Pinecones and Cherry Blossoms

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How it All Started

This project all started when my FYS instructor, Professor Wolbers, recommended me to do an Honors Project. She claimed that I could do anything, if it related to Japanese culture. I love to create stories, so I decided to make a love story. In the end, it turned out to be more of a romantic-comedy. I also drew the characters of the story as well, and short manga strips that relate to parts of the story.
The Story

My story, Pinecones and Cherry Blossoms, revolves around an American student transferring to a Japanese high school with no knowledge of how Japanese culture operates and does not speak Japanese at all. Together with his new friends, he learns to adapt to his new home, while his friends learn more about their American companion. Though he will eventually deal with embarrassment, bullying, and unexpected romance, the American boy will find some way to connect with the new people in his life, whether intentionally or not.
Characters
List of characters appearing in the story

- **Ash**: The American transfer student. He is unfamiliar with his new surroundings which often leads to many misunderstandings.
- **Hanako**: Ash's first friend. She is one of the smartest kids in her school and acts as a translator for Ash. She eventually grows to have a crush on Ash.
- **Misui**: Ash's and Hanako's homeroom teacher. She is friends with Ash's mom and planned on him moving to Japan. She is a bit of a worrywart.
- **Nakama**: A rebellious kid but with a lot of heart. Happy to be friends with Ash. Has a fondness for 1980s American movies.
- **Shien**: Hanako's best friend. Full of energy but lacking in wisdom.
- **Gankano**: The school's World History teacher. Does not have a fondness for Americans or their culture.
- **Chomei**: The richest kid in school with a vain personality. Has a crush on Hanako and believes himself as the king of the school.
The Story Itself

Information on the story

- The current version of the story is 25 pages long and contains over 9,600 words.
- All the characters' names, excluding Ash, relate to something specific about the character. For instance, Nakama means "bro" in Japanese while Chomei means "famous." The name, Ash, was voted on by my fellow students in my FYS 100 class.
- The school that the characters attend is called Akai Raion Academy, which translates to "Red Lion," referencing Albright's mascot.
- Quotes from the story:
  - "There were always complaints like 'I'm never going to America, so why should I learn English' and 'why do the Americans spell 'there' in three different ways?!'"
  - "this boy had his uniform unbuttoned and wore it like a jacket, revealing a red shirt with black symbols in kanji, saying Hangyaku-sha (Japanese for rebel, though of course Ash had no idea what it said)."
  - "'it's not just because he likes American culture, but also because he seems like a nice guy deep down. There's more to people than just how they look and act.'"
Cultural Differences
Some differences between American and Japanese cultures that I added in the story

- American school doors usually open back and forth, while Japanese school doors open side to side, like a van.
- Japanese physical exams have something called tobibako, where solid wooden boxes are stacked on top of each other. The goal is to jump over them while spreading your legs in the air. Sometimes the stack is over 9 feet tall.
- When a teacher (sensei in Japan) enters a classroom, all students stand and bow to him/her, showing respect.
- While most American students eat in a cafeteria, some Japanese schools allow their students to eat anywhere on campus, but most times it is in their homerooms.
- While most American lunches usually include a sandwich or something similar put into a lunch bag or paper bag, Japanese students usually have lunches involving cooked meats, seafood, or poultry, with the main ingredient being sticky rice, and are put into plastic boxes called bento.
- In the story, Ash cannot read any forms of text in the school because they are all written in Japanese characters.
The Future
How my story could progress in the future

- It would be amazing if I could publish this story in the future, as well as adding more series to it (I already have some ideas).
- With proper time and with the right help, I could make my story into a book, manga, or even anime. I would love to see something like that come true.
- My story itself is still in its early stage of development, and much more could eventually be worked on.
- Even though much of the story has been researched, the majority still needs to be fact-checked by an expert.
- I hope this story can eventually be worked upon and reach successfulness sometime in the future.
- The last two slides are the manga-like comic panels I drew in addition to the story.
Door

You like American movies? Yep.

I wanna be just like my hero...

Danny Zuko! From Grease!

Gankago, why do you hate Americans so much anyways?

SNAP!

Come on! Open up!

American only dine on greasy, fatty fast food! Their disgusting!

Movie

Grease...?

That movie is over 40 years old...

Has this guy never opened a door before?

Fast Food

Misui, make sure that American of yours doesn't get into trouble.

Damn Americans...

You wanna know why? It's because...

Oh dear!

Noah dude, are you ok?

That's all. They eat it... more than that you know...

Someone call the nurse!
Lunch part 1

What do you guys have for lunch? Fried shrimp! Grilled salmon! Omelettes!

SHRIMP??! Salmon??! Omelettes?!

Lunch part 2

Make no mistake, commoner! I rule this school! Heh. Heh. Heh.

Hey!! Are you even LISTENING?!

He looks so good...

Confession

And if you ever get in my way, I'll make sure that you...

Looks so good... Hanako...

Well, what do you have for lunch, Ash?

Just a sandwich, cookies, and chips...

Cookies?!! Chips?!! A real American sandwich!

I'm sorry. What were you saying?

Don't you think this is sudden?

Say it, Hanako!

Why would I say that?
Thank You for Reading

P.S.: SORRY I DID NOT DO A VIDEO. I AM SHY WHEN IT COMES TO SPEAKING, EVEN IF IT IS RECORDED AUDIO.