speak of the family you grew up with. I am very much grateful that you had a family and do no deny them around me. I find comfort in knowing you weren’t alone and that you have people who loved you.” He looked at Bikky. “I am glad that you know of this man and consider him a grandfather.”
“Mother says that if Jess hadn’t found Dee when he did, he might have died that night,” Ryo said quietly.

“Then I love this Jess,” Saburo said, his voice cracking. “He was a father to my son when I could not be and made it possible for us to be here right now. Yes, I love Jess.” He grasped Dee’s arm.

“You are Bikky’s only living grandfather. And his only biological one,” Dee said with a smile. “But I guess he has two living grandfathers if I have a stepfather.”

“This is true,” Saburo stated. “You will like him a lot, I’m sure of it.”

“I can’t wait to meet him,” Dee said. “As I did with Bikky about Jess, I also hope that you will tell me more about Alun.”

“Oh of course. We weren’t married long before he was killed, but I did love him, and he is your father. I will tell you everything I know about him. Oh Daisuke, he also loved you so much. But first before he comes back, let me tell you a little about your stepfather. You’ll understand why once I do.”

Dafydd chuckled. “I do love this story,” he said with a smile.

“When I met Yoshio, he decided that I was going to be his, even if I wasn’t looking for a lover,” Saburo said.

Dee looked at Ryo and took his hand. “I think I know how he felt,” he said as Ryo smiled warmly.

“Oh, is that so? You and Ryo too?”

“Oh yes,” Ryo said with a laugh. “Your son waited two years for me to finally make up my mind and return his love. And now all I can think is how glad I am that he’s so persistent.”

“I had no choice. I loved you that much.” Dee leaned in close and said softly, “I love you much more now.”
Saburo let out a happy sob. “Sugoi! I am so happy for the two of you. And now you have a beautiful family too.”

“Yeah, we do,” Dee said. “But about Yoshio?”

“Yeah, I was still grieving for Alun and you. At first I thought I never wanted to take the chance again and be hurt more. Yoshio was a customer in my mother’s store. He kept coming back, saying his brother was about to give birth and he was helping his brother out with things for a baby. Eventually figured out where I lived, and I do suspect my mother had something to do with that, and would come over. I finally let him in and we did become friends. I didn’t feel so lonely with him. I liked him but didn’t love him. He would make it clear that he loved me and was not going to give up.” Saburo shrugged. “I should be ashamed, but at least I never lied to him. I did like not feeling alone so much, so I told him we could be together, if for that one reason. He was also very good with Dafydd and Dafydd took to him well. When we finally married, he knew I still didn’t love him, but he was my best friend, so I guess we had that.” He smiled. “I married my best friend. That could not be so bad, yes?”

Dee and Ryo nodded, holding hands, noticing that Dafydd and Momo did the same. “Ryo is my best friend. And I’m Ryo’s,” he said to his father.

“Very good. We were also friends with benefits, but we were married. It was when Yoshio found out he was pregnant and during his pregnancy that I discovered that I did love this wonderful man. When we were married, Yoshio said to me that it was his wish to see me happy one day. And I am, because of Yoshio. I never will forget Alun, and he doesn’t expect me to, but I have Yoshio now and love him very much. We’ve been together 28 years and hoping for at least another 28. The only pain that I had in my heart I can now say is going away, because it was the grief I held onto over you. I wish I could have had you in my life as you grew up, but I am happy you had loved ones to nurture you. I am glad you have family that you can tell me all about. And if you will, please be a part of my life going forward, even from New York. Telecommunications is a wonderful thing.”

Dee nodded. “Of course. Now that I know you, I do want to know you more,” Dee replied.

“Now that you have background on the man who is your stepfather, please tell me about this wonderful woman who is your mother.”

Dee started to smile more. “If you don’t mind, I can do more than just tell you. I know she is anxious to know you too. She was so happy and excited when I told her about Dafydd and then when she found out that we were going to meet you today.”
“Dafydd tells me she’s a Catholic nun, yes?”

“Yes. She runs the orphanage that I was taken to.” Dee started to smile softly. “She always tells me that the moment Jess put me in her arms, she knew I was her miracle. I bonded to her too. At first, I was too sick, and I guess the people who came looking for children in the orphanage were not interested in taking a sick baby. Most of these people were not rich, but for whatever reason could not have children but wanted. So I was passed over for the healthier children. By the time that perspective parents started to look at me with interest, I was so close to Mother, I could not see myself without her. So I would hide when someone came to look at children. I would cry and act up when it was attempted to place me with a family. I became unadoptable.” Dee shrugged. “I would always be in the orphanage with Mother and that made me happy. She made time to do things just with me that she didn’t do with the other kids too. We had our special things, just the two of us. Then the impossible happened. Even though she was a nun and she did run the orphanage, she was allowed to adopt me so that I had a parent. She became my mother.”

“You never minded growing up in a group home?” Saburo asked in curiosity.

“I didn’t know anything else,” Dee admitted. “So I guess it was normal for me. I considered it having a large family with a lot of brothers and sisters and having to share a room with most of my brothers.” He chuckled. “So it made me happy when Dafydd said we had many brothers and sisters. I guess my large family got even larger.”

“Yes it did,” Dafydd stated with a smile. “You also have Ryo’s family too.”

“Yes. Obāsan and I got along very well from the start and she’s like a grandmother to me. Her family accepted me into the family with open arms.” He studied his father. “So yes, I grew up with love and family, and as an adult found even more family to love, thanks to my wonderful husband. And now there is this family. I feel very very lucky.”

“I am happy to hear that. That is all I ask if I could not be with you,” Saburo said. “Now you said you can do more than just talk about your wonderful mother?”

“I can call her.”

Saburo looked at the time. “Would be she sleeping now? I can wait. We have all day, I hope.”

“Yes, we do,” Ryo agreed. “And I’ll answer for Dee. Mother made sure to stress to Dee that when
the opportunity came up, she didn’t care if we are waking her up. As Dee said, she’s very anxious to know you.”

“If that so?” Saburo asked.

Dafydd and Momo nodded their heads. “We also know this is true from the time we got to know her,” Dafydd stated.

“If you think it’s okay, then yes, please give her a call. I would love to get to know her too.”

Dee took out his phone and then looked at Ryo. “Oh, are we still sending J.J. that picture?” he asked Ryo.

Bikky and Carol both nodded their heads enthusiastically. “Yes, do it!” Bikky said, snickering. “He’s gonna sh--- scream.”

“What picture?” Dafydd ask as he watched Ryo laugh with the two teens and Dee smirk. Ayaka even started to laugh with them.

“J.J. called while we were having lunch, making comments about how nice it would have been if we ran into someone from NGY52,” Ryo explained.

“Meanwhile, we’re sitting with her,” Dee pointed to Ayaka. “And about 20 of her closest friends.”

“You had lunch with NGY then?” Saburo asked.

“We thought we were having lunch with just Ayaka but then we walked in to find her team and some of the other teams taking over the café there,” Dee explained with a laugh. “I thought we might have to call an ambulance for poor Carol.”

“I thought it might be fun to send J.J. a picture of Bikky and Carol with Ayaka with no text except that details will be later when we have time,” Ryo said with a smirk.
“Ah, that is truly evil, and I approve,” Dafydd said while Momo started to laugh.

“We took a picture together just for Dee’s and Ryo’s friend,” Ayaka said.

Saburo joined in the laughter. He had no idea who J.J. was, but he seemed to also approve of the plan of shocking the poor man with the photo. Yoshio must have done an awesome job at helping his father find his sense of humor again, because it was obvious Saburo also had a wicked streak in the area.
Chapter 28

Chapter Summary

The reunion continues, including some other Fujioka family members curious about the phone calls and texts they received.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Fujioka Residence

Nagoya, Aichi

Japan

November 5, 2006

Dee ended up telling Saburo about his college years when Bikky mentioned something about Ken’s house, which he told Saburo was also the same house Dee had shared with Ken and two others in Yokohama. It led to Saburo asking how did Dee end up learning Japanese. Dee told his father about his friends in New York, whose mother was happy to teach him Japanese, because it meant her children would continue to learn too even if they were not living in Japan and intended to live in New York. Dee went on to explain how because of his time living in Japan for college, he found himself adopting some of the Japanese culture as his own.

Dafydd used the time to get the van keys from Ryo and go out to park the van in the family lot and came back with some of the gift bags Ryo and Dee had taken with them to give as presents for the family.

Dee had just given Saburo the bag that contained a bottle of good sake, which was Dafydd’s suggestion as a gift to his father, when they heard the door open and loud little voices. Dee immediately recognized the voices as his nephews and started to smile.

“Papa! Mama!” Kiyoshi cried.
“Take your shoes off first,” he heard an unfamiliar voice warn the excited boy in Japanese. “Tatsuya, you too.” Dee figured it was Saburo’s husband – his stepfather.

“But I want to see Mama and Papa,” Tatsuya said in a small voice.

“You saw them already,” Yoshio said, sounding amused.

“We missed them,” Kiyoshi said. “My shoes are off.”

“Kiyoshi!” Yoshio called out to no avail. Kiyoshi charged into the family room, with his brother right behind him.

“Hey you two, be nice with Ojiisan. You know better,” Dafydd admonished in Japanese.


“Sorry, Papa. We missed you,” Kiyoshi apologized in Japanese, giving big sad eyes.

Dafydd pulled them to him and hugged him. “I know you did. If you did not have school, we would have taken you.”

Kiyoshi rested his head on Dafydd’s shoulder. He noticed Dee sitting on the other side of Saburo and pulled away with his eyes wide with surprise. “Who’s that?” he asked surprised, pointing at Dee with wide eyes.

Tatsuya gasped. “He looks just like you, Papa!”

Dafydd started to laugh. “Yeah he does. And Kiyoshi, don’t point. That’s rude.”

“Sorry, Papa. I was surprised. He looks like you,” Kiyoshi said, still staring at Dee. His mouth hung open, which made the others try not to laugh.
Dee continued to look at the boys with a sunny smile.

“I thought only twins looked alike,” Tatsuya asked. He was also still staring at Dee.

“Dee-san is my twin,” Dafydd said.

Kiyoshi shook his head, and looked up at his father, wrinkling his little face. “I’m confused.”

“Hey! We spoke to you, Dee-san. On the phone when Papa and Mama were in Tokyo,” Tatsuya exclaimed, excited. He started to jump in place, clapping his hands.

Kiyoshi shook his head again. “Dee-san can’t be your twin. He’s Mama’s cousin’s husband.”

Dee phone started to ring. He had it set to vibrate and he took out his phone. He checked the display.

“Who is it?” Ryo asked.

“J.J.,” Dee replied. “Most likely he’s having a fit. He also texted me 3 times.”

Ryo started to laugh. “Yeah, I’ve been ignoring his calls and texts too.”

“You two are evil,” Dafydd said with a smirk, “and I approve. You’re much like your cousin,” he added, his attention on Ryo. He looked at the two anxious children staring at Dee. “That is Mama’s cousin.”

“That’s Ryo-san? Why are they here?” Tatsuya asked.

Dee smiled at the boy. “I said I’d try to come to Nagoya.”
“Tatsuya, Kiyoshi, this is your Uncle Dee, and his husband, your Uncle Ryo,” Dafydd said.

“He can’t be our Uncle Ryo. He’s Mama’s cousin,” Kiyoshi repeated, still staring at Dee with wide eyes.

“I am your Mama’s cousin, but I’m also married to your Papa’s twin,” Ryo explained.

“Papa doesn’t have a twin anymore,” Kiyoshi said.

“He died,” Tatsuya said sadly. “When he was a baby.”

Dee lost his breath for a moment, as his nephews’ sad comments told him just how much of an impact his not growing up with his family had made and how much Saburo had truly continued to love him all these years. These were two very young boys, and most likely through their father and grandfather, were told stories that made them sad to think of their uncle, who they believed had died decades ago. He felt Ryo’s hand rub the small of his back as his husband looked at him in concern. He gave Ryo a small watery smile, letting him know he was okay and then he smiled warmly at both his brother and father.

“We thought so,” Saburo said with a smile, his eyes filling with tears again, as he met Dee’s look before giving his attention back to the boys, “but that’s him. He’s your Papa’s twin.”

“Ojiisan, you said that Papa’s twin’s name is Daisuke. That’s Dee-san,” Tatsuya said.

Dafydd took a deep breath. “They make me tired sometimes,” he said to Dee and Ryo.

“Dee is short for Daisuke,” Dee said, taking pity on his brother.

“But Papa is Japanese and you’re American,” Tatsuya insisted. “How can you be twins?”

“I was raised in New York as an American,” Dee explained. “So I’m American.”

“You’re not that American if you’re Papa’s twin,” Kiyoshi remarked, sounding disappointed.
Saburo laughed and pulled his grandson over and settled him on his lap. “Your uncle lived in New York for almost all of his life, so that makes him American.”

“But was he born here? With Papa?” Tatsuya asked, cuddling close to Saburo.

“Yes, he was. There is no way that twins can be born in two different countries,” Saburo explained.

“Depends on where the twins are born,” Ryo quipped.

“Or when,” Dee added.

Dafydd nodded his head in agreement with an amused smile. “If they were on the TARDIS that might be possible.” He started to smirk as he looked at Dee and Ryo.

“Doctor Who!” both children cried out with excitement.

“YAY TARDIS!” Kiyoshi exclaimed, clapping his hands.

“Uncle Dee likes Doctor Who too, just like your Papa,” Momo said with a smile. “So does Uncle Ryo. Maybe you and Papa can watch it with your uncles?”

The two boys looked at Dee and Ryo and then nodded.

“Are you really my Uncle Dee?” Kiyoshi asked.

“Yes, I am,” Dee replied as Saburo spared a hand to rest on Dee’s shoulder.

“He really is,” Saburo supported him. “This was the surprise that Papa said he was coming back with from Tokyo,” he explained to the two boys. “We thought that he had died in New York along with their Tad, but somehow he didn’t. And he was raised by a very wonderful lady that became his mother.”
Saburo spoke in the same tone that he would when it was story time for the boys. Both little boys gazed at him in wonder. Tatsuya had moved to sit on Dee’s lap, while Kiyoshi remained on his grandfather’s lap. Momo slipped her arm around Dafydd’s waist and rested her head against his shoulder and smiled.

Ryo leaned against Dee, and also smiled as the older man spoke to the young children. Bikky and Carol watched, having an idea of what was being said, but not understanding everything. Ayaka sat with them, her attention going between her father with her nephews and her new baby niece and nephew. Ryoko and Darin were wiggling on their mats, grabbing at their feet with their hands and making her laugh.

“Then last Saturday when Papa and Mama went to the party for Mama’s cousin, they saw Dee, who is Mama’s cousin’s husband, but they realized is also Dafydd’s twin brother Daisuke. When his Tad died, Daisuke was too young to know anything about us or where he was born. The only thing he knew until Saturday was the family he had in New York. We are new to him and very likely a big surprise.” Saburo looked at Dee. “A good surprise I hope.”

Dee nodded, hugging Tatsuya, who cuddled against him. “Yes it is. In only a week, I have become very close to your Papa. It almost feels as if I’ve known him all my life, even if we are still learning things about each other.”

“Twin bond!” Tatsuya exclaimed happily, looking up at Dee.


“So you are Uncle Dee?” Kiyoshi asked.

Dee smiled at the boy. “You know what? I didn’t know my name was Daisuke until your Papa told me last week. I didn’t even know my family name was Fujioka.”

“What family name do you use?” Kiyoshi asked.

“Laytner,” Dee replied. “But then I got married and added my husband’s family name to mine. So it’s Laytner-MacLean now.”
“That’s too long,” Tatsuya stated, making the adults laugh.

Dee laughed too and leaned toward Saburo and Kiyoshi. “Everyone in New York only knows me as Dee. Well, except for my mother. I told her about your Papa and Ojiisan, and about the two of you, too. I’ll let you decide what you want to call me, okay? I can be Uncle Dee, or Uncle Daisuke. Both are my name, so you pick,” Dee reasoned, thinking that it wouldn’t be so bad to be known as his birth name while with his family in Japan.

“I like both,” Tatsuya said. “Let us think about it.”

Kiyoshi nodded along with his brother. “We’ll let you know.”

“Uncle? How come you didn’t say you were our uncle when we spoke on the phone?” Tatsuya asked.

“That was because of me,” Dafydd admitted. “We knew he was your uncle, but we needed confirmation to show Ojiisan before telling him. I was afraid telling you he was your uncle would have Ojiisan ask questions we couldn’t answer yet. Remember Ojiisan was with you.”

“Oh yeah, he was!” Tatsuya asked. “Okay.”

Dee turned slightly with Tatsuya still in his lap. “I want you to meet your cousins,” he said indicating Bikky and then the twins. “This is Bikky. He is my first son. Unfortunately, his Japanese isn’t too good yet.” He grinned at Bikky and in English said, “and their English isn’t good yet either. Sorry Biks. We’ll figure something out.”

“It’s okay, Dad. I think I still like the little bugs even if I can’t understand them,” Bikky said. “I like the faces they are making Uncle Dafydd do.”

“They make me tired,” Dafydd said in English, “but I love them anyway.”

“I know what you mean,” Dee said in English with a laugh. “After all, we do have Bikky.” He glanced over at his son, who stuck his tongue out at him.
“Bikky,” Ryo warned. “Let the rest of Dee’s family know you better before you do things like that around them.”

Saburo laughed heartily. “I can see your son is comfortable with you to do that. This is a very good thing.”

“You weren’t there when they first met,” Ryo sighed, making Carol giggle. “I never thought they would ever stop fighting.”

“We still do,” Dee said with a grin as he ruffled Bikky’s head. “But no, it’s not the same as when Ryo first took him in. But that’s a long story for another time soon.”

Bikky pulled away from Dee and tried to fix his hair.

Tatsuya came up to Bikky and stuck his tongue out at him.

“Tatsuya!” Momo exclaimed, horrified.

Dee and Dafydd started to laugh. Bikky looked shocked at first and then started to laugh. He stuck his tongue out at the little boy, who also started to laugh.

“Great,” Ryo said with a sigh. “The only way these two can communicate, it seems.” He lightly rapped Bikky on the head with a knuckle. “See what you started.”

“Me too!” Kiyoshi exclaimed, clapping his hands and ran up to Bikky and stuck out his tongue.

“I give up,” Ryo remarked, starting to laugh. “Biks, this is all your problem now.”

“What problem?” Bikky asked, laughing. “These little guys are crazy and that’s going to be fun,” he replied before returning the gesture.

Kiyoshi clapped again, laughing.
“Did I say they make me tired?” Dafydd asked, trying not to laugh but failing.

They heard sounds come from the floor and Dafydd looked down. He started to laugh more. “It seems they are amusing your little ones.”

“Biks, I’m warning you that you are not teaching them any of this,” Ryo stated.

“Too late,” Dee commented, also looking at the twins. “Are you sticking your tongue out at your brother too, sweetheart?” he asked Ryoko.

“She always does that when she’s having fun,” Bikky commented, “so don’t blame it on me.”

Saburo laughed. “Your family reminds me very much of ours, so you will blend in perfectly,” he said with a smile. He looked down at the babies. “That little boy does look much like you and your brother at that age.”

“Twins sometimes do have children that resemble each other,” Dafydd explained. “I also see my boys in Darin.”

“It’s Ryoko that will stand out in our family,” Saburo said. “With her hair color, even if I do see Daisuke in her, but I also see a lot of Ryo in her too. I think Ryoko and Bikky will be the most popular in the family.”

“Me?” Bikky asked. “I’m only adopted.” He started to blush a little.

“Are Daisuke and Ryo your fathers?” Yoshio asked, sounding amused.

“Yeah. They are now,” Bikky replied.

“And you have their last names?” Yoshio asked.
“Yes. I do,” Bikky replied.

“You’re our oldest son, Bikky, no matter how we got you,” Dee remarked with a smile. “Even with our start.”

“Exactly,” Saburo exclaimed. “You are my son’s son and that is all that matters. That makes you my grandson, and if you will, you are also Yoshio’s too. We got sidetracked by little ones, but Daisuke, this is your stepfather, Yoshio.”

“Hajimemashite,” Yoshio greeted and continued in Japanese. “It is an honor to be able to meet Saburo’s son that he had been missing all these years,” Yoshio said with a bow.

Dee got to his feet and returned the bow. “The honor is mine.”

“Welcome back to the family. I am looking forward to getting to know you and your family.”

Dee gave a twisted grin. “I’m afraid that will also include everyone back in New York. I know my mother is wanting to know you all. She is very excited about this.”

“That pleases me to hear that. I am glad that you still have those you call family even if you were separated from us,” Yoshio said. “Let us sit. Please.”

“Oh I really need to learn Japanese now,” Bikky said.

“So do I,” Carol said. “I would love to talk to everyone without needing an interpreter. It’s too late for me to learn in high school since I have only one more semester.”

“Carol should have been graduating next month, but when she heard us talking about Japan, she decided to take this semester off and graduate with the rest of her class,” Ryo explained to Dee’s family in Japanese.

“She surprised us that she actually finished high school early,” Dee said, “but we’re proud of her.”
Carol shrugged. “Other than being here, I realized I really did want to graduate with my friends,” she said. “I also realized that I might still have to wait before going to college, so it doesn’t matter when I graduate.”

“From what Elina told us, you have quite a choice of colleges,” Ryo said. “And we already told you that you should not worry about the cost. Dee and I are going to cover it for you. Hell, we started a college fund for you before I got back into good graces with my grandparents.”

“Are you sure. I mean, college is expensive, even the city university,” Carol said.

“Princess, we have the money and we’re happy to make sure you get the college education you deserve. And we’ll still have plenty left over for Bikky if he doesn’t get a basketball scholarship,” Dee said. “So pick a college that you really want to go to and let us worry about the tuition. If you decide the best choice is in the city university, then go, but if you want to go to NYU or Columbia, then that’s covered too. If you want to do a semester or two here in Japan, that’s on the table too. Whatever makes you happy and you graduate.”

Saburo smiled at Yoshio. “He has such a good heart. So does his husband. This makes me so happy.”

“I am impressed that his family is both natural birth and adoption,” Yoshio said to his husband.

“Oh yes. That makes me so proud to know that. It’s something I never thought about, but I have to admire those who do,” Saburo said.

“It was Ryo’s idea first,” Dee admitted. “Bikky’s dad was killed, which was our first case together. Ryo decided to take him home because he had nowhere to go. He never left Ryo’s care.” Dee shrugged. “I thought he was crazy at first, being single and a detective and deciding to raise a child. But Bikky gets under your skin.” He smiled at Bikky. “Even when I insisted I hated him, I realized I had to help Ryo protect him. Eventually I knew I had to be his father too. I would have done anything to keep him safe, and give him a loving home. That’s when I knew I was ready to adopt him too.”

Dafydd started to chuckle. “He gets it from his mom, I think,” he said. To Yoshio, he explained, “Mother Maria runs the orphanage where Dee was taken to when he was found. She still does. You’re going to like Mama-san Lane very much.”
"I think you were going to call her before we got distracted?" Saburo asked.

"I would if our friend back in New York would stop calling or texting every five minutes," Dee said.

Ryo took out his phone. "Mine has been vibrating too. I’m going to text him that we’re in the middle of some very important family business and we’ll tell him and everyone else all about Nagoya before our meeting tomorrow. He’ll probably think some of my family came along with us."

"You could try," Dee said with a smirk. He looked over to Dafydd. "Are you still willing to join us for the meeting?"

Dafydd’s grin matched Dee’s. "I’m looking forward to have a little fun."

"What are you up to?" Yoshio asked suspiciously.

Dee, Ryo, Dafydd and Momo all started to laugh wickedly.

"Now I’m afraid that you asked," Saburo said to his husband.

"We’re going to introduce Dafydd to our unit at tomorrow night’s meeting," Dee replied with an evil grin.

"Night for us, morning for them," Ryo added.

"You are on vacation," Ayaka said in Japanese after Momo translated for her. "Why do you have a work meeting?"

"This unit is very important," Dee replied in Japanese. "It’s not only to protect the Carriers in New York City but if it’s successful, it will expand to cover the state. Other cities and states are watching us. We are expanding and moving into a larger base of operations, so Ryo and I decided that we need to keep up with things. So we participate in weekly meetings. Only last week we avoided it. I didn’t want to take the chance of mentioning Dafydd then. We were still waiting for the DNA results to come back." Dee shrugged. "Besides, I tried to keep the number of people who knew down as much as possible before you found out."
“Dafydd tells me you are heading this unit and that your husband is second in charge. That is very impressive. I am proud of you,” Saburo said.

Dee smiled at Saburo as a slight blush spread across his face at his father’s praise. “Let me see if I can get a call out now,” Dee joked and dialed Maria’s number.

“Hi Mom,” Dee said when Maria answered her cell phone.

“Dee, how is it going?” Maria asked, sounding a little anxious.

“Good,” Dee replied. “Very good. We’re at my father’s house. He’s sitting next to me, and I want you to talk to him. His English is really good.”

“I would love to say hello to him,” Maria said.

Dee turned his head when he heard Darin start to fuss. “Oh oh, it’s feeding time,” Dee commented.

Ryo smiled at Dee. “Bikky and I will handle it. It looks like we’ll have help,” he added as Ayaka stood up and came over to them.

Dee held out his phone to Saburo and smiled at him. “Next feeding time, I promise you can take on if you are interested.”

“Of course, I am interested, but since we have your mother on the phone, this is important too.” He took the phone from Dee. “Mother Lane-san,” Saburo greeted into the phone, “I am very glad to speak to the woman who raised and loved my son. I am happy that he had a parent for all these years. Two, I heard, for a while. Dafydd told me about Jess Latener.”

Dee looked over at Dafydd, who put his arm around Dee’s shoulder and smiled. “This is going to be good,” Dafydd said. “I know Papa will love Mama-san Lane.”

“That’s what I’m afraid of,” Dee said and then sighed. “I’m doomed.”
Dafydd started to laugh and hugged Dee tighter.

OoOoOoO

Saburo had been talking to Maria for about fifteen minutes, asking questions about Dee as a baby and a child. Dee suspected that there will be a much longer call between the two at a later time, most likely a time when Saburo wasn’t being host to a house full of family, and a time when Maria shouldn’t be sleeping.

The front door opened and two Japanese women, one who Dee immediately saw the family resemblance, enter the house. Dee recognized her from the photos Dafydd shared with him as Tomoko. One thing Dee noticed about his family was that they seemed to have deeper set eyes than usual than the average Japanese. He also understood Saburo’s earlier comment about Bikky and Ryoko. Dee might have had green eyes instead of dark brown, and shared being the tallest in the family with Dafydd, but Saburo was also a few inches taller than the normal Japanese. Dee also had the same hair color as the family he had met so far. While sitting, he basically didn’t stand out as much in the family. He also suspected that would mean Ryo would also be popular, especially being half-Japanese and not looking too much Japanese unless you noticed his eyes. His eyes settled on Ryoko. His infant daughter was actually half-Japanese, just as her twin brother was, and Dee suspected that it would be a bit more visible in her features than Ryo, but she would still stand out in this family.

“I’m home,” Tomoko called out in Japanese as she started to remove her shoes.

“Welcome home,” Yoshio replied. “Tomoko, come meet Daisuke. Or Dee, as he is known now.”

Saburo laughed at something Maria said and then started to say goodbye. He handed Dee back his phone. “Your mother said that you should give me her number. She also said that she has mine already.” He grinned at Dee. “Tomoko! Come in.”

“Let me get my boots off first, Papa,” the woman replied.

She entered the house and looked at everyone assembled. “I’m the first one here other than Dafydd and Ayaka?” she asked.
“Ayaka was with Dee and Ryo and their family while I came over here to tell Papa the news,” Dafydd explained.

“Ah yes, the news. Chichi said something about Daisuke being alive?” Tomoko asked. She stopped as her eyes fell on Dee. “Oh my God,” she uttered. “I’m guessing you are Dee?” she asked, still speaking Japanese. “Oh sorry,” she started in English, bowing in apology.

“It’s okay,” Dee replied in Japanese. “Yes, I’m Dee, which I recently found out is short for Daisuke.” He stood up and bowed. “Dee Laytner-MacLean,” he introduced himself. Saburo had told them not to worry about the traditional Japanese greeting when meeting new people in the family. This was a momentous occasion and they shouldn’t have to worry about typical Japanese tradition and etiquette.

“Otherwise known as Daisuke Fujioka,” Dafydd added with a grin. “Look at him.”

Saburo also stood up. “This is my Daisuke. He goes by Dee now, so it’s fine to call him that. And his legal last name is Laytner-MacLean, but he’s still Fujioka, no matter what name he goes by. They took DNA tests which is why they waited since last weekend. They also have additional proof.”

“It was enough that we already knew the first day we met,” Dafydd said. “But we did the DNA tests to prove there is no doubt.”

“Tomoko, stop staring at your brother with your mouth hanging open and say hello to him,” Yoshio said sounding amused. “And then say hello to his family.”

The other woman came over to Tomoko and took her hand. “Tomoko, he is Dafydd’s twin. That’s for certain. And look at the cute little babies. That little boy also definitely looks like a Fujioka, but I can see Fujioka in the girl too.”

“I…. I’m just shocked,” Tomoko finally said. “I know what Papa said on the phone, but I thought that he had finally lost it.”

Dee looked from the newcomers to Dafydd, and then smiled at her. “Imagine being me. I had pretty much believed that I was an only child with no biological family. And then at a party last week, I met Dafydd.”
“Oh, my goodness,” Tomoko said and bowed. “Forgive me. It’s just too obvious and I was shocked.”

“It’s understandable,” Saburo stated. “Daisuke, this is your sister Tomoko, and her wife Kimi.”

After everyone was introduced, Tomoko and Kimi joined everyone at the low table. It seemed that Saburo, Yoshio and Tomoko all had a million questions to ask, but knew it would only be over time they would get all their answers.

Tomoko, Dee had already known through Dafydd and Ayaka, had attended the University of Tokyo, choosing that school so Ayaka could have a guardian in Tokyo when she had first joined TKY52 at 14 years old. If she did not decide to go to Tokyo for university, then Saburo and Yoshio would never have allowed Ayaka to join TKY52. The sisters shared an apartment in one of the new high-rise apartment buildings in Bunkyo, close to Tokyo Dome. Their grandfather handled the rent. When Ayaka transferred to NGY52 and went home to Nagoya, Tomoko finished up her degree before returning to Nagoya. Tomoko also met Kimi in college. After graduation, Kimi decided to leave Tokyo and move to Nagoya to marry Tomoko, and start their business and a family.

“Where is Minori?” Saburo asked as Tomoko held Ryoko and Kimi had Darin. Both women were fussing over their new niece and nephew.

“Those boys make beautiful babies, yes?” Yoshio stated with a smile.

“Fujiokas make beautiful babies,” Saburo stated proudly, “and seem to know how to pick the best mates to make even more beautiful babies.” He looked directly at Dee. “This is the gift of the Fujiokas, and you are no exception by picking Ryo.”

“One of the gifts,” Dafydd commented and chuckled.

“This is very true,” Saburo agreed. “So where is Minori?” Saburo asked his daughter.

“We left her in daycare for now. There was nothing pressing when we got your call, so Kimi and I decided to come over now and see what all the excitement was about.”
“You honestly did not believe Daisuke was here?” Saburo asked. “Well, I cannot blame you. It does seem pretty unbelievable.”

Momo started to laugh. “And you do not know how this had happened yet.”

“I am curious,” Tomoko said. She looked at Dee and then Dafydd. “You are definitely Dafydd’s twin. I can see that.”

“Momo and I were sure immediately,” Dafydd said, “but we asked questions about Dee, which was easy since he was a guest of honor at the party, and then I got to sit down with him and compare notes.”

“I was fighting it, even with my mirror image right in front of me,” Dee added. “I was convinced when I saw a picture of the two of us in baby carriers that was exactly like the one I was found in.” He smiled. “I couldn’t fight it anymore.”

“I want to hear all about it,” Tomoko said, “but first I should tell you, Papa, that we have no events planned for tonight, so should I open a building up for an open house? I’m sure everyone who is available will end up showing up at one point or another.”

“I was going to ask you if we could open up the park,” Saburo asked. “If there was an event there, we would have settled for here, or take over a ballroom in the Westin.”

“Dee and Ryo also own the Sakae Blossom Hotel,” Dafydd said.

“If there’s a need, I’m sure we can take over something in the hotel,” Ryo offered.

“Tomoko and Kimi are event coordinators. They own their own business,” Saburo explained. “Including a beautiful event space near the zoo.”

“It shouldn’t be a problem tonight. I suspect that there might be more people than you can squeeze into this house, even if it is big. We can always manage to get some quick platters,” Kimi suggested. “We have our connections to get food at the last minute. It won’t be anything fancy, but it will have a lot of family favorites.” She turned to Dee. “It’s going to be Japanese I’m afraid. Is there anything that you don’t like?”
Ryo looked at Dee and started to laugh hard. “Him? Don’t like any Japanese food?” Ryo remarked and laughed again.

“Just because Daisuke grew up in New York, does not mean he does not know Japanese food. Or the language,” Saburo said to his daughter-in-law. “He did live in Yokohama for college, and have you noticed his Japanese is like he’s been living here all his life.”

“I did notice that,” Tomoko stated. “I was going to ask about that. Both of you, actually,” she said as she looked at Ryo.

“Well, Japanese is almost like a first language for me,” Ryo replied. “My mother raised me speaking both English and Japanese.”

“Plus he spent most of his early childhood in Japan,” Dafydd added. He started to grin. “Did you notice he has a Japanese name?”

“It’s actually my middle name,” Ryo said, amused. “My given name is Randall and I always went by Randy when I wasn’t around my mother’s family. Around them I was always Ryo.”

“Aunt Elena and Uncle Rick also call you Ryo,” Dee pointed out.

“Yeah, them too. My mom’s influence, but otherwise I was Randy. Until I met Dee. From the start he figured out that I was part Japanese….”

“Half, remember?” Dee cut in.

“Half,” Ryo accepted, “but not as half as you are,” he added with a wicked grin, “Daisuke.”

Bikky and Carol started to laugh. “We understand that,” Bikky said, still laughing when Dee and Ryo looked at them.” They were busy keeping Kiyoshi and Tatsuya occupied. There might have been a language barrier, but amusing kids was always universal.
“Anyway, Dee asked me what my Japanese name was and that’s what he called me since. Unless he’s introducing me to strange people, especially when we’re working. He knows that I don’t want the local perps to call me Ryo.”

“Ryo is Akira-san’s grandson,” Momo said. “It was her party she was holding for Ryo, Dee and their family that Dafydd and I went to.” With a wicked grin of her own she glanced in Dafydd’s direction. “Even if I had to pull him kicking and screaming to the party.”

Dafydd leaned over to kiss her cheek. “And you have no idea how thankful I am that you are such a stubborn woman.”

“Oh, I know. We wouldn’t be here with your twin otherwise,” she said with a smile. “And don’t worry about Dee and Ryo eating tonight. They’ll eat almost anything, and willing to try what they haven’t yet, which isn’t much. The same for Bikky. He already had his favorites, no doubt thanks to Dee and Ryo, but he’s willing to try everything. Carol also has been enjoying the food in Japan.”

“That explains your husband’s Japanese, but what about you, Dee?” Tomoko asked. “How did you end up speaking Japanese?”

“When I was a kid, I made friends with some Japanese kids who moved into the neighborhood. I was really fascinated with the culture. Their parents were attempting to become New Yorkers, but they still spoke Japanese in the house and maintained some customs. They would invite me over for dinner or lunch sometimes, which was my first Japanese food, and when I asked, they were willing to teach me Japanese.”

“And he perfected it enough to pass the JLPT N1 exam and able to be accepted in the National University of Yokohama,” Dafydd finished proudly. Looking at Ayaka, he added in Japanese, “JLPT is Japanese Language and Proficiency Test, and N1 means he is fluent enough to get jobs in Japan that English speakers cannot. Even on his own, he still found his culture.” He made a face at Dee. “Even thinking he was a nice Irish lad.”

“I’ll bet your Welsh side is irritated with that,” Momo joked with a laugh.

“It’s all going to get along nicely, because it’s all part of who I am. I might not be Irish by blood, but I did spend summers in Ireland with my mother’s family.”

“He also has a cousin who lives in Swansea,” Dafydd added.
“You’re very lucky, Dee,” Yoshio said with a smile. “You have two families who love you very much.”

Dee nodded with a warm smile. “At first I thought by accepting this family I would have to forfeit the one I grew up with, but now I know it doesn’t have to be that way. I see it as having my Mom’s family and now I have my father’s family. I also have a lot of siblings on my mom’s side too, but not in the same way as my siblings here.”

“That’s three siblings down and five more to go,” Saburo said with a laugh. “Let me check who else might be on their way here. Everyone else you can meet tonight. I’m sure you don’t want to spend your first day in Nagoya sitting in a house. We need to get out and do something.”

“We already saw some of downtown,” Ryo said. “And we’re here for a couple of more days. And I already told Obāsan that we’ll be back in Kamakura a few days later than we planned, and she agreed. We’ll stop here again on the way back from our road trip.”

“Road trip?” Kimi asked.

“Yes,” Dee answered. “We decided that we didn’t want Bikky and Carol to see just the Tokyo area, so we planned a trip around the country a bit. We already had plans to be in Nagoya this week. We ended up coming here a day earlier than we planned because we made a deal with Dafydd and Momo to stay in Tokyo longer, and we can all come here together.”

“Where else are you going?” Tomoko asked.

“Osaka, Kyoto, Fukouka and Hiroshima, and maybe Kobe. We’re also up to stopping along the way to each city if there seems to be something interesting, especially for Bikky and Carol to experience,” Dee replied. “And Ryo decided to add a few more days here on the way back.”

“We can have a bigger party for the family then,” Tomoko explained. “We’ll talk later and see if I have an opening at the park for any of the days you’re back for a huge celebration. If not, I’m sure between the Westin and your hotel, we can get something decent. I’ll do all the planning. All you need to do is show up.”

“Did we say that she’s an event coordinator?” Dafydd asked with a teasing glance at his sister.
“I think something was mentioned,” Dee said with a laugh.

“The event space they own is set up like a park with buildings around it, a pond, bridge and even a tea house,” Yoshio explained for the newcomers to the family. “It’s called Hagashiyama Event Space, but our family and regulars call it the park.”

“Jirou and Eri are almost here, with Kyoka,” Saburo announced. “Everyone else can’t get away now, and will see us tonight for dinner.” He looked at Dee. “Did Dafydd tell you that Jirou and his family lives next door?”

“Yes, it was mentioned on the way here,” Dee said. “Okay, when we got here and saw Dafydd waving us onto the sidewalk. I just feel bad cutting anyone’s Sunday plans short.”

“You also mentioned it to them before Chichi and my monsters returned,” Dafydd gently reminded Saburo. “But I guess with all your emotions, it’s easy to forget less important things than Daisuke coming home, yes?”

Saburo nodded, his eyes watering again as he clenched Dee’s arm, as if checking that he was still there.

“Don’t be,” Yoshio assured Dee. “If they rather wait until tonight, they can and no hard feelings. Many are doing just that. If they do decide to cut plans short, that is their decision to do so.”

“This is very true, Daisuke,” said Saburo.

“We’ll be leaving shortly after Jirou arrives,” Tomoko said. “Kimi and I have a lot to do by tonight.”

“You don’t have to go to all that trouble, especially last minute,” Dee started.

“Nonsense,” Tomoko cut in. “This is important. Daisuke’s home!” she exclaimed and leaned over to hug Dee. “This makes me so happy.” Tears started to fall from her dark eyes as she hugged him.
“Do you need someone to look after Minori for you?” Yoshio asked. “I can pick her up from daycare and keep her with us until later.”

“Would you, Chichi? That would be helpful,” Tomoko said. “If it is not too much trouble.”

“Even better, Ryo and I are willing to give a hand,” Dee said.

“Even with your two?” Kimi asked.

“I suspect they will be taken care of, while we get to know our niece,” Ryo said with a smile.

“This is true,” Saburo agreed.

“Besides, it looks like you’re both going to be very busy and shouldn’t have to also worry about Minori,” Yoshio assured his daughter.

“I am thinking of going over to my parents’ house with Daisuke and his family,” Saburo said. “We can pick up Minori along the way.” He looked at Dee and Ryo. “We can go to the shrine our family maintains. It is very close to my parents’ house. Koji is usually there on weekends, but this weekend he decided to stay in Ise to study for exams.”

“Koji is studying to become Shinto priest,” Yoshio explained. “He’s almost done with studies at Koogakkan University down in Ise.”

“If I can manage to pull you away from Nagoya for a day, I would love for you and your family to go down to Ise. I would really like it to be an overnight. We’ll stay at the family house on Toshijima,” Saburo stated.

“Family house?” Ryo asked.

With a cocky grin, Dafydd said in English, “You Americans would call it a beach house. And you won’t be wrong. It’s about ten minutes’ walk to get to the beach because the harbor is right there in front of the house. We have family who also live on the island. One runs an izakaya there with her family. Another is a teacher at the school there.”
“We can make a stop on Dolphin Island on the way. I think Bikky and Carol would enjoy it,” Saburo said.

“We might have to take our two monsters out of school for that day,” Momo said. “I would hate for them to find out we went to Dolphin Island without them.”

“Dolphin Island!” Tatsuya exclaimed, rushing over to his mother. “I love Dolphin Island! Are we going?”

Dafydd looked at his son, and then Dee and Ryo. “I don’t know,” he said. “It depends on Uncles Dee and Ryo.”

“Uncle Daisuke, Papa,” Kiyoshi insisted. “He said it’s okay for us to call him Uncle Daisuke!”

Dafydd held his hands up in surrender while Bikky and Carol started to giggle. “Okay, understood.”

Bikky looked at Dee. “Can I call you Daisuke too, instead of Dad?”

“No!” Dee snapped.

Bikky started to laugh more.

“Oh, be nice to our son, Daisuke,” Ryo said with a straight face, but his eyes were twinkling.

Dee gave Ryo a glare and then smiled as Ryo broke out in laughter. “You are so getting called Daisuke at times,” Ryo warned him.

“Yeah, I understand. Shame I think calling you Randy feels too weird.”

“Once I would have been disappointed, but I’m actually glad of that now,” Ryo said. “And it’s all your fault.” He grinned at Dee.
Dee laughed at Ryo’s look. “Even if you didn’t say it this time, I heard it. And I guess it’s okay since I told my father and my nephews it’s okay, I’ll let you get away with it.” He looked over at Bikky who started to open his mouth. “But not you.”

Everyone in the room was laughing at Bikky’s expression. Ayaka leaned over to hug her nephew, still laughing and rested her head on his shoulder.

“Bikky,’ Ryo said to Bikky, “don’t get Dee stirred up please. We don’t want to scare off Dee’s family already.”

“We’re hoping we don’t scare you, now that you’re going to meet us all,” Dafydd said with a laugh.

“Especially when they meet Ojiisan,” Ayaka said.

Saburo rolled his eyes. “I should warn you all that you’re best to ignore some of the things my father might have to say. He’s a good man and does a lot for community. He also loves all his family, no matter what he might have to say at times. And he’ll always be there when you need him.”

Yoshio let out a heavy sigh, “Think of him as a good-hearted bigot. If you’re not 100% Japanese, he’ll have something to say for it.” He pointed to Ryoko and Darin, “but he’ll love those two babies so much, just as he does all the rest of his great-grandchildren. And he’ll be there for you in a heartbeat if you asked him.”

“Even if to him, they are gaijin,” Dafydd said, “just like he calls my two boys because I’m half Japanese.”

Dee found his two nephews standing in front of him. “Uncle Daisuke, can we go to Dolphin Island? Please?”

Bikky scattered over and popped his head between the two boys. He looked up at Dee with wide pleading blue eyes. “Yes, can we?”

“Oh geez,” Ryo remarked with a laugh. He quickly took a picture of his son with his new nephews by marriage, and then took another one getting Dee in the shot. “Dee, I don’t think we have a
“I was going to say I can’t risk getting on the bad side of my nephews so early in the game, so I’m up to taking a couple of days to go to the islands.”

Suddenly Dee found himself with three kids jumping up and down with excitement. Dee started to laugh as he pulled his son and two nephews in for a hug.

Dee released the boys when he heard the door in the entryway open. Along with everyone, he looked up, expecting to meet his half-brother Jirou, who was Saburo’s and Yoshio’s first born, along with his wife and daughter. Instead there was a man who looked like Saburo, who was tugging off his shoes.

“Saburo!” the man exclaimed, excited. “Where’s Daisuke? Where is your son?” He rushed into the family room and stopped where the family was sitting. “Daisuke? Is that really you?” he asked Dee, looking down at him.

Saburo got on his feet and went over to the man, who pulled him in a tight hug. “Oh! This is wonderful news! I couldn’t believe it when you told me, but if it was true, I had to get here as soon as I could.”

Saburo hugged him back, laughing. “Yes, that is Daisuke. My baby boy survived and now he’s home with his own family. Daisuke, this is my twin brother, Kennosuke. He is your uncle.”

“Yes, he does look like Dafydd but with green eyes,” Kennosuke said in Japanese, studying Dee. “I figured it was him, because I know Dafydd’s hairstyle. Yours is slightly different. Dafydd also looks more Japanese than you. I remember that is why your fathers named you Daisuke, and why Dafydd got his name. Both your parents had a wicked sense of humor. Your father here lost it for a while when he lost you and your Tad, but thankfully Yoshio found a way to bring it back. Now he has no reason to ever lose it again, because Saburo has you back.” He looked at Dee again and in heavily accented English said, “Oh forgive me. Saburo said you grew up in America. You probably don’t know Japanese.”

“I understood everything,” Dee said in Japanese with a grin as he stood up. “It is an honor to meet my father’s twin brother.” He bowed deeply. “Hajimemashite.”

“Daisuke, remember what I told you,” said Saburo. “No need for that nonsense today.”
Kennosuke returned the bow. “This is amazing! You speak Japanese even if you grew up in New York.”

Saburo laughed and guided his brother to sit down at the table. “Yes, Kennosuke,” he said in English. “Daisuke is fluent in Japanese, as is his husband, Ryo. But his boy, Bikky and Bikky’s girlfriend, Carol, do not, so those of us who know English are speaking it for their sake.”

“You might have noticed that Uncle Kennosuke talks a lot,” Dafydd commented with amusement.

Tomoko and Ayaka nodded. “Especially when he’s excited,” Tomoko said.

“Uncle Kennosuke gets excited a lot,” Ayaka added, also in broken heavily accented English.

“Nothing wrong with that,” Kennosuke commented. “Now Daisuke, is this your family? Are the babies yours too?”

Dee chuckled. “Yes, this is my husband, Ryo. Over there is our son, Bikky and his girlfriend, Carol, who is also like a little sister/daughter to Ryo and me. And that’s our twins, Darin and Ryoko.”

“Oh how great. Even in New York, you married a Japanese, and named one of your little ones a Japanese name. That’s impressive,” Kennosuke said. “I am happy to meet my nephew’s family. Is this your first time to Japan? And what’s this about meeting Dafydd at a party?”

“Uncle Kennosuke can make you tired too,” Dafydd said and laughed. “But we love him anyway.”

“Behave, Dafydd,” Kennosuke said with a mock pout.

“Dafydd was recently telling Daisuke that our family might scare them off, Kennosuke. I think he was talking about you,” Saburo said with a teasing grin and winked at Dafydd, who laughed as he nodded his head.

“Momo is related to Daisuke’s husband,” Ayaka said in Japanese. “That’s why Dafydd and Momo
were at a party held for Dee and Ryo.”

“And this was in Tokyo? Why do all tourists have to go to Tokyo first?” Kennosuke grumbled.

“Kennosuke is on the tourist board here in Nagoya,” Yoshio stated. “And he also works at our mother’s company.”

“Ryo’s family is in Kamakura,” Saburo explained. “From what I understand, Ryo also lived in Kamakura at times during his childhood. Daisuke went to Yokohama National University and lived in Yokohama for his time in college.”

“But we were planning to come to Nagoya for a couple of days even before I ran into Dafydd,” Dee said.

“Yup,” Ryo agreed. “It was Daisuke’s idea that we had to go to Nagoya while we were here. That started our planning to go to a few more cities so Bikky and Carol could see more than the Tokyo area.” He grinned at Dee, his eyes daring Dee to grumble about the name he used.

Yoshio caught the exchange between Ryo and Dee and laughed. “Before we go any further, you are aware that Daisuke did not know his name. He was too young when he was found and all they had was the letter ‘D’ on his baby carrier. He was given the name Dee. He’s being gracious enough to allow us to call him Daisuke, but all his life he has been going by the name Dee Laytner. His husband seems to find a lot of joy calling him by his birth name now that they know it.”

“It’s Laytner-MacLean now, since he also took Ryo’s family name,” Ayaka said in Japanese.

“Where did you get MacLean from, Ryo?” Kennosuke asked. “Did your family take an American name or something?”

“No sir,” Ryo replied. “But my mother did take my father’s name when they were married. My father was American and from Scottish descent. No Japanese on that side. Actually my given name is Randy, but for the last few years, I’ve been going by my middle name, which is Ryo.”

“Ryo will tell you the story on how he ended up using his middle name soon, don’t worry,” Momo said, smiling at her cousin. “Which explains why he’s having so much fun calling Dee by his birth name.”
“What do you prefer me to call you?” Kennosuke asked. “Both of you.”

“Ryo,” Ryo replied. “Only my father’s family calls me Randy these days, and even some of the younger ones decided they prefer Ryo.”

“It doesn’t matter when I’m with this family,” Dee replied, “otherwise, I still prefer to keep Dee.”

“I’ll call you Ryo,” Kennosuke said to Ryo with a grin, and then looked at Dee, “and you, my nephew, I shall call you either Daisuke or Dee, depending on my mood. Nothing wrong with a little guessing here and there.” He grinned at both. He looked over to Bikky and Carol. “Bikky, that’s an unusual name. How did you get that?”

“My name’s really Victor, but my mom said when I was young I couldn’t pronounce it and say my name was Bikky. My parents started to call me that,” Bikky explained. “I prefer it to Victor.”

“So Bikky it is. You’ll have to tell me how you came into this family,” Kennosuke said, “which now places you in this family. We’re a fun-loving family, Bikky. Be prepared.”

“Especially your Uncle Kennosuke,” Tomoko quipped. “Once you get used to him, you’re realize he’s your funny Uncle Kennosuke. He drives us crazy at times, but we love him.” She smiled warmly at her uncle.

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Chapter 29

Chapter Summary

Dee is getting to know his father, along with an uncle and another sibling better.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

Fujioka Residence

Nagoya, Aichi

Japan

November 5, 2006

The door opened, and everyone looked in that direction. Dee watched as a Japanese man and woman enter, the man setting a young girl about 2 on her feet.

“Jirou,” Saburo greeted, standing up. “Come, you and Eri join us, and say hello to your brother Daisuke.”

Once his shoes were removed and stored, Jirou went up the steps from the entry and came over to the table. Dee noticed with amusement that Jirou’s wife also picked up the shoes Kennosuke had just dropped and put them in the shoe cabinet in the entry along with hers and her daughter’s shoes. Saburo and Dafydd were already starting to stand. “Papa? What’s going on?” Jirou asked.

“What did I say in my call?” Yoshio asked, amused. He pointed to Dee. “Look, and see for yourself.”

“Oh.” Jirou stared at Dee in shock. “Looks like Dafydd but green eyes. You are Daisuke!” he exclaimed, starting to smile. “Sugo! This is amazing!”
“How wonderful!” Eri stated, coming to Jirou’s side with their daughter. “I am your brother’s wife, Eri,” she said and bowed. “It is my pleasure to meet you.” She smacked Jirou’s arm. “Aren’t you going to say anything to your brother, Jirou?”

Dee stood up with a smile. “I expect to get a lot like that in the next few days,” he commented in Japanese. “I can understand.” He let out a nervous laugh. “I kinda feel the same way with each new sibling I meet.”

“Forgive me,” Jirou said. “I do not mean to be rude.”

“I understand,” Dee said. “It is my honor to meet the two of you.” He bowed before his brother and sister-in-law.

Saburo stood next to Dee. “Daisuke came home today,” he stated happily. “All these years I believed him to be dead, but he was found in New York City, where he has been living all his life.” He hugged Dee. “I can’t believe that Dafydd found him at the party Momo was invited to, but I’m thankful for it.”

“Welcome home!” Jirou exclaimed and closed the gap between them to hug first Dee, and then Dafydd. “I’m so sorry for not believing you all these years, because you were right. Daisuke is alive, and he’s come home now.” He went back to hug Dee again. “I’m glad Eri and I decided we did enough shopping and that we needed to come home and see what Chichi’s call was about.” He smiled warmly at Yoshio. “It is not that we did not believe you, but it is just so….”

“Incredible and unbelievable,” Dafydd said. “I thought the same thing when I first met Dee at the party, but I really did find my twin, and brought him to Nagoya to meet his family.

Saburo started to tear up again. “It is incredible and unbelievable, and I am so thankful for this great gift that was given to me today.” He hugged Dee to him and kissed his head. “My Daisuke is back with me, with all of us. I can’t find the words.” He started to cry again as Dee and Dafydd hugged their father.

The little girl peeked from around her mother’s legs and then hid her face again. Eri lifted the child, who buried her face in her mother’s shoulder. Resting a comforting hand on the child, she said, “Kyoka is shy at first, but if you get her to warm up to you, you won’t get her to be quiet.” She laughed.
Dee looked over to his sister-in-law as his father patted his back and then gently shoved him toward Jirou and Eri. With a warm smile, his eyes wet, he said, “So far I don’t have that problem. Hello, Kyoka. I hope to hear your sweet voice someday.” He wiggled his fingers in hello as Kyoka peeked at him before hiding her face again.

Dee started to laugh along with his family. “Jirou, Eri, allow me to introduce my family. This is my husband, Ryo.”

“It is an honor to meet my husband’s brother and his wife,” Ryo said in Japanese with a bow.

“No, it is our honor to meet Daisuke’s family,” Jirou said as Eri bowed in greeting with a warm smile.

“The babies are our twins, Darin and Ryoko and holding Darin is our oldest son, Bikky.”

Bikky held Darin up and hid his face behind his baby brother, moving Darin’s arm up and down as if the infant was waving.

Dafydd, Momo, Saburo and Yoshio started to laugh.

“Hello, Darin,” Jirou said, sounding amused. “And shy big brother.” He started to smile.

Ryo rolled his eyes and smiled as Dee let out a snort. “I guess it’s never too late to become shy,” Ryo commented and gave an amused look at Dee, who let out a laugh.

Darin started to babble, waving his arms. Kyoka’s attention was on Darin, and she started to smile. “Down,” she said in Japanese to her mother and started to wiggle.

Eri put her daughter down and they watched as the child toddled over to Darin and Bikky. Darin started to laugh, making Eri laugh. Bikky moved his head slightly so half his face came out from behind Darin. “Hello Kyoka,” he said.

“Hello,” she repeated and sat down in front of Bikky and his brother.
Carol was sitting next to Bikky, holding Ryoko. Kyoka pointed to Ryoko and smiled again when Carol made the infant wave.

“Okay, cousins are bonding,” Dee commented. “That’s good.” He shook his head. “We keep saying that kid is smart, just not with books.”

“While the children are getting to know each other, let us sit. Jirou, get to know your brother and his husband. Eri, you too,” Saburo said and sat down again.

Tomoko and Kimi stood up. “If you will excuse us, we need to be going now. Papa, call me when you have a time.”

“I think that 7 would be a good time,” Saburo said.

“Then call me if that changes,” Tomoko said. “Dee, I am glad you came home. I look forward to seeing you and your family later tonight.” With a bright smile, she hugged Dee and then headed to leave the house. Kimi also hugged him before joining her wife.

Jirou and Eri took the places Tomoko and Eri vacated at the table. “What’s tonight?” Jirou asked.

“Daisuke’s back! We are going to have a family dinner for anyone who can make it tonight at the park,” Yoshio exclaimed.

“We can make it,” Eri said. “What are you doing for the rest of today?”

“Are you taking them to meet Ojiisan and Obaasan?” Jirou asked.

“Yes, we’ll be leaving soon,” Saburo said.

“This is everyone who can make it now,” Yoshio added, “but I’ve been getting many texts asking where we’ll be tonight. I’m letting the rest of our children know we’ll be at your parents. I’m going to let everyone know we’ll be at the park and to let Tomoko and Kimi know if they can make it.”
“Good,” Saburo said. “My mother just sent a text asking when do we think we’ll be there. She’s almost ready to make her way here on the subway.” He let out a laugh and looked at Dee. “That says a lot, since your grandmother never takes the subway.”

Dafydd, Ayaka and Jirou all looked shocked. “Wow!” Jirou said. “That’s a first. Obāsan either drives or is driven around wherever she goes.” He smiled at Dee. “But this is a special occasion. What about Ojiisan, Papa?”

“Okāsan said that he’s at the shrine with his twin, so we’ll see them there,” Saburo replied. “I guess we should be leaving soon then. Jirou, would you like to join us when we go?”

“I would love to, but perhaps it’s best if Daisuke meets the grandparents without the rest of us hanging around, except for Dafydd, of course, because he is his twin. I’ll call Tomoko and see if there is anything Eri and I can do to help for tonight. We’ll stay until you leave.”

“I’m sure Tomoko will appreciate the help. I don’t know if she can get any of her staff in action so last minute, especially if they don’t have any events tonight,” Yoshio said.

“There will be quite a gathering,” Kennosuke commented. “I know at least most of your aunts and uncles, along with cousins have said they’ll be coming to see you tonight, Daisuke. Saburo, I’ll have to pass on going to our parents’ home. I have to pick up some family from the Aquarium. I need to make sure they don’t eat too much at the mall.”

“Who went to the aquarium?” Ayaka asked.

“Hanako and Azumi decided to take the little ones for a day at the waterfront,” Kennosuke replied. To Dee, he added, “Hanako is my wife, your aunt, and Azumi is the oldest of my children. They took Azumi’s two, Shoraku and Toyohara. They are my only two grandchildren so far.”

“Will Karin and Ami be here tonight?” Saburo asked Kennosuke.

“I don’t think they’ll make it today. I should say that the family in Nagoya will be here tonight. The others might make it while you are still here.”
“If Karin or Ami can’t make it here, perhaps they can meet Daisuke and his family when they are in Osaka?” Yoshio suggested.

“Karin and Ami are Uncle Kennosuke’s youngest. They are both going to college in Osaka taking pre-medicine. They want to be doctors,” Dafydd explained.

“Ami just got married over the summer. Her high school boyfriend moved to Osaka to be with her. They married shortly after,” Kennosuke said. “The wedding was in Nagoya, at the park. I’ll talk to them later and see if they can make time to meet with you and your family if they can’t make it here.”

“This is good. You are learning about your family. On that note, Jirou is the Production Vice President for Akaya,” Saburo said.

“That’s the department store you own, right?” Dee asked.

“Your grandmother owns it, but Yoshio and I are both company presidents, along with Jirou,” Saburo stated. “Your grandmother is retired, but she is still the head chair on the Board of Directors. Dafydd wanted to join the police, so when Jirou was old enough, he showed interest in joining the company.”

“Dafydd worked in the main store part-time, if I remember,” Kennosuke stated. “Along with most of the kids,” he added. “Not only your siblings, but your cousins too,” he added to Dee.

“It’s a good place for the young ones to get work experience part time while going to school,” Saburo said. “I expect them to do their best, but I’m also flexible if something comes up with friends. If they took a job somewhere else, they might not have that luxury.”

“In Jirou’s case, it was more like detention,” Kennosuke said.

Jirou shrugged. “I guess I made some bad decisions in my youth, but it wasn’t really anything serious.”

“I’ll be the judge of that, along with your Papa,” Yoshio remarked. “At least you weren’t the worst, but you were the first. Dafydd was the quiet one, and if he got into trouble, it was mostly from trying to help someone when he should have gone to adults.”
Dee started to grin. Learning about Dafydd over the week, he did learn of one of the big differences between them, and that was Dafydd hardly got into trouble. “Sounds like Jirou and I have something to bond over then,” he commented. He looked over to where Bikky and Carol were keeping the three younger children busy, pretending to allow them help with the babies. His eyes settled on his niece, making sure Jirou knew who he was looking at. “I have it on good authority that being a parent, you suddenly realize what you put your folks through. Bikky’s a good kid, but it’s been a long road to get him there.”

Ryo let out a sigh. “And he still manages to find trouble to get into at times. And I wasn’t much of a troublemaker as a teen.” He looked at Dafydd and laughed. “However, most of the trouble he gets into lately is because he tries to help when he should go to us or even the authorities.”

“Saburo and I drove your grandfather crazy,” Kennosuke said with a laugh.

“And yet, we were not the worse ones,” Saburo added, also laughing. To Dee, he said, “Your mother said a couple of things that I wish to talk to her more about, but you just confirmed it. You take after me.” He laughed more. “I still intend to talk to her more on when you were younger.”

Dee covered his face while the others started to laugh.

“Did Dafydd tell you that when I met your father, my mother had only the one store?” Saburo asked Dee.

“He did mention it. He said that Yoshio helped expand the store into the corporation it is now,” Dee replied.

“First, he convinced me and my mother to start branding our products, and then we expanded to open a few stores around Japan. We sell our products to other stores in cities that we do not have stores, and are working on a website for online sales. We are also negotiating with a big department store in America to sell our products,” Saburo explained.

“Which one?” Ryo asked, interested.

“Macy’s,” Yoshio said. “We are talking about opening a mini-store inside some of their stores. We’re still expanding. It has been only 10 years since we started.”
“Where do you have stores?” Dee asked.

“Here, of course. We opened an express store last year in Osu. It has just the basics that people with young children would regularly need and a few extras. It’s an experimental model that so far is doing very well. Five years ago we moved the headquarter store to its third location at Maker’s Pier.” Saburo started to smile at Dee’s confused face. “It’s a mall at the waterfront. South of the aquarium.”

“The aquarium is the most south I’ve been in that area, except for Rainbow Hall, but that’s not really waterfront,” Dee replied.

“No, it’s close but not waterfront,” Jirou agreed.

“I have no idea what you’re all talking about, but that’s okay,” Ryo said with a smile. “I’m glad it’s Dee who knows something about Nagoya.”

“That’s going to change by the time you leave here, Ryo,” Saburo stated. “We also have stores in Osaka, Kobe, Hiroshima and Fukuoka. We just signed a lease for a store in Yokohama and are searching for potential locations in Oita, Tokyo and Sapporo but that could take years.”

Jirou let out a laugh. “It’s already taking years for Tokyo. Oita and Sapporo went on our list in the last year due to customer demand. We discovered we had many customers come into our stores from Oita and Sapporo stating they wished there was a store in their cities.”

“After further looking into it, we also discovered many people from cities that do not have stores and have family or friends will have them come in. We’ve since opened our shipping to other cities. Which made us start working on the website,” Yoshio said.

Ryo started to laugh and said to Dee, “You do realize that the cribs we have for the chibis are Akachan?”

“Holy crap!” Dee exclaimed. “That’s why the name sounded so familiar. Do you have any stores selling your products in Fujisawa?”

“Yes, we do,” Yoshio replied.
“We got our first crib as a gift from my family in Kamakura because both Dee and I let it be known that we preferred Japanese cribs. When we found ourselves with two babies, we asked my grandmother if she could find another one like the one we had,” said Ryo. “Hey Dee, we have cribs from your grandmother’s business.” He started to laugh. “And knowing my family, since they picked that brand, I’ll bet we have Akachan all over our apartment.”

Dee shook his head. “No doubt. Chances are most of the Japanese stuff we received as gifts basically came from my grandmother, fathers, and one of my brothers. I think I’m going to need a moment to wrap my head about that.”

Saburo hugged Dee with a smile. “You really did find your way to us even when we did not know it.”

“Dee and Ryo own a hotel chain,” Dafydd said, “but they have a team who is working on acquisition and expansion, while they work as detectives in New York protecting Carriers.”

“That’s true,” Ryo admitted. “My grandparents gave us the chain as a gift when Ryoko and Darin were born. Lately Dee and I have been talking about getting more involved. At least to look over what is being considered for acquisition, and maybe give some suggestions. We have some ideas on what we want to offer to potential guests that the people my grandfather hired might not consider. Besides, Dee is starting a side business in real estate in New York with a friend of his. We’re not ready to give up our day jobs, but we don’t want to be ignorant of what’s going on with the hotels.”

“Do you have any hotels in Japan?” Jirou asked.

“They are staying at their hotel here,” Ayaka replied.

“Really? Which one?” asked Yoshio.

“The Sakae Blossom,” Dee replied.

“It’s the nice one that’s down the street from the theater,” Ayaka said.

“That’s one of the big, fancy ones,” Eri commented. “Nice.”
“We also have hotels in Tokyo, Osaka, Hakata and Nagasaki, with more in the planning,” Dee replied. “In fact, we have an Asian Division office in Tokyo for acquisition and development. Never been, but we might stop by for a tour when we’re back in Tokyo.”

“That would be wise,” Saburo said. “Even if you have no intention of actually running the business, you are Chairmen of the Board. Am I correct?”

“Yes, you are,” Ryo replied. “Grandfather made it sound like we make money by just sitting around here, but I don’t think he realized how we think. We don’t have time to be presidents, but we can take time to review the big issues and keep in touch with things.”

Kennosuke started to grin. “I’m willing to bet your grandfather knows you two better than you think he does when he gave this wonderful gift to you. If he didn’t believe you would keep an eye on business, he might have given you something less, but still profitable.”

Saburo nodded in agreement. “He could have just given you stocks instead of a chain of hotels if he didn’t believe you would be somewhat involved.”

Dee started to chuckle. “Ryo’s grandparents also gave me a cruise line. I’m the owner, but we have no idea how to handle that.”

“A cruise line? Do you have ships coming in Japan? Nagoya? I can help with public relations to get people to use it if you do,” Kennosuke inquired.

Dee shook his head. “I’m not really sure. I think the closest is Fiji or something. Oh, I think I read that there is a ship that goes to Okinawa from Hong Kong.”

“You should get to know that better,” Saburo said. “Maybe get some operations here in Japan. How many ships do you have? Maybe if you have one line that isn’t doing so well, you can have the ship go to Japan.”

Dee shrugged again. “Three or four. Maybe five. I think you’re right. When I have some time, I need to read over the paperwork again. Maybe request more information from the main office. Having a ship hit all the major port cities in Japan to Okinawa wouldn’t be a bad idea instead of just between Hong Kong and Okinawa.”
“You should do that,” Saburo said. “At least get to know your company better so you could make informed decisions like extending cruise lines. Yoshio could help you, if it’s too much to take on. His major in college is International Business.”

“You don’t have to give me a position or pay me,” Yoshio stated. “I just want to make sure you have a good hold on what is yours. If you decide not to, I won’t be offended, but if you start to feel overwhelmed with keeping your eyes on both businesses, let me know and I’ll consult for you.”

“Take his offer, Daisuke,” Kennosuke said. “My advice to you is that I trust that Ryo’s grandfather hired good people, but you shouldn’t let them run on their own.”

“My grandfather tries to drop in when he can,” Ryo said, “but he has so many different businesses and investments… Yes, you are right. He does rely on people he hired more than he looks after things himself. We do need to get more involved.”

“He has been lucky that no one has taken advantage of that,” Yoshio said. “My grandparents also have other businesses and investments, but they have family running things. Like Akaya.”

“I’ll take your advice under much consideration and talk to you more after Ryo and I have some time to discuss things,” Dee said. “That might be when we get back to Tokyo, or even New York. I know this is a vacation, but there’s so much to do and see, we seem to be on the go more now than when we are working.”

The adults continued to talk, getting to know each other more. Every so often, Saburo would touch Dee’s arm or pull him in a hug, still getting used to discovering his lost son was not killed and that he was now sitting next to him.

OoOoOoO

A half hour later, Saburo decided they should get ready to go over to his parents’ house. His mother had called for a second time, asking when they will be leaving, and Saburo promised that they would be leaving shortly.
Jirou had already reached out to Tomoko, who had accepted his offer to help and given him a list of things he could pick up and then meet at the event space. Kennosuke called his wife, asking if they were ready to leave yet, and reminded them that there will be a big dinner later that evening. He handed his phone to Dee so that his wife and daughter could speak to Dee for a few minutes, both of them expressing their excitement over Dafydd finding him and couldn’t wait to meet him. When Kennosuke hung up, he explained that he had dropped them off at the Aquarium, and was driving to the harbor where he kept his boat to go fishing for a few hours when he got Saburo’s call about Dee. Immediately, he changed his direction, heading for his twin brother’s house to meet the nephew he had last seen when Dee was four months old.

Ayaka and Yoshio started to clean up, promising it would be quick. Ayaka decided that as much as she wanted to be around her new brother, that it was best for Saburo, Yoshio, Dafydd and Momo to take Dee, Ryo and family to their grandparents’ house, and that she would meet up with them later.

Dee looked around the room and did not see his nephews and niece. “Hey, where are the little ones?” he asked.

“They are probably fussing over the puppies,” Momo said. “Kiyoshi, Tatsuya!” she called out. “We’re getting ready to take Uncle Dee and Uncle Ryo to Ojiisan’s house. Come here please, and bring Kyoka with you.”

“Uncle Daisuke, Mama!” Kiyoshi called back.

Momo rolled her eyes as she grinned at Dee and Ryo. “Whatever. Get over here with Kyoka so we can get you ready to leave.” She picked up the last few plates from the table and headed to the kitchen.

“Puppies?” Bikky asked.

“Yes, puppies,” Dafydd said. “Our family dog managed to get out of the house and by the time we found her, it was too late. She had her puppies a couple of weeks before we left for Tokyo.”

“What’s your dog’s name?” Carol asked.

“Michi,” Dafydd replied.
Dee started to laugh. “I should be surprised,” he commented, “but I’m not.”

“Nani?” Bikky asked.

Dee looked at his son. “When I was around 12, I found a dog and convinced Mother not to take her to the pound. I guess it helped that I showed the dog to the other kids in the orphanage before Mother saw her. Father Patrick cleaned out a shed in the yard to the building next to the church, where the clergy lived and kept the dog for us. Trixie was the only dog I had.”

“Isn’t Trixie the name they….?” Dafydd asked.

Dee nodded, smiling. “Yup. Michi Shimura became Trixie in the American version of Speed Racer. And I named my dog after her.”

Ryo stared at Dee, grinning. “You know,” he mused. “What was Pops Racer’s original name?”

Dee started to answer but his mouth opened with no sound, making Ryo laugh.

“Oops?” Yoshio said, amused.

“I did not have Daisuke Mifune on my mind when I named you two,” Saburo assured Dee, but he also looked amused.

“Of course, he wasn’t thinking of Mach GoGoGo when we were born,” said Dafydd, “because we would have been Gō and Kurio. And then your American name would have been either Gee or Kay.”

Saburo lightly smacked him. “You don’t help.”

“I know,” Dafydd said and hugged his father.

“I could have been X,” Dee said thoughtfully. “I know his name was Ken’ichi, which would make me Kay.” He shrugged. “It fits.”
“You don’t help either, Daisuke,” Saburo said, and then hugged Dee, tears falling from his eyes. “But it does fit. They did believe he had died.”

Dee returned his father’s hug. “And he also came home. In the manga, anyway.” He smiled at his father.

“At least they show the brothers reunited,” Dafydd commented. “So we are both Mach GoGoGo geeks,” he added with a laugh, “as well as the American version.” He noticed his sons, along with Kyoka coming over to the table. He gave a wicked grin to Momo, who had returned from the kitchen, also noticing the children. “Hey, anyone want to see puppies?” he asked his brother’s family.

“Me!” Carol exclaimed.

“Me too!” came from Bikky, raising his hand.

Dafydd got to his feet and laughed as Momo rolled her eyes again. “Let’s go and look at puppies. Dee, Ryo, you should go too. I’m sure Kiyoshi and Tatsuya want you to see them.”

“Those puppies are their pride and joy, along with Michi,” Saburo said. “So I agree. You should go and see them before we leave.”

“If you want to keep in good graces with your nephews, you should come and say hello to the new family,” Dafydd said with a smile. “We won’t take too long,” he added to his father. “Obāsan will see Dee soon. Tell her we’ll be leaving shortly.”

“Sure,” Dee said, getting up and holding his hand down to Ryo. “Let’s go see the puppies.”

“We’re not getting a puppy,” Ryo said as he allowed Dee to help him up. “Not in our place. Maybe one day when we get a bigger place, but no puppies now.” He glared at Bikky.

“Aw man!” Bikky exclaimed as Kiyoshi came over and grabbed his hand.
“Come, Bikky,” Kiyoshi said in Japanese. “Let’s go see puppies!”

“Let’s go, Ojisan,” Tatsuya exclaimed coming up to Dee and Ryo.

Dee grinned down at the boy and took his hand. “So take us to them,” he replied.

“YAY!” Tatsuya exclaimed as he started to pull Dee along. Dee grabbed Ryo’s hand and made sure he kept up with them.

“Daisuke, we’ll see you later tonight,” Kennosuke called out, amused. “I’m leaving now, and so are Jirou and Eri.”

Eri was already up and making a grab for Kyoka before the toddler followed everyone down the stairs to the lower level where Saburo kept the mother and puppies while Dafydd and Momo were in Tokyo.

“I’m glad to meet everyone, and I’ll see you tonight,” Dee called back, already starting down the stairs. He smiled at his uncle and younger brother before making sure Tatsuya didn’t miss a step.

“I’ll stay here and sit with your little ones until you come back,” Yoshio offered and sat down next to the playmats.

“Thank you,” Dee called back.

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Dee was expecting just a basement with storage and a utility room for a washer, at the least, but possibly a dryer. Somehow he didn’t see the house as a typical one with laundry drying on the balconies. He knew the garage was on that level. He was expecting to find the puppies in a corner of the utility room.

The two-car garage was the only thing he was right about. The basement was a three-bedroom apartment, including a small kitchen, bath and toilet. A small dinette set was by the kitchen and the
center of the main room was furnished with comfortable couches and chairs around a glass and wireframe coffee table and facing a large flat screen TV. Under the stairs was a cozy corner with a large plush dog bed. Michi, a white Akita, was in the bed with two puppies cuddled against her. Two puppies had their front paws on the top of the bed cushion and started yipping at everyone as everyone came into view.

“Puppies!” Tatsuya exclaimed in English, pointing.

Looking at Bikky, while pointing to the basket, Kiyoshi said, “Koinu!”

Smiling, Bikky repeated, “Koinu.”

“Hai!” Kiyoshi exclaimed happily and clapped his hands.

“It looks like Kiyoshi is teaching Bikky Japanese,” Ryo commented to Dee in amusement.

“That should be interesting,” Dee commented.

“Oh kawaii!” Carol exclaimed seeing the puppies.

Bikky got on his knees a few feet from the dog bed along with Kiyoshi. “Kawaii koinu,” he said, smiling.

Three of the puppies were white and beige in color and one was pure white like their mother. The white puppy managed to climb on the top and jump to the floor.

“They were starting to get out of the basket to explore,” Dafydd said, “but they weren’t getting very far.”

“They have become slippery little devils during the last week,” Saburo said. “We had to chase after a couple of them and get them back in the bed at first, but then we gave up. We just put a baby monitor down here so if one of them got into trouble, we would know we were needed down here. And we went down a lot. We had to put up at gate while we were all at work. Ayaka spent a lot of her time home down here. Yoshio and I also got comfortable down here for a couple of hours at night. With
someone down here, we were able to take the gate away for the time and let them roam.”

Suddenly the little white puppy made a dash for Bikky, making Kiyoshi and Tatsuya laugh with joy. He jumped up putting his paws on Bikky’s knees and starting yipping happily, its little tail wagging.

“Can I pick it up?” Bikky asked.

“Yes. Michi is ready to let these little ones go on their own and let her rest,” Saburo said in amusement. He went over to Michi and bent over to pet her. Michi seemed to relax into the attention, her eyes closed and Dee swore she had a little smile.

Bikky gently picked up the puppy and held it up to his face and started to laugh while the puppy started to lick his face.

Kioyshi was laughing with joy as he watched. Meanwhile Dee went over to the basket with Tatsuya and knelt before the bed with his nephew. He held his hand out and the other puppy that wasn’t cuddled against its mother came over to start licking his finger. “Aw, they are all cute little monsters,” he said. “And they have a beautiful mother. Hello Michi. Are you enjoying all that attention there?”

Bikky stood up with the puppy, coming over to join everyone by the bed. “C’mon you baby marshmallow, and stop running around.” He placed the puppy in the basket and petted it for a moment. “Will we see them again?” he asked Dafydd.

“Hopefully you’ll come to my house at some point while you’re in Nagoya,” Dafydd said. “And this fur family is going home tonight after we’re done with dinner. So you’ll see them if you visit me and Momo.”

“I want to go to Uncle Dafydd’s house,” Bikky stated to Dee.

“We’re not bringing back puppies from Japan,” Ryo stated, reminding Bikky and Dee again that he felt their apartment was too small for dogs.

Dee started to laugh. “Well, of course I would love to see my twin brother’s home,” he said. “We’ll make the time, but we probably should be getting ready to leave now.” He looked at his father who nodded his head.
“Third text from my mother, so we need to leave,” Saburo said.

As Dee started to stand, he said to Ryo, “We have many neighbors who have dogs. Some even have German Shepherds and children, and we have the largest unit in the building.”

“I still don’t think it’s a good idea,” Ryo said.

The little white puppy started to bark again and jumped out of the basket, heading straight for Ryo.

“I think you insulted him, Ryo,” Dafydd said and laughed.

The puppy jumped on Ryo’s foot, attempting to climb up his leg.

“Hey you, you’re holding up progress here,” Ryo said as he bent down to pick it up. Immediately the puppy wiggled in Ryo’s hold until he was able to lick Ryo’s face. He barked again and started to lick him, its tiny tail wagging.


“Oh for….” Ryo cuddled the puppy closer. “I like you very much too with your little puppy kisses, but you need to stay by your Mama while we go and meet Dee’s grandmother. Be good and I’ll play with you when we come to visit you at home.” He came over to Dee, who was watching with amusement.

“Get that look off your face,” Ryo said, handing the puppy to Dee.

Dee lifted the puppy and gently scratched the tiny pink belly, making the puppy wiggle and making tiny sounds of bliss. He laughed. “I don’t know. He went to you and Bikky. He obviously likes the two of you, and I’m getting no complaints from giving him some attention.”

“He looks like the biggest handful of them all,” Ryo observed.
“He is, but isn’t he cute,” Saburo said.

Dee started to laugh and held the puppy up. The puppy started to lick his face and made him laugh. “He’s very lovable. I wonder how he will be around the twins.”

“He looks like a ball of mochi,” Bikky stated, making everyone laugh.

“We’ve been tempted to call him Mochi, but since we can’t keep all the puppies, we don’t want them to get confused if their new families don’t like the names we gave them,” Momo explained. “So we don’t call them a particular name.”

“But I do refer to him as the mochi monster,” Dafydd said. “I heard Papa and Yoshio do the same.”

“Especially in the last week,” Saburo said. “You should think about it. I know it’s not a decision you can make on the spot, but I think it would be nice if you had one of these puppies.”

“Yeah, one of my dog’s puppies,” Dafydd said to Dee. “You know, your twin, who will be halfway across the world when you go back to New York.”

“Dafydd, you’re not helping,” Ryo warned.

“Sorry, Ryo, but I’m helping my twin.” Dafydd smiled at Ryo.

Ryo rolled his eyes, and let out a heavy sigh. The puppy Dee was still holding onto decided he gave enough attention to Dee, and wiggled so he could look at Ryo, starting to bark for attention.

“Look Ryo, he wants to give you more puppy kisses,” Dee said and held the puppy out so it could lick Ryo’s face.

“They are very good with children, even with Kyoka and Minori. They have enjoyed playing with the puppies when they were over this week,” Saburo said.

“Don’t look at me that way, Dee, Bikky, Mochi,” Ryo commented as he smiled at the puppy’s
attention. “Shouldn’t we be going upstairs and get ready to leave before your grandmother gets on a train to here?” he asked.

“Oh! Yes,” Saburo said. He took the puppy from Dee and smiled at it. “Ryo called you Mochi. He named you. Be nice to your Mama and I’ll see about you going to New York to live.” He settled the puppy down.

Dee started to smirk. Ryo was trying to hold onto, but he was faltering. Dee saw as Ryo looked down at the puppy who didn’t seem happy to have to say goodbye already. Saburo was putting the gate up to keep the puppies from getting into trouble in other parts of the apartment while they were out.

“Michi should have enough food until tonight,” Saburo observed. “It might be a late night.”

“Papa, she has more than enough,” Dafydd said. “Another week with you and Chichi, and Michi will start looking pregnant again.”

Momo and Ayaka started to laugh. “They were afraid if they didn’t put out so much food that she would starve while you were away,” Ayaka said in Japanese. “And they didn’t want you to come back to a dead dog.”

“Oh for….” Dafydd started and then hugged his father. “It’s a wonder you didn’t end up with sumo wrestlers for children, Papa.” He kissed the side of his father’s head. “But I love you anyway. C’mon, let’s get Dee to Obāsan’s house.”

Everyone started to head up the stairs.

From behind him, Dee head Ayaka say to Carol, “You should take a puppy too. I already told Papa I want to take one, and you can take one. We can be connected like Dafydd and Dee with Mochi.”

“Sumimasen, wakarimasen,” Carol said, not understanding Ayaka.

“Later,” Ryo said.
With a smirk, Dee repeated what Ayaka said in English.

“Oh, I don’t know. I’ll have to ask Aunt Elina if we could have a dog,” Carol said.

“Wakarimasu,” Ayaka said. “Ask.”

“Can we even take dogs on a plane?” Bikky asked.

“Yes,” Dee said. “We’ll have to get kennels for them so they don’t run around the plane, even if it’s a private jet.”

“Especially since it’s a private jet,” Ryo added as they were on the main floor and headed toward Yoshio who was happily playing with Darin and Ryoko. “We don’t want to return it smelling like dog pee.”

“They’re puppies,” Dee commented. “How badly can they smell up a plane in twelve hours? But we’ll have to look into getting them through customs. They might need shots or end up held up for a while before we can take them home.”

“If we take puppies back to New York with us,” Ryo reminded them.

“You keep telling yourself if, Pops,” Bikky said. “I want Mochi to go home with us. And you named him.”

“Because you said he looked like a mochi ball,” Ryo said. “And then Dafydd said he was tempted to call him that.”

“But he didn’t because he didn’t want Mochi to get confused if his new owners named him something else,” Dee said, looking down at the twins and smiling at his stepfather. “But his new owners love the name Mochi.”

“We need to talk about it more,” Ryo insisted.
“Fine, we’ll talk about what we need to take at least Mochi home,” Dee said. “For you especially, because he ran all the way across that big space with his little tiny legs just to give you puppy kisses.” He started to smile as Ryo’s face softened. “Fine, we’ll talk, but don’t be surprised if we take him home. Especially if they are good with little ones.”

“How about we let Ryoko and Darin meet Mochi at some point and then we decide?” Ryo said.

Dee thought about it for a moment. “Sounds fair. Deal.”

“Yay! We’re getting a puppy!” Bikky exclaimed and started to imitate his young cousins who obviously understood what Bikky said and started to jump up and down happily, clapping their hands and exclaiming “Yay!”

“It looks like these two are ready to go out,” Ryo observed looking at Darin and Ryoko.

Yoshio nodded his head. “I heard when everyone was getting ready to come up, and thought to get them ready.” He started to smirk, “Especially with the Mochi delay.”

As everyone started to get ready to leave, Ayaka said in Japanese, “I am not going to Obāsan’s.”

“You aren’t?” Saburo asked. “Why not?”

“I would love to spend more time with my new brother and his family, but I think it’s best that I meet everyone at the Park tonight. I can help Tomoko with getting things set up. I can also pick up Minori so you don’t have to take more time to pick her up and have her with you. I’ll bring her to the park and watch her when Tomoko and Kimi cannot.”

“If that’s what you want,” Yoshio said.

She nodded. “Besides, I want to make a surprise for Dee.” She smiled at him. “I hope you’ll like it.”

Dee smiled warmly at his youngest sister. “I’m sure I will, because I already know it will be made with love.”
Ayaka’s smile was brilliant. “It will be.”

Everyone said goodbye to Ayaka, and finally left the house so Dee could meet his grandparents and see the Fujioka family home.

OoOoOoO

Saburo and Dafydd rode in the van with Dee and Ryo. Dee and Ryo decided to let Saburo drive, rather than giving one of them directions to his father’s house. Dee sat in the passenger seat next to his father, Ryo, Bikky and Dafydd sat in the row behind them, with Carol sitting behind them with Darin and Ryoko in their car seats. Momo had Yoshio in their family car along with Kiyoshi and Tatsuya. Yoshio decided to let Dafydd go in the van with his twin and their father, giving the reunited family more time.

As Saburo started the drive to his father’s house, he announced, “We’re going to my parents’ house first. Your grandmother is going to crawl through my phone if I don’t get you there soon enough, Daisuke. She said she told your grandfather to stay at the shrine until we get there.”

“I think that’s a good idea,” Dafydd agreed. “Meeting Obāsan before Ojiisan is good. Then we can deal with him. He will be happy that I found you, but you’re still as ‘half-breed’ as I am, plus you’re an American Fujioka. That’s unheard of, and I’m sure he’ll have something to say of it.”

“You are forgetting there are Fujiokas in Chicago. My brother Hajime has twins who live in Chicago.”

“Oh, that’s right!” Dafydd said. “How could I forget. Kayoko and Shinichi keep asking when I will visit them in Chicago.” He looked at Dee. “Maybe I will sometime next year, and maybe you can meet me in Chicago.”

“Or you can come to New York first and we go together to Chicago,” Dee said. After a moment, he made a face that made Ryo laugh. “Oh crap. Chicago?”
“Dee never liked flying into and out of O’Hare, but the last time, last year shortly after we found out he was pregnant, he had a real bad experience on a flight out from O’Hare to Los Angeles,” Ryo explained. “He had me pretty worried too.”

“What happened?” Saburo asked.

“Other than getting bumped from our original flight out to LA, Dee and I ended up on separate flights. Mine was first and I got there with no problem. Dee’s was later, and wasn’t happy about flying alone. Pregnancy and flying didn’t go together well for him. I tried getting us on a flight together, but nothing was available for a couple of days, and we had to be in LA by the next morning. It was really hard leaving Dee behind, but he convinced me to get on my flight.”

“I never had to fly while pregnant,” Dafydd said. “And I always did well on the shinkansen.”

“Lucky you,” Dee said. “When my flight was leaving, it took off but had to come back and we took a hard landing. I got bumped around a bit and had a bad headache. Once I was checked over and cleared to fly, I am thankful that I was asked to accompany a young girl who was flying alone to see her dads in Los Angeles. I was able to transfer my worries to her, and made it to Los Angeles.”

“That doesn’t sound like fun at all,” Saburo said. “I’m glad everything worked out.”

“So I have cousins in Chicago?” Dee asked.

“Even better, Otōsan has great-grandchildren who are Japanese-American and living in Chicago. One of my older brothers, Hajime, who I hope you will meet tonight, has twins who fell in love with twins from America. Their father was military and was stationed in Japan for 15 years. Both their parents were American. He was still stationed in Japan when they started university, so they decided to go in Japan and stay close to their parents. Meanwhile my niece and nephew, Kayoko and Shinichi, were accepted into a university near Tokyo. They fell in love and got married here in Nagoya, and shortly after when their father-in-law retired and moved back to Chicago with his wife, their children wanted to go too. So Kayoko and Shinichi agreed to move with their spouses.” Saburo chuckled. “You should have seen my father at that wedding. Americans at a Fujioka wedding.

“My father can be a bit racist,” Saburo admitted. “He believes in pure Japanese, especially in our family. That is why I got pregnant with you two. My father was against my wanting to marry Alun because he wasn’t Japanese. He even tried to break us up, but my mother had things to say to him about that. But I knew he would never give us his blessing to marry, but he was traditional enough that he would not want any grandchildren born outside of a marriage. So I allowed myself to get pregnant, and suddenly I was planning a wedding.” Saburo shrugged. “One of us most likely would
have become pregnant shortly after getting married, if my father had allowed us from the start. We wanted a big family and couldn’t wait.” His voice grew wistful. “Perhaps if my father had allowed us to marry when I first asked him, you two wouldn’t have been born yet, and Daisuke would never have been separated from us.”

“Or Tad would have been killed before you got pregnant and you wouldn’t have had either of us here with you,” Dafydd pointed out.

Saburo sighed. “Or Alun would have gotten pregnant and you two would have been girls.”

Dee looked back at his brother and they both made faces as Ryo, Carol and Bikky laughed.

“You’re right,” Saburo said with another sigh. “If things happened differently, I would never had had the two of you for four short months, and have Dafydd all these years.” He spared a glance at Dee. “And Mother Maria would never have had her miracle.” He smiled at Dee. “One never knows what the universe has in design for us. All I know is I am glad you are with us again, Daisuke.”

“Ojiisan can be a real ass,” Dafydd said, “but I remember that every time after he gave me the speech about not really being Japanese, because I was half-Welsh, he would still hug me and tell me he loved me. He does that to my sons, too, but we try to keep him from sprouting that nonsense to them and just keep to the hugging and telling them he loves them.”

Saburo let out another sigh. “That can be a task sometimes, so we try to limit keeping Tatsuya and Kiyoshi with him alone as much as we can. We let him alone with Dafydd too much and now we have Mr. Super Japanese here. Even with his name, it takes a lot to get him to mention his Welsh half. I’m glad that since he met you, Daisuke, that he opened up more to that side. You and Dafydd are half-Welsh, after all. Anyway, we are not making that mistake with any of Dafydd’s or your little ones and my father.”

“It’s best to have Obāsan around,” Dafydd stated. “Because he shuts up when Obāsan threatens him with no nookie for a while.”

Dee looked scandalized. “Dafydd!” he yelped. “You did not just use Obāsan and nookie in the same sentence.”

Saburo started to laugh. “Yes he did. I did try to break him of that habit when he was younger, but he never learned.”
Dee looked back at Ryo, still looking horrified to find his husband laughing along with Bikky and Carol.

Ryo shrugged and with a smirk said, “As long as he said your Obāsan and not mine, I’m good with it. Besides, this side of your parental unit type aren’t nuns and priests. And if you don’t know where your father and all your uncles and aunts came from, then we’re going to have to have a little talk when Bikky and Carol are asleep.”

“Yeah, it would be nice if you two just talked for once after we go to bed,” Bikky quipped.

“Biks!” Dee exclaimed as Ryo bopped him on the head.

“Hey! What are you hitting me for? If you two don’t know where Ryoko and Darin came from, then all that noise must be for something wrong.”

Saburo and Dafydd started to laugh as Carol blushed and let out a nervous giggle.

“You’re making Carol blush,” Dee said. A wicked grin grew on his face. “Besides, we’re not that loud. At least not while in Japan.”

“Well, you weren’t really when Obāsan stayed with us,” Bikky said. “I know Pops probably doesn’t want her to hear.”

“For most of the time she was with us, I was still recovering from having the twins, so there was no choice but doing a lot of talking,” Dee stated. “What I really meant is we’re listening to make sure we don’t hear strange things going on elsewhere in the penthouse.” He stared directly at Bikky and Carol.

Carol turned more red, and Bikky dropped his head, starting to blush.

Saburo glanced in the rearview mirror and let out a chuckle. “Nice, Daisuke. I think you just made sure those two will never have sex again.”
Dee’s eyes went wide and then he started to laugh. “Sorry.” He looked at Ryo. “We did it again, you know. Biks, you too. We forgot there are others around.” Looking at his father again, he asked, “So you really think so? Or perhaps just until Bikky is around 30?”

“Considering I was 19, I can’t really talk.”

“But you wanted to get married too,” Dafydd pointed out.

“My dads keep saying that they want Carol and me to get married,” Bikky said. “Do we have to wait until we’re 30?”

Ryo started to laugh as he lightly bopped Bikky again. “How about just graduate college. Okay?”

“Which in Bikky’s case, can be in his 30’s,” Dee remarked.

“Dad!”

Dee looked back at his son. “If I didn’t pick on you sometimes, you might start thinking I don’t love you anymore.” He winked at Bikky.

Bikky finally started to laugh after looking shocked for a moment. “Yeah, you’re right. Love you too, Dad.”

“Isn’t this nice?” Saburo asked, trying not to laugh. “A nice family outing.” He started to laugh. “They do fit in, don’t they?”

“Almost,” Dafydd stated. “We just need to get Daisuke from being so hung up about parents and grandparents having sex.”

Dee turned his head to glare at Dafydd, who started to laugh along with Saburo.

“Ryo, I should remind you that we do have priests in the family,” Saburo stated, “however Shinto priests are allowed to marry and have families.”
“Oh, even better!” Ryo commented and laughed. “Oh, don’t blush, Daisuke.”

“Shut up, Ryo,” Dee grumbled and dropped his head as everyone else in the van started to laugh.

OoOoOoO
Chapter Summary

Dee meets his grandmother.

Chapter Notes

So sorry it took so long to post this. My new contracted job is a bitch in travelling to and from without a car – I leave at 5:30 am to get to work by 8 and then I’m getting home between 7:30 and 8 in the evening. By the time I get home, I’m wiped. Thankfully I recently found a co-worker who passes my house, so I at least get a ride home, which gets me home around 6. Sometimes I can get a ride in, which allows me to sleep in. I also did have some fun – my faithful beta and bestie, Milady Dragon, came to San Antonio at the end of October so we can celebrate a joint birthday weekend at Alamo City Comic Con. We had a blast that weekend, between meeting our favorite celebs – John Barrowman, William Shatner, Henry Simmons and Natalia Cordova, and even a surprise encounter with Michael Rooker. We also had time so she could do some sightseeing, including a boat tour along the San Antonio River, and yes, I did make sure she saw the Alamo. Then she went off to vacation for a few weeks with family, and I finally had something to send her to beta. Anyway you probably don’t care, because you’ve been waiting long enough for the next chapter. I am going to start getting the next chapter ready to send Milady Dragon in between volunteering this weekend for San Antonio’s Aki Matsuri and hopefully get it post much faster than this one. So onward with the story. I hope everyone had a Happy Thanksgiving!

CHAPTER THIRTY

Fujioka Family Home

Meito, Nagoya

[1] Japan

Saburo’s parents lived a few miles southeast from Higashiyama Zoo. To Bikky’s dismay, the route Saburo took had them going through an underground tunnel for much of the last part of the trip. Saburo told them they were going past the zoo, but obviously they wouldn’t see the zoo until later that afternoon.
“There’s not much to see on the surface road I could have taken, except for a lot of trees, shrubs, shrines and temples. Nothing different from what you saw before we went into the tunnel,” Saburo explained. “You will see some of the zoo later, Bikky.”

As they came out of the tunnel and approached the exit off the toll road, Saburo said, “I hope that Dafydd told you your grandparents’ names.”

“Of course, I did,” Dafydd replied, sounding offended.

Dee pulled a small notepad out from his jacket pocket and held it up. “I have all the family names here, including children, ages, birthdays, clothes sizes….”

Saburo laughed. “So Momo gave you all the vital information on our very large family.”

“I told Dee their names before Momo gave him the notebook,” Dafydd defended.

Dee nodded. “He really did. Sakura and Ryoichi are their given names.”

“Very good. You did that without consulting Momo’s notes,” Saburo replied, amused.

Saburo guided the car from the toll road making several turns, going under the toll road to back track several blocks. He made a turn to go under the toll road again and turned onto a small road.

Dee glanced back to Bikky, who already had his eyes covered.

Dee chuckled. “Bikky is still getting used to the small roads.”

Saburo looked in the rear view mirror and let out a laugh. The road wasn’t paved, and on the left were bamboo plants of tall stalks. Shortly up the road, there was a break in the foliage. “If you keep covering your eyes, you won’t see the pond. We’re just about there. We’re behind my father’s house now.”
“By the pond?” Bikky asked, removing his hand to look at the pond. Lily pads covered parts of the large pond.

“Close. It’s on the other side.” Daffyd remarked. On the other side was mostly tall pines and oaks. “If we go down this road past the pond, is the shrine.”

Saburo made a left and a little up the way, was a stone and iron gate, and a driveway. The gates were open, and Saburo drove through them and along a driveway through the trees.

Ahead looked like a complex of old traditional two-story houses that were still in good condition. There was another building that was of the same style but it was obvious the materials used for construction were newer. Off to the side was a modern smaller building.

“Which house do they live in?” Bikky asked.

Saburo laughed as Dafydd looked back. “There are only two houses here, Biks. The main one and a guest house, which is the modern one.”

Saburo brought the car to a stop in a space where there was a van, a sports car and a sedan parked. He chuckled as he looked behind. “Not counting the tea arbor, the family shrine, the tool shed and the hot spring. It does look like a small village in here. Come, get out of the car. The gate is opened, which means we’re expected.”

Everyone got out of the car. Behind them Momo pulled up and stopped the car. Dafydd and Saburo took charge of the twins, allowing Dee, Ryo and Bikky to be free when meeting Dee’s grandmother.

Momo came up to them with Tatsuya and Kiyoshi. Yoshio stood next to Saburo. Darin looked at him and reached out, laughing. With a smile Yoshio leaned down to kiss Darin’s nose, which pleased the infant even more. Ryoko was happily cuddling into Dafydd, babbling softly. Dafydd smiled tenderly and started to talk to her in Japanese, pointing to the main house.

Dee was watching the scene as Ryo slipped his arm around Dee, and Bikky stood on the other side.

“You okay?” Ryo asked softly.
Dee nodded, still staring. “Yeah. I’m just a bit overwhelmed that these people are not your family for once.”

“They seem like good people, Dee,” Ryo said. “Well, we pretty much know that about Dafydd and Momo.”

“Yeah.” Dee smiled at Ryo as Saburo looked over at them.

“Daisuke, are you up to meeting your grandmother yet?” Saburo asked, a knowing look on his face as he looked at Dee.

Dee nodded as he put his arm around Bikky’s shoulder, pulling him closer. Having his husband and his son grounded him. He looked at Bikky. “Are you ready to meet my grandmother?”

Bikky smiled at him. “Sure. Let’s go before she has to come out of the house, searching for us.”

Dee let out a laugh as he started to move closer to Saburo and Yoshio. “This was not how we originally planned our first day in Nagoya to Ryo,” he commented. “Yes Papa. I am.”

Saburo’s smile grew as tears formed in his eyes. “Follow me.” He led them on along a winding stone path, around what Dee discovered was a wing of the main house, connected by a hall between the buildings, with a beautiful garden with flowers and a statue. Akira’s house also had a wing connected by wider hallways between the sections, but while this was a single house, it was four houses connected by a corridor no wider than 4 feet. Because of the shoji sliding walls, there was a way to go in and out of the wings without going through the main section. As they reached the center building, they followed the path leading to what was obviously the entrance. The house was build among the pines and oaks, along with patches of ferns and bamboo plants, giving it the appearance that they were in the middle of a forest miles away from civilization.

The front door opened and a woman who looked more like she could be Saburo’s older sister than his mother came out of the door. She wore a patterned yukata under a Japanese style apron. She had dark hair pulled back in a bun, accented by hair ornaments. Her darks eyes went wide as she looked at Dee, her mouth dropping open. Her gaze went to Dafydd and back to Dee.

“Oh!” She started down the steps to meet them. “That is definitely Daisuke!” She closed the distance and reached up to hug him. “Daisuke, you came home to us!”
Saburo was laughing with joy, sparing a hand from holding Darin to wipe his eyes. Yoshio took Darin from him, smiling at the scene.

“That’s what they keep telling me,” Dee said with a laugh, hugging the woman back. “It sure feels like it.”

“And he speaks Japanese. How wonderful,” she exclaimed and hugged him again before pulling away. “Let me look at you. I know you look like your twin, but I see the obvious differences from when you were an akachan.”

“Okaasan, please speak in English for Daisuke’s son’s sake,” Saburo said. He came over to stand next to his mother and long-lost son. Dafydd came up behind him.

She turned to hug Saburo. “He looks well,” she said, still in Japanese. “He looks very much alive. This is such great news!”

“Yes, he looks very well, Okaasan,” Saburo said. “And very grown.”

“Time does that to one,” Sakura commented and smiled. “And you have a family, Daisuke?” she asked.

“Yes, he has a family,” Saburo said in English. He turned toward Ryo, who stood with Yoshio and Momo, who now had Ryoko, Bikky and Carol. Momo’s two sons were jumping up and down, while Ryo tried to keep them from charging toward the reunion.

Dafydd started to laugh. “Ryo, let my little monsters go. Kiyoshi, Tatsuya, say hello to Oba, and go inside the house. We’ll be inside in a few minutes.”

Ryo let go of the boys’ hands and they ran up to their great-grandmother. She bent down to hug each of them, giving them a kiss and sent them off inside the house.

“That is Ryo, Daisuke’s husband, who ended up holding back Dafydd’s sons,” Saburo said. “Next to him is Bikky, their oldest son, and Yoshio has Darin, and that’s Ryoko in Momo’s arms.”
“I don’t bite,” Sakura said. “Come over here please. I want to meet my grandson’s family.”

Ryo took Ryoko from Momo as Yoshio handed Darin to Bikky. They came over to join Dee, Saburo, Dafydd and Sakura.

Ryo bowed as he stopped before the elder woman. “I am Ryo. Hajimemashita. Dozoo yoroshiku.”

Sakura let out a snort. “How formal. Save that for my stubborn husband.” She laughed and went over to hug Ryo. “I am pleased to meet my grandson’s husband. Please call me Obāsan, or just Sakura, if it makes you feel more comfortable.” She looked back at Dee. “And you will call me Obāsan and nothing else, Daisuke.”

Dee laughed as he held up his hands. “If you please.”

“I insist,” she replied. “And I suspect that Daisuke carried these little ones.”

Ryo started to laugh. “Yes, he sure did.”

“We didn’t plan it, because we had already adopted Bikky. It was a huge surprise, because we actually believed that Bikky would be it for us,” Dee explained.

“It looks like being a big brother is agreeing with Bikky,” Sakura said as she came over to hug Bikky and caress Ryoko’s head.

“Yes, it is ma’am.” Bikky started to bow but Sakura stopped him.

“As I said to your father,” Sakura started, “save that nonsense for my husband. You are family, so none of that formality around me. You can also call me Obāsan, or like Dafydd’s boys, Oba, will also do just fine.”

“Oba, I think, if it’s okay.”

“I just told you it’s fine. So Oba, it is. And who is this young lady?”
“This is my girlfriend, Carol. We’ve been friends since I was about 8, and now we’re dating. My dads were cool enough to take her with us to Japan,” Bikky said.

“Carol is like a little sister, daughter since she came into our lives,” Dee explained. “If she didn’t have her aunt to live with, she most likely would have ended up Bikky’s sister instead of girlfriend.”

Sakura smiled at Carol. “It is a pleasure to meet you, Carol. So you are pretty much part of the family even before Bikky became your boyfriend?”

“Yes,” Dee, Ryo and Bikky all replied, and then laughed.

Sakura laughed too. “That is wonderful. Welcome to our family then, Carol.” After giving Carol a hug, she turned to face everyone. “Please, come in for a while. I have many questions since I did not get much information except that Dafydd met Daisuke at a party in Tokyo, and that he was in Nagoya today.” She walked over to slip her arm through Dee’s leading him toward the entrance. Speaking loud enough for all to hear, she added, “I have matcha and mochi. I also have some pan and cookies, if nobody likes mochi.”

Dafydd and Momo started to laugh. “The way to Daisuke’s and Bikky’s hearts are with mochi,” Momo teased.

“Wonderful. That’s good to hear. What about you, Ryo? With a name like Ryo, you have to like mochi.”

“Yes, Sakura-san, I like mochi very much, when I’m able to get some before these two eat it all,” Ryo replied with a wicked grin.

Sakura laughed again. “I love this family already!” she exclaimed as she walked up the four wide steps with Dee. “You, I just love because you are my grandson, but I am very pleased with your family already. I am also so happy to hear you love mochi. We have the most wonderful mochi here in Nagoya.”

“Oh I know. I remember from when I was here about 10 years ago, but was recently reminded when Dafydd bought some mochi as a gift.”
“It never stood a chance,” Momo commented. “I thought Daisuke was going to eat it all that night.”

Dee looked back to glare at her, which made Momo laugh more. “Okay, it’s true. Oh! We did bring something from Tokyo. It’s in the car.”

“I know which one it is,” Momo said. “I’ll get it. Go on and let Obāsan get you comfortable.”

The main house was larger than Akira’s with three levels, and terraces going around the upper floors. It was a beautiful old house with dark wood beams and itado, sliding shoji doors, and wooden sliding rain doors opening to beds of flowers or ferns with paths between them to go from the house to the outside. The entry was also larger than Akira’s. Everyone removed their shoes and placed them in the cabinets, trading their shoes for the soft comfortable slippers Sakura handed to everyone.

They went up two steps to enter the spacious main room. In the middle was a sunken area covered with tatami mats with a hearth in the middle. On the hearth was a big black iron kettle. Off to the side on a wooden platform were utensils to make matcha. The rest of the room was hard wood floors, with some areas covered by a long or oval carpet. One side had comfortable modern living room furniture and the other had a long table much like Saburo had surrounded by cushions and chairs to sit. The side with the furniture had wood walls, and some sections had built in shelves with some books, mementos, framed photos and antiques.

“Welcome to the Fujioka family home. Daisuke, as with every one of my children’s children, this is always your home. You and your family are always welcome here,” Sakura said.

“This is beautiful,” Ryo commented, looking around with interest. His eyes fell on some of the antiques with appreciation. The antique that seem to really impress him was the hearth and the cooking appliances. He turned to look at Dafydd. “Look at you being all ‘Oh wow! So big!’ at our penthouse. Now that I’ve seen your father’s house and this house, I have to agree with Momo about your reactions to luxury.”

Dafydd blushed as Momo started to laugh. “I did tell you,” she said to Ryo.

Dee was still looking around, trying hard not to gape, but it was hard. He was also impressed with the hearth area, and the many very old Japanese antiques. Even the living room furniture, while it looked comfortable and inviting, it was obvious that it cost a lot of money. Some of the antiques he had quickly identified as going as far back as the Edo period. His jaw finally dropped when his eyes settled on the very old and very beautiful painted screen.
Dafydd was laughing at Dee’s reaction. “Well, you tried, brother.”

“Is that….?” Dee asked, pointing at the screen.

It was Ryo who nodded his head, coming to stand on the other side of Dee, also looking stunned. “I think it is. Is this a replica?” he asked Sakura.

“No, dear. It is an Edo period screen. We had to have a little refurbishing work on it, but I made sure it was minimal. I did not want the whole thing repainted just so the colors would be brighter,” Sakura explained.

“It’s beautiful,” Dee said in awe. “We have a friend who deals with antiques in New York looking for one for us. I was hoping he could find one from Edo period, but I would take a later one if that’s what is available.”

Sakura hugged Dee. “We have more. So for a homecoming gift, I will take you to our storage and pick one out, and I’ll have it sent to your home. New York, is it? I think I heard you were found in New York. Do you still live there?”

Dee’s jaw dropped again, and this time he had company as Ryo looked equally shocked. “It’s very expensive,” Dee uttered.

“Nonsense. I didn’t pay a yen for it. Many of the antiques around here were passed down from my husband’s and my families. These are family heirlooms, and anyone in this family knows they can take what they want. In the holding space, that is. Whatever is around here, is mine.” She smiled at Dee. “You are a Fujioka, and through me, a Chiyoshi, and it is your birthright to have some of our family treasures as your own. We will make sure of that before you leave Nagoya.”

“Oh wow,” was all Dee could say before he hugged his grandmother. “Thank you.”

“No need, Daisuke.” She started to lead him toward the living room area. “Do you live in New York?”

“Yes, we do.”
She offered everyone to sit. Momo came over and handed Dee a paper shopping bag stamped with a shop’s logo. “Thank you, Momo,” Dee said. He held it out to Sakura. “Please accept this gift. When I found out I would probably be meeting my grandmother for the first time, I did some shopping and selected this for you. Dafydd mentioned that you liked sweets, so I hope you like it.”

She removed the brightly wrapped package from the bag, and read the writing. “Oh, I know of this confectionery store in Tokyo. It is very famous. I know I will love it. And ask to send me more when you are in Tokyo.” She looked at Dafydd and grinned. “I’m sure you mentioned that I always have your grandfather pick me up something from this store when he’s in Tokyo and doesn’t bring me along.”

“He asked me what you would really like, and that’s the first thing that came to mind,” Dafydd remarked.

“Thank you, Daisuke. We will sit here.” She indicated toward the hearth. “That’s all for show, but sometimes I will make tea and cook there, especially on holidays. I thought everyone would be more comfortable here. Please excuse me, while I get the tea and snacks from the kitchen. Then after my curiosity is appeased a little, I will take you all on a full tour of the house.”

“How long is Otōsan going to be at the shrine?” Saburo asked his mother. “I would like to take Daisuke there and let us all pray for thanks of his being returned to us. I would also like to present the little ones to the shrine kami as well.”

“I told my husband to wait there until we come. I suspected you would want to do that, and if I was wrong, that is what I would like to do too. We will all give thanks that Daisuke and his family are here with us today. Please excuse me,” she said with a smile and a small bow of her head, she left the room.

“So what do you think, Daisuke?” Saburo asked.

“I think I love her already.” Dee looked over at Ryo. “I can picture my grandmother and yours having tea and mochi together.” He smiled.

Ryo started to laugh. “Yes, she does remind me of my grandmother, and that makes me happy.”

“Me too.” To Saburo and Yoshio, he explained, “I have to admit that I had some pretty high standards on what an Obāsan should be thanks to Ryo’s grandmother.”
“Dafydd told me that she’s wonderful,” Saburo said. “He said that in one week, she had him calling her Obāsan.”

“She’s Ryo’s grandmother, but she loves to be everyone’s grandmother. She immediately accepted me in her family when she found out that Ryo and I were getting married, and then she did the same with Dafydd when she learned that he was my twin brother, just because he was my brother.”

“I hope to speak to her too,” said Saburo. “I’m sure she also has stories to tell about you from the recent years.”

“Yes, she’s wonderful and I love her to pieces, but I’m happy to say that I’m finding that my own dear grandmother equals out,” Dee replied.

“I’m glad,” said Saburo. “I know she’s excited. She hasn’t hugged me like that for decades like she hugged you.”

“Um, Saburo-san?” Carol asked.

“What is it, Carol?”

“I need to use the toilet.”

“Oh, there’s a hall right over there along this wall. The toilet is on the right side,” Saburo said.

“It really is just over there,” Momo said with a kind smile, “but I’ll take you there.” She stood up and waited for Carol to stand. “Tell Obāsan that we’ll be right back, so she can start pouring the tea.”

They watched as Momo guided Carol to the toilet.

“This house is huge,” Dee commented. Looking at Ryo, who sat next to him, he said, “This is the Japanese version of your grandparents’ house.”
Ryo and Bikky started to laugh. “Yeah, I was thinking that too,” Bikky said and laughed again.

“It really is,” Ryo had to agree.

“Doesn’t your grandparents live in Kamakura?” Saburo asked.

“My grandmother does, the one everyone calls Obāsan. Her husband, my grandfather, passed fifteen years ago. But I also have my father’s parents in America. They have a very large, stately house in the Hamptons. We go to visit them for the weekend once a month. Obāsan’s house is very large, but theirs is much larger. So is this house.”

“And we haven’t seen everything yet,” Dee added.

“You will,” Yoshio assured him. “You will not be leaving this house until you get the full tour. She will also probably designate rooms for everyone, even if you never use them. Saburo and I have a room here.”

“The room I shared with my brother growing up. It is also Kennosuke’s room too. She gives everyone rooms, in case they want to stay over or need a place to stay,” Saburo stated.

Yoshio started to laugh. “I would love to see if all the people she designated a room to shows up at the same time.”

“I’m surprise that hasn’t happened yet,” Saburo said and laughed.

“Which house do you prefer, Ryo?” Dafydd asked. “Your grandparents’ or this one?”

“That’s not fair, Dafydd,” Saburo said. “He didn’t see the whole house yet.”

“I’ve seen enough,” Ryo replied. “I have always loved how my grandmother’s house in Kamakura opened to the outside, so even though her house is smaller, I always preferred it to the estate in the Hamptons. This house opens to the outside, so….” He left the statement hanging and grinned.
“We won’t tell your grandparents,” Yoshio commented amused.

Sakura entered the room from a door on the other side of the room, carrying a tray. Dafydd stood up and met her, offering to take the tray from her and walked with her back to the living area.

“Where are Momo and Carol?” Sakura asked as she knelt before the table where Dafydd set the tray. On the tray was a large clay teapot with bright flowers hand-painted on it, and a platter with freshly made mochi. There was also a small clay pitcher, a honey pot and a glass filled with tubes of sugar.

“Momo went to show Carol the toilet, making sure she doesn’t get lost,” Yoshio remarked with a chuckle. “Momo said they’ll be right back, so you can start pouring the tea.”

“Okaasan, I hope you didn’t rush to make this for us?” Saburo asked.

“You took long enough from the first time you called to get here. I had to do something to keep myself busy until you got here. To be honest, I already had a batch in the mochi-maker when you called, so I decided to make daifuku mochi. It is the easiest. Dango is the time-consuming mochi,” Sakura explained. She reached to the center of the wood coffee table. Dee watched as she pulled open a panel and started to pull out ceramic tea cups and small spoons. Another panel reveal small plates for them to put their mochi on. “I apologize for making quick matcha, but we probably don’t have time for a tea ceremony.”

“Obāsan, your quick matcha is my very favorite matcha,” Dafydd said. He looked up and smiled as Momo and Carol came back and sat down.

“I hope that Daisuke and his family like it,” Sakura said. She pointed to the small pitcher. “That has some cream in case anyone likes it in their matcha, so feel free. I don’t judge on how you drink matcha,” she added with a smile. She started to pour the tea and hand out the cups, starting with Dee, Ryo, Bikky and Carol before giving to the rest of the family. “Please help yourselves to some mochi.” Once she finished handing out the tea, she opened the package of sweets that Dee had given her. “Do not be afraid to take, if anyone wants.” She removed a large oval sweet from the box and put it on a plate for herself. “Especially now that I have the first piece.”

“It is best to also let her have the last,” Saburo commented to his family, and laughed with everyone else. Sakura also joined in.

Dee, Ryo and Bikky answered all her questions, many of them were the same ones they answered
several times already, and will most likely answer many more times as they meet more of the family. Sakura had a few questions not asked yet, but Dee and Ryo knew that they could be asked again over the next few days. She was finally told that because Dee was too young to know his birth name that he had spent the majority of his life as Dee Laytner. Dee explained that as of then, he had no intention to legally change his name back, but he was comfortable enough for his natural family to call him Daisuke. Sakura, like Saburo, assured him that no matter what name he went by, he was still her grandson and a Fujioka. She then decided that she would continue to call him Daisuke, because it was her right as his grandmother.

Dee found that he loved this woman more. He could definitely see her and Ryo’s grandmother become good friends, because she was the of the same caliber as Akira Aoki.

She went on to ask Ryo about his family, especially after finding out that Momo was a distant cousin of Ryo’s, and that Ryo had spent time during his childhood in Nagoya with Momo and her family.

Sakura concluded her questioning with, “I must reach out to Aoki-san, especially with Ryo now being in our family. I wish to make time to call her with you, if possible, Ryo.”

“I am very sure it’s possible. She really wants to meet and get to know Dee’s family. She had embraced Dee in the family before she found out that we were getting married and having a baby.”

“Daisuke, I also would love to reach out to your mother.”

“I already have her number, Okaasan,” Saburo said. “I spoke to Mother Maria-san briefly, and we both agreed we need to have a longer call. She would love to speak to everyone from Daisuke’s birth family. She is so excited that Daisuke is able to get to know us, and that we are not the horrible people they all though his parents had to be. I was able to feel her excitement at him finally finding us, but I am also sure she wants to make sure we treat her baby boy very well.” He smiled at Dee. “I am so happy that you had such a loving mother in your life, especially since I could not be there for you.”

Dee smiled at his father. “You are here now.”

Saburo smiled more as he wiped his eyes, tears starting to fall again. He stood up to embrace Dee in a hug, kissing the side of his head. “I still can’t believe that I have my Daisuke back.” He pulled away, “I am glad that you and your family want to be part of my life. Of your natural family’s life. I love you, Daisuke. I never forgot you and never stopped loving you.”
Dee started to flush, but not from embarrassment. Well, just a touch, but it was mostly from warmth of once again being reminded that he was never unwanted, and that he was taken from two wonderful and loving fathers. It was a shame that he would never be able to meet his other father, but he looked forward to learning more about him from Saburo.

“I would like to hear more on how Daisuke was found that made him and those around him believe he had horrible parents. I think I have an idea.”

“Whoever killed Alun must have left Daisuke in his carrier at a garbage dumpster,” Saburo explained to his mother. “A cop found him and took him to a hospital and then called Mother Maria-san, who ran the orphanage Daisuke was raised in.”

“That’s the basic story,” Dafydd added. “There is so much more to it.” He smiled at Dee, who nodded.

“Even more than I knew all these years, apparently,” Dee said. He shrugged. “Unfortunately it wasn’t unusual for a parent to decide they didn’t want a kid and just leave a baby out in the streets somewhere.”

“Oh, I see. Yes, that is close to what I imagined. I can see how it looked as if you were left unwanted by a parent, most likely left to die in the cold winter weather,” Sakura stated. Starting to look sad, she continued, “We do have that even here. It is unfortunate and sad. I also understand how you and Mother Lane-san believed you were unwanted by bad people.” She reached out to take Dee’s hand and held it in both of hers. Looking into Dee’s eyes, her own dark eyes wet with tears, she said, “I can assure you that you were very much wanted and loved. And by more than just your fathers. Your grandfather and I also loved you, along with your many uncles and aunts. Losing you was a horrible thing and we never forgot you.” She squeezed Dee’s hand and smiled when he moved his hand to reverse how they held hands. Now it was Dee’s two hands who held her hand.

With a warm, loving smile, Dee said, “I know that now, and feel bad for believing such terrible things about such a wonderful family. I am honored that I finally learned the truth about my family and now have a chance to know them. I am so happy to meet my grandmother, and look forward to us becoming closer.”

“Oh, me too, Daisuke. I think we’re off to a fine start in becoming closer. At least I feel that way,”

“You are not wrong, Obāsan,” Dee agreed. “I can say the same for my father and Ayaka. And of course, Dafydd.”
“You and Dafydd seem like you have been together all your lives, which is not surprising considering you are twins, but it pleases me to see it anyway,” Sakura stated.

They released hands and Sakura picked up her tea cup. “I hope you are in Nagoya longer than today,” she stated, looking at Dee and Ryo.

“We originally planned to spend two days here before going to Kyoto, but after meeting Dafydd, Ryo pretty much decided to add a few more days. We are flexible on when we leave for Kyoto, and the rest of our trip around Japan.”

“I also told Dee that we will stop here for at least a couple of days on the way back to Tokyo,” Ryo added. “Especially if he had a family who was happy he found them.” He smiled at Sakura. “Which means we are definitely going to stop.”

“Tuesday I am taking them to Toshijimi and stay overnight,” Saburo said.

“That sounds lovely. You should see our island home. Many of our family have decided to live there, and hopefully you will meet anyone who cannot make it tonight,” Sakura said. “I might go with you, if it will not be an inconvenience.”

“Okāsan, you are very much welcome to join us,” Saburo stated. “We will be stopping at Dolphin Island for a while on the way there.”

Sakura laughed as Tatsuya and Kiyoshi clapped their hands, letting out a happy cry. “I assume that you are taking them out of school for a couple of days so they could join you?”

“They understand that they will be doing assignments while we are there, because tomorrow I will be picking up their assignments,” Momo replied.

“We are?” Kiyoshi asked, looking surprised while Tatsuya made a face.

Dee choked back a laugh at his nephews’ reaction, along with the other adults, even if everyone was amused.
“Yes you are,” Dafydd backed his wife up. He looked at Momo amused. “They seem to understand more English than we think,” he said because they were talking in English for Bikky’s and Carol’s sake, so Bikky could also get to know Sakura.

“Aww…..” Tatsuya let out.

“That will be after Dolphin Island,” Momo pointed out.

“Oh, okay,” Kiyoshi said.

Tatsuya made another face.

“So Bikky and Carol, why are you two not in school right now? Did you dads take you out of school for this trip, Bikky?” Sakura asked.

“I’m on winter break,” Bikky said. “My school’s schedule is different than most schools.”

“We put Bikky in a private charter school and their school year starts in January, which is why we chose now to go to Japan,” Ryo explained. “Some of the charter schools run on a different calendar than the normal city and private schools.”

“That makes sense. Would you like to learn Japanese, Bikky?”

“My dads have already started to teach me, and Uncle Nobu said that he’ll help,” Bikky replied. “My school offers Japanese as one of the languages, so I’m going to take that as my language.”

“I am happy to hear that, but concerned that it would be more convenient to know Spanish or Italian in New York,” Sakura stated.

“I already know enough Spanish,” Bikky replied, “and I couldn’t understand my dads’ families if I studied Italian. I already promised Ryo’s grandmother and uncle that I’ll learn Japanese.”
“Is that what you want?” Sakura asked Bikky, looking concerned.

“It is. Really,” Bikky assured his new great-grandmother with a smile.

“If it will make you happy, then I’m happy. You may also reach out to me if you want additional help.”

“Arigatou gozaimasu, Oba,” Bikky said.

With a warm smile, Sakura replied, “You are very much welcome, Bikky. But again, I would do anything for my great-grandchildren, so don’t be afraid to ask me for anything, within reason.” With a sly smile, she glanced quickly to Dee and Ryo before her attention went back to Bikky. “Sometimes even not so within.”

Bikky laughed with joy, and Dee saw the same connection start between Bikky and his grandmother that he once saw when Bikky had first met Ryo’s grandmother. Between that and what she said to Bikky, it made Dee love this woman more. She was definitely a keeper, and he realized how thankful he was to discover this delightful woman was his biological grandmother. He looked forward to the day when he could watch his grandmother sit down over tea with Ryo’s grandmother. That was going to be an incredible day. He also hoped that his grandmother could one day sit down over a meal with Mother. That would also be an awesome day. He knew it. Because there was something special about the three women who he knew were the most important in his life. Yes, he already felt that about Sakura in the short time since he met her. He also had stories from Dafydd over the week about their grandmother, but even Dafydd admitted that he was biased because he loved his grandmother so much. Upon meeting Sakura Fujioka, Dee immediately understood why his twin loved her so much. He found himself already starting to feel the same about her. Ryo’s other grandmother, Estelle MacLean, was also another woman that he looked up to and loved, but there was something about Akira Aoki and Sakura Fujioka that set them a bit higher, and placed them damn near close to Mother.

Dee was feeling very blessed that day. He already had Mother and Jess as his family, and then later saw Akira and Estelle as family. Of course he also had Elena. Now he had Saburo and Yoshio, and now this wonderful woman, who were his fathers and grandmother. Also between Dafydd, Ayaka, Jirou and Tomoko, Dee realized that he had siblings that he really wanted to know.

Dee and his family continued to answer questions Sakura had, along with Saburo and Yoshio over tea and sweets. They also had a chance to ask their own questions of Dee’s family.
When they were done with the tea, Sakura took them on a tour of the house. The square footage of the house was very close to the MacLean estate in the Hamptons, but once Dee got over his shock, he realized that it was fitting for a CEO of such a huge corporation would live in something like that. From what he knew, the corporation had been a giant in communication since the telephone came into being, making his great-grandparents extremely rich. Combined with what Dafydd had said about the family once being daimyō, it made sense that the original home was already large for its time.

One wing was mostly bedrooms, with three toilets and two bathrooms on each level. Many of the rooms were small, some just big enough to fit a futon in, while others had twin platform beds. Sakura explained that it was mostly for children and visitors. Sometimes she offered lodgings to someone who had travelled far to visit the shrine. Dee already had known the name of the shrine, thanks to Dafydd, but learned from his grandmother that Hinotsuke was believed to be the name of the first Carrier, and that the shrine was named for him after his death. She added that since the shrine had been in the Fujioka care for as far back as their history went, it was believed that Hinotsuke had been Fujioka, or at least one of their ancestors. Between the shrine and the unique trait of the males in the family all being Carriers and giving birth to twins, that it was very likely that they were directly descended from the original Carriers.

She led them into the newer wing of the house, continuing her talk on the Fujioka family. “The peculiar thing is that it is impossible to trace our ancestors past my husband’s grandfather, yet there is no doubt that this has been a family home to his ancestors for several generations before that.” She indicated the hall that they stood in, “Except for this section of the house, the building materials date back to the early 1800’s, and the family treasures that were passed down are from the same time and even many before then. We tend not to think too much on it, as I believe that we must look forward and not back, but your grandfather tends to take much pride in family history, even if the family seems to not exist before the end of the Edo period.”

“So it is possible that Carriers were in Japan during the Edo period?” Ryo asked, sounding amazed.

“It is more than possible. One of my husband’s grandfathers Carried his father. And his name was not Hinotsuke. If there really was a Hinotsuke Fujioka, we are not sure when exactly was his time, but it definitely had to be at least Edo period,” she answered Ryo. “Now this section, as you can see is much newer than the rest of the house. I must warn you that you will hear from my husband how America destroyed his home. What he really means is the extension that originally was here. We weren’t home that night, spending the week on Toshijima. They told us we would be safer there. During an American airstrike in 1945, a bomb was dropped not far from here. It devastated many houses and a rice field from the actual bomb and the fires caused by the bombing. Shrapnel from the bomb fell on the section that stood here. A lucky strike where it hit, we were told, because it took out the main foundation post, and destroyed a good portion of the building, and the fire destroyed...
another good portion. How the fire did not spread to the rest of the house, I’ll never know.

“My father-in-law had some of his people stay here to protect the house. It was decided to raze the entire section and rebuild. I decided I wanted something bigger. We were already sharing the house with some of my husband’s siblings and their families, and I knew I wanted a big family. Both of us came from large families, and we wanted to do our share. It was important to have big families, with both of us able to conceive and carry children, and with my husband having twins with each pregnancy. So I made a good thing out of a bad situation. This building has five rooms more than the original and all the rooms are bigger than the original. When it was completed, this is where my husband and I lived, and started our family, leaving the rest of the complex to the rest of his family. It was after both of my fathers-in-law passed and all the children moved out, along with most of my husband’s siblings that we moved our master bedroom in the main building.”

She started to look sad as she remembered that night in 1945. “We lost many of our friends and neighbors that night. Businesses we frequented were gone. Roads torn up. But somehow the only damage we had was this one building, and everyone in our family was safe. And remained safe throughout the rest of the war.”

She took them on a tour of both levels. After she was done, she said, “I have to admit that I expected more of our children, and even their children to live with us, but most of them moved out once they were old enough, even before they were married. Such is the way of the times now, I suppose. Most of my husband’s siblings moved from Nagoya, living in other places in Aichi, including Toshijima. Now there are only 8 of us living here, but with our family, there is always someone visiting, especially with children.”

She took them out to the back garden, which was the tea garden, where there was green grass surrounding a pond large enough to have a bridge going across the middle of it. The pond was bordered with stone and there were koi swimming about in the calm water. Maple, cherry blossom trees, and tall bamboo gave some shade to the area, and a few iron benches were placed among the ferns and flowers beds along the stone path winding through the garden. Not far from the pond was a well, a shrine, and a tea arbor. Next to the tea garden was a small guesthouse. On the far side, behind one of the other sections, was a tool shed and another building. Sakura lead them from the tea garden along a stone path that winded around patches of bamboo plants, more oak, red maple, and pine trees, and beds of flowers and ferns to the other building.

She smiled at Dee and Ryo. “I do hope you get to enjoy this while you are in Nagoya. I had this built after the construction of the replacement section.”

Dee started to grin as they got closer because he already suspected what it was. Ryo also seemed to know. “Dafydd wasn’t kidding when he said there were hot springs here,” Dee said as she took them inside the building. Inside was a very beautiful, very large onsen, with a section going outside the building, with a sliding partition to close the inside area from the outside when it was very cold
“Onsen is more of the term, since it’s all civic engineering and nothing to do with tapping into heated underground springs,” Sakura explained. “This is a family size, and yes, men and women use it at the same time. We do not segregate family, but outside on the other side of that wall is a smaller onsen for up to two people for a more private bath.” She grinned at Dee and Ryo, and winked. “I am going to guess that we are going to make that off limits to Bikky and Carol without adult supervision?”

“Only if they’re together,” Ryo replied, and Dee agreed. He looked over to Bikky and Carol and laughed when he noticed their red faces.

“At least until Bikky is 18,” Dee said. “We prefer later, but once he’s 18, there isn’t much we can do about it.”

“There are video cameras, that can only be turned off by adults,” Sakura stated. “So if you want to use the onsen, you turn off the cameras so you don’t have to worry about the rest of the family watching.”

“Unless they are also with you using the onsen,” Saburo said.

“You said six of you live here,” Dee asked. “Besides you and my grandfather, who else lives with you?”

“Takahiro, who is my husband’s twin, and his husband,” Sakura replied. “Their oldest daughter, Yasu, and her husband and two of her youngest children.”

“Uncle Takahiro is the main priest at the Shrine,” Dafydd said.

“Oh. Yes, I remember you telling me that while Momo was talking to your boys,” said Dee.

“At that restaurant in Shinjuku, after the Halloween parade,” Dafydd added.

“Which was only last Sunday. The day after we met,” Dee stated, amazed. “Wow, it’s only been a
week.” He smiled at his brother. “It feels a lot longer than that.”

“We’ve been through a lot in just a week,” said Dafydd.

“True, but at least except for the first couple of hours after we met, it’s all been good,” Dee said. “And it’s getting better.”

Sakura let out a small snort and rolled her eyes. “You are yet to meet your grandfather, Daisuke.”

“Believe me, I am fully warned,” Dee said to his grandmother.

She gave Dee and Dafydd a warm smile. “But you two already sound like you’ve been together all your lives. This is a very good thing. But then you are not only twins, but you are Fujioka twins.” Her eyes went to Darin, who was in Ryo’s arms, and Ryoko being held by Dafydd. Momo was making sure her two boys were not running all over the place, telling them that playtime will be later. “These two darlings will not be exceptions, I must tell you. You Carried them, Daisuke, and that makes them Fujioka twins. At least you will have your bond with your brother to help guide you and Ryo in handling the bond with care.”

She smiled again and then let out a sudden heavy sigh. “Your grandfather, Daisuke. He’s a good man,” Sakura said. “He loves his family, even if some of the things he has to say makes you wonder. Especially Dafydd and his boys. I have no idea what he’ll have to say to you, being that you are also American. He’ll most certainly tell you about the original building that was lost in the bombing, and not in the way I told you.” She patted Dee’s arm. “But he has a strong sense of family, and you are his grandson, so no matter what he thinks of you and your family being American, he will be there when you need him. He will also love you, even if he sometimes acts otherwise.”

They went back in the living area, where Sakura took turns with each baby on her lap while she asked Bikky questions about his natural parents, getting to know him more.

Sakura paused and looked up when the front door opened and they heard a woman call out, “Taidama!”

A young woman wearing a red hakama and white haori entered and smiled at them. Dee did not recognize her from the many photos Dafydd had shared of their siblings, but he had quickly started to recognize a Fujioka when he saw one. He couldn’t quite pin down what about this family that made it obvious that they were Fujiokas but so far, everyone he had met just had a look about them.
His grandmother didn’t have the look, but she spoke with a family pride that identified her as much as the others. Since he could not remember her face from pictures, he figured she was not another sibling that decided to meet them there. Besides, she looked younger than Ayaka, and Ayaka was the youngest.

“Yuuki, don’t tell me they sent you to get us,” Sakura said.

“Ojiisan did send me to get you. Ojisan Ryoichi said he got a call that something came up at work, so if Daisuke wants to see him today, you better get him at the shrine. Ojisan will be getting ready to leave soon.”

Sakura started to stand up, still holding Ryoko. “I guess we’re leaving now. It’s just across the road, so we can carry the little ones. We have enough adults to handle them.” As they grabbed their jackets, she looked at Yuuki. “Surely he’ll be at dinner tonight.”

Yuuki shrugged. “He said it might take him all night.”

“We’ll see about that. Daisuke, this is Yuuki. She is your second cousin. She is Takahiro’s youngest granddaughter.”

Dee smiled at her and bowed. “It is nice to meet you.” It was obvious that she was a shrine maiden from the way she was dressed.

Sakura came over and started to move him to the door. “Please hurry, everyone. My husband can also be quite impulsive when the mood hits him, so we better get there before he leaves. We can finish introductions while we walk.”

Dee noticed that as they all left, his grandmother did not bother to lock up the house. Coming from New York City, he found that remarkable, especially since he had no doubt that when she returned home, nothing would be missing.

OoOoOoO
Chapter 31

Chapter Summary

Dee finally meets his grandfather.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

Hinotsuke Jingu

Meito, Nagoya

Japan

November 5, 2006

Sakura and Yuuki led the group across the street. Sakura insisted on carrying Ryoko, with Bikky next to her. Saburo carried Darin, talking softly to the infant in Japanese as Darin grabbed at his grandfather, smiling and babbling.

Ryo smiled and leaned closer to Dee as they walked up the road. “Darin really seems to take to your father well.”

Dee chuckled. “Ryoko seems pretty keen on him too. If our kids are a monitor to judge character, my father passes with flying colors. I would trust Yoshio with them too.”

“I agree. Then there’s Dafydd and Momo. I would definitely leave the twins with them overnight.”

“Me too,” Dee agreed. “My grandmother is a contender, too. She reminds me of Obāsan. Hell, she is Obāsan to me.” He laughed and looked at his grandmother with Ryoko, looking as if she was carrying a national treasure in her arms.

“Yes, she is your Obāsan. And that there with Darin is your father. Who I know you already adore, so plan on calling him that anytime soon. You are already calling your grandmother Obāsan.”
Dee let out a heavy sigh and took Ryo’s hand. “I’m still fighting against the rapids of emotions. I like everyone so far. Actually I think I love them, but I just met them today, and… Well, there they are – my father, my stepfather, grandmother, twin brother, 2nd cousin, and then there is a brother and two sisters who are busy with getting things set up for dinner tonight.”

“You’re a bit overwhelmed.”

Dee nodded. “Yeah, but it’s not in a bad way. It just feels all so surreal to me. I think I need a little time for it to all sink in, let it start feeling real. I mean, look at them, they’re all Japanese! I know there’s a Welsh side, but who knows if I’ll ever meet them.” Dee shrugged. “Maybe tomorrow when I wake up and they’re all still here, I’ll know I’m not dreaming.”

“It’s not a dream, Dee. Believe me. This is your family. Your biological family. I can’t imagine how you are feeling, but I am happy for you.”

“I think it makes it feel more unreal every time someone calls me Daisuke.”

“Oh shoot, and here I thought over the last week I got you used to it.” Ryo gave Dee a fake pout, making Dee laugh. “That’s one big family that seems pretty tight.”

Dee let out a nervous laugh. “That’s some house my grandparents live in. Sheesh!”

As they walked, they realized that the street was busy with people walking toward and from the shrine. Ahead of them, they could see a red tori gate.

Sakura came over to them. “That’s the entrance to the shrine. Just across the street.” She smiled up at him. “I can’t believe I’m taking you to the shrine. I’m just so happy!” She cuddled Ryoko and kissed the baby’s head. “My Daisuke and his wonderful family.”

Dee smiled back at his grandmother and lightly touched her arm. They walked toward the entrance to the shrine grounds. Saburo came to his mother’s other side, smiling. He still carried Darin. “This is a great day, isn’t it Okāsan?”

“I am so happy for you too, Saburo. You have your Daisuke back.”
Dee started to flush as a warm feeling rushed through him as he listened to his father and grandmother talk. He couldn’t help it. He had never imagined he would be so welcomed and wanted by his biological family. It also helped in making his meeting with this wonderful family as his biological one surreal.

As they approached the tori, Dee noticed that it was the first of many gates going along a path of long stairs. Each stone step was roughly about a meter, and every five steps was a tori.

Just before going through the first tori gate, his family bowed. Dee, by habit from visiting many shrines also bowed, not surprised when he saw Ryo do the same and was pleased that Bikky and Carol also bowed.

Sakura looked up at him as they started up the stairs. “I do not know if you know, but you do not need to bow before each tori.”

Dee nodded with a smile. “Yes, for something like this, I know the next time to bow is before the tori before the shrine itself and other tori that are spread out. I also know that this type of entrance is made to go through instead to the left.”

“That is correct. It pleases me that you know that,” Sakura exclaimed.

“I don’t know if Bikky and Carol know that,” Dee said with a smirk, “but it would be fun to watch if they don’t.”

From his other side, Ryo started to laugh. “I think he knows, but if he doesn’t, he’s smart enough to notice that we’re not.”

“True, but until then it would be fun to watch,” Dee remarked, making Ryo laugh again. Sakura and Saburo also laughed.

“It is nice that your son knows to bow before tori,” Saburo stated.

“He picked it up during our time in Kamakura with Ryo’s grandmother. We went to quite a few shrines and she took the time to explain to Bikky and Carol why we do certain things at shrines,”
Dee replied.

Ryo let out a sigh. “Daisuke and I could have taught him, but I knew my grandmother would love having the chance.”

Dee gave Ryo a sideway glance and with a sly smile, Ryo shrugged. He didn’t say anything about his husband calling him Daisuke. He knew Ryo saw it as revenge for his husband to be better known as Ryo instead of Randy, but he also figured that Ryo would want to show respect to Dee’s newfound family by referring to him by his given name at times instead of always Dee. Dee decided he would let it go, even if while showing respect, Ryo was having just too much fun with it too.

“As much as I appreciate Aoki-san in showing your son Japanese ways, I do hope there is something that I can have the pleasure of showing Bikky,” Sakura stated.

“Ryo and I both talked about Japan, so he already arrived here knowing a lot of things,” Dee said, “but we didn’t cover near enough. We couldn’t, not living here, and he’s picking up a lot during our time here.” He smiled at both his grandmother and father. “There is still plenty that he can learn from both of you and anyone else in this family, if he wants.”

“Dafydd must have had his chance to start,” Saburo said.

“Yes. Bikky accepted Dafydd as his uncle pretty quickly and I watched them become close during the last week. But Dafydd mainly gave him more insight on the fun things in Japanese culture.”

“Dafydd is very easy to get close to, even if you’re not his twin,” Ryo added. “And since we arrived in Nagoya, I’m convinced he got it from somewhere, and that had to be his family.”

“That is very nice of you to say, Ryo,” Sakura said, sounding pleased. “Oh, I know I should brush it off and deny, but Fujioka are a very proud family. Unlike the average Japanese, most of us do not do modest very well. And we are very close. I do hope you will not be a stranger to me, Ryo. You are also my grandson by being married to Daisuke.”

“I am honored and look forward to being part of my husband’s family,” Ryo replied with a bow of his head. “Just as he is a part of mine.”

“That pleases me to hear. I do have to reach out to Aoki-san soon and give her my gratitude for
being so wonderful to my grandson when I was not able to.” She smiled warmly at Ryo.

Halfway up the stairs, a path branched off to opposite side of the pond which was now below them, leading to lesser shrines. At the top of the stairs was the main shrine. Sakura stopped them so they would observe the area, while she started talking, providing information on what they saw.

Dirt paths led to the buildings of various sizes, all smaller than the main shrine and other areas with statues of various kami who were also considered beneficial for Carriers and children. Many of the smaller buildings were the brown wood of the ancient shrines, while few were red, white and gold. The paths, while dirt, were meticulously maintained and lacking any pebbles, stones or branches that one might trip over, especially while wearing geta – the traditional wooden shoes worn with kimono. While not in the majority, there were many visitors at the shrine in kimono. The rest of the ground covering was lush grass that seemed too green to be possible at that time of the year. The cherry trees dispersed around the grounds were exactly as they should be for November. Dee could imagine how the area would look in April when they trees were in bloom and made a mental note that they had to be in Nagoya in April and come to the shrine. He was certain it was going to be gorgeous. There were also maple and oak trees providing shade to many of the open shrines, and some had patches of tall stalks of bamboo. Old stone statues and lanterns, once for burning candles, and later oil, now had LED lights made to look like flames burning the candles, programmable but a computer in the administration office as Saburo explained. There were also flowerbeds with colorful flowers set up around the buildings and statues.

Sakura pointed out the area where they would have dances for festivals and explained how along the paths, booths would be set up selling food and merchandise, as was typical for any type of festival in Japan.

She also told them that the usual festivals were held for the cherry blossom viewing, New Year’s Day, Children’s Day, Culture Day, to celebrate Hinotsuke and of course, fertility festivals. Like most Carrier shrines, fertility festivals were held four times a year, one for every season, and that was the time Sakura had the most visitors staying at the house. There also Naming Day ceremonies. There was some weddings, only involving two men who at least one was able to have children. They never held funerals there, believing there were other shrines more suited for such rites, as this was a shrine to celebrate the beginning of life. They also held random impromptu celebrations and festivals for goodwill within the community and fundraising as needed.

Dee listened intently as his grandmother spoke with pride, occasionally pausing the kiss Ryoko’s head or lean over to nuzzle Darin’s head, who was still being held by Saburo, who stood next to her and Dee. He could not blame his grandmother for the pride that came through her voice as she spoke. The shrine had beautiful grounds that he had seen so far, and doubted it changed once they reached the top of the stairs to the main shrine. The history of the shrine was also something to be proud of, and considering his own situation back in New York, he could not help to also feel the pride that he came from a family that maintained this particular shrine, dedicated to the first man to have given birth along time before the Carrier Project, and most likely the very first man ever. Even the remote possibility that this man was one of his ancestors filled Dee with a sense of awe.
Also on the landing was a purification basin that Sakura said many who were visiting the lesser buildings would use. They bypassed it as they started up the stairs again, in favor of the one that was for the main shrine at the top of the stairs.

“Look Dads, they have food here,” Bikky said, coming between Dee and Ryo shortly after they

While they walked up toward the shrine, Dee had noticed a small tea house along the pond, with outdoor tables in the center of a garden, but did not get a chance to comment. He figured that it would be mentioned by one of his family who were all contributing commentary about the shrine’s grounds, Dafydd and Momo included.

“I see,” Ryo replied.

“That’s the tea house,” Yuuki explained. “But they serve more than tea.”

“I am sure there will be at dinner tonight, but we should go and have some noodle soup when we are done here,” Sakura said. “Have any of you have kishimen noodles?”

“I’m pretty sure I did, but I don’t remember what it tastes like,” Ryo said. “But Dee has been talking about having the noodles again once we decided we were going to Nagoya.”

“Among other food,” Dee added with a chuckle. “We can get tebasaki in New York, and it’s good, but it doesn’t stand up to what I remember getting in Nagoya.”

“What they have in Tokyo will never stand up to what we have in Nagoya either,” Sakura stated. “I am sure that by the end of tonight, both you and your family will have all the Nagoya specialty favorites, because I know your sister. Tomoko can pull together enough food to feed everyone last minute by getting what’s available, meaning what’s popular around here. Have you ever had kishimen, Bikky?”

“No ma’am, but I heard my dad talk about it,” Bikky replied.

“Obāsan, Dee can make very good tenmusu,” Dafydd said. “He made it last night. We all did a couple of dishes after shopping at Tsujiki Market, and it was one of the things he made.”
Dee started to laugh. “That was one of the things I was able to get a recipe for one of my times here, and be able to get the ingredients outside of Nagoya. Tebasaki, I was never able to get the recipe, and kishimen is hard to get outside of Nagoya.”

“I have a wonderful recipe for tebasaki that I’ll give you,” Sakura said. “They use the recipe at the tea house. And I have their soup recipes and will share. I’ll also make sure you have a supply of kishimen in New York. That way you can have some of home at home, if you will.” She smiled at Dee, tears suddenly forming in her eyes. “Oh Daisuke, I can hardly believe I am here with you. And your wonderful family.”

“I was telling Ryo the same thing walking from your house,” Dee said.

“We will stop at the tea house before we go back to the house,” Sakura informed them.

They reached the top of the stairs and looked around at the area. There were a few lesser small brown wooden shrines and the beautiful main building, the large, impressive structure red with white trim and plenty of embossed gold trimming and gold statues. Just ahead of them was the torii leading to the mail shrine area, and not far beyond it was the purification basin to rinse hands. Between the basin and main building was a well. The landscaping was as meticulous and beautiful as the area with the lesser shrines below. Cherry blossom trees surrounded the sides and back of the shrine as if framing it and framing the stone-paved walkways leading to other shrines, statues outdoor statues. There were also a couple of areas with picnic tables and benches for visitors to relax with a couple of vending machines offering refreshments and snacks.

Posts with rows of string between them were set up around the grounds, filled with stripes of paper tied to the strings. The paper strips were omikuji, fortune slips that were for sale at the shop selling charms, amulets, along with some souvenirs such as key chains and small statues and omiyage. Wooden posting boards were also set up for ema, small wooden plaques that people wrote their wishes or a message to the kami and hung up on the boards.

Yuuki led them around the people who were praying or taking pictures to a particular ema board. A man stood before it, his back to them. He wore a man’s kimono in tones of brown. Next to him was another man in priest garment in orange, gold and deep brown, which were the shrine’s colors.

“I was told to meet them here,” Yuuki explained.

Sakura’s eyes filled with more tears as they came up to the two men. “This is one of the boards
where people leave messages asking the kami to look after their loved ones who have passed on,”
she said softly.

Saburo started to wipe at his eyes, his face already with tears that he already started to shed.

“He’s here,” Yuuki announced to the men.

The two men turned to face the group. Identical faces looked back at them, and Dee immediately
knew the priest was his great-uncle, Takehiro Fujioka, and the other man was his grandfather,
Ryoichi Fujioka.

“He looks very healthy for the dead,” Dee’s uncle stated in heavily accented English, amused as he
studied Dee. He broke into a warm smile. “Daisuke, I could not believe it when Saburo called saying
that you were alive and in Nagoya. Welcome home.” He bowed.

Dee returned the bow. “I am happy to report that I somehow survived that mess that took one of my
father’s life. I am honored to meet you, Ojisan.”

I am your grandfather, Fujioka Ryoichi. I am pleased that you found your way back to us.”

Unlike the rest of the family he had met so far, his grandfather introduced himself in a traditional and
formal manner. Dee was not surprised, considering all he had heard about his grandfather. What did
surprise Dee was from what he had heard about his grandfather was that he man spoke English with
no accent or pronunciation that was common to most Japanese. More than Dafydd, who had
perfected his English while attending college at New York University. He also noticed that
Takahiro’s English was much like his twin brother’s.

“I am honored,” Dee replied and bowed again. “May I introduce my family?”

“Chotto matte, kudasai,” Takahiro requested kindly. He turned back to the board and reached to the
top row of plaques. They were older than the rest. Toward the middle, he gently touched one of the
plaques. Dee noticed the worn kanji for his birth name on it, with other writing. It was just barely
legible, most likely from the passing of over 30 years that it was there. “Saburo, if you would please
join us. I do not think we need this hanging any longer, and you should remove it.”
Saburo was crying as he handed Darin to Yoshio and first hugged Dee, kissing the side of his face, and then went to join his father and uncle. He reached up to the plaque and with some effort because of how long it hung, he managed to remove it. Holding it, he turned to Dee. “I put this up immediately after I returned to Nagoya from America. Dafydd and I stayed with my parents for a couple of weeks before I braved returning to our home without you and Alun. And this reminded me that I should remove you from the kamidama in my den because you are very much alive.”

Dee covered his eyes and let out a small sob, feeling his father’s pain as the older man remembered the time he lost one of his sons and believed him dead. Saburo turned back to the board and touched the plaque next to it, a name written in katakana instead of kanji – Alun Jones. “At least one of these I am able to take down. Can I ask if we prayer for Alun? Daisuke, Dafydd, please join me.”

Dafydd came over to Dee and guided him to stand next to their father. Ryoichi and Takahiro moved to give them some space but not too far. The rest of the family gathered close.

“Perhaps we should show the Americans how to pray the Shinto way,” Ryoichi stated.

“Ryo is Shinto,” Momo commented, “And I’ve seen Dee pray in many shrines this last week. Bikky and Carol also know the proper custom. Dee and Ryo taught them.”

Dee smirked. “Actually it was Ryo’s Obāsan who taught them when she took them to their first shrine in Kamakura, but yes, I had learned during my time living in Yokohama.”

Takahiro smiled and winked at Dee. “It pleases me that my nephew is not lost on the ways of Shinto, and that he married one who is.”

“I’m mostly freelance Shinto,” Ryo admitted, “but I also accept parts of other religions as long as it doesn’t harm.”

“I can accept that,” Takahiro said, while Ryoichi’s face remained expressionless.

“I was raised, and still am for the most part, Catholic,” Dee replied, “but I lived in Yokohama for a while, and during that time I did attend a Catholic church near where I lived, but I also got used to praying in shrines and temples, to respect their customs.”

“Dee said that he loved to explore shrines and temples while he was in Japan,” Dafydd added.
“I still do,” Dee said. “And I am in awe to be here, at a shrine that my natural family maintains.”

“Good, then you have no problem in prayer for your deceased father,” Takahiro said. “And welcome to Hinotsuke Jingu. Yes, it is believed that the shrine has connections to the Imperial family in its history, so it is jingu.”

“And because it is also believed that Hinotsuke was a Fujioka is why the family believes we are descended from daimyo,” Dafydd added.

“This is true,” Takahiro agreed. “It is very likely that you are at the shrine that was dedicated to one of your ancestors. Let us pray for your other father now, so we can meet the rest of your family, Daisuke.”

The group grew silent as they clapped their hands twice in unison and put their hands together. Dee’s eyes were on the one wood board still hanging. He prayed as he usually did, but since it was silent no one had to know. As far as Dee was concerned, he was praying for Alun’s soul, sending love back to a man he had heard many times since last Saturday had loved him very much. He also knew enough about Shinto to know that as far as the Fujiokas were concerned, Alun was now considered a kami — a god in the Shinto religion. Family members who passed on were considered to be kami. Small shrines, kamidama, in family homes also included offerings to the deceased, and written wishes to the kami were carved ema on boards like the one they stood before. Not all the boards with ema were for the dead, as this one was. Many were for wishes and desires or just prayers carved in wood and hung in hope that the kami would read and help them, mostly concerning fertility and conception and well wishes for children.

The clap of hands at the end of prayers were not as cohesive as the first time because everyone clapped their hands whenever they were finished with praying.

Saburo handed his uncle the board with Dee’s birth name on it. “I will dispose of this properly because we have no need for it,” Takahiro said.

“Dee?” Ryoichi asked. “You were named Dee? Or is that just a nickname as an adult?”

“It is the name I was given after I was found,” Dee replied. “Dee Lane Laytner.”

“How American. They gave you a middle name,” Ryoichi commented dryly.
The way he said it was in the same tone Ryo’s American family used when saying something was quaint or cozy.

“I had nothing on me when I was found to identify me as Daisuke Fujioka,” Dee replied, “except for the initial on my baby carrier. It was decided that I had to be named quickly that first night, because the doctors in the hospital thought there was a chance I might not survive to the next morning. The woman who became my mother was called that night because she ran the orphanage I was raised in. She is a nun, was back then, and she wanted me to be baptized just in case. So she used Dee, because of the D. Lane is her last name and Latener, L-A-T-E-N-E-R, is the last name of the cop who found me and called Mother. I wasn’t given the exact spelling because they didn’t know that night that Jess would keep coming around to see me and become someone I saw as my father, so I was given Laytner, L-A-Y-T-N-E-R.”

“That makes much sense,” Takahiro commented. He looked at his twin brother. “She is a nun, Ryoichi. Of course, she would want to look after an infant’s spiritual well-being should the doctors could not maintain his physical well-being. I would have done the same thing, except in Shinto.” He smiled at Dee. “She sounds like a very wise and caring woman.”

“As I said, she became my mother, and Jess became my dad. Now I find that I have two more fathers and a step-father.”

“How do you feel about that?” Ryoichi said.

“That I have room in my heart for everyone. That these two here have made it very clear that I am their son, and I find I desire to be so.”

“Ryoichi, go easy on him. I see he is much like his twin, and that is a very good thing. I am glad that you had parents while growing up and very happy that you have accepted your natural parents and stepfather. It won’t be too long before you will forget the step part, because I know Yoshio has already taken you in his heart as his son.”

“I also feel that, Ojisan,” Dee replied.

“Now that we got that necessary business out of the way, I am going to take a guess that Ryo is your husband,” Takahiro cheerfully surmised.
“He is. This is Ryo,” Dee said, indicating his husband. “We’ve been together four years, and were married in March. We were best friends for two years before we became a couple.” He pointed to Bikky, who stood next to Momo and Ryo. “That is Bikky. He may be adopted, but as far as Ryo and I are concerned, he is our oldest son. Family does not always have to be blood.”

“Hello Bikky,” Takahiro said. “I am happy to meet the son of my great nephew. I am your Uncle Takahiro.”

Bikky bowed before Takahiro and said, “I am honored to meet you, Uncle Takahiro.”

Dee had to smile, along with Ryo. So far Bikky was doing well remembering all that he was taught while meeting Dee’s family and it made him proud of the teen.

“This is Carol,” he continued. “Ryo and I have been watching out for her since she came into our lives about six years ago, around the same time as Bikky. She has an aunt she lives with since her father passed, but we still like to help out when we can. She’s like a little sister, daughter to us. She is also, since the summer, Bikky’s girlfriend.”

“It is a pleasure to meet you Carol. I hope that you are enjoying your time in Japan,” Takahiro greeted while his twin remained silent, sharp eyes studying each member as they were introduced. In between, Ryoichi’s gaze went back to Dee.

“Oh yes sir. I just love Japan, and I’m so happy I was invited to come along.”

“How are you liking Nagoya?” Takahiro asked.

“From what I’ve seen so far, very much. I’m getting hungry just hearing about all the great food Nagoya is famous for.”

“What about you, Bikky?” Ryoichi finally spoke. “I take it this is your first time too?”

“Yes, sir. I am liking it very much. I think I would like to study here at least for a semester if I get into college. I am glad my dads decided to go now instead of later.”
Saburo laughed joyfully. “You have no idea how glad I am that your dads decided to come here now, or else we all would not be here right now.”

“Yeah, that worked out very well,” Dee replied. “Even knowing what could be in store for today, I’m still in shock on everything happening today, but I’m glad to have the chance.”

“Ryo, I was told that you are Momo’s cousin and that is how Dafydd met Daisuke?” Takahiro looked at Dee. “Or would you rather I call you Dee? It doesn’t matter to me. Whatever you are comfortable with.”

“It doesn’t matter. It feels weird when someone calls me Daisuke, but since it is my birth name, then whoever I meet from my family here wants to call me Daisuke, that’s fine with me.”

“I will call you Dee,” Ryoichi announced. “I accept that you are my grandson, and you are welcome in our family, but you are not Japanese, nor is your family. Daisuke, even if he was a half-breed, was born here in Nagoya and was to be raised here as Japanese, just as Dafydd was.”

Dee blinked, but he was already well warned. “You may call me whatever makes you comfortable, sir.” He barely got out his words sounding respectful and if his grandfather continued to push, Dee doubted he would be able to remain so.

“Sir?” Ryoichi asked, staring him down, despite being a few inches shorter.

Enough was enough and Dee last his last thread of restraint under that share. “Well, Daisuke might have called you Ojiisan because he was raised Japanese, but since I’m American, I’ll call you Grandfather.”

“Oh Ryoichi, stop.” Sakura warned her husband, coming to stand next to Dee in support. “Today is not for fighting over who is Japanese and who isn’t. Daisuke was born here, in Nagoya and he has a Japanese father, who is our son. That doesn’t change because he goes by Dee Laytner now.”

“Yes, you will call me Grandfather. I will accept that,” Ryoichi replied to Dee defiantly, as if his wife did not speak.

“And you will call me Obāsan,” Sakura added to Dee after giving her husband a glare that told of a woman whose husband would have to grovel to get back on her good side. “I do love that you are
able to pronounce it correctly. You also can pronounce Ojiisan correct too.”

“Do you speak Japanese, Dee?” Takahiro asked. The inflection when he said Dee was of respect and accepting the name Dee had known all his life, and not with scorn like his grandfather did.

Takahiro went over to Sakura and removed the baby from his sister-in-law’s arms.

“Fluently,” Dafydd answered for him. “It’s as if he had been speaking it all his life.”

“I started to learn Japanese when I was 8,” Dee replied. “I had friends who were half-Japanese, and their mother, who is from Wakayama, started to teach me when I asked.”

“And you lived in Yokohama? When?” Takahiro asked, and gave attention to Ryoko.

“Yes, I went to Yokohama National University for college. I lived in Yokohama for five years before going back to New York after graduation.”

“Did you study in English or Japanese?” Takahiro asked.

“The only time I spoke English was when I was with friends who only spoke English or when I called my mother and friends in New York.”

“Then you must speak Japanese very well. Ryo? With a name like Ryo, you have to speak Japanese.”


“Oh, I can see Ryo has Japanese in him,” Sakura chided her husband, and took Darin from Yoshio.

“I am half, Fujioka-san. My mother was Japanese, and my father was Scottish-American.”
“Was your mother Japanese-American?” Ryoichi inquired.

“No, sir. She was born in Kamakura and lived in Japan until she was eight, when my grandmother moved her family to San Diego so she could oversee operations on the American division of her textile mill.”

“If Momo is her cousin, that should have told you that there is Japanese in him, Ryoichi,” Takahiro commented. “And I agree with Sakura. I can tell Ryo is Japanese, especially his eyes.”

“But you were born in America?” Ryoichi questioned, ignoring his brother.

“I was born in New York City, but I spent most of my first five years in Kamakura, and went back frequently while my parents were still alive. My birth name is Randy Ryo MacLean, but those close to me call me Ryo. Everyone else calls me Randy.” He gave Ryoichi a cool glare. “You should call me Randy then.”

“I think I will. Randy and Dee. Good, now that we got that clear, shall we go to the honden. That is the main shrine, just in case you did not know. I was told we have babies to present to the shrine kami. I have to leave soon so let’s make this quick,” Ryoichi said, his eyes on Ryoko in his brother’s arms.

“Ryoichi,” Sakura hissed. “We will present our great-grandchildren the proper way or if you are in too much of a hurry, we can do it without you.” She stared at her husband, daring him to leave.

“Are they baptized?” Ryoichi asked.

Dee and Ryo shook their heads. “No,” Dee replied. “We decided not to bind them to any one religion, and let them choose their own paths when they are old enough.”

“That is very un-Catholic of you,” he remarked.

“Since Ryo isn’t Catholic, I didn’t think it would be fair. Besides, I know enough about other religions to appreciate the beauty in them and will not be offended or fear for their souls if they choose another path. And if they do become Catholic, I would prefer it to be of their own free wills instead of having to be because Daddy insisted they were.”
“That is a very good way of seeing things, Dee,” Takahiro said with a smile.

“We did have a general naming ceremony,” Ryo added. “It was in a park near our home. Basically it was to introduce them formally to our friends and family. We let my grandmother plan it.”

Dee shrugged. “Even if there were some Shinto aspects to it, it would not bind them to the religion like a baptizing would, so I agreed.”

“Dee and I decided to expose them to all religions as they grow up so they can make an informed decision.”

“I have to say I admire the open-mindedness I’m hearing,” Ryoichi admitted.

“I know that it is a bit late, but would you mind if, for your father’s sake, and most likely your grandmother’s, we have a Naming Ceremony for them here at this shrine while you are in Nagoya?” Takahiro asked.

Dee and Ryo looked at each other. “I don’t mind, if you don’t,” Dee said.

“Are you sure?” Ryo asked.

“I didn’t when we did it the first time.”

“But it was in a park.”

“Only because there are no shrines in New York City. Shinto rituals are not binding as in other religions, so I have no issues with it.”

“Actually, there is one shrine,” Dafydd remarked. “I would go there on New Year’s Day while I was in college.”

Dee stared at his brother in surprise. “There is?” he asked. “Where?”
Dafydd laughed and replied, “In Prospect Park, in the Japanese Tea Garden. It’s not a fully functional one like this one. More like the tiny ones you see squeezed between new buildings. But it is a dedicated shrine and I would go there on New Year’s Day or whenever I wanted to pray at a shrine.”

“Well, I’m going to be checking that out when we get back,” Ryo commented. “Wait until I tell Obāsan.” He started to laugh.

“We’ll discuss later on a good day for the ceremony then,” Takahiro stated and smiled at Saburo, whom once again had tears in his eyes as his husband hugged him. “Speaking of naming, what are the little ones’ names?”

“Our little boy there,” he indicated the baby now in his grandmother’s arms, “is Darin, and that is Ryoko.”

Takahiro laughed. “Oh, you are your father’s son indeed. Darin and Ryoko. It reminds me of Daisuke and Dafydd.”

“When I was pregnant, remember I knew nothing about this family and how all Carriers in the family give birth to twins. I had no reason to suspect I was having more than one, especially since in America Carrier twins are hard to come by. We were looking forward to a girl, and yes, because of Ryo’s heritage, I was considering a Japanese name. While looking through Japanese girls’ names, I came across what I felt should have been obvious. I felt so blessed that I was giving Ryo what he had thought he gave up when he accepted that he loved me – a child of his own. We had no idea that either one of us were Carriers.”

“So Ryoko,” Sakura said with a warm smile. “That is so sweet. And Darin got his name how?”

“When we realized we also had a baby boy, one who we feared might not make it through the night, we had to come up with a name for him quickly. If we lost him, I didn’t want him to go as “Baby Boy Laytner-MacLean”, though Dee called him Little Ninja because of his stealthy arrival. They had to put Dee under shortly after Darin was born, so it was up to me. All I knew was because we already had one baby named Ryoko that I wanted the other baby’s name to start with D, like Dee’s. I decided to give a book of baby names to Bikky and let him choose. And he chose Darin. Dee and I both loved it and well, there’s Darin.”

“That’s wonderful,” Sakura exclaimed, leaning over to kiss the baby boy in Takahiro’s arms. “I am
so glad that they didn’t lose you that night, so I could meet you, Darin.”

Darin turned his head from his seeming intense study of the new person holding him and smiled when he saw Sakura. His attention went back to Takahiro, who kissed the baby’s cheek and reached up to touch Takahiro’s nose, still smiling.

“I agree,” Takahiro stated, leaning into the baby’s touch. “I’ll bet your grandfathers are also glad to meet you and your sister.”

“Yes, we are very glad,” Saburo stated, smiling as he hugged Yoshio.

“It looks like Darin is taking to you, Ojisan,” Dee stated. “Watch out for him because when he decides he really likes you, you can get poked.”

“Oh this akachan can poke me all he wants,” Takahiro said, blew a raspberry on Darin’s nose, making the baby squeal with joy and laugh. “I also want a chance with your twin sister too, so don’t get jealous. I love you both so much already and I just met you.”

Dee was smiling broadly, his eyes glistening, watching another member of his family accept his family. Despite being his grandfather’s twin, Takahiro seemed to be everything Ryoichi was not so far.

‘Let’s go present them, and Bikky and Daisuke too,” Sakura said, also smiling at her brother-in-law and Darin, “before my husband has to run off to do someone else’s job. And yes, you will make it for dinner tonight. Or you can stay at a capsule hotel near the headquarters.”

“There are many other rooms I can sleep in if you insist on locking our bedroom door tonight. No need for a capsule,” Ryoichi stated defiantly.

“If I do not see you at dinner tonight, I will not lock our bedroom door. I will lock the gate to our home and change the code so you cannot come in. Let us go now. Ryoichi, please take your great-grandson from your brother.” She looked back at the group, and winked before heading toward the main building.

Ryoichi shrugged and took Darin from his twin and followed his wife, finally looking somewhat concerned. Darin looked back at Takahiro, reaching out to him, but then Ryoichi peppered the little
dark head with kisses and Darin’s attention was now on Ryoichi, as if judging him.

It made Dee laugh. The entire scene was just funny, and he was glad that Darin didn’t start screaming like the devil was holding him.

Takahiro laughed and said to the newcomers, “Welcome to the Fujiokas. Ryoichi likes to believe that he runs this family, when we all know it is Sakura. Please follow me. Daisuke, this is the same shrine that you and Dafydd had your Naming Ceremony. As all of your brothers and sisters. In fact, Saburo and all his brothers and sisters had theirs here too.” He smiled and started to lead the group to follow the family matriarchs.

Dafydd came over as they started to follow the family elders and said to Dee and Ryo, “I told you that he doesn’t get any when he doesn’t listen to him.”

Dee smacked his brother, who yelped, and then laughed along with the rest of the family.

“They act like they’ve been together all their lives,” Saburo said, coming up and hugging Dee. Dafydd moved to his other side, and with an arm around each of his first born twin sons, Saburo walked toward the main building.
Chapter 32

Chapter Summary

Dee continues to get to know his new-found family.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

Hinotsuke Shrine

Meito, Nagoya

Japan

November 5, 2006

Inside the temple, Sakura and Ryoichi stood together, each of them with an infant in their arms. Sakura had Bikky stand with them. Next to them were Saburo, Yoshio and Dee. Takahiro stood before them near the altar. Other visitors and worshippers stood to the side, as several other shrine maidens gathered around the group, which included Ryo, Carol, Dafydd, Momo, Tatsuya and Kiyoshi, to assure someone did not walk into the space currently designated for family.

A woman around Saburo’s age dressed in Priestess garb came out from a back room. She smiled at the group, her eyes going wide when she saw Dee, and clasped her hands with joy. She stopped to stand next to Takahiro. Dee had no idea who she was exactly, other than she was to be a Priestess in whatever way they were all to be presented in the shrine, and that she had to be a Fujioka. Dee guessed that she most likely was Takahiro’s daughter and Yuuki’s mother. Yuuki stood among the shrine maidens, closest to the family.

Dee also mused that this was the second time that he stood with Ryo and their children to be presented to the kami of a shrine, the first one also being one dedicated to Carriers. In turn, his mind reminded him once again of how different it was for Carriers in Japan. To have even one beautiful building built to honor Carriers and allow Carriers to worship was something he did not see happening in America, even in New York.

Takahiro and Yasu turned to face the group. Yuuki pulled on the thick cord once to call forth the
kami. Darin and Ryoko both started to fret at the sound.

Sakura looked down at Ryoko in concern and then at Darin. She started to bounce the baby, speaking softly to her in Japanese, and seemed to settle her. Ryoichi, much to Dee’s surprise was also whispering softly to Darin as he bounced him.

Based on the first time they were presented, Dee had an idea of how it was going to end, and his twins did not like it at all. Chances were they were going to cry out their protest again, and he was getting ready to take Darin from his grandfather to soothe and comfort his son when it happened.

Takahiro started to speak in Japanese, sending thanks for the gathering before them. He spoke of how a son once lost to them came home that day. Yasu was next, asking the kami to welcome Dee and his family to the Fujioka family.

Next Saburo sent thanks and gratitude to have Dee with him, and wishes that they may strong bonds as father and son, even after all these years. Saburo had to pause at times, his voice rough from crying as he hugged Dee. Dee hugged his father back. Yoshio welcomed Dee home.

Then Dee realized that he was expected to say something. He was glad of the times he had spent in shrines, listening to special ceremonies going on while he was there, so he had an idea of what he should say, and if he did screw something up, he hoped that most of his family would forgive him because he was not raised Shinto. As he spoke in Japanese, begging forgiveness for being away for so long, and thanking kami for his finding his way back to his family, he noticed the smiles on the family he had recently met, as they listened to him speak in their native language. Even his grouchy grandfather seemed to be proud. It made him send thanks to his finding a way to still learn his native language and learning many of the customs while in a country far from his family’s. He concluded with how happy he was to find his way back to his family and how he would do his best to make up for being away for so long.

Everyone, except for the grumpy grandfather, was crying as he spoke. Even Bikky was trying to inconspicuously wipe at his eyes. His grandfather had a strange look on his face that Dee was unable to decipher, but quickly ignored it on the account that his grandfather was an ass.

Unfortunately, it seemed that it was up to the matriarchs of the family to present new children in the shrine. Dee had no problem with his grandmother, because he found that he already started to love the woman and looked forward to getting to know her more. Once his emotions settled and things started to seem more real than a dream, he knew he would continue calling her Obāsan. Adding to the emotional waves that were crashing in his mind was that he was actually standing in a Shinto shrine in a gathering of people and that he actually used the word ‘kami’ several times as he spoke.
Then again, it really wasn’t so strange, considering that his wedding to Ryo included a handfasting ceremony, and while specifics that Wiccans used for ritual were purposely left out so those of other religions, namely Christians, who attended the ceremony did not feel uncomfortable, it certainly wasn’t a Catholic wedding. There were even a few Shinto, Buddhist and Japanese things tossed into the handfasting because of Ryo’s heritage. Which also turned out to be his as well. He remembered how Dafydd and Momo got a huge kick out of the very Japanese red bridge and the tori gate at the altar, and would probably get similar reactions from the rest of whatever family looked at the wedding photos they had with them.

He was concerned about his grandfather presenting Darin. He worried about bad juju because the man did not seem all that happy about his grandson showing up that day, being American, along with his gaijin family. Ryo was only half-Japanese, and it was obvious it wasn’t enough for Ryoichi Fujioka.

Shame that the man’s name had Ryo in it, Dee thought as he noticed his husband also eye the elder man holding their son. Ryo was worried too. Most likely did not like his grandfather either, if he had demanded that Ryoichi call him Randy. That had more of an impact after the last five years, than when Dee insisted that his grandfather call him Dee. Dee was just being stubborn and hurt, despite warnings and could not help but flinging his grandfather’s words about being half-breed into his face. Chances were if the old man found it in himself to call him by his birth name outside of the current ceremony, Dee would accept it as much as he would Dee, but until he proved himself otherwise, Dee was certain that if his grandfather called his husband Ryo, that Ryo would correct him, once again demanding that his grandfather call him Randy.

Thankfully, after Takahiro and Yasu spoke again, this time welcoming Darin, Ryoko and Bikky to the family, it was Sakura who did most of the speaking.

Dee was shocked that when Ryoichi finally spoke, he looked down at the baby boy he held and then to the baby girl, his look became tender. “You are my son’s son’s children,” he spoke in Japanese. He spared a hand to squeeze Bikky’s shoulder for a brief moment. “That makes you my great-grandchildren. You are Fujioka, and I will love you always.”

Sakura had concluded her speaking with something of the same sentiment, which Dee was expecting, but not from Grandfather Fujioka.

Apparently the ceremony came to an end when Ryoichi finished speaking and a shrine maiden started ringing the bell in the shrine. Not once, but four times – once for each of them being presented.

As expected, both Darin and Ryoko started to wail, not liking the continuous bell ringing, which was loud and brash.
Sakura pulled Ryoko closer, kissing her and shushing her gently. Both Dee and Ryo started toward his grandfather to rescue Darin, but since Dee was closer by the time Ryo came up behind him, Dee stopped his husband with a touch, and together they watched as Ryoichi bounced and cuddled Darin.

In Japanese, he said, “Don’t cry little one. It’s okay.” He held Darin closer and started to kiss his face and nose. “It’s okay. No one will hurt you. I will not allow anyone to hurt you or your twin.” And then he started to sing a Japanese lullaby.

Dee looked back to trade amazed looks with Ryo. He did notice that the rest of his family did not seem all that surprised.

Once both Darin and Ryoko were calm and back to happily gurgling, looking up at their great-grandparents, Sakura and Ryoichi came over to Dee and Ryo.

Ryo took Ryoko and Dee took Darin. “Thank you,” Dee said softly to them.

“Welcome to the family,” Ryoichi said. He tenderly ran a finger along Ryoko’s face and leaned over to kiss her. He then bowed to Bikky. “I really must be going now, but I’m sure my wife will want pictures, so can we take them quickly.”

“Shame we couldn’t get pictures of the ceremony,” Ryo said wistfully.

“No worries,” Yasu said. “I am Yasu. This is my father,” she added, with a slight bow toward Takahiro, “so that makes me your cousin. You already met my daughter, Yuuki.” She smiled at them. “My father knew what we were going to do once he received Yoshio’s call. So one of our priestesses offered to video the ceremony, and a friend who helps out at the shrine was taking photos. I will make sure everyone gets copies.”

“That’s awesome,” Dee said as he smiled at Ryo. “This was something I definitely wanted photos of.”

“Obasan Sakura would never have forgiven us if we didn’t have someone getting it all on film for the family to have,” Yasu said.
Takahiro came over to Dee and hugged him. “Welcome to our family, Daisuke. I have to say I am very impressed with your part, considering that you don’t do this every day. I could have given you something to read, but I wanted it to come from your heart, in whatever way that made you comfortable. But you convinced me that this is not your first time in a shrine. Not that we would have kicked you out if you started to pray as if you were in church.”

“You’re gaijin, so we would have rolled our eyes and looked the other way, and then added extra prayers to the kami to forgive your mistake,” Ryoichi said. He held his hands up in defense when Sakura gave him an icy glare. “But you didn’t. It was almost as if you really were Japanese. Nice job, Dee. And welcome to the Fujiokas. We are happy that you came back to us after so long.”

Gee, how do you respond to that? Dee thought. He was complimented, insulted and welcomed to his birth family, with a smidgeon of guilt tossed in, as if he had any choice to be away from his family for so long. He decided to be gracious for the sake of the rest of his new loving family and bowed slightly. “Thank you, Grandfather,” he replied.

There!

He caught Ryo cover his mouth and snicker. Bikky didn’t bother to try to hide his. He expected that from Bikky, and at the moment was damn glad of his son. His grandmother was rolling her eyes at her husband. Dafydd and Momo were also chuckling, while Saburo looked annoyed at his father and Yoshio was soothing him.

“And on that note, let’s take pictures please. Then I can go to work, and we can give the shrine back to the other worshippers,” Ryoichi commented.

First some photos were taken of just those who were active in the ceremony. A couple were taken with Dee and Ryo holding the twins, and then gave them back to Dee’s grandparents for a few more photos. After a group shot of everyone in the family, having Dee and Dafydd standing next to each other.

Ryoichi returned Ryoko, who he ended up holding for the photos, to Dee, giving her a kiss on the nose and saying he’ll see her later. He excused himself from the family and started to walk down the stairs to leave the shrine.

Sakura came up to Dee as they started to move away from the inside of the shrine. She put her arm around his waist. “We warned you. And in case you’re wondering why I still love him after years of putting up with his attitude, it is because of moments like when he was comforting Darin. He can be a very kind and loving man. He has never mistreated me. For that and other things, I still love him.”
“As long as no one mentions gaijin,” Dafydd remarked.

“I don’t know if anyone noticed, but I don’t remember any of us using that word except him,” Ryo commented.

“Mentioning includes being one,” Dafydd replied.

Dee shrugged. “Well, I guess I am gaijin but he doesn’t have to keep rubbing it my or my family’s face.”

“I’ll handle him, Daisuke,” Sakura said softly.

Dafydd started to laugh.

Dee shook his head and had to look away from his grandmother for a moment. “Thanks, Dafydd. Need brain bleach now.” He started to laugh as he looked back at her and leaned over to kiss her cheek. “At least he comes with you.”

Dafydd nearly doubled over.

“Dad!”

“What?” Dee asked.

Ryo was trying very hard not to bust out laughing, his face red from the effort. Carol’s face was red for a very different reason. Momo was giggling as she shook her head fondly. Takahiro let out a snort. Yasu and Yuuki were trying to round up Tatsuya and Kiyoshi, who were heading for the well.

Saburo gave him an amused look, as Yoshio laughed. “I know what you meant, Daisuke. Everyone did, but considering your twin’s remark before you said what you did.”
“That I was glad that Obāsan…..” Everyone started to laugh as Dee blushed deeply. He bowed to his grandmother. “Obāsan. Forgive me. I did not mean it that way.” He realized that if there was ever a moment when he had to use ‘Obāsan’ instead of omitting a name or title while speaking to his grandmother, that was the moment. Not to just did not seem right to Dee by both his understanding of Japanese customs and his own upbringing in New York. Mother just would not have approved if she was there and he did not.

“Even if she does,” Dafydd said and chuckled.

“You’re not helping, Dafydd,” Dee exclaimed.

Sakura hugged him. “I know exactly what you meant, and we’ll ignore the fact that your twin seems invested in my sex life. Or lack of, it would appear.”

Dee stared at his grandmother in shock and then as she grinned impishly at him, he started to laugh.

“Dafydd, can you rescue your cousins from your sons,” Momo stated.

“How? Why?”

Momo pointed to the two little boys and two women. The women were digging through their coin purses and handing the boys coins to toss in the well.

“Yeah, I know how to stop it. Dee, Ryo, Bikky and Carol too, let’s go toss five yen coins in the well,” Dafydd stated.

“Dafydd, they have to learn that tossing just one coin is enough,” Momo stated.

“They will when they’re a little older to understand. So we toss some coins in for their entertainment. It won’t empty our bank account. For now, I see it as giving to the shrine. How can that be bad?”

Ryo’s mouth dropped and he looked at Dee. “You know, he really does think like you. That’s scary.”
Dee started to laugh. “Be afraid, Ryo. Be really afraid.”

“Can we go get some noodles now?” Bikky asked.

Dee looked at his grandmother. She smiled at Bikky. “I think that’s a good idea.” She held out her arm for Bikky to take it. “We should stop and toss a couple of coins in the well on the way out. Then we might have Tatsuya and Kiyoshi join us.”

“Okay, Oba,” Bikky said and started to walk toward the well with her.

Dee shook his head and looked at Ryo. “We get it from her.”

Ryo started to laugh and along with the rest of the family, started toward the well.

OoOoOoO

Ryo knew he had it before, but as far as remembering what it tasted like, it was the first time that he had kishimen noodles.

For all intents and purposes, they were udon noodles, only instead of round, they were flat and wide. Kind of like eating egg noodles instead of spaghetti. They were made with the same ingredients but the special process of stretching to flatten them changed the texture. And when cooked, they were more chewy than regular udon noodles.

He had selected the noodles in miso broth with green onions and fried tofu. The miso in the broth wasn’t dark and thick like he had been expecting, listening to Dee and Dafydd discuss hatcho miso, but it didn’t taste like miso he had before. When he asked, Sakura explained that for that soup, that a miso which was derived from hatcho was used, which gave it the color and taste it had, but not the full hatcho flavor. Ryo liked the noodles very much and was glad that Dee’s grandmother was giving them the recipes for the soups.
Sakura had ordered tenmusu, which was onigiri with battered shrimp on the top corner, sticking out of the rice and seaweed wrap. They were smaller than most onigiri. It was far from the first time he had it, since Dee would make it sometimes at home and the night before as part of their dinner. He was impressed that Dee had managed to capture most of the same flavor as what they were eating. There was a difference, but it was Dee who had explained that it was because of the shrimp he normally used, which was what was available to them in New York, and that he did not find the same type of shrimp at Tsukiji Market, and the batter. The difference wasn’t a big one, and even the night before Dafydd had proclaimed that he was impressed that his brother, who grew up in New York, knew how to make tenmusu.

Another thing that was available in some of the Japanese restaurants in New York was the tebasaki chicken wings. So it really wasn’t something new, or yet another forgotten taste from his past, because again, he was pretty certain he had some of the local chicken wings Nagoya was famous for during his childhood. Yet when he ate his first wing, he understood what Dee had meant about the wings in New York. They were good, they were different than the usual wing in New York, but what he was eating now was much more. Perhaps it was because they were in Japan, and everything that they were able to get locally or make tasted much better in Japan. Or perhaps it was because of some secret ingredient that the places that made them could not be easily obtained in New York. When he asked, Dee, Bikky and Carol all agreed that it was probably both. Dee added that the fact that they were in Nagoya eating food that were local specialties probably helped too, more than if they had the same food from a restaurant in the Tokyo area. Ryo had to agree.

Sakura then mentioned that Nagoya was also famous for locally grown chicken and how they were raised gave the meat an extra flavor not found in chicken raised elsewhere. She mentioned that at some point in their time in Nagoya, they were to have other soups with chicken, or just a chicken dish that the place used locally sourced chicken and they will really notice the different.

Whatever, he really enjoyed their meal, and along with all the historical landmarks and things to see and do in Nagoya, that they had exploring more of local food during their time there to look forward to. Even Dee said that he had not tried everything during his previous times there and was looking forward to his family showing him what he had been missing.

After they left the tea house, there was still plenty of time before they were expected to show up for dinner. Takahiro had to go back to the shrine, along with his daughter and granddaughter but assured that all three, along with other members of his family would see them at dinner. Dee’s grandmother decided that she was not yet ready to let Dee out of her sight, so when they went back to the house, she got in the van with them. Bikky and Carol offered to go in the other car, so that Sakura could be with her newly reunited family.

It was decided that they were going to the zoo for a while. The main reason was because it was not only close to the house, but the Higashiyama Event Center was even closer to the zoo. They could walk around until it was almost time for dinner.
Ryo was just glad for all the walking around after the two meals they had already that day, and the snack at his new grandmother-in-law’s house, plus the dinner later than night.

When they arrived at the zoo, they entered the gate near the lake. Ryo had forgotten about Dafydd and Momo telling them at the lake in Ueno Park that the zoo in Nagoya had the duck boats too until Tatsuya and Kiyoshi started to jump up and down, much like Ryo’s younger cousins that day in Ueno Park, and begging their parents to go on the duck boats.

Just to appease his sons, Dafydd convinced Dee and Ryo to take out a couple of boats for a half hour. Saburo and Yoshio decided to sit with Saburo’s mother, and all three taking charge of Darin and Ryoko. After the boats were returned, the group walked around the zoo, looking at the animals. They allowed Bikky and Carol to go on some of the rides there. When Bikky asked, Dafydd and Momo happily let the two teens take Kiyoshi and Tatsuya on the rides they were old enough to go on. It seems to make the two little boys very happy and further bond with their older cousin.

Ryo kept an eye on Dee during the day. As he had said to Dee at the shrine, he could not imagine what Dee was going through, and had no idea how he would deal with it if he was in Dee’s place. Dee seemed to be handling it well on the outside, but he knew that his husband could hide his feelings. Dee had admitted that he was feeling overwhelmed, but at least it was a good overwhelmed.

Despite everything Dafydd told them during the week, Dee was still full of questions for his father, stepfather and grandmother. Ryo did notice that Dee was carefully not asking any that could potentially involve his grandfather in the answer, but the old coot still came up in some of the answers.

Ryo was raised with enough Japanese customs that he felt a small twinge of guilt by thinking what he was about Ryoichi Fujioka, because he was always taught to respect his elders.

At least the family didn’t seem delusional about him. They would admit that he was closeminded and bigoted. He was not fond of non-Japanese, and anything less than 100% Japanese wasn’t Japanese to him.

If Ryo was honest with himself, Dee’s grandfather reminded him of his own. There was a time, not very long ago, when his grandfather had frowned upon anything but rich, white heterosexual Anglo-Saxons in the MacLean family. That is why even with his generation, most of his relatives married into other well to do, white families with a European background. It was why there was so much tension when his father decided to marry a Japanese woman. Not only his grandfather, but the majority of the family did not want Japanese in their family. His grandmother did not feel that way, and had even assisted with wedding arrangements. It was her only son who was getting married and...
all Estelle wanted was for him to be happy. If marrying a beautiful, intelligent and loving Japanese woman made her son happy, then his grandmother was going to help make it happen.

Unfortunately, as it was also at the time, that Estelle was what was expected of her. Her husband was the head of an important wealthy family, and her role was basically to be seen and not heard. Except when she was doing charity work on behalf of the MacLean Foundation. Not that his grandfather at the time cared about the needy, but it was expected to give some show of helping. Most of the MacLean Foundation’s money went to supporting the arts, giving large sums of money that basically benefitted rich people. Museums were for everyone, but not everyone was able to afford going to symphonies and opera on a regular basis. There were other things like scholarships to ivy league universities for under-privileged kids who had the grade point average to be accepted but unable to afford the tuition. His grandmother had never worked a day in her life, unlike his other grandmother. She attended meetings that ranged from just spending time with others like her under the guise of doing something ‘important’ to actually raise money and help others.

It was only with the arrival of the 21\textsuperscript{th} century that his grandmother started to break out of the mode and become more vocal with her objections. She was the only reason Ryo had kept in touch with his grandfather, Estelle finally putting her foot down and doing everything she was able to keep Ryo from turning away from them completely. She started to take more control on family holdings and the MacLean Foundation started to include medical needs for the needy and helping the elderly. So, when she found out about Ryo and Dee, she was comfortable enough to exert more pressure on her husband to do what was right, until he finally took off his blinders and saw his family for what they were.

As Franklin got to know Dee more, his views started to change. As contact between his grandmother in Japan and his grandparents increased since the wedding, he opened more. He had embraced Dee into the family, finally gave Ryo his father’s shares in the family holding, along with his own that was due to him, and even gave Dee his own shares. He loved his great-grandchildren very much, and that included Bikky. Bikky now had a trust fund thanks to his grandfather, and Ryo and Dee were able to provide for their family without worrying about the money. Even more important, the MacLean Foundation, much to the disappointment of most of the family in his grandfather’s generation, was mostly focused on Carrier assistance and helping the needy. He had all three of his grandparents in constant touch now.

As much as he really didn’t want to think about it, but he was certain that his grandmother had most likely locked the bedroom door shortly after she found out about Dee and his pregnancy. Which was why he had to agree with Dee. Sakura Fujioka reminded Ryo of not only his mother’s mother, but also his father’s mother. He could still see some of the ancient custom of a woman respecting her husband from the way she spoke of him most of the time, but yet she was not afraid to stand up to him or admit to her husband’s shortcomings, even if only to family. Because of that he suspected that there was a time that she put up with her husband’s nonsense only because that was her role, but recent times had changed how she felt her role as a wife should be. Unfortunately, they had confirmation on Dee’s grandmother locking the bedroom door when her husband was unreasonable. There certainly were enough rooms in the house if that didn’t work.
As they talked while they ate, they discovered that much like Estelle MacLean, Sakura did not have a career, other than in fundraising for the shrine and a preservation society for historical and national treasures. She made mochi to sell at a booth whenever they had a matsuri – festival – at the shrine, and sometimes made fresh dorayaki in the booth. She also helped at the shrine, mostly working in the shrine shop selling amulets and gifts, along with giving information. She opened their house to travelers who could not afford a hotel but wanting to visit the shrine. Many of them were unable to conceive and would go to the shrine, asking the kami to give them a child. The shrine was renown because of tales of men becoming pregnant after a visit to it. It was part of the shrine's fame. There was also folklore that the shrine was the first of its kind, built for the Imperial family, but like the family’s history, they were unable to trace back that far to validate the folklore as truth.

Ryo continued to watch as Dee interacted with his new-found family. Dafydd he was not concerned about. Dee had bonded with his twin brother just days after meeting. Now Dee was getting to know his father, the man who had Carried him, and gave birth to him and Dafydd. The man who insisted on sitting next to Dee in the shrine tea house, touching him, and hugging him. Ryo also could not imagine what Saburo was going through, believing for all these years that one of his sons had been killed when he was an infant, only to find out otherwise thirty years later.

Saburo would stare at Dee with wonder, his eyes filling with tears. He would start crying at times when he looked at Dee and hold him tight. He wanted to know everything about Dee’s life, and asked questions to Bikky, Ryo and Carol. It told Ryo about how much Dee was loved as a baby, and that Saburo will continue to love him. Thankfully Dee had no worries about being rejected by his family because he was married to a man and was a Carrier. Even with a lack of family history, the fact that the males in the family gave birth to twins strongly hinted at them being the descendants of the original Carriers, whenever and who they were. He had heard mentions of the original Carriers from his own family since their arrival in Japan. It was something that all Japanese knew, his own family included.

So far, except for Dee’s grandfather, everyone was glad that Dee was there, even the siblings they met who were born after Dee was separated from his deceased father. It warmed Ryo that Dee was not forgotten since then. Saburo spoke about his lost son enough that the news Dafydd came back to Nagoya with had generated excitement from Dee’s half-siblings. Ayaka had reacted to meeting Dee as if he was her long-lost twin. That meant a lot of love for Dee, just from Saburo’s and Sakura’s memories. Maybe even from Dee’s grandfather. After all, at four months old, Dee might have been a half-breed to his grandfather, he was still Daisuke Fujioka, who should have been raised Japanese as Dafydd was. Ryo did not think the old man was so cold as to not mourn his grandson, and keep his memory alive.

If Dee had any notions about being unwanted by his birth parents after this, Ryo was going to have to hurt his husband on account of being stupid.

Tomoko had called Saburo while they were still in the tea house, letting him know that a dinner party
was confirmed for 7 o’clock, and that the invitations were emailed to the family. Saburo decided that they should be there by 6:30, so Dee could meet the family as they arrived.

Ryo continued to observe as they went through the zoo. For once, he was the one taking more pictures. Dee was absorbed in getting to know his family. Ryo felt it was his job to make sure there were pictures and videos for Dee to remember this day. For Bikky, Ryoko and Darin to look at in the future and remember how the Fujiokas became part of their lives that day, and even more important how they had become Fujioka, especially since he made sure they were in many of the photos too. Plus Mother would never forgive him if there weren’t pictures. Once Ryo was sure that she would be up, he planned to start sending pictures from the day to her.
Chapter 33

Chapter Summary

Dee meets more of the Fujioka family.

Chapter Notes

So sorry for the delay. I realized I needed to go back and read over EVERYTHING from The Unexpected 1 and take better notes before going further. While reading I realized there are a lot of inconsistencies throughout all the stories, especially TUIV. Which means I’m going to go back and make an attempt at getting everything in line and repost updated chapters. So if you see updates to the previous stories, this is me making changes.

Meanwhile, Chapter 34 was already sent to my beta and hopefully I can post it next weekend.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

Higashiyama Event Center

Uedayama, Nagoya

Japan

November 5, 2006

By the time they arrived at the event center which Tomoko and her wife named Higashiyama Event Center but was known to the family and regulars simply as ‘The Park’, Dee was not surprised to find it was more than just a building with a large open space. His father had mentioned it was more than a building but seeing was much different than hearing about it. Embellishing due to pride could sometimes make something seem much more than it was. Pretty much like family pride and talk about their family made them seem much more important than Dee figured they really were. Yes, he had a grandfather who was CEO to a major corporation in Japan, but Ryo’s grandfather in New York was CEO to several major corporations and while most of the family, especially the older ones still adhered to customary practices expected of a family of their wealth and status, it did not make the MacLeans the most important family in the U.S., not in power and certainly not in historical
value. Franklin MacLean, unfortunately, did not have the President of the United States on speed
dial. Dee figured talk about Fujioka importance was just family pride and not much else. So far, they
had all seemed pretty normal, including his grandfather. There were no bodyguards lurking in the
background everywhere they went. They did not ride in large chauffeured vehicles with a motorcade
escort. Stuff like that belonged to the real most important people, such as the Emperor and the
Imperial family in Japan, and the President in the U.S. Most of what Dee had heard about Fujioka
importance was most likely just talk. As for the folklore potentially linking the family to some
historical figures of the past, it was most likely one of his ancestors boasting about a shrine that no
one was able to find an origin for, claiming it in his talking as his own, and it carried down the family
from there. It was also very likely how the shrine had become maintained by his family.

It didn’t mean that there wasn’t some historical value to this new family of his in Japan. If whatever
an ancestor did brag about had brought the shrine into the Fujioka family, it probably helped that if it
was a male and gave birth to twins, it also connected him to the original Carriers. And while that did
seem very likely true that they were descendants of the original man or men who gave birth, the
Fujiokas were not the only family. In Kamakura they had met a man who was pregnant with twins,
and his family also very likely had the same claim as the Fujiokas, but Dee was certain the man was
not even remotely related to him. There were several branches of that original family, which had
splintered off into other branches over time, and they all had the twin gene. All of them were not
Fujiokas. And while all the men who had twins were revered, it was more a quiet respect of meeting
such men and not a country putting them all on a platform to worship and praise.

Sure, his grandfather had some power because of his position and wealth, and even from what he
heard, had connections to the Imperial family, but that did not make him part of the Imperial inner
court. There were also many other CEOs of equally important or successful companies who also had
the same privileges. Again, it did not make Ryoichi Fujioka the most important man in Japan. He
only shared advanced social status and nothing more.

And while he had a great-grandfather and great-uncle who seemed to have actually given the way to
the Carrier gene produced by the Carrier Project, their names were not known by everyone, not even
in Japan. Japanese people might think there were Japanese on the project only because Japan had
agreed to being involved, if only to protect their own secret of men able to conceive and give birth
long before the conception of the Carrier Project. It was also the country’s means of reaching out
with other countries in an attempt to be less secular.

His father – and he was still getting used to thinking that - pulled the van up to a pagoda style
building that served as the entrance. They got out of the van as a valet patiently waited for when he
was able to take the vehicle to a parking lot somewhere on the other side of the event space. Behind
them, Dafydd, who drove back with his family, pulled their family car behind them. It was dark
already, the sun setting while they were at the zoo.

Kimi was waiting for them by the door, holding an electronic pad. She smiled when she saw the van
pull up and walked over to them as Saburo and Sakura got Darin and Ryoko out. Dee turned as he
saw his sister-in-law come up to them. Dee also noticed Dafydd and Momo letting their excited sons
out of their van, attempting to keep them from rushing off somewhere only the boys knew where.

“Hello again, Kimi” Dee said with a smile.

“I am happy to see you again, Dee,” she greeted. “I have good news and bad news for you.” She looked over to include the rest of the family.

“Give us the good news first, kudasai,” Sakura requested.

“Everyone living in Nagoya-shi is confirmed to be here tonight.” Kimi looked at Saburo. “All but one of your brothers and sisters have confirmed, as well as many relatives from Ise and Toshijima. Ojisan Nori is taking the yacht out and will bring anyone who can join from Toshijima and making a stop in Ise to get everyone who is able to come. I have a bus chartered to pick up the passengers near the aquarium. Most of the family in the surrounding Nagoya area will be there tonight.”

“That’s wonderful,” Sakura exclaimed happily. She smiled at Dee. “Nori is one of your father’s older brothers. Everyone wants to meet you, Daisuke. That makes me so happy.” She hugged Dee’s arm as she smiled warmly at him.

“It does look like that,” Dee replied. To Kimi, he asked, “So what’s the bad news?”

She giggled and then replied, “You are going to have to meet and remember the names of approximately 150 great-aunts and great-uncles, aunts and uncles, first, second and even a few third cousins tonight. Have fun.”

Dee paled at the number and looked at his father in fear. This was even more people than who attended the party Ryo’s grandmother threw the week before. The same party where he met a man who looked too much like him not to be a twin. The man who was his twin brother, and that meeting was the reason they were all at this place now, so that Dee could meet the family he never knew he had. Dee looked up at the pagoda. His family, his very Japanese family, who were based in Nagoya. He was born in Nagoya to this very large, but close family that he was removed from when the father he was with as an infant was killed and Dee was left on his own in an alley by a dumpster with no inkling of who he really was and where he was from.

All his life, he never really considered what his true nationality was, raised as American in New York City, and taking on Mother’s Irish heritage as his own. It helped that Mother’s family had taken him in as one of their own, especially after Mother was able to adopt him. At least he allowed some
Japanese culture in, especially after his five years living in Yokohama enough to know it helped shape the man he was today, but even then, he never considered himself Japanese. He had too much respect for the culture to do so, knowing he was always going to be gaijin.

Turns out he’s not as gaijin as he thought. Well, as long as he didn’t listen to his grandfather, who if he did listen, then he was very gaijin. Except for his grandfather, the rest of his very Japanese family did not consider him as such. They knew he was American, not just in thought, but in citizenship. He preferred to keep Dee Lane Laytner-MacLean as his name. He also knew that it was too many years since the deadline for him to take back his Japanese citizenship that he was born with and would never have the chance again. Even if the idea did pop in his mind here and there over the last week, it was far too late to be a Japanese citizen, even if he was half-Japanese. It was a good thing he felt he wanted to remain American, a native New Yorker, because the choice was taken from him on his 22nd birthday. Which back then, he had no idea when exactly that was.

Despite it all, this family still considered him one of their own and because of that, not gaijin. No, the Fujiokas had too much family pride to every consider him that. Except his grandfather, whose family pride ran in a different direction and for that, would always consider him as such.

The week before, his world had shifted drastically by meeting a twin brother he never knew he had. His world had continued to shift and change during the week he got to know his twin more and learn about a family he never knew he had. That day he felt the ground moving from beneath him as he met a man he had once believed he never wanted to meet, and then started to feel things for his biological father that he never had imagined he would. Everything he had believed about his birth parents had been ripped from him, replaced with the truth, about two fathers who had loved him very much, and he still had one of those fathers, who never forgot him, never stopped loving him, and was so very glad and thankful to have Dee back in his life, no matter which name or nationality Dee choose to go by.

And now he felt as if whatever was left of his life before coming to Japan come crashing down on him as he learned that he was about to meet 150 relatives who among the older ones also did not forget him and still loved him, along with younger members who were told stories of his four short months with this family. They were all excited and anxious to meet him, obviously dropping whatever plans they might have had for a Sunday evening to converge upon this place to welcome him back to the family.

Dee’s mind felt as if it was going to explode. It was all very good, thankfully, but it didn’t lessen the impact of shock he felt once he realized what meeting Dafydd and agreeing to meet with his biological father meant. It meant what was facing him that evening.

Saburo hugged Dee and with his other arm, patted his jacket pocket. “At least you have your notes that Momo gave you in Tokyo.”
Ryo started to laugh as he took a picture of Dee and Saburo. “Wait until Mother sees the pictures from tonight!” he exclaimed.

“Daisuke, are you okay?” Saburo asked in concern as Dee paled more and started to shake a little.

“Yeah. Just give me a moment.” He shook his head, allowing his father to continue holding him in a comforting and supporting way. “Sheesh. The very few times I actually thought about my birth family, I imagined two parents, maybe a sibling or two and that’s it. I know better now about how families worked from when I was younger, especially knowing Mother’s family, and then Ryo’s family. Yet all this week, even with this,” Dee pulled out the memo pad, “I didn’t imagine that many people. This is all just a list of names.” He shrugged. “It could be a telephone book for all intents and purposes, but tonight most of these names are going to become faces. People I should know, send holiday cards and gifts to. Real people who are actually related to me. Blood relatives.”

Sakura was rubbing his back. “I know. It’s overwhelming. Sometimes at family gatherings I still get overwhelmed at the number. And this is a close-knit family regardless of the number. You’re going to have to face them eventually.”

“I know, and I do want to. I’m not about to go running off, so don’t worry about it. You’re right, I just got overwhelmed and came damn near close to hyperventilating at the thought.”

“Keep in mind that this is basically only the local family,” Dafydd reminded him. “Everyone who lives in or around Nagoya. At least everyone won’t be arriving all at once. I hope.”

Dee chuckled. “I hope so too.” He looked at Ryo. “This is last Saturday night all over again. Except it’s my family this time. Something that before the party last Saturday I didn’t know I had.”

Ryo let out a nervous laugh. “Also, it’s about twice the number of relatives than who were at the party last week. And as you said, this time, they are all yours.” Ryo gave Dee a smile.

“At least you won’t be meeting me or Dafydd for the first time again,” Momo said with an encouraging smile.

Dee laughed and squeezed the bridge of his nose. He took a deep breath and centered his mind. He had been doing a lot of that during the day. He was by no means a Zen type person, but he did learn a few quick techniques to quickly still turbulent emotions enough to remain focused and calm, when
he felt so inclined in using them. It had helped him over the years, especially on the job. It had saved his, Ryo’s and even other’s lives, including Bikky, many times. Now he found he needed to use them before meeting the majority of his blood family for the first time.

“Crisis over for now,” he assured his father. “I'm good. You might as well get me in position to greet all these people coming tonight.”

“Perhaps you would like to call your mother and speak to her for a few minutes?” Saburo asked.

Dee had to love the man even more, for already understanding that much about him, and not only seeing, but respecting the special bond he had with the woman who to Dee was his mother in all ways except in giving birth to him. That particular honor went to the man who was now holding him and seeing what might be best for his son.

Dee shook his head. “No. Thank you for suggesting it, but besides the fact that she should still be sleeping, which I know she would not have a problem with if I did call her, but if I did, it will be much longer than a few minutes.” He smiled at his father. “We’d never get on with greeting this family of ours. So, it’s much better that I hold off, and talk to her about my great evening meeting everyone after.” He hugged Saburo. “Besides, you are helping. A lot. Thank you.”

Saburo smiled warmly, his eyes filling with tears again. “I am pleased to hear that.”

Dee took another deep calming breath. “So, with that out of the way, bring on the masses. I mean, the family.” He gave a cocky grin, which made everyone around him laugh.

“Then follow me,” Kumi said with a smile.

“If there comes a time tonight when you need to go and catch your breath, then do so. We’ll understand. Find your husband or one of your children and find somewhere quiet for a few minutes or call your mother. She should be up by then,” Saburo said as they entered the ground floor of the pagoda. “There are plenty of spots around here to get a moment’s quiet during festivities.”

Kimi explained to the newcomers that they were in the reception area. Guests checked in and then were escorted to the location where their party was being held. Because their dinner was the only party that night, none of their reception people were working, and Kimi planned to handle the incoming guests. Kimi also told them that on the levels above them were smaller party spaces.
“We opened the tea house and the pavilion next to it by the pond,” Kimi stated. “I’m hoping that you know where to go, so I can stay here and direct everyone else,” she said to Saburo.

“Yes, enough of us know where it is,” Saburo replied. “Thank you for taking care of things here. We’ll see you soon?”

She held up the tablet. “Just as soon as the last person arrives, I’ll be there.”

As Saburo led the group out of the pavilion on the other side, they entered what indeed looked like a park with several buildings. Traditional looking buildings were spread out around a pond in the center of the space. The pond was much larger than the one at his grandparents’ home, and also had a bridge going across the middle. In the pond with some lily pads many koi swam about. It was a perfect location for a photo op.

Dee grasped Ryo’s hand as they walked around the pond. “What’s up?” Ryo asked.

“All these red bridges, it makes me think about our wedding,” Dee replied. “Which reminds me, we didn’t show my family any photos from it, and I know we both made sure we have some on our phones.”

“Yeah, we do,” Ryo admitted. “Dafydd and Momo saw them. Remember?”

“Oh yeah. I think the tori gate will be a hit too,” Dee said. “Especially with this family.”

Ryo started to laugh. “Figures. You have a Catholic nun for a mother and an uncle who is a priest in New York, and an uncle and brother who are Shinto priests, and cousins who are Shinto priestesses in Japan. That’s a lot of clergy in your family.”

“Don’t forget the High Priestesses in Ireland,” Dee added, also laughing.

“Who is a High Priestess?” Yoshio asked, who was walking next to them, “and why are you holding back wedding photos?”

“The Lanes, my mother’s family in Ireland, are Wiccan and there are a couple of certified High
Priestesses in that family,” Dee replied. He took out his phone and quickly scrolled through the gallery. “Wedding photo,” he said, holding out his phone.

Yoshio looked at it and started to smile. “Saburo, Okāsan, look at this!” He handed his phone to Saburo.

“Is this from your wedding ceremony?” Saburo asked, showing his mother.

“Our wedding,” Dee replied with a nod.

“That’s a tori,” Yoshio stated, pointing at the photo.

“Yes, that is,” Dee said with a smile. “We had a tori by the altar. There are other photos from the ceremony, including the procession.”

“I see Japanese charms on the canopy,” Saburo stated. “And cherry blossoms. There is a lot of Japanese in your wedding.” He smiled at Dee.

“You weren’t married in a church?” Sakura asked, seeming surprised.

“We thought about it, but even if same sex marriages are legal in America, the Catholic church still frowns down on it. We could have had a priest perform the ceremony, but the diocese would look down on him and do what they can to make him step down. Father Pat does a lot of good work for not only his church, but the community the church is in. He understands the mixed heritages of his congregation, and their needs. After speaking with my mother on our concerns, she suggested a handfasting and gave us the name of a high priestess who once had worked at the orphanage. Once we started planning the handfasting, since it wasn’t directed for Wiccans, we decided to add ourselves in it. Ryo’s parents had a bridge and a tori at their wedding, and it meant a lot to him to have the same.” Dee shrugged. “Since I was partial to Japanese culture, and was no stranger to shrines, I agreed and we added a few Shinto elements to the wedding, because I knew Ryo was partial to it.” He grinned at Ryo.

Ryo laughed. “What he means is that I’ve also claimed to have beliefs but not to adhere to one religion. Which is true for the most part.”

“But for the most part, he’s Shinto,” Dee added.
“I lean more toward it at times,” Ryo admitted, “but not exclusively.”

“We can accept that,” Sakura said, smiling kindly at Ryo. “We do not judge. I would love to see more of your wedding photos, of both the ceremony and reception, but even if you had access, we do not have time right now. Here we are, and there is Tomoko.”

“It does make me happy to see some Japanese in Daisuke’s wedding ceremony,” Saburo said joyfully.

“Obāsan, Dee and I agreed to exchange wedding videos. We’re hoping that maybe we can watch them together before they go back to Japan. You are invited, as well as Papa and Chichi, if you like,” Dafydd said.

“I would like very much,” his grandmother exclaimed with a smile. “Tell me when if you can do it, even if in Tokyo. I will be there.”

“So will I and Yoshio,” Saburo said, also smiling.

Tomoko came over to them and hugged first Dee, and then her fathers, grandmother and everyone else.

“This is some place you have here,” Dee commented looking around. “This is the tea house, I suppose.”

“Yes, it is,” Tomoko replied. “A bit more windows than a traditional tea house, but for events, guests prefer a nice view of the outside. I have the food and drinks set up in the tea house, along with tables to sit, and the pavilion has a bar and the karaoke machine. It’s a good place to dance.” She looked at her father. “I thought since it’s a nice night that we can have mingling and dancing outdoors. We even have some seating there too. And of course, people can walk around the pond.”

“I see you also have all the lights on,” Saburo stated, looking around in satisfaction.

Colorful paper lanterns hung from wires along the edge of the pond, making the space seem more festive. LED lights were strung around the bases of some trees, and others the lights strung through
the branches. There were also black iron lamp posts that looked like flames flickering within the lamps. Lights reflected on the water in the pond.

Dee thought that if they had such a place like this in New York when they were looking for wedding venues, it would have been at the top of his list. Even above Bridgewaters, because this was absolutely beautiful. He almost envied all the people who had their weddings here.

Saburo hugged Tomoko and kissed her head. “This girl has a knack for pulling things together last minute. They were already doing well when they just had a small office and contracted other facilities, but when they moved operations here, her and Kimi became the best event coordinators in Nagoya. I’ll bet she can even give the ones in Tokyo a run too.”

Tomoko blushed at her father’s compliments. “It’s just something I enjoy doing,” she said humbly.

“And you do it very well,” Yoshio said proudly. “What do we have for food?”

“You know, I’m looking at this and can’t help comparing to Sharon,” Ryo said. “And I don’t think even Sharon could pull off something like this in the few hours Tomoko and Kimi had. I’m impressed. Can we convince you to do some events in New York?”

Tomoko laughed and smiled at Ryo. “I’m afraid I can’t bring the Park with me, but if there’s something that important, we’ll be glad to help out. Who is Sharon?”

“She was our wedding coordinator,” Dee replied. “She had about 3 weeks to pull together our wedding, and we did end up with much more than we expected for the time we had. That makes me afraid to ask what you could do in three weeks,” he said to his sister.

“We do have a website and you can see pictures of different events and we do put how long we had to make it happen,” Tomoko said. “As for tonight, it wasn’t a big deal.” She shrugged. “I managed to call a favor from a friend, and we have food and a wait staff here tonight. It’s buffet, but we have local favorites, and some other foods. We also have takoyaki, ikayaki and okonomiyaki stations with someone making the foods for the next two hours.”

“Yum!” Bikky exclaimed.

“You better have one person making them just for Bikky,” Ryo quipped with a laugh.
“There will be plenty, don’t worry. Bikky, did you get to try tebasaki yet?” Tomoko asked.

“Yes. In Nagoya it’s more oishii than what we can get in New York. I can’t wait for more,” Bikky replied.

“Good. That makes me happy,” Tomoko said.

Ayaka came out of the tea house and rushed immediately to Dee, to hug him. “We’re going to have so much fun tonight,” she exclaimed and then said hello to the rest of the family. When she got to Carol, she said, “We do karaoke together, yes?”

Carol looked excited and terrified at the same time. “I’m not really that good.”

“You don’t give yourself enough credit, Carol,” Ryo said.

“Where do you want Daisuke and his family to be?” Sakura asked.

“Right here is good. They can greet family as they arrive. Kimi will call me when the last of them check in, and then they can all go in and get some food,” Tomoko replied. “I take it that you made sure they ate at the shrine’s tea house to hold them over until we can let them get dinner?”

Dee and Ryo started to laugh as Sakura smiled and nodded her head. “I made sure they were all prepared for this.”

Which explained all the platters of food that was ordered at the tea house, despite her knowing that they had a good lunch before going to Saburo’s house. His grandmother had a smooth way about her. Dee smiled at her. “And here I thought you were showing off the food served at the tea house. I should have known when you insisted on the mochi and matcha before we left. Even after the mochi and matcha we had at your house.” He let out a chuckle. Yes, he really did love this woman who was his grandmother.

Sakura reached up to touch his cheek, tears glittering in her eyes. “I was just making sure you and your lovely family got through this without grumbling bellies. I am glad that Darin and Ryoko got fussy before we left the zoo, so they should be good for a while, yes?”
“Yes, they’ll be good until later,” Dee commented. “They are ready to meet the family now.”

“That’s good.”

“Momo and I will hold the chibis for you,” Dafydd offered. “That will leave you free for any hugs and kisses some family might inflict upon you. Ryo, Bikky and Carol will not be safe. Papa, Chichi and Obāsan will also be getting many hugs of congratulations, so it is best we stay close so they can meet the little ones.”

“What about you?” Ryo asked. “I mean, Dee is the twin that you kept insisting was alive.”

“Yes, I will be getting a lot of attention, but not as much as the rest of you,” Dafydd replied.

“If Dafydd does seem to have trouble holding onto one of the babies with well-wishing relatives, I will gladly take over baby holding duty,” Tomoko offered.

“Wouldn’t you need to be inside getting everyone settled?” Dafydd asked.

“I can manage if needed.” She started to smile. “Or Ayaka can take one.”

Ayaka nodded her head. “I should be able to while filming,” she exclaimed with a huge smile in broken English as she held up a camera. “This should be recorded, nee?” Then in Japanese, she asked Dee, “How was meeting Obaasan and Ojiisan?”.

“I’ll answer part of that question for him,” Sakura replied with a knowing smirk, “just in case Daisuke decides to be too polite for the truth. Your grandfather was his usual self, and of course had things to say about his grandson now being American. Which the poor dear cannot help. He was left alone in New York City with no ID after Alun was killed.” She touched Dee’s arm with a smile. “At least he found his way back to his native country for college. And you speak Japanese very well. I think that did impress my husband. He did welcome Daisuke back to the family.”

“That’s a start,” Ayaka stated. To Dee, she said, “That means you’re in with Ojiisan.”
“So, when he starts making comments about my being American and a half-breed, that’s his way of saying he loves me?” Dee asked sarcastically.

Sakura let out a loud put-upon sigh. “Unfortunately, that is a yes.”

“What about you two?” Dee asked Ayaka and Tomoko. “You’re both full Japanese. You have to be safe.”

Ayaka started to laugh. “Ojiisan thinks that being an idol is a waste of time and an embarrassment to Japan.”

“I was supposed to work for one of the family companies or become a lawyer, and go into politics,” Tomoko answered.

“And yet I found NGY52 and TKY52 CDs in his study, and he did give Tomoko and Kimi the money to build this place on land that the family corporation owns,” Sakura replied. “He’s a strange man like that.”

“Ojiisan also paid for our apartment in Tokyo,” Tomoko said. “Mostly so Ayaka could be in TKY52.”

“There is that, too,” Saburo agreed. “Otōsan made it clear that I wasn’t to worry about them having a nice place to live.”

Dee and Ryo started to laugh. “I’m willing to bet he doesn’t know you found his CDs,” Ryo stated.

“If I did, he would deny buying them, I’m sure. Just knowing that there is a new one every time NGY releases a single with Ayaka on it is good effort,” Sakura said with a wink and a smile.

Tomoko’s phone chimed and she looked at it. “Uncles Takahiro and Shigeru are here, along with Yasu, Fumio, Yuuki and Chouko.”

“Of course, Takahiro would be here early. Shigeru is Takahiro’s husband,” Sakura explained. “You already met Yasu and Yuuki. Fumio is Yasu’s husband and Chouko is their second youngest.”
“And Uncle Kennosuke is here with Hanako, Azumi, Katashi, and their children. So is Naoki and his family,” Tomoko said. “No surprise that he is also early.”

“Naoki is your brother, right?” Dee asked.

“Our brother, Dee,” Tomoko stated, as Ayaka and Dafydd nodded their heads.

“Our brother,” Dee affirmed.

“It looks like Naoki couldn’t wait to meet his brother,” Saburo said. “He was stuck in auditions. His first. He wants to be a voice actor.”

“Dafydd told me,” Dee said and looked at Bikky. “Bikky watches anime and finds that exciting.”

Bikky nodded his head. “That’s really cool. I hope he gets it.”

“To be honest, he would be lucky to get a role on the first try,” Saburo said, “but Naoki knows that. He has to start somewhere. We do know that he will succeed eventually. For now, he works in the Osu Akaya store.”

“We wish him well,” Sakura stated.

“Here comes the first of the masses,” Dafydd commented, amused. He took Darin from Dee and smiled. “I’m glad I get to just stand by holding a cute baby boy for relatives to ogle at.”

Tomoko went to stand next to Ayaka as she spoke into her phone. She smiled as she watched the family welcome Dee back into the family.

Takehiro approached with his family. His husband, Shigeru, was all smiles as they approached. Dee decided that his grandfather’s brother and his family seemed to be happier about his return than his grandfather. He certainly felt welcomed by Takahiro, Yasu and Yuuki, and judging the smile on his great-uncle by marriage, Shigeru felt the same.
Dee took a step closer to his father and grandmother, making sure Ryo and Bikky moved with him. He looked over at Carol and smiled at her, not wanting her to feel left out, but since she was basically a friend of the family, welcoming and getting to know her would be secondary.

She smiled encouragingly back at Dee as Ayaka motioned for Carol to stand with her and Tomoko. Dee realized that Carol was going to be fine during this.

“That definitely has to be Daisuke!” Shigeru exclaimed as he came over. He was dressed in a blue and pink polo shirt, dress slacks and sports jacket, while Takahiro wore a dark purple dress shirt, black slacks and jacket. “Dafydd, you do have a twin!” He stopped before Dee. Dee started to bow but Shigeru stopped him and pulled him in for a hug. “This is too amazing a situation to go formal. I am Shigeru, Takahiro’s husband, and if you will have me, your uncle.”

“I am honored, Uncle Shigeru,” Dee replied.

“Good! So am I. Honored to meet you, and so happy that you survived and finally found your way back to us. Welcome back. I am pleased to hear that you grew up with a loving mother and have a good life, and a wonderful family of your own.” He hugged Dee again and turned to Ryo and Bikky. “You are Ryo? And Bikky?”

As Sugeru greeted Ryo and Bikky, Takahiro, Yasu and Yuuki came closer. “Hello again, Daisuke,” Yasu replied, now out of her priestess clothes and wearing a beautiful kimono of dark blue and colorful flowers. Her hair was pinned up and adorned with glittering jeweled accessories. She leaned over to kiss Dee’s cheek. “Please meet my husband, Fumio. Fumio, this is Daisuke.”

“Since Dafydd is standing over there with that cute little baby boy that looks like he could be Dafydd or Daisuke’s son, it is obvious that this is Daisuke,” Fumio remarked amused. He was dressed in a green man’s kimono including the jacket.

Ryo was showing off Darin and Ryoko to Takahiro’s husband. Dee smiled as he watched the scene for a moment before looking at Fumio. “Yes, you are right. And that cute little baby boy is my son Darin. I am honored to meet you.”

“And I, you.” Fumio looked around. “I was informed that the baby boy has a twin sister.”

Dee laughed. “Yes, he does. To be honest, we thought I was just having her, so he was a surprise.”
Ryoko is right there with Momo.”

“And that is Ryo and Bikky?”

“Yes, that is.” Dee smiled. “That is my family. Along with Carol.” He pointed over to where Carol stood with Ayaka and Tomoko. They were now joined by a man dressed in a black dress shirt and trousers, with a red tie and red waiter’s apron who had Ayaka’s camera. Apparently, he was recruited to get the event on film, freeing up Ayaka to join Tomoko in introducing Carol to the family.

“Ah, yes I was also informed about Carol. It is good that you extended your family as you did. That makes you and your husband very honorable. That makes me happy.” With a big smile, he held out his hand. “Welcome back to the family, Daisuke. I hope we can get to know each other more.”

“That would be good,” Dee said.

Yasu grabbed onto Dee’s arm and laughed. “Yes, please, because that means we’ll get to know each other more. I was thinking this afternoon. I would really love to get to know that wonderful woman who became your mother and kept you safe. I know she’s a nun, so would she have any trouble meeting me?”

“Hardly,” Dee replied with a laugh. “While she raised me as Catholic, she made sure I was exposed to other religions. She comments occasionally because I don’t attend church regularly, but that’s only because she is a nun, and it’s her duty. But she doesn’t tell me I’m going to hell. I might be Catholic, but I’m a firm believer in praying where I am. I don’t have to be in a church, and she understands that works for me.” He started to grin. “Honestly, I think she’ll get a kick finding out that I have Shinto clergy in my family. She’s a bit of a maverick in her family, anyway. Her family in Ireland are Wiccan, and there are high priestesses in her family.” He shrugged. “I have priestesses in Wicca and Shinto as cousins now.”

“Really? Now I really want to meet her. Fumio, we must plan a trip to New York sometime soon,” Yasu stated.

“Agreed. If Daisuke and his family doesn’t mind,” Fumio said.

“You are always welcome to visit us in New York,” Dee said with a smile. “And I know you coming to visit my mother would thrill her so much.” He looked around and his smile grew.
“Anyone from this family is welcome to join us in New York. We would love it.”

“Even your grandfather?” Sakura asked with a sly grin.

Dee chuckled and nodded. “If he finds it in himself to come visit me and my family, then yes, he is also welcome.”

Sakura hugged her grandson and laughed with joy. “I am so happy to have you back,” she exclaimed, her eyes filling with tears. “Welcome home, my darling Daisuke.” She added, “Yasu, I might join you when you visit Daisuke in New York. I don’t think I can wait until he comes to Japan again once he leaves.”

“You are always welcome to join us, Obasan,” Yasu said to her aunt. She looked at Dee and smiled, “This is also your cousin, our second daughter and Yuuki’s older sister, Chouko.”

“Hello Chouko. I am happy to meet you,” Dee said to the young woman, who looked a couple of years older than Yuuki.

“Welcome home, Daisuke,” Chouko replied with a bow. “It’s very exciting that Dafydd finally found his twin brother. I am happy that everyone was wrong about you being killed with your father.”

“I look forward to getting to know you,” Dee replied with a smile.

“Me too,” Chouko stated enthusiastically with a wide grin.

“Now let’s go and say hello to the rest of Daisuke’s family and free him up for everyone waiting,” Yasu said.

Tomoko chuckled as she came over to stand behind Dee. “I’m afraid that more relatives have arrived. But don’t rush,” she assured Dee. “They understand. You’ve spent practically your whole life away from us. It’s going to take more than a quick hello. Oh, I forgot to mention that I sent out an FAQ based on what I learned during my time at our fathers’ house. It has the answers to the basic questions that would be asked, to save yourself and Ryo from saying the same things all night.”
“That does sound convenient,” Dee replied with a laugh. “Thank you for thinking of that. So, next I suppose.” He smiled at her and turned to Kennosuke.

“This is my family, but first I think someone else is the most excited to meet you. This is your brother, Naoki,” Kennosuke said.

Dee smiled at the young man who had a big smile and was almost bouncing with excitement. Naoki was dressed in dark jeans and a button up mustard yellow shirt and black jacket.

“It really is you, Daisuke!” Naoki exclaimed coming up to Dee and pulling him into a hug. “It’s so great to meet Daisuke’s twin. I didn’t think this would be possible, but here we are. Welcome home, big brother!”

Dee hugged Naoki back with a laugh. “Thank you. It’s great to meet you too. I’ll admit this is something else. I never considered having so many brothers and sisters, but I think I really love it. How did the audition go?” Dee asked.

“They told you?” Naoki said, surprised and blushing a little.

“Of course, they did.” Dee gave his younger brother a bright smile. “I think it’s great.”

“I think I did a good job, but I won’t know until after the call back.”

“You got a call back?” Saburo asked, coming over to hug his son. He managed to also pull Dee into the hug.

“It’s more than I was expecting, so I’m not complaining, Papa.”

“That’s very good. Let me introduce you to Daisuke’s family while he meets his aunt and cousins. There will be plenty of opportunity to get to know your brother, I promise.”

“Before we move on, I want to introduce my husband, Shinkichi, and our twins,” Naoki said, indicating the man who moved closer to the group. He had a double stroller with him.

“Hajimemashite,” Dee replied also with a bow. “It is a pleasure to meet my younger brother’s husband. And family.” Dee smiled as he looked down at the little ones in the stroller.

“These are our twins, Kazuki and Rina,” Shinkichi said, also smiling as he looked down.

“They are 1 year old,” Naoki added.

“And you obviously Carried them,” Dee said to his younger brother.

“How did you guess?” Naoki remarked with a laugh.

“Seems to run in the family, as I learned,” Dee commented. “And it looks like Tomoko is about to run you all over to meet the rest of my family and keep this line going.”

“Looks like it. We’ll talk to you inside,” Naoki stated.

“I’ll talk to you later, Naoki. You too, Shinkichi,” Dee said with amusement, knowing that Saburo was helping in moving things along. He looked back to Kennosuke and noticed there was now a line behind him.

“The relatives from Ise arrived,” Tomoko offered, “along with many others. I guess everyone is so happy to meet you, they aimed to get here right on time. Don’t worry,” she said, patting his back. “Papa, Chichi and I will get you through this as quickly as possible. Then you can talk more inside.”

“You’re the expert, so I’ll follow your lead.”

Tomoko hugged Dee. “I have to admit that I never held a party for something like this before, but I’ll do my best because we all deserve it.”
“I think you’re doing a damn fine job, so keep going,” Dee replied and kissed her head before turning to start meeting the waiting relatives.

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Dee continued to meet relatives for the first time, feeling completely overwhelmed at all the Japanese people who welcomed him home to the family. Reactions upon meeting him ranged from exuberant hugs to very American firm handshakes. Formality seemed to be dropped as excited, happy and even a few disbelieving relatives got to meet the man who was believed to be killed as a child.

When Tsukiko, who was Naoki’s twin, arrived with Tomiji, they were moved to the front of the line. Tsukiko explained that Tomiji picked her up at Nagoya Station, so they could arrive together. Tomiji worked at the GPN headquarters as an assistant operations manager upon graduation from college. He also oversaw customer service and had to go in for a few hours to handle an issue that came up with the Sunday shift. Because he came from work, he was still in a black suit and white shirt with black and blue pinstriped tie. He was also being groomed to one day taking over operations as CEO from his grandfather and run the company. Tsukiko was in Osaka for work on Thursday and Friday, but also took advantage to visit family living there and stayed in Osaka for the weekend. She was supposed to return to Nagoya later that evening, but once she got the news, she decided to take an earlier train home. The family she was supposed to spend the afternoon with insisted that she go back to meet her brother.

Tomiji’s twin, Koji, was doing an internship at Ise Jingu, a Shinto shrine complex in Ise. The other famous Carrier Shrine after Hinotsuke Jingu was located in the complex. Koji spend many weekends assisting at one of the many shrines on the complex. Koji also spent some of his weekends and school breaks helping out at the family shrine in Nagoya at times, but that weekend he had decided to stay in Ise and was not among the family who took the boat into Nagoya for the party, claiming he had exams to study for.

The last to arrive was Ryoichi, while everyone was inside the tea house, enjoying dinner while getting to know Dee and his family better. Sakura noticed her husband and with what had to be the first frown of the day for her, went over to him.

When Dee, Ryo, Bikky and Carol entered the inside, the first thing they saw were huge banners on the wall behind the food, one in English and another in Japanese. In Japanese, it said, “Welcome Home, Daisuke”, and in English, “Welcome Home, Dee”. They found out that Ayaka made the signs during the time they were with Sakura. They showed that she had more talent than being able to sing and dance by the lettering and cute manga-style drawings of Dee, Ryo, Bikky, Carol and the twins, along with flowers.
There was a table of honor set up for Dee, Ryo and their kids, along with Dee’s fathers. Being Dee’s twin brother also earned Dafydd a place at the table with Momo and their two sons. The rest of Saburo’s and Yoshio’s children sat at tables with their families close to the table of honor.

For the first half hour, everyone ate, but whenever they went to the food, someone would start talking to them. Toasts were given, and then while there was still food available, it was time for mingling. Dee had a crowd around him with well-wishing siblings and other relatives. Ryo also had people coming up to him. Bikky and Carol attempted to gravitate to the under 18 crowd, along with Ayaka, but Dee’s relatives were also interested in knowing Bikky, and also Carol and would come over to ask them questions.

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After dinner, and as the family started to mingle and going up to Dee, Ryo managed to call his grandmother on a video call and showed her what was going on that evening, assuring her that Dee was very much being accepted back into his family.

Akira was thrilled at what she saw on her phone. Ryo also assured her that there was video of their reception line as they greeted Dee’s relatives as they arrived. There would also be more video and photos of the impromptu dinner party.

“That is a very nice place for this party,” Akira observed. “I’m amazed that it was available last minute.”

Ryo laughed. “It helps that one of Dee’s sisters owns this building and the surrounding grounds, and that she had no events planned to tonight. Dee’s sister, Tomoko, owns this beautiful event center and managed to pull together enough food to feed everyone who was able to make it tonight.” He moved closer to the wall with the food and banners. “I’m amazed there is still food left. Not much, but still….“ He laughed. “Ayaka made the banners,” he added.

“How did Carol handle meeting Ayaka?” Akira asked.

“She’s still alive,” Ryo assured his grandmother with a smile. “They are getting along wonderfully. Ayaka keeps saying she wants to do a song with Carol at karaoke tonight. I’ll make sure there is video.”
“You better,” Akira stated. “That looks like a wonderful party for Dei. That makes me so happy.”

“I’ll call you later tonight with more details on the day. I just wanted to check in with you and show you some of the excitement going on around here,” Ryo said.

“I am happy you did. It’s a shame Maria doesn’t have a phone that can do video calls,” Akira stated.

“Unfortunately, no. Not yet. But she might need one, listening to Dee’s father,” Ryo replied with a laugh. “We’re going to have to look into that when we get back to New York, but it might be difficult. Cell phones in America aren’t as advanced as here in Japan. Dee and I made a couple of videos especially for her with some of Dee’s immediate family. We’ll get it uploaded tonight so she could watch it.”

“I know she’s going to love whatever you send her. I’m also glad you’re having a good time. Most important, that Dei is enjoying himself.”

“He gets overwhelmed at times, but he keeps insisting it’s a good thing. He really has a great family who are excited that he’s back with them. Oh oh, more relatives are coming my way. I better go,” Ryo said.

Akira laughed. “For once, it’s you surrounded by Dei’s family. That must be different. I look forward to your call later.”

“I know you do. Good bye, Obāsan,” Ryo said and laughed as he disconnected the call as Sakura came over to him. She had a man and a woman with her that Ryo had not met before.

“Ryo,” Sakura said. “We have some latecomers. This is Masatake and his wife, Naoko. Masatake is the son of my husband’s brother, Hiroyuki.”

“Hajimemashite,” Masatake greeted with a bow. “Forgive us. We missed the boat and had to drive to Nagoya.”

Both Masatake and Naoko looked to be around Ryo’s age, but after meeting so many of Fujioka’s, Ryo could not be sure if they were actually his age, or just looked younger than their age. Afterall,
Dee’s father looked to be an older brother instead of father. It seemed to be an ongoing theme with many of the Fujioka family they had met that day.

“Hajimemashite,” Ryo returned, also bowing. “I am very happy you are here to meet my husband, but that had to be a long drive,” Ryo replied.

Masatake waved it off. “It’s not so bad. It would have taken us less time if we were able to make it to the harbor in time, but we could not miss being here tonight.”

“It was so exciting meeting Daisuke,” Naoko exclaimed. “And your babies are so kawaii! It makes me want to have another.”

“We’ll talk about that,” Masatake commented, the look on his face making Ryo bite back a laugh.

“Who were you talking to?” Sakura asked.

“My grandmother. I’ve been texting her during the day, but I thought she’d get a thrill seeing this party. She knows Dee is in good hands with his family now.” Ryo smiled at Sakura.

“Oh, I hope you didn’t hang up because of us. I wish you were still talking so I could say hello to her,” Sakura said.

With a smile, Ryo said, “I’m sure you’ll be speaking to her very soon.”

“I do hope so.”

Ryo joined Sakura, Masatake and Naoko as they started to roam around, stopping to talk to various well-wishing relatives.

Around 8:30, Ryo found himself across the room from Dee, both still surrounded by relatives. Ryo decided he needed to excuse himself and make his way over to Dee, because his husband was getting the look as if he was completely overwhelmed. He hid it well behind a smile and answering
questions, but Ryo knew Dee well enough to know better. Dee was finally reaching his limit and was in desperate need of a time out. Before Ryo had a chance, he saw Saburo go over to Dee, and start extracting him from the others. He said something to the relatives, who all nodded and gave them space so Saburo could lead Dee out of the tea house. As other relatives came that way, Ryo watched as Saburo politely kept them away until he was out the open door with Dee.

Ryo decided right then and there that he absolutely loved his new father-in-law. The man had just met Dee earlier that day after not seeing him since Dee was four months old, and already Saburo was able to see what the other relatives did not, that Dee needed a break to catch his breath. It also told Ryo just how much Saburo loved and cared for his son. Even without Dee in his life for over thirty years, he never stopped loving his son, and now he was able to bestow that love on his very alive son.

With a smile, Ryo excused himself and started toward the door. He noticed Saburo and Dee sitting at a bench along the pond. Saburo had his arm around Dee’s shoulders and it looked like the two men were talking.

Ryo slipped off to the side, to avoid any relatives who might wander outside and watched the scene, wanting to give father and son some alone time. Ryo realized that it had to be the first time since they showed up at the house that father and son had a chance to be alone. He decided to let them be and be a diversion for anyone who might want to go over to Dee.

The two sat for a while before they hugged and started to stand up. As they started to make their way back to the building, Ryo came out of the shadows.

Dee smiled when he saw Ryo and waved him over.

“So, there you two are,” Ryo commented casually. He grinned a little when Dee gave him a look that said he knew otherwise.

They knew each other that well, that Dee knew he didn’t just find them.

Dee put his arm around his father and stated, “Papa noticed that I was getting overwhelmed and decided get me away from the excited relatives for a while. Then once we got here, we realized that we never had time alone until then.”

Noticing Dee finally referencing his father as “Papa”, they must have had a very good talk. He made
a note to make sure they had more father and son time alone, maybe even let Dafydd in at times.

“That’s good. I didn’t think of it until now,” Ryo said.

“I was just so excited when Dafydd told me the news, I had to share it with the family. With this family, that meant gathering for dinner. And of course, Daisuke had to meet his siblings, and his grandparents. My mother would never have forgiven me if I kept the news to myself for longer than a few minutes.”

“That’s all very understandable,” Ryo said. “Even I got caught up in meeting Dee’s family, especially such a wonderful one like this. I get the feeling that you’re all very close.”

“There are some who are much closer than others, but yes, we stick together. There are some exceptions, but every family has that. Thank goodness there are only a few in our family,” Saburo replied. He wiped his eyes. “Forgive me, but I am still emotional. I cannot believe that Daisuke is here.”

Dee hugged his father tighter. “It’s okay. Remember what I said. I know you have the business to run, but I also have a unit to run, too. I’ll make time even if for a few days to come see you every two or three months, but you have to come to New York in between that time. And of course, Yoshio-san is very welcome to join you.”

“Understood, Daisuke.”

“Ryo, I hope you don’t mind, but I promised my father that we’ll stay at his house tomorrow night, and we can leave from there for Ise and Toshijima.”

“That’s fine with me,” Ryo stated. “I already told you that I’m willing to change plans so you can get to know your family better.”

“We’ll check out tomorrow morning and go to his house. Then Papa will take us sightseeing until it’s time to see Ayaka perform,” Dee explained.

“I have a very high-tech computer in my den that you can use for your work meeting tomorrow night. Dafydd and I will make sure you get back in time to make the meeting,” Saburo offered.
“That’s very kind of you. Thank you,” Ryo said.

“We better get back inside before they come out looking for us with torches,” Dee joked, making Ryo and Saburo laugh.

Saburo moved away from Dee. “Before we do, this is the first time that I have time with you without a crowd. It is my wish that we can also sit down, just the two of us, and talk some. You are my son’s husband, and I can tell he loves you very much. I want to know you better.” He hugged Ryo. “Welcome to the Fujiokas, Ryo. As I told Daisuke, I’m sure you’re going to find us very fascinating.”

“I can see that this is a great family. It reminds me much of my own. The Japanese family, that is. My dad’s family is kind of splintered.”

“I want to hear more on both of your families,” Saburo stated.

“Anything you want to know, I’ll tell you,” Ryo agreed. “The good and the bad.”

“Good. Very good. And Bikky. I would like to learn more about his life before he came to you. To know that is to fully understand him, even if I see he is now in a very loving home with two good fathers.”

“You can ask him whatever you want,” Ryo said.

“That’s what Daisuke said. You won’t allow him to forget his parents.”

“We’re here now, but that’s only because his parents cannot be,” Ryo stated.

“You are good parents. For Bikky and your twins. I can see he doesn’t feel pushed aside as the adopted kid. He knows he is, but you treat him as if he’s as precious as the two you conceived.” He looked toward the door and laughed. “And here come the torches.”
Ryo looked behind him to find Tomoko, Dafydd, Ayaka and Bikky coming toward them.

“I’m going to be releasing the family to the pavilion for karaoke and dancing,” Tomoko said with a knowing smile. “Or should I find a reason to keep everyone in the tea house for a while more?”

“We’re good,” Saburo said. “Yes, it is karaoke time.” He looked at Dee and Ryo. “You do karaoke, do you?”

Dafydd and Bikky started to laugh as Dee and Ryo grinned.

“You have to give Ryo a push but when he gets up there, he’s good,” Dee replied. “Meanwhile I seem to keep finding songs I want to sing.”

“Do you know any Japanese songs?” Saburo asked.

“Dee was a Japanese idol!” Tomoko exclaimed. “Dafydd told me.”

Ayaka stood next to Dafydd, grinning widely. It was obvious Dafydd had already informed her that she wasn’t the only famous Fujioka.

Dee looked horrified. “I wasn’t an idol,” he denied.

“Dee, you were in Daigaku Dudes. That makes you an idol. You had two very big singles,” Ayaka exclaimed.

Saburo looked at Dee in amazement. “Daigaku Dudes? You were in Daigaku Dudes?” He started to laugh. “Oh, Ayaka, I’m sorry but you’re not the only idol in our family.”

“I wasn’t even the first,” Ayaka said with a laugh.

“Dafydd!” Dee exclaimed. “You told them?”
“I had to. You weren’t going to keep that a secret forever. Not in this family. I was just waiting for the right moment to tell them, because I knew you weren’t.”

Dee covered his face and groaned.

“When Obāsan sends me and Momo the videos, we can all watch them together,” Dafydd said. “From their early days before they became famous.” Then he added for his father, “I mean Ryo’s grandmother.”

“Yes, I would love to watch them,” Saburo stated.

“Me too!” Tomoko said.

“And me. Don’t forget me!” came from Ayaka. “Now I need to find the videos on You Tube to watch their appearances for the single.”

“Papa was caught going around the house, singing the Japanese version,” Tomoko said with a giggle.

“With all of you playing it all the time, I had no choice,” Saburo replied with a grin. “Good thing it’s a very good song. Makes it easier when it gets stuck in your head.”

Ryo started to chuckle, even after Dee’s glare went from Dafydd to Ryo. “Dee doesn’t like to talk about it,” Ryo said. “But maybe we can get him to sing ‘It’s Gonna Be Me’ during karaoke?” He smirked at Dee.

Ayaka clapped her hands while Tomoko let out a little happy sound. “Oh, that would be so wonderful!” Tomoko exclaimed with a huge smile. “Please Dee!”

“Yes, please Dee,” Ayaka stated. “I would love to be able to watch you sing live. You were my favorite, you know.”

“Mine too!” Tomoko added.
“That would be very enjoyable, Daisuke. I’m also looking forward to it.” Saburo had a very big and proud smile as he looked at his son.

“You don’t want to get Papa upset,” Dafydd said with a grin. “He’s already all weepy today. We shouldn’t make it worse.”

“I’m going to throttle you,” Dee said to Dafydd with a growl.

Dafydd laughed for a reply. “I love you too, brother.”

“Sorry, can’t say it back to you right now. Because of you I’m going to have to get up and sing that song.”

“Yes, you do,” Ayaka said, laughing happily.

“Fine. Fine. I’ll do it, but I’m not used to singing it alone, so Dafydd and Ryo, you’re going to back me up. If either of you say no, you’ll have to explain why I’m not singing it to the fangirls and fanboys.”

Ryo looked at Dafydd. “I think I can pull off backing vocals. Dee’s going to have to do the lead anyway.”

“Yuki sings some of the lines,” Dee pointed out. “And since he’s not here with us, one of you will have to take it on.”

Ayaka raised her hand. “Yuki? Is that Y? Because I know that song inside out. I can do Y’s lines.”

Ryo and Dafydd started to grin. “I can handle backing vocals,” Dafydd said to Ryo. “And I think Ayaka helping with lead is great. Our two big celebrities singing together.”

Saburo hugged Dee and reached out to pull Ayaka in too. “We have been honored with having two big idols. I really would love to see you two do that song. That would be another great gift given to
me on this day.”

Dee finally had to chuckle. “What will Carol say when she sees Ayaka doing a song with me?”

“She’ll get her chance to sing with me,” Ayaka said. “I promised her.”

“She’s sweating right now, even if she’s really excited about it,” Ryo said.

“I think I’ll hold off and let some of the family have their turns first,” Dee said. “Then we can do ‘It’s Gonna Be Me’.” Dee gave Dafydd an evil grin. “And then you can start picking which TUBE song you want us to do. That will also be a gift for Papa.”

“TUBE? You know TUBE songs?” Saburo asked, getting more excited.

“They are one his favorite groups,” Ryo stated. “He made me a fan.”

“And he also sings ‘J-Boy’, Papa,” Dafydd offered. “Daigaku Dudes did it at the party in Tokyo.”

“You are my son!” Saburo exclaimed happily. “Tomorrow, we must talk music.”

“Yes, we can,” Dee agreed. “Among other stuff.”

“Good.”

“I guess I can let the happy crowd head to the pavilion,” Tomoko said. “There will still be food out, so everyone can wander between both areas.”

“Maybe you and Papa can do ‘J-Boy’,” Dafydd stated.

“Yes! We are!” Saburo exclaimed happily.
As they headed for the doors, Dee pushed Dafydd and said low, “You are so dead.”

“That would be you. At least until today,” Dafydd remarked.

Dee smacked him, causing Dafydd to laugh and put his arm around Dee’s waist. Dee grinned and joined Dafydd with laughter.

“They act as if they have been brothers all their lives,” Tomoko said to Ryo, amused.

“We have been,” Dee commented with a grin. “But we get to act like it only in the last week.”

“True,” Dafydd agreed.

“Still, when you least expect it, I am so getting back,” Dee said.

Saburo and Ryo started to laugh, joined by Ayaka and Tomoko as they went inside.

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Chapter 34

Chapter Summary

Dee continues to meet his family, and learns a little more about his grandfather.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

Higashiyama Event Center

Higashiyama, Nagoya

Japan

November 5, 2006

Ryo had wandered from the pavilion to sit by the pond. He was still able to hear the various Fujioka family members singing. For the most part, there weren’t very many who had no business singing into a microphone in front of a group of people. Dee and Ayaka weren’t the only ones of Saburo’s children who could sing well; they were just the only ones who happened to get chances to record. It might also be possible that the two were just a little bit better than the rest of singers in the family. But then, Ryo might be a bit biased when it came to Dee.

He realized that he needed a break and wrap his head around the events of the day. He was prepared, along with Dee, that if Saburo wanted to meet Dee that there would be some family showing up. Dafydd did mention that probably most of the family would show up by evening, but Ryo didn’t think so. It meant people dropping plans at the last minute. Dee also did not believe there would be so many relatives showing up. Dee had his moments during the evening, but his biggest problem was realizing that he had a very large biological family who was very close and loving. It also affirmed that Dee was far from unwanted with so much family who showed up that night to see him and welcome him home. Ryo was so happy for Dee, that it did overwhelm him at times. He was finally taking a moment to take a deep breath before going back to the happy celebrating family.

He was gazing out at the pond, his eyes going to the bridge. It was a typical Japanese bridge painted red. There were many bridges like that in Japan, and they had seen a couple so far on their vacation. And like this one, they all reminded Ryo of his wedding to Dee. Many of Dee’s relatives have seen the pictures and seemed to be excited that while most of his life, Dee was American, he still had
Japanese elements in his wedding. Of course, it helped that Dee had ended up marrying a Japanese-American.

He heard someone come up behind him and turned around to find Ryoichi Fujioka. Ryo bowed to the older man, knowing he was the only one in the family who seemed to demand traditional respect. In response, Ryoichi just bowed his head.

“MacLean-san,” the older man started. “We need to talk.”

Ryo could not read the man’s face, but suddenly felt uncomfortable. The other times during the evening when he found himself face to face with Dee’s grandfather, Dee’s grandmother was with him, at the least. He was mostly non-verbal at the time, grunting or nodding his head in agreement. Most of the nods were when Sakura glared at him after saying something she was certain her husband did not agree with. He hardly had used any of the usual remarks Japanese would make while someone talked as a way to acknowledge they were listening.

“I’m willing to answer any questions you might have,” Ryo replied respectfully, willing to give the old man a chance now that they had a chance to talk alone, but he also prepared himself just in case.

“Let us walk.” Ryoichi started to walk along the pond, leading them away from the pavilion and tea house.

They walked in silence for a couple of minutes and suddenly, Ryoichi stated, “I did some research on you and your families. I need to be careful who we bring into the family. I also need to watch out for my grandson’s well-being.”

“Forgive my bluntness, Fujioka-san, but your grandson’s well-being has been doing fine without you. It is true that he seems much happier than he normally is now that he has met his biological family, but he had done very well before today.”

Ryoichi waved Ryo’s reply off. “That is good, but he has us now, and Saburo might not realize, but our family has enemies who would love to siphon the family fortune. Surely you have to appreciate because of your families.”

Ryo shrugged. “My grandmother’s money is hers. It has nothing to do with me. She did help me out here and there but that’s it.”
“Your grandmother does not concern me. Aoki is a good name, as is Hashimoto, and both of Aoki-san’s businesses are among our priority accounts. What does concern me is my grandson, a Fujioka, going by the name MacLean. You are Franklin MacLean II’s grandson.”

Ryo let out a heavy sigh. “My grandfather did have an issue with Carriers, but he was never a part of the ACC.”

“He might as well be. His companies had No-Carriers policies that could result in separation from the company, putting Carriers out of work. Health benefits obviously do not include any Carrier specific health issues. And that also sends out a message of hatred.”

“Agreed,” Ryo said. “Dee and I have experienced the intolerance at one of the hotels on our honeymoon, but thankfully it was a case of the hotel management not accepting the change of policy.” Ryo started to smile. “He had actually purchased the hotel to be part of the new hotel group that he had given to Dee and me when the twins were born.”

“Your grandfather only changed policy because he was giving it to you.”

“My grandfather gave the hotel chain to me and my Carrier husband who had just given birth to twins, who my grandfather also had named the family heirs. I am not sorry to inform you, Fujiokasan, but not only does your grandson go by Laytner-MacLean and sometimes answers to just MacLean, but your great-grandchildren are MacLean heirs. It sounds like your research did not include my grandfather’s change of view on Carriers once he accepted Dee into the family. He has since changed where he concentrates charitable efforts to assist Carriers, and is very pro-Carrier these days. He loves those two babies so much, and will do anything to make it a safer world for them. He also has fully embraced Dee. He is helping Dee start up a real estate business. Oh, Dee will deny what it really is, but listening to them talk, I know that is what Dee really wants but is still in denial stage.”

“The name MacLean is still associated to anti-Carrier sentiments. He has done Carriers wrong for far too long in his life that his recent efforts will erase easily. Should he continue, maybe in ten or twenty years, the name won’t be so tarnished. And now my grandson is going by that name. A Fujioka! My eldest grandson! Our family has pride in being one of the first Carrier families. Besides communications, I run a company that does what it can to assist Carriers in places where there are strong Anti-Carrier sentiments.”

“My grandfather is very much involved in Carrier Rights these days. He recently donated money toward a building where we are going to offer shelter to Carriers with no place to go. He donated money to the City of New York to help with more resources for Carriers.”
“That’s good to know, but there are still decades of damage he still needs to undo. I cannot allow my grandson to go by such a tarnished name,” Ryoichi remarked.

“First, I need to point out that my grandfather never went out of his way to harm Carriers or to discriminate. He just didn’t feel they belonged in our family but has since changed his mind. Second, it was Dee’s choice to go by Laytner-MacLean,” Ryo said. “I did offer that we go by Laytner, but he preferred we go by both of our names. He insisted that the main name should be MacLean because it is my family’s name, my father’s name, while Laytner was a name given to him fashioned after the man he grew up seeing as his father, but it wasn’t a family name.”

“He has a family name now. Why not go by Fujioka? It is a very fine name.”

“I agree it is, but that will be for Dee to decide if he wants to take on the name Fujioka.”

“I will make sure that he does,” Ryoichi stated firmly.

Ryo could not help the smirk as he studied the older man before him. “You do not know your grandson yet. And as much as he is enjoying today and happy to get to meet his father, he still does not know any of you except for Dafydd that well yet. Even Dafydd is still too new to him to be making any drastic life changes, except for allowing his family to be part of his life.”

“Then drop the MacLean and use Laytner until Dee decides to take on the name that is his birthright and his heritage.”

Ryo pointed at Ryoichi, even knowing to Japanese, it was considered rude, and he did not care. “Right there is also another reason why he would not take Fujioka right now. You refuse to call him by his given name, the one that your son named him, then why should he take his last name?”

Ryoichi stared at the finger and then shrugged. “Once he goes by Fujioka, I will consider calling him Daisuke. It will depend on other decisions he is bound to make now that he has found his way back to us. I do not deny that Dee is my grandson, and as his grandfather, I am bound to make sure he finds his position in our family. Daisuke and Dafydd should have been the family heirs. They were when they were born, being the first male twins born to my son, who was also the firstborn of the first male twins born to me. But once we believed that Daisuke was dead, Dafydd could not retain the honor. I had to wait until Saburo finally had another set of male twins to name new heirs. If he did not, then Kennosuke’s first born twins would have been named to carry on the family legacy. However, ours is a very important family and there are obligations and responsibilities to uphold.” He frowned as he stared at Ryo. “Going by the name MacLean goes against those responsibilities.”
Ryo started to open his mouth to argue again that his grandfather was now very much Pro-Carrier and was using his money to help Carriers in need, but Ryoichi started talking before Ryo got a word out.

“I have no quarrel against my grandson marrying you. I would prefer if he had married a full Japanese, but considering he was on his own away from us, raised as an American in New York City, I am surprised and pleased that he did settle with someone from an upstanding Japanese family. I have no problem with Aoki Akira-san and her family. I may even decide to one day sit down with your grandfather and allow him to prove he is not part of the ACC, but until then, I just cannot allow my grandson to go by MacLean.”

“My grandfather may have not cared much about Carriers in the past, but he would never had joined the ACC. He never gave money to organizations who were against Carriers, and never physically harmed any. He just discriminated against any who came to his notice, but never wanted them dead. Yes, I know you’re going to repeat yourself about how discrimination breeds hatred, and hatred can kill Carriers. I can’t not know doing what I do, but that’s small scale compared to those who are jumping on the ACC train. I’ve dealt with injustices against Carriers that went beyond mere discrimination.”

“Is not discrimination now a crime in New York City?” Ryoichi demanded.

“That’s a recent law, but the penalties for just discrimination is much less than other crimes against Carriers. Dee didn’t like my grandfather at first but that’s changed. He trusts him now, and I can tell you that your grandson’s intuition about people can be scary at times. So, if he trusts my grandfather and even works with him on Carrier issues outside our unit, then that says something.” Ryo shrugged. “To be honest, I didn’t start trusting my grandfather until I started to see Dee trusting him.”

“You deny your grandfather giving money to support the ACC?” Ryoichi asked.

“I just said he gives money to Pro-Carrier causes. He even holds fundraisers for Carrier Rights and assistance. No, he would never give to the ACC. He wants nothing to do with them.”

“I do have on good word that there are MacLeans who are supporting, and even in, the ACC. Even if your grandfather is doing good, those in your family who even help that organization tarnishes your family name.”

“I suppose you are unaware of that piece of information?”

“Yes, this is the first that I’ve heard of it.” He let out a heavy sigh. “But it doesn’t surprise me. Some members of the family were put off by my grandparents not only allowing our wedding but giving their blessing to Dee and I getting married. They threatened to annex, but to do so would mean losing what little money was still due to them after my grandmother made some financial changes because of the way some of them acted at our wedding. I am sure once my grandparents hear of this, they will seek out those responsible and make sure there is no more of the family funds going to the ACC.”

“I hope you are right.”

They heard footsteps coming in their direction. He turned to find Dee, Saburo and Sakura walking toward them.

Dee smiled at Ryo, but then looked at his grandfather in concern. Saburo also looked concerned, and judging by Sakura’s face, she was not happy with her husband at all.

As the three stopped by Ryo and Ryoichi, Sakura slipped her arm through Ryo’s and asked, “I hope my husband is not giving you trouble, Ryo.”

Ryo’s eyes shifted to the older man and then smiled down at Dee’s grandmother. “No, not much. He was just interrogating me, being that I am married to his grandson. That is all.”

He bristled inside as Dee’s eyes fixed on him. Dee knew he was lying but would hopefully keep quiet about it until they were alone.

“You could not do that around the rest of the family?” Sakura asked her husband. “Like the rest of the family.”

“You had your chance to speak to our grandson’s husband without the majority of the family around you,” Ryoichi pointed out.

“I did, as would you if you had decided to join us this afternoon instead of coming up with a reason
to have to go to the office.” She squeezed Ryo’s arm reassuringly, and then released his arm to go over to her husband. “It’s karaoke time and you have not yet been up there. It’s time you do.”

“But….”

“It is also near time for Daisuke and Ryo to take their turns. Daisuke is also going to do a song with Dafydd and Saburo. That is going to be wonderful. I just know it,” Sakura continued, not letting her husband have a chance to speak. She started to lead him back toward the pavilion. “Dafydd was telling me about karaoke at Ryo’s family’s parties. Some of the family get dressed and do performances. It sounds like fun. He said that he’ll show us video from last week’s party. Isn’t that exciting? I will bet that some of our family would love to do that once they hear about it.”

Ryoichi let out a grunt and then nodded his head. He glanced back at Ryo. Dee had already moved to Ryo’s side and was watching as Sakura took control of her husband.

“Damn, Grandma can talk,” Dee muttered in English, amazed.

Saburo let out a laugh. “My mother is something else. My father likes to think he’s in charge, but he should know better by now.”

“Did she diffuse something ugly?” Dee asked looking at Ryo in concern.

“If my father said anything offensive, I beg forgiveness. Please understand I would never be so forward and demanding as my father,” Saburo said.

Ryo smiled at his father-in-law, once again reminded that he really like this man and was glad that he was Dee’s natural father. “I’ve heard worse,” Ryo replied and gave Saburo a smile. “But thank you anyway.” He bowed slightly.

Saburo bowed in return, and then waved his hand. “That is not necessary with me. Not for my children and their spouses.”

“I felt it was this time, but unless I feel that I have to show you my respect again, I will respect your wishes,” Ryo replied. He looked at Dee. “Is it about time for you to take the mic?”
Dee let out a laugh. “You, me, Dafydd and Ayaka. Then me and my father. And then, you and me, babe.” He leaned over to lightly kiss Ryo.

Ryo nodded as he smiled at Dee. “That sounds good. Let’s go.”

“Before all that, Ayaka and Carol are going to do a song,” Dee said as the three started back toward the pavilion.

“There is a rumor going around that they are going to get Bikky with them,” Saburo offered, with amusement. “That boy of yours isn’t happy, but he’s not going to stand a chance. Carol has him wrapped around her finger, doesn’t she?”

Dee started to laugh more, Ryo joining him. “Now this is something I have to see,” Ryo said. “And make sure we have video.”

“Bikky believes otherwise, and we let him have his illusions,” Dee remarked with smirk about Carol.

Ryo had to nod in agreement as he laughed along with Saburo.

“Ayaka promised she won’t hit the stage until she sees us there,” Dee commented.

“You have a great sister, Dee. Hell, all your sisters are great, but I’ll have to admit I’m partial to Ayaka. And Tomoko, for pulling this off in the time she had. I didn’t really get much time to talk to Tsukiko, but chances are she’s great.”

“All my sisters are great,” Dee said with a smirk. “Tsukiko came in from Osaka once she heard. She was supposed to be coming back to Nagoya at a much later time but had to be here in time for the party.” He smiled warmly.

“Yeah, you’re a lucky bastard,” Ryo remarked with a smile, making Dee laugh more. “Then there’s Dafydd and your other brothers you met tonight. I just know you’re going to be smug about it, and I can’t blame you.”

Dee did deserve to know what his grandfather had to say, but Ryo decided that the party was not the
When they entered the pavilion, Tsukiko came over asking where they disappeared to. Dee chuckled and made a joke about the event space being so large, they got lost, which made his half-sister smile and laugh, agreeing with him. They learned that Naoki got married there, and how she planned to have her wedding there too when she finally found someone to marry, and how Dafydd and Momo planned to have a party for their 10th anniversary there because they were married before Tomoko and Kimi opened the place. Jirou also had married before it opened. Dee casually mentioned renewing their vows for their 5th anniversary there, which Ryo looked surprised at first, but then nodded in agreement. Then Tsukiko suggested they have the ceremony for their 1st anniversary so Dee’s family could be part of it. Both Dee and Ryo agreed that it was something to consider. It would also mean having more of Ryo’s Japanese family who could not make it to New York for their wedding.

“The shrine is more oriented toward males conceiving and giving birth to many healthy babies, so we do not have many marriage ceremonies there,” Saburo explained. “But many Naming Ceremonies and special ceremonies for children are held regularly there.”

Dee smiled, already knowing he and Dafydd had their Naming Ceremony at the shrine. On of the first pictures Dafydd had showed him at the party of them as babies in front of their father’s house was taken when they were leaving for the shrine, with a party at the tea house after.

It felt weird to Dee learning so many facts about himself from before Jess found him in the alley, but he also found contentment in filling in those gaps. In one of the times that Saburo had managed to get Dee to himself for a few minutes, his father had asked about where and how he was found. Once he told his father, he understood what Dafydd had warned him about in Tokyo. He did try to put it in different words than his usual way of describing how he was found, but there really was no nice way to tell someone that their son was found in an alley next to a dumpster in the bitter cold. He saw his father’s heart break just as surely as it did all those years ago when he was first told that his husband and one of his twin infants were killed. Dee allowed his father to hold him as he wept, hugging the older man back. Saburo found strength in holding the child he had thought he lost, and after a few minutes, he started to wipe his tears away, heartbreak being replaced by joy with having his son with him again.

Dee’s memories had started with Maria telling him stories about him since the first time she saw him.
Now there was his biological family giving little tidbits of facts from before then. It was only four months, months that he should not have memories of his own, but at least there should have been stories. He was getting some of those stories from not only the man who had brought him into this world, but from various other older family members.

Until that night, Dee could not say that he felt incomplete, but suddenly as he watched his Uncle Waotaka, one of Saburo’s younger brothers, do a song by B’z, he realized that was starting to feel complete.

Ryo nudged him and pointed in the direction of people near the small stage. Carol was waving to them, along with Ayaka. Dee and Ryo laughed when they noticed they had Bikky, trying to look pitiful. They were called up next. Dee took the recorder out of the bag as Ryo pointed his phone toward the stage.

Dee and Ryo were not surprised when they started singing another song from Fullmetal Alchemist. Bikky had enjoyed the songs so much that he had looked up the lyrics in romanji, and knew at least the choruses to most of them, and even a couple he was able to hold his own for a full song. The song they selected was “Tobira no Mukou e” by Yellow Generation. Bikky really wasn’t the greatest of singers, but they had encountered worse karaoke singers. He really had no chance of not doing a good job with Ayaka and Carol urging him along. Ayaka also had to urge Carol a couple of times. It was obvious that those times, Carol realized that she was singing with her favorite idol and nearly froze with shock. Dee and Ryo cheered loudly when they were done, joined by Dafydd, Momo, Saburo and Yoshio.

Dafydd started to move everyone toward the stage. Carol was flushed and near hyperventilating as Ryo hugged her, exclaiming how great the three were.

“We would have flopped if it wasn’t for Aunt Ayaka,” Bikky commented. “She’s really a pro.”

“I would hope so being in NGY52,” Dee said with a laugh. “But you and Carol would have done just fine without her because I heard you two before.”

Kennosuke was called up, and started to sing “Tsunami” by Southern All Stars.

Once Carol got herself under control, she turned to Ayaka and bowed. “Forgive me. I just got really overwhelmed. I mean I was singing with you. I couldn’t believe it. I heard you, but when I looked past Bikky, you were there, singing, with us on the stage.”
Dafydd was laughing as he translated for Ayaka.

Ryo lifted his phone with a wicked grin. “Yes, we know. And we have it all on video.”

“You may put that on your YouTube channel, Carol. I don’t mind. You are family, and family who have their own channels have plenty of video of me.” She smiled toward Dee and Ryo. “Carol can also use the video of me, Dafydd, Dee and Ryo.”

Dafydd started to translate for Carol when Dee interrupted. “Wait a minute! What about us? Nobody is going to ask us?”

“Permission granted,” Saburo exclaimed, laughing.

“I know you’re all going to say yes,” Carol replied with a pretty smile aimed at Dee and Ryo. “I think I know what Ayaka said by Dee’s reaction.” She giggled along with Ayaka, who nodded her head.

“Yeah, no kidding,” Bikky commented. “I got that loud and clear without Uncle Dafydd finishing translating.”

“She also said that the video of the three of you can be uploaded, just in case you missed that part,” Dafydd remarked with a smirk.

“Oh.” Carol started to smile. “First, if it is okay with Ayaka, I would like to do a regular video with her.”

“Oh, just post the video of you guys singing first,” Dee said with a wicked grin. “It will shock the hell out of your followers. Especially any of them who would know who she is without introduction.”

Momo nodded her head with excitement. “Yes. Then do the introduction video to explain how that happened.”

“Why don’t we make a video of Ayaka and Carol tonight, here?” Saburo suggested.
“Good idea!” Bikky stated. “That would definitely be a good start to Dad meeting the rest of his family. Especially since we didn’t mention Ayaka yet.” He grinned at Carol.

Carol stared at Bikky and then at Ayaka and the rest of Dee’s family with them, who all nodded. “Well, I have been doing some video already. Bikky, what about you?”

“Me too. I mean this is all too good not to do video, even just for my Dad.”

“Then start working on putting something together,” Dee said. “Dafydd already got some great videos for his channel.”

“We’ll be uploading to our new channel so Mother and my grandparents can watch,” Ryo said. “Thank you Bikky, for getting us set up. I wish you mentioned something before we left, but now that we have it, we’ve been getting at least one video uploaded each night.”

“Oh good. Okay, I’ll do that then. Thank you everyone.”

“I do like YouTube better than that other one we were using,” Dee commented.

“You mean the one that doesn’t exist anymore?” Ryo asked.

“Yeah, I’m glad we got notice so we could delete everything before it went down last month,” Dee said.

Tomoko came over with a bottle of water and handed it to Carol. “You looked like you could use this,” she said.

“Oh thank you. Yes, I do. That was so very exciting.”

“No problem, Carol. You and Bikky are very good. It was fun watching the three of you singing.”
When Kennosuke was finished singing, Dee, Saburo and Dafydd were called up. Dee glared at his family and Yoshio started to laugh. “While you were all talking, I took the liberty of signing you up. Saburo said there were a few songs. Time to get up there and wow the crowd. After all, you are all the stars of this party.” He was holding Darin.

“Where’s Ryoko?” Dee asked.

“Aunt Hanako has her. Or had her when I saw her last. These little ones are getting plenty of attention,” Yoshio said. “They are also stars of the party, but too young to join in the singing.”

Ryo checked the time. “I hope they don’t get too fussy tonight. We usually have them at least tucked in their strollers to sleep, if not in a nice comfy crib by now.”

“When they start looking sleepy, someone will tuck them in. Too many people are watching them like hawks not to notice.”

Dee looked at Darin, who too was busy reaching up to touch his new grandfather’s face to be tired. “Watch it. He can poke at eyes when you’re not looking.”

Yoshio stared at Dee in disbelief. “You think this is the first baby I held? After you met all your brothers and sisters? Really?”

Dee started to laugh as he held his hands out in defense. “I’m sorry. I stand corrected.” He grinned at his stepfather. “However, before the twins I handled plenty of infants over my life, and that little imp still got me a couple of times. Just saying.”

Dafydd and Saburo started to push Dee and Ryo toward the stage. “We’re holding things up here. Get on the stage.”

“My name wasn’t called yet,” Ryo protested. “I’ll stay here with Ayaka and wait for when you’re ready for me.”

“Fine,” Dee said. “So, we’re doing ‘Season in the Sun’?” he asked his twin brother and father.
“Yes!” Saburo exclaimed as he stepped on the stage, followed by Dafydd and Dee.

“Thank you everyone for joining us in this very unexpected and wonderful celebration. My son, Daisuke, is home. He is alive and he came home to me today.” Saburo started to sniffle as tears welled up in his eyes. “There are no words to describe the joy I am feeling tonight. I am happy that so many of my family was able to be here and join me in my celebration. This is something I never believed would be possible, and I thank you in being part of this most wonderful day.” Saburo bowed deeply. “Please listen to our song and rejoice.”

The music to ‘Season in the Sun’ started. Dee and Dafydd allowed Saburo to sing the first few lines before joining in. They all managed to sing a few lines solo and the rest of the song they sang together.

The gathered family cheered. Those who were sitting jumped to their feet, clapping along. Video and photos were taken. It was a precious moment for the entire family, who by their presence told of their excitement and happiness for Saburo and his family.

Dee glanced out to find that Sakura had moved to stand with Yoshio, Momo, Bikky and Carol. She was holding Ryoko, and happily bouncing the baby to the music. Ryoko was laughing and waving her arms, as if caught up in the excitement too. Darin was staring at the stage, while gripping Yoshio’s shirt, and babbling happily. Bikky and Carol were clapping with excitement. And then he noticed Ryoichi standing not far from the group, with a camcorder, among those capturing the moment on video. Ryo stood to the side of the stage, wiping his eyes in between clapping and smiling.

The cheers were the loudest so far that night when they were done. A little too loud for Ryoko and Darin, who suddenly started to cry. Sakura and Yoshio cuddled them, kissing their little heads, hands and bellies until they were laughing again.

The three bowed to more cheers. “I will be back for another song, but for now, my firstborn twin sons are going to do a song for you. Thank you.” Saburo hugged and kissed the two of them and went over to join Ryo.

Ryo could not help hugging his father-in-law, and with arms around each other, watched as Dee and Dafydd started to sing ‘Datte Natsu Janai’ by TUBE.

Dee and Dafydd decided to stick to their father’s favorites for that night. There would be plenty more times to sing all their favorites, but tonight it was for their father.
They bowed to the family who were cheering when they were done and together said, “Thank you for listening to us.”

“Now our father is coming back, and I’ll be standing off to the side with my brother-in-law, Ryo,” Dafydd said. “This is one of my father’s very favorite songs, and he is going to sing it with Daisuke.”

Dafydd waited for Saburo to come back on the stage. He hugged his father and went to stand with Ryo. To the gathered family’s enjoyment, Dee and Saburo did ‘J-Boy’ by Shōgo Hamada. They switched off singing a couple of lines each solo and sang the chorus together. Dee noticed his grandfather was still filming. He also noticed a few more of his siblings join Yoshio, Sakura, Momo, Ayaka, Carol and Bikky. Jirou took Ryoko from Sakura and started to cuddle her. He was pointing to the stage and at one point held Ryoko’s arm carefully and moved it as if she was waving to the two men on the stage. Tsukiko had Darin and was making as if she was dancing with the baby, making him laugh.

When Dee and Saburo were done, they hugged and then called Dafydd, Ryo and Ayaka to the stage.

“My two sons, daughter and son-in-law want to do a special song for me. So, I’m going over there by my other children, parents and new grandbabies, and enjoy what they have in store. Thank you again, and please enjoy their song.” Saburo hugged each of them and with very light steps, went off the stage to join the group gathered.

Sakura hugged her son and kissed his cheek, wiping his eyes gently. Saburo returned the favor by wiping Sakura’s eyes. Naoki handed the two tissues with a happy smile, making them laugh.

Dee looked at his twin, husband and half-sister. “Are we ready?” he asked.

“Are you?” Ayaka asked with a teasing grin.

“You’re not giving me a choice.” He looked over to the man who was handling the music and nodded. “I hope you enjoy our song,” he said in Japanese to his family.

His family!
Dee was still getting used to the concept, but he could not complain. He had been watching through the night as various members of the family handled Ryoko and Darin, amazed at how quickly the infants took to the strangers, especially his fathers, his grandmother and his siblings. To Dee, it said a lot of the family who took turns holding his babies and giving them attention. These were good people. Well, most of them. So far, the only time Dee had seen his grandfather hold one of the twins was at the ceremony at the shrine. At least they didn’t start screaming like the devil was holding them, so maybe there was hope yet for the sourpuss. That, or Dafydd was right about twins having a strong perception of family. So, while they weren’t laughing and giggling like with the many siblings, aunts, uncles and cousins he suddenly found himself with, they didn’t reject Ryoichi Fujioka because instinct told them that he was family.

Dee had time later to ponder about that, but for now, ‘It’s Gonna Be Me’ started. Ayaka took the spot next to Dee, exactly where Yuki would stand, while Dafydd and Ryo stood behind and a little to the side of them. Just as Dee started to sing, he noticed that Ayaka started to do the dance moves for their version of the song and decided to follow his sister’s lead. Out of the corner of his eyes, he caught Ryo giving Dafydd a ‘what the hell?’ look. Not knowing the steps as well as Ayaka and Dee did, Dafydd and Ryo decided to start moving side to side, trying to look cool. Dee wanted to bust out in laughter and was glad to see all the video being taken by family. He was extremely happy to see Bikky with the camcorder, trying not to shake it as he laughed.

Before they got to the chorus, he heard the surprised exclamations coming from some of the family. By the time they were done, most of the family was staring at him with excitement or curiosity, some both.

As they bowed and said their thanks, Ayaka exclaimed, “Daisuke is D from Daigaku Dudes!”

Almost as one, the happy or surprised gasps sounded across the pavilion from the family and then everyone started to cheer. Dee couldn’t see where Ryoko and Darin were, but he was certain there were two relatives who were doing their best to calm the babies down. Dee could have sworn many of his relatives swooned. He shook his head, as Dafydd, Ryo and Ayaka laughed.

Saburo ran on the stage, hugging all four of them, and took Ayaka’s mic. “This is true. We have two idols in the family. My Daisuke was a Daigaku Dude and sang this very famous song.”

“Only one who is current,” Dee remarked, looking at Ayaka. “And definitely more famous than me.”

“He was very famous for a while,” Ayaka said.

“Well….” Dee said as they guided him off the stage. Like the week before, once again Dee found
himself with relatives he had been speaking through all night suddenly appear like excited fans and asking for his autograph.

To his further shock, his Aunt Miyako, who was Saburo’s second youngest sister, exclaimed, “Oh! I have a new one!”

“New?” Dee asked.

Miyako nodded vigorously, making Saburo laugh at his sister’s enthusiasm. “Yes, I was at one of your shows and managed to meet you coming out of the show. OH MY GOODNESS! I met my nephew back then and didn’t know it!” She hugged Dee tightly. “Oh Daisuke! If you didn’t have that make-up on, I would have noticed how much you looked like Dafydd!” She hugged him again. “I’m so glad that you finally did come back to us. And so proud of you.”

Dee allowed his overwhelmed aunt to hug him for a few minutes before she pulled away with a smile.

“Well, to be fair, I did wear brown contact lenses as D. Our promoter was trying to pass me off as Japanese and said green eyes wouldn’t work.” He shrugged and smiled at his aunt.

Next to them, Saburo stood, looking shocked at his sister’s realization.

“You were very famous, and many people still remember you and your group. And your song. Even if you are just a detective now,” Miyako stated with a smile.

Dee smiled back at his aunt and watched as she moved to let other relatives come over to him. He was aware of Saburo standing close to him, and with Dafydd and Ryo’s assistance direct the excited relatives in an orderly manner. He did manage to reach out to squeeze his father’s arm.

By the time Dee was able to find somewhere to sit and take Darin from one of his cousins, he decided that he had to get Yuki, Ken and Hide to Nagoya and do a show for his family. They would get a kick out of it.

Ryo came over to him, holding a sleepy Ryoko. “I think she finally ran out of energy,” Ryo remarked amused as he sat next to Dee. “What about you, little man? I hope you’re not too wired to sleep tonight.”
“I’m pretty sure he’ll be going down soon enough,” Dee replied.

“Things are winding down,” Tomoko assured them. She had a tray with glasses of iced green tea. “Do you want something to drink?”

“You take this hosting very serious, do you?” Dee asked, amused as he accepted a glass.

“Only for the guests of honor,” she replied with a smirk. “There should be a tray of wagashi making your way in a couple of minutes. Make sure to grab what you want, because that will be the last time they are going around. Take what you want, please. Otherwise they’ll go to waste. Whatever is left, I might make people take as they leave.”

“Now that’s a good idea. Sweets do sound good about now. Thank you, Tomoko.”

“I also got to feed your adorable little ones not very long ago, so hopefully they’ll be set for a while.”

“Wow, you really do take this seriously,” Ryo joked, also holding a glass.

“We’ll probably see if they want any more before putting them to bed when we get back to the hotel. It depends on how deeply asleep they are by the time we get back,” Dee said.

“Your little boy looks so much like the pictures of you and Dafydd,” Tomoko stated softly.

Ryo started to laugh. “We were not expecting to have a child looking so Japanese,” he stated. “Dee was hoping a little because of me, but that was for Ryoko, since we didn’t know about Darin until he was born. Turns out this little girl took after me by not looking very Japanese at all. But Darin looks way too Japanese to be just from me. It had us a bit puzzled, but somewhat suspicious. Now it all makes sense.”

Tomoko laughed with glee. “Yes, Darin definitely has Fujioka genes. But like you, if you really look at her, you can tell Ryoko has Japanese in her.”

“She’s definitely her Papa’s little girl,” Ryo remarked amused, “and Darin is Daddy’s little boy.” He looked over at Dee a moment before his attention went back to Tomoko. “Dee kept hoping that the
baby would look like me. I wanted the baby to look like Dee.”

“You both got what you want,” Tomoko said. “That must have been a huge shock to discover Dee had twins. After all, twins in America are very rare.”

“We didn’t know that Dee was a Japanese Carrier, with the Fujioka twin gene,” Ryo said. “But we do now.”

“Planning on having more?” she asked.

“I would like to have one, but now that I know that my Carrier gene is from the Japanese side, I’m better prepared on that, but Aoki is not known to have the twin gene.”

“I think it is better for male couples to have only one with the twin gene and both regularly getting pregnant,” Tomoko said. “I don’t know if I can handle that many children at one time. Kimi and I are going to wait another year or two before having another, and it will be Kimi’s turn. What about you, Dee? Do you plan to give this family another set of twins?”

Dee shrugged. “Ryo and I really haven’t thought that far about it yet. When we arrived in Japan for vacation, we were just thinking about letting Ryo have one and even out the number of kiddies to four. But I’ve been asked by many of our aunts and uncles on when I plan to get pregnant again.” He looked down at Darin and then to Ryoko. “But geez, these guys are only four months old. That’s a little too soon to consider doing it again.”

“That is true maybe for our generation, but for the older generations that is how they did things,” Tomoko said.

“And why this family is so friggin’ huge,” Dee said with a nervous laugh. “I just told them what I said to you, that we didn’t think that far ahead yet. We’re still newlyweds, you know. And already with three kids. When these guys get a little older by a year or two, it’s Ryo’s turn. When that little one is around two or three, we’ll decide then.”

“That is true.” She smiled at Dee and Ryo. “I’m going to end up supervising clean-up when things shutdown for the night, so I’ll probably miss you when you leave.” She leaned over and hugged Dee. “I’m so glad about today. Welcome home!”
She hugged Ryo, and kissed each baby. She stood up and picked up her tray, handing it to one of the staff and then went over to Bikky and Carol to talk with them a while.

Dee smiled as he watched her. “I like her a lot too,” he exclaimed.

“The brothers and sisters we met today are very good. No, awesome. You have a good family, Dee, and that makes me so happy.”

“I’ll admit I’m pretty happy myself. I have so many pictures I want to send to Mother. She’s probably up, but I suspect we’ll be too busy saying goodnight to the relatives shortly to send anything until we’re back at the hotel.”

“So out of your brothers and sisters, we didn’t meet what? One?”

“Yeah. Koji. He’s in Ise and didn’t come home for the weekend. We’ll meet him on Tuesday.”

“Right. He’s one of the new heirs.” Ryo looked at Dee amused.

“What? Koji and Tomiji can keep the title,” Dee remarked. “Can you imagine me as a CEO or a Shinto priest? Or even Dafydd? Dafydd agrees with me.”

Ryo started to laugh. “Now that would be hysterical. You a Shinto priest that is. CEO? Well, even if you remain a detective, if you get that real estate thing going, you will end up a CEO. You’re already doing some of that CEO work.”

“That’s a small business, not this huge corporation like GPN is. Oh, there’s the wagashi tray. And looks like Bikky and Carol are joining us.”

“There goes all the wagashi,” Ryo quipped. “I’ll bet that will make Tomoko happy.”

Dee started to laugh.
Ayaka came over not long after looking amused. “In case anyone is interested, Ojiisan is about to do karaoke. Obaasan is not letting him out of it.” She laughed. “I’m surprised that he didn’t already. He’s usually the first.”

Dee looked at his youngest sister amazed. “He actually does karaoke. The impression I got from him so far is that he doesn’t like doing anything fun.”

“Ojiisan loves doing fun things.” Ayaka shrugged her shoulders. “I don’t know what’s with him today. When I asked Obaasan, she said that she thinks he’s feeling guilty for believing that you were killed with your father. Because he believed it, he’s the one who convinced Papa to call off searches for you.”

“There was also yakuza included,” Dee said. “Knowing what I know now, I can’t blame anyone for not wanting to snoop around to bring bodies back to Japan. I’m sure if Ojiisan had any reason to believe my father or I was alive, he would have taken the risk.”

Dee felt Ryo staring at him, but Dee was not just saying that to make Ayaka feel better. He had to believe his grandfather wasn’t that much of an ass. He had to believe it. He did not blame his father for not going to New York and start asking questions and going into police stations. The debt may have been called off when his father was killed and it was believed Dee was also, but had Saburo gone around asking questions, it might have brought attention to himself and Dafydd by the wrong people. Chances were, no matter how big a company his grandfather had, even him asking questions could have put Saburo and Dafydd in danger again, at the least.

Dee did not blame anyone for not looking for bodies. Maybe if he was not a cop, he would have felt differently.

“Come join us as we watch Ojiisan sing a song to Obaasan,” Ayaka said with a smile.

Tsukiko came up behind her sister and laughed. “Come on. You all had a chance to relax for a while and get to hold your adorable babies for once tonight. You have to watch Ojiisan serenade Obaasan. You’ll enjoy it. I promise.”

Behind Tsukiko stood her twin, Naoki, who nodded his head in agreement. “It is most amusing,”
Naoki said with a laugh. “Besides, Papa is waiting for all of us to join him.”

Ryo let out a chuckle. “That sounds like we have no choice,” he said with amusement.

Naoki came close and bent over to take Darin from Dee. When Bikky and Carol came over to sit with them, Dee and Ryo had switched babies. Tsukiko was right. It was the first time in a while since they were able to hold their infants with so many relatives wanting to hold Darin and Ryoko.

“And we no longer get to hold our babies again,” Dee added, and laughed. He stood up as he watched Tsukiko take Ryoko from Ryo.

“No kidding,” Ryo remarked and also stood up. “Well, let’s go watch your grandfather sing.” He looked back at Bikky, who was still sitting and finishing a piece of yokan, a sweet bean jelly confection. Carol was already going over to Ayaka. “Bikky, that includes you.”

“He can take some wagashi with him,” Tsukiko said with a smile.

The group found the rest of the family standing by the stage. Sakura noticed the group and held out her hand toward Dee. As Dee took her hand, moving next to her, she wrapped her arm around Dee’s and smiled up at him. “You’re in for a real treat. And probably not what you are expecting.”

From what Dee was able to tell about his grandfather, he suspected that Ryoichi would sing some very old enka song. Now he wasn’t so sure but had no idea what type of song it would be.

The family continued to talk for a few minutes before Ryoichi was called up for his turn. Dee’s jaw dropped when the music started, and his grandfather started to sing “What’s New Pussycat?” by Tom Jones.

Sakura squealed happily as she tightened her hold on Dee’s arm. Ryoichi had his eyes on Sakura for most of the song. Dee dared to glance to his side to find Ryo looking just as shocked as Dee felt. Bikky was laughing while Carol was giggling as Ayaka stood next to her with their camcorder as she filmed Ryoichi singing. Meaning they now had Ryoichi doing karaoke in their collection of videos during their time in Japan. Actually, Dee was glad, because it did show another side of his grandfather that he did not see until then. The man was having a great time singing, and he did know how to sing. He gave Sakura special smiles and sly winks as he sang. It was obvious that Sakura enjoyed watching her husband sing, and that the song meant something to her, and very likely Ryoichi too.
After the song was over, Ryoichi joined the family. Sakura moved from Dee to hug her husband. Dee watched as Ryoichi kissed her tenderly and broke the kiss with a smile. Dee had learned that his grandparents’ marriage was arranged by their fathers, but they fell in love.

It was Ryoichi who explained to Dee, Ryo and Bikky that Sakura’s favorite singer was Tom Jones, and it made her happy hearing her husband sing the Welsh singer’s songs. With a put-upon sigh, he added that he had to take Sakura to his shows at least once a year, whether in the UK or Las Vegas. Sakura added that when Tom Jones was playing on their anniversary, no matter where it was, Ryoichi would take her to see him, and then they would make the best of whatever city they were in for at least a couple of days as part of their anniversary celebration. The song he sang that night was Sakura’s favorite, mostly because once Ryoichi realized she liked his songs, he would start singing that particular one around the house. It had become a special song for them, and still was.

Dee still thought his grandfather was an ass, but at least he seemed human now. His grandfather no doubt loved his grandmother deeply. With that piece of information, it made a lot of sense that Sakura had her husband wrapped around her finger.

As he found himself saying good night to most of his new family, he wondered what else was lurking behind his grandfather’s thick skin.
They returned to the hotel just after eleven. There was a game center around the corner from the hotel that Dee and Ryo allowed Bikky and Carol to go to, making them promise to be back around midnight. Bikky had discovered in Tokyo that the game centers there had many games not in the U.S. yet. Both Dee and Ryo had explained to Bikky how some of the games they played during their times in Japan were still not available or had just come out in the US. The game center near the hotel also offered indoor slick track racing. Instead of go-carts, the vehicles were more like mini-sports cars. It was something that they did not have in New York that Dee and Ryo had enjoyed the last time they were in Japan. They had even joined Bikky and Carol in racing when they went into a game center in Tokyo together.

After they got Darin and Ryoko settled for bed and in the crib provided by the hotel, Dee sat down with a grateful sigh. As enjoyable as the day was, it was long as they expected, and Dee and Ryo were exhausted. By the time they arrived at the hotel, Darin and Ryoko were asleep and did not stir when they took the babies out of the van. Bath time would be in the morning for the twins. Dee was ready for a long hot soak himself, but the day was still not over yet.

There were phone calls they felt they were finally able to make, and it was a good time to call those in the U.S. They were still ignoring J.J. until the next night when they were scheduled for their video conference with the unit. Ryo had sent J.J. a text saying they would try to be on a little earlier to give an update on their vacation. They were certain they would make it for the video conference because Dafydd was looking forward to it since he had a big part in their update, and had made it known to
everyone in the family who had made it to dinner about it, so no one would dare to come up with something late night for adults to do until after the call. No one would think of keeping Dee from getting to the call at the time they planned by talking to him or some other activity to get to know him better. J.J. seemed to accept Ryo’s text, replying that he was looking forward to it and to not take too long before telling them the story behind the picture Ryo had sent him earlier in the day.

Dee and Ryo had worked out the order of their phone calls. The most important people already knew: Mother and Obāsan. Dee wanted to talk to Barry first. For one reason, he had been feeling guilty about rushing the couple of calls Barry had made to them. He wanted to burst out the news about Dafydd, but couldn’t before letting Saburo know that he had survived whatever had happened to Dee’s other father. Barry was Dee’s closest friend since childhood, the two considering each other brothers. Ryo easily agreed that Barry should have the honor of being the first to know. Dee had questioned Ryo about telling Elena or Emiko first since they were actual family. Ryo had reasoned that while both his families had embraced Dee as one of their own, they were his family, meanwhile Barry was Dee’s. It made sense for Dee to talk to Barry first before Ryo got on the phone with his family. They were also both curious on the news Barry had for them. They had a feeling it wasn’t great news like theirs were from the short talks Dee had with him. Barry also had mentioned that it was best for when they had more time. So, while they had amazing news to tell Barry, they were bracing themselves for whatever Barry had to tell them.

But first they had to have a conversation. Dee knew that his grandfather had more to say to Ryo than what both of them were admitting. He hardly believed that Ryoichi Fujioka would corner Ryo alone to give him ‘the talk’ about being good to his grandson. That didn’t just seem right.

Ryo was putting water in the electric water kettle to make coffee for them. Dee stood up and went by the small kitchen area and watched as Ryo plugged in the kettle and turned it on.

As Ryo reached for the mugs, Dee asked, “So what was it he really said?”

“Who?” Ryo asked, turning to look back at Dee.

“The groucher. My grandfather.”

“Oh.” Ryo pressed his lips together, his mouth going into a straight line. “Well, he’s okay with me being your husband. He said he would have preferred if you married a full Japanese like Dafydd did, but considering your circumstances, he is pleased that you picked someone who is at least half-Japanese.”

“That’s good to know. Shame he didn’t feel to include me in that conversation. I still don’t really
have any idea how he feels about you or even me, except for what you just said. Whatever he did say to me was grumbled, and most likely what he knew my grandmother would want to hear.” He started to smirk. “That woman has her claws in him.”

“As your father said, your grandfather thinks he’s in charge. He might be with running business, but not with family life,” Ryo said with a laugh.

“What else did he say? I don’t see him as giving only compliments, not that I really would consider that a compliment.”

Ryo shrugged. “It could have been worse, but yeah he had some things to say. I was hoping we could talk over coffee.”

“That doesn’t sound good.”

“It shouldn’t come as a surprise that he has issues with my grandfather. Dafydd mentioned his refusing to give rights to Grandfather to bring GPN Communications to America, because of his previous attitude about Carriers.”

“But that’s all in the past,” Dee commented. “I think what he has done since he made his turn around is really making up for all that nonsense.”

“But to your grandfather, and probably other pro-Carrier groups who don’t know him or have benefitted from his recent actions, it’s not enough yet. Dee, your grandfather does not want you associated with the name MacLean.”

Dee stared at Ryo with wide, surprised eyes. “What? He wants me to change my name? Does he expect me to suddenly take on Fujioka after one day?”

“No, he’s not insisting, but he would prefer it. He said that he will never see you as Daisuke until you take the Fujioka name, but if you don’t, at least he acknowledges that you are his grandson. Only his grandson is named Dee.”

“To be honest, I don’t care, because Dee is the name I know.”
“I know, but his reasons....”

“Are crap, I know. Unlike the others in this family who call me Dee. I would like everyone to eventually call me that, maybe as a nickname for Daisuke.” He shrugged. “I know what my father said when we first met him, but after today, I really don’t see him calling me Dee. Not for a long time, at least. At least the brothers and sisters seem okay with calling me Dee. And the way they say it, it is both acknowledgement of me all my life going as Dee and seen as a short version of Daisuke. With my grandfather, he says it like it’s a curse.”

“Your grandfather is an ass,” Ryo remarked.

“I’m not arguing you there,” Dee agreed. He stared at Ryo.

“Your grandfather did say something that is disturbing, but it’s something that I believe we do need to look into.”

The kettle made a chime signifying the water was hot. Ryo continued to take out two mugs and after rinsing them, he put in a packet of Blendy Stick, a Japanese instant mocha coffee, in each mug and then added water. The hotel provided packets of UCC instant dark coffee, along with green and oolong tea bags, but they had picked up a box of Blendy Stick during their travels for nighttime coffee. The Blendy Stick not only was mocha flavored but included some non-dairy creamer and sugar.

Ryo handed Dee a mug with a spoon and picked up his. “Let’s sit down and talk about this.”

Once they were settled on the couch, Ryo turned so he was facing Dee. “Your grandfather said he had done some research on me and my families. Not really a surprise, especially considering that he is the owner of a multi-billion-dollar corporation. Then there’s the department store chain, which I’m sure is probably worth at least a few million. I’d be doing background checks on spouses too.”

“Yeah, me too. Okay, so you don’t have a problem with him doing research on you. That’s probably what he suddenly had to do at the office. So, what did he find?”

Ryo took a deep breath and suddenly looked angry. “He said that even if Grandfather gets acknowledged in the Pro-Carrier community, the MacLean name is still being tarnished. He claims that there are members of my family who are giving money to the ACC. He didn’t give names, but once he said that, at least two names came to mind.”
“Yeah. Same here. So, what do we do?” Dee asked.

“I talk to my grandfather, let him know so he could start looking into it, and then we bring it up at the meeting tomorrow. The others need to know what we’re up against.”

“That makes it ugly,” Dee commented. “I mean, flushing out the ACC in your family should be hard enough, but it makes me think of all the other wealthy families willing to fund the ACC.”

“I should have thought of it. That bastard Richard probably has a slush fund that hasn’t been frozen that went to the ACC. Anyway, just so you know, I was planning to talk to you about what your grandfather had to say before we made our calls. I didn’t want to tell Grandfather before you knew what was going on.”

“I have to give my grandfather that, even if he did it to attack you.” Dee folded his arms. “We will run with the information and use all resources possible to confirm who in your family is aiding or belongs to the ACC. However, I have no intention of changing my name in the near future, so don’t even think about us dropping MacLean. My father doesn’t expect me to start changing all my documents to Daisuke Fujioka and understands why I would want to keep the name I have. As long as he understands, then that’s that. I don’t need anyone else’s approval. I really didn’t need my father’s, but it’s good to know he understands and won’t start badgering me to start making changes. He’s just happy to know I survived and that I’m back in his life now.”

“What about you? How are you feeling now that you had a chance to sit down and catch up with the day?” Ryo asked.

Dee smiled warmly. “I like him. A lot. It’s still too new to say I love him, but I’m sure with time that will change. It still feels weird calling him Papa, but by the end of the night, it also feels right.” Dee leaned back and closed his eyes for a moment. “All my life I believed I was unwanted; sometimes even thought I did something so wrong as an infant that they didn’t want me. Most of the time I just saw my parents as monsters who decided to dump an unwanted child. Saburo made it very clear that I was very much wanted, and loved. It’s a bit overwhelming. I mean, I was only in his life for four months, but even all the kids in the family born after me, know about me.”

“I get the impression that your father mentioned you often. Enough that even while you weren’t there, you were still a part of their lives. Which is why so many relatives showed up tonight,” Ryo said. “Yes, I would say you were, and still are, very loved. Saburo loved you when he woke up this morning, having no idea what the day had in store for him.”
“I believe you. It’s still going to take time to shake off over 30 years of thinking, but I’m off to a good start. Wow, I can’t believe that I have such a huge family.” Dee shook his head. “A huge, very Japanese family.”

Ryo started to laugh. “Yeah, that’s obvious. But that’s only the Japanese side. Are you curious to find out more about the Welsh side?”

“I’ll talk to my father eventually about it. He did tell me some things about Alun. Nothing really about Alun’s family. I admit that after today I am curious about my Welsh family, but I’m not sure if I could meet anyone.”

“Well, I’m sure there’s might be a cousin or someone in Wales. I think eventually you should ask your father,” Ryo said.

“Yeah, but not right now. I figure, let the excitement wear off first. Who knows, maybe with time, he’ll start giving me more information without asking him. He did say he wanted me to know about my other father. I know Dafydd knows about him, and he told me some things, but Dafydd also admitted he wanted Saburo to have something new to tell me about Alun, so he didn’t tell me everything. I guess it’s probably a good idea. I need to absorb knowing I have this gigantic family here. Can you believe that tonight was mostly the relatives in this area, with a few from Toshijima and Ise?”

“Imagine what the party when we come back to Nagoya will be like?” Ryo said with a laugh. “Tomoko already is starting work on that one.”

“We need to give her a date, which we might not be able to give until we know for sure when we’re leaving Nagoya for the rest of the trip,” Dee stated. “So, do you think Bikky is okay with all this?”

“Are you kidding? I think he’s having fun knowing he has so many more Japanese people in the family. Besides, he has new friends as of tonight. New friends who are cousins. And Dafydd’s boys seem to gravitate to him.”

“Jirou’s little girl too,” Dee added. “I think by the time we get back to New York, Bikky is going to need a vacation from little kids. Which is a shame because we’ll be going to the orphanage so the kiddos there don’t think we forgot about them. Especially for Christmas.”

“That reminds me, if we’re extending our time in Nagoya, are we going to spend less days back in
the Tokyo area? Or push our return to New York?”

Dee shrugged. “I didn’t think of it, but I guess we should. We probably should check the jet’s schedule on when it’s available.”

“Remember we can also fly commercial. I know the flight overseas won’t be as comfortable as our flight here, but we can at least go first class, and have whatever we can’t take on the flight shipped home.”

“Yeah, I guess we can afford it,” Dee said.

Ryo let out a laugh. “You forget that any of our transport needs will be handled by Obāsan and the family company. We can more than afford it since she will most likely not charge us.”

Dee let out a snort. “Part of tomorrow’s expedition includes picking out what we want from my father’s store. We are getting a lot of owner’s benefits lately. Sheesh. We’ll work it out when we’re here again on the way back. We’ll have a better idea of when we’ll be back in Tokyo and should give us enough time to make new arrangements if we decide to stay a while longer. You good with that?”

“Yeah. Probably the best way. So, if we got everything out of the way, phone calls. Barry first, right?”

“Sure.” Dee reached for his cell phone and dialed Barry’s number. “First call of many we’ll be making eventually. Here we go.”

Ryo took Dee’s almost empty mug. “I think we need refills to get through the calls.” With a smile he went back to the kitchen area.

Dee gazed out the windows in the lounge, looking out at the lights of Nagoya beyond the wall of windows and the small balcony. From his place on the couch, he was just about to make out part of the Oasis 21. The spaceship structure was aglow in bright neon blue. The tip of the Nagoya TV Tower above the observation deck was also visible, bathed in golden yellow light. As he listened to Barry’s phone ring and waited for him to answer, he knew Nagoya would never be the same as it had been from his visits before. It had never occurred to him that this was the place of his birth. He would have never thought it of Tokyo or Yokohama either, even if Yokohama had once been home to him. Nagoya, he knew now, was more home than Yokohama because he was born in a hospital a
few minutes before Dafydd not far from Nagoya Station. It explained the affinity he felt for the city from the first time he visited, which he now knew was not his first visit since he spent the first four months of his life there.

“Hey bro!” Barry answered, bringing Dee out of his thoughts.

Ryo came from the small kitchen area and set a mug of coffee on the end table next to Dee. With a smile he sat down, cradling his own mug of hot coffee.

Dee put the call on speaker and set the phone on the coffee table. “How’s everything back in New York?” Dee asked. “Family doing good?”

“Yes, we’re great. And yes, I’ve been stopping by the orphanage just to check on Mother.”

“Oh,” Ryo asked, looking amused and sharing a look with Dee. “Did she say anything about our vacation?”

“No, but something is up,” Barry replied. “She seems extremely excited about something. I asked her about it, and she said that I had to wait until we had time to talk. So, if you’re calling me, I’m hoping that means you have time to talk?”

“Yeah, we have time to talk,” Dee said. “And for whatever it is you need to tell us.”

“Everyone is fine, so it’s nothing bad like that. You know Mother is doing well, so I don’t have to reassure you about that, thank goodness. Personally, I don’t think it’s all that bad, but I know you’ll disagree. But later for that. Tell me all about Japan.”

“It’s great here, but you knew that already,” Dee replied with a laugh. “I really loved to see Obāsan’s Kamakura, and even Tokyo. Then there’s all those places that’s part of Ryo’s early life.”

“How was that for you, Ryo?” Barry asked.

“It was wonderful,” Ryo sighed. “For once I was able to go to places I would with my parents, and instead of being sad, I was able to proudly show those places to my family and add stories from the time. I didn’t realize how important it was for me to show Dee and Bikky those places, or even
Obāsan’s house until we got here.”

“Add those two darlings of yours, I’m guessing this was a very special visit for you, Ryo.”

“Oh, that it was. I’m loving every minute of it. And Obāsan is just so happy to have us here, even when we were staying in Tokyo,” Ryo replied. “And then Dee got to show off his Yokohama to us. He even had his friends join us at times.”

“I’m sure it was great being back in your second home, Dee,” Barry commented.

“Yeah, it was. A lot has changed, but there are still enough familiar old haunts that we went to. It was great showing it to Bikky, Ryo and his family,” Dee said. “We even walked around my college.”

“You took lots of pictures, I hope,” Barry said.

Ryo started to laugh. “We’re Japanese, of course there are tons of pictures from all the relatives we had had with us.” He winked with an impish grin at Dee. “Besides, Dee’s here.”

“Oh yeah,” Barry said with a laugh. “Dee’s an honorary Japanese the moment you put a camera in his hands.”

Dee covered his mouth as he snorted. Ryo fought from laughing too hard. “See? I’m not the only one. Even Barry says that,” he managed to say.

“Yeah well,” Dee replied with a chuckle. “You don’t know half of it.” He winked at Ryo with a grin.

“Driving even the Japanese crazy with your picture taking?” Barry asked with a laugh.

“Not at all,” Dee replied. “The relatives find it charming.”

“So, when I called last night, you said that you were driving to Nagoya. Are you settled in now?”
“It’s after 11 pm here,” Dee replied with a laugh. “We had all day to see Nagoya.”

“You’ve been there before, right?” Barry asked.

“Yeah, several times,” Dee replied. “But like Yokohama and the Tokyo area, while so far a lot of it is familiar, there’s a lot that changed since my last time.”

“This is my second time in Nagoya as an adult,” Ryo said, “and I’m trying to figure out why I didn’t go more than once. This is a beautiful city.”

“How’s the hotel there?” Barry asked.

“It’s very nice. Not as spacious as in Tokyo. That was larger than our apartment. Much larger,” Dee said. “And I’ll admit getting just a bit spoiled. Between all the space and the view of Tokyo, I’m tempted to move there.”

“You wouldn’t,” Barry commented, sounding amazed.

“If we could pack Mother up and bring her here, I would consider it,” Dee replied. “Anyway, we designated the penthouse as our Tokyo home whenever we can get away. Only there is a bit of a problem with that.” Dee smirked at Ryo.

“You’re killing me, you guys. What could ever be a problem with a place like that? As much as I’ll miss you, if you really wanted to, I’ll help you pack and send you off. It would give me a reason to go to Japan.” Barry paused to chuckle. “Seriously. You should have what you really want and if living in Tokyo is that, well, you need to figure it out,” Barry said.

“The problem is that it might make more sense to move to Nagoya if we ever left New York for Japan,” Ryo answered, poking Dee.

“You like it more than Tokyo then? And even Yokohama?”
“Well, I’ll admit I prefer Tokyo and Yokohama,” said Dee, “but Nagoya seems to be home to me.”

“What?”

Ryo started to laugh and poked Dee again. “Get on with it,” he said to Dee. “If you keep going around in circles, I’ll tell him. For once in your life, you’re avoiding getting to the point.”

“Maybe because I’m savoring this. Hey, look Barry. You’ve been my brother for almost all our lives, but I have some bad news for you,” Dee said, grabbing Ryo and attempting to cover his mouth with a hand.

“What’s up, Dee?” Barry asked.

“It turns out that you’ll have to share me with my twin brother,” Dee said and removed his hand from Ryo’s mouth.

“About time!” Ryo crowed and laughed more.

“Shh…. You’ll wake the chibis,” Dee warned and leaned in to lightly kiss Ryo.

“What the fuck? What twin brother? Dude, you really are a twin?”

“It’s not really that surprising that he is, after Dee gave birth to the chibis,” Ryo said. “What is surprising is that we actually met him.”

“Yeah, that does make sense. I’ll admit Julie and I wondered about if you had a twin out there somewhere, but I doubted that even as great you two are as detectives that even actively looking, you wouldn’t have much luck.”

“That’s how Dafydd felt,” Dee replied. “It wasn’t how he was expecting it. And yes, Barry, before you ask, Dafydd is my twin brother. He’s a detective here in Nagoya and he’s been looking most of his life for me.”
“Only he wasn’t expecting to finally find Dee at the party Obāsan threw for us last week,” Ryo said with a laugh.

“Oh Lord, don’t tell me he’s related to you?” Barry asked, sounding amazed.

“No, but he is married to one of my distant cousins,” Ryo replied.

“Holy shit!” Barry exclaimed. “Hey Jules, I have Dee and Ryo on the phone, and you need to hear this!” Barry called out. “So, he’s married to one of your cousins? One of the Japanese ones, I assume.”

“Yeah, Momo. She’s a very distant cousin, but I always wanted to reach out and get to know her more,” Ryo replied. “Obviously I never got around to it. For some reason her husband has always been a mystery to us. That’s what we get for not finding time to go to Nagoya for her wedding.”

“To be fair, even Dafydd said they only sent a wedding announcement to your side of the family,” Dee added.

“With no photo,” Ryo said.

“Well they did get married before we met, so it’s not like you would have seen it and known he was my twin.”

“But when I finally met you, I could have exclaimed that you look exactly like my cousin’s husband,” Ryo countered.

“Maybe,” Dee said with a shrug, “but they didn’t have a photo yet and wanted to get announcements out.”

“What’s this about a twin brother?” they heard Julie’s voice come from the phone, while Barry laughed at them. “And what about wedding announcements?”

“My cousin didn’t include a photo of the happy couple when they sent out the wedding announcements or else I might have noticed that Dee looks like my cousin’s husband,” Ryo
“Well, it certainly sounds like you’re having some time there in Japan,” Julie said. “From the tone of your voice, I’m assuming this is good news, Dee? I know how you felt about meeting your biological family, but I sense excitement there, even happiness.”

“Oh yeah,” Dee admitted. “It almost wasn’t for a bit after we finally talked, and I realized why he looked so much like me.”

“And then you called Mother,” Barry said. “And that’s why she seems so excited.”

Dee let out a laugh, “Yeah, you know me. I called Mother and she convinced me to give him a chance. I already knew from Dafydd that I wasn’t dumped unwanted by my parents and told her that. Still I felt uneasy until I talked to her. And then she sent Obāsan in for reinforcement.”

Barry and Julie started to laugh. “Hoo boy, bro! You never stood a chance with that tag team,” Barry exclaimed. “That’s great. I’m happy for you. Imagine that! Dee Laytner has a twin brother now. How awesome!”

“That’s marvelous, Dee,” Julie said. “From that name, I’m guessing there’s some Welsh there? Was Dafydd military? Or your parents?”

“And what is your name? Can we still call you Dee?”

“Yes, Barry, you can still call me Dee. And it’s Laytner-MacLean, Mr. Best Man,” Dee said. “And no, not military. Jules, you’re correct about the Welsh, but that’s only half.”

“Oh man. Oh no. Please don’t tell me,” Barry said. “Dude, if you tell me that you are actually Japanese, I’m just going to fall to the floor laughing here.”

“Well, I won’t tell you then because I don’t want you to hurt yourself,” Dee said. “But I will tell you my birth name.”

Ryo was taking a sip of his coffee and nearly sprayed it over the table. “Oh crap,” he exclaimed. He
put down his coffee and picked up his cell phone from where he set it when they got back to the hotel. “Go ahead and tell them, Dee, while I send a picture of you and Dafydd to them.”

“Good idea.” He waited as Ryo quickly picked a picture from that day. He selected one with just the two brothers standing in front of their father’s house, with the castle grounds in the background. It was much like the photo of the twin babies that was one of the first photos that Dee had seen of him and Dafydd. He nodded to Dee when he was ready. “Sending you guys a picture of the reunited twin brothers,” Ryo said.

“Yes. Thank you, Ryo,” Julie exclaimed.

“My brother’s name is obviously Dafydd because one of our fathers was Welsh. And Dee can very much be a nickname for either one of us,” he said with a laugh. “But my name is Daisuke.”

“You’re talking funny again, Dee,” Barry said, and they heard the sound of a light slap. They knew he had to have slapped his forehead. “Oh Lord, Dee. You have a very Japanese first name.”

They heard a chime letting them know Ryo’s text came in. “Pictures!” Julie exclaimed in excitement. They heard her fumble with the phone.

Ryo moved closer to Dee and slipped his arm around Dee’s shoulder. “Well, they’re happy for you,” he said softly.

“Oh, Dee in double!” Julie exclaimed. “That’s a great photo. Oh, and you both look so happy in it too.”

“Damn, lookit all that teeth,” Barry exclaimed with a laugh. “Big happy smiles. That’s wonderful.”

“Dafydd and Daisuke Fujioka,” Julie read. “Your last name is Fujioka?”

“Daisuke Fujioka!” Barry laughed. “Dude, don’t hit me when I call you Daisuke when you get home. Daisuke. Oh sorry, couldn’t wait that long.”

Dee smirked while Ryo started to laugh again. “Yeah, go ahead. Yes, Ryo will be having fun every
time someone calls me Daisuke. But so far, I only gave permission for my family in Nagoya to call me that. Mother told me before I met them that it would be easier for them. And while my father was willing to call me Dee, I can see it is easier for him. Each time he called me by the name he gave me, I can see him healing more. Barry, Julie, he believed I was dead all these years.”

“What the hell happened? Your family is based in Nagoya, I’m guessing, but you ended up in New York on your own in an alley?” Barry asked.

“It’s quite a story,” Dee said, “and it involves the yakuza and my Welsh grandfather getting involved with them.”

“Holy crap,” Barry exclaimed. “I can see where this is going.”

“I also noticed the past tense used for your Welsh father while your Japanese one is very much in the present,” Julie observed.

“Yeah. My Welsh father, whose name, by the way, was Alun Jones, was killed. I was with him, so it was assumed that I was killed with him. They had good reason to believe I was killed with my father. My Japanese father, Saburo Fujioka, was in San Diego with Dafydd. They were hoping that by splitting up, there was a better chance of survival. At the least, they were hoping to keep Dafydd and me alive.”

Dee told Barry and Julie what they knew so far, especially about his parents going on the run from Japan. When he was done, they heard a sniffle from Julie. “That is so sad. I feel for your father, Dee. I don’t even want to think about how it would feel losing one of our children.”

“Yeah, I’m sorry he had to wait until I am grown with my own family before coming to back to him, but you know what I discovered I love about my father? His reasoning. He not only found joy in my showing up today, but after talking to Mother, he decided that if she found joy in having me as her son, then it made him happy for her, and for me.”

“Meaning you didn’t lose a mother today, but you gained another dad,” Julie reasoned.

“Exactly,” Ryo agreed.

“Yeah, I know. He kept insisting I call him Papa, like my brothers and sisters, but it was hard at first.
Then tonight at a family gathering, we had a talk and it just started to come natural.” Dee started to smile.

“This family is much like mine. The Japanese side, that is,” Ryo added. “They have their traditions, but when with each other, it’s very intimate and personal. They know there is honor and respect, so a lot of the formality is dropped. Not very much oneesan and oniisan for siblings.”

“I am happy to know him and want to get to know him more,” Dee said. “That goes for pretty much all of my family, including my stepfather.”

“But he calls his stepfather Yoshio-san,” Ryo added. “Everyone else calls him Chichi.”

“Everyone else except for Dafydd, Yoshi-san is their father,” Dee remarked.

“Dafydd calls him Chichi too,” Ryo added.

“Only because Dafydd was young enough when Yoshi-san moved in with them that he basically raised Dafydd as his own,” Dee explained.

“Hey, another picture coming your way. This one is a much older version of the one you have.” Ryo sent the photo of Dee and Dafydd as babies in front of the house.

“Oh, how adorable,” Julie exclaimed.

“That is you in this photo,” Barry stated.

“Mother picked me out right away,” Dee said. “That’s how I told her. I sent her the photo with no explanation. She called me immediately asking where did I get that picture of me and who was the other baby who looked like me.” He started to smile. “Even before I gave her what little facts we started to piece together, she confirmed what I pretty much already knew. And there are also the baby carriers in the photos from back then. That was the same one I was found in by Jess.”

“Just looking at you and Dafydd is enough proof for me, but I take it you got absolute proof,” Barry said. “Didn’t you say that he’s also a detective there? Two twin detectives plus a husband detective.
That’s too many of you type not to go further.”

“Yes, we did. There’s also the forensics wife. Momo is head of the forensics lab here in Nagoya. I had Diana go to Mother’s and get a DNA sample from the Carrier and the clothes I was wearing, and then we also did DNA matching between me, Dafydd and my father. It’s definite.”

“So now you’re Japanese and Welsh. Damn bro,” Barry said. “I guess you always were, but we didn’t know until now. No wonder you always had a fascination with Japan. So wait! Does that mean you were born there?”

“Yes, here. Nagoya.”

“So when can we throw you a surprise birthday party, Daisuke?” Julie asked with a giggle.

“Oh, you’re bad,” Dee commented, “And it won’t be a surprise now.”

“Depending on how long we have to wait, you might,” Barry said. “So, when the hell is your birthday?”

“September 23rd,” Dee replied.

“Dee and Dafydd are equinox babies,” Ryo added with a grin. “Japan holds festivals for them.”

Dee rolled his eyes but had to laugh at Ryo. “He’s being silly. They do hold festivals on the equinox, but my birthday doesn’t fall on it every year.”

“It did when you both were born,” Ryo said.

“Okay. Sure.” Dee laughed, remembering one of the stories he heard about when Dee and Dafydd were born. Some of his aunts and uncles went from the hospital to equinox festivals in Nagoya to celebrate their birth.
“And what’s with the other brothers and sisters?” Barry asked. “How many Fujiokas are there?”

“Dee happens to come from a very large family,” Ryo said. “I think they’re even bigger than my family.”

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“Apparently all the males in the family are Carriers and have twins. Never single babies. And because they have money, everyone has large families. I think the average is five kids,” Dee explained.

“My father and stepfather have seven kids, plus Dafydd and me.”

“You have 8 siblings?” Julie asked.

“Don’t let him pull most of them are step-siblings, because the ones we met today don’t think about the step part,” Ryo said. He started to laugh.

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“Go ahead. You can tell about the first one we met after Dafydd,” Dee said.

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“You’re really going to love this one,” Ryo said, amused. “Shortly after we got to the hotel, one of Dee’s sisters called Dafydd. She already knew and said that she was approaching our hotel. So, while Dafydd and Momo went to tell Saburo-san the big news, Ayaka took us for a lunch party with some of her co-workers. Turns out Ayaka is in NGY52, and we had lunch with her team and some of the girls from the other teams. She’s really a sweetheart. Oh, and she originally was in TKY52 until they started the group here in Nagoya and she transferred to be home.”

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“That girl will end up flying herself back to New York after this,” Julie said with a laugh. “Wow, you have a Japanese pop star in the family. That’s very fun.”

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“She’s wonderful,” Dee replied. “I just adore her. So does Bikky. He seems impressed with everything so far. Except for my grandfather, but I don’t blame him. I’m not very impressed with him either. Even if he holds the purse strings for the family.”
“Speaking of Bikky, how is he handling everything that happened?” Barry asked.

“He’s doing fine,” Dee said. “He doesn’t understand everything said all the time, because for some in my family their English isn’t that great, but he had fun today. He already calls Dafydd Uncle Dafydd and you can hear he means it. I think he’s just having fun seeing me put in positions meeting my family for the first time.”

“We had a dinner party tonight for just the members of the family who were able to make it who lived in Nagoya and some in the surrounding area,” Ryo said. “Something quickly thrown together last minute, since they found out earlier today. Along with children, we had about 150 people tonight. Many of Dee’s aunts, uncles and cousins came by to meet him.” Ryo looked at Dee. “It’s a good thing one of your sisters owns that event hall and no events tonight.”

“My sister Tomoko and her wife owns this event place. It’s more like a small resort. Beautiful place and she opened the larger building and pavilion next to it for us to have dinner tonight. For getting platters last minute, she did a great job. Especially for the number of people that showed up.”

“Damn, so you have this gigantic family now. Did you meet all the brothers and sisters?” Barry asked.

“All but one. We’ll be seeing Koji when we go down to Ise on Tuesday,” Dee replied. “And there are still more cousins and aunts and uncles. Tomoko said that tonight was a meet and greet type meal and a bit of a celebration, but when we come back to Nagoya after the rest of our road trip, she’s going to hold a proper celebration party.”

“We’re getting more photos now that we know, right?” Julie asked.

“Yes, Jules. I promise we’ll send you some more photos in a bit.”

“Thank you.”

“Carol has a YouTube channel and she’s been uploading videos,” Ryo added. “Until tonight, she was just uploading videos that had just us without Dafydd and Momo, but now she’s going to start uploading the videos her and Bikky made that has Dee’s family. I’ll email you the link if you’re interested.”
“That’s that new video website,” Julie said. “Yes, I know it. I just signed up so I can upload videos of our family.”

“We just got signed up, so when we have a chance, we’ll be uploading videos to share,” Dee said.

“Send me your user name so I can subscribe to yours and Carol’s,” Julie requested.

“Will do,” Dee replied.

“I’m glad you’re having such a wonderful time there, especially with the very unexpected reunion with your biological family, but I do need to let you know what’s been going on around here,” Barry said.

“What’s going on, Barry?” Dee asked.

“Mrs. Rutkowski hasn’t been doing very well lately,” Barry said about Dee’s and Ryo’s landlady.

“What?” Ryo asked. “I didn’t know.”

“No, you didn’t,” Barry agreed. “She’s been putting up a brave front, acting as if nothing is wrong when she’s out of her apartment, but it’s gotten to the point that her son stepped in to take care of her.”

“Her son has been living in San Francisco,” Dee said. “She mentioned him a lot.”

“Yup. Her son decided that it’s best she goes to San Francisco so he can take care of her.”

Dee leaned forward, resting his elbows on his knees. “So where is this going, Barry?” he asked concerned.

“Her son was given power of attorney for her buildings,” Barry replied.
“Buildings?” Dee asked, sounding surprised. “As in more than one?”

“More than ten. You would never have known that looking at the way she lives,” Barry said.

“Whoa!” Dee exclaimed.

“Here I’ve been thinking that she had the one building, making a living off it and the rest going into a nest egg for her retirement,” said Barry.

Dee let out a chuckle. “She’s been retired for as long as I lived there.”

“That’s true. But her retirement nest egg just blew up,” Barry said.

“She was using the money from the rent to what? Buy up more buildings?” Dee asked.

“Not in recent years,” Barry stated. “Seems she had a nice little trust fund when she was younger and started to buy up the buildings around your area. She owns the block. She likes you, Dee. She always has. You’ve been there for her, watching, making sure she was safe. That’s why you got your rent so cheap, and then the offer to buy both your place and the apartment next to it. She definitely decided to give you a break.”

“That was really nice of her,” Dee said. “I really do appreciate it. It made a difference when I needed it. Then when Ryo and I suddenly found ourselves rich, we offered more when paying off the amount we agreed on.”

“You’re about to get a whole lot richer now,” Barry said, “and this is where it’s going. Her son sold her buildings to developers this week for a lot of money. From what I know, she most likely made a 1000% profit on what she paid for her buildings way back when.”

“What does this mean to us?” Ryo asked. “We own the apartment. We got the papers proving we own, so that means we don’t have new landlords.”
“Yes, apparently she made it very clear that you are not tenants, but you own your ‘condo’ as it was put in the paperwork. She also convinced her son not to make it known to the new owners just how much you actually paid for that condo. Look guys, I know you want to stay at your place for a few more years. When I was contacted in your absence, I really did try my best, but they want to buy you out.”

“No way!” Dee exclaimed. “We’re not selling!”

“What Dee said,” Ryo added.

“All the tenants were already given eviction notices,” Barry said. “They were told that they would get assistance in finding new places to live and are also getting a nice sum of money for being uprooted. They want your building empty by April.”

“We’re not moving,” Ryo insisted.

“You might not have a choice. They want to gut the building for some ultra-luxury tower,” Barry explained. “They are using some law that new owners can evict current tenants. They are doing what they can to make the move easier on the tenants. They can do the same with you, because you are in their building and your apartment is in the way of their plans. They are also willing to make you richer too.”

“I don’t like it,” Dee commented, gritting his teeth. “This reminds too much of the original orphanage.”

Ryo moved closer to Dee and slipped his arm around his husband, pulling him closer.

“I don’t believe they are the type like S-Corp,” Barry assured Dee. “I looked into the company. Ryo, your grandfather also is looking into them but so far they’re not bastards, except for uprooting people from their homes. Just like many other developers all over New York City. But it’s not a bad thing. With what the tenants are being given, they can end up in nicer, and in some cases, bigger places than what they have.”

“Can I ask if she was selling, how come we didn’t get a bid in?” Dee asked.

“Because I knew nothing about it until I got a phone call from the new owners’ lawyers saying she
sold the building,” Barry said.

Ryo looked at Dee and shrugged. “That’s a good reason,” he said.

“Yeah, I guess so,” Dee agreed. “Did they tell you why they can’t leave us where we are?” he asked Barry.

“It was explained that the building is being gutted from basement to roof. The finished building is going to be much taller than seven floors and keeping you in place hinders that plan. Look, I hope you don’t mind but right after I hung up on that call, I called our lawyer and then Mr. MacLean for advice. We got the paperwork, and both lawyers went over it. Yes, you can fight it, but it could be a long and expensive process. They both suggest taking the $11 million dollars they are offering and let me start looking for possibilities for you to sink that money into.”

Dee’s jaw dropped as Ryo exclaimed, “What?”

“That’s their offer?” Dee managed to croak out. “How?”

“As I said, she left what you paid out of the deal. They started at current market value for your place, and then considered how much they would be making on whatever apartment ends up where your is. They feel this is a fair price for you to find something else within the city. Chances are with that money you don’t even have to go to the auction block. Plus, their relocation services also stand for you. If you don’t take up their finding you a new place to buy, at least take advantage of them providing the moving service for you. Yes, you can afford to pay for the move yourself, but considering the inconvenience of moving out of that apartment sooner than later, I say let them pay that bill too.”

“And we have to be out by when?” Ryo asked.

“By April 1st,” came the reply.

“Happy April fuckin’ Fool’s Day,” Dee muttered, looking down. “Alright, Barry. Ryo and I will talk it over and get back to you on our decision.”

“I think, as much as we appreciate you being our proxy while we’re gone, that it should be us to give the new owners the final answer, whichever it might be,” Ryo said.
"I understand. I was going to suggest that. It won’t stop us here from digging in more just to double check this company. And Dee, I know that you’re thinking about the old orphanage and what happened to Mother, and I can assure you it’s not the same thing. Also, as far as Mother holding out, remember her reasons for it, even if the money was okay. It wasn’t good like your offer, but it wasn’t bad either. She was thinking of all the children under her care and making sure they had a home. You just have three kids. You can even think of having a bigger space now, instead of later. I don’t know,” Barry sighed. "I guess what I’m trying to say to the both of you is that this could be a bad thing or a very good thing. It all depends on how you look at it."

Ryo also sighed and rested his head on Dee’s shoulder. “You know, he might have a point. Especially now that we both have two large families that might invade us in New York.”

“Huh,” was Dee’s response. “We can also take up residence in Tokyo and say fuck it all, too.”

“Would you?” Julie asked.

“No, not really,” Dee said with a small smile, “but it’s still a fun thought. Especially since we do have that option now.”

“Well, even if not full-time, we still do have a very nice penthouse in Tokyo for whenever we want to stay there,” Ryo agreed.

“Okay Barry,” Dee said. “Can you send over the paperwork, please? It’s not that I don’t trust you or the team we apparently have there, but we need to review the paperwork before making a decision.”

“I was going to send it to you today. I just needed to talk to you about it first.”

“Hey, we’re sorry we kept blowing you off when you called last week. That most likely put you in a not so good situation dealing with this for us,” Dee said. “But if I talked more than a couple of minutes, I would have wanted to tell you about Dafydd, and I just didn’t feel right telling you before Saburo knew I was alive.”

“Saburo, that’s your biological father?” Barry asked.
“Yeah, that’s him. Pretty good guy too, thank goodness. I like him. A lot.”

“Then I’m happy for you, Dee. Don’t forget to send us pictures of the family. And Ryo, I know I met a lot of yours, but I don’t mind seeing more pictures of everyone during your time there.”

“We’ll get you pictures as soon as we can,” Dee promised. “It might be a couple at a time until we have a chance to sit down and breathe a bit, which won’t be anytime over the next few days.”

“That’s cool.”

“And you better have a party to show the rest of the pictures and videos when you get back,” Julie insisted.

“Ha. We can try,” Dee remarked, “but we might not have time if we decide we’ll be out of our place by April. It might seem like a long time, but it really isn’t.”

Dee and Ryo looked down when Ryo’s phone started to ring. “It’s Elina,” Ryo commented.

“Ho boy, I think Carol finally remembered to send her a picture from today,” Dee said.

“I think so too,” Ryo agreed.

“Hey, I’ll let you go then,” Barry said. “You should have the paperwork by the time you get up in the morning.”

“Sounds good. And I’ll give you a call in the next couple of days,” Dee assured him. “Barry, thanks for taking on all that. I know it’s not what we expected when I made you my proxy. I was thinking more business deals than this.”

“And it’s a good thing you did,” Barry said. “It’s all good, Dee. Say hello to Bikky and Carol for me, kisses to the chibis and hello to all the family.”

Ryo laughed. “Now that’s a tall order, Barry. Hi Elina,” he spoke into his phone as he answered it.
“Later!” Dee said and hung up the call.

“I hope you boys didn’t go and do something crazy like spending a lot of money just so Carol could meet one of the idols she loves,” Elina said in greeting as Ryo put her on speaker.

Both men laughed. “Oh no, nothing like that at all.”

“I thought it was very nice of you to arrange that meeting with that other idol group in Tokyo,” Elina commented. “Carol was so excited after that.”

“That was nothing. We were invited by Hide to drop by and watch them rehearse. They are gathering opinions and listening to feedback. I just happen to be lucky enough to have a close friend who is involved with the new idol project,” Dee explained.

That made Ryo started to laugh. “As for today, well, what did Carol say?”

“She said it was a couple of pictures of lunch today and that it was Dee’s story to tell. Other than that, I heard about how sweet and wonderful Ayaka is.”

“Well, she is,” Ryo said with a smile, “and it is Dee’s story to tell, I guess. And he also happens to be lucky enough about that too.”

“She could have told you what that was about.” Dee said to Elina. “I did tell her it was okay now.”

“What’s going on?” Elina asked.

“We really did think we were just going to have lunch at the NGY Café,” Dee said. Then in a sly tone, he added, “Okay, we weren’t expecting the rest of them, but we did actually go to the café with Ayaka, who said she was taking us to lunch.”

“How did that happen?” Elina asked, sounding surprised.
“She showed up at our hotel room to say hello,” Ryo answered casually.

“Don’t tell me she’s some distant cousin of yours, Ryo,” Elina said, sounding curious. “I mean, popular Japanese idols just don’t show up at hotel rooms of anyone.”

“We’re not just anyone,” Dee said, sounding amused.

“Ayaka’s oldest brothers were in our room,” Ryo said with a wink, making Dee chuckle.

“How did you end up with her brothers in her room? Who are her brothers then?”

Dee gestured to Ryo, who looked like he was having too much fun with the call. “Dafydd and Daisuke Fujioka,” Ryo replied with an amused smirk at Dee.

“Who?”

“They’re twins,” Ryo added, “but you know Daisuke better as Dee.”

Silence came from the other end of the call for a few seconds. “Wait!” Elina shouted. “What? Dee? You’re saying that Dee is Ayaka Fujioka’s brother and that he also has a brother named Dafydd?”

“Don’t forget the part about Dee being Daisuke,” Ryo said and fell against Dee laughing.

“You are having way too much fun with that,” Dee commented but smiled at Ryo, rubbing his back. “Yes, Elina. Last week at that party Obāsan threw for us, I ended up staring at myself standing in front of me. Then I realized his eyes were dark brown and not green. It turns out that Ryo’s distant cousin Momo was married to Dafydd. Wait… who is Ayaka’s brother?” He looked down at Ryo with a smirk. “Elina was right. If you think about it, Dafydd is a distant relative of yours and he’s Ayaka’s brother.”

“And at the same time, she is my sister-in-law,” Ryo said.

“Okay, I think I’m going to pop right now,” Elina exclaimed. “What is going on?”
Dee and Ryo explained about meeting Dafydd at the party and how they realized that Dee was the missing twin brother he had mentioned. They mentioned how after the party they spent time with Dafydd and Momo, and how Dafydd almost killed Carol by mentioning his sister Ayaka.

"After we got confirmation from DNA matching what we already knew, Dafydd called her that night. He then told her that we were all coming into Nagoya today. She couldn’t wait until we finally got to my father’s house and decided to show up at our hotel shortly after we got here. And that’s how Ayaka Fujioka ended up at our hotel room," Dee concluded.

"Dee… Oh my God! Even more than Carol having such a great day, I’m floored. I mean…. Wow! You actually met your biological family today?"

"Most of them. Obviously Dafydd we met last week, but yeah, I discovered I have one of those super huge but close-knit family," Dee said.

"Dafydd and Daisuke? How different are those names," she remarked.

"One of our fathers was Welsh, one Japanese," Dee replied. "So each of us got an ethnic name. Dafydd got the Welsh name because he looks very Japanese. Much more than I do," he explained and chuckled.

"Sounds like your fathers had a wicked sense of humor," Elina stated, sounding amused.

"Saburo still has one," Ryo commented. "He reminds me a lot of my Uncle Nobu."

"And then some," Dee said. "Out of all the crazy adults who sometimes forget they are adults that I know, I think he’s the one more likely to actually get into trouble with the kids. And this is what I got from him after only one day."

"That’s so true," Ryo agreed.

"What are you going to do about your name?" Elina asked.
“I’m still Dee,” Dee replied. “I even got some of the family calling me that. Mostly the siblings and cousins. I’m letting my fathers and older relatives call me Daisuke if it makes them feel better. And I’m trying to get Ryo to stop calling me that.” He turned to slap Ryo’s arm, making Ryo laugh after letting out a yelp.

Elina started to laugh. “Oh Dee. I know how we all know Ryo as Ryo, and you are so screwed now!”

“See?” Ryo said with a laugh. “The lady is smart.”

“Hush you. Anyway, I promised Saburo that we’ll stay at his house tomorrow night,” Dee said to Elina. “And Ayaka still lives at home. Carol will be staying with her in her room.”

“Oh no!” Elina exclaimed. “She’s going to be talking about that to everyone for years!”

“Hopefully they’ll become close enough friends that it will stop being that much of a deal,” Ryo said. “Actually, I think they will.”

“Yeah, she’ll come back to you talking all the time about her best friend in Japan, who just happens to be in a major idol group,” Dee commented and laughed. “Did she send you any video yet?”

“No, just a couple of pictures with Ayaka from your lunch,” Elina said.

“We have video from lunch, and then there’s also Carol and Ayaka doing karaoke together during dinner,” Ryo said.

“I’m really looking forward to seeing some video,” Elina said.

“We’ll have Carol give you a call, probably morning for us and evening for you, unless you are working,” Dee said.

“Today is my day off, and I’m not planning on doing much except relax, so anytime today is good for me,” Elina said.
“It’s probably going to be a long phone call, even if it’s only been a couple of days since you last spoke to her,” Ryo said.

“I’m ready,” Elina said. “Now is there any chance of this family of yours invading New York so I can meet them?”

“Maybe. Hopefully,” was Dee’s reply. “If not, we’ll have to get you to Japan even if for a few days. There are some things coming up over the year that now that they know about me, I’m expected to be at.”

“That’s going to be interesting. Good thing you have use of the private jet,” Elina stated.

“Very good thing. We’ll be making trips here throughout the year, but it won’t be as long as this trip,” Ryo explained. “Sometimes even just for a couple of days and back again. It all depends on what’s going on with work and school.”

“I’m going to let you two go now,” Elina said. “It must be late for you and you’ve both had a long day.”

“Very long,” Dee agreed. “We hit the road about 5:30 to avoid traffic on the Tomei Expressway, and to give time to stop at the rest areas so Bikky and Carol could explore them. And to collect stamps from at the rest stops.”

“The rest areas here have their own unique stamps as souvenirs,” Ryo explained. “Bikky and Carol decided to collect as many as they can as we’re getting around Japan. Which is fine, because Dee and I are also collecting them for our trip book.”

“Knowing Carol, I know it’s probably obvious, but she really is having the time of her life. And that was before she got to Nagoya,” Elina said with a laugh. “Now it’s off the scale.”

“Oh, tell me about it,” Ryo agreed, also laughing. “But I’m glad she’s enjoying herself.”

“She should be getting back soon with Bikky and we all need to get ready for sleep. We have another long day tomorrow. My father wants to take us sightseeing.”
“That sounds so exciting for you, Dee,” Elina exclaimed. “I’m so happy. This is amazing and surprising. Have a good day tomorrow.”

“I’m sure we will,” Dee replied. “I’m sure Carol will be calling you after we get out of the NGY show tomorrow night. Have a good day.”

Ryo ended the call and looked at Dee. “I think I’m going to give Obāsan a call and let her know we’re both good tonight and give her a recap since we last talked. I’ll deal with the rest of the family at some point soon. You better give Mother a call and let her know everything went mostly well with your family tonight.”

“Yeah, you’re right. I know I’ve been texting her through the night with photos, but I’m sure she wants the rundown. Okay, those are good next and last for the night calls to make,” said Dee.

Ryo ended the call and looked at Dee. “And then I have plans for you, Daisuke,” Ryo said with a wicked grin.

“Oh crap,” Dee moaned. “Here it comes.”

Ryo grinned at him. “Oh yes, you will.”

“Behave now, until we’re done talking to Mother and Obāsan,” Dee warned and then grinned back. “Let’s get these calls out of the way.” Dee picked up his phone to call Maria.

OoOoOoO
Bikky and Carol were still sleeping by the time Dee and Ryo gave Ryoko and Darin baths and got them dressed for a day of sightseeing with Saburo. When they were done, they got their luggage packed. Being that they did not take much out from their suitcases the day before, it was quick work.

They made themselves comfortable on the bed and called Ryo’s grandparents in New York. Ryo had already sent a text to his grandmother, asking if it was a good time to call. She replied a few minutes later that she was anxious to hear how their vacation was so far. It was the first time he called his grandparents after the call to let them know they arrived in Tokyo safely and assured them that the flight was very comfortable, and they were happy to be in Japan again.

Ryo put the call to his grandparents’ house phone on speaker, so Dee could be involved in the full conversation. Franklin answered the phone. “MacLean residence. This is Franklin speaking.”

“This is your grandson speaking.” Ryo replied with a grin.

“Randy! I was hoping it was you. Your grandmother said you were going to call. I’m sure she’s
going to pick up….” There was the sound of an extension being picked up and Ryo started to smile.

“Hello Grandfather and Grandma,” Ryo greeted with a smile.

“How is Japan treating you?” Estelle asked anxiously. “I’ve been waiting for your call. It’s about time!”

Franklin started to laugh. “As much as I wanted to hear from them, I know if they were truly having a wonderful time, then they would be too busy having fun, and would call when they finally have a chance to breathe.”

Dee started to laugh as Ryo said, “Oh, you have no idea the time we’ve been having, but it’s been all wonderful. Right, Dee?”

“Definitely,” Dee agreed.

“I knew you would have a great time,” Estelle said. “And I’ll bet it’s nice not to have to worry about a budget.”

“Or getting everything from shopping home,” Ryo quipped and chuckled. “Actually, Obāsan suggested we ship most of what we bought here to avoid long, messy customs coming back to New York.”

“Akira-san makes sense,” Franklin added. “However, did she tell you that we are currently working on Greenway’s cargo planes to be used for express shipments? It’ll be a joint effort. We’re just working on the fine details, but it looks like a go. She’ll be able to offer express shipping at lower rates than using the airlines she uses.”

“We’re considering it a family connection. We’re also considering expanding her freight company on the US side,” Estelle said. “We started talking after you boys left for Japan. But enough on that. I want to hear about your time in Japan. I’m glad you’re also enjoying shopping.”

“When we’re with Obāsan, we really don’t have much chance spending money,” Ryo commented. “She’s always paying for everything and not taking no for an answer.”
“That sounds like her,” Estelle agreed. “I am so glad we have had a chance to reconnect, and it’s because of your wedding. Dee, Ryo, thank you for opening doors. Unfortunately, your poor father closed those doors to most of our family, mostly because of blind family pride that I now see as stupidity, but the two of you opened them. I have kept in touch with Akira over the years, but not as close as we are now.”

“I’m glad of it too, Grandma,” Ryo said, his eyes filling with tears. It meant the world to him to finally see both of his grandmothers become close. That Maria was also included was a bonus and made both Ryo and Dee happy. “Speaking of, something incredible happened here.”

“We had a feeling. Akira-san said you would have big news for us, but we would have to wait until you told us,” said Franklin. “I trust you can tell us what that is now?”

“Part of the reason why we’re calling,” Ryo said. “I don’t know if you remember mention of one of my cousins Momo in Nagoya.”

“Your mother took you to Nagoya a few times when you were younger to visit Momo’s mother. Is that right? You also stayed with them at times for a week or two,” Estelle said. “I do know Momo came up in conversation over the years, especially lately.”

“He keeps saying he’s only been to Nagoya once, but from what I’ve been hearing from the family, he’s been here plenty of times,” Dee said.

“I know I have been, but I don’t remember much beyond playing with Momo and her house. The only time I went that I remember was while I stationed at Zama,” Ryo explained.

“There was talk during your wedding amongst your Japanese relatives that they believe Momo was making up her husband and family,” Franklin said. “It seems weddings always brings up that topic. I hear she came to Emiko’s wedding alone.”

Dee and Ryo started to laugh. “Yes, she did,” Ryo confirmed, “but at Obāsan’s party last Saturday in Tokyo, she finally showed up with her husband. Turns out he’s not an imaginary husband after all.”

“Really? This seems to make you very happy,” Franklin observed.

“Oh, it does make me very happy, but not as much as Dee is now,” Ryo said.
“I am most curious now,” Estelle said. “What is it about Momo and her husband that makes Dee so happy.”

Ryo glanced at Dee and with a sly grin said, “I think I really am my father’s son.” He winked at Dee. “I’m going to let Dee tell the rest. It really is his story, even if it’s because of one of my cousins.”

“Dee, please don’t follow your husband’s wicked example by drawing this out. I must admit I am now very curious,” Estelle stated.

Dee laughed and said, “It turns out that Momo’s mystery husband is my twin brother.”

“What?” Franklin exclaimed.

“Is he really your twin or he just looks like you?” Estelle asked.

“He really is my twin. We had a DNA test, even if we were pretty much convinced by the end of the party. We did the tests so that he could convince my biological father that I wasn’t killed along with my other father in New York.”

“Have you also met your father?” Estelle asked nervously. Estelle was very aware of what Dee felt about his biological parents, and had said that she really couldn’t blame him for feeling as he did.

“It’s fine, Grandma,” Ryo said. “We’re in Nagoya today, in a suite in the Sakae Blossom hotel, but we’re about to check out this morning to stay with Dee’s father and stepfather.”

“Yeah, we met him yesterday, along with six of my half-siblings and their families,” Dee said. “And grandparents, aunts, uncles… just about everyone who lives in the Nagoya area.”

“Is your family military, Dee?” Franklin asked.

“No Grandfather,” Ryo replied for Dee. “As I said, I discovered that I really am my father’s son because I ended up also marrying a half-Japanese.”
“You’re half-Japanese, Dee?” Estelle asked. “Oh, this is so exciting that you got to know your family. I am guessing that it wasn’t at all as it seemed on how you ended up in that wretched alley.”

“It wasn’t, ma’am. Yes, one of my fathers, the one who lives in Nagoya along with most of his family, is Japanese. My other father, the one who went missing with me in New York, was Welsh. It was believed that we were both killed by the yakuza. My father who was with me seemed to have been killed, and I was left to fend for myself, or so we’re thinking now. If that father did end up surviving, he would have contacted someone from the family, and tried looking for me. Since no one heard from him since then, and I ended up being found by Jess, then he was most likely killed. They did get proof at the time, but I won’t go into it. But it was enough to make them believe that both my father and I was killed.”

“And now your father knows that you weren’t killed,” Franklin said. “I’m sure that was a shock for him.”

“He was no doubt glad to see you,” Estelle added.

“Oh he was,” Ryo said with a laugh. “He knew we were on the way. When I made the turn onto his street, I could see him pacing, looking down the street with Dee’s twin trying to calm him down. I thought he was going to break a few of Dee’s bones hugging him.”

“That’s so delightful!” Estelle exclaimed joyfully. “How do you feel about having a real father, Dee?”

“It feels good,” Dee admitted with a warm smile. “I never would have believed I would willingly go to meet my father, but after hearing what happened, and then after meeting him, I know he loved me very much, and never stopped just because I didn’t come home with him back then.”

“Even his brothers and sisters born after Dee’s father remarried know him, and it feels like from talk from Saburo-san and the other, older relatives, that they miss him even if they never met him,” Ryo added.

“Even if Dee was only months old when his father lost him,” Estelle mused. “Yes, Dee. You do have a family that loves you very much, and no doubt thrilled to have you back.”

“Yes, ma’am,” Dee said with a nervous chuckle. “Last night we had a gathering of the relatives around Nagoya who were able to make it.”
“Just about everyone dropped what they had planned for the evening and showed up,” Ryo added with a warm smile as he rubbed Dee’s arm. “About 150 of them.”

“One hundred and fifty?” Franklin exclaimed, sounding amazed. “My goodness. It sounds like you have a very large family indeed!”

“Yeah. I have relatives in areas around Nagoya and some in Osaka and Kyoto, and even a couple of cousins in Chicago,” Dee said.

“You mentioned other brothers and sisters besides Dafydd,” Estelle started. “How many siblings do you have?”

“I have 4 half-brothers and 3 half-sisters, but it’s very easy to drop the ‘half’ part when around them. At least the ones I met. There is one in Ise who could not make it last night. We’ll meet him tomorrow on the way to Toshijima, where my family has a house. My father wants to show us the island.”

“The island is owned by his family,” Ryo said.

“Mostly my grandfather, who holds the family wealth,” Dee commented. “It’s his money, but from what I hear, he will give money to family as needed, especially the closer ones.” Then Dee added under his breath, “Even if he is a douche.”

Ryo nodded in agreement.

“I take it that Maria knows,” Estelle stated. “I can’t see you keeping something like this from her very long.”

Ryo let out a laugh. “He called her minutes after he realized that Dafydd was his twin brother.” Ryo suddenly got serious. “Grandfather, there is something about Dee’s family that you need to know, and his grandfather had something interesting to say. Unfortunately, knowing some of our family, I have to admit that I believe him.”

“What’s that, Randy?” Franklin asked.
“We did mention that Dee’s family has money. Hell, his grandfather is probably among the richest in Japan. You never asked what Dee’s birth name is yet.”

“I was going to get to that,” Estelle stated. “I am curious if he knows his name and his birthday. I would so love to throw a party for him.”

“I really appreciate it,” Dee said, “but I think my father called dibs on my next birthday. However, if you want, I’ll make sure you are invited. I’m not sure if it’ll be in New York or Nagoya, but you’re very welcome to join us.”

“It’ll probably be here in Nagoya, Grandma,” Ryo added, “because Dee was born here.”

“Then if it’s okay with his father, we’ll come to Nagoya,” Estelle said. “This is a big deal. Dee gets to celebrate his actual birthday. I’m so thrilled for you, darling!”

“Which would be when?” Franklin asked.

“September 23rd,” Dee answered.

“I’ll put it in my calendar!” Estelle exclaimed happily. “And what is your birth name?”

Dee took a deep breath. “Daisuke Fujioka,” he answered.

Estelle laughed merrily. “Oh, you are your father’s son, Randy! Your husband has a very Japanese name.”

“My twin, who looks more Japanese than I do has the Welsh name,” Dee said with a chuckle. “The rest of my family are all Japanese.”

“If your grandfather is Ryoichi Fujioka of GPN Communications, then he’s not just the richest man in Japan, but he’s among the top 10 in the world,” Franklin stated. “And I must agree that he is a douche.”
“I’m sorry, I didn’t mean for you to hear that,” Dee said.

“I’m sorry that he’s your grandfather,” Franklin said.

“Oh Franklin, stop it,” Estelle warned him. “Your grandfather is only saying that because Fujioka-san refused the offer to bring GPN to the US.”

“After hearing his reasons, I can’t say I don’t disagree with his decision,” Ryo said. “Until we get the ACC under control, do we really want them to be using GPN’s technology?”

“Of course not!” Estelle exclaimed.

“I also admit that now I understand him. However, he was still very abrupt and rude for a Japanese. Not just to me, but to others around him,” Franklin said.

“He is to me and Ryo. Apparently to Dafydd and my nephews because they aren’t 100% Japanese,” Dee said. “But I have been told by many family members including my grandmother that when family needs him, he’s there, be it with support or money.”

“They may be half-Japanese, but to see Dee’s grandfather with the twins. He showed he isn’t always a gruff asshole. He was okay with Bikky too,” Ryo stated.

“I’m sure he’ll want to have a talk with Bikky about not being any bit Japanese eventually,” Dee said. “And then I turn my grandmother on him.”

Ryo chuckled. “Oh, Dee’s grandmother is a gem. You’ll love her, Grandma. I think you both could be friends.”

“Oh, but I did meet her. Not as Dee’s grandmother, obviously, but she took me around Nagoya while our husbands had their most unfortunate meeting. I enjoyed our time together, and now I look forward to meeting her again as your grandmother, and perhaps we can be friends.”

“With this little discovery of yours, will you still be back for New Year’s Eve?” Franklin asked.
“Yes, we’ll be back in time for the orphanage’s Christmas party. I explained to everyone that I can’t miss that,” Dee replied. “Besides, you went through all that trouble to have this party for us and our friends, we have to be there.”

“Dee is trying to convince his brother to join us when we return to New York, along with his family,” Ryo said.

“I’m thinking of asking if my father and stepfather would like to come back with us, even for a week,” Dee said.

“If you manage to get them to come, they and anyone else of your family is very welcome to join us for New Year’s Eve,” Franklin said.

“Even his grandfather?” Estelle asked slyly.

“Only if he behaves himself,” Franklin replied. “But since he is Dee’s family, we’ll let him in.”

“I would so love to see Sakura-san again,” Estelle said. Suddenly she let out a wicked laugh.

“Oh, that scares me,” Ryo said.

“Don’t, Randy. I was just thinking of the dinosaurs and how they were saying you were bringing trash into the family by marrying Dee, believing he did not come from money.”

“They seemed to ignore the Lanes at the wedding, except to pick fights, if I remember,” Dee reminded her. “They have money.”

“But they are your adopted family, so to those biddies, it doesn’t count,” Estelle said.

“They count to me,” Dee said, “but I made it clear a long time ago that, except for when I was in college, that any money they feel they have to share should go to Mother for the orphanage. And in college, I did try to limit what they gave me. They did set up an allowance.”
Ryo let out a snort. “And you and Yuki would get day end bargains, because I bet you sent even some of that money to Mother.”

Dee shrugged. “There were times when I knew she needed it, so like I did with my little brush with success, I managed to make an anonymous donation to help her out. I know she’s too stubborn to give the family a call asking for money. At least she never said no when they sent her money. She never liked it when I did, but too bad. That’s what sons are for.”

“That is very noble of you, Dee. I know how much you love your mother. You do know you won’t lose her if you one day love your father as much,” Estelle said.

“I don’t know if I can love him as much, but from the time I spent with him, I know it could be pretty close,” Dee admitted. “Maybe with time, being as I just met him, but I’m willing to give that time to get to know him and let him and my stepfather be part of our lives. And thank you for your offer. If I do get them to come back with us, I’ll make sure to extend the invitation.”

Ryo started to laugh. “Oh, I understand why you laughed like you did, Grandma. Dee’s grandfather is richer than our family, isn’t he?”

“I’m afraid so, Randy,” Franklin said. “Japanese may handle wealth in families differently than us, but to many families of wealth here, Dee comes from a prime family. The one thing your father did not do differently than expected in our family was marry a woman from a family of money. So yes, Randy, apparently you are very much your father’s son. Be proud of that.”

“I’m just proud that I managed to marry my best friend,” Ryo said with a warm, loving smile directed at Dee.

“If your grandfather does come to New York, or at any other time I would meet him, which I hope since I am Randy’s grandfather and he is Dee’s, and it’s good to get to know the other family, I promise to not ask him anymore about GPN,” Franklin said. “I just want to meet him as your grandfather, along with your grandmother.”

“Thank you, sir,” Dee said. “I think we better bring this up before we get sidetracked again,” he started. “Speaking of the dinosaurs, my grandfather said something disturbing to Ryo when he cornered him last night.”
“Cornered? Did he want to give you the talk?” Estelle asked, amused.

“Worse, I’m afraid,” Ryo replied. “He wasn’t happy with his grandson going by MacLean, and he insisted that either Dee drops it or we both find something else. Or just go with Laytner. When I tried to explain to him that you see things differently now, and even assist Carriers, he went on to say that while you might have opened to Carriers, there are others in the family who are tarnishing our name by giving money to the ACC.”

Estelle let out a gasp, while Franklin remained in shocked silence for a few moments. “Well,” he said slowly. “If that’s true, I’m sure I have a good idea where to start looking.”

“This is outrageous! We have to put a stop to this!” Estelle stated firmly. “I will not see any MacLean money go into that awful organization.”

“Unfortunately, I believe your grandfather might be correct, now that you mention it,” Franklin said. “And I should have looked into it sooner. I’ll have to do some looking into this, and then how to bring this to a stop. I swear, if I have to start treating our family wealth like the Japanese, then I’ll figure a way to do it.”

“If you need assistance, contact Commissioner Rose and Diana,” Ryo said. “Grandfather, I’m sorry but I did have to say something.”

“And we’re glad you did, Randy,” Franklin said. “Heads are going to roll. If they want to annex from the family because of any changes I come up with, well, I’ll show them the exit door to our family – without the family money, of course. We don’t need filth like that in our family. Randy, you and your generation, along with the one after, are our family’s future and no one has the old mindset on how that should be.”

“Sit down, Franklin, and catch your breath. You can’t kick people out of the family if you give yourself a stroke,” Estelle ordered.

“I’m sorry,” Ryo said. “Grandfather, I didn’t mean to cause you harm. Please take care of yourself.”

“Nothing to apologize for Randy. You didn’t cause me harm. It’s the ones who are guilty,” Franklin assured Ryo. “And Dee, I am glad that your grandfather said something. I’m just kicking myself not finding a way to monitor our money better since your wedding.”
“Now that we are aware, we’ll work it out, Randy,” said Estelle, in her level headed, practical way, but her anger at the situation was still evident in her voice. “Don’t you worry. And Dee, you can tell your grandfather that. The MacLean name is a fine one, just as Fujioka is, but there are those in every family who can make a name seem tarnished. We’ll weed them out and cut them off. Now, I really don’t want to end this call on that note. Especially after all the lovely things we have been talking about.”

“I hate to bring up, what I’m sure for you two is more unpleasantness, but have you spoken to Barry yet?” Franklin asked.

“I did,” Dee said. “He was my first call when we got back to the hotel last night. I felt bad that I kept brushing off his phone calls last week, especially after leaving him handle things for me. He called again while we were driving to Nagoya and I made it very brief because I had Dafydd and Momo in the van with us.”

“I take it that you know about your building?” Estelle asked.

“Yes, we do,” Ryo replied.

“I know you both were happy to stay there for a while longer. Barry and I did all we were able to, but I assume he told you your options,” said Franklin.

“He did,” Ryo said. “Dee and I talked about it last night and decided we don’t have the time or energy to fight it, especially if after all the time and money, it’s not guaranteed.”

“It could even take long enough that even if we win, it could be the time to start looking for a larger place,” Dee added. “And it would all be for nothing. Besides, it could cost more than the offered money to fight it, and still end up losing. So, once we get back to New York, Ryo and I are officially house hunting. We’ll give the lawyers a call tonight and let them talk, then most likely agree to taking the money. Meanwhile Barry sent us all the paperwork, so hopefully in between running around with my father and seeing my sister perform tonight, we get hope to read it.”

“You don’t have to call today. Take time to read it all before speaking to them,” Estelle suggested. “I must say that with the money they are offering, you can find something you like in Manhattan.”

“We’re hoping so,” Ryo said. “Another reason why we decided on moving is because we now have two large families. Obviously, we’ll have at least Obaasan coming to visit, along with other relatives,
but Dee’s relatives have mentioned wanting to come for a visit too.”

“You’ll need a big house then,” Estelle said. “I’m sure you can find a lovely townhouse with enough room for all your guests. Including us.”

“Of course, including you,” Ryo assured her.

“Of course, we do have our pied-a-terre,” Estelle stated, “so if you don’t have anything to move in by April, you are more than welcome to use it until you have a new, bigger home to move into.”

“Or you can take over the better suite in the Pierre,” Franklin said. “I know you would probably want to be settled in your new home as soon as you can, but since you are buying, you want something that you love. If you need to wait beyond April for your dream home, then you have two options. You don’t have to spend money on a hotel, even if you stay in the Pierre, because it is your hotel.”

“Yes, Grandfather. We haven’t talked to Bikky yet, and we’re hoping he’s okay with it. Dee and I are going to let him give input in what we end up buying, and yes, we are thinking of some renovations to make it what we want,” Ryo said.

“We’re hoping to basically find a good basic structure that we can move things around if we want,” Dee said. “I’ll see if Barry can spare some of his team. We’ll pay them well, even if Barry is now my business partner. I know his people and trust them in giving us the best.”

“I have not met his team, but working with Barry on our projects, I have to admit I can’t think of anyone better. In fact, I already have started referring him.”

“He’s going to have to start looking for more people, but with his standards it won’t be quick,” Dee said.

“Finding the right people never is quick or easy,” Franklin agreed. “I also had the pleasure to meet one of the designers he works with who working on the plans for the new orphanage and Carrier home. I am very pleased with his first ideas and Dru is very easy to work with. By the time you’re back in Tokyo, you should have some plans to give your input on.”

“I’m looking forward to it,” Dee said. “I never met Dru, but I am familiar with his work. I wouldn’t
mind hiring him when we have something to renovate.”

“How exciting!” Estelle exclaimed happily. “You’ll be looking for a new place to call home. If you need anything, please let me know.”

Ryo chuckled. “Thank you, Grandma. But Dee and I also agree that we’re still looking for a house in the Pines. Yes, the priority is our main residence, but we’ll also be watching the real estate in the Pines, and if we see something that isn’t too much, we’ll buy it. Hopefully we won’t have to do much work on it, because we won’t be able to do much before the summer, if we’ll have our minds on getting settled in a new place.”

“If you need any help at all, just ask,” Franklin said. “I can get you in touch with some realtors, or give advice, on weeding out the selections. Whatever you need. Money shouldn’t be a problem, but on the small chance it is, don’t pass up something because you think you can’t afford it – for both houses. Talk to me first before passing up a perfect home.”

“I can help with decorating, and I can offer reliable cleaning companies, so don’t worry about the cleaning,” Estelle offered.

“Thank you, both of you,” Ryo said with a warm smile.

“We’ll keep that in mind,” said Dee. “Thank you.”

“Oh, I can’t wait to see you and your family settled in your two new homes,” Estelle exclaimed. “I know it’s going to be a while, which is why I can’t wait.”

Dee and Ryo laughed along with Estelle.

“So, tell us more about your family, Dee. So far we know that you and your twin brother are half-Japanese and half-Welsh, and you have full Japanese half-siblings.”

“Seven of them,” Ryo added in with a smirk. “Dee and Dafydd should have been the Fujioka heirs, but only twins can inherit. Obviously with them believing Dee was dead, then they both lost their place.”
“I have so many half-brothers and sisters, because only male twins can inherit. My stepfather, Yoshio, wanted to contribute to the family, but he could not carry the heirs,” Dee explained. “My father’s first pregnancy with Yoshio, he had a boy and a girl, so he was expected to try a couple of more times before the honor went to my uncle’s male twin’s. My uncle who is my father’s twin.”

“I am guessing that family tradition is that the oldest should produce the next heirs,” Franklin stated.

“The first male twins,” Dee said. “My father is the oldest of the first male twins born to my grandfather, who was the oldest of the first male twins.”

“But what if no twins are born. They are supposed to be rare,” Estelle said. “That’s why little Darin was such a surprise to us.”

“In America, yes it is. And yes, my father is a twin, but my other father was an only child,” Dee said. “In Japan, there are families with what they call the twin gene. My family is one of those, which explains why I had twins.”

Ryo started to chuckle. “All the males in his family have twins, so if he gets pregnant again, it will be twins again. And every time after. Rumor has it that his family are descendants of the original Carriers, the first men to give birth.”

“What we are about to tell you, it really isn’t common knowledge outside of Japan, and the Japanese prefer it that way,” Dee said. “But having some knowledge might help us with the issues we’re having with the ACC.”

“You have our silence,” Estelle said.

“Men were giving birth in Japan long before the Carrier project,” Dee explained.

“Plus, Dee’s great-grandfather and great-uncle were sent by Japan to the Carrier project.”

“If there were already Carriers in Japan, then I would guess they were sent to give others a nudge in the right direction,” Franklin commented.
“You’re not wrong about that,” Dee said with a laugh. “We are going to share a lot with my unit during a video conference later tonight, and Dafydd agreed to be part of the sharing, but to be honest, it’s going to take time explaining it all right now.”

“I understand. We can talk when you’re back. The people who need the facts will have them, and since anything I hear about the ACC, I’m talking to Berkeley. He can fill me in on whatever you tell him.”

“He’s the best one to go to until we’re back,” Ryo said. “We’re not ready to talk to Mayor Blum yet because what is going on here in Japan isn’t important and since it’s what we call the best kept secret in plain sight, we don’t want to be the ones to blow the secret.”

“Understandable,” said Estelle. “Especially considering Dee’s family. They are powerful, influential and very protective of Carrier rights, not just in Japan. You don’t want to tip that boat, Dee.”

“No ma’am, I don’t. I already met my grandfather, remember?” Dee said. “He’ll probably have us forbidden from entering Japan.”

“And we both have too much here for that to happen,” added Ryo.

“Of course, you do. Now that you have the money, you are able to connect with your newly found family without having to wait for them to come to New York. And I know that Randy’s family there won’t allow him to wait another 10 years to come visit them.”

“We have a compromise which includes everyone from both sides making visits – us to Japan, and them to New York,” Ryo explained. “Which means that Obaasan is planning to be with us on the flight to New York and stay until after the New Year. She wants to help with the orphanage for the holidays, and just be with us.”

“Anyone else from your family there, Randy?” Franklin asked. “Just let me know and I’ll make sure they’re on the list.”

“I’ll make sure they are on the list, since I’m working with Sharon on planning the party,” Estelle remarked.

“I stand corrected. Let your grandmother know and she’ll make sure there are seats and food for
“Speaking of Sharon, we met an event coordinator here that looks like she can knock Sharon out of the ballpark with last minute events,” Ryo said and laughed.

“Oh really?” asked Estelle.

“Yes, the one who put together the nice cozy little dinner for us and the 150 of my relatives who were able to make it last night in only a few hours,” Dee stated and chuckled. “And that would be my half-sister, Tomoko, and her wife.”

“They even have their own event space,” Ryo added. “You’ll see it when we send you pictures of last night’s party. And she’s planning a bigger one when we’re back in Nagoya after our trip around Japan.”

“Apparently my grandmother’s side of the family will be at that one too. Only a few of my cousins from her side were there,” Dee stated.

“It looks like we’ll be making a trip to Nagoya next year, hopefully with you and Randy, so I can meet your wonderful family. Hopefully you’ll get some of them to New York for New Year’s Eve,” Estelle said.

“I hate to cut this off, but we have to start getting ready to meet Dee’s father,” Ryo said. “At least we don’t have much trouble getting Bikky moving in the mornings these days.”

“I bet he’s having a great time,” Estelle commented.

“Oh, he’s loving it. I’m afraid he’s going to ask when we’re going to move here,” Dee said and laughed.

“That’s still an option, I’ll admit,” Ryo said. “A small one, but still an option. Between Dee needing to connect with his family, the penthouse in Tokyo and us needing to move, it’s on the list of options.”
“Even if we don’t now, both Carol and Bikky have mentioned wanting to go to college here, even if for a semester, and we’re willing to let Bikky, if it makes him happy,” said Dee. “And if he manages to actually get in a college here, I think we’ll move too for his time, but that’s a few years down the line.”

“I would miss having you in New York, but if that’s what makes everyone happy, then follow your heart,” Estelle stated.

“Dee has a family he needs to get to know, and I think that would be a reason enough, if you decide to move,” said Franklin. “Maybe if you don’t think you can move away completely, split the year.”

“That’s true,” Ryo said. “I hear Bikky and Carol, so I think it’s time to say goodbye for now. Since you know about Dee’s family now, we’ll start sending pictures when we have a chance to sit down at our laptop.”

“I look forward to them. What about videos?” Estelle asked.

“Yes, videos too. We’ll keep you informed, don’t worry, Grandma,” Ryo said. “I don’t know when you’ll get another call, but you will be getting emails until we talk again.”

“I’m so happy everyone is having fun. Keep enjoying yourselves. And give Bikky our love. Carol, too,” said Estelle.

“We will. Take care,” Ryo said.

“We’ll be in touch at some point,” Dee said.

“I’m glad we got a chance to catch up. Don’t worry about calling us, emails and text messages with photos and videos will do fine while you’re on this wonderful adventure. I’ll talk to you when you are able,” Franklin said.

“Love you two,” Ryo said.

“We love you too, both of you,” said Estelle.
With a smile, Ryo disconnected the call.

OoOoOoO
Chapter 37

Chapter Summary

More time with Dee's father and sightseeing in Nagoya.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

Nagoya Sakae Blossom Hotel

Sakae, Nagoya Aichi

Japan

November 6, 2006

Everyone was having coffee in the lounge area of their hotel suite as Dee and Ryo informed Bikky on what Barry had told them about their apartment. Bikky remained quiet when they were finished.

“Can you fight it?” Carol asked.

“We could,” Dee said. “It could give us a year or so, but it’s going to cost us. Not as much as it will cost the company, but it’s going to involve who knows how much time, and a lot money.”

Ryo leaned forward and placed his coffee cup on the table before the couch he sat on. “Dee and I talked about it, and we both agree that if we’re going to take time off from work, we rather take it to come here, especially since we want Dee to connect with his family. Plus, now that we could afford it, there are some other places besides Japan we would like to go to. As for the money, we could end up in court battles for years. We don’t want the chance to spend all that money and time, only for it to end just when Darin and Ryoko are old enough for their own rooms.”

“We’d have to move then, right?” Bikky said.

“I don’t know where you’re going for college, but even if it’s not in New York, you’re always going
to have a room to come back to,” Ryo added. “And sure, we can convert the nursery into a room for the twins to share, but it would also be around the time that I hope I’m pregnant.”

“So, we’re moving,” Bikky commented and nodded with satisfaction.

Dee blinked as he studied Bikky. “You don’t mind?” he asked.

Bikky shrugged. “I know you two love our apartment. I do, too. Don’t get me wrong on it, but we can afford something bigger. So, I don’t mind, as long as we don’t end up moving into another apartment the same size.”

“Are you open to maybe something like the penthouse in Tokyo?” Ryo asked.

“Yes. That’s so much bigger than our place, and there will be room for all of us kids,” Bikky said. “You better make sure Dad doesn’t get pregnant again, being that he’ll end up having twins again.”

Ryo looked at Dee. “Yeah, that’s true.” He looked thoughtful for a moment before looking at Dee. “You do realize that your family takes pride in having more than one set of twins. I noticed that last night. It’s very likely that you will be expected to have at least another pregnancy.”

“Yeah, I got that impression too,” Dee admitted, running his hands through his hair. “I was asked by a lot of them last night how many pregnancies do I think I’ll have. I didn’t have the heart to say just this one, but I didn’t commit either.”

“You just said you didn’t know, and we’ll see,” Ryo said. “Well, Biks, if you’re good with moving, and we probably need to get something at least the same size as the penthouse, I guess we’re moving. We can have Barry start looking for us. Maybe get something at below market value.”

Dee nodded. “I knew we would have to be doing this eventually, but I was hoping we’ll have a few more years. Instead of fighting it, we decided that we’re going to make the best of the situation. We also decided that you will be part of our decision making in our new home.”

“I hope so!” Bikky exclaimed. “I do like our place but since we have to move, I hope we get a really cool place.”
“I’m glad you’re excited over it,” Ryo said. “We have until April to move, but we’re not going to start looking at places until after the holidays.”

“Meaning January,” Dee added. “Or whenever Barry has something to show us starting then.”

“But that will give you three months to find something and move,” Carol said, sounding concerned. “Are you sure that’s enough time?”

Dee shrugged. “I’m not sure even if we started looking now, it will be enough time. Ryo agrees with me, but from here all we can do is just look at photos and information. It’s not enough and we’re not cutting our vacation short because Mrs. Rutkowski decided to sell the building.”

“I spoke to my grandparents this morning,” Ryo said. “It was time to give them an update of our time in Japan.”

“Did you tell them about Dad’s family?” Bikky asked.

“Yes, we did. They are thrilled about it, but I doubt they’ll be reaching out to the Fujiokas anytime soon, like Obāsan and Mother are,” Ryo replied. “Dee did mention trying to get at least Dafydd and his family to New York for New Year’s, and Grandfather told Dee to just let him know how many Fujiokas to expect at the New Year’s party. Anyway, we also talked about the apartment, since Barry reached out to Grandfather for advice. They agreed that we shouldn’t cut our time here short, especially with Dee still getting to know his family, so Grandma said that we could stay at their place in the city until we find something.”

Dee smirked. “Remember, it’s a quaint and cozy place to Ryo’s grandparents, but it’s bigger than our apartment.”

“It’s about the size of the penthouse in Tokyo,” Ryo stated.

Bikky and Carol started to laugh at Dee’s and Ryo’s comments. “Those are Grandma’s and Grandpa’s words, aren’t they? Quaint and cozy.” Bikky started to laugh again.

“Hey, everyone do me a favor,” Dee said. “if you ever hear me use quaint and cozy to describe a small space, just shoot me right there. Well, Biks, you can hold me down while Carol gets Ryo with his gun, if you hear me.”
With an impish grin, Ryo looked around the suite they were currently occupying. “You know, this could be quaint and cozy,” he said.

“Don’t start, Ryo,” Dee warned. “I don’t want to have to shoot you.”

Ryo started to laugh. “As if! Just like no way I’ll shoot you. Maybe slap you about some, but no shooting.”

“Fine.”

“Are you both packed?” Ryo asked Bikky and Carol.

“I am,” Carol replied.

“I’m almost done. Just a few things,” Bikky said.

“Well, go get it done then,” Ryo said.

“I thought we’re bringing our stuff over to Ojiisan’s house later,” Bikky said.

“We’re going to have our stuff when we go to meet him,” Ryo said. “When we’re close to his house, we can drop everything off.”

“And then tomorrow we’ll have to pack it all again to go to that island, right?” Bikky asked.

“Not everything,” Dee said. “We’re just going to be gone for a night, so we’ll just take what we need and leave everything else at my father’s house.” Dee shook his head. “Wow. Does that sound weird.”

“A good weird, I hope,” Ryo commented, poking Dee lightly in his side.
“Yeah, a good weird, but it’s still weird.”

“It’s also still new. You’ll get used to it. Don’t worry,” Ryo assured Dee, patting his shoulder. “Biks, finish your packing. Once we hear from Dafydd, we’re checking out. We won’t be coming back to this hotel while we’re in Nagoya.”

“Okay. I do like Ojisan’s house,” Bikky said. “It’s not an old house like Obāsan’s, but it’s a real cool Japanese type house,” Bikky said as he finished his coffee and stood up. “Do you think he still has the puppies there?”

“I don’t know, Biks,” said Ryo. “I would think that Dafydd and Momo would have taken the mama and her pups home with them.”

“But we got out of dinner pretty late last night,” Bikky pointed out.

“From what I heard it isn’t that much a diversion stopping at Saburo-san’s house,” Ryo said.

“Well, do you think we’d go to Uncle Dafydd’s house at any time?” Bikky asked. “I want to see where they live.”

“And see the puppies, no doubt,” Dee said with a grin. “We’ll see. I would like to see my brother’s house, but on the other hand, who knows when he will be able to see ours.”

“Or which one,” Ryo added.

“There’s that too,” Dee agreed.

Bikky grabbed another mini-sponge cheese cake that was delivered to their room first thing in the morning, along with other favorite Japanese cakes and pan, and headed into his room.

Ryo looked at Carol. “Do I need to do a sweep of your room in case you left something?”
“Nah. I’m pretty sure I got everything,” Carol replied. “My bags are by the door in my room.”

“If you realize you left something, I’m sure we’ll get a call,” Dee said. “And we will be down the street tonight.”

“Oh yeah! That’s right!” Carol exclaimed. “We’re going to see NGY52! I don’t believe it!”

Ryo started to laugh. “As if you didn’t meet most of them yesterday and spent most of the day with Ayaka.”

“I know that, silly,” Carol said. “I’m still trying to believe that, or that she’s Dee’s half-sister, but a performance is different than just having lunch with them.”

Dee started to chuckle. “Yeah, we know, Princess. Hearing all those songs you listen to live, with them dancing with the full show. I understand. It’s going to be fun.”

Carol jumped up and hugged Dee. “You did promise me that you’d do your best that I get to see at least one of the groups. And you did it. Thank you, Dee!” She kissed his cheek. “Thank you for allowing me to come on this trip. It’s been fantastic!”

As Carol rushed over to also hug Ryo, Dee laughed. “Gee, does this mean we’re going to have find something better for our next vacation.”

“Your family found you, we’re going to see NGY52 as Ayaka Fujioka’s guests, and from the moment we landed, I’m just loving Japan, including more time with Ryo’s grandmother and meeting more of his family. I don’t think you can ever top this. You don’t have to,” Carol said.

Ryo smiled. “I agree. This trip as been definitely more than I expected it to be, and I’m not complaining.” He hugged Carol back. “And we’re glad you were able to take the time off without getting behind on your studies.”

“I really would prefer to graduate with my friends, so I was going to take off this semester anyway.”

“You keep saying thank you to us when you know you don’t have to,” Ryo started, “but if you
really feel like you want to thank us in a big way, then when we get back, I want you to start
deciding on a college and sending in your acceptance. Don’t worry about the costs. Just pick the one
you want to go to.”

Carol nodded her head. “I’ll probably thank you a million times for that too, but I promise. I think I
already know where I want to go, but I need to check into a couple of other schools before making
my decision.” She smiled at Ryo. “Will the week after I start my new semester do?”

Ryo looked over at Dee, who nodded. Dee’s cell phone started to ring, and Dee picked it up.

“We’re good with it,” Ryo agreed with Dee. Looking over at his husband, Ryo watched as Dee
answered the phone.

“Moshi moshi. Hai!”

Ryo smiled as most of Dee’s side of the phone call was mostly Dee saying “Hai!” and making
sounds that was basically the Japanese version of acknowledgment of listening and agreeing with the
speaker. Dee laughed a couple of times and then closed the call. He looked at Ryo. “We’re going to
take a little walk first before checking out.”

“To where?” Ryo asked.

“To Nagoya division police headquarters,” Dee said with a chuckle. “My father came to work with
Dafydd and Momo, and it looks like Dafydd’s co-workers want to meet us. So, we’ll go there for a
bit and then Saburo is going to take us for breakfast. After, we’ll come back here and check out.”

“Sounds good to me,” Ryo said with a smile. “No doubt they were talking when Dafydd went into
work.”

“Dafydd said he never got the chance,” Dee said. “He said that Momo’s co-workers from the lab
spread the news. Since Momo and Dafydd weren’t due to return to work until today, they didn’t
have to call in or anything when they decided to spend the extra time and drive in with us. They
walked in with my father, and everyone was waiting to offer them congratulations. And now they
are expecting us.”

“We better get going then so we can let all those cops get to their posts,” Ryo said.
Dee started to laugh. “No kidding. Ready to go, Princess?” Dee asked Carol.

“Biks, come on. We’re going out for a bit,” Ryo called out.

Bikky came into the main room. “What’s up?”

“We’re going to visit your uncle at work,” Ryo replied.

“We’re going to a police station?” Bikky asked. “You’re on vacation.”

“Yes we are,” Dee said, “but Dafydd and Momo aren’t anymore.”

“So why do we have to go?”

“Their co-workers want to meet us. After, we’re going for breakfast with your grandfather,” Ryo said. “At least we’ll see a little how the Japanese police operate.”

Bikky started to laugh. “You’re both police geeks!”

“We’re both police,” Dee said, looking amused. “Now c’mon and grab your jacket. You’re finished with packing?”

“Yeah. Just managed to get one of my bags closed.”

Ryo looked at Bikky with concern. “I might have to take a look at that bag before we take it to the van.”

“Geez, sorry I can’t pack so neatly like you can,” Bikky said.
“Enough for now,” Dee said. “Let’s get this day started already. I don’t know about the rest of you, but I didn’t come to Nagoya to sit in a hotel room all day and argue luggage logistics.”

When they arrived at the Achi Nagoya Division Police Headquarters building, they found Dafydd waiting in the front for them. Dafydd got them visitors’ badges and led them to the elevator up to the floor his unit was on. When they got out of the elevator, they entered the bullpen. Sitting on an uncomfortable looking small couch was Saburo. He jumped up when the elevator doors opened with a huge smile. He immediately rushed over to hug Dee. “I woke up this morning thinking yesterday was all a dream, and then Dafydd called me asking what time did I want you to meet up with me. Oh, Daisuke! I still don’t believe this is real. It’s all too good to be true!”

Dee laughed and hugged his father back. “I’m really here, Papa. I’ll admit I thought I was dreaming too, until I woke up and looked out the window of the suite and saw Nagoya. Suddenly I had this voice in my head reminding me that I was born in this city.”

“Did Dafydd call you too?” Saburo asked.

“Well… actually before that, we had to make a few more phone calls back home, mostly to tell people what’s going on here,” Dee said. “Then Dafydd called. My mother also called just to check on how I was dealing this morning.”

“She called me too,” Saburo said. “She really is a wonderful woman. I am so glad that you ended up with her. I know in my heart that you had a very loving mother and that makes me happy.”

“Okay, there are people waiting here that need to get back to work,” Dafydd commented amused. “They already are meeting Ryo, and the kids.”

Saburo pulled away from Dee, both men laughing. Dee went over to his brother, while Saburo went to Ryo, and hugged him, and then Bikky and Carol. He cooed at Ryoko, who Ryo was holding and took Darin from Momo.

Dafydd introduced Dee and his family to everyone in his division. Some who had the day off came in just to say hello before going to whatever their plans for the day. When they were done with Dafydd’s division, Momo took them to the lab where she worked. Dee got to meet Hana and thanked her for everything she did.
When they were done with meeting everyone, they were taken on a tour of not only the detective division, but also the uniform cops with Dafydd introducing them to the uniforms he knew. The tour allowed Dee and Ryo to ask questions about police procedure in Japan. To their amusement, despite Bikky’s comment back at the hotel, Bikky also ended up asking questions about differences. They also found themselves answering questions, especially Dee and Ryo about their ‘Special Carrier Unit’, which sentiment with the Japanese police was it was a very important unit that was needed with the way things were in America. Having studied the Japanese justice system in college, Dee impressed many of the cops with his questions. Dee did have knowledge of the system, but except for going into kobans to ask directions, and having some cops as part of security during Daigaku Dudes promotional tour, Dee really had no idea how the police worked, but was finding out that day. When they were ready to leave, the New Yorkers said they will meet Dafydd and Momo that evening and left with Saburo.

Saburo took them to a nearby café for a late breakfast. It was the first time for everyone to have ogura toast. Even Dee had managed to miss a Nagoya breakfast favorite during his previous visits to Nagoya. On the plates were thick slices of toasted Japanese bread. On each slice was a generous scoop of red bean sauce. Also served with the toast was a bowl of fresh whipped cream. Saburo suggested they all take a bite of the toast, getting some of the red beans. They all agreed that it was good. Bikky commented that while it was good, he thought the red beans in mochi were better. Saburo smiled and suggested that they take another bite with the whipped cream.

Saburo started to laugh when Bikky’s eyes opened wide. “Wow! That is oshii!” Bikky exclaimed.

“Oshii desu, Bikky,” Ryo corrected him.

“Oh yeah. Oshii desu!” Bikky stated.

“This is really good with the whipped cream,” Carol said with a smile.

“I could have this a few times or more,” Dee commented, and Ryo nodded in agreement.

“I am surprised that you managed not to have this before,” Saburo said to both Dee and Ryo. “Ryo, chances are you did have it during your visits as a child but like almost everything else, you don’t remember. I can tell you that Momo’s mother serves ogura toast that tastes better than this.”

“It can taste better?” Carol asked.
“Bring on Momo’s mom,” Dee commented and laughed.

“Perhaps Momo can arrange that,” Saburo stated. “While not her mother’s, Momo is very good at serving it.”

“It’s such a simple thing, but something tells me making it is not as simple as it seems,” Dee said.

“It’s all about proportion,” Saburo asked. “Also, some red bean sauce is better than others, and the same with the quality of whipped cream. The type of bread used also makes a difference. I am glad that you enjoyed a Nagoya specialty that we did not have last night. Let us finish so I can get you around Nagoya. Yoshio is making dinner tonight. We think it is a good idea to get home with time to let you get settled in and relax before having dinner. Then we can get ready to head over to the theater and see Ayaka. Are you excited, Carol?”

“Oh yes. I am. I know that I met her, and she said that we’re friends now, even family, but to see her and other others perform…. That is so exciting!”

“She gave me all the information about getting in tonight, as if I don’t know already,” Saburo said and rolled his eyes. “She did say that she will be giving you a call at some point today when she is not busy and most likely repeat what she said to me this morning. She was hoping to be home for dinner tonight, but it does not look like she will.”

“I got a text from her on the way to the police headquarters,” Dee said. “She said that she found out she had some things to do, and won’t have time to join us for dinner.”

“She asked Dee if it was okay to call me at times,” Carol said, “but I’m afraid we won’t know what we are saying.”

Ryo started to laugh. “That is called learning Japanese and English. You can help her with English and she will help with Japanese. If you really can’t figure out what is being said, you can hand the phone to me or Dee.”

“I can’t believe that Ayaka Fujioka actually wants to call me,” Carol said as they ate their breakfast.

“I can’t believe Ayaka Fujioka is my sister, along with seven other brothers and sisters,” Dee quipped, making the others laugh.
“Speaking of calling, you will have to allow updates to your phones sometime tonight. Since you have GPN as your service provider, my father said you are all entitled to the family service, free of charge. You will be noticing some changes. It’s a good thing you chose the best phones available, or we would be stopping at the office to get you new phones. Your service will also continue when you go back to New York, so you can use them to call us.” Saburo gave a sly smile. “Keep in touch with your family here.”

“We will be able to use them in America?” Dee asked.

“Japanese who travel to America can get extended service. It’s done all the time, so we can do the same, only make it permanent. As of tomorrow, you will always have service in Japan and America.”

“We can use these as our main phones then?” Dee asked.

“Yes, you can.”

“I’d still keep certain numbers on the phones we had back home,” Ryo said with a smirk.

“I understand what you mean, but that would mean paying for a second substandard service just for numbers you don’t always want calls from. Your GPN service is free because you are family,” Saburo said. “You are direct family. Daisuke, you should have had a chance to run GPN after my father retires. It was originally between you and Dafydd.”

“With the other one training to become a Shinto priest to take on running the shrine,” Dee added.

Saburo laughed. “Chances are if you were raised here, you would not be Catholic, so it wouldn’t sound so strange as it does now. I respect your beliefs, Daisuke, and will not attempt to convert you to the family religion. Shinto does not involve itself in such practices. You are not the only Christian in our family. My brother, Hajime, has twins who have married twins from Chicago and live there now. They have converted when they moved there, and had two marriage ceremonies. One here at a Shinto shrine and then with their spouses’ families in a church in Chicago.”

“I do recall hearing of cousins in Chicago,” Dee said. He took out the notebook Momo had given him and decided to keep on him at all times while in Nagoya. Looking through the book, he read, “Kayoko and Shiinichi. They married male twins. Did Shiinichi have children?”
“Yes. Of course, he gave birth to twins. The American doctor assumed that it was because his husband is also a twin, and Shiinichi did not correct him. Of course, Shiinichi has the Fujioka twin gene, as does his son, Ryan. Ryan’s twin sister will pass on the twin gene to her children. Shiinichi’s husband also gave birth to a boy, Eric, and Eric will always have twins, should he decide to Carry. Kayoko’s husband is a not a Carrier, so she had all three of their children.”

“Shiinichi is far from the only Japanese to marry Americans and move from Japan,” Ryo said. “But how many Japanese with the twin gene moved to America?”

“Plenty enough that if American doctors took time to notice a pattern among Japanese Carriers, they would be questioning it,” Saburo stated.

“I’m going to have to correct my MOP on why I gave birth to twins. After all, my other father was not a twin. But how much can I tell him?”

Saburo remained quiet for a while as he had the last bite of his toast and have a drink of coffee. “I know there are truths on men giving birth that are not spoken of outside of Japan. Your grandfather mentioned something mysterious last night about the time is coming for change. I am not sure what he meant. Sometimes your grandfather speaks in riddles shrouded in myths and legends. However, I suggest that we ask him your question before you come to any decisions on what to tell your doctor.”

Dee had a pained look on his face at the thought of talking to his grandfather before he realized it was there. He tried to change his look to neutral but Saburo had already seen it.

“Give him a chance, Daisuke. He does accept you as his grandson and will offer any advice you may need. All you need to do is ask him. If it makes it easier, I will be with you.”

“I would prefer that for now, if you don’t mind.”

“Daisuke, you are my son. Anything you ask, I will give it to you. Within reason, of course.” Saburo smiled warmly at Dee.

Ryo let out a snort. “Excuse me,” he said. “I did not realize I did that.”
“Are you suggesting what my son asked is not within reason?” Saburo asked Ryo with amusement.

“I’m the one who got cornered by your father,” Ryo simply remarked.

“That is true. And for whatever he said, I am truly sorry.”

“He wants me to drop MacLean from my name,” Dee stated. “I’m sorry, Papa, but that’s not going to happen. Ryo and I thought long and hard about our names once we were married, and we’re not going to change it now.”

“I do not expect you to, Daisuke. I do not even expect you to take Fujioka. For all your life, minus your first four months, you were Dee Laytner. Ryo’s family name, which was his name all his life is MacLean. I can understand why you want to keep the name you have chosen for your married name.” Saburo leaned on the counter and sighed. “During the phone call with my father this morning about your phone service, he did mention that he would prefer if you both took Fujioka, but I told him I doubt that you would agree to it. Maybe one day, in the future, when you know your family more, you might, and I do stress might, decide to take Fujioka. That will be your choice when the time comes. I do appreciate you allowing me and some other family to call you Daisuke. Once you gave me permission, I find it much easier calling you by the name I gave you, but I will never deny you going by Dee as your legal name. I acknowledge that is your name as much as Daisuke, perhaps more. So do not ever think that you have to change your name to please or honor me, or our family.”

Dee looked down for a moment and swallowed back tears he felt were threatening to spill. This was a very good man, and he was glad that Saburo was his father. It made it easier to accept Saburo, and that day he found calling him ‘Papa’ was becoming easier, almost natural. Dee was certain by the end of the night it would be natural.

When he looked up, he put his hand on his father’s and smiled gently. “I appreciate it. I never mean to dishonor you or the family, but it’s all too new to even think about making changes. As you said, maybe in the future, I might find the reason to make some changes. Ryo will also have a say at the time, if it comes.”

“I understand completely, and never mind what my father may say, don’t worry about thinking about such things for now,” Saburo assured Dee.

“Thank you. That means a lot.”
Saburo smiled at Dee and looked around the booth. “Are we ready? Our first stop is going to be Osu Kannon and the shopping streets in the area. There are many unique shops that you cannot find elsewhere. There is one shop that has an Alice in Wonderland theme. You have to enter through a very small keyhole shaped door to enter the shop.”

“Oh wow!” Carol exclaimed. “I think I would like to see that.”

“You will,” Saburo assured her. “I think you and Bikky will find many shops there interesting.”

“I wouldn’t mind seeing it,” Ryo said.

“Good. Let’s go then,” Saburo said. He looked down at the two strollers and smiled. “Time to go sightseeing, akachans.”

OoOoOoO

They did plenty of walking during the day. They walked around the Osu Kannon, a beautiful well-known temple, and then along the covered shopping streets of Banshoji Dori and Niomon Dori which ran from the temple grounds to Otsu Dori. They were not able to go into every store that interested them, but they did go into the more interesting ones. Saburo also took them inside the Chiyoshi Akaya express store located on Banshoji Dori and introduced Dee and family to the workers. Both Dee and Ryo were impressed with the store. It was stocked mainly with items that were regularly needed for infants and children. Saburo explained that while most of the items in the store were the Akachan brand, there were items from other brands kept in stock, mostly disposable diapers and formula and food for infants and small children. They did not get anything in the store, and went onto other stores to shop in. By the time they headed back to the van, they had many shopping bags to add to their luggage.

It was time for lunch, and Saburo took them to a restaurant that he claimed was very famous for their soup using kishimen noodles. It was more of a donburi served in a clay covered bowl with a thick soup made with hatcho miso.

After lunch, Saburo directed Dee, who was driving the van, to Maker’s Pier, a shopping mall next to Nagoya Legoland. Dee thought it was fitting for a store that specialized in items for infants and children to be next to Legoland. Maker’s Pier was a theme mall with three sections. One was in a
wooded area, where many of the trees were left in place during construction. Another section resembled colorful townhouses, and the third with single level shops, mostly selling food in a parklike setting, with picnic tables, benches and in the center was a fountain. Akaya was in the wooded area, a double store with three levels. The focus was not much on toys, but there was a section with toys that were educational for all ages. The rest of the store was filled with cribs, strollers, baby slings, car seats, bedding for cribs and youth beds, baby monitors, bottles, bottle warmers, things to baby and child proof and everything else Dee could think of needed for babies and children under 12, and a lot of things he never thought of. The one thing they all had in common was the brand – Akachan.

When they entered the store, a woman looking smart in a pink jacket, blue and pink pinstriped shirt and blue skirt greeted them. Seeing Saburo, she gave a deep bow as she did her greeting, and then looked at Dee. At first, she seemed to recognize him, before having a shocked look.

Saburo chuckled and said happily, “This is Dafydd’s twin, Daisuke. My son was not killed in New York, and he came back to us yesterday, along with his family.” He went onto introduce Ryo and the rest of the family to the woman who had worked in the store since they opened in Maker’s Pier before Saburo directed them to go further into the store.

As Dee and Ryo started to go down an aisle, Saburo went behind the service counter, speaking to a young pretty woman also wearing a shop uniform and returned with two inventory scanners. He handed one to each Dee and Ryo. “If you see something you want, scan it. Then you can tell me where you want it shipped, to Tokyo or your home address in New York. Bikky, if you see anything, let your dads know. You might be too old for most of our stock, but you might see something. Carol, you too.”

“Papa, we couldn’t!” Dee exclaimed.

“You could and you will. Daisuke, this is your store too. Yours and Dafydd. You may no longer have the prestige of being the Fujioka heirs, but my mother gave me her business when she retired. Dafydd and you are my firstborn. She had no problem when I told her years ago that Dafydd will be given the business upon my retirement. Dafydd has no problem with sharing it with you. It’s not as large a corporation as GPN, but we’re growing. I’ve been looking for a second location in Nagoya because we’re outgrowing this store. Yoshio spends more time in our development division. We have good minds working there coming up with more new things to put in our inventory. We are working toward introducing a fashion line for ages newborn to 14. We are giving a break to new, unheard of but very talented designers. We are going to need larger stores soon. And it will one day be Dafydd’s and yours. Do not feel bad about taking what you want.” He smiled at Dee. “Since we’re not as large as GPN, I can’t allow all our family to walk in and take what they want. That could leave my shelves empty, but for my children, everything is free. The same for my siblings. Everyone else gets discounts, starting at 50% for my nieces and nephews, and it gets lower, the more distant the relation.”
“That makes sense,” Ryo said.

Dee started to laugh. “Yeah, I can see these shelves going empty with the size of this family. That wouldn’t be good for business.”

“No, it would not,” Saburo agreed with amusement. “But I won’t run out of stock just for your family, so please take whatever you want. If anything, I haven’t given anything for your twins’ birth, and I have a lot of Bikky’s birthdays and Christmases to make up for.”

“Just six, Ojiisan,” Bikky said. “Pops took me in about six years ago.”

“Bikky!” Ryo exclaimed.

“I was just letting him know he doesn’t have to think about all 15 years,” Bikky explained.

Saburo laughed and went over to hug Ryo. “Don’t worry, Ryo. He’s fine. That makes twelve gifts, so if you can’t find that many here, we’ll get the rest somewhere else.”

“Thank you, Ojiisan,” Bikky said.

“And no complaints from your dads,” Saburo added, staring at Dee and Ryo.

“If you insist,” Dee said, holding his hands up in surrender. “Have fun shopping with your grandfather, Biks.”

“Come over and let me introduce you to my staff,” Saburo said. “Then go shopping. While you are at it, pick out some things to send to your mother to use at her orphanage.”

Dee stared at his father a moment and then smiled brightly. “Thank you, Papa. Mother would probably give us both an earful, but in the end, she’ll appreciate it.”

“I’ll gladly take an earful from her if it means helping her with her children. Now go shopping,” Saburo said and laughed.
Saburo got choked up again as he started to introduce Dee to his workers. Some of them had heard about Dee earlier that morning when Yoshio stopped by the store on the way to the office. Dee and Ryo had managed to find quite a few things they did not have yet, along with many things they did not think they needed until they saw it. They selected only things that would be useful for the next few months or so. Saburo stated that they will be getting packages from him as the twins gets older, and all Dee and Ryo were able to do was thank him, as Dee’s father made it clear that it was not optional.

Bikky and Carol did not find much, but Saburo managed to buy things for both when they went into other stores at the mall.
Chapter 38

Chapter Summary

Everyone goes to see Ayaka perform with NGY52.

Chapter Notes

So sorry for the delay, but unfortunately being out of work since November, and without unemployment since February, I found myself finally having my internet suspended. Fortunately I started a 6 month contracted assignment and finally got paid last week, so I was able to pay the internet bill. So here I am.

I also want to mention that Amazon now has FAKE Second in English for download to Kindle or Kindle apps. No Backstage Pass, I doubt there ever will be, but the four volumes of the main arc, along with the volume that contains the new side stories when FAKE was republished. Just search for Sanami Matoh and they will come up.

Alrighty then, let me get posting before it's too late here for me.

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

Fujioka Residence

Nagoya, Aichi

Japan

When they left the mall, Saburo had Dee drive them to the Port of Nagoya. They did not have time to go into the aquarium, because they walked around the area, including the amusement park, Sea Train Land, going on some of the rides. Bikky got a huge kick out of Saburo joining them on the rides. He was not expecting to go on the few rides there for older children and adults with his grandfather. Ryo and Dee took turns not going on a ride so someone could watch Darin and Ryoko, except for the Ferris wheel since they had Darin and Ryoko in their slings and were able to take them into the car. Since they had Saburo also join them playing video games in the game center he took them to had Bikky exclaiming that he had the coolest grandfather ever. That seemed to please Saburo and amuse Ryo and Dee. Carol was also pretty impressed with Saburo joining them.
After the amusement park, they headed back to Saburo’s house. Saburo promised Bikky that he would take him to the aquarium when they returned to Nagoya after their trip. Yoshio had called during the afternoon saying he would be able to pick up Dafydd’s boys from school, so they did not have to make the stop.

When they arrived at the house, they found Yoshio starting dinner, while Tatsuya and Kiyoshi were doing their homework in the main room. The young boys did jump up to greet everyone when they entered the house. They followed everyone upstairs, lugging some small shopping bags in their attempt to help bring in the luggage.

Tatsuya and Kiyoshi hovered in the room Saburo gave Dee and Ryo for a while, full of more questions, and requests of their new uncles. After a while, they said goodbye. Dee heard them go down the hall to Bikky’s room and started to chuckle.

“Sounds like it’s Bikky’s turn,” he said to Ryo as he sat on the bed.

“I think your nephews can keep us busier than Emiko’s two,” Ryo said with a smile. “But they are sweet.”

Dee started to laugh. “Hell, I think they can keep us on our toes more than Barry’s team. And you’re right. I just want to pick them up and cuddle them. So, I don’t mind when they crawl on our laps for cuddling.”

“I don’t either, but after that I understand when Dafydd says they make him tired,” Ryo commented, resting against the headboard. “Boy, am I glad your fathers believes in real beds. The way Dafydd talked about your family being traditional, I was expecting futons.”

“Obviously my father has a modern house that doesn’t date back to the 1800’s. But your grandmother’s house has real beds in them, so why not here?” Dee asked.

“True. I do hope there are beds in the house on Toshijima. If not, at least it’s only for one night. Okay, what’s up? You suddenly look very pensive.”

“Well…. I’m thinking. And shut up.” He grinned at Ryo.

“I wasn’t going to say anything,” Ryo defended with a smirk.
“Yeah, right. Anyway, my father said that he can free himself for as long as we’re in Nagoya so he could spend time with us. So, I’ve been thinking that since I have family in Osaka and Kyoto, would you mind very much if we ask if my father and perhaps Yoshio, if they can, join us?”

Ryo started to smile widely. “I think that’s an excellent idea. He can arrange for you to meet any family there, and you both get more time together. If they can join us, I definitely don’t mind. I doubt Bikky and Carol will. Bikky seems fascinated with having a grandfather who is not a great-grandfather. I think we should let him know what we’re thinking before inviting your fathers.”

“Sure. We can grab him before we go downstairs for dinner,” Dee agreed.

“We should also check in with Carol, and see how she’s doing,” Ryo added with a chuckle. “I don’t think it’s fair to tell her to get settled in Ayaka’s room without Ayaka.”

Dee shrugged, but he was smiling. “Ayaka would have been here to help Carol settle in, but as we found out this morning, she can’t get away until after the show tonight. She was planning on having dinner here and go back to the theater, but they want her to do some promotion or another for radio and needed to go to a studio somewhere around here. Meaning she might not be done in time to say hello to us on the way in.”

Ryo had to laugh. “It was nice of her to call Carol to confirm the change in plans, even if you had to take the phone from Carol to translate.”

Dee let out a heavy sigh. “Such is the life of an idol, I guess.”

Ryo pointed his finger at Dee with a wicked grin. “You more than guess. You had to deal with last minute promotion stuff back then. Didn’t you?”

“Well, that’s why we couldn’t take any classes during that time. We never knew when something came up and we had to be there to promote the singles and the tour.”

Ryo came closer and leaned in to kiss Dee. “My idol.” He batted his eyelashes at Dee and giggled. “Now that I know the truth, I want you to know that I’m proud of you, Dee. Not many gaijin pass themselves off as Japanese and become big idols, you know. Or was that your Japanese side coming out?”
“Before we got famous, everyone obviously knew I wasn’t Japanese. Even the business people who signed us for tours and promotions knew I wasn’t, but they decided that we’d say nothing. They had me wear brown tinted contacts, and I was able to pass myself off as Japanese.”

Ryo started to laugh so hard, he had a hand on his stomach. “I bet you looked like Dafydd then.”

Dee looked thoughtful and started to grin. “Come to think of it, yeah, I guess that’s what happened.”

“When you put on the brown contacts for our Samurai cruise, you and Dafydd looked exactly alike and we had to tell you two apart by making you talk,” Ryo pointed out. “Which means when the promoters made you wear brown contacts your Japanese side did come out, only none of you considered it because you were so certain there wasn’t any Japanese in you.”

“I guess that’s true,” Dee admitted. “The kabuki make-up finished the job. The promoters had no doubt they could pass me off as Japanese. It was even mentioned a couple of times that they thought I had some Japanese in me, but I ignored it. I wanted to keep my identity hidden, so I went along with them on anything they suggested. The funny thing is that part of my bio they released is true. Besides finding out that I am half-Japanese. The promoters thought it best to have me remain the outsider in a way. All the other guys were born and raised in Yokohama or Tokyo. They kept that without giving away too many other facts. They decided that because I wasn’t born in Yokohama or Tokyo to pick somewhere else in Japan. My bio as ‘D’ states that I was born in Nagoya.” Dee started to laugh. “Holy shit. To be honest, I didn’t remember until just now, but if you look up ‘D’ of Daigaku Dudes, it says I was born here.”

Ryo started to laugh with Dee. “And you really were born in Nagoya, and you’re Japanese. Well, half but that’s more than everyone thought back then. That’s amazing. And so funny too.”

“Yes, it is.”

Ryo’s phone started to ring, and he picked up his phone from the end table he placed it to charge. “Hey, shouldn’t you be sleeping?” he asked. He grinned at Dee and put the phone on speaker.

“I tried waiting until morning, but ever since my mother called, I just can’t get to sleep no matter what I do. I finally gave up and called, hoping that it’s a good time,” Emiko’s voice came from the phone.
“Yeah, we have a few minutes before we should go downstairs for dinner,” Ryo replied.

“With Dee’s family?” Emiko asked, excited.

“Yes, Emiko,” Dee said, sounding amused. “With my father and stepfather. Dafydd and Momo will also be joining us with their kids. And another brother, Jirou, and his family since they live next door and have dinner with my fathers several nights a week.” Dee laughed and added, “My sister Tomoko, and her family will be meeting us after dinner at the NGY52 theater, and yes, we are going to see them perform because Ayaka Fujioka is my sister. Is that enough to get to sleep so you can get up in the morning at a decent time to get Shiichi to school on time?”

“Almost,” Emiko said. “I don’t believe it. You found your family, and they live in Nagoya? Even more amazing, you twin brother is married to Momo?”


“It’s not fair! All the times we made jokes about Momo’s mystery husband, and the first time I can’t make it to a family function, she finally shows up with him, proving he isn’t someone she just made up,” Emiko whined.

“Meeting Dee would have gone a completely different way if Momo had brought along Dafydd to your wedding,” Ryo said and looking at Dee, shaking his head. A sly grin grew as he looked at Dee.

“I still would have wanted to get you, you know,” Dee said. “I still would have fallen in love with you.”

“Aww, he’s sweet,” Emiko said with a giggle. “Can you teach Daito how to say things like that, Dee?”

“Ryo is pretty good at it too, you know,” Dee said. “But I know Daito, and he doesn’t need any help from us. What else can we get off your mind? I’m sure you have a busy morning.”

“Oh, tell me about it. After I get Shiichi in school, I have to meet with Barry and the interior designer he found for me. Then I need to go look at more equipment.” She let out a heavy sigh. “No chance I can convince you two to get some things for me at Kappabashi?”
“If you can tell us exactly what you need, I think we can arrange that,” Ryo said. “After all, we are investing in this shop, so we’ll get it delivered to you.”

“Oh, you’re so wonderful!” Emiko explained. “Talk to Obāsan about shipping here.”

Ryo snapped his fingers. “Oh, yeah. That’s right. Yes, we’ll get this figured out once we’re back in Tokyo.”

“Do you need us to talk to any of the suppliers in Japan while we’re here?” Dee asked.

“I wasn’t going to ask, but if you can find me a new matcha and green tea supplier, that would be great. The supplier I was going to sign with decided they want to use their own shipper, which would cost more than if they dropped off the shipment at a Chikaiki office and have shipped by them. Chikaiki has many ships that come into New York, and it would cost much less to ship.”

“You’re looking for a quality distributor who will agree to using our freight terms?” Ryo asked.

“Exactly. I think we can even arrange for pick up, but I’ll have to check with Obāsan,” said Emiko.

“I wouldn’t have a clue how to start looking, but I can always ask Tomoko if she has any suggestions,” Dee said.

“Tomoko is one of your half-sisters, right?” Emiko asked Dee.

“Yes. She’s an event coordinator and even owns her own event space. I’m sure she would have some idea. It would be from Nagoya, most likely,” Dee said. “We can also ask both families if they can recommend some distributors. My grandmother might also have some suggestions. Hey, while we’re here, do you want any hatcho miso?”

“If you’re looking for the perfect omiyage to get me, that would be hatcho, please,” Emiko said with a laugh. “If you can get a good recipe for that donburi soup, maybe at some point after I open, I might consider adding it to the menu or some other Nagoya specialty, being that one of my investors is from Nagoya. But for now, I would love some hatcho for home cooking.”
“You got it,” Dee replied with a smile. “And perhaps I can get a recipe from the tea house at my family’s shrine.”

Emiko started to laugh. “Considering I know who your mama is, it’s going to take time getting used to you saying things like that.”

“It’s true,” Ryo said. “His family has maintained a popular Carrier shrine for generations. Even from before the Carrier project.”

With a smirk, Dee added, “Japanese would say it’s a very famous Carrier shrine.”

With a laugh, Ryo stated, “And that was your Japanese side coming out.” He laughed. “Honestly, Em, we’ve both spent significant time in Japan before, but we were both pretty amazed that they had shrines dedicated for Carriers.”

“Oh.” Emiko giggled. “I guess you discovered Japan’s biggest secret. It’s amazing that people won’t believe what they don’t want to.”

“Are you saying that I didn’t want to believe?” Ryo asked.

“Well, as you said, this is not your first time spending any significant amount of time in Japan, and yet only this trip you’re discovering the truth. After you and Dee had twins together.”

“On that subject, we also found out that Dee will always have twins.”

“Dee’s family carries the twin gene?” Emiko asked. “My mother did not mention that. Talk is that those with twin genes are descended from the original Carriers in Japan.”

“We’ve been told that too,” Dee said. “Especially listening to my grandfather. He sometimes sounds as if he’s talking in mystical riddles. And seems to think highly on the family’s importance.”

“Did Aunt Hoshi tell you that Dee’s grandfather owns GPN Communications?” Ryo asked. “Dee’s
from that Fujioka family.”

“What?!? I don’t know about how true family history is, but if your grandfather owns GPN, then I would think he has at least an inside to both the Prime Minister and the Imperial family,” Emiko said.

Dee laughed nervously. “Dafydd has stories of being inside the Imperial Palace for dinners. GPN was supposed to go to Dafydd and me, being the first born male twins, but since I was assumed dead, the honor went to my half-brother, Tomiji, who was groomed to run the company since he was a child, and his twin, Koji, who will also be on the board, but he’s in training to be a Shinto priest and take over maintaining the family shrine when my great-uncle finally retires.”

“This is really all too much,” Emiko exclaimed. “I want pictures, but if you tell me anymore like what you just said, I’m going to pop. Give it to me in small doses please. You’re also from a family of great money and status,” she said. “And you have Ayaka Fujioka as a half-sister. Oh my God, I am going to pop!”

Dee and Ryo laughed at Emiko’s outburst. “Yeah, change of subject is a good idea. But I’m not sure the direction you’re hoping,” Ryo said. “Going back to Dee’s sister, Ayaka, we better wrap things up for now. It’s about time for us to join Dee’s fathers downstairs for dinner, and then get ready for the show tonight.”

“Send me pictures!” Emiko exclaimed, making Dee and Ryo laugh. “And tell Ayaka I said hello! I’m a big fan of hers.”

“That did already come up in conversation since meeting her yesterday,” Ryo said. “She knows who you are.”

Emiko let out a squeak. “Oh my God, Ryo! Dee! I just popped! Thanks for that!”

Ryo and Dee started to laugh again. “So much for small doses. Sorry Emiko. I’ll start sending you some pictures we took since yesterday,” Dee said. “Ayaka came over to the hotel to meet us while Dafydd went to tell my father about me.”

“Oh yes, please send me pictures of Ayaka. Also, I’m looking forward to pictures of Momo’s mystery husband,” Emiko said. “I want pictures of Dee and Dafydd together please! And Dafydd and Momo.”
Ryo laughed more. “Just picture Dee only with brown eyes and looking very Japanese.”

“Ok, fine, but I still want pictures. And don’t forget pictures of the rest of your family, Dee,” Emiko requested.

“Fair enough,” Ryo said with a smile as Dee nodded in agreement.

“I can’t believe you kept this for a whole week!” Emiko exclaimed. “This is huge! It’s all just so amazing. Dee, Daito and I are so happy for you.”

“Well, it’s not like we were expected to call you daily, so we were going to give you a call this week anyway. We did suspect that Ryo’s family would talk once they got confirmation that my father was told that I am alive,” Dee said.

“My mother did tell me about how your family believed you were killed with one of your fathers.”

“I’m pretty sure they told you everything,” Ryo said with a laugh. “Aunt Hoshi does have stories since her and Uncle Nobu joined us on some of our outings during the week. And if you talk to Obāsan, I’m sure she’ll have plenty more stories.”

“Oh, I’m going to call her next, don’t worry. You don’t have to waste time telling me everything except for when you have more time, you can tell me about your time in Nagoya meeting Dee’s family. I’m assuming it went well, if you’re at his fathers’ house about to have dinner.”

“Yes, it went very well,” Dee assured Emiko. “We were out sightseeing all day with my father, and we’re just settling in our room before dinner because we agreed to spend the night in my father’s house.”

“And then you’re going to see NGY52? As a guest?”

“As Ayaka Fujioka’s brother and his family,” Ryo corrected with a wink. “Don’t worry. The next time you’re in Tokyo, we can get you in for a TKY52 show, or you can come to Nagoya and see NGY52 and hang out with Ayaka.”
Emiko made a muffled sound before a squeal came out, making both Dee and Ryo laugh.

They heard a knock on the door and Ryo went over to open it to find Bikky. “Dads? Uncle Dafydd came up to check on us. He said to let you know that him and Aunt Momo are here, and Uncle Jirou is also here with his family. Dinner will be ready soon. He said that he’s in Aunt Ayaka’s room, helping Carol get settled in the room and they’ll be done shortly.”

“Oh.” Ryo sighed. “I didn’t think of that with Carol. Saburo said that she could put anything where she wanted because Ayaka won’t mind, but I guess to Carol, it’s that she’s in her favorite idol’s room.”

“Carol’s staying in Ayaka’s room?!?” Emiko asked in an extremely high-pitched voice. “She’s sharing a room with Ayaka Fujioka? I’m so jealous!”

“Yeah.” Bikky replied to Ryo’s comment and started to laugh because he heard Emiko since Ryo had his phone on speaker.

“Biks, come in,” Dee said. “We’re talking to Emiko. She’s also having a mini-meltdown over Ayaka.” He grinned with amusement as Bikky laughed more

“Mini?” Ryo asked and laughed.

“Hi Emiko,” Bikky greeted as he came into the room.

“How are you enjoying Japan, Bikky?” Emiko asked.

“I love it. It’s like what you all said, and even more,” Bikky said. “Including suddenly having a lot more family members. Dad has a lot of brothers and sisters. So does his father.”

“So I heard. I guess you are also having fun with meeting your dad’s family?” Emiko asked.

“Yes, very much. Except for the old groucher.”
“Biks,” Ryo warned.

“What? It’s not like you didn’t think it,” Bikky said. “I see your face when you’re around him, and it says that ‘old groucher’ is one of the polite things you think about him.”

“Bikky’s talking about my grandfather, who isn’t exactly the friendliest one in the bunch and has issues about gaijin, especially gaijin in his own family,” Dee explained to Emiko.

“There’s always one party pooper,” Emiko stated.

“And who is that in your family?” Dee asked.

Ryo shrugged as Emiko laughed. “Aoki is the exception to that. The only family that I know of,” Ryo remarked.

“That’s true,” Emiko agreed with her cousin. “Anyway, it sounds like I’m keeping you when you have other things to do, but I do want to let you know what else Aunt Hoshi told me that I can’t believe you kept quiet about all this time, Dee.”

“Oh no,” Dee said. “Yeah?” he asked in a knowing tone.

“Get him, Emiko!” Bikky exclaimed, also knowing what was to come next. He stared at Dee in amusement.

“Daigaku Dudes? You were in Daigaku Dudes and never told us? When you get back here, I have some things to say to you about that,” Emiko said.

Dee groaned as Bikky and Ryo laughed. “We all had something to say about that,” Ryo said to his cousin.

“And I’m going to continue hearing about it for a long time to come,” Dee sighed. “Fine. Now email us with what you are looking for in the tea and get it to us tomorrow. We’re going on a little trip to stay on an island around here and will be back on Wednesday. I think there’s internet there. Hell, if I know my grandfather, since it’s mostly Fujiokas there, there’s no doubt they have internet. But just in case, then we can check out email when we’re back in Nagoya.”
“Okay. I’ll do that. And then start making my list of equipment to send you by the time you’re back in Tokyo. Have a great time tonight!”

“I’m sure we will,” Ryo said, smiling. “We might have to carry Carol out of the place.”

“Nice talking to you, Emiko,” Bikky said, smiling. “Tell the rugrats that I said hello.”

“I’ll do that, Bikky. Thank you. Have fun there!”

“Bye Emiko. We’ll talk to you again later this week,” Dee said.

“Have fun getting to know your new family, Daisuke,” Emiko said with a giggle, making Dee groan again.

Ryo was laughing and managed to say, “Later, Em! We’ll start sending you pictures shortly. Love to everyone!”

“Bye,” Emiko said. “And tell Carol I want to also talk to her all about everything with Ayaka please.”

“Sure. You have her number for her phone here, so give her a call sometime” Ryo said and laughed again as Emiko ended the call.

“Are you all settled in?” Ryo asked Bikky.

Bikky nodded his head. “Yeah, I’m good. I like the room. The bed is really comfortable too.”

“We were just going to check on you when Emiko called. Aunt Hoshi has been talking now that she knows Dafydd spoke to Saburo. Anyway, Dee and I were going to ask you how you feel if we asked if Dee’s fathers could join us when we go to Kyoto and/or Osaka. If they can make the time, that is.”
Bikky looked at Dee as he answered. “I don’t mind. I think your father might want the extra days with you anyway.”

“Yeah, that’s what we were thinking,” Dee stated. “And I have to admit wanting more time to get to know him and Yoshio more.”

“I’m cool with it,” Bikky said. “I want to spend more time with them too.”

“Okay. Shall we rescue Dafydd now?” Dee asked with a wink, making Bikky and Ryo laugh.

“That or we’ll never get to have dinner, I’m sure,” Ryo said as they left the room and headed across to the other side of the level where Ayaka’s room was. “I’m sure it was Ayaka’s idea for Carol to share her room, because there certainly are enough rooms for Carol otherwise.”

“It is a big house, but it doesn’t feel like it’s a big house, if you know what I mean,” Dee said. “I like it a lot. If we go for bigger, I hope we can get the same feeling. It just feels like a family house and not just some huge house with too many rooms because someone can afford it. Obāsan’s house feels the same. Your grandmother, that is.”

“But this is a modern one. Your grandparents house gave me the same impression, and I’m sure that’s all your grandmother’s doing.”

“That’s true, but it also has history. Maybe it’s the way she spoke as she gave us the grand tour, but it seems my grandparents’ house has a bit more history.”

“It feels like it has more history, in a good way,” Ryo said. “Except maybe for one section having too much history.”

“The new wing?” Bikky asked.

“Yeah, that,” Ryo said.

“I know!” Bikky said and shuddered. “It’s kinda scary.”
“It is,” Dee said. “And I’m glad my grandfather and his family weren’t there when it happened, or Dafydd and I might not have been born.”

They came to the open door of Ayaka’s room and found Dafydd helping Carol put her personal items on the dresser along with Ayaka’s.

“How’s it going in here?” Ryo asked.

“We’re just about done,” Dafydd said. “Go on down. We’ll be right behind you.”

“If you insist,” Dee said. “Carol, you good?”

“Yes, thanks to Dafydd,” Carol said with a smile.

“Good. See you two downstairs,” Dee said and the three headed for the stairs.

“We’ll be right behind you,” Dafydd remarked with a laugh.

OoOoOoO

Much to Ryo’s and Dee’s amusement, by the time they sat down for dinner, not only Dafydd and Momo with their boys and Jirou and Eri with Kyoka were there as expected, but Tomoko and Kimiko arrived with their daughter, Minori, as well as Tomiji. Yoshio explained that it was normal to have any number of their children along with families to show up, bringing something to contribute to dinner. Eri had a variety of fresh pickled vegetables to add to the dinner table. Tomoko and Kimiko had a platter of tebesaki chicken wings, and Tomiji added tempura vegetable patties. Yoshio had made fried pork cutlets with a thick hatcho miso sauce, potato salad, miso soup, shredded cabbage drizzled with ginger dressing and rice. There was more than enough for everyone sitting at the low table in the dining area.
There were fewer personal questions for the newcomers to the family, and more conversation about how the day had been for everyone. Jokes were made, funny stories told and laughs were had by all. Ryo and Dee bought up Emiko’s phone call. Yoshio decided that he was going to have Ayaka call Emiko one day when she wasn’t busy. He made Dee, Ryo, Bikky and Carol swear not to say anything to Emiko. The four agreed with lots of laughter, the rest of the family joining in.

It was just a family dinner with a family who was very close, and Dee found he was glad that he was now part of that family. The distance once they went back to New York was going to be difficult, but Dee was determined to find a way to remain close in touch with his newfound family. From the way they talked, Dee got the impression his family felt the same.

When dinner was done, those who were not already dressed to go out, quickly got ready. Everyone else, except for Momo and Tomoko, cleaned up from their dinner. Momo and Tomoko offered to get Carol ready. She not only was able to be ready faster than if she dressed by herself, but both women offered their tips and tricks in hair and make-up, including a pair of fake eyelashes.

When everyone came downstairs to join the others, shortly after Yoshio came up informing everyone it was almost time to leave, they came downstairs to find Sakura waiting on the couch, with Darin on her lap, and talking to Ryoko in a bouncy chair, who seemed to be babbling back to Sakura. The evening before it was decided that it was not a good idea to take the babies to the show. Sakura had volunteered to watch all the younger children while everyone went to the NGY52 show.

Ryo was reminded of his grandmother when they left the house to find a chartered bus waiting for them and started to wonder if it was a Japanese thing. Their van was parked where they left it, in the parking area between Jirou’s house and the small park on the corner. The lot was also owned by Saburo and used for additional parking for family. Instead of taking several vehicles, everyone boarded the bus for the ride to Sunshine Sakae, the building where NGY52 performed. Outside the gate to enter the theater, Tsukiko, Naoki and his husband Shinkichi were waiting. The only one not present was Koji, because he was in Ise. It was a family event, with Saburo and Yoshio and most of their children going to see their youngest perform.

Waiting just inside the gate was a young woman dressed like one of the members of NGY52. She smiled as she saw the group go through the gate and bowed before Saburo. “Fujioka-san, welcome again. Is everyone in your party here?” she greeted in Japanese.

“Good evening. Yes, everyone is here.” She looked back at smiled at Dee.

“I have heard that Dafydd-san’s twin is alive and arrived in Nagoya yesterday,” she said. She looked at Dee and smiled brightly. “Welcome home to Nagoya, Daisuke-san,” she continued in Japanese. “It is our hope that you and your family enjoy our show tonight.” She bowed to Dee.
Dee returned the bow. “Thank you” he replied in Japanese. “I am certain we will. This was something we were hoping to do before I knew I had a twin brother, and a sister in NGY52.”

“Please follow me. Special arrangements were made that we hope you find satisfactory.”

She greeted the rest of the family and then led them through the entrance into the building and to an elevator, where they were taken up to the theater. Instead of going through the doors that the public took, they were escorted to a stage door.

Ryo hugged onto Carol as she let out a strangled sound as they were led through some of the backstage area and brought along the stage. Inside the barrier between the stage and the seating were seats set up in two rows of eight chairs. Dee, Ryo, Bikky and Carol were instructed to take the center seats of the first row, with Saburo and Dafydd sitting on the two seats on the left next to Dee, Yoshio next to Saburo and Momo on the right next to Carol. The rest of the family took seats in the second row.

There was still time before the show would start and they were the only ones in the theater. Drinks were bought out for them along with colorful neon glow sticks as the doors opened, allowing the ticketholders to enter.

Ryo felt they were being stared at in curiosity, the fans who came to the show wondering who the people were seated where they were. There were some whispers and giggles from the first row behind them.

When the house lights dimmed, a screen dropped. An announcer welcomed everyone and then announced that the night was an unannounced special event. An overture started to play, with flashing effects on a large screen in the back of the stage and house lights also flashing along the audience and the stage as the crowd was worked up, the announcer shouting, “Are you ready?” and “NGY52”, bringing the crowd behind them into a frenzy of anticipation.

Carol was leaning forward, her hands clasped together, her big blue eyes wide as she stared at the stage in growing anticipation. Ryo caught a tear escape from her eye and started to make its way down her cheek. He was certain the same was happening to her other eye. He wasn’t concerned. It was happy tears. This was something Carol was waiting for a long time to happen, and she once believed would never happen before Ryo and Dee had announced their trip to Japan and asked Carol to join them. Even going to Japan wasn’t a guarantee that it would happen, but now here she was, in special seats in front of the stage, and the group about to hit the stage. And she wasn’t just another face in a room of many adoring fans. She now knew Ayaka Fujioka, her favorite, and was going to share a room with her later that night.
It was enough to make Ryo’s eyes well up. He was so happy for her. He looked over to Dee, who also seemed choked up as he gazed around at the lights and the stage, waiting for his newfound youngest sister to hit the stage with the other members of NGY52. Suddenly Ryo found himself wiping his own eyes. When they first promised Carol they would try to see this group while in Nagoya, he never imagined it would be like this. It was all too wonderful in so many ways.

NGY52 hit the stage to the screams of many adoring fans, including Carol, who was on her feet like everyone behind them, jumping up and down, excited to see her favorite group on stage. The rest of the family also got on their feet, applauding the band, cheering and whistling.

To their surprise, the opening song was TKY52’s “Heavy Rotation”. Ryo found himself singing along, as was Carol, which was no surprise. Dee and Dafydd were also singing along as they clapped. Dee’s eyes seemed fixed on the one girl in the center, seeming to glow. She gave the audience her attention, but her eyes kept flicked back to her family, especially Dee.

When the song was finished, and the girls called out their thank you’s while bowing, Ayaka took the microphone, exclaiming in Japanese, “This is a very exciting night for me. My oldest brother, Dafydd, had a twin that everyone believed was killed as a baby in New York. I am happy to say that is not true, and he’s right here tonight.” She pointed at Dee. “Daisuke is alive and right there with my family.”

One of the other girls took the microphone from her and Ayaka jumped from the stage, going right to Dee and hugged him. Ryo had to laugh as Dee went stiff for a moment, stunned to suddenly be in the spotlight, his arms straight out, holding in each hand a couple of glow sticks, before he closed his arms around his youngest sister and laughed.

Over the loudspeaker, the announcer’s voice boomed. “Tonight’s show is called Welcome Home, Daisuke!”

Dee shook his head and laughed more as he hugged Ayaka tightly and kissed the top of her head. She pulled away from Dee and hugged Dafydd first, and then hugged and kissed Saburo, who was crying again as he clapped with everyone else, a huge smile on his face. Everyone in their group was stunned at the announcement. Yoshio was cheering loudly with a bright smile as he looked at Dee and Saburo. The rest of the family also cheered wildly at the announcement. There wasn’t a dry eye in their two rows, including Bikky.

Amid the cheering from the audience and family, Ryo made out Bikky’s exclamation of, “Holy shit! That’s so awesome!” Ryo had to agree.
Ayaka pulled away from her father to give her other father a quick but tight hug and a kiss on his cheek, and then did the same to Ryo before she rushed along the row, giving Carol and Bikky an ‘OK’ sign with a bright smile. Her face was wet with tears. She was most likely wearing waterproof make-up, because except for the tears glistening in her bright shining eyes and on her cheeks, she still looked perfect. Ryo was glad that Momo and Tomoko thought to also use waterproof make-up that night, including when they did Carol’s, otherwise they all would have looked like a mess by then.

As Ayaka turned to get back to the stage, she realized what she had done. Getting down was easy with a jump, but not so much getting back up. Just as she started to turn to make a quick dash to the backstage area, both Dafydd and Dee rushed over, and together, hoisted her back on the stage, to the applause of the crowd. The spotlight landed on them again, and they quickly waved and went back to their seats.

Yoshio was hugging Saburo, saying something to make his husband laugh. Momo and Carol joined in with the cheering, so Ryo decided he might as well. He stopped as Dee hugged him.

The show went on, and they included a couple of other TKY52 songs that Ayaka had recorded with the Tokyo mother group, including “Heart Gata Virus”. For their encore, it turned out that all the members of NGY52 were there that night, and they all took the stage, each team in outfits different from the others, but managing to keep everyone coordinated. The Kenkyuusei came out from the sides of the stage and performed before the first row. They started to sing, “Oogoe Diamond”. At times, someone from the row of fill ins sang to someone in Ayaka’s family. Much to Ryo’s surprise, they pulled Carol up for the last part of the song, getting her to dance with them.

Dee was cheering louder and laughing and at one point, looked up at the stage, he caught Ayaka looking at them with a pleased smile. Dee winked at her, and she winked back before concentrating on finishing the song.

After the show, they were directed to follow the Kenkyuusei backstage, where they got to meet all the members, saying hello to the ones they met the day before, and meeting the ones who were not at the café. Dee, Ryo, Bikky and Carol were all given NGY52 white tee-shirts that the girls signed while they talked. Pictures were taken for private photo albums, along with a couple to post online, if anyone desired. Ayaka followed the four, sticking close to Dee as they talked to members. They allowed Carol to make a video of some of her time backstage for her to post on her YouTube channel. Ryo noticed someone who worked for the band also recording as they met the group. Ayaka explained later that she requested video of her family with the group as they met her newfound brother.

Before they left, Ayaka requested if her team could take a couple of pictures with Dee and Dafydd for her personal memories photobook that was going to be released in the next year. She also took
some pictures of just Dee and Dafydd with her.

When it was time to leave, Ayaka was released to go home with her family, promising to return her stage outfit when she returned for her next show. The happy and excited family boarded the bus waiting for them near the entrance for the ride to Saburo’s house.

Once they got to the house, everyone except for Dafydd, Momo and Ayaka left, collecting children to go home.

Ayaka excused herself to get changed into street clothes, pulling Carol up to her room. Ryo looked at the time. “Geez, we better start getting things set up. We are running late.”

“I sent Berkeley a text letting him know that it was going to take longer than we expected to get out of the show, and we’ll be on as soon as we can,” Dee said. Looking at Dafydd, he said, “Time to suit up.”

Dafydd laughed. “As if you’re a superhero.”

“Well, one can dream,” Dee said and laughed.

Saburo led them upstairs to his den while Yoshio put on tea to bring up for everyone.
Chapter 39

Chapter Summary

The crew in New York find out what's been happening in Japan.

Chapter Notes

This one is a long one - be warned.

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

CHCU – NYPD

27th Precinct

New York, NY

USA

It was a large crowd crammed in the squad room of CHCU, waiting for Dee and Ryo to log into the conference. It was 8:30, a half hour later than the agreed time of 8 am EST before Dee and Ryo had left, but Commissioner Rose had informed the unit that Dee and Ryo had requested the later time because they could not make it earlier.

It was closer to 8:45 when the blank screen changed to Dee and Ryo sitting at a desk. It looked like they were in a study or home office. Both men looked tired, as they were at the end of what was probably a long day and most likely just returned from seeing NGY52.

“Ohayo gozaimasu,” Ryo greeted cheerfully. “At least it is for you.” He started to smirk. “It’s konban wa time here,” he said.

J.J. peered closer at the screen. “Dee? Did you change your hairstyle a little?” he asked.
“Dee needed a trim,” Ryo answered for him.

Rose waked into the view of the camera on their side. “Welcome gentlemen. Shall we get the obvious out of the way so after we can concentrate on business?” He looked over at Diana, who started to smile more than she was when the two men appeared on the screen. She also looked amazed and still did as her eyes went back to the screen. “How are things in Japan?”

“You have no idea of everything that has happened since the last time we did this,” Ryo exclaimed. “This trip has been very informative, and definitely more interesting than we imagined.”

Dee nodded his head, starting to smile. “Oh yeah,” he said.

“You mean about Carriers?” Ted asked.

“Yes, them too, but so much more,” Ryo replied.

“Dee, how come you’re not talking much?” J.J. asked, becoming concerned.

Dee looked happy enough. Hell, the man seemed ecstatic as he sat next to Ryo, and seeming to burst from excitement, but oddly the glimmer that usually reached Dee’s eyes was different. There definitely was a glimmer, but not the same.

Then there was the new hairstyle. Oh, it wasn’t drastically different, but for years Dee had gotten a trim without changing his hairstyle. It seemed unsettling to J.J. that a trip to Japan would make Dee change up his hair. The cut seemed… more Japanese. Dee might be interested in the Japanese culture, but hairstyles was the least of the Japanese influences Dee would adapt for his own.

The most concerning was Dee’s silence. Dee is never silent, and especially if he was excited as he seemed to be. By normal means, Ryo should be fighting to say something.

“Ohh,” came from Dee as he looked at Ryo.

Ryo started to smirk more and actually chuckled a little. “Don’t mind Dee. He’s here as promised but he did an awful lot of screaming at the NGY52 show tonight. He’s more than a little hoarse.”
“Is that so?” Henry asked. J.J. noticed he seemed to be studying Dee intently.

“Yeah,” Dee said roughly.

“And how was the show?” Drake asked from his seat next to J.J.. “I’m surprised that isn’t the first thing J.J. asked, since that’s all he talked about since you told him yesterday. It was as if he was going.” There were groans and chuckles from all the others in the room.

“I’m living vicariously through Dee and Ryo,” J.J. remarked. “It’s not like I’m ever going to see NGY52 or TKY52 unless they play New York, and I doubt that’s likely.”

“Oh, I hear there’s some things in the air, but nothing concrete yet,” Ryo commented, seeming amused. Dee chuckled at Ryo’s comment and smiled. “At least one year soon.” It made Dee laugh more.

There was some chuckling in the background and the two men on the screen looked over to the side.

“What’s going on there?” Ted asked. “Are you at the hotel in Nagoya?”

“Actually, we’re staying with family tonight,” Ryo replied.

“I didn’t know you had family in Nagoya,” Jim stated.

Ryo and Dee started to laugh. “That’s one of the interesting things we learned during our trip,” Ryo said. “Oh, you have no idea!”

More laughter came from behind them.

“I should warn everyone to keep things to catching up on our vacation for now, since we have some civilians present,” Ryo said.
“Some,” Dee commented, giving Ryo a look that made Ryo laugh again.

“What’s going on there?” Marty asked. “Damn, your family is something else, Ryo. Everyone sounds like they are having fun there.”

“My family usually does love having fun, but….” He looked at Dee. “Hey, we meant to apologize for being late, but we ended up going back to meet some of the group.”

“What?” J.J. almost screamed. “You mean other than Ayaka? And how did you meet her? What’s the story? I bet Carol must excited.”

“Carol is one of the relatives having fun,” Ryo replied.

Dee started to grin more as Ryo nodded to him. “We decided to introduce the family before going onto business,” he said.

J.J. blinked and noticed that almost everyone else in the squad room also seemed a bit surprised. The only ones who didn’t were Rose and Diana, who shared a look and laughed. Dee’s voice didn’t sound hoarse at all, J.J. thought, but it did sound different.

“What the hell?” J.J. asked.

“Something is going on,” Henry spoke up. “This is some type of a set-up. I could feel it from the moment you logged in.”

“I have no idea what’s going on, but whatever it is the Commissioner and Diana are in on it,” Drake added.

“What do you think it is, Henry?” Ryo asked. “What about you, Jim?”

J.J. was even more startled as Henry and Jim said at the same time, “That’s not Dee.”

Ryo was grinning more.
“What?” Drake asked, confused. “But he’s right there! I mean, he looks like Dee.”

“That has to be Dee,” Ted argued. “I mean, it’s not like Dee has a twin or anything.”

“That we know of,” Dana reminded them, suddenly looking suspicious.

J.J.’s mouth fell open.

“Oh crap,” Dee’s voice said, “it looks like J.J. is catching on too. Henry, Jim, and even Dana, good work.”

The voice was really Dee’s voice, not the voice that came from him a minute ago, but it came from beyond the camera range. If J.J.’s jaw could hang more, it would. Everyone except for the three Dee had mentioned, along with Rose and Diana, looked startled.

Suddenly before anyone could react further, a man who looked exactly like the one sitting next to Ryo stepped into view. He was dressed exactly like his doppelganger, but his grin was perfect. Well, to J.J. it was, because this was Dee’s trademark grin that seemed to be belong just to him. “Hey guys,” he said, coming to a stop between Ryo and the man sitting next to Ryo. “Sorry for the deception, but we really are staying with family.” His smile grew warm as he placed a hand on his lookalike’s shoulder. “My family. This is my twin brother, Dafydd.”

Dafydd nodded his head as he bowed forward from his seated position. “Hajimemaste,” he said. “It is a pleasure to meet everyone.”

Ryo started to laugh again. “I told you that you have no idea what had happened since we got here.”

“You are Dee’s twin!” Marty replied. “But you are actually Dee’s twin? Twin brother?”

“That is what my brother said, did he not?” Dafydd replied with a smirk very close to Dee’s but not exactly.
“How the hell did you end up with a twin brother?” Ted asked.

Drake smacked the back of Ted’s head. “How the hell do you think, dumbass?” he asked Ted.

“It’s been way to long for Ted,” J.J. remarked. “He forgot where babies come from!”

“Are you’re staying with Dafydd?” Rose asked, with a knowing smirk, once the laughter died down.

Dee looked into the camera. “No. This is not Dafydd’s house. At least not now.”

“I did grow up here,” Dafydd said. “This is our father’s house.”

“Holy shit!” Marty exclaimed. Dana let out a gasp of surprise.

“Did you say your father’s house?” J.J. asked.

“We are still waiting to hear how this has happened,” Henry said. “And I have a suspicion that Commissioner Rose and Agent Spacey know.”

Diana nodded. “We do,” she admitted. “I was told only because Dee needed my help in getting the DNA samples from Mother Lane to prove that Dee and Dafydd are twins.”

“I had to know, because Dee wanted to let me know why they would not be in conference last Monday, and of course, it is a major development in his life,” Rose stated.

“But how did this happen?” Jim insisted. “You meeting your twin brother, that is, before someone makes a crack at my sex life.”

More than just the three in the camera range laughed.

“Momo, why don’t you join us?” Ryo requested.
A Japanese woman came into view to stand next to Dee. Judging from the height difference to Dee, J.J. figured her to be about 5'3”, with dark brown hair just below her shoulders and bangs just above her brown expressive eyes. She had a pert nose and her face was almost oval. She smiled up at Dee before placing a hand on Dafydd’s other shoulder and smiled at Ryo and Dafydd who looked up at her. Dee slipped a friendly arm around her in a half hug and smiled again.

“Everyone, meet my cousin Momo,” Ryo said. “Momo seemed to be the mystery woman on my grandmother’s side of the family, because no one from my immediate family saw her husband, or even pictures of him. Dafydd was just a mystery. My uncles would joke and say she was making him up. I mean, imagine a Japanese man with a Welsh name, but….“ Ryo indicated with his hand, “here he is. My cousin Momo’s husband. She finally managed to get Dafydd to go with her to one of the family parties, and what a party to drag him to attend.” Ryo laughed.

“Hello,” Momo said with a smile. “I always knew I was Ryo’s cousin, but I did not know until last Saturday that I am also his sister-in-law. Obviously, that means I am also Dee’s sister-in-law as I am married to Dee’s twin brother.”

“Hello,” Momo said with a smile. “I always knew I was Ryo’s cousin, but I did not know until last Saturday that I am also his sister-in-law. Obviously, that means I am also Dee’s sister-in-law as I am married to Dee’s twin brother.”

“Wow!” J.J. exclaimed. “So, this is why you’ve been laying low? Because of Dafydd?”

“And you are sure this is Dee’s twin?” Andy asked. When everyone looked at him, he shrugged. “Well, it isn’t entirely impossible to meet someone who could be a twin, but isn’t.”

“I guess you missed the part about my getting DNA samples to prove they are twins, didn’t you, Andy?” Diana asked, rolling her eyes.

“Oh… right. I’m sorry. So, DNA tests proved it then?”

“Without a doubt,” Dee replied. “In fact, except for eye color, everything matched. It also all matched with our fathers’ DNA samples.”

“Except eye color?” Ted asked.

Dee started to laugh. “Because if I had dark brown eyes, you would know right away it wasn’t me. I got the Welsh daddy’s eyes.” He paused as on camera, Dafydd removed the color tinted contact lenses and then looked up again. “Dafydd, despite his very Welsh name has the Japanese daddy’s eyes.”
“Well, that explains finding your twin brother in Japan,” Dominic remarked, seeming in shock. “Wow, that’s amazing. I’m so happy for you, Dee. And for you too, Dafydd.”

“It’s shocking,” Ted commented. “I can’t imagine being either one of you, but it’s obviously you’re happy about it.”

Dafydd and Dee both nodded, grinning at each other. “Yes, we are,” they replied in unison.

“Twins!” Diana exclaimed. “They definitely sound like twins.”

“Just wait for when you get to spend time with the two of them together,” Ryo said, amused.

“And yes, J.J., we kept communications with everyone in New York on the downlow, because we knew it would be hard not to say anything about it, and I wanted to keep the number of people who knew low until Dafydd and I were able to tell my father that the infant son who had gone missing and was presumed dead is very much alive,” Dee explained. “Also, about yesterday when you called, and we were having lunch. You mentioned running into NGY52 and Ayaka Fujioka.”

“Um, yeah?” J.J. remarked.

“Meet one of my sisters. My youngest sister actually,” Dee said. Looking to the side again, he said, “Ayaka, come on over and hello to my co-workers and friends.”

J.J.’s jaw dropped as Ayaka Fujioka from NGY52 walked into view. She was a few inches taller than Momo with long brown hair pulled into a high ponytail with bangs.

Ayaka waved at the camera. “Ohayo gozaimasu,” she said. Then in a heavy accent, she spoke in broken English. “It is nice to meet Dee’s friends and co-workers. Dee meet mine last day.”

Dee nodded approvingly at his younger, famous sister. “Not bad in the time we had,” Dee said in Japanese to her, making her smile more.
Ryo was smiling as she spoke. “Ayaka doesn’t speak much English,” he explained, “but it meant a lot to her to say hello to everyone in English.”

“I am learning English,” she said.

“Ayaka recently started to learn English when talk started of TKY52 or SKE52 playing in New York in a year or two. She wanted to be able to speak to her American fans when they do,” Dafydd explained. “No matter which team plays, she would be part of it.”

“I am glad I know a little,” Ayaka said.

“Ayaka is learning English, and Bikky and Carol are learning Japanese so they can speak without a translator,” Ryo added.

“Wait!” J.J. exclaimed, jumping out of his seat. “Ayaka Fujioka is your sister?!? Oh my God!”

“I will give Dee autographed picture for you,” Ayaka said.

“What about me?” Diana asked.

Dee laughed. “She’ll sign for anyone who wants one. And don’t ask just because she’s famous and then you’ll stick it in a corner forgotten. Everyone is getting gifts anyway.”

“So Momo came to the big party your grandmother was throwing and she bought her husband, who ended up being Dee’s twin brother?” Marty recapped.

“Besides Dafydd and Ayaka, how many siblings do you have, Dee?” Henry asked. “You said that Ayaka is your youngest sister.”

Dee let out a small groan, but was smiling as Dafydd laughed.

“It turns out that Dee, along with Dafydd, are the oldest of 9,” Ryo said.
“What about never wanting to know who your real family was?” Drake asked.

Dee shrugged. “I had no choice with Dafydd. I mean, he is part of Ryo’s family since he’s married to Momo. You know the reasons why I didn’t. Let me assure you, it was nothing like I had imagined. My father believed that I was killed along with my other father.” Dee turned and held his hand out.

An older Japanese man, who was on the taller side for Japanese came over to join the group. He looked to be about an inch taller than Ryo. He was all smiles as he stood by Dee and behind Dafydd. Standing with Dee and Dafydd it was easy to see that this man was their father. As Japanese as he looked, J.J. was still able to see some features of the man in his sons. It was amazing. If Dee was happy, then he was happy for Dee. What did puzzle J.J. was Dee’s and Dafydd’s father looked as if he was an older brother instead of their father. The man looked as if he was in his late 30’s or early 40’s instead of mid-50’s, which he should have been.

“This is my father, Saburo Fujioka.”

“Your last name is Fujioka?” Ted exclaimed.

“Birth name, yes. I am a Fujioka.” Dee smiled at the older man.

Henry seemed to react to that, but knowing the Medical Examiner, it could have been anything.

“I would have thought someone would have asked when I said Ayaka was my sister.”

“I considered the possibility,” Henry said, “but as I am not familiar with who she is other than she is your sister, it was also possible that she changed her family name.”

“You never heard of her?” Ted asked. “That means you haven’t been spending enough time out of your morgue, because otherwise you would have to listen to Diana and J.J.”

“I’ll admit that is a surprise to me,” Diana stated. “I only knew about Dafydd. Dee never mentioned having a famous sister.”
Dee started to laugh. “I did find out about Ayaka later that day I first talked to you and decided that you needed something to be surprised at with everyone else.”

“Are you going to change your name?” J.J. asked.

“No. Not there, I’m not. I’m still going to be Dee Lane Laytner-MacLean to you guys,” Dee replied. He shrugged. “But I’m letting the family here call me by my birth name if it makes it easier to them.”

“Which is?” Drake asked.

Ryo started to laugh.

“I’m going to give the honors to my father,” Dee said. Looking at Saburo, he said, “Go ahead, Papa. Tell them what you and Tad decided on.”

Saburo laughed. “We already had the names picked out, but when you and Dafydd were born, it became obvious. Being that my husband was Welsh, we wondered if either or both of our sons would not look fully Japanese. So, when these two were born, identical twins that they were, Dafydd still looked more Japanese than our other son. My husband and I decided so that our sons remember both of their nationalities, Dafydd got the Welsh name and this one here got the Japanese name.” He paused when everyone in the squad room started to laugh. He indicated with his hand toward Dee and said, “This is Daisuke Fujioka.”

“Holy shit!” Drake exclaimed, starting to laugh.

Jim shook his head. “I always suspected Dee had at least a little Asian in him, and then when Darin was born it was obvious that he got more than just Ryo’s Japanese genes.”

“Indeed,” Henry agreed. “However, I was not expecting Dee to be half-Japanese. That is quite the surprise.”

“You mean that something actually did slip your notice?” Lucas asked, looking amused.

“It does happen. Very rare, but it’s not the first time,” Henry replied.
“Where were they born?” Drake asked.

“Here in Nagoya,” Saburo replied.

“Whoa!” Marty reacted, along with everyone else. “How did he end up in New York alone from Nagoya?”

Dee looked at Saburo and asked something in Japanese.

Saburo nodded. “Hai.” He looked at the camera. “My son asked if I am okay doing this and I am. I regret not seeing my son grow up,” he said in English, “but you can never imagine how happy I am that I got my Daisuke back in my life, along with his wonderful family. I honestly believed that would never happen, because we believed him to be dead.”

Everyone became quiet, except for sounds of sympathy as the man explained about the trouble his father-in-law had gotten into with the yakuza and how it had led them to flee Japan with their four-month-old infants.

When he was done, Dana, who looked upset, asked, “Did they ever find your husband’s body?”

“No. Back then, Nagoya police had some yakuza influence, so they determined that they had enough evidence that he was dead. It was also a crime that was committed outside of Japan. They closed the case. To them, Alun and Daisuke were dead,” Saburo replied. “As time went on, I thought I was okay with it. What good would it do, I would ask myself whenever I wondered what had really happened to them. I went forward. I found love again, and I had seven more children between myself and my husband, Yoshio. But I think deep inside, I was never okay with never knowing, but had no chance of finding out if I had asked. Once, after I returned to Japan with Dafydd, I did ask my father if he could do anything, but he told me not even he had the influence and to just move on. I found comfort with Dafydd and for 3 years it was just me and him before Yoshio found his way into our lives. Now that I have Daisuke here, it makes me wonder what had happened.”

Rose, who remained quiet, stepped forward. “That is a tragic story that thankfully has a happy ending with your being reunited with your missing son. Being that your son is also one of our own, if Dee so wishes, we can start looking into it, now that we have more information. We can keep it in our unit, being that a Carrier and a child of a Carrier were victims. May I ask if your husband was also a Carrier?”
“He was. We had plans for a large family. I never had a chance with Alun, but thank goodness Yoshio was persistent and never gave up until I finally gave in, and I still got my large family.”

“That is wonderful news,” Diana spoke up. “And even more wonderful is that you got Daisuke back. A bit grown up, but I can see that still makes you very happy.”

“I cannot describe how happy. Not even in Japanese, can I find the words,” Saburo stated, his eyes getting watery.

Dee hugged him, chuckling warmly. “Don’t start, Papa. If you do, then you’ll get me and Dafydd. That will start Ryo and Ayaka. And I don’t want those guys over there seeing me and Ryo crying.” He smiled at Saburo.

“Looks like we have another case,” Drake remarked.

“Dee,” Dana said. “Can you send me specifics from your father so we can start looking into this?”

“I appreciate it,” Dee said, “but make sure you handle current cases first. Take care of our Carriers and work on this when you have nothing else. We just would like answers to give my father closure, and I admit now I am curious on how I ended up in that alley, but not before people who need us.”

“I agree,” Rose said, “but this is not unimportant either. I’ll make sure we find the balance.”

“Thank you,” Dee said.

“Yes, thank you, Rose-san. That is most generous of you. I appreciate anything you can do.”

“Me too,” Dafydd added.

“So, before any further questions on this and our vacation, one more person I would love to introduce to everyone. This is my stepfather, the man who made my father feel joy again and gave him 7 more children. Meaning thanks to him, Dafydd and I have seven more siblings,” he added.
with a laugh. Dee smiled to where the others not on camera were standing and a man who was shorter than Saburo. He looked to be older than his husband, but somewhat younger than what his age should be. He was a very attractive man, but J.J. decided the man’s husband was more attractive. Which explained where Dee got his drop-dead godlike gorgeousness. Now J.J. was wondering what this Alun Jones looked like.

Rose allowed time for the team to ask more questions about Dee’s family and their vacation since their last communication, until Dee suggested that they get on business. It was getting late after another long day in Nagoya, and they had an early start the next morning. J.J. and Diana could not help asking Ayaka questions, and Diana was curious about Carol’s feelings on everything, so both Carol and Bikky came into the camera view, joining the rest of the family present.

As they asked questions, J.J. found his eyes kept wandering to Dee and his twin brother. He fought to remain calm, because if he reacted as he wanted to, he knew he would lose Drake forever, and as much as it was a pleasant treat to watch the two half-Japanese men, who, to J.J., could be the new wave of Japanese gods, other than both men being very happily married, but J.J. knew Drake was the one for him, not Dee or Dafydd. He had to admit to himself of being a little jealous of Ryo and Momo, but not enough to kill his relationship with Drake. They were already on rocky ground at times, mostly because of Drake’s coming to terms with discovering he was bisexual and wanting to be with J.J., along with Drake’s own insecurities about his looks and body. J.J. knew he was partially the cause of it, especially when he made comments about Dee’s and even Ryo’s looks without thinking.

While there were still questions, after a while, Rose cut them off, saying they did need to get back to work soon, apologizing to Dee’s family. Saburo and Yoshio understood, as did Momo and Ayaka. Dee promised to start sending photos and sharing videos of their time since meeting Dafydd, including pictures of the rest of his family. Saburo, Yoshio, Ayaka, Carol and Bikky said their goodbyes and excused themselves, leaving the room, closing the door behind them. Only Dafydd remained, now without his contact lenses, showing his true dark brown eye color.

“I hope you don’t mind that Dafydd stays with us. He is a detective with the Aichi Prefecture Police, and agreed to answer any questions about Carriers, if he knows the answer,” Dee said as he said down. “He’s being modest, of course, because in the short time that I got to know him, he knows plenty enough about them, especially here in Japan, and will most likely have the answer.”

“Not at all,” Rose said. “From what I heard from Henry, I think having someone from the Japanese police would be very helpful with giving us some insight. I will also welcome any thoughts he might have.”

“Are we finally breaking open this great Japanese secret?” Drake asked.
“No, not really,” Ryo replied. “Whatever is said about Japanese Carriers is to be between us. No one is to make any public statements, or even talk about it in public for the time being. We just thought that having the unit understand how things are here will help us in figuring out what we need to do against the ACC.”

“From what we learned about the conference, the ACC is going global. They did not say much about Japan, except that they believe it is their biggest enemy outside of the U.S.,” Rose stated.

Dafydd nodded his head. “Yes. I was told today that there is chatter of the ACC sending people to Japan. While I was in Tokyo last week, an arrest was made when someone attempted to deface a Carrier temple in Nagoya. It is the Nagoya Police’s suspicion that the ACC is seeking out Japanese who so far have remained quiet about their distaste in men who can have babies. We have nothing solid yet, except for the one man who stated he was silent long enough.”

“That’s interesting, but very unsettling,” Diana said.

“What do we know was said at the conference?” Dee asked.

“They never went into specifics about any plans against Carriers, but all the seminars were built around rallying up against Carriers,” Rose stated. “They used the motto, ‘Change will be our only way’. Also, the phrase ‘A New World is Our Horizon’. Their main focus seems to be on the United States, specifically the big cities that are pro-Carrier, such as Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, New York and Miami, to name a few.”

“But they are also starting to seek out supporters all over, including small towns,” Dominic stated. “They also want to urge cities and towns that are mostly anti-Carrier to join the ACC and make laws outlawing Carriers.”

“Can they do that?” Dee asked. Then he shook his head. “Never mind. If our mayor can sign bills making laws to protect Carriers, then some idiot-minded mayor who wants Carriers out, can sign bills for the opposite.”

“Exactly,” Rose said. “And that is what they are aiming for. Apparently, there will be phases to change the world, as they put it during the conference. Basically, they are planning phases to rid the world of Carriers. First phase is the United States. Since they feel how they do about Japan, and from that incident Dafydd mentioned, I suspect they are making plans to involve Japan somehow in the first phase.”
Dafydd nodded his head solemnly. “That makes much sense. Yes, I can see that.”

“Meaning there will be more attempts at defacing Carrier temples and shrines here in Japan,” Dee said, and then shuddered. “Oh man, I feel for the suckers who try it on Hinotsuke Jingu. Grandfather would roast them in the bonfires of the next matsuri at the shrine.”

Dafydd started to laugh loudly, obviously agreeing with his twin. Ryo groaned and said, “You’re not kidding!” and joined in the laughter.

“What is this jingi thing?” Drake asked.

“A jingu is a Shinto shrine that has connections to the Japanese Imperial family,” Henry stated. “The connection is mostly historical, but there are a few shrines that the current imperial family has visited. There is also their own personal shrine, which is a Jingu.” He looked at the screen. “What strokes my curiosity is why you bring up this particular shrine, Dee? And what your grandfather has to do with it?”

“Our grandfather’s twin brother is the Chief Priest at Hinotsuke,” Dafydd explained. “And our grandfather has much pride in the shrine. It is a very famous Carrier shrine that our family has maintained for as far back as we can figure out.”

“That’s most interesting, Dafydd. I would love to talk to you more about it, but unfortunately as it has nothing to do with information that Commissioner Rose wants, it shall have to be at another time,” Henry said.

“If you don’t get a chance while we’re still here, I am trying to get Dafydd to New York early next year, if I can’t convince him to join us for New Year’s Eve.” Dee grinned at his brother.

“Definitely early next year, I promise,” Dafydd said.

“Okay, back to main business,” Dee stated.

“Another conference is being scheduled in Atlanta at the beginning of the new year,” Rose said.
“They hope to have more government officials along with more support. The first phase will be revealed at the conference. They also plan to make the ‘Carriers From the Stars’ announcement to the public shortly after,” Diana added.

“What are our chances of getting someone inside for that conference?” Ryo asked.

“We’re working on it. The Chicago PD is considering sending their plants to the conference, but Mayor Blum wants someone from the NYPD to be in attendance. So I am working on finding volunteers from our force to go.”

“The FBI wants someone, too. Someone on our side, because as we discovered with Richard, there might actually be some already planning to attend. The FBI has to uphold laws, meaning any acts of terrorism, destruction, personal injury and murder has to be punished, but so far there isn’t any mandate stating that one has to be pro-Carrier to be in the FBI,” Diana said.

“All we can do is wait and try to get people in on the conference to know what they are planning, before they act, so we can be ready,” Rose said. “In the meantime, despite the new laws, we are still being kept busy. Whether they are ACC or not, we have some citizens who have decided to play vigilante, and have no regard for laws.”

“The wrong type of vigilant, mind you,” J.J. said.

“Very true,” Rose agreed.

“Speaking of the ACC,” Ryo started, “last night I was told something very interesting by Dee’s and Dafydd’s grandfather that I am not proud to say, but we all agree it needs to be shared. Hopefully you can look into it.”

“What’s that?” Rose asked.

“He said that there are MacLeans giving money to support the ACC. Now I can give you a few names who came to mind when I heard it, and believe me, my grandparents no longer see them as part of our family, but they use the MacLean name.”

“And tarnishing it despite all your grandfather has generously contributed over the last few months,” Diana stated.
“Exactly,” Ryo said. “I already let my grandfather know, and believe me when I say, he is mad. He is willing to cooperate with you if you contact him.”

“I think we will. He may be the best contact in fishing them out,” Rose said.

“There are some members of the family who should have been cut out from the MacLean family fortune, but unfortunately they had made many investments of their own over the years using family money before then,” Ryo said. “Meaning even if cut out, they still have enough to finance their own vendettas against Carriers, if they wish to do so.”

“We will put that on our list and look into it,” Rose said, looking at the unit. “We’ll work it out over the next few days.”

“Also, something else we discovered, but it’s about my family here in Japan,” Dee said. “Henry, it turns out that you are not the only one with a relative on the Carrier project.”

“Really?” Henry asked. “Whom from your family was on the project?”

Dee started to grin. “It’s in the file we have from the Carrier project. There were two Japanese involved named Fujioka.”

“They were our great-grandfather and great-uncle. They were twins,” Dafydd replied.

“Now here’s the part that remains secret,” Dee added. “For one, they were both already Carriers. For another, they were actually running the show, even if they acted like they were just part of the team wanting to make this great discovery. They did not give away their secrets, but guided research using their knowledge to make the Carrier gene.”

“Excuse me, did you say that there were already Carriers on the Carrier project?” Marty asked, looking shocked.

“Yes, he did,” Dafydd stated. “Carriers were in Japan long before the project. It was decided by the Japanese government that the ability for men to conceive and give birth should be shared with the world and convinced other governments that this idea would be a major scientific breakthrough if
successful. Japan being the country to suggest it was lost in the historical data of the project, but my grandfather had spoken of it many times, having pride in the fact that it was our country, along with the guidance of our ancestors, who had given Carriers to the world.”

“Now that is very interesting indeed,” Rose stated, looking surprised.

“I have been allowed to read the file, and I cannot vouch for everything, but from what I do know, lost historical data was replaced with falsified facts most likely made up by whoever had doctored the file,” Dafydd continued. “If only I can feel we can trust my grandfather to help us, I feel if he read the file, he would be able to confirm it.”

Dee sighed. “Our grandfather is a difficult one, I’m afraid,” he said. “Very complex man, but he has his prejudices against non-Japanese, mostly because of how Carriers have been treated outside of Japan. I sense that he is also full of partial truths in whatever he does have to say about the family and Carriers. I’m sure he believes he has his reasons, but that also means we won’t get much from him in helping us.”

“My grandfather and his twin have a tendency to speak in riddles many times,” Dafydd added. “I always thought that it was because of their deeps roots in Shinto, and some type of mysticism.” He shrugged. “I’ll be honest, listening to him the past couple of days, I’m beginning to wonder if it’s all just to keep some big family secret.”

Ted chuckled and said, “You have an interesting family there, Dee. Dafydd, you too.”

“There has always been a big mystery,” Dafydd stated. “My grandfather and his siblings all speak of a grand and glorious history for our family, and of legends going to the Edo period and even before, but even my grandmother will admit that our family history stops with my grandfather’s father and his generation. So, the importance of our family’s history is mostly from legends and myths that came from my great-grandfather and his siblings.”

“But we can confirm that my great-grandfather and his male siblings were able to get pregnant, and the women passed the Carrier gene onto my grandfather’s generation,” Dee said. “Which puts Carriers in Japan at the start of the 20th century.”

“Even my grandmother admits that Carriers were around as long as she can remember,” Ryo stated, “and not just a few. Meaning that Dee’s and Dafydd’s great-grandfather and that generation could not be the first ones. Even if I have heard talk around the family that the Fujiokas are one of the first Carrier families. My grandmother had mentioned it too, because of the twin gene.”
“Twin gene?” Henry asked.

Dee nodded. “Because I’m a Fujioka, I have the twin gene, which is how we ended up with Ryoko and Darin, even if there are no twins in Ryo’s family. Dafydd has the twin gene. All the males in our family have twins when they Carry, and sometimes can even mean twins if a female partner is pregnant. Not all the time, but looking at my family tree, it does happen here and there.”

Dafydd nodded his head in agreement. “There are other families besides ours where the men give birth to twins every pregnancy, but it is not the norm. It is said in Japan, that those with the twin genes are from the First Carriers.”

“Whenever the heck that first male pregnancy happened, however, is a mystery to us, Dafydd included,” Dee added. “It seems that like the Fujioka family history, the origins of the first Carriers in Japan are missing. There is only that everyone who is alive in Japan today will most likely say that men have always been able to give birth.”

“This is something to sit down and think about,” Dominic said. “Especially if the ACC builds their case based on the Carrier project.”

“The doctored Carrier project,” Ted corrected.

Dominic nodded. “That too. If we can get Japan to admit to these truths, it might help in defense to bring down the ACC. If we can’t, which seems to be very likely, then we need to find a way to use this knowledge without giving away this secret. This is huge.”

“Legend sometimes speaks of Carriers being evolution,” Dafydd offered. “I know it is only legend, but there is always at least a spark of truth in legend.”

“Since I’ve been here and talked to other Carriers and just other Japanese, I did notice no one seems to be concerned with the origins. It’s as if even if they do not know how, they seem to accept that they always have been in Japan,” Ryo said.

“Yes,” Dafydd said. “We never use that word, or even put a word to it, but if I had to, I would use evolution to explain why we have Carriers before the project in America.”
Dee stared at Ryo and his brother, and then at the camera. “I have to agree, but, c’mon here, to suggest evolution to even pro-Carriers, we would be laughed out of business here. Well, not here in Japan maybe, but in America definitely. It just sounds insane.”

“And we have no proof to back up such a claim,” Henry pointed out. “I do admit, being that I have spent time in Japan, I am in agreement with you that the general attitude on Carriers there could be summed up by ‘evolution’, but in truth, do you really believe it to be true?”

Dee, Ryo and Dafydd looked at each other and they all shrugged. “To be honest, even with everything we discovered since coming here, there also seems to be more mysteries,” Ryo said. “To even get someone who is Japanese, born and raised here, to speak of it they will quote myths and legends.”

Dafydd let out a laugh. “My grandfather is an encyclopedia of them.”

“Yeah, but from what I heard from him so far, it also all includes Fujiokas,” Dee added with a smirk.

“Ryo is right. Until I actually sat down and talked to them about differences of Carriers here and in America, I never put any thought into it, and when asked by gaijin, I just repeated what I heard from my grandfather. My father will do the same, because he was raised by all those quotes.”

“Well, do what you can with the information without actually giving any of this away please,” Dee said. “Grandfather Fujioka has ties with the government and the Imperial family, and if he suspects I gave away Japanese secrets for American use, he won’t hesitate to have my gaijin ass tried for treason against Japan.”

“I doubt he’ll go that far,” Dafydd defended, “but I agree, he will be very displeased.”

“Oh, he’ll have me banned from Japan.” Looking at the camera, Dee added, “And I have family here in Japan that I would very much love to be able to visit, not to mention Ryo’s family, so don’t screw it up for me.”

Chuckles went around the room from Dee’s reaction.

“I’m sure you’re exaggerating,” Rose said, “but I do agree with extreme discretion. If Japan has maintained this secret for so long, I doubt they will admit to changing that any time soon.” He looked
“Understood. We’ll see if we can work something out, and if not without giving away this great big secret, then we’ll have to find another defense,” Dominic stated.

“What I don’t understand is how can this be such a big secret with all the Americans who go to Japan?” Drake asked.

“It is remarkable what one’s mind can deny as the truth when it is not your own,” Henry stated.

“Or if it is something you are not consciously looking for,” Ryo admitted. “I’ll admit, with all the years I’ve been in Japan, I mean, hell, I was practically raised there as a kid, but Carriers did not concern me, so I never really noticed just how many there were. Now coming back here this time for vacation, along with my twin infants and the man who Carried them, I was seeing just how normal it was practically from the time I stepped off the plane.”

“Same here,” Dee agreed, raising his left hand. “It’s not to say that I thought there were no Carriers in Japan the first time around. Sure, I came across plenty of Carriers during my time, but I never really gave too much thought about how widespread and accepted they were. I spent five years in Japan, and I still fell into the American belief that there are more Carriers here because of the time of Occupation and the US military giving the genes to Japanese prisoners and others under their control. They even have shrines and temples dedicated for Carriers. If someone mentioned it to me back when I was in college if we came across one, I certainly didn’t think much about it, and don’t remember now if I was told that back then. Until I became pregnant, I had no problem with Carriers, but they certainly did not pertain to me.”

“Out of sight, out of mind,” Diana said.

“Exactly,” Henry agreed.

“So how come you noticed it when you were there?” J.J. asked Henry. “Are you a Carrier?”

“I am not, unfortunately,” Henry replied. “I am, however, very open-minded.”

“He also has that creepy way of noticing every little thing that gets in his sense,” Lucas added. “You see how he is during an investigation.” Lucas ignored the glare that Henry gave him.
“Yeah, you’re right,” Ted agreed. “He absorbs stuff much more than Dee does, and I thought Dee was scary.”

“But also very useful,” Marty pointed out. “Both Henry and Dee. Especially Henry.”

“Did you know,” Rose asked the men on the screen, “that Henry is the first medical examiner I know of to join us in the field for the investigation? He doesn’t just stay in his lab after giving us his autopsy findings. He has been around here very often and tagging along on the field. And giving us information that have helped in closing many cases successfully. We are happy to have Henry as part of our team, and welcome Lucas to assist.”

“That’s awesome,” Dee said with a smile.

“I had this feeling that Henry would become of greater use than just autopsy,” Ryo said. “I’m glad I was right, and looking forward to working with you, Henry, when we get back to work.”

“Which have you decided when that will be?” Rose asked.

“Not yet,” Ryo said. “Especially after meeting Dafydd. We might extend our stay in Japan a little so Dee has time to spend with his family before having to go back to New York.”

“That’s understandable. Just keep me updated on extensions and when you believe you can give a date on when to expect you back,” Rose said. “I will expect the date to also be when Dee will report to medical to get his release back to active duty.”

“I can assure you that I am definitely physically ready to go back to active duty,” Dee stated. “If Japan doesn’t kill me first. All the stairs and hills and walking halfway across the city to change train lines. Sheesh!”

Dafydd started to laugh. “It’s only a little worse than New York, Dee. I remember some long walks to change trains in New York.”

“Yeah there are a few, but not almost every line like here. I guess I got soft with having an elevator in my building. But it’s getting us in shape, that’s for sure. I’ll be ready to climb the stairs to those
walk-ups by the time I’m back.” He grinned at the camera.

“And your other reason for not returning yet?” Rose asked.

“I think I have a handle on that, too. The chibis were here with my grandmother tonight while we went out,” Dee replied. “And it’s far from the first time. Ryo’s grandmother or someone in his family would watch them whenever we went out at night, or to somewhere that we didn’t think was wise to have babies.”

“It’s definitely getting easier,” Ryo said. “Whoever is watching them doesn’t have to constantly send Dee videos anymore. In fact, not even text message. We check in on them when we get back, and until then, we have a great time doing whatever it is we’re out doing.”

“Good to hear. That means you will most likely be cleared to start shortly after your appointment,” Rose said.

“Yes, I think so too,” Dee said. “And while I’m enjoying being the wealthy man of leisure travelling internationally, I’m also going to be glad to get back to joining the rest of you when this trip is over.”

“Do you think you’ll be back in time for Christmas?” J.J. asked.

“I hope so,” Dee said. “You know I have to be at the orphanage for Christmas Eve, so we’re doing our best to make that happen.”

“Speaking of the holidays, do you know that we all received invitations from Ryo’s grandfather for a New Year’s Eve party at some fancy hotel in Times Square?” Ted asked.

“Yes, I knew he was sending them,” Ryo replied. “I also know that the hotel is right there by where the ball drops and there is a terrace with a great view. It’s going to be mostly our friends, along with some cousins. My grandparents of course will be there, being they are hosting it.”

“And I’m still trying to find a way to convince my twin here that he can forget about the shrine for one year and join us. In return, next year I’ll be here to help in any way at the shrine.”
“Tell more about that, Dafydd,” Drake requested. “I find it highly amusing, knowing Dee.” He started to laugh, with most of the others joining in.

Dee looked at his brother and shook his head. “Go ahead. I know you’re proud of it.” He started to smile.

“You’re starting to feel the same, no matter what religion you are,” Dafydd stated. “I can see it on your face since we went there yesterday.”

“It is pretty impressive, that’s for sure,” Dee admitted.

“There are going to be pictures of the shrine, right Dee? Ryo?” Diana asked.

“Yes, we’ll include some from when we were there yesterday,” Dee said as Ryo nodded his head. “So Dafydd, tell them more about Hinotsuke Jingu and why you can’t come to New York for New Year’s this year.”

“Our family maintains this very famous Carrier shrine in Nagoya. People come from all over Japan to visit it, especially if they are a Carrier and are unable to conceive yet. It gets even more busy on New Year’s Eve and in the morning of New Year day. Many Carriers and their families travel here to start the new year visiting the shrine,” Dafydd explained. “I told Dee that my grandfather always expects all of us to be there and help out. Dee’s exempt this year so far.” He looked at Dee with a smirk, “That’s because it’s still new to him, being he just found out about you yesterday, but he has time until then to decide you should be part of family tradition.”

“Considering that Ryo’s grandfather already had planned this party mostly for us and our friends, Grandfather will just have to do without us this year,” Dee replied. “But next year, we can make plans to be here.”

J.J., Drake, Ted and Marty all started to laugh.

“What’s so funny?” Andy asked.

“Dee talking about helping out around a Shinto shrine, that’s what,” Ted remarked.
“Oh!” Diana exclaimed and started to laugh with them.

“That is funny,” Dana agreed and giggled. “Make sure there are pictures.”

“Does your Mama know, Dee?” Marty asked, amused.

Ryo grinned wickedly and said, “We’re Japanese, there are always pictures.” His eyes shifted to his husband and added, “That includes Daisuke.”

Everyone laughed at Ryo’s comment.

“And yes, she knows. She finds it amusing, especially since she also has pagans in her family,” Dee replied. “Those of you who were at our wedding met them.”

“Oh yeah, that’s right,” J.J. said. “Boy, you have interesting families, Dee.”

“No kidding, J.J.,” Dee commented with a laugh. “Is there anything else we need to know about?” Dee asked after glaring at both Ryo and Dafydd.

“No. That’s everything for now,” Rose stated. “Everything else is business as usual and not to bother you with while on vacation. By next Monday, we should have a confirmed date on when we will be moving to our new headquarters.”

“Henry, did you find any of those notes you mentioned the last time?” Ryo asked.

“I did find some of the pages in a box of family junk, but you already mentioned everything. I really have nothing new at this time, but still searching,” Henry replied. “I do find it amusing that Dee had ancestors also on the project. In fact, in consideration of everything else since you became pregnant, Dee, I have to really wonder about the coincidence of it.”

“New York’s Carrier Hero is from a family who gave us Carriers,” Dominic said with amusement. “Heck, if anything about the family history is true, that’s double then.”
“I know some of you are finding it amusing, but I can’t help but think that it was destiny that Dee would gain the publicity he has here,” Dana stated thoughtfully.

“I don’t know,” Dee said. “Just being at the right place at the right time. That also goes for discovering stuff about my biological family. Because meeting Dafydd at that party last week, definitely was right place at the right time.”

“True,” Dafydd agreed. “It was, even if I went in there thinking wrong place, since Momo put her foot down this time and I ran out of excuses.”

Dee started to laugh. “I’m glad you did, brother. I’m glad you did.”

“Me too.”

“So, anything else?” Ryo asked. “We want to check in on all the kids before going to bed. Especially Carol because she is having a slumber party with Ayaka.”

“Oh, I’m jealous!” J.J. whined.

“And will also never happen,” Dee commented. “Have dinner with, sit down and talk to, sure, whenever I can get her to visit us in New York, but definitely no slumber parties with my little sister. I don’t care how gay you are, it’s still just wrong.”

“Sorry,” J.J. commented.

Drake started to laugh. “Listen to the big brother there protecting his sister’s virtue. That’s rich, dude.”

“I love it,” Dana added with amusement. “You have gotten that close to her already?”

“Yes, I did,” Dee agreed with a smile. “She’s something else and the youngest one in the family. We’re all protective of her.”
Dafydd nodded in agreement. “He’s right.”

“We’ll let you gentlemen get ready to get some sleep, while the rest of here should be getting some work done,” Rose said. “Have a good night. Dafydd, it’s a pleasure meeting you and thank you for your input. I hope if not for New Year, then sometime soon we’ll have the pleasure of meeting you in person.”

“It is my intention to visit my brother in New York the first chance my family is able to,” Dafydd said. “It is good to meet those who my brother works with. He got to meet mine early this morning.”

“Excellent,” said Rose.

Everyone else called out their goodbyes and then the screen went blank.

“That was not what I expected,” Drake said in awe. “Dee found his family. Wow!”

“And seems to be accepting them too,” Ted put in.

“He does seem very close to the ones we met already,” Diana said. “That’s good. I’m so happy for him.”

“You both knew about that already,” J.J. commented.

“Of course, we did,” Rose replied with a smirk. “I had to know why they were not going to join us last Monday, and Diana is the one who did the work on getting DNA samples from Mother Lane to confirm that they were twins.”

“Why Diana?” J.J. asked.

“Because he didn’t want to involve the unit,” Diana said. “FBI has a greater jurisdiction to be helping out with the Aichi Prefecture Police without an extra pile of paperwork. That’s why.”

“Oh. Yeah, makes sense, I suppose,” J.J. said.
“Hey, does that mean they’ll start sending us more pictures of their vacation now that the big surprise has been revealed?” Dana asked.

“I do recall it being mentioned, so I am sure they will,” Rose stated. “And we are not going to spend another hour discussing the revelations in Dee’s life when we have cases we need to work on. We will at some point soon sit down and discuss the facts they gave us about Carriers in Japan. Now shouldn’t some of you be heading out in the field and be detectives?”

Amid the grumbling, everyone got up and started to move their chairs back into place. Henry and Lucas excused themselves to go back to the morgue, promising to be in contact later in the day.

J.J. was still stunned at how much Dee’s life had changed in just one second at that party. It had to be even more significant than the money he had received as Ryo’s husband from Ryo’s grandfather. Much more significant.

He decided he was glad Dee was letting his family in, and definitely glad for Dee to discover that his parents didn’t dump him in the alley because they didn’t care. It was all really good for Dee.

But it also made J.J. think that Dee was now different because of it, and wondered how much it would change him.
Chapter 40

Chapter Summary

A trip to Ise and Toshijima with Dee's father and stepfather.

CHAPTER FORTY

November 7, 2006

Fujioka Residence

Nagoya, Aichi

Japan

The next morning when Dee and Ryo joined the family downstairs, they found Momo with her two boys already there with Bikky and Carol. Saburo was in the kitchen making breakfast while Yoshio entered the lounge from the kitchen carrying a tray with a carafe of coffee and a pot of tea. On the table in the lounge were coffee mugs and teacups, a pitcher of milk set in a bowl of ice, sugar, and a box of various breakfast breads from a nearby bakery. There was also a rice cooker at one end of the table.

“Uncle Daisuke! Uncle Ryo!” Tatsuya exclaimed when he noticed the two standing at the stair landing.

Dee started to smile more and went over to his nephews. Kiyoshi looked up at his brother’s exclamation and started to wave frantically. Dee hugged both boys, saying good morning to them and then kissing the top of Momo’s head. He then went on to greet everyone else while Ryo greeted his nephews by marriage.

Yoshio smiled warmly and put his hand on Dee’s arm as they said good morning. “Your father is in the kitchen.”
“Thank you,” Dee said.

He looked around the room to find Ryo sitting next to Momo, and listening to his nephews, pulling Bikky and Carol into the conversation. Yoshio sat down with them and Bikky started to talk to him.

Dee entered the kitchen and found his father at the sink. “Ohayo gozaimasu,” Dee greeted with a smile.

“Daisuke! Ohayo,” Saburo replied as he turned around. He put down the utensil he was holding to hug Dee. “Did you get coffee?”

“I’ll get it in a minute.” Dee looked at the stove to find his father was making small wheat pancakes. On a nearby counter there was a bowl with adzuki bean paste. Dee also smelled salmon being broiled and checked to find the broiler was on. “What are we having?” Dee asked.

“A little bit of everything. I wasn’t sure what your family would enjoy best, so Yoshio and I decided to make sure everyone had something to eat. We have traditional breakfast food, which I already know you and your husband would eat, and then some favorites with young ones. Many adults, too, I should say.”

“I would guess that you’re making dorayaki,” Dee commented. “You’ve been busy this morning.”

“I’ve had help. Yoshio made coffee and tea and put the salmon on. He also made the hacho miso glaze for the salmon. Momo made a run this morning to get the breakfast pan and made that bean paste. I’m also going to quickly whip up some cream and we can make toast if someone wants. If not, dorayaki tastes extra good with a little whipped cream.” Saburo grinned at him in a way that told Dee he liked it that way.

Dee started to laugh. “I can go for some of that,” he agreed. “Is there anything I can do to help?”

“I have everything almost ready. Go join everyone and I’ll be out shortly. Have some coffee and pan until then.”

“If you insist,” Dee said. On impulse he leaned over, holding Saburo by his arms and kissed his
cheek before leaving the kitchen.

He caught the warm smile on Saburo’s face as he left and smiled himself.

“Where’s Dafydd and Ayaka?” Dee asked as he sat down at the table. He chuckled as Kiyoshi toddled over and crawled on his lap. As he caught Tatsuya pout and looked up at his mother, he added, “In a little while Tatsuya can switch with you, if he wants.”

“I want! YAY!” Tatsuya shouted happily.

“Come here, Tatsuya,” Ryo said softly with a smile.

“Oh!” Tatsuya scrambled to crawl onto Ryo’s lap and hugged him. “Thank you, Uncle Ryo.” He cuddled against Ryo with a happy smile. Bikky and Carol laughed as Bikky reached over to ruffle the little boy’s hair. “Can I also sit on your lap sometimes, cousin?” Tatsuya asked Bikky in Japanese.

“Hai,” Bikky replied and laughed at Dee’s and Ryo’s faces. “Anytime.”

“YAY!” Tatsuya exclaimed as he clapped his hands.

“Me too?” Kiyoshi asked.

Bikky nodded his head. “Hai.”

Kiyoshi leaned back against Dee, laughing with glee as he clapped.

“What?” Bikky asked his dads. “It was pretty obvious,” he replied and laughed. “Besides, I did recognize some of the words.”

Yoshio laughed joyfully. “Perhaps it will be these little ones who will help you with Japanese,” he said to Bikky.
“Maybe we should all start speaking Japanese around Bikky?” Dee said with a teasing grin.

“You do it enough anyway,” Bikky replied with a shrug. “I know English is spoken because of me and Carol, but not everyone can speak English well, and the rest of you need to communicate with them. So there’s a lot of Japanese being spoken around here.”

Ryo shrugged. “True. I guess you have more a reason to listen to people around here when they speak Japanese than when you’re watching anime and making up things in English to amuse yourself.”

“We don’t do that through all of the anime,” Carol said. “We do try to listen and pick out words we know. Just the basics.”

“Okay,” Ryo said. “Carry on then.” He smiled at Bikky and Carol. “And remember you have a lot of people who are willing to help.”

“We know,” Bikky said.

“Dee, Ayaka is upstairs doing a call-in interview that she couldn’t reschedule and then she’ll be free for the next few days,” Carol said.

“Did you have a good time last night?” Dee asked.

“The big question was, did you get any sleep? Or did you stay awake from nerves?” Ryo asked.

“We stayed up a while. We were able to talk a little with broken English and gestures. I guess it was such a busy day that I was asleep the moment my head hit the pillow.”

“Good,” Ryo said with an approving smile. “I’m glad you two figured out a way to communicate.”

“I agree,” Dee said. “Is Dafydd still sleeping? Or hunting down more of this delicious pan?”
Momo and Yoshio started to laugh. “On his days off, Dafydd tends to sleep in on his off days and leave everything to us,” Yoshio said.

Momo laughed more. “You don’t know what I went through on the mornings we needed to meet you early in Tokyo.”

Ryo grinned. “We did try not to because we also figured that last week was also your second honeymoon,” he stated.

Momo started to blush as Dee winked at her. “There was that,” she muttered looking down. When she looked up again, she added, “but I still had to battle to wake him up first.”

Ryo laughed and stared at Dee. “Well, another thing you two have in common.” To Momo, he asked, “But does Dafydd get out of bed at obnoxiously early hours if he has something heavy on his mind?”

“No, not at all. He just doesn’t go to sleep,” Momo replied.

“Why am I hearing my name?” they heard Dafydd as he came down the stairs. Like everyone else, except for Bikky and Carol, he wore a yukata over sleep pants.

Dee’s eyes went wide as he looked over at his brother. “What the hell happened to you?” he asked.

Dafydd looked down and scowled.

Momo also looked at her husband and laughed again. “He also takes a while in the mornings to straighten his hair.”

“Papa!” came from both little boys and they jumped off Dee’s and Ryo’s laps and rushed to their father.

Dafydd kneeled to hug his boys before guiding them back to the table. He greeted Yoshio and said down next to Momo, giving her a brief kiss. Looking at Dee, he said, “You got the Japanese daddy’s hair, while I got his eyes.”
Dee laughed more. “And you got the Welsh daddy’s hair.”

Dafydd’s natural hair, Dee discovered that day, ten days after first meeting his twin brother, was wavy. It was very wavy, almost curly. He remembered the photo of his fathers, realizing that Alun also had very curly dark hair. He let out a snort. “It doesn’t look bad. I just wasn’t expecting it,” he said.

“So Saburo and I keep telling him that it’s nothing to be embarrassed about, but I suspect his grandfather got it in Dafydd’s head that his hair is very gaijin,” Yoshio said. He didn’t look happy about it. “Over the years, I wished I could smack my father-in-law every time he said that to Dafydd and his boys. I take comfort that when he’s caught by my mother-in-law, she does the smacking.”

“Not hard enough,” Dee commented. “I’m afraid if he pulls that in front of me, I won’t be so respectful about it, even if I do know custom says that he’s my grandfather, so I must show him respect.”

“He wasn’t that respectful to you,” Ryo said to Dee.

“Or you, Bikky and Carol,” Dee said. He let out a heavy sigh. “I would just prefer to avoid him except whenever Obāsan is with him.”

“We try not to leave him alone with Tatsuya and Kiyoshi. Our other grandchildren are fine with him since they are full Japanese,” Yoshio stated. “Even Saburo is aware of it.”

“I am indeed,” Saburo said, carrying a large lacquer tray and set it down on the table. There was a platter of grilled salmon, the azuki paste and a small bowl of whipped cream. “I even lost my temper at him many times about how, first he spoke to Dafydd when he was young, and then to the little ones there. He would just ignore me for several days, finally contacting me when he needed, or when my mother makes him. And then just do it all over again.”

“It’s hard to break habits when it’s based on belief,” Dee said. He let out a sigh. “I’m not defending him or making excuses. I’m just stating facts. It’s not the first time I encountered it.”

Dafydd nodded his head. “I agree.”
“It’s unfortunate that I have to deal with it in an otherwise wonderful family. If you don’t mind, I prefer if me and my family try to limit being around him to when Obāsan is present. The only times he actually spoke civil to me was when she was around,” Dee said.

Saburo leaned down to hug him. “I understand and will do what I can to assist. Excuse me, while I bring out the rest of the food. Can someone check on how much longer Ayaka will be? Carol, please?”

“Of course, Saburo-san,” Carol said and got up to go upstairs.

“Asa gohan,” Ryo called out. “Breakfast.”

“Oh, okay. Thanks.” Carol went up the stairs.

Momo got up. “I’m going to help Papa bring the rest in.”

Ryo studied the table and leaned over to say softly to Yoshio, “Are we expected to eat everything?”

Yoshio laughed and shook his head. “Whenever there is more than me, Saburo and Ayaka here for mornings, there are different tastes, so we offer a variety.” He smiled at Ryo, and then Dee. “Before I forget, my mother-in-law called. She said she could not clear her schedule to go with us today, and sounded very disappointed. She is looking forward to seeing you again when we return.”

Saburo and Momo returned from the kitchen. On Momo’s tray was a large platter with the dorayaki, while Saburo had a metal pot with miso soup and the leftover pickled vegetables from dinner the night before.

“Hopefully Ayaka and Carol will be down shortly, so let us eat,” Saburo said. “Some of us still need to get dressed for our day. The bus will be here in an hour and a half. Hopefully that will be enough time for Dafydd to get his hair under control.”

Dafydd made a face at his father.

“You can leave it as it is,” Saburo stated. “It looks very nice and most of the family knows what you
do to your hair.”

“I do now,” Dee said and chuckled.

Saburo reached out and ran his fingers through Dee’s thick straight dark hair. “This is natural?”

“Not that he doesn’t put a ton of product in it so it looks ‘fashionable’,” Ryo stated with amusement.

“What is it with hair product with kids these days. So much money goes into making hair what it’s not, if you ask me,” Saburo said.

“I didn’t do anything to my hair yet,” Dee said. “So this is natural.”

“I thought it looked different,” Yoshio said.

“He did comb out his bedhead,” Ryo said with a snicker. “When he wakes up, his hair sticks up in all directions and not in the styled spiked way either.”

“Thanks,” Dee said to Ryo.

“You definitely got my hair then,” Saburo said with a smile. “You didn’t have enough hair the last time I saw you to know for sure if it would remain straight. Dafydd’s was and a few months later, as it grew out more, it started to curl.”

“I always had straight hair,” Dee said.

“I think both of you just need to leave your hair natural today,” Momo said. “Besides, by the time we get to the island, the sea air will make it worse.”

“And then my hair will be almost curly if I don’t put something in,” Dafydd groaned.
“Just for one day,” Saburo said. “Both of you. For me.”

“That’s not right, Papa,” Dee complained. “Fine. I’ll do it, if he does.”

“I don’t know. You only use it to style your hair, but it’s still straight,” Dafydd said.

Dee looked at his twin brother. “After all this time, he has the two of us together, going to this island that I can hear in Papa’s voice is very important to him. It’s such a little thing considering everything.”

“What are we missing?” Carol’s voice asked.

Everyone looked up to find Carol and Ayaka come down the stairs. Carol went back to her place next to Bikky and after saying good morning to everyone, Ayaka sat down next to Carol.

“I looked in on the chibis while I waited for Ayaka to finish her interview, and they’re still asleep.”

Dee snickered. “They’ve been having hard days lately, what with being handled from one adoring relative to another.”

“To be fair, they decided to wake up at 5 am for a while,” Ryo said. “Thankfully after feeding and then amusing them, they were ready to sleep again.

“They’ll wake up in time to fall asleep during our ride to Ise,” Dee said with a laugh.

Ryo held up a small monitor that he had set near him. “We’ll know when they wake up, which will hopefully be after we eat.”

“Speaking of, can we eat now?” Bikky asked.

“Bikky makes a good point,” Saburo said. “I did say we can start. Now that everyone is here, let us eat.”
Koji was waiting for them in the parking lot as the bus pulled up. The ride there took a little over three hours, and they arrived around eleven. Much to their surprise, when Saburo made arrangements for the bus, the driver was instructed to make stops at all the parking areas along the way. The stops were not long, basically so they could get stamps from the PA, get something to drink and in a couple, Ryo picked up something as omiyage for his grandmother and other family. At first Ryo was concerned about getting more than a box or two of some local food gifts because of their plans over the next few days, but Saburo assured him that if he left anything he picked up for family on the bus, that the bus would return to Saburo’s house and Jirou would see to getting everything off the bus and placed inside the house, waiting for them when they returned. Before leaving Tokyo, Ryo and Dee had discussed having any purchases they would not be using for the rest of their trip around Japan would be sent to the hotel in Tokyo, where it would be placed inside the penthouse. That would keep from having to travel from city to city with too much inside the van. Even if they didn’t have the money they had, it was an option, because sending packages and luggage from city to city in Japan was very affordable, and a method many people travelling by train used instead of lugging luggage.

Koji was the last sibling Dee was to meet. He was cordial and polite, but Dee was able to sense the unease from the other man. At least he wasn’t as abrupt as his grandfather, but Dee suspected that Koji shared many of his grandfather’s opinions. Unlike Dee and Dafydd, and Tsukiko and Naoki who shared many personality characteristics, and seemed to be in-tune with many things, Koji and Tomiji seemed to be opposites in many ways. By the time that they stopped at the tea house at the Carrier Shrine, Dee felt as if Koji was just being polite only out of respect for his fathers. When they first met, there were no hugs and excitement coming from Koji. After the proper Japanese etiquette of meeting someone for the first time, he simply smiled and politely said he was pleased that everyone was wrong in their assumption of Dee being killed as an infant in New York, and extended his hand for a handshake. He was equally as cool as he greeted Ryo, Bikky and Carol. He did break his cool as he held each of the twins, cooing at them softly. It did not escape Dee’s notice that they did not respond to him as they did with the rest of Dee’s immediate family and many of his relatives. Koji also was enthusiastic when they first approached him, and Dafydd’s boys noticed him, running up to greet their uncle.
Before sitting down for lunch, he had led them along the trail from the parking lot to the Carrier Shrine which was further away from the parking lot than the Grand Ise Shrine. There were over a hundred various shrines in the large wooded area and were only accessible by walking along trails. He had explained what Saburo already told them on the ride there, that it would be impossible to see everything even if they had a full day. He suggested when they had the time, they should return for a few days to explore everything, as it was a very beautiful and serene place. Ryo said that he would love to take up that suggestion, but it would have to be during another trip to Japan because their days on this trip were becoming full.

As their time there that day was limited, Koji conducted their tour to seeing the Carrier Shrine, taking them to the various areas of the grounds, sounding much like a tour guide. At least they passed a few of the other shrines along the way, and Koji would tell them about each shrine they passed as the group made their way along the trail. Dee had to admit that Koji had a lot of passion and even pride as he spoke, which made it easy to listen to him. He spoke even less English than Ayaka, so someone had to translate for Bikky and Carol whenever they had a chance. At least Koji would pause once he realized what was going on, giving the chance for someone, usually Saburo or Yoshio who knew almost as much about the shrines as Koji, and able to put the same enthusiasm in the translation.

As they waited for their lunch, they were joined by another of Ryoichi’s brothers they had not yet met. Hiroyuki was also not over-enthusiastic, but did seem to genuinely want to meet Dee and his family. He was the main priest to the Carrier Shrine there, and he had his oldest twin sons with him, who were both lesser priests at the shrine. Both sons were 50 years old, but like just about everyone else in the family, looked more like they were just a little older than Dee and Ryo. Toyonobu and Shigetaka both had their spouses with them, who looked more like their ages. They apologized that their children and grandchildren were unable to join them, but they would all be at the party when Dee returned to Nagoya on the way back to Tokyo.

The Carrier shrine in the Ise Jingu area was not as popular as the one in Nagoya, but it was also maintained by the Fujiokas. Many Carriers would come to the shrine while visiting the Grand Shrine, which was considered the biggest shrine in Japan, which kept it pretty busy.

After lunch, everyone went to the Grand Shrine, which was where Koji was assigned to until his graduation from university. They took a tour of the shrine, and then walked back to the parking area. Koji and the others from Ise said their goodbyes as they got on the bus.

A half hour later, the bus let them off at a marina in Toba. Saburo and Yoshio led them to a boat that reminded Dee much of the yakatabune they had been on in Tokyo. Instead of low dinner tables on the deck, the interior was set up like a lounge with comfortable cushioned couches and tables. Saburo explained that it was one of the family boats to use getting to Toshijima, and also used for dinner parties on the water. They had a second boat that usually was used going between Toshijima and the Port of Nagoya, which was a more direct trip and that they would be taking that one on their trip back.
The boat stopped at a small island only a few miles from the tip of the peninsula that Toba was on the south end. The island was known as Dolphin Island. They went to the theme park, where there were many dolphin exhibits. Bikky, Carol, Tatsuya and Kiyoshi got to pet and feed dolphins while the adults took photos. They also managed to get photos of Bikky and Carol holding Darin and Ryoko by a dolphin that stayed obediently during the photo ops. Kiyoshi and Tatsuya were asked to join in for a few pictures, because it was the younger twin boys’ turn to pose for pictures while petting the dolphin. They took the lift up to the observatory. On the deck, Saburo pointed out Toshijima, along with naming the other islands they were able to see in Toba Bay. They came down from the observatory in time to make the dolphin show. After the show, they went back to the boat and headed the few miles to Toshijima.

As they disembarked from the boat, Saburo’s older brother Nori was waiting for them, along with a few young men. Dee remembered Nori from the party Sunday night, along with a couple of the younger men, who were Nori’s sons. They helped with the luggage, loading it into a cargo van. One of Dee’s cousins said that he’d meet them at the house and pulled the van out of the parking lot.

“I was not expecting cars,” Ryo commented, looking around the harbor. He had Darin in a sling at Saburo’s suggestion, while Dee had Ryoko. The strollers had gone ahead with the rest of their bags for their stay.

They had arrived around the time Saburo had aimed for, which was late afternoon. The sun was setting, creating a beautiful background to the sleeping looking town around the harbor. Next to the harbor was the parking lot. One section was mostly white vans and scattered around the rest of the lot were various different cars, most of them of the small variety, but there were also some compact family vehicles.

Across from the lot were old but well-maintained buildings. There was a café with tables outside, a grocery store, a fish shop, a vegetable stand, and several other small businesses. Next to the row of smaller buildings was an inn on one side and a taller building that was a hotel. The hotel stood out from the rest of the buildings because it looked like it was built in the latter half of the 20th century, while the other buildings seemed to have been built in the end of the 19th century.

“There are barges made to carry vehicles to the island,” Saburo explained. “You won’t see them in this harbor because it is not outfitted to load and offload vehicles.”

“In other areas of the island are construction sites and you will find construction vehicles,” Yoshio said. “We have garbage collection and school buses on the island.”
“Don’t forget the hotel shuttles around the island and taxis,” Dafydd added.

“So, you see, we have vehicles here, except you won’t find a traffic jam,” Saburo said. He pointed to the buildings as they went across the parking lot from the harbor. “This is the business district of this town. On weekends, an open market is held. It’s also where festivals are held. I hope you do not mind walking. It’s not that far from here and it is looking to be a nice evening.”

“It is,” Dee agreed, also taking in his surroundings. It was serene there. In between the occasional vehicle going along the single two-lane road which went through the area, he was able to hear the gentle lapping of the water going against the docks of the harbor. In the harbor, there were plenty of boats and yachts of different sizes that were personal boats of people living on the island or had access to visit.

According to what Saburo had told them about the island, the island was not open to the general public. One had to have either a resident’s or visitor’s ID. Applications had to be filed for permanent or temporary IDs. Applicants had to have either a contact living on the island or came from a particular family history. In addition, many GPN employees were granted IDs for vacations. Even with needing IDs, the island still had enough visitors to keep the various inns and hotels in business, and provide extra income to the island’s economy.

Being that Dee and Ryo were with Saburo and boarding one of the private Fujioka boats, no one asked for their IDs. Saburo did promise that by the time they came back to Nagoya, he would have IDs for the family, should they ever decide to come back to the island in the future. It was Dee’s right, since he was the grandson of the CEO of the corporation that owned Toshijima. That also gave Ryo, Bikky and Carol the right to IDs too. Once Ryoko and Darin were 13 years old, they would be required to have their own IDs and would receive them before their 13th birthday.

At the edge of the businesses along the harbor was a wooden gate. Dee immediately noticed by the entrance was a plaque that read Fujioka in kanji. Saburo led them through the gate while Yoshio held it open for them. They found a beautiful garden with statues and bamboo fountains. Beyond the garden was a large structure in the old traditional Japanese style.

Saburo smiled at everyone. “This is the family home,” he stated with pride. “We also have a few smaller homes for family use if they prefer something not as large or for privacy. This is basically for family gatherings, but we have also been known to take over the hotel sometimes during a matsuri when we get most of the family together.” He entered the house.

To Dee, the house resembled more a ryokan than a private house, but considering what he had noticed about the Fujioka family, it seemed to fit them. The first floor was a large common area and kitchen. The middle of the common area was sunken and had a coal burning stove, with black iron
cooking equipment on it. Above was a landing going along half of the second level. The house included the usual engawa between sliding shoji inner and outer walls, which opened the house to the garden surrounding the house. Currently the outer walls were closed but the storm doors were not in place, and the inner walls had enough an opening to access the engawa to get around the house.

The second level was mostly bedrooms. The rooms were not large, with tatami mat floors. Most of them were big enough for a futon and a small dresser. One of the walls opened to reveal a small closet. There were a few rooms that were larger and had Japanese style platforms with futons laid out and comfortable looking duvets. The adult couples were given the larger rooms, while Bikky, Carol, and Tatsuya and Kiyoshi were given rooms with futons. In a room next to Dee’s and Ryo’s, there was a large crib and changing table set up, along with a baby monitor and lamp that projected colorful animals on the walls set on a small nightstand.

Darin and Ryoko were fully awake so they were settled in the playpen in the common area while everyone quickly settled in.

Dee and Ryo also found in the closet in their room, a selection of men’s and women’s kimono. One thing they noticed along the walk to the house was that almost everyone they saw were in kimono. The few in western style clothes seemed to be going to or from the harbor, and many of the children also were not in kimono. They did think to pack their yukatas that were used as lounge wear around the house or to cover pajamas but did not consider they would be needing any kimono, so they left the ones they received from Ryo’s family or bought in the penthouse in Tokyo.

Dee left their room and knocked on the door of his father’s room. “Papa?” he softly called out.

Saburo answered the door, and Dee saw behind him Yoshio changing into a kimono. “Yes Daisuke. Is there anything you need?”

Dee started to smile. “Not now. I think my question is answered. We were wondering if we should wear the kimono that are in our closet.”

“You are not obliged to,” Saburo said, “but they are there should you choose to. We leave them in the closets for anyone to use. Your stepfather and I prefer to go island style, you could say. Dafydd and Momo never pack any whenever they come here, but most of the time will change into the ones provided.”

Yoshio came closer to the door with a knowing grin. “Perhaps for the same reason we never do,” he said to Saburo. “Why carry them when there are plenty in the house to use? They are always cleaned after the house is empty, so do not worry about wearing something that someone else wore the other
“That makes sense,” Dee agreed, smiling at his stepfather. “I don’t think Ryo will have trouble going island style then.”

“And you?” Saburo asked.

“I’m here because I wanted to make sure it was okay to use them, and that Ryo and I wouldn’t be the only two,” Dee replied.

“Go ahead and get changed then,” Saburo said with a laugh. “We’ll see you downstairs.”

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Fujioka Toshijima Home
Toshijima, Mie
Japan

Dee leaned back in his chair on the patio and looked at his companions. His father sat in the chair next to him, while Dafydd poked at the firepit that was in the center of the table set near them. In bouncy chairs were Darin and Ryoko, laughing and babbling as they waved the small plushies that Saburo had given them the previous day, including the small penguin that Darin seemed quite taken to since Saburo first put it in his little hands. The patio was on the front of the second level and had a view of the bay. Yoshio, Ryo, Momo and Ayaka had decided to take a walk to the beach with Bikky, Carol, Kiyoshi and Tatsuya, leaving the three to have a chance to be alone. When everyone was sitting on the patio after dinner, Dee insisted that it was fine to keep the infants with them. Saburo backed his son up, enjoying the time he had with his grandchildren.

Earlier before dinner, Saburo and Yoshio had taken stock of what was in the house and decided on what to make for dinner. Dafydd had volunteered himself and Dee to go to get the meat and fresh fish that was needed since there were no perishables, especially fresh proteins, while Ayaka went
with Carol to get vegetables. It took them a while because many of the residents who were friends of the Fujiokas, along with some of Dee’s relatives living on the island came up to them. Most of the family living on Toshijima were at the party on Sunday, but by the time he made his way back to the house, he had met a few new relatives, who promised to see him and his family at the big party when they returned to Nagoya after their trip around Japan.

Meanwhile Saburo had Bikky help with making the dashi stock and whatever else they were able to make using what was already in the house. Saburo was also hoping to have time to get to know his oldest grandson. Everyone else stayed in the common area, having tea and talking. From what Ryo told Dee, there was a lot of laughter coming from the kitchen, along with Saburo asking Bikky questions about himself, his life in New York and the stay in Japan. Yoshio would also ask questions, sometimes joining Saburo and Bikky in the kitchen. Bikky came out of it knowing more about Saburo, and Yoshio, as well as how to make dashi stock and later, sauce using hacho miso.

Once Dee, Dafydd, Carol and Ayaka returned from the store, everyone pitched in to make dinner, while Kiyoshi and Tatsuya sat by Darin and Ryoko, amusing themselves by making the infants laugh and squeal. Which amused those making dinner.

It was an enjoyable evening. Now everyone was winding down. Talk had ceased between the three men a few minutes ago as they enjoyed the cold beer Saburo had brought out with him. It was a comfortable silence.

When Saburo started to talk again, things got a little uncomfortable. “Daisuke, do you like your stepfather?”

Dee gave his father a double take, surprised at the question. “Yes, I do. Why do you ask that? Did I say anything wrong?” he asked in concern.

“It’s what you don’t say yet,” Saburo stated. “I do see the two of you talking, and when you do, I can see you both like each other, but then you never address him. Not even by his given name.”

Dee shrugged. “I’m just not sure what to call him. Calling you Papa, I found, is natural. I was saying it before I thought about it. You are my father. I know that Yoshio is also my father now, but he’s not Alun Jones and it just seems, well, hard to start calling him Chichi like everyone does.”

“I think it’s just a timing thing,” Dafydd said. “Did Chichi say anything?” he asked his father.
“No, nothing he said. But I can see he’s hurt at times when you could have called him Chichi,” Saburo replied.

“I’ll try,” Dee said. “But like Dafydd said, I’m sure it’s just a timing thing. I do like him very much. He’s a good man and he does treat me like his son. I don’t mind that.”

“It’s only because he’s not your other natural father,” Saburo summed up.

“I guess even in my situation it takes a while to acknowledge a stepparent as parent, even if I know he is my father now, especially from the way he is around me. As I said, I don’t mind it, and I’m sure it will help when I finally can call him Chichi as naturally as I can say Papa. Meanwhile please assure him that I do think of him as one of my fathers.”

“I can do that,” Saburo assured Dee with a warm smile.

They fell into another comfortable silence. It lasted only a few minutes before everything started to shake. Immediately all three men sat forward in their chairs but after a few minutes, Saburo and Dafydd leaned back.

Dee remained sitting straight as he stared at the water. Beyond the bay the water got choppy, and started to swirl around in a spiral, causing the waves in the harbor to slap against the docks harder and making boats rock. The waves were getting higher. Dee was just about to panic, especially with his family on the beach when he realized that the people walking on the path along the bay were not reacting. No one was running in panic, and just continued along their way at the same pace. They had paused when it first hit, but like the two men with him, after a couple of seconds, they went about their way.

“Earthquake?” Dee asked.

“Most likely,” Saburo replied.

“Can that lead to a tsunami?” he asked, pointing to the stirring water.

Dafydd shook his head. “No, it’ll all calm down in another minute or two. It’s not as bad as it feels.”
“We’ll probably have to upright a few things, but there shouldn’t be any significant damage,” Saburo said. He pointed to Darin and Ryoko who seemed to find the shaking amusing. “They don’t feel any danger. Believe me, babies can sense danger, but it’s probably like an amusement ride for them.”

“Will the others on the beach be okay?” Dee asked.

The shaking stopped and the water started to calm down, the swirling getting slower and the waves becoming smaller.

“Don’t tell me all those years back in New York made you soft to Japan’s earth tremors?” Dafydd asked amused.

“Don’t let your brother tease you, Daisuke,” Saburo said with amusement. “You should have seen him with his first earth tremor when he came back from college.”

“Papa!” Dafydd exclaimed as Dee laughed at his brother.

“So, this was nothing?” Dee asked. “What about aftershocks? I seem to remember these things came in pairs, at least over a few hours. Besides, now that I think about it, it felt different.”

“These things do,” Saburo agreed. “Also, you will find no seismic activity will be reported for the area. It’s just something that happens every now and then. Actually, it’s been over a year since the last time something like this happened.”

“That sounds strange. No seismic activity? Really? Something caused all that.”

They heard the gate below open, and the rest of the family entered the garden. Ayaka and Momo were talking to those on the island for the first time.

“The odd thing is it’s only felt this on this side of the island,” Dafydd said. “No shaking on the west side of the island and certainly nothing in Mie or Nagoya. Just this end of the island.”

“My father calls it a natural phenomenon unique to this side of the island, but never gave more of an explanation, including why he knows that. I do know that it happens every once in a while for as
long as there are people who lived here. It even shows up in local stories written by people who lived here before the current generations. Ask anyone here and they'll tell you it's a natural phenomenon and nothing to worry about,” Saburo said. “Well, the rest of the family is here. Shall we go inside and see what we need to upright and check in with them? Your family should be fine because I’m certain Momo and Ayaka had assured them.”

Dee looked at his watch. “It is around time they said they’d be back,” he commented. “Yes, let’s go down and meet them.” He stood up and leaned down to get Ryoko out of her chair. Cuddling her to him, he stroked her head with a smile. “So you thought that was fun, didn’t you, baby girl?”

Ryoko grabbed onto the collar of Dee’s kimono with one hand while reaching up to pat his cheek.

Dafydd started to laugh as he picked up Darin. “Is that her way of telling you it’s alright?” he asked.

“I guess so,” Dee agreed and leaned over to kiss her nose.

Saburo took their near empty beer bottles after he shut down the firepit and followed his sons into the house.

Downstairs, Ryo, Carol and Bikky did admit they found it unsettling, but Ryo was the first to relax and already had written it off as one of the earth tremors Japan was known for and started to reassure Bikky and Carol it was okay. Bikky and Carol had never been through earthquakes or even tremors, having lived all their lives in New York City, and it took a little talking them down before the two realized that if it was something serious, then Ryo, Momo and Ayaka would have been reacting to get them to safety instead of standing on the beach, backing Ryo up in his claim that it was nothing to worry about. Since it was close to the time Ryo thought they should be going back to the house, they started back, while Ayaka and Momo basically said the same thing to Ryo that Saburo and Dafydd had told Dee once Ryo realized that it felt different than he remembered and started to ask questions.

The rest of the evening, they sat in the common area and continued their bonding as a newly reunited family. Remembering Saburo’s questions about Yoshio, Dee made sure that while he could not yet call his stepfather Chichi, he liked him very much and wanted to know more about him. Conversation turned to asking questions about Yoshio’s family, and Yoshio assured them that when they returned to Nagoya, they would meet his family that lived in Nagoya.

Before they called it a night, Dee voiced the suggestion to his fathers if they would be interested in joining them when they went to Kyoto and/or Osaka. Both men stated they would love to go to both cities with them and could clear their schedules for the time. Dafydd and Momo wished they could
join but they had to get their boys back into school and for them to get back to work, since they had only cleared to take Tuesday and Wednesday off. Ayaka also had appearances and shows starting on Thursday. Dafydd did say it was probably a good thing they couldn’t join, and would be an excellent opportunity for his fathers to spend more time with Dee and his family, especially since Dafydd and Momo had the week in Tokyo.

By the time they called it a night, Saburo and Yoshio were already making plans to join Dee and his family to Osaka and Kyoto. Saburo had already called his sister Masami, who lived in Kyoto. She was already told about Dee and was making plans to meet the Laytner-MacLeans while they were in Kyoto. She was a former geisha, who still trained several maiko and had a geisha house where the maiko trained and some of her former maiko, who were now geisha, held dinner parties for guests. Saburo informed her that he would be joining them, along with Yoshio and he looked forward to seeing his younger sister again.

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Chapter 41

Chapter Summary

Time to hit the road to Kyoto. Dee meets Saburo’s sister, Masami.

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

November 9, 2006

Kyoto L-M International Hotel & Spa

Nakagyō-ku, Kyoto Japan

They returned to Nagoya the day before just in time to get lunch when they got off the boat at the Port of Nagoya. A waiting Akaya van was loaded with the luggage they had with them on the island to be taken to Saburo’s house, and then they went into the mall to find something to eat for lunch. After lunch, the group continued to walk around the area. They stopped for a while at the amusement park, Sea Train Land, to allow Bikky and Carol to take Tatsuya and Kiyoshi on some of the rides. The two young boys had really taken to Carol, and especially Bikky, and had started to be protective over their baby cousins. Dee found it endearing, Kiyoshi and Tatsuya also enjoyed walking with Dee and Ryo, happily taking their new uncles’ hands or sitting next to them, sometimes crawling on an available lap.

From there they took the subway to Sakae Station and went up the Nagoya TV Tower. They came out of the subway from Oasis 21 and crossed the street to the long stretch of park that ran along Hisaya-odori, where Nagoya TV Tower was located. The park, which was called Central Park, had walkways and ponds. Of course, Bikky and Carol were amused at the park’s name. Ryo had forgotten about the name and only remembered that while it wasn’t a large park, at least not in width, it was a beautiful place. As for length, the park stretched along the middle of Hisaya-odori like a medium for almost 10 blocks, only wider and much prettier than mediums back in America. As they approached Nagoya TV Tower, Ayaka pointed out a café at the base of the tower called The Brooklyn Café, which made everyone laugh and decide to take pictures in front of. This was new to Dee, who couldn’t remember what was there before, but was certain he would have remembered that name if it was there during his previous visits to Nagoya. Dafydd confirmed that the café was renamed a few years ago when it was reopened under new management.
Nagoya TV Tower wasn’t as popular as Tokyo Tower, but it was fun exploring and did have a great view of Nagoya. Dee, Ryo, Bikky and Carol allowed the others to point out various spots of the city from their vantage point and promising to take them to some of the other spots of interest when they returned to Nagoya.

“What if we can’t go to them all before we go back to Tokyo?” Bikky asked his grandfather.

“Then your dads will have to bring you back here so we can finish,” Saburo said with a wink and a grin. Yoshio, Dafydd, Momo and Ayaka all made comments of agreement, making Dee and Ryo laugh. Dee knew there would be many visits to Nagoya in the future, now that he had family there.

The one thing Dee found amusing was how no one really seemed to notice Ayaka, who wore hoodies and baggy pants when out in public. She would pull her hair up under her well-worn NY Mets cap that Dafydd had sent her while he attended NYU. She was only 8 at the time, but somehow it lasted all these years. Dee doubted it had another year left before it finally had to be retired and made a mental note to get her a new one once he was back in New York. She also wore glasses that had non-prescription lenses, explaining that people tended to look more closer to people with sunglasses than what looked like normal glasses. She was noticed by a few people, but most of them just stood to the side, giggling and trying to sneak taking a few pictures. They tried not because anyone from their group stopped them. It was just that they were caught and Ayaka posed as the photos were taken. Just before they were ready to leave the observatory deck of Nagoya TV Tower, Ayaka did allow some fans to approach so she could give them her autograph and pose with pictures. When one of them pointed to Dee and Dafydd, the fan asked if one of them was Daisuke, having been at the show on Monday night. When Ayaka introduced them to Dee, she let it slip that he was also ‘D’ from Daigaku Dudes to Dee’s horror and everyone else’s amusement. Dee ended up posing with his sister and the fans for some photos and signed his autograph for them.

He was definitely going to have to talk to his family about them mentioning that, outside of the family.

At Ayaka’s insistence, they went into The Brooklyn Café for a snack with some hot beverages before taking the subway over to Nagoya Castle, where they spent the rest of the day before going back to Saburo’s house. As they walked to the subway entrance, Dee impressed his family when someone came up to him, asking in Japanese how to get to Atsuta Jingu, and Dee gave them directions. It was not his understanding and replying in Japanese that impressed them, but they were still amazed that he managed to learn Japanese while growing up in New York. It was Dee’s knowledge of the city he was born in and should have been raised in. Saburo commented on how it made him happy that Dee had been around Nagoya enough that even ten years later, he still remembered how to get to some places.
Dee’s grandmother was waiting for them at the east gate of Nagoya Castle, and joined them as they explored the castle. Not only the family from Nagoya had spots to point out with stories to tell, but Dee had several of his own to share with everyone. Ryo added his own story that he remembered while visiting the castle with some friends. Much to everyone’s amusement, Momo had a couple of stories from the time her mother and Ryo’s had taken them to see the castle, stating she had pictures that she could scan and send to Ryo. Ryo commented that he would love to see them very much, and had Dee, Bikky and Carol joining in, since it was pictures of Ryo when he was a young boy.

On the walk to Saburo’s house from the castle, they stopped at the Westin, a couple of blocks from the house, to have dinner. Sakura had planned to join them for dinner and then go back to the house for a couple of hours. When Saburo and Yoshio told Sakura that they were going to join Dee, Ryo and kids to Kyoto and Osaka, Sakura was both happy that they would get to spend more time with Dee, and disappointed that she couldn’t join them. Dee let her know she would be very welcome, but she explained that she could not leave so suddenly and hoped that one day she could travel with them.

Dafydd and Momo had gone to their house that night, promising to have them over when they returned to Nagoya. As they were leaving, Dee and Dafydd found themselves saying goodbye for the first time since they met in Tokyo and knowing they wouldn’t see each other for over a week, it was difficult for the reunited twins. Dee wondered how he was going to feel when he would have to say goodbye to his twin the last time before going back to New York. It was going to be difficult. He also knew he would miss the rest of the family in Nagoya. At least there were phone calls and video chats, but it still was not the same as actually being with everyone.

The next morning after breakfast, they said goodbye to Ayaka, Jirou and Eri, who had joined them for breakfast and loaded up the van to head to Kyoto.

The hotel in Kyoto was one of the first that was bought in Japan and already had the L-M International name. Proud Papa that he was, Saburo insisted that he get pictures of Dee and Ryo with children at the main entrance with the hotel name displayed behind them. Bikky decided that there had to also be a picture of Dee with his fathers before the sign too. The hotel manager, who came outside while their luggage was removed from the van, was indulgent enough to take a group shot before escorting them inside. Dee and Ryo had reserved a suite, but as it had just two bedrooms, also had a deluxe room for Carol. Saburo and Yoshio insisted they did not need a suite and would probably be using the room just to sleep, so Dee got them a deluxe with a king-size bed, rather than the double Carol’s room had.

After settling into their rooms and resting for a half hour, they all met in the lobby to start sightseeing. Ryo wanted to go to Kinkakuji and see the Golden Pavilion, so that was their first stop. Bikky eagerly backed up his father’s request, having wanted to see it since he saw pictures of it back in New York.
Before they left Toshijima, Saburo mentioned if they were interested to have dinner with geisha, which they had all agreed they wanted. He suggested they all take a kimono from the house to have when they were in Kyoto. One of his younger sisters had been a geisha and now she owned her own house where she trained young women to become geishas. While they were at Kinkakuji, Masami sent Saburo a text message giving him a time set for dinner.

After walking around and exploring the grounds of Kinkakuji, they stopped at the Kinkakuji Rest House, which had many booths selling bento and other food. After eating, they went back to the van and Dee drove across Kyoto to the area near Ryozen Kannon. There was a parking area where Dee parked the car. Ryo and Dee had noticed over the couple of days that Bikky seemed to be getting used to the small streets they often encountered in Japan. He would still squeeze his eyes shut or grasp tightly onto something.

Dee could have parked in the parking lot for Ryozen Kannon, but they were planning to walk around the area until it was time to meet with Masami for dinner.

Bikky was looking around at the buildings and immediately wanted to walk along the street to check out the old structures, but Ryo insisted on going to Ryozen Kannon first. As they went up stone stairs across the street from the side Bikky wanted to explore, Dee assured him that they would be going up the street he wanted next, along with some side streets. They had time before dinner.

“Since we’ve been to a lot of shrines the last few days, remember that this is a temple we’re going to. Which means we pay our respects according to the Buddhist ways,” Ryo reminded Bikky and Carol.

“Like we did at Osu Kannon,” Bikky pointed out. “There were a lot of shrines, but we did go to that temple.”

“That’s true,” Dee admitted with a smile.

“Do you know what’s the difference between shrines and temples, Bikky?” Yoshio asked.

“Yeah,” Bikky replied as they reached the top of the stairs. There was a walkway along a café heading to a large parking lot. “Temples are Buddhist and shrines are Shinto. Also, shrines have tori gates and temples don’t.”

Dee smiled as he looked at his stepfather and chuckled.
“It seems he has it down,” Yoshio stated with a laugh and returned Dee’s smile.

“I guess you’ve been to enough of both,” Saburo said.

“Kamakura has all these shrines and temples that Obāsan wanted us to see, and she taught us how to pray in each one. Are we getting incense for this place?” Bikky asked.

“I believe they give you incense when you enter as part of the entrance fee,” Saburo stated. “At least they did. I haven’t been here in a few years.”

“What’s the big deal about this place?” Bikky asked. “I mean, I knew before we went to that temple this morning that it had the Golden Pavilion. What does this have?”

Ryo smiled and then looked at his in-laws. “I don’t think it was mentioned around you, but when we were planning this trip, Bikky already saw pictures of the Golden Pavilion and asked if we could see it. That’s what got me and Dee thinking about going to other cities around Japan.”

“That was an excellent choice,” Saburo said. “Everyone should see it. I’m glad you have the money to extend your trip beyond Tokyo.”

“As for what’s the big deal about this one, look,” Ryo said as they reached the end of the café.

“Oh!” Carol exclaimed. “It’s a big Buddha!”

“What? Oh yeah. Cool!” Bikky exclaimed. “Oh, I do remember you saying that there were other ones in Japan.”

“Obāsan said to make sure we send pictures of us in front of this Buddha,” Ryo stated. “Including Dee’s parents.”

“Maybe for one or two,” Saburo said. “We’ll see if we can get someone to take a group photo after I take photos of all of you.”
“I would love to also have a few photos of just my fathers that I can send Mother,” Dee said. “And I want pictures of them with just the kids.” He smiled at Saburo and Yoshio.

“I already sent the ones from this morning to Maria-san,” Saburo stated with a sly grin. “Yoshio and I promised her that we would share our pictures.”

“So, she doesn’t need Ryo and I to send her any?” Dee teased.

“I’m still sending to Grandma!” Bikky exclaimed. “It makes her happy.”

“You stop, I don’t care how old you are now,” Saburo said. “I will make up for all the years I did not spank you.”

Dee started to laugh. “Mother and Jess had that covered very well,” he said.

“I also hear ear-pulling was involved,” Yoshio said with a smirk. “She said it was very effective.”

Dee subconsciously covered his ear and winced. “Probably more than the spanking.”

Saburo and Yoshio laughed. “Apparently that is true.”

“She still does it,” Ryo said with a wicked grin.

“Ryo!” Dee protested. “Don’t give the fathers any ideas!”

“Too late,” Saburo quipped. “Bikky, Carol, shall we go in? Your dads can follow us along with your brother and sister.”

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When they were done exploring Ryozen Kannon, including going into the Buddha and looking at the various altars set up inside, they crossed the street past where Dee had parked the van to the street Bikky had pointed out earlier. When Carol let out an exclamation of how beautiful the street looked, Yoshio started to say that they were in the Ninenzaka district, but Carol stopped him.

“Can we do a video as we walk here?” Carol asked, “and then you can explain on the video, if you don’t mind, Yoshio-san.”

Yoshio smiled at the young woman and nodded his head. “Of course. Both Saburo and I have been here many times because we both have family here. I would love to be one of your guides for your video. I assume you will upload it to your You Tube channel?”

“Most of it,” Bikky said. He shrugged. “Some of the stuff I might edit out, but I’ll make sure you and Ojiisan has everything.”

“That is much appreciated, Bikky,” Saburo said with a smile. “You may take all the video you like.”

“I’ll probably add what we did at Ryozen Kannon and make one video of our time in Kyoto.” Bikky took out his phone, going for the video feature when Daisuke tapped the young man on his head.

When Bikky looked up, Daisuke held out the camcorder he had been using. “Here, maybe you want to use this for some of your videos.”

Saburo smiled more as Bikky nodded. “Thanks, Dad,” he said.

Daisuke looked over at his husband and nodded. Ryo said to Bikky, “I think along our travels, we’ll make a stop in Bic Camera or some other electronic store and get you your own camera.”

“Did you know,” Saburo started, “that here in Japan, digital cameras also have video features that are just as good as your camcorder?”

Daisuke and Ryo looked at each other. “No, we didn’t,” Ryo stated.
“But we should have known,” Daisuke added. “There were many things available here that were not available in the US until years after I returned to New York. Heck, I came back to New York after being used to my cell phone I had here, which was a little thing, and ended up with a brick for my first cell phone in New York.”

Saburo and Yoshio laughed. “That must have been disappointing,” Yoshio commented.

“It was,” Daisuke agreed. “It didn’t have other features like the one I left behind in Japan. It was one of the many things, to be honest. To this day, I still walk into a convenience store in New York, and end up disappointed because of the lack of bento and onigiri selections.”

Ryo started to laugh. “Yeah, I have to agree with that.”

“That’s why I was so excited in finally seeing a convenience store here,” Bikky stated. “I heard all this talk from my dads. The stores are so cool here. So many different things that are yummy.”

“I assume that means you were not disappointed?” Yoshio asked.

“Hell no!”

“Biks!” Ryo warned.

“Sorry. Um, gomenasai,” Bikky said with a bow toward Yoshio.

“It’s okay, Bikky.”

Bikky grinned at Yoshio. “Does that mean it’s okay if I say hell?”

“NO!” both Daisuke and Ryo exclaimed as Ryo bopped him lightly on the head.

“And stop growing,” Ryo insisted. “It’s getting harder to do that these days.”
Saburo suppressed a laugh and covered his face to hide the grin he was unable to stop.

“Go ahead and start making that video,” Daisuke stated. “Then Yoshio-san can give us some information on this area. Maybe Papa would like to join in at some point?”

Saburo pointed down to the baby sling he wore, where Ryoko was snuggled against his chest and watching her fathers and brother with rapt attention, occasionally letting out a laugh. “I have baby duty right now.” He leaned his head down to kiss Ryoko’s light brown hair.

“You and Ryoko are welcome to be in the video,” Bikky said. “I mean, you are my grandfather, and Ryoko’s my little sister. Of course, you both should be in it too. You and Darin, too, Pops,” he added to Ryo, who had Darin in a sling.

“Why don’t you guys get started,” Ryo suggested, “and we’ll join in at some point. Okay?”

“Okay, Pops,” Bikky said. He looked over at Daisuke. “You don’t have baby duty, so you can join with Ojiisan Y,” he said, using the reference Yoshio had suggested to use at times to avoid confusion. At least when Bikky and Yoshio were talking together, Daisuke’s son had taken to also calling Yoshio ‘Ojiisan’.

Now if only Daisuke would take example from his son and start calling his stepfather Chichi.

Bikky turned the camcorder on and said, “Alright, we’re filming.”

Carol started to talk toward the camera, saying that they were still in Kyoto and were on a lovely old street that started across from Ryozen Kannon. She pointed out that all the buildings were of traditional architecture, the area preserved from the modernization like other areas of Kyoto. The street was closed to vehicles except bicycles and some delivery vans to the many businesses on the street. She went on about how she was enjoying seeing this section of Kyoto and felt as if she had stepped back in time. Then she went over to Yoshio, reintroducing him as Daisuke’s stepfather, and asked him the name of the area.

“This is Ninenzaka,” Yoshio said, indicating the street ahead. “The 2-year slope. It was named in the 9th century. The buildings here were rebuilt, maintaining the ancient Japan charm.” He started to smirk. “The buildings are traditional Japanese style, and you will find many traditional shops along
the way, but you will also find a Starbucks up ahead in what was once a tea house, as well as some other modern businesses in these very traditional buildings.”

“Do you know why they named it the 2-year slope?” Bikky asked from behind the camera.

Saburo had noticed Bikky did that often at times. He was mostly content to stay behind the camera, but also at times, Daisuke or Ryo, or even Dafydd or Momo when they were around, would take over filming so Bikky and Carol can do a video together. He would also ask questions while still filming.

“Because it is down slope from the Sannenzaka, the 3-year slope,” Yoshio replied. Yoshio started to explain how that area was called Sannenzaka, and if it was all right with Daisuke and Ryo, that they would continue their walk along Sannenzaka before going to the Hōkanji Temple, which was a 5-story pagoda that they were able to see from Ryozen Kannon. It was visible from many points around the area.

Saburo watched as Bikky filmed the street, with Carol talking, along with Yoshio’s help, who had also drawn Daisuke into the video. Occasionally, Bikky would turn the camera toward Saburo and Ryo when a question was asked of one of them.

Saburo smiled as Carol finished the video for You Tube, but Bikky was still filming here and there. He watched as Daisuke asked Yoshio a question. Saburo’s husband smiled and nodded his head and led the group along the street. Bikky finally finished filming and handed the camcorder to Daisuke. Saburo considered that the family really needed new cameras that took both stills and video.

It was obvious that Daisuke was very pleased with his stepfather, and Saburo could see that he did care for Yoshio, but he was still yet to call him Chichi like the rest of the family. Saburo understood that it was going to take time, and he was thankful that when Saburo spoke to his husband on Toshijima before they left their room to join the rest of the family that Yoshio understood.

Ryo walked next to him, both men having baby duty. Ryo had Darin in a sling, while Saburo had Ryoko. That allowed the others to have fun making videos to post on You Tube, and just to have of this time in Kyoto. Saburo knew he would be watching all videos since Sunday many times and not get tired of them. Even many years from then, he would still love watching all the videos of his Daisuke back with his family. He would remember the joy of the recent days and the days that his Daisuke will be with them for the rest of his life.

He still could not believe that his baby boy had survived. He was so certain that Daisuke had been
killed along with Alun by the yakuza. When Saburo’s father called on that horrible day, he said he saw what was sent to Edwin and Carys Jones, and from his talks with the police, that both Alun and Daisuke were dead. He believed his father had done all he could, but there was nothing to be done. Saburo had lost his husband and one of his infant twin sons that day. He heeded his father and did not go to New York. His father said he would do what he could in finding out what exactly happened, and perhaps find bodies to bring back to Japan to bury. His father later said that he had done all he could but was able to find nothing. He feared that their bodies were thoroughly disposed of by the yakuza so they would never be found by the New York police.

Now he wished he had gone to New York anyway. True it was a big city, and he had no idea where his family was taken from him, but perhaps he could have gone to the residence hotel that Alun had settled in with Daisuke in Sunnyside, a section of Queens near the Queensboro Bridge. At least he could have found out something, something that could have led him to where they took Daisuke when he was found. Then Daisuke would have grown up with his family, alongside his twin, in Nagoya, where he was born and should have been raised in. He would have been a Japanese citizen. Daisuke and Dafydd would be what were their birthright – the Fujioka heirs, one day receiving their family fortune while carrying on their family legacy. It might be a strange thing to Dafydd and Daisuke to be a Shinto priest and CEO of GPN Communications now, but if they grew up together, they would have been raised to fulfill those positions, much like Koji and Tomiji had been. Dafydd would have had no motive to join the police, because Saburo knew it was in hope to have an in to one day find his twin brother, who Dafydd had always believe was alive. Saburo felt bad now that he never believed Dafydd. He should have known better, and should have trusted the twin bond, but between his father and the police, they have managed to completely convince him that Daisuke was dead. If Saburo had found Daisuke, and returned to Nagoya with him, his son would have also had no reason to want to be a cop, because Jess would never had been a father figure to him.

As much as he wished he had his son with him all his life, being able to watch Daisuke grow up and become the man he was, knowing what he did now, he started to feel guilty. Daisuke would not be the man he got to know a few days ago. He would not have the beautiful family he has. And Mother Lane-san would not have had the joy of finally becoming a mother to one special child among the many she cared for until they found homes with families looking for children, or became of age to move from the orphanage and many times never heard from again.

From his talks with this wonderful woman, she loved Daisuke with all her heart. She was kind and generous. Saburo was shocked and impressed when Daisuke told him that once she was a millionaire, inheriting her parents’ money when they were killed in an accident. She put all the money into first saving an orphanage from closing, and then continued to fund it until all her money was gone. Since then, she was dependent on fund-raising. Saburo found he had much respect for her, and was proud that while it usually wasn’t much, Daisuke did what he was able to help, by having a fixed amount from his detective’s pay to the orphanage’s funds. The amount deposited into the account was much larger during the time he made money from Daigaku Dudes. Saburo was glad to hear that Mother Lane-san’s family in Ireland also deposited money, so she was able to continue to help homeless children. Saburo imagined it was sometimes thankless work, but it was necessary. There were probably harder times for the children in the orphanage many times, while she did whatever she could to provide for the children’s well-being, both physically and emotionally.
He was glad to learn that recently, along with Mother Lane-san’s family, both sides of Ryo’s family also started to donate money and goods. Of course, once finding themselves with newfound fortune, Daisuke and Ryo had a percentage of their monthly deposits into their accounts to go to the orphanage’s funds. Daisuke’s mother knew about it, and demanded that it should be a small amount, so they would not lose all their money into the orphanage like she had. Daisuke and his husband decided on 10%. It would be sufficient for the minimal costs of running the orphanage. Daisuke, along with his husband, would continue the fundraising he had started upon returning to New York from university in Yokohama for extra things like better food, clothes and toys. Now with Mother Lane-san taking on giving a place for homeless Carriers, along with children, she was also being partially funded by the City of New York. Yet everything she could get for both the orphanage and the Carrier shelter would always help.

Which was why Saburo decided that he, too, would send a fixed amount of money from his own income, along with some goods from the company. He would also donate to the Carrier home, using charitable funds from the company.

Providing for homeless and under-privileged children in Japan was a sensitive issue. There was not much thought given about homeless children, therefore not much assistance was given to the orphanages. Saburo did give thought about it long ago, much as his mother had, and they had always given money and supplies to a couple of orphanages in Nagoya. They wished they had the resources to help more, but they did what they could. After learning about Daisuke’s childhood, he was thankful that his mother’s company had been donating to the orphanages. He would love to make a larger contribution from Chiyoshiya money, but with the state of Japan’s orphanages, it wouldn’t go over well if the public discovered the company was supporting gaijin children in New York. They would not understand why, even if it was in the press release about Daisuke’s background. Saburo could not risk the company’s reputation, but he did not care what people thought about how he spent his own money. So, he decided that he was going to do his share in helping the children under Mother Lane-san’s loving care.

Saburo came out of his musings and stopped walking when his phone started to ring. Ryo walked a couple of feet before he also stopped, looking back. Saburo waved him to go ahead and join the rest of the family while he took the call. It was his sister, Masami, calling with finalized details for dinner. Others from the family who lived in Osaka would be joining them for dinner and the rest of the evening. Once Masami heard where they were, she said that she was in the area and would meet them at Hōkanji Temple and join in on their exploring until it was time to head over to her geisha house for dinner and entertainment. Masami would not be one of the geishas, instead joining them for dinner, allowing the geisha of her house to provide the entertainment.

They had time to finish their walk along Ninenzaka, and then walk along Sannenzaka before backtracking to the point between both shopping streets and head over to Hōkanji Temple. Once they met up with Masami, they could decide what to do until dinner.

He noticed everyone had stopped before a fine pottery shop, waiting for him. Yoshio was pointing out some items, while Daisuke and Ryo seemed to confer.
Saburo looked down at his granddaughter, who rested her head against his chest. He could tell she was not sleeping from the way she gripped his shirt in one hand, and the babbling as they walked past the various shops along the street of traditional buildings. The street was paved with stone bricks and was for pedestrian use only. One still had to keep an eye out for bicycles, especially as it got later. At the moment the street was not as crowded as it would be in a few hours, and all the shops were open.

As he approached the group, he smiled and said, “Nagoya also has many shops to buy fine tableware.”

Yoshio laughed as Daisuke shook his head, with a fond smile. “Daisuke and Ryo have assured me that they plan to look at the places available when they return to Nagoya to buy dinnerware for their penthouse, but while they are travelling around Japan, they want to pick up odd pieces to take back to New York, for themselves and to give as gifts to friends and family. Remember, Americans usually expect more than rice crackers and wagashi from travelers.”

Saburo started to laugh. “Of course, I know that. It might have been many years ago, but I did live in San Diego for a year. I was just teasing. I do not mind looking around in the shops here as they open. Perhaps we can find something to add to our collection?”

Yoshio gave a pained face and looked at Daisuke. “You might have noticed that we already have a large collection of dishes and cups of all shapes and sizes, and yet he wants more. Your father has this thing for collecting dishes and cups. Even in Nagoya, he’ll come home often with something new.”

Ryo started to laugh as Daisuke smirked. “We also have a large collection, both American and Japanese. We even have British antique dinnerware. We didn’t have anything like that on our wedding registry, but many of my relatives felt we needed them.”

“And rice cookers from the Japanese side,” Daisuke added with a chuckle. “Electric hot pots also from the Japanese side, and linen from the American/British side.”

“Still, we decided that along with the few pieces I bought back from my last time I was in Japan for a few years, and the collection your son returned from Yokohama with, we wanted some stuff from these small shops in the cities we visit. These will be pieces collected by our family, instead of just me or Dee,” Ryo explained.

“I understand,” Saburo said. “Nevermind your father’s teasing, Daisuke. I intend to pick up some things so that when we use them, I can remember these first days of having you back.”
Daisuke smiled. “Yoshio-san already mentioned it. He said he also would like to have something picked out by all of us. Which is what we were looking at.”

“Oh….” Saburo felt the tears come again and wiped his eyes. “Don’t let me stop you.”

“You are also to help pick, Ojiisan,” Bikky said.

“Ah, is that so. Then yes. Hopefully on the way back, they will be open, so we can go in and do some shopping,” Saburo agreed.

“You know the one thing we didn’t get as a wedding gift from the Japanese relatives that I wish they had thought of. I know I didn’t, because I didn’t realize they had it, but would love to have,” Daisuke said.

“What’s that, Daisuke?” Saburo asked.

“A mochi maker like Obāsan has.”

Saburo and Yoshio traded looks. “We did not give you and Ryo a wedding gift yet, so when you return to Nagoya, there will be a mochi maker waiting for you,” Saburo stated, grinning. Yoshio nodded his head in agreement.

“Really? I mean, I guess now that we know, we could look around,” Daisuke stated.

“No need to. You’ll have one. You wouldn’t believe how easy it is. Obāsan could probably give you some of her secrets to get mochi like hers,” Saburo stated. “I could tell you, but if she found out I didn’t give her the chance to share her secrets with you, she would have my head.”

Daisuke and his family laughed. “We couldn’t have that,” Daisuke said. “After all, I just got you and I want you to be part of our family for a very long time.”

Saburo could not help the wide, sloppy smile as this time he did start to cry. “It makes me so very
happy to hear that, Daisuke. I want you and your lovely family in my life forever.”

Yoshio held out a linen hankie. As Saburo took it, his husband kissed the side of his face. “I know these are happy tears, and there will probably be plenty more for a while. So, I decided to come prepared.”

Daisuke chuckled as he moved to hug both of his fathers. “I love you,” he announced. He looked into each of their eyes. “I was pretty much sure of it on Sunday, but I know without doubt that I love you both.” Now it was Daisuke’s turn for tears to fall, making his dark green eyes glitter in the setting sun. “I never imagined I would ever say that to my real father, but here I am. I’m saying it to you, and to your husband, who has also been a loving father to me these last few days.”

Both Saburo and Yoshio hugged Daisuke, planting a kiss on each side of his face. Saburo saw over his son’s shoulder that Ryo was taking out a tissue to wipe his eyes and handed one to Carol. Bikky was all smiles but he also ran an arm sleeve over his eyes to wipe them.

The three men were being careful not to squish the precious bundle in a sling on Saburo, but they were interrupted by a squeal. Bikky started to laugh.

So did Daisuke. “Don’t worry,” he assured them as he pulled away to look down at his daughter, who was grabbing higher and kicking her feet. Saburo noticed she started to giggle, trying to look around her, as if trying to find her father when he started to speak again. “That’s her happy sounds.” Daisuke smiled tenderly down at the baby girl he had given birth to and started to lean over toward her.

Saburo had an idea of what he was about to do, and so did Yoshio apparently. All three men bent their heads to kiss her little head. She squealed more and babbled happily.

“I think we should get your other children, so they don’t feel left out,” Yoshio suggested.

Daisuke grinned at him and Yoshio. “You are right.” He paused and then looking at Yoshio, added, “Chichi.” Looking concerned, he went on. “If the offer is still open, that is. Is it alright?”

Yoshio hugged Daisuke. “It is very alright,” he assured his new son. “I am your father, if you will have me.”
Daisuke nodded. “I will.” They smiled at each other.

“Now about other children,” Yoshio reminded them.

“Yes.” They came over to Ryo, who was holding Darin. Darin seemed to be in a conversation that only he could understand as he watched people pass. Ryo was still misty from the display between the three men and did not notice their approach until they were surrounding him.

“Chichi said we shouldn’t let our other children feel left out,” Daisuke said to his husband. As Ryo’s eyes widened and looked at his husband in shock, the three bent their heads to kiss Darin’s head, making the baby laugh gleefully as he started to reach out to them. Daisuke then kissed Ryo’s face and smiled tenderly.

Ryo returned the smile and rubbed his nose against Daisuke’s. “I’m so happy you worked it out about Yoshio.”

Daisuke nodded his head. “Yes, me too.” His grin got bigger. “Bikky next?” he asked.

“Oh please,” Ryo said with amusement and watched as they went over to Bikky. Ryo picked up his phone, pointing it toward them. He was most likely capturing the moment on video. Bikky wasn’t really the touchy-feely type, Saburo had learned. He did not need to be kissed and hugged to feel loved and wanted by his fathers. He was usually content with a hand on his shoulder or back by Daisuke and Ryo. Saburo knew he was tolerating all the attention he had been getting the last days because he was Daisuke’s son. It did not matter that he was adopted. Daisuke was one of his fathers now, and that made Bikky Saburo’s grandson. Yoshio felt the same, and Saburo found he could love his husband a little more for it.

They descended on Bikky, who once he realized what was about to happen, looked like he was about to run, but he stood his ground and allowed the three to hug and kiss his head.

“Your grandfather suggested that we do not leave you and your little brother feeling left out,” Saburo said.

Bikky looked up at them and then smiled. “I feel as if this was some weird type of rite of passage,” he said and then looked knowingly at his father.
Daisuke nodded. “Yes, it was,” he said.

“Everyone okay now?” Bikky asked.

Saburo could not help but laugh at his grandson. That was Bikky, and Saburo not only accepted it but also at times found entertainment at the things the boy would say. Judging the chuckle from Yoshio, Saburo’s husband felt the same.

“It was always okay since we arrived in Nagoya,” Daisuke stated, “but it’s definitely better now.”

Bikky nodded and smiled. “Good. I’m happy then.”

“So am I,” Daisuke agreed, placing a hand on his son’s shoulder and squeezing it.

“I am too,” Ryo added, coming over to them, after handing Carol another tissue. “And the store just opened. Shall we go in now then?”

Everyone agreed, and they entered the shop that the door was now open to welcome customers.

OoOoOoO

Masami was waiting for them at the entrance to the temple. She was dressed in regular street clothes - a light knit sweater with abstract designs in pastel colors and straight leg black jeans tucked into stylish black boots. In recent years she spent more time in street clothes than kimono, putting them on only for special events and business. Before she retired from being an active geisha, seeing her without kimono was quite shocking. She started her own house about 10 years ago when she saw the building she currently trained maiko to become geisha went on sale. Her parents helped with the sale, as they did for all their children. There were rooms for the girls who were being trained, as well as several rooms of various sizes for entertainment. During the day when there were no parties booked, the entertainment rooms were used for training. Along with training maiko, she still performed duties as a geisha for another five years before retiring from performing. She still trained, currently having three maiko and keeping three of her former students, who were now full geisha, for entertainment in her house. She also employed other former students, who were also now full geisha, to entertain outside her house, for corporate parties and foreign visitors who wanted the geisha
She now had a fiancé, and after the wedding, planned to move into a home close to her geisha house. One of the geisha living in the house would look after the maiko during the time Masami would go home to her husband.

Saburo hugged his sister in greeting, not seeing her for four months, except in video calls. “How are you, Masami?” he asked.

“Good,” she replied, hugging him back. “But not as much as you.” She looked past his shoulder, smiling brightly. “That has to be Daisuke! He looks just like Dafydd, only less Japanese and he has green eyes.”

Daisuke stepped forward and bowed before her. “Hajimemashite. I am Daisuke,” he replied in Japanese. “It is my honor to meet another of my father’s sisters.”

“I am your Aunt Masami,” she said, closing the gap between them and pulling Daisuke in for a hug. “I am so very glad to meet you.” Tears came to her eyes as she pulled away a little, but still having a hold on him. “I must apologize for not coming to Nagoya on Sunday. I would have but I had a business meeting that I could not pass up.”

“No need to apologize, since we were coming here. I was hoping to meet you during our time here.”

“And you are. This must be your lovely family that Saburo has spoken of with much enthusiasm,” Masami said in English as she looked over to where Ryo, Bikky and Carol stood with Ryoko and Darin.

Daisuke chuckled as they pulled apart and he looked over to his husband and son.

Bikky had taken charge of Ryoko when they started to walk down the street toward the temple, to allow for Saburo to greet his sister. Saburo also thought it was good for Ryoko to be with her other father and brothers upon meeting Masami.

“Yes, this is my family,” Daisuke said, also switching to English for Bikky’s and Carol’s sake. “This is my husband, Ryo, our oldest son, Bikky, and our twins, Ryoko and Darin. And we also have Carol, who is Bikky’s girlfriend.”
“You and your husband has been helping Carol long before she became your son’s girlfriend, is that correct?” Masami asked.

Daisuke looked at Saburo with a knowing smirk. “Got it all in one,” he replied to his aunt. “She’s like a little sister/daughter to us, but she lives with her aunt.”

Masami went over to Ryo, pulling him for a hug, careful not to crush Darin, who stared at Masami with curiosity.

“I am so happy to meet my nephew’s husband and family,” she said in heavily accented English. “You are married to my nephew, so that makes me your aunt too. You may call me Aunt Masami.”

“It is a pleasure to meet you, Aunt Masami,” Ryo said with a grin.

Masami looked down at the infant and smiled. “Why hello little one. One look at you and it’s obvious who one of your daddies is, little Darin. You look just like Daisuke and Dafydd did.”

Darin stared at her for another few seconds, and as he smiled and reached out to her, Saburo guessed he decided he liked her.

Ryo took Darin out of the sling with Masami’s help and she cuddled the baby to her, kissing his face and making him laugh. She let out a laugh too, and then after giving him another kiss, gave Darin back to Ryo. “Later for more cuddles, Darin, but I need to meet your sister and older brother.”

Darin let out a squeak of protest as Masami turned to Bikky. “Hello Bikky. Do not worry about me asking why you are called Bikky because your grandfather explained it to me. It is my pleasure to meet my nephew’s oldest son. I am your Aunt Masami.”

Bikky gave a slight bow and smiled at her. “Hajimemashite. It is my honor to meet you, Aunt Masami.”

“Oh, how formal,” Masami said and smiled. She pulled Bikky in a hug from the side so Ryoko would not be crushed. “You are family and family does not do formal. At least that’s true in our family.”
Ryo raised his hand, and ignored Daisuke’s knowing smirk. “That was my fault,” Ryo said to Masami. “I warned Bikky to be on his best behavior while meeting Dee’s family because we don’t want him to scare you all off.”

Masami laughed as she hugged Bikky again, careful again not to crush Ryoko. “Like he could do that. Let him try.” She looked down at the infant girl, smiling. “Hello Ryoko. Are you such a little darling. I know you are twins, but you look very much like your daddy Ryo. Still I do see some Fujioka in you.” Looking at Bikky, she asked, “May I?”

Bikky nodded. “Sure, Aunt Masami.” He allowed Masami to help get Ryoko out of the sling to cuddle the infant girl. Ryoko reached out to pat Masami’s cheek with a small smile, her eyes focused on her aunt’s face.

“Do you have anywhere in particular you would like to take us, Masami?” Saburo asked his sister.

“All of Kyoto is fascinating, if you ask me,” Masami replied. “I do not know Daisuke and his family enough to plan a tour that will be interesting to them.” She looked at Daisuke. “What do you want to see?”

Daisuke smiled at Masami, who was still holding Ryoko, as the little one seemed to get used to her new aunt, if the poking and touching the akachan was doing was any indication. “Bikky and Carol seem to enjoy streets with traditional style buildings, the older the better. But from what I know of Kyoto, much on this side of the river is like that. Ryo and I also like those type of streets, but we are also interested in visiting temples and shrines as well. We’re hoping to give the kids a nice, fun cultural time.”

“We don’t mind temples and shrines,” Carol said softly, as if she was afraid of interrupting.

Bikky nodded his head. “Yeah, especially the old ones that didn’t have to be rebuilt.”

“We were at Kinkakuji this morning and then came over here for some walking,” Saburo said to his sister.

Masami seemed to consider what she was told before nodding. “If you do not mind, let us walk toward my house. We still have a couple of hours, and we can walk along the more traditional style streets in the Gion. Are you parked around here?” she asked.
“We’re in the parking area by Ryozan Kannon,” Daisuke said. “But we were prepared for a lot of walking. I guess we can take a cab back to the van from wherever we end up later tonight.” He looked at his husband and son. “Does that sound alright to you?”

Bikky nodded vigorously. “Oh yes. We can’t really see things driving, so I don’t mind walking.”

Ryo started to smirk. “Besides, the streets that are of interest that we can take the van are small and have a lot of pedestrians. Bikky and Carol are still getting used to it, so best we walk as much as we can while sightseeing and leave the driving down those streets when it can’t be avoided getting around town.”

Daisuke nodded his head, his eyes on his oldest son. “That’s true. However, Bikky still has to get used to it. Probably Carol, too.”

“There will be enough of those streets that we can’t avoid while we’re in Japan,” Bikky commented. “I guess I’ll get used to it eventually, but I still would like to stop and look at stuff.”

“But we also have our kimono in the van for dinner tonight,” Ryo pointed out.

“Oh yeah,” Daisuke said. Looking at Masami, he continued, “Papa suggested we change when we get to your house, so we can fully embrace the geisha experience.”

“Yes, I did,” Saburo said. “But we don’t have to.”

“I was looking forward to it,” Carol said, looking disappointed that they might not change their clothes for dinner.

Placing a hand on Carol’s back, Ryo nodded his head. “I have to admit, so was I.”

Yoshio looked at their son. “Daisuke?” he asked. “What about you?”

Daisuke shrugged and then with a small smile, said, “Well, yeah. I guess I was kinda looking
forward to the whole rounded experience. Besides, it would make for great photos to send back home.”

Saburo had to laugh. “You mean to send to your mother, ne?”

Daisuke chuckled. “That too, Papa.”

“Then we could circle back to the van to get the kimono,” Masami said. “Those who wish, can change in the coffee shop there so you don’t have to carry your bags with you. I have seen many who change there and other coffee and tea shops, so do not worry.”

Saburo started to laugh. “Oh, that would be ironic if we all changed now, leaving you the only one without kimono.”

Masami gave him a mild glare before letting out a small huff. “I am able to walk these streets in kimono anytime I wish. It might be a while before Daisuke and his family are in Kyoto again. I am all for the full experience if that is what one wishes for.”

Carol looked around at the many people who were walking in the area. “There are so many people in kimono, I noticed. Even this morning at the temple with the Golden Pavilion. I wouldn’t mind.”

With a smile, Masami said, “Many people come to Kyoto and put on kimono to walk around when they would not in their hometowns. It is considered part of the Kyoto experience, with this city having the history it has.”

“Probably it helps that much of the city did not bow to modernization,” Ryo added. “There are so many areas here that do not have new modern buildings. Or at least the new buildings are built to look like older historic ones.”

“That is also very true,” Masami said. “If there is any city to don kimono while enjoying sightseeing, it’s Kyoto. There are also many kimono rental shops here. Even non-Japanese are inspired to rent kimono to wear while sightseeing.”

“I guess that’s it then,” Daisuke stated. “We’ll go back to the van and everyone who wants to change can. Bikky, if you want to keep your aunt company with Western clothes, you’re going to have to carry your bag, because we decided we’re all going to be in kimono for dinner.”
“I’ll change too then. Sorry, Aunt Masami.”

Masami laughed. “No worries, Bikky. For many years I have worn nothing but kimono. It was my choice. My choice now is Western clothes, but I too, will be in kimono for dinner.”

“I guess we are all good with changing, but once we put our Western clothes in the van, Carol, are you okay with walking to Masami’s house?” Yoshio asked. “I noticed you did not give your input on the plan.”

“Oh yes. I’m good with that, Yoshio-san,” Carol replied.

“Then we’re walking. You may lead the long way back to the van, Masami,” said Saburo.

“I’ll hold onto this little one for a while, if it’s okay,” Masami said with a smile. “And then in a little while, I’ll take Darin, if you do not mind.”

Daisuke smiled at his aunt. “That is fine. I know we don’t have a lot of time here, but it’s good that they get to know more of their family.”

“Good. We still have this lovely temple to explore and then we’ll walk.” Masami accepted Bikky’s assistance with the baby sling.

Saburo started to smile more as Yoshio took his hand. He was proud of Bikky to be able to assist Masami getting set up with his baby sister without any further assistance from any of the adults. It made him think of Dafydd, who dedicated time to learning how to help with his new sibling when Jirou was born, even at 4 years old, and then later how he also helped Jirou learn how to take care of their younger siblings when Tomiji and Koji were born. From what he had learned from Mother Maria-san, Daisuke was much the same at a young age, wanting to learn how to help her with the infants. Eventually, as he got older, he became a big brother to all the younger children. He was happy to see Daisuke’s son willing to do the same and seriously take on the responsibility of looking after his younger siblings. It said a lot about not only Daisuke, but his husband. Saburo could see how they treated Bikky as if he was their biological son, but were also respectful of Bikky’s parents. They never wanted Bikky to forget his real parents, and yet Daisuke and Ryo were there now, and the only living parents the boy had. To Saburo, it felt like a difficult dance on a fine line, but from what he had been observing, they were doing a fine job with it. It filled Saburo with pride and much love for his son, who had been separated from his family until recently, and Daisuke’s family. He was so happy and thankful to finally know this wonderful family.
They walked around the temple, taking many photos and videos. Carol even did another video for her channel. Masami graciously talked about the temple, including the pagoda, and a little about Kyoto in general. Bikky and Carol were happy to hear that while the original structure that was erected in the 10th century had been destroyed and rebuilt several times, that the current pagoda was rebuilt in the 15th century and remained standing since. It made their time there even more fascinating to Bikky and Carol.

The Hōjanji temple grounds were not as large as many of the other temples, with only a couple other buildings on the grounds. Masami led the group into the pagoda, where they went up to the second level and spent time enjoying the views and taking family photos with Kyoto in the background.

From the temple, she led them along the street toward Yasaka Dori, where they walked along. At one point, Masami handed Ryoko over to Yoshio, who insisted it was his turn for baby duty as Ryo handed Darin to Masami.

Masami led them to the small, stone-paved road going downhill from the temple. Yasaka-dori was another charming old street much like Ninenzaka and Sannenzaka, lined with many older style buildings with many small shops and restaurants, and a few newer buildings but not many.

They stopped in a few shops along the way. Masami helped Carol pick out more accessories to go with kimono, especially for the hair. Masami insisted on paying. She also insisted on getting something for the rest of the family. For Daisuke and Ryo, that meant some rice bowls they could add to their now growing collection of Japanese wares that were collected together. Bikky was a little harder to find something for, so she ended up buying him some Kyoto souvenir tee-shirts. At one point, she stopped them in a wagashi shop that she explained was very famous because it had been in Kyoto for hundreds of years, the shop passed down along the generations in the same family that had originally opened the shop when Kyoto had been the capitol of Japan. It was said they provided wagashi for the Imperial family back in the day. The history was fascinating to Daisuke and his family, but the real treat was the many different type of wagashi that were very delicious. With a laugh, Saburo explained to his sister that they had also stopped at the famous old wagashi shop on Sannenzaka. Like at the shop at Sannenzaka, Ryo and Daisuke decided to buy several boxes of their original designs to send to Ryo’s grandmother in Kamakura, and a couple of boxes to enjoy during their travels.

Yasaka-dori ran for several blocks until it reached the wide Higashioji-dori, which if taken going north would go to the Yasaka Shrine. It was a picturesque view looking back toward Hōjanji temple, with the 5-story pagoda the centerpiece. Some family photos were taken with the beautiful scenery as the background, and Bikky did some filming for Carol’s channel. Then they left Yasaka-dori to walk north on Higashioji-dori, but they only walked for a block before turning right to head back to the parking area and Ryozen Kannon. It was the street that Dee had driven down after turning off Higashioji-dori, and the group enjoyed the chance to walk down the street, stopping for quick family photos along the way.
It was a good idea to go back to the van, Saburo determined. They had done quite a bit of buying during their walk around the area and they were able to put everything in the van and not have to carry all the bags up to Masami’s geisha house. That did not mean by the time they did reach the house for dinner they would not have bags again, but at least they were starting again with empty hands for the next part of their sightseeing.

Once everyone was changed and Western clothes also placed in the van, Masami decided they were to walk down Nene-no-michi. It was the street that ran along Ryozen Kannon that Bikky and Carol had noticed earlier while at the Kannon and expressed interest in. They strolled north from Ryozen Kannon along the street to Daiunin Temple, where they walked around. Also, part of the grounds was Gionkaku tower, a pagoda with a different shape than the usual pagoda. They passed going up the tower because it wasn’t far from the Hokanji temple, so the view would not be much different. They did take photos with the Gionkaku tower in the background before going on their way.

Ryo mentioned that both he and Daisuke had photos of the tower from previous times to Kyoto but could not figure out where exactly in the city it was. Daisuke figured it made sense, because they both remembered going to Ryozen Kannon. Daisuke stated that he was glad to finally figure out the mystery, but even happier that they now had pictures of the two of them together there, along with their family. And some of Daisuke’s family, too.

Masami had them walk west for a block from the temple and then turn right, walking south. The street had some shops but unlike Yasaka-dori and Nene-no-michi, it also had many residential buildings and open to vehicles. The street also had parking lots used by locals and visitors. It didn’t have the old Japan charm as the other streets, but it still had buildings that were obviously Japanese design as well as a couple that seemed to be of European influence incorporated into Japanese design. It was a photo-worthy street that Daisuke and Ryo admitted they wouldn’t have thought to walk down if they were on their own. They were glad for having a local guide with them who was more knowledgeable about Kyoto than they were. They only walked down the street for two blocks, but it was worth it. They were also able to get some photos further down the street with the pagoda from Hokanji Temple.

When they turned right, they headed toward Higashioji-dori which they crossed, and continued down the street for another two blocks. The first block was mostly a residential block with old houses and modern apartment buildings. The next they passed a small shrine and then an old wall on the right and a row of older houses and shops on the left. When they approached the next intersection, on the left was a gate to the Oshoin and Kenninji temples that they walked around a little, taking photos of the various buildings, before going out the same gate and heading north up Hanamikoji-dori. It was another shopping street, but wider and occasionally had a car or delivery truck go down, yet it was normal to walk in the street and pull over if a vehicle needed to pass.
Along their walking, Masami pointed out geisha houses. Some were easy to figure out with maiko in make-up and kimono in front of some of the buildings. Even if they were going to Masami’s geisha house and meeting the women in her employ, she encouraged Daisuke, Ryo, Bikky and Carol to approach the maiko, asking to take a photo with them. The women were happy to oblige, and even one group, two of the girls held onto Ryoko and Darin for the photo.

At the intersection of Hanamikoji-dori and Shijo-dori, Masami suggested they turn left and walk on Shijo-dori. From there they walked toward the Kamo River. At the river, instead of going across the Shijo Bridge, they walked north on the street along the river for a few blocks. On one side of the street were modern buildings. Saburo noticed that while they were not the older traditional buildings that had Bikky and Carol pointing at with excitement, the two were still very fascinated with Japanese architecture in general. On the other side was the river, and views of the buildings on the other side of the river.

They made a right turn after a couple of blocks and at the next intersection, they came across Yamato Bridge, a small bridge going over the Shirakawa River, which was more a canal than a river, and flowed into the Kama River. After crossing, she made them go right again, and they walked along another street of wooden traditional style buildings, including the ones on the other side of the Shirakawa River with bridges going across to enter the various restaurants and businesses. The buildings housed teahouses, cafes and restaurants. Masami’s geisha house was one of the buildings, near the end of the stretch along the Shirakawa River. Before going in, she took them past the building to the end, where there was the Gion Tasumi Bridge, a very famous, much photographed bridge. Many people in kimono, especially young women, would gather there to take photos. Across the street was a very small but beautiful shrine.

It was at that shrine that Saburo noticed his other relatives who lived in Kyoto. His Aunt Kanon was there along with her wife, Atsuko. Kanon’s and Atsuko’s daughter, Kaede and her husband, Eisen was also there, as well as Kanon’s son, Masaaki and his wife Kaori. Kaede’s and Masaaki’s children were also there. He also noticed some of his mother’s family who lived in or around Kyoto and Osaka were also there. Also waiting were Yoshio’s aunt and uncle who lived in Kyoto, and Yoshio’s cousins. Everyone in the group wore formal kimono for the occasion.

Masami handled the introductions, and then led everyone over the bridge crossing the Shirakawa River to the entrance of her geisha house. Everyone was settled in a large party room on the first level. Masami sat with the family after checking in with her staff and changing her clothes. In the meantime, the family who lived in Kyoto were getting to know Daisuke and his family. Saburo was glad that some of Yoshio’s family were able to join them. It was good for Daisuke to know some of Yoshio’s family. He was glad to see they treated Daisuke as they would Dafydd, which was as Yoshio’s son.

A full kaiseki dinner was part of the evening, along with music, dances and games led by the geisha and maiko attending to their room. Masami told Saburo that she had the food catered by a restaurant on the same block and owned by a good friend. Whenever a party called for more than tea and wagashi, she had the food catered by her friend. A good time was had by everyone. After the dinner,
most of the family said good night with promises of coming to Nagoya for the big party the following Saturday.

Masami made plans to spend the next day with them until they were ready to leave Kyoto for Osaka, and then waited with them until they got a cab back to their van.

Once in the van, still in kimono, Yoshio suggested that they stop at Yasaka Shrine, because it was known for the lighted lanterns at night. Saburo backed his husband up, thinking it was an excellent suggestion and a perfect way to end this most wonderful day of sightseeing and Daisuke meeting more of his family in Japan. The shrine was known to be as busy at night as the day. After they were done walking around the shrine, they decided to call it a night and went back to the hotel.

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Back at the hotel, Ryo decided to take Bikky and Carol to a nearby café for dessert, wanting to give Dee and his dads a chance to spend some time together just the three of them. Ryo didn’t take Darin and Ryoko, so Yoshio and Saburo got the babies ready for bed, which they took great joy in, and the babies were asleep shortly after.

Ryo and the kids returned shortly after midnight to find Dee’s dads had left not long before. Dee was in a great mood and informed Ryo that they had a good time catching up. Then Dee pulled Ryo into a hug and kissed him, thanking Ryo for giving Dee and his fathers some time alone.

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Chapter 42

Chapter Summary

The 2nd day in Kyoto.

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

Kyoto L-M International Hotel & Spa

Nakagyō-ku, Kyoto Japan

November 10, 2006

The next morning when Dee and Ryo entered the hotel restaurant with Carol, Bikky, Darin and Ryoko, they not only found Saburo and Yoshio waiting for them at a table, but Masami was also there. Saburo explained that his sister had called him while they were in the elevator down to the hotel restaurant, saying she had just entered the hotel, so they all went into the restaurant to get a table. Then Yoshio assured them that they weren’t there more than 10 minutes and were early. They spent the time filling up on coffee until everyone was there to start ordering. Yoshio then held up the carafe of coffee in offer to the newcomers.

“Oh yes, please, Chichi,” Dee said holding out the white ceramic cup he found at his place at the table.

Dee’s fathers had also thought to request highchairs, so they were able to set Darin and Ryoko in them upon arriving at the table. Darin seemed to have a grip on the plushie penguin he was given by Saburo when they were in Nagoya, while Ryoko was having fun shaking a large key ring with plastic keys. Each key had a different sound when shaken, and she seemed to find great amusement at it.

Darin was waving his plushie as he looked at Saburo and Yoshio and started to jabber away with a smile on his face.
“These two seem to be fully awake this morning,” Saburo commented with amusement. “Hello Darin. How’s my little grandson doing?”

“I’m good, Ojiisan. What about you?” Bikky replied, leaning in his chair next to Darin’s highchair so his head was hidden behind it. He had already answered the question for himself when Saburo asked as they settled Darin and Ryoko and took their seats.

Everyone was starting to laugh but laughed harder when Darin suddenly tried to look behind him with a surprised face, his hand still extended and holding onto the plushie, but not moving.

“Was that really you who answered, Darin?” Yoshio asked, amused.

“He does remind me of Daisuke around his age,” Masami said fondly as she looked at Darin.

“Oh God,” Dee sighed. “Sorry, Aunt Masami, but I’m still getting used to hearing baby stories from this family.” He smiled at her. “Where’s your big brother?” Dee asked Darin in Japanese.

Bikky moved his head so Darin could see him. Darin let out a gleeful sound and held out the plushie to Bikky.

“Do you want me to hold this for you, Darin?” Bikky asked. As he went to take the toy from his baby brother, Darin held onto it. “Okay, maybe not.” He moved his hand away and laughed when Darin started to wave it in his direction. Bikky quickly reached out to grab Darin’s little nose between his fingers and gently squeezed it and pulled away.

Darin let out another sound and opened his mouth, looking at Bikky.

“I do that because you’re so cute,” Bikky said. “You and your sister with your little baby noses.”

“And tiny baby fingers,” Dee added.

“Gotta grab those little baby toes too,” said Ryo.
“Oh yes, baby toes are the best!” Saburo agreed. “At first Daisuke and Dafydd weren’t too happy with it, but I couldn’t resist, and they eventually got used to it.” He laughed. He watched as Darin still waved the toy, seemingly toward each person seated at the table. “I feel as if he waves that toy at him, then you have fallen into His Majesty’s favor.”

Masami and Yoshio started to laugh at Saburo.

“You might not be wrong there,” Ryo remarked with a smile. “We never know what to expect with this one lately.” He laughed. “The two of them.”

Ryoko was still interested in her keyring. Dee reached out and with a finger jingled the keys. It finally got her to look up, as if curious to see who interrupted her serious playtime, and then smiled when she saw Dee.

“Where’s your manners, young lady?” Dee asked her in Japanese. “Say hello to your grandfathers and aunt.” He moved her head gently to look at the older family members.

Her reaction was as if she had just noticed them. Her mouth opened wide and let out a sound and started to wave her arms as she laughed. The keyring suddenly dropped as she reached out toward Yoshio and Saburo.

“Good morning to you too, Akachan,” Saburo said as Yoshio got up to take her from the chair. He handed her to Saburo after hugging her and giving her a kiss and then plucked Darin from his chair.

“We’ll put them back once we have food on the table,” Yoshio said with an apologetic smile.

“No problem,” Dee said. “Knock yourself out.”

Dee, Ryo, Bikky and Carol looked at the menu while Yoshio, Saburo and Masami played with the twins.

“Do you know what you want?” Dee asked his fathers and aunt.

“Yes. We had already looked at the menu and browsed the buffet while they got us coffee. We said
we were waiting for everyone to arrive before getting our food,” said Saburo. “The buffet includes most of what is offered in individual sets. We decided on the variety of the buffet.”

“Buffet sounds good to me,” Bikky stated.

Ryo looked at the menu again. “I agree. How about making this easy and we all go buffet?” He looked at Carol. “Don’t worry if you only want a little.”

“I saw they also have pan at the buffet,” Saburo said with a knowing smile at Carol.

“Maybe not a little then,” Dee said and laughed. “Yeah, I’m good with buffet.”

“You have a point, Dee,” Carol said. “I’m thankful for all the walking we’ve been doing. I’m beginning to wonder if there was a plan with all the walking and steps in Japan,” Carol said. “You need the exercise with all the food.”

“You can always exercise restraint and not eat everything you see,” Dee suggested with a teasing grin. His eyes settled on Carol and Bikky.

“Nah,” all three said, making the others laugh.

“Why don’t you all go and fill your plates while we watch the little ones,” Yoshio offered. “When at least one of you get back, babies will go back in the chairs and we’ll get our food.”

“Someone also should be here to let our waitress know we are all getting the buffet,” Saburo added.

“Are you sure?” Dee asked. He got three nods for an answer.

“Of course!” Masami remarked. “Go eat!”

Ryo started to laugh as Bikky and Carol were already heading for the food at Ryo’s signal. “That’s us being told, Dee. Let’s go. The sooner one of us gets back, the sooner your fathers and aunt get to eat.” He nudged Dee playfully.
“If you insist. We’ll be right back.”

“We know,” Masami called out. “We have your babies.” She laughed at their faces, Yoshio and Saburo joining them.

“I really love your family,” Ryo commented as they approached the buffet.

“Yeah, gotta agree with you there,” Dee replied, picking up a plate from the stack of plates in a plate warmer. “They are something else, and that’s a good thing.”

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When they were done with breakfast, they left the hotel and with Masami guiding them, they walked two blocks along Oike Dori, which was the street the hotel was located. At first, Bikky and Carol wanted to go in the opposite direction, walking across the Oike Dori bridge that crossed the Kamo River by the hotel’s back entrance.

With a smile, Masami explained that she had been listening to them the night before and between what she had heard and what had interested Bikky and Carol the most during their walking the day before, she had a firm idea of what would be of most interest to them.

“You know, Biks,” Dee started, “Kyoto has a lot of fascinating things to do. Yesterday was easy only because for one, you saw pictures of the Golden Pavilion at Kinkakuji, and wanted to see it, and both Ryo and I also wanted to see it again. We also already had planned to go to Ryozen Kannon and see the daibutsu and take photos to send to Obāsan. Ryo’s Obāsan, that is, although if mine wants some she is very welcome to it. We also planned to walk around the area, because Ryo and I both enjoyed it during our previous times here and knew you and Carol would too. After that, there really is so much to see, we’d be pulling in all directions. It would take a couple of weeks alone just to see all the temples around here, and another to go to all the shopping districts. So, since we saw what we wanted to see, and since Aunt Masami offered, we decided to let her be our guide today.”

“Masami is very good at getting to know people and tell them where to go that they would be most interested in,” Saburo said. “Today she is focusing on what you and Carol would enjoy.”
“What about everyone else?” Carol asked. “And I apologize for my rudeness,” she said with a slight bow in Masami’s direction. “It’s just that there are so many pretty bridges in Japan that I see one and just want to run across it.”

“We saw what we really wanted to see, and unlike Nagoya, I’m no stranger to Kyoto,” Ryo said. “My parents would come here often and stay a week or two for business. When I wasn’t in school, they would have me along. I also took some leave and came here with Obāsan and some of the family for a week while I was stationed at Camp Zama.” He looked at Masami. “And yet, I know I still didn’t see everything, so you might even have something new to even me.” He smiled at her and laughed when she did.

“Yeah, I’ve been around Kyoto too,” Dee said. “They took us on a tour of a lot of shrines and other famous places for photo ops during our promotional tour. I also came here a few times with friends to explore. So, I’m good with whatever Aunt Masami wants to show us.”

“Was that a promotional tour for Daigaku Dudes?” Masami asked.

Dee rolled his eyes but smiled at his aunt. “Yes, it was. They picked Kyoto for a few days of photo ops because of its history.” As Saburo started to open his mouth to say something, Dee added, “And yes, we also spent a couple of days in Nagoya for photo ops, mainly because my bio said I was from there.”

Saburo started to laugh, having already been told about how Dee’s bio for Daigaku Dudes came to be. “I still can’t believe Nagoya was picked. It was a very good choice.”

“No kidding,” Dee said. “I had no idea back then, obviously.”

Masami looked on with curiosity.

“Dee was supposed to be Japanese in Daigaku Dudes, so he couldn’t say he was from New York,” Ryo explained. “They picked Nagoya as where he was from. The promoters decided to still make him an outsider from the other three who are from the Tokyo Metropolitan area, so Dee had to decide on something a little further from the Kanto Plain.”

Dee shrugged. “After Yokohama and Tokyo, my favorite city was Nagoya, so I went with that.”
Masami started to laugh. “And you really were born in Nagoya. I love it!”

“So, we were allowing Aunt Masami to take us on a tour?” Ryo said. At Bikky’s and Carol’s nods, he added, “Good. Let’s get this going.”

They started to walk again while they were talking. “We’re almost at our first stop. If no one minds, we can walk or take a bus to the next spot. Then I’m afraid, we’ll have to come back to the hotel and take the van,” Masami said.

The first stop was Honnoji Temple. The grounds could not be seen from Oike Dori as it was tucked away in the middle of the new modern buildings. They passed the Kyoto City Hall building across the street, that Masami pointed out, but said she had no plans to explore it that day but would put it on her list if they wanted the next time they were in Kyoto. She added that they were very welcome to explore it on their own since it was a short walk from the hotel. Ryo and Dee added that it would be the next time they were in Kyoto and promised they would be there again. They also promised Masami that they would let her know in advance when they knew they would be there again.

At the next corner, still across from City Hall, she had everyone make a left and started to smile as Bikky and Carol exclaimed that it was a shopping street.

Yoshio started to laugh as Dee and Ryo rolled their eyes. “Yes, Bikky and Carol do enjoy exploring Japanese shops,” Ryo stated with amusement.

“Yes, they do,” Dee agreed.

“How have they been to any depäto yet?” Saburo asked.

“In Tokyo,” Ryo replied. “We went into Takashimaya at Shinjuku, and Mitsukoshi at Ginza. They got a kick out of how they are set up here.”

“They especially loved the basements,” Dee added.

“So did you,” Ryo commented amused.
“I also enjoyed finally buying from the counters in those stores without worrying about money. Usually it was going into the basements of Odakyu Ox and Sotetsu Rosen around the time they started to mark down food,” Dee replied with a laugh. “Okay, why are we stopping here?”

They only went a few steps down the street before Masami stopped everyone. She pointed and Dee looked to find the entrance gate to a temple. “Yeah, this one is new,” he commented. “What temple is this?”

“Last night I got confirmation from Bikky and Carol that they do like to go to temples, especially if there’s something special or holds historic value. Honnoji is a very old temple. The first temple was built in 1415, but it was located on Shijo Dori.” She headed toward the gate of the temple. Bikky and Carol walked on each side of her.

“What happened to it?” Carol asked.

“It was burned down in 1582,” Masami replied. “In the fire, Oda Nobunaga died.”

“Oh, yeah. He was the famous daimyo,” Bikky said. He looked back at Saburo. “You mentioned him when we were at Nagoya Castle.”

Saburo nodded, looking pleased. “Yes, he was born at Nagoya Castle. He is a very famous historical figure in Japan.”

“This is where he died?” Carol asked. “How sad. I read about that in the museum at Nagoya Castle, but I didn’t pay attention to the name of the place.”

“This is it. Well, the temple that was on Shijo Dori. This temple was built in 1589 on this location.”

“Wow!” Bikky exclaimed. “These are very old buildings then! I wanna see!”

“Bikky, manners,” Ryo reminded him just as Bikky was about to go charging off.
“Oh yeah. Sorry, Aunt Masami. It’s just exciting to see real old stuff that hasn’t been rebuilt. Especially if it has history.”

“The main temple here had to be rebuilt several more times after that,” Masami said. “The building now was built in 1928. But I do love your enthusiasm.”

“Don’t encourage him, Aunt Masami,” Dee quipped.

“However, this building here,” she pointed to the building that went along the path from the entrance toward the main hall, “is a museum with many treasures from Oda Nobunaga’s time.”

“Can we see them?” Carol asked.

“It costs 500 yen to go in,” Masami replied.

“We can afford that.” Ryo said. “If Masami has going in the museum as part of our day, then yes we can. I wouldn’t mind seeing it myself. This is something new. Thank you for thinking of going here.”

They toured the temple’s grounds before going into the museum on the way out. When they were done with the museum, Masami led them along the shopping street toward Shoji Dori. She suggested they walk only a few blocks, looking at shops on one side and then head back to Oike Dori looking at the shops at the other. Dee was actually shocked when they got to Oike Dori when they did not have many shopping bags. Mostly small items were bought and not very many. For once they enjoyed just looking at what the shops had to offer instead of buying. They also had bought some amulets from the temple and some souvenirs in the museum’s gift shop.

Back on Oike Dori, there was an entrance to the subway and Masami had them go down. They got to the platform and took the Tozai line two stops. As they walked along the platform station to an exit, Dee already had an idea of where they were going because of the station name and thought that Bikky and Carol would love it for sure. He looked over at his fathers, who had taken charge of Darin and Ryoko.

Bikky and Carol were commenting that the train platforms at that station had the full walls with sliding doors that opened when the train doors opened just like the at the station they had taken the train to Odaiba.
Leaning close to his father, Dee said, “We’re going to the castle, aren’t we?”

“It looks like it,” Saburo agreed. “But we already know from Nagoya Castle that the kids love castles.”

Dee started to laugh. “Tell me about it. I’m thinking we might have to find time in between trips to Japan to take a vacation in Europe. Bikky’s been to England, but we didn’t see any castles where we went. We passed Buckingham Palace on the way to Heathrow but didn’t stop.”

“You should visit your grandfather in Cardiff,” Saburo said. “Wales has many very old, not rebuilt castles that Bikky would love.”

Dee looked at his father in surprise. “You think he would want to meet me?” he asked.

“He should,” Saburo said. “I was going to tell him the great news that you survived in my next letter to him. We usually just write on holidays, but I decided I wasn’t going to wait until Christmas to tell him about you. The last time we wrote to each other was on your birthday. It is Dafydd’s birthday too, and he always sends Dafydd a gift, but you are also mentioned, along with his regret that his mistake caused us all to lose you.”

Ryo had come up besides Dee and heard Saburo. “That’s it. We’re going to Cardiff sometime next year. Especially if we have an address. Do you have a phone number?”

Saburo shook his head. “No. He never gave me a phone number after he moved back to Cardiff. Just addresses. He didn’t move much, but when he does, he gives me his new address. Otherwise I would have been on the phone with him already.”

“We should convince Dafydd to join them. Dafydd hasn’t seen him in what? Twenty, twenty-five years?” Yoshio asked. “I think it would be nice to see both his grandchildren after finding out that Daisuke is alive.”

“Edwin-san has never come back to Japan, but when Dafydd was around 5 or so, he asked about his other grandfather, so we took a trip to Cardiff so Dafydd could meet him. That was the last time Dafydd went to Wales,” Saburo explained.

“I think as Dafydd got older, he started to think if he went to visit his grandfather, he would have to
accept his Welsh side,” Yoshio commented.

“Oh, that would never do,” Saburo agreed. “He could never be fully Japanese if that happened.”

Dee snorted, remembering when he first met his twin at the party. It seemed to pain him discussing the Welsh side, but he did to fill Dee in on his own background. He started to loosen up since around Dee, but Dee suspected that was only around Dee and his family. He saw how Dafydd would be around his grandfather, and Dee knew without asking that his twin was hoping that one day Ryoichi would call him Japanese and not gaijin. It made Dee sad to consider their grandfather had convinced Dafydd he had to act that way, instead of being himself, which was Japanese-Welsh, but born and raised by his Japanese side of the family in Japan. That should have been plenty enough Japanese. It’s a shame that Ryoichi would never see it that way. Dee had fully accepted that he would always be the American-gaijin in the family, while he did find validation for the Japanese ways he had long adapted as part of who he was, because he knew now that he was half-Japanese. He was also willing to accept more Japanese ways into his family's lifestyle because of both Ryo and him, but also because Bikky seemed to want them both to embrace more of their Japanese sides, but he would never deny being Japanese-American. Well maybe Japanese-Welsh-American, because there was that side to him too. As much fun as he was having meeting this very large Japanese family of his, and learning more about the Fujiokas, he really did want to find out more about the Welsh side.

Now he got confirmation that Saburo had been in touch with his other grandfather. Hopefully this one wouldn’t be so harsh on him now being American.

“Yeah, I can see that,” Dee commented in response to Yoshio’s comment. He shrugged. “Maybe now that he has a twin brother in his life again, I can get him to soften up on some of that silliness.”

“It’s going to take time, if ever,” Yoshio said.

“I find it kinda amusing in a way,” Ryo commented. “I mean, his name is Dafydd.”

“And I’ll bet only because of Japanese custom of respecting your parents, he never considered changing his name,” Dee said.

“You are not wrong there, Daisuke,” Saburo said. “And that is one of the few things good about him being so Japanese. I do like the names Alun and I gave you two. Oh, I don’t blame you for going by Dee now. After all, it was not your decision to change your name, and Mother Maria-san really had no choice but to give you a name, since it escaped our thoughts in planning that we should have had at least full names somewhere in your carriers, and maybe even an address or phone number.”
“You could have and then I could have ended up in a box instead of the carrier,” Dee said.

“That is true too,” Saburo said. “No use in wishing what we could have done. We just focus on what we could do. And I am thankful that I can now include you in that.”

Dee smiled at his father. “I am too, Papa.”

“That makes me happy to hear, but I do not doubt it. I know that from you already,” said Saburo.

They found themselves at an elevator, Masami deciding that it was not too much trouble going down the stairs with babies, but harder going up. So they were taking the elevator. They found themselves on a line of elderly and people with baby strollers or suitcases. Because of the size of their group, when they got to the front of the line, the car going up had space for about two more people, so they allowed the couple with suitcases standing behind them to get on the elevator. When the car came down again, their group filled the elevator.

“I’m glad it’s not one of those small ones like some stations have, or we would have had to split up,” Ryo commented.

“We would have been fine,” Dee assured him. “We have enough people knowing where we are to make sure Bikky and Carol don’t get lost.”

“Or we could have gone up and met everyone once we all got up to the concourse,” Bikky suggested.

“You could have, and then wandered off because something caught your interest,” Ryo said.

Dee chuckled and said, “Or we would have gotten out of the elevator to discover Bikky having a snack.”

“Hey, if it smells and looks good, it’s meant to be eaten,” Bikky said. “Especially in Japan.”
“Where are we going anyway?” Carol asked.

“I’m going to let you see it first,” Masami stated with a teasing grin. “You’ll enjoy it. I know you will.”

They took the escalator up to the ground level. Somehow Bikky and Carol managed to not see the few signs pointing to Nijo Castle, but then again most of the bigger signs were in kanji, and the ones in English said ‘nijojocho’. He caught only two small signs as they came out of the wickets (Bikky and Carol still called it turnstiles, like in New York), and there was a crowd of people who were standing before the wall with the signs because it also had a directory to the area, along with which gate would bring them closer to their destination.

Once on the street, Carol immediately zoomed in on what was across the street. “Look, it’s a pretty gatehouse!” she exclaimed.

“And a very old stone wall like the ones surrounding castles,” Bikky observed.

The two started to smile brightly.

“We’re going to a castle,” Bikky said happily.

Masami laughed. “Yes, we are going to Nijo Castle. Or in Japanese, just Nijo, because jo means castle in Japanese. I assume your fathers have been here before, Bikky?” She looked over at Dee and Ryo.

“Yes, I have been here once,” Dee replied. “But it was during that promo tour, so I really didn’t get to explore it as much as I would have on my own.”

“We’ll take care of that today, Daisuke. What about you, Ryo?”

“Many times. My mother would love going here on nice days when she wasn’t doing business.”

“What kind of business did your mother do?” Masami asked.
“She was an antique and art dealer. Her and my dad. They also had galleries in Kamakura and New York. My mother had a friend here who would find things and sell or trade with other dealers she knew. My mother also knew where to go looking for new pieces all over Kyoto.”

“Do you also know about antiques and art?” asked Masami.

“Not as much as my parents, but yes, I do,” Ryo replied.

“He was good at identifying many things in Okāsan’s home,” Saburo said. And then with a proud smile, added, “Daisuke was good at it too.”

Dee shrugged. “I studied some art in college, and since college was in Japan, then the art was mostly Japanese.”

“You’re pretty good at other pieces too,” Ryo pointed out.

“Yeah, but I’m far from an expert. Unless it’s something I have a fascination with. Living in New York, for a while I was fascinated with art deco, like pieces from Erte and other artists with similar styles. Because of that, I seem to have a knack for identifying art deco pieces. I found a lamp at a rummage sale in a synagogue that I knew was valued much more than it was being sold for, so I paid the $5 for it. Only I didn’t know just how much it was valued at until Ryo saw it. We still have it in our bedroom.”

“Oh, that’s wonderful,” Masami exclaimed.

“How much is it worth?” Saburo asked.

“Around $700,” Ryo replied. “It wasn’t a Tiffany lamp, but it was made by another artist known for a similar style from the period.”

“I guess the owners thought it was one of those cheap replicas that there are a lot of and sold it cheap to get rid of it,” Dee said. “Are we going inside the castle, Aunt Masami?”
“Yes, please. Let’s go.”

OoOoOoO

It was a short walk around the corner to the east gate, which was the visitor entrance to the castle. They paid admission and picked up brochures on the castle. Bikky and Carol got the brochures in English, while Dee and Ryo picked up the ones in Japanese, along with Dee’s fathers and aunt. They started to walk along the suggested path, going around some wooden walls, which didn’t seem like much. They turned a corner and Bikky started to laugh.

“Hey, we’re pretty much where we were when we got out of the subway,” Bikky said. “Only we’re inside.”

“That was some walk to get back here again,” Carol said with a laugh.

“Anyone complaining?” Saburo asked. “We could have scaled the wall and left a bigger donation to cover the entrance fees.”

“No thank you,” Carol exclaimed, her eyes wide.

“I’m glad to hear that,” Masami stated. “I don’t scale walls.”


“No, I left that to you and Kennosuke,” she remarked with a teasing smile.

“I wouldn’t have minded, but I guess going in through the entrance is the right way,” said Bikky.

“I scaled many walls in my life, but I’m not going to scale a wall with Darin, so I would rather take the walk, thank you. And nobody else is going to scale any walls with Darin or Ryoko,” said Dee.
“What he said,” Ryo said and laughed. “Besides, with all the meals and snacking we do around here, a little walking never hurts.”

“We’re at the Karamon,” Yoshio said. “And I stopped scaling walls decades ago. Could we get some family photos in front of Karamon?”

“Yes,” Saburo said.

They took photos with the beautiful dark wood and gold-trimmed gate. That was when Bikky noticed that the wall they had been walking along was actually a perimeter building. They went inside and noticed the palace.

Carol looked around. “This doesn’t look like the other castles,” she said.

“The distinction of this castle is that it is wood,” Masami stated.

“Well, I think it’s very beautiful,” Ryo commented. “Just because it’s different doesn’t make it any less interesting or historic than the others. I’m looking forward to seeing it again.”

“I think it fits Kyoto,” Dee said. “Especially after walking around the Gion last night.”

Saburo nodded his head in agreement.

They continued to tour the castle. Bikky and Carol got a kick out of having to take their shoes off before entering many of the buildings, even if it wasn’t the first time. At Nagoya there were a couple of buildings where it was required to remove shoes. It was afternoon when they were done and found themselves by the gift shop and café. There was also a row of about twenty booths set up across from the building with the café and gift shop.

They looked at the shops and ended up buying some things for themselves and to take back as gifts. The first booth sold pottery. Dee and Ryo ended up picking up a few cups and small plates and condiment dishes for both the penthouse and for their collection in New York. They picked up some kimono accessories to bring home for Diana and bought some for Carol. They saw a beautiful bag made from exquisite kimono fabric and bought it for Elina. They stopped at another to buy dango
mochi and sat on a nearby bench, enjoying the fresh mochi along with drinks they bought from a vending machine. They continued to look at the other booths.

They came across a booth selling green tea and matcha. It reminded Ryo of their talk with Emiko.

“I have a cousin who moved to New York from Tokyo,” he said to Saburo, Yoshio and Masami. “She’s opening a matcha café in Brooklyn near where she lives and she’s looking for a distributor in Japan that is willing to ship using her shipper.”

“Will the shipper be your grandmother’s freight company?” Saburo asked.

“Yes, only because it will be cheaper, and she can keep her prices down. She had a distributor, but they only want to use their own freight company. It was significant enough that she would have had to charge more than she was planning. Dee and I promised we’d look around for her, but we realized that we have no idea where to start. For one, which city would be best to get the tea from?”

“Or is there any company with a good reputation that we could reach out to?” Dee asked.

Saburo looked at Yoshio and started to laugh. “I bet you are expecting me to say Nagoya, yes?”

Dee chuckled. “Yeah, I guess so.”

“I think we’re in the city for the best company that has quality tea and a great reputation,” Saburo stated.

“The tea house at the shrine uses a company here in Kyoto,” Masami said. “They are the same company that I use for my geisha house. They are very open on how their tea is distributed. I have pick-ups arranged, while they ship using my family’s choice for freight to Nagoya. I am certain your cousin could set up her terms.”

“We’re hoping we can have a truck from my grandmother’s freight company pick up the tea, and it will most likely ship out of Osaka,” Ryo explained.

“That or fly out of Nagoya,” Dee added. “Depending on how we decide is the cheapest option.”
“Going by ship should be cheaper, but takes longer,” Yoshio said.

“Most of the time,” Ryo said. “My grandfather in New York is working with my grandmother here on offering the cargo planes in his fleet for her use for express shipments. I know it’s cheaper to go in and out of Nagoya. Greenways has more flights to Japan going into Nagoya than Tokyo because of airport costs. Even before they roll out the new extension to the freight company, I’m pretty sure it will be easy to get the tea to Nagoya and get it on a flight to New York.”

“That sounds good. Did you like the tea we had last night?” Saburo asked.

“Yes, very much. As well as at the tea house when we were at the shrine,” Ryo agreed.

Dee started to smile. “And I’ll bet Obāsan uses the same tea at home.”

“Oh, you’re a smart boy!” Saburo crowed happily. “And you know your matcha. I’m impressed. Yes, my mother uses the same tea. She also has others, depending on her mood, but especially for special occasions, she will take out that matcha. Of course, she used it for your homecoming.”

Ryo looked at Dee and smiled. “It seems we have the tea issue handled. Maybe we should send some for Emiko to try and see what she thinks.”

“If you give me your cousin’s address, I’ll send her some this week,” Masami said. “I’ll let her know that I’m Daisuke’s aunt and at your request sending her some tea samples for her to try.”

“That would be much appreciated, Aunt Masami,” Dee said. “I’m sure she’ll love it, but it is best that she tries it first. Ryo and I invested in the shop because we thought it would be a great opportunity in that area of the city, especially with the interest in Japanese restaurants opening. A matcha café near the ferry to Manhattan seemed like less competition and giving a different view of Japanese food.”

“It sounds nice. I would like to see it. Hopefully by the time I get to New York, it will be open,” Saburo said.

“We’ll make sure to take you when you come to visit,” Dee said.
“Well, I would love to visit you, and since I have a small part in this café now, I wouldn’t mind going too. When she opens, please let me know,” said Masami.

“And you are also very welcome to come visit us whenever you like, and we would love to have you at the opening, if you can make it. If not, we will take you whenever you come to New York.”

They still bought some green tea from the booth and finished looking at the other shops. Since they had to go back to the hotel to get the van, and now they had shopping bags from their shopping at the booths, it was decided that they would have lunch near the hotel before heading to their next stop. Since it was only two subway stops to the hotel, everyone decided to take the train. They had Masami and Carol handle Darin and Ryoko, while the men carried the bags. One of the booths was selling sake and Dee and Ryo thought that Rose would enjoy a bottle of sake from Kyoto as would Ryo’s grandfather. They also decided to collect sake from each city they went to, to have back at the penthouse. Saburo and Yoshio also decided to bring a bottle back with them to Nagoya, especially when Yoshio noticed a bottle of very famous sake. Dee and Ryo made sure that a bottle of the same was the one for them to enjoy back at the penthouse. Masami promised that if they enjoyed it, she would send a bottle once in a while so they could enjoy the very good sake while in New York.

On the train, Masami informed them that they were going to Fushimi Inari Taisha after lunch. The shrine was on the route to leave Kyoto heading for Osaka, so she suggested that they load the van up and check out of the hotel. It would be no problem for her to take the subway home, especially since she did not have any shopping bags of her own.

Saburo saw the debate on Dee’s and Ryo’s faces, and already knew both men enough to know they were thinking if she went out of her way to show them around, then it was their obligation to make sure they took her home. Before either man had a chance, Saburo said, “I think that’s an excellent idea.” Looking at Dee and Ryo, he added, “This is Masami’s city, and she knows her way around it, if she had to take the train.”

“I assure you that I always take the train. I have a car that I hardly use except for going out of the city,” Masami said and smiled. “Even when I go visit my parents, I leave my car at home and take the shinkansen to Nagoya. I do not mind the trains. I actually enjoy them.” Her smile got wider. “It was I who offered to take you around Kyoto. You did not come to me, asking, so you have no obligations. There is no need for everyone to have to drive back up to the Gion, and then back down this area. We took longer than I planned, so you will be leaving Kyoto later than planned.”

“We’re on no time schedule,” said Dee. “As long as we’re in Osaka tonight, we’re good.”

“And we’ll be in Osaka in time for dinner,” Saburo said. “It’s only an hour drive. We have plenty of
time to make sure Bikky and Carol have a good experience at the shrine, while we get plenty of photos before we have to leave. But it is still practical to allow Masami to take the subway home while we get on the highway out of Kyoto when we are done.”

“If you both insist,” Dee said.

“We do,” brother and sister said in unison.

Yoshio started to laugh. “Sometimes I wonder who is your father’s twin when I watch him with Masami.”

“No kidding,” Dee said in amusement. “I guess you are in agreement to this plan, Chichi?”

“Yes. I soundly agree with it.”

“Do we have to leave tonight?” Bikky asked. “There seems to be so much more to see around here.”

“Oh, I know,” Carol agreed. “I really enjoyed seeing what we did already and going to the shrine with all those tori gates sounds really exciting. I’ll bet it’s beautiful, but there is so much more to see. I was looking at the guides in my room last night.”

“This is the type of city that if we did something else instead of what we did, we would have still had a great time and enjoyed seeing what we did, but then also want to do the things we didn’t, including what we saw today,” Dee said.

“Yeah, that’s true,” Bikky said. “I really liked going into that Samurai museum. That was really neat. It was lucky the hotel is so close to it. I also wish we went all the way down the shopping street, and even check out that Nishiki shopping area off Shijo. What?” he asked when all the adults stared at him. “We also have tourist guides in English in our suite and I looked at them before going to sleep last night. Japanese shops are cool, and they have so much neat stuff. But going to the castle was also a lot of fun.”

Ryo smiled at Bikky. “We’ll be back, okay. Maybe next time it won’t be a stop on a road trip. We can always come here for a few days after visiting Dee’s family in Nagoya.” He looked at Masami, “And then we can visit his family here too.”
“Please do. Whenever you are in Kyoto, please let me know. You can also pick out the places we go to next time,” Masami said.

“I’ll give you a call the moment we decide we’re coming to Kyoto, Aunt Masami,” Dee assured her.

“Good. Because if you don’t, you’ll see another side of me, and you don’t want that.”

Dee looked at his aunt and laughed. “I like this side of you, so I’ll call.”

Saburo and Yoshio also were laughing. “My sister has a dark side. Especially when family attempts to come to Kyoto without seeing her. You don’t want to deal with that, Daisuke.”

Ryo grinned at Dee. “Looks like we better keep Aunt Masami on speed dial, because I foresee quite a few more trips to Kyoto in our future. Then maybe we would have seen everything, because I know for all the times I’ve been here, there are still things I haven’t seen yet.”

“You’ve been to this shrine we’re going to, haven’t you, Pops?” Bikky asked.

“I was once with my parents,” Ryo replied.

“I never was, but I always meant to,” Dee said.

“Your promoters didn’t think it was a good place for photo ops?” Yoshio asked.

“I guess not. They decided on another shrine on the north end.”

“Dads, why do we have to leave tonight? We didn’t even have two whole days.”

“Think of this as a taste of what is out there besides the Tokyo area,” Dee said. “We knew we would make time to come back to cities we enjoyed at some point in the future. And that was back when we thought we only had Ryo’s family in Japan.”
“We did originally plan to stay here for three days, but remember we spend a couple of extra days in Nagoya, and even though we’re moving up our return date to Tokyo, we are going to spend most of those extra days also in Nagoya,” Ryo explained.

“Oh yeah.” Bikky looked at Saburo. “So we get to spend more time with you, Ojiisan, and the rest of the family. I’m cool with that. Did you really used to scale fences?”

Yoshio started to laugh as Dee and Ryo shook their heads in amusement. “He still does if he has good reason. We really need a gate on that back wall to make it easier to retrieve balls that go over the wall in our back garden.”

Saburo smiled at Bikky. “I used to scale walls when I was younger for fun, but as an adult, I see no reason why my grandchildren need to learn that skill. So, it’s my job to retrieve balls.”

Bikky looked at his grandfather and started to laugh. “You’re the coolest grandfather ever!” he announced.

“So we keep hearing,” Ryo said with a laugh. “I am glad.”

“I am glad too, Bikky,” said Saburo.

OoOoOoO

After packing the van and checking out of the hotel, Dee decided to drive over the bridge, so the kids could see what was in the area on that side. It was mostly apartment buildings with a few businesses. Carol and Bikky decided that while it was pretty, especially with the river going along it, it wasn’t as fascinating as the Gion or the other places they had been too. There wasn’t even a shopping street in the nearby area.

Masami had no recommendations for eating in the area, so Dee drove a few blocks until they saw a shop with an exterior to make the building look older with bright colorful flags fluttering in the breeze with the shop’s name. There was parking within a block, so they decided to make that their
lunch stop. From the outside there was no way of knowing what kind of food they had, but the adults were certain it was not ramen, since most ramen shops always displayed the word ramen. The specialty in the shop was nabe, and it was a place where after entering through the sliding frosted glass door, they had to remove their shoes. They were taken to the back of the shop where there were a couple of low tables. The tables were community dining tables, with many people who did not know each other would fill a table. There was one table completely open and because of their group, they were given it.

The tables were traditional Japanese, low with pillows to sit on, so Dee and Ryo took out the playmats from the bag they always had with them when they had the twins along and settled Darin and Ryoko on them. The group decided on a large chanko nabe with udon, along with sashimi platters and an order of grilled eel. They were also each given a bowl of rice, miso soup, pickled cucumbers and daikon, and octopus and seaweed salad. Saburo, Yoshio and Dee also ordered a raw egg to add to their nabe.

At one point, Saburo picked up Darin, who was getting noisy wanting attention, while Masami already had Ryoko. Everyone had a good laugh when Darin decided he wanted his fingers to investigate the food before Saburo. It took Saburo by surprise, but he managed to stop Darin from putting his hands in his bowl with hot broth before he added some of the various vegetables, chicken meatballs, and pieces of chicken from the large clay bowl set on a burner in the center of the table. At least that pot was set well away from tiny wandering hands. He did hand Darin a sliced pickled cucumber, which kept the baby occupied as he seemed to check it out. He squeezed it, hit it against the table and even sniffed it.

“This little boy is ready for solids,” Saburo said, “but for now, that cucumber is another toy.”

Masami did the same with a pickled cube of daikon for Ryoko. Like her brother, she was fascinated with her new toy. The food came to the babies’ mouths, but they didn’t attempt to put them in their mouths, but they did lick and made faces as the new taste experience, much to the adults’ amusement.

When they were done with their lunch, they got back in the van going to Fushimi Inari Taisha.

Fushimi Inari Taisha Shrine was known for the trail of tori gates through the woods behind the shrine that lead to other shrines at the base of Inariyama. Over the centuries, businesses donated a tori gate in hopes of having blessings of good business and fortune. There were well over 5000 torii that visitors walked through like a tunnel, with the branches of oaks providing additional shade. It reminded Dee, Ryo, Bikky and Carol of the way from the street to Hinotsuke Jingu, but the torii along the trail they walked along were not as spread out as at the family shrine in Nagoya. There were sections where there were just mere inches between torii, and overall no more that a foot. The trails seemed to go on forever. Every now and then, they would reach an intersection or spots where the trail forked off in different directions.
Since they had no particular shrine in mind as a destination, they spent a couple of hours after visiting the shrine just walking, sometimes deciding to take another trail at an intersection. At a few of the intersections, there were benches to sit on, and some vendors with booths set up selling food and refreshments with tables were people could eat at. At every intersection, a vending machine to get both cold and hot drinks could be found. The larger intersections would also have statues, mostly of foxes, and small shrines. When they got to the shrine, it was already decided they would be doing a lot of walking through the torii trail, so they took the strollers out of the van.

After an hour of walking, while resting at an intersection, enjoying crepes filled with vanilla and green tea ice cream, adzuki sauce and whipped cream, topped with small mochi balls, and drinks from the vending machine, Ryo commented, “There’s no way we can go through all the trails this time.”

“Maybe if you have a full day, you might,” Masami said. “And that’s just walking and not stopping to admire the statues and looking at the various shrines along the way.”

“That’s no fun,” Dee said. “As much as I enjoy walking through all these torii, I love seeing all these statues. Most of them are foxes, but no two are the same.”

“And of course, we need pictures by each statue,” Ryo said, “but you are right. They are so unique.”

“They are beautiful,” Carol said.

“Yeah, they’re really cool. I like foxes,” Bikky commented.

“I am glad everyone is having a good time,” Saburo said and looked at his watch. “It’s going to start getting dark soon, so I suggest start taking trails back to the main shrine. If we don’t, we might not by leaving tonight.”

“You are joking, Saburo,” Masami said. “Of course, we’ll make out way out of here, and you’ll be on your way to Osaka. There are lights along the paths and people do come here at night.” She smiled at her brother. “You’re just thinking of having takoyaki for dinner tonight.”

Saburo laughed as he hugged his sister. “You know me.” He looked at Bikky. “I’m sure you’re also looking forward to takoyaki and okonomiyaki in Osaka. Both originated in Osaka.”
“Oh yeah, that’s right. Yeah, that does sound good.” He looked over to Dee and Ryo. “Is that what we’re having for dinner tonight, Dads?”

Ryo nodded. “Even if your grandfather wasn’t looking forward to it, I wouldn’t dare try to get between takoyaki and okonomiyaki in Osaka and your father.”

Dee chuckled as he had Ryoko on his lap. “Like my father said, they originated in Osaka, which means you can get the best there.” Looking at Bikky, he added, “Even better than what they have in the takoyaki museum in Odaiba.”

“When are we heading back to the van?” Bikky asked.

“Now he’s ready to leave Kyoto,” Yoshio teased.

“Well, Pops did say we’re coming back. It may be a few months, but that’s okay.”

“The hotel is a block away from the river where you can find the best takoyaki in Osaka. I’ve had a lot of takoyaki in Japan and enjoyed it very much, but never as good as at this place,” Dee said. “But there’s a little shop in another area of Osaka that I remember made the best okonomiyaki. I think I remember where it was and I’m hoping it’s still there. It’s in an area that we’ll be doing some sightseeing anyway, so I’m thinking if it’s still there, we’ll go there for lunch tomorrow.”

“And for tonight, we’ll eat at the places along the river,” Saburo stated.

“What Papa said!” Dee agreed. “Chichi, I hope you also like takoyaki and okonomiyaki.”

“I do, very much, but I don’t spend nights dreaming about getting it in Osaka. I’ll never say no, but it’s not like we don’t have it in Nagoya, or that we can make it ourselves.”

“My dads make it at home in New York, and it’s very yummy, but it’s still way better eating it out in Japan,” said Bikky. “So, I can’t wait to have it in Osaka.”

“Ahh, Bikky, you are my grandson!” Saburo proclaimed, making everyone laugh.
Chapter 43

Chapter Summary

A night in Osaka

CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

L-M Dotonbori Royal Plaza Hotel

Namba, Osaka

Japan

November 10, 2006

The group arrived at the hotel around 6:30. On the drive to Osaka, Ryo had called the hotel, letting them know they were on the way, so upon their pulling in, like in Kyoto, check-in was fast. What they wanted to take to their suite was quickly placed on a luggage rack, they exchanged pleasantries with the staff attending them, and the manager on duty personally escorted them up to their suite.

The Royal Plaza Hotel, like the other hotels from the chain purchased together, was a mix of Western and Japanese rooms. Before the party, Dee and Ryo had already reserved the Sakura suite, but before leaving Tokyo they adjusted the days they were staying there. Then once more, before leaving Nagoya one last call was made to let the hotel know they were arriving with one of their parents, who would also be staying in the suite with them.

It was a four-bedroom suite in Japanese design but with some Western amenities. Each room had shoji sliding doors that opened into the living area. In each bedroom was a closet to store belongings, a tansu dresser and a Japanese platform bed with thick futons. The living area provided a couch and a small wooden dinette set along a wall, with a long low table and saizu floor chairs, along with pillows. Much like the other tables Dee and Ryo had seen, the table had compartments that opened to reveal teacups, small plates and wood utensils. In the center of the table was a rectangular wood stove. On the cooking surface sat a black iron kettle and on the side of the stove were utensils used in a tea ceremony.
Tucked in a corner was a small kitchenette with a sink and cabinets next to a slim but modern refrigerator. On the counter was a hot water kettle, a two-plate butane cooktop, a microwave, an electric grill, a toaster oven and set in the counter beneath the cooktop was a fish broiler. The manager explained that once water heated to boiling in the hot water kettle, as long as the warm feature was turned on, it will remain at the temperature until the kettle needed to be refilled or the time set had passed. He showed them how to set it to remain hot for a certain amount of time, or a time to start heating up water. He also showed them how to use the other appliances.

Then he showed them where the toilet was, and to their surprise when they went into the bathroom, it really was a small onsen big enough for six people. Like a typical Japanese bathroom, the shower heads were along a wall, but instead of just one, there were two. There were stools if someone wished to use them while showering and small shelves to place toiletries for washing. Off to the side, so it would not be splattered on by the shower, was a vanity with a hair dryer, curling iron and various amenities in all rooms such as soap, shampoo, wash towels, toothpaste and toothbrushes and even small folding pocket brushes in small baskets for easy carrying to the bath. The body soap, shampoo and conditioner were in fancy pump bottles set on the vanity to bring to the shelves by the showers. Plush white towels were in the linen closet.

In each of the two of the bedrooms with the larger size beds, they found two yukatas with the hotel name embroidered on them. In each of the two smaller rooms, one yukata was laid out on the single beds. Along with plenty of bowing, the manager asked if they had any questions and gave them his direct number if they had any problems or concerns with the room, and then wished them a great stay in Osaka.

Bikky and Carol stayed in their rooms, anxious to settle in and head out to see Osaka.

Saburo and Yoshio were grinning, having only seen the arrival part in Kyoto since they had their own room. Dee turned to them as Ryo was closing the door behind the manager. “What?”

“It must be nice to be the boss,” Yoshio remarked.

“We’re not really his boss,” Dee commented.

“That’s so cute that you think that,” Yoshio remarked with a bigger grin.

“No, you’re both only the owners of this fine hotel,” Saburo stated. “Let me ask you, should you see an employee of this hotel doing something that you know is wrong, would you fire them?”
Dee shrugged. “I really don’t foresee any reason to while in Japan. It’s the hotels in America that we’re more likely to discover something that needs to be corrected.”

“If there should be such a need, I think I would get the name and handle it through the Japan division of the company,” Ryo said. “And what Dee means is that probably the only reason we would find cause to let go of an employee is if they display any type of prejudice, especially again Carriers. After all, many of the hotels in the US used to have an anti-Carrier policy, and if we end up staying at a hotel and encounter that type of behavior, everyone involved with be fired.”

“So, it’s the inspectors from the headquarters in Tokyo that the hotels here have more to worry about,” Saburo said. When Dee looked at him confused, he added, “Politeness, including tone of voice, proper speaking and titles, and a lot of other little things that Americans don’t find fault with their workers can mean grounds for dismissal in Japan.”

Ryo looked at the door and then at Dee, who shrugged again.

“Yeah, we don’t look for that and even when shopping in Japan, don’t find offense if someone doesn’t raise their pitch when talking to us, or miss a bow,” Dee said.

“Did he do anything that for normal Japanese companies mean dismissal?” Ryo asked.

“No,” Yoshio replied. “We were just amused because since you are the owners of this hotel at the extreme level of politeness and formality he gave while in your presence.”

“The only other person who they would give a higher degree of respect would be his Imperial Highness,” Saburo stated, smiling.

“Perhaps, not as much as our Emperor, but more than you, I would think your grandfather,” Yoshio added with amusement.

With an embarrassed grimace, Saburo said to his husband, “You are not wrong there. He might even expect to be greeted exactly the same as the Emperor at times.” Looking at Dee, he added, “Your grandfather is a complicated man.”

Dee just snorted for a reply, which made Ryo chuckle.
“Since you had fathers along, the manager made sure he treated us the same. He was not going to take a chance of insulting one of the owner’s fathers,” Saburo added.

“Oh. That’s part of the culture that I have noticed when I encounter it, but don’t really pay much attention to,” Dee admitted. “As long as an employee is doing their job and not giving me any lip, all’s good. Good thing I’m not in line for CEO of GPN. I’d make a real bad Japanese boss.” He grinned at his father.

“Saburo tends to overlook some of those details with our staff in the stores. I usually let it be, unless I feel that it’s too relaxed and then I had to step in. Otherwise, if my father-in-law came in and saw it, even if it’s not really his business to run, he would read us both the riot act on proper employee etiquette,” Yoshio explained.

“Yeah, I don’t see Ojiisan allowing anything less than proper etiquette of his employers,” Dee remarked. “How about settling in and getting ready to go out for dinner before Bikky comes out of his room asking where’s the takoyaki.”

Saburo and Yoshio laughed while Ryo rolled his eyes, muttering, “Ain’t that the truth.”

“I did notice something missing,” Dee said, looking at Ryo. “Did you let them know in the calls that we also had two infants with us?”

“Yes, I did, but they aren’t Western enough to have a decent stock on cribs yet. I told them I’d rather paying guests who need them get them, and we can use the travel playpen. I was also assured that they are negotiating a new contract for cribs,” Ryo said.

Dee grinned at his father. “Do you do hotel contracts?” he asked.

“Not that I’m aware of, but now you have me thinking,” Saburo said. “And not just your hotels.” He looked at Yoshio, who nodded in agreement and smiled at Dee.

“Since we’re branching out more, it is something I need to look into. Maybe even some of the Japanese hotels in America too,” Yoshio agreed.
“Good. I think I’m going to have the office in Tokyo reach out to you then,” Dee said with a smile and went to follow Ryo to their room.

“All we needed to do was put our luggage in the room,” Saburo said. “There’s nothing for us to put away, and we’re not going to change our clothes.”

“Yeah, same here,” Ryo said, coming back out of the room. “No need to change clothes. I don’t know about everyone else, but even if it was only an hour, it’s the first trip here that we didn’t stop at a rest area for snacks.

Bikky came out of his room, and everyone started to laugh.

“What?” Bikky asked.

“Nothing, Biks. We just all decided that as soon as we have the chibis ready to go out again, we’re heading out for dinner,” Dee said.

“Cool! Where’s the best takoyaki around here?” Bikky asked.

The adults started laughing again.

“You guys are weird,” Bikky commented. He went over to the window and looking out, said, “I can see it better from here. What’s that weird yellow thing on that building over there?”

“That’s Don Quijote,” Yoshio answered.

“Oh. There’s one in Roppongi,” Bikky remarked. “We went shopping in one. It’s not far from our hotel.” Suddenly Bikky’s eyes went wide. “Oh! There’s that roller coaster thing on the roof. It’s all yellow and stuff, just like that.”

Saburo and Yoshio started to smile. “Donki is a very big chain store in Japan,” Saburo stated. He looked at Dee. “It can’t be new to you.”
“It is,” Dee admitted. “During my time in Japan, I didn’t see any. I would have remembered. The big cheap department chain I went to often was Daiei.”

“The first time I heard about it was from one of my cousins,” Ryo said. “And Dee heard about it from me.”

“I think it was under another name around the time you were in college,” Yoshio commented. “Which is around the same time you were stationed at Camp Zama?” he asked Ryo.

“Yeah. Our times in Japan overlapped,” Ryo said with a smile.

“That explains it. They probably changed the company’s name after you both left Japan,” said Yoshio. Looking at Bikky, he added with a smirk. “The half pipe roller coaster on the roof of the Roppongi Don Quijote was completed a few months ago, but it doesn’t operate. The residents of the area made enough complaints about safety that it never got the permits to operate. Which makes it a nice building ornament. Unlike the Ferris wheel here.”

“It works?” Bikky asked, getting excited.

“Yes, it works,” Yoshio assured him.

“Oh, that’s cool! Can we see it?”

“We’ll pass it as we walk along the canal,” said Saburo.

Dee looked at Ryo with a questioning look and returned the smile Ryo gave him as his husband nodded his head.

“Bikky,” Ryo started, “depending on what the line looks like, we could go on the Ferris wheel.”

“It has a beautiful view of the city,” Saburo said. “Hopefully the line won’t be that long. Oh well,” he said with a smile. “We can always go inside Donki and pick up some snacks as we wait.”
“Now that’s a way to wait on a line!” Bikky exclaimed. “It’s waiting on a line to get to the food that’s annoying.”

Ryo started to laugh. “We encountered a few restaurants since we arrived where we had to wait on a line. We passed up quite a few restaurants because the lines were too long. And unfortunately, an extremely long line isn’t just places that attract foreign tourists. Apparently, the locals have their favorite spots that create long lines.”

Saburo chuckled. “Ah, you mean the famous restaurants.”

Ryo shook his head as he laughed. Looking at Dee, he quipped, “Now I know where you get it.”

Dee laughed as he winked at his father. “Living five years in a house with three other people who used famous a lot can also do it. You should be glad that I finally dropped it after a couple of years back in New York. Boy, did I get teased a lot by the others in my class at the Academy and then at the 52nd. It was bad enough that I never adapted to saying karaoke like they do in America.”

“And the moment you stepped off the plane here, you started up pretty easy,” Ryo observed. “How long is it going to take to break you of the habit once we’re back in New York.”

Dee looked at Ryo for a moment or two. “I don’t think I’m going to try,” he finally said. “I have a twin brother and two fathers who say it a lot, not to mention seven other siblings.” He gave Ryo a teasing smile. “After all, I am half-Japanese. Born here too.” He stuck his tongue out at Ryo, which made Bikky laugh.

“I swear, if I hear Bikky start using it,” Ryo started.

“Hey! Don’t pull me into this!” Bikky protested.

“What about the chibis?” Dee asked sweetly.

“Well… they weren’t born here, but they are half-Japanese, and growing up around our two families in Japan, I don’t think they stand a chance of not using it a lot,” Ryo said thoughtfully.
“Good point. So, let’s not segregate the kids. If Bikky wants to use it, then it’s okay.”

“Right on, Dad!” Bikky crowed and started to laugh. “Wow, that is the weirdest fight I’ve seen you two have.”

“We’re not having a fight,” Ryo said as Dee suddenly broke out in laughter. He started to laugh too. “You know I love to tease Dee, especially since Dafydd started to hang out with us. Momo uses it, of course she uses it. She’s Japanese, after all. But not as much as Dafydd, and Dee was there giving him competition.” He turned to his fathers-in-law, who were standing by, looking amused. “And Yoshio-san uses it at times, but Saburo-san, I know where Dafydd picked up using it as much as he does. Dee is definitely your son.”

Saburo laughed happily. “That makes me happy to know.”

“I guess, since I’m also half-Welsh, maybe back in New York, I’ll say it’s bloody famous.” Dee gave Ryo a teasing smirk.

Ryo rolled his eyes but still chuckled as the other two older men and Bikky laughed.

Carol came out of her room as they were getting Darin and Ryoko ready for the outdoors. “What did I miss?” she asked.

Yoshio looked up and smiled at her. “Did you get rid of the car hair?” he asked her.

“Yes. I tried to do ponytails like how Momo and Ayaka did for me. Does it look okay?” she asked.

Saburo came over and kissed her head. “It looks perfect, Princess,” he replied with a smile. “Ayaka would be proud. Are you ready to go out?”

“Yes please. After all that walking we did today, I’m starving.”

“Should we take the strollers?” Ryo asked.
“If you want to carry them up and down stairs as we walk along the canal, sure,” Saburo replied.
“Didn’t you have enough at Fushimi Inari?”

“At the time it seemed like a good idea,” Ryo admitted.

“Remember, there’s enough of us that no one is going to get worn out carrying the akachans in a sling,” Yoshio stated.

“Okay,” Dee said. “That is the truth since we arrived in Japan. First Ryo’s family and now mine, we have willing adults to help with these two.” He looked down at Darin and Ryo, who had jackets on and their Little Twin Star hats and smiled. “We’re ready then.”

They bypassed the main entrance of the hotel and took a side door. The first thing Bikky noticed was the 7-11 next to the entrance. He looked up, noticing it was the same building as the hotel.

“Oh cool!” he exclaimed. “We have a 7-11 in the hotel!”

“Not exactly in,” Ryo stated. “It’s the same building, but not part of the hotel. If it was, there would be an entrance to the store from the hotel lobby.”

“It’s still downstairs and the same building,” Bikky said. “So, part of the hotel.” He grinned up at Ryo.

Ryo sighed in defeat while Dee started to grin. Saburo and Yoshio were doing their hardest to keep their expressions neutral. “Whatever,” he commented.

“Where’s the river?” Carol asked. “I’ve seen pictures of it, and I can’t wait to see.”

Saburo pointed to the buildings across the street from where they stood. “See those buildings?” he asked.

“Yeah. This street looks very interesting,” Carol said, “and bright, but not like how the river looks in
“That’s the back of the buildings overlooking the canal,” Saburo said. “A lot of people call it a river, and even the promenade along it is called a river walk, and they have river cruises, but Dotonbori is really a canal. If we take the river cruise, you will learn a lot about it and its history.”

“I’m not sure about tonight,” Dee said as the group followed Saburo and Yoshio, “but definitely, we’ll find time tomorrow. And if we don’t do the Ferris wheel tonight, we’ll try again tomorrow. We do want to take the river cruise. I heard about it, but they didn’t have it the last time I was in Osaka.”

“Yeah, that’s new for me too,” Ryo added. “We already knew we wanted to try to get on the boat while we’re in Osaka.”

“If we can’t do either tomorrow, we also have Sunday to try,” Bikky said walking next to Ryo, who had Darin in his sling. The baby boy’s arm extended toward him and started to smile. He reached out to grab Darin’s hand. “Are you ready for a fun night in Osaka, Darin?” he asked. “It’s a shame you can’t eat real food yet.”

“By the time your little brother and sister are old enough to enjoy the best of Osaka food, I think you will be able to take them to all the best places,” Yoshio said.

“Yeah, that’ll be cool,” Bikky said. “Where are we going to eat?”

“Do you two have any particular place in mind?” Saburo asked Dee and Ryo.

“No, we just know what we want, which is pretty obvious being in Osaka,” Dee replied and laughed.

“Then I suggest a food crawl,” Saburo said.

“Is that a Japanese word?” Carol asked. “How would you say it in Japanese?”

“It’s not, but I did spend some time living in America,” Saburo replied. “There is a word here in Osaka, if you prefer to use it. It’s kuidaore. It means ‘eat until you drop’. When Yoshio and I are in
places like Dotonbori, with such a wide selection of food, especially street food, we agreed that we do food crawls. All over Osaka, there are many places that have outside serving counters, or windows, so you can buy food without going inside. Then we don’t have to decide on just one thing, because going inside, getting a table and having a meal will take much longer.”

“And you end up getting a set or several selections to make it worth dining in a restaurant, so you leave full, and no room for nothing else, except maybe an after-dinner dessert,” Yoshio added.

“Makes sense,” Dee said. “I assume you know the best spots to hit up?”

“We do, but if something else catches your attention that we can grab and go, we’ll stop there too,” Saburo said.

“And then when we’re done having everything we want, then we’ll crawl back to the hotel after eating all that food,” Bikky remarked and laughed.

“That is also part of the food crawl,” Yoshio said.

“I’m glad I wore my comfortable clothes for tonight,” Carol said.

They reached an intersection and noticed on one corner a food truck was parked and selling steamed custard.

“That looks like something I might want on the way back,” Dee said.

“They sell very famous steamed custard,” Saburo said, approvingly. “We’ll stop on the way back, and if everyone is full, we’ll bring it back to have later or tomorrow morning.”

“I love how you think, Ojiisan,” Bikky said with a smile.

“But first, we go left here. At the start of the bridge, we’ll go down the stairs to the promenade for our first stop,” said Saburo.
As they started to walk down the short stretch of a narrow street closed off to traffic, with a devilish grin, Yoshio leaned toward Ryo and said, “This is a very famous takoyaki shop. I think they have the best takoyaki in all of Japan.”

Ryo started to laugh at his father-in-law. “I surrender,” he said, “but I’m not complaining about the first stop.”

“Oh yum! I can’t wait!” Bikky said.

“Me too,” Carol added.

They got to the start of the foot bridge going across Dotonbori and moved to the side to stop for a minute.

“Oh, it looks prettier than the pictures,” Carol exclaimed as they took in the man-made waterway going between two rows of buildings with bright neon signs, moving LED billboards and large objects that displayed something to indicate the type of food they served on some buildings.

A boat came from under the bridge, and they heard the tour talking about the bridge they stood on. The guide was talking in Japanese, but Bikky and Carol caught the name of the bridge. Then she started talking in English.

“Yes, the tour guides speak Japanese and English and both languages are used on the cruise,” Yoshio said. “I guess we don’t have to tell you the name of this bridge.”

“I think we are only going to see two bridges tonight,” Saburo said. “This one, and the next one down there, but you will see all the bridges on the cruise and even get a little history on each one. In fact, Yoshio and I will refrain from saying too much about the area, so you have something to look forward to on the cruise. Tonight, we’ll just concentrate on food.”

“Papa, Chichi,” Dee started. “I think we should get down there before that line grows.”

“Oh no! A line?” Bikky exclaimed and looked down. “Geez!”
“It is a famous spot,” Dee said. “And if my father says they have the best takoyaki, we’re getting on that line.”

“Yes, please. Let us go,” Saburo said, starting to walk to the wooden stairs going down to the promenade and the corner shop with the large open counter as part of their storefront. As they stood on the line, a family left one of the tables set up along the boardwalk.

Putting his trust in both of his fathers, Dee volunteered to quickly go over and sit down at the table. Ryo joined him a few minutes later.

“Your fathers said that since we both have babies with us, that I should keep you company and they’ll make sure we have the best takoyaki in Japan. They asked if there was any way we didn’t like takoyaki and I told them that we only had it one way, but willing to try something different if that is what they come back with.”

Dee started to laugh. “Yeah, I’m pretty used to the standard way with the mayo, takoyaki sauce, bonita flakes and aonori, but I did eat in a place around here that served the takoyaki with green tea broth. Anyway, I suspect my fathers are going to do what your family tends to do when we eat out.”

“Oh, right. At least then we’ll get to sample a little of what they have to offer and still have room for the next place or two,” Ryo said. “I also thought it was good to leave Bikky with your fathers. He seems to like them a lot, and even if it’s not a long time, at least it will give him some time with them without us.”

“Seems to?” Dee asked. “Hell, he adores them. I can see that, and I’m glad. I’m very fond of them myself, and hope we’ll be seeing much more of them.”

“You will. We all will. We’ll make certain of it,” Ryo assured Dee. Suddenly looking serious, he said, “I really do feel for Saburo. I can’t imagine losing a child, and I hope we never will know, but I’m also glad that it wasn’t what it looked like it was when you were found. Saburo is a good man who definitely loved you so much.”

“He still does,” Dee said softly. “That’s what amazes me more than discovering the truth. And I’m getting there. I’m glad we asked them to join us. I just wish they had the time to do the full trip. The more time I spend with them, the more I’m finding I love both of my fathers.”

Ryo reached out to grab one of Dee’s hands in his and squeezed it. “I am so happy for you, Dee.”
Another thing to be thankful of you getting pregnant. Who knows if you would have ever been reunited with Dafydd or any of your family if we didn’t find we had the money to come to Japan for a vacation.”

Dee shrugged and with a teasing grin said, “Who knows? I mean Momo could have finally produced a picture of her husband for someone in your family.”

“And who knows when that would have been. Instead of you having the last week getting to know your twin brother and then your father, and the rest of your family.”

“I still think at nights that it’s all a dream, and then I wake up and find out it’s not. This is our life now, Ryo, including my Japanese family.”

With a smile, Ryo said, “And how many times did you speak to Dafydd today?”

“Only twice. As much fun as I’m having since we left Nagoya, I got so used to having Dafydd around that I find I’m missing him. It makes me wonder how it will be when he’s still here in Japan and I’m in New York.”

“Thank goodness for facetime,” Ryo said. “It’s not the same, but it’s better than just a phone call. And we have better technology for you two to do that, thanks to your grandfather’s communications company.”

“You know, I’ve been thinking about what your grandmother said when we told your grandparents about my family. There’s a part of me that wants to just rub it in all the dinosaurs faces that I’m not the trash they think I am.”

“If I know my grandmother, she’s already planning an opportunity for you to do just that,” Ryo said. “I get my evil side more than just from my mother’s family.”

Dee started to laugh. “And yet I fell in love with you.”

“Not apologizing about that.”
“You don’t have to.”

When Saburo, Yoshio, Carol and Bikky came over to the table, they were loaded with clear plastic containers and paper food boats. They set them on the table.

“We should have picked up drinks at 7-Eleven,” Saburo said as he sat down. “There are no vending machines close by, and we did not want to hold up the line coming back for drinks.”

“We should be able to get something to drink at some of the places,” Yoshio said, “but we’ll make sure to get drinks in Donki to make sure we have something with our food.”

“We can survive the one time,” Dee said, accepting chopsticks from Carol. “I was telling Ryo that he shouldn’t have expected you to get us just one thing.”

“Where’s the fun in that?” Saburo asked. “Everyone can enjoy all the ways they serve takoyaki and there should be enough for a little extra of a favorite.”

“It all looks great,” Ryo said, already with chopsticks and ready to dig in.

Saburo picked up one of the paper food boats and removed several extras from the bottom. “We asked for empty cartons so we can put what we want without having to move food around.”

“Even the type we normally have looks much better than anything we have back in New York,” Dee said. “Including when we make it.”

“Well, eat up,” Saburo said with gusto. He clapped his hands before him and exclaimed, “Ikadakimasu!”

Everyone followed his example and started to pick takoyaki balls and place in their holder.

“Oh my goodness, this is really good!” Carol exclaimed as they started to eat. “I’m glad we came here just for this.”
“It’s very easy to come to Osaka just for the food,” Dee agreed. “But it’s been so long, that this passes my memory on what takoyaki tastes like in Osaka.”

“I think we should come here together at least two or three times a year. It’s not far from Nagoya and it takes much less time on shinkansen,” Yoshio suggested. “Maybe if we’re coming for just a day or two, we can convince more family to join us.”

“I think I like that idea,” Dee said.

“Don’t forget Uncle Hitoshi and his family who lives here,” Saburo stated. “I’m sure you all will want to see more of his family after meeting them tomorrow.”

“I look forward to meeting them,” Dee said. “And if this is their neck of the woods, no reason not to include them when we come.”

“You might even come a time or two just to visit family,” Yoshio said with a smile.

“At the risk of having a massive crowd with us, if no one minds, I’d love to have my grandmother and some of my family join us once,” Ryo said.

“They are also invited,” Saburo said. “The more the merrier. Yoshio and I are pretty used to going to places in a large crowd. You have seen our family, yes?”

“We look more like a tour group than a family most times,” Yoshio added. “We usually end up hiring buses when we are not walking.”

“I can see why,” Dee had to agree. “Ryo and I got used to it around the time of our wedding when family started to come in from Japan and Ireland.”

“Mother Maria-san’s family flew in from Ireland for your wedding?” Saburo asked.

“The ones who know me from when I used to visit them in Ireland and their families,” Dee replied. “About twenty of them.”
“Where in Ireland are they from?” Yoshio asked.

“Around the Belfast area. One of Mother’s cousins has a farm outside of Belfast. It’s been in the family for generations. There are cousins who live in Belfast and Bangor,” Dee replied.

“And this is the farm you used to spend summers?” Saburo asked.

“Yes, but sometimes I’d spend a night or two in another cousin’s house in the cities, which are much different type of city than New York,” Dee replied.

“Hey, little man, you have to wait a few years before you can eat takoyaki,” Ryo exclaimed as Darin attempted to grab a little wheat ball with a piece of octopus inside. He barely prevented it from falling to the floor and got it back on his plate. “And these are just too delicious to let you play with it.” He tickled the baby boy’s chin as Darin giggled, reaching for the table.

Bikky leaned over so his face was in Darin’s view. The baby’s attention went from the food on the table to his older brother with a wide smile and he started to reach toward Bikky. Bikky took a little hand and shook it gently. “Darin, kono takoyaki wa oishii desu.”

“Which means we’re going to savor being greedy with our takoyaki until you and your sister are old enough to have to include you,” Dee remarked with a grin. “That’s very good, Biks.”

“Yeah, it sounds like you’re picking up very well,” Ryo said. He reached over to ruffle Bikky’s head.

“Because Bikky did so well with that, I volunteer one of my most oishii takoyaki for little Darin to explore,” Yoshio said. He held out a takoyaki until Darin had it in his hands. “Now don’t eat it, akachan.” To Ryo, he said, “It’s okay if he puts it near his mouth. It’s an object, and akachan will put things in his mouth. Just make sure he doesn’t swallow it.”

“That also means that Darin is getting tired of formula and wants other choices,” Saburo said. He looked over to Ryoko, who was sitting on Dee’s lap. “Ryoko looks like she’s ready too even if she isn’t as adventurous with the real food close by.”
“I don’t think being in the middle of a countrywide road trip is a good time to try solid food for the first time,” Ryo said. “Besides, since we figured it will happen while we’re in Japan, I promised my grandmother that she can be there, since she missed being there for their birth. She had plans to be in New York before Dee’s c-section, but these two decided they wanted to come a little earlier.”

“About a week earlier. Ryo’s grandmother had plans to fly in the Saturday before my C-section date, and these two wanted out the Monday before,” said Dee. He looked at his fathers and with a small smile added, “You both weren’t there either. Not that any of us knew you should have been there. How about we give you a call when we’re ready to try solid for the first time, so you can join us.”

“It’s only 90 minutes to Tokyo on shinkansen. Of course, we would love to be there,” Saburo said. “Even if you call in the morning of that day, we’ll be there.”

“Good.” Dee sighed. “It’s a shame that Mother won’t be around for it, but at least she was there for their births and to see them anytime she wants, so that’s something. She’ll just have to have honors of feeding them solids their first time back in New York.”

“She already had an idea that they will be trying solids while we’re here,” Ryo added. “Which is why she expects us to do a video call when we do. She’ll be fine, and we’ll have all the other important people with us when it happens.”

“Yes, we’ll make sure Mother Maria-san is included with video,” Yoshio said.

“I think I am going to send her a GPN phone. I can get her on the family plan. That way she will have the best communication during the times you are in Japan, and when you are in New York, I can have nice video talks with her,” Saburo said. “In fact, I will see to it Monday.”

“Will Ojiisan allow it?” Dee asked.

Saburo waved off the question. “He doesn’t have to. Don’t worry, all will be handled. Like you and your family when you return to New York, she can use her new phone for her regular phone service in America.”

“Thank you, Papa,” Dee said with a smile. “I guess you’re right. What’s the good of having state of art video on our side, if she has equipment that can’t handle it. It’ll probably be a little better because we will be using our phones, but not as good as her phone is equal to ours.”
“Exactly, Daisuke. She needs the best phone there is for all communication with your families in Japan. That also includes Ryo’s family, since she is also in contact with them,” Saburo said.

The group continued to enjoy their food, making happy sounds and exclamations as they ate, while Darin continued to play with the takoyaki that was given to him. He even put it to his mouth several times, making a screech or laughing after. Ryoko seemed not happy with being left out, so Dee sacrificed one of his takoyaki for his daughter to examine. As they ate, they had two happy infants exploring the strange new toy that was given to them. Everyone made sure that if a ball went into one of their mouths, that it didn’t go in too far for them to accidentally swallow.

Sometime later, Dee looked at the table cluttered with empty containers. “It looks like we’re done here, and I’m sure someone on that line is eyeing us, wondering when we are going to leave.”

“Time for the next stop,” Saburo announced as he stood up and started gathering their trash. “If you do not mind, Yoshio and I will take the akachans for a while.”

Carol stood. “I’ll help with this since you two have babies on your laps for now,” she said and helped Saburo take their trash to the garbage receptacle near the shop.

When they returned Yoshio already had the sling on and Ryo was handing Darin over to him. Ryoko was on Bikky’s lap and Dee had his sling ready to hand to his father. It was a quick transfer and before they knew it, the group was walking along the boardwalk going toward the bridge that was indicated earlier.

The Don Quijote was only a few buildings from where they ate, and they went inside picking up something to drink, a few bags of various snacks and a cloth bag to conveniently carry everything in. When they came out of the store, they found a bench to sit at and everyone enjoyed one of the drinks they each had selected inside the store.

As they drank, talked and took pictures, Dee was observing the line for the Ferris wheel. When everyone was almost done with their drinks, he said, “The line doesn’t seem that bad. Maybe a little bit of a wait, but to be honest, after our first food stop, I don’t think I’m ready to hit up the next food place.”

“Yeah, that’s a good idea,” Ryo said. He looked up at the Ferris wheel. “It looks like they only fit up
“If you don’t mind us taking Ryoko and Darin in a car with us, you and Daisuke can go with Bikky and Carol,” Saburo suggested. “That way you can appreciate the view from the Ferris wheel with your son who is also able to appreciate what you can see.”

“If that’s okay with you,” Dee said.

“That is,” Yoshio replied. “If it was not okay, your father would never had suggested it.” He smiled at Dee.

“Okay. Time to get in line for the Donki Ferris wheel,” Dee said and looked at the others, who all nodded their heads in agreement.

The Ferris wheel wasn’t the highest they had been on, but it was high enough for a beautiful view of Osaka. They allowed Bikky and Carol to take a video, using parts of it for Carol’s YouTube channel, and whatever they didn’t would still be a great video of them enjoying the ride along with the view. Both Ryo and Dee also took pictures, leaving the video to Bikky and Carol, but at one point, Dee did take over the camcorder for a couple of minutes so there could be a sequence with both Bikky and Carol. Ryo was glad for that to have with the video.

Apparently Saburo and Yoshio had been on this particular Ferris wheel because they didn’t get on the next car, so there were times that they were able to see Dee’s fathers, along with Ryoko and Darin. Thankfully, Bikky got video of them too.

The Ferris wheel was unique than other’s they’ve been on. The car was like a wheel and it rotated once the car cleared the building. It afforded 360 degree views of Osaka.

When they got off the ride and waited for Yoshio and Saburo to join them, along with their infant twins, they continued their walk along the canal. There were no more restaurants with kiosks outside, so the group just enjoyed the sights of the buildings, and all the interesting signage. More video footage was taken, and they stopped a few times for photo taking.
When they reached Ebisubashi, the Ebisu Bridge, Saburo suggested they cross the bridge to the other side. There were a few restaurants that had windows or kiosks selling food to go. As they crossed the bridge, Yoshio mentioned that they should keep in mind this particular bridge as they crossed it, because it will come up again during their sightseeing. He had everyone’s curiosity, including Ryo’s and Dee’s, but he had nothing more to say about it. Saburo backed his husband up, only adding that to say more will kill the fun later. Carol did point out that the middle of the bridge was round like a circle, and Ryo caught both Saburo and Yoshio smirk as they confirmed it was indeed a circle. Ryo suspected the shape had something to do with it, but could not think of anything. He decided it was best to push it to the back of his mind until they took the river cruise, and if they ended up not having time, to ask then about the bridge.

They did stop a couple of times for photos and to allow Bikky and Carol to make a video. At the end of the bridge, Yoshio said they should get some crab first from the end restaurant. The restaurant had a giant crab on the front and had a kiosk next to the door under the crab on Dotonbori Dori. Saburo quickly seconded the idea and decided they should take a walk along the street, buying from places that sold on that street. Then they could make their way along the canal side.

They got grilled crab and crab sushi from the restaurant. Ryo noticed a couple of stores down, there was a coffee shop selling Kona coffee and decided he was in the mood for coffee. It was a long day, but no one wanted to call it a night yet. There was a Starbuck’s across the street, but Ryo felt they had plenty of them in New York, and to try something more local. Besides, he did enjoy a cup of Kona coffee when he had the chance.

Dee agreed with Ryo. Saburo also decided on coffee. Bikky and Carol were happy with opening another bottle of milk tea, and Yoshio decided on getting a cup of oolong tea. They found a place to pull over with the crab and coffee. Ryo was thinking he was just having crab and not expecting anything different than what he had before. He did enjoy having crab, but there really was only so much to do with it. However, when he took his first bite of the grilled crab still in its shell, he let out a sound that would have been embarrassing if he was the only one. Dee’s eyes were wide, and he dug in for another bite, drawing the delicate crab meat from the shell with his chopsticks. Bikky was also starting to plow through his crab. Carol was more ladylike in her enjoyment, but she made little sounds of bliss. Saburo and Yoshio laughed, having already expected such reactions.

“This is incredible,” Ryo exclaimed after swallowing his second bite. “I don’t think I’ve had crab this delicious.”

“It’s sinful,” Dee commented. “Damn, that’s good crab. And something tells me there’s no way we can get it this way, no matter how many hours spent grilling crab.”

Yoshio laughed again. “Oh, we’ve tried, but we always end up having to come here for crab just like
“I suspect the only way to learn the secret is to get hired to work here,” Saburo said.

“Do you think they’ll hire me when I’m old enough?” Bikky asked. “I mean, my Japanese should be better by then. I hope.”

Ryo laughed and patted Bikky on his shoulder. “You manage to get a job making crab here, you better come home and share the secret. Which could be in Osaka. Damn, I think I want more.”

“It’s a possibility, but there is still more food out there to try,” Saburo said. He looked at Dee. “Daisuke, did you not try the crab the last time you here? This is a very famous place that was here forever.”

Dee shrugged with a rueful smile. “I always passed it up,” he admitted. “I figured you can get crab everywhere. I mostly focused on okonomiyaki, takoyaki and kushikatsu.”

“What’s kushikatsu?” Bikky asked.

“Well, it’s katsu,” Dee replied cryptically. “Only it’s on a stick.”

“You’ll know exactly what it is tonight,” Saburo promised Bikky.

“You know, I completely forgot about that,” Ryo said. “I don’t know why, except maybe because it’s been a while since I’ve been here and only had it the times I came to Osaka. I’m looking forward to it.”

“We could go there next,” Yoshio said. “However, there are a lot more shops selling kushikatsu at Tsutenkaku, one of our stops tomorrow.”

“This is how I see it,” Dee said. “We can go next. And if Bikky decides he has to have more before we leave Osaka, then we always have tomorrow at Tsutenkaku. But we still need to make a stop here at some point going to and from the hotel for more crab.”
“I agree with my son,” Saburo said.

“Well Biks? Carol? Looks like we’re getting more crab before leaving Osaka, so want to try some kushikatsu? You’ll be wanting more tomorrow, I promise,” Ryo said.

Bikky nodded his head vigorously. “Do you think maybe we can grab some of our favorites, including the crab before leaving for Hiroshima for road food?”

“Oh hell yeah, Biks,” Dee said. “Great idea!”

Saburo let out a laugh as he hugged both Dee and Bikky. “Definitely my son and grandson.”

“Ryoko and Darin doesn’t stand a chance with those two around,” Ryo quipped with a laugh. “And I won’t complain if they do grow up with the same ideas.”

With a wide grin, Saburo looked at him and exclaimed, “And spoken like my son-in-law.”

Yoshio laughed and said, “You three are definitely family, especially by Saburo’s standards. Which in my opinion are higher and more important than his father’s.”

“There’s more food out there, so if we’re done, let’s get walking,” Dee stated with a smile.

Saburo and Yoshio introduced Bikky and Carol to kushikatsu, skewered meat dipped in egg and breadcrumbs and then deep-fried until golden.

It really was no surprise to Ryo when both Bikky and Carol exclaimed that they better be getting more the next day.

“Do you have a favorite, Bikky?” Saburo asked.

“The mochi,” Bikky started.
With a laugh, Ryo said, “No surprise there.”

“And the pork. And the shrimp. The chicken. The squid. Oh! Those long fishy things that had cheese in them was yum too,” Bikky continued.

“I think it’s safe to say that kushikatsu was a success with Bikky,” Yoshio said with amusement. “What about you, Carol? Did you have a favorite?”

“Shrimp, but that’s my favorite, but they were all good including the stuff I don’t know what it was,” Carol said. “Like those long things Bikky said.”

“You had them before,” Ryo stated. “We never stuffed a piece of cheese in them, and I have no idea why since it was something my mother always made. Chikuwa.”

“We usually cut them up when we use it at home, but when Ryo makes oden, he would leave them whole,” Dee said.

“Oh, those. Yeah. And you do need to add cheese to them,” Bikky said.

“Yeah but having them just baked instead of fried with batter and panko will seem a bit of a letdown at this point,” Dee said with a smirk.

“Better than nothing, I guess,” Ryo said.

“Yes, you are right,” Dee agreed. “Now, did you notice that none of the vegetables were mentioned?”

“They were good too,” Carol said. “I liked the asparagus a lot. Also the mushrooms.”

“Onions,” Bikky said. “And mushrooms.”
“That’s good,” Yoshio said. “Yes, I agree with the mushrooms but my favorite is quail eggs.”

“That’s not a vegetable,” Bikky pointed out and laughed.

“No, but it’s not a meat,” Yoshio countered. “But I would have one of everything if I had the room.”

Dee started to laugh. “I know what you mean, Chichi,” he agreed. “At least we have tomorrow to get some favorites and try something we didn’t tonight. So next? After we have some of our drinks, because now I’m thirsty.”

Once they had something to drink, the group continued on their walk, enjoying sushi, gyoza, yakisoba, okonomiyaki and more takoyaki. On the sweet side they had taiyaki, mochi and shared a gigantic cloud of cotton candy.

After sharing some yakisoba, and just walking along the streets in the immediate area, Yoshio stopped them before a truck parked on a corner of a parking area. “I think we need to have some of this,” he said with a smile.

“Oh good idea,” Saburo agreed.

“Holy crap!” Dee exclaimed, looking at the side of the truck. “Okay, I gotta have some of this.”

“Melon pan and green tea ice cream?” Bikky asked.

“Fresh baked melon pan,” Yoshio corrected, “and their own green tea ice cream.”

“Oh, I want to try,” Carol said. “Melon pan is so much better here in Japan than what you get in Mitsuwa.”

“I agree,” Ryo said, “but we get what we get,” he added with a laugh.
Yoshio went over to the truck and ordered three melon buns with green tea ice cream. Ryo watched as the woman in the truck took fresh baked buns from a warmer and sliced it in half, and then added a generous serving of the green tea ice cream. Yoshio managed to get the buns cut in half, so everyone could enjoy the treat but not have a whole one. They were delicious, which was a good thing, because it needed to be eaten fast. The warmth of the buns caused the ice cream to start melting. By the time they were done, Ryo took out the large package of wet tissues he had picked up earlier when they were in Don Quijote, because he didn’t want to pull out the baby wet wipes they always kept in the baby bag. Everyone needed more than one tissue to clean up from the messy but wonderful treat before they were ready to go on their way again.

There was a small ramen restaurant with outdoor tables, so they stopped there. They selected three types of ramen and all six shared the bowls. By the time they reached Ebishibashi after the ramen, Ryo felt he understood kuidaore, because he felt like he was ready to drop. He felt if he had one more bit, he would explode.

They found a bench along the promenade and were enjoying just sitting and people watching as they drank the rest of the drinks they had bought in Don Quijote.

After a while, Saburo looked at Yoshio, and then started to yawn. Ryo knew immediately that something was up. One thing Ryo had noticed upon spending time with Saburo and Yoshio is that they seemed to be more in tune with each other than he was with Dee. And he knew that the rapport he shared with Dee was special. Dafydd and Momo were a cute couple and had their own language, but they did not read each other as well, even after ten years. Not that Ryo didn’t believe they eventually would.

What Ryo saw with Saburo and Yoshio went beyond him and Dee. They really were able to finish each other’s sentences. Ryo also observed that Saburo seemed gifted to see things others weren’t able to, and wondered if it was one of those rare things that were passed down, because Dee’s knack for it was sometimes scary, and the only person Ryo knew who could pass Dee was Henry. There might be two, Ryo mused, wondering if Saburo could equal or surpass Henry with that gift. Dafydd also had that ability, and Ryo had to wonder if Dee and Dafydd got that from their father.

To share what Dee and Ryo did took two, and while Ryo sometimes envied Dee’s ability to see between the lines and read people, he also knew that the connection he shared with his husband was special. Looking at Saburo and Yoshio, Ryo had to wonder if that connection to read each other would grow stronger with time. Saburo and Yoshio did have almost 30 years to build on it, and it was special. His grandparents in New York were married for over 50 years and he did not see any special connection except that they still loved each other, and that his grandmother definitely did have his grandfather wrapped around her finger.

Ryo was brought out of his musing when he heard Yoshio start to speak. “It’s been a long day, and I fear we’re not as young as the rest of you.”
“We can go back to the hotel,” Dee offered, for once completely missing what Ryo pieced together once his father-in-law started talking.

Saburo took Ryoko from Dee’s lap and smiled. “As Yoshio said, we’re not as young as you, and many places will still be open for at least a couple of more hours. Plus, there are izakayas and bars, at least for you and Ryo,” Saburo said to Dee. “But Bikky and Carol can find some places to enjoy what Osaka has to offer too. There are many game centers in the area. Why don’t Yoshio and I take Ryoko and Darin back with us, and the rest of you make what’s left of the night a date night?”

Dee looked at his father in thought and then to Yoshio. “Are you sure, Papa? What about you, Chichi? I mean, if it’s all right with Ryo, I don’t have a problem letting Biks and Carol go off on their own for a bit.’”

“We did say they could go off on their own in between family outings, so I’m good with it,” Ryo said.

“Cool!” Bikky exclaimed.

“Do you have your cell phones with you?” Ryo asked. When both teens nodded their heads, he added, “Fine. You can go exploring then. Just don’t go too far from here, and if you get lost, call us. And be back by midnight. Just be quiet when you come in, in case your grandfathers are sleeping.”


“Yes, thank you and goodnight Saburo-san and Yoshio-san. I’ll see you in the morning,” Carol said.

As Bikky and Carol started to get up, Saburo said, “Chotto matte, Bikky.”

“Yes, Ojiisan?”

“How much yen do you have?” Saburo asked.
“I guess enough. We’ll be okay, Ojiisan.”

Saburo took out his wallet and handed Bikky a couple of bills. “This should keep you going for at least a few days.”

Bikky looked at the bills and his eyes lit up. “Oh wow. Thank you, Ojiisan!”

“Enjoy, Bikky. Now you two go and have fun, while we convince your dads that they need a date night too,” said Saburo.

After Bikky and Carol left, offering to take the empty bottles to find a bin to deposit them, Dee looked at his father. “Papa, you didn’t have to. Bikky knows, if he’s running low on money, to just ask. Especially while we’re on vacation.”

“I know, Daisuke, I know. I know you can afford to give him money, but does that mean that a grandfather can’t spoil his grandson?” Saburo said with a smile. “I did nothing more than I would do with my other grandchildren when they get his age.”

Dee let out a snort and looked suspiciously at his father. “Like he’s going to have a chance to spend whatever he has left tomorrow morning while you’re with us.” He looked at Ryo. “It’s your grandmother all over again,” he said. “Did you notice we didn’t pay for anything tonight?”

Ryo had to laugh, because what Dee said was true.

“I have a lot of catching up to do,” Saburo said. “Both Yoshio and I do. We’ll be heading back to Nagoya Sunday night, and you can start spending your own money again until you return to Nagoya.”

Dee started to laugh and hugged his father. “You don’t have to make up for anything, Papa. Just having you and Chichi going forward is more than enough for me,” he said in Japanese, since they did not have to worry about Bikky and Carol being included.

“I’m glad to hear that,” Saburo said, also in Japanese, his eyes glittering with unshed tears. “But two facts still remain.”
“What’s that?” Dee asked as they continued to speak in Japanese.

“One, after all that walking around in Kyoto today and then tonight, I really am getting tired. I can see Yoshio is too. Two, it is important to have time just for the two of you with no kids, no fathers or other family. So please take advantage of opportunity when it presents itself. Yoshio and I have no problem taking the akachans back with us, and we have plenty of experience with getting babies ready for bed.”

“We’ll have them cleaned and fed in no time,” Yoshio said. He smiled down at Darin. “Besides there is nothing more soothing then relaxing with a little one during feeding. They don’t seem to be no trouble at all during feeding time.”

Dee started to smile, and Ryo had to join him. “Yeah, they don’t fuss around for feeding, but they can get a little fussy during bath time. You can just change them, and we’ll take care of baths tomorrow morning.”

Yoshio waved him off. “We can handle baths in a nice comfortable hotel room with very comfortable furniture. It’s doing more walking that is any further than from here to the hotel that I reached my limit on for today. Now go off and have fun and do not worry about these two.”

“And I promise not to give you and Ryo money so you don’t have to spend your own during the time,” Saburo added with an impish smile, which made Yoshio laugh.

Dee shook his head and looked at Ryo. “Any problem with my fathers heading back to the hotel with the chibis?”

“None at all,” Ryo replied. “I trust Saburo-san and Yoshio-san completely with Darin and Ryoko.”

“Ryo, I’ve been meaning to bring something up, and before we leave, I think this is a good time,” Saburo said.

“What’s that, Saburo-san?”

“That,” Saburo replied. “Daisuke now calls us Papa and Chichi, because we are his fathers. But you are my Daisuke’s husband, and all our children’s spouses also call us Papa and Chichi. You are family and because of Daisuke, you are also our son. Can you consider calling us Papa and Chichi
Ryo nodded and noticed the smirk on Dee’s face. He knew exactly what was on his husband’s mind, and truth be told, Dee would have the right to say it. “I will strive to remember that, Papa,” he replied.

“Good. I know it will be hard at first, but it would mean much to us,” Yoshio said.

“I do know,” Dee said, still with that smirk, “that once you put your mind on using it, it gets easier until you no longer have to think about it.” The smirk turned into a warm smile. “Besides, my fathers make it really easy to stop having to think about it.”

“This makes me happy to hear, Daisuke,” Yoshio said.

“Me too,” added Saburo. “Now please give us the slings so we can be on our way, and you two can enjoy each other in Osaka.”

“If you insist, Papa,” Dee said, starting to remove the sling.

“I do,” Saburo stated with a smile.

Ryo started to remove the sling to hand to Yoshio. “I doubt you will, but if there is any problem, please do not be afraid to call us. Sometimes Darin can get a little fussy around bedtime.”

“I’ve seen Darin’s fussy, and it’s nothing like I had to go through with Dafydd,” said Saburo. “After all, that poor akachan lost his twin, and could find no comfort for the longest time. At least Darin has his sister to cuddle up to when he gets fussy.”

“Yeah, that does seem to do the trick most of the time,” Dee said. He had a strange look on his face.

“That was over 30 years ago, Daisuke. Forget what I said about your brother. He is fine now. He’s a very good man, and now he also has his twin back,” Saburo said. “Do not think that Dafydd was the only one. I spoke to your mother, and she said that when she got you, for the longest time you cried for no reason. Or she thought was no reason. She knows better now. You missed your twin, too. But you both got past it and you’re more than fine. You were before you were reunited, but I bet it’s
better now.”

Dee nodded. “It is. You know, I didn’t think of it until you mentioned it, but Mother did say that I cried a lot. They just thought it was colic.”

“In America, I guess there was no reason to consider that you were a twin. No one had any idea about your parents. Carrier twin bonds are stronger than non-Carrier twins, so of course even as a baby you felt a part of you missing.” Yoshio offered. He smiled at Dee. “I noticed that you speak to Dafydd at least twice a day since we left Nagoya. Do you miss not having him with you?”

“Yes. We both admitted that with each other, but we have to get used to it before it’s time to head back home to New York,” said Dee. “At least we won’t be crying all the time. Just picking up the phone will do the trick.”

Saburo sighed. “I do wish we can get you and your family to move to Japan. Even Tokyo is closer than New York, but I understand you have your life in New York. I would try to convince Dafydd to move to New York, as much as I’ll miss him, but I’ll find comfort in knowing my first-born twins are together. But he also has his life in Nagoya. We’ll all be doing a lot of phone calls and video calls when you are back in New York. Let us not think about that now and enjoy the time you are in Japan. And as much as I enjoy spending time with you and your husband, I really am ready to go back to the hotel and want you both to have a good time just the two of you for a while. That is good for a marriage.”

“Even raising eight children, Saburo and I found time to spend at least one night a week just the two of us. As you should do while raising your three. And we get to spend some time with our grandbabies.” Yoshio smiled at Dee, and then Ryo.

“We’ll keep that in mind, Yo--- Chichi,” Ryo said as he gave Yoshio the sling and then took Dee’s hand. “Good night.”

“You two have a very good night,” Yoshio said with a warm smile as he settled Darin in the sling.

“Yes, what your father said. We’ll see you in morning,” Saburo said, already having Ryoko snug in her sling. She had her head resting against his chest and her eyes were close. “It looks like this akachan is ready for bed.”

Ryo chuckled. “She had a rough day being carried and handled by loving relatives.”
Dee, Yoshio and Saburo laughed. Dee looked at Darin, who was patting Yoshio’s chest, looking up at him and smiling. “This one is bound to run out of energy eventually. Hopefully for all of us, before the morning.”

“Oh, I’ve gotten to know this one’s patterns quite well,” Yoshio said. “He’s fighting to stay awake because he thinks there’s still a lot of excitement. I know they enjoy all the bright lights around here, but it also tires little ones out after a time. He’ll be asleep just in time to have to wake him long enough for his bath and feeding.”

Dee squeezed Ryo’s hand. “See that? My fathers have their number already,” he said with a laugh. “You are right that we can trust our chibis with them. Goodnight, Papa, Chichi.”

“Night Daisuke and Ryo,” Saburo said and the two older men started to head for the stairs by the bridge to go up to the street.

“I really do love your fathers,” Ryo said.

“I do too,” Dee admitted. “And I love them even more for giving us some time alone, as much as I enjoy having them with us. I also got to know those two pretty well, and I know it takes more out of them to be that tired. They just want to hang out with the chibis and give us some date time.”

“You know, I was wondering about that myself. Well, Daisuke, any place in particular you want to go?”

Dee leaned over to nip Ryo’s nose. “Let’s stroll down the shopping street until the stores start to close. There should be a bar or something that we can settle in after. It’s been a while since I’ve been here, and there is a lot of new stuff.”

“I know what you mean. I’m good with strolling.” He smiled as they started to head toward the stairs Saburo and Yoshio had taken not long ago, still holding hands and looking forward to further explore what Osaka had to offer.

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They strolled along the canal, enjoying the lights of the establishments, and taking pictures. At one point while crossing one of the bridges, Dee took a photo of a boat as it went under them. Several people looked up and waved as Dee took the photo. He spared a hand to join Ryo in waving back at them. They continued on their roaming of the streets for another 45 minutes before settling down at a bench on the promenade enjoying hot cans of coffee they got from a vending machine on one of the side streets they had walked along going away from the promenade before returning to find somewhere to sit.

Three Japanese girls in their 20’s were walking by and as one looked in their direction, she let out an excited exclamation, making the other two girls look. They came up to Dee and Ryo with smiles and saying hello.

Ryo looked at Dee, who shrugged and was just about to say hello back and ask about why they came up to them when the first girl who first noticed them stated in Japanese, “You were on the bridge, and took our picture.”

Dee started to laugh. “Oh. Yes, I did,” he replied in Japanese, and the girls giggled in response. They talked for a few minutes. The girls were on vacation in Osaka from Fukouka. They told the girls they were on family vacation from New York and came to Osaka with Dee’s fathers, who insisted that they go on a date night while Dee’s fathers took their twins back to the hotel for the night, and that somewhere out there was their teenage son with his girlfriend. They also mentioned how they were going to Fukouka later that week. They took a few selfies with the girls with their phones and the girls’, and then said goodbye as the girls continued on their way along the promenade.

Dee and Ryo decided to leave the promenade to stroll along a few more streets in the area. They found a bar with an interior of neon lights, including on the furniture and a ceiling painted to look like outer space. They left after one beer and continued to walk.

They went between talking to walking just arm in arm, enjoying exploring Osaka together.

Ryo came to a stop when they came to a corner with a flashy building. More than just bright lights, each of the buildings 6 floors were painted a different bright color, and each floor had a different shape than the others, with both pointed and rounded corners jutting out at all angles.

“Huh,” Dee said. “It’s a love hotel. Pretty gaudy looking, but still picture worthy.”
Ryo chuckled a little and then looked at Dee. “See this made me wonder about the times we let Bikky and Carol roam on their own.”

“Bikky’s only 15,” Dee replied. “Maybe next year we might have to worry.”

“But Carol is 18, and Bikky can get slippery when he wants to.”

Dee gave Ryo a strange look and it took a second for Ryo to read the look and thought back to what he just said. He started to laugh. “Oh, hell no. I didn’t mean it that way, but yeah, he is sneaky enough that if Carol was able to get a room to find his way into it.”

Dee let out a heavy sigh. “Then we hope they don’t get caught. I really don’t want to get that call from the police in Japan. Yeah, I know they are probably doing it whenever they can find a place away from us. And yes, I know how creative I was when I was his age. We both agreed that we can’t stop it. We can do our best to make it difficult, but we can’t stop it. As long as they are careful enough not to let us, or anyone in our families know, we just don’t talk about it. And Elina did say she made sure Carol is taking birth control pills.”

Ryo shook his head. “And you also told him that if there was anything he wanted to talk about or know, to come to you instead finding the answers on the streets.”

“Hypothetical questions are not the same as walking in on them,” Dee pointed out. “Even if I know the real reason he’s asking, and he knows I know. Besides, you also agreed with me that it’s better he gets answers from us than from his friends.”

“Yeah, I know. He knows he can also come to me, but he’ll most likely come to you. Not that it would be a pleasant experience for either of us when he finally does decide to take up that offer.”

“I know. Talking about sex with your son is just too damn weird,” Dee said.

With a smirk, Ryo asked, “Is it as weird as having your brother talk about your grandparents’ sex life?”

“One is weirder, but I’m not sure which one yet.” Dee moved closer to Ryo, tucking him against the building. “I’d rather not talk about what our son is up to with his girlfriend, even if I know what I was doing at his age, which is probably the same thing. I don’t want to think about my grandparents’
sex life. But you know what? In all the years I lived in Japan and heard about the main reason why these hotels are around, I never really understood it. Did I use love hotels? Sometimes. Mostly so the roommates don’t scare off who I’m with,” he added with a chuckle. “But since you decided to stop here, it did make me finally understand why. We do have our own room, one with paper thin walls, that not only we stand a chance of Bikky and Carol hearing us, but for the next couple of nights, we also have my fathers.”

Ryo looked at Dee and started to laugh. “Yeah, I forgot about why these things are here. I also was assuming that we wouldn’t be doing any of that until we can have our own room, or at least somewhere that isn’t behind paper thin walls.”

“Me too,” Dee said. “Especially with my fathers in the room across the living area.” Dee dipped his head to nibble on Ryo’s neck. “So, maybe instead of finding more bars, we get us a room for a couple of hours?”

Ryo let out a sigh and pushed Dee away. “If you’re going to keep doing that, you better get us a room first.”

Dee grabbed Ryo’s hand and started to pull him toward the entrance of the hotel.

“With Bikky and Carol, and me and you out on date night, I wonder if your dads took advantage of being alone after they got the chibis to bed.”

Dee glanced back at Ryo as they entered the lobby. “Don’t kill the mood, spoilsport.”

Ryo laughed and ended up dragging Dee along when his husband stopped. “Yeah, and you better finish what you started. So, none of that.”

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