

第21章

父の死後、初めての母の手紙

<1972年11月20日、母より>

[あなたの<十日午後六時十五分>とゆう別配達の手紙を受け取ったのは、十二日、今日
はもう十八日土曜日です。

お父さんが居ないだけで、明子と哲の生活は殆ど変わっていないし、私も同じといえば同じ。あの病気のときは特別で、お父さんとゆう人は、周囲に影響を与えない人だったので、現在も前と同じで、私は応接間で新聞を読んでいるときも、庭で落ち葉を燃やしているときも、お父さんはやはりあの、薄暗い机の前に居るような気がしているのです。この少人数の家族の中でさえ、薄々しい存在だったお父さんは、まして他人様の中においておやで、死んでしまってからどうだ、こうだと話を聞くわけでもなく、本当に自分の穴の中で終わってしまった人だったようです。それでも、たまには忘れがたい印象を持った人も二・三はあって、暮の雑誌に、思い出の記が載ったり、私宛てに長い思い出の手紙を送ってくれたりした人も居たわけです。

あの年齢になって交友録一冊無いために、私が記憶のうろ覚えから、死亡通知を出したような始末ですから、洩れた人もあったのではないかと思われませんが、さればとって、あの孤独癖の自閉症には、とんとひびいていないと思わ

Chapter 21

My Mother's First Letter After My Father's Death

My Mother's Letter Dated November 20, 1972:

< I received your October 10 letter on the 12th. It is now already the 18th, Saturday.

Your father is gone, but our lives are the same as before. Your father had never been in other people's way. He had kept his solitary stance all his life, except for the time when he was going downhill just prior to his death. When I read newspapers in our living room, when I burn leaves on the ground in our yard, I feel that your father is still working at his desk over there, with his face lit by the soft light from the desk lamp. Within our family of five, he was never a big presence. Among his friends and acquaintances, he was even less of a significant presence. I don't hear people speak of him with fond memories after he is gone. Indeed, he lived his life, throughout, in his own small compartment, so to speak. Even so, a handful of his friends wrote about him fondly in one of the "Go" magazines for which he was editor-in-chief. One sent me a very nice, long letter.

I had sent out the "announcement of death" to his friends and acquaintances, relying on my vague memory, for I have never seen one alumni member list from Tokyo University or from Ikkō High School. I might well have missed some, but I don't necessarily feel bad about it, for I know

れ、特に気にもなりません。それでも人並に、香典返しをしたり、新聞社や日本棋院などの法人に、それ相当のお礼の書状を出したり、死後の事務はかなりありましたが、全部一人で済ましてしまいました。そして最後に、先月二十日、多摩墓地に埋葬を済ませて、全部終了とゆうことになりました。後一つ、ここの土地の借地の件で、契約更新(正樹から哲へ)をしなければならぬことが、残されていますが。

こんなわけで、私の毎日は、さほど肉体的な仕事があるわけではありませんが、なにかしら、しょっちゅう頭の中には一杯につまっているものがあるようで、落ち着いてあなたに手紙を書くゆとりも無いようでした。

あなたの手紙によれば、今度も以前と同じ様子。ジムを信頼して、忙しい生活を続けているのなら結構なことで、私は満足しております。只、青木尼と口争い等したことは、返す返すも不心得な話しで、なんの得にもならない愚かなことだったと思います。ジムを信頼してニコニコしている表の裏側に、何か不満の種を宿しているような気がします。

ミサカードのことはよく分かりました。金文字で大型の豪華なカードでしたので、そんなことだろうと想像されました。日本の香典ではなく、仏教でゆう供養塔に類するものだろうと思います。大津等は所属する寺があるので、分かるのですが、お寺に金子を納めて、五年なり十年なりの供養を頼むのです。これを永代経と云う。カ

your father wouldn't mind his friends not knowing about his passing away. He was such a loner, locked up in his own small world. Still, there were many business routines that I had to follow, including the kōden-gaeshi (Note), sending formal letters of thanks to the newspaper he worked for and Nihon Kiin (Japan Go Association), and such. Finally, we buried him at the Tama Mausoleum on September 20. One last step to follow is the matter of renewing the Shakuchi-ken contract, replacing your father's name with that of your brother.

All in all, it is not that I have been pushed to do any physically strenuous task since your father's death, but for some reason, my head has been filled with many, unclear thoughts, which made it difficult to put my thoughts together to write to you.

You tell me that you are back to your Chicago life, same as before. You trust Jim; you have a busy life, as before. I am glad to know that.

You say, however, you had a little argument with Sr. Aoki. How unwise of you, indeed! It was totally uncalled for. I wonder if there is a hidden seed of dissatisfaction within you, behind the outward semblance of your continued happy life, trusting Jim.

The meaning of the Mass card Jim's mother sent to us is now very clear to me. It was quite a large, ornate card, with gold lettering, and I knew it was more than a conventional condolence card. I believe it is akin to the Kuyōtō of Japan's Buddhism. The Ōtsu family belongs to a Buddhist temple, and I know this from what they do:

リックはやはそういう形式が伴っているわけですね。うちは無宗教で葬式をしたわけですから、そのような形式に対する費用は少なくて済んだわけですが、でもそのお父さんが、奇しくもシカゴのカトリックのお寺に永代経を受けるようになったとは、有難いことです。ジムのお母さんに感謝の意を伝えて下さい。]

[あなたもジムも、病気の点に就いては、一段の注意をお願いしますよ。]

こちらはまだ、たまらない寒さにはなりません。毎日、柿の葉と白木蓮の葉の落ち葉を燃やし、片付けています。一仕事やっては休み、を繰り返すようになりました。これも仕方ないことです。シカゴの厳しい寒さに負けないように。]

When a family member passes away, you pay the temple a sum of money, asking the Buddhist monk to pray for the soul of the deceased for the next five or ten years. This is called Eitaikyō. I now understand that the Catholics over there follow a similar formality in their religion. Your father's funeral ceremony was conducted without any involvement of Buddhist monks, for your family does not adhere to Buddhism. Instead, the Catholic Church in Chicago remembered your father and prayed for him, thanks to Jim's mother's special prayer. How fortunate we are! Please send my deepest appreciation to her.

Please take care of yourself, both you and Jim. No accidents, no sudden illnesses, please.

It has been colder every day, but not that cold, yet. Burning the dead persimmon and white magnolia leaves on the ground is one of my daily chores. I now need to take a break and lie down after every small household chore. It must be awfully cold in Chicago. Stay well. >

Note from Page 2 on "kōden-gaeshi:"

An ancient tradition of Japan is that, at the time of a funeral, the family of the deceased receives a monetary condolence gift called "kōden" from all the mourners. Within a certain period of time after the funeral, the surviving family who received "kōden" must send a gift, very often monetary, but sometimes in kind, to each sender of "kōden," in return for their good will. This is called "kōden-gaeshi" or "a return for a kōden."



< End of Chapter 21 >

我が敬愛する母の書簡は、これまで「書き写しては右側に英訳文を入れる」の作業でやってきましたが、これより先、母が書いたままの原文ををいくつか、PDFフォーマットにスキャンし、本 Walnut ブログに挿入していきたいと思ひます。彼女の旧仮名遣いを含め、興味を持たれる読者もあらんかと、...

From this point on, I'd like to scan some of my mother's original letters and insert them in PDF format. Some Japanese readers might find them of interest. I will continue to translate portions of them into English.