



## Fresh Start

It's typical in this 'A Story A Week' series for me to take some trivial little thing that happened and spin it out into the usual length for one of the stories, but this week it is going to be different. There is nothing 'trivial' about this event. Indeed, there is no event that can be less trivial. I heard about it in an email from my mother in Vancouver who had heard the news first ... "Congratulations! From Great Grandma and Great Grandpa"

I had been half expecting this any day; my daughter Himi had been told by her doctor that her baby - originally predicted to arrive a couple of weeks from now - could be a bit early. And so it turned out; little Alexandru decided it was time to get started on the big adventure, and pushed his way out into the world.

My new grandson Alex has quite an amazing genetic inheritance. I come from the north of England, so my own genes are presumably a mix of Celtic, Scandinavian, and Saxon. Himi's mother is Japanese, and thus carries a good blend of Asian genes. And Alex's father comes from eastern Europe, one of the most genetically tangled-up areas on this planet. So this little baby should have 'U.N.' as his middle initials!

This mix is also reflected in his nationality. As he starts life, he has three nationalities, plus a 'bonus'. He is Canadian, Japanese and Romanian, but as Romania is shortly to become a full member of the European Union (in January), he will thus have access to all the other countries of that region. Later, as a young man travelling around the world, he will be able to carry three passports in his pocket, using whichever one is most convenient for any particular destination.

I wonder what he will think of as his basic nationality? I suppose this will depend on where his family spends most of their time. They intend to live in Canada for the foreseeable future, but also have plans to spend a lot of time in Romania, as the cost of living there is apparently quite low, and they will be able to enjoy a comfortable life there too. My guess is that they won't be spending too much time in Japan, as it is simply too expensive for them to come and stay here.

Perhaps though, when Alex gets a bit older and capable of travelling by himself, he may occasionally come and stay with his grandfather during school vacations. Whether or not he will have any curiosity or interest in his Japanese heritage is of course still to be seen; he may develop a lot of interest, or none at all.

My guess is that he will not feel particularly strong ties to any of his nationalities. My case is similar to his; I have a Canadian passport and a European one (British), and along with my permanent residency here in Japan, this means that I too can live and work anywhere in that group of countries should I choose. But this flexibility is combined with a general feeling of 'rootlessness' stemming from having moved residences so many times when I was young, and has left me without strong emotional ties to any single location.

But this is a 'glass half empty/half full' situation; Alex may feel at home nowhere, or he may feel at home anywhere, the choice is his. At this point, none of us can tell what the future will bring for him. All we do know is that for a young man like him, the world is his oyster; never in human history have young people had so much opportunity, or so many choices.

Congratulations on a good start Alex, and we'll enjoy watching you along your journey!

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