

第28章

ほぼ6ヶ月振りの母の手紙

1975年5月25日、早朝5時、母より

〔目が覚めたので起き上がりました。自分勝手な時に寝たり起きたり出来るのは、老境の一つの特権かもしれない。1月4日から13日にかけて書かれた、あなたのいつもの長文の手紙を取り出して、又読んだところでペンを執りました。いつに変らぬ綿々たるジム賛美につらぬかれた長文は、一回や二回では消化し切れないのです。

元日に泊まってくれたお母さんと亮子が、いろいろ家事のことに精を出している時、一人でおとなしくテレビを見ているジムを想像して、思わず笑ってしまいました。

大変な忙しさの中で、タフに働きまくっているジムが、結婚以前と少しも変らぬ態度を持ち続けられるというのは、なんという尊く有難いことかと、私は涙ぐむばかりです。そういうジムのために好きな童話の翻訳などはやはり暫く諦めることです。

台所用品ありがとう。然し、私を見を言うなれば、一分一秒刻みの多忙な毎日の生活の中から送るほどのものではない、と思います。何故なら、あんなものは、日本製品が全部アメリカの模造だからです。それに、水を使用する洗剤な

Chapter 28

My Mother Writes After Six Months

From Mother, May 25, 1975, at 5:00 A.M.:

< I got up because I woke up. One of the privileges of being old could be that we can get up and go to bed at any time we want. I have just re-read your long, long letter written between January 4 and 13, and I took a pen. As usual, it is difficult to digest your long essay, filled with never-ending admiration of Jim, in one or two sittings.

I could not help smiling to myself, picturing Jim who sits quietly in front of the TV, watching sports, while you and his mother, who stayed over New Year's Day, were busy cleaning and preparing dinner.

When I think of Jim, working hard every day as he does, dealing with tough cases at court, who has never changed from before marriage, who stayed the same good man as before, I feel like crying. What a precious man he is! How deeply thankful I am! You should give up your hobby of translating books, at least for now, so you can spend your entire time for Jim....

Thanks for the kitchen sundry you sent us. I must tell you, though, that the gadget of that sort is totally wasted on us, for we have the imitation versions of them in abundance in Japan. Use of the powder detergent and the like is affected by the water quality here, which is different, I would think, from that of the U.S. All

どは、両国の水質の違いなども考えなければなりません。大家族で活動的な家庭なら大いなる必要品でしょうが、停滞しきった我が家には、不向きの贈物でした。

クロ、西山嬢(?)にはいいことをしました。吉ケンも、ジムのお姉さんたちの生活で、貴女も分かるでしょうが、子供を育てる世代の男女が、今一番苦労しています。物質に豊かな時代であればあるほど。私など、戦前・戦中・戦後と、困難そのものの中であなた方3人を育てましたが、むしろあの、引き締められた人間性のまじめさが懐かしいくらいです。

貴女の認識不足の点を書きます。

明子の鏡台のことです。貴女は貴女の鏡台觀から明子がたいへんな失い物をしたと思っているらしいが、とんでもないことです。あれは鏡が嫌いなのです。「嫌い」は極端かもしれないけれど、少なくとも鏡に顔を映すなどということは、彼女は好きではないですよ。これも変人の一つの条件のような気がしますが。ですから私は、あの鏡を朝子にやったのは、大いに良かったと思っているのです。朝子もあまり鏡の愛用者ではないようですが。

編み物でジムのお母さんを喜ばせるのはいいけれど、その後ごたごたするのは、きっと貴女の高慢心のせいだと思います。私は自分の夫

those kitchen gadgets could be of use for a large and active household, but not for this torpid writer family.

You did well for your high-school classmates. All three of them are raising small children now. You must see over there how Jim's two sisters and their young families are faring. Young couples in Japan today who are bringing up children are having the hardest time. Living in an affluent time does not make it easier. I have raised 3 children during the non-affluent times before-, during-, and after-the-War period. But, I have certain nostalgia for the sense of restraint and self-discipline people had in those difficult times.

I must point out your misunderstanding. It's about your sister Akiko's mirror stand. You seem to use your own school-girl theory about the mirror and think that Akiko lost something precious, giving it away to her young sister-in-law, Asako. You are quite off the mark, Ryoko. Akiko dislikes mirrors. Well, 'dislike' may be a little too strong a word, but she does not like to do things like looking at herself in the mirror, which could well be one of the criteria of having a little oddball personality. I think it was good that she gave her beautiful mirror stand away to Asako, though Asako herself does not seem to be the type of a girl who loves to spend much time in front of a mirror.

It was nice of you to have made a knitted scarf for Jim's mother, but it is not nice to have to make much ado about it

の親兄弟姉妹と親しくしなかったので、必然的にごたごたも無く、極めてあっさりしていましたが、貴女のポップジョイ一家は、或る種の日本人達の如く、家系的ですね。個人主義的なお父さんの気風の中で育ったあなたは、よく気をつけねばならないことです。

ジムの優しさが、単なる甘ったるい優しさではないことは、私にも分かります。第一、その職業が理知性そのものですし、私は貴女のお父さんの弱弱しい優しさに長年月接してきましたので、比較したくもありますから。

イリノイからルイジアナへ、また旅行したようですね。1966年のアネットたちと写した写真を取り出して眺めました。今度の写真も送ってください。

ジムやっと老朽車を捨てて、安心しました。亮子の練習もなんとか始められるように祈ります。シカゴの癌研究所での健康診断のこと、安心しました。

4人の日本人がシカゴの真ん中で、キントンやキンピラゴボウまで作って食べられるとは、驚きです。これで、考えたのですが、何か欲しい食べ物思い出してノートしておいて、知らせてください。私の手すさびに、船便の荷造りをしますから。

afterwards. It was because of your conceit, I'm afraid. I have never been close to your father's parents or his brothers and sisters, and consequently, I have never had to have any hassle with them. I was quite comfortable at all times. It appears that your Popjoy clan is very Japanese-like and they are quite family-centered, in a way. You grew up in the very individualistic atmosphere of your father's house. I hope you think about this very carefully.

I can understand that Jim's sweetness is not just the syrupy, sugary kind. For one thing, his profession calls for reason and practical intellect. I was accustomed all my life to the somewhat soft and tender affection of your father, which I believe is a bit different from the affection Jim pours on you.

I understand you and Jim took a trip to Louisiana. I took out the photos from your trip there in 1966 with the French girl Annette and others. Please send me pictures from your recent trip, also.

I am relieved to know that Jim finally got rid of his old car. I hope that you will learn how to drive now. I am glad that you both took the physical exams at the Cancer Prevention Center.

That was a small surprise that four Japanese got together and cooked "kinton" and "kimpira-gobō" in the heart of Chicago. That reminds me: please jot down the names of the Japanese foods you'd like to eat, and send me a list. I'll send you a package by sea.

去る12日の電話ありがとう。ジムの声に、思わず「元気?」と言ったら、「げんきです」と答えが返ってきたのは、私の聞き違いだったかしら。本当にうれしかった。

＜同じ日、夜11時近＜＞

こちらの報告。先ず、家族が一人増えたこと。2月1日に小太郎誕生。今まで元気に育っております。私にとっては曾孫みたいなもので、感激も薄れたこの頽廃年齢では大した感激もないような思いでしたが、近頃は相手の顔を見る目の色がはっきりと生気を帯び、声を立てて笑うようになり、可愛いものだと実感するようになったところです。

父親のほうもこれと期を同じくしたようにたいへん忙しくなり、家で2・3日書いたかと思うと、次の2・3日はプロデューサーとの打ち合わせで泊り込みというわけで、自然収入も増えていき、今のところ私は安堵の中に浸っております。ご安心のほどを。

朝子も娘時代をあまり豊かには育っていないことがかえって哲には幸いしたのではないかと、私は思っております。哲といい明子といい、世間の一般的のレベルで見たら、明らかに低い収入の人間ですが、この貧しい家庭に入り込んできて、別に期待はずれの感情も持たずに

Thank you very much for the telephone call on the 12th. When I heard Jim's voice, I said,

"Genki?" before I knew it, to which he responded instantaneously, "Hai, genki desu!" Or, was I just dreaming? I don't know. All I know is that I was simply happy to hear his voice.

＜On the same day, around 11:00 P.M. - >

One news item from this household: We have a new member in our family. Kotarō was born on February 1st, and he's been growing up just fine. At first, I was not necessarily thrilled or overly rejoiced as all other grand-parents would be. For one thing, he could well be my great-grandson, rather than a grandson. Lately, however, I see the sparks of life in the baby's eyes at all times. He laughs with distinct expressiveness, and the spirit of a human person is felt there. He is totally endearing and so precious!

The baby's father, in parallel with his first son's daily development, has become suddenly busier in his writing profession. He would be writing in his study room for a few days in a row, and then go out to discuss the production of the movie he is writing, meeting the directors, producers, and such. His income has been increasing fittingly. I've been feeling quite relieved lately.

His wife Asako did not necessarily grow up in an affluent family, and that's to your brother's advantage. She married into this financially below-average family (your

すんだらしく、極めて素直に毎日を送っているようです。これはやはり、若くて、世間的な苦労を知らない純粋さのせいだと思います。哲のような浮世雲助の暢気な男には、経済的に協力できる、分別盛りの30歳の職業婦人よりも、この幼さが良かったような気がします。必要以上にでしゃばることも嫌いらしく、こちらの生活圏に入り込むような無作法さは微塵も無く、自他のケジメがはっきりしていることを、私は多としております。明子のようなへんくつに対しても、極めて自然に対処していて、私は少しの危惧も感じないですんでいます。

明子は、依然として、来る日も来る日も部屋の中で机に向かい、且つ眠っています。編集者との付き合いが少ないので、日の目を見る原稿は極めて少ないわけですが、ご本人は極めて落ち着いています。持つて生まれた性格、いかんともしがたく、あるがままに日々過ぎて行くのみです。対人恐怖症とか深層心理学的見方もありますが、本人は極めて自分自身に忠実で、他人に迷惑をかけない小心さで、自分の好きな道を歩んでいるのですから、私は及ばずながらささやかな協力をやってやるべきだ、と思っています。貴女にはジムが居り、哲には朝子が居るのですから。

私も人生の持ち時間は本当にもう少なくなったようです。日に一回はその事が脳裏に閃きます。素直な気持ちで自分の周囲を見つめ、自分自身を先ず傍らに置き、中心は他の人のために

sister and brother each have a much lower income than the average person in Japan), and she has never shown a speck of dissatisfaction. Asako's demeanor has never changed from the beginning: calm, easy, and complaint-free. I believe her still being young and not having been exposed to the harsh reality of life works better for your brother, than a mature career woman of 30 who makes a lot of money would. Asako never puts herself forward. She wisely draws a line between her life and ours. Even with your eccentric and difficult sister Akiko, she talks in a most comfortable, natural manner, never assuming an affected attitude.

Your sister Akiko continues to write at her desk. If she is not writing, she is sleeping. Since she does not have a good publisher or an editor to deal with, her completed novels seldom get published. She is quite calm, though. Nothing seems to disturb her. She could be suffering from the fear of interpersonal relations disorder, or some similar psychological disorder, but she is amazingly true to herself. She may not have an outwardly successful writer's life, but she does not inconvenience anyone, and she follows her passion quietly. I am determined to stand behind her as long as I live. You have Jim, and your brother has Asako.

I realize that I don't have much time left now. The thought occurs to me at least once a day. I look around and observe things, hither and thither, with a calm mind. I put myself aside and try to do what little things I can do for others. I don't hesitate

するべきではないか、と思っています。ですから、人に頼まなければ出来るだけのことはやり、困っている人には進んで助力するよう心掛けております。

あなたの手紙にジムの職業圏内の人々の話があまり出ないようですが、日本人達だけで集まって、キンピラゴボウやいなり寿司を食べたりするより、ジムの将来に関わりのある人々と親しむべきではないかと思われますが、どんなものでしょうか。

近頃ペンを握ることがたいへんおつくうで、貴女にも随分長いこと書きませんでしたが、それというのも、赤ん坊用の編み物などに寸刻を惜しみ、また、世話になった知人の家の子供達のために、お手玉などを作つて日を過ごすことが楽しみとなりました。それも一時間坐つたら次の1時間は庭に出て草むしりをしたり、木の剪定をしたりして、足腰の運動の平均を図らなければなりません。

それにしても、ジムのお母さんの元気さには敬服します。ゴルフを今もやっておられるのでしょうか。

私はもう街に出ても、あの歩道橋の昇り降りはしないで、遠回りしております。そんなわけで、我が家の一階にもなかなか昇りません。

to help anyone who is in a tight situation, who is in need of help from others.

I have seldom seen you mention in your letters the people with whom Jim works in his profession. Rather than getting together with Japanese friends to eat sushi, shouldn't you spend time with people Jim works with?

I've been finding it more and more difficult to pick up a pen and write. I haven't written you for such a long time. (Walnut's note: Indeed, this 5/25/1975 letter was the first since her last one dated 12/18/1974. She did not even tell me about the birth of her first grandson until he was nearly 4 months old.) I have been busy, however, knitting baby clothes for Kotarō, or sewing hand-made toys for the small children of our neighbors. I seem to enjoy doing stuff like that now. After I sit for an hour, knitting and sewing, though, I get up, go out to our small yard, and pull up the weeds or clip and prune the tree branches for an hour, trying to keep my legs strong.

I am totally awed at Jim's spirited and energetic mother. Does she still play golf?

When I go out on an errand, I avoid climbing and descending the elevated walkways; I make a long detour. I seldom go upstairs in my own house.

The United States has fully pulled out of Viet Nam. There'll be social changes and adjustments nationally, in many ways, I suppose. Take care, both of you, in everything you do in your daily life.

ベトナムから完全に撤退したアメリカは、国内的にも色々変化していくことでしょう。二人共どうか大事に身を処して下さい。

これから私の最も嫌いな季節に向かって行きます。暑さに加えて、東京の湿度がものすごいことは、ジムも去年の経験から分かってくれるでしょう。長い手紙は、この間休みたいのです。貴女も無理して書かないこと。— 母より】

We are heading for the time of the year that I hate most. In addition to the heat, we are going to face the insufferably uncomfortable humidity of Tokyo, which Jim experienced last summer. I will have to skip writing long letters during this hot season. — Mother >

< End of Chapter 28 >