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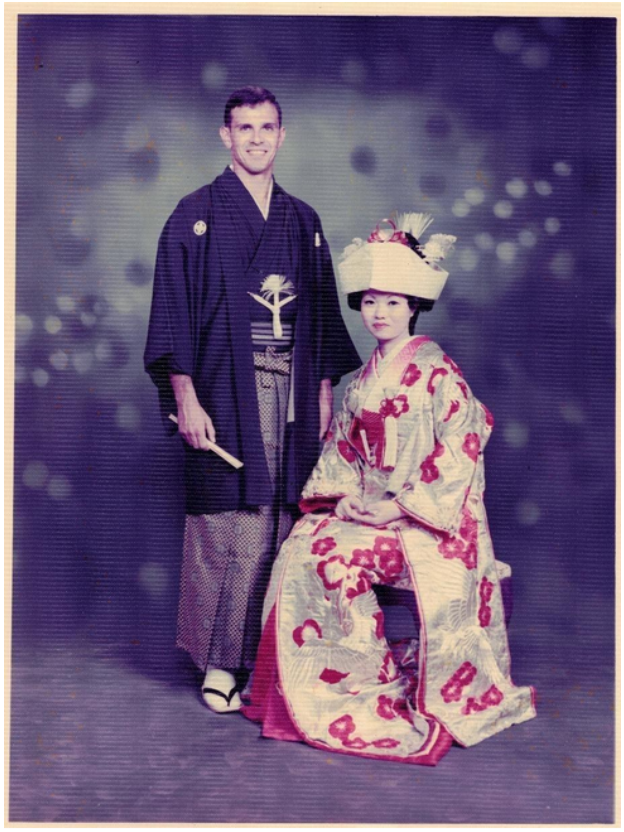
Speak, Okinawa

Elizabeth Miki Brina

Introduction

Speak, Okinawa is a book I needed to write for a long time, long before I knew I needed to write it. The book is essentially about healing the relationship between me and my mother, me and my heritage. Both felt very strange and foreign to me, distant from me, for most of my life.

My mother was born and raised in Okinawa. She was born in 1948, three years after the Battle of Okinawa, which destroyed and devastated the entire island, killing one third of the population and leaving those who survived to wander and scavenge amidst the ash and wreckage. My mother was born into poverty and chaos and grief. As she grew up, she witnessed the militarization of the island, the countless crimes that were committed, the injustice. She became a waitress at a nightclub where soldiers, marines, and sailors came from nearby bases to drink, flirt, and forget about the war. She met and married my father, who was a U.S. soldier stationed on the island after fighting in Vietnam.



Wedding of Arthur and Kyoko Brina, Elizabeth's parents, in Okinawa, 1974

I had not learned this history, my mother's history, my history, until I was thirty-four years old.

Perhaps the most direct impetus for writing my book was attending my mother's baptism. She had recently joined the Rochester Japanese Christian Congregation. The forty or so members were all Japanese, almost all women, almost all middle-aged or older, almost all

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married to white American men who had served in the military. Seeing all these women together was a revelation. That was when I realized that my family was not utterly unique, not an isolated incident. I began asking questions. I began searching for answers. I wanted to capture this revelation, but in order to render the full impact I had to explain the history that brought these women together, brought my mother and father together. I had to explain my experience of growing up as the only child of two people from such vastly different cultural backgrounds.

Speak, Okinawa is my attempt to explain myself. Not just my own shame and internalized racism, but the long-standing systems and imperialistic origins that caused me to reject my mother and deny my heritage. *Speak, Okinawa* is my attempt at reconciliation.

How They Met

> Business thrived in the war economy of such towns as Koza and Kin. "Those days we really raked it in," the owner of a nightclub in Kin recalled nostalgically when I interviewed him in 1996. Located just across the highway from Gate Two of the Marines' Camp Hansen, the amusement area remains there on a much smaller scale today. But during the Vietnam War, Kin was a town that never slept, where the lights burned brightly all night, crowded with soldiers on their way to Vietnam or on leave from the war for two-week "R&R" (military slang for rest and recuperation). At his club, which employed twenty hostesses, soldiers spent money like water, throwing so many dollars around there was no time to count them. "We stuffed them into buckets, but they still overflowed, so we had to stomp the piles down with our feet," he said. Some months we made $1000. Dollars rained on us." -Etsuko Takushi Crissey, *Okinawa's GI Brides*

Our mother and older sister disappeared in flame then smoke. Grandmother lost her sight and grandfather lost his limbs. Grandmother and grandfather tell us to leave them behind. We beg them to let us stay. We don't want to be alone.

"We will fetch water for you. We will scratch your backs, pick off maggots and squeeze the pus out of your wounds for you. Please let us stay here and die with you."

We beg and weep for two whole days but they still refuse.

"You're too young to die just yet. You can't give up. You must go."

So we obey. We find a hole in the ground. We leave them in the hole with the rest of the food, not much, just a jar of miso paste and some dried squid. We cover the hole with branches. We cover the branches with dirt. We place stones in the shape of a circle on top of the dirt. We call to them through the dirt and branches, saying goodbye one last time, promising to return when the war ends and bring their bones to our ancestral tomb. They do not answer us.

We hope they die calm, sleeping beside each other. We hope they breathe their last breath in silence, after the bombing and shooting finally stop.

When the war ends, we return to the hole but the hole is gone. The Americans have built a road over it. We search for scattered bones along the side of the road but the road keeps

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widening. The Americans build roads over tombs and graves, marked or unmarked. The Americans build roads through smoldering fields, through embers and ashes of homes. The Americans build roads in between stations and camps, clusters of tents expanding and spreading so fast, we can barely recognize our island from one day to the next.

The Americans can build in a day what takes us months to build.

The Americans can destroy in a day what we will never forget.

We will never forgive ourselves for leaving grandmother and grandfather behind.

We will never forgive the Americans.

Inside the camps, we stand in long lines so soldiers can feed us. They feed us food stuffed into tin cans that does not resemble any food we have ever eaten before. They feed us popcorn and candy. If we are suspected of saying or doing anything un-American, our rations are withheld. Inside the camp, doctors and nurses tend to our sickness and wounds better than we ever could. If one of us asks for water, they bring us water. We used to tell ourselves that drinking water would make us sicker, because we didn't have enough. Inside the camp, we live in tents. We sleep on the ground and when it rains, we sleep in mud. Inside the camp, we wear discarded uniforms. Our children run around in shirts five sizes too big and sometimes we sew clothes from torn parachutes.

Outside the camp, we are afraid to walk alone.

A crowd of us has gathered on the road beside a field. We are watching as one of them, a young man, twenty years old, drags one of us, a young girl, sixteen years old, from a tent across the camp, and then across the road into the field. Her mother, one of us, clings to his leg, begging, wailing, making awful animal noises that force us to watch. He kicks the mother off his leg and drags the girl farther into the field. He rips off her clothes and pulls down his pants. We watch because we want to bear witness. We watch because bearing witness is the only power left within us. We watch because the horror doesn't frighten or madden us anymore.

We watch until he is done with us, until our mother crawls to us, then wraps a blanket around our stunned and trembling body. We watch, and those of us who can bear it, look at him directly in the eyes. We want to make sure he sees us. We want to make sure he knows we're watching. We do not scold or attack him. We do not seek revenge. We just keep walking. Because that is the only power left within us. We do not want to fight. We are done with this war.

Outside the camp, we shove poles into the ground and hang large bells from the poles. When we see one of them approaching, we ring the bells to warn ourselves, then run away and hide.

Between the years 1945 and 1949, one thousand of us, those of us who are counted, those of us who allow ourselves to be counted, are raped.

Those of us who give ourselves willingly to the Americans, those of us who get paid to give ourselves, are called pan-pan. We are called whores. Some of us are widows. Some of us are young girls who still live with our mothers. It doesn't matter what they call us, or what we call each other. At least something is being done. At least we're getting paid. After all, our

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island is covered in ash and dust, filled with stench and rot. There isn't anything for them – or us – to do except drink until we are numb and fuck. Some of them would rather pay us than rape us and for that some of us are grateful.

They come stumbling out of the bases, through the barbed wire fences, through our villages. They shout and slur our names. We invite them into our homes. Sometimes our mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, and children sleep – or pretend to sleep – on the other side of the walls. Some of the neighbors complain that we are dishonoring our families, defiling the children. Some of the neighbors try to banish prostitution but when we ask how else to feed our families, our children, the neighbors have no answer so we come up with a better solution. We move to the outskirts of the villages. Our homes become brothels and our brothels become districts.

By 1967, ten thousand of us become prostitutes.

* * *

We are done with this war. But they're not. They have a war to fight in Korea, and then a war to fight in Vietnam. "As long as communism is a threat," Vice President Richard Nixon announces during his visit in 1953, "[the United States] will hold Okinawa." They must use our land to build a fortress to protect the 'Free World.' A world in which we are not included. They must use our land to launch ships that carry tanks and guns, to launch planes that drop bombs. We shudder with each sound as ship after ship departs, as plane after plane takes off, remembering the damage and devastation, the slaughter those ships and planes have caused. They must use our land to store missiles and poisonous gases. We feel guilty, complicit, even though we have no choice.

Forests and fields that have just begun to heal are bulldozed and replaced with concrete. Farms that once grew pineapple and sugarcane, crops that sustained our meager economy, are bulldozed and replaced with concrete. Family-owned plots that have been passed down for generations are confiscated, often at gunpoint, and residents are evicted. One hundred thousand of us assemble at their headquarters in Naha and they agree to pay us for the land they already stole.

But it is not enough. Not nearly enough.

So we become labor. We are hired to build bases. We are hired to build barracks, armories, loading docks, landing strips, fences, gates, more roads. We are hired to serve food in their cafeterias and clean their houses. The prettiest of us, who have curves and speak the best English, get to work at the post office and fancy restaurants like McDonald's. Cities form around these bases, with bright neon signs in English, advertising to them, welcoming them. With bars and clubs where soldiers can yell and laugh, fight and flirt, and spend money like it's their last day on Earth, because, well, who knows, their last day could be very soon. They're fighting a war and they pay us to help them forget.

But we remember. We will always remember.

Some of us fall in love with them. Is that so strange? Because they're tall and strong and polite. Taller and stronger and more polite than many of our men, since most of our men are gone. Because they carry heavy bags and boxes for us. They open doors for us, and let us enter or exit in front of them. They pull out chairs for us. They offer us their seats and stand for us. Because they drive us home in their cars and trucks, so we don't have to walk home by

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ourselves at night. Because they're rich. They make more in a day than we make in a month. They smell like soap when we can only rinse our faces and armpits with water from buckets or soak in a public bathhouse once a week. They leave us big tips and buy us gifts. Perfume, make up, silk stockings, chocolate, chewing gum, bottles of liquor and cartons of cigarettes that they bring from their bases and we sell to each other for cheaper than we can get anywhere else on the island. Because they let us watch movies on their televisions and wash clothes in their washing machines, so we don't have to wash clothes in the river. Because sometimes they buy us our own televisions and washing machines. Sometimes they pay our rent.

Because some of them are gentle and genuine, warm and kind, foolish and impetuous, and very young. Just like us.

Some of them fall in love with us. Is that so bad? Because we're tiny and shy and vulnerable. Tinier and shyer and more vulnerable than many of their women, who are far far away. Because we blush and we giggle. We lower our heads and avert our eyes. We don't speak much English, so they can't understand us. They don't know us. So they look at our faces and imagine who we are, see who they want to see. They look at our faces and see themselves as they want to be seen. We can't understand them, either. We don't know them, either. So we imagine that they are brave and good, will protect us and take care of us, never hurt us. Because we're grateful for everything they do for us. We're not angry, not like those of us who are older. Not like the men, who hate them because they're taller and stronger and richer. Because we're not used to men approaching us and treating us like beautiful delicate creatures meant to be cherished. We're not used to men lying to us in such a way that we have to believe them, lying to us in such a way that they have to believe themselves.

"Don't confuse sympathy for love," one of their mothers writes back to one of them.

* * *

The first "international marriage" in Okinawa is recorded on August 1st, 1947, in the *Uruma Shimpo*, a weekly newspaper written by Okinawans yet supervised by American military officers to inform the public about policies and directives, as well as local news. The marriage is between one of them, Frank Anderson, a twenty-three-year-old soldier from Ohio, and one of us, Higa Hatsuko, a nineteen-year-old seamstress from Ginowan. The couple receives a certificate from a civilian governor. The marriage is annulled by a commanding officer one month later.

According to the War Bride Act of 1945, spouses and children of Armed Forces personnel are allowed to enter and reside in the United States – "if admissible." However, according to the Immigration Act of 1924, otherwise known as the Asian Exclusion Act, marriage between Americans and Asians is considered illegal. Upon hearing this shameful news, Frank Anderson turns to his now ex-wife and says "then we'll hold hands, and by the time we get to America, I believe congress will have changed the law."

And congress does, eventually, in 1952, with the passage of the McCarran Walter Act.

Before 1952, there are a few exceptions, temporary reprieves of maximum Asian immigrant quotas. In 1948, during a month-long lifting of the ban, eight hundred twenty-five marriages between U.S. Servicemen and Japanese citizens, including Okinawans, are recorded. The newspaper, *Uruma Shimpo*, notes that an "extremely high proportion" of these marriages occur in Okinawa compared to

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the rest of Japan. So much so that in 1948, the U.S. Military issues a special executive order prohibiting marriages between servicemen and Okinawans, referring to an overall best practice of "nonfraternization" in occupied areas.

From 1952 to 1975, sixty-six thousand Japanese women emigrate to the United States as wives of U.S. Servicemen. More than half of the total Japanese immigrant population. It is difficult to determine precisely how many of those Japanese women are actually from Okinawa, or if there is a separate tally that will never be recorded. After 1952 and until 1972, Okinawa is a territory of the United States. We are not recognized as Japanese, yet certainly not as U.S. citizens. However, since seventy percent of U.S. Military bases in Japan are located in Okinawa, it seems safe to assume, as the *Uruma Shimpo* notes, that an "extremely high proportion" of these marriages occur in Okinawa compared to the rest of Japan. Plus, there is significant anecdotal evidence. Just ask any of us.

* * *

For many years, it is forbidden. For many more years, it is ridiculed. We are called pan-pan. We are called traitors. We are called yankee-lovers and gold-diggers. We meet with them in secret. In hotels. In the backseats of cars. And when it comes time to tell our families, some of us are told we are no longer daughters. No longer sisters.

Our families warn us not to leave with them. "If you go to America, you will be lonely. If you go to America, your children will be tormented. They will call you Jap. They won't accept you." Some of us refuse to listen. Some of us listen but refuse to believe what our families tell us. Some of us believe, but decide to leave with them anyway.

Some of us leave by ships bound for San Francisco, crammed with a thousand or more passengers. Soldiers, sailors, marines, and a few dozen of us, their new wives. We sit together on the dock and stare at the ocean. Talking, dreaming, admiring our new husbands, promising to visit each other all the time. At night, they show movies and host parties. We drink and dance with them, except those of us who are already getting sick in the morning. The voyage takes fifteen days and each day reminds us how far we are away from home.

Some of us arrive by planes, in New York and Los Angeles. We look around the airport and don't see anyone else who looks like us and we realize we've made a big mistake. "Is it too late to go back?" we look up at our husbands and ask. Our husbands look down at us and nod, their faces confused and sad.

Some of us have to sit in a car while our husbands drive for two days, four days, six days, across this vast and magnificent country. We have never seen mountains so high and terrifying, deserts so dry and engulfing. We have never seen roads so wide and smooth. We had no idea. Not even an inkling. We feel even smaller now, humbled. "How much longer?" we look up at our husbands and ask. Our husbands look down at us and smile. "Just a couple more days."

Some of us find out that our husbands already have wives. They hide us, put us in a trailer on the edge of town overlooking a field of corn. They visit us once a week to drop off groceries. They watch TV and drink six cans of beer while we sit beside them. Sometimes they let us sit on their laps. After they leave, we are afraid to go outside. We are afraid to answer the phone. Sometimes we wish we were dead and some of us swallow pills or slit our wrists and crawl into bathtubs.

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One of their wives comes over and beats us. One of their wives comes over and tells us it's not our fault and asks if we need help getting back home. But we can't go back home and bring more shame to our families, more shame to ourselves. So some of us stay and raise children by ourselves.

Some of their mothers hate us. Some of their mothers are the only reasons we can bear this strange and lonely place. Some of our neighbors ignore us. Some of our neighbors notice our isolation and take us out for walks or shopping at the mall.

Some of our husbands turn cruel, call us "ugly" and "stupid" in front of our own children. Some of our husbands remain sweet and bring home puppies or kittens and promise to give us more children to cheer us up.

When we see each other by chance, in passing, we follow each other until we get close enough, until we muster the nerve to ask "Nihon-jin desu ka?" *Are you Japanese?*

"Hai, hai! Nihon-jin desu. Okinawa shusshin desu." *Yes! Yes! I am Japanese. I am from Okinawa.*

"Watashi-mo!" *Me too!*

Then we bow and cry and hug and become friends forever. Because it is easier to miss a place when we are together.

Too Young, Too Old

When I ask my mother why she decided to marry my father, she says because he was very handsome and polite and left big tips. She says because he was different from the other soldiers. He didn't swear. He didn't start fights. He didn't tease or grab. He didn't take without asking. He always ate whatever Obaa cooked for him. He always knelt at the tatami table even after his knees got sore and his feet tingled. She says my father bought her a car and taught her how to drive. She says she wanted to get off that sad poor island. Get away from her sad poor family.



Brina family, Elizabeth age four

When I ask my mother if she was in love with my father, she says "Well… *now* I am."

"Well what about back then?"

"Probably not," she says and laughs. "Maybe. I guess I don't really know."

I guess that's fair. How many of us really know?

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Elizabeth and her mother

When I ask my father why he decided to marry my mother, he says because she was very beautiful and clean and loved music. He says because she was different from the other cocktail waitresses. She didn't giggle. She didn't flatter. She was serious and sincere. She always took good care of her mother and younger sister and that impressed him a great deal. He also says – without reluctance or reflection – that while serving his tours of duty in Vietnam, he formed an image in his mind of the woman he wanted to marry, the woman he wanted to bring with him back to the United States, and my mother fit that image perfectly. He says that when he went away to Korea, after being stationed in Okinawa, after meeting my mother and dating her for six months, he couldn't stop thinking about her. He missed her more than he thought he would, more than he had ever missed anyone in his life. That's how he knew.

When I ask my father if he was in love with my mother, he says "of course."

When I ask my mother if she was afraid to move to America, she says "No, I was very excited. I never flew on a plane before. I never saw so many big buildings and cars before. I always wanted to go to Disneyland. I didn't know how hard it was going to be. I was too young."

I ask her if she ever wishes she had stayed in Okinawa.

"I used to."

"What about now?"

"No. Not now. I'm too old."



Elizabeth today

My Mother's Church

The Rochester Japanese Christian Congregation doesn't have its own church. It doesn't have its own name on its own sign mounted to the front of its own building.

Each week, through collective donations, the congregation rents a small room from Atonement Lutheran Church. A church that is painted white, with a steeple and a giant wooden cross, with its own name on its own sign, one mounted to the front and one posted on the lawn at the beginning of the driveway.

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Each week, the forty or so members drive twenty minutes, thirty minutes, one hour, sometimes two hours to meet in a room with a separate entrance behind the church.

The room doesn't have a high-arched ceiling and stained-glass windows, or an altar and pews, or decorative paintings and sculptures. The low ceiling has suspended foam tiles and plastic shades that cover fluorescent light bulbs. The single window overlooks the parking lot. Folding chairs are arranged in rows. The walls are bare. At the front of the room, where service is conducted, there is a podium and a microphone, a guitar and a keyboard, a laptop and screen for projecting slideshows.

My father opens the door and holds it open for us as he shakes the rain from his umbrella. He wears a suit, the only suit that still fits since he retired several years ago. I follow my mother into the room, both of us carrying a tray of sushi. My mother wears a long black and white floral-printed silk dress. I also wear a long black and white floral-printed silk dress, the dress I bought from Macy's earlier. The dress feels strange because it's new, because it's not a dress I would usually wear, but today I want to look more like my mother, more like her daughter. We set the trays on a folding table, beside bowls and platters wrapped in aluminum foil. My stomach grumbles. I wish we could eat before the service begins.

The room is bright and warm, filled with faces I don't recognize and the rhythms of chatter I don't understand. A tiny woman, much shorter than my mother, much older than my mother, with gray permed hair and a protruding curved spine, gasps at the sight of me.

"Kyoko! Kyoko!" She points at me. "Musume desu ka?" *Your daughter?*

"Hai, hai," my mother says. "So desu." She nods proudly, then smiles and blushes.

The woman grabs my hand. Her hand is smooth and cool to the touch, inviting. "Honto? Kawaii desu ne." *Really? Pretty, huh?*

"Hai," my mother says and nods again. "She is very beautiful," she says for my benefit.

More women crowd around us, greet us. They bow. We shake hands, and their hands linger. The women interrogate my mother in their gentle voices.

"I didn't tell them you were coming. I wanted to surprise them," my mother explains. I know my mother didn't want to tell them I was coming until she was absolutely sure I was coming. Until I actually showed up. Until now.

The guilt. I force it down.

"We're so happy you came. She talks about you all the time. This means so much her. To us," says another woman, much taller than my mother, much younger than my mother, with dyed streaks of auburn hair and matching eye shadow.

"Thank you," I say, embarrassed. I mimic her bow.

Another woman, much younger than me, a transfer student from Osaka, studying hospitality and tourism management at the Rochester Institute of Technology, asks me why I don't speak Japanese. She clearly doesn't understand the laden sting of such a question.

"I don't know," I answer, as I ponder the reasons.

"You should learn," she says, as if it's that easy. As if I can purchase a Rosetta Stone tomorrow and become fluent enough to have a meaningful conversation next week. "I speak Japanese, Mandarin, and English." Then she proceeds to try to sell me some type of insurance. She gives me a business card but I don't have a wallet or any pockets so I hold the

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card awkwardly in my hand until my mother comes to my rescue with her purse.

"Don't worry about her," my mother whispers. "She's kind of… weird." She pronounces "weird" as *wared*.

We laugh at the weird girl's expense.

The Rochester Japanese Christian Congregation meets once a week to worship the same religion, to worship God and Jesus Christ, but also to commemorate their shared language and culture. The congregation is made up of people who found each other in crowds, in the aisles of grocery stores, at their children's school concerts and field trips, eating or working together at Japanese restaurants. They could see right away, hear right away, that they're not from around here. That they're from the same place. The Rochester Japanese Christian Congregation has been a people long before it was officially founded by Reverend Dong Ki Kim and his wife Miki Kim in 2004.

Reverend Dong Ki Kim, also known as Sensei Kim, is from Korea, and his wife, Miki-san, is from Japan. They met in 1979, in Kumamoto, Japan, at a Lutheran church, where Sensei Kim traveled for his mission and Miki-san attended as a member. At the time, Sensei Kim couldn't speak Japanese and Miki-san couldn't speak Korean. But they learned both languages together. They got married. They lived in Kumamoto, then in Okinawa, and then in Korea for more training for Sensei Kim to become a pastor. They moved to the United States so that Sensei Kim could study social work at the University of Rochester. Their plan was to move back to Korea but they found a people and a need here. They found a way to serve God and Jesus Christ here. Now Sensei Kim and Miki-San are fluent in Korean, Japanese, and English. Together, they conduct a Korean service in the morning and a Japanese service in the afternoon. Once a month they conduct an English service for the husbands and children.

They founded the congregation as a way of spreading the doctrine of Christianity, but also to give their congregation an opportunity to meet once a week and simply exist in a place where their language and culture, their collective identity, are dominant. A place that is completely theirs, even if it's just a small room rented from a big church with another name on its own sign.

It could be worse.

I don't know when my mother first heard about this congregation. I don't know why she decided to join eight months ago. I asked her once, and she answered that she was too old and too tired to work at the restaurant twelve hours a day, six days a week, and she needed something else to do with her time. I'm not completely satisfied with that answer. Maybe I should try to ask her again.

But if I had to guess, and that's completely what I'm doing, guessing, maybe she joined the congregation because of her younger sister, who died of liver failure at the age of fifty-four. Maybe she joined the congregation because of her mother, who hardly drank alcohol, watched her husband die from it, watched her children suffer from it, and died at the age of ninety-nine, six years after her youngest child died. Maybe my mother joined the congregation because of the gastrointestinal illnesses she sustained as the result of extreme alcohol consumption, the two surgeries she underwent to fix the part of the inside of her body that was broken. At the age of sixty-seven, she could feel, really really feel, her body aging and getting weaker, her body reaping the consequences of choices she made and choices she was forced to make, choices she didn't have. Maybe she finally understood that she needed to stop drinking to save her life, save

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the rest of her life, and she decided to live and make the best of it. To make herself at home.

Before she joined the congregation, before she stopped drinking, maybe she was resisting. Maybe she was keeping a barrier, keeping her distance, allowing herself a figment of an escape. Maybe she was drinking to numb herself but also to feel, really really feel, her sadness, keep it close to her, keep it around her. I remember when she used to call me drunk and sobbing, used to tell me she wished she could leave my father, wished she could go back to Okinawa. Sometimes I used to say "Mom, I just want you to be happy," and I hoped that I was giving her my blessing, hoped that she would take a leap of faith, a leap of change, and explode her life wide open. I remember I used to be disappointed in her for not having the guts to pull out the pin. I didn't know how it felt to be trapped in my life, trapped in the choices I made and was forced to make and didn't have. After her younger sister and mother died, there was no reason to go back to Okinawa. She was alone in the world. Except for her husband. Except for her daughter. Except for her co-workers at the restaurant, the restaurant where she worked as a waitress, hostess, bartender, substitute line cook, substitute sushi chef, and ultimately, a manager. Except for her friends who joined the congregation. She took control. She made herself at home, made herself happy. And maybe that's when her husband and daughter finally welcomed her.

Shortly after my mother recovered from her illness, her surgeries, my father arranged to have a special satellite dish installed so that every television in the house received NHK, Japan's national public broadcasting network. She turns on the channel the moment she wakes up. She watches the channel while she does her stretches and exercises, while she cooks and folds laundry, for an hour or two in the afternoon between shifts at the restaurant, for an hour or two before she falls asleep for the night. News, talk shows, game shows, food shows, concerts, soap operas, sumo wrestling. Japanese filling the room. My father watches, too. Sometimes they watch together. Sometimes they watch the same shows in different rooms.

The Rochester Japanese Christian Congregation is almost all women, all middle-aged or older. More than half of these women are married to white American husbands. When the white American husbands attend the service in English once a month, they hover in the corners and stand along the wall, keeping to themselves, nodding and smiling at their wives, happy for them. They usually have a lot to say to each other, comparing stories from their younger days as soldiers, marines, sailors. All of these white American husbands were in the military and stationed in Japan and Okinawa.

Elizabeth Miki Brina's memoir and debut book, *Speak, Okinawa*, was published in February of 2021 by Knopf Doubleday Press. Her work has appeared in *The Sun, River Teeth, Lit*

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Hub, and *Gulf Coast Magazine*, among others. She currently lives and teaches in New Orleans.

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