

第18章

ジムの訪日、そして父の死

2度目の渡米で、シカゴに住みはじめた1969年から、ほぼ3年ぶりの1972年3月に、私は東京の両親の家に帰りました。ジムは少し遅れて4月に到着することになっていましたが、私は初めの一週間ばかり、朝から晩まで母と喋りまくったあとは、ジムの来る日を待ち兼ねて我が家でウロっとしてるのがいやで、渡米直前に活躍したマンパワー・ジャパンに急遽返り咲き、ほぼ毎日仕事をした次第です。

3年前同様に、アメリカ人、ヨーロッパ人ビジネスマン達の臨時秘書で、速記を取っては、それを文書にタイプする仕事をしました。ジムがもうすぐ来る、もうすぐ来る、と思ってるものだから、てんで仕事に集中できなかったこと、記憶にあります。

4月に入り、やっとジムが現れました。母は、私の短編小説もどきの長文手紙で、あれだけ話を聞いとりゃ、

「とても初めて会ったような気はしないわ」

と言いました。3週間足らずの滞在でしたが、その間『曲者』のジムは、我が父が胸中密かに望んでいたに違いない「リョウコを預かります」という言葉は遂に言わなかったのです。

Chapter 18

Jim Visits My Family, Then My Father Passes Away

I returned to Japan in March of 1972 for the first time in nearly three years since I moved to Chicago. Jim was to join me in April.

My mother and I talked and talked, day and night, without stopping, for nearly a week.

Then I called good old Manpower. President Finnerty and all the staff welcomed me back. Once again, I took temporary assignments, just as I had done a few years prior. I took dictation from American and European businessmen, which I transcribed into English documents. I recall not being able to concentrate on what I was doing, for my thoughts were forever focused on Jim and his forthcoming visit. My whole family was looking forward to meeting him, for sure.

Finally, Jim arrived. Having been inundated by my interminable letters about him for three years, however, my mother's first impression was, "I don't feel I'm meeting him for the first time!"

Jim stayed for about two weeks at my parents' house. However, true to his reputation of being "easy-going but not easy," he did not say the words that I'm sure my father secretly wished to hear from his lips, that is, "May I have your permission to take your daughter's hand in marriage?"

父は3年前に比べ、ぐっと老け込んでいました。少女時代から、自分のお父さんは、友人達の父親とはまるで異なった、素敵な風貌と比類なき孤高の精神を供えた人だ、と誇りに思っていた私は、今、昔日の面影薄れた父の姿をジムに見せることは、無念の極みでした。そのもどかしさを、私はやはりジムに伝えたのです。するとジムは、

「リョウコ、僕はお父さんがどんな人だったか、ちゃんと分かるよ」

過たず人を見る、深く優しい心の持ち主ジムは、恐らく衆に抜きん出た父の本来の姿を、我が少女時代の誇らしき父の面影を、見通していたにちがいありません。

ジムがなんら意思表示をしなかったことで、末娘を溺愛してた我が父は、おおいに心を痛めたと思いますが、他方、賢婦人の母は、ジムの沈黙に少しも動じることなく、いかにも彼女らしい以下の解釈を私に提示しました。即ち、

「このジムって男は、日本の女に惚れるその他アメリカ人男性一般と、ちょっと違っとる。日本の女に惚れたり、妻に娶るアメリカ人や西欧人は、そもそも日本の古い文化や歴史、しきたりなんぞに関心がある。このジムは、日本の文化なんぞまるで興味なし。いわゆる Japanophile といわれる西欧人たちが大好きな、日本のお風呂一つを例にとっても、彼はもう大閉口してるじゃない？」(註)

In the three years that I was away from home, my father had aged quite a bit. His health was visibly declining. As a young girl, I was so proud of my father. He was tall. He was wonderfully serene in his appearance. He was of distinguished character. I was quite disappointed that I could not show off that shining figure of my father to Jim, and I said to him,

“I wish you could have met my father at least several years ago,” to which Jim remarked,

“Ryoko, I think I understand what kind of a man he used to be; what kind of a father he was to you.”

Jim, with his kindness and compassion, could see who my father had been in his prime.

I am sure that Jim not having made any declaration of intent regarding me hurt my father immensely. My mother, who was of sturdier character, on the other hand, interpreted Jim's silence on the subject, as follows:

“Jim is a bit different from all those Americans and other men from Europe who fall in love with and wed Japanese women. Many of them seem to be interested in Japan's old culture, history, tradition, and the like, first. They like Japanese handicrafts, Kabuki, and even the Japanese bath, you know. They are called Japanophiles. Look at Jim. He is not at all comfortable in our Japanese bath!” (Note)

註：当時の我が家の風呂は、3年前まだ私が居た頃のものからは、なにがしか進歩したもようでしたが、風呂桶自体は古色蒼然たる木桶式で、シャワーなんて無し。可哀そうにジムは、シカゴに戻ると友人・知人らに、「僕は木製のバケツで入浴したんだ」と報告していました。

母は続けて、「ジムが日本に来た理由は、あなたに関するお父さんと私の許可を貰うことなんかじゃないのよ。私が思うに、あなたという女を形成した、その生まれ育った家庭なり、日本という国を、ちよつくら見たかっただけなのよ。もしあなたがイタリア人だったら、イタリアに行っただんじゃない？でも、それだけ貴女という人間に深い興味を持ってるんだから、こりゃ素晴らしいと言えるでしょ？」

母は、愛娘に対しこれほどの深い関心を持つてる男ならこりゃ大丈夫だ、と確信したのかどうか、それを口には出しませんでした。こうしてジムと対面したあとは、私に書き続けた数々の手紙の中で、例の『路傍の石』という言葉はまったく使わないようになりました。

上記、『註』で述べた、木製バケツの入浴で思い出したことあり。

ジムが到着した日は、兄が羽田空港（成田空港はまだ出現してなかった）に車を運転して一緒に行ってくれました。世田谷の我が家に到着、玄関に入り、教わったとおり靴を脱いで、待ち兼ねていた母に案内されて、すぐ横手に続く応接間兼居間に入りました。このときは既に夕刻で、我が家はアメリカと異なり、照明到る所サンサンではなく、なんとなく辺り一帯薄暗い、

Note: Our bathroom had been somewhat renovated from what it was while I was growing up, but my parents were still using the deep and narrow wooden tub, which is the traditional Japanese bath. There was no shower. I heard Jim jokingly complain to his friends later that he took a bath in a wooden bucket and got stuck!

“I don't think,” my mother continued, “that Jim came to Japan to ask for permission for marriage from us. He was just interested to see the country where you were born and grew up. You see, if you were an Italian woman, he certainly would have gone to Italy. You could say, though, that he would not have come to see us if he were not truly interested in you.”

Was my mother totally convinced that, with this absolute interest that she thought Jim had in her daughter, he would eventually say the words that everyone wanted to hear? I doubt it. Nevertheless, from this point on, in all of her letters that I received back in Chicago, my mother never again used that famous phrase “pebble on the road side” about Jim.

Incidentally, the inconveniences that Jim quite gallantly put up with during his stay in Japan are, in addition to the aforementioned wooden bucket, the smallness of the rooms and, of course, the toilet.

On the day Jim arrived, my brother and I drove to Haneda Air Port (Narita International Airport was yet to be built) to meet him. Arriving at my parents' rabbit hutch house, Jim removed his shoes at the entrance, just as he had been instructed. My mother showed him into our guest

日本家屋ですから、ジムは、そこは廊下の一部に過ぎず、部屋だとは思わなかったそうです。それとトイレ！私が居た頃すでに腰掛け式にはなっていましたが、ジム訪問の折、未だ水洗式にはなっておらず、ジムは大いに苦労した筈です。

ジムの帰国後父は急速に衰え、盛夏8月15日に他界しました。ひとこと、父を安心させる言葉を言えなかったものかと考えたくもなりますが、弁護士としての仕事が軌道に乗ったか乗らぬかのその当時、又『結婚の日取り』はいまだ不明のあの時点では、気休めのことばを潔しとせず、無言で昂然としてシカゴに帰っていった、あの時のジムの心意気こそ誉れあれ！

私は父のお葬式の直後にシカゴに戻り、ベーカー・アンド・マッケンジー法律事務所は辞めて日本に一時帰国したため、又新しい法律事務所を探して働き始めました。その名は、McBride, Baker, Winkie & Schlosser、弁護士数千人を世界主要国に抱える国際法律事務所のベーカー・アンド・マッケンジーよりはるかに小さいが、それ以前のカミングス・アンド・ワイマンや増田・舟井事務所よりはずっと大きいという、まあ中規模の事務所でした。

実は住居のほうも、日本へ立つ直前にアパート契約を解除していたので、シカゴに帰った直後は仮住まいを余儀なくされました。その仮住まい先は、例の姉の友人のシスター・青木が当時住んでおられたシカゴ市北部、シェリダン

room/living room combination, which was right next to the entrance area. She asked him to take a seat on the sofa. It was evening, and the entire house was dimly lit, like most other Japanese houses. Well, Jim confessed to me later that he thought he was still in the hallway leading to a larger room.

And then, the toilet! No longer a hole in the floor by the time Jim was there (the year 1972), it had a stool to sit on. Great! However, the flush toilet was yet to become standard in most Japanese houses around that time.

Soon after Jim went back to the U.S., my father's health quickly worsened, and he passed away on August 15 of that year.

Couldn't Jim have said one word about me just so my father could go in peace? Well, Jim was just about to launch his career as a lawyer. He had not yet thought about marrying me, let alone the "date of the wedding." He would not dare offer an empty word of comfort to my father or to anyone else, and he returned to Chicago, holding his head high. I say, "Hallelujah!" to his spirit.

I returned to Chicago soon after my father's funeral. Since I had resigned my position with Baker & McKenzie before going back to Japan, I started a new job with another law firm, this time a medium-size outfit, called McBride, Baker, Winkie & Schlosser.

Before leaving for Japan six months prior, that is, March of 1972, I had also

ロードの Sacred Heart 女子修道院。青木尼のご好意で、そこに数週間滞在しました。毎晩、シスター達と一緒にキッチンで料理し、そのあとは広々とした客間で本を読んだり、尼さん達とジグソーパズルをしたりしました。

ジムの待つシカゴへ立ち戻った時点から、ジムが私以外の女と結婚することは考えられないとの確信は一層強まり、その頃初めて、ジムと自分の将来のために、貯金することを思いつきました。

いつまでも修道院でお世話になるわけにもいかず、ジムが友人の一人、大男のボブ・デイリーに話してくれて、彼の住む同じビル内に部屋を見つけてもらい、そこに私は住み始めました。中庭を隔ててボブの窓が見えており、とても安心できる部屋でしたが、なによりこのアパートが家具無しで、過去に住んだ家具付きよりぐっと家賃が安くなったことが見つけものでした。

ここに暮らした一年間で、私はずいぶん貯金が出来たこと覚えています。ジムのお母さんが Couch Bed(ベッドと長いす兼用)や椅子類を使わせてくれたり、友人のメイとヒロシ夫妻(一旦カナダに帰国した太陽娘メイ・川本嬢はその後シカゴに戻り、めでたくヒロシとゴールイン)がキッチンの家具一式を貸してくれたり、新しい家具を買う必要も無しだったと記憶します。

terminated my apartment lease, and I had nowhere to live. Sr. Aoki came to my aid. She was then living in the Sacred Heart Convent on Sheridan Road on the North Side of Chicago. She made a quick arrangement for me so that I could live there temporarily. I lived there for a few weeks, cooking dinners with Sr. Aoki and other Catholic nuns in the convent's kitchen. We often idled away the evening hours together in the convent's spacious parlor, reading books or doing a giant jigsaw puzzle.

From the time I returned to Chicago where Jim was waiting for me, I knew that he would not marry anyone but me. For the first time, I thought of saving money for our future. One of Jim's friends, big Bob Dailey, told Jim that there was a room available in the apartment building in which he lived. I moved there from the convent. I could see Bob's room across the courtyard, and I felt quite safe there.

The best thing about this rental apartment, however, was that it was an unfurnished apartment, making the monthly rent much less than the furnished ones I'd rented before. Indeed, I was able to save quite a lot of money in the year that I lived there. Jim's mother let me use her hide-away bed and some other items of furniture. My former roommate May and her husband Hiroshi (May had returned to Canada and then came back to Chicago to marry Hiroshi) gave me a set of kitchen furniture. I did not need to furnish my apartment at all.

毎日の生活は以前と少しも変わらず、ジムと彼の友人たちと、ことごとく行動を共にし、一方、仕事は、それまでと同工異曲の法律事務所、配属された若手弁護士のガリガリ亡者的仕事ぶりに反感を抱きつつ、日夜こき使われていました。ジムはその頃は別の親友ジム・クローリーと、非常に古めかしい大きなアパートを借りて住んでいました。

ところで、そのガリガリ亡者的な弁護士ですが、大分以前の章で悪口云ったユライア・ヒープよりはやや良かったのですが、これまた妙チキリンな人物でした。以下、説明します：

1972年当時に、仕事でタイプライターを使った人なら、誰でも記憶にあると思いますが、当時は今のようなコンピューター操作の便宜はゼロ、タイプライター上に“delete key”なんか無しで、タイプミスをしたら“Correction paper”を使うのが慣わしでした。日本でもコレクション・ペーパーと言ったかどうか記憶にないのですが、それはタイプミスをしたら、すぐさまタイプ用紙とタイプライター・リボンとの間に挟みこんで同じアルファベット・レターを打ち込む。すると、そのコレクション・ペーパーに含まれてる化学分子のお蔭で、誤って打った文字が消え去り、タイプストはその同じ位置に今度は正しい文字を打ち込めばよろしい、というものです。

ただ、この Correction paper を使うと、タイプライターのキーを打ち込んだ部分に一瞬白い粉が飛び散り、それがいかめしい法律文書の

My everyday life had not changed much. I worked all day every day at McBride, Baker, et al., not necessarily liking the lawyer to whom I was assigned as a secretary.

I went out with Jim and his buddies on weekends and some evenings, attending various sports events. Jim shared a large, antiquated apartment on the Near North Side of Chicago with his old friend Jim Crowley.

I bad-mouthed that Uriah Heap lawyer some chapters ago, and I don't mean to make a habit of it, but my new boss, who was an up-and-coming associate at the McBride, Baker law firm, had a very annoying obsession.

The year 1972 was far from the computer age. There was no “delete key” on the typewriter, and the “typing correction paper” was a convention in all law firms and business offices. If you made a typographical error, you slipped a small piece of correction paper between the typing paper and the ribbon, and typed the same letter onto the correction paper, and voilá, the unwanted letter disappeared thanks to the chemical component of the correction paper. Then you removed the correction paper from the typewriter, and typed the correct letter over the same spot. The job was done. Bravo!

However, one big drawback of these correction papers was that if you really closely examined the final document, you could spot where the correction paper was used, because the tiny, itty-bitty

上に微かに跡を残す、という欠陥がありました。何も気にせず読んでいれば誰も気付くはずも無いのですが、私が配属された下級弁護士殿は、どういうわけかこの、紙上に残るほとんど目にも留まらぬ白い粉末にこだわり、一ヶ所でもその形跡があると認めると大騒ぎして、もうこの書類は上司に見せるわけには行かないと、慌てふためくご仁でした。

かくして彼は、私が完成した書類の各ページをば、縦横斜めに透かし読みして、私が Correction paper を使った部分があるかどうかを執拗に吟味し、

「ホーレ、ここだ！ここに忌まわしき Correction paper を使った形跡がちゃーんとあるぞ！」

と大得意になり、拳句はその見苦しいページをもう一度全部打ち直せ、と命令あります。

私は今度はタイプミスはするまじ、と決心して、その面白くない文面をもう一度タイプし始めます。そこらのアメリカ人セクレタリーたちに負けない超スピードでタイプを打てる私ですが、まあタイプ用紙一ページ、まったくミスなしで打つ、というのは、やや超人的な技です。だいたいこんな愚劣な弁護士があるものか、と腹を立てながらタイプをしていますから、やり直すたびにタイプミス続出。緊張しきってタイプを続け、遂にページの最終行まで来た、とホッとしたりとたんに、忌まわしきタイプミスが発生、という段取りでした。

この下級弁護士が提出する書類を検閲する彼の上司弁護士が、私がタイプした正確・且つ美麗なるドキュメントの中で Correction paper を

surrounding area of that corrected letter showed microscopic powder particles produced by the chemical component of the correction paper.

Now, the associate lawyer to whom I was assigned had an extreme dislike towards these powders. He would examine and re-examine the suspicious paper, holding it up in the air, at eye level, perpendicularly, sideways, or turning it over, looking at the suspicious area from the back of the paper.

“Aha!” cried the triumphant lawyer. “Here it is, Ryoko! You used the correction paper right here, didn’t you?”

He then would tell me to retype the whole ugly and unacceptable document. I would start typing the same darned page, trying so hard not to make a typo. I could type at machine-gun speed, just like any other American legal secretary, but it was humanly impossible not to make a typo in one whole page.

Besides, I now hated having to re-type the same brainless paragraphs. I ended up making typographical errors more often.

I thought the whole thing was ludicrous. Who is going to fuss about the microscopic white powder on the otherwise impeccably typed document?

I started this job in late August or September, almost as soon as I returned from Japan, and I said “adios” to the fanatic lawyer and the McBride, Baker law firm in February of the next year.

使ったかどうかを詮議立てするとは思えなかったし、結局この愚劣な仕事も、8月から翌年の2月までしか続かなかったのです。

この驚異の弁護士は、その年のクリスマスに、鉢植えのポインセチアをアパートに送り届けてくれましたが、私あまり熱心に面倒見なかったのか、なんだかすぐ萎れてしまったこと覚えています。

I am inserting just a few photos from those days on this and the following page.

Here's an ancient photo of my father, in the back row, 6th from right, long hair, from a class reunion, circa? He certainly looked different from other Japanese men.



Here's Jim's law school graduation photo, 1971. He is at far left, in the front row.



I also recall that this lawyer sent to my apartment a beautiful poinsettia plant for Christmas that year, which unfortunately died rather quickly for I did not take good care of it.

< End of Chapter 18 >

My roommate May and Hiroshi, on their wedding day, October, 1970, at The Buddhist Temple of Chicago.



Hiroshi, May, Jim, and I at their wedding reception.



Jim at the front gate of our parents' house, April 1972.



My parents' house. My brother's car parked just inside the front gate. I have no idea how he got his car in and out of that small area.



Jim and I in central Tokyo, April 1972.



Jim visits my aunt and her family. From left, my aunt Michiyo, her mom, Makiko (my cousin Sato-chan's wife), me, Wakko-chan (Sato-chan's sister), Jim, and my brother.

Jim at a roof-top beer garden in Tokyo, April 1972.



Jim takes a trip to Kyoto and Nara, April 1972.