

Chapter XXXIV

Rendezvous in Tokyo

December 24, 1951 – January 1, 1952

Lunch was over and Alejandro was gathering up their plates when there was a knock at the door.

“Come in.” Sheffield beckoned.

In stepped two sailors in dress blues. After Sheffield invited Ramona and the girls aboard, he had Lieutenant Moncur track down Seaman Carter to round up a couple of the guys in the group and have them report to his wardroom. “You wanted to see us, sir?”

“Yes. Come in. I want you to meet my wife Ramona and our daughters Norma and Janet.”

He looked at Ramona and the girls and continued, “This is Seaman Quinn Goodey from Tremonton, Utah and this is Airman Sedic Orchard from west of Blackfoot, Idaho. They are members of the Serviceman’s Group here aboard the ship. Sedic actually attended Ricks College for a year and was on the wrestling team with Craig.”

As the sailors shook hands with the ladies, Sheffield continued, “They surprised me by showing up on the dock when we pulled in. I need the two of you keep Norma and Janet entertained for two or three hours this afternoon. Here’s ten dollars, treat them and yourselves to a picture show or something here on the base and have them back here by seventeen hundred. I trust that you will be the gentlemen that I know you to be.”

“Yes, sir, Thank you sir.” Looking at the girls, Quinn asked, “May we help you with your coats?”

Before they knew it, Norma and Janet had their coats on and were leaving the wardroom with two handsome young sailors. Sheffield took Ramona by the hand and took her back to his stateroom to pack for his unexpected shore leave. As he sorted through what he wanted to take, they talked about what they could do.

Then it occurred to the two of them about the same time that this was the first time that they had been alone together in more than six months. What happened next was a natural result of that fact. Sheffield was sure that there was some regulation forbidding such a thing aboard a navy ship, but they had done it before.

Meanwhile, Quinn and Sedic initially planned on taking the girls to a matinée, but there wasn’t anything playing that they wanted to see. So they did next best thing and took them to the base recreation center. None of them were sure if this was a date or just what. They got to know each other better while bowling a couple of lanes.

Quinn was nineteen years old enlisted in the Navy rather than being drafted into the Army. After graduating from high school, he worked full time in the family grocery store. Sedic, the larger of the two, was also nineteen years old and as Sheffield indicated, had graduated from Ricks College. He too enlisted

rather than being drafted. Like Craig, they both had their plans for serving missions changed by the war.

By the time they finished the second lane, they were better acquainted and enjoyed each other's company. They avoided pairing up, although Quinn tended to gravitate towards Norma. After bowling, they tried their hands at the arcade games. Sedric dazzled everyone with his skill at pinball. After they each had their turn at the two pinball machines, they moved on to other machines such as the claw grabber in which Janet managed to snag a small stuffed panda bear, the Drive-mobile, and it was guys against girls in foosball.

At one point, a couple of ruffians from another ship who had been playing pool, tried to horn in on the girls. "Why don't you dump these bozos and we'll show you what a good time really is." one of them boasted.

Norma response was, "You're disgusting." Which only encouraged more crudeness.

Before it went any farther, Quinn demanded, "Back off and go find someone else to bully."

"And who's going to make me, you little pipsqueak?"

"I am." Sedric challenged as he turned around revealing his broad shoulders and massive upper body strength. He was bigger than either one of them. "I'd hate to tell Admiral Brason that I had to get ornery while we were looking after his daughters, but I will if have too."

That was enough for the two tough guys. One said to the other, "Come on Joe. Lets blow this joint and go find some real action."

At that, they had to make their way past Sedric, one of them purposely bumped him with his shoulder in one last provocation. Once they were gone, Quinn and Sedric treated the girls to a malted milk at the soda fountain, before trying their hand at some more of the arcade games. Before leaving, they dropped several coins into photo booth. Of the several photo strips, there was one of Norma and Janet, one of Quinn and Sedric, and one of each of the guys with one of the girls, and one last strip of all four of them crowded into the booth.

From the rec center, they strolled back to the ship. When they tried to board, the Officer of the deck refused to allow the girls aboard. Norma explained, "We're Admiral Brason's daughters. Were supposed to meet him at his stateroom at five o'clock. You can call and check."

The officer, a young Lieutenant junior grade, told them to wait where they were as he stepped over to the telephone. A moment later, he returned and granted them permission to come aboard.

Quinn and Sedric escorted them back to the admiral's suite and returned the girls to their parents. Sheffield thanked them and dismissed them to go about the rest of their afternoon. While telling them about their afternoon, including their run in with the bullies, Seaman Mantequillas informed them that dinner would be served at seventeen thirty, right on schedule.

After washing up, they returned to the wardroom. Alejandro set before them a pork roast, backed potatoes, and a bowl of mixed vegetables, to be served family style. Before leaving the room, he informed them that he had a cheery pie fresh from the ship's bakery and carton of ice cream. They talked over dinner just as they did at home. For Sheffield, he was glad that they had made the effort to come all that way to spend Christmas with him. After desert, Sheffield took them down to the hangar deck for the show.

As soon as the ship had docked, men began setting up the stage and filled the hangar with a few thousand folding chairs that had to be brought aboard. The sound system and lighting all had to be set up as well. During the afternoon the entertainers came aboard and were given two spare staterooms as their dressing rooms.

Sheffield took his family to meet Mr. Kaye and Maxene and LaVerne Andrews while they were rehearsing their routines for the show. They found Danny Kaye every bite the funny man that he was on the radio and in the movies. He engaged them in conversation and asked them to tell him a little about them.

When Norma told him that she was majoring in music education, he asked, "What instrument do you play."

"The piano."

"Really, I was going to ask for a volunteer from the audience to accompany everyone in a round of Christmas carols during the intermission. Would you be up to it?"

"I suppose I could do that. Only if my mother is the chorister."

Danny looked at Ramona and asked, "How about it?"

Ramona agreed.

Likewise they had a delightful visit with the Andrews Sisters. This was their first tour since the much publicized break up with their younger sister, Patty, earlier in the year.

Sheffield and his family had front row seats directly in front of the stage. Captain Lawrence, the Reprisal's commanding officer, sat next to them. The first two rows was filled with several other senior officers, both from the ship and the base. The hangar began to fill up with sailors, soldiers, marines, and airman from the military installations around Tokyo. There were several women and even a few children among the audience. Not very many of the Reprisal's crew were in attendance as most of them left the ship as soon as it docked to go liberty after six weeks at sea.

Commander Trestlewood, the Reprisal's executive officer, was the master of ceremonies. "On behalf of Captain Stuart Lawrence, the commanding officer and Admiral Sheffield Brason, the commander of Carrier Division One, who is accompanied by his family tonight, welcome aboard the Reprisal for what promises to be the bright spot of the Christmas season so far from home. We have a great show lined up tonight. You have already heard form The Uptown Ensemble all the way from Los Angeles, California who

are providing tonight's music. Now it's my privilege to introduce the one and only Mr. Danny Kaye and the fabulous Andrews Sisters."

The stage lights came on, illuminating the stars of the show, the orchestra started up, and the show began with "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas". For the next fifty minutes they performed a number of current popular hits as well as songs from Broadway and old familiar tunes. The Andrews Sisters performed their recent hit "Sparrow in the Treetop" with Danny Kaye singing the part performed by Bing Crosby in the recording.

Danny Kaye was a versatile actor, singer, dancer, and comedian best known for his slapstick comedy, quirky pantomimes, and rapid-fire nonsense songs. At one point he launched into a hilarious one-man comedy act. The last number of the first half featured a vaudeville style tap dance routine. He announced that the cane he used as a prop was missing. He looked over the audience and went down off the stage and up to Sheffield on the front row and asked, "May I borrow this for a moment." He snatched his cane and returned to the stage to do the number.

When it was over, he asked for Sheffield and his family to join them on stage. With them standing beside him he said, "Thanks for the use of your cane, Admiral." and gave it back to him. He continued, "I just met Admiral Brason and his family late this afternoon. His wife and daughters flew all the way from Roanoke, Virginia just to spend Christmas with him. Isn't that sweet? I don't know if you know this or not. I just found out myself. He was the first Captain of this ship, and has written a book about it. Not only that but one episode of his book is currently being made into motion picture."

The audience applauded.

Mr. Kaye continued, "This is his daughter Norma who is a music education major and a talented pianist. While we take a about a twenty minute break, she is going to play while Mrs. Brason leads you in some Christmas carols."

Sheffield and Janet returned to their seats and the entertainers and the orchestra left the stage. Norma sat down at the piano and Ramona announced the first song. For the next fifteen minutes or so they sang song after song, some traditional carols and some popular holiday hits. They did one or two more while the stage was being set up for the second half of the show. When they were through, Mr. Kaye stepped to the microphone and addressed the audience, "That sounded marvelous. You don't need us." He then added, "Thank you Mrs. Brason and Norma. How about a round of applause for them."

Ramona and Norma left the stage as the audience clapped while they returned to their seats.

The second half of the show was devoted to Christmas type numbers, both musical and comedy. When the show was over, they received a standing ovation and came back for an encore in which they invited the audience to join them in singing Silent Night.

As soon as the show was over and people began leaving the ship, Danny Kaye, the Andrews Sisters, and the orchestra began packing their things. They had performed in Okinawa that morning and had to fly to Seoul for two more shows on Christmas day.

Sheffield called for a car to meet them on the dock, which took he and his family to the hotel in downtown Tokyo to spend Christmas Eve together..

The next day was Christmas. Christmas isn't a recognized holiday in Japan, however the Japanese celebrate the commercial aspect of Christmas on a scaled down basis with Christmas trees, their own version of Santa Claus, and gift giving.

Ramona brought a one gift each for Sheffield, Norman, and Janet. The rest of what she had already got would wait until they got home. The girls each brought one small gift for everyone else as well. The first thing in the morning they opened their gifts.

After everything that had been brought had been opened, Sheffield said to Ramona, "I have something for you too. When I got it last time we were in port, I had no idea that you would be here for Christmas. My plan was to give it to you when I came home." He opened his suitcase and retrieved a flat box that he had stashed under the rest of his clothes and handed it to her. "Merry Christmas Sweetheart."

She excitedly opened it and held it up in front of her to show the girls. She gasped, "Oh, Babe. Its a kimono. It's just beautiful. I love it." She put it down and threw her arms around his neck and gave him a big kiss.

"I don't have anything for you girls yet, but the shop where I bought this isn't very far from here. After breakfast, I'd like to take you there and get one for each of you, too. Since it's not a holiday here, they'll be open."

The girls simultaneously threw their arms around his neck and each kissed him on either cheek.

Once the gift giving was over, they got ready for the day, including a trip to the sentō and breakfast. As promised, Sheffield took them to the shop and let each of the girls pick out a kimono. After trying on a few, they each selected the one they liked. In addition to their kimonos, they also got a pair of zōri, which are traditional Japanese sandals, a hair ornament called a kanzashi, and a hand fan.

Then they looked around the downtown business district for a while. Ramona bought a porcelain doll about fifteen inches tall, all decked out in a kimono, elaborate headdress, and a parasol over her shoulder to take home and display as a souvenir of their trip to Japan.

After shopping, they went back to the hotel to leave off the things that they had just bought and made their way to the Mission Home for Lieutenant Kirk's baptism. Since Sheffield was performing the baptism, he had to be there a little early in order to change his clothes. Dan had just arrived himself. Elder Rowan and his companion were there early and had taken care of preparing the font.

Wade was surprised when he saw Ramona, Norma, and Janet show up. Ramona wanted to give him a motherly hug, but refrained and simply shook his hand at arms length.

When Norma shook his hand and looked into his eyes, she felt something strange. It was a wonderful feeling. The kind of feeling that she had hoped would have emanated from Read. Right then she realized that she had placed her hopes on the wrong Rowan. Wade was four years older than her and when he graduated from High School, she had just completed the eighth grade. She had been around him when she went over to see Jolene, but she hadn't really paid much attention to him, until just then. She didn't know if he felt it too, or not. He would be home in a couple of weeks and she determined to change her strategy and see if she could get him to notice her and quit wasting her time on Read.

Elder Rowan needed to put a service together and asked Norma to play the piano and Ramona to conduct the music. He told them that he had selected "Come Follow Me" as the opening hymn and "I stand All Amazed" as the closing. He already had Seaman Carter giving a short talk on baptism and Fireman Arlo Gummow giving a short talk on the gift of the Holy Ghost.

While Sheffield and Daniel were changing, the rest of the members of the Reprisal's Serviceman's Group began stringing in, including Quinn and Sedric. Quinn immediately gravitated toward Norma as he did the day before at the rec center. While Quinn was talking to Norma, Elder Rowan approached and asked Quinn and Sedric to be the witnesses.

Norma excused herself and sat down at the piano and began playing some prelude music. The meeting was being held in the parlor of the mansion house that served as the mission home. It was in that same parlor were the Serviceman's Branch met.

Before long, Sheffield and Daniel came in, dressed in their white baptismal clothes and sat on the front row. That was Elder Rowan's cue to start the meeting. After Seaman Carter's talk, they all went out into the garden behind the mansion where what used to be a private open air sentō, complete with a boiler, that now served as a baptismal font.

The temperature was about forty five degrees, but the water was good and warm as Sheffield stepped down into the font. He then reached out his hand and leas Lieutenant Kirk into the font. With his right hand to the square, he uttered the words of the baptismal prayer and laid Daniel under the water. Both Seaman Goodey and Airman Orchard nodded their heads, indicating that the ordinance had been performed properly.

After emerging from the water, they were handed towels to wrap up in and went back inside to change back into their uniforms. While everyone waited, Norma softly played some hymns on the piano. When Sheffield and Daniel returned, the service resumed. When it came time for the confirmation, Sheffield was asked to stand in along with Seaman Carter, Elder Rowan, and his companion as Wade confirmed him

a member of the church.

At the conclusion of meeting, President Mauss, the mission president, made a few brief remarks. He invited the Brasons and the Reprisal Serviceman's group to stay and join them for Christmas dinner. An invitation which was graciously accepted by all.

There was a little time before dinner was served so everyone mingled. During that time other missionaries from around Tokyo began arriving. When it was time to be seated, Quinn made it a point to be directly across the table from Norma. All the while he engaged her in conversation, she was watching Elder Rowan out of the corner of her eye.

Dinner was a full course American style Christmas dinner, complete with ham, mashed potatoes and gravy, cranberry sauce, and the works. Sister Mauss had to supervise their Japanese cook in preparing it American style. As a rule, the missionaries were encouraged to immerse themselves in the Japanese customs, but on Christmas, they deserved a taste of home. For many of them, this was their first Christmas in the mission field, but after two and a half years, this was Wade's third. He just missed being home for Christmas by two weeks.

Quinn got Norma's full attention when he asked her to go out with him sometime before they had to go back home. The query also got Sheffield's attention as well. He glanced at Norma and winked his encouragement for her to accept the offer.

Norma accepted.

Wanting in on it too, Seducer hesitantly suggested a double date and asked Janet out. She looked at her folks and begged, "Please? After all, I'll be sixteen in less than a month."

"Well," Sheffield replied, "you will be in good company and it is a double date, I don't see why not."

Ramona whispered to Sheffield, "I'm not so sure. After all he is three years older than her."

Sheffield whispered back, "It's not like this is going to become a serious relationship. After you go home, she'll never see him again. Besides. It will give us some time alone."

"I see what you mean." She whispered back. "After all, he did come to their defense at the rec center."

"It's alright with me too, Janet." She said.

"Thanks Mom, thanks Dad." Janet beamed at prospect of her first real date.

"What do you have in mind, Quinn?"

"Well sir, there's an ice skating rink not far from your hotel."

"That sounds fun." Janet responded.

They arranged for them to meet them at the hotel on Friday evening. Then Norma promptly returned her attention to Wade.

The Brasons spent the rest of the afternoon at the mission home. It was a rare opportunity for him to socialize with the young men in the group, who looked to him as father figure. Ramona got acquainted with them as well. Janet, Norma and some of the sailors, elders, and lady missionaries played a game of charades, and other parlor games.

Sheffield and Ramona had the opportunity to talk to Elder Rowan. Even though he only had two weeks left, he hadn't really thought about what he wanted to do when he got home. He told them a little about his mission and some of the successes that he had, mostly with American servicemen. He said the Japanese were slow to want to listen and even slower to accept what they taught. He said that President Mauss had told them that one day in the next decade or two, that that would change and and hundreds if not thousands would embrace the gospel. Sheffield and Ramona also visited with President and Sister Mauss and got better acquainted with them.

Later that evening, the Brasons returned to their hotel. For the rest of the week they took in the sites in and around Tokyo. Since it was winter none of the gardens had much to offer and many of the attractions that had been damaged during the war still hadn't reopened. Even at that, there were still plenty of shrines, temples, and museums to visit. One day they rode the train to Mount Fujiyama, about a hundred kilometers southwest of Tokyo.

On Friday, they were sure to be back at the hotel in time for the girls to get ready for their dates. Quinn and Sedric arrived right on time at six o'clock. The gentlemen that they were, they helped them on with their coats. As they left, Quinn announced, "We'll have them back by twenty three hundred, Sir."

Their first stop was a favorite hang out of the American servicemen. It was a diner ran by an American ex-GI who catered especially to the American serviceman, serving hamburgers and hot dogs, french fries and onion rings, milkshakes and malts, and soda of every kind. There was even a juke box with all of the latest records from home and small dance floor.

After treating them to something to eat, they took them to the skating rink, as promised. Ice skating was popular in Japan and the rink was filled with families and couples, a few of them American. Norma and Janet had gone ice skating before, but being the more athletic of the two, Janet was much better at it.

That gave Quinn a the opportunity hold Norma's hand and help steady her on the ice. Norma forgot all about Read Rowan and even her plans of wooing Wade and enjoyed the attention that Quinn was giving her. He really was a nice guy. He told her about himself, his family and his plans and dreams. He was the type of guy that she could go for.

Sedric was sensitive to the fact that Janet was three years younger than him and that this was her first real date, if you don't count the rec center. Being a little shy and reserved himself, he treated more like he would his sister. That made Janet much more comfortable anyway.

When thy tired of skating, there was still time to take in a movie. With all of the Americans in Tokyo, there was a lot for them to choose from that made them feel at home. There were a number of theaters that specialized in all of the latest movies from the United States. Even though they were there to cater to the Americans, the Japanese had a fascination with American movies. Sedic was into science fiction and convinced the rest of them to see "The Day the Earth Stood Still". All of this was withing walking distance of the hotel.

Meanwhile, Sheffield and Ramona had the evening to themselves. For starters, they went out to dinner. As for the rest of the evening, they went back to their room to really take advantage of the time that they had alone, together. . . .

They had gotten ready for bed and were laying in bed talking when the girls came in. Just like at home, they piled onto the bed and told all about their evening out.

On Sunday they attended sacrament meeting in the Serviceman's Branch at the mission home. As they came in the door, Elder Rowan and his companion were greeting people and shaking their hands. As at the baptism, when Norma shook his hand, she felt a jolt of electricity. Colonel Fleetwood, the branch president and his wife also greeted them. Sister Fleetwood was glad to see some other American women there and took a moment to visit with them.

Before the meeting started, they found an empty row and sat down. Quinn and Sedic saw them and came and sat next to Norma and Janet. But with Elder Rowan sitting on the stand, Norma's attention was riveted on him. In all there were about forty or so people there, including the group from the Reprisal. During the business portion of the meeting, President Fleetwood presented Lieutenant Kirk to be ordained a Priest in the Aaronic Priesthood.

The concluding speaker of the meeting was Elder Rowan, since it was his last Sunday in the mission field. The next Sunday he would be on his way home. He was scheduled to fly out on Saturday and report to Church headquarters in Salt Lake City on Monday before going home to Roanoke. In addition to delivering his talk, he had an opportunity to say goodbye to the mission and bear his testimony.

Norma listened intently to his every word. Not only was she touched by the spirit about his message, but she also found herself completely infatuated with him. At the same time, Quinn sat next to her, completely infatuated with her.

After the meeting, the Brasons visited with Wade for moment and wished him a safe trip home. He had to leave for an appointment but said to Ramona, and the girls, "I'll see you when I get home."

"I sure hope so." Norma blurted without thinking as she shook his hand.

After Elder Rowan and his companion left, Daniel asked Sheffield to ordain him. The members of the Reprisal group stayed around for the ordination. Then President and Sister Mauss invited the Brasons to

stay for dinner. As they were leaving, Quinn and Sedric said goodbye to Norma and Janet.

“You know where to write to us, but can I have your address?” Quinn asked as he handed a slip of paper and a pen to Norma.

She wrote it down for him and handed it back.

Quinn went to shake her hand, but she obliged him with a hug. “Thanks for the good time you've shown me.” As she let go she added, “Good luck and take care of yourself.”

Janet settled for a handshake from Sedric as they said goodbye.

After dinner with the Mausses, they went back to the hotel to turn in early. The next day was the first leg of the trip home.

After breakfast on Monday morning, they checked out of the hotel and rode the train to the Haneda Air Force Base to catch their flight. Sheffield stayed with them as they checked in and went to the gate to await the call to board. It gave him just that much more time with them, not knowing when he'd actually see them again. Having them there with him for Christmas was almost as good as going home for the holidays.

The call to board was announced and their time together was over. He took Norma into his arms as said goodbye and kissed her on the cheek. Likewise he had a hug, a goodbye, and kiss on the cheek for Janet. And last of all, a longer hug and kiss for Ramona. When he let go, he walked out onto the tarmac with them.

They turned and waved one last goodbye as they started up the boarding ladder. Sheffield watched until they disappeared through the hatch into the fuselage of the giant Boeing 377. From there he went to where he could watch the plane take off. Once in their seats, they were on the wrong side of the plane to look out the window for one more glimpse of Sheffield. They settled in and waited for the plane to take off and the long flight to Honolulu. The rendezvous in Tokyo had come to an end.

The plane took off from the Haneda Air Force Base at 8:55 a.m. on Monday December 31st. Eleven and a half hours later, after crossing several time zones and the International Dateline, it landed in Honolulu. It was only 11:25 a.m. the same day, as if they had gone back in time seven hours and twenty five minutes.

There was a two and half hour lay over in Honolulu before leaving aboard an American Airlines DC-6 at two o'clock in the afternoon. After a lay over in San Francisco, they watched the new year come in twice while flying cross country and landed in Washington D.C. forty five minutes before sunrise. After one more lay over, Ramona, Norma, and Janet arrived back in Roanoke just before eleven o'clock in the morning on New Year's Day.

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Full time missionaries returning from missions reported to and were released by general authorities until March 25, 1953.