

The Sakura Tree

Cool tears ran down her face. She looked down at the wrinkles on her hands and thought of the journey she had been on. Today was the day. Slowly she cut open the old box. Inside there was a picture, a letter and many other old items from her childhood. Hands shaking, she opened the letter and read it:

Dear Hayami,

I'm sorry that we've been fighting so much. Your mother suggested that I write you a letter so we don't start arguing again. How about I take you out to get ice-cream? Then we can talk about it over ice-cream. No one can argue over ice-cream!

You know how we're planning to go to Japan? Your great grandparents have a beautiful old house up on a mountain with a Sakura tree and a koi fishpond! You would love it!

She couldn't read on. It hurt too much, but that was the moment she knew. He lay up there on that mountain, where he had always wanted to be. She knew what she must do. Slowly she stood up as there was a knock at the door.

'Hi! Happy birthday Hayami! The kids were *begging* to come and see you.'

'Hello Hayami!' said the smallest out of the three.

'Hello! It's so nice to see you all again! Come in, come in, how are you all?'

'Are you ok Hayami? You look...like you've been... crying?' the mother asked.

Hayami nodded and motioned her head over to the old box. Annette was the only one who knew a bit about her past. Annette was also one of the only ones who knew what the box meant to Hayami. She leaned over to see what was in it. She saw the picture.

'That's beautiful. Is that him?'

'Yes.' Replied Hayami. 'These are a few of the things that he left in his will for me.'

Annette sat down. All three of her kids handed Hayami a big box of chocolates and some flowers. Hayami thanked them and started making tea with the second oldest, Emily. She was quiet but lovely to spend time with. She loved Hayami very much. To a lot of the children in the apartment building Hayami was like a grandmother. When Hayami sat down she tried to say something, but nothing come out- she didn't know what to say.

Finally, she whispered to Annette, 'I'm leaving. I know what I have to do.'

'What?' Annette didn't know what to say. She was speechless.

'I – I don't understand... why?'

'It's what I have to do. Before he... passed, we were meant to go to Japan. My great grandparents have a house up on a mountain, and... it's where he lays. He loved it there as a child.'

Annette nodded, she was a very understanding person. However, Annette knew that leaving wouldn't be easy, and many people would miss Hayami. Annette understood what Hayami had to do, and Hayami was certain Annette would help other people understand too. It was a hard reality they must face. As well as being where her father lay, she wanted to find peace because she already carried a terrible burden.

The next afternoon Hayami had finished packing. She didn't have many things she wanted to take, so all in all it was pretty easy. She had booked her flight for Tuesday the following week. As she was moving her luggage into the lounge there was a knock at the door.

'Hello! Come in, come in!' it was Emily at the door. 'How come you've come alone?'

'Mum was on an important work call, so I thought I'd come here instead.' She looked over at the luggage.

'Why do you have so much luggage?'

'Well...' Hayami hesitated but continued, 'I'm moving...'

'Where?!' Emily demanded, slightly worried.

'Japan...' For a minute there was silence. Emily didn't know how to respond, silent tears running down her face.

'W- why?' she blurted out.

'I'm sorry.'

'WHY?!' Emily yelled, even more tears filling up her eyes.

'Emily, please calm down. If you sit down, I'll tell you.' Hayami said. She too felt like she was on the verge of tears. Emily sat down and Hayami explained everything.

When Hayami was fifteen years old she and her father got into many fights. They constantly argued, they were too much like each other. One fateful day, Hayami had stormed out of the apartment building. Her and her dad were still yelling at each other and as she ran across the road she didn't look where she was going. A truck was speeding towards her. Though they argued it didn't mean they didn't love each other - he threw her on to the pavement. She looked back and saw him laying there.

Hayami wanted to be closer to him because she didn't even get the chance to say, 'I love you'. That's why Hayami needed to leave.

Emily ran up to Hayami and gave her a huge hug and started to sob.

'Promise me you'll visit every holiday and facetime me every week!' She sobbed.

'I promise.'

'When is your flight?'

'Tuesday next week.'

'Does mum know?' Hayami nodded.

Hayami had lived in this old apartment since was two, it was where both happy and sad memories were made. It was amazing being here, but now, she was on a new path - a path to peace.

The day had come. The day she would move. Surprisingly quickly, she had got her visa. She was ready. When she had arrived at the airport, she had a feeling she hadn't had in years - excited, nervous, happy and sad all at the same time.

She had only felt like this once, when she was a teenager and her parents told her that they were going to Japan. Then she realised she had never actually been to an airport. She had been alive for sixty-three years and never been to an airport. It was a surreal experience.

While on the plane Hayami had a thought - why didn't her mother tell her about the house? After the funeral Hayami and her mum never really connected. Her mum didn't tell her where her father's body was going, except that it was going to Japan. They never spoke about him again, and now her mum was gone too. Hayami was alone on this journey, but she knew this was the right thing to do.

When she arrived in Japan, she took a taxi to the house. It was beautiful. It had a Sakura tree in front of the house and a big koi fishpond just like he said in his letter.

She felt at home. She climbed the mountain a little higher to get to his grave. He loved this place and he always told her he would come here as a child to spend the summer with his grandparents. To him it felt like home, now it felt like home to Hayami as well. She looked down at the grave and without knowing it tears started to fill her eyes and stream down her face.

'I'm sorry.' she whispered, as she placed a blood red rose down on his grave. Silent tears fell onto the rose.

'I hope the sacrifice was worth it and I hope you're proud. I finally found peace.'

'I love you.'