

Bsian
M. E. Omori

Spring

Age 0

Room in the Shinjo City Hospital in Shinjo, Japan

The room is dim.

A woman is sleeping in a hospital bed. Next to her, a man is holding her hands. His hands are grasping the woman's left, fidgeting with the ring on her hand. He smiles. The man has straight, brown hair. The hair is combed over, to disguise the bald spot that is growing. His eyes are brown, surrounded with red. His head slowly teeters towards the bed. Every time he is about to slip into sleep, he jerks his head back. His eyes focus on his wife. The room is quiet, even the slow breathing of the woman is silent. In the break of the silence, a cry rises from the corner of the room nearest to the couple. The man lets go of the woman's hand and stretches while he walks over to the crib. He peers into the crib and lifts the baby into his arms.

"You are our gift. We love you, Dokuji." (English translation)

The baby rattles, crying in his father's arms.

Spring

Age 2

San Diego International Airport in San Diego, California

(Conversation in an approximate English translation)

"Mommy, I'm scared."

"Don't worry, Dokuji. We'll be alright. Honey, where do we have to do?"

"According to this guide, baggage claim is on the fourth floor."

"Fourth? Why do they have a fourth floor here? That's not good!"

"Shiho, they do things differently here. Don't worry about it."

"No. I don't want to go on the fourth floor! Something bad could happen!"

"Don't be crazy. We need to get our stuff."

"I'm not going there. Sorry, Masahiro."

"Fine. I'll go alone then. Dokuji, stay with your mom."

"No, Dad. I want to go with you."

"I said to stay with your mom. Keep her company."

"Dad! Please, don't leave me! I want to go!

"Dokuji! Stop it! Stay with your mom."

"No!"

"Honey, I'll just go with you to the fourth floor."

"It's okay. Don't worry about it. I can go alone."

"For Dokuji, let's just go."

"Are you sure? You don't have to do this."

"It's fine."

Summer

Age 12

Lincoln Middle School in San Diego, California

I'm looking through our car door, and I can see the many students that will be attending the middle school that I will also be in. The school is different from my elementary school. It has a second floor, and they have a much bigger playground. I don't know anyone here, but it's okay. I'll make new friends here. I glance at my watch, and it reads 7:25.

"Mom, are we almost there?"

"Yes. Maybe two more minutes."

Mom has gotten much better in English since coming here to America. My family immigrated here to San Diego when I was only two years old, which is why I can speak English well, at least better than my parents.

"Dokuji, are you excited for middle school? This is the time when you need to study hard, so you can get into a good college and a good job," Mom says as she fixes the rearview mirror.

"Yes, I know. You've said it a million times."

"I know you know. I'm just reminding you, so you don't forget."

"Okay, Mom."

She drives the car around the curb and into the middle school drop-off space. My mom switches the car into park and turns around to meet my eyes.

"Do you have everything? Bag, lunch, textbooks?"

"Yes, you asked me to check it before we left the house."

"I'm just making sure, okay?"

I hop out of the car and close the door. My mom unrolls the passenger seat window. "Have a first great day of school, dear!"

I ignore her last statement and pace towards homeroom. It's going to be a long year.

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I go inside my homeroom classroom, and I don't know where I'm supposed to sit. I went to a private middle school, and all our classes were in the same room. Each of us had our own desk, with a nametag on it. But here? I walk in, and there is no assigned seating. No nametags. Where am I supposed to sit? I don't know where I'm supposed to sit. There's a few people in the center of the room, and some on the edges. I decide to sit in front of the classroom.

"Oh, what a teacher's pet," a guy snickers.

"A what?" I ask, as I'm setting my stuff next to my seat.

"You heard me? I called you a teacher's pet."

"Wait, the teacher has a pet here?"

"My goodness, this guy is stupid. Yes, she has a pet. It's a monkey, and I'm looking at it right now."

The room erupts with laughter. I'm not understanding something. I'm the monkey?

"I'm not a monkey. What are you talking about?"

"Listen here, boy." The guy was much taller than all of us. He was probably around five feet, five inches. He had black hair, spiked up with some sort of gel or wax. "I'm just going to say this once, so when I say 'listen,' I mean, listen. You are the first Asian kid that's been in this school. Don't think that we're going to treat you any differently. This "affirmative action" thing they have in this school. It's a bunch of bullshit. You shouldn't be here, boy. Someone else should be in your seat, had it not been for that affirmative action."

"I don't know what you're talking about. I took the entrance exam and aced it. Why don't I deserve to be here?"

"Listen here, chink. Keep quiet, and you'll survive here in middle school."

I'm lost. So lost.

Summer

Age 16

Lincoln High School Auditorium in San Diego, California

"Dokuji, did you do it?" asked Josh.

"No, not yet." Damn it. I've been avoiding the topic the entire day.

"Dude, time's running out. Someone's eventually going to ask her." Josh is my best friend. I first met him during homeroom in my first year at middle school. We weren't exactly the best of friends when we met. He came off pretty strong, calling me things that he should not have. But that's in the past, and he's been understanding since."

I shut the locker doors in front of us. "Fine. Okay. The next time I see her, I'll ask her, alright?"

"Perfect. So I should leave then?"

"What do you mean?"

Josh raises his eyebrows and nods to a direction that's behind me. Confused I turned around. And lo, and behold, Selene was there.

"Bye, dude. Good luck. You're going to need it." He was always blunt.

Josh closes his locker and strides away.

Alright, Dokuji, you can do this. I glance towards Selene, and she's at her locker, surrounded with friends.

You can't do this. What in the hell were you thinking? She's with her friends. If she says "no," all her friends will know. I close my eyes and pace my breathing. Slow and steady. I glance back, and her friends are gone. Selene is alone, rummaging through her locker. Okay. Game time.

I give myself one more slow exhalation, and I pace towards Selene. You can do this Dokuji. What's the worst that can happen? She rejects you? Who cares? It's just prom. Get over it.

"Hey, Selene, how are you?" What kind of opener was that?"

"Oh, hi, Dokuji. I'm fine, thank you. How have you been?"

"Pretty good. How are classes?"

"Passing. The only thing I care about right now is the summer. One more month to go!"

She's smiling. That's a good sign, right? "I feel you. Junior year has been pretty rough. Apparently it gets easier senior year."

"Really?" She shuts her locker. "That's a relief." She faces me and leans her shoulder on the lockers. "So what are you doing for the summer?"

"Who? Me?" I thought I was going to be the only one asking the questions.

"Sorry, I was talking to the guy right behind to you."

I'm confused. I cock my back to see who she was talking to. But I didn't see anyone.

She blurts out a laughter. "You actually thought someone was behind you? That was too easy!"

Dokuji, you genius. She's laughing now. Her blonde hair rests gently on her shoulders. The teal shirt she's wearing brings her blue eyes out. Her nose, when she laughs, it crinkles. It's cute.

"Selene, I need to ask you something." I smile.

"Sure, what's up?"

"Well, in two weeks, prom's coming up, and I was wondering..."

"Look who we have here."

"Hi, Gordon! How are you?" She knows everyone in school.

"Not too bad, Selene. Not bad at all. You?"

"Pretty good. Do you know Dokuji?"

"Doki-what? No, I don't. Hey, the name's Gordon." He put his right hand out. I greet it with mine, and he squeezes it excessively. For a few seconds, I could handle the grip. But he squeezes it even tighter. I couldn't take it, and I spasm.

"Oh, sorry. Sometimes I can't control my own strength."

What an asshole. He cuts in between us and faces himself to Selene, his back the only thing that I can see. Gordon's huge. Standing six feet six inches tall to my five feet seven inches, he looks like he could be my father.

"Anyway. Selene, got a question."

"Aren't you supposed to be at basketball practice?"

"This is more important than that." He clears his throat.

"Will you go to prom with me?"

Damn it. Josh was right. I should have asked earlier. Now the athlete's going to get the cheerleader. Typical. I'm in defeat. If she's happy with him, that's fine. I'll be happy. I guess. I turn around and am about to walk out until...

"Sorry, Gordon. You're a great guy, but I'm already going with someone." I stay put. If she's not going with me, at least

"What? But we were supposed to go together. The quarterback and the head cheerleader. Who's the guy?"

"Actually, he hasn't asked me out yet."

"He hasn't? What if he doesn't ask you out?" Gordon's getting a bit frustrated. His grip on the locker handle is getting tighter.

"I'm pretty sure he's going to ask me."

"How do you know that?"

"Well, actually, he was about to ask me before you arrived." Wait, what...

Slowly, Gordon twisted his body until it completely faced me. "This kid? THIS KID? Are you kidding me, Selene?"

"Dude, chill." I pat my hand on his shoulder. He flicks it away with his.

"Don't tell me what to do."

"Gordon, just go." Selene adds in. "You have basketball practice. Coach is going to be mad."

"No, shut up. You stay out of it. This is between me and chinky eyes."

"Chinky eyes? Are you kidding me?" A fight's a brewing.

"No, I wasn't. Don't you see it? She only said "yes" to not hurt your feelings. Because she knows that an Asian guy can't handle rejection. You guys are too soft." He says the last part as he pushes two of my fingers on my chest. What am I supposed to do? I can't be weak in front of Selene. She was going to say "yes!"

"Back off Gordon."

"Ooooooh, I'm scared." He raises his hands in feigned fear. Then, I connect a right jab on his left jaw.

I beat the bully. And I get the girl.

Fall

Age 34

Lucius Publishing Company Barracks in Los Angeles, California

"Yes, Mr. Walker. I will be at the conference. No, it will not be a problem. Yes, I understand. I will see you there."

"Hon, who was that? Selene asks.

"Sorry. It was the boss." I sit down in our dining room table and take a sip of coffee from the mug.

"Is everything all right?" Selene asks as she's cradling John in her arms.

"Sorry, but I have to fly out first thing in the morning tomorrow. There's a mandatory meeting at headquarters in Seattle."

"Wait, but Yuki's recital is tomorrow night." Oh no, I completely forgot about her dance recital. Yuki joined a ballet company when she was five. Three years later, she's performing in her first recital.

"I'll talk to Yuki. She'll understand, right?"

"I don't know, dear. She really wants you to be at the recital. She's been practicing this for the entire summer."

"I'll talk to her." I walk away from the kitchen and head towards Yuki's bedroom.

"Sweetie, may I enter?"

"Yes, you may."

I open the door, and I see her reading a book.

"Hi Daddy. What's up?"

"So, tomorrow's night is your recital."

"Yup, and I'm so excited!"

"There's something I need to talk to you about. Daddy needs to go to Seattle tomorrow for a business meeting. And I'm going to miss your recital." Her head shifts downward. "Sweetie, I know you worked really hard for this, but I will be there. Mommy's going to Skype the recital, so I can watch it from Seattle. You'll have a fan from Seattle." I smile.

"Okay daddy. Just this one time."

"Thank you. I love you."

Winter

Age 40

Therapy Room in Los Angeles, California

My life has been great so far. My family successfully integrated into the American culture. I beat the bully and married the girl of my dreams. I have two wonderful children. So what's the problem? Why am I here in a therapy room? Because none of it happened. This was all my fantasy.

My parents never understood the culture. They had a divorce, and I never grew close to them.

I didn't defeat the bully. I never punched him. He punched me, and I got knocked out. Selene laughed. And I never talked to her again.

I don't have children. I married someone who I thought I loved, and it didn't work out. I became my father.

So why did I not share you the correct memories? Because who needs them? I don't have to tell you. Why talk about something that won't help me or anyone else? Why does the world need to know? Why do I need to know?