

## *Four Natural Disasters (One Outcome)*

*(Prologue)*

### *Part I*

It seems like most movies produced today have three basic plots.

#1 A former assassin or special forces guy's wife is killed, he looks for revenge.

#2 Hostages are captured in Afghanistan and must be rescued.

#3 Disaster

Others are historical dramas based on true stories. Jews and Nazis. Kings, emperors, and fallen empires.

For this story I chose disasters.

### The Tsunami (Chapter 1)

Jake's dream was to retire in a peaceful environment and live the rest of his life healthy and happy. He had been resourceful and had adequate money to do this. He researched many places for the best benefits. The Philippines were a top choice. South America also has many economical benefits. Parts of Europe and Asia were tops on retirees lists. He chose Japan. Why? After his divorce, he had been looking for a new partner. At first, he just wanted to find someone near him in the US. During his career he had witnessed many ethnicities and liked the Asian cultures and mannerisms. His first attempt to hook up with someone online took him completely by surprise. After posting his dating credentials, he did get some local responses. He did try to connect, but did not find anyone with similar interests. He got dozens of responses from all over the world though. At first he was reluctant to even converse with anyone. He was not a spring chicken. In his late 50's, he was still in good shape and kept up his health with exercise and reasonable diet. One woman in particular caught his eye. He started an online conversation with her.

Her name was Meko.



We corresponded for several months. It seemed that she had a good family background and was adventurous. I spoke to her on the phone and was encouraged that her English was adequate. Not perfect mind you, but good enough to convey basic ideas. This was what I was looking for. It took some courage to decide to go to Japan and meet her. She met me at the Haneda airport. Not the busiest, but the one that handles most International travelers.

I had booked a hotel near the airport. The Shinagawa Prince Hotel. Not the most expensive, but not the cheapest either. One advantage was that it was within walking distance of the Shinagawa station and right on the coast. I always liked being near the ocean.



A major railway in Tokyo

She hailed a taxi and dropped me off at my hotel. I told her that I was jet-lagged and not in the best condition. Please return to the hotel in the morning and I will treat you to breakfast. She was agreeable to this. When I booked the hotel, it included breakfast for two. A nice amenity.

The hotel catered to foreign travelers. Our breakfast included lots of Japanese specialties along with international cuisine.

A traditional Japanese breakfast typically includes steamed rice, miso soup, grilled fish (like salmon or mackerel), tamagoyaki (rolled omelet), and a side of pickled vegetables. Other common components are natto (fermented soybeans) and nori (seaweed).

I ordered bacon and eggs. I would get plenty of chances to partake of

Japanese cuisine during the next weeks.

Meko was very pleasant. We talked about our upbringing and our education. She had been a nurse in a factory that eventually closed. I was thinking that in the future I would be lucky to be married to a nurse. Who knows what aliments I might get?

Since I had never been to Tokyo, I asked her what is the best tourist sights to see. She didn't disappoint. We visited four of the best ones.

Mt. Fuji



Sensoji Temple



One of my favorites (walk on water garden)



The ocean



During the days we spent together I really enjoyed her company. I sensed that she liked me too. She had never invited me to her home. We had never had the chance to become intimate. That was OK with me. I wanted to get to know her before or if that opportunity came around. So I was surprised the next day when she invited me to her home. She said that she wanted to cook me an authentic Japanese meal. I was all in.

She gave me her address and said that she would be waiting for me. I took a



taxi to the address she gave. I thought that this might be the moment when we stepped up our relationship. I was already enamored with her and was hoping this would lead to the real deal.

Her home was a modest apartment in a relatively low class area. I did not care about any of this. Whatever situation that had caused her to live in this place, I am sure was not her fault. When I knocked on her door, a young girl about the age of 10 answered. She said, in better English than Meko, hi my name is Rin. My mom is in the kitchen making dinner. You must be Jake. I was momentarily stunned. It seems that Meko had left out an important detail about her life.



Rin: A short and sweet name meaning "dignified" or "凜".

I recovered and she led me into the small kitchen area where the dinner table was located. Meko looked up and gave me a somewhat cautious smile. I could have complained about her leaving out an important aspect of her life, but I remained calm as if nothing had changed. Our evening proceeded nicely and her food was spectacular.



Fresh made sushi, miso soup, seaweed chowder and Sake to drink. I could

see why the Japanese are the healthiest people on earth.

Rin was very animated and talked a lot about her school and what she was doing. Meko was somewhat reserved. I could guess why. I did enjoy the evening and I parted with the comment that I needed to take care of some stateside business for a day or so. I would call. Both Meko and I knew that what I really was doing was deciding if I should just go back to America or stay. It really didn't take me long to decide. Meko was everything I was looking for and Rin was a well behaved almost teenager.

A day went by and then I called Meko. I invited her to dinner. I had arraigned a poolside catered meal with a garden near by. We needed to talk. The area was private enough so that others could not overhear our conversation. I needed her to give me an explanation of why she withheld such and important thing as having a 10 year old daughter.

She explained it this way: I know I should have told you upfront, but before I introduced you to my daughter, I needed to find out what kind of person you were. I wasn't interested in entertaining some playboy just looking for a few nights of fun. My husband divorced me after finding a younger woman. He left me with little money. Even though he visits Rin now and then, we are pretty much on our own. If you aren't interested in continuing our dating, I would understand if you left and returned home.

I took hold of her hand and looked her in the eye. I said, you are everything I could have hoped for. Your daughter is a gem. I would be crazy to leave you. Thus began one of the happiest periods of my life. For the next two weeks Meko and I were rarely separated. March 1st is the beginning of spring in Japan.



My idyllic life was about to be turned upside down.

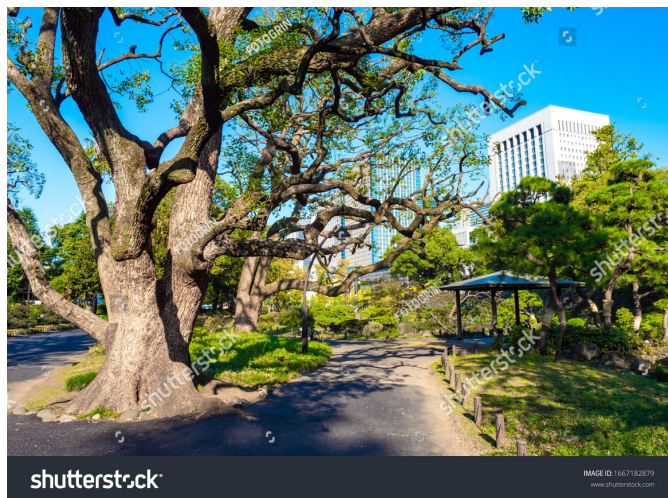
March 11, 2011: The Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami event, often referred to as the Great East Japan earthquake and tsunami, resulted in over 18,000 dead, including several thousand victims who were never recovered. The deadly earthquake was the largest magnitude ever recorded in Japan and the third-largest in the world since 1900.



**Four Natural Disasters (One Outcome)**  
(Chapter 2)

Rin was on spring break. We had been taking her with us on more tours. On this particular day, we were at the beach. It was at picnic area not far from my hotel room. A park like setting with green grass and lots of trees for shade. Palm trees and older trees like this one shown below.





Meko had returned to the room to change into a swimsuit. Rin and I were already dressed for the beach. Without any warning, I saw the tsunami rise up. The earthquake was close enough to Japan's coastline that no warning could have been given. It is hard to imagine, but a tsunami wave travels at 600 mph. Faster than a Boeing 747. There was no way to outrun the wave. A ship out in the open ocean won't even notice a tsunami wave. The wave might only be 3 feet high. It's when it reaches a land mass, it pulls the coastal waters back, then rises up 25 feet high crashing over breakwaters and pushing far inland smashing everything in sight. Then the receding waters drag all the debris back out in a rush of returning water. I grabbed Rin's hand and told her to follow me. We both scaled up the closest tree. We got up as high as we could in the strong large branches. The first wave passed by. As the receding wave left, all kinds of debris, including trash and even the bodies of those who had drowned flowed by. Rin started to get down from the tree. I need to help my mom. Don't get down yet Rin. Your mom is probably safer than we are and there will be several more waves to hit. I was not wrong. Two more even stronger waves crashed across the coastline. If not for this strong tree, we would have perished. We stayed up there for several hours. Enough so that I thought the tsunami threat was over. When I thought it was safe, we both climbed down. I could not believe the devastation. The hotel was completely demolished. Emergency personnel were busy combing through the wreckage. No sign of Meko.



The problem with a disaster of this scale is if you didn't die in the water, an enormous danger still awaits you. No clean water, infestations of rats, disease, and predators. There are never enough responsible safety personnel to protect the survivors. My job now was to protect Rin and search for Meko. The next week was hit and miss on the survival scale. Luckily Rin and I were not injured. A cut or broken limb at this stage did not bode well for survival. Infection, bacteria in the water, and human predators were around every corner. I told Rin we needed to work our way inland. If we could get past the devastation our chances would improve. After some time, we could then return and look for Meko. We made it far enough inland that we found a fresh water lake. It was still a risk to drink straight from the lake, but we had no choice. We were both dehydrated. After quenching our thirst, the next thing we needed was some food and shelter. The area that we had entered was kind of a natural setting. We climbed up on a hill and could not see any cities close by. I guess we were stuck here for the time being. I told Rin that we needed to make the best of it. No problem. I had been in the boy scouts and had learned to make a fire and build a shelter with out any tools. Even though it was early spring, the temperature at night was still cool. I peeled some bark of a tree and broke off some small branches. I found some mossy fibers and used the branches to rub and spin enough to ignite the moss. We now had a fire. There were enough palm fronds to assemble a kind of shelter. We laid some of them down on the ground for insulation. I used some of the thin bark strips to make a snare. By slipping this around some lizards that were abundant, we caught enough to use for bait. Another snare



and branches for a trap bagged me a rabbit later that evening. We had not ventured far from the lake so water was still within reach. Roasted rabbit and lizard on a stick gave us some protein. We managed to live like this for the next two weeks. I told Rin that it was time to return to the coast and look for her mom. She was all for it. During the time we were gone, things had improved. The authorities had done an amazing job and help from other countries gave support. We did have one scary incident on our return trek. We came across two unsavory types. They started to approach us in a menacing way. Before they were in range, I told them that I was bringing my daughter back to search for her mom and anyone trying to stop us would end up like the last two. They didn't comprehend what I was saying. Rin translated for me. This may have been a bluff, but it was a good one. I didn't look like a weakling and they seemed wary of me. I would have defended her with my life. She had already suffered not knowing if her mom was still alive. We got by with out further threats. I said that worked better than I had expected. She said, I didn't translate exactly word for word. I told them that you were ex-special forces and had already killed several others with your bare hands. This girl was even smarter than I had given her credit for.

The authorities had set up a central information center in one of the brick buildings that had not been knocked down. It was also a makeshift hospital. We checked the list of deceased who had been identified by ID that was in their possession when found. Thank God Meko was not on that list. We were allowed to search through the ward. Rin told them that her mother had been at the hotel when the wave hit. There were hundreds of victims in various states of injury. I was about to give up when Rin spotted a woman near the far end of the complex. She ran to her and exclaimed "Mom, you're alive!" Indeed it was Meko. She had a bandage wrapped around her head, but otherwise looked unharmed. This is what she related to us:

When the wave hit, I was up on the third floor of the hotel. The first wave knocked down the outside walls and the floor collapsed. I fell through and landed on a bed on the floor below. The next wave knocked all the walls down and I got trapped under some debris. Fortunately, I was high enough not to be inundated by the water. I was trapped there until some rescue workers freed me. I got banged pretty good on the head and they took me to

this field hospital where I have remained every since. Sometimes I would drift in and out of consciousness, but lately I seemed to have fully recovered. They were going to release me soon. I was sure that both of you had been swept out to sea. No one near the coastline survived. How did you? I told her about the big strong tree in the park and how we climbed up to safety. We had searched for you, but things were so hectic and other dangers were all around. We headed inland and survived in that forested area. When I thought it was safe, we came back to look for you.

What should we do now? For one, we have to leave Japan. Not only will it take years for this area to recover, the earthquake ruptured one of Japan's nuclear facilities and radiation has been leaking out of the reactor. There is no cure for this other than capturing the contaminated water. A short term solution is to store the water, but that won't work in the long run.

Before coming here, I had researched safe places around the globe to retire. If you are willing, I will take you and Rin with me to South America. I know of a city on the ocean that doesn't have hurricanes or tsunamis. It is called Montevideo and is in Uruguay. Where will we live? I can rent an apartment there for a reasonable price and I also planned on buying a boat to keep in the marina.

That is how I ended up married to a Japanese woman and retired in a safe place. Rin adapted to the area quickly and I already spoke Uruguayan. It is also called Spanish.

## **The end of Part I**

Next, the hurricane