

Homestay
Plot Summary

by
Colin Sanders

mrcolin.com

July 11, 2025
colin@mrcolin.com

CHARACTER SET-UP:

The host mother, MEGUMI KIMURA, is an expert thief though long retired. Her husband TATSURO, the host father, traditionally ran the business front to launder their earnings, but they both vowed to abandon that life when their daughter MIKI was born ten years ago.

After years of moving around, they settle down in a suburb of Tokyo where Tatsuro opens a legitimate video game arcade and Megumi does her best as a stay-at-home mom. Megumi thinks that becoming a host family will help keep them on the straight and narrow path, where they must be on their best behaviour to play host to a guest.

The player controls the visitor to Japan, an unseen and unheard character we only know as coming from outside Japan. The player character wants to travel, not just for the cultural immersion, but to fill the void in their own life left by the passing of their adoptive mother.

Outside forces begin to dash the family's hopes for a normal life as a local gang run by Tatsuro's older brother MASARU has infiltrated Tatsuro's arcade business and ensnared Tatsuro into a financial debt. Megumi becomes increasingly concerned that they risk jeopardizing their daughter Miki's future as they are pulled back into their old life of crime.

PLOT:

The game begins on an airplane as the player character (PC) travels to Japan. They have before them the box of the latest in language learning technology: Professor Shinji's Magic Eye. An amazing device that can translate the name of any object it photographs. The player unboxes the item and learns how to use it by pointing it at objects around them and pressing the capture button. It is quite impressive.

The plane lands and the PC reviews some papers they carry as they wait for their baggage. They have one sheet that briefly outlines the family they will live with -- the Kimura family which has a mom, dad, daughter and dog. Another sheet is the arrival guide from the tour company they signed up with, and finally they carry a photo of their mom. The bags start to arrive and the player must select one -- there are five of different themes: baseball, wrestling, anime cooking, rainbow and plain black.

The PC is put in a taxi by the tour company liaison and enjoys a scenic drive through Tokyo to the host family's home in the suburbs.

The mother MEGUMI, the daughter MIKI, and the dog BRANDY, greet the PC at their front door before leading the PC inside. The player views the dining table as new food keeps getting added to it. Then the player must awkwardly use chopsticks for the first time while Megumi and Miki converse. The player does not know what they are saying as no subtitles or translation is given.

After dinner, Megumi draws a map for the PC which explains how to navigate from their home to the train station, which the PC will need to do to get to their language school the next day. She gives the PC the map she drew and a train pass and then shows the PC to their room.

Once left alone for the night, the PC takes out the Magic Eye in their bedroom when Miki and Brandy burst into the room wearing playful wrestling masks. Miki demands to be shown how the camera works and guides the PC if they are having difficulty.

After they leave, the player learns how they can review all the words and conversations they gathered through the Magic Eye that day. Reviewing the conversations adds an enormous amount of new words to the player's captured list, revealing more subtitles in the scenes that will follow.

The player chooses when to go to sleep, and when they do the PC will first take out a sleep-aid that can be played with before actually sleeping. Which aid appears depends on the luggage chosen: baseball (baseball player action figure with voice), wrestling (wrestler plushie with voice), anime cooking (character plushie with voice), rainbow (centaur action figure with voice), plain black (two pages of a translated romance manga).

After using the sleep-aid for a bit the PC begins to suffer a bout of home sickness and they look over at the picture of their mom before falling asleep.

The PC wakes up in the middle of the night because of their jet lag, and hears a heated conversation coming from downstairs. The PC sneaks into the upstairs hallway and spies on the host mother and father talking below. They can't understand what they are saying but they can tell the host mother is angry and the host father is sorry about something. They go back to bed.

The PC wakes up in the morning with Brandy staring over them. Brandy leads the PC down the stairs for breakfast. Once again the player observes the dining table as food is added to it and then uses chopsticks to try to eat, all while Megumi and Miki talk to each other. After breakfast Megumi wishes the PC well on their journey to the school.

The PC follows Megumi's map as they walk through the neighborhood navigating their way to the train station. Along the way they encounter a gang who take the Magic Eye from the player and break it, telling the PC to get lost. The PC picks up the broken pieces of the Magic Eye and carries on to the train station. The Magic Eye cannot be used again until it is fixed.

At school, the teacher plays a game with the students. She asks students to draw a line following her instructions: go, left, right, stop. After the player performs this activity correctly the class breaks for lunch.

The PC enjoys lunch in a nearby park and looks at an advertisement for an electronics repair and game arcade in Shinjuku.

For the afternoon session of class the teacher reads a book to the students about a turtle who always wants to help and learn even if they aren't very good at things. The player controls the turtle on the pages as the teacher reads.

After class the PC heads to the electronics repair store in Shinjuku to get their Magic Eye fixed. While waiting they explore the arcade and play a game called Mech Protectors. It is a vertically scrolling shooting game about mech pilots who can attach their ships together to make a more powerful bot. The player plays this as long as they'd like and when they choose to quit an OLD MAN is waiting there to return the repaired Magic Eye to the PC. The old man can speak English.

Back at the host family's home, the PC plays a game of "Western Gun" with Miki and Brandy. Players fire foam darts from a revolver, taking cover and reloading the barrel when necessary. After playing for a bit Miki is satisfied and expresses her longing to have a brother or sister.

The PC is in their own room for the night and can review words again. After a while they take out the sleep-aid, feel homesick, look at their picture of mom, then fall asleep. The player struggles to sleep because of jet lag and is awake late at night again and this time hears a loud sound from downstairs. Once again the PC sneaks out of their room to look around. They don't notice anyone else awake so they go down the stairs to look around in the dark. They see the kitchen window slide shut.

In the morning, Brandy once again greets the PC and leads them downstairs for breakfast. The player inspects the food and then uses chopsticks to eat while Megumi and Miki talk. The player doesn't really understand but they discuss how children can act wild as a means to learn a language better. After Miki leaves for school, Megumi asks the PC -- confident she isn't being understood -- if the PC wants to act wild, too.

The PC learns some basic Japanese words at school and then they head to the Shinjuku arcade again to play Mech Protectors. The Old Man talks with the PC and warns them to not stay too late because the clientele changes at night.

The PC returns home but no one is there. They explore the home freely and go into the parent's bedroom. They find old newspaper clippings about robberies from different cities, though they are written in Japanese and the player doesn't understand. They notice all of Megumi's clothes are black. They can find an LCD handheld game called "Dorobou" (The Thief) and take it.

Suddenly the front door opens and Tatsuro enters. He walks around looking for something and the PC tries to hide and sneak past him back up to their bedroom. Tatsuro catches the PC and seems to forget that they were hosting a guest.

The PC is in their bedroom and can review the Magic Eye. If they stole "Dorobou" they can play it now. The PC uses their sleep-aid, feels homesick, looks at their picture of mom and then falls asleep.

The PC wakes up much later than usual. Brandy is not there. No one is home. The player can explore the home again. On the dining table is a note saying that Megumi will be home tonight and that Tatsuro will make breakfast. There's a single banana left on the table -- the player can try picking it up with chopsticks.

Soon the phone rings until the answering machine picks it up. The player doesn't understand, but there are men speaking about missing payments and the price of protection going up.

The PC leaves for school, once again navigating all the way there.

The class is on an excursion this day to the Nakamise shopping street in Asakusa. The teacher has prepared a scavenger hunt for the students. The PC navigates the street looking for the items on the handout until they find everything or time runs out.

After school the PC goes to the Shinjuku arcade. The PC plays Mech Protectors and talks with the old man. It's Christmas Eve and he talks about how New Years in Japan is a time for family like Christmas is in other countries. He tells about the 108 bells rung on New Years Day that symbolize the 108 different ways to sin.

Back at home it is just Megumi there for dinner. She seems sad. The PC uses the chopsticks to eat like usual but Megumi keeps interrupting them. She tells the PC, though they may not understand, that Miki and Brandy are staying with her parents for the winter break. She rhetorically asks if Santa still comes for people who are bad. She wonders how Santa gets into homes that don't have a chimney, and she tries to reason that if Christmas is about family and you fight for what's best for your family then it can't be bad, can it?

The PC goes to their bedroom and reviews their Magic Eye captures. After using their sleep aid they hear Megumi and Tatsuro talking downstairs. The PC sneaks to the top of the staircase to eavesdrop.

The player can put together the key parts of this, but not all the details. Tatsuro is trying to convince Megumi to steal money from the homes of the gang that antagonizes Tatsuro's arcade. He says this is the surest way to repay the debt they owe, and besides, they are bad guys anyway -- is it really so bad? Megumi is not convinced. She does not want to live that life anymore, and says they have already "done it for the last time" many times already. Tatsuro says he wants to do better than before, so he suggests also giving the arcade business to the gang for them to use as a legitimate front for their criminal activities, allowing Tatsuro to walk away and for the family to be free of them. Megumi is frozen and cannot act -- she knows it's a way out, but it also breaks their promise to live a normal family life for Miki's sake.

The PC starts to feel a panic similar to their feeling of homesickness, but this time the player has the option to "Open Up". Upon selecting it the PC talks to the parents through the Magic Eye offering to help. Tatsuro and Megumi each comment that they have caught the PC sneaking around the home before. Megumi refuses the PC's offer and tells them to go back to bed.

Just as the PC is about to fall asleep again, Megumi enters their room. She says that she discussed it with Tatsuro and that they will in fact accept the PC's help. The barrier between host and guest falls, and the PC enters the host parents' world.

In a montage, Megumi tells the PC that they must do exactly as she says as she teaches the PC how to break into homes, find money, then leave undetected. The PC performs actions such as holding a flashlight while Megumi picks a lock, opening doors quietly, moving slowly, searching for money, finding money, taking money and leaving carefully. In between burglaries we see Megumi counting the money, the PC going to school and visiting the arcade, before going to a new home the next night, and so on and so forth for several nights in a row.

Megumi tells the PC they almost have enough money but there is still one more home to hit. This time the player experiences the burglary as one complete sequence. Megumi unlocks the front door and they both sneak in. They go separate ways to search for and collect money. In the family room the PC finds a display revolver. At the same time Megumi opens a mysteriously locked kitchen door, which opens to reveal a gang of men on the other side playing mahjong. One of the men pulls a gun out and starts to fire it. The PC grabs the revolver out of the display and can fire back -- ducking for cover and moving about just as they did when playing with Miki and Brandy. No one can actually get shot, but a mess is made of the home.

Megumi finds car keys and gives them to the PC and tells them to go start the car out front. The player moves from cover to cover out the door to the car and starts it. Megumi gets in and gives driving instructions just as the teacher did in the classroom and the player controls the car -- left, right, left, etc. They are being chased by motorcycles, and as the player correctly follows orders the motorcyclists crash until finally Megumi screams "Stop!"

Megumi and the PC leave the car behind and walk home. As they walk Megumi expresses her confusion about their relationship. Is the PC just a guest, or are they really like a member of the family?

Back at home the PC can review the Magic Eye and sleep. There is no homesickness effect.

Overtop scenes of the PC waiting for the train, being in class and hanging out in front of the Shinjuku arcade, we hear Tatsuro talk with Megumi about how he now sees what Megumi was trying to do by becoming a host family and he is sorry he didn't support her before.

Later that night, Tatsuro talks with the PC. He says it's now time for the second part of their plan. Tatsuro and the PC are going to try to deceive his older brother Masaru and his gang into thinking that the PC is actually a wealthy investor from America who wants to buy into the Japanese arcade market. Tatsuro will sell this fake American investor his share of the company, which the investor will pay for using the stolen cash. Tatsuro will give this cash to Masaru to repay his debt. Tatsuro will then explain to Masaru that the investor thinks they are buying just a piece of the company and that Masaru is the majority stakeholder. Tatsuro will then transfer real ownership of the company to Masaru, thereby both paying off his debt and legally setting up Masaru as the arcade's rightful owner. Tatsuro's family will be free from the gang and the gang will have a legitimate business they can use -- everybody wins.

Tatsuro has devised a system for the negotiation with the gang where he will show a number on his hands which corresponds to a preset phrase the player must select to play from the Magic Eye. After practicing it a bit Tatsuro says there is still time to kill and they must get into the mood of being a rich investor.

This begins another montage where Tatsuro takes the PC out for a night on the town. They visit a dance hall, a karaoke bar, a bowling alley and a hostess club. The whole time the PC can use the Magic Eye to capture words from these environments. They have too much to drink and the screen becomes a bit foggy and blurred.

Tatsuro and the PC appear at Tatsuro's arcade and head to the back room where the whole gang is waiting. Tatsuro explains the situation to Masaru, and Masaru says he is interested in playing a game with the investor to see if they will be a good fit as business partners. Masaru proposes playing a game of blackjack. If he wins, the buy-in price goes up 20%, but if he loses it goes down 20%. It's best two-out-of-three. The PC accepts. As they play, Masaru becomes suspicious of the PC because of their Magic Eye, which the gang recognizes from before. Masaru questions if the PC is actually a cop and this is a set up, and just then the actual police break in and arrest everyone, including the PC. Tatsuro apologizes to the PC and says he had fun together.

At the police station the PC is questioned by two officers, but the PC cannot reply. The police captain antagonizes the PC saying he can keep them there forever and no one will ever know.

The PC spends the night in a jail cell. They hear the countdown to New Years by officers down the hall and then they can hear the temple bells being rung from far away out the window. The PC begins to suffer an extreme home sickness attack and they black out.

As if in a dream, we see that the PC is now in a hospital and they can navigate down the hall. In the last room is the PC's mom, hooked up to various devices. She asks the PC what's wrong and says there is nothing to be afraid of. She says that the PC will have a great trip to Japan and will meet lots of people and that they just need to open up to others. She hands over a wrapped box -- the exact shape of the Magic Eye box -- and says it's to help the PC make connections, but not to open it until the trip begins. The mom fades away leaving an empty hospital bed.

The PC wakes up in the jail cell the next morning. An officer unlocks the door and says they are free to go. Megumi is there waiting. She expresses her deep shame at getting the PC involved in all of this and how she hoped being a host family would help make their life normal. She says the PC will return home soon and her family won't trouble the PC anymore.

Once again, overtop of some of the places the PC has visited on their trip, we hear a basic Japanese lesson being led by the teacher. We end up at the Shinjuku arcade where the PC is playing Mech Protectors.

When the player finishes playing the Old Man is there to talk. He says he knows the PC got into some trouble. He knows because of his "magic eye" -- he says he has friends in many places. The Old Man even has the PC's Magic Eye and he returns it. It is now upgraded and can capture twice as fast as before. He says the gang at Tatsuro's arcade are invaders and they don't belong there and he wants to meet the PC there tonight so he can introduce the PC to his own family.

That night at dinner, Miki and Brandy are home, but Megumi is sombre. The player goes to bed and can review words, but instead of going to sleep the PC opens the bedroom window to sneak out. Miki catches the PC in the act but says not to worry and she won't tell mom.

The PC navigates from the home to Tatsuro's arcade in the dark of night. When they arrive, Tatsuro is concerned for the safety of the PC for having shown up, and the gang quickly mobilizes around them. Just then the Old Man enters the arcade along with six large men in black suits.

The Old Man greets Masaru as if he has known him from when he was a child. The gang members are all frightened as they know who this Old Man is. The Old Man says the gang is out of its territory and that he has a proposition: defeat the PC at a game of Mech Protectors to keep Tatsuro's arcade, or lose and never show their faces there ever again.

Thinking it will be easy, they gladly accept. The player has practiced much and is better than the gang members. As they are playing, the PC imagines they are inside the game itself flying in 3D and that the different family members -- Brandy, Miki, Tatsuro, Megumi -- are the real mech pilots and they are teaming up to defeat the gang. The player beats all five gang members and the Old Man's henchmen toss them out of the arcade. The Old Man had fun watching and says goodnight.

For the first time, all the members of the family are sitting around the dining table. The PC is now proficient at using chopsticks and the family talks while they eat. Tatsuro tells Miki that he is selling the arcade to find a new job that allows more time to spend with her. Megumi starts to cry because it seems like a normal family scene. Miki then starts to cry because the PC will go home soon. Megumi says there's still a little bit of time left and they should do something exciting together, something fun, something wild! Miki loves the idea.