

第13章

一筋縄で行かぬジム

<1970年2月11日、父より>

[11日建国記念日夜、皆在宅、夫々の部屋に在り。先日の電話は、床の中で夢のように聞いていた。後で色々聞かされて安心し、本当に嬉しかった。]

～ 願はくは花のもとにて春死なむ、其の如月の

望月の頃～

<母からは>

[午前中の洗濯に疲れて横になっているところへ、あなたの電話。羽田へ降りたところかと、一瞬思ったことです。元気な、そして真面目な声に安心しました。

お父さんは、床の中で眼を覚まして、やりとりを聞いていたらしいが、電話に出てのやり取りは、やはりぎこちなさが先に立って、いやだつたらしい。丁度起き出して来た哲(我が兄)をつかまえても、あの調子です。

それにしても、ジムの事が手紙に書かれたよりも切実に聞こえたのです。スナップ写真でも送って下さい <中略>。

Chapter 13

Jim is Easy-going, but Hard to Figure Out

My father's letter dated February 11, 1970:

⟨ It's the evening of our National Foundation Day. Everyone is home, each being in his/her own room. I was listening to your mother's dialogue with you over the phone when you called. I felt like I was hearing your voice in my dreams. Your mother told me everything you said over the phone, and I was simply happy. ⟩

(My father quotes an ancient Japanese Waka here.)

From my mother:

⟨ It was mid-morning and I was just lying down, for I was a bit tired from doing laundry, when I received your phone call.

For a moment, I thought you were calling from the Haneda Airport. I immediately felt at ease, hearing your chipper voice that's full of life. Your father was still in bed, listening to our conversation. As usual, he must have felt a little awkward to talk with his darling daughter on the phone. I grabbed Satoshi (my brother) who had just gotten up and walked into the room, but he was also the same old brother of yours. (My brother also felt awkward to talk to his younger sister on the phone.)

I had been reading about Jim in your letters, but it came home to me, during our phone conversation, for the first time, that he is far more important to you than how

世界中がでんぐり返って、大騒ぎしているようです。平和であることが経済を成長させ、そしてその大成功は、各國の競争となり、それは殆ど大戦争の観さえあるのです。そんな中で生きてゆく、これからの方若い世代のことが、最近つくづく思い巡らされます。こんな中で、最も大事にしたいのは、やっぱり豊かな精神と健康です。くれぐれもそのことを忘れないように。無理しないこと。意地悪しないこと。じつと深く、一人で考える時間も造るよう心掛けて下さい。

- 母より]

<1970年3月17日、父より>

〔亮子、何か言ひそびれている事がありはしないか。思ひ切って何でもするがよい、亦言ふがよい。儂は、いよいよ日経(日本経済新聞)近く御闘になる。但し、気の向いた時に仕事して呉れといふので、一両年は捨て扶持が出るらしい。穏やかに第一線を退く事叶い、ほっとしている次第、。。。悠っくり(ゆっくり)本を読み英文誌でも手伝って、と考える。

明子(我が姉)、哲(我が兄)が早く名を成すようになると、亮子は願ふらしいが、儂は反対。名を挙げたり、財を成したり共に御免である、。。。。

you described him in your letters. Please send us his picture. (A few paragraphs omitted)

The whole world is topsy-turvy. It's generally peaceful, but every nation is experiencing a fast economic growth, resulting in a huge competition among nations. Yes, we are now in an economic war with other economically thriving countries. I think about you and Jim who must live in this frenzied and chaotic world. Come what may, what's most important is the rich humanity within a person, and health. Please don't forget it. Don't be unreasonable. Be thoughtful of others. Have a few minutes every day to think deeply about yourself and your situation. - Mother >

My father's letter dated March 17, 1970:

< Dear Ryoko; Is there something that you want to tell us, but you hesitate to tell? Do whatever you want to do, and tell us whatever you want. It appears that my time for retirement from the Nihon Keizai Newspaper is finally approaching. They say they'd like me to hang around for a year or so, and continue to write whenever I feel like doing so. Well, it looks like they will pay me a small amount of money for a while. I'm glad I can retire from the front line quietly this way.... I will continue to write for the English "Go Journal." I will have time for reading books now.

It seems you are anxious for your sister and brother to be known as established

昨夜から『背教者』(我が姉の書いた歴史小説)を読み返す。改めて感銘は無いが、このように獨りよがりで、然も自分の持っているものを消化し切れぬのでは、一般に受け容れられる筈なしと、今更の如く思ひたり、。。。

梅散り木蓮そろそろ膨らみ、金魚も元気。

ジムとその家族に挨拶しなくていいのか。事務所の三ボスにも黙っていていいのか。】

ジムの名が父の手紙に現れたのはこれが初めてです。

〔ジムと共に居る時間は、そこに太陽があり音楽があるような気がする。かくも素晴らしい人物の、その深き心の襞の、裏の裏まで見たいと思う〕

と我が父母に書き送った私ですが、上記の父の書簡は、恐らくインテリ教授卵のヒューバートが、多分その頃結婚の話を持ち出してきて、私が口では強そうなこと言っても、内心少なからずグラツイタ頃の手紙に対する、返信と思われます。だいたい頼りとする母が、我が傾倒せるジムのことを「路傍」、「路傍」と呼ばわるんだから致し方ない。

writers. Well, I'm totally against it. I don't like people who pursue fame and money....

I have just started re-reading your sister's "Haikyōsha" - ("The Apostate" is one of the historical novels my sister wrote. It was nominated for the famed Naoki Award.) Again, I am unable to be impressed by the story line. She is too self-absorbed and too feeble in displaying her inner strength and sensibility to appeal to the readers in general....

The plum blossoms are about to die; magnolias are ready to bloom; gold fish in the pond are doing well. Should I send a greeting to Jim's family? Should I also send a greeting to the three lawyer bosses at your office? >

That was the very first time that Jim's name appeared in my father's letters to me. I sent to my parents an ode to Jim one after another, saying "When I'm with Jim, I feel sunshine and music all around me. I want to go behind those many folds of his deep soul, if I could."

I have a suspicion that the first two lines of my father's 3/17/70 letter above was in response to my letter in which I must have exhibited my uncertainty and weakness. I believe Hubert, the intellectual assistant professor of biology at Northwestern University, wanted to know my feelings towards him about that time. I did not want to lose him totally, and gave him evasive or non-committal responses. Well, on hindsight, I blame my mother for this dishonesty on my part, for she continuously discouraged me, by

しかし今こうして記憶の糸を手繰り戻してみると、
当時ジムのことは「マシマローのような柔らか
な内面なのに、その外側は鋼鉄の如き強靭さ、
どこか一筋縄では行かぬ点あり」という風に両
親に書き送っていたと思うので、その一筋縄で
は行かないところが魅力でありながら、一方私
に決定的な自信を持たせることを拒んでいたこ
と、確かです。

1972年春に東京に帰った時、その『一筋縄で
行かない』というのは、英語でなんと言つたらい
いかしら？と父に聞いたら、父は言下に

“He is hard to figure out!”と答え、私は、そうだ、
そういえば、ルームメートのメイが、ジムのこと
をいつもそう言ってたっけ、と膝を打ったのでし
た。

ジムは一筋縄で行かなかった反面、ロマンチッ
クでもあった次第で、ある時

「僕はあなたを愛してるけど、恋してはいないん
だ」と発言しました。しかもそのあと、コメントを
付け加え、「恋はおよそ儂いが、愛は永続する
ものだ」

うん、そりや私もどつかで聞いたか、読んだかし

repeatedly calling Jim “a pebble on the
roadside.”

I recall writing to my parents about Jim,
saying that he is as soft as a marshmallow
inside, but he is as tough and impenetrable
as a sheet of steel on the outside. He was
easy-going, but he was not easy. You
could say that he was not without
complications. And, of course, that made
him even more attractive. I was greatly
attracted to his personality, but there was
something about him that would not allow
me to become totally confident of his love.

When I returned to Tokyo briefly in the
spring of 1972, I asked my father,

“How would you put someone is 'not
without complications,' or 'easy-going, but
not easy,' into good and simple English?”

My father responded, smiling,

“How about ‘He is hard to figure out?’”

Then I recalled my roommate May once or
twice called Jim exactly that!

Jim was not easy, but he was somewhat
romantic. One day, he said to me,

“Ryoko, I love you very much, but I am not
in love with you.” He then made an
additional comment, saying “‘Being in love’
does not last long, but ‘loving someone’
endures.”

Well, I had heard that, or read about it,
somewhere. But, I wanted Jim to say, “I’m

たような気がした。しかし私は、やっぱりこのジムから“I am in love with you”と言われたい、恋のほうが愛より力強くダイナミックではないか、と内心大いに不満だったのです。

ジムがそのようなことを私に言ったのは、やはりそのヒューバートのことで揺れ動く、我が女心を察知したことだったと思いますが、ことの前後は今やはっきりしません。ただ、クリスマスにヒューバートが、分厚い料理の本をプレゼントに呉れた。私はメイと二人で和洋折衷のインチキ料理をするのが、楽しくてならなかつことはたしかですが、この男が料理の本を呉れたのは、なんとなく気に入りませんでした。これで練習してくれとでも言う気か、、、？以前、日本で結婚しかかったサラリーマン氏も、まあよく食べ物の話は したし、また月給袋はそのまま渡すから家計をやって欲しいとか、それでこっちは興ざめだったんだ。ジムなんか、デート時代は無論、結婚後だって、食べ物の話なんぞしたことなし、家計なんぞは、ぜつたいた話題にしないんだ。

その後間もなくヒューバートは、予想通りに結婚の打診をしてきて「ジム・ポップジョイのような先の計画や予定もない男と付き合って、今は面白おかしくても二年後、三年後にはきっと後悔するだろう、それをあなたは待つ気か。僕と結婚するほうが賢明ではないか」と演説し、我が反感を募らせたのでした。

“in love with you,” because that’s more romantic, dynamic, and far more powerful than just loving someone.

I don’t know what prompted Jim to say what he said to me about love, but he must have sensed my wavering uncertainty about the presence of Hubert.

I recall one incident that made me dislike Hubert, though. He gave me a big cookbook as a Christmas present. Surely, I liked to cook half-American, half-Japanese, somewhat strange dishes in our small kitchen with May, but I did not like the fact that he gave me a cookbook. Is he telling me to practice cooking so I’ll become a good wife for him? Come to think of it, the favorite topic of the guy I didn’t marry in Japan was also food. Additionally, that Japanese man wanted me to handle the entire household money matters after marriage, saying that he would hand to me his monthly salary in its entirety. What a bore! Jim has never, whether before or after marriage, discussed food or household finances.

As I expected, Hubert brought up marriage soon afterwards, and said

“Jim Popjoy does not have any plans for the future. You have fun dating him now, but you’ll be sorry in two to three years. Are you just going to wait for the big letdown? Don’t you think it is wiser to settle down with me?”

These words did not help reduce my initial antipathy towards him. I was mad about

私はジムに熱中し、またジムから大事にされることをはっきり感じ取りながら、いかにせんか、そのジムが約束めいたことは決して言わないとこへ、魅力薄けれど、ジムと同じくらい頭脳明晰なヒューバートが、結婚しようと言い出したことで明らかに動搖し、すぐさまメイに相談したのでした。すると、あの太陽娘は、言下に、

「リョウコ、あなたのインチキ相談なんか乗りませんよ。あなたにそんな気が無いこと、メクラだって分かるわ。分からるのはトンマのヒューバートだけでしょう！」

ジムにもすぐこのことは打ち明けました。

「今は楽しくても、将来後悔するぞって、言われたわ」

「彼はすぐ結婚する気なの？」

「いいえ、それはまだ先のことでしょう。ただ、今約束して欲しいんですって」

「リョウコ、僕もいつかは結婚すると思う。君とかもしれないし、そうでないかもしれない。今は結婚のことは、まるで考えていないから分からないんだ。ただ僕は、西欧のしきたりの『婚約』というのは嫌いなんだ。婚約してから互いの気持を探りあい、確かめ合うなんて、愚劣だよ。僕は式の日取りを決めてから求婚するよ」

Jim. I was certain that Jim cared about me. But, admittedly, he never said anything promising about the future either.

And, Hubert, who was far less charming but almost as smart as Jim, wanted to marry me. I was somewhat unsettled, and asked my roommate May what she thought. She replied, without hesitation,

“Ryoko, please don't pretend that you need my advice. Even a blind person would see that you have no interest in Hubert. The only person in the world who doesn't see the truth is bonehead Hubert!”

I later told Jim about my unsettled feeling, saying,

“Hubert said that I would regret continuing to date you, even though I am having great fun now.”

“Does he want to marry you soon?”

“No, I don't think so. But, he wanted me to promise him now.”

“Ryoko, I'm sure I'll marry some day. It may be with you, or somebody else. I don't know who it will be with, for marriage is not on my mind now. I can tell you this, though, that I don't like the conventional idea of 'engagement.' To me, it's stupid to be first engaged and then later decide to actually get married after waiting a certain period of time to determine how you feel about each other. I would decide on the date of the wedding first, and then propose to the one that I have chosen.”

私はジムが求婚する相手は自分に違いないという確信は無かったのですが、彼の自信に溢れるその言葉を聞いて、

「ウン、これはやっぱり私の太陽だ。この太陽に比べたら、あのヒューバートなんか星屑に等しいんだ」

と改めて確信し、その会話の後、ジムが今夜仕事の後バスケットボール見に行く?と聞くので、忽ちヒューバートのことは忘れてしました。

(ついでながら、この『式の日取りを決めてから求婚する』は、高校時代の親友が「これぞ殺し文句の極致」と評価した、名高いキャッチフレーズです。)

<70年3月19日、母より>

[いかにも好青年らしい感じのジムの、家族共々の写真、、、それにしても、優しく整った顔立ちの中に、精神の美しさも秘めているようなジムが、単なる路傍の人でなければいいがとは思います。然し、努力や熱情も大切だけれど、自然の力を忘れないように。決して無理を通してはなりません。

シカゴもようやく寒さがうすらいだ由、ひどい風邪も引かずにひとりでがんばったことを感謝します。庭の梅は今満開です。こぶし、白木蓮

I was far from being confident that the person he would choose would be me, but I liked what he said. His unwavering confidence. His unmistakable strength.

Yes, he is indeed my music and my sunshine. Compared with this brightest sunshine pouring all over me, Hubert is but an obscure, tiny star in the sky at night!

I forgot about Hubert instantly, for Jim was then asking me, "Would you like to go see the Chicago Bulls' basketball game tonight?"

(About this "Decide on the date of the wedding first, and then propose," one of my high school friends made a comment later: "There's a sublimation of marriage proposal. I would have liked to hear that!")

My Mother's Letter Dated March 19, 1970:

<Thank you very much for the picture of Jim and his family. What refreshingly nice, refined features Jim has! They exhibit the superior quality of his character. I wish, from the bottom of my heart, that he is more than the pebble on the roadside for you. You must not forget, however, the importance of the natural course of things in your life. To make an effort and to pour your passion on people and things you deem important is good, but please let things take the natural course; do not try to make things happen by force.

I understand that Chicago is finally getting out of the grip of its winter cold. I thank God that you managed all by yourself without even catching a bad cold. The

が今年は大変多く薔薇をもっています。

毎日原稿書きで暇のない哲が、昨日お見合いなるものをしました。岡本家に出入りしている英語の先生のすすめで。ポンコツ車をあやつつていつものやぼったい服装で出かけて行きましたが、帰路は仕事のほうに立ち寄り、夜になって帰宅しました。結果は家が豊かで「おとなしいだけが取り柄の娘」で、まるで魅力がなかったらしい。】

父の便りには、この見合いから帰った兄が、

〔「あんなおとなしいの駄目」とあり。

「ボーズ(兄の愛称)も悪人ね」と、オネエの評なり。】

と書いてありました。

母の手紙は続いて—

〔貴女は体質的にも、田園より都会向きではないかと思います。私は、貴女の現在のシカゴ滞在は、特に心配していないのです。しかし、それなりに、都会であるための危険性は想像されます。大建築の中の、換気、火事など、不注意は決して出来ないでしょう。どうか、くれぐれも、よく注意の行き届いた生活をしてください。

plum blossoms are in full bloom in our yard. The magnolia bushes have a lot of buds this year.

Your brother Satoshi has been very busy writing for the movies, but he went yesterday to meet an arranged-marriage candidate girl, who was recommended to him by the English teacher who has been working with Director Kihachi Okamoto. Satoshi went to the meeting place in his usual unpretentious clothes, driving his old car. He reported to us later, saying "She's from a good family, but she's too shy and too ordinary." >

My father wrote just a few lines about this incident:

〔*Your brother returned home from the meeting and said, 'She's too quiet for my taste.'*

Your sister commented on it, 'Behold, there's a villain in this family!' >

Mother Continues:

〔*I know you are more comfortable living in a big city than in a country-side. I'm not worried too much about your living in Chicago. Nonetheless, I think of many intrinsic dangers of the city life. Stay alert, at all times, about the fire hazard and ventilation of the room. Never be careless.*

I talked to Ms. Shiiki who called the other day. She's now back in Tokyo, and she was wondering what you are doing. (Note: Ms. Shiiki is the girl who replaced me as a

先日、東京に戻ってきた椎木嬢から、電話がありました。貴女がどんなことをしてゐるのか、知りたがつてゐましたよ。

春の彼岸が近いとゆうのに、こちらは毎日冷たい風が吹いて、ぶつ続けて練炭起しをするのがもう嫌になりました。この不自由さは私たち両親で終わり、三人共セントラル・ヒーティングの生活を期待します。東京にはマンションが一日一軒の割合で出来ていますが、お母さんの新聞好きが新聞紙上で注意してゐるところでは、セントラル・ヒーティングは二割にもなつていません。機密性の近代建築の中は、相変わらずの時代遅れもいいところでガスストーブ石油ストーブらしく、人命に関わる大事故の続出です。

やはり日本人はまだまだ貧乏人らしいです。有識者には万博もたいへんな非難の的なのですが。本分を知り、跳ね上がりを抑えることは、個人の場合も同じですね、。。。

昨日は新聞に寒波の彼岸入りとあり、めつきり寒さに弱くなったお父さんは部屋の中に引き籠もつたきりです。

日本もアメリカも、否、世界中が、情報過多の中で、人間はきりきり舞いをしていると言われています。一日一回、十分くらいでも、ひとりになつて考える生活をして下さい。】

Japanese instructor at Fredonia College nearly 2 years prior.)

The Vernal Equinox is just around the corner, and yet we are being blown away by the cold wintry wind every day. I'm really getting weary of dealing with the coal briquettes to heat the house. This ancient way of heating the house should not be repeated after our generation, and all three of you should live in a centrally heated house.

The "modern" City of Tokyo is seeing one "modern" apartment building being built every day, but the reality is that only 20% of all new buildings have central heating systems. The remaining super-modern, high-security 80% continue to use the antiquated gas and kerosene stoves, resulting in repeated big and fatal accidents. By all means, we are behind times. Japan as a nation is still poverty-stricken, I should say. Japan's intellectuals are frowning upon hosting the World's Fair. Every man and woman, as well as the nation like Japan, must know their limitations, and suppress their desire to show off....

Your father who has been increasingly losing his resistance against cold weather does not go out of his room at all.

It is said that people not only in Japan and in the U.S. but all over the world are being thrown from right to left, and left to right, by the excessive supply of information. Please slow down, and find ten minutes a day to sit quietly and think. >