

Chapter III

Back to School

September 9, 1953 – November 21, 1953

Wednesday was the first day of school for the 1953 – 1954 school year. For Janet and Takara, it was the first day of their senior year at Jefferson High School. For Norma, it was her junior year at Hollins. Craig began his senior year at Virginia Tech after taking a year off while on active duty, and for Wade, it was his senior year at Roanoke College. They weren't the only ones going back to school. After two years of active duty, Sheffield was going back as well.

It was a scramble that morning in the Brason house. With everyone getting ready to go different directions at different times the problem of transportation arose. The problem had been solved while Sheffield was away, but now there was a shortage of vehicles.

Janet and Takara were the first out the door as they had to be at the meetinghouse at six forty five for early morning seminary. They left the house at six thirty five in the old 1941 Ford Super Deluxe Coupe that she and Norma shared. Takara expressed an interest in attending. For one, she wanted to be with her new friends. After attending church on Sunday her curiosity had been peaked. Besides, it was only practical since they had to be at school at eight.

Norma didn't have to be to school until eight. It took her twenty minutes to get there, so she left at seven thirty. She took Ramona's car. Sheffield's first class wasn't until nine, but that day the class periods had been shortened by ten minutes to allow for an assembly between second and third periods. He left the house in the old pickup at eight fifteen to be there by eight thirty. That left Ramona with the Roadmaster to take to attend to her business.

As Sheffield stood to begin his first class of the day, it was as if he had never been away from it. He began the first day as he always did, by introducing himself and the subject, followed by getting to know his students. Both Janet and Takara were in his government class, only during different periods. In addition, he had Janet's friends Olivia and Beverly and several others from the branch.

After second period, Sheffield migrated to the auditorium for the assembly. Mr. Gossely, the new principal, welcomed the students and faculty back to school for the new year. He introduced himself and the faculty and staff members who were new to Jefferson High, which included Coach Warfman. As he called their name, he each one stand to be recognized. Then he had Sheffield stand to be recognized and welcomed him back after a two year leave of absence, acknowledging that he had been on active duty with the Navy, having served a tour of duty in Korea. His reputation had not been diminished by his absence.

Mr. Gossely next introduced the two foreign exchange students. First he had Takara Yamashita, a senior from Nagoya, Japan stand up to be recognized. She was followed by Bianca Oliveira, a junior from São Paulo, Brazil. The rest of the assembly was an overview of the coming year which included special

events, the various clubs, organizations, and athletic teams. The assembly concluded with a reminder of school policy and rules.

During the rest of the day, Sheffield conducted his other two class periods and used his preparation hour to make one last review of the roster of names of those signed up wrestling tryouts. He recolored some of the names of the seniors since they were on the junior varsity team the last year that he coached. Since he didn't know them personally, he had to rely on their individual records to form his impression of each one.

After school, he and Coach Warfman met with the team hopefuls to get to know them. He discussed the tryout period and what it would take to make the team. For those who would make the team, he laid out the rules of conduct that they would have to adhere to in order to remain on the team. These included academic performance, attendance, and personal conduct which included no swearing, smoking, drinking, bullying, and no sexual activity. If anyone was unwilling to follow the rules, they were invited not to return the next day when the tryouts got underway.

When Sheffield came home after wrestling practice, Janet and Takara were already home. Takara had to wait for Janet while she met with the girls track team. He asked each about their day. Takara felt overwhelmed by the size of the school and all of the students. The school at the orphanage was much smaller with maybe two hundred students of all ages. If it hadn't been for Janet, Olivia, Beverly, and her new friends from church she would have been completely lost.

When Norma got home a little later, he asked her, "How much money do you have saved up?"

"About twenty one hundred dollars. Why?"

"What would you say to taking some money, your mom and I will match it and go find a decent car for you."

"I'd be willing to do that." she said excitedly.

"What brought this on, Babe?" Ramona asked.

"We just have too many people going too many directions and there aren't enough vehicles to go around. I don't mind driving the old pickup, but its pretty dirty and I messed up my nice clothes."

"I suppose your right." Ramona agreed. "What do you think, Norma."

"Yeah! I think its a great idea."

"Me too. Janet chimed in. Then I get the old Ford to myself."

"Alright then, Norma. On Saturday, lets you and me go car shopping." Sheffield concluded. "I suppose we can get by with what we have for the rest of the week."

Now that school was back in session, Janet somewhat reluctantly resumed her piano lessons. Takara had learned to play the piano from the missionaries at the orphanage and wanted to know if she too

could take piano lessons so she could better develop her talent. Ramona thought it would be great and arranged for Janet's teacher to take her on too. That was just enough to encourage Janet to take it more seriously. She had always struggled with the piano, but had stuck with it despite wanting to quit a time or two.

Being a senior brought Janet much more in focus with her future plans. Graduating from high school and going to college had always seemed like something in the distant future. But now she realized that she was standing on the doorstep. Now that she had to take it seriously, she had to decide what she was going to do. She was thinking about majoring in English with an emphasis on writing. Having been inspired by Sheffield's books, she had taken a composition class as a junior which taught her how to express herself in writing. As a senior, she was taking an advanced composition class to further develop her skills and abilities.

In addition, she read everything she could get her hands on. Her library was growing as she kept buying books at the BookEnd with her employee discount. She would go through a book in a week or ten days, depending on how long the book was and how much time she had to read.

She had initially been inclined to do like Norma and live at home and attend Hollins. Her friend Beverly Rowan had a big influence in that decision. Like her brothers Wade and Reid and now her sister Regena, she planned on attending Ricks College and live with her grandparents. Olivia Furness was going with her and they talked Janet into coming with them and they could all be roommates.

She remembered how much Craig and Edith had enjoyed Ricks College and the thought of moving away from home seemed like an adventure. So on Friday, she announced her decision to Sheffield and Ramona. It was obvious that she had given it a lot of thought. She hoped to get a track scholarship to help cover the cost, even though she had enough money in the trust fund that Samantha had set aside for her. Sheffield and Ramona were supportive of her decision and thought it would be a good experience for her. Besides, they wanted to have an excuse to go out west again.

Takara also had to decide what she was going to do about college. She wanted to stay in the United States and dreaded the idea of having to go back to Japan. The problem was, being an orphan, she had no money. She saw no future for herself beyond her senior year and it weighed heavy on her mind because after graduating from high school she would have to go back to Japan to fend for herself.

Sheffield accompanied her to the guidance counselor to see what help there might be for her to go to college. It turned out that there were a number of scholarships and grants available for foreign students. She was given a stack of various forms to take home to fill out and send in. It seemed overwhelming but at least there was hope.

As promised, on Saturday Sheffield took Norma car shopping. During the intervening time he had called around on some classified ads in the newspaper and found a couple cars that sounded like they would do. They also planned to go around to some of the used car lots. The first car they looked at obviously wouldn't do.

But Norma fell in love the other car in the classified ads. It was blue 1949 Studebaker Champion DeLuxe Starlight Coupe. The thing that was unique about this car was the rear window. Unlike other two-



door sedans that had the backseat side windows separated from the rear window by the roof supports, this one had a rounded roof at the rear with a wraparound window that provided a panoramic effect, similar to a railroad observation car. The curved window was achieved with four fixed panels of glass.

The roof was supported by two wide pillars immediately behind the doors and in front of the wraparound back window.

Sheffield and Norma took it for a test drive to get a feel for it. Norman liked the way it looked. It had been taken care of, although the paint was beginning to fade. It had 169.9 cubic inch six cylinder engine. Norma didn't mind that it had a three speed manual transmission as she had leaned to drive in the old pickup and drove the old Ford so she knew how to use a clutch. Unlike the newer models from 1950 onward, it didn't have the odd looking bullet nose. The best part was that the owner was only asking eight hundred dollars.

After the test drive, Norma knew that it was the car that she wanted. Sheffield felt it would be a good car for her. It was obviously in good shape. He agreed to split the cost with her. But before making out the check, he negotiated the price down by one hundred dollars, after all the 1954 models were coming out making it a five year old car.

Sheffield wrote out a check for seven hundred dollars and Norma agreed to pay him back the three hundred and fifty dollars on Monday when she could go to the bank. Norma drove home in her very own car happy as can be. On the way home, she went out of her way to go out to the Rowan Ranch to show it to Wade.

On Sunday, Takara went to church with the Brasons again. She began to feel herself drawn to it. In seminary they were studying church history and she had learned about the First Vision and the visitation of the Angel Moroni. She found them to be incredible, fascinating occurrences, but more than that she was impressed by the testimony that Brother Fielding bore and how it made her feel. That day in Sunday School and Sacrament Meeting, she couldn't help but have that same feeling. It was a wonderful feeling that she

had never felt before until coming to live with the Brasons.

Norma used a break between her classes on Monday to to get the money from the bank for her car. She also stopped by the court house to get it licensed. A telephone call from Ramona to their insurance agent got it added to their policy. She felt a new sense of freedom as she drove to school in her very own car. Janet was equally pleased to have the old green Ford all to herself. Most of all, Sheffield was happy to drive his Roadmaster to school and not have to get his clothes dirty form the old pickup.

By the second week of school, Takara was beginning to know her way around and seemed to have settled in. On Tuesday Janet had to work at the BookEnd for a couple of hours after track tryouts, so Tarka did some of her homework while waiting for Sheffield to be finished with wrestling practice and rode home with him.

On the drive home he asked her how she was doing and if everything was going well. She couldn't have been more pleased, but there was one thing she was worried about. "Sheffield," she asked, "will you teach me to drive so I can get a job and earn some spending money."

"The way I understand it, your student visa doesn't permit you to work in the United States. If it's spending money you want let me see if I can find some chores or something for you."

"Thank you, Sheffield."

"So you want to learn to drive. Have you ever driven before?"

"Not at all."

"Well then we'll have to do something about that won't we. We have Mutual tonight so how about tomorrow after school?"

"That will be great, thank you."

"So are you going to Mutual with Janet tonight?"

"Oh yes. Janet told me all about it. Its a big party tonight."

"I guess you can call it that. We call it a social, but yeah I guess it is going to be a party."

That evening Sheffield mentioned to Ramona that Takara wanted to earn a little spending money. Ramona put on her Relief Society President hat and said, "I just might know of something she can do. Let me make some phone calls and I'll see what I can come up with."

The next evening after school, Takara had her first driving lesson. Sheffield stated her out as he had all of the other kids, beginning with Sandy. Using the old Ford, he had her sit behind the wheel while he explained all of the controls to her. When he felt she understood everything by explaining them back to him, he had her turn on the key and press the starter knob on the floor board. As the engine tuned over, he had her pump the accelerator once. A big smile came across her face as the motor came to life.

"Now do you remember which one is the clutch?"

"Uh, the one on the left?"

"That's right. Put your left foot on it and push down on it. Now where's second gear?"

"To the left and down."

"That's right. Go ahead and put it in gear and slowly let your foot off the clutch."

Takara laughed as the car began moving forward through the pasture.

"Press down a little on the accelerator to go a little faster. For now I just want you to get the feel for steering."

They drove around the pasture in circles, squares, and figure eights. From time to time he had her stop and start again, particularly when one of the cows was in the way. After about twenty minutes he told her, "Very good for your first time. Next time we'll work on shifting gears."

The next day during their lunch hour, he took her to get a learner's permit. Since she was already eighteen there weren't the restrictions that were placed on younger beginning drivers. All she had to do was to pass the driving test and the written exam, when she was ready.

At supper that night Ramona said to Takara, "I might have found a way for you to earn some spending money. Are you good with children?"

"Oh yes," she beamed. "Being one of the older girls at the orphanage, my job was to help look after the younger children."

"Perfect. Do you remember meeting Sister Cooke at church? She's the short lady with the black hair and the wire rim glasses."

"Oh yes. Sister Cooke. I remember her."

"Well she has three children all in grade school and no husband. When they get home from school at three, the ten year old tries to look after the other two until she gets home from work at five. Usually things are such a disaster when she gets home that she has to spend a couple of hours to clean up their mess. The little ones just won't listen to the older one. Boys don't make very good baby sitters anyway."

"I can be a tough cookie if I need to be. Some of the younger children at the orphanage wouldn't be good for anyone else, but me."

"Would you be willing to take on the challenge? They just live a couple of blocks from the high school, you could walk there, watch the kids and Sheffield could pick you up when he's finished with wrestling practice. Before you say yes, why don't we go pay them a visit after supper."

After supper, Ramona and Takara went into town to see Sister Cooke. Her children, six year old Mandy, eight year old Christina, and ten year old Benny took a liking to her right off.

"They really are good kids," Sister Cooke exclaimed, "They just need to have some responsible supervision. What do you think, Takara? Are you willing to give it a try and see how it goes. I'll give you ten

cents an hour per child, that's sixty cents a day or three dollars a week. What do you say?"

After consulting with Ramona, Takara agreed.

The next day after school, she walked over to the Cookes when she got out of school at three o'clock. She got there just as the Cooke children were getting home. She helped them fix an after school snack and clean up. That was where the disaster usually started. Then she kept them entertained with games and stories. Before they could watch cartoons at four thirty, she helped them put away what they had been playing with. That's where she had to be a bit of a tough cookie. A little supervision was all they needed. When Sister Cooke got home, she couldn't believe the difference it made. She could concentrate on fixing supper instead of straightening things up after a hard day at work.

Sheffield arrived to pick up Takara about the same time and as she was about to leave, all three children begged her to come back the next day. Takara agreed and had the job she wanted and a little spending money.

Ramona was finding it more difficult to sell the house that she had listed. Ever since the war ended the economy had slowed down and was formally in another recession. As during the last recession she had to sit back and wait for it to pass until it picked up again. She decided to rent out the house instead of selling it. Finding a renter didn't take very long as there were plenty of people who needed a place to live but weren't in a position to buy. For the duration she would have to rely on her rentals for a return on her investment. That left her wondering what to do with her time.

Ironically, on the fourth Tuesday in September, out of the blue she received a call from Hollins University. They still had her resume and application on file from when she had applied to teach nursing. They were in a bind and needed a health teacher and they needed one quickly. The woman who had been teaching the class was abruptly dismissed for what they called "inappropriate personal behavior", whatever that meant. They asked her if she would be available.

She told them that she was and agreed to come in and talk with them that very day. There were only four classes on Monday and Wednesday so it didn't involve a lot of time, and it kept Thursday free for her responsibilities with the Relief Society. The money they offered her wasn't bad for the amount of time involved. The money really didn't matter that much. She had enjoyed teaching Sheffield's government class while he was gone and besides, health fit in with her nursing background.

They were desperate and pushing for an on the spot decision. She asked if she could look at the text book and the classroom first. It was a reasonable request and they agreed to give her a little time. The classroom had all of the things that she would need and the textbook was fairly up to date, being a couple of years old. She had one question for them, "How much latitude do I have?" She didn't want someone telling

her what she had to do.

“As long as you stay pretty close to the text book, you can do pretty much anything you like. After all you're more qualified than most of our instructors.” they said in reference to her masters degree and all of her experience from the Navy.

Romona sensed the same reservations that she had felt from them when she first contacted them. At that time the department head was afraid that Ramona would end up with the job. She let them know wasn't really interested in a full time position, which put them at ease and they offered her the job as an adjunct professor.

“Can I call my husband?” she asked. “I want to discuss it with him.”

“Certainly. You can use my telephone. I need to step out for a minute and attend to another matter.”

It happened to be during Sheffield's preparation hour and she found him in his office at school. She told him about the opportunity and that she was inclined to tell them that she would take the job. Naturally, Sheffield told her that whatever she wanted to do was fine with him.

When she hung up, the interview continued as Ramona wanted a little more information. One of her questions was, “When do I start?”

“Tomorrow would be great. Don't worry, here's the lesson plan. You can use it until you come up with your own.”

Ramona took a deep breath and agreed. She took the text book and the lesson plan and was shown to the office where she had to provide some information and sign a few papers. By the time she was done, it was the end of the last class.

As she was leaving, she ran into Norma. “What are you doing here, Mom?” she asked with surprise.

Ramona told her all about it as they walked out to the parking lot together.

The next day she taught her class for the first time and found it quite enjoyable. The young ladies at Hollins were much more mature than high school students. Being a girls only school, the course was geared more to women's health issues, which was a nice change from dealing strictly with men during her career in the Navy.

At the end of that week, the tryout period was over and Sheffield and Coach Warfman had selected the team and posted the roster. Those who didn't make the cut were thanked for their interest and participation and sent on their way. Likewise, the track team selections were posted and Janet found her name on the roster.

Meanwhile, with help from Sheffield and Ramona, Takara worked on filling out applications for scholarships and grants. They even contacted the colleges close by and got additional applications. The paperwork was tedious and had to be filled out correctly to even be considered. Their goal was to complete

one a week and get it in the mail.

Later in the month, Sheffield received the October edition of the Naval Aviation News in the mail. Even though he was now fully retired from the Navy, he maintained a keen interest in the latest developments and what was going on. One article the magazine caught his attention. In fact he had to read it twice.

“Ramona.” He called.

“What is it Babe.”

“You know all of the agonizing that we went through when they offered me that command in Hawaii.”

“Yeah, that was torture on you, and had the rest of us turned topsy turvy. What about it?”

“It says here that as of January first it will be stationed in at North Island in San Diego.”

“Really? The whole reason we were even considering it was because it would have meant living in Hawaii.”

“I know. Now I'm really glad that I turned it down.”

“Yeah, we would have just got Janet settled in school over there to have to uproot her again.”

“In hindsight,” Sheffield concluded, “I can now see what an answer to prayer that was. This really is where we were meant to be. I mean look at all that has happened in the last little while. I was called into the branch presidency, which by the way I still question the reasoning behind that one.”

“Oh don't sell yourself short. You've grown so much from it already and you are making a difference.”

“I suppose your right. Another thing is that we wouldn't have been here for Takara. I think she really likes it here with us.”

“She's sure taken a liking to you, Babe. She really looks up to you.”

“She's doing pretty good with her driving lessons. She is starting to get the hang of it. She's so eager to learn.”

“That's not all. She has really taken to attending Mutual, seminary, and church. She seems to really be interested.”

“Yeah I know. We've been real careful not to push her. It will be interesting to see where it goes.”

“If we would have gone,” Ramona continued, “we'd of missed out on watching Little Geannie grow up. I cant believe that she is almost six months old now.”

“As for me,” Sheffield concluded, I'm glad things turned out the way they did.”

September was gone and it was the first weekend in October. Takara had proven to be very bright young woman and was doing very well in school. Sheffield noticed how well she was doing in his class. He

and Ramona had just attended parent teacher conference for both her and Janet. All of Takara's teachers gave good reports of her.

She also seemed to have adjusted socially as well. She was well liked at school and was really enjoying the experience of being an American teenager. Like any other teenager, she was looking forward to getting her drivers license, although she was older than most. At the rate she was progressing, she would have it before the end of the year.

The harvest ball was coming up and she had been asked to go by a nice young man at school. This too was first for her. She hadn't really had the opportunity for that kind of social interaction at the orphanage. She had practically become Janet's shadow and really deepened on her. Janet's friends had become her friends and they had accepted her into their circle.

Then during fast and testimony meeting, Takara surprised everyone when she stood up and went to the pulpit. She began by saying, "I am so grateful to be in America and to live like an American. More than anything, I want to be an American someday. You are so lucky.

"I'm also grateful to the Brasons for taking me into their home and making me a part of their family, even if it is only for a year. No matter where I go after this, I will never forget them. Janet is the best friend I've ever had in my life. All of you have been so good to me, especially the kids my age.

"When I first went to the orphanage, the missionaries taught me to believe in Jesus. There are not very many Christians in Japan, but I believed. Since I have been coming to church here, I have learned so much more about Jesus than I ever knew before. I knew that he died for my sins, but I am beginning to understand so much more about him and God than what the missionaries in Japan taught me.

"I really like coming to church, especially Mutual and Seminary. I have never felt like I do here and I like how it feels and I want to learn more. The kids my age here are different from the kids at school and especially the ones I knew in Japan. I want to be like them. I think thats why God directed me to the Brasons when I was supposed to go to a different family.

"If its alright, I want the Elders to come and teach me more. I believe that this I the reason why I am here. At first I wanted to come to learn what it was like to be an American. Now I want to know what it is like to be a Mormon."

That was all she said and went back to sit with Ramona, Janet, and Norma. After the meeting, the missionaries approached her to make an appointment. She knew the missionaries as she had meet them and talked to them at church. They had even been over to the Braosns for Sunday dinner once since she had been there.

Rather than approach her about being taught the lessons when she first arrived, they were wise enough to let her experience attending church for herself and let her ask for the lessons when she felt that

she was ready. An appointment was made for a cottage meeting at the Braosns home on Wednesday evening.

She looked forward to it all week. Eventhough she had a little exposure to the church by then, they started her at the beginning. She was very receptive and full of all kinds of questions. The answer to most of them was the same, "We'll get to that in another lesson." At the end of the eveing she had her own copy of the Book of Mornon and had committed to read it.

Other than Craig taking the Staggewing to Norfolk for his drill weekends, it hadn't been out of the hangar much. One Saturday morning Sheffield got the itch to go flying and invited Ramona, Norma, Janet, and Takara to come along. Having flown from Japan and across the county, it wasn't Takara's first time to fly, but she was honored that he would take her up in his plane.

They all helped him push it out of the hangar and climbed in. When they took off, it was to be just a pleasure flight around the area. After circling around Roanoke a two or three times, Sheffield headed northeast along the mountains. The next thing they knew, they were having lunch in Charlottesville before flying back.

They included her in on other family outings as well. Takara really enjoyed going to the movies. One Friday night they went up to the cabin for an overnighiter which included a campfire and hot dog roast that evening and a hike back to the lake on Saturday for a little fishing. By then the fall colors in the mountains were at their peak.

During October, Quinn and Sedric come to spend a three day weekend and stayed with the Brasons while they were there to see Bonnie and Jolene. Quinn and Bonnie had set their wedding date for December 29th in the Logan Temple. Sedric and Jolene set their's for August 21st in the Idaho Falls Temple to coincide with when the Rowans took Beverly to Ricks College and when Sedric got out of the Navy.

As October progressed, so did the Magicians varsity wrestling team. Sheffield was confident that they had a promising season ahead of them. Ramona had settled into her class at Hollins and had revised the lesson plan to suit her.

Janet and Takara both had dates to the Harvest Ball. Takara was progressing with both her driving lessons and the missionary lessons. She was becoming more and more comfortable behind the wheel, but hadn't quite mastered parallel parking. She and Sheffield had to work on that one some more.

As October faded into the November, the fall leaves had all fallen from the trees and were being blown around by the cool breezes of November. As the days passed, they became shorter and shorter. The Magicians won their first match against the Christiansburg High Blue Deamons and were off to a good start on the season but they lost the next match. They had two weeks off with no matches until the 4th of December.

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the Recession of 1953 began in the July of 1953 and lasted for ten months until May 1954. After an inflationary period that followed the Korean War, more money were directed toward national security. The Federal Reserve tightened monetary policy to curb inflation in 1952. The dramatic change in interest rates caused increased pessimism about the economy and decreased demand for goods and services.