

“Japan: A New Age” by Tasogarenin (黄昏人)

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Chapter 5: Junpei Transfers

Two days after their dinner meeting, Dr. Yamato and Dr. Makimura visited Junpei’s home at 7 pm, having previously made arrangements with his mother Yoko for his father to come home from work early that day.

However when they arrived, Yoko said to them at the entrance, “I’m terribly sorry. My husband isn’t here yet, but he is on the way home from work now. Please come in, he should be here soon,” and lead them into the living room.

While Yoko went to go prepare tea, Junpei stayed behind in the room with them. “Thanks to both of you, the school transfer looks like it is going work out well, although I am curious about how many classes I’ll have to take in my new school.”

“We can talk about that in detail after your father gets home,” said Dr. Makimura. “But I’ll just say that right now, many people are working very hard to prepare for the realization of your ideas. Of course, we’re looking forward to your assistance as well.”

“I’m not surprised to hear that. There is no way we can let an opportunity like this pass us by,” said the boy.

Just then, they heard the sound of a car stopping outside, and the front door opened. "I'm home...Oh, I'm really sorry to be late," said Junpei's father Yohei, his face visible through the open living room door.

Yohei, a large, chubby man who looked a like a salesman in his neat suit, removed his shoes and joined them in the living room.

"It's nice to meet you. I'm Yohei Yoshikawa, Junpei's father. I got delayed by a phone call just as I was about to leave the office.

My wife tells me you wanted to talk about our son today."

"Yes, that is correct. I am Susumu Yamato, Professor and head of the Department of Physics at Konan College. We are sorry to trouble you at such a late hour."

"I'm Masaki Makimura, Associate Professor working in Dr. Yamato's research laboratory."

Dr. Yamato and Dr. Makimura explained a few things to Junpei's parents: how they received a research paper from him, how it described groundbreaking ideas, and how the practical application of those ideas, for which preparations had already begun, could have a tremendous impact on the world. They went on to explain how ill-fitting Junpei's classes were for him, and how they wanted him to transfer to the elementary school associated with Konan College and to actually participate in the College itself.

Junpei's father began to speak openly about his son. "To be honest, it wasn't as if we were completely unaware of his abnormally high intelligence.

In preschool, he scored over 200 points on an IQ test and for a little while there was a big commotion over this, but on a subsequent retake he scored just above average, so his teachers decided the first test result must have been mistaken. I think that probably around that time his grandmother, who was taking care of him, started encouraging him to hide his abilities from others.

In elementary school he always got 100% on his tests, but his report card contained a bunch of comments like how he showed signs of ADHD.

Later, he began to cut classes and his school contacted us about this, but it seemed like he wasn't particularly causing any problems there, and since there was no effect on his grades there was no real reason to scold him.

However, ever since his Grandmother passed away, we were thinking that something had to be done about our son. But we never imagined that he could have written a paper that would have such an effect on the world, like the one you have described. We both feel that our son transferring to Konan's elementary school and starting to attend the college itself would be the best thing for him now.

Actually, I am also a graduate from Konan College and work at a local company which I've had connections with since my college days."

Professor Yamato spoke. "We are extremely glad that you agree to transfer your son to Konan's elementary school. Yohei, we have actually done a little research about you as well and are aware that you are the head of the department of equipment sales at Konan Mekatronix. We also discovered that you graduated in 2000 from the Engineering College, majoring in Mechanical Engineering. There will be some private

companies participating in the development project we just alluded to, and we are planning to leverage the local factory owned by Yotsubishi Industries. I believe your company is on good terms with Yotsubishi, correct?"

"Yes, Yotsubishi Industries undoubtedly has the largest factory in Konan City, so they are our number one customer. By the way, you mentioned this development was triggered by the ideas in Junpei's research paper, but can you tell me specifically what you are planning on developing?"

Dr. Yamato explained, "I will tell you, but you must know that for the time being we are running this project in absolute secrecy. The device is a nuclear fusion reactor. It's already October, but we want to do whatever possible to have a working prototype complete within a year. Incidentally, Dr. Makimura and I specialize in theoretical science and are not very familiar with creating an actual device, so are we seeking supervision from Dr. Yamamura, a Professor of Industrial Engineering at our college."

"Nuclear fusion! Wouldn't that entail a massive-scale project?" asked Yohei in surprise.

"Not quite. We are targeting a 100 megawatt device as the smallest version," Dr. Yamato answered nonchalantly.

"But a power generator outputting 100 megawatts would cost around \$80 million dollars if using thermal power, and by no means would be a small-scale effort," countered Yohei.

“That highlights some of the fundamental differences of his new technology. We are expecting facilities costs to be approximately one fifth of traditional thermal and nuclear generation costs, and for a 100 megawatt unit, our calculations indicate it will be small enough to fit inside of a truck.

By the way, I’ve heard that you have some experience with power plants and related equipment,” Dr. Yamato said.

“Yes, while I would not consider myself an expert, I do work with devices such as heat exchangers and air filters.”

“I have a proposition for you, Yohei. Would you be interested in joining this project yourself? We can talk to your current employer and have MEXT (*) in conjunction with Yotsubishi negotiate to get you on the project,” Dr. Yamato offered.

(MEXT = Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology)*

“Dad, you should accept. I’d be really happy to work with you,” Junpei said with a glimmer in his eye.

“Well...as an engineer I’ll admit that I’d love to play a part in such a groundbreaking project, but I have so many things I am working on now that it will take some time to finish those off. Having said that, I’d like to accept your offer,” Yohei said as he thought things through.

They got lost in conversation talking about this and that, and finally finished sometime after 9 pm.

In the car on the way home, Dr. Yamato began a conversation with Dr. Makimura. “I’m really glad that Junpei’s father will be joining the project. From what I researched, he seems like an extremely capable engineer,

and I expect him to contribute in a big way to the project. But more importantly, when the truth about Junpei eventually gets out, we'll have to be tight on security so nothing happens to his family.

In that sense, it will be easier to manage things if his father is on the project.

If possible, I'd like to think of some way for his mother to participate as well. As she works in a hospital office, she should be able to do desk work, so we can ask her to help with the project's general services."

Dr. Yamato paused for a moment, then added, "By the way, how is the patent paperwork going?"

"We have prepared a rough draft of the patent specifications," said Dr. Makimura. "What remains is to decide who to list as applicants. Junpei and I will be listed, but who else do you think we should add?"

Dr. Yamato responded to Dr. Makimura's question. "The licensing fees alone will be enormous. Our country generates around 1 petawatt hours a year, and within five years there will surely be a complete transition to this new system. I think we should set licensing fees per kilowatt hour, and even assuming a low rate of one-tenth of a cent per kilowatt hour, this works out to one billion dollars. Since this technology will likely be used overseas as well, the yearly licensing fees will exceed 10 billion dollars. If possible, I'd like to create a corporation within the college and set up things so the money goes there.

The patent will be registered under individual's names, but we can create a contract between those people and the corporation. I'll speak to the College President about this.

Oh, one more thing. Let's meet with Patent Attorney Mr. Yamaki tomorrow and submit the patent form ASAP. As you probably know, I am going to request he lay out the most important points to ensure no one can take advantage of loopholes in the future, although judging from that paper, most of the content will be completely new, so as long as we can cover the fundamental excitation process I think we'll be safe."

"Sounds good. Have you...mentioned this to MEXT yet?" Makimura asked.

"I don't think we need to get the government involved in this part. Ultimately, we want to provide sufficient income to Junpei's family, but with such a large amount of money, I think it's best to have the college manage it."

Next week, after homeroom ended at Namishima elementary school, Junpei's teacher Sachiko Akai pulled him aside. "Junpei, could you come with me to the faculty room for a minute?"

On the way Ms. Akai added, "I said faculty room, but we are actually going to the Principal's office.

I don't know what this is about, but I guess maybe you do."

"Yes, I think it is about my transfer."

"Transfer? Oh, so you're moving. But then why do you need to see the Principal?"

Before Junpei had a chance to answer, they arrived at the Principal's office. Junpei's teacher knocked on the door.

"It is Ms. Akai from the 4th grade class B. I'm terribly sorry to interrupt," she said and opened the sliding door.

Inside was a kind-looking, thin man in his 50s, along with the Principal and Vice Principal.

“Ms. Akai, thank you very much. You must be Junpei Yoshikawa. Please have a seat. Ms. Akai, you can sit there,” the Principal said, sitting Junpei in front of himself, next to Ms. Akai who sat in an extra chair.

The older man began speaking. “I am Kimura, Vice Principal of the elementary school associated with Konan College. I’m here today on the matter of Junpei’s school transfer. Junpei has been interacting with a certain research professor of Konan College, and there is a need for him to move to an environment where he can have quick access to the College in order to assist with some research there.

It is desirable for this to be carried out as soon as possible, and thus it has been requested that he transfer to our school without further delay. We have already obtained permission from Junpei’s parents on this matter.”

“When exactly will the transfer occur?” asked the Principal, to which Mr. Kimura replied, “We would like to schedule it officially for next Monday. However, it would be best if he stopped by tomorrow in order to take care of a few formalities.”

Mr. Kimura turned to the boy, “So Junpei, what do you think?”

“Yes sir, I should be able to go tomorrow,” replied Junpei without hesitation.

“Is this acceptable with Namishima Elementary?” asked Mr. Kimura.

The Principle shot Ms. Akai a questioning glance and replied, "That should be fine. However, this is a very unusual situation which I've never heard of before. What exactly is going on here?"

"Yeah, I guess it is a little unusual. You see, we have discovered Junpei has some special abilities, and it has been decided that it would best for the college to help foster those abilities," Mr. Kimura explained, sidestepping the question.

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"But even so, receiving a call from the prefecture's superintendent of education just for this...", the Principal said, unconvinced.

"I'm sorry, but because of special circumstances, for Junpei's sake I would prefer you to not discuss it with anyone outside this room. But if someone presses you to speak about this, please simply say that Junpei's transfer is because of a family situation." Mr. Kimura once again refused to answer directly, further avoiding the question.

After Mr. Kimura went home and Junpei was brought back to the classroom, Ms. Akai questioned the Principal and Vice Principal.

"So...Does anyone know what is going on here?"

The Principal responded, "I don't have any idea. All I know is this was decided very high up. The superintendent himself seemed very nervous."

"By the way, while Junpei's grades are excellent, I've heard he tends to skip class," the Vice Principal added. "What do you think about him?"

Ms. Akai thought for a moment before answering. "I think that he probably already knows everything we are trying to teach him in class. But it seems like he tries to keep that a secret and is very cautious about what he says around others.

And yet, I am not sure if he actually knows as much as he seems to. There are times, however, when I feel like his level of understanding exceeds even us teachers. In any case, I think that if transferring schools means he will be able to study at college, then it is a good thing for him."

The next day, Junpei took a bus and arrived at the elementary school adjacent to the college before 9 am. At the end of the day yesterday, his teacher Ms. Akai had told his classmates about Junpei's transfer. While there was a commotion in the class when his transfer was announced, not a single person said anything to him directly—probably because he had no real friends to speak of—and the class soon returned to normal.

He greeted the guard at the gate, "I am here to see Vice Principal Kimura," and the old man replied, "Yeah, I was told you'd be coming. Go inside that building over there, change into slippers and make a left, and in about 20 meters you'll see a room that says 'Vice Principal's Office.' "

Junpei felt a little uncomfortable not knowing why he had been summoned today, but he decided it was nothing compared to when he started attending college classes with college students.

Just like the first time they met, Vice Principal Kimura had a certain air of kindness about him.

"Welcome to our school. Please sit down over there.

Junpei, today I've invited you here in order to have a discussion about how you will participate in our school."

Mr. Kimura continued, "Officially, you will be joining our school as a regular student.

Of course, we will also have you take classes and participate in research at the college, but being that you are only 10 years old, you'll have to take the necessary elementary level courses, such as PE."

"I am actually a big fan of soccer," Junpei said. "But I don't think I could play with college students."

"Yes, I doubt very much you could. We'd like you to take PE classes in the elementary school. But that sort of stuff is what I would like to talk with you about today," said Mr. Kimura.

"OK, I understand," said Junpei.

After talking things through, they agreed that Junpei would take PE, art, and music classes as much as possible in the elementary school.

The Vice Principal then took Junpei to Dr. Yamato's office on the college campus. There Dr. Makimura and one other young man were waiting.

"Thanks, Mr. Kimura.

Junpei, welcome to our college. Let's see...I think that both you and Mr. Kimura are here for the first time.

This is Masato Saito and Associate Professor Makimura, two graduate students in my research lab. They will both be joining this project, as something like your partners.

By the way, Mr. Kimura, what did you decide about Junpei's elementary school classes?" asked Dr. Yamato.

"It looks like things will work out as we initially discussed, with him attending PE, art, and music classes at the elementary school whenever possible."

"I see. Thanks very much for your help. It seems that things are for the most part going as planned," Dr. Yamato said. After that Mr. Kimura left the office, his business there complete.

"By the way, Junpei," said Dr. Makimura. "I wanted to talk to you a little about the development plan for the fusion reactor."

He went on to give a brief overview of their plan, including some things that were happening with MEXT.

"We are planning to do the system assembly at Yotsubishi Industries' Konan factory, but first we will have to design it.

I considered doing the design at the college here, but it would be difficult to keep things secret that way. That's why we've decided to reserve a room in the Konan factory and do the design there as well.

Once your father is able to join us, he can also work there with you."

Then Dr. Makimura looked directly at Saito and the others and said sternly, "As far as this project is concerned, we have to be extremely careful with students from overseas. We should avoid this topic entirely with them. I can think of a few countries who would love to get their hands on this technology. I am sure you know which ones I mean."

Junpei smiled. "Yes, of course sir. I frequent the 2chan forum, so I know exactly what you mean."

Dr. Yamato spoke next. "So I'd like to limit Junpei's participation to graduate-level seminars. However, on campus it will be difficult to find

regular seminars that overseas students do not attend, so I am thinking of creating some special seminars where only teachers and selected graduate students can participate.”

The professor continued, “By the way, since we have Junpei here with us now, let’s have a technical discussion together with Dr. Makimura and Saito.

Junpei, I’d like you to explain how you thought up such amazing ideas just by reading Dr. Makimura’s research paper.”

“Yes, sir. When I read Dr. Makimura’s paper, the first thing that came to mind was a research paper from MIT Professor Jon Kenridge from five years ago...”

The technical concepts and their interrelations that Junpei went on to explain were astounding to Saito, Dr. Makimura, and even Professor Yamato, who now felt even more strongly about the importance of Junpei attending seminars on campus. Before they knew it, it was long past noon.

“Oh...I’m really sorry. It’s almost 1 pm. Let’s go grab a bite to eat,” Dr. Yamato said and they all headed over to the cafeteria.

The discussions continued as they ate, and after lunch they spent some more time together. They introduced Junpei to Mrs. Hidaka, who was working on the development plan in Dr. Makimura’s office. By the time Saito had driven Junpei home, it was nearly 4 pm in the afternoon.

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