

Episode THREE

Uncle Jim and Takako were both surprised to hear her name being called. After all, they were in a truck-stop café on a dark and rainy night in the middle of nowhere. They turned around to see who it was, but the man who was approaching was a stranger to both of them. From behind, Takako
5 could feel Jim's fingers dig into her arm.

"I will do the talking. You stay quiet, or else!"

She understood what he meant, and she remained silent when the man arrived.

"Hello there! What a surprise it is to see you here! Of all places, I
10 never expected to see my favorite violinist in the middle of the night somewhere on the other side of the world! But let me explain who I am and how I know this fine young musician."

"Please do", said Jim, somewhat agitated by the loud-talking man.

"I am the western Canadian representative of Yamaha music
15 instruments. I had the pleasure, several months ago, to be in attendance at a concert in Japan. It was the opening of the new violin factory in Hamamatsu, and who do you think was playing her violin there?" The stranger looked at Jim as if he was daring him to guess.

Ah yes! Takako remembered. That had been a special day in her life.
20 She had received news about her scholarship to study in Toronto, *AND* a special financial gift from Yamaha, given to her by the president, Mr. Matsuo. Mr. Matsuo was a great fan of the violin, and she was very honoured by the presentation.

Takako answered him. "Yes, I remember. It was a special concert at
25 the new factory in my hometown. Were you really there, sir?"

"I certainly was! You were very good."

"Thank you."

"Well, this is very interesting, but we are in a bit of a hurry, so if you'll
excuse us, mister, we'll be on our way."

"Of course. Don't let me keep you from your urgent business," the
30 stranger replied, smiling at Jim, almost as if he knew what was going on. The stranger made Jim a bit nervous, but he didn't let on.

Jim escorted Takako out the door of the café. She glanced back, and
saw the stranger looking at her with a smug look on his face. There was
35 nothing she could do, however, to alert the stranger to her plight.

It was raining harder now, so Jim and Takako ran to the car, although
Jim's bad leg slowed him down. Takako made a mental note of this. If she
did try to run away, Jim wouldn't be able to catch her!

Soon they were travelling on the highway once again. Neither spoke.
40 Jim was concentrating on his driving. And he was probably concerned that a salesman at a truck-stop café had identified Takako, and how strangely that man had acted. Takako continued looking out the window, watching

for road signs that would give her a clue to their destination. In the distance Takako thought she could see the border crossing.

45 Just then, Jim turned off the freeway onto an exit that led up into the darkness. He pulled over to the side of the road and stopped.

"You'll have to put this on", he said, pulling out a black ski mask. There were no holes for the eyes.

50 "The place where we're going is secret. To keep it that way, you mustn't know where it is exactly."

Takako reluctantly put on the mask, and everything became blacker than the night already was. Jim started up the car again. Takako could feel when they turned left or right, but she had no idea of how far from the main highway they were. Most of her concentration was on remaining calm. She was tired and frightened, but there was nothing she could do, so she sat quietly, listening to her pounding heart.

60 After what seemed to be at least an hour, Jim turned the car onto a gravel road. Takako knew that the road surface had changed by the sound of small stones rattling against the bottom of the car. Several minutes later Jim slowed, turned into a driveway, and stopped.

"We're here", he said.

Takako wondered where *HERE* was exactly.

65 Jim came around to her side of the car, opened the door, and helped her out into the night air. It had stopped raining, but the air was still humid, and thick with the smell of smoke. Most likely from someone's fireplace, Takako imagined. Even though she still wore the ski mask she still had her senses of smell and hearing.

70 Jim grabbed Takako's violin from the floor of the front seat. "Don't forget this." As he spoke, he put the case in her hands. Takako held it close to her chest, not wanting to let it go. What could he mean by *THAT* statement, she wondered?

75 Jim escorted her across some wet grass, which dampened her toes through her shoes. Takako hated to get her feet wet! They continued through a doorway, along a hallway (she thought), and down some stairs. Takako heard the jingling of some keys, then a lock turn and a door open. Jim gently pushed her into a room. Takako could feel that it was warm and cozy, but she also sensed the presence of another person.

"I'll be back in the morning. Get some sleep. Good night", she heard Jim say as he closed and locked the door behind her.

80 Takako pulled the mask off her head. At first, everything was blurred and her eyes needed to adjust to the light. Just then she heard someone speak.

"Takako? Is that you?"

85 Takako looked around. There, standing on the other side of the room, was Christine!