



First Hello in Tokyo

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Bright morning sunlight washed over the modern concrete buildings of the Tokyo campus as cherry tree leaves gently rustled in the breeze. Ren stood near the main plaza, his backpack tightly clutched in his hands while he stared at the bustling crowd of students. This was his very first week of university life, and a mix of thrilling anticipation and butterflies danced in his stomach. (日本語: 東京のキャンパスに朝の明るい日差しが降り注ぎ、そよ風に桜の葉が揺れていた。レンはリュックサックを強く握りしめ、賑やかな学生の群れを見つめていた。大学生活の最初の週であり、胸の中では期待と緊張が入り混じっていた。)



Everywhere he looked, groups of older students were laughing and chatting easily, making Ren feel completely out of place. He wondered if everyone else had already found their circle while he was still trying to figure out where his classrooms were. Taking a deep breath, he adjusted his bag and reminded himself that it was only the first few days. (日本語: どこを見ても先輩たちが楽しそうにおしゃべりしており、レンはすっかりアウェイな気分になった。教室の場所を探すのに必死な自分とは違い、他の人はすでに友達を作っているのではないかと不安になった。深呼吸をしてバググルを直し、まだ始まったばかりだと言い聞かせた。)



A massive, colorful banner spanned across the central courtyard, announcing the annual university welcome fair. Dozens of brightly decorated club booths lined the walkways, with members waving flyers and calling out invitations to passersby. The sheer energy of the event was overwhelming, yet it offered a glimmer of hope for finding where he might fit in. (日本語: 中央の中庭には、大学のウェルカムフェアを告げる大きなカラフルな横断幕が掲げられていた。通路には色鮮やかな部活のブースが並び、部員たちがチラシを配りながら呼び込みをしていた。イベントの活気に圧倒されつつも、自分が馴染める場所が見つかるかもしれないという希望が湧いてきた。)



Ren wandered slowly past rows of booths representing photography clubs, sports teams, and arts societies. He paused near a particularly lively table filled with handmade pottery, but hesitation kept him from stepping closer to ask questions. It was hard to find the courage to interrupt when everyone seemed so busy and confident. (日本語: レンは写真部、スポーツチーム、アートサークルなどのブースの間をゆっくりと歩いた。手作りの陶芸が並ぶ活気あるテーブルの前で足を止めたが、ためらいが先立ち、近づいて質問することができなかった。誰もが自信に満ちて忙しそうに見える中、声をかける勇気を見つけるのは難しかった。)



While hesitating near a botanical illustration booth, a sudden gust of wind caught a stack of promotional flyers from a neighboring table. The papers fluttered through the air like autumn leaves, and without thinking, Ren dropped to his knees to help catch them before they blew away. Another student crouching nearby also lunged for the papers, and their hands gently collided over a stray postcard. (日本語: 植物画のブースの近くでためらっていると、突然の風で隣のテーブルからチラシの束が舞い上がった。紙が秋の葉のように宙を舞い、レンは飛ばされないように反射的に膝をついた。近くにしゃがんでいた別の学生もチラシを掴もうと手を伸ばし、一枚のポストカードの上で二人の手がそっと触れ合った。)



They both looked up simultaneously, sharing an embarrassed yet amused smile that instantly broke the tension. The other student, whose name tag read Aoi, chuckled softly and thanked Ren for his quick reflexes. Standing up together, they introduced themselves and quickly discovered a mutual love for sketching urban landscapes and nature. (日本語: 二人は同時に顔を見合わせ、気まずさと面白さが入り混じった笑顔を浮かべて緊張が和らいだ。名札に「アオイ」と書かれたその学生は、クスリと笑ってレンの素早い助けに感謝した。一緒に立ち上がり、自己紹介を交わすと、お互いに都市の風景や自然を描くのが好きだという共通の趣味が見つかった。)



Bound by their shared artistic interest, Ren and Aoi decided to explore the remaining booths together as a team. They visited the campus art club display, where they admired intricate watercolor paintings and even tried their hand at a collaborative doodle on a community chalkboard. Walking side by side, Ren no longer felt like an isolated outsider wandering through an unfamiliar maze. (日本語: 共通の興味をきっかけに、レンとアオイは一緒に残りのブースを回ることにした。キャンパスのアート部では複雑な水彩画を鑑賞し、共同の黒板と一緒に落書きもしてみた。並んで歩くうち、レンはもう見慣れない迷路をさまよう孤独なよそ者だと感じなくなっていた。)



While trying out a traditional Japanese calligraphy brush at a cultural society table, Aoi accidentally made a comically wobbly ink stroke that looked more like a dancing octopus. Both students burst into laughter, drawing amused glances from the booth supervisors and completely melting away the last remnants of Ren's nervous awkwardness. It felt wonderful to simply share a genuine moment of joy with a kindred spirit. (日本語: 文化サークルのテーブルで伝統的な書道の筆を試していたとき、アオイがうっかりコミカルに歪んだ線を書いてしまい、それはまるで踊るタコのように見えた。二人は思わず吹き出し、ブースの責任者たちも微笑ましそうに見守る中、レンの緊張はすっかり溶けてしまった。気の合う仲間と心からの笑顔を共有できるのは素晴らしいことだった。)



As the afternoon sun began to cast long golden shadows across the campus grounds, the welcome fair slowly started to wind down. Before parting ways to head to their respective dorms and apartments, Aoi suggested meeting up for lunch at the campus cafeteria the very next day. Ren eagerly agreed, feeling a warm surge of satisfaction as they exchanged friendly waves goodbye. (日本語: 午後の日差しがキャンパスに長い黄金色の影を落とし始め、ウェルカムフェアはそろそろ終わりの時間を迎えようとしていた。それぞれの寮やアパートへ戻る前に、アオイは翌日キャンパスの食堂と一緒に昼食を食べようと提案した。レンは喜んで同意し、友好的に手を振り合いながら、胸の中に温かい充実感を覚えた。)



Walking back toward the train station, Ren looked up at the towering Tokyo skyline with a completely different perspective than he had that morning. The university no longer felt like a cold, intimidating maze, but rather an exciting canvas waiting to be explored. He realized with a gentle smile that all it took to change everything was one small, unexpected hello. (日本語: 駅へ向けて歩きながら、レンは今朝とはまったく違う気持ちでそびえ立つ東京の街並みを見上げた。大学はもはや冷たく威圧的な迷路ではなく、これから探検するのが楽しいなキャンパスに感じられた。すべてを変えるきっかけは、たった一つの小さな、予期せぬ「こんにちは」だったのだと、優しい笑みを浮かべながら彼は気づいた。)