

carried a certain knowing in his voice that I couldn't help but detect. The following week, I bought a one-way flight to Tokyo. From the time it took to land and arrive at my hotel room, I had fallen in love.

Tokyo is the most populated city in the world. Its land mass is enormous. Its skylines are spectacular. Yet there is no pollution, little traffic, and almost no noise. Subways run seemingly everywhere, with trains that arrive every three minutes. They are never late. Eat at a five-star restaurant or visit a local 7-Eleven and you can expect the same politeness and a similar quality of service. You like technology? Tokyo has the latest and most cutting edge. You prefer nature? Dozens of incredibly well-manicured gardens are there to visit. And the food? Don't get me started, or I'll never finish this book.

After two weeks in Tokyo, I called Kimberly and convinced her to come join me. She fell in love too. We decided to take our first trip from Tokyo out to a little town named Hakone. You might have heard of Hakone. It's famous for its natural mineral baths and scenic beauty, nestled below lush green mountains. But there is another thing this beautiful place is also known for - its finely crafted wooden puzzle boxes.

Japanese puzzle boxes are perfectly Japanese. Finely articulated wood-inlay designs decorate the surface of a smooth six-sided box with no obvious or discernible way to open it. You must slide its panels to discover the way in. Each box has its own combination of movements. To hold a Japanese puzzle box in your hand is to feel a part of the refined attention to detail that makes Japan so special. There is a budding joy in the detailed movements required to open one.

Kimberly and I were so enamored by these Japanese puzzle boxes we saw in Hakone that we bought several as gifts for friends and family and a few for ourselves, to boot. After we returned, at last, to Los Angeles, these puzzle boxes were interactive topics at our dinner parties for many months to come.

Meanwhile, about 6,000 nautical miles east of Japan and forty miles northeast of Asheville, North Carolina, lies another small town tucked away into the mountains. This place is named Bakersville, and the people who live there enjoy scenic green mountains not too dissimilar to Hakone, Japan.

In Bakersville, lives a young man whose attention to detail is on par with some of the greatest artisans in the world. He spends much of his time in his humble blacksmith studio, crafting tools. These tools are sought after by fellow builders and artists from around the world. His tools are widely popular because of their combination of aesthetics and utility and the quality and detail with which they are made. Seth Gould is this blacksmith's name, and he spent more than a year designing and crafting the five treasure boxes that now safekeep our complete treasure.

When mapping out this hunt, one of the most difficult riddles for me to solve was how to acquire five treasure boxes of suitable size, craftsmanship, and value to match the contents they would hold. I had no interest in chests that were glorified containers. From the jump, I wanted each treasure box to be as original, desirable, and well-crafted as any treasure item they would hold. I wanted each treasure box to be a treasure piece itself.