

Chapter 1

The morning sun slipped between the curtains waking Kimie from a deep sleep. Spring had finally arrived bringing its renewed beauty, warmth and cheerfulness. More importantly, it marked the first day of her new life. Well, not exactly a new life, just the first day she would step out of her routine life. She needed a new direction. Something to do that would help others instead of focusing on herself. She didn't know what that new something would be, but Kimie knew she didn't have to figure it out today.

Stretching her body from toes to legs, through her back then into her arms, Kimie wiggled and smiled. The fresh sheets she'd put on last night and the comfort of her bed on a spring morning felt wonderful. She loved spring and its promise of warmer days. Today she planned to get outside and pull the weeds from the flowerbed in front of her home. Then she'd raise the windows and let the smell of spring wash the rooms with its refreshing scents. With the temperatures going to almost seventy, today would be a great day to give the car a bath airing it out too. Even now, the stuffy smell of winter lingered in her memories. Thoughts of the post winter smog on the windows and the thick coat of dirt on the outside reminded her that would be a big job. Maybe she would put that task off until tomorrow. After all, she had nothing but time these days.

Stretching again, Kimie couldn't help thinking how everything had been going her way lately. "Ouch!" Except for that pesky foot. It popped out of joint again! Those bones didn't seem to want to stay in the correct position for her little Human feet.

"Dang it! Don't you stupid toes know how you're supposed to look? This is the third time in the last month you've tried this

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and I am not going to let you win.” Kimie cried out in pain as it happened again. Quick reflexes kept them in place and minutes later Kimie resumed her stretching. Relaxed and happy, her mind drifted back to the event that made this new beginning possible.

Who would have believed that a twenty-six year old marketing manager could win the lottery? After all, the winners they showed on the news were always old couples or groups of blue-collar workers who pooled their money to win the big one. Kimie didn't fall into either of those groups. Had it really been almost a year since she'd won? So much had happened in that time and each change had triggered new emotions. From the high of winning the lottery, to the low of the ensuing kidnapping these mixed with the constant insanity of the paparazzi trying to get her picture or a quote. It had taken a lot for her to decide to leave the comfortable routine of her job and change her life. It was still hard to believe it had all happened to her.

Almost a year before, while doing her weekly grocery shopping and chatting on the phone with her best friend Sydney, Kimie took out two dollars and bought a lottery ticket. The prize for the next drawing was \$250,000,000. She'd always said someone had to win, so why not play! Besides, this was her contribution to the college students in Tennessee.

Kimie smiled. With the help of her parents and some old trees that gave their lives for her to learn, she'd managed to get through college without any loans. Not everyone had that support and a dollar or two here or there, didn't hurt her budget. Once or twice, she even won a couple of bucks. Kissing the ticket for luck, she tucked it into her purse, pushed her grocery cart out, loaded her battered old car, then headed home to fix dinner and get ready for work the next day.