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17.541 / 17.543 Japanese Politics and Society  
Fall 2008

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### Case #3: Education

#### ISHI'S DILEMMA

Ishi-san sat next to his twenty-one year old son Ichiro at the Formica kitchen table. He wanted to spend time with Ichiro and was delighted that Ichiro was up before he left for work. His wife Sachiko was on a trip with old school friends and he and Ichiro had the house to themselves. Before leaving, Sachiko had whispered, "please spend time with your son," when she left, and he had nodded, conscious that he had not had a real conversation with Ichiro in several years.

Now Ishi watched Ichiro leaf through his *manga* magazine. He didn't want to force a conversation and as he waited for Ichiro to look up, noted the tall chairs with bright blue plastic seats. Sachiko had insisted on a Western kitchen, dining room and living room in an otherwise Japanese house. Ishi had argued for Japanese tradition, citing his samurai ancestors as examples of Bushido and the Japanese way, but Sachiko wanted something new. She didn't want to live in simple *tatami* rooms with only a scroll for decoration, claiming it was easier to clean rooms with plastic surfaces and florescent lights.

Ishi came from a proud tradition of valiant samurai who fought to the death. In the 1870's his family was picked by the Meiji oligarchy to take charge of the growing ship building industry in Shikoku's port city of Takamatsu (tall pines). With considerable government financial support along with the demand for ships created by the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo Japanese war, the family business thrived.

Ishi's grandfather had been reared on a family estate near Takamatsu and from the time he was a small child Ichiro loved stories about their clan, the Taira, who after being defeated by the Minamoto at the end of the Hein Period, had escaped to Shikoku where they lived deep in the deep mountains. They were tales of honor in defeat, and Ishi adored the old man. "A real samurai never shows his strength," his grandfather claimed. They were sitting under the *kotatsu* eating salty-sweet *senbe* and drinking green tea when he made this claim. "Why?" Ishi who was then ten had inquired. "Once your enemy knows your strength, you loose your advantage," Ishi senior had said. "Remember that and you will always be strong. Remember also that a true samurai protects the weak and understands obligation and honor."

Ishi had thought about his grandfather many times during the years since his death and increasingly felt that his grandfather's spirit was with him. Lately, his grandfather's voice had become so insistent that he heard conversations twice, once as the words were uttered, and again as his grandfather would have reflected on the

conversation. This dialogue between his grandfather and himself energized him and even though he knew it wasn't healthy, he found it increasingly difficult to block his grandfather's point of view.

Ishi knew his grandfather would be proud of his success. Not only he was head of the Chemistry department at University of Tokyo but had been appointed a University Director and also designated a "special professor" in the President's committee that was responsible for change at the university. Buoyed by this recognition, Ishi increasingly emphasized his grandfather's values in his chemistry laboratory by mentoring students and talking to them about Japan.

Now Ishi wondered if his son Ichiro had absorbed any of the Japanese tradition and whether the Japanese attributes of the house that he had fought for were worth the arguments with Sachiko. At Ishi's insistence the house had a small *genkan*, where the family removed their shoes, and had the bedrooms covered with *tatami* mats. Ishi had designed a stone garden just off the living room where he could sit in a lounge chair and contemplate life. Even with all the Japanese characteristics, the eat-in kitchen still annoyed Ishi. "Where we have meals will be our gathering place," he'd argued with Sachiko. "We should be sitting on *tatami* mats around a low table with you serving rice to the family. Ichiro-kun will never understand what being Japanese means. I want him to understand Japanese culture. I want him to understand Japanese family life."

As Ichiro stuffed himself with sugared cereal and poured milk from a carton, Ishi grew irritated. To take his mind off the crunching cereal, Ishi thought of his own childhood breakfasts with his family. During and after the war, food was scarce and Ishi rarely asked for a second bowl of rice. Yet, despite the rumble in his stomach, Ishi cherished the slow meals and took satisfaction watching his mother serve rice to his grandfather, then his father and finally himself as the eldest, followed by his three sisters and finally her. This order of service established hierarchy and respect among the members of the family and again he regretted not having Japanese style meals in a Japanese environment in his own home.

"Ichiro-kun," Ishi said, "don't you have some important tests this week?"

"Some," Ichiro replied carelessly and smiled.

Ishi noted his son's regular features and thick hair that framed his broad forehead and high cheekbones. His lean frame was at least 6 inches taller than Ishi and girls called his cell phone at all hours of the day and night. Yet, Ishi found his son unattractive. His mouth was too soft and Ishi judged a person by the way the upper lip moved. Ichiro mumbled and his lip moved without precision as if his words didn't really matter. Ishi blamed

himself for that too. Now he pressed on, “your mother told me you missed a lot of classes this semester. She is worried.”

“Don’t worry,” Ichiro laughed. “Keio professors are so committed to their government and university committees that they often don’t show up for classes. Tests are pretty easy. I’ll do fine. My friends at the University of Tokyo say it’s the same there.”

Ishi was annoyed by the last jab but remained silent and glanced at his watch. He was aware that he had gotten the conversation off to a bad start. Sachiko was right, he was too angry with Ichiro to establish descent communication. University of Tokyo President Oda had asked him for a private appointment. He should leave for the trip. It took 1 1/2 hours and 3 subway changes to the Tokyo University’s famous *Aka Mon* Red Gate.

Yet he lingered. He must make things better, he thought. It was rare that he had breakfast with Ichiro and even rarer that they had a conversation. It might be possible to talk now if Ishi could manage to hold his tongue. For years, he had waited for Ichiro to prove that he was a continuation of those valiant Taira that had fought with fury and maintained their independence in the mountains of Shikoku. If only Ichiro would show signs of his entrepreneurial ancestor that had made a fortune in the ship building business. But so far none of this had happened.

Ishi knew that Ichiro as a late child, meant Sachiko and he had been overprotective. Now Ishi felt that they had made a terrible mistake. At the age of 4, to avoid the stress of Ichiro preparing for an entrance exam to a national university, they had enrolled him in Keio elementary school program. They were pleased when Ichiro was accepted, understanding that Keio, a private school, continued through college. As the years passed, Ishi and Sachiko smiled sympathetically when friends complained about their children’s *Juku* cram school that lasted till ten o’clock at night. They were relieved to avoid the anxiety associated with acceptance into good junior high and then high school and finally to a national university. No one spoke of University of Tokyo but everyone wanted their children wanted to pass that exam knowing that leaders of Japanese business and government were chosen from its ranks.

Ishi was pleased with Ichiro’s elementary Keio education and felt he and Sachiko had made a good choice. In keeping with Fukuzawa, Yukichi, the founder of Keio’s progressive outlook, classes were flexible and the teachers seemed concerned about the students. A core curriculum brought together different subjects and Ishi and Sachiko helped Ichiro with his assignments. Ishi was especially pleased with the environmental module

and felt particularly close to Ichiro as he explained the chemical make up of water and air. Ichiro was a good student and basked in the approval of his parents. Most importantly the pressure was off.

However, when Ichiro reached high school, he started slacking off. Ishi had been particularly busy during those years and hadn't spent much time with Ichiro. By the time Ishi focused on his son, Ichiro had a cell phone and was constantly using it to make arrangements to meet his friends. Ishi remembered the phrase *Keio botchan* used to describe the spoiled playboys who attended Keio. Dismayed by Ichiro's untidy room and his haphazard study habits, Ishi lectured Ichiro on the honor of his Taira samurai family background. "In the hills of Shikoku, we survived on our wit and muscle," Ishi declared. Ishi could talk for hours about his stoic ancestors but clearly Ichiro was not interested. When Ichiro entered college, thinking Ichiro would join political groups as he had done, Ishi switched the subject to politics; article 9 of the constitution and whether Japan should rearm and after that, Prime Minister Koizumi's visits to Yasukuni Shrine where Prime Minister Tojo and other Japanese war criminals were enshrined. Nothing Ishi said had any effect.

Now seeing Ichiro slurp up the last pieces of cereal from the bowl, Ishi was sure Keio had been a bad idea. Ichiro would have been much better off under the pressure of an exam. He would have developed good study habits and had more respect for his heritage. He must be patient. Ichiro was not the only young Japanese that was lazy. More than forty percent of Japanese college bound young people had successful strategies for avoiding the national entrance exams. Ishi understood that much of the exam material was rote, but also knew the exams taught endurance and discipline. Thinking this, Ishi waited for Ichiro to finish breakfast when he would invite him into the living room for a chat.

Under pressure from politicians and parents, exams had been modified and now gave students a choice of exam subjects. This meant that students studied narrowly in one area and the upshot was that they did not receive a well-rounded education. Endurance. Wasn't life all about endurance, Ishi thought, recalling Japan's major value of *giri*, obligation. Yes, Japanese of his generation were taught the difficulty of fulfilling obligation to one's parents and to the state. It took *gammen*, endurance, *ganbaru*, gather force against all odds, and *jishin*, energy and commitment. Didn't the exam system support Japanese meritocracy that enabled the best and the brightest from all strata of Japanese society to enter University of Tokyo and eventually the government bureaucracy and the highest ranks of industry?

In addition to easing pressure for exams, Japan had also minimized pressure on elementary children and the “*yukuri kyoiku*”, relaxed education, was introduced in 2002. *Yukuri kyoiku* meant the study of classics was cut by thirty percent and the school week was reduced from 51/2 days to 5 days. In addition, the Ministry of Education introduced integrated classes without textbooks to stimulate children to form their own interests and think for themselves.

Ishi had fought *yukuri* with letters to Momkasho, Ministry of Education, describing the need for Japanese children to understand their Confucian heritage that connected Japanese youth to their past. To bolster his case, Ishi cited the Tokugawa era, where Japanese quoted Confucian writings when greeting Chinese emissaries. Ishi had followed this tradition, when in 1973 after formal relations between Japan and China had been established, he had met Professor Chen, Chairman of the Chemistry Department at Beijing University in China. Professor Chen welcomed the Japanese with a quote from Confucius and Ishi stepped forward and answered him in kind. They traded quotes for some time until harmony had been established and at that moment Ishi felt deeply in touch with his roots.

Now Ichiro put down his bowl of cereal and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. It was time. Ishi was about to ask Ichiro into the living room, but noticing that the corners of Ichiro’s mouth drooped, wondered if Ichiro had been drinking. For the last 3 nights Ichiro had come home after 4 am. Six months ago, curious about Ichiro’s life, Ishi had followed him to a club in near Yoyogi. He stood in the back of the darkened room lit by strobe lights for an hour watching Ichiro with his friends, some with pierces and dyed hair, down whiskey sours. Ichi felt bewildered by the staccato lights and the loud music. As a young man, Ishi frequented the tea houses in the entertainment district of Tokyo. There he was served sake by young geisha who joked, punned and flattered him with their attention. Ishi left the dark club feeling empty and old.

“How is your work on the committee?” Ichiro asked.

“Good,” Ishi answered, pleased that Ichiro had asked. “Let’s go to the living room. I’ll tell you about it.”

“That’s ok,” Ichiro said pouring another glass of milk. “I’m comfortable here.”

“University of Tokyo is being privatized in a hurry,” Ishi said feeling his face flush with hurt when Ichiro refused his invitation for a quiet talk in the more comfortable living room. “In the end it will be similar to Keio University.”

“I know that,” Ichiro laughed ignoring Ishi’s unease. “Privatization. People talk about it as if it were going to do miracles. Do you think there will be any real change?”

“Yes, I do,” Ishi answered again pleased that Ichiro was interested. It didn’t matter that they were still sitting in the bright kitchen at the Fomica table, he reasoned. They were talking and that’s what mattered.

“President Oda is a top-down sort of fellow,” Ishi continued. “He knows exactly what he wants and he will have his way. There are 40 members of the committee and I am on the special council of 10 which is the inner group. President Oda consults my opinion on all sorts of issues and I feel we will make a big change. The power of the procrastinating professor is being broken. No longer will professors alone determine hiring and budget policies. There is an exchange of points of view and consensus building and the Dean checks everyone’s opinions. Even so, we know that orders come from the top.”

“What does Oda-sensei want?” Ichiro asked in a friendly tone.

“Tokyo University will be among the top ten universities in the world,” Ishi answered quickly. Ichiro open face encouraged him and he was now on a roll. “It will attract the best minds and do the best work. It will serve Japan in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Ishi’s voice grew louder as he spoke. “It started with Prime Minister Nakasone’s vision of encouraging privatization over twenty years ago. Nakasone-sama realized a private University of Tokyo will encourage competition and new ways of thinking to serve Japan. Much later, the Toyama plan picked up on Nakasone’s ideas and recommended three things: a reduction of the number of national universities, an outside evaluation of policies and an introduction of management techniques used in the private sector to make things more efficient. When I think of what we are doing, I’m reminded of Meiji and Mori Arinori, Minister of Education, who was so forward looking that he wanted all courses to be taught in English. He understood sacrifice was needed to serve the state.”

“You sound committed,” Ichiro said with a slow cynical smile.

“I am,” Ishi said feeling suddenly ashamed of his robust voice. Just yesterday Sachiko had scolded him about his bombastic tone when talking to Ichiro. “He is your son,” she’d said. “You are always delivering a lecture. Why do you think he is so distant from us? No one can stand all those lectures. You are closer to Matt, the intern from MIT in your laboratory, than you are to your own child.”

“My friends are going to school because their parents expect it. They don’t think their education is part of serving Japan. In fact they don’t think of serving Japan at all. They want to have fun and enjoy life,” Ichiro said.

Ishi glanced at his watch. Now the kitchen light seemed bright and the plastic surfaces made him dizzy. He felt depleted and certain the conversation would end in a fight. Ichiro walked to the fridge and was refilling his glass of milk. "I've got to go," Ishi said quickly and picked up his brief case. "We can talk again tonight. Will you be around?"

Ichiro patted his cell phone on the Formica table as if to suggest that it was up to the calls he might receive and shrugged.

As Ishi left the house, he thought of Matt, the MIT intern, and was glad he had not brought him up as an example of industry and creativity. Ishi had not wanted to take an intern from MIT, but his old friend and colleague Kato had convinced him. "Japanese need to work along side foreigners, if things are going to change," he'd told Ishi. "You know I spent time at MIT just after the war. MIT students are hard working and diligent. You will like Matt."

Kato had been right. Ishi liked Matt right away. He came from a small town in North Carolina and was the first member of his family to go to college. His father was a carpenter and his mother a waitress. Matt adored his father and wanted to apprentice as carpenter but his father thought he should try college. At his father's recommendation, Matt went to a college advisor. The advisor said in a slow but certain voice, "MIT is the best school for people who like to build things. You should apply." The rest is history. Matt only applied to MIT and was accepted with a scholarship.

Matt had bright red hair and a freckled face and an open smile and looked like a Japanese version of the devil. He worked hard during the day and he studied Japanese at night. He was always cheerful. Gradually Ishi took on a mentor role with Matt, taking an interest in his chemistry experiments and inviting him to small restaurants after work for dinner. The members of his laboratory noticed his affection for Matt and Ishi was conscious of showing his team how to mentor Matt in the Japanese way.

On a cold night several months after Matt's arrival, Matt called Ishi at home. His landlord who lived on the first floor had threatened Matt with eviction notice for playing music and demanded that Matt leave that night. Matt was rarely home and never played music very loud. The landlord had spent the last 2 hours yelling at Matt. Matt was upset and convinced the landlord was under pressure to get rid of Matt from his wife who didn't want a foreign tenant.

Ishi listened carefully. It was still only 8pm and he most of his people would still be at work in the laboratory. Quickly he dialed Fuji-san, senior lab manager, who he had appointed as mentor to Matt, and explained the problem. "I want you, Sato-kun and Maki-san to come with me. We must talk to Matt's landlord."

Ishi heard the hesitation in Fuji's voice as he agreed to round up his lab mates and meet Ishi at Matt's house. Ishi knew Fuji, like his son Ichiro, resented Ishi's constant lectures on the samurai tradition of caring for the weak, honor and obligation. Now Fuji would learn what it meant to be a Japanese mentor, Ishi thought.

An hour later Ishi rang Matt's landlord's doorbell, and for three hours, Ishi stood alongside Matt, Fuji, Sato and Maki in the cold talking to Matt's landlord about the problem. He explained that Matt was critical to his group and worked long hours and never complained. He spoke of Matt's commitment to learn Japanese and his sense of duty and honor. The cold stung Ishi's cheeks and his feet and hands were numb but he never stopped talking. Now more than ever, his grandfather was by his side, encouraging him and supporting him, filling him with the desire to help Matt and show his young Japanese students what it meant to fulfill an obligation to a member of the group.

The landlord listened, aware that Ishi, a Director from the University of Tokyo, and the senior members of his Tokyo University laboratory, were standing in the freezing drizzle supporting their lab mate. He invited them inside but Ishi stood his ground and kept talking. Finally the landlord lowered his head and apologized to Ishi in a low voice. "There will be no more trouble," he whispered. Then Ishi's students along with Matt, bowed one-by-one long and low in front of their sensei. It was twelve at night, and Ishi was frozen but tears pricked his eye lids and he knew his students had experienced the "Japanese way".

After that Ishi came to love Matt as a son. He spoke to Kato and others at the University of Tokyo about accepting Matt as a graduate student and personally advised Matt on his research and career choices. Matt responded and worked even harder. Last week Matt had delivered a paper in Japanese at a environmental meeting. Ishi had sat beaming in the front row.

But Ishi couldn't mentor his own son, Ichiro and he was fully aware of his own shortcoming. Sachiko was right about his obsession with Matt. He wanted to produce Japanese Matts, students from modest backgrounds, self-starters, whose energy and commitment would serve the nation. He didn't mind working in close dialogue with the ministry to do this. After all, he reasoned, Tokyo Imperial University was established to build Japan and only in close cooperation with the state could Japan produce young people that would enable

Japan to take its rightful place in the global economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To this end, Ishi and others on the committee were in close dialogue with government bureaucrats on the president's committee.

The crowded subway gave Ishi time to think. What did President Oda want? This was only the second time he had been summoned at such short notice. Topics addressed in the Committee were divided into education, research, international affairs, industrial relations, and funding. The committee was required to come up with 10 recommendations for each topic. Ishi and others felt confident that Oda would act on the recommendations immediately. That understanding made the Committee meetings dynamic. By establishing a cross-functional committee of administrators, professors and governmental bureaucrats, Oda had taken power from the professors, who historically controlled hiring and budgeting in the departments through their own fiefs.

Which of the topics did Oda want to discuss? Ishi thought about the last meeting. There had been a great deal of discussion of the industrial relations issue. Oda had established a center for industrial relations at the university where professors' work would be matched with company interests. In addition, Oda created a large fund to help professors establish companies of their own. The university would profit from the start-up intellectual property rights and the professors would encourage young students with lectures on their corporate initiatives.

Did Oda want Ishi to establish a company? He tried to think of which research topics in his laboratory would be suitable for such a venture. Most were in the early stages and their outcomes were still in question. However, there was one new technology where his lab had made a contribution which involved removing carbon dioxide from the air and pumping it underground. That might fly.

Ishi got off the train and climbed the subway steps. He liked the old station with its crumbling walls and broken steps and the small dank coffee shops that lined the street that fronted the University of Tokyo. Nothing had changed in this part of Tokyo and he liked that, too. He imagined many of these old buildings would be torn down when Oda's idea of University of Tokyo professor generated start-up companies really took off. That would be a great pity, he thought as he entered the famous *Aka Mon*, the Red Gate portal to the university.

Ishi announced himself to President Oda's secretary, a tall woman whose hair was tied with a bright purple ribbon in a pony tail. "He is waiting for you," she said in a pert tone and bowing quickly knocked lightly on Oda's door.

"Come in," Oda said.

The secretary opened the door and Ishi bowed as he entered the room. He bowed again as he stood in front of President Oda. Oda waved him to a leather couch and Ishi was grateful to be seated. He and Oda were the same age, nearly seventy, but Oda looked considerably older. He had let his shoulder length hair go gray and his fine hair next to his sallow skin and high forehead gave him the look of an ancient sage. Ishi remembered that as young man, Oda had a lofty aspect that distinguished him from the other University of Tokyo students. In class, Oda's opinions were well stated and in his third year, his professors and fellow students listened to his opinions and Oda's ascent to power had begun.

Ishi knew that Oda had admired Prime Minister Nakasone and many of the reforms were influenced by Nakasone's doctrine on educational reform. Now he waited and tried to focus on the carbon dioxide project that might attract funding for a company. Sachiko would like more money, he thought.

"Ishi-kun," Oda began, "thank you for coming to see me on such short notice. I really appreciate your coming to see me."

"It is my pleasure," Ishi answered politely.

"How do you think the committee meetings are going?"

"Well," Ishi answered carefully. "The last meeting on professor start-up companies was lively. There will be a lot of rich professors."

Oda laughed. "Well I hope so. It's time. Japan must change. It must be creative the way it was before the war. We knew the good old days before the military when everything was possible? How I long for that time. Don't you?"

Ishi felt immediately uncomfortable. There was a great deal of talk among committee members about the "good old days" before the military coup as if the Committee members had personally experienced that era. Ishi had always been disgusted by this corraling of history, since most of them were sixty and had no knowledge of Japan during that time. He was always grateful during committee meetings that Oda never participated in those discussions. Of course he wouldn't have minded if his colleagues spoke with admiration of the Meiji period. There was no pretense in that. He was a great admirer of Meiji himself. Meiji was history.

Now Oda was mouthing the same words as if he had personal knowledge of the era before the military coup in the thirties. Perhaps, Ishi thought, Oda was not an original thinker and followed current trends like

privatization. Oda might not be the leader Ishi imagined. He thought all this with astonishing speed and now saw Oda in an entirely different light.

“Yes,” Ishi answered vaguely trying not to show disapproval.

“I’m so glad you are on the Committee, Ishi-kun,” Oda said. “University of Tokyo will be one of the best universities in the world and that can be only good for Japan. How is your work going?”

Ishi smiled. “Well,” he answered. “Most of the research is at an early stage but some of the experiments are coming along”.

“How I envy you,” Oda said. “To feel productive and do good work. I don’t know how you manage. I know the Committee is taking a lot of your time.”

Ishi knew Oda was testing him. Oda smiled and Ishi smiled. Now Oda would ask about forming a start up company with guaranteed university funding.

Immediately Ishi knew he would refuse. His earlier desire to commercialize the CO2 experiments dissolved and he realized with finality that he didn’t want to be part of Oda money making schemes. His earlier enthusiasm for privatization also vanished. All this took him by surprise and he didn’t understand himself. He wished he had stayed longer at the breakfast table with Ichiro. It was his fault that Ichiro had no spine. A company would mean more university red tape and more meetings. Recently, he’d felt his heart flutter and had gone to the doctor who recommended inserting a pace maker within a year. His heart was fluttering now. Sachiko would have to content herself with the income they had.

Now he waited.

“I want to pass an idea before you,” Oda said.

“Please,” Ishi answered.

“You know that my dream is to make University of Tokyo one of the best centers of learning in the world.”

“Yes,” Ishi said certain now that he would refuse to do a company using the disclaimer that his experiments were at too early a stage for commercialization.

“The University of Tokyo tradition is to serve Japan,” Oda said in a low voice. “I know you agree. I know that the Committee agrees. We produce the best and the brightest leaders.”

Ishi twisted in his chair and tried to look earnest. He had heard this speech too many times to look sincerely interested but although he nodded as if Oda's words were an important mantra, Ishi was increasingly irritated. Had the conversation with Ichiro unnerved him to this extent? He wanted to like Oda again and took a deep breath and tried to understand his own reactions. He wished Oda would just pop the question about forming the company so he could give his excuse and leave.

"I have an idea that will create an even greater avende guard."

Ishi waited.

"University of Tokyo will establish an elementary school," Oda said. "The children will be tested carefully so we will only accept the best and the brightest. It will be creative and encourage individualistic thinking. We will have these students from an early age and will be able to groom them to be true servants of Japan." Oda's voice rose and Ishi was embarrassed by its similarity to his own bombastic tone he'd used with Ichiro that morning.

Ishi waited for Oda to talk about Ishi forming a company but instead Oda launched into his private school project. "There will be the most creative curriculum in this school," Oda declared. "Students will be groomed to be leaders."

It was hard for Ishi to change gears from a private company to a University of Tokyo private school, and for some moments he was dumfounded as Oda described his idea for the school. What was Oda talking about? He tried to listen and gazed at the Persian design on the carpet thinking of Ichiro. What should he say to Oda? His head was pounding and he tried to control his trembling hand. Didn't Oda understand what was at stake?

"I can see you are confused," Oda said. "I know this is a new idea. A very new idea. We are private now and like Keio, a University of Tokyo school will be important money making proposition for the University. Parents would pay dearly to send their children to the best with a guaranteed place at the University of Tokyo. I know that students at University of Tokyo are from rich families anyway. After all it takes a great deal of money to send a child to the appropriate *juku*."

Ishi folded his arms around his chest and hoped Oda would stop talking. An elite elementary and high school attached to the University of Tokyo would destroy Japan's hard earned place in the world as a middle class country. Oda was right about the rich attending University of Tokyo but this would further cuddle youth and ruin their sense of mission, even if that mission were only to pass the dreaded national exam. He remembered his long

hours of study and the interminable wait with his friends for names who passed the exam to be posted. Their anticipation of had been all encompassing and when his name appeared he had hugged his friends and Oda who he knew from high school, and then bounded home, feeling victorious from the hunt, to tell his parents that he was Japan's best and brightest.

Oda cleared his throat. "I called you here today to write a report for me on the pros and cons of such a venture, Ishi-kun," he said. "I want to present the report to the Committee for their opinion. I believe that this will be a great addition to the University. Of course, we will still accept university students who are not in our school and we might even augment the number of the school's students in junior high and again in high school. Imagine, Ishi-kun, a core group of Japanese specially groomed from an early age to be Japan's leaders. I am very excited by the idea.

Ishi nodded wondering how admiration could turn to distrust in such a short time. Now he saw Oda's long face and gray hair as part of an actor's disguise instead of a scholar's aspect.

Oda stood and Ishi stood. They both bowed.

"I know I can depend on you," Ishi said. "You have been my friend and comrade for a long time. It is good to be the same generation. We think alike. I am reminded of the Meiji oligarchs when I think of the Committee. Mori-sama would be proud of what we are doing. Nakasone-sama was right. A new Japan, a Japan that will compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. That is some something to reckon with.

"Yes," Ishi said and mustered a smile before he left the room. "Yes."

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