

Keiretsu

by

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“The pace and scope of China’s sustained military investment have allowed China to pursue capabilities that may contribute to regional tensions and anxieties.”

Michael Shiffer, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense.

“China’s increasing assertiveness has significant consequences for the security and stability of the region.”

Representative Howard McKeon

“That’s the behind-the-scenes reason Japan decided to develop the Hayabusa (H-2B rocket). It sent a quiet message that Japan’s ballistic missile capability is credible.”

Toshiyuki Shikata; former Lt. General in Japan’s military.

In an interview with Mr. Shintaro Ishihara, the governor of Tokyo, Mr. Ishihara said in reference to China’s increasing encroachment on other countries, “Think of Tibet. They don’t have a country. They don’t have a leader. They’ve even lost their culture...I don’t want Japan to end up as a second Tibet.” As reported in “The Wall Street Journal” August 8, 2012

From the book:
“Japan The New Super State”
by Nobutaka Ike
Stanford University 1973

In the beginning, the heaven and earth were formed from chaos, and in the Plain of High Heaven dwelt a multitude of gods. In the fifth generation of these heavenly deities, a brother and sister, Izanagi and Izanami, were born. The celestial pair were united in marriage, and in celebration the other gods gave them a jeweled spear. Standing together on the Heavenly Floating Bridge, they dipped the spear into the ocean below. Sparkling droplets fell from the point of the spear, forming an island.

Izanagi and Izanami descended from the heavens to dwell on the new land. Here Izanami gave birth to the islands of Japan, the mountains, the sea, the rivers, trees, wind and rocks, and to a host of deities. In giving birth to the god of fire, Izanami suffered burns and died.

Her grieving husband followed her to the Land of Darkness and begged her to return. “My beloved spouse, the lands we are creating have not yet been completed; you must come back.”

“Wait, my husband,” Izanami answered. “I have eaten in the land of the dead and must seek the counsel of the gods of darkness. Turn your eyes from me and wait.”

But Izanagi became impatient after the long waiting. He broke a tooth from his comb and set fire to it. As the forbidden light pierced the caves of the Land of Darkness, his dead wife’s corpse decayed before his eyes.

Terrified by what he had done, Izanagi fled, pursued by the hags and warriors of the underworld. Izanami, too, followed him, wailing. At last he escaped from the land of the dead, but he had lost Izanami forever.

Upon his return to the island of Japan, Izanagi purified himself by bathing in a river. As he cast off his jewels and articles of clothing they were transformed into deities—the Sun Goddess, the Moon Goddess, the God of Storm, and others. From the Sun Goddess was descended the first Emperor of Japan. He was called Jimmu, or Divine Valor, and his mission was to unify the islands and all the peoples of Japan.

As symbols of his divine descent, the sacred mirror, chaplet and sword, gifts from the Sun Goddess to Jimmu’s forefather, have remained in the keeping of all the Emperors of Japan who followed him.

CHARACTERS

The American Nagoyas

John Nagoya—second generation Japanese American

Yoshi Nagoya—John's wife

Roger Nagoya—John and Yoshi's son

Gingi Nagoya Morrison—John and Yoshi's daughter, married to Danny Morrison

The Japanese Nagoyas

Toshio Nagoya—John's cousin

Michiko Nagoya—Toshio's wife

Ogato Nagoya—Toshio's and Michiko's son

The Morrisons

Senator Ted Morrison

Sandy Morrison—Ted's wife

Danny Morrison—Ted and Sandy's son, married to Gingi Nagoya

Douglas Welfield—Sandy Morrison's brother

The Extras

Bill Hendricks—head of the Amalgamated Auto Workers

Alan Bates—Senator Morrison's Chief of Staff

Timuro Sakamoto—Yakuza boss in America

Prologue

As he walked along the dock on this Memorial Day holiday, he should have been hearing gulls squawking and the lapping of the water against the hulls of the berthed boats. This being their first cruise of the season, he should have been delighted that the day was clear and the water calm. Instead he was staring into space hearing his own words echoing in his head. "I'm not interested."

Reaching his thirty-two foot cabin cruiser, he pulled on a stern line to haul the boat close to the dock. He tied off the line on a cleat and hopped on board then took his wife's hand and helped her over the transom.

"What's troubling you dear?" she asked.

"Nothing."

"Something's bothering you."

He never could hide anything from her. "They upped their offer to thirty-five million."

Her mouth dropped open. She was the company treasurer and knew that offer was astronomical. "And?"

"And I turned them down."

She nodded.

"I'm only fifty. What'll I do if I sell the company? Besides Kevin is anticipating taking over when we retire. He's doing a great job. I couldn't sell the business out from under him."

"Dear, you don't have to explain yourself to me. You have my full support in whatever you decide to do."

Inside the cabin, he opened the hatch and vents to the engine compartment and sniffed. Despite smelling no gasoline fumes in the bilges, he turned on the blower then went back to join his wife on deck. Seeing his son and daughter-in-law approaching, he said, "Let's not say anything to them."

"Of course, dear." She fell into a pout. "They didn't bring the baby?"

"You know Connie's parents are in from Idaho. I invited them to come with us but they said they weren't thrilled about boating so I suggested the kids leave the baby with them. Her parents rarely get to see their grandchild and were overjoyed to have the whole day alone with him."

"I guess you're right. He is a little young. It wouldn't be much fun for the kids having to watch the baby every minute."

He welcomed his son and daughter-in-law aboard, then climbed to the bridge and started the engine. His son and wife untied the bow and stern lines and they headed out of the Mackinaw City Municipal Marina for a relaxing day fishing on Lake Huron.

They were off the eastern shore of Mackinac Island when the explosion turned the luxury yacht into a mass of driftwood.

Chapter 1

Roger sat stoically at the conference table across from the trustees of the Hanson estate. As they signed the last document, Roger slid the twenty-five million dollar check from United Industries of America, his brother-in-law's company, across the brown Formica. Gathering the contracts, he stood and shook hands with the trustees. "Thank you, gentlemen. I hope that will ease the child's pain."

In the cab on the way to the airport, news from the driver's radio about an earthquake and tsunami in Japan snapped Roger out of his thoughts about how unfair the deal was that he'd just consummated. It was the first he heard of the disaster.

He called his father. "Have you heard from Cousin Toshio?"

"Yes, I was able to get through to him. He's okay. The quake was over one hundred miles from Tokyo, but he's in shock like the rest of Japan. He said the destruction in the Fukushima Prefecture was devastating. Whole cities were wiped out, something he had not seen since the atom bombs were dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima."

"My God, what can we do to help them?"

"I've been calling all the managers of the Japanese companies we represent over here in the U.S. and offering my sympathy and any assistance I can give. They tell me the carnage was mostly in a rural area and that little damage has been done to their parent company's factories. But many executives have elderly relatives living in the affected area and are worried."

Roger shook his head. "How horrible."

Roger made it to the airport with barely enough time to catch his flight from Detroit to San Francisco. Hustling past a newsstand, he bought the late editions of papers from Michigan, Chicago and San Francisco. He joined the line boarding the plane and glimpsed one of the TVs in the waiting area. The announcer seemed to be reporting on the damage in Japan but the TV was too far away to hear or to get a good look at the pictures.

On board he rifled through the newspapers. The stories were sketchy with few pictures as the earthquake and tsunami had occurred only hours earlier.

The woman next to him noticed his distress. "Are you from Japan?"

"No, I live in San Francisco."

"Do you have relatives over there?"

"Not in the tsunami area," Roger said.

She held out her hand. "I'm Katherine."

He shook gently. "Roger."

"Nice to meet you, Roger."

"You too, Katherine." She was an elderly woman, smartly dressed with grey hair. Roger guessed her to be in her sixties.

"I'm so sorry. We all are."

She seemed sincere so he answered with a meek smile. "Thank you."

"I'm going to send a donation to the Red Cross."

“That’s very kind of you.”

“I wish I could do more.”

He thanked her again and they returned to their reading. Frustrated with the lack of information in the newspapers, Roger activated the TV screen in the seat back in front of him by swiping his credit card. He plugged the free set of ear buds they had given him when he boarded the plane into the armrest, set them in his ears and tuned to a news channel. His mouth dropped open and he fell back in his chair in shock at the unbelievable scenes. He glanced at Katherine. She was watching his screen and looked as numb as he.

The announcer talked over a continuous video loop about a giant wave that washed away the port city of Sendai and other the cities in the Fukushima, Iwate and Miyagi Prefectures turning buildings into piles of tinder and killing thousands. Oceangoing ships leaned on their sides hundreds of yards inland. Cars floated about ending up in piles like they had been deposited in junkyards. People wandered aimlessly, their faces zombie-like as they searched through the rubble for loved ones. Roger thought the devastation was more horrendous than any disaster movie he had ever seen. It was reality TV at its worst. Unable to watch any longer, he shut the TV off.

He treated Katherine to a drink and a sandwich and they made small talk for the rest of the flight. Katherine was a mother of four and a grandmother of six. She lived very close to the ocean in Carmel-By-The-Sea on the Monterey Peninsula. During their silent periods Katherine bowed her head and Roger couldn’t help but assume she was praying that nothing like what happened in Japan would hit California.

On the way up the gangway Katherine said, “Good luck to your people.”

Roger thanked her yet one more time and thought, *your people*. Until this disaster he never considered the people in Japan as his people. He was third generation American, and although all the law firm’s clients except for his brother-in-law’s company were headquartered in Japan he never looked at himself as one of them. His upbringing was one hundred percent American.

But what did being American mean? Everyone knew the basic tenets—freedom, democracy, “certain unalienable rights.” Didn’t the Japanese have those also? To him, many Japanese seemed as American as he. They also had freedom and democracy. They liked golf and baseball. Other than language, religion and customs, like the beautiful tea ceremony, what really separated the Japanese people from Americans?

They revered family. They had their wealthy, their poor and their middle class. They liked to party after work, although maybe a little too hard. They were free to wander the world as they wished. Yet despite all their similarities to American culture, there was an underpinning that he could not put his finger on that said to him he would never want to live permanently in Japan.

At eight in the morning he walked into his father’s sparse office. For a law firm the size of Ito & Nagoya with branches in every major U.S. city, one would imagine the headquarters of the senior partner to be luxurious, but John Nagoya’s seventeen by twenty foot office was plain—commercial carpet, a nicked and scratched wooden desk that belonged to his mentor, black lacquered sideboard, two visitor’s chairs and a couple of Japanese wood block prints hanging on rice paper covered walls.

Those pictures caught Roger’s attention every time he entered his father’s office. They were of women resembling his mother—tall for Japanese women, and slender with flawless skin and a

delicately pretty faces. That was obviously why his father bought them. Even part of the artist's name, Yoshitoshi, was the same as his mother's first name, Yoshi.

"Any better news from Japan?" Roger asked.

John shook his head. "It doesn't look good. Thousands are dead and missing. Many more thousands are homeless and in shelters. The Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant is in danger of a melt-down."

"Terrible."

"Help is flooding in from around the world. Even age-old enemies, China and Korea, are sending aid."

"Why does it take a major disaster to bring people together?"

"I don't know, son. That just seems to be the way of the world. Friends today, enemies tomorrow and vice versa."

"So sad."

"Yes it is, and we will pray for the survivors and send aid, but we also must go on with our lives. How'd it go in Michigan?"

Roger handed his father the signed contracts. "It's done, but I still don't think it's fair. Nine months ago just before the accident, Danny offered thirty-five million for the company. Now when the executors are ready to settle the estate he drops his offer to twenty-five million."

"A deal doesn't stay on the table forever. Once it's turned down, it's considered over."

"I know, but—"

"Obviously if the trustees had gotten a better offer they wouldn't have accepted Danny's. How old is the child?"

"I think two by now."

"Twenty-five million will give him a hell of a start in life."

"I think he'd rather have his parents back."

John shrugged. "Wouldn't we all."

Continuing to think about the Hanson child, Roger mused, *Will the boy still be dwelling on his parent's deaths sixty-seven years from now like my father continues to do about his own parents? Of course there are a couple of huge differences between that child and my father. Where a mob beat Dad's parents, my grandparents, to death, this child's parents died in an accident. Where my father was an orphan with no relatives and not a cent in his pocket, the Hanson boy has \$25 million and loving grandparents to raise him.*

Seeing your parents beaten to death right before your eyes would certainly leave a person traumatically scarred for life, Roger thought. How his father had overcome such a cataclysmic, horrific tragedy and not let bitterness destroy him had to have taken monumental strength, just like the strength the people in Japan will need today. Well, strength of purpose was certainly his father's greatest attribute. Without it he never would have been able to build such a large law firm.

Was that the big difference between the Americans and the Japanese, intensity of purpose? No, that couldn't be it. Americans had the same resolute strength that let them rebound from sudden shocks like the Oklahoma City bombing, 9/11 and Katrina.

Still, Roger often felt there was more behind his father's all-consuming focus on the law firm than just the desire to succeed. Although he had inherited his father's looks—large wide eyes, pronounced narrow nose, and an oval face with a rounded chin—he didn't inherit his father's fervor for work. He was conscientious, did his job without complaining, but he didn't live the job twenty-four hours a day like his father seemed to do.

When Roger didn't get up to leave, John asked, "Is there something else, son?"

"United Industries of America, Danny's business, is doing very well."

"Is that a question? You're not begrudging his success?"

"No, of course not."

"Good, because you should be happy for your sister. Danny has provided well for her and your niece and nephew."

"I know, but I mean, it just seems so strange. He went from one electronics store you had to talk him into starting to becoming the CEO of a huge conglomerate."

"Look, Roger, after Danny got his feet wet running a business, he really liked it. He came to me and said he wanted to expand. I told him electronics retailing is a cutthroat business, and I'm not going to live forever. After I'm gone his connections with the Japanese suppliers may fade. I suggested he diversify into other businesses. I set him up with a couple of hedge funds for capital and he proved himself. That's all there is to it."

Except, it's quite a coincidence that the owners of four of the last six companies Danny acquired died in accidents leaving no partners to take over, forcing the trustees into quick sales. There was no way he would verbalize that thought to his father without further investigation.

"Dad, I don't mean to be contrary, but Danny's never been to Japan. He never met our clients."

"What are you trying to say, son?"

"I mean, Danny's United Industries of America does a lot of business with our Japanese clients because of your connections. Wouldn't Danny be in the same situation as he would have been with the retail store?"

"No. First of all Danny's companies have become important to our clients. By purchasing products from United Industries of America, which by the way are 100% American owned, they have blunted a lot of politician's demands that Japan import more from American companies. Danny's companies sell so much to our clients that the balance of trade argument has been turned away from Japan and toward China."

"True, but our clients could buy the same goods from Danny's competitors. What if they decide to do that once you retire?"

"That's where you come in. Japanese businessmen don't make new affiliations easily. You have gone with me to Japan and met all our clients. Your association with them will assure their continued business dealings with Danny's companies."

"It's been a couple of years since I've gone with you. Maybe when the panic is over in a few months, I should take another trip to reinforce my relationships?"

"Good idea, but not this time."

"What do you mean, not this time?"

"I'll be going myself as soon as things calm down."

"What about the radiation from the crippled power plant?"

"It's over one hundred miles from Tokyo. Only trace radiation has reached the city."

"Only trace now, but what if the plant melts down?"

"That's why I don't want you going there now. I don't want you exposed. You'll get married someday and want children."

"But, Dad—"

"Look, Roger, I'm seventy-six. My life is on the down side."

"Don't talk like that."

“I’ll be fine. Besides I’m sure Toshio is not going to hang around Tokyo if the city is threatened. He has a private plane. If he leaves, I’ll go with him.”

Knowing his father’s stubborn nature, Roger realized he would not be able to change his mind so he didn’t pursue the issue. He rose and shook his father’s hand. He didn’t fall into a hug as loved ones did when greeting and departing. Years ago when he began to understand certain emotions, he had felt the tension in his father when they hugged so he stopped doing it.

Just because his father wasn’t a hugger didn’t mean his father didn’t love him. He knew he did. Despite his father being absent for long periods when he and his sister were growing up, the short periods his father was at home he gave him and Gingi all his attention—playing with them, helping them with their school work, coming to his baseball games and Gingi’s gymnastic meets in high school, advising them, and consoling them when they skinned their knees. It was just that his father didn’t seem to like the hugging thing, so Roger shrugged it off as a quirk in old Japanese men. They bowed. They didn’t hug.

“Have a good trip. I’ll hold down the fort.”

“I know you will, son.”

And maybe I’ll do a little digging into the Danny’s company files.