



I HAVE TO  
MAKE DINNER  
FOR TONIGHT.



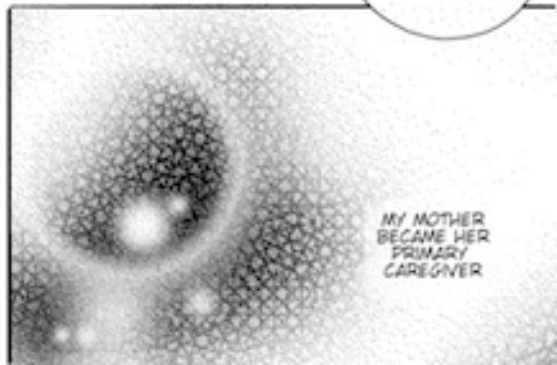
MOM! WHAT  
ARE YOU  
DOING?!  
YOU'RE  
GOING TO  
BURN THE  
HOUSE DOWN!



SHE STRUGGLED  
TO SUPPORT OUR  
FAMILY WHILE  
TAKING CARE OF  
BOTH MY  
GRANDMOTHER  
AND ME.



NO YOU DON'T!  
YOU STOP  
COOKING YEARS  
AGO! DON'T  
YOU REMEMBER?



MY MOTHER  
BECAME HER  
PRIMARY  
CAREGIVER

MY GRAND-  
MOTHER'S  
CONDITION  
WORSENE  
EACH YEAR...

COME ON MOM,  
I NEED TO GIVE  
YOU A SHOWER.

NO! I DON'T  
WANT TO.  
GO AWAY!

...AND BY THE  
TIME I REACHED  
HIGH SCHOOL,  
SHE COULD NO  
LONGER  
REMEMBER ME.

WHERE'S  
NICOLE?

I AM  
NICOLE.

NO YOU'RE NOT.

SHE COULD  
ONLY REMEMBER  
MY YOUNGER SELF...  
THE "ME" RIGHT NOW  
DIDN'T EXIST IN MY  
GRANDMOTHER'S  
MEMORIES



IT WAS DURING  
THAT TIME IN  
MIDDLE SCHOOL  
THAT I FIRST  
STARTED LISTENING  
TO JAPANESE MUSIC

...W-INDS., EXILE,  
UTADA HIKARU,  
AMURO NAMIE,  
HAMASAKI AYUMI...

I CONVINCED  
MYSELF I WAS  
MORE "JAPANESE"  
THAN "LOCAL".



I WATCHED  
JAPANESE  
DRAMAS AND  
EVEN KEPT  
UP WITH THE  
LATEST  
JAPANESE  
FASHION  
TRENDS.





I FELT AS IF  
I DIDN'T BELONG.  
I WAS DIFFERENT  
FROM MY COUSINS  
WHO LOVED THE OCEAN,  
WHO SPOKE PIDGIN,  
AND WHO KNEW  
HAWAIIAN SLANG.



I DIDN'T DRESS  
LIKE THEM.  
I DIDN'T TALK  
LIKE THEM.  
I DIDN'T ACT  
LIKE THEY DID.  
I WAS DIFFERENT.



I STUDIED A LOT.  
I LIKED JAPANESE  
THINGS. I ENJOYED  
LEARNING ABOUT  
THE CULTURE.  
I FELT A CONNECTION  
AND THOUGHT I'D  
FIT IN MORE IN JAPAN  
...BUT I WAS WRONG.



SOTO  
TOKU  
TO SO  
PRYU?



MY FIRST TRIP  
TO JAPAN WAS  
IN 8TH GRADE.  
MY FATHER  
TOOK ME DURING  
SPRING BREAK.  
I WAS SO  
EXCITED TO  
FINALLY GO.



AREN'T YOU  
LEARNING IT  
IN SCHOOL?  
JUST TRY.



NO, I CAN'T!  
I DON'T KNOW  
HOW TO SAY  
IT IN JAPANESE...



NICOLE, GO AND  
ASK THAT MAN  
OVER THERE IF  
WE CAN USE A  
PHONE IN HERE.



THE DISTINCTION  
BETWEEN "SOTO"  
AND "UCHI" HAD  
NEVER BEEN SO  
CLEAR TO ME.



I LOOKED LIKE  
THEM. I DRESSED  
LIKE THEM. I  
ACTED LIKE THEM.  
I BLENDED IN...  
BUT I WOULD  
FOREVER BE AN  
OUTSIDER.

I COULDN'T SPEAK  
THEIR LANGUAGE.  
I COULDN'T  
UNDERSTAND  
WHAT THEY WERE  
THINKING.



OKAY...

...BUT I WAS  
SCARED.



IN HAWAII, PEOPLE  
WOULD OFTEN  
ASK ME IF I WAS  
FROM JAPAN.  
THEY WOULD TREAT  
ME DIFFERENTLY.  
I WAS A "TOURIST"  
I WASN'T APART OF  
THE CLIQUISH LOCAL  
CULTURE...



HEY ARE YOU  
FROM JAPAN?  
SO KAWAII!

...YET IN JAPAN  
I HAD NEVER  
FELT SO  
"AMERICAN"  
BEFORE.

...I FELT AS IF I HAD LOST MY IDENTITY.  
I DIDN'T BELONG ANYWHERE...

...BUT TO MY  
SURPRISE, AFTER  
I RETURNED BACK  
TO HAWAII, MY  
LOVE FOR JAPAN  
ONLY GREW  
STRONGER.



I STUDIED THE LANGUAGE, THE CULTURE, AND THE HISTORY. I WON OUR LOCAL JAPANESE SPEECH CONTEST.

BY THE TIME I ENTERED HIGH SCHOOL, I HAD STOPPED LISTENING TO ENGLISH MUSIC. I ONLY KNEW JAPANESE SONGS. I ONLY WATCHED JAPANESE TV SHOWS AND I ONLY READ JAPANESE MAGAZINES.



IT WAS WHEN I WENT BACK TO JAPAN AGAIN THAT I FIRST REALIZED I ACTUALLY ENJOYED BEING "AN AMERICAN IN JAPAN".

WELCOME  
ようこそ



I EVEN ENTERED IN JAPAN WIZARDS, A STATE TRIVIA COMPETITION ABOUT JAPAN AND WON A TRIP TO JAPAN. I WANTED TO KNOW MORE...



THEY FELT CLOSER  
TO ME BECAUSE I  
LOOKED LIKE THEM...  
BECAUSE I ACTED  
LIKE THEM...  
BECAUSE I COULD  
SPEAK LIKE THEM...  
BUT IN THE END I WOULD  
FOREVER BE AN  
"AMERICAN".  
I WAS DIFFERENT...  
AND I LIKED IT.



OH REALLY!  
YOU'RE FROM HAWAII?  
I LOVE HAWAII!



IF YOU WERE A  
JAPANESE GIRL,  
I PROBABLY  
WOULDN'T BE ABLE  
TO TALK TO YOU  
LIKE THIS.

IT'S SO EASY  
TO TALK TO  
YOU.

EVEN THOUGH I'M  
JAPANESE, I DON'T  
LIKE OSEJI. IT'S TOO  
POLITE... TOO FAKE.  
THAT'S WHAT I  
LIKE ABOUT AMERICANS.  
YOU'RE ALL  
STRAIGHTFORWARD.


MAY I HELP YOU?

IRASSHAIMASE.

WHERE ARE  
YOU FROM?  
ARE YOU  
ENJOYING  
YOUR VACATION?

BACK IN HAWAII,  
I STARTED TO  
ENJOY BEING  
MISTAKEN AS A  
TOURIST. THEY GAVE  
ME BETTER CUSTOMER  
SERVICE. WHEN I WENT  
IN STORES THE SALES  
CLERKS WERE MORE  
ATTENTIVE. THEY  
THOUGHT I WAS A  
"RICH JAPANESE  
TOURIST".





I DON'T KNOW.  
WHY DO YOU NOT  
LIKE JAPAN?

...BUT MY  
MOTHER WAS  
NEVER FOND  
OF MY  
INTERESTS.

WHY DO YOU  
LIKE JAPAN  
SO MUCH?



YOU LOOK LIKE  
A TOURIST!

THAT'S WHAT  
YOU WANTED.  
I LIKE JAPAN,  
SO WHY CAN'T  
I DRESS  
LIKE THEM?  
YOU WANTED DRESS  
"AMERICAN".  
IT'S DIFFERENT.

WHAT'S WRONG  
WITH THAT?

WHY CAN'T YOU DRESS  
MORE AMERICAN? WHEN  
I WAS YOUR AGE  
GRANDMA WOULDN'T  
LET ME WEAR THESE  
KINDS OF CLOTHES.  
THE FASHION HERE  
IS SO CUTE TOO.  
WHY CAN'T YOU DRESS  
LIKE YOUR CLASSMATES?  
I LIKE THEIR STYLE.

BUT STILL...



THEY'RE BOYS!?  
THEY LOOK LIKE  
GIRLS! ARE THEY  
GAY?

WHO ARE THEY?

NO MOM... A LOT  
OF BOYS DRESS  
LIKE THAT IN JAPAN.  
IT'S IN STYLE.

HEY! SAY! JUMP.  
THEY'RE A  
JAPANESE  
BOY BAND.

I JUST COULDN'T  
RELATE TO MAINLAND  
AMERICA. THERE  
WEREN'T A LOT OF  
ASIAN IN AMERICAN  
POP CULTURE AND  
MAINSTREAM MEDIA.



I THINK THAT WAS  
WHY I TURNED TO  
JAPAN. I LOOKED  
UP TO JAPANESE  
SINGERS AND ACTORS.  
THEY LOOKED LIKE ME.  
I COULD RELATE TO THEM.  
I COULD NEVER BE  
BLOND HAIRD AND BLUE  
EYED LIKE THE ONES IN  
AMERICA...  
AND TO BE HONEST,  
I DIDN'T WANT TO.



IN MY SENIOR YEAR  
OF HIGH SCHOOL,  
I OFTEN FOUGHT WITH MY  
MOTHER... IT WAS THEN  
THAT I FINALLY REALIZED  
WHAT JAPAN MEANT  
TO ME.



NICOLE, I HOPE  
YOU'RE NOT THINKING  
OF MAJORING IN  
JAPANESE...

WHY NOT?

WHAT CAN YOU DO  
WITH A DEGREE LIKE  
THAT? WHY CAN'T  
YOU MAJOR  
PHARMACY OR WHAT  
ABOUT ACCOUNTING?



I USED TO LIKE  
JAPAN TOO FOR  
A WHILE, BUT  
EVENTUALLY YOU'LL  
GET OVER IT LIKE I DID.  
JUST TRUST ME.

THAT MAY BE TRUE...  
BUT HOW DO YOU KNOW  
WHAT I WANT? YOU'VE  
BEEN TELLING ME I'LL  
GET OVER THIS JAPANESE  
PHASE OF MINE SINCE I  
ENTERED MIDDLE SCHOOL  
... BUT IT'S BEEN GROWING  
SINCE AS LONG AS I CAN  
REMEMBER...





...AND I BELIEVED THAT...UP UNTIL THE GANSEI THAT IS.



MY MOTHER USED TO TELL ME THAT WITH EACH GENERATION OUR TIES TO JAPAN HAVE BECOME WEAKER.



MY NATIONALITY IS AMERICAN, AND I'M CULTURALLY DIFFERENT FROM THOSE BORN AND RAISED IN JAPAN... YET I AM STILL CALLED A JAPANESE AMERICAN.

I AM A YONSEI. I AM DIFFERENT. MY GRANDMOTHER HAS KEPT MY CONNECTION TO JAPAN ALIVE.



HAWAII IS MY  
"HOME", THE PLACE  
WHERE I WAS BORN  
AND RAISED MY  
ENTIRE LIFE.  
HAWAII IS WHERE  
MY FAMILY IS.



AMERICA IS MY  
"COUNTRY", MY  
NATIONAL IDENTITY.  
I AM A U.S.  
CITIZEN BY LAW.



JAPAN IS A PART OF  
MY IDENTITY AND  
MY HERITAGE. IN  
AMERICA, WHERE  
MULTICULTURALISM  
AND DIVERSITY  
FLOURISH, JAPAN  
IS MY "ROOT". IT  
KEEPS ME GROUNDED.  
JAPAN IS THE COUNTRY  
OF MY ANCESTORS.

I AM A YONSEI JAPANESE AMERICAN.

THIS MAY SEEM CLICHÉ,  
BUT FIGURING OUT WHAT  
IT MEANS TO BE A FOURTH  
GENERATION JAPANESE  
AMERICAN IS A LIFE LONG  
PROCESS FOR ME. IT'S AN  
ONGOING JOURNEY THAT'S NO  
WHERE NEAR PERFECT...

...THIS YEAR, I'LL BE LEAVING HOME  
AND GOING OFF TO COLLEGE IN  
ONE MONTH... AND I CAN ONLY  
HOPE THAT I'LL NEVER FORGET WHO  
I AM AND WHERE I CAME FROM.