

## I found a new 'dad' online!

By Mandy Stadtmiller October 14, 2010



When Liu Mochizuki-Delignon was 4 years old and growing up in Japan, his father left his mother because he wanted a different life. “We couldn’t stop crying for two weeks,” the boy recalls today — nearly a decade later.

“I had just turned 4, right after my birthday,” Liu says softly. “I was very sad. It was tough. Really tough.”

In 2006, when Liu moved with his single mom, Minako Mochizuki, to New York City, he still ached for his mother to remarry — and to have siblings of his own.

But Minako was very shy about romance. Even though she joined dating Web site [Match.com](http://Match.com) in 2008 at the urging of another single mother, it was Liu who went online to play matchmaker at the tender age of 11.

Liu helped her write the profile. And he was the first to spot the man who is now his stepfather, saying to his mom: “I think he’s the one.”

The man he selected was named Scott Lupia, a sports-loving, easygoing, self-deprecating fifth-grade teacher from New Jersey who said he liked to cook and had kind eyes.

He also proved to be the answer to their dreams.

After dating for just a year, Scott, 44, and Minako, 43, married, and next month they will celebrate their first wedding anniversary.

“He was a teacher, so that was nice, too,” says Liu, who attends the Lycée Français de New York.

“I thought he would be nice to kids.”

On a recent weekday, as the whole family joked and laughed in its sunny apartment on the Upper East Side, it’s hard to imagine them as anything but a family.

Playfully curious, Scott inquires how school is going for “Liu-sky” (the 13-year-old got a perfect score on his poem analysis), or just as gently, he teases “Minaks” about her adherence to specific Japanese customs and culture.

Together, one thing is clear: These three are the picture of a real-life “modern family.” And a gorgeous reminder of how sometimes the wisdom of a child might be all you really need.

Back in Japan, shortly after Liu’s French father, Thomas, walked out, the boy and his mom comforted each other and Minako made a decision.

“I kept saying to ourselves,” Minako recalls, “ ‘We are not miserable. We are happy.’ ”

A devoted team, the two of them played classical music, with Minako on cello and Liu on piano, cooked bluefish in their small, cozy apartment, rode bicycles and talked constantly.

Liu was sometimes shockingly mature. One day, as he and his mother embarked on a 40-minute bus ride home from school in Tokyo, he turned to her, held her hand and said: “Your life is your life. It’s not impossible to start over.”

He was 4.

At one point, his divorced parents moved back in together to make raising him easier, and Liu would ask why they couldn’t be together.

“Mom would always tell me that was impossible, and I wouldn’t understand why,” he says.

“But now I see how awkward, how weird it must have been for them.”

But then Minako made a decision to move halfway around the world from his father, and Liu’s world was upturned again.

Leaving his 68-year-old grandparents, who often cared for him, Liu came with his mother to America so she could accept a job as a technology consultant at a bank in Manhattan. On the flight to New York, Liu had to ask three times how to say “orange juice” in English. Once, in

Manhattan, the pair got lost on the subway and ended up wandering around 125th Street in Harlem.

Liu couldn't understand a word.

Still, although the two of them cried every night, they both knew it was the right decision. Eventually, Minako stumbled upon a group for single Japanese mothers, seeing a posting in a bookstore. She took up salsa classes, had fun shopping at Quiksilver, her son's favorite clothing store, and she started to meet people outside of her 12-hour workdays.

When one of the mothers at Liu's school mentioned [Match.com](#) to Minako, and urged her to start looking for a partner, she hesitantly agreed. But it wasn't until Liu stepped in that the real matchmaking began.

He helped her write an extraordinarily simple profile — accompanied by only one photo — with information on her favorite foods, like Japanese delicacies and apple turnovers. It said she was looking for a “serious long-term relationship.” Her user handle? “Iris smile8.” When Scott suddenly “winked” at Minako's profile, indicating his interest, young Liu helped his mom decide to return the “wink” back. The schoolteacher, who also had a spare profile — with only two photos — then wrote her, “Thanks for returning my wink. I like your profile because you mention being happy and smiling and seem like a sincere person. Life is good and we have a choice to be happy so your profile seems good.”

He added, “Tell me more about yourself. You have a child — how old is he/she? You are from Japan?”

Scott and Minako met for coffee at Grand Central Terminal one week later. Before the date, Liu had but one bit of advice. “He said, ‘Be nice,’” Minako recalls. “I'm sometimes so uptight. Too polite.”

But when the two found each other, the connection was instantaneous. “When I met Minako, I knew she was different,” Scott says. “First of all, she smiled. Sometimes when you meet someone on a date, they're very nervous.”

“He's so comfortable and easy to talk to,” Minako reflects. “There's really some element of him that makes me feel like I knew him so long.”

Scott gazes tenderly at his wife, remembering: “I thought she was cute and really happy and gentle and feminine, and like I wasn't getting the third degree.”

He then recalls previous [Match.com](#) dates, including the woman who tried to recruit him for a cult and the woman with the large Adam's apple. “I'll be polite to anyone for a half hour,” Scott says with an easygoing shrug.

But for Minako and Scott, the sparks were flying. And by date five, it was time to meet Liu. So they all cooked a simple Italian meal together at their apartment.

“I was really nervous,” Liu explains.

“Because, like, it’s hard the first time you meet someone. I was nervous before, but then I was really comfortable. We shook hands, and right away I knew he was a nice guy.”

Within six weeks, as the courtship progressed, Scott stunned Minako, a world traveler who speaks Spanish, Japanese, French and English, by taking her to his hometown.

“This is the first time I spent a lot of time with Americans,” she says excitedly. “I had never been to Jersey before.”

After six months, Scott took her to Avalon, NJ, a sleepy beach town where his whole family vacations.

He took Minako on a stroll on the beach, and when he dropped to his knees, she surprised him by dropping down in the sand, too.

“I barely got half a word out of my mouth, and she was on her knees, too,” he recalls with a chuckle.

“I said, ‘Minako, will you marry me?’ Her response was immediate.”

Five months later, at City Hall, Liu stood next to his mother, crying once again. This time with happiness.

Minako wore her grandmother’s traditional purple lace kimono with yellow and orange detail. Underneath, a small bump was starting to show. In answer to both of their prayers, despite being afraid she might not be able to conceive at the age of 42, Minako was pregnant.

Because the two of them wanted to have children and because of her age, she and Scott started trying before the wedding, and a newly pregnant Minako took the vows of marriage.

“I told my mom, what if it is twins?” Liu says. Minako just shook her head and said she didn’t think it was possible. Liu said, “You never know.”

Later, a visit to the doctor confirmed: twins. Liu then said, “What if it was one boy and one girl?” His prediction was right once again. Six months after the ceremony, Minako gave birth to Juliette and Charlie. Minako picked the name Juliette. Scott picked Charlie.

“I was so happy,” she says, “because in one year so many things happened. All the time we have two, two, two. And suddenly,” Minako pauses, her eyes widening as she counts the number of people in her family, “five.”

Sitting nearby at his laptop, Liu looks up and just smiles.

*(<https://nypost.com/2010/10/14/i-found-a-new-dad-online/>)*