



Video Story Transcript

My Japanese Parents' Unromantic Marriage

By: Storyteller Karin Amano
www.japanesestoryteller.com

Link to YouTube Video:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_3j6u896lz4

Note: The following is a transcription of a spoken story performance and may not reflect textbook perfect English. It will guide you as you listen (or read) along.

Hi, my name is Karin Amano. I have been living in the U.S. for 26 years and I've been observing, uh, married American couples. And, uh, many of them meet each other, uh, when they are young, and get married, grow older together, but then they go different directions, and later, they divorce. But then, they meet the new partner and remarry.

And American married couples remain passionate towards each other even though they are middle aged. They kiss and hug, holding hands together, uh, unlike Japanese married couples. Uh, I never see my, my Japanese parents, uh, kiss and hug and holding hands together. Uh, many cases, Japanese couples marries and then they leave their relationship from, uh, deek... relationship behind to focus on their children. So, when I was young, I never, uh, dreamed of marriage growing up seeing my parents, uh, unromantic, arranged marriage.

Uh, well, my father used to tell me, "Well, when I was a about to meet your mom at the blind date set up by my relative, I expected that a pretty lady, uh, is showing up because I heard she was a student from, uh, Miss Bunka Fashion College. But when she showed up, I thought, 'Wow! This woman has a unibrow!' And I wasn't attracted to her. But, um, my relatives are bugging me, saying, 'Hey, you're already 29. Why don't you settle down!' So, I reluctantly married your mom."

So, uh... Well, my father was born in 1930, aa, as, uh, 10th child out of, uh, 11 children. He was smart and, um, handsome, very popular in his hometown. He went to a good college and he got the nice, nice job as a chemist at a big, a Japanese company. And, uh, at some point, he left his job and he started his, uh, own business, a shop for wrestling fans in Tokyo. And it was successful, so he became very wealthy.

And meanwhile, my mom was born in, uh, 1934. She was tall, and athletic, and very popular at school. Uh, she learned uh, uh, dressmaking at a fashion college. And when she met, my mom, uh... my father at the blind date, she thought, "Okay, he's an intelligent and handsome man so I'm going to marry him. That's okay." So, they got married.

And at that time, my father had a girlfriend. They used to dance together at the dance hall. And they loved each other but my father knew he was not allowed to marry her because she's not from a good family and she didn't go to a good school. So, my father chose to marry my mom. And, uh, before long, he got the, a job and then my parents moved to a bigger city. And then, you know, uh, uh, the... they're doing okay.

Uh, well, when I was 9, I remember my father had an affair. Um, he went back to his hometown for a class reunion and ran into, uh, his ex-girlfriend. And he felt sorry for her and, uh, she seemed miserable so he had an affair. And my mother seemed to be upset, but she didn't divorce him. And then, several years later, uh, he had another affair with a woman who was a con artist. Uh, uh, she swindled him for, um, I don't know, tens of thousand dollars. And my mother still didn't divorce him. She said that, well, he got let go by the company so, you know, his, uh, anxiety, uh, made him do such a thing. Yes.

And then, when they were 70s, my mother made friend with this woman who was in her, uh, early 60s. Also happened to be a con artist. And then, uh, yeah, my mother, yeah, my parents lost a half-million dollars, uh, for a fake investment. So, at the age of 70, 75, I forgot, uh, they lost everything – assets and houses! They were broke. My father was angry at my mom but he didn't divorce her over it.

And when my father was 81, uh, my mother found him on the floor, lying down on the floor, in the middle of the night. He had a severe stroke so he was carried into the hospital and he was in a coma for 8 days.

Um, when I went back to Japan, when I flew back to Japan, uh, he woke up but he wasn't himself anymore. He was like this and he didn't recognize me; he didn't recognize my mother. The doctor said, "Well, he had a severe stroke and, um, uh, majority of his brain was damaged, especially frontal lobe was damaged so he gets aggressive. His mental age, it could be as young, as little as two years old. And there's no hope for the recovery."

And I was in shock. I hadn't introduced my, uh, baby girl (it's his first grandchild) before his stroke so I, I, I brought the photo album of my baby girl and I show it to him. "Th, th... hey, Dad, this is your first grandchild." And my father took it, threw it on the floor and look at somewhere else. And drooling and my mother was wiping him. And I had to flew back to Florida (because I had a full-time job) a week later. I told my doctor, "Uh, I think, well, for the past one week, I think a little by little, maybe my father is getting better."

And the doctor said, "Huh, huh, no way! Can you hear him? He's, uh, screaming? We have to tie him into the wheelchair and other patients cannot, uh, sleep. We have to put him in a psychia... psychiatric, uh, hospital for the rest of his life."

My father loved to go outside, socialize, very intelligent, and smart; he has to stay in a psychiatric hospital for the rest of his life! I was sad and I cried but I had to go back to Florida.

And two months later, I had a dream of my father who, uh, got back to himself. I know that my mother here... for... had, uh, very bad knees, um, climbed down three flights to get outside from her apartment. Took, uh, two buses and climb up to the hills every single day for two months to teach my father how to read, how to write, how to make him remember who he was. I called my mother. "I, I just had this dream; how's, uh, uh, my dad doing?"

And she said, "I was just gonna call you. He came to, back to himself. Now he recognizes me, and the doctor and the nurses. He can communicate, uh, and he's going to be released from the hospital, uh, next week. Yes, his, uh, feeding tube was, tube was removed!"

So, I was so happy and, um, now we (*he*) can ride a bicycle, he go to library by himself, mm, to read his favorite history book. And, you know what? Um, several years later, my mom fell down at the, you know, uh, parking lot, at the grocery shopping. And nobody else was there, and she couldn't, she couldn't get up. And then, "Oh, no! somebody HELP!"

And guess who showed up like a Superman? That was my father! He was walking around and found my mother on the ground. So, he called the taxi and he took my mom to the hospital. So, actually, um, her hipbone was broken and, also, it was time, uh, to do her knee surgery. So, my mother was staying at the hospital for four months. And every single day, my father went to the hospital to take care of her.

So, my father right now is 87 years old; my mother is 83 years old. They still live together at their apartment. So, I guess, they're not passionate towards each other like American couples but, I guess, some kind of love has been growing between them over fifty-three years.