



## An International Triumvirate

Are you a long-time reader of A Story A Week? If so, then when I mention that this is a 'birthday Sunday', you will know what I mean! For newer readers, I should explain that whenever one of my family members' birthdays falls on a Sunday - which is the day that the stories are published each week - then that person becomes the topic, or perhaps I should say 'target', of the story.

In recent years our family has developed a new habit - every summer as many of us as is possible gather in Vancouver for a kind of reunion. We choose Vancouver because my parents live there, and at their age, travel is no longer as easy and casual as it once was. I fly from Japan, and my brother Simon from Germany, but it is my sister Sherry who has the easiest time of it - she strolls down the street a couple of hundred yards, from the home she shares with her husband Darcy.

And yes, it's Sherry's birthday today. I'm the eldest of the three of us; Simon is a couple of years younger, and there was then a gap before my sister came along, so she is around ten years younger than I. For me then, she was a 'kid sister', and to her I was what the Japanese call '*o-nii-chan*', a term that really has no translation in English - if I asked her now to start calling me 'honorable elder brother' she would fall over laughing!

One downside of the gap in our ages, is that at the time I left home for good when I was 20, she was only about 10 years old, so I 'missed out' on all her teen years. When I think of my sister now, I thus see two completely separate people - the little elementary school girl, and the adult woman. Just how the one became 'suddenly' transformed into the other - I have no idea!

It seems she was interested in accounting and financial topics during her school years, and this obviously affected her career choices later, because these days she is working in the casino business as a behind-the-scenes manager. And a couple of times a year or so, whenever she and her husband take a vacation together, where do they like to go? Why, to Vegas of course ... 'professional development' you know!

Back when we were all children, we always had a pet cat in the family, and Sherry has maintained that 'tradition' for herself. I must say though, that her pets do always seem to be a bit 'difficult'; one of them even attacked me when I visited one day. But now that I think of it - and remembering last week's A Story A Week episode with Boots the Cat - perhaps Sherry is simply expecting her cats to earn their keep!

Last summer, during our family get-together, Simon, Sherry and I went out for lunch together one day, and as we sat there at the table preparing to place our order, we realized that this was the first time since we were children that us three siblings had actually sat down for a meal together - just the three of us! Now before you jump to conclusions about this, and criticize us for our lack of 'family togetherness', please remember our living situations: Sherry lives in Vancouver, Simon in Germany, and myself in Tokyo. Looking at the time zones, you can see that it's almost impossible to get farther apart than we all are!

Back in the 'old days', family members who emigrated to far-off countries were pretty much saying 'good-bye' permanently to other members of their family. In our case, it seems our parents brought us up to have a pretty strong dose of independence, so it was perhaps inevitable that ours would end up being such a spread-out family. But the flip side of this is that our times together are never under a sense of obligation or

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duress; my brother and sister are friends of mine. Because of our life choices, we don't see each other very often, but when we do, we just pick up where we left off the year before ...

No, we have no problems ... that is, if you don't count her taste in cats! :-)

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