

第30章

最終章

<1976年9月17日、母より>

[ジム様、
亮子様、

十五日午後三時四〇分、予定より一時間早く羽田着。税関検査場の中は我々ジャンボ001から降りた客でごった返していました。自分の荷物を手押し車に乗せて順番を待ちながら、出迎いの群れの中を見まわしても哲たちは見えない、否見つからないほど、人の顔が幾重にも混み合っているのです。オヘアに着いた時は、すぐにあなた方をみつけて安心したのですが。もし哲の方が私をみつけても、前方へ出ることが出来ないほどの人の山なのです。あとで聞いたことなのですが、十五日は休み(敬老の日)で、羽田に見物に来た人々が多かったとのこと。驚いた日本人の後進性です。検査を済ました三つの荷物は、その場の青年に出口近くまで持っていき、その荷の上に腰を下ろして、哲らを待つことにしましたが、落ち着いて、出迎いの群集の方を物色することができません。荷物だけ置いて見つけ歩いたら、置引き犯に引っかかるだけです。私は覚悟を決めて赤帽をつかまえて、荷物をタクシー乗車場まで運んでもらいました。ここはまたその客で延々十数人の人、人なので、日本の過密を

Chapter 30

Final Chapter

My Mother's Letter Dated September 17, 1976:

< Dear Jim and Ryoko:

I arrived at Haneda Airport at 3:40 p.m., on the 15th, about an hour earlier than scheduled. The customs clearance area was jam-packed with people who got out of our Jumbo 001 flight, beyond imagination. I placed my luggage on the push-cart, and looked for Satoshi and Asako. There were faces and faces in multiple layers, as far as I could see. It was impossible to spot one particular face. When I arrived at O'Hare Airport, I spotted you and Jim instantly, to my great relief. Not now. Even if Satoshi and Asako could see me, they would not be able to step forward to reach me. There was no room for anybody to move forward or backward. I learned later that there was an unanticipated huge crowd at the airport on that day just because it was the national holiday (Respect-the-Aged Day). People came out just to see the airport, the epitome of Japanese people's backward minds. After the customs inspection, I asked a young man nearby to carry my luggage towards the exit door. I sat on my luggage, and waited for Satoshi and Asako, feeling quite ill at ease. I thought of walking around the area, looking for them, leaving my luggage there. But that would be unwise: somebody will walk away with my luggage. I got hold of a porter and went to the cab station. There was an incredibly long line of people there, too. The "overcrowded Japan" is

どこへ行っても見せられることにうんざり。次のコースにあるハイヤーに乗ってゆうゆうと帰宅しました。五千円余分なお金を使いましたが、私の消耗には代えられません。然しその後三・四十分間私を探したり、空港事務所で001便の乗客を調べたりした哲には気の毒でしたが。

タラップを降りたとたんの、ムーツとした臭気と湿気、あれは汚染に汚染を重ねた、羽田の海の匂いなのでしょうか。あんな哀れな玄関口から入る外国人の気持が推し測れます。そして今度は飛行場から京浜国道に出るまでの車の渋滞。京浜から環七の四車線に出てホーツとしたものです。オヘアに着くまでのジムの軽快な車さばきだけを考え出していました。私におくれて二時間ほどで帰ってきた哲たちの話では、手分けして私を見つけていた彼らが、朝子の方が私をちらっと見つけたとのことですが、声をかけることができずに、すぐに見えなくなったとのこと。まるで夏祭の雑踏の中そっくりです。

今度は往きと違って、我が家に帰り着いたという安堵感も加わって、時間の混乱がたいして起こらず、今日はもう頭がはっきりしています。それでも飛行機で一睡もできなかった故で、食事をしては、眠り眠りしています。

さても我が家の汚ならしさ、薄暗さ。いかに

everywhere. I moved to the limo station, and arrived home in a limo. I paid 5,000 yen for it, but it was money well spent, sparing me the physical and mental strain. I was sorry for Satoshi and Asako who kept looking for me for one hour. They even went to JAL's airport office, asking them to check the passenger list of Flight 001.

As soon as you deplane, you are attacked by the oppressive stench in the air and humidity. I wonder if that's the smell of Tokyo Bay that has been polluted to no end over the years. What a wretched entrance gate for all the people from abroad! What do they think of Japan as they arrive? Next is the mind-boggling traffic congestion between Haneda Airport and the entrance to Keihin National Highway. I finally felt a little comfortable when we hit the 4-lane Circular Expressway No. 7. I was at all times remembering how Jim drove me to O'Hare, easy and relaxed. Satoshi and Asako arrived home two hours behind me. They told me that they searched for me, separately, all over the airport. At one point, Asako saw me, just momentarily. She yelled, but her call did not reach me because of the unthinkable noise. The next moment, she lost sight of me. It was as though we were in a local villagers' summer festival.

I don't seem to have significant jet lag this time. I had a sense of relief, naturally. My head is quite clear. Still, I can't do much yet. I do nothing but eat, sleep, and then I eat and sleep some more. That's from being unable to sleep at all during the entire return flight.

What a dirty and gloomy house we have! I

風土と建物の違いとはいえ、あまりの違いに驚いてしまいました。体験の尊さをしみじみ感じたところです。アメリカの乾燥した風物に、ある程度慣れるのに一週間ほど掛かったようですが、今度はこの我が湿った風物に、元通り帰っていかねばならぬかと思うと、ちょっと嫌な気もしますが、これが生れた土地故の運命というものでしょう。

サン・フランシスコまでのトランス・ワールドはジムのおかげで窓際のありがたさ、すっかりアメリカ大陸を堪能したような気持ちになりました。うす紫色の平野部から茶色のロッキー、そしてソルトレーク、そして砂漠地帯、所々の山々、そして開発された土地など、晴れている故か実によく見えたのです。一時二十分着。ここで時計を十一時二十分まで戻しました。

日航ジャンボに乗るまでの二時間足らずは、私はじっと腰掛けて体を休ませ、あたりに慾深く買い物などに動き回る人々を観察して楽しみました。

トランス・ワールドの中では、エバンストンに二年間住んでいるという三菱電機の社員夫人と並んで座り、色々教えられて有り難いことでした。日航機では私年配の日本人爺さんと三人並び、再度私は窓側になりましたが、これはなんにもなりません。太平洋上はただ雲また雲の一万七百メ

am astonished at the stark difference between your apartment and our house. I know there's a difference between Japan and America in the overall climate, and how the houses are built. But still the difference is overwhelming. One learns lessons from one's experiences. It took me about a week or so to get used to the dry climate over there. Now, I'll have to be re-acclimated to this wet and damp environment. I don't feel too happy about it, but this is what I'm accustomed to all my life. I'll have to accept it.

Throughout my flight on TWA between Chicago and San Francisco, I enjoyed the great aerial view of North America, thanks to Jim who secured a window seat for me. The soft, purple of the Great Plains; the brownish Rockies; wide expanse of open fields; mountains; and Salt Lake City. It was such a bright day, and I saw everything. We arrived at San Francisco at 1:20 p.m. I turned my watch back to 11:20 a.m. We had good 2 hours before transferring to a Japan Air Lines' jumbo flight to Tokyo. I sat quietly while resting. I watched people scurry to and fro, all over the place, with greedy eyes to do the last-minute souvenir shopping. Between Chicago and San Francisco, I sat next to a Japanese woman who said she'd been living in Evanston for two years with her husband who worked for Mitsubishi Electric. Between San Francisco and Tokyo on JAL, I sat next to a Japanese man about my age. I was lucky to have a window seat again, but this time it was to no avail: we were flying 10,700 meters above the Pacific Ocean, looking down at nothing but the great expanse of white clouds. The man next to me was

ートルで。眠れないので、退屈この上ないことでしたが。隣の爺さんは名古屋の田舎の言葉を使い、私と同じ行き帰り便だったわけです。亮子が軽蔑したアジアクラブ(Walnut の註1)は、その手を随分はば広く、日本中に広げていたわけですね。往きは石川婆(Walnut の註2)、帰りは名古屋爺。

註1: 母は、シカゴ・アジアクラブなる怪しげな団体が用意したチャーター機で、東京・シカゴを往復しました。

註2: 往路の機内では、石川県出身のしゃべり好きの婆さんと隣り合わせ閉口した、と母は言っていました。

こちらの家は一ヶ月間つつがなく暮らしたのですが、私がそちらで気持ちの良い晴れの中で暮らしている間じゅう、豪雨、暴風と宿命的な季節に真っ向から立ち向かっていたわけで、その意味でも汚れのひどさを感じました。

土曜日はメイたちを迎えて大変なことでしょう。純粋に、ひたむきになることは、人間性として立派なことであるけれど、時と場合を考えてコントロールして下さい。これがなければ、亮子は骨と皮だけになって死んでしまいますよ。

ジムは、一ヶ月の長い間、私の存在をよくみとめて我慢してくれ、本当にかえすがえすも有り難いことでした。ジムのお母さんは、誉めことばが見つからないほど立派な方だし、お姉さん二人も実

from the boondocks of Nagoya, and he talked garrulously in his annoying Nagoya dialect.

He said he was on the same flight that I took to Chicago. Well, Ryoko, the Chicago-Asian Club (Note 1) you didn't like seems to have had business all over Japan! In any event, my travel companion on the way to Chicago was an Ishikawa grandma (Note 2), and that on the way back home was a Nagoya grandpa!!

Note 1: Jim and I purchased her flight tickets through a travel agency called "Chicago Asian Club."

Note 2: Mother told me that on her flight to Chicago, she had to sit next to an old woman from Ishikawa Prefecture who never stopped talking, to her great annoyance.

For your sister, brother, and his family, it was life as usual during the month I was gone. However, they were in the midst of Japan's typhoon season. It had been stormy. They had torrential rains every day. All the more, the house looked filthy to me, I believe.

You'll have a busy day Saturday, having May and others over. Your quest for purity, and your stance in life to look straight ahead at all times, are both quite admirable. However, you need to control yourself, depending on the circumstance. Otherwise, you are going to end up being nothing but skin and bone.

Jim tolerated the long one month, having me in the household. I cannot thank him enough.

に爽やかな女性であることが、亮子のために大変な幸福なのです。

これから私は、時折日記と写真を眺めては思い出を楽しむつもりです。先ほどは、車椅子の斎藤さんから電話がかかり、早く来てアメリカの話をしてくれとのこと。

二人が日本へ来た時の二回とも、それからひんばんな亮子の手紙からも、そして今度の私のアメリカ行きからも、ちっとも変らぬ同じ二人を感じ取る事が出来たことは、私の一生の幸福だと思います。

富士子]

シカゴから東京に戻ってすぐ書いた、前記母の手紙の封筒には、我が姉がジムに宛てて書いた短い手紙が入っていました。以下:

<1976年9月20日、姉より>

[ジムさま、母にたいへんすばらしい なつやすみを すごさせていただきまして、ありがとうございます。おやさしいお母さまや、また姉上さまが

What a wonderful woman with fine character Jim's mother is! Jim's sisters have both refreshingly charming personalities. You must realize how lucky you are.

I intend to keep reminiscing about my trip to Chicago, looking at the daily notes I jotted down and the photos you and Jim took and gave me. I've just received a call from my wheelchair-bound friend Mrs. Saitō. She is simply dying to hear my story.

You and Jim were the same you and Jim on the two occasions that you were in Japan. I saw the same you and Jim on my visit to Chicago, this time, as described in your countless letters you sent to me. There is no higher bliss than having this knowledge, for the rest of my life.

Sincerely yours,

Fujiko >

A letter from my sister to Jim was thrown into the airmail envelope containing my mother's letter above.

From My Sister, September 20, 1976:

< Dear Jim: Thank you very much for the wonderful summer vacation for my mother. My mother came home totally content, having met your loving mother and wonderful sisters. She was indeed happy and satisfied to have witnessed the daily life of you and Ryoko. Thank you very much for the beautiful present for me. There'll be my

たに お目にかかれましたほか、ジムさまと亮子の生活ぶりをみることができましたことで、母はすっかり安心もし、またまんぞくもいたしているようでございます。なおまた 私にまできれいなプレゼントを ありがとうございます。近々女学校のとときの友だちとあいますので、そのときにきてゆくつもりです。そちらは雨がことのほか少ないようですが、こちらは台風のせいもあって 9月に入ってからずっと雨つづきでした。ことに9月8日から13日までは それこそノアの洪水のように雨がふりつづき、庭じゅうが川のようになったため、ジムさまもごぞんじの、あのスープざらのような小さな池から、きんぎょが3びきあふれ出て、どこかへ行ってしまいました。もっとも、のらねこに食べられてしまったのかもしれませんが。

明子]

上記姉からジムへの手紙には、私宛ての追記が入っていて、それは:

[亮子さま、即席ラーメンは、玉子を割り入れてかき回し、お醤油数滴、七味(一味でもよし)唐辛子をふりかけ、最後に焼きのりをこまかく千切って散らしますと、ちょっとの手間で、そのままよりずっとおいしくも、また栄養価豊かにも相成りませぬ。]

high-school reunion soon, and I intend to wear that dress on that day.

My mother tells me that it didn't rain much in Chicago. We have had continuously rainy days since the beginning of this month, due partly to the typhoon season that we are in. Between September 8 and 13, in particular, it rained day after day, night after night, as if it were the great flood that Noah saw. Our small yard turned into a river. The tiny pond that looks like a soup dish (I'm sure Jim-sama remembers) was flooded, and 3 goldfish were lost. Well, they could have been taken by the neighborhood feral cats.

Akiko >

There was a P.S. addressed to me, which reads:

< Dear Ryoko: As your instant Rāmen noodle soup starts boiling, stir in one egg and add a few drops of soy sauce, and sprinkle a little spice and roasted sea weed broken into pieces. The cheap Rāmen soup is now a tastier and more nutritious dish. >

< End of Chapter 30 >

END OF BOOK ONE