



Sakura: Petals and Regret

KITA SPARKLES
An AB Discovery Book

Sakura: Petals and Regret

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by
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Foreword:

When I first started to write a Sakura story, “Sakura Comes To Visit”, it was bedtime stories for a close friend – an adopted sister, basically. I never expected it to grow to the length it did and to gain the cult following that it did. As soon as it was apparent that it was my most successful story (and this was pre-publishing days, before I thought anything I wrote was good enough to publish), it was obvious a sequel was needed, so I wrote “Sakura Comes To Stay”.

Those two seemed good, and when Christmas came, and there was a story contest, I entered “A Very Sakura Christmas” in that (I think I got runner-up for it). And then life changed as it does, and for years, the Sakura stories (and for a while, ALL my writing) sat dormant.

One day, I was at a conference and staying in a college dorm, and I thought, “I wonder how Sakura would handle college?” Before I knew it, the ideas started to form in my mind, and three days later, I had 6 or 7 chapters already written of “Sakura Goes To College”.

While I was writing it, I noted that we had skipped over 4 years of Sakura’s life. That wasn’t too bad, though, since I had skipped over 3 years between “Sakura Comes To Visit” and “Sakura Comes To Stay”. I did think some things needed to be explained, so I set up “flashbacks” throughout the story, but I did not go into detail on any of those side stories. Some really deserved detail. Of course, the college stories were writing themselves, what with Megan coming out (I did not intend to do that in that book – totally Megan’s idea!) and Sakura finding a potential Daddy. I wanted something for “Sakura, Megan, and Summer: I Know Her So Well” to have more of a plot. My sister Sharline, when she read it, said, “Okay – that got real dark real fast...” It was handled well, though, and turned out okay, and in the end, I had another great idea, so I wrote it into a cliffhanger for the next book, “Sakura: Spring Break”.

It’s not yet through a whole first year at college, but having all three girls now finding their path (even Summer!), it seemed the

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series might pause for a while at six novels. But I have fans. One of them, named Senna, wanted to see more. They paid me to write a commissioned story that is included in this collection as “Sakura: Petals and Regret”. But with that, I started to think about all those little side stories that got ignored over the years.

These twelve stories start by going all the way back before the first story, to where Sakura is seven and Felicia is seventeen, and explain the origin of The Baby Game, which is what Sakura asks to play when she visits Felicia three years later. There are three stories in Felicia’s arc, which starts with the pre “Sakura Comes To Visit” and spans up to “Sakura Comes To Stay.” Megan’s arc is two stories about her babysitting adventures, which put Sakura at about fifteen or sixteen. Sakura’s arc starts with her meeting Austin at fifteen in “The Dance” and then spans all the way up to her acceptance to college at age eighteen.

Throughout the stories, you will be delighted as you see the ties to the novels, how they fit in, or what they explain. Each story has a forward from me, placing it in the timeline and such, and three chapters. Each story is less than 15 pages, so you can read at your own rate and yet finish a story or two each time. I hope every fan will enjoy reading these stories as much as I enjoyed writing them. I hope you will laugh and cry and come away understanding the characters just a little bit better.

- Guinevere Nikita Sparkles

The Baby Game

Foreword:

“But how did it all begin?” A common question, no? If you read “Sakura Comes To Visit,” then you know how it all started as a game between the two sisters, Sakura and Felicia. This was pre-Megan, pre-a lot of things we see in the novels. So what about a story to see how all that began, the game they played, and how it was done? What if we drop all the way back to the first time they played it? Before Felicia went away to college.

This takes place when Sakura was seven. It is shorter than the rest of the short stories in this collection and predates her friendship with Megan, but it is an origin story that needs to be told. All these years after the first Sakura story was told, it is time to look back on the game Sakura and Felicia played that left its mark so heavily on Sakura.

Chapter 1

Felicia raised her eyes once again from her book to gaze at Sakura, her sister. Ten years younger than she was, Sakura had come along as something of a surprise to their parents. Now, seven years later, Felicia would soon be leaving for college, and it seemed she barely knew this little girl. That was sad to her.

They didn’t look a lot like sisters. Felicia was definitely different from other Japanese descent girls of her age. She had very light blonde hair, fair skin, and was very tall. Some of the older superstitious people of her heritage had suggested she was a gifted child, while some of the more suspicious thought her mother had cheated with a Caucasian, and in most cases, such people had been weeded out of her family’s lives. The truth of the matter was that it was just a genetic variation. It was rare, but not impossible.

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Sakura, on the other hand, was dark. It was hard to see how tall she would be, but right now, she was shorter than most, if not all, of her class at school. With her dark hair and dark eyes, there was really no mistaking her heritage. But Felicia did not want to keep missing out on knowing Sakura. She was babysitting her a lot now, and at least until she did have to leave, since she was old enough now, maybe they could have some fun together.

"Sakura? You umm... want to play a game or something?" Felicia finally ventured.

Sakura looked up, a bit surprised. This was different! "You usually say I'm too young to play games with you..." she pointed out.

It was Felicia's turn to be surprised. The kid was smart. She hadn't even realized Sakura was picking up on that. "Well, yeah, those games you usually are! Mamma-San would kill me if I let you play those violent games. But there are lots of other things we could play."

Sakura's attention to the TV was broken. She now faced her sister. "Okay. Do you... Wanna play with my dollies?"

Felicia grinned a little at that. "How about," she said with a little gleam in her eye, "We play that you *are* a dolly?"

"That doesn't sound very fun," Sakura remarked. "I'd have to be like this all the time..." She stuck her arms and legs out straight and assumed an unblinking stare. Felicia bit back laughter. The kid was funny too. Why hadn't she ever realized it before?

"Okayyyyy... so maybe you can be something different then. How about... a baby?" Felicia's eyes twinkled. At Sakura's age, she would have loved to get to play. She was a baby. She wondered if Sakura would jump at the chance as well.

"I suppose we could do that." Sakura appeared to be thinking hard. "It might be kinda fun actually..." she caught herself before going on. "So, kinda like playing house?"

"Yeah," Felicia agreed. "Except you'd always be the baby."

"I already *am* always the baby," Sakura rolled her eyes. Every time her friends wanted to play this, she ended up being the baby. And some of her friends had actually said it was a part she was good at. She wasn't sure how to feel about that. She didn't exactly mind

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playing the part of a baby, and she thought maybe she should. “You won’t... tease me?” she added plaintively, watching Felicia’s face.

“No, Sis, I won’t do that to you,” Felicia said earnestly. “Why would I?”

Sakura tried to put a voice to her fears. “Maybe it’s not. Maybe it’s not normal to have fun doing that?”

Felicia was quiet for a minute, trying to figure out how to put things in words her young sister would understand. “You’re worried what other people think is normal? I don’t think you should worry about that. If you like something, just find an acceptable way to express it.” She could see that Sakura wasn’t quite understanding her explanation. “I won’t tease you,” she promised with a smile.

A small smile tugged at the corners of Sakura’s mouth. “What would you like to do first?”

Chapter 2

That game had gone well. They played all the way up to when their parents got home. Then they played it the next time Felicia babysat Sakura, and the next.

Felicia was keen to add layers to the game. It didn't take long for her to suddenly remember she had a baby bottle hidden away, and then a pacifier. Sakura had accepted these tentatively. The bottle was fun as she snuggled with her sister to be fed, and the pacifier bobbed in her mouth without her even thinking about it, as she played on the blanket that Felicia had spread on the floor, saying it was her "playpen".

Felicia watched her suck the pacifier and did not even mind that she was dressed in a blanket sleeper in the middle of the day. "She really is like me," Felicia thought, and then she had to bite back a desire to be a baby herself. She was the older sister, and she was the babysitter. Someone had to be responsible. Maybe in the future, though.

"So, here is what I am thinking," Felicia said to Sakura, who had been fully engrossed in a few baby toys they dug out of the attic. "What still separates you from being like a real baby?"

Sakura looked down at herself. "I'm too big," she answered simply.

Felicia looked doubtful. "Not really..." she let the comment hang.

Sakura frowned. "You promised not to tease me!"

"I'm sorry. I'm not trying to. I just think you can still fit in lots of baby things," Felicia explained. "Wish I could," she added silently to herself.

"Oh, I guess in that case it could be a lot of things. I don't sleep in a crib or eat in a highchair, or get walked in a stroller."

"Do you want to walk in a stroller? I bet the one in the garage still works," Felicia began.

"Licia! Of course not! My friends might see me!" Sakura said logically.