

THIS IS HOW I ROLL



DEBBI MICHIKO FLORENCE

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If there's one thing I've learned from my dad, it's that following your dreams is important. Not that he's ever said as much to me. Dad is not the talkative type. In fact, neither of my parents is and that's okay, because actions speak louder than words. And before this summer is over, my actions will prove to my dad that I am worth having in his restaurant kitchen and ready to be taught how to cook great Japanese food.

Which was why I was in our home kitchen earlier than I normally ever woke up, especially on the first weekend of summer.

"Where is it?" I asked out loud even though I was alone. I was determined to make the perfect breakfast.

This setup was not nearly as nice as the one we'd had in San Francisco. I missed our bright and airy kitchen with white subway tiles and stainless-steel appliances. This one was definitely dated, with apricot countertops and dark-wood cabinets.

I flung open the island's cabinet door and yanked out every single pot and pan, tossing them onto the counter to join all the lids I'd already grabbed. Then I slid on sock feet to the shelves next to our basic white oven, pulling out baking sheets and muffin pans. But as I reached toward the cabinet next to the sink, my hand knocked into the tower of pot lids and they all came crashing down onto the floor. I would have cringed, but the lids were an improvement over the vinyl floor with its mint-green squares.

“Goodness, Sana, sweetie. What are you doing?”

I spun around to face my mom, who was dressed for her morning run in black shorts and a neon-orange tank top, her shiny black hair in a high ponytail. It still took getting used to, not only having Mom at home more often, but seeing her in running clothes instead of her business skirts and blazers. When we lived in San Francisco, the only kind of running she did was out the door to her job every morning.

“Hey, Mom,” I said with a sheepish wave.

“Good thing your father is already at the restaurant. You could wake the dead with the racket you're making.”

I, of course, knew Dad had left an hour ago. Although there

was no rule against me cooking, Dad wasn't a fan of me messing around in his kitchen.

"Your cousin will be here in five minutes," Mom said. "What are you looking for?"

I contemplated my answer to Mom's seemingly simple question. The thing was, communication in my family was complicated. Sometimes a twist of the truth was easier. The less said, the less anyone would worry. My parents were all about protecting me, even though I'd rather know what was going on.

Case in point: Most of what I knew about Piper Bay and my parents' decision to move here I'd learned from my cousin, Charli. Her dad, my uncle Luke, owned a successful real estate company and had helped Dad find the perfect place for his sushi restaurant. My parents hadn't ever really asked me what I thought about leaving. And before I knew it, we were living two hours south of San Francisco in a small, pretty town no one had barely ever heard of before. Fortunately, I made friends easily, so starting a new school in the seventh grade hadn't freaked me out. Plus I had Charli here. She wasn't just a cousin, she was also my best friend. So even though my parents had kind of left me in the dark about the move, Charli had

told me everything she'd heard. She knew I liked to have all the facts.

This morning I opted for the whole truth. "Where's the tamago pan?" I asked.

"If you want a Japanese omelet, why don't you just ask Dad to make it when he gets home?"

I sighed. That was the problem. "Mom, I want to make tamago on my own. Dad would just chase me out of the kitchen anyway." He had a lot of rules both in his restaurant and at home. Besides, I wanted to make the homestyle rolled tamago, while Dad undoubtedly would make his high-end fancy sushi-style custardy tamago.

"Oh, Sana, your father wouldn't keep you out of the kitchen," Mom said. Of course she took Dad's side.

"Yo, what's up?" Charli called, kicking off her shoes before darting into the house. "Whoa. What a mess! Is Uncle Hiro home?"

She knew as well as I did that he'd hit the roof if he saw his pristine kitchen like this.

"Take a guess," I said. "Hi, Uncle Luke!"

"Happy Sunday, Sana." Uncle Luke's smile was the exact

same as Mom's, quirking a little higher on the left side. He stayed at the back door so he wouldn't have to take his shoes off.

"Let's go!" Mom quickly put on her running shoes.

"And they're off," I said as the door slammed.

"Ugh." Charli slumped on a kitchen chair. Her chestnut-brown pixie cut stuck up like porcupine quills. "It's finally summer. I wanted to sleep in. Our families get up way too early."

I threw open another cabinet. "Help me look for the tamago pan."

"What's it look like?" Charli stayed put at the table, not even making a show of helping me.

"It's a stainless-steel rectangle with a wooden handle."

"And *tamago* is *egg*, right?"

Charli didn't speak Japanese. I didn't either, really, but I understood a little because my parents spoke it once in a while, mostly when they were upset or wanted to say things they didn't want me to know. Plus I'd made it a point to learn food-related words in Japanese.

"Yes. Come help me!" I stood on my toes to try to see behind the plates. Not that I thought the pan might be back there. Dad was very organized and pans didn't go with plates.

“Um, hi, Uncle Hiro,” Charli chirped.

“Ha ha,” I said, without turning around. “Don’t try to scare me. Dad’s at the restaurant already.”

“Susannah!”

I yelped and spun around, knocking two baking sheets to the ground to join the pot lids I hadn’t yet picked up.

“Hi, Daddy.”

He frowned as he took in the disaster of his kitchen. “Don’t ‘hi, Daddy’ me. Why does my kitchen look like this?”

“What are you doing here?” I asked.

Charli, who was no help, made her way silently upstairs to my bedroom.

“I live here,” he said, grinning and lifting an amused eyebrow.

“Funny, Dad.” I started to pick up the lids off the floor and stick them back into the cabinet.

“Ah! Dameda!”

I nearly dropped everything again. “What’s wrong?”

“You can’t just put them back in the cabinet! They were on the floor! You need to wash them.”

I glanced down at the huge pile of lids. “No! Dad! The floor

is so clean you can eat off it.” Dad swept and mopped the kitchen before he went to bed every night.

He flapped his hand at me. I sighed. Foiled once again by the Mikami Way. I piled the lids into the sink. It was going to be a while before I could join Charli upstairs. Not that she would care—she was probably already on my laptop watching crafting videos.

Dad opened the fridge and pulled out stacked containers, which he placed in the soft-sided cooler he’d brought with him.

“So, seriously, why are you home?” I stuck the plug into the drain and turned on the water, squirting dish soap into the sink. Maybe Dad would leave before I had to wash *all* the lids.

“The crew is running late, so I came home to grab some more fresh ingredients.”

The crew was the film crew. A director had contacted Dad in the spring, wanting to do a short documentary on him. Mikami Sushi had been a finalist for Best New Restaurant in California and then been featured in several articles in food and travel magazines. I had been excited to learn that the filmmaker was none other than Baxton Ferguson. He had won an award two

years ago for a documentary he'd done on sustainably caught fish that Dad and I had watched together. Not that Dad had much time to sit around and watch movies with me anymore.

Since opening over a year ago, Dad's ten-seat sushi bar had become so popular, people came from all over just to try his food. Weekend reservations for his omakase Chef's Choice dinner menu were booked weeks in advance. It was no wonder Baxton was interested. And after a couple of weeks of phone interviews, he and his crew arrived last week to start filming.

"Can I come watch?"

My heart sunk as Dad shook his head. "It's summer. Go have fun." When I didn't respond, Dad asked, "Don't you and Charli have plans?"

That was Dad's way of discouraging me. He never outright said no, but after twelve years, I knew how to read between the lines and fill in the blanks on my own.

Dad zipped up the cooler and looked around the kitchen again, wincing like it physically pained him to see the mess. "What were you looking for anyway?"

"Tamago pan," I said, not having the energy to deflect.

"Why didn't you say you wanted tamago?" Dad grinned and

ruffled my hair. He reached up to the cabinet over the fridge, the one place I hadn't looked because I'd need a step stool to get up there.

"Can I help?" I asked.

"I've got this." He nodded to the sink.

So while I washed the lids that didn't really need washing, Dad made tamago, even though the only reason I'd been looking for the pan was to try making it myself. I'd asked him to teach me countless times, but he always had a dried-out excuse ready to serve me.

By the time I finished cleaning up, Dad had made two gorgeous rolled Japanese omelets, plated on blue-and-white dishes with a garnish of green onions cut on the bias. He set the table with chopsticks laid on origami crane holders.

"Charli!" Dad called up the stairs. "Come eat!"

I dried my hands and joined Charli at the table. She loved my dad's cooking. Everyone did, including me, of course, but more than anything I wanted to be a successful chef like him, even if he did everything he could to stop me.