

EXTRA CHAPTER 1

Gotanda, Tokyo

12:08am

Yukio took his *onsen* bath as usual; unusually, it did not relax him. He wrapped himself in a *yakuta* and kicked his feet into house slippers before shuffling off into the loft to hunt for sleep. This would be his fifth night under covers without Takara. Five nights since she absconded with the American. Joshua Harker may have been twenty five years younger than Yukio, but the aging tycoon felt right then he could tear him apart with his own hands.

A lone yonkuichi stood guard on the inner balcony, in the place usually occupied by Kazuki. His head bobbed in respect to the passing magnate who, adrift on the currents of his thoughts, didn't notice it. Kazuki also was missing for two days. Kazuki promised his *oyabun* he'd find Takara, bring her home. That was three days ago. Yukio tried to call the young man several times, but failed. It was unlike Kazuki. Something was wrong. First Takara, now Kazuki. He even tried Taro, but his calls weren't answered. Communication with his father was shunned.

What was happening? His family was unravelling. Most of his life Yukio took control, but on days like today, when caprice took control, he felt powerless, and he hated it. Today he was once again the little boy standing by a market stall over the bullet-chewed body of his Korean father. The world, his world, was revolving out of control. How? The moment it happened must have slipped past his attention. Why? Destiny had set against Shimura Yukio having family, time and again. Family – just like any normal person could have.

He stopped by the threshold of one bedroom; it had been Kazuki's. The past resurged again. Twenty years ago, Yukio stood on that same spot, with Mark Olsen at his side, watching and listening to the nursemaid's sweet dulcet song lulling the new arrival to sleep in a cot. The haunting delicate

simplicity of that traditional Edo lullaby echoed still in the rafters of Yukio's mind. It was his favourite as a child, and became Kazuki's too. The boy's breathing grew gradually faster and deeper as she caressed his forehead in rhythm with the lyrics.

Nen nen kororiyo okororiya

Boyawa yoikoda nenneshina

The boy soon fell asleep.

'You see Olsen-san,' Yukio had said, 'he will get the best care here.'

'Yukio, I have no doubt he will receive the best mothering money can buy,' Mark had said.

'Your words strike me deeply, friend. Do you think I would simply buy the boy's future?'

'He needs a mother, a real mother. All boys need their mother.' Olsen's tone was peppered with regret.

'Then you strike me even deeper, for that is the one thing you know I can not provide.'

Olsen backtracked. 'I'm sorry. I forget how close you still are to Hiromi's death. Forgive me.'

'Forgiveness is not necessary between friends. I know you did not mean to offend. Your concern for Kazuki's welfare is admirable and one – I assure you – I share.'

'It was good of you to take him in,' said Olsen. He laughed at a private joke before making it known to his colleague. 'It's always been said that Japanese are eager early adopters of new technologies, but this is taking it a bit literally, isn't it?'

Yukio just smiled, not so enthusiastic about the joke.

Olsen tried candour again. 'I fear what the future he would have in the US if word leaked out, from those who know his secret. Someone who worked on the project in Genesys labs would tell the press one day. He

would become a freak show. It is better that he simply disappeared from there. And here, no one will know. No one will know what he is.'

Yukio sighed. 'Maybe someday, they should.'

Olsen looked taken aback.

Yukio continued: 'At the very least, Kazuki must know himself some day.'

'Is that wise?'

'When the time is right, and he is mentally prepared for it, I think it is essential that he know. I intend to tell him someday. This is not some dark, shameful thing we should hide Olsen-san. Come: let's talk.'

Yukio ushered Olsen downstairs where a *Geisha* served them a pre-dinner drink – *maszake* for Shimura, gin and tonic for Olsen. Shimura loosened his neck tie, plonked into a sofa, and was first to speak. The conversation turned, as old mens' do, from the specific to the abstract.

'From your tone tonight, Olsen-san, I sense that you are displeased at the outcome of Project GENAFORM. I can understand that. You have had to "bear the brunt", as you would say, of the inquisitions. Your standing in Washington has been, I can imagine, damaged by this – the spending overruns, American dollars that have been allocated to Shimura Biotech, and even the ethical concerns of lesser, politically motivated, men. But, do not lose sight of what our two great organizations have achieved in Kazuki – the zenith of genetic research. No one else had the vision, the ambition, and the resources to achieve all that we have.'

'All these things you say are true, but the opinions of others are not my concern Yukio. In the end, it is the opinion one has of oneself that must be endured. What you say – that this achievement is ours – I do hold with. We did not design DNA. We simply poked around with it, stuck genes together in a pre-defined pattern. We appropriated God's toolkit. My concern is that we were able to do it. Once it has been done once, shown to be possible, it will be done again, perhaps by lesser – dare I say – unscrupulous men.'

If science has taught us anything it is that there are boundaries we should only cross if we are prepared to accept the new rules, and maybe pay the price. We harnessed the atom, created the atomic bomb, we could not put the genie back in the bottle, and now handling atomic weaponry is something that governs human society's struggles every day. The cause of wars and tensions. The people of your country know this more than most; surely you must feel it too?

I must tell you that I have had many sleepless nights since I heard what Genesys Labs had achieved. Don't mistake me: I don't fear the taunts of others for what we have done, but I do fear the judgement of posterity. Do you remember what Oppenheimer said when the Manhattan project bomb test succeeded?'

Yukio nodded. 'I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds.'

'Yes. Well, my fear is that history will judge us responsible for breaking human evolution, and more.'

'Breaking it?' Yukio shook his head and settled back for a contentious discussion. Yukio cleared his throat and began.

'Do you know what Emmanuel Kant said about mankind?' he asked.

Mark raised an eyebrow.

'Oh yes,' Shimura said, responding to the surprise, 'I've educated myself in the higher studies of philosophy, even the less enlightened western varieties. I found time for it all somewhere between the *yakuza* punishment beatings and the corporate takeovers —' Yukio's idea of light humour was a little creepy — 'Kant described every living organism as both an end and a means. With the discovery of DNA he was proved prophetically right: DNA builds a human being, and with it each human being is an end in its own right, but its DNA also holds within it the plan for the next generation, the means to continue itself and to evolve. And just as that is true of an individual organism — of each and every person — it is also true of mankind as a whole.'

Humanity itself is an end and a means also. Mankind is an end, because we are now at the top of the food chain. We are the dominant species on this world, except perhaps for the more robust and less self-destructive bacteria, but I digress ... Evolution ensures the emergence of the best through natural selection, but natural selection — survival of the fittest — becomes meaningless in a world dominated by one species, does it not?'

The question was rhetorical, so Yukio continued.

'Homo Sapiens has reached its natural end. Evolution no longer applies. But creation is an unfinished entity, and it must continue, adapt, and grow into something new and better. But if natural selection has abandoned us, then there must be some new paradigm for our future if we are not to stagnate, or even revert, as a race. And as Kant says, mankind is also a means, the means to that next step in evolution.

Our Universe produced us — we are the Universe made self-aware. What if the next step in evolution is for the children of that Universe to guide their own evolution? With our knowledge of DNA and genetics, we have been handed the keys to creation; what more proof is needed that we are to guide our own growth and evolution now? We can decide the parameters for the future direction of our species. The Genaform are that next step.'

'Noble sentiments, Shimura-san. Cold sentiments. You speak of evolution in abstract, scientific terms. But the evolution I refer to is more than just the physical evolution of the organism. We evolve as people, as a society. If we evolve away from seeing God's place in evolution, then it is we who play God then.'

'God? Very well. If you choose to express this in divine terms then think of it this way: God made creation in an unfinished state; creation is still going on all around us today. Could it not be part of God's plan that we should be part of that creation, continuing to mould it, to complete it. It is the next step in evolution: to break the cycle. We can now take creation into our own hands, and grow as a species by having to take some of the responsibility for creation onto our own shoulders.'

'I don't know,' Mark replied, 'I personally don't feel qualified to speak for God and what his plans might be. Such genetic manipulations and selections are against the natural order.'

'Natural order?' Shimura scoffed, raising his volume. 'Where has that natural design got us? East attacks west. Democracy no longer provides vision, just flavours of conformity. The prosperous become more so by driving the causes of poverty. Our society is jaded, its spirit spent. That ... is nature's message to us. We need to change our direction. In a creaking world of poverty, disease and dwindling natural resources we can no longer afford the old luxuries of fragmented human ideologies, colliding agendas, and clashing communities. Can we sit by and watch all these things transpire with the voices of the next generation pleading into our ears: "why?"'

'It is human nature,' replied a resigned Olsen under his moustache.

'To destroy ourselves? Then we are in need of revitalisation, a new vision for our future, now more than ever. And the future ... is what we make of it. The Genaform could be that inspiration.'

Olsen scoffed. 'You can't simply change human nature by rebranding it. Why should a "Genaform", built of the same genes, have any less of the fragilities of a human? These are dangerous ideas Shimura-san. Genetic selection. What you espouse is no different than Hitler's Aryan supremacy. It's high-tech eugenics, nothing more. And we know how that ended.'

The problem is: who decides what traits are preferable? Those with either the money or misanthropic motivations to order the parameters of a new person? What will determine the dominant and recessive genes of our race then? Fashion? Physical power? If that gets into the hands of one or a few people, then you have a recipe for a disaster.

Don't forget article 16 of the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights: "The impact of life sciences on future generations, including on their genetic constitution, should be given due regard." Genaform trait selection could put the human genome — our entire gene pool — at risk. It was for such reasons that the IBC issued those guidelines about non-inference

in genetic research. Such research should only be under international supervision and consensus, with checks and balances to ensure we don't destroy the very seed of humanity.

The Genaform themselves might not thank you in future either, for those with means enough to do such a thing raises serious ethical doubts. Would it lead to a new era of slavery? Or at the very least, more discrimination based on a new faction of humanity which, depending on your point of view, could be seen as super- or sub-human. All human conflict stems from our differences in cultures, and in race. The Genaform may become a new outlet through which people will project their fears and prejudices. Do we not have enough difficulties in the world without throwing a new race into the mix?

If this is your dream for all mankind, Shimura-san, then all mankind should have a say in it. A society built on the ideals and opinions of one man never lasts. History is something we are all in together, and something we should all have a say in. Article 10 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and on the Human Genome: "No research or research applications concerning the human genome should prevail over respect for the human rights and human dignity of individuals."

Yukio had smiled to himself after hearing Mark's moralistic tirade. The Olsen he knew had passed into seniority without learning that idealism was the province of youth and always ended in failure or apathy. It always surprised him to see such naïve idealism in the keep of such a worldly man. Such idealism in the face of all his experience with the harsh vagaries of life. Or perhaps it was because of it ... that he saw more than most the importance of such idealism.

'You seem very well briefed on international guidelines lately,' Yukio said.

Olsen bobbed his head in the direction of the sleeping infant upstairs. 'I find of late that I have more reason than most to brief myself on such matters.'

'Indeed, but you are as much an accomplice in the creation of Kazuki as I.'

'Of that, I need no reminder. It is with me every day.'

Olsen took a deep slug of his drink and continued.

'Besides, soon I will need to espouse such guidance to the international community. I have been approached by IBC – they've offered me a place on the committee.'

'Congratulations,' Yukio said. 'They clearly appreciate your moral fibre more than I could.'

'It doesn't bother you, then? In such a role, I will become a protector of the human genome.'

Yukio smiled. 'We are just two men having a philosophical discussion.'

'Fascinating as this intellectual candy may be for us, it is Kazuki who has to live with the consequences. No parents. Not born of love. What will that do to a boy? Everyday I see the criticality of the ethics of this. Do you not see the need for such regulation too?' asked Olsen.

'Friend: I have no intention of crossing the boundaries of international ethics, nor indeed ... of friendship.'

They clinked glasses together.

Yukio continued: 'We know ... you know ... that Genaform technology is now a very real possibility in man's future, so I trust to your wisdom to bring that awareness to the deliberations of the IBC. In time, they will decide, what is to be done about it. Or perhaps, in time, Kazuki will decide. He will be able to speak on behalf of Genaform kind, in a way that no human can. Perhaps you should remember that, and one day give him that voice on an international stage.'

'Perhaps. I hope you are not laying a cruel expectation upon Kazuki. To live with the knowledge that he is alone, expected to be a perfect re-evolution of mankind, and to be the target of fear, rather born out of love. I fear for him.'

'For now Olsen-san, we agree on one thing: that what we have done could be seen as a contravention of international opinion on these things, and could damage both our reputations further. So for now, at least, I think it should remain a secret.'

'Agreed – for now,' Yukio sipped. 'But you still seem worried.'

'I am worried,' said Olsen. 'You posit the future, but my worry is that what we have done in the present will have consequences for all of us. My fear is that none of us will out-live the consequences of what we have done here.'

They were words that echoed from the past to haunt Yukio's present. He missed Mark's sagacity and the rigours of those conversations; he missed his friend. Dead, at the hands of the infant who had lain sleeping in the cot above them, in a room now empty. A house now empty, but for the anonymous *yonkuichi* guards.

A phone warbled around the corner. He overheard the *yonkuichi* talking into it.

'Moshi moshi ... hai!'

The guard marched around the corner to convey the news to Shimura. Before he could speak, Yukio interrogated: 'Kazuki?'

'The company's pilot filed a flight plan out of Sapporo airport. We believe Kazuki requested the flight.'

'A Flight? To where?'

'The destination filed is Paris.'

Before Yukio could comprehend the perplexing jolt of information, he was hit again.

'There is more, Shimura-sama. Your wife has been located.'

Yukio felt a sharp intake of breath.