

Prologue

地元の文化センターが開く英会話クラスに通う恵子と里香。ネイティブの先生がしょっちゅう替わることに不満を覚えた二人はクラスを辞めることにし、英語の読書会を始めようと計画する。

Not again! Keiko sighed and closed her still-new textbook.

David, a young English instructor from the US, stood in front of the whiteboard and spoke to the class of adults.

“I’m sorry, but this is my last day. A new teacher will come next week.”

The classroom began to buzz as the others in the class discussed this latest development, but it was no surprise to Keiko. She knew that teaching small English conversation classes offered by the local government was not the job teachers dreamed of. As David told the class about his new plans, Keiko noted that it took less than six months for the average native English speaker to move on to something better. David had been the class’s third teacher.

The worst part about it was that every time a teacher quit, the class had to buy an expensive new textbook and get used to the way a new teacher taught *and* spoke English: American, British, Australian—they were all a little different. On top of that, the students varied greatly in how much English they could handle, with new ones entering and older ones quitting the class every few months or so. Even still, Keiko had stuck with the lessons. Looking back, though, she didn’t think she had made any progress. She certainly didn’t feel any more confident in her English ability. It was time for a change.

As she put her textbook into her bag, Keiko turned to look at her friend Rika. Rika had really liked David, and she looked disappointed.

It had been a little over a year since a flyer advertising the English conversation class had appeared in Keiko’s mailbox. By then, six years had passed since she had given up her job to stay at home, raise her children, and help out her parents. She had volunteered for the PTA, taken yoga classes, and done her best as a

homemaker. She didn't regret those years she had devoted to her family, but she had begun to feel that she wanted to take on something new—she was ready to go back to work. Keiko had looked at the flyer again and thought back to the days when her co-workers had depended on her for any task requiring English skills—she'd had plenty of confidence back then.

“That's it!” she had declared, “I'm going to take lessons and do something about my rusty English.” And so Keiko had signed up for the once-a-week conversation class. After a few months, she had called up her old pal Rika and talked her into joining too. They had been classmates in high school and still got together occasionally. Convincing Rika to join had not been easy. Keiko recalled her reaction to the suggestion:

“English conversation? You've got to be kidding. You know me, ‘this is a pen’ and ‘thank you very much’ is as far as I go.”

“How about just coming with me once?” Keiko had refused to give up, and almost dragged her friend along one week. And she had been lucky: all it had taken was a look at David, who was tall and handsome, and Rika had decided that maybe she could manage English after all.

“You know, I think the teacher looks a little bit like that British soccer player—David Beckham. They even have the same name!”

From the first class, Rika completely forgot how much she hated English and used every word and phrase she could come up with, no matter how broken, to try to communicate. She was delighted every time her efforts evoked a smile from the good-looking teacher.

After David's last class, Keiko and Rika stopped for a cup of coffee on the way home.

“I'm going to quit,” said Keiko, sipping her drink. “My English isn't going to get any better this way. The textbooks all cover the same things—I'm tired of pretending to make orders in restaurants. It's all so dry and boring.”

“I guess I'll quit, too,” agreed Rika. “There will never be another teacher like David.”

Keiko didn't care what the teacher looked like, she just didn't like the way they were constantly changing—and the rest of the class wasn't very good either. There was that Mrs. Baba, for example. Every time David called on her she got so nervous her lips began to quiver, and it was impossible to hear what she was saying. Keiko couldn't imagine what she was doing in the class. Her husband, though, could speak English. He was a retired businessman who had spent two years assigned to his company's offices in Australia. Keiko would definitely miss being paired with Mr. Baba for conversation practice. And how was she going to explain this all to her family? She had made such a big deal about starting lessons, and now she would have to admit failure. More than anything, though, she was afraid of giving up her still-secret dreams of going back into the workforce. But what could she do?

"There's got to be something better than English conversation," she mumbled to herself. Unfortunately, Rika heard her and offered what she considered the perfect solution.

"How about hula?"

"What?"

"Hula dancing. Everyone is doing it these days, and there's a new dance studio opening in front of the station."

Hula was definitely not what Keiko had in mind. She wanted to study English, and she needed a companion to help keep her committed.

"Let's take up English reading," she blurted out.

"Reading? That's even worse than speaking! I can't do that."

"Oh come on. It won't be that hard. Don't you remember that movie we saw, 'The Jane Austen Book Club'? The members got together, sat around, and talked about the books. That's what we'll do."

"That was a great movie!" Rika recalled blissfully. "The young rich guy, Grigg, falls in love with Jocelyn. She was older than him and not interested at first, but he read all of the books by Jane Austen—just for her." Suddenly, she sat up straight and turned to Keiko. "So if we start a book club, do you think a man with a fortune will join, and..."

Keiko just let Rika talk until she was sure her friend forgotten all about the hula class. Then she spoke up again. "The day after tomorrow we're going book

shopping. Keep a couple of hours open in the afternoon!”

Chapter 1

街で一番大きい書店で洋書探しを始めた恵子と里香。そこでバツタリ、英会話クラスで一緒の馬場さんに会い、馬場夫妻も読書会に加わることになる。マーク・トウェインの本で始めた１回目の会合は、しかし・・・。

Two days later, Keiko and Rika set off for the largest bookstore in town. They walked in and looked around, but didn't see anything.

“English books?” Keiko inquired at the information desk.

“Go straight to the back, and turn left,” was the brief response.

The two women began a short hike that ended right in front of the restrooms.

“This is it?” Rika wondered aloud.

The “foreign books section” consisted of a revolving rack of English paperbacks, and a couple of shelves of books on Japanese culture and readers—books simplified for non-English speakers.

They looked through the small selection of books.

“Ah! Mark Twain!” Keiko finally found a familiar name. “Why don't we try this? Mark Twain had a great sense of humor. I had a professor who loved him and always quoted his sayings to us. This will be fun!”

“There's only one copy.” Rika was not enthusiastic.

Keiko was afraid Rika would start talking about hula dancing again, so she took control of the situation.

“Don't worry, I'll buy it. I'll copy the first few pages for myself and then lend you the book. If I just make the one set of copies, nobody can accuse us of breaking copyright laws.” She pulled the book out of the rack and led Rika to the cash register. Just as she was receiving her change, she heard a familiar voice.

“Well, how are you ladies?”

They turned to see Mr. Baba in line behind them.

“I see you've purchased a book by Mark Twain,” he noted.

Keiko opened her mouth to make up some excuse, but Rika spoke first.

“Oh yes,” said Rika obliviously. “We're going to quit the conversation

class and read this book instead.”

“Read Mark Twain?” He sounded interested.

“Uh, yes,” broke in Keiko. “Since the teacher is quitting, I’ve decided to quit and do something on my own. Rika has promised to help me out.”

“Yeah,” Rika added. “It’s going to be a book club.”

Keiko knew something bad was about to happen.

“A *book* club?”

Yes, Mr. Baba was definitely interested. And that could mean only one thing.

“My wife and I would love to join you!”

Keiko didn’t know what to do. She would be delighted to have Mr. Baba as a study partner, but his wife ...

“Your, um, wife, doesn’t really seem to enjoy English,” she tried. “Do you think she would want to, um, I mean ...”

Keiko could tell from his expression that Mr. Baba clearly understood what she meant.

“Yes, I know that my wife slowed down the conversation class. It’s not her fault. We have a daughter—she’s our only child. She married an American and moved to Oregon. Now she has a seven-year-old daughter who has started to send us letters.

“Can you imagine not speaking the same language as your grandchildren? It’s depressing for my wife, so I started dragging her to the conversation class. But a book club would be even better!”

“What do you say? If you are going to read Mark Twain, I’ll go home and order the book online.”

After hearing that, neither Rika nor Keiko had the heart to turn down Mr. Baba. The three of them set the date for their first meeting. They would have two weeks to read the first chapter of *Roughing It* by Mark Twain.

Keiko, Rika, and the Babas—Goro and Natsu—gathered at a local café for the first meeting of their book club. Everyone was oddly quiet—even Rika had

almost nothing to say. When the waitress brought them their menus, they all studied them at length before they placed their orders. It was almost as if they were trying to delay the start of their discussion on *Roughing It*.

After they had all ordered and the menus had been whisked away, Keiko had no choice but to begin.

She cleared her throat, pulled out her book, and began to speak. “Shall we get started? Did you all have a chance to read the first chapter?”

Everyone nodded, but they didn’t even lift their eyes to look at Keiko.

“Would anyone like to read the first paragraph?”

There were no volunteers.

“All right, then, I will,” she said grimly. “Please follow along:

My brother had just been appointed Secretary of Nevada Territory—an office of such majesty that it concentrated in itself the duties and dignities of Treasurer, Comptroller, Secretary of State, and Acting Governor in the Governor’s absence. A salary of eighteen hundred dollars a year and the title of “Mr. Secretary,” gave to the great position an air of wild and imposing grandeur.

Roughing It, by Mark Twain

Keiko finished reading, took a deep breath, and turned to Goro Baba.

“Mr. Baba, would you like to explain the passage to us?”

Goro looked up in alarm.

“Yes, of course,” he began. “It seems the author had a brother, and ... and ... the brother received a salary. He was a salaryman! He lived in the state of Nevada, but it says ‘Nevada territory,’ which seems odd. Mrs. Tajima, perhaps you could help us out with the next part.”

Keiko opened and closed her mouth. She looked at Rika, who blinked her eyes a few times, took a sip of her coffee, put it down slowly, and then dropped her head as she collapsed into a fit of giggles.

“I couldn’t understand a word of it!” Rika blurted out. “Neither could Keiko. We thought *you* could help us!”

Mrs. Baba put her cup of tea down and looked at all three of them. A huge smile broke out on her face and, much to everyone's amazement, she spoke.

"Oh my goodness, I was sure I'd be the only one left out! I looked up every single one of those words in the dictionary, but I couldn't understand what it was saying."

There was a moment of silence, before Keiko and Rika, followed by the Babas, all begin to laugh until they had to wipe their eyes.

"At least I didn't buy the book," Rika finally managed to say. "But I don't understand. Mark Twain wrote books for children. I read *Tom Sawyer* when I was young. Why is this book so hard?"

Mr. Baba smiled. "I'm not sure what the problem is, but now that I think of it, we have probably all read Mark Twain's books in translation. You know, he wrote over a hundred years ago. How many books in Japanese do we read that were written so long ago?"

Keiko suddenly remembered her college professor and all those funny sayings by Mark Twain. Her professor had told them in Japanese. She realized that although she had her classmates felt they had become familiar with Mark Twain, they had actually read very little of his work in the original English. One of Twain's sayings seemed perfect for this occasion:

A classic is a book which people praise but don't read.

When Keiko mentioned it to the group, they all started laughing again. But the problem remained: if they couldn't read familiar classics in English, what should they read? It was all so much more difficult than they had anticipated. Keiko was sure the tiny selection of English books at the bookstore wouldn't be of much help.

Finally, Rika raised her hand. "Why don't we ask David? I asked him for his cell phone number at our last lesson. Maybe he's got some ideas."

It was the best idea any of the group came up with, so that was what they decided to do.

Chapter 2

本の選び方についてアドバイスをもらうため、恵子と里香はかつての英会話の先生デービッドを訪ねることに。そこで教えてもらったのは、思いもよらない方法一本を買わずに、電子デバイスを使って英語の本を読むことだった。

Keiko and Rika managed to call David and tell him that they needed his advice. Much to their relief, he invited them to his school to talk about their problem. There was only so much they could communicate over the phone.

On the day of their appointment, the two women set out for the college where David was teaching. They were meeting him in the school cafeteria. When they walked in, they saw David sitting at a table, all of his concentration focused on a small object in his hands. Rika waved, and then gave up when David failed to notice her.

“Look at him!” she said. “His eyes and the way he’s moving his hands ... he’s using an iPhone! I’ve just got one myself.”

Now that she and David had something in common, she walked right up to him and called out cheerily, “Hello, David!” That was about the extent of her English, so she gestured to ask him what he was doing.

“Hi, Rika,” David answered. “I’m using my cell phone to read English books.”

Keiko was puzzled. She was pretty sure she couldn’t read books on her cell phone. Rika, though, didn’t miss a beat. She pulled her iPhone out of her purse and drew upon her limited English reserves. “Can I ...?”

“Of course! Download Kindle app and you can read e-books on your iPhone.”

“Kindle?” Keiko had heard the word before. She had seen a picture of one in the newspaper once. “Isn’t it expensive?” she asked.

“You’re probably thinking of the Kindle reading device. I’m talking about Kindle app, which is free software.”

“What’s an app?” asked Rika, as she did her best to follow David. He showed them the icon for the app on his iPhone.

“By the way, what can I help you with today?” he asked.

Keiko told him about their reading group and showed him her copy of *Roughing It*. She opened the book to the first paragraph, the one they had all failed to comprehend.

David chuckled as he read it. “Mark Twain was a genius—his way with words! But this would be impossible to understand unless you knew something about the background. See how it says ‘Nevada Territory’? Nevada wasn’t even a state in those days. People nowadays think of Las Vegas when they think about Nevada. But a hundred years ago, it was still the Wild West. There was nothing there. It’s very funny, but much too difficult for beginners.”

“So what advice can you give us?” asked Keiko. “How can we find something to read?”

David thought for a few moments. “Why don’t you just try searching the Amazon.com site? You can look at the book categories and click on the ‘Look Inside’ icons.”

Keiko got out a memo pad and started taking notes. She had used the Amazon.co.jp site before, but never the English US version. She certainly hadn’t known that there was a function that let you look inside the books—that’s what David seemed to be saying anyway.

David noticed Keiko’s confused expression, asked the two of them to wait, and ran off. He reappeared a few minutes later with his computer.

He opened it and began typing.

“This is Amazon.com,” he said, showing them the screen. “And here,” he stopped talking to type a little more, “is a page for an English manga. It’s called [*The Outcast*](#).”

On the top of the picture of the book cover was an icon that said “Click to LOOK INSIDE!” David clicked on it, and the pages of the manga appeared on the screen. David showed them how to look through the pages available for free.

So this is a way to check out a book before you pay money for it, thought Keiko. She wished she had known about it before she had bought a book by Mark Twain that she knew now she would never read.

Rika, on the other hand, was spending no time on regrets, but was dashing ahead.

“Look here where it says Kindle Edition. Does that have anything to do with the apps David was just talking about?”

Keiko explained to David what Rika wanted to say. He told her that Kindle Edition was an electronic book, or e-book, sold by Amazon.com.

“Are you interested in e-books?” he asked. He clicked on Kindle Edition, and the screen changed. This was the page for ordering e-books. Keiko noticed the picture of a device located just under the cover illustration for *The Outcast*.

“If you download the Kindle app, you can read e-books on your PC.”

Keiko and Rika were amazed. First David had told them about a Kindle app for iPhone, but there was one for computers, too. Although they had heard about e-books before, they were sure that they had to buy a separate device for it. But David was telling them they could read them on equipment they already owned.

“With the Kindle app, you can also get free sample chapters of e-books and keep them on your PC.” He pointed to some words in the lower right-hand corner of the screen.

Try it free
Sample the beginning of this
book for free
Send sample now

Keiko continued to take notes as she thought about what David was saying. The “Look Inside” function would let them flip through the first pages of a book, but using the Kindle app, they could save a free sample of the first pages of a book on their hardware. “Look Inside” was like standing in a bookshop looking through books for free, but a Kindle Edition sample was like having the shop owner letting you take those first pages home if you liked.

To Keiko and Rika, the Kindle app sounded like some kind of magic button. They could use it to read e-books on their computers and iPhones, and they could even use it to get free samples.

David was delighted at their reaction, and explained where to look to download the Kindle app for PC. He told Rika that she could download the app

she needed for her iPhone as long as she had an iTunes account.

Always the good teacher, he summarized everything he had told them about how to find books that would be a better match for their book club:

Step 1: Look through the book categories on Amazon.com, and choose a genre you like.

Step 2: When you find a book that looks interesting, read a few pages with the “Look Inside” function.

Step 3: If the contents don’t look interesting, go back and look for another book.

Step 4: If you find a book you think you might like that has a Kindle Edition, order a free sample using your Kindle app.

“Anyway, you can see Amazon.com is a great place to search for books online. E-books. And just browsing won’t cost anything at all. It’s fun *and* it’s free.” David thought a minute and then switched into Japanese: “*‘Ii eigo no tame ni ebook ga ii desu ne.* You could just call it ‘e-reading.’ I really recommend it if you’re thinking of starting a reading club.”

Keiko and Rika laughed at David’s bilingual pun, and thanked him for his advice. Then it was time for his next class.

On her way home, Keiko thought about everything they had learned that day. She no longer needed a bookstore with a huge selection of English books. She could go through books on her computer while at home. Then there was the Kindle app! She definitely wanted to use it to get free samples of books. Things were looking up for her new book club!

Chapter 3

翌日、Amazon.com のサイトから難なくキンドル・アプリをダウンロードした恵子。すると、感激はそれだけにとどまらなかった。Amazon.com は無料で英語の本のサンプルが読める宝庫だったのだ。

The next day, Keiko sat down with her laptop and the notes from their meeting with David, and accessed the Amazon.com site. The first order of business was to download the Kindle app. She was excited about being able to order free samples and read them on her computer. She found the download page, input her email address and then a password that she made up and jotted down for future reference. In a few minutes she had the Kindle icon on her desktop. She smiled to herself and thought *This is it! I've officially entered the digital age!*

But she had more to do. She had to find a book! The first meeting of her precious book club had ended in failure. The chemistry among the four members, however, had been much better than she had imagined. It was up to her to find a book they could all understand.

David had suggested she use Amazon.com to find a book. She knew there were lots of English books on Amazon.co.jp, but the US site had more and they were organized in a way that made searches easier. David had said that searching for books by category might actually be fun.

She went back to the Amazon.com top page and found the bar labeled “Shop All Departments.” She clicked on “Books” from the drop-down menu, and a list of categories appeared underneath it.

Arts & Photography
Audiobooks
(snip)
Sports
Teens

There were at least thirty different items. Keiko wondered where she should start. She tried Children’s Books first. These were mainly picture books,

and they didn't interest her. She was pretty sure Mr. Baba would object, too.

What category would everyone like? she wondered. There was Home and Garden, but neither she nor Rika spent much time on interior decoration or planting beds of tulips. Then she found the Romance category. Now that looked interesting.

Just as Keiko was about to click on Romance, she noticed Teens several lines below it.

Books for teenagers? They might be more interesting than children's books but less difficult than books for adults. Keiko clicked on [Teens](#) and found it broken down into even smaller categories. She chose Literature and Fiction, and then Love & Romance. She scrolled down the line of colorful book jackets and noticed that many of them had the "Look Inside" icon.

Keiko began clicking on the different books, taking a look at the book descriptions and then reading the first few pages using the "Look Inside" function. It was just as David had said—the search itself was fun.

Keiko had lost track of time when she found the cover of [The Carrie Diaries](#). She read the explanation of the book on its top page, and learned that "Carrie" was Carrie Bradshaw, the lead character in the TV series "Sex and the City." This Teens-category book was about Carrie as a high-school student before she went to New York to become a newspaper columnist.

Keiko had seen the movie "Sex and the City," so this book got her attention. The first pages of the book were short and simple, and there was plenty of conversation. What could be more familiar to anyone than high school?

This was it! Keiko would undo the damage of Mark Twain and his hundred-year-old book by jumping firmly into the modern day with *The Carrie Diaries*.

Having made the decision, Keiko had a sense of satisfaction that comes with a job well done. She realized she had never before spent so much time online—not to mention on an English website. Come to think of it, she had spent the entire time reading English book explanations and the first pages of dozens of English books.

Even the process of finding an English book meant hours of reading. She

wondered if she had read and digested more English that morning than she had in a year of conversation classes. She suddenly realized that using English as a means to an end might be one of the most natural ways to absorb the language.

As she looked over *The Carries Diaries* page, she found “Kindle Edition” in the section titled “Formats.” This was what David had shown them. With her Kindle app, she should be able to download a free sample of the book.

Keiko clicked on [“Kindle Edition”](#) and the screen changed. She was surprised to see a different book cover. It was, she thought, much more elegant than the other one. She found the Send Sample Now button and clicked. These words appeared on the screen:

Your free sample is being sent to Keiko's Kindle for PC. Click on the button below to open Kindle for PC and automatically download the sample to your Home screen.

Below that was an icon that said “Go to Kindle for PC.” All Keiko had to do was push the icon, and in a matter of seconds she had the shiny gold jacket of *The Carrie Diaries* on her PC screen. She clicked on the cover and found chapters 1 to 3—even more than the Look Inside function provided.

Now she understood what David had tried to tell them. With the Kindle app, she could try out samples of hundreds of thousands of books on Amazon.com. She couldn't believe that twenty-four hours ago she thought the only place she could buy English books was in a bookstore. Now the possibilities were endless.

Keiko called Rika to tell her she had downloaded the Kindle app. Rika had already got one on her iPhone, so she was ready to get her own sample chapters of *The Carrie Diaries*. That was easy, Keiko thought. But when she called the Babas it was a different story.

“What's an app?” was Mr. Baba's response. “We aren't very high-tech here. We've only got one computer and we were always tripping over chords and getting in each other's way. We decided to try a wireless home network. One of my former colleagues installed it for us. It's convenient, that's for sure. I tell you what, why don't you and Ms. Hoshino come to our house for our next

meeting. Bring your laptop and iPhone with you. You can show us how to get this app. Until then, we'll use Look Inside. Although it won't be as convenient."

"Don't worry," Keiko assured him. "Downloading the app is simple and you'll be set up to use it in no time." After she hung up, she smiled to herself. She was feeling more and more optimistic about the reading club!

Chapter 4

読書会用に恵子を選んだ本ではアメリカの女子高生の物語が展開され、女性陣は大盛り上がり。「英辞郎」や Google を駆使して知らない単語を調べるまでに発展する。それとは対照的に、一人不満げな Mr. 馬場がいて・・・。

When Rika and Keiko arrived at the Babas' home for the book club, Mrs. Baba had tea and cookies waiting for them. Almost before she could offer them the plate, Rika was reaching out for one.

“Cookies!” she squealed. “I didn’t have time for dinner and I’m starving.”

Natsu Baba smiled with pleasure. When she opened her mouth to speak, though, her husband took over.

“My wife baked them herself. Our daughter in the US translated the recipe into Japanese and sent it to us. Natsu’s next goal is to learn to read English recipes so she doesn’t need the translation.”

“These cookies are delicious.” Rika hadn’t been listening. “Could I have another one?”

When they were all settled, they took out their tools. Mr. Baba turned on the computer he shared with his wife. Keiko had her laptop, and Rika pulled her iPhone out of her purse.

“Rika and I both have sample chapters using the Kindle app,” Keiko began. “Yesterday, I searched for *Roughing It*, and it turns out you can get the whole book for free. That was a shock! A lot of books that are no longer under copyright are available for free. I paid over ¥1000 for that book at the store! I wish I had known about this app ahead of time. It’s easy to download, so let’s get one for the Babas’ computer.”

In a few minutes, Goro and Natsu had both the app and the Kindle Edition sample of *The Carrie Diaries*. They were both delighted at how much easier it was to read on the screen.

“Isn’t it easy to use?” Rika never thought she’d have anything to offer in an English class, so she was enjoying the moment. “With a smartphone, I can read while I’m on the train or waiting for a client. And when I go back to the

sample later, it is in the same spot where I stopped reading. I don't have to go searching for the location.

“And look here. The app comes with a dictionary function. All I have to do is touch the word and the definition comes up on the screen. The only problem is that the definition is in English, but sometimes it gives me hints with easier words. I was able to use it to get through a few pages.”

Now that they all had the sample of *The Carrie Diaries*, Keiko had them open to the first page.

“This is the book I've chosen. Let's look at it together and then decide whether or not to buy it and read the whole thing.”

As she spoke, Keiko noticed a pained look on Mr. Baba's face. She decided to ignore it, and moved ahead. She explained that she had chosen the book because it had lots of white space, there was a good deal of conversation, and it made a good first impression on her—she had been intrigued that the setting was “Sex and the City's” Carrie Bradshaw as a high-school student.

“Has anyone seen ‘Sex and the City’?” she asked. It was a story about four women living in New York and their many romantic relationships. It had been popular among women for many years. Both Keiko and Rika had seen the movie, and Natsu Baba had seen some of the episodes on TV. Mr. Baba was silent. Keiko read the first passage out loud:

They say a lot can happen in a summer.

Or not.

It's the first day of senior year, and as far as I can tell, I'm exactly the same as I was last year.

And so is my best friend, Lali.

“Don't forget, Bradley, we have to get boyfriends this year,” she says, starting the engine of the red pickup truck she inherited from one of her older brothers.

The Carrie Diaries, by Candace Bushnell

“Carrie and her friend are starting their last year of high school. This book is based on the diaries she keeps. Her friend calls her ‘Bradley,’ but that is

probably a nickname based on her last name ‘Bradshaw.’”

“Yes, that’s what I thought, too,” spoke up Natsu Baba, much to Keiko’s surprise. “This book is much easier to understand than the first one, but I still had to look up most of the words. Some of them weren’t in the dictionary.”

“Yes, I had the same problem,” agreed Rika. “But I just skipped them all. One part that I did understand was where Carrie becomes interested in a transfer student who has just arrived at their school.”

Keiko asked Natsu which words had been hard to find.

“Well, ‘prom’ comes up several times. My old dictionary says it’s short for ‘promenade.’ But a promenade is a path of some kind. It doesn’t make any sense.”

Keiko had looked up ‘prom,’ so she was ready with an explanation. It was a dance that US high school students attend before graduation. Boys usually invite the girls, so everyone is interested in finding someone to go to the prom with—preferably a boyfriend or girlfriend—when they are seniors.

“I see, so it’s kind of like a graduation party. What about ‘someone’s got to shake things up around here’?” Natsu had more questions. “I know all of those words, but what are they supposed to mean when they’re lined up like that?”

The passage with the phrase started out when Carrie’s friend notices that she is wearing go-go boots, a fashion accessory that was popular over thirty years ago.

“Bradley,” she says, eyeing the boots with disdain. “As your best friend, I cannot allow you to wear those boots on the first day of senior year.”

“Too late,” I say gaily. “Besides, someone’s got to shake things up around here.”

“Let’s see what Eijiro has to say,” suggested Keiko.

“Who’s Eijiro?” Rika and Natsu spoke in unison.

“It’s not a person; it’s an online dictionary. It’s convenient because you can look up whole phrases at once. I’ll bet it can tell us what ‘shake things up’

means.

Natsu reached in front of her bored-looking husband to pull their computer closer to her. As she accessed the [Eijiro site](#), Goro stood up and walked into the kitchen. Natsu was much too absorbed in the book club activities to notice. She input the phrase “shake things up,” and the definition came right up.

In the meantime, Rika wondered out loud what go-go boots were.

“I used to wear those boots,” Natsu looked up from her screen. “Of course I got rid of them before we got married,” she smiled. “Let me see, how can I describe them?”

“I know!” This time Rika had the solution. “Let’s do a Google image search, and then we can see for ourselves.”

She found the Google search site and clicked on “[Images](#).” Then she typed in “[go-go boots](#)” and pressed the return key.

A screen full of brightly colored high-heeled boots appeared on the screen.

Rika and Keiko almost fell out of their seats. They couldn’t believe the unassuming woman sitting before them had worn these. Rika wanted to ask if she’d also worn the miniskirts they saw in the pictures, but she decided against it.

“What about ‘[prom](#)’?” Natsu went on unperturbed. “Why don’t we look up that too. I wonder if my granddaughter will go to a prom when she’s in high school.”

Now the screen was covered with young men in tuxedos and girls in outfits suitable for weddings. Google image searches were proof of the old saying “one picture is worth a thousand words.” The photos filling the screen launched a noisy conversation among the three women. They continued reading the first chapter of *The Carrie Diaries*, looking up the words and phrases they didn’t know. Each one was a new discovery for them. Keiko explained the parts that the other two just couldn’t figure out.

After a while, Natsu got up to go see what her husband was up to. Keiko and Rika heard them arguing in the kitchen. Mr. Baba did not sound happy.

“All this sex and boyfriends and go-go boots and dances for teenagers! It

doesn't mean anything to me. Put yourself in my shoes."

Mrs. Baba sounded like she was doing her best to calm Goro down so he could join them again.

"I guess this wasn't a good book for him," said Rika.

"Back to the drawing board," said Keiko regretfully.

Natsu and Goro came back into the room, but Goro was stone-faced. After an embarrassed silence, he spoke.

"Why don't you ladies hold the book club? This just isn't for me. It's nice to see my wife smiling, but you can't expect me to get excited about young girls and their boyfriends. I can't imagine reading a whole book about it."

Keiko had to think quickly. If Mr. Baba quit, she'd lose the only other member who was comfortable with English. She didn't know how long she could keep Rika and Mrs. Baba interested—she suddenly had images of them both dancing with leis around their necks. No, she couldn't risk losing Mr. Baba!

She turned to look at him. "Mr. Baba, why don't we do this? Books are expensive to buy, and all four of us are interested in different things. We could just decide to read parts of books."

"You mean just the first pages?" Rika was intrigued with this idea.

"Yes, just like we did today. We'll meet once a month and read the first part of a different book each time. We'll take turns choosing. The person in charge will choose something in English that they like and lead the discussion. Of course, we'll all read it ahead of time. That way we'll get chances to read about different things. If anyone wants to read more of a book, they are free to do so on their own. This way we'll learn lots of new things, we're bound to be interested at least part of the time, and best of all—it won't cost us a thing!"

"I'm with Keiko! This book about Carrie is fun," said Rika. "I got through a few pages by skipping the parts I didn't understand, but a whole book would be impossible. Wait a minute! This is what David was talking about—he called it e-reading. That is exactly what we would be doing."

With Rika on her side, Keiko continued on.

"Mr. Baba, how about it? We'll use samples from electronic books—e-reading. How would you like to run the meeting next time? No more

teenage girls, no more go-go boots. What do you say?"

Goro nodded. He had to admit that he wouldn't mind topics that were unappealing to him as long as he had a chance to introduce something he liked once in a while.

"E-reading ... that sounds like a good idea. I'll do it!"

"So now we have the ground rules for our book club—maybe we should just call it a reading club. Next time we should come up with a name for it!"

And with those words, the reading club concluded for the evening.

Chapter 5

次の当番に任命された馬場五郎は、「科学」のカテゴリーに面白そうな本を見つけ、満足げ。さらにはキンドル・リーダーを購入しようとするが、機種がいろいろあって迷ってしまい、元部下の矢部に手伝ってもらふことにする。

Goro Baba was relieved. Although he had been disappointed by Keiko Tajima's selection of *The Carrie Diaries*, he badly wanted to be a part of the reading club and he had been encouraged by his wife's interest. When Keiko suggested reading part of a book each month, it opened the door to his full participation, and he was looking forward to his turn leading the discussion about a book he liked.

A few days after their meeting, Mr. Baba woke up inspired to take care of several matters of business. He decided to take Keiko's advice and search on Amazon.com. *The Carrie Diaries* had been in the Teens category.

I wonder what other categories there are, he said to himself. He clicked on Books and ran his eyes down the list until he came to Science. In the days when he had a daily train commute, he had enjoyed reading magazines specializing in scientific topics. Best of all, he knew that the category would be completely free of evening gowns and go-go boots.

He clicked on [Science](#), and a whole new page of book covers appeared on the screen.

None of them looked familiar. Then he noticed the title “Bestsellers” on the right-hand side of the page. No. 1 was by Stephen Hawking—a name he recognized.

At the bottom of the list was a link: “See all bestsellers in science.” He clicked on it and began to browse through the pages until he came across a cover of an astronaut floating in space with a suitcase in his hands.

“Now that looks interesting,” he thought. The title was [Packing for Mars: The Curious Science of Life in the Void](#)—an unusual title to go with the intriguing illustration on the cover. What was it about?

Goro accessed the page for the book, and noticed the Look Inside icon, but he also noticed the button for Kindle Edition Read First Chapter Free. He

could click this to get an idea of what the e-book, Kindle Edition, looked like. It was basically an e-book version of *Look Inside*. Recalling how easy it was to use the sample chapter of *The Carrie Diaries*, Goro decided to take a look at the Kindle Edition.

On the title page of the first chapter, the Japanese words for “space shuttle” leaped out at him. That was a surprise! The title of the chapter was “He’s Smart but His Birds Are Sloppy.” Everything about this book was puzzling, and it made Goro even more curious. When he started reading the first page, he discovered that the author had visited JAXA (Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency) to find out how Japan chose its astronauts.

The setting was sure to be familiar, and JAXA had recently been in the news because the asteroid explorer Hayabusa had successfully reached asteroid Itokawa and managed to collect particles from it.

Goro was very satisfied with this sample, and he decided to choose *Packing for Mars* as his reading club selection.

That took care of his first job of the day, but he still had more to do. If digital books were the wave of the future, he wanted to be a part of it. He needed a reading device that he could carry around with him. Rika Hoshino used her iPhone, but the screen was much too small for his liking. Now that he was retired and had time to read, he wanted a reader with a bigger screen and larger print.

He had heard of various readers on the market, but he wanted to get a Kindle Reader so he could easily access English e-books. He went back to the Amazon.com site and discovered a variety of products: different sizes, 3G, Wi-Fi, both 3G and Wifi ... it was too confusing for him to figure out on his own.

“I know! I’ll call Yabe again. He knew how to set up the wireless network; he can help me with this, too.”

Ryo Yabe, one of Goro’s former colleagues, was in his late thirties and still single. In the eyes of society, it was high time he got married and settled down, but until then, Goro knew he could lure him over to his house with the promise of a home-cooked meal. He picked up the phone, called Yabe, and invited him over for dinner. Fortunately, Yabe had no plans to work late ... nor

did he have anything to do after hours.

Goro replaced the receiver and called out to his wife, who was busy in the kitchen—she'd been in there all morning. "Natsu! Yabe's coming for dinner tonight. You know how he loves your home cooking."

"Yes, dear," Mrs. Baba responded automatically. It annoyed her that he never bothered to ask her before making invitations, but she looked forward to seeing Ryo Yabe. He was a nice young man, but definitely in need of a social life.

Ryo Yabe arrived at the Babas' a few minutes after eight.

They exchanged some brief pleasantries and then quickly sat down for dinner. Yabe cleaned his plate, then helped himself to seconds and thirds. By the time he finally pushed himself away from the table, he had begun to look sleepy, so Goro quickly went to get his laptop.

"Yabe, I want to buy an e-book reader, but I don't know which model is best. Would you mind taking a look?"

Ryo stifled a yawn, sat up, and obediently peered at the computer screen.

For the next hour, the two investigated the Kindle information on Amazon.com, and Goro was able to place an order. A few minutes later, Natsu came in with tea.

"So did everything work out?" she asked.

"Yes, I should be getting my Kindle in a week or two," Goro looked pleased with himself.

"You know, I got myself one of those iPads," Yabe mentioned.

"iPad? They were all over the news—people standing in line."

"I couldn't resist! But now that I've got one, I'm not exactly sure what to do with it. I can use it pretty much like a computer and it's more portable than a laptop, but I don't usually work when I'm on the move. Now I'm wondering if I didn't really need one."

This was just the opportunity Goro had been waiting for—his chance to fulfill his third goal for the day—finding another male to participate in the

reading club.

“Say, Yabe,” Goro began, “I hear that those iPads are the wave of the future—you’ll be able to read Japanese e-books, and English ones, too. That’s sort of what Natsu and I have been involved with and why I wanted to order a Kindle. We’re in an English reading club. One of the members just downloaded the Kindle application to her iPhone. I’ll bet she could help you get one on your iPad.”

“An English reading club, you say? The boss has been mumbling something about sending me to Singapore, and I’ve been thinking about learning a little English. What do you pay the teacher?”

“There’s no teacher, and so far it hasn’t cost much at all. We’ve done no more than read parts of two different books, but the idea is that everyone gets a chance to choose books they like and share them with the rest.” Yabe looked interested. “Natsu! Could we have some more tea in here?” Goro called out to his wife, who had been listening to the entire conversation from the next room.

She came right in with the tea and settled herself in a chair, listening as her husband continued his explanation—it was now clear to her that he had been planning this move all day.

“The interesting thing is that we’ve decided we won’t read entire books. Each month we’ll just read a chapter or two that we can get online. Natsu and I share a computer, and now we’ll have a Kindle. One of the other women has an iPhone, and the other brings her laptop. You know,” he said, trying to sound as if he had just thought of it, “Yabe, you could come and bring your iPad! Then we’d be a real high tech reading club. Maybe that’s what we should call it!” Natsu noticed that the younger man didn’t seem completely convinced, but he probably couldn’t refuse his old boss. In no time at all Ryo Yabe had agreed to come to their house for the next meeting—iPad in hand.

After Yabe left and Natsu was clearing away the tea cups, she thought she heard her husband humming to himself. He was certainly in a good mood!

“I think it’s wonderful that Yabe is going to join us,” she said.

“Yes, I do believe it will balance the group out nicely!”

“And you’ve ordered a Kindle reading device, I see ...”

“That’s right, I can download a chapter for the book we’ll be doing

next.”

“Does that mean you won’t need to use the computer anymore?” Natsu asked without looking up.

“What? No, of course not! It will still be easier for me to make searches on the computer; I have my e-mail, too. What do you need your own computer for anyway?”

“I was just thinking. You spend quite a bit of time on the computer, and I’d like to have it more so I can do my own studying—Keiko showed me how to look up words online and Rika taught us how to use an image search. It would make it so much easier for me to keep up. And it won’t be long before I need to find something for the group to read.”

Goro was taken aback by this sudden interest. He had had to drag his wife to the English conversation classes, but now here she was actively trying to take over the computer for the reading club.

Chapter 6

読書会の日、届いたばかりのキンドル・リーダーを自慢げに披露する馬場五郎。元部下の矢部も会に加わり、賑やかな集まりとなる。ウィキペディアや著者のウェブサイトを参照しながら読み進め、皆の理解力はより深まる。

Finally the day of the third reading club meeting arrived. Mrs. Baba had spent most of the day in the kitchen, and Mr. Baba had stayed out of her way, busy with his own preparations in his study.

Keiko and Rika arrived at about 7:30.

Keiko wanted to talk about the reading material right away. “Mr. Baba, I was worried about *Packing for Mars* because I didn’t know anything about outer space, but the story was set in Japan. I even understood the funny parts!”

“I’m glad you liked it!” Mr. Baba was delighted. “By the way, I invited one of my colleagues from work to join us. I hope you don’t mind.”

“How’s his English?” Keiko was hopeful.

“I don’t think it’s his specialty, but he knows a thing or two about computers. He was the one who set up the wireless connection for me, and a couple of weeks ago, he helped me order this!” He pulled out his new Kindle and showed it to the ladies, who began a careful inspection. Goro showed them how he could change the size of the print, the dictionary, and the text-to-speech function that read the text out loud. He opened the sample chapter of *Packing for Mars* and then turned off the power. When he turned it back on. The book opened to the exact same place.

“It’s just like your iPhone,” Goro nodded to Rika. “The device memorizes the last page you read so you don’t have to search for it every time.”

Just then, the doorbell rang, and Goro popped up to answer. “That must be Yabe!”

Keiko and Rika had been expecting someone older, so they were surprised to see a much younger man—a little bit younger than them anyway. Mr. Baba introduced Ryo Yabe—and his iPad—to Keiko and Rika.

“Oh, an iPad!” said Rika. “Mind if I hold it?” she said and plopped down into a seat.

Without a word, Ryo obediently sat down next to her and handed over his iPad. The others gathered round for a look. He had installed the Kindle app, so they compared it to Goro's Kindle. There was no text-to-speech, but he could change the size of the print and use a pre-installed dictionary.

After a few minutes, Goro got started explaining how and why he had made his reading choice for the meeting.

"I was looking for something in the field of science when I found a book that described how Japan chose astronauts."

"I opened it up and there was the Japanese for 'space shuttle' imposed on a paper airplane!" broke in Keiko. "Then I saw JAXA and the place name Tsukuba. There was even something about origami. It was great! Because there were things I knew about, I could make guesses about words and phrases I didn't know."

Goro began to talk about the first part. "I asked you all to read the first chapter, but I started with the foreword, entitled 'Countdown':

To the rocket scientist, you are a problem. You are the most irritating piece of machinery he or she will ever have to deal with.

Packing for Mars: The Curious Science of Life in the Void, by Mary Roach

"The author is talking to everyone when she says 'you,'" Goro continued. "It's a difficult job for scientists to keep humans alive in outer space. The author, Mary Roach, did research on how it all works. Have any of you ever used the online encyclopedia called 'Wikipedia'? I looked up [Mary Roach](#) and found an article about her. She has written a number of books on popular science, such as *Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers*. She writes about topics that nobody else writes about, but that almost everyone has wondered about."

"Now that you mention it," said Rika, "we never hear about how JAXA chooses astronauts."

"This book was more difficult than *Carrie*," said Natsu. "There were ten finalists for two astronaut positions, and they all had to live at Tsukuba during the test."

Ryo Yabe had been quiet, but now he had something to say.

“During the test, did they have the finalists fold a thousand origami cranes?”

“That’s what I thought too!” Rika was excited. “The passage said ‘crane’ and ‘thousand,’ but it seemed like a strange activity for astronauts-in-training.”

Natsu laughed. “So we were all thinking the same thing! I remembered the Google image search that Rika taught me last time, so I tried it. I typed in [‘thousand cranes,’](#) and I got a page full of them!”

“Your hunch was right,” said Goro. “JAXA had candidates fold a thousand cranes as part of their test;

The genius of the Thousand Cranes test is that it creates a chronological record of each candidate’s work. As they complete their cranes, candidates string them on a single long thread. At the end of the isolation, everyone’s string of cranes will be taken away and analyzed. It’s forensic origami: As the deadline nears and the pressure increases, do the candidate’s creases become sloppy? How do the first ten cranes compare to the last?

“They put the candidates in an isolated room and watched them perform different tasks—including folding all of those cranes. After I read this I finally understood the title of this chapter: ‘He’s Smart but His Birds Are Sloppy.’ The birds were the origami cranes! It’s not enough for astronauts to have a high level of intelligence; they also have to be able to do careful work and not fold under pressure.”

Keiko added her impressions. “Folding the same origami figure over and over is also boring. JAXA seems to be testing for patience. I found this line:

Astronauts these days are as likely to be nerds as heroes.

“I looked up ‘nerd’ in the dictionary—it’s something like the Japanese *otaku*. Back in the days of the Apollo flights, astronauts were treated like heroes. Nowadays, though, astronauts spend months in outer space doing experiments

that might not seem too exciting.”

As Keiko spoke, she noticed Yabe and Rika snickering at something on Yabe’s iPad. They had done an image search for “[nerd](#)” and were laughing at the pictures that came up.

Goro cleared his throat to get their attention and went on.

“On the Wikipedia site for Mary Roach, I also found a link to her [official site](#). Let’s take a look at it.”

The members looked up the site on their devices. All except Goro gasped when a computer-graphic cockroach crawled up the screen!

“‘Roach’ is short for ‘cockroach,’” he explained. “Not only is Mary Roach an entertaining writer, but she can even joke about her own name.”

The five members of the reading club continued their discussion, sharing parts they enjoyed and passages they couldn’t understand. From time to time, they searched the Internet for words and phrases. Goro noted that the conversation didn’t always stick to the book, but he was delighted to see Yabe enjoying himself.

After a while, Natsu appeared with coffee and cookies—American-style cookies full of nuts and chocolate chips.

Without a word of encouragement, Rika and Keiko helped themselves and began munching.

“No need to wait,” Rika looked at Yabe who appeared unsure about what to do.

“Oh, okay. I’ll just have one, then ... oh, these are so good!”

The three were so busy eating that they didn’t notice the satisfied look on Natsu’s face. She looked like a child trying hard to keep a secret—but unable to do it for long.

“These aren’t from a Japanese recipe my daughter sent me,” she finally announced. “I found the cookie recipe on the Internet and made them using an English recipe! The first time I tried it, I mixed up ‘baking powder’ and ‘baking soda,’ and they tasted awful! My poor husband did his best to choke one down.”

Goro added his description of the scene and had them all laughing and congratulating Natsu on her accomplishment.

But there was one last order of business. “What about a name for our

club?” asked Goro. “I thought of E-book Reading Club because we aren’t reading paper books here.”

“I’ve got an idea,” said Keiko. “How about the One Chapter Reading Club? Today we had a wonderful discussion about a single chapter that we received in a free sample. I think it captures the essence of what we are doing.”

Rika clapped her hands in agreement.

“I like that name! When we were in school we had to look up every single word of our English lessons. We copied everything out in our notebooks, underlined phrases, drew arrows—and if we didn’t do it just right, we never felt like we were doing it correctly. With ‘One Chapter’ in our name, it makes me feel like we don’t have to read the whole thing perfectly. We just read part—and we can enjoy ourselves while we do it! We can use our new name to remind ourselves that what we are doing is fun and free.”

Everyone else agreed.

They were officially the One Chapter Reading club. Their motto was “Fun & Free.”

Chapter 7

次回の当番になった里香は、本が見つからず途方に暮れる。仕事をしているデザインなら興味を持てると気づいた後、進路の問題で対立している息子・純也の助けを借りてロゴデザインの本を選ぶ。しかし、純也との溝は埋まらず・・・。

Before everyone left the Babas' house after agreeing on the name for the One Chapter Reading Club, they decided that Rika would be in charge of choosing the next chapter. She had thoroughly enjoyed *Packing for Mars*, even though she had never been particularly interested in science, and she was a little bit jealous that Natsu Baba was already gaining some independence in this new world of English reading. She remembered how slow Natsu had been to respond in the conversation class, but now she seemed to have plenty to add to the discussion.

Rika thought of the smile on Natsu's face as she brought them the platter of cookies. She told the group she had made a Google search for "recipes" and then "cookie recipes." That was how she had come up with the instructions for those delicious cookies.

A few days later, Rika sat down at her computer and decided to follow Natsu's example. She found sites that appeared to be full of instructions for cooking in English. But there were so many ... The more Rika searched, the more irritated she became.

She finally gave up in frustration and checked her e-mail. She hated cooking. She hated English, too, she thought as she clicked on her inbox. She noted with pleasure that one of her clients had contacted her about a cost estimate for a new project. Now this was what she loved—her graphic design work!

Wait a minute! Natsu had taught home economics—she was a cooking teacher. Rika was a designer ... that was it! She would find a chapter on her own specialty. She logged onto Amazon.com and downloaded the Kindle app just as Keiko had done for the Babas the other evening. Then she went back to the top page and looked at the different categories for books. There were none for "design."

“Junya!” she called out to her son, who was, as usual, squirreled away in his room working on his computer. He probably had his earphones on, too, she thought as she stood up and knocked on his door.

“Come in!” a voice finally yelled out.

She opened the door and found him exactly as she had imagined. “I need some help searching for a design category on Amazon.com ... and I hope you’re doing entry sheets for a job after you graduate,” she added.

“On my way,” he said reluctantly as he took off his earphones and put down his book. “And I thought you agreed that I would go to music school.”

Rika sighed and Junya sighed. They had had countless quarrels over Junya’s plans after graduation. He insisted that he was going to make a living with his piano and needed a couple of years of graduate school. His dream was music school in New York. Rika was ready for him to put music aside and get a steady job. But she wasn’t ready for him to leave home. She decided to drop the subject for now.

“I’m looking for a book on design, but there isn’t a category for it here.”

Junya sat down at Rika’s desk, looked at the computer screen, and clicked on a few of the categories.

“There you go! It was under Arts & Photography. Here it is—Design & Decorative Arts.” Then he quickly stood up, and trying to sound casual, said, “I’ve got to get back to the books. I’ve got a year to get my TOEFL scores up. I was just working on my listening.” So saying, he headed back to his room and closed the door behind him.

Rika was more interested in finding a book for the reading club than fighting with her son, so she sat down to find a book she could figure out the first few pages of. There were thousands of books in the Design & Decorative Arts category, including textbooks. Most of the books available on Kindle had complicated text, but since they were about design, and design was a topic she was familiar with, she enjoyed checking the “Look Inside” samples. Sure enough, this was a lot more fun than looking at recipes. She spent the morning browsing, and found this book: [*Logo Design Love: A Guide to Creating Iconic Brand Identities*](#).

Rika clicked on Kindle Edition Read First Chapter Free. It opened to the introduction of the book. She saw the words “graphic designer” and “brand identity.” These were familiar to her, so she decided to read:

Brand identity design. Who needs it? Every company on the planet. Who provides the service? You.

Logo Design Love: A Guide to Creating Iconic Brand Identities, by David Airey

Rika was surprised to realize that she understood these sentences. Until now, English had just looked to her like a random selection of words on paper. This passage, though, began with “brand identity design” and ended with “you.”

“That ‘you’ is me!” she realized with excitement. She decided to download a sample chapter. The Kindle sample contained two whole chapters. She was still fearful of how difficult the English would be for her, but the first few pages were photographs of logos. Designing effective logos for businesses was an important part of her own job.

As she turned the pages, her eyes rested on the words “the Queen of England,” so she stopped to read:

The Queen of England—head of state and head of a nation—understands the importance of brand identity.

The Queen of England and brand identity? That seems like a strange combination, thought Rika. She searched for “Royal Parks” and learned they were public parks in London run by the British government. Using a dictionary, she read on to learn that when Moon Brand, a design company, was hired to create a new logo for the [Royal Parks](#), it had to get final approval from Queen Elizabeth:

“The leaves we chose to use in this logo are from indigenous British trees found in the Royal Parks,” said Moon Brand

director Richard Moon.

The logo tells the story of the parks using their own language—leaves—and deftly portrays the relationship between the park system and the British crown with one clever picture.

The book went on to describe how getting approval for logos could often take months, but that the queen had signed off on this one in less than twenty-four hours.

Rika had spent a lot of time studying logos, and she knew the importance of simplicity and relevance. Working at home, though, she lacked contact with other people in her profession—let alone famous designers in other countries. She had never dreamed that English reading would end up being a professional move!

Rika made a note of the title and called Keiko and the Babas. She e-mailed the information to the new member, Ryo Yabe, who was sure to be at work. Keiko was surprised that Rika had found reading material so quickly. Natsu told Rika that she and her husband were on their way out to shop for a netbook—a small computer used only for the Internet. Mr. Baba had complained to Ryo Yabe that Natsu was using his computer so often that he rarely got a turn. Yabe had suggested a netbook as an inexpensive alternative.

After Rika hung up she was more convinced than ever that their little reading club was generating more excitement than any of them had expected. She hoped that Ryo Yabe would be as excited as the others.

Chapter 8

得意分野で発表する里香は生き生きしていて、その解説にメンバーは深く納得する。Kindle・アプリやオンライン辞書の使い方にも、皆どんどん習熟していく。新入りの矢部はそんな光景に素直に感心するのだった。

The One Chapter Reading Club would be arriving in a few minutes. Her iPhone would be too small for everyone to see, so Rika carried her desktop into the kitchen and set it on the table. She had the sample chapter ready, the author's blog was bookmarked, and she had rustled up a couple of extra chairs so everyone would have a place to sit.

On her way to the kitchen to make sure she had enough matching cups for tea, she stopped at Junya's room, opened the door a crack, and poked her head in.

"My reading club is coming here this evening. I hope you'll be able to come out for a few minutes and have tea with us."

"Is there anyone my age in your club?" Junya asked, looking up from his books.

"Well, there is a single guy in his thirties who just joined," Keiko offered.

Junya frowned and leaned back in his chair. "I've been working on my English and I still have piano practice today."

"Fine, but I don't have guests over very often, so I'd appreciate an appearance, OK?"

"Don't worry," Junya smiled weakly. "I'll pop out for a few minutes."

Rika left Junya's room. She was sure he would have given up this crazy dream by now, but he was determined as ever. Why couldn't he just get a job? Why did he have to go so far away? What was so great about New York?

That evening Keiko showed up first, followed by the Babas and Ryo Yabe, as usual a few minutes late. When they had gathered around the kitchen table,

Keiko took out her laptop, Goro proudly displayed his Kindle, Natsu shyly pulled out her new netbook, and Ryo had his iPad.

Before they began their discussion of *Logo Design Love*, Rika told them how she had managed to get samples on both her iPhone and computer. As she spoke, she noticed the Babas nodding.

“Goro figured that out, too!” Natsu smiled. “And look! Now I’ve got my own app.” She turned her netbook around to show them.

“I downloaded the sample on my Kindle reader, but the photos were in black and white. I wanted to see them in color, so I downloaded the sample again to my PC,” added Goro.

Yabe was impressed with the enterprising attitudes of the others—they were teaching him new things rather than the other way around. “Wow! That means I can stop lugging this iPad to work. I’ll download the Kindle app onto my Android cell phone and use that on the train. Then I can download it onto my computer at work, and ...” He looked over at Goro, his former boss, “... and read during my lunch break!”

Goro nodded in approval.

Keiko, who had just her laptop, seemed eager to get on to the book.

“Did everybody read the chapters?” Rika asked.

“I used to work in marketing with Yabe,” Goro said, “so this was a lot of fun for me to read.”

“Yeah,” Yabe spoke up. “The only way I know if designs work well is if our products sell. I never realized the different things designers have to consider when they make those logos.”

Rika talked about what she, as a designer, had got from the text. Goro, whose English was better, added comments now and then, and Yabe took copious notes.

Natsu and Keiko sat in silence as the others chatted.

“How about you, Natsu?” asked Rika. “Anything to add here?”

“I have to admit that this was difficult for me because I don’t know anything about marketing ... The pictures were nice.”

“It was the same for me,” Keiko spoke up. “I was lost at first, but then I got to the short episode about the Royal Parks. The logo of the crown made up



of leaves was clever. There was one word I'd never seen before: 'indigenous.' I looked up the Japanese definition."

"The leaves we chose to use in this logo are from **indigenous** British trees found in the Royal Parks," said Moon Brand director Richard Moon.

"So I learned what it meant, but I couldn't figure out how to pronounce it. Then I found this online English dictionary—*Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*." Keiko had the others access it, and this is what they found:

[Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary](http://dictionary.cambridge.org)
<http://dictionary.cambridge.org>

indigenous *adjective*

UK  US  /ɪn ˈdɪdʒ.ɪ.nəs/ adj

naturally existing in a place or country rather than arriving from another place

*Are there any species of frog indigenous **to** the area?*

So who are the indigenous people of this land?

"If you look at the definition in English, it's rather simple, don't you think? And it uses examples of frogs and people."

"The Kindle app dictionary says 'originating or occurring naturally in a particular place; native,'" noted Rika.

"Yes, the app dictionary is useful, but it doesn't teach you how to pronounce the word. Let's try the Cambridge Dictionary."

Keiko clicked the UK speaker icon, and the word "indigenous" was spoken by a woman with a British accent. The US speaker icon produced a male voice with an American accent. It was the perfect tool for people who have a hard time deciphering pronunciation symbols.

Rika went on to talk about how she had read the sample and then

discovered the [blog of author David Airey](#). She showed them his entry entitled “[Negative space in logo design](#).” Using the explanation in the blog, Rika explained how white space—or negative space—was used to create the crown for the Royal Parks logo. There was a long list of other examples of logos with negative space, and Rika pointed out the logo for the Guild of Food Writers.

“I love the way it uses negative space to show a tiny spoon inside a pen nib—perfect for people who write about food! It tells you everything you need to know at a glance. I’d love to design logos like this.”

The other members were impressed with how well Rika was able to explain the material to them even though she wasn’t very good at English. Obviously her passion and expertise made a difference.

About the time Rika stood up to get some tea, Junya walked in.

“This is my son, Junya,” Rika introduced him to the group. Junya gave Keiko a wave—he had known her all his life—and bowed politely to the others.

“Are you a student?” Goro asked.

“Yes, a junior in college,” Junya responded.

“What’s your major?” Yabe asked casually.

“Music. I play piano.”

“Music? I always wanted to be a musician.”

“You did?” Junya was surprised.

“Tea all right for everyone?” Rika interrupted, anxious to change the subject.

Right on cue, Natsu pulled a plastic container out of her bag and put it on the table.

“I tried a new recipe again this month! Let’s have some cookies with our tea.” As everyone reached out for the treat, she continued. “I guess next month it will be my turn to choose a chapter. And I’d love to have you all come back to our house again.”

Junya felt like he’d missed a chance to talk about his future plans. He had hoped his mother’s friends would be sympathetic and help win her over. He’d just have to find another chance, he thought while munching on Natsu’s delicious cookies.

Chapter 9

ワン・チャプター読書会が始まって半年。最も大きな変化を遂げたのは、英会話クラスでは夫の陰に隠れていた馬場なつだった。今日はクラブサンドイッチを用意して、家で皆を待ち受けている。やがて里香の息子、純也もやって来た。

It had been six months since the One Chapter Reading Club had started up, and it had made quite a difference in Natsu's life. Her husband had dragged her to English conversation classes, but now she was the one who promptly wrote the date and time on the calendar for their next meeting. One of her greatest joys was looking for recipes in English and trying them out. Each month, Goro congenially taste-tested several batches of cookies before she chose her favorite—the one she took to the club meeting.

She and her husband talked together more, too. They enjoyed discussing their chapters for the month at mealtimes, and lately they had begun planning a trip to Oregon to see their daughter and her family. Natsu didn't imagine she could speak English well, but the prospect of being in a country where English was spoken didn't scare her anymore—she was ready for a new adventure.

Today it was Natsu's turn to run the reading club meeting. She had planned carefully and everything was set when the doorbell rang. Uncharacteristically, Ryo Yabe was the first to arrive.

“I finished up early, so I came right over.”

“Come in!” Goro called out. It was a pleasure to see his former colleague so regularly. “You haven't eaten dinner, have you? Natsu has been busy in the kitchen! I'm not sure what you started by recommending that netbook. She is on it hours a day—especially this past month.”

Yabe was followed by Keiko, Rika, and Junya, who all arrived together. Natsu had called Rika to make sure she brought her son with her. Goro ushered the group into the dining room and had them sit down at the table.

“What's all this?” Keiko asked as she sat down. She had made dinner for her family at home and rushed over without eating anything herself. Now she realized that she had come to expect a treat or two from Mrs. Baba. “Are we starting out with cookies this evening?”

“Cookies before or after—anytime is fine with me!” Ryo chimed in hungrily.

“You all have been very kind with my experiments using English recipes,” Natsu began. She looked at Keiko and Rika. “Do you remember those textbooks we used in that English conversation class? One of them had a sample menu from a restaurant, and it said ‘club sandwich.’ I was intrigued with that sandwich. Most of the club sandwiches I found on the Internet use turkey in them—something we can’t get in Japan very often, but I found one that had ingredients I can get at the local supermarket, and it had pictures for each of the steps!

“I thought, why not? We’re a club, so we really ought to eat club sandwiches. I’ll show you the recipe later, but let’s eat first.”

Nobody required further encouragement. They all picked up the enormous sandwiches Natsu set down before them.

Chapter 10

著作権が切れた作品を扱うサイト Project Gutenberg を使って、日本の昔話の英訳を探し出した馬場なつ。無料で作品の朗読を聞くサイトも見つけ、世界がどんどん広がるのを読書会のメンバーは感じる。

After everyone had finished their hefty snacks, Natsu asked them to look at the site she had chosen for them to read.

“Today we are going to look at *Japanese Fairy Tales* by Yei Theodora Ozaki. All of our chapters up to now have been from Amazon.com, but a few weeks ago I read about Project Gutenberg in the newspaper. It sounded interesting, so I looked it up. The article said that all of the books offered on the Project Gutenberg website have expired copyrights, which means they are in what is called ‘the public domain,’” she explained.

“It means that it’s public—anyone can use it. We can print the books up or make copies. In the past, ‘public domain’ didn’t mean much, but now that books can be digitalized to be uploaded and downloaded on the Internet, it means everyone can share this literature.

“The length a copyright is valid depends on the country. It’s at least 75 years in the US and about 50 years in Japan and most other countries.”

“Which brings us back to Mark Twain,” sighed Rika, remembering their first meeting.

“That’s exactly right!” laughed Natsu. “*Roughing It* was out of our range, but there are public domain books that even I can read.”

“I printed the chapter you gave us, Natsu,” Keiko said. “I looked through Project Gutenberg myself, and there were thousands of books. I didn’t know where to start. How did you manage to find *Japanese Fairy Tales*?”

“It actually took me quite a while to figure it out, but I’ve got lots of time!” Natsu said brightly. “And since all of you taught me how to make Internet searches, I decided to find something to read in Project Gutenberg, and I got to work.

“The [front page](#) has a search section. You can search by author or title.” Natsu accessed the Project Gutenberg top page on her netbook and showed the

others.

“Unfortunately, I didn’t know any titles or authors to search for! Finally I saw this: ‘Bookshelves by topic.’ There were Adventure and Crime categories, but none of the books I looked at seemed right. I finally took a hint from Keiko and looked for ‘teens’ and ‘young adult.’ The site didn’t have those categories, but they did have Children’s Bookshelf.”

Everyone listened carefully as she spoke, following on their own devices.

“I tried [Children’s fiction](#). Look, another long list of authors I don’t know! But up here, it says Children’s Myths, Fairy Tales, etc. So I tried that. And here is what I found, [Asia](#), and under that Japanese Fairy Tales (English) Ozaki, Yei Theodora!”

“This is amazing,” Ryo said admiringly. “It must have taken hours to get this far.”

“It did!” Natsu said. “It took a couple of days. I looked at all kinds of different books, but there were none I was able to understand. Finally I found this one!”

“I was about ready to start looking for recipes to cook myself dinner,” Goro laughed. “I couldn’t pull her away from that netbook.”

“Here’s the page with the different downloads,” said Natsu, showing them [another page](#). I just chose HTML, and went straight to [this site](#). Scroll down and you can see all the chapters in the book.

“I recognized some of the titles: *The Story of Urashima Taro*, *The Adventures of Kintaro*, *Momotaro*, *Rashomon*. But when I went to look at each of the stories, they were too long and difficult! Finally I found one that was short and easier to understand, but it was unfamiliar to me. The one you read, [*The Sagacious Monkey and the Boar*](#).”

“I’d never heard of that one before,” piped up Junya. “And I had to look up that word ‘sagacious.’ It just means ‘clever.’”

“I hadn’t heard of this story either, but I thought, maybe I could find the Japanese version if I looked it up. I did a Google search for [猿と猪](#), and it came right up!”

“And that was the other website you told us to read!” Rika finished. “I

don't think I could have understood the English without the Japanese. This was a big help!"

Yabe nodded. "Mr. Baba and Keiko may have been fine without it, but it made all the difference in the world to me. How about you, Junya?"

Junya smiled shyly. "I admit that I read it. But I read the English first and then the Japanese to see if I got it right."

"How did you do?" followed up Yabe.

"About seventy percent, I think."

"Not bad!" Yabe was impressed. Even Rika had to smile with pride at her son.

"I recognized most of the words," said Goro, "but the sentence structure was different. 'Hasn't your master a baby?' rather than 'Doesn't your master have a baby?'"

"The trickiest part for me," contributed Keiko, "was the ending. It wasn't until I looked at the Japanese version that I realized the monkey had actually betrayed the boar who had helped him—the master ordered boar instead of monkey meat for their supper."

"Very subtle," said Natsu.

"I was intrigued by the [author](#) just because of her name!" Keiko continued. "So I looked her up on Wikipedia."

Yei Theodora Ozaki was an early 20th-century translator of Japanese short stories and fairy tales.

(snip)

Yei was sent to live in Japan with her father, which she enjoyed. Later she refused an arranged marriage, left her father's house, and became a teacher and secretary to earn money. Over the years, she traveled back and forth between Japan and Europe, as her employment and family duties took her, and lived in places as diverse as Italy and the drafty upper floor of a Buddhist temple.

Keiko read the last two lines out loud:

All this time, her letters were frequently misdelivered to the unrelated Japanese politician [Yukio Ozaki](#), and his to her. In 1904, they finally met, and soon married.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yei_Theodora_Ozaki

“That’s so romantic,” sighed Keiko. “That would never happen nowadays.”

“I don’t know,” said Rika, looking off into space. “It was destiny. There must be some kind of modern-day destiny for the rest of us.”

“Destiny?” Ryo looked over at Rika as if contemplating romance for the first time in his life.

Goro, Natsu, Keiko, and Junya all looked up at this turn in the conversation, but none of them had a word to add.

Natsu paused before turning to her next surprise. “I’m not finished yet. There’s more! While I was searching through all those Gutenberg books, I noticed some symbols. For example, let’s look up [L. M. Montgomery](#). She’s the one who wrote the *Anne of Green Gables* books.

“On some of the books there is a book icon, and on others a speaker icon. The books mean the text of the book is available, and the speaker means that the book has been recorded. You can actually listen to someone reading it!

“So I went back to *Japanese Fairy Tales*, and there was no speaker icon, and I was disappointed, so I thought about trying to find another book when this title “Volunteering” caught my eye on the Project Gutenberg top page. Look at this: ‘LibriVox. Help record audio books by joining [LibriVox](#).’

“Of course, I had to check out the link, and this is what it led to. I clicked on the LibriVox catalog and did a search for *Japanese Fairy Tales* by Yei Theodora Ozaki, and it came up with all of the chapters listed separately. It even has the times listed. [The Sagacious Monkey and the Boar](#) is just about six minutes long. Now I’d like you all to go back to the pages of the text of this story and read along while we listen to it.”

Natsu played the recorded version. When it was finished, everyone sat back and sighed in satisfaction.

“Kindle has a text-to-speech function with a mechanical voice reading the text of some books,” started Goro. “I like that because I can listen in the car, but some of the words are pronounced strangely. This speaker was very easy to understand.” Everyone nodded in agreement.

Junya took advantage of the lull in the conversation to speak up.

“You know, right under the title of the book, it said ‘Profusely Illustrated by Japanese Artists.’ The book originally must have had lots of illustrations, but the Project Gutenberg version doesn’t have any.”

Everyone turned to look at him. “So I wondered if maybe I could find them. I searched ‘[Japanese Fairy Tales Yei Theodora Ozaki](#),’ and look what I found!

“It’s a scan of the title page of the original book. And this is the illustration from [The Sagacious Monkey and the Boar](#). Since the pages are scanned, the printing is not very clear, but the illustrations are classic!”

While the others looked at the illustrations, Keiko was busily tapping on her keyboard. Then she stopped and looked up with a big smile on her face.

“I found it! *Daddy-Long-Legs* by Jean Webster. When I was about twelve I read this book. I must have read it four or five times—in Japanese, of course. But I know I’ve still got it on a bookshelf at home. Project Gutenberg has both the text and the audio on its site. I know the story from start to finish, so I think I can do it. I hereby declare that I will read and listen to *Daddy-Long-Legs*—the entire book!”

Everyone applauded Keiko’s decision. And with that, Natsu went to prepare tea and bring out a plate of cookies. While they were eating, Goro turned to Junya.

“You’re good at this! Would you like to run the meeting next time?”

“Oh no, I’ll pass on that. Ryo is ahead of me.”

“Me?” Ryo was caught off guard.

“That’s right,” said Keiko. “Me, Mr. Baba, Rika, Natsu ... you’re next!”

“I’ll see what I can find,” Ryo looked uneasy. “But I don’t think I could possibly top this evening’s session—in terms of either reading or eating.”

“You can leave the eating part to me!” Natsu called out from the kitchen.

Chapter 11

矢部亮は読む本の選び方から迷ってしまい、純也に助けを求める。純也の家で本探しをしているところに里香が帰宅し、彼女も手伝うことに。3人は力を合わせ、ニューヨーク・タイムズの記事に取りかかる。

Ryo Yabe was at a complete loss about how to go about choosing a book for the next meeting of the One Chapter Reading Club. He had never been good at English, and now if anyone asked him, he'd never be able to explain why he had joined in the first place.

He was beginning to suspect that the main draw was spending a pleasant evening in the Babas' living room. Dinner and conversation. The Babas treated him like a son, and Keiko and Rika saw him as the younger brother type. They were never nervous or on their best behavior when he was around—a refreshing change from personal relations in the workplace. Rika's English was no better than his, and since she didn't seem concerned about making mistakes, he followed her lead and just enjoyed himself.

And now Rika's son Junya had joined the club, and Ryo had his own younger brother figure. Yes, thinking it over, the One Chapter Reading Club was the high point of his social life right now, and he was determined to make a success of it.

After the last meeting, Ryo had got Junya's cell phone number, and now he realized Junya was just the person to help him out. He made the call. Junya didn't seem bothered or surprised by Ryo's request, and invited him over the next day.

When Rika got home the next evening, there were two pairs of shoes by the front door. She took off her own and found Junya and Ryo Yabe at the kitchen table, Junya with his laptop and Ryo with his iPad.

“Well, hello!” she said to their guest. Ryo promptly stood up, and Junya just as quickly pulled his arm to sit him back down.

“No need to exchange name cards,” Junya said dryly. “You’ve already met. Mom, Ryo brought us all hamburgers for dinner. I’m helping him find a chapter for the reading club.”

“Two miracles in one day!” Rika said airily as she opened the bag on the kitchen counter and pulled out a hamburger. “There’s food ready when I get home and Junya is out of his room!” She looked her son up and down and joked, “You look more handsome in this light—we should eat together more often.”

“And yet, I can see every wrinkle on your face,” Junya said without looking up from his screen.

Ryo laughed. “Ah, give your mother a break—she must be younger than the mothers of your friends.”

“That’s what she tells me,” Junya replied.

Rika laughed at the exchange between the two young men, sat down, and bit into her hamburger, oblivious of the computers and research going on around her.

“Hey, Mom, watch the crumbs, will you!” Junya scolded and then turned his attention back to Ryo. “So, you want to find something on business?”

“Last night, I checked business books on Amazon.com,” said Ryo. “I downloaded a few samples, but they were only introductions to the subject matter. The free samples ended before the books got to the interesting parts.”

“Too much introduction, hmmm ...” Junya said to himself. “Let’s see, what can we find about business that is short and to the point?”

“Newspapers?” suggested Rika absently.

“English newspapers?” asked Ryo.

Rika shrugged. “Not that I’ve ever read one.”

Junya was glued to his screen now. “How about *The New York Times*?”

Ryo felt a little queasy. “Er, I’m not sure I’m ready for something that difficult ...”

“And here we are!” Junya said triumphantly. “The Business page of *The New York Times*!”

Ryo and Rika turned to peer at it without getting too close to the screen.

“It won’t bite!” laughed Junya. “Wow, look at all these different articles, why don’t you access this page, and we can both look through them?”

“Maybe I’ll get my laptop and help you two out,” said Rika.

Junya looked at Ryo and then over at his mother, thought a second and then stood up. “Fine, I’ve got one more assignment to finish before tomorrow. You two can have fun with this while I do that. It shouldn’t take more than a half hour.”

As soon as Junya was out of earshot, Ryo complimented him to his mother.

“Smart kid.”

“He does all right, and I’m proud of him, but now he’s talking about actually going to New York.”

“Music school?”

“Yes. He says he’ll work and borrow money—I’m sure he can manage it somehow—but what about me? It has been just the two of us for so long. I’d always hoped he’d get a job somewhere around here and just keep up his piano as a hobby. If he leaves I’ll be all alone.”

“That would be hard. I’ve been living in an apartment by myself for the past fifteen years, and it’s not much of a life. But on the other hand, your son has a dream—it seems a shame to waste it, especially when he obviously seems to be working so hard at it.”

“He spends hours studying for that TOEFL exam, plus his schoolwork, and then his piano practice on top of all that. Now he’s starting to get big envelopes with US return addresses. They must be applications and other information. That’s why he decided to come to the reading club, you know—good practice!”

“I guess that means he’s serious,” Ryo said, and unable to think of anything helpful or comforting, he decided to get back to the matter at hand. “Well, whether he goes or stays, I’m going to have to find something for our next meeting. What do you say we get started on this and surprise him when he gets back.”

Rika, oddly encouraged by the promise of a future for their club, nodded in agreement, put on a pot of coffee, and went to get her laptop. For a while, Ryo and Rika stopped chatting and began clicking on the different links, Ryo on his iPad and Rika on her laptop.

“Take a look at the links under Insight & Analysis,” Rika suggested after a few minutes. “These look like columns rather than hard news. ‘[Life Without a TV Set? Not Impossible](#).’ I think it says many Americans feel like they can make do without a TV set. Even I can understand this.”

“Let me see.” Ryo turned to look at her screen. “‘More than half of American homes have three or more televisions.’ I guess if they have so many, they don’t need any more.”

“And here at the end, it says ‘other devices—like computers and smartphones—edge into its territory and take over TV’s functions.’ Can you figure out what this means?”

Just then, Junya came sauntering back in. Ryo, who had been leaning over Rika’s shoulder looking at her computer, sat straight up again.

Rika, her eyes still on the screen, nonchalantly continued the conversation, including her son in it. “Junya, would you look at this and explain what it’s trying to say?”

“I see you found some articles,” Junya noted. “You two aren’t so bad when you put your heads together. Well, when you have a group of words you are trying to figure out, you should look it up on [Eijiro](#).”

Junya accessed the online dictionary on his own computer, input “edge into,” and a number of sample sentences came up on the screen. “Here’s one!

edge into interesting territory

“Now let’s try ‘take over.’ Good. So what do you think it means?”

Ryo thought a moment. “People have lots of TVs, but they aren’t as important to them because they’re using computers and smartphones more.”

“That’s it!” Junya smiled.

Ryo and Rika looked at each other and grinned. It was a very short article, but it was from *The New York Times*, and the three of them had worked together and figured it out!

Chapter 12

矢部が選んだ文章は、アメリカで活躍する日本人医師のインタビューだった。「外の世界に出て学ぶべき」というくだりで、留学を希望している純也とそれに反対の里香は対立し、読書会は陰悪な雰囲気になってしまい・・・。

Once again, Ryo Yabe was the first person to appear on the Babas' doorstep on the evening of the One Chapter Reading Club meeting.

“You’re looking cheery,” Goro said as he let him in.

“Really?” Ryo replied as he stepped in and looked around. “Are the Hoshinos here yet?”

“You’re the first,” Goro said. “They’ll be here with Keiko in a few minutes, I’m sure. What’s this special interest in our favorite mother and son?”

“Oh, nothing. Well, OK, I asked Junya to help me out with the reading selection. We had a good time together, and I just, well, you know, I was looking forward to seeing him again.”

Goro gave him a hard look, and Ryo tried to act like he didn’t notice it. The truth was he now found himself interested in both of the Hoshinos. The night he had visited them, Rika, Junya, and he had worked together on the computers for another hour and then chatted around the kitchen table until midnight. Rika and Junya had discussed the young man’s future plans, and Ryo had happily served as referee. Rika wanted her son to follow his dreams, but she didn’t see why he couldn’t stay closer to home. Junya was worried about leaving his mother alone and adding to her financial burdens. But he was devoted to his music and anxious to see the world while he was still young.

“You just can’t have everything,” said Rika finally.

“I still don’t understand why not!” Junya refused to give in. And that was how they had left it.

On his way home, Ryo began to think about what Junya had said. He had had his own dreams that he had sacrificed to make a steady living. Now Ryo had begun to wonder if he had been settling for less than he really wanted. What would have happened if he had stayed in the band he and his friends had formed? He would never know, but he decided that he would do what he could

to support Junya.

Keiko, Rika, and Junya finally arrived. Rika flew over to Ryo's side to thank him for visiting them and bringing dinner, apparently forgetting that he was the one who had originally asked for the favor. Ryo, though, seemed delighted to follow her conversation in whatever direction she wanted to take it.

Keiko turned to look at Junya, her glance asking him what was going on. Junya smiled and shrugged. Keiko decided that, whatever it was, he knew and it didn't bother him a bit.

"I'm ready to start anytime!" Ryo announced with an unexpected dash of confidence. "First, I have to admit to you all that Junya helped me find this month's selection. Since I'm a businessman, I wanted to find a book on business. When I had trouble with that, Junya steered me into English-language newspapers with business sections.

"We looked at *The New York Times*, and amazingly found a few columns that I could deal with. The one I chose is called 'Corner Office.' Adam Bryant, a columnist, interviews a CEO each week and then writes a column focusing on one particular aspect of that CEO's policies. Business books are full of all kinds of advice, but this column narrows the topic down to one or two issues.

"[This page](#) has a list of all the different CEOs that Bryant has interviewed, so I spent a couple of hours going through them to find one I thought we might all enjoy. I finally found this Japanese doctor. [Tachi Yamada](#). He works for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. He's president of the foundation's Global Health Program.

"I'm sure you all know that Bill Gates founded Microsoft. He and his wife started a foundation that has been doing public service work all over the world. I found Dr. Yamada on Wikipedia in both [English](#) and [Japanese](#). His real name is Yamada Tadataka. Tachi must have been his nickname and it was just easier for non-Japanese to pronounce.

"The English in this interview is not too difficult, but it was long. So I'd like to discuss one of the first parts—the part that made the greatest impression on me."

Ryo looked around. He was feeling nervous, but everyone was nodding,

ready to go. He began to read:

One very important partner I had in life was my father. (snip) His outlook was always international. Very early, he sent me to the United States. I was 15. He sent me to a boarding school, Andover.

His whole idea was that you can't possibly be competitive in the world unless you actually go outside your own geography and learn the way other people live and think. That probably was the most important lesson I learned—that what's out there is more important than what you already know, and that you'd better go out and learn what it is out there that you don't know.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/28/business/28corner.html>

“Yamada is from my generation,” noted Goro. “He was born in 1945. That was back in the days when everyone followed their father's orders! So in 1960, when he was fifteen, there couldn't have been many Japanese boys in US schools.”

“I looked up Andover,” added Ryo. “It's a very prestigious prep school.”

When they got to the last line, Ryo said, “But what did you think about what he said here? ‘What's out there is more important than what you already know’ and ‘you'd better learn what it is out there that you don't know.’” “Japan was rebuilding after the war, and maybe Yamada's father wanted him to see the rest of the world to get new ideas to help get Japan back on its feet,” offered Natsu.

“He says his father's ‘outlook was always international.’ He must have been unusual for his time, but I wonder if Japanese are much different these days,” said Junya thoughtfully. “It's still a big deal to go overseas and study. Everyone makes such a big fuss about it.”

Rika looked at Junya in frustration, and then turned to look at Ryo with a frown on her face. “Are you two trying to tell me something? You think I'm too old-fashioned to let go of my son?” she demanded.

“Rika!” Keiko was shocked at her friend.

“He knows I don’t want Junya to go to New York ...”

“He can’t possibly—”

“He knows,” Junya said with just a touch of triumph in his voice.

Keiko and the Babas were speechless, and Ryo seemed confused about how to proceed, this was not going the way he had planned. Finally Keiko made an attempt to get the discussion moving again.

“Yamada does say later that it’s important for a company to be able to change, and that people who have lived in different places find it easier to change when it is necessary. He also says people who can’t accept change are always trying to fight it, and that can cause companies to fail:

The biggest problems I see in a group of people who don’t embrace change is that they will always fight anything new, any new idea, any new concept, any outside point of view. And, of course, there are many examples of companies that have failed because of that.

Goro tried to help, too. “And he mentions the importance of a sense of humor—so you don’t take yourself too seriously. Um, er, I mean, that was important for me to read:

One underestimated and important value, I think, is a sense of humor. It’s engaging, it’s delightful, but it’s also a reflection on not taking yourself so seriously

“Yes,” Natsu agreed. “I wouldn’t mind a little more laughter around the house!” That finally brought a smile to Rika’s face.

“I suppose families are like companies,” Rika sighed. “I guess we have to be willing to change sometimes.”

Ryo appreciated everyone’s attempts to mend the situation, but he had hurt Rika without intending to do so. Keiko noticed his expression. She decided to keep talking and get the details from Rika later. “You know what I liked

best?” she said. “The very last part, ‘Be open to new challenges.’ Now that spoke to me!”

“Any challenges in mind?” inquired Natsu.

“To tell the truth, I’m thinking of getting back out into the workforce!”

“That’s a wonderful plan.” Goro was pleased. “You’ve raised your family and now you are going back to work. It’s a great way to make good use of all your talents. Tachi Yamada is obviously a great leader! He managed to get all of us thinking about new things. Good job, Yabe!”

Natsu nodded at her husband’s words. “He’s right. I don’t know much about business, but Yamada’s words touched me, too. Especially this part:

One of the things that I learned is that you have to give more of yourself than you’re used to. I’m Japanese. We’re very reserved people. It was very difficult for me to learn that, in order to connect with groups of people, you have to give of yourself.

“I’ve been retired for five years now and my daughter has married and left home. For so many years, I lived for my job and my family, and when I lost them both, I didn’t know what to do. But lately I’ve learned how doing what I enjoy can bring joy to other people, too. I think that for me, this is giving of myself.

“So this month, I’ve made [cupcakes](#) for you! My daughter says they are very popular these days in the States.”

“I’ll have one!” said Rika, obviously more hungry than upset.

At the sound of her voice, everyone breathed a sigh of relief and helped themselves to the treats. As they ate, Natsu turned the subject back to their reading for the day.

“I just remembered something,” she said. “That column Ryo found—‘Corner Office.’ Does that mean anything special? I looked it up, but I still don’t understand the ‘corner’ part.”

Ryo shook his head, and so Keiko stepped in. “I found it on [Wikipedia](#). There is a photo and everything.”

A corner office is an office that is located in the corner of a building. Corner offices are considered desirable because they have windows on two walls, as opposed to a typical office with only one window or none at all. As corner offices are typically given to the most senior executives, the term primarily refers to top management positions.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corner-office>

“A corner office is an office with windows on two sides—it’s the office everyone wants, so the most important people get them. That’s what the name ‘Corner Office’ means—interviews from the office of the CEO.”

“Now I understand,” said Natsu.

“Thanks for the explanation,” added Ryo.

After they had enjoyed tea and cupcakes, Rika spoke up.

“And before we forget, next month is Junya’s turn.”

“I had a feeling that was coming.” Junya was, as usual, a step ahead of his mother. “So I’ve already prepared for next month!”

The One Chapter Reading Club members were getting better at making searches to find English material, but Junya had been at it longer than they had. He borrowed Ryo’s iPad and opened up a website with videos.

“This is a site one of my professors recommended to improve my English skills. It has all kinds of speeches on subjects from science to entertainment—even music. Not only is it good for listening, but you can read transcripts of the speeches. I’ve chosen one of the speeches for next month. I’d like you all to read and listen to it.”

The iPad screen showed the red TED logo along with the words “Ideas worth spreading.” The One Chapter Reading Club was about to discover the perfect site for fun & free e-reading.

Chapter 13

アメリカの音楽大学へ留学したい純也は、各大学のウェブサイトを読みこなすうちに自然と英語力を伸ばしていた。そんな彼が読書会用に選んだのは、TED というサイト内の、あるスピーチだった。

Junya had never done any serious English reading until he decided to go to a music school in the US. All of the universities he was interested in had websites full of information—all the information any prospective student in any field might possibly need. This meant that, for each school, Junya had to sort through a mountain of web pages and links to pick out what he needed: graduate school, the music program, tuition, housing, international student requirements, and so on. Some sites were easy to follow, others were impossible to navigate. He had almost decided to give up on finding a school that might accept him and that he could afford when he found [CUNY, the City University of New York](#). It was a school in the heart of New York City—the place he was determined to be.

Suffice it to say that by the time Junya had made his decision about music school, his English reading skills had improved enormously. English had never been a subject he liked, but he discovered that wanting something badly enough was good motivation to understand a foreign language.

He had decided to join the One Chapter Reading Club as a way to convince his mother how serious he was. Meeting Ryo Yabe had been an unexpected benefit. Not only did Ryo support his efforts, but he also seemed interested in his mother. It didn't make any sense to Junya, but he decided not to question his good luck. Maybe a boyfriend was just what his mother needed to keep her company while he was away.

On the evening of the next meeting of the reading club, Junya was on the Babas' doorstep right on time, together with his mother and Keiko.

“Come right in, young man!” Goro welcomed him. “You certainly kept me busy this month!” he continued after everyone was inside and seated.

“Was it too hard?” Junya was suddenly anxious.

“No, the problem was that once I got into the TED site, I couldn’t pull myself away from it.”

“It was the same for me,” added Keiko. “I kept going from one talk to the next—they were so interesting.”

Rika and Natsu looked at each other doubtfully.

“[Jay Walker on the world’s English mania](#) kept me busy just trying to figure it out,” Rika finally said, “but I used the Japanese translation and that helped.”

“Me too,” said Natsu. “The different photographs were interesting to see, but it took me a while to figure out what the point of the talk was. Using the video and subtitles and the transcript—reading and listening over and over again, I managed to get through the whole thing.”

Chapter 14

純也が選んだスピーチを中心に、英語を勉強することについて議論が盛り上がる。発表の締めくくりに、スティーブ・ジョブズがスタンフォード大学の卒業式で行ったスピーチを純也は紹介し、渡米の決意を語る。すると里香は・・・。

As Junya was explaining to the others how he used TED to study English, the doorbell rang again, and Ryo Yabe came bustling in.

“Sorry I’m late!” He looked over at Rika, and they gave each other a brief “thanks for the other day” greeting.

Junya stopped talking and looked over at his mother—as did the rest of the group.

“Another study session?” asked Keiko, looking at Junya.

“Not with me,” he responded.

“We, ah, got together once for lunch,” said Rika, trying to sound offhand.

“I couldn’t understand the English mania talk, and, uh, Rika offered to help me out ...,” started Ryo, and everyone’s eyes opened wide.

“*Mom* helped you?” Junya was the only one who could get away saying what the rest were thinking.

Goro wasn’t going to let his former colleague off the hook. “After your tutoring session, do you have any thoughts for us about the English mania?”

“We don’t usually think of manias as anything more than fads,” said Keiko, jumping in to take the focus off of Ryo. “But I got the feeling Jay Walker doesn’t think this English mania is temporary. And I think it was interesting that he didn’t mention Japan or Korea in this talk. He seemed to be focusing on developing countries:

Imagine a student taking a giant test for three full days. Her score on this one test literally determines her future. She studies 12 hours a day for three years to prepare. 25 percent of her grade is based on English. It’s called the Gaokao. And 80 million high school Chinese students have already taken

this grueling test.

http://www.ted.com/talks/jay_walker_on_the_world_s_english_mania.html

“I couldn’t figure out ‘Gaokao,’” said Natsu. “It must be the Chinese pronunciation for a word we would pronounce differently in Japanese.”

“When I worked overseas,” said Goro, “we often had trouble with romanized Chinese words because the pronunciation is so different from the way we Japanese pronounce it. We had to put it back into kanji to make any sense of it.”

“I tried looking it up on Google,” Keiko said. “I tried ‘Chinese test Gaokao,’ but all the sites came up in English. Next I tried to find something in Japanese, so I googled ‘Chinese test’ in Japanese plus ‘gaokao’ just like it is written in the transcript, and I finally got some Japanese sites that explained it. It’s the Chinese version of our national university entrance exams.”

The discussion then turned to entrance exams followed by the new curriculum in Japan that will make English a compulsory subject for elementary school students. One of the arguments in Japan is that learning a second language before mastering the mother tongue could be detrimental for children. This was also a topic Jay Walker covered in his speech:

Is English a tsunami, washing away other languages? Not likely. English is the world’s second language. Your native language is your life. But with English you can become part of a wider conversation. A global conversation about global problems ... English represents hope for a better future. A future where the world has a common language to solve its common problems.

“He says there is no danger of losing your first language—but we need to have a single language to use to talk about issues that most countries in the world share. That made sense to me.” Goro seemed convinced.

“And did you notice that he said English wasn’t like a ‘tsunami’! That

proves that Japanese has some influence on English, too,” noted Rika.

As they chatted, the reading group discovered that after each of them had read Jay Walker’s speech, they had gone on to listen to lots of other talks. They had all found several they liked and could understand. As the members shared, it was clear that the topics they had chosen matched their individual interests.

When they were finished, Junya had one more speech to introduce.

“Ryo sent me an e-mail to tell me about a speech by Steve Jobs that he really liked. Jobs tells university students to follow their dreams. It really made an impression on me.” He looked over at Ryo, who had turned red in embarrassment, but seemed determined to explain himself.

“I’ve always admired Steve Jobs,” Ryo began. “He gave [this speech at the Stanford University graduation](#) a few years ago. He quit college, started Apple, got fired, started a new company—Pixar—and ended up working for Apple again. Then he got sick and was told he was going to die—but he got better. He’s the sort of guy I’ve always admired but have never been able to emulate.”

“The speech was long, but I read it through from start to finish—it was fascinating.” Junya continued. “It was the story of his life—he has both achieved and lost so much. I wanted to share with you all one part that really impressed me. He talks about finding something you love to do. He says you shouldn’t give up until you get it:

You’ve got to find what you love. And that is as true for your work as it is for your lovers. Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven’t found it yet, keep looking. And most importantly, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition.

“You all probably know that my mom worries about me leaving her and going away to study,” Junya continued, “and I understand that. It has always been the

two of us together. She's afraid of being alone, and I'm not really sure if I can make it without her either. Sometimes I wonder if I should find a job and stay at home. But Steve Jobs says, 'You've got to find what you love.' I already know what I love—my music. Then he says you have to 'have the courage to follow your heart and intuition.' I think that means you should follow your dream even if you don't know where it might lead you."

Junya turned to look at Rika. "I'm old enough to pick up and go if that's what I want to do. But Mom, I want you to tell me you'll send me off and that I'll always have a home to come back to. We'll stay in touch the whole time I'm gone—we don't even need phones, we can talk for free over the Internet, and I'll need you to encourage me when things don't go well and I get discouraged. I'll be there to talk to you when you need me, too. Maybe you can come to see me in New York."

Rika opened her purse and searched furiously for a handkerchief. Ryo reached into his pocket and handed her his. She took it, and dabbed at the tears she couldn't stop.

"How can I tell you to stay when you tell me all this in front of everyone?"

Junya looked down, unable to say anything else.

Now it was Ryo's turn to speak to Rika. "You know, Rika, I admire you. You did exactly what you wanted to. You managed to make a nice life for yourself and your son—doing what you liked. You need to let Junya do what he loves. You've got to let him go to New York and study music!"

"I gave up the things I was interested in when I was young. I can't complain about my life, but I wonder if there might be something I'm missing."

Rika looked at Junya and then back over at Ryo. The Babas and Keiko held their breath.

"So," he said taking a deep breath, "if you let Junya go to New York, I promise you that—I'll make sure you're never lonely."

Natsu couldn't help stepping in to help Ryo sort all this out. "Are you saying that spending time with Rika is what you'd really like to do?"

"Yes," Ryo said slowly. "If she doesn't mind having me around."

Everyone waited for what Rika would say next.

“I always knew Junya was serious about going to New York and that I would have to let him go. I just didn’t want to admit it. Junya, don’t worry. I’ll send you off with my blessings. You do what you need to do—you’ll always have a home here to come back to.”

“Rika!” Keiko was anxious for a happy ending. “Don’t you have something to say to Ryo?”

“Yes, I guess I do. Ryo, you’ve been kind to both Junya and me, and listened to all of our arguments. I can tell Junya is happier when you’re around. And I’m happier too.” Rika’s voice sounded uncharacteristically shy. “When Junya leaves, maybe I won’t be as lonely as I was afraid.”

With that she wiped away her eyes again with Ryo’s handkerchief.

All six of the reading club members sighed at this satisfying turn of events. It was like something out of a storybook.

Finally Natsu stood up. “I’ve got a batch of brownies on the table. I think this calls for a celebration!”

Epilogue: Six months later

半年後。読書会のメンバーは一人一人が新しい道を進み出していた。今日は、オレゴンへの旅行に行く馬場夫妻の壮行会が開かれる。パートで再び働き始めた恵子は、会場となる里香の家へ急いでいた。

Keiko got off from work and headed straight for Rika's house. Today the One Chapter Reading Club was having a sending-off party for Goro and Natsu Baba, who were about to take their first trip to the US—to Oregon to see their daughter and her family. It was still early, so Keiko would probably be the first one to arrive.

It had been just about a year since they had begun the One Chapter Reading Club, and so much had happened. The first half year had been a time of trial and error, but things had taken an unexpected turn after their session on TED when Junya had announced his intentions to study music in the US. The group still met every month and they still took turns choosing reading material, but each member was moving in new directions, too.

Keiko had begun applying to jobs that required English skills, and had been rehired part-time at her old job. Her former boss was still there, and the entire section had been relieved to have someone who could deal with the communications with overseas clients. Keiko was catching up with the modern business world. She also had a thirty-minute commute, and had bought herself an iPod Touch and used it to finish *Daddy-Long-Legs* from the Gutenberg Project. Using earphones, she was able to pass the time on her train ride listening to the audio version while reading the text.

She had always loved Japanese mystery novels, so her next project was to look at mystery books using her Kindle app. There were many American female mystery writers, and she was sampling books by Janet Evanovich and Sue Grafton. She had discovered Diane Mott Davidson, who wrote light mysteries about a crime-solving cook. Keiko had just read the first chapter of Davidson's *Fatally Flaky*, and was thinking of sharing it with Natsu.

Junya, she knew for sure, was still working toward the TOEFL test. She admired him because he didn't spend all of his time immersed in workbooks,

but practiced reading and listening using materials about subjects that really interested him. He listened to speeches on the TED site and found online articles on music. Recently, he had made an appointment to take TOEFL, so he had finally started taking practice tests. And that wasn't all. Applications for US universities all require essays, so the next task ahead for him was to concentrate on writing.

Rika had fully accepted her son's plans to go to New York and become his strongest supporter. She was even talking about going to visit him while he was there.

Goro spent his free time reading online sources of information on tourism in Oregon. He had a long list of places he wanted to visit. He had told them all about Crater Lake—a deep, beautiful lake on the top of an old volcano. He was buying Kindle versions of travel books as well as some books to read while he was away. The electronic reading device weighed only 240 grams, and he could store thousands of books on it. It was the perfect travel accessory.

Natsu, of course, was still investigating cooking websites. She had discovered a wealth of Japanese recipes available in English and had printed out the pages to make a scrapbook. Her granddaughter was in second grade, and she hoped to have some fun cooking Japanese dishes with her. At their last meeting, Natsu had told Keiko how nervous she had been about visiting a foreign country, but that now she was ready for the new adventure. She was confident she could read signs and handle menus in restaurants while leaving conversational needs to her husband. Looking at Natsu now, Keiko found it almost impossible to recall how reticent she had been at their old English conversation class.

As for Rika and Ryo, the two of them had mentioned the BBC Learning English site. There were short articles, audio and video resources, and even quizzes. It wasn't too difficult, and Keiko suspected they enjoyed it because it meant they could tackle it together without having to ask for help from anyone else—but she couldn't be sure. Even though Ryo had announced his feelings for Rika at the club meeting, he was younger and had never been married. The two of them must certainly have different expectations for a relationship. She just hoped that her old friend wasn't setting herself up for disappointment or a broken heart. Nor did she want to see Ryo hurt, either.

Keiko rounded the final corner to Rika's house. Rika would probably need her to help get things ready, but it had been a long day. Her feet hurt and she was ready to sit down. She walked up to the door and rang the doorbell. Expecting to see Rika in a state of mild panic, she was surprised when the door flew open and Ryo greeted her with a big smile.

“Keiko, come in! I got off work early today, and Rika and I have just finished straightening up. She's in the kitchen boiling water and grinding coffee beans. I picked up some things to eat on the way over, so all you have to do is sit down and relax.”

Gratefully settling herself on Rika's couch, Keiko noticed the look of contentment on Ryo's face, as he added, “Don't you just love parties? I hope you'll throw one for us when we go to New York.”

The End