

第6章

仕事も住居も確定せず

私が泊まっていたマコーミックYWCAは、実に巨大なビルで、その宿泊者はむろん全部女性、それが日泊まり組と長期滞在組に分かれ、長期組は上のほうの階を占め、私のような日泊まり組は、下の階に大体まとまっていました。一見して、あまり魅力的な女性は居なかった。単に私が運が悪かっただけなのかもしれませんが、少しずつ知り合いになっていった女性たちの中で、友達にほしいような人にはぶつからなかったのです。

一階のただっ広いキャフェテリアに行くと、あまり様子のよくない女性群が、陰気に各自の皿にへばりついている。随分若い女の子もいたし、又明らかにヨーロッパの人たちがたくさんいました。私は、だいたい朝、ダウンタウン行きのバスに飛び乗る直前に駆け込んで、オレンジジュースを飲むくらいはしたのですが、あまりそこでは食事をしないようにしていました。夕食はダイアンがいる時はすぐ誘いに行き、彼女が仕事で空を飛んでる時は、彼女のルームメートのテリーを誘い出しました。

その界限は、一ブロック東へ歩けば、もうそこはシカゴの盛り場とされている、名高いラッシュ・ストリートとなり、夏の宵の口の、開放的で賑々しい雰囲気は、異郷の旅人の心を誘い、冒険心をかき立てるものがありました。一人歩いていると、通りすがりの奴からチョックラ口笛を吹かれたり、“Looking good!”なんて声を掛けられれば、そりや気持ち弾みました。ある時

Chapter 6

Job and a Place to Live, Undecided

My temporary domicile, the McCormick YWCA, was an enormous building. The residents were all women, and the long-term residents occupied the rooms on the upper level, while the short-term residents who paid the daily rent, like me, occupied the lower level rooms. It may have been that I was simply not lucky but, among the various women that I met while I was there, I did not run into one that I wanted to have as a friend.

I would go to the huge cafeteria on the ground floor. I would see rather unattractive women, some young, some not so young, and some stout European stock, bent over their plates, in silence. The whole place was rather dismal and depressing. I decided to go in there only in the morning, to have a quick glass of orange juice. I would then run out of the building to catch the bus going downtown. In the evening, I would ask Diane to go out to have dinner in a restaurant in the area with me. When she was flying and not available, I asked her roommate Terry.

A few steps to the east from the front door of the YWCA is Rush Street, the popular and trendy strip where the action is. The open and generally animated air of the area on a sweet summer evening was quite inviting and aroused a sense of adventure in the traveler from a foreign land. I was walking alone, feeling excited from deep within, and a young, good-looking man whistled to me. Still another

一人でレストランで食事をしていると、ウェイトレスが

「あんた、あそこにいるお兄さんが、勘定払ってくれましたよ」

なんてこともありました。

私はそこでニコやかに笑顔を送って、あとは知らんふりで食事続ける、なーんて映画の中みたいなのはやっぱり馴れてないからできず、すぐ立っていってお礼を申し述べ、暫く雑談をし、あげくは数日後と一緒に映画を見に行ったりという、今思えば、実に不見識なことをした記憶もあります。

時々、ダイアンたちのアパートに食料品を買い込んで行き、二人の台所で、私がインチキ料理をしました。当時私が出来たものといえば、キャベツとウィンナソーセージの炒め物ぐらい。しかし、今でこそアメリカ人に知れ渡っている、野菜炒めの至高技術は、その頃はまだ東洋の魔術です。二人ともこんなおいしいキャベツ食べたことないわ、と大感激。

その頃お金の心配をした記憶はなく、弁護士事務所ですべて稼げると考えていたと思います。しかし、人間、自分の辛かった時のことは素早く忘れていくのならいで、住居がYWCAという、あまり思わしくない仮住まいだったし、金銭的にもかなり不安定だったことは確かで、当時の両親からの手紙を読むと、私が不安な境地を訴えていたことが分かります。母は、私が言う

hollered, "Looking good!" I felt my heart bounce. Once, I was eating alone in a restaurant in the area, and my waitress said to me:

"Honey, the young man over there picked up your bill."

I couldn't just send a friendly smile of acknowledgment and continue to eat as if nothing had happened, like in a movie scene. Not only did I go to his table right away to thank him, but I talked to him a little bit, and then went to see a movie with him a few days later. Today, as I look back, I admit that it was a careless and imprudent behavior on my part. I was reprimanded by my very strict father in one of his letters.

Every now and then, I brought groceries to Diane's and Terry's apartments, and I did what little cooking I knew. I really never cooked in my mother's kitchen in Tokyo, and all I knew at that time was stir-fried cabbage and chopped sausage. Stir-frying is widely known today, but in 1969, this culinary style was magic from the Orient. Diane and Terry were ecstatic, saying that they had never eaten such a delicious dish in all their lives.

I don't recall being worried about money. I must have been confident that I could always make money working for a law firm. Well, it is said that we learn to forget about our down days. I was living in the YWCA, not exactly the lap of luxury. I must not have been too comfortable

なれば『移民』の身分で渡米したため、大蔵省の規則上送金が難しいと述べ、手続きに手間取ることに苛立ち、

「明日にでも送れると思っていたお金が、こんな状況です。ほんとうに心細いことでしょう」と手紙に述べています。(註)

註: 私の渡米が、留学・観光・業務のどれにも該当しないため送金不可であると、東京銀行、三菱銀行から言われ、結局日本銀行が最終的にオーケーした、と手紙にあります。

住居も仕事も確定していなかった(なんせ私は、両親宛の手紙に、YWCAの住民やユライア・ヒープの悪口ばかり、書いていたにちがいありません)当時の私の不安定な状況を、非常に気遣っていたことは、彼女の文面からありありと分かります。以下、母の手紙引用:

〔土台あなたには平均の取れない心情性格があるので、その点は本当に心配です。実力があるから生活してゆくためには心配は無くとも、その実力を利用して野心的に進んで行くことはしない。過ぎ去ったことを持ち出しては愚かだけれど、只、心の触れ合いだけで信用して、一介の商売人を頼りにアメリカへ渡っていったなどは、その立派な証拠です。この際自分の気持ちを立て直し、結婚などという平凡な人間の道を見捨て、立派な仕事に打ち込んでみてはどうですか。それにはやはり後ろ楯も必要な

financially, either. The evidence that I wrote about my unsettling and precarious circumstances to my parents is in the letters I received from them. My mother was highly agitated that she could not make remittances to me readily, due to the restrictions by the Ministry of Finance's regulations. "Imagine, the simple remittance we want to make taking this long! We thought you'd get it tomorrow," she laments in one of her letters. (Note).

Note: My mother describes how she had to deal with three major banks in Tokyo, which declared that she could not make any overseas remittance to me because I went to the U.S. not as a student, visitor, or on business, but as an immigrant.

How she was profoundly worried about me (I had no permanent place to live, and a stable job was yet to come my way) is keenly felt in the following letter. She is sharp and unforgiving, but I'm sure I was making derogatory remarks in all my letters about the women at the YWCA, and I called the Uriah Heep guy all sorts of names. Obviously, she didn't like it.

< You have an inborn propensity to be unbalanced and emotional. That worries me greatly. You are smart. You are capable of living on your own raw power, but you don't strive for arriving at a higher plateau, with ambition. What has past is past, but you traveled to the United States, trusting a simple businessman who was just nobody to you; that alone establishes how you are unmotivated and nonchalant. Gather yourself up now. Rather than look for the road to marriage where all common pedestrians walk, seek a meaningful and

のですよ。〇〇氏(註)などにも手紙を出したり、シカゴ大学あたりの日本語学科などにも、それこそ自分を売り込んでみてはいかがですか？つまらない人々からチヤホヤされることなど、実に愚かなことです(レストランで支払いしてくれた奴の件だな)。

お父さんの傾向も確かに受けているあなたが、折角再度渡米という壮挙を決行しながら、なにかケチケチした、哀れな状態にいるような気がします、、、。満足感のない、孤独な状態で外国の大都会で生活しているくらいなら、俗に徹して、もっと飛躍したらいいでしょう。]

註: 〇〇氏とは、当時ニューヨークに住んでいた父の友人。

父の手紙には次のようにあります。

[四日付けの長文入手。元気でなにより嬉しい。このうちは仕事(無理と思はれるものは避けよ)と住居(安全第一)が定まりさへすればだが、それも急ぐべからず。どんなに苦しい事があっても堪え抜く、儂とお母さんの願いなり。

～ 生き残れひとつばかりは秋の蝉 ～

creditable career and dedicate yourself to it heart and soul. You might need support for that, too. Why don't you write to Mr. XX (Note)? Why don't you sell yourself to, for example, the Japanese Language and/or Literature Department of the University of Chicago? To be given attention by a lot of meaningless people and feel good about it is indeed stupid. (I bet she's talking about the incident of the restaurant!) You are the daughter of your father. Taking the second trip to the United States is all right, but I have an impression that you are feeling somewhat miserable. I don't feel your usual power in your writing. Rather than live in a big city of a foreign land, unsatisfied and lonely, feeling sorry for yourself, why not take a giant leap, making friends with all sorts of worldly people? >

Note: *Mr. XX was a friend of my father, who lived in New York about that time.*

I will quote a portion of my father's letter, as follows:

< I have read your very long letter of the 4th. I am more than happy to know that you are in good spirits. All you need now is a job (don't take any position that could become a hardship on you) and a place to live (safety is the most important consideration). Do not rush with either task. Your mother and I know that you will stick it out no matter what hardship you might encounter. [My father quotes a Haiku here written by an ancient Haiku poet.] I have just received another long

16日付け長文入手。初見の男と同道など、自重せよ(例のレストラン支払い男と、映画を見に行ったことだな)。我等兩人、あなたが落ち着く迄、安心できない。]

別の父の手紙 ー

[一番の心配は定住と定職のこと、あとは好きなように暮らすべし。亮子が居なくなって気が抜けたのか、我等兩人、毎日の生活に疲労はなはだし。フレドニアは、こちらから挨拶しなくていいのか。亮子は自分の行動にこちらの事を考えたり、捉われたり、そのような事なきよう、それのみを念じます。

～ ふりさけて 夕月みれば ひと眼見し 君が眉引き思ほゆるかも ～

今年は柿の実ほとんどならず、柘榴もどうしたとか、たった一つだけぽつんと。櫛の落葉すではなはだしく、毎日集めて焚くのに忙しい。ゲルいつでも送る。あゝ、どうか自由に好きなように暮らしているように、、、運転免許など取るべからず]

また別の日はー

[時事に注意せよ、読書怠るべからず、フレンチは続けておるや?(註)]

letter of the 16th from you about going out with a man whom you just met in a restaurant. Be more prudent. Your mother and I cannot rest until you are settled. >

My father wrote, again:

< What I worry about most is your job and a place to live. Have those two things secured, and live freely. Since you were gone, your mother and I have a life of idleness, so to speak. We get tired easily. I wonder if I should write to people in Fredonia? Don't let your life be affected by how we are, what we do. Live your life, to the fullest.

My father quotes a beautiful Waka here, written by an ancient Waka poet. Then he continues:

Funny, but we have little or no persimmons on our persimmon tree this year, and we have one lonely pomegranate on the pomegranate tree. I am busy everyday burning the dead leaves in our yard. I will send you money any time you want. Just tell me so. Oh, how I hope you are enjoying life over there, doing what you like...! Don't get a driver's license. >

My mother wanted me to get a driver's license, but my father didn't.

Still another letter from my father:

< Keep abreast with news and current events. Don't stop reading books. Are

註: 立教大学英文科の時、第二外国語で取ったフランス語が私は大好きで、このため卒業後、上智の外国語学部、フランス語科に更に一年行ったりしたのですが、この時午前は上智、午後はアテネフランセ、日仏学院、と私がフランス語に熱中してたことを、父はとても自慢に思っていたのです。

再び母よりー

[、、、特派員たちの報告によると、そちらも日本と全く同じく荒々しい様相です。古人は『衣食足りて礼節を知る』と言ったけど、現代人は決してそうではないし、又そうであったとしても、自己管理だけのためには、他人は別に問題ではありません。

情理あやまたず生活すること。早く住居が安定するように。]

また、別の母の手紙ー

[4日に着く荷物を、待ちきれない様子でもないので、安心しましたが、服装に凝りだしたら切りが無いことはお分かりでしょう。それに、アメリカ人は服装に無頓着ではないの？頭髪に相変わらず時間をかけたりしては、アメリカ人の鼻つまみになりますよ。睡眠の方が大事です。

荷物は受け取ったらすぐに開いて、風通しすること。なにしろ、30度の高温多湿が、1ヶ月以上も続いたその中で作った荷物です。それを、

you continuing the study of French?
(Note) >

Note: *As I mentioned earlier, I majored in English literature at Rikkyo University. My minor was in French language, and I studied it with passion for four years. After graduation, I pursued the study of French at Sophia University and at L'institut Franco-Japonais de Tokyo. My father was very proud of my passion for the French language.*

Again, from my mother:

<The foreign correspondents assigned to the United States keep reporting to their papers that the social conditions over there are the same as in Japan: tumultuous and unsettled. Our ancient adage says, "Well fed, well bred," but it is not necessarily true with the modern populace. It may still be true with certain people. Regardless, in order for you to manage yourself, other people should be of no concern. Do not make an error in your heart and in your head. I'm praying that you find a safe place to live. >

Still another letter from my mother

< I'm glad to know that you are not dying to receive the shipment. Indeed, you know that you shouldn't be too concerned about your clothes. Aren't Americans known for their insouciance about what they wear, in general? Don't spend too much time fixing your hair, either. You'll be looked down upon for that. Sleep is more important.

Open up the shipment and air the contents as soon as it arrives. I packed your trunk in the midst of unprecedented heat and

商船航空のケチなオフィスの中に2週間置きっぱなし。ジャパン・エクスプレスは、それを30日まで放置、みかげ山丸の航路がそのあと一ヶ月、考えると腹が立ちます。いまだに運賃を取りに来もしないというズボラさ。貴女から、荷の中に異常が無いとの知らせがきたら、送料を支払ってやります。]

humidity that lasted a month this summer. I know that the trunk sat in the miserable warehouse of Shōsen Air-cargo Shipping Company for 2 weeks, and Japan Express kept it in their office until August 30. It will take one month for S.S. Mikagesanmaru to cross the Pacific. I am furious about their sloppy way of conducting business. I will make the final payment to them only when I hear from you that the shipment arrived without a hitch. >

< End of Chapter 6 >