



STORY 1: KENTA

CHAPTER 1

On the Way to School

The heavy schoolbag was hurting Kenta's shoulders, so he took it off and put it on the low wall. Then, he sat on the wall and looked out at the calm sea. Kenta had started to walk to school by himself from the age of four. It wasn't very far and his father thought it was good for him to become independent. Now, he was four and three quarters. That's what he told anybody who asked him his age. The three quarters were very important to Kenta. It meant that when he was five, he would be able to have guitar lessons at school, and he would be tall enough to go on *real* roller coasters*, not just the baby rides – that's what his father had said.

Most days, if the weather was nice, Kenta would take a break on the way to school to look at the sea. He wanted to be a fisherman, just like his father. Kenta's father was the most powerful man the little boy knew. He was even more powerful than Ken, his uncle, who the little boy was named after. Uncle Ken had been a soldier, but now he was dead. Kenta's mother told him that if Kenta ever wanted to talk to Uncle Ken, he could go to the temple* and his uncle would hear him.

There were no boats to be seen on the sea now. Kenta's father had gone out to sea very early that morning and his boat was too far away.

Kenta opened his schoolbag and reached inside for his new toy, a red and yellow plastic airplane. Kenta wasn't supposed to take it to school, so he had to keep it a secret. He would tell his best friend Takumi, and maybe his second-best friend Koji, but nobody else. Then, Kenta took out the delicious rice cake he had taken from the kitchen when his mother wasn't looking. It was filled with sweet purple jam. He ate the whole cake and cleaned the jam off his mouth and hands.

roller coasters
רכבות הרים / أفعوانيات

temple
מקדש / معبد

Kenta picked up the airplane and jumped off the wall. Leaving his bag, he held the airplane high over his head and started to run toward school.

"Nee-yow!" he screamed, making the sound of the plane, as he waved his arm up and down. He threw the toy high into the air and watched it fly. But then, the plane fell to the ground with a crash. It was not a flying toy. Kenta ran over in panic. The two small plastic wheels had broken off the bottom of the airplane. He was going to be in trouble! What could he do? He quickly picked up the plane and the broken wheels and ran back to his bag on the wall. He pushed the toy into the bag and picked up the bag.



Kenta gave one last look at the sea before leaving for school. The water looked less calm and the waves seemed to be bigger. Kenta imagined his father far out in his fishing boat on the waves. Then, he thought he might be late for school, so he ran the rest of the way.