

Isolated Connected Kyushu Island

*In a triangle of Western influence,
communism and legends*

Hana da Yumiko



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This half-fiction starts in 1945 and ends in 2004. It's about my parents, who were born and raised in a village and small town far from the capital. I describe them in a triangle of Western influence, communism, and legends. My father was born in 1935, during the time of rising militarism. But his second step was a drastic change.

Dedication

This book, half fiction, is dedicated to:

Yuki, my daughter, who couldn't be sixteen. This tale is about your gran'parents; we used to talk for years. You were behind her seat while gran'ma was relating what had happened during the war.

Beth, my mentor, who inspired me to write a fiction about my island when my father passed away on my fortieth birthday. Without her support, especially with editing my foreigner's English, I couldn't have written this book.

Valeria, my ex-neighbor, who told me about Christianity in Portuguese.

Young Sook, my former next-door neighbor, with whom I spent daily life together. The moment I met your husband's parents from South Korea, I thought my father's brother and sister were in front of me. They greatly influenced this story.

Noriko, my *mama-tomo* (friends who met as mothers first), whose origin is in the line of islands between Kyushu and Taiwan.

Chapter 1

People

Ayako—Jiro's wife

Ichiro—Hisaharu's eldest brother

Jiro—Hisaharu's elder brother

Mr. Universite—a man who tried to make a better world for
poor people

Rutu—Hisaharu's great-gran'ma, a hiding Christian

Ryuji Anda—Hisaharu's friend

Shiro—Hisaharu's father

Tera—a girl in the next village

Yone—Hisaharu's mother

Status and Groups

Earth Spiders—the people who originated in the Nihon islands

Emishi—one group of Earth Spiders in the north

GHQ—American occupation force in Nihon

Hayato—one group of Earth Spiders in Kyushu

Long Shins—one group of Earth Spiders in Osaka and
elsewhere

O-Kimi—status, the highest from the fourth century to 1945

Yamato—the people who came from the continental peninsula
before the seventh century

Places

Beppu—a city in Kyushu

De Island—a tiny island in Nagasaki Bay

Hakata—the biggest city in Kyushu

Hiroshima—an area on Main Island facing the inland sea,
next to Yamaguchi

Izumo—a city on the continent side of Main Island
Kan-Mon Strait—the sea between Kyushu and Main Island
Kaya—a southern country on the Korean peninsula
Koguryo—a northern country on the Korean peninsula
Munakata—the area where Hisaharu lived
Nagasaki—a city in Kyushu
Nara—the oldest capital in Nihon
Nihon—the Japanese name for Japan
Oki Island—a tiny island between Kyushu and Korea
Otushima—a city in Yamaguchi, with a navy base
Paekche—a country on the Korean peninsula
Silla—a country on the Korean peninsula
Tu-shima Strait—the sea between Kyushu Island and Korea
Yamaguchi—an area on Main Island facing the inland sea

Chapter 2

People

Eriko—Nihon pronunciation of Jericho
Goro—a private, one of the four surviving soldiers and a
hiding Christian
Ino—Misao's mother, Tom-O's wife
Jericho—Misao and Hisaharu's daughter
Ken—a private, another surviving soldier
Mika—a woman who tried to make a better world
Misao—Hisaharu's wife
Muneki—a private first class, one of the four surviving soldiers
Tom-O—Misao's father

Places

Koga—a town in Kyushu, near Hakata

Kure—a city on Main Island next to Hiroshima
Nanzan—a Catholic seminary in Nagoya
Nagoya—a big city on the Pacific Ocean side of Main Island
Sasebo—a city in Kyushu near Nagasaki

Chapter 3

People

George—Nuttida's son
Mari—Jericho's friend
Nuttida—a girl in Borneo

Places

Gotemba—a city on Main Island near Tokyo
Ko-ura—a village in Tu-shima
Tu-shima— islands between Kyushu and Korea

Chapter One

In a triangle of Western influence, communism, and legends, a boy was born and raised in a village far from the capital.

July 1945

An air-raid siren wailed again in the morning. A boy dashed out of a house.

“Hisaharu! Back! To the cave!” His mother shouted.

“This time I will watch them!” He didn’t look back.

“No!” His mother, Yone, cried out.

“It’s alright,” his father said. “The target is Yahata, not this valley. Yone, daughters, let’s go to the cave just in case.”

“I don’t wanna lose another son.” Yone began to cry.

“I am a ninja!” Through trees and bushes, the boy heard the sound of fighters and bombers as usual. He looked at another mountain on the other side of valley, where an antiaircraft gun was in position. *Will it work this time?*

The noise got louder and louder. Then he saw a big group of F6Fs and ten B-29s through branches and thick leaves. *They are the enemy!* All he knew had been their noise. They came from the southeast as usual. *This is the enemy my brother died fighting against. I am watching them!*

He climbed a tree and watched the antiaircraft gun. It began to fire as usual. American pilots knew the height its shells would reach. The Americans had no obstacle between them and their target, Yahata, the iron city.

The ten-year-old boy jumped to the ground and dashed again. *Are our armaments really miserable? Last week, a typhoon made an American fighter crash. Are typhoons our only defense? What happened to the pilot?*

At the top of the mountain was a ruin from the samurai era, an ancient castle he climbed up to. Far away beyond the mountain ranges, he saw Yahata being bombed by innumerable planes. *Are we losing? Am I gonna get killed too?*

Two airplanes with the sun on their bodies came from the east, chasing the B-29s. One of them caught Hisaharu's eyes. *It's plunging!* His heart pounded. "Why? Ah, no! It's falling in a spiral!" he shouted. "Why? We're losing! Adults say enemies will land soon. Can I be ready for death next week? Tomorrow?"

The education in those years told pupils to die, not to surrender. A man went to battle and died with honor. *No! I will run and hide. Hiding doesn't mean I'm a coward. I'm brave! Oh yes!* He found a good reason to persuade himself. *I'm brave enough to search for the enemy in the crashed fighter. There must be a pilot. There must be a body.*

Barefooted, the boy rushed back into the thick underbrush. He was one of the typical village boys who didn't like *zori*, straw sandals. Cuts and scars were a boy's pride. Village boys' soles were hard as bamboo. Their feet weren't for walking, only running. Walking was done balancing on their hands with their feet in the air.

Deep in the forest, climbing up a cliff, he smelled something wrong. *This is it.* He opened his nostrils as wide as he could.

Closing his eyes to concentrate, he traced the smell and opened his eyes when the smell got stronger. He walked like a ninja for a while and found a plane in the treetops.

Wow! Is this ... is this a plane? He had not seen such a big piece of metal before. *This heavy material flies!*

He saw a head leaning a little to the right. *Is he dead?* He looked around and decided to climb a tree near the combat plane to see the pilot's head. He held the boughs and put his soles on the trunk silently. *Even if the pilot is alive, he can't catch me here.*

It was burning hot above the forest without the shade of the trees. The pilot's helmet had slipped off. The color of his hair scared the boy. It was like that of an *oni*, an ogre in tales. *No way. He must be old. No, it's yellow, not white. I've heard a terrible experience sometimes makes hair colorless. So this is colorless hair.* The curious boy gazed at the stranger. This pilot must have felt terrible fear. Hisaharu moved to another tree to look at the pilot's face. The pilot's face was very different. *Is this difference the reason we have war? No way. Did my brother Ichiro also feel fear like he did?*

It was hard to imagine Ichiro's hair had turned out to be this color. *Why should his nose be big like this? Do Americans need more air?* Hisaharu breathed the air to make his nostrils as big as he could. *More than this?* The pilot's eyes were closed. *Will he open his eyes?*

Hiding himself from the man, Hisaharu crawled to the next tree, which was supporting a wing. The boy pushed the wing; the pilot groaned. *He lives! He lives! He's gonna kill me!* The boy's body was frozen for what seemed like hours. The sun was burning above. The American didn't groan anymore. *He's*

gonna die. Ah, he's gonna die. He looks as young as Brother Ichiro. "Mister, I'm gonna bring you water."

Hisaharu ran through the mountains. Jumping over roots from the ground, he checked strong vines to hold one after the other. He took big bamboo bottles and poured water from a well. All the metal cups had been taken to make planes. Hisaharu had crushed his lunchbox with a stone in his schoolyard¹. The order had made him very sad.

Uncle Enemy, all I have are bamboo bottles, the boy told himself. He plucked cucumbers and eggplants. There he saw *dojou*, small freshwater fish, and mud snails, which he put in the water to get rid of the mud. *They're for our meal tonight. I'll bring my portion for ya, Pilot-san.*

When he got back to the aircraft, everything was the same. The boy waited to see if the pilot would groan again. The American's silence froze the summer forest, the sound of the boiling sun, glittering light, and the noise of *semi*, cicadas. Hisaharu pushed the wing.

"Open your eyes, Mr. Enemy." He pushed the wing again. *Am I too late?* He pushed the wing harder. The plane began to lean. Hisaharu jumped back with fear. The big noise of breaking branches horrified him. The pilot didn't move at all. *I am too late.* The *semi* were blaming him with their noise. *This heat and humidity were too heavy to breathe for that man's weary body. I am to be blamed.* He thought about a life. But the young heart couldn't continue to think about death, so he put the bottles and vegetables in the cockpit.

"Uncle Enemy, offering food and water is what we do for a soul in heaven." The boy put his hands together and prayed

¹ Hisaharu's best friend, Kenji Handa's talk, 2008, March

for the pilot's soul. *I have to tell father about him.* He walked down to the house and saw his father.

"Father." He saw tears running down Shiro's stone face. *Father is always thinking of Brother Ichiro. Is there anybody else I can talk to? Um, wait. If someone heard about the American, he would let the military police know.*

Hisaharu couldn't sleep at all that night. Before dawn, he ran to the American. The cockpit was empty. *He lives!* Joy overcame him, and then fear. Hisaharu looked around; he strained his ears and widened his nostrils. *Will he hurt us? Will I be punished by the adults? I won't say anything.*

November 1944

One of Hisaharu's brothers came home. Even he could understand what it meant. *I, we, won't see him anymore.*



The Hanada's house, from Hisaharu's old album

On the morning of his arrival, the whole premises and the driveway along the bamboo bush were cleaned up and purified for him. Hisaharu raked leaves and drew beautiful stripes on the driveway and garden with a bamboo rake for the one who would be leaving. His father carried heavy bags of rice. That autumn he had to carry such loads alone.

Would I be like him? They say Brother Ichiro was great. But I don't remember him at all. He left home when I was so young. Raking in front of entrances, Hisaharu thought, I'm a little bit afraid. No, I'm not. I have to die for the nation. It would be glorious. I have to feel honored to die for O-Kimi. The social hierarchy had taken advantage of religions to control people's minds by saying, "Dedication of life to the nation is the most respectable act!"

Brother Ichiro lived his days for people; it didn't matter if they noticed his help. He left food and clothes for children in the days of hunger. He carried heavy bundles of rice straw and sticks on his back for old women.

"As Ichiro is so nice, I have decided to give him to a family in town who has no son to give him time to study," Father told Hisaharu in a sad voice. "Even poor boys can go to army or navy schools by taking fair exams." The army and navy schools, which had been established in 1870, allowed students entrance by passing fair exams rather than by having family status.

Leaders at the end of the samurai age understood that farmer and fisher villagers were full of people with abilities. The leaders came from those of such low class. Those new-age leaders lifted up the O-Kimi on the top of the forces by the 1889 constitution. The O-Kimi had been out of politics for 600 years, during the age of the samurai. The O-Kimi

gave court rank to samurai. The renaissance seemed to be successful. Democracy, one of the newly imported elements of culture, was welcomed.

But people didn't know how fragile the system was; they didn't know how many lives had been lost to create and keep the discussions-and-voting system at the other end of the continent.

There was a problem on the rise about creating European-type forces; new forces were poison for the majority of inexperienced people.

Ichiro had learned about the world map and statistics before the war. The United States overwhelmed his nation in population, productivity—everything. Pictures showed modern factories. He thought it was impossible to win. *Why do they have so much? Why don't we have as much?* He wondered if we could have peace if we didn't know others' enormous wealth like in the closed age, before Commodore Perry. *Is that why the government wants resources? Who decided this war? I chose the navy thanks to the adoptive family who gave me a higher education. Ordinary men had no right to choose. They say the navy is different from the army.*

The naval minister Nagano tried to persuade the military minister Terauchi in 1936 to avoid war. Besides him, Admiral Inoue had been against this war. He tried to block the alliance with Germany and Italy; he kept an English test in the entrance exam of the Naval Academy after the Military Academy abolished English. *As long as Admiral Inoue lives, he won't let us lead in a wrong way.* Anyone with a view was against starting this war. Even the former Fleet Admiral Yamamoto had asked the indecisive prime minister to find another way, not war. Later, Yamamoto died in a battle. *And they say there*

are violent men in the army. How poor my brother Jiro; he said he was hit often.

Ichiro had learned what had happened to his brother. When his cloth shoe was stolen, his superior officer beat him. "You fool! You lost a thing!" A superior officer shouted. Jiro fell, but at that moment, he needed to stand up straight. His superior officer punched him till he fell down. Jiro had to stand up again or he would have been kicked endlessly. He was moved from the entrance to the end of a corridor, struck repeatedly and having to stand up straight. *Under the name of the nation.* Jiro heard the words with his thought fading away.

The navy passed out small pieces of paper to students saying, "Our nation will start a new strategy. So we need men who can keep secrets. Do you want to join this strategy? Draw a circle around your choice. Ardent yes, yes, or no."

Ichiro chose yes.

A superior officer said to the young men who chose yes. "Great ones, I am taking you to the base in Yamaguchi. There you must understand the strategy."

At the base in Otushima, Yamaguchi, there were torpedoes named *kaiten*, which had a double meaning, "screw" in its pronunciation and "spin sky" in its Chinese characters. The name gave Ichiro an imagination of his death and turning up to heaven.

"Great ones, *kaiten* are converted Type 93 torpedoes. You'll get into them yourself, alone. Then you will attack an enemy ship with one and a half tons of explosives."

What is he saying? It took him a moment to understand what he said. *I might misunderstand this. Is it I who will do this?* It stopped his breath for a while. *Could I do this?* He felt his legs lose power to stand. To keep his posture, he

breathed deeply. *This is a nightmare. I'll be awake soon. Where is Admiral Inoue?*

Heat made men insane. Humidity pressed bodies and minds. After completing a hard training, a captain gave him permission to go home.

Manliness for O-Kimi and my nation, he persuaded himself on the train home. The ambiguous word *manliness* haunted him. This pain was rigorously reduced while training. Petty officers had always forced boys to shout out patriotism and chauvinism.

The train was so crowded. Everybody was scrawny. But they showed Ichiro respect for his uniform. Children stood up straight and bowed deeply. They knew why uniformed men were on the train. The men would have their last reunion with families. Women tried to give him their seats.

"No," Ichiro said. While supporting an old woman's heavy luggage, he put his hand on her shoulder softly. "You have to have the seat."

"But, you're going to ..." She couldn't talk well because her heart was swaying with tears. "My son is also."

"I also have a mother. Please." He gently put her luggage on her lap to keep her seated. Children with malnutrition were watching him with their hands at their sides. Their eyes were pure. Their attitude hit him.

*We'll never win. But my life is for them. At this stage of the war, all I can do is to reduce the number of enemy landing.*²

Hours on the train passed. Ichiro kept reading books and newspapers to hide his feelings. But everything was clear again even though he was mentally drained. *Kaiten are made of thin*

² Michitaka Kondo, an article in NihonKeizai News Paper, April 4, 2009

steel, not steel plate. Nihon's tanks are also made of such steel sheets. Those ships and planes had been kitchen pans, nails, temple bells while. The enemies' tanks and ships were made of strong steel plates. No, no, I can't think of it. Memories. No, it's sentimental. It makes me cry in this crowd.

But it was impossible to resist the feeling. Ichiro stepped to the door and put his sack on his shoulder to cover his teary face. *I'm going to die, won't see anybody, mother. There must be many people on the battleship. What will happen at the moment? Am I going to feel pain? Fear? The enemy might have a family Ah, no, I'm not fearful about it. I am brave, to crush a ship full of enemies. Many people.*

People around him saw his back and shoulders shivering. They thought about their fathers, husbands, and sons.

Hisaharu gazed at Ichiro walking steadily, each of his steps taking hold of ground on the driveway to their sweet home. Ichiro's face was stern, sallow. His father, mother, and four sisters choked back tears.

Shiro was just a farmer who had not seen any kind of map. He didn't know where his son was going. He didn't know anything about the war, couldn't imagine what was happening to his son's life. All he could do was to clench his fists. It was the first day he would spend for the rest of his life petrified with agony until his last day in 1975.

Yone had been a cheerful farmer, filled with motherly love for seven children. "They say Ichiro is a hero. It could be true, but why?" Yone asked.

"Shh!" Shiro said. He continued in a low voice. "Ya wanna say do not go to war, don't ya? But if anyone would hear ya, our family would become a byword in this community. What punishment would be inflicted on us? Our rice planting,

harvesting, and every moment of life would be impossible. Children would die.”

She gave up asking questions; questioning was not allowed. Women especially were raised under the spell of “obey your father while you’re single, obey your husband while you’re married, then your first son while you’re old.” They said it was a rule from Confucius 2,500 years ago. No woman could have her own will in the three stages of her life. But Yone once had a strong will at a Bon Dance³ night when she was sixteen. It brought her happy married life.

Hisaharu and his sisters were sitting on tatami, mats made from stems next to the formal tatami room, where Ichiro was standing and bowing deeply in front of a sepia picture on the wall. It was of a young man who had died in the Mediterranean in 1917. His bones and soul were still in the water. He had been in the navy, which was on the side of the United Kingdom then. *Who makes us change?*

“Father, Mother, I am deeply grateful to you for raising me up. Forgive me. I’m going before you.”

Far away from the center of politics and economy, the village people didn’t know why it was wartime.

“Why, this war?” Shiro asked, expecting no answer.

Yone was surprised and afraid. *Can anyone hear him?* She stood and looked around the house.

“Anyone with a view was against this war at the beginning,” Ichiro said.

“So why?” Shiro asked.

“The majority, farmers and fishermen, don’t know anything. In towns, newspaper companies want to sell their papers.

³ Dance in Shrine or Temple garden in August

People like exaggerated articles. So some newspapers agitate people. For such writers, battles are tools to bring them money.”

“Ya mean it’s the common people, not the leaders, who want this war.”

“It’s the common people who elect decision makers; this is democracy.”

“Demo—? Newspaper—?” The youngest sister whispered to the eldest sister.

“Shh!” The eldest put her finger to her lips.

“People trust what is printed. Because brains are already full of eating and women, there is no space for consideration.”

“Hah!” Shiro laughed through his nose. “Making food has been very tough, very, very. Eating, making children, what else is life for?”

“I’m afraid to say, but I remember our grandmother saying humans ought not to live by instinct alone.”

“She was—” Shiro turned his head. “Ah, go on. Well, um, humans can die for fame, people say, for our nation. But I don’t understand it. Ichiro, what is a nation? Who is the enemy? Who is a foreigner?” Shiro liked learning, but it was harder each day to gain more knowledge.

Ichiro said, “This is what I learned. It was ninety-one years ago, in 1853, that Matthew Calbraith Perry forced the islands open for the United States under an unfair treaty.” He looked at his father’s eyes. “Well, the United States is America, a part of the American continent, sisters,” Ichiro explained to the girls. He didn’t want to be his father’s teacher.

“Go on.” Shiro nodded.

“For more than 200 years, the United Kingdom, France, and other developed countries had expanded their colonies in Africa, India, America, and Asia. The huge wave also shook

our islands ninety years ago. This made samurai understand the importance of European-style armament. Learn about the navy from the United Kingdom. Learn about the army from France and Germany.”

“What’s the United Kingdom? What’s France and Germany?” One sister whispered to another sister.

“Names of countries in Europe.” He looked at the girl. “A very far, colder place, where our uncle died.”

“Ya say we learned many things from different countries?” Shiro asked.

“Yes, Father. After Germany beat France in 1871, a German, Jacob Meckel, was invited to Tokyo in 1885. He was the key person in the Franco-Prussian War. During his three-year stay, he trained army leaders. His students led our country in beating the Qing Dynasty China in 1894, the Russian Empire in 1904, and the World War in 1914⁴.”

“Huh,” Shiro sighed. “Germany was our enemy in the 1914 War. I remember. The, Ja— Jac—”

“Jacob Meckel.”

“Ya. Did the German know he created his own enemy in the end?” Shiro was surprised.

“He had died before the two governments separated. And it was a German who made the melody for our national anthem. It was Franz Eckert who had studied our traditional music for years in Tokyo and Kyoto. And he adjusted our old style to the European do-re-mi scale. An anthem was needed for international ceremonies⁵.”

“My parents died without such knowledge.”

⁴ Keiichi Aizawa & Reinhard Zöllner, *Mainichi German*. NHK Shuppan. Tokyo, 2011. Hereinafter cited as Aizawa & Zöllner.

⁵ Aizawa & Zöllner

“The leaders in their age went to Europe to invite many specialists. An American musician, William Fenton, was also invited, but his melody for our anthem was too European, so it was not accepted. The melody that an Englishman, Samuel Webb, made was like a song for a Christian Church.”

“We haven’t heard that kind of music.” Shiro looked at Yone.

“Melodies, laws, all powers and functions were centralized in the capital city to encourage our newborn country to survive.”

“Well, that’s why our Kyushu Island was left,” Shiro said.

“Yes, Father.” He continued. “The newborn government came to understand our nation lacked natural resources, so it learned European history.”

“Sounds farther away than the stars at night. Why do people in this valley have to be involved now? Even ya?”

“Because we had been assimilated into the ruling people, Yamato, Father.”

“I don’t understand. I am not Yamato. I am Hayato.”

“But now, each man on earth affects each other. For example, the desperation brought this country victory against the tsar’s navy in 1904.”

“I remember.”

“Before the war, the Central Bank found ten million pounds needed for the war.”

“Poun, poun, pon!” their youngest sister whispered in a rhythm, and their next to youngest sister elbowed her.

“Pound is like yen, sisters.” He smiled at his sisters. “A negotiator at the Central Bank, Takahashi Korekiyo, succeeded in getting half the national loans from the United Kingdom because the United Kingdom was afraid Russia would send soldiers to India and China while the United Kingdom was

at war in South Africa. But U.K. bankers couldn't trust the undeveloped country at the other end of continent. So the fund wasn't enough. Then Takahashi met Jacob Henry Schiff, who prepared five million pounds through Loeb Kuhn. Then Schiff persuaded other Jewish bankers for their faith to help Jewish people in Russia."

Ichiro knew his parents would never understand who Takahashi was or who Schiff was, but he wanted his younger brother, Hisaharu, to remember their names.

"Educated by a German, financed by a Jew," the eldest sister said to herself. *Where do they live? Is it farther than Tokyo?* she wanted to ask, but she couldn't.

"I remember the Russo war," Shiro said. "I was a child. A sizable tax increase for the war had tormented us. My father had expected our winning would bring us wealth. Many girls were sold because of poverty."

"The reason was the Treaty of Portsmouth in 1905, Father. It brought no wealth, no compensation. Huge loans were left. Families of the 90,000 war dead and the 380,000 war wounded got furious with the government. Then they learned that tsarist Russia permitted in the Portsmouth agreement that our government would rule a peninsula. As you know, the peninsula-country was next door. Some leaders of the government had expected it to protect the Far East together against European colonization. But Prime Minister Katura decided to make the peninsula a part of our country in 1910. It came to be the beginning of the Koreans' deep-rooted hatred toward Nihon. The prime minister was criticized and expelled by the Diet. Then he died.

"The next prime minister began to control the army, which wanted to expand as European countries had. But he and the

naval minister were questioned in the Diet about bribery. Later, they were found not guilty, but it was too late. The new cabinet couldn't have any power over the army. In 1913, the army battled in China, which was facing a Communist uprising."

"In 1913? That was thirty-one years ago." Shiro remembered the Bon Dance night he spent with Yone. He had been watching her in the dance circle around the fire. He had been waiting for a chance to talk. He saw her walking to him behind the drum stage. *I'll never forget her eyes on me then, burning. In the shadow, I could take her hand. It was she who took me into the forest in heat. It was the hottest season of the year. It was the hottest moment of my life.*

"Prime Minister Konoe declared his government would keep the battles under control, but he had no ability to change the army. Chinese leaders thought the prime minister was lying."

"Political men! Create an enemy on the outside to fix people's eyes on that, and then they can keep their status," Shiro said. "Traditional way."

"Then in the 1914 war, my uncle, your brother, died in the Mediterranean Sea." He looked up at the picture on the wall. "After the war, the Great Depression also attacked our country. Policymakers made the situation worse."

"It's the year our marriage was permitted. I was glad." Shiro said. Yone touched his hand.

"Father!" Ichiro was surprised. It was the first time Shiro expressed his feelings to him.

"Go on. I wanna learn more."

"Yes, Father. It was on the twenty-fourth of February 1933 at the League of Nations Extraordinary General Assembly beside Lake Leman."

“Brother Jiro was born that day!” a sister said.

“That’s why I remember the date.” Ichiro smiled at her. Yone and each family member looked at her gently. Jiro was the fifth baby to Yone and Shiro.

When Yone was fourteen, she found her head had been filled with Shiro for a long time. Her mother noticed it. Yone remembered the days clearly. Yone’s mother said, “Shiro may be a good boy, but I can’t agree with you, ’cuz rumor is in the air. There is a Kirishitan hiding in Shiro’s house.”

A few months later, Yone’s father said, “You’ll marry a man in the village beyond the river.”

The next week, the man came to Yone while she was caring for the goats. The man talked to her and touched her hip. Yone dashed away. The next thing she knew, she was up in a big tree in the forest. She didn’t know how long she had been up there. She heard bushes rustling. Something was running. It was Shiro being chased by a wild pig.

“C’mom!”

Shiro looked up and climbed up the tree. Both of them laughed a lot. Yone liked the way he ran. After the Bon Dance night when Yone was sixteen, her mother noticed changes in her daughter’s body. Father walked out with sharpened scythes in both hands to kill Shiro. All the village people had been watching her, chatting about her for four seasons.

“A recommendation that demanded not recognizing the independence of Manchuria and Nihon’s withdrawal from there was passed by a vote of forty-two to one.” Ichiro continued. “Ambassador Plenipotentiary Matuoka stood up and declared the withdrawal from the League of Nations. He decided to begin a war for resources, to expand or be wiped out. Admiral Inoue called Matuoka an idiot. That was all he could do. Men

in the armed forces had to obey civilian-controlled politicians. Civilians could establish militarism. Civilians are moved by media and money.”

“War starts much earlier than real fire,” Shiro said.

“Yes, Father. Prime Minister Konoe was against the war with America, so he offered to meet with Roosevelt, but he was denied twice. Konoe, the highest aristocrat in a thousand-year-old family line, wanted Roosevelt’s authority over the military minister and the naval minister to make them withdraw from the Chinese continent.”

“Why couldn’t the prime minister persuade the other ministers?”

“Because the mass media stirred people up for war⁶.”

“What’s mass media?”

“Newspapers and radio. Townspeople could get them easily. Besides, a group called the right wing was very powerful in Main Island cities. They pressured political men and media with threats.”

“I haven’t seen these so-called papers. There is a radio, the only one, in the next village. I haven’t seen it,” said Shiro, looking at Yone.

“In May 1941, America decided to ban oil exports to our archipelago after freezing our assets in the United States. The dollar was the only way for trade. Our country’s exports were stopped. More important, without oil, this whole country would have been back in the Middle Ages and would have been colonized.”

“Ya say the army was running around with its eyes closed?”

⁶ Nihon Keizai newspaper’s columns, N. Komuro’s books, Hisaharu’s talks

“Army. That makes me think of brother Jiro. There was another critical issue. As Qing Dynasty China was in confusion because of revolution and rising communism, our government was arguing over whether Chiang Kai-shek⁷ was the leader to negotiate. They couldn’t handle information brought by spies.”

“Didn’t the leaders have a clue?”

“I don’t know. I hope the next generation will have the ability.”

Ichiro turned to his sisters and a brother in the next room. “Hisaharu, you’re the youngest brother. Could you have time to learn the virtues of Confucius, the Four Books, and the Five Chinese classics? You’re the right age to learn them, but it’s wartime.”

“I’m afraid not.” Hisaharu felt a strain. “But I know some. I can read the Chinese characters on the wall.”

“Good.” Ichiro looked at Shiro. “Father, could I listen to your words again, as you did for me when I was seven? Will you read them for Hisaharu?”

Shiro looked at his youngest son in the next tatami room.

“Hisaharu, listen well. This is the first and last time.” Shiro closed his eyes. “*Chi*, develop wisdom from experience. *Jin*, consider others, be on the side of the weak against the strong. *Yu*, accomplish what you believe right. *Mu-Yoku*, no greed; wealth harms those virtues.”

Silence.

“Mother, would you make a thin cushion with the kimono you’re wearing?” Ichiro expressed all his love to his mother, putting his hands on the tatami.

⁷ The leader of the Republic of China, not Chinese Communist Party

She changed her kimono and brought a thread and needle. She took off one sleeve, as kimono sleeves were wide enough to make a cushion. Tears disturbed her work.

Ichiro put the cushion on the seat of a *kaiten* on January 20. Two capsules, torpedoes, burst out from the E-48 submarine against an enemy ship anchored in Ursy in the West Caroline Islands.⁸ He was twenty-one. He couldn't give up hoping for a miracle till the moment he got into the torpedo. *The former admiral Inoue will persuade others.*

The eldest sister read the paper first. She was working in the village office that was facing an acute labor shortage because men were at war. While she had been in elementary school, she had brought manure and night soil every day from not only her house but also from the town for *satuma* potatoes in the school's former sports field. So the principal recommended her to the office after her graduation, saying she was their most reliable person. Her painful work was handling reports. She sympathized so strongly with each family, sending a boy, losing a father.

When his sister was reading a report in the office, Hisaharu was cutting off dead branches for the bathing fire at the top of the back forest. He suddenly felt strong pain in both shoulders, and then he was in the air. An eagle was above him, flapping its huge wings. *At last my turn, but ain't I too big?* Children had been lost in the days huge eagles flew, but Hisaharu had no fear. *War is worse. I'm good with birds and animals. Keep me flying, Eagle! Oh, its wings are wider than our barn!*

⁸ A soldier; Taro Tsukamoto's mother's record in Yasukuni Shrine.

Several minutes later, his leg became tangled in vines. The pains in his shoulders got stronger, and the next moment, he was grasping a branch. The eagle flew away. *No one has survived being snatched by an eagle!* Hisaharu felt no pain. He ran through the forest to his mother.

“Mother!” He was filled with joy when he saw the old roof. “I’m back! The first one to escape the eagles! Mother!”

Nobody answered. He walked into his house. “Mother?”

She was crying in the arms of his sisters.

Oh, no, this is the day Brother Ichiro ...

They didn’t notice their young brother’s kimono had been torn. His long run home had stopped the bleeding from his deep wounds.

Mother’s heart belongs to Brother Ichiro, Hisaharu thought. He felt jealousy. *I can’t win not ’cuz he’s brilliant and good but because he’s gone.*

Hisaharu thought he should think of his mother’s feelings, Ichiro’s possibilities, but his love for his mother couldn’t be pushed inside. *A seventh of her heart is mine. But Brother Ichiro got six sevenths.*

When Yone passed away in 1977, following her will, her clothes were changed into the kimono with one sleeve made of another cloth. She had been waiting for the moment to see her eldest son again. If she had not had other sons and daughters, she would have died. For thirty-two years she had counted the days. Every time she noticed the seasons change, she felt a strong heartache. *But the pain he had was much harder than mine*, she said to herself. Time had stopped at the time he’d gone. *Why is the winter sky gettin’ brighter? Where has the cold wind gone? Why are trees buddin’? My son can’t walk among cherry blossoms anymore.*

Each season of pink scenery kept ripping her heart even though slashing winter's air had passed. *Why do the young men in the village get old?*

It was painful for her to be outside. All her surroundings forced her to accept reality. She kept working in the fields in tears. *Surely he will come back to me. Now he's just laughin' with friends or walkin' with his wife and children somewhere far away, in Osaka or Tokyo. On the earth, not in the sky. Is he still young? Did he get old? Can he recognize me? I'll say to him, my son, I got old but I'm still your mother.*

One month before Ichiro's death, Italy surrendered. Common people had no media to tell them that. Leaders in the capital didn't stop the war.

August 1945

It was hot as usual. Sunshine stung Hisaharu's cropped head. Some city people came to know it was only their country that had been fighting against the Allied powers since Germany's capitulation. People thought, *It doesn't matter we're alone. We're fighting for the deity. One for all! Watch your four neighbors. Accuse any family that asks questions!* Force ruled the world. Hisaharu had thought of Ichiro almost every day, especially after receiving the paper. "It was a brave end."

Hisaharu knew his father would never be happy again. *They say time circles, because seasons return. Nature has patiently kept giving people the circle for thousands of years. But since my brother has gone, there can't be the circle of time. Time won't be back. Maybe only in my family, maybe in other families that lost children, time goes only in one direction.*

Hisaharu went to the next village to help a family. There was Tera. Her father had died in Siberia as a prisoner of war. Her six-year-old brother was the only male in her family. Hisaharu was sharpening all their knives used to cut bamboo to make mugs and bottles. The labor shortage in wartime let bamboo spread. *Bamboo is useful, but its overgrowth hurts houses and farms*, Hisaharu thought. He heard old men talking at the well.

"It's painful. Every man knows his life will end within a month."

"Not in a month, in a week."

The youngest said, "The radio from Tokyo headquarters sounds like lies."

"They were all lies!"

"Were?" the man in his fifties repeated.

Hisaharu strained his ears for their talk.

"Yeah, Tokyo was also attacked from the air. More than a hundred thousand people died. No information from the headquarters anymore. We will fall to America. Our country won't exist anymore. We'll all perish."

"What will happen to us?"

This is what I wanna listen to. Hisaharu inched down a few wooden steps to them.

"All men will be killed, women will be violated, and children will die of hunger."

It was what everyone was convinced of since the end of 1944. That was when the air raids on cities began.

"Can I kill enemies with my bamboo spear before I am killed?" Hisaharu asked the elders.

"Sure," the oldest man answered. "Ya've been taught how to use a bamboo spear against enemy soldiers, *na*?"

The enemy uses planes, tanks, and guns, Hisaharu thought, but the old men didn't say that. Hisaharu looked at Tera. An old man sensed the boy's feeling and wanted the boy to give up his hope for his first love. He thought men should not have hope because all his hopes had been turned to desperation.

The old man said, "Girls were instructed to commit suicide before men touch them." He thought, *This is the first and last hope for this boy.*

"The goddess in Oki Island has been angry for thirty-five years; that's why this country the Yamato has been ruling is in pain. Though we're not the Yamato," the oldest man said.

"Ah, one of the three goddesses in the Munakata Shrine? She's the protector of fishermen and sea women."

"Not only for that. She had protected Yamato twice. The first time, eight hundred years ago, from Mongolia, and the second time, forty-one years ago from Russia. But not this time."

"Why?"

"Because Yamato annexed their origin."

"I don't believe that."

"It was more than sixteen hundred years ago." He began to talk to Hisaharu, the next generation. "There were wars in the continental peninsula among five countries, Paekche, Silla, Kaya, Koguryo, and China. The Yamato dynasty was from Kaya and Paekche. They crossed the sea after each battle. With iron, letters, and horses, they beat us, the Hayato. They had called us natives Earth Spiders because our faces and bodies were very different from those of the Chinese continent people. Originally, maybe, we're from the south islands.

The newcomers kept going east. Near Osaka, the other end of the long inside sea, there were also natives, the Long

Shins of the Earth Spiders. After a battle, a crow with three legs guided them to a better place to rule all the islands. The crow was Koguryo's royal symbol. Then they exterminated all the local people, Earth Spiders, in Osaka. And the conquerors found a good place beyond Osaka and called it *nara*. In their words, it means "country." That's why we call it Nara now."

"You fool, again," another old man whispered.

The oldest man ignored him. "Fourteen hundred years ago, when Paekche was wiped out completely, many Paekche Dynasty members crossed the sea with doctors of astronomy who had knowledge of celestial navigation, weather, and a calendar. The royal family met their relatives, now called the Yamato Dynasty. That's why a prince of the O-Kimi family sent a force to the continent at the time.

"But the prince was lost. Then, China and Silla attacked Kyushu Island. That's why our north Kyushu has the remains of Kaya-style walls for protection. The Kaya Dynasty was forced by Silla to cross the Tu-shima strait before Paekche. It was the Kaya Dynasty that brought Buddhism. Our islands used to be the world of nature worship. This is why we're not Buddhists."

"Don't care. He just got too old and lost. Our O-Kimi also isn't a Buddhist, a son of the sun goddess," one of the old men told Hisaharu.

"Don't forget, we're the Hayato. When Silla was wiped out by Koguryo a thousand years ago, the record was lost in the continent. It's only us, the Hayato, who know the history."

Hisaharu was at a loss.

"We say *kami* or, in polite ways, *o-kami* when we refer to an awe-inspiring person. It's Kaya's word, *kah-mi-i*, to express

a feeling of respect, fear, and admiration together. In these fourteen hundred years here, *kah-mi-i* came to be *o-kami*. You know what it means, the imperial court, the government, the authorities. And *kami* is, you know, god.”

“Anyone who died will be a *kami* in Shintoism, nature worship. But Buddhism has no god,” one man said.

“I thought *o-kami-san* is a wife,” Hisaharu said.

“Yeah! My *kami-san* is awesome!” the man in his fifties said with a laugh.

At that moment, the air raid siren sounded. Soon, a group of F-29s appeared. One began to fly low.

Something's wrong. Hisaharu sprinted to Tera and grabbed her arm. “He’s shooting at us!” Bullets were raining down in a line. Tera and Hisaharu ran to a cave. *What’s the pilot thinking? This is a mere village!* Hisaharu saw the pilot grinning at him, a dark light of racial prejudice in his eyes.

The plane left. Hisaharu looked at Tera. *She lives.* She looked back. Her mother was crying crazily over a boy. Hisaharu looked at the oldest man. *The history was lost; He was only one in the world who knew that Korean had conquered primitive Nihon islands,* he thought. *Was the pilot in the forest also cold blooded like that devil?* Hisaharu lost sympathy for the pilot he had found in the forest.

As the government pondered their answer to the Allies, 1,000 carrier planes from Halsey’s Third Fleet made their final raid on Tokyo. General MacArthur recalled it in the ’60s.

Never before in history had one nation been the target of such concentrated air power. In the last

fifteen days of the war, my Fifth and Seventh Air
Forces flew 6,372 sorties against Kyushu alone.⁹

August 15, 1945

Men's hearts sank with the announcement of their surrender by the O-Kimi that day. They had fought for the O-Kimi, a deity. Every man would be a *kami*, a god, after death according to the Shintoism, nature worship. But they were forced to believe the O-Kimi was a living *kami*. Common people had been told so since the end of the samurai age.

At one time in the late nineteenth century, some young men from southern Kyushu discussed the existence of the oldest family being the only symbol to unify Nihonese. "Now Nihon has been facing experienced countries trying to get Asian wealth."

The young men decided to use the family's long history to free people's mind from samurai feudalism. Some of the young leaders had studied philosophy in Nagasaki, in western Kyushu. Some of them secretly had traded with foreigners on the line of islands between Kyushu and Taiwan. That was why they knew the world. They understood their home country needed a big change, a speedy revolution, but they wanted to avoid confusion. The leaders were of two opinions: "Expel foreigners!" "Accept foreigners!"

Actually, Nihonese had no ability to expel them. Once, four English people rode horses past a big-name, high-ranking samurai. A few samurai got angered and killed one of the

⁹ Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences*. Page 264-265, U.S. Naval Institute, Annapolis, 1964. Hereinafter cited as MacArthur.

Englishmen. English ships fired on two important cities in 1863. Samurai could do nothing against cannon. New leaders discussed a number of points of view. “Disorder would cause the islands to be controlled by European countries.” “To gain independence, Nihon needs to learn what the Europeans had established on the earth.” “Authority and divinity would work not only on farmers but also on the stubborn, high-class men. All the high-class men, frogs in a small well, can do is think of how to keep their status.”

The young power discussed a lot and decided to move the O-Kimi family from Kyoto, the capital city, to Edo, where successive shoguns, the highest samurai, had been living. The leaders forced the shogun to leave his huge castle and invited the O-Kimi to the castle. The city O-Kimi lived in must be called Kyo, so they changed the name from Edo to Tokyo, “eastern capital.” The common people thought diligence would bring them a better life under the sovereignty of O-Kimi.

One of the new leaders, Ito Hirohumi, invited German diplomat Ottmar von Mohl, the kaiser’s chamberlain. When the sophisticated European landed on the east end, he found the court had already shifted from traditional clothes to Western-style clothes. He was disappointed about that, but he gave advice, what European Courts were for his stay for two years¹⁰.

Ito discussed two major points with the other leaders in the 1880s before writing the first modern constitution¹¹. The first major point was to limit O-Kimi’s power. The second was to protect people’s rights.

¹⁰ Aizawa & Zöllner

¹¹ Nihon Keizai newspaper column, May 3, 2014

Ito had visited European countries to study their legal systems, but other opinions persuaded him. One opinion was to avoid being colonized: "Unity will be more important than democracy." Another opinion was, "Let's give limitless power to O-Kimi, the symbol of unity, at the beginning of the constitution." Young leaders expected the next generation would amend it after establishing independence and become more democratic.

But gradually, the O-Kimi became a deity because sovereignty was hard for the people to understand and unite behind but the concept of a deity was easy to grasp.

Hisaharu wondered, *Teachers say the O-Kimi family is the oldest blood line from the gods' age. But gran'pa said the O-Kimi Keitai fifteen hundred years ago was from the Emishi, not the Yamato. I can't trust the textbooks the central government published.*

In 1945, seventy-eight years after the samurai age, average people were at a loss; they thought, *My son died for O-Kimi. O-Kimi is the nation. The nation won't exist. The whole land was occupied. What will happen to my daughters?*

I live. What will the enemy do to me? Hisaharu thought. *Is this real? I don't have to run away and hide in forests? Don't I have to die for O-Kimi?*

The winners, the Allied forces, didn't kill and didn't touch women, at least not in that area. Some American soldiers gave canned foods to the losers who were trying to commit suicide.

Troops had orders at the beginning by General MacArthur.

Our own country would be judged in world opinion, that success or failure of the occupation could well rest upon your poise and self-restraint.

Carefully abstain from any interference by edict with the cultural traditions or the personal their way of life. Learn from them as well as teach them.¹²

An enormous wheel had been set in motion. General MacArthur was appointed supreme commander for the Allied powers on August 15. He made a clear difference between being given so much power and administering it. He who had experienced wars in Europe wrote about that summer.

Never in history had a nation and its people been more completely crushed than were they at the end of the war. They had suffered more than a military debacle, more than the destruction of their armed forces, more than the elimination of their industrial bases, more even than the occupation of their land by foreign bayonets. Their entire faith in their way of life, cherished as invincible for many centuries, perished in the agony of their total defeat. The extraordinary feudalism which had prevailed in this isolated land had resulted in almost mythological and fanatical belief in the invincibility of its arms and the superiority of its culture.¹³

He understood that leading a defeated people into the free world could block Stalin's ambition. Foreign Commissioner

¹² MacArthur, page 283

¹³ MacArthur, page 281.

Molotov had demanded in London that MacArthur be replaced by a four-power commission because the supreme commander's approach was different from plans born in hate and dedicated to vengeance. Soon, the Soviets demanded that their troops should occupy Hokkaido to divide the country in two. "Russian forces would move in whether the supreme commander approved or not," General Derevyanko said.

"If a single Soviet soldier enters here without my authority, I'll throw the entire Russian mission, including you, in jail," MacArthur told him.¹⁴

The Soviet army had already been in the northern part of the Korean Peninsula.

September 4, 1945

The O-Kimi addressed his people personally for the first time in history in an extraordinary meeting of the Diet.

Submit to the terms of surrender. Strive to establish a position of trust and respect in the world. I had followed the path of submission to improve our precarious position. We need self-discipline and composure.

It was the moment that a new history began.

The O-Kimi had opened a record dated December 1857 before the address. It was about Townsend Harris, a diplomat from the United States. *The tough negotiator wanted our ports open.* There was information about China. The great country

¹⁴ MacArthur, page 285

had been defeated by the United Kingdom in 1840. Opium brought by the East India Company made the Manchurian Empire weak. *Be careful what developed people bring.*

But Harris had understood it. The American addressed the shogun's ministers, "I came here alone, left my fellows in the ship, which is not a battleship." He declared that his government would never bring opium or other drugs. Watching him alone, samurai trusted him. Townsend Harris succeeded in making Shogun Ieshige open trade with the United States under an unfair treaty of commerce on July 29, 1857. *Douglas MacArthur belongs to the culture Harris did.*

Douglas MacArthur found the country his government once tried to ruin "a feudal society, of the type discarded by Western nations some four centuries ago. There were aspects of their life that went even farther back than that."¹⁵ He decided "to bring into the political, economic, and spiritual vacuum concepts of honor, justice, and compassion. The Soviets had already started to bring their communism into the vacuum."¹⁶

MacArthur recalled the days in the west bank of the Rhine at the end of World War I and etched words in his mind.

History teaches that military occupation breeds new wars of the future. This country had become the world's great laboratory for an experiment in the liberation of a people from totalitarian military rule and for the liberalization of government from within. This experiment must go far beyond the primary purpose of

¹⁵ MacArthur, page 283.

¹⁶ MacArthur, page 282, 293.

the Allies—the destruction of its ability to wage another war and the punishment of war criminals.¹⁷

When Washington seemed to be veering toward the British and the Russian point of view that the O-Kimi should be indicted as a war criminal, MacArthur advised that he would need at least a million reinforcements should such action be taken. It was clear to him that if the O-Kimi were indicted and perhaps hanged, guerrilla warfare would probably break out. In his opinion, the O-Kimi's name had then been deleted from the list. But the O-Kimi knew nothing. MacArthur wrote,

I explained would be ... and make a martyr of the Emperor in their eyes. No, I shall wait and in time the Emperor will voluntarily come to see me.¹⁸

Later, the O-Kimi visited the supreme commander, who recorded the meeting.

What he said was this. "I come to you, General MacArthur, to offer myself to the judgment of the powers you represent as the one to bear sole responsibility for every political and military decision made and action taken by my people in the conduct of war." A tremendous impression swept me.¹⁹

¹⁷ MacArthur, page 282.

¹⁸ MacArthur, page 287.

¹⁹ MacArthur, page 288.

December 16, 1945

Prime Minister Konoe poisoned himself because he thought if he committed suicide, MacArthur would not declare the O-Kimi a criminal. It was a few hours later that the occupation army named him a war criminal. The House of Kono's role for a thousand years was protecting the House of O-Kimi. The name *Konoe* means the imperial guard. For his life, he wanted that Douglas MacArthur's court would not name him the highest criminal.

New Year's Day, 1946

O-Kimi issued a rescript in which he renounced his own divinity. The decree stating that the O-Kimi was a human totally bewildered the people. He had been the god all had devoted themselves to for fifty years. The military had made unfair use of a statement written by a scholar in the name of the O-Kimi, the Imperial Rescript on Education. The military had used its aspects of loyalty, allegiance, and fidelity. Elementary schools had been the place where these virtues had been taught.

Hisaharu was too young to be affected by this declaration. Except for promoting new content in schools, the occupation forces had less influence on his village because it was too far from the center of politics.



Hisaharu, from his old album

It's incredible! He thought. My life is goin' on. I shouldn't believe anything. No religion. No god. Belief kills people. Belief makes people begin war. Belief is brainwashing. I need to make my mind stronger by myself. By myself.

But he didn't have the confidence he needed. The ten-year-old kept working in the fields and house without rest. He expected the hard labor would make him forget things, but it sharpened his thinking. *I need to work to eat. But I wanna keep going to school. Where can I read books? Reading frees me from difficulties.* He kept on weeding fields and carrying water, but his hunger for books increased.

April 1946

Almost all children were back in school. On the first day, Hisaharu was astonished. Girls were also sitting on the wooden floor. *Smells soft. Isn't it my classroom?* But familiar

faces were also there. Some of them made funny faces at him. Some of them had babies tied on their backs like before. A baby on a boy was crying. *So this isn't a dream.*

The boy smelled the baby and shouted, "No poop. Um, he needs milk," and he went out of the classroom to his rice paddy where his parents were working.

I wonder why girls are in the same room. Boys can't study near girls! He sat on the floor away from the girls. *We're not in the low grades. It used to be only the first and second graders who studied in the same room. Why? But this is a new age.* He looked at the floor. He didn't want the other boys to notice he minded that girls were among them.

The teacher told the children to open their books. His face looked sad. He said, "Rub your inkstick a lot. Now we have enough inksticks from GHQ, the occupation army. You need to remember the name." He turned to the blackboard. The children noticed he was crying. "Dip your brush in ink. We're going to black out some words." He pointed to lines and pictures.

Is it true? Hisaharu was surprised. Every word and concept about patriotism and war were covered in thick black lines. Even in math and science books, pictures of and words for planes and ships were covered in black. Other books' pages were covered in black by the order of the occupation force.

Hisaharu heard another teacher telling his class, "Now you can speak the truth." Hisaharu was confused. *This teacher seems to be happy, not like my teacher.*

After school, Hisaharu saw that many older pupils were angry, puzzled, and sad. The generation came to feel a profound distrust of all adults.

The radio in the school told children of rapid changes. It was surprising for Hisaharu that no radio broadcast complained about the winners. *They're like the teacher in the next classroom. Or are they forced, like before? Some must dislike the ex-enemies. Who suppresses their resentment? Have the people who were full of rancor died? It seems such anger has now been extinct with the army, which had been dissolved by the Allied forces.* Many people began to express their hatred for the ex-army, which had brought them war, pain, and hunger. A tidal wave of deep regret washed over the nation.

Even in his tiny village, GHQ jeeps appeared. The foreigners in the jeeps were the same as the two Americans he had seen, one in the forest, and the other in the sky above Tera's house.

They look more like the Earth Spiders than we do, he thought. *Did the Earth Spiders come from them, from another continent three thousand years ago? My elders say that we, the Earth Spiders, originated on this island and that the Yamato came from the peninsula on the China continent seventeen hundred years ago.*

Many people came out to watch the creatures that came from another planet. The crowd was like that on Bon Dance day. A boy said, "Hisa, I see. They are the *oni* and *tengu* in tales! Their skin colors, red, blue, and white."

"Red *oni*, blue *oni*!" Hisaharu nodded.

"Yeah," another boy said. "Look! Their hair! Red! Yellow! Their height, their noses are those of the *oni* and the *tengu*."

"Shut up. They can hear you!" a boy behind them whispered.

"They can't understand us," Hisaharu said.

"They had already drifted from far away and landed on these east-end islands during the samurai time and before," a teenager said. "As they couldn't communicate, they couldn't

join rice-fields unions. Then they came to be legends. The *oni* and *tengu* in the tales are just men. That's why they not only make people fearful and take girls and treasures away but also get sad, cry, and apologize."

"Really?" the youngest boy asked.

"Maybe," Hisaharu whispered.

Hisaharu wanted to tell the foreigners about the pilot, but he was very fearful to approach them because they were bigger than his father.

1947

"What will I do after elementary school?" Hisaharu asked his brother Jiro while ploughing a rice paddy with *ren-ge* flowers. Jiro had been back from the army. Jiro didn't say anything about the army; he wanted to forget the miserable days.

A breeze cradled bamboo bushes behind their rice paddy. A series of heavenly sounds of bamboo striking spread out and made the brothers' heads turn. High above in the sky, bamboo tops were swaying gracefully.

"Now the whole school system was reformed last September. Yew can go to school till yer fifteen years old with no tuition. It's the father's duty to let their children go to school." Jiro's eyes were back on the bright flowers covering the fields.

"*Ren-ge* is fertilizer for rice paddies," Jiro twitted.

"Junior high," Hisaharu raised a hoe over his head. Mixing *ren-ge* flower with soil took strength for a boy.

"Yew may wanna stay in school after you're fifteen. But high school costs too much for farmers. I wish we could afford it. Yew like to study, don't yew?" Jiro stopped to stretch his

back. "Though we don't have money, yew must appreciate we have land to cultivate."

"Well," Hisaharu said in small voice. Hisaharu had seen many townspeople down on their knees, foreheads, and hands in front of farmers' houses for food.

"In April, the new junior high school will open. It's for thirteen-, fourteen-, and fifteen-year-old boys and girls. Go to it after grade school," Jiro said. "They say the junior high building used to be a part of the broken elementary school. There are no windowpanes, and some windows have been replaced with cellophane." Jiro intended to have fun with Hisaharu, but he had lost his sense of humor in the army.

"Thanks." Hisaharu knew Jiro needed hands to work. "It'll be rice planting in May. In the last planting, yew were in the army, so yew dunno. Mud made mother fall down in the paddy. She couldn't stand up, and your sisters helped her but fell down too. I did too. All of us were in mud from head to toe."

Jiro didn't respond. He had also been in mud on the wet ground, hit in the face, so many times.

"Ya don't wanna remind of yer past, do ya?" The boy looked at Jiro's face. He wanted to keep talking with his brother. "Do yew know how father learned letters?" Hisaharu straightened himself and inhaled the smell of bamboo.

"At the Munakata Shrine. The late priest had been teaching letters to kids."

"That's all?" Disappointed, he looked down and grasped the long hoe. "Weren't there elementary schools when he was a child?" Hisaharu had heard about the beginning of modern schools on the radio.

"I dunno. That's all." The soil was getting as soft as cotton.

“Some say that’s nonsense,” Jiro said. “father and grandparents say we’re special because we belong to the shrine and had inherited letters, the Chinese characters since 1185, in secret. Yew know, only the aristocracy in Kyoto were literate seven hundred years ago. That’s why we have been able to own and keep land. Men who were too lazy to learn them had to walk away from owing land. Such men became *sanka*, or denied, the free people of the samurai age. What a silly fantasy.”

“It’s interesting.” Hisaharu opened his mouth, eyes, and nostrils. “Many of *sanka* and denied were ninja, *na?*” *I am a ninja.*

“Yer also stupid. This is the age our country had fought against continents for. It’s foolish to think about ancient times.” Jiro looked at his young brother’s innocent face. “Well, imagination is fun. If we were Hayato, as father says.”

“Yes. We’re Hayato, *na?*” Hisaharu thought he had heard it before. *At the well! The oldest man was talking. We’re Hayato, not Yamato.*

Jiro checked the edge of his hoe. “I think iron was more important than letters. The reason the Hayato on Kyushu Island were beaten by Yamato was iron as raw material. Granfather said that this area had been the lifeline for Yamato seventeen hundred years ago ’cuz we were nearer to the continent than their Nara.”

Hisaharu related what the old man had said. “I know. Yamato landed on Kyushu from the continental peninsula and then went to Main Island sixteen hundred years ago. Later, they came back to rule wider lands. Why were we defeated?”

“They had horses. Originally, our islands had no big animals except bears and deer. But even after they won, they were

afraid of us. So they gave us their three precious princesses as goddesses. That's the origin of the Munakata Shrine."

"Why women?" Hisaharu was reminded of what an old man at the well had said about the goddess.

"Hayato women were sea women. Ancient people believed the bottom of the sea gave food only to women."

"I can't imagine women had power."

"This is just fiction, legend. But remember, it's real, the Munakata Shrine area had been an exception of Yamato laws since thirteen hundred years ago. It was called holy country. Munakata had been a holy forest even before Yamato named the place a shrine for the three princesses. We can't imagine the forest was facing a kyle, a seaway to the ocean, then the continental peninsula."

Hisaharu's nostrils and eyes got wide again.

"A huge earthquake happened more than two thousand years ago." Jiro pointed over. "The glen was the kyle. Ancient fathers had fought for water, food, better land, women, and revenge. Now, war is for something farmers can't understand."

In Tokyo, far away from the brothers, seven war criminals were put to death, including a former prime minister. Sixteen were sentenced to life in prison.

"Stay in school, brother. Yew don't have to worry about the farm. But I can't pay." Jiro put his hand on Hisaharu's shoulder.

Well, am I lucky? I'm not the first son, Hisaharu thought. It was the first son's right and duty to succeed his father. Until the 1950s, more than 80 percent of the population engaged in farming. Hisaharu had been told that second and third sons could work in the narrow tunnels in the Tukushi coal-mining

region. Though a low mountain range and a river separated the coal region from his village, the mining area was famous, notorious. Coal mining companies had needed millions of workers since 1872, the end of the samurai age, and in an attempt to build a strong nation like those in Europe, mining industries hired men, women, and children. Though women working in tunnels was prohibited in 1933, small companies kept hiring women.

Will I work in the coal tunnels? I don't want to. But I wanna see the outside of this village. He looked at his fingernails darkened by soil. I want mental strength. Today, one of my classmates' painting won first prize. It should've been mine. I had drawn and painted cone pillars rising and falling in 3-D perspective. He had pleaded with me two months ago for my painting if I was going to throw it away. I couldn't say no.

One cold, wintry day, Tera was taken to a “bar” after her mother’s funeral. Her only kin, an uncle, took money for her. Elders were trying to change his mind.

“Too poor she would be.” Good men were not good at words. As they were brought up to be reticent, they didn’t know how to combine words. Their faces were so sad.

“It’s the government that should be blamed!” Tera’s uncle shouted. “Taxes have increased month by month because of reparations! The name is not reparations, yew know, so called, the economic aid to China.”

“Ya blame high class?”

“Now I can yell at the first-class people! Times have changed! Decision makers are dumb! Foolish! Clueless! It’s alright, I say!” he insisted while sticking the edge of an ax into the soil. “I have eight kids, and my wife has been sick this year. Besides, the new government has ruled that kids have to

go to school longer, for nine years! Even girls! It's impossible! Who'll work on the farms?"

"I know. I," an old man without a leg tried to persuade him, but Tera's uncle said loudly, "No work, no food!"

Good people were raised not to express opinions; being assertive was bad. Do not argue! Listen to others!

"Tera!" Hisaharu said to the girl leaving with a disgusting man. It was the first word he had spoken to her after he had noticed she had often been on his mind. She turned to him in grief. Hisaharu grabbed the red earth. The fists were trembling. "I hate this soil. Our soil can't produce enough food. It's this poor soil that sold her. If only she had been born somewhere else!"

A teacher was next to him, seeing the girl off. She had come from a big town because many male teachers had died as soldiers.

"The soil in our nation is very poor, Hisaharu. You're twelve, and she'll be fourteen soon. You're able to understand a lot. Our land is made from red earth or volcano ash." She gently put her hand on his back. "Nihon is on a relatively new plate of earth compared to the continents."

She had read Wegener²⁰ in 1929. The images of moving earth surfaces gave her huge wings that had saved her from hunger and hardship; they had given her the energy to become a teacher. She told him, "That's why we don't have natural sources. No metals, cotton, oil. Some coal. So the ex-government tried to get them but had lost out in every negotiation. Then the military was on the rise. They had tried

²⁰ Wegener, geophysicist and meteorologist, wrote "Continental Drift"

to get such resources by force, mimicking what European countries had done before.”

He looked at her. They couldn’t see Tera any longer.

“Then the war and huge reparations named ‘aid’ to China. Every situation is connected. This red soil, being isolated from the continent, lack of negotiation skills, resources, Tera’s destiny.”

The teacher liked him. Hisaharu was one of a few children who understood that the hours they spent in class were precious. All the students were too busy with family labor to study at home. Hisaharu tried to keep up with her. Her explanation seemed to be too advanced.

“It was suicide to begin the war, I heard. Teacher, our enemies were too gigantic.”

“The government literally forced us to die. Boy, keep learning. It helps you have balance.”

“Teacher, how do you get to know those, well, whole thoughts?”

“Aha.” She smiled. “It’s taken my whole life. Even now, I’m learning from you, from Tera. And I learned a lot from the letters one of my relatives had sent to my grandpa. My relative was one of the students who studied in America around 1900.”

“It’s the age soon after the samurai times.”

“He went to the United States and Europe to learn many things to build a new country.”

“Wow? Then we fought?”

“The letters were very interesting. My relative stayed at a home of a university professor in the United States. People are very punctual even at home. Children were trained to move by minutes. Every member in the family worked hard, without useless action. Then they could have time for fun.”

“Even now we don’t have a clock at home.”

“My relative wrote in the letters that American prosperity did not come from its big land, but from their diligence.”

“Teacher, my grandma said it depends on the person how to use the asset, land.”

“Yeah, now, many ex-peasants sell their land. GHQ had ordered millionaires to give land to peasants. Many of the peasants sold the land to eat, drink, and have no money left.”

“If I could read the letters.”

“They had been copied and read by many people. The American family’s way of life was our model after the samurai world. They wrote like this.”

There’s no servant in the American family. Families who can have clocks are extra rich in Nihon. Such classed families in Nihon have many servants. Masters never do housework. But, the American “masters” care about their wives and do housework naturally.²¹

“I found things they brought into our newborn country were not only difficult studies and systems but also the basis of life, a strong work ethic and punctuality.”

“Teacher, were we not hard workers?”

“I don’t know. I guess. People before militarism may have been very different. It was before I was born. The letter said our way of life had been too constrained by Buddhist and Confucian thoughts, Chinese philosophy from twenty-four hundred years ago. You may know Buddhist priests tell people to be a part of

²¹ Motoko Hani’s books, volume 9. Fujin-no-tomo shuppan

nature, not to assert themselves, not to take another's place, not to compare or compete. Sometimes, it sounds to me, good for established riches. And it sounds like they tell us to give up before making efforts for success, because I've learned the American thinking, win or lose, so make an effort."

"Farmers make big efforts every day," the boy said.

"It means, I think, to be richer, to be a member of the upper class."

"Upper class?" He couldn't understand that.

"Maybe the American people believe competition brings them a better life."

"It sounds very far." Hisaharu stared at his soiled hands.

"Well, the letters said each person's reasonable acts will make a nation better."

"Mmm!"

"When the writer returned from America, he must have faced many stubborn, stone-headed people."

"Teacher, I think there must be stone-headed people in America too." The boy couldn't forget the face of the fighter pilot above Tera's house.

1948

The thirteen-year-old boy started a small business to raise money for high school. Shiro allowed him to sell bonsai trees for his higher education.

"Without yer care for each bonsai my father and grandfather had grown, they would have died, so they're all yers."

Besides bonsai, he began to grow chrysanthemums. *They are necessary for tombstones and funerals*, Hisaharu thought. *Selling them must bring me some money.*

The garden came to life again. Early every morning before school, Hisaharu peddled trees and flowers to villagers. One morning, he was in a busy town far from his village, where he had learned he could earn much money. Though it was far, the hours he needed to sell everything were the same, and besides, he didn't need to offer discounts there, which was good because he was bad at negotiations.

Soon after he sold all his bonsai, two men walked up to him. Their attitude was different from others. Their mouths were open. Their eyes were filled with violence. Their shoulders were swaying, and their hands were in their pockets.

Hisaharu was paralyzed by fear. *Are they yakuza*²²?

"Boy, here is our *shi-ma*," one of the men said with his chin raising. Hisaharu didn't understand what *shi-ma* meant.

"Can't yew hear me?" The man grabbed the boy by his collar. Hisaharu couldn't move.

"Yeah, I'll teach this kid," the other man said. "If yew do business heeere, yew must paay to our *ku-mi*." His dirty mouth was on Hisaharu's nose. Hisaharu glared at the man.

This money is mine. I cultivated the hard soil in the heat. I grew each bonsai carefully.

"What eyes!" The man punched his nose and kicked his body. They took his money and went away spitting.

Hisaharu walked house to house in the villages early in the morning again the next day, watching the height of the sun to be in time for school. He gave many flowers away for free. *Can I save enough money for high school?* Nevertheless, he remained positive. Everyone in the school was poor and hungry.

²² Organized crime syndicates

Before dawn, he would go to the kilns and put cold rice in cut bamboo, the best material to protect food from bacteria. As he prepared the rice, he thought of some girls in the class who never brought lunch. He wanted to give a rice ball to the girl next to him but thought the other boys would make fun of him. Once, he pretended his rice fell out of his bamboo in front of her. She was reading a textbook, and put the rice ball back with eyes full of pride.

In December, Tojo Hideki was executed as the wartime prime minister and the leader of the army.

1949

When the new year started, Hisaharu came to be ashamed of his clothes. Almost all his classmates wore old clothes, but some boys' clothes weren't worn out. A few girls had cloth on their feet. He heard they were called socks. The girls also had something he had not seen. They called them shoes.

Shoes and socks. All I have are zori for sunny days and geta for rainy days made of straw and wood. Their socks cover all the toes. They can't use their toes. I don't like shoes and socks. I don't like shoes and socks. He persuaded himself. *What womanly things they are. But, he thought, having those must be so warm for mother. How and where do they get them?*

In the pink season of cherry trees in full blossom, he saw a man who was walking with livestock. Hisaharu hadn't seen horses and cows up close. *What big animals! Besides, they seem to be clever.* He began to gaze at them at every chance.

"Hey boy," the man said to him one day. "Which community are yew from? I often see yew work hard. Yew see me, don'tcha?"

The man seemed to be very simple and pleasant. Years of hard work had carved wrinkles into his face, neck, and hands. *Like my father*, Hisaharu thought.

“I’ve been looking for someone to help me. Yew wanna lead my cattle to the town hall sometimes? Vaccinated livestock will be sold at a high price. Every time yew do, I’ll pay ya.” He took a small cloth bag and opened it.

Heaven help me!

The man let him touch his horse.

“Warm! Hair is harder than I thought.” Hisaharu talked to the horse with a soft voice.

“Fur. He’s listening at ya. Look at his ear.” Watching the livestock’s movement, the man smiled. “Ya have natural talent for them. I knew it.”

The fourteen-year-old boy started leading cows, pigs, and horses through the forest from the man’s hamlet to town and back to the man’s house. He kept the job till he was eighteen to pay tuition. Working wasn’t a hardship at all for him as long as he could keep studying.

The USSR tested its first nuclear weapon at Semipalatinsk in Kazakhstan in autumn 1949. Mao had declared the People’s Republic of China at the Gate of Heavenly Peace in Beijing in October.

One early morning in November, he went back to the Uncle Simple’s cattle place, where he saw a man with strong eyes. The young man’s hair wasn’t cropped. Hisaharu had not seen a man with hair on his forehead. *His hair must be a nest of lice, but it seems neat. It means he uses lots of water. I carry heavy buckets for mother and sisters. But it’s out of the question*

to ladle extra water for a man's long hair. He shouldn't waste water. Though each house has a well, water belongs to no one. It does to forests. Mountain is chunk of water. If man wastes it, something very bad will happen.

"Ya, boy, this is Mr. Universite," Uncle told him. The man was smiling. Hisaharu saw something under the smile. *He's looking down on us.* Ichō leaves had fallen all around and had made the ground bright yellow. The man wore socks and shoes. He had not hair cropped as he didn't like a military way.

"He's great, but he'll talk to ya." Uncle Simple said proudly. The old man's feet, clad in *zori*, were as hard as shoes.

Hisaharu was sad. *Don't talk that way, Uncle Simple. That's why educated guys look down on us.*

"How do you do." The elite held his hand out to Hisaharu. It was the first time somebody had offered a hand to him. The hand was white and thin. Hisaharu noticed a Communist book in the other arm. *My eldest sister used to say to me, "Communist groups make fools of us farmers. They see us as stupid and want us to change our mind and embrace communism."*

"What's co—, com—?"

"Cooo ... mmuu ... niiiiism. I hate to lose our property. At last, MacArthur crushed landowners, except small owners like us and distributed land to peasants. I don't understand why universities professors want communism."

Looking at the thin white hand in front of him, Hisaharu kept wiping his hands on his short slacks as he didn't want to touch the smooth fingers of a Communist who looked down on farmers. To avoid the young man's eyes, he looked at his feet. They were in *zori*; the straw was almost rubbed through. *I've been thinking I must make a new pair.* Hisaharu hid his left

foot behind the other. *Mr. Universite notices what I'm thinking.* Hisaharu stepped back.

"I'm so sorry," the rustic Uncle said. "Mister, he's just a poor kid. Please let him—"

"Well, it's alright." His attitude was so sophisticated. "All we want is to save poor people, to make an equal society." He looked at the bright leaves. "I know what the established society does." It was usual for him to face stubborn, rural ways of thinking. *They prefer poverty to change, he thought. It's religion that makes them headstrong. Religion had created this hierarchical world, which we must change.* "I want ordinary people to know how capitalists exploit them." He clenched his fists. "Average people respect riches; riches look down on people."

"I'm sorry," Uncle repeated.

"You don't need to say so, I know." His voice was filled with love and strength. He knew how common people had grown up. "It's not your fault. You, we, are right. Listen, our Comintern in Soviet Russia was over and is going to take another step. Our original goal is coming."

"Original goal?" the old man repeated.

"Comintern needed the Chinese Nationalist Party to lose. China's Communists must win. For the purpose, Nihonese had been easy to provoke, as the people are very simple.

"Nihon's governors had no vision. Prime Minister Konoe mistook in 1938 who was representing China. It was the beginning of the islands' sinking into war against China, America, and Russia. It was what the Soviets had planned. Few people noticed that was the first step of the Cold War. The hot war made people in China and Nihon impoverished to the communism revolution. The real winner was we Communists. We've been fighting for redistribution of income since 1919."

The smart man looked up at the blue sky. "Our success is promised because European capitalism has been stopped since 1917. This east-end island can be a convenient tool for communism. When czarist Russia was collapsing, the war against Nihon in 1904 was fatal for the established class. Russian Communists could have the first revolution in January 1905. Our era has just begun!"

"Even I can be happy then," the old man said slowly.

"Sure. You're enduring hard labor because you were born into a poor family. All men are equal. This is the goal."

Uncle was crying, thinking of his daughters.

Hisaharu was listening carefully. *It sounds good. I have to tell this to my eldest sister.* He turned and ran to the *kaki* tree step to talk to her. She was picking fruit near a bright red maple tree. He said he had met a clever young man with a red book.

"Equal conclusions." She looked in his eyes for a while. "Hisaharu, yer a hard worker. In communism's way, lazy men who drink during the day, sleep after dawn, can have the same life as ya. No!" She kept picking fruit, watching him. "It's natural that men who work hard have better days. Well, I know we should help people in need. Helping this way is different from the Communist way. It's men with no effort who voice loud the same outcome." *It's men*, she thought. *Women never rest from dawn to midnight, but some men are really lazy.*

"People in need," Hisaharu nodded, thinking of Tera. The moment he thought of her, he forgot he wanted to ask her what the established society was, what capitalist exploitation meant.

"Now I tell ya another point of view our gran'ma told me. Yew know she had lived in a strict class society. But she said the value of every life is equal in the eyes of Deus."

"De, ze?"

“Deus. Probably a kind of god. I’m not sure. Um, this is what Francis Xavier told her poor ancestors in the strict class society three hundred years ago. That was why many villages came to be believers. Her mother was from a tiny island near Nagasaki. She was,” the eldest sister checked his eyes carefully, “a hiding Kirishitan.”

“I think I’ve heard of it, but I’m not sure. Father and mother haven’t told me anythin’.”

“It had been a secret even after the samurai era. Though the new central government said freedom of religion, people’s minds wouldn’t change so fast. Yew know community tradition is the strongest rule. So this is our family secret.”

“You said every life has been equal for the hiding Kirishitan for three hundred years?”

“Maybe.”

“Wow, do you mean Communists want the equal of goal; hiding Kirishitans wanted the equal of start?”

“Yeah, that’s what I wanna say.”

“I see.”

“I dunno what Kirishitanity is. But I wish the equal start would be created. The reality is every baby can’t choose parents.”

Is that what Mr. Universite said, the established? Hisaharu wondered. *I don’t remember Gran’mā well.*

1865

His grandma’s mother, Rutu, was among the farmers and fishermen who looked at a tall building that looked like a castle. A contract between France and the samurai government in 1858 gave France the right to build houses of worship. It was

seven years later that the church in Nagasaki was completed. The whole archipelago had been closed off for more than two hundred years. Only Chinese, Koreans, and Dutch had been able to enter. They had landed on De Island, which was surrounded by a high wall. The foreigners couldn't leave the tiny island in Nagasaki Bay.

Rutu was born and raised in a small island out of Nagasaki Bay. One day, a fish seller from the next island visited her father and brought good news.

"It seems the time has come, the time we don't have to hide anymore. A big house with a cross on the top is now in construction in main Nagasaki." His tears of joy made her father cry. Her father said, "Now I found why you're stronger than boys, smarter than adults. Our Lord has given you a mission. Go look at the building. You will let us know we don't need to hide anymore. Let's have an *orasho*." For an *orasho*, a prayer, they closed their eyes and put their hands together.

"Vamos orar. Vamos orar. Vamos orar. Do not be afraid of any man, for judgment belongs to Deus."²³

The next week, the seller visited Rutu's island again. He drew a map of Nagasaki Bay on the sand. "See, this is the building on a hill. New-type foreigners have lived around the east side of the hill for ten years."

"New type?" Rutu asked.

"Down the hill." He placed a stone on his map. "Here, a downtown. Then a port, and next, De Island." He put two more stones. "The place for the old-type foreigners, Chinese and Dutchmen only. Here, for two hundred years, they

²³ Deuteronomy 1:17.

bought and sold many things. The island gate had always been closed. But those days, samurai didn't need the gate key, so it was in the hands of a Dutchman. In the closed days, for more than two hundred years, some Dutchmen secretly had tried to send words of Kirishitanity to us through fish sellers like me. Father and I couldn't communicate well with them because their language was very different; besides, there was always somebody watching us. But my grandfather noticed something."

"What?"

"Some Dutchmen who called themselves Berghollanders, mountainhollanders, didn't understand Dutch²⁴."

"The land may be big."

"Yeah. I also can't understand what Hakata people say. Ah, the Berghollanders were, something else."

"What?"

"The Dutchmen sometimes denied what Xavier and the Portuguese had said. But my father said it was a matter of foreign words that were handed down by word of mouth. That would make a difference little by little."

Hiding Kirishitan didn't know anything about the differences between Catholics and Protestants.

"Anyhow, for us, the disagreements between the yellow hairs and the black hairs do not matter. Father and I risked our lives for just talking with them."

"Yes, risked our lives."

"Foreigners seemed to think there were no Kirishitan in this country. One of the foreigners said to my gran'pa a

²⁴ Aizawa & Zöllner

Berghollander, Karl August von Hase, mentioned about our Kirishitanity in his writing in their village, Dresden²⁵.”

“So?”

“It was *die Jesuiten* who wanted to rule natives, who wiped out Kirishitanity here as the result. And the Berghollanders swore they would keep our existence secret.”

“Oh we aren’t wiped out. Still now, here are those who teach Deus’s words conveyers. They’re the *yujo* of a house in the downtown here, aren’t they?” Rutu pointed a part of the map on the sand.

“My sister was taken by the landowner when my da couldn’t pay tax.” Rutu looked over the sea. “She was sold as a *yujo*. Your aunt too.”

“Both of them were eager to learn foreign words, totally different from ours. My aunt said foreigners couldn’t understand each other. New-type foreigners didn’t understand Dutchmen’s words, Xavier’s, or our orasho.”

He wished his aunts were not in misery.

“They, no names in history, have conveyed Deus’s words through lattices to my father and me when we brought them dried fish and sea grass. They are the holies, Rutu. It was Deus’s will they were sold to the house near De Island.”

“Why did Deus make the girls victims?”

Soft waves erased the map.

Rutu was waiting for a chance in worn-out clothes with a straw band. Looking womanly would bring unnecessary trouble. *I won’t miss the chance when Deus gives it to me. Be very careful, then, making the most of every opportunity.*²⁶

²⁵ Aizawa & Zöllner

²⁶ Colossians 4.

A French father was on the stairs. He was thinking about the twenty-six martyrs, six Spanish Franciscan and twenty natives killed in 1597. They had been arrested in Kyoto and Osaka and were forced to walk eight hundred kilometers to Nagasaki and were killed. It happened because a sailor in a Spanish ship said a mission was the first step of colonization. *I must be careful. Lord, let me have a much more difficult mission.*

He saw hundreds of people along the stairs. Their chatting voices were getting louder as his walked. He could master some local words to communicate with carpenters. *They're practical, universal*, he thought. *Some of the young samurai who speak Latin or Dutch surprise me. They are eager for any kind of knowledge of this nineteenth century. Such positive young men are of low rank. The foreign languages speakers talk in their mother tongue are easy to learn. But when they talk to other samurai, I can't understand what they say. It sounds like they add more than ten syllables to each word for seniors.* He couldn't catch what the crowd was saying. But he suddenly heard a voice, words, and a melody he knew.

Gloria in excelsis Deo,
et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.
Glsta, michi-michi ta-mou,
Deus, Santa Maria-sama, zai-gyo ni-te,
wa-re aku nin na-re-do-mo, aku nin no-ta-me,
An-men.²⁷

He saw a farmer among the crowd on his left. *Latin? Portuguese? It can't be. Where's the coming voice from? Did I*

²⁷ From a document preserved by Kakimorii family in Naru Island, Nagasaki.

hear the Lord's voice? No, it was from this side. He looked at a boy. Or is that a girl? Her eyes and lips showed she wakes up and rises from the dead.²⁸ Oh, Lord, you led me here! "Filius meus, filia mea." The moment he said this to Rutu, he heard another voice.

"Frater meus."

It was a very old man's voice. He looked older than a hundred. His face was in tears.

A miracle! These east-end islands can't have any Christians. All of them died two hundred and fifty years ago. A miracle! The French priest got to know the hiding Christians. He wrote letters to Paris and the Vatican. But the news among foreigners in Nagasaki had leaked out to the governor on Main Island. Though the samurai age was almost over, the new government kept suppressing the Christians. The new system needed to keep its traditional soul to avoid invasion by Europeans. New leaders with knowledge about Europe and China judged that one-god believers would give the land to Europe again. More than 3,000 Christians in Nagasaki were arrested and sent one by one to far places on Main Island to make them assimilate.

Those pursuing the Christians landed on Rutu's island. The moment her father was pushed down to the ground by the chasers, he shouted, "Go!"

Rutu ran and dove into the sea. She knew the height of the cliff would make the chasers give up and the depth of sea would save her.

"Lovad seiaosactissm sacramento!"²⁹

²⁸ Ephesians 5.

²⁹ The words for village people led by a sixteen-year-old Japanese Christian boy who fought against the government in 1637.

She stayed in the wild forests between Nagasaki and Munakata for months. “Consider it pure joy, whenever you face trials of many kinds,”³⁰ she repeated to herself.

Then she met a young man. Both of them sensed the smell of “minority” in the other. He was overwhelmed by her noble attitude though she was muddy and wounded. He took her to his village.

1950

On June 25, the Communist North Korean Army tried to reunite the Korean peninsula, which had been divided since 1948. The conflict was then expanded by the United States and the Soviet Union as part of the larger Cold War.

The U.S. Army in Nihon was sent to the peninsula. The whole archipelago became a line of dikes against the Communist continent. To compensate for the American force, MacArthur ordered natives to establish a new force, but the natives strongly resisted doing so. The American had absolute power; a new force was built and called the Police Reserve, later renamed the Defense Force.

1951

In January, the White House dispatched Avery Dulles to the islands as its special envoy. He had two missions: to rearm Nihon after the San Francisco Peace Treaty; the other was the continuation of the American presence there. Prime Minister Yoshida denied the first suggestion. The treaty between the

³⁰ James 1.

Allied powers and Nihon was officially signed by forty-nine nations and officially ended World War II.

A high school in a town accepted Hisaharu. He walked miles to the bus stop every day. There, he took off the straw sandals he had made and put on a pair of worn-out shoes. He did it full of hope. *I must find something I should do. What is it? Whom can I ask? Father belongs to a different generation. He never understands me. Ah, out of this family, out of this village, I go to the high school. I will find somebody, something. I have to do it by myself.*

Shiro told him before the first day, “Don’t give us a bad name.”

“And I will keep working in the fields after school and on Sundays.”

Shiro knew his son had worked things out for himself. Shiro didn’t know high school students needed black uniforms. *It must cost a lot. My son put the five buttons on it using a needle and thread. He’s like me. He learns anything without a teacher. That’s life. Through painful toil ya will eat of it. All the days of your life.*³¹

Hisaharu found students were very different from those he had known. They were sophisticated but not in the same way as the young Communist. There were many boys whose hair was longer than his. And it was surprising to see girls in high school. *Why do their parents permit them to study? They don’t think of their daughters’ happiness.*

The girls had fair complexions. *It seems they don’t have to be in the sun in summers and in the wind in winters.* Hisaharu

³¹ Genesis 3:17.

q u t t e r

pictured his people's tanned, patient faces. *And Tera. Where is she?* On his first day at school, he wavered; he thought they called him a country dweller. Something took root in him. Their accent was different; it was not the accent he had heard while selling bonsai and flowers in that other town. He noticed the gap between village and town. *Misery. The entire world my parents know is their house and farm. My parents never understand how miserable I am. I can't let them know this.* He tried to encourage himself. *Mountains covered by the deep forest have been my playground. Our house is what typical farmers built a hundred and twenty years ago. Townspeople couldn't own such a solid one with such thick pillars.* But he came to know a kind of power, something he couldn't understand was on their side.

The next week, he met a classmate on the way to Uncle Simple's house.

"Hanada-kun, cool! You're riding a horse without a saddle!" His face was full of admiration.

"Well, I'm doing this to buy a second-hand bike." *How dull I am. Saying this is stupid.* Hisaharu had been surprised when he saw a wheel, called, rubber wheels.

The classmate walked away politely.

If I could only speak better.

He studied new subjects in high school, though a few subjects were still traditional. The four Chinese classics were surviving. Teachers explained Confucius, an ancient Chinese thought. It's called REI, order and peace. The Chinese order 2,500 years ago was still the basis of Nihon. Confucius taught that everyone, from the emperor to the people, had to fulfill their roles and be obedient, just, courteous, respectful, formal, ceremonious, service oriented, and ritualistic. This applied to

ruler and ruled, elder and younger, man and woman, parents and children, elder brother and younger brother alike. The order made families, nation, and all the world right.

Then his teacher told about Mengzi, Confucius's follower. His thought was called the way. Hisaharu thought this was like the imperial rescript on education. *Does America have such a spiritual basis? They might. What is that? How about in Africa? Though the ex-army had occupied north China for more than fifteen years in the early twentieth century, our land has been a mental Chinese colony for more than fifteen hundred years. It's our will, our choice. Elders always say yes to the old Chinese sayings.*

The American occupation force couldn't change people's minds quickly, but "equality" was a subject after the classics. Another teacher showed a book. "In 1872, Fukuzawa Yukichi, from Kyushu, published this. Heaven created no one above you, no one under you. Only learning makes the difference. Yukichi traveled through America and Europe in 1860 and 1862. He respected William Ewart Gladstone and wanted to establish England style democracy. He explained what human rights, freedom, democracy were in his mother language for his people. Those concepts were not in Asia. And he witnessed Asian people were treated like dogs by Westerners. He understood individual independence was the only way the homeland could survive. For such self-determination, we should learn. Learn what?"

Oh, this is it. Hisaharu saw other classmates' eyes also opened.

He was always alone. He had some classmates to talk to and play baseball with; he sensed fires in some of them, but their flames were different from his.

One day, he went to the school library. No one was there. *Eldest sister told me this world was full of interesting stories. Her stories while working at nights had let me forget hardship.* The library entrance wasn't locked. He slid the thin door open and was surprised at seeing thousands of books. The amount made him comfortable. *What treasure!* He smelled the air of books. *Ah, this is what I want.* He felt he was standing in front of endless wisdom. *The hows and whys are here. I'm not alone. These authors are with me. Now I understand what Aunt said, man lives not only by rice. I had thought there were vegetables.*

He discovered that no one had visited there for many years judging by the dust on the shelves. It seemed to have been closed during the war. He soon came to know why. There were many translated books, and English-oriented books.

He walked to the shelf of classification 0, then 1. There were books on philosophy, religion, and myth. *Religion. That's what made us puppets die. Ah, Brother Ichiro. I must be clever. The militarism used the traditional religion. I never forget the morning I forgot to bow in front of the royal picture at the school gate. A sixth grader punched me. Now the cold war of ideology has begun, but someday it will end 'cuz ideology has roots not as deep as does religion.*

He stepped to the right. *Why is philosophy with religion in the classification? Why aren't books about myths in literature?* He eyed each title. *Greek myth, Celtic, Indian. Does each culture have its own religion and myth? Holy Book. What an exaggerated name. Which culture's myth?* He kept walking carefully along the shelves classified. *Who thought up this sorting? The man is great.* He thought of the classification of minerals, plants, and animals. He didn't know the first

classification had been established by Carl von Linne of Sweden in the eighteenth century.

He visited the library almost every day; reading opened up to him a whole new world. He had not known the world was so huge. The sliding door to the library was a gate to the rest of earth.

How fascinating ancient Greek culture is! This is the origin of mathematics, democracy, and beauty! It was great travel for him to imagine the land 4,000 years ago. Then, a part of a title, *Adventure*, caught his eye. It was not the devices and ideas in *Robinson Crusoe* that amazed him. *I may be able to make such things.* It was the author's philosophy that surprised Hisaharu. *It seemed to be based on so called only one god so different from ours. Does the religion draw a clear line between human and nature? The hero tried very hard to keep his life comfortable. He made a chair. We don't have chairs even now, except in schools. Why did Robinson deny living as a part of wild nature?* Despite being surprised at the author's prejudice, Hisaharu was totally sympathetic with author's constructive ways. *The foundation Crusoe stands on is different 180 degrees from our culture. Is this one of the reasons nature-worship cultures had been defeated by one-god believers?* So he took the book with the exaggerated name.

What fun stories! What is his name Yes? Isn't it the English "Hai"? Is there any relationship between Yes Kiristo and the American custom of Kurisumasu? Last December, there was a picture board in front of a big shop, "It's fashionable to buy presents for Kurisumasu!"

Even weeks of reading didn't get him to the end of the book. But after flipping through Leviticus, Numbers, and

Deuteronomy, he found the reasons why nature-worship cultures had been defeated.

If this is the basis of the European and American world, if the parents and teachers tell this way of thought to children, their society would be in more unity than East Asia is. Within only god's viewpoint at the top, their way of thought was built high and strong, in the shape of cone. I don't wanna think about it, but how flat our thought is!

Nature worship is on the wilderness's happenings. But the Holy Book tells readers one solid timeline from the beginning to the end. Our culture, mixed with nature worship, many kinds of Buddhism, and ancient China's Confucianism, sees history repeating itself. But this one god book sees history in a direction. Is their nature different from ours? What about earthquakes? Tsunamis? Typhoons? Volcanoes? What's sheep? What's desert?

He didn't want to admit others' priorities, but he admitted the culture he had not known. He wondered if the decision makers before and during the war had had no vision or a long-term, historical point of view. *How about the men with power now?*

Another novel also took him back to the Holy Book, André Gide's *La Porte Étroite*. It made him want to know what a *porte* was; in his language, it was translated as a gate. He was confused.

Enter through the narrow gate ... for wide is
the gate and broad is the road that leads to
destruction, and many enter through it.³²

³² Matthew 7.

Hisaharu found a copy of a picture, *Völker Europas, wahret Eure heiligsten Güter*, that Wilhelm II had distributed to the heads of European countries. In it, Hisaharu saw Michael the Archangel talking to Athena and others, “gelbe Gefahr,” pointing to Buddha in the Far East³³.

It had been made in 1895, the year Germany, France, and Russia had gotten angry with the east-end islands’ victory in China. The established people never had thought the islands had ambitions on the continent. The picture was insisting, “The wealth of the world must belong to the shining cross.”

But why were Nihonese at the time fascinated by Goethe and other German writers? I think I heard something about this from Brother Ichiro, but I was too young to understand. If only I could find somebody to talk to about this and William Shakespeare and Émile Zola.

He especially liked the works of Tolstoy; the title, *Voyna i mir*, *War and Peace*, made him choose the book. *The author belongs to the generation forced to experience the war. Now this peace has been created.*

He soon discovered the story wasn’t the one he’d expected, but he was moved by its philosophy and history. *The great writer who was born with a silver spoon expressed warm understanding of farmers’ lives. Tolstoy liked his heroes to be farmers. Russian farmers seemed to be more exploited than us, but they seem to have a lot in common with us.*

One day, when he was reading Tolstoy, he thought, *I got it! This is what Mr. Universite wanted to do. That young man had been facing the stubborn, rural way of thinking. They*

³³ Aizawa & Zöllner

prefer poverty to change. "I want ordinary people to know how capitalists exploit them." What about other Russian writers?

Hisaharu kept selecting books. *Fyodor Dostoyevsky! He understands me more than I do.* After he got tired with Russian literature, he saw another shelf. He took a book by Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialia, Essentia. Existential philosophy is natural. If Nihonese read this book, they'll agree with Sartre. Is the existential philosophy unacceptable in Europe? Something important seems to be in the Holy Book. It may be an answer to this confusion.*

Hisaharu didn't know the culture Sartre had lived in, the one-god world Sartre had based his work on. This one-god world could have given birth to atheism. Hisaharu lived in the world of millions of gods. It was just unbelievers, not atheism, that gods world could give birth to.

Hisaharu didn't know he was like the people in universities in the metropolises who also went crazy for the new French philosophy. Those elites didn't understand the foundation; they wanted a new basement that let people in the east end get out of the traditional thoughts and actions.

Five years ago, I heard, "Anyone who died will be a kami, a god, in Shintoism." In the Holy Book, a translated word, kami, is used for God, but it's a bad translation. Any Nihonese who read that word would misunderstand. In the world of kami, views are always ours, but some God believers could have a view above human beings. This is why the international standard is on them, and this is why Nihonese think each traditional culture has its own god or gods.

He kept switching between the religion and science shelves. *I was moved by the Greek culture. I noticed it was the origin of mathematics, democracy, and beauty. Then I found that in*

the fifteenth century, the logical orientation in the first half of Holy Book understood Aristotle's formal logic! That's why European mathematics and logic could beat the Chinese study of numbers and quantities, which had a great effect on the rest of the Far East.

Elders say American and European material cultures are destroying our spiritual culture because it's so fascinating, but they just can't see the spiritual background of the culture. It's true they have material we don't have. But I don't think their society is materialistic. Somebody said that we learn only what hands can touch, not what the head can understand.

The background of American and European way of thinking can be understandable for Asian people only through that Holy Book. Who said "Man-made things are the result only of what man thought"? Democracy, human rights, social systems, a person's actions, private communication, and what Europeans stand on is what they had achieved through blood, sweat, and tears. Original freedom is to believe in. A heart is free from a ruler. Our hearts had been ruled.

1952

It was the season the smell of soil at night told of the very early spring. Brother Jiro's marriage was decided to be held in November, after the harvest.

"Maybe it's time to make the ceilings. The bride is from the House of the Fire-keeper for the Munakata Shrine. The house has ceilings," Shiro said at a supper fire. "There're more than nine months till the banquet. In these days, many houses have ceilings."

Hisaharu was pleased. *Now I can call my friends in high school. Townspeople are afraid of snakes; they don't know some are not poisonous but are good for eating rats and bugs.* He watched a part of a white snake on the first beam, about seven meters up.

"So we'll have to give up this fire pit or the air will kill us." Shiro looked at the square place in the middle of the room filled with ash. "Well, where will we grill our food? The fires in the earthen floor were built for boiling. One's for rice, and another is for miso soup." Shiro looked at Yone.

"They say modernization changes food culture," Hisaharu said. He was young enough to be curious about the change.

"No, I've heard old castles have had ceilings." the youngest sister said. Her attitude was different from that of their other sisters and brothers. *She's the only one who says "no" easily,* Hisaharu thought. *Is the American style easy to accept?*

"Farmers couldn't have them, so, new age." Hisaharu looked at her. *Her difference comes from the new education,* he thought. *She doesn't know she's happy not having to work like girls before. She thinks a woman is equal to a man.*

"Your new room will be above part of the ceiling, over there." Shiro pointed to an empty space under the roof, above the formal entrance hall. "Of course your room will have a ceiling and a window with glass."

"Father?" Jiro couldn't get what he had said. "My room?"

"Not only for ya, also for yer bride. Say thanks to your mother." Shiro looked at Yone. She understood new-age young couples wanted their own places.

"Ya'll be able to have a great view of the glen through the window." She smiled.

High school boys and girls began to wear white short-sleeved shirts. In the brighter air, the skin on their arms and legs reflected the sun. Hisaharu was one of the boys who felt something exiting was sprouting deep inside. *Summer will bring something to seventeen-year-olds. To me?*

“Ya grew strong like father,” Jiro said to Hisaharu. Their hair was not cropped anymore. “Today, it’s good weather to plant those baby metasequoias, Father says.”

“I know,” Shiro said. “Ya don’t wanna be absent from school, but we need your help today. Those wispy, gray clouds are spreading, and this wind will bring rain the day after tomorrow. Remember the flaming sunset last evening? And this moisture in the air?”

Hisaharu couldn’t feel the moisture but said clearly, “Of course.” Hisaharu had been thinking Jiro’s school education was over when he was eight. Shiro’s parents had cleared a part of the forest behind the house and cultivated seven terraced fields along the slope, all long and narrow. Shiro noticed the clearing caused the high wind and turbulent waters. *The old saying is always right; a mountain is a chunk of water.* He decided to plant trees along the edge between the second terrace and the third. The second was for *mikan* citrus and the third for chestnut trees.

“Father, why did you buy metasequoias? They must cost a lot,” Hisaharu asked while arranging stones along the terrace.

“They grow fast. Metasequoias will protect our house for a long time. This precious land is our only way to live. Typhoons won’t wait for us.” Shiro kept digging up weeds.

“Did you get such knowledge from the books you used to read?” Hisaharu checked stones that supported the second terrace. The walls were perfect.

“Yeah, the books were about agriculture. Those books gave me a lot of useful knowledge.” Father was pleased at the son’s effort to keep studying.

“You used to read them at night with the light of fire or moonlight. I’m afraid you’re losing your sight.” Hisaharu watched his father’s broad back.

“My family will be my eyes. Jiro’s gonna have his yome soon. She will support me.” Shiro said, “Wait. That’s not the place. We need to plant thinking how they’ll spread roots. Roots will break the stone wall, but we can use the roots to protect the wall if we select the proper place for planting. This knowledge is not from books but from experience.”

“Father, how did your grandfather make these terraces?”

“Not only my parents, but also all the village people helped each other. Our generation needed to help each other. They had dug and moved rocks and stones. Even five-year-olds worked. Children classified rocks and stones into size, strength, and shape.”

“I see big, flat rocks on the bottom. Small ones are used depending on their shape and size.”

“Every time a typhoon broke parts of these terraces, my parents, my brother and sisters, now yer mother and I, rebuild them right. Yer mother’s parents have terraced rice paddies. Keeping their terraces is more difficult because—”

“—they need water.”

“Do not interrupt while somebody talks.”

“I’m sorry, Father.”

“Ya have to wait till my words are over.”

Stone walls are art. I saw fine art in books at school. It’s sad my father couldn’t have any chance to see such art in pictures. Father might spend all his life without seeing any pictures of

fine art. I wonder how many people haven't had a chance to learn about other cultures.

1954

One of sixty-seven nuclear tests was conducted in March above the Marshall Islands in the Pacific. The ash-like radioactive fallout was white. Children played in the “snow.” Nihon’s fishermen there also experienced heavy radioactive fallout.

This news led Tanaka³⁴ and Tuburaya³⁵ to create a Gojira. It was called *Godzilla* in the United States later.

Hisaharu finished high school. It was nine years after the war. The unemployment rate was sky high. Despite the three cities on Main Island, which fostered growth, grave difficulties existed elsewhere. Steep mountains and rivers cut off traffic. On Kyushu Island, people in a few big cities had running water, but many areas were left without electricity. Farmers’ sons and daughters (except the first sons) at age fifteen left Kyushu for the cities to get jobs. Factories didn’t want eighteen-year-olds with high school educations; they wanted youth with flexible fingers willing to work for low wages.

Should I have gone to Main Island years ago? he wondered. *No. I wanted to learn.* His high school prepared students for universities; teachers there did not help students find jobs. Even some girls in the school were going to become teachers or pharmacists.

³⁴ Tomoyuki Tanaka, Gogira creator, movie producer

³⁵ Eiji Tuburaya, special effects engineer, movie producer

He worked hard every day in his father's paddies and fields. He knew he couldn't be a merchant. He knew village people had bought his flowers because he was a boy. The miserable memory of the business in town was still vivid in him. *How do merchants deal with yakuza? The horses and cows were now business for Uncle's sons. They gave me a goat and a kid on the last day.* He had accepted them with appreciation.

He visited his eldest sister's home. She had quit the village office when she had married. She and her husband were dedicating themselves to their community in addition to working their farm.

"My young brother, ya don't know how much I wanna help ya, but I'm afraid the office is now full with ex-soldiers without legs or arms. We will keep looking for a job for ya."

Hisaharu understood she would never make family a priority. She would speak up for those who could not speak for themselves, for the rights of the destitute. She'd speak up and judge fairly and defend the rights of the poor and needy.³⁶

I must leave home as soon as possible. Hisaharu thought. Ayako, Jiro's wife, was a tolerant woman. The young wife's face soon got wrinkles. *She cares for this big family, my sisters and my parents, with all her might even after she gave birth to twins.* Her life was daily sacrifice as Yone's had been. Her tender attitude moved him.

"Sister Ayako, I can't be here. Brother Jiro said he'll buy a farm tractor someday. I'll go and dig coal. Companies need many men 'cuz the occupation army prohibited women's work there."

³⁶ Proverbs 31.

“Ah, Hisaharu-san.” She shook her head. “Machines are too big for our fields. Jiro-san wants one, but we can’t. And more important, I’ll never let ya go there. Ya don’t have to mind being here. Yer so helpful.” She made a smile without opening the mouth. Hisaharu knew why. She had lost a few teeth after childbirth, like other young mothers had.

“Sister, I’m afraid we shouldn’t be prejudiced toward coal workers,” Hisaharu couldn’t help but say to her, though he didn’t want to talk back.

“Yer right. There are many good people working there. Go be one of them. Imagine ya’ll have yer family there. Ya’ll have a daughter. And ya’ll die soon because of a gas explosion, a cave in, or lung disease. Yer daughter will be sold by her new father like Tera was.”

“Sister, selling girls is forbidden now.” He wanted Tera out of such darkness. At the same time, he thought of the *yakuza* who had hit him.

“There’re always the underground. Yer young and innocent. Ya need to know, make yer paths straight. Even you’ll be able to survive longer there. Yer daughter will have a baby when she’s fourteen whether or not she wants. There, many men have tattoos, and some women are proud to have tattoos of their lovers’ names on the inside of their thighs ’cuz they barely got out of grade school.” Ayako shook her head. “Before that war, many women gave birth in tunnels! They never had a day off. It’s to feed other kids. People’s customs won’t change soon in spite of the law.”

On a day he finished his rice-paddy work, Hisaharu started to walk to Hakata to an unemployment office. He had heard about it from a teacher in the high school. *How*

much useful information I don't know! Do townspeople get such information easily?

Amazing! The sky goes on forever here! There were no mountains blocking the sky as in his valley. In Hakata, even a huge cloud showed its edge; such a cloud would have covered his village completely. Also amazing was that he didn't see any rubble. He had pictured millions of bodies burned by the bombing. He saw houses built with burnt wood and old materials. Though they are worse than my goat shed, how strong men are. This is a city. Their words are much different from what I heard in high school. They're talking and walking fast. They might laugh at my accent, my looking like a clodhopper. I'm afraid this isn't the place I belong. But I need to stand tall. My community is not into material culture. The culture has already covered Hakata. How fascinating. But I can't afford any attractive goods. That takes money.

He spent nights in the unemployment line, looking at signboards. It was rumored Tera was dancing in Hakata. Soliciting was noisy. "Mister, there's a girl you like. I'll make it reasonable!" "You can drink with beautiful girls!"

Where is she?

On the third day, he found a temporary job at a blast furnace. The heat and the hard work numbed workers; many of them fell down. Salt was available here and there in the factory for the workers to ingest to make up for sodium lost in sweat. But that was all the large company did for the workers' health. He thought of the factory owner. *Ah, this must be what Mr. Universite called the establishment.*

Working in the blast furnace all day deepened his anxiety. *What kind of life does the owner have?* Hisaharu understood

what Mr. Universite wanted, why communism and socialism were popular.

His first payday was fantastic. *Not coins, paper!* A boss explained, "Payroll taxes are big, twenty percent, but you should think like this. Your tax will be used for beggars, discharged soldiers without legs, children without parents." He looked in Hisaharu's eyes. "Tax, a part of our labor, will go to our society." His eyes were checking if the young man was able to understand. "I had thought that losing the war meant we were all going to be slaves, that all the women would be forced to give birth to enemies' kids. We lost the war, but our identity is left. This kind of war end had not existed before, and it won't happen again."

Something's wrong, Hisaharu thought, but he couldn't say what. *The winners must have a reason for this. What happened to my fathers 1,500 years ago?*

The boss liked Hisaharu because he was honest. He told Hisaharu, "Look for work as an official, not this kind of job. I'm an official here, so I'm given new social system, fringe benefits, such as social insurance. Choose good newspapers to get information. It's important bein' up to date with current affairs. Then try hard to find another job."

He was exhausted, but he kept buying newspapers every day not only for job listings but also to become informed. He discovered things were reported very differently depending on the papers. *A few papers' sensational expressions seem to make for good sales, but I prefer a logical approach. I understand what Brother Ichiro had said. Common people let themselves be agitated and came to be supporters of the war. Wasn't it the public that liked to sensationalize everything and pushed the military into war through media?* Gradually, he found

what was happening in the world. He wanted an answer to why America, the winner, hadn't taken everything. Hisaharu remembered Mr. Universite, who had a book on communism. *The young man has rolled up his sleeves to help workers. He was not a bystander.*

Media described one of the important things, about how at the end of the samurai age the Diet had been established. The traditional camp wanted to push the European system, elected officials making the rules. The new camp wanted more power for the Diet. To stand aloof from both camps, one new leader asked the advice of Hermann Roesler, Lorenz von Stein, and other German lawyers³⁷. The leader didn't ask it of France or the United Kingdom. Their systems were based on differences at first; on the other hand, the German lawyers had considered a nation as a body.

Hisaharu read breathlessly, "The new leaders seventy years ago knew our people, voters, were not sophisticated enough to deal with opposition, disagreement, and fights to resolve such conflicts."

Lorenz von Stein wrote that Nihon was one of the Asian countries that had no basic principle of law or human rights.

It's proper. Hisaharu thought that the origin of their legal system was Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. *The Book is their culture, not Asians'. The basis of the Asian way of thinking is ancient Chinese culture. The lack of the basic principle is—Hisaharu was connecting the dots—the reason why both constitutions, the former one and the new one, were made by Westerners. The first one was effected by Germans in the end of the nineteenth century, and*

³⁷ Aizawa & Zöllner

the new one was made by Americans in the middle of twentieth century.

He remembered the Book in the high school library. *Have our lawyers and lawmakers read Exodus and Leviticus? Perhaps even European and American lawmakers in this twentieth century haven't read them at all. But their social bases go back more than three thousand years. We planted the baby tree seventy years ago without fathoming it.*³⁸

Newspapers told him companies had decided to employ only students before they left school. To increase loyalty, companies promised to employ fifteen-, eighteen-, and twenty-two-year-olds who would be leaving school in March.

On April 1, those boys' new life will start, and they will work till they're sixty. Their income will increase year by year though their starting salaries will be low. Companies won't be able to fire them because of unions. Changing jobs is proof of a useless man. But I want a job in the new social system with fringe benefits such as social insurance!

Still, he was alone at the blast furnace; his newspaper was his only friend. *I want someone to talk to about the war in the Middle East.*

On his fifth payday, he saw a movie poster, *Gojira*. *Imagination can be a work.* He thought of his family. *They talk about our history. Is it true or imaginary?* Once, he told his father while helping him make ropes from straw, "Ya could have been a book writer if you'd been born in the big city."

Shiro said, "Words should be voices. That's why each history can have life. Voices are older than written things.

³⁸ Ecclesiastes 3:9.

Parents used to say in the beginning was the word.³⁹ The word was a voice.”

“I read that in a book.”

“Ya read too much. Ya’d better use yer ears than eyes.”

“The voice is older than written things, true.” He thought of the library. *I could reach the knowledge as they were written. That value comes from far, far away.*

1955

Hisaharu couldn’t get used to town. Townspeople were clever, and farmers weren’t. Simple people lied because they wanted time for themselves though they had to dedicate all their time to the community.

He was always in a crowd. Walls were thin. Even while he was on the street, he could hear what was happening in houses. *I wanna breathe in the forest to get myself back. Townspeople drink in evenings to regain their sense of self.*

The Socialist Party censured the government for the Defense Force. “The DF is against the constitution. It should be disbanded immediately.”

Socialists and Communists disliked America, which tried to rebuild the military. They loved the constitution that forbade war, but they never mentioned the national basement had been made by America.

A new threat had come about—the Cold War. It shook this defeated nation without the citizens even noticing it. The Soviet Union had insisted on occupying half of Nihon but had

³⁹ John 1.

failed to do so except for the islands near the USSR. America, the counterbalance to communism, wanted the archipelago to be a buffer between the giant Communist countries China and Russia.

In 1950, the Korean War broke out. It was a hot war, not a cold war. And another hot war was anticipated in Vietnam.

In the situation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs prohibited direct contact of the military/naval-attachés to embassies with the Defense Agency. The government was afraid the dual diplomacy once practiced by the army had led to the war. In the ministry, critical information had been up in the air for days, weeks.

In 2003, at last, the Defense Agency got an agreement with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to get information on the day the MFA received it.

1956

Hisaharu still couldn't change his life. *Four years have gone.* Newspapers kept telling him about the world, and that made him feel isolated. *I've come to know about the United Nations. The radio says Nihon joined the United Nations. Is that a power above nations?*

One early morning, he found an article; the branch office of the Defense Force in Hakata was recruiting members for two-year enlistments. The Defense Force had been established in July 1954 to a barrage of criticism. Media kept reporting the movement. Hatred against the army that had caused the war turned people against the DF. Hisaharu knew there had been no military force in his country since the demobilization and disarmament in autumn 1945 under the United States.

Media and universities criticized that the Defense Force meant that totalitarianism was coming back. The past was the shame of militarism.

1932

Joseph Clark Grew, an American diplomat, came to be an objective witness of the ex-army rising. All his Nihonese friends who had had experience in other countries or had been educated at Annapolis were assassinated by inflamed youth. The young patriots were insisting the upper class was a bunch of soul sellers standing up for America and Europe.

Joseph Grew understood the gap between rich and poor was the cause of the assassinations. As he expected, two days after the crime, the O-Kimi finished the affair, but the American diplomat's relief didn't last. A few surviving men with vision couldn't stop the second stage because the media were always on the side of thousands of city people who bought their papers. Agitating was always the best way to sell papers.⁴⁰

People in big towns seemed to hate the Defense Force, but Hisaharu decided, *Two years? I can do that. Though it doesn't pay a lot, it will make my life stable. And I will look for Tera.*

Under democratization, the Diet passed many new laws. New social systems were formed and reformed. Hisaharu thanked the boss who advised him to read newspapers, which had explained the changes well.

"Now, employers must pay half the premium of the social health insurance and pensions for employees," Hisaharu told his father.

⁴⁰ Naoki Ota's article on Magazine RekishiKaido 2011, September

Shiro was at a loss. “What’s premium? Insurance? Pension?” His father had spent more than fifty-five years without any social welfare system. “Are ya goin’ into the army? Jiro had been beaten and kicked there.”

“No, the DF isn’t an army like before, Father.” Hisaharu tried to relieve him. He understood Shiro was thinking of Ichiro.

Many kind people had tried to encourage Shiro to conquer his deepest grief, but Shiro had no will to be positive again. He kept thinking of the life Ichiro had had and the days he couldn’t have any more. Ichiro’s time had frozen.

“Father, the DF never sends members outside Nihon. The government made laws on this point. Don’t worry. It’s just for protection, to hold the land as it is now and to keep war from ever happening again.” Hisaharu didn’t mention the confusion in cities. Even a prime minister, Shigeru Yoshida, declared, “A self-defense war is harmful” in 1946.

1957

Hisaharu was accepted by the DF in January for twenty-four months. He went to a base in Yamaguchi, on Main Island, for educational training.

He saw the Kan-Mon Strait, the narrow sea between Kyushu and Main Island. *At last I’m off Kyushu Island!* He saw many factories on both sides of the strait. Smoke from the chimneys polluted the sea, sky, and land. The landscape made him understand why housewives began to stand up against the factories and governments. The huge women’s movement had begun from chatting, *ne, ne*, we shouldn’t use synthetic detergent for the sake of the children.

Even in the smelly, grey air, his heart was full. The sunlight glistened on the waves. *It's exiting entering unknown territory. At last I'm facing my own future.* The sea breeze brought him the words from a book in the high school library, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household."⁴¹

His brother Ichiro had also crossed the sea to take the fatal training for *kaiten*.

Hisaharu used to hear that the sea was the setting for a battle that had influenced the Hayato 900 years ago. *This is the sea of legend the little O-Kimi was taken into.*

The narrow strait had been a secret the continent people didn't learn till Philipp Franz von Siebold's 1832 letter⁴². The sea lane was the shortest way to reach the Golden City and Emerald City,⁴³ where the Great Oz, the O-Kimi, lived. If the outer world found the hidden sea, their huge ships could head easily along the calm inland sea for the gate of the unprotected cities. As the continent people didn't know about the strait, they had been satisfied with the three ports in Kyushu—Tu-shima, De Island, and Satsuma. From the three ports to the cities, the Yellow Brick Road was long, covered with enchanted forests.

Further away than the samurai age, there were the ocean people. On the north side of the inland sea, there was a critical bay called Hiroshima. The bay had been the base for the people 900 years earlier. It was an ideal location for shipping in three directions—to the calm inland sea, to the strait for the continent, and to the Pacific. They traded with the continent people and gained enormous wealth. The complicated bay was their nest, surrounded by forested islands. Successive patriarchs

⁴¹ Genesis 12.

⁴² Aizawa & Zöllner

⁴³ *The Wizard of Oz*.

kept expanding their shrine above the bay. The little O-Kimi was the last patriarch's grandson. When he was taken into the sea, the ocean people had disappeared from the official history. It was the beginning of the Hayato new secret for survival.

The modern navy in the end of the nineteenth century also had a critical base in Hiroshima Bay. Ichiro's last training had been done seventy kilometers from the base. Hisaharu's training base was near there. He received a pair of boots, his first new shoes ever. *If those are real boots, the pair Ichiro had were not boots, just cloth and string. This pair is good protection. Thick soles, hard toes, fixed ankle covers. Brother, how do ya like my boots?*

"Beds!" someone shouted.

"I haven't seen a bed before. I'm afraid I'll fall off!"

"Is this a bed?" another man asked. "The width is almost shoulder width!"

"It's the foreign style to sleep in a bed!"

"I've seen one in a movie!"



Hisaharu in the dorm, from his old album

“Alright, listen up. I’m here to maintain iron discipline!” The *taicho* had great posture. “You must not forget the vow you made just now. Keep the promise, and each of you will be given a weapon after the governor’s speech. This is, you remember, controlled by civilians!”

The early spring sun is so comfortable in the cold air. Bush warblers are singing.

“Our reason to exist is to protect our land and people’s lives. We’re the organization that will protect people in situation firefighters and police can’t manage, by the request of the governors. Each of us must accomplish his duties. One man’s mistake can lead to the whole team’s death!”

The mountains around the base will be bright green soon. Plum trees are forming red, pink, and white clouds.

“You need to understand what deterrence is. It’s to make invaders give up. This organization must be an effective deterrent.”

Cherry blossoms will dye the whole world in early April. Just standing for a long time is hard.

“Mind the rules! It leads you to prepare your will and body. It grows your indomitable, unconquerable spirit that can withstand any hardship!”

The trainer’s attitude was fresh for Hisaharu. *Brisk. I like this. And he’s very positive. Positive like Robinson Crusoe and the believers in the Bible. It’s like everything is good or bad, yes or no. It’s very different from the traditional thinking I experienced in villages and towns.*

“We can purify water for drinking. We can prepare food. We can construct avenues and bridges. We have doctors. This is the team we belong to. This is work for ordinary people.”

Hisaharu was surprised. *It's totally different from what mass media says about the Defense Force. Why do the media write that the DF is as an invader?*

Life in a dormitory was more fresh than rigid for him, being from a big family. He didn't have to bring water. And he could expect to make friends. But it took a week for him to get accustomed to being quick about performing his duties.

Words were complicated there. The government had eliminated every word that recalled militarism.

"I belong to the infantry, don't I?"

"No, you belong to a usual division, young man. We never use military words."



From Hisaharu's old album

Training began. Rifles were empty. At first, bodies and minds had to be built up strong enough to handle weapons. Training was hard; Hisaharu tried to remind himself of his

boyhood. He had wanted to be a ninja. *Creeping on sand is fun, isn't it?* Sand was in his eyes, nose, and ears.

“Hustle up!”

A Type 99 rifle was very heavy.

“Mind the angle of your rifle!”

The recruits suffered from fatigue and hunger.

“Check the angle of your legs and back when you hold a rifle!”

“The body can stand. Mind is the matter!” the *taicho* shouted. “You know the drill!”

At daybreak, one recruit dropped out. *I mustn't give in.*

“You can't shoot the rifle repeatedly, but it will make you sharpshooters as they have long barrels,” the *taicho* said.

“Target practice!”

“We're on a firing range.”

Are my earplugs working? My ears will be broken.

“Second fire team! Work around!”

The rifle recoiled heavily on his shoulder.

“Cease fire!”

Many kinds of training went on—high-wall climbing, trench digging, experiencing gas, and foraging for food. It all made him realized he had forgotten everything. He learned how to read maps. His first look at a world map in junior high was still in his mind. *Each part of the world has its own geography—hills, forests, and streams. Now I understand them close up. Each soldier in each country must be the same as me, even the pilot I saw in the tree. What is he doing now? Guys on the front lines are always against wars, like me. It was politician-pushers or ordinary people who wanna begin it. They would say our sacrifice was not a waste.*

Boot camp started.

“When will we put mud on our faces?” a man next to Hisaharu asked.

“You *wanna* do that?”

“I’d always wanted to be a ninja.”

“Ha, ha, so did I!”

“Next four! Over the side. Let’s go!”

Rain the night before had made the ground slippery. Staggering with a fifty-kilo bag and a rifle on his shoulders, Hisaharu felt hunger and was irritated. His boots hurt him. *Wow!* That moment, his view turned upside down. He tumbled down through bushes into a valley. *Idiot!* He was all wet. But the water made him alive under the strong sun. *This is like the rice field in summer*, he thought.

He was weeding in Shiro’s rice field. The sun’s heat was cruel. The wind kept blowing cool air over the flooded field. Working in paddies took more energy than working in dry fields, but he preferred it. Wind on water was better than air over dry land. Raise a leg and step carefully into the shallow water between bundles of rice leaves. *The first step, and the second step.* The bamboo baskets around his waist were getting heavier and heavier with weeds and mud sticking to roots. *The first step, and the second step, and then a harvest.*

Water-full wind was always comfortable on his forehead and neck during summer labor, though his feet were sending terrible sense of mud, pebbles, tadpoles, frogs and tiny fish.

The first step, and the second step. They walked all night.

“Don’t stop, and you can save somebody’s life!”

No moon. The stars are cruel. Without these boots and the backpack, this mountain walk would be easy. But he felt new

power every time he put his foot on the ground where the fallen leaves lay thick.

Before dawn, Hisaharu couldn't feel his feet moving. His head was empty. A firefly was in front of him in the darkness. *Faint, flickering, it's my soul; it's getting out of my body. Struggling with nature is the same as with agriculture.*

The moment Hisaharu lay on the ground, he fell asleep. The next moment, it seemed, he was forced to awaken. *Still dark. Dirt's hard.* It reminded him of the soil he had ploughed. *Is it hard now like this? I had made the fields so soft.*

"Stand up!"

The training was coming to an end.

"Now you know how risk-control and self-control are important," the *taicho* said at the closing ceremony.

On a holiday before leaving Main Island, a man in his troop took guys to his hometown, Izumo, which faced the ocean. "This ocean stream has brought lots of things from the continent since ancient times," an old man came out and said.

"I heard Izumo people were beaten by Yamato fifteen hundred years ago, but the winners made a special shrine here for the losers, didn't they?" Hisaharu asked.

"It's the place my son took you just now, though the original building was lost long ago," the old man said.

"Yamato had needed here 'cuz there were the skills of making iron in addition to resources," the son said. "Old men in this town say skills were brought by the ocean stream from the Korean peninsula, by people who had run away from wars there. The country was Kaya, conquered by Silla. It was they who made the Dragon Sword here."

"Dragon Sword?" one of young men asked. "One of the three treasures to be an O-Kimi?"

“Yes, the one,” the old man said.

“The Yamato took the sword when they beat us, Izumo. They named us Eight-Headed Dragon because we, the eight tribes, were very strong.”

“I heard the peninsula men were on the side of Yamato.” Hisaharu was surprised listening to him.

“The Yamato was,” the old man said, “made from the men of Paekche in the peninsula in the seventh century, when the Paekche were conquered by Silla. Next, Koguryo was conquered, and people there sailed out to the islands, here. When they landed, they found the ex-Paekche had controlled the center of these east-end islands. The ex-Koguryo were moved to eastern of Main Island in the eighth century.”

After the educational training for two months, Hisaharu was back to Kyushu because of a flood there.

“Guys!” a sergeant first class looked at each eye. “During the activity, do not eat! Do not drink! Do not sit down! Do not rest! Think of the victims’ feelings.” He kept checking eyes. “Our rest can be only in moving trucks from here and back!”

They were trucked to the land of disaster. At the edge of the load-carrying platform, Hisaharu had to stand up to the dirt and mud the rear tires stirred up.

When Hisaharu arrived at the village between cliffs facing a sea, the flood waters had gone. Debris covered the narrow land. Nobody was there.

“Tsunami?”

“Dunno. A reporter said there was an earthquake very far from here.”

“Look, over there. Someone!”

The sergeant first class ordered two freshmen to go there.

“This boy was looking for his parents, sir!”

“He’s seven or eight, sir.”

“Hanada-kun,” the sergeant called Hisaharu. “You take this boy to the truck and give him water and food.”

The boy heatedly shouted, “No! I *must* look for my ma and da!”

Hisaharu saw the sergeant’s throat trembling. Then tears were falling. Hisaharu also couldn’t hold his tears.

“You go with him, protect him with your life. Give your food and water.”

“Surely, sir!”

Under the crushed houses, Hisaharu saw bodies. He felt as though he had been hit by an ax.

Hisaharu was surprised by the boy’s power. *We had been searching for his family in the debris for hours. He seemed to be worn out. I repeatedly told him to get on my back, but he had insisted on finding his parents, so he walked. He got injured. He’s on my back. He’s sleeping now.* Hisaharu was pained as he thought of the boy’s future without parents. Feeling the boy’s breath on his neck, he thought he could understand what his grandaunt used to say, “For none of us lives to himself alone, and none of us dies to himself alone.”⁴⁴

Sputnik 1 was launched into geocentric orbit by the Soviet Union in October.

1958

I’m twenty-three, older than Ichiro had gone. Am I better than him? Is that why I lived and he died? No. Standing for

⁴⁴ Romans 14.

hours as a guard was so tough. Though the twenty-four month contract for this occupation will be over soon, I think I can make a new twenty-four month contract. Or I have nothing.

1959

“The mines in Kyushu Island were closed. Ayako and I are relieved you’re not in the mines.” Hisaharu received a letter from Jiro. It made him think of Tera. *The mines are closed, so the bars are closed. Is she still in Kyushu? Everything’s changing. But she must be the same. The way she smiles. The way she walks.*

A giant typhoon attacked Main Island. Dikes gave way. A month had passed. Thousands of houses were still covered by high tides twice a day. Even troops from Kyushu Island were sent there.

On the way to the stricken area, he saw the power of the Pacific Ocean. *They said there had been a scenic parking area along the cliff and a building for tourists. But all the land was lost.* Hisaharu saw a sandy beach far down. He looked at the ocean. *The Pacific is very different from other seas. Its color is bright. Its horizon shows the earth’s size. The biggest thing I’ve ever seen, I’ve ever felt.*

Trucks arrived at the flooded area. “There’re children left on the roof!” somebody shouted. They saw a boy and a girl who were five or six.

“Where’s your mother?” a private asked.

“Here,” the boy answered. He was so affable.

“Where’s your father?”

“In prison,” the girl said, looking into ochorous water. Hisaharu and the private looked at each other.

“I’ll search for their mother,” Hisaharu said.

He stepped out of the boat and went into the house through a window. Water was stinky with sewage. Furniture and sheets of tatami were floating.

“Somebody! Anybody?” he shouted.

“Help!” A woman’s voice came from behind a closet and a sheet of tatami.

“I’m coming!” Hisaharu shouted. He held his breath, dove, and struggled with a broken closet. Hisaharu dove under the closet and tatami. Visibility was almost none due to the sewage. He saw her legs between sheets of tatami and the wall under water. *Her face is above water. Good! She can breathe.* Before moving the tatami, he wanted to breathe. He jumped up and saw her face. *Tera!*

Hisaharu couldn’t move. It was her. She was so beautiful, with long, curled, wet hair and formed eyebrows. Her bleached hair was evidence of her nights of alcohol and men. Pale lips in the sun. And sharp eyes. *But the face is still small and round. The long eyelashes, the thin nose.*

“Help my children!” she shouted. She didn’t understand why the man was staring at her. He couldn’t say anything.

“Miss!” the leading private shouted, “you’ll see a rescuer soon. Hanada-kun, what’re ya doing? Hurry!”

Hisaharu found himself.

“Your children are rescued.” He almost called her name, but she belonged to somebody, the man in prison. His heart raged. He couldn’t stop looking at her.

“Ha ... na ... da,” she murmured when she looked into his eyes under the helmet.

Her lips spoke my name. He was trembling.

“Hanada-kun!” the private shouted, “are you alright? What’s happening?”

“Yes sir!” Hisaharu said. “She’s okay, but her legs are caught!”

“Okay, I’m coming! I have experience. Everything gets very heavy in water, especially futon and tatami!”

The moment the boss dove in, a loud voice thundered outside of the house. “Tera!”

Hisaharu heard the splash of a man swimming. Tera’s eyes were still on Hisaharu. The man swam to them like an arrow.

“It’s alright!” The voice was already at the window.

“She’s okay here, this side!” the private shouted.

The man made another dive and came to Tera and Hisaharu.

“Tera!” He held her tight. She opened her arms and wrapped herself around him. Hisaharu saw his left little finger was gone. The wound was not old. It was clear he hadn’t gone to a doctor. It was clear he was yakuza.

“I can’t live without ya!” He was crying. Then the eyes turned to him. “Thank you, thank you so, so much, DF-san!” His eyes were so thin but as sharp as hers. “Let’s pull the tatami together!” The man of thin eyes had a straight voice.

“Sir, I’ll take these children to their mother.” Hisaharu said seriously. She was in a doctor’s boat.

“Oh please. They seem to like you.”

Children always like me, he answered in his heart. “Let’s go.” He put them on another boat.

“Your ma was thinkin’ about you even when her legs were caught under water.” Hisaharu paused. “And your father came to save her.”

The boy had Tera’s eyes, big and dark brown.

“It was Ko-chan, not my father.” The boy said happily. It was a little surprise such a boy called a man by his first name.

“Ko-chan?”

“Yeah. Did you see he lost a finger?” The boy’s words stunned Hisaharu.

“Well, yes.” He was at a loss.

“Mister made him cut it. Ko-chan went to my home while Mister wasn’t at home. That was a bad thing. So he had to cut off his little finger.” The boy chatted as if he were reporting what had happened in kindergarten that day.

“Mister? Your father?”

“No. Mister is Mister,” the girl said. Her eyes showed revulsion. Hisaharu wanted to ask them whether they were happy, whether their mother was happy, but he saw the little girl’s lips were closed tightly. He couldn’t ask innocent children anymore. *Tera had been a child, as I used to be. Can’t this world offer other ways for a lonely girl to survive?* The man had the same eyes as she did. The two were one. Hisaharu noticed his heart had been so pure till that moment. *The smooth heart was now torn apart. Rags were left.*

1960

Thoughts of the man and Tera pained him. *The man was ... the man was ...* Hisaharu hated this feeling. *Get out of my mind! The man has her. Mister? The father in prison? She had been holding his head with her arms, under her chin, feeling him on her throat and breast. It’s the man who has her. Oh no, she’s the one, still now.* Hisaharu put his head on a wall. *I won’t let this feeling haunt me. I’ll crush my head.*

He could finish ranger training in April. Creeping along a tightrope horizontally and vertically made him forget Tera. The goal seemed far away. He was hanging in midair by a rope on his waist. He jumped from a tightrope with another rope into the valley. He crept flat on the ground and ate weeds. He mastered cooking snakes and hares. He could sleep well every night after crossing a valley in the air walking between two ropes in the wind.

The U.S.-Japan Security Treaty caused students to riot around the national assembly. Students and citizens shouted, "The treaty will lead the country to war again!" Life as a DF member far away from big cities didn't bring Hisaharu humiliation.

1961

Hisaharu took the oath of the Defense Force. It was a long one, about democracy, civilian control, and the life of the people. He recited it perfectly. "I am a man with responsibilities."

The boss smiled. "Only a man who feeds a family can say so."

1962

Hisaharu was sent to Beppu, in northeast Kyushu Island. Once, the United States had a large occupation force in its center because there were hills and mountains suitable for training just thirty minutes away. The base had been left for the Defense Force. Old buildings were there among huge pine trees. The forest cooled the base in the summer, and Beppu Bay could be seen from second-floor windows. From windows

on the other side, there was a green mountain range. At the foot of Mt. Fan, a great many geysers were blowing.

The whole town was built on a slope. Every house and building was constructed on stone terracing. On the higher place, the terracings became narrower. Such terracings were for rice paddies. *What a sight! Ocean and mountains.*



http://www.beppu-navi.jp/photo/site/jp_nature.html

“Here is your rifle.” The sergeant major’s voice was cool. “A rifle in your hands means you’re at the front.” His eyes were not cool. “A hypothetical enemy has landed. You’ll need restraint and patience. No mistakes.”

The most important fact about Beppu as far as young men were concerned was that the area was famous for its hot springs, so there were many women working at *sake* bars. Some of the women didn’t mind bathing in hot springs where passersby could see them.

Hisaharu and other young men were very interested in going to *sake* bars but rarely went because their salary was so low. Talking to such women required money; they belonged to *yakuza*. The memory of the punch and kick he had received in his youth was still in him. They knew places of temptations were under *yakuza* control, so they enjoyed sightseeing in town. *Beppu is a fun place even for us, na?*

Hisaharu started a long training regiment. A walk from the base in Beppu to Kumamoto, on the other coast, was a hundred and twenty kilometers as the crow flies. The hike took them past a smoking volcano.

At the onset, he noticed a man on his right. He had the appearance of a Spanish actor Hisaharu had seen in a movie. *A foreigner can’t be here.*

The man said, “I’m Ryuji Anda, from Kikai Island,” in a merry tone.

“Ah, Kikai, the ...” Hisaharu bit the words back.

“Yep, the exile island in the Middle Ages for political reasons.”

“Yep, political reasons,” *I don’t wanna be rude.* He looked for words. “Those political offenders were brave, weren’t they?”

“Besides the brave Yamato, the island had many races, though it was small.”

“Ah.” Hisaharu was surprised. *It’s like Ayako’s stories.* “Yamato! I’ve heard of it.”

“Ya have! Ya know, it was hundreds of years ago, the west end, Portugal, Holland, England, and so on were eager to reach the east end. Typhoons brought our fathers to our small islands in line before Kyushu Island.”

“Yer story is far bigger than mine.” Hisaharu restrained his story. “Yer new in Beppu, aren’t ya? Me too.”

Hisaharu noticed his “T” sound; his tongue was not on the back of teeth. *So soft.* “Why not walk down to Kan-nawa on our next break? I haven’t been there, though we see vapors rising there. Let’s see what hot spring is there.”

“I don’t have money for bathing.”

While talking, they went on through thickets and high trees.

“Just a look.”

“A look at a bathhouse and rising steam? Yeah, let’s go. I wish we could bathe there. I’m fed up with water from pipes on the ceiling.”

“My house has a bath. As yer from a village, yer house has one too?”

“Yep, it’s a *goemon*, an iron tub.”

“The same I liked stepping on the floating wooden lid.” Hisaharu remembered mother used to ask him from the other side of the wall, “Warm?”

“Enough,” he said even when the water wasn’t warm because he wanted to reduce her labors. He heard her putting more wood on the fire. He used to wonder why Mother knew everything. Childhood memory eased his foot pains.

They passed Mt. Turumi and Mt. Yufu.

“We’re all beat, huh?”

“Don’t say that. Please. It makes me ... er ... I won’t say.”

Hisaharu said.

When Hisaharu’s feet were aching the most, they suddenly got out of the bush. Scarlet highlands were in front of them, their new fields for maneuvers. They were called Miyama Kirishima. *How wonderful! I think it’s easy to withstand any maneuvers.* They went beyond the scarlet. It was not only Hisaharu who loved the bright-red-carpeted area. His fellows were beaming though they couldn’t talk any more.



http://www.beppu-navi.jp/photo/site/jp_nature.html

Beyond the flowering highlands were ranges of mountains that looked like waves. The range under the sky was a white-blue wave melting into the bright-blue sky. The next mountain

range was light blue; the third was blue, then blue-green and green-blue. The range of mountains nearer was bright green with forest. The nearest mountains showed each tree. *Blue rainbows on earth*, he thought. *They never disappear.*

They pitched their tents on the highlands. Before dawn, they started walking again. The early light, moisture from the forest, and layers of air caused them to see a huge dragon running along a valley under the cliff.

“What fog!”

They hacked their way through the thick undergrowth on the mountain ranges. It reminded Hisaharu of his boyhood. The corps’ trail wound its way through forests and over streams. *There’s no one in this huge area except us. Nobody knows this beauty.*

Creeks and swamps made them lose their balance. Mud and sweat irritated them greatly.

“Guys, *kappa* are on us!” Ryuji said in bright voice as he felt the irritation. Walkers pictured comical water monsters on themselves. Then men felt lighter and heard the calm water flowing.

A drop of sweat slid down Ryuji’s forehead. “We need to remember exactly where we can find water.”

“A mountain is hunk of water, my parents said,” a young man Hisaharu didn’t know said. At the creek, he felt something far behind him that hadn’t made a sound. It was a bear. For the first time, he realized his self-preservation instinct.

The highlands, valleys, and cliffs they conquered had transparent water. The water eased them. Sometimes, they saw hot springs along the rivers. Men washed themselves there and watched huge eagles fly.

“We can see the volcano Aso at last, can’t we?” Ryuji asked.

“The caldera. Is it really safe?” Hisaharu hesitated. “Rocks blasted and destroyed concrete shelters two years ago, *na*? Last year, clouds of ash and toxic gases surged upward. Well, it’s the reason we have this training, I know.”

“Yep, we can witness an eruption.” Ryuji’s sense of humor was beyond Hisaharu. He thought he needed to laugh. “Ha, ha, ha! We studied topography. Aso’s landform is unique.” *Ryuji is so attractive; he can express his feelings, but only happy feelings. I used to think expressing such thoughts should not be done.*

“Like a huge doughnut ring falling from the sky.” Ryuji wanted to show he knew the name of the American food. “The earth’s surface sank, pressed by the doughnut ring. The god picked up the doughnut and ate it. Then the ring center was left rising above. It’s the middle of Kyushu Island.”

“Yep, a doughnut ring.” Smiling, Hisaharu repeated the word. He hadn’t seen one. He sensed it was a modern name. *It may be made from American powder.* He felt himself behind, again.

On the third day, they arrived at Senomoto crossroads on schedule. *At last here! For the rest of my life, I’ll be able to endure anything.* He wanted to collapse.

“Now we’re in the outer ring of the caldera,” a private first class said. “The boiling mouth is twenty-three kilometers away.”

The seven-kilometer walk took them to astonishing highlands, the outside of the pressed earth surface by the doughnut ring. Hisaharu was on the eight-hundred-meter high tableland that was covered by a grassy plain more of more than two thousand square kilometers around the Aso volcano. Water had eroded the god’s table and had made hundreds

of small valleys. They walked three kilometers and suddenly found its edge. The scenery was incredible. The Aso crater rose above them level ground under their feet.

An enormous mountain created Kyushu Island 300,000 years ago, but eruptions had destroyed the mountain and had made the land sink. Rain, ash, and mud made the rocky bottom flat over millions of years. Eruptions 90,000 years ago in the center of the flat land raised a few mountains called Aso.

The ring ground had been turned into rice fields. It was just after rice planting. The paddies were filled with water. The whole plain seemed to be an enormous mirror shining in the sun and reflecting the volcano and white clouds.

"The paddies are in a grid!" Hisaharu said. He had not seen gridded paddies.

"How sophisticated but unnatural the paddies are! Straight lines never happen in nature," a private said.

Farmers were weeding in the mirror. They seemed to be dots. Weeds grow faster, taller, and stronger than rice. While Hisaharu was thinking about the labor that paddies involved, he forgot the pain in his legs and feet.

Standing at the edge of the highland, a private first class said, "Let's go down this forested cliff."

The winding way was almost a precipice. Waterfalls were here and there. "What beautiful danger this nature has! Let's wash our cans in the stream."

At last they arrived on the sunken land. Roads were straight between rice fields. Nearer to the mountain, they regained their energy. "Look, there's the Aso goddess shrine." Hisaharu pointed to his right, to an area surrounded by rich forest.

"Goddess of fire, protect us please!" Ryuji put his hands together.

At the foot of Aso, they looked up the long slope of lava before them. Blisters broke in boots. “I haven’t seen any place like this. No place to hide from the sunshine.”

They kept walking up and found rebuilt concrete shelters.

“The range of mountains is a circle here.” Hisaharu stood at the edge of Aso’s huge crater.

“We had been on that edge of the horizontal range over there. We walked such distance. We’re great, *na?*” Ryuji asked.



From Yumiko’s album

Finally, the emerald crater lake was in their vision. It was calm. “You’re lucky. If steam were rising from the boiling water, we would all die. The color of steam is different depending on the place because of the chemicals. The poison gas color is really beautiful,” an officer said to the DF men.

Sunshine turned the green lake to pale blue then bright white, blue, and dark.

“It’s very mysterious, isn’t it?” a private first class said and shouted, “Lucky guys. You have a break for thirty minutes!”

The troop walked along the edge. A tall man shouted, “Look!” There the edge was collapsed and sloped gently down to the lake.

“Let’s go down to the water!” the tall man, called Mr. Ilya, said. Gravity helped them slide down to the beautiful blue pond.

“Stop! Stop!”

“I can’t!”

“Hey, what fun!”

All of them were exited. “The whole world is ours! Forget about tomorrow!” Mr. Ilya shouted.

They felt so free. The Aso crater wall around them was telling them to open their young hearts. The wall around them would keep their secrets. The lake would sink the secrets into magma below.

“Have ya thought about death?” Hisaharu asked the others. This beautiful nature seemed to be a dream for him because wartime was still hanging on him heavily.

“Of course. My town had so many air raids because of our iron factory. It’s a miracle I’m alive.” Mr. Ilya sighed. “This life is newly given. I don’t wanna waste it.”

“What do ya mean?” Ryuji asked.

“I’m going to quit the DF,” Mr. Ilya said seriously.

“Why? When?” Hisaharu had been sensing Mr. Ilya’s mind was somewhere far off.

“After next payday. I’ll be an actor.”

An actor. A feeling of excitement came over the guys.

“I’ve worked here to get my fill and build my body. Have yew ever watched movies?”

“Only a few times,” Hisaharu answered. “I wanna see more, of course.”

“I think it’s the world I should live in,” Mr. Ilya continued. Hisaharu couldn’t catch up with him. *In his dreams.*

“It must be very tough to be an actor. Do ya know somebody in show business? Do ya have kin to rely on in Tokyo?” Hisaharu asked.

“I don’t know anybody in the business. I came to know movies are made in Kyoto. My aunt in Osaka says her husband lets out a room. First of all, I’ll go to Osaka, then Kyoto.”

It was very hard for Hisaharu to restrain himself from envy. “Ya have an aunt in Osaka ...” He thought big cities were Sodoms and Gomorrahs.

“I’m prepared to be homeless. I might not be able to marry, but it’s okay. I’ll live my own life.”

Ryuji sat up. “I confess I decided to try out for a pro baseball team.” Ryuji jumped up.

“What?” All the other men looked at him.

“My father died in the war. I joined the DF to support my sisters in Shima-bara. They went out for marriages from Kikai island, but ...” He closed his mouth.

Hisaharu’s village had accepted laborers from Shima-bara during planting and harvest seasons. They were much poorer because of the volcanic ash. Hisaharu could imagine how the sisters were spending their miserable lives. “But I can’t give up my dream. I’ll be twenty-two soon, and the test in Hakata will be my last chance.”

Ball games. Hisaharu had suffered from an inferiority complex. The boys in high school enjoyed the sport. *I was so bad at ball. They said they had played with a handmade cloth ball and sticks since they were seven or eight. I’d been working*

on the farm. Do I have a dream? What's a dream? C'mon, be honest. If I could go to a big city, Osaka, Tokyo, what would I do? Nothing. It sounds like dreams are up ahead on the hill.

During the rest of training, Hisaharu's mind was captured by thoughts about life; they let him forget about the terrible pain in his boots. He learned how an organization could work systematically, in an orderly way. It was a great discovery for him to get to know the power of a skilled group. All the organizations he knew involved farming, which requires cooperation. He was learning a larger system. Though he was merely a pawn, he soon understood the system was great enough to contribute to ordinary citizens. Hisaharu came to know the world through the Defense Force.

He watched planes on another base. He had watched other planes during the war; now he could look at them critically. He saw their system of communication. It was amazing to contact someone from afar. He was reminded of the boyhood tales he had heard. *Letters were the key to survive for us.* He could understand what it meant. Hisaharu wondered, *who uses planes? Who use communication systems?*

The Cuban Missile Crisis happened. It was a military confrontation. The Cold War threatened a nuclear war. Ordinary people didn't care about the confrontation. Young men in the cities were wearing blue jeans, and girls listened to the Beatles.

Hisaharu saw his colleagues getting married one by one. Some families invited him over; they seemed happy. He kept thinking of Tera. *I hope that man is making her happy.* "It seems marriage is a restriction," Hisaharu said.

"But a man should have a wife and protect her and his kids. It's a prerequisite to getting status with responsibility in society, ya think?" a roommate asked.

“No doubt. *Love* is a word just for stories. America brought us such fantasies.”

“Yeah, American movies. But the reality is no one marries for love.”

“It must be why almost all people are getting married.”

“Yer sister sometimes sends ya pictures, I know.”

“Yeah, of women in steady families. She adds letters to pictures, ‘She has brothers’ or ‘She’s the third girl though she doesn’t have brothers so you don’t have to be successful for her family,’ and, ‘A man should not hope for a beautiful wife because beauties are lazy. They boast of their beauty and have affairs. A hard worker is the best for a wife.’ But I’m an average man. I wish my partner to be as beautiful as possible, but I know my income.”

“And ya look into the mirror!”

The next month, Hisaharu opened a letter and looked at a small picture. *Not bad, too good for me. Her way of dressing shows she’s lived in daylight, not nightlight. Her world is the same as mine. Tera and the man have lived during the nights.* The woman in the small picture was watching him through a bus window. *She’s beautiful. For me.* He read the letter.

“She is a daughter of the Oda; your aunt is from them. She is old, but not too old, twenty-five. Her name is Misao.”

*La passion est toute l’humanité.
Sans elle, la religion, l’histoire, le
roman, l’art seraient inutiles.*

—Honoré de Balzac, *La Comedie Humaine*

Chapter Two

*In a triangle of Western influence,
communism, and legends,
a girl was born and raised in a small
town far from the capital.*

1962

Misao decided to marry the man. *Times have changed*, she thought. *Even a woman can say no. But this time may I say yes? I'm twenty-five, and they say it's too late. Marriage is the end of life for women. My income has helped Ma, and the company volleyball team is so exiting.*

"Men don't need any efforts to keep wives sincere," said a coworker at the break room in the office. "Ah-, no employment for married women except as part-time workers without welfare programs. I wanna keep this job!"

They were preparing tea for the male workers.

"You mean you like this job?" Misao was surprised.

"It's not 'cuz I love it. It's 'cuz there's no other choice." The water was almost boiling. "Do you know about the new law?"

"What law?" Misao took cups from a cupboard.

"Misao-chan, you should know. After the war, with the endeavor of a young American woman, Beate Sirota Gordon, the constitution, and the civil law, of equal rights for both sexes."

“Greeeeek.”

She put a teacup in front of Misao. “You want some too?” She shook the pot above the cup for the last drop.

“Thanks. This drop has the best taste in the pot.” Misao smelled it.

“To keep their jobs, many lawsuits were filed, but rulings will take decades. How can women with children live for long periods? Though judgments will be on the side of women, the compensation will be small. Moreover, brave women who filed the lawsuits are not welcome in any society.”

“Arrah, mah!” Misao’s ears caught the knowledge as noise.

“You don’t listen to me, do ya?” She smiled and went to serve tea after sipping her own in her special cup.

The previous month, an aunt had brought her a picture. “Misao, he has an elder brother, so ya don’t have to live with his parents, to care for ancestors and family business, for example, their farm.”

“They say a landowner would look for the first son’s yome from a landowner’s daughter. We have nothing, so no farmer.” Misao had taken a quick glance at the picture nonetheless. “Well, not bad.”

“Sweetheart, I understand ya don’t like a man with a house. Yew had watched yer ma and Tom-O’s mother. Every breath of yer ma had been under obligation. She had been on pins and needles.” The aunt sighed. “So I brought ya this picture. Ya can’t find an ideal man. Ya know the war killed men. This is the eleventh picture, and it’s the last I’ll bring.” She looked into Misao’s eyes. “Handsome is as handsome does.”

“I know!” Misao put the picture aside. “I just don’t wanna be a servant for a big family. I disliked Pa’s ma. She took all the fish meat for herself and that eldest brother. Ma dried and

cooked the leftover bones for all our meals. The small heater in winters was always with her. Only that eldest brother was allowed to be on the charcoal side.”

She turned the picture over on a table. “It’s modern times, and I long for a husband, wife, and children lifestyle.” She looked at the ceiling, “I wish I could marry to be happy!”

“Yer so influenced by America.”

“Of course, dear.” Misao straightened her back.

“Only experiencing hard times will bring you happiness.”

Misao turned her face to a window. “I’ve had enough.”

Her aunt said, “he works for the Defense Force.”

Though Misao had heard of the DF, she didn’t know what it was. “Well,” she said, “I understand how people see me, a single.”

“Yes, it has been *seken* in other people’s eyes,” her aunt smiled, “that has regulated yer act. What ya must think is to be a good citizen, a good neighbor, and a good housewife.”

“Could I be an average woman if I marry, dear Aunt?” Misao smiled. “I survived the war. I ate weeds. I’ll be able to marry.”

“Ya can. Ya used to fight for your younger brothers against boys with fists. And yew know the drunken patriarch.”

“I know why Pa drinks. He was sent to Borneo for the war. He went when I was very young, *ne*? Well, as other families were also without fathers like mine, it wasn’t a big deal.”

She had grown up without her father until she was ten years old, two years after the war. Neighbors said her father had suffered shell shock and couldn’t adjust to the change.

1945

In the spring, even after Mussolini and Hitler had died, the army leaders in Tokyo couldn’t decide what to do. As autumn

passed, seeing many soldiers coming home, Ino, Misao's mother, came to feel despair. It was her children who roused her from her depression.

Preparing for winters, she had made use of moonlight to sew her children's socks. Putting their feet on old newspapers, she drew lines around their feet. She cut up her broad, thick sashes to become soles and sewed her underclothes to cover their feet. *How happy I am losing my clothes; their feet are getting bigger.*

Misao and her brothers loved the moment they woke up on each New Year's Day. They found new socks and new underwear at the head of their futon mats once a year. "Thank ya so much, Ma." *I won't tell ya about my chilblains on my right hand. I don't want to make trouble for ya,* Misao thought.

1946

In February, Ino noticed frostbite on Misao's hand. The skin and flesh had come off. "I'll take ya to a doctor! How foolish I am! I should've found it earlier! What a strong girl ya are!"

After waiting for Tom-O, her husband, for thirteen months, Ino said in a deep voice, "We will go to the house in Koga, his hometown. I think Pa would go back there."

Pa, Tom-O, in an emerald jungle in Borneo, didn't know the war had ended.

1945

Douglas MacArthur was firmly convinced of his victory and reported,

The width of the South China Sea averages only a few hundred miles, so that its expanse, as well as the coastline of the Asiatic mainland, was easily covered by our bombers, in addition to our submarines. This cut off enemy sea traffic to the conquered possessions to the south and severed the so-called Empire lifeline to the East Indies.⁴⁵

Pressed by the heavy heat of the July sun, Tom-O was lying at death's door. In burning pain, he heard a language he couldn't understand. *I died. It must be Hell Gate here. Em-Ma and Oni are talking. Em-Ma won't decide to send me to heaven.*

He couldn't raise his eye-lids up. The sounds of steps and voices became clearer. Gradually, Tom-O noticed he was still alive and the sound belonged to the enemy. The sound reminded him of what had happened. His troop had been surrounded by the enemy. *We lost. They should've landed on the west coast. I killed a man. Or I was killed.* Tom-O persuaded himself. *Someone near me had pulled the pin of a hand grenade to commit suicide to complete the high class tradition, "know shame for living among enemies."*

Tom-O couldn't remember what had happened next. All he thought about were his wife, Ino, and their three children. He had liked her since he was five or six. *I couldn't imagine having another girl to spend my life with.* In the valley, he had watched her. He had beaten up anyone who teased her. Adults were laughing, saying, "When's your marriage?"

⁴⁵ MacArthur, page 254.

How happy I was on our real wedding day! Suddenly, the moment he killed the man came back to him. The man. He also had a wife and three young children. His soul and body pains were too much. Ino, help me. I do think about you. He deeply regretted that he had not voiced his feelings for her. Such things float in my teeth. Please, gods of this forest, gods of that sea, ancestors, let me go back to Ino. Please, I have to thank her, please! Ino, I've slept beside bodies for weeks. Ino, I wanna bath. My hair is getting longer than ever. How filthy. Ino, men's eyes shine strangely in grimy faces. They and I can't see if we'll live ten minutes.

Ah, Ino, I'm fine. Don't worry about me. Care for our children. They must be healthy. Take care of yourself with all your might. It must be so hot there too. You must be exhausted by this tension. You have our children. They make you stay strong—no crying, no sadness. You have our children. We can't grumble about shortages. Holding them in your arms might help you feel the blessing of the earth and sky in a grain of rice. He felt exhaustion and was lost in darkness again. Ino's graceful lips were with him.

Em-Ma has sent me to heaven. He felt something very tasty on his lips. He opened his mouth. It was rain. He found himself terribly thirsty. He opened his mouth wider. He felt his soul hovering in space. Suddenly, he heard a familiar language. "You alive?" He answered by breathing. He opened his eyes slowly. He saw three men looking at him.

A private said, "We'll take you to another place. Staying here will bring us infection and disease."

The place was filled with bodies and their parts.

Another one said, "I found a bush that smells like a *dokudami* leaf, so I bit one to check its sap. I think it can be a

medicinal herb. Let me put them on your wounds.” His eyes and voice were cordial.

“*Ari-gata-i*,” Tom-O whispered. He wished that the man had also been rescued. He knew it was impossible.

Tom-O had belonged to a division of 2,000 soldiers. Diarrhea and malaria had killed more soldiers than had the battles. A medic without a medical kit also died. Tom-O got to know when a soul left a body. At the moment, millions of lice leave the body. Decision makers sent the division into this jungle with no food. They had eaten insects and weeds. Hunger, heat, and humidity had tormented them. They were ordered to move to the west coast, where the enemy would land. The hopeless battle was over. The jungle was full of bodies. Heat bore the odors of death.

There was a private first class among the four survivors. Every dawn, he knotted a vine to count the days. He crouched and put his ear to the ground to listen for the sound of the enemy. He couldn’t understand why he hadn’t heard any enemy for weeks. He strongly believed he had been fighting to liberate South East Asia from the exploitation of whites.

Douglas MacArthur

had blocked enemy’s military supplies already. He was surprised these millions of enemy troops could never contract their lines to keep pace with the ever-narrowing area of conflict.

Are they unable to conduct an orderly retreat, in classic fashion, to fall back on inner perimeters with forces intact for a last defense of their main islands? It’s a situation unique in modern war.

Never had such large numbers of troops been so outmaneuvered, separated from each other, and left tactically impotent to take an active part in the final battle for their homeland.⁴⁶

Tom-O's wife and children were spending days under air raids. Nights and days, they needed Tom-O. Every day, air raid sirens wailed and made them run to shelter, a hole they had dug with the help of neighbors. The hole was in front of their house. The cover was not enough to protect them from a bomb. They never used light and fire at night in the house or they would have been a target for bombing. They slept with their shoes on. Ino was desperate to protect their newborn baby who Tom-O didn't know. "Come back, Tom-O-san. Look at and hold yer third boy," she kept praying during the long, scary nights.

One bombing night in the cave, Ino looked at Misao in the dark. Tom-O's mother was sleeping on sheets made of grass. There was no room for her to lie down. She was sitting with her head bent forward not to break the cover. The soil and rocks around them were cold and hard. *Lice bites torturously itched. Children are always scratching their heads and skin. How poor Misao is. Fears are destroying her emotion. I must do something for her. Something, but what? She's in first grade, but she has no chance to study. She can't read or write. A little girl has to weather many storms.* "How was school today? Ya walked to see the B-29, ne?" Ino whispered.

"Yes, Ma, I saw it. Crashed on the ground. Wonder where the pilot is." Misao felt good on that day because she didn't

⁴⁶ MacArthur, page 260.

need to tend the *satuma* potato farm in school. She was fed up with weeding in the field filled with manure. She was fed up with getting oil from pine trees for planes. Though she disliked learning, sometimes, she wondered about sitting and listening to her teachers.

“The pilot died. He killed many of us.” Saying so, Ino paused with remembering Tom-O. “The pilot could be a father in his country.” Ino was surprised at herself and ordered her children, “Ya keep my words only in yer hearts.” *People who began this war are in the upper class. We can’t talk back.* Silence came back to the cave.

“Ma,” Kiyoto, the eldest child said, “Misao’s name on her cotton hood got wet and disappeared.”

After each bombing, those who had survived identified bodies by the names on their cotton hoods.

“Arrah, I’ll use thread and needle this time, the name won’t go away again. But please the god of thread and needle, please, let her name be useless on it forever,” Ino whispered. Six eyes were watching her. “All of yer names on the cotton protectors, keep the names useless, children. No one needs to read yer names. Ya will live, Kiyoto, Misao, Kazutaka.” She thought, *God, I give my life to yew, so please protect my children.* Then she looked upon the baby in her arms. “And Teru, okay?” Her voice was so gentle. Her children forgot the jolts caused by the bombs. Ino thought, *It’s saving me that Misao doesn’t seem to be scared. Maybe she can’t understand death. Maybe she trusts me with her life.*

An ambassador to Moscow was making frantic appeals to the Soviet foreign minister to have Russia intercede as a

neutral party to create armistice and peace with the United States⁴⁷. MacArthur knew it, but he didn't know the Soviets wanted to enter the war before the dying country surrendered. The Communists wanted at least all the islands between Soviet and Nihon, Kalaft, Sahalin, and Chi-shima (Kuril) to ship to the Pacific Ocean. The Soviet's move succeeded on August 7, 1945.

MacArthur and his staff were unanimous in believing the enemy was on the point of collapse and surrender. He was shocked at the concessions given to the Soviets. On August 8, the Soviet Union formally declared war on Nihon. The general understood the full emergence of the new enemy and wrote,

Following four years of pretentious neutrality that had allowed Japanese forces to move against and occupy New Guinea and the Philippines, instead of being tied down to guarding the Siberian frontier.⁴⁸

He couldn't understand at this time why the decision makers in Tokyo didn't chose to surrender when Germany and Italy did.

Toward the end of 1944 and in early 1945, the question of Russian intervention in the Pacific was seriously considered in a secret international discussion among Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin in February at Yalta. To protect the free world from communism, Roosevelt issued an order on July 25 to use the atomic bomb on the dying country, though Undersecretary of

⁴⁷ MacArthur, page 260.

⁴⁸ MacArthur, page 263.

State and former Ambassador to Nihon Joseph Clark Grew was strongly against it.

The burning lights of the equator cut under the emerald forest. Showers in the evenings eased the four men. Ken, the private who had found the medicinal leaves, murmured to Tom-O, "If my brother looked at me, he'd get angry with me. I can't find out why I have to hate and fight against America, Holland, many countries. Look! Bodies around us. Though their classes are different, they all rot in the same way. I just wanna go home."

Private First Class Muneki glared stonily at him. "Whites must not rule Asia."

"So an Asian country has no right to rule others either," Ken said. He thought he would be beaten by Muneki.

"You don't know world history." Muneki didn't hit Ken. "My half-brother studied Kant, Hegel, and Goethe at Tokyo University. On the other hand, my mother was a mistress. Father didn't care about my mother and me at all." Muneki talked a lot for the first time. "I hate the brother in a mansion. I hate the European thought that the brother and his parents respected. Europe and America should not be the model for us. Asia is Asian, not European property."

Ultrnationalism must have been on the rise in him while he was a child, Ken thought. *Will a modest way of talking change his mind?* "Immanuel Kant was against colonization. He wrote so in his *Zum ewigen Frieden*," Ken said, checking Muneki's reactions. "Kant referred to us in that⁴⁹. He had read

⁴⁹ Aizawa & Zöllner

the report of Engelbert Kaempfer, who visited our capital in 1691 along with Dutch traders⁵⁰.”

“You have knowledge but don’t seem to be of the upper class. You’re just a private.”

“I’m a peasant, but a temple master led me to read Karl August von Hase’s book. You’d be interested in it. The German wrote about Xavier. Xavier, or, Xaver, found our country had both *kaiser* and *geistlicher* monarchs. The *kaiser* was the shogun, and the *geistlicher* monarch was the O-Kimi⁵¹.”

“O-Kimi is the living god.”

“The Jesuits described our Buddhism as the Devil mimicking Christianity.”

“How stupid.”

“*Glocken, Rosenkranze, Colibat, Monchthum, and Hierarchie.*”

“They’re Buddhist’s.”

Ken continued sensing Muneki’s sharp eyes. Ken thought Muneki would get angry at what he said, so he changed the subject. “My brother was a member of the kamikazes. He believed in the beauty of a death for the nation just like I used to. I had applied to be a member of the kamikaze, but I wasn’t intelligent enough to be a pilot. Now, my brother’s spirit must be in a bloom of *sakura* in the Yasukuni Shrine. There, even foot soldiers are set up as gods.”

No one realized the shrine would be a symbol of militarism later. They didn’t think the shrine would accept the war criminals, class A, thirty-three years later.

Tom-O nodded, but he wasn’t listening to the conversation well; the man he had killed was always in his head.

⁵⁰ Aizawa & Zöllner

⁵¹ Aizawa & Zöllner

“I’ve heard about the shrine. There is no difference between classes. Even a peasant’s third son who died in war is set up there.” Ken continued, “I heard my brother’s fellows had promised each other to meet again, reborn on a twig of a *sakura* in the shrine after their attacks. I wonder what he had felt at the moment of death. And I wonder how many enemies died thinking about their mothers.”

The private first class sitting on a root shouted, “Are you kidding? Enemy is enemy. You are *not* a man! Man should have royalty!” He tried to grab Ken by the collar, but he couldn’t get up because of dizziness.

This war isn’t the one I had thought, Ken told himself.

Another private, Goro, said in a deep voice, “Your brother will be reborn. It’s hard for me to accept reincarnation. I’m a Kirishitan. I’m from Nagasaki. Kirishitan aren’t unusual there historically. My ancestors had been hiding Kirishitan.”

A few seconds passed silently.

Tom-O’s mind was far away, in the man’s hometown. *His parents are crying. I feel their hatred for me.*

The voice of the royalist in anguish repeated, “You’re one of the Christians? They’re infected by other culture and looked down on, like my half-brother.”

Silence calmed them down. Goro didn’t know what Christian was. *Kirishitan might be called Christians in the Tokyo dialect.*

Tom-O stood and walked into the bamboo bush.

“You are a war buddy for me rather a Europe believer,” the royalist continued. “The cycle of reincarnation is like the water cycle. All of the water on earth is on a never-ending journey, precipitation, evaporation, and condensation. As rain and snow fall, I was born. As the sun’s heat changes water into

water vapor, I will die. And as water vapor forms a cloud, my soul will transmigrate. Every human being is a part of earth. We're only a small portion of this great nature. Even you don't wanna accept this concept. I respect any differences between religions 'cuz I'm a Buddhist."

Tom-O heard it from behind the bamboo. *That's a thought of Shintoism, not Buddhism. A man is a part of nature, and nature is the gods. Shintoism is the traditional nature worship. Christianity might be from Europe or somewhere, and Buddhism also came from a foreign country.*

"I also respect others' religion," the Kirishitan said. He knew some Kirishitan looked down on nature worship. *Some Kirishitan try to change gods believers. Why don't they accept people as they are? Here in Borneo, also, each tribe seems to have its own gods. There is no priority between religions. But it's understandable. Deus believers in Europe seem to be experienced, clever grownups. They wouldn't accept others, thinking gods believers were babies who would accept anything without consideration.*

Then the color of Muneki's eyes changed. "You don't know history. Christianity has been the first wave of colonization. Europeans can colonize other lands without war. The ruler of Nagasaki and other Big Names once donated lands to Societe Iesu, the Society of Jesus. That was why the central government prohibited Christianity three hundred and fifty years ago."

"Well," Goro tried to say no, but his tongue didn't know how to. *I'm raised not to say no.* Besides, his knowledge was not as strong as his belief. *I wanna learn. I wanna change myself.*

Muneki continued. "That's why shogunate denied the Spanish and Portuguese. Some say it was the Netherlands

captain who advised it to the shogun. Anyhow, that's why your ancestors had pains."

Goro's tongue froze every time he wanted to say no. *No it's not. Belief isn't pain. It has been belief that has supported us.* His scattered words wouldn't form a single sentence. *I wanna learn. This isn't the matter of countries or cultures or politics.* He prayed, concentrating, *No principio era o Verbo, logos, e o Verbo estava com Deus, e o Verbo era Deus.*⁵²

Words were built up at last in his head. His lips were opened. "It was not Kirishitanity but politics that has been hated. Man would do wrong. That's why men need—" Goro saw Muneki's eyebrow rise. *Muneki-san does not need this kind of explanation,* Goro thought. *Help, Deus.*

"India didn't colonize our land after Buddhism was accepted thirteen hundred years ago," Tom-O said, wanting to help Goro. Tom-O thought he knew how Goro was feeling. *The feeling of wanting to say no to elders! Same, same!*

"Buddhism was brought by Koreans and Chinese, not Indians," Muneki said. "They didn't come with guns, but Europeans did. You don't understand how their nations had survived." Muneki built a fire with stones and grilled insects and snakes.

Goro opened his lips, moved them, but his voice wouldn't come out. He saw men moving toward the smell of smoke. Tom-O blew into a piece of bamboo he had cut and said, "I think Nihon's Buddhism is far from the original. It was China-translated when it was conveyed thirteen hundred years ago. Then it's Nihon-translated like this bamboo sound. Yeah, I welcome the changes dependent on cultures."

⁵² Joao 1, Portuguese John.

On August 15, the royalist Muneki died of diarrhea. He had kept knotting until the last day. He was always under the stress of duty to protect his subordinates from the Allied forces.

“The sense of duty supported his life till the end.” Goro felt he could understand him. *It’s Deus who has been supporting my life.*

“Let me show you something special here.” Tom-O showed Ken and Goro a thick bamboo pipe. “I’m finished.” He played the bamboo pipe for Muneki’s soul in heaven. The deep sound and sad melody remained in the air.

The next week, they found wet papers written in their language, “The war is over. The O-Kimi announced defeat.” The papers had been scattered by the Allied forces’ helicopters. They considered the possibility that the information was meant to delude them, but bewildered, they decided to walk down to a port to confirm they were still at war.

The homeland has been guarded, Tom-O thought. That’s why we’ve been here. Ino and my children have been protected. The truth was they had lost. What about Ino and our children? Why am I here?

Tom-O, Ken, and Goro couldn’t stand.

“We have to let Muneki-san’s family know about his death. Do you think we should tell the truth, that diarrhea killed him?” Tom-O asked.

Goro said, “They’ll wanna know the truth. An official paper will tell his family he had died a glorious death in battle.”

Ken’s face was contorted with agony. Diarrhea had caused them all chronic pain. They had picked up badges and pins from the body for his family. They decided to visit another young man’s family; he had died when Tom-O was unconscious.

At the port of Borneo, the men felt lost. It was very crowded. The war seemed to be just a nightmare. *It was an illusion I had killed him.*

“For what did we have to fight? For what did men die? What were we doing in the jungle? Stupid!” Ken said it loud.

For weeks, they’d waited for a ship. One day, several Indonesians talked to them with gestures including, “Will you leave weapons? The Holland force is back to recolonize here.”

“You hate us, don’t you?”

“Well, many of you were cruel. But we know Commander Imamura and his successors were on our side. They made Indonesians mayors and governors. The naval commander, Maeda, let our independence leaders use his house on the night of the sixteenth. The next day, your O-Kimi announced your defeat. Sukarno was released from prison by your forces.”

Ken’s face lit up. He could understand some of their language. He said to the Indonesians, “Let me join you as a guerilla.” He turned to Tom-O and Goro. “I won’t go back to my homeland.”

Tom-O and Goro were astonished. Both had no idea about choosing one’s own life. Being forced into military service, going to the front—that was all.

“I wanna go back home even if I’m just bones,” Tom-O said.

“I’d believed we were sent to South East Asia as a liberation army. Asia must not be under Europe and the United States. At first, our force drove the colonizers out. But look what happened later. Our government had no philosophy or ability. I’m so disappointed.”

“Look, devastation.” Tom-O couldn’t say more onboard the crowded ship. Beyond the bay, burned ruins stretched into

their homeland as far as they could see. When they landed, Tom-O saw hundreds of beggars without legs, arms, eyes, and noses. Terrible fear caught Tom-O. *My Ino, my children! Live, live, please.* He felt sharp pain in his body. He fell.

“Are you really going to Yamaguchi and Kure?” Goro asked Tom-O. “Your hometown is on the other side. I’ll do it alone. Your young children are waiting for you.”

“I have to. I must head for Yamaguchi to pass this letter, badges, and pins to Muneki’s wife and then Kure to bring this letter written with blood.”

“Why?”

“I live. They died. I’m afraid I can’t see Ino and my children any more. I’m letting her fall into much trouble, but this is my mission. I shouldn’t have happiness.” *Ino, forgive me.*

He thought he could walk to the man’s home on the continent. *I would walk even though the land is huge. I wanna confess to them it was me who killed your family.*

Muneki’s letter read,

I saw you standing and watching the train.
Through the window I shouted, but you didn’t
recognize me in the crowd. I recognized you. I
will recognize you again⁵³.

At Yamaguchi, Muneki’s wife cried. “No! I haven’t accepted an official paper or his bones yet.”

“You’ll have them soon.” Tom-O didn’t know what to say.

⁵³ the letter to his wife placed in the Yasukuni Shrine

“On the second day of our marriage, he went to the front. How am I going to live alone from now on?”

On the way to Kure, they went through Hiroshima. The entire city had been destroyed. They had seen other burned cities and towns, but Hiroshima was totally different. The outlines of adults and children had been burned into the walls.

“What kind of bomb did they use?”

People couldn’t find places to sleep under the ruins because of something they couldn’t see—radioactive contamination.

In Kure, a letter written with charcoal and blood was passed to his family.

I’m still alive today. This letter is my will. Father, Mother, you saw Tomiko at the station when I left. It’s beyond my imagination what you thought about her, but she is the only woman I love. She’s very pure. Please keep in touch with her forever, thinking she is a part of me. Will you, please, call her for my funeral service? Yoshio⁵⁴.

Yoshio’s mother said, “I don’t believe this, I’m sorry. You’re so good to me. I will keep waiting for him.” Then she served *satuma* potatoes and told them, “On the way back, you’ll be hungry. Near Hiroshima, there is a house. I heard an American distributes food. I’m gonna make a map for you.”

“I dislike Americans. In case I ever eat food from American forces, I’ll commit suicide,” Tom-O said.

“No, no, he’s not in the army. He’s alone. If you want to kill him, it would be very easy. But no one has.”

⁵⁴ the letter to his mother placed in the Yasukuni Shrine

“Alone?” Tom-O thought the man was brave.

Goro found the shack with a cross on the top in a fire-ravaged town. “Tom-O-san, here we are.” Goro stood at the end of the line. “*Kon-nichiwa*.” He wanted information about the man with the cross, so he talked to a skinny woman. “We’re just back from Borneo.”

“Ah, you’re very lucky. You live. My son, my son was taken to Siberia.” She touched his arm.

He held her shoulders. “Well, do you know the American who’s distributing food here?”

“Yeah, young man, he used to be a pilot. But the plane was downed by a typhoon, he said. We can’t understand what he says except a few words. He went back to America once. Now he landed again alone with those.” She pointed at canned foods.

Tom-O and Goro looked at the man in the shack. Goro understood who made the ex-enemy return.

“Are you okay?” Tom-O asked Goro because his shoulders and chest were heaving.

“Tom-O-san, I decided. I need to study the truth, Deus.”

“Zeus?”

“No.” His eyes were strong. “Deus.”

“I’ve heard of it. A god from Greece, isn’t it? I thought it was Zeus. You wanna learn mythology? Literature? History? Or the gods themselves? Your god?” Tom-O was confused.

“My ancestors had been hiding Kirishitan, as I said. Francisco de Xavier taught people about Deus in 1549 for two years.”

“Even I know it, as I used to live near Nagasaki. He was the first missionary, wasn’t he?”

“Yeah, it’s surprising.” His eyes became soft. “You don’t deny me. I didn’t expect I could talk about him with anyone.”

“Muneki-san was talking, *na*? Kirishitanity was forbidden completely in 1635. The authorities were afraid Spain would colonize our land, *na*? Kirishitanity had spread out among peasants like fire when they heard about the god.”

“Deus, not the god.” Goro had interrupted another’s talk for the first time in his life. “I didn’t mean to be rude.”

“Ah.” Tom-O didn’t care. “Xavier said his god created men equal, *na*? But the shogun at the time wanted to build a warless society soon after the continual war age, and he created a system in which each family belonged to a Buddhist temple. Temples recorded each name, birth, marriage, death, and travel. The aim was to check Kirishitan.”

“Then the hiding Kirishitan. As Nagasaki was mostly made of small islands covered by forested mountains, you know, my ancestors could survive.”

“They must have been very hard days, I guess.”

“Learning let me find that many things had been altered. We don’t have bread and wine, so we used fish and *sake*.”

“What’s bre and vine?”

“Bread and wine. I also haven’t seen them. I don’t know what they are. Everything had been transmitted by word of mouth for three hundred and fifty years. My gran’ma on a small island used to tell me an important story.”

“Tell me.”

“A woman named Mariya gave birth in a cowshed at night. At dawn, the shed owner noticed it, and she helped them move into her home. She wanted to make them warm, but she had nothing to burn. So she broke her precious weaving instruments and made a feast with all her might, buckwheat and rice.”

“It’s like our old tales.”

“Isn’t it? But some say it’s not true, so I wanna study the truth.”

“Well, you say the truth, but isn’t Kirishitanity just one of the stories or philosophies?”

“No. I can’t explain it well, but look at him. It’s the truth that makes him come here.”

“I can’t understand what you say, but I think you’re great because you chose your way. The war is over. Ken-san was left in Borneo. Also, you’re young and single. It seems in this new age that you can choose your life.”

“You’re not like the other guys I’ve met.”

“You say you wanna know the truth of your god. All I’m interested in is my wife and kids, not gods. All I need is peace and safety. Not only me. A Korean said all their greetings include peace and safety.”

“*An-nyon*, isn’t it?”

“Weell, I don’t mean to deny you, but ...”

“Eh?”

“You speak the truth. You say the transmission by word of mouth conveys misunderstandings, *na*?”

“Right. I heard a written thing exists. I wanna read it.”

“For hundreds of years, for thousands of years, the original might be copied by hand. Even after the machine printer was invented, typing was done by a man, someone who could make mistakes.”

“Well ...”

“Besides, when it’s translated to another language, the sentence never has the same meaning, don’t you think?”

“Ah, ah, but the original must be somewhere.”

“In the original language, the ancient words can’t be read by modern people.”

“A wise man could read the old original and tells us.”

“Then transmission by word of mouth. The wise man would try hard to convey the original, but he can’t. A man can’t be a copy machine.”

“But Deus talks to me through not only another man, not only written things, but also directly in my heart.”

“Isn’t it your voice inside?”

“I don’t know. This is the reason I wanna study.”

It was Tom-O’s turn to get the canned food. He made a deep bow to the foreigner. Next, Goro knelt and voiced the prayer,

Gloria in excelsis Deo,
et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.
Glasta, michi-michi ta-mou,
Deus, Santa Mariya-sama,
zai-gyo ni-te, wa-re aku nin na-re-do-mo, aku nin no-ta-me,
An-men.⁵⁵

The man who had crossed the Pacific Ocean opened his eyes in amazement. He also knelt and tried to take Goro’s hands. But Goro jumped back as he was afraid of the unknown custom. The alien showed a movement of understanding. Goro continued, “I’d like to learn the truth about Deus.” with gesture.

A bright smile appeared on the foreigner. He took out a paper and wrote, “To Nanzan, Nagoya.” He handed the letter to Goro. Though the Nanzan church was Catholic, the American didn’t know any Protestant churches around there. He couldn’t accept Catholics before, but Klaus Luhmer, who

⁵⁵ A document preserved by Kakimorii family in Naru Island, Nagasaki.

had experienced the A-bomb in Hiroshima⁵⁶, gave him wider authority. The German was a Jesuit priest who had been there as a missionary since 1937. His followers had all died in the light of the bomb. The two atomic bombs destroyed Hiroshima's and Nagasaki's Christian places.

"Where did you learn Latin?" the American asked. Goro didn't understand English. *A Miracle*, the American thought. Though he was a Protestant, his grandmother was from Sicily.

One of her ancestors, Giovanni Battista Sidotti, had secretly landed on a small island in the south part of this east-end country in 1708 with a passion⁵⁷ to rebuild Christianity. The European was conspicuous even in his worn-out fisherman's clothes. Soon, he was sent to the capital, where he found the examiner, Arai Hakuseki, a man of thought.

Arai could understand the second important purpose Sidotti brought. "Christianity is *not* the first wave of colonization." Arai made the government give Sidotti a better life as a lower samurai because he felt Sidotti's depth. Sidotti was given the swords and clothes of a samurai. There was one condition—no missionary work. A married couple were his watchers.

Five years later, the couple was found with a wooden cross. Their parents had been Christians and had died in jail. They had asked Sidotti to baptize them. Sidotti made up his mind. *I must baptize them. For my life. This is why I made the long journey, for five years, from Rome, Genoa, the Canary Islands, around Africa, India, and Luzon Island in the Philippines.*

There were 3,000 deported Nihonese in Luzon. He learned their language and customs from them, but he couldn't find

⁵⁶ Aizawa & Zöllner

⁵⁷ Atuko Hirose's article for the newsletter of Order of Friars Minor in Nagasaki.

any ship to Nihon. Domingo Zabalburu de Echevarri, the governor general of the Philippines, built a ship for him.

*I've been here for seven years without rebuilding churches. Why? The language I learned in Luzon was not useful in this capital. Are they different people? The island the Spanish had landed on a hundred years ago was far way in the ocean. In the sixteenth century, the age of wars, the Spanish were accepted. I read their records. Peasants were crying, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." I pictured how common people were miserable in the war age. For I am gentle and humble in heart, And you will find rest for your souls.*⁵⁸

The war age had been over for a hundred years. The power belongs to samurai, but wealth belongs to merchants in three big cities. The authority belongs to aristocrats in Kyoto. In this capital, men and women are cheerful, laughing, chatting all day long. They seem to have no fear. Why?

I often see fighting, but I'm sure they scuffle outside to give neighbors amusement. And I have seen hundreds of Chinese ideographs here and there. Even the poorest people in town can read and are eager to teach their sons. It's impossible to master those without early education. Those ideographs put men under ancient Chinese thought. In any situation of daily life, they have a standard—"Confucius said," "Mozi said," The difficulty of ideographs let me feel their doors and windows were closed. In the doors, their own spiritual life is blooming. Their houses are so simple, made of thin wood, bamboo, and paper. Towns have no walls for protection. This country has no army or navy. Samurai weapons are only swords.

⁵⁸ Matthew 11.

The guns and cannons Europeans had brought got rusty. The ocean is the only but the strongest shield. It's easy to destroy their material by our cannon, but it's hard to enter their souls. They deny any one human is superior to others. They don't accept that nature has been created by the Lord. Indeed, typhoons, floods, and earthquakes were what I haven't experienced before. They think nature is god. Isn't my translation enough? They think humans are a part of animals and plants, even soil! How can I explain truth in their language? Lord, you will use my life for your mission.

Sidotti and the couple were jailed and died in 1714. Many ordinary people voluntarily brought better food to the jail till the end. It was tacitly allowed. The neighbors worked to keep the hygiene of the jail expecting no return. They simply liked the foreigner.

Arai had tried to move the government, saying, "We need his knowledge about the world!"

Arai wrote two books about what the other world was based on the conversations with Sidotti. The books were secretly copied and spread.

"Giovanni Battista Sidotti," the American talked to him. "I'm the one the Lord sent after you. I'm also the farmer went out to sow His seed."⁵⁹

In front of the shack, two ex-soldiers said good-bye. The Kirishitan said he wouldn't go back to Nagasaki. He wrote, "Dear father and mother, I'm fine. Let me study at a theological seminary in Nanzan, Nagoya."

⁵⁹ Matthew 13.

Tom-O said, “I’ll bring this letter to Nagasaki. Sasebo, the place my family’s waiting for me, is near there. The postage system has not recovered.”

Tom-O started out for Nagasaki and Sasebo, his hometown. His steps were not getting lighter as he had expected. He saw a woman with a child on a street. There had been thousands of beggars. But the child was striking. He or she was lying and watching Tom-O. Tom-O had never seen such a beautiful face before. Tom-O had no money. He put some edible leaves in their box. *Oh, the highest god, help them. Every step brings me to my home. No one is shooting at me. How peaceful is the world. This happy feeling should’ve happened to him too.*

Tom-O met Goro’s father in Nagasaki. “My son is alive.” He put his hands on his face. “My son is alive. Ah, you ...” He put his hands on Tom-O’s shoulders. “Come in, eat anything in my house.” He pushed Tom-O inside.

“I thought there wasn’t Deus when the atomic bomb destroyed the church area. We had been the hiding Kirishitan. You heard it from my son. When freedom came, we built churches. As we’ve been so poor, we made everything, each brick. Why here? The bomb? I saw hundreds of burned bodies, totally black. Something was moving in their bellies, bubbling.”⁶⁰ He looked down.

Tom-O couldn’t say anything. The same type of bomb had destroyed Hiroshima.

“My son is alive. Deus is guiding him. Please do not tell him about my body.” His scars were worse than Tom-O’s.

⁶⁰ Sowa Nishida’s memory published in a Nagasaki newspaper on August 12, 2010.

“You see, my leg was lost when the roof fell. But I want him to study. I’ll write him that all the family is fine.” He put his hand on Tom-O’s scar. “Fine, yes.” His tears were like a waterfall. “The fire didn’t catch me at that time. Fire was spreading. My wife, without skin and hair ’cuz of the bomb flash, looked at our daughter between beams, then me, under the roof, on her left, then fire on her right. She put her shoulder between the beams.⁶¹ Incredible power, she made her arms straight. The moment she saw our daughter out of the beams, she was crushed.” He covered his nose with his arm.

“You should let him know it. You need his help,” Tom-O said.

“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”⁶² I want him to find truth. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”⁶³

Tom-O felt he understood a very small part of Goro’s words. *Deus talks to me directly.*

Sasebo was completely destroyed too. Shuddering, he kept walking. His house had been burned. Strangers were there between boards. One of the women said, “I would be very happy to learn about the family that used to live here, but I don’t know.”

The shock brought him a dire thought. *Did they die by bombs? No. Is it possible they had gone to Koga? They haven’t lived there before. But yeah, I should go there. My wife and kids will never die.*

⁶¹ A record in the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum by the daughter.

⁶² Acts 21.

⁶³ John 8.

1947

It was a hot day. Misao was rushing to the sliding door to go swimming in the river. There, she saw a man with scars. *Who is he?* His smell made her edge back. The smell reminded her of lice, itches, and the sense of humiliation when in a line. The occupation force, very different, big men, were pouring a kind of wet powder on people to kill their lice.

The moment lasted forever. His eyes were sparkling though exhausted. He was worn out, but his head was up and his backbone was straight.

"I wanna swim, Mister. Don't stop me. I wanna swim. It's hot!" she told the stranger.

He stared at her in astonishment. "Are you Misao?"

Ino had walked down to the seashore, seven kilometers away to get sea water to make salt. Tom-O went down there. At last, he saw her. He found immense patience had put depth in her eyes. It made her more graceful. He came to know the news. He had another son.

The family reunion put the war to an end at last. But soon, Ino and the children came to know he couldn't play the role of father. Tom-O's mind was always full of that man's face and voice. Every time Tom-O saw his wife and children, he thought of the man's family and his cofighters who had died. *Why did I live? Worthless. My life is worthless.* Tom-O couldn't tell anyone about it. His heart was still in the emerald jungle alone. *I must meet his family.*

He looked west. It took forty minutes on foot to get to the shore, which was not like those he had seen in Nagasaki. Koga's coast was simple. Some parts had beautiful, sandy beaches. There were many shrine gates standing along the

beaches for the goddess of the sea. Tides let the gates' feet sink to tell people time.

Through Tu-shima islands, there is Korea, then China. What countries are there between China and Holland? He told Kiyoto, his first son, "Let me see your world map." Kiyoto had been crazy for Glenn Miller's music he had heard over the radio for months. The swinging sound freed the young soul that had once been locked up by martial songs.

"Map? The one school gave me?" He passed a map.

"Where are Holland, Australia, and America?" He had heard Borneo had belonged to the Dutch and Australian armies led by MacArthur. The corps he had fought was from Holland.

"Here's Australia, and here's America, and—"

"What huge countries. And where is our country?"

"Here, Father."

Tom-O lost words knowing the enemy was so big. An old Chinese saying came over him. *Know yourself before a fight.*

"Then, Holland, mmm, here!"

"Oh." Tom-O's mind came back. "Holland is so far. How much does it cost to go there?" Tom-O couldn't believe the continent in front of him. *But I have to go.*

"Do you really want to go, Father? Even if enough money would fall from the sky, going abroad is prohibited."

"Why?"

"Perhaps economic reasons. I don't know."

They say the age of freedom has come. But I have no freedom to see his family to confess. Who's taking advantage of our so-called freedom? Tom-O didn't know what freedom had brought. Social status was formally lost. Plutocracies were dissolved. Communists used freedom of speech to influence

schools and the media. The younger generation cried out, "It's the army that destroyed everything. Even now the ex-soldiers suppress us with militarism!"

Tom-O, a former-soldier, felt ashamed. *Is it a shame I worked for my motherland?* Tom-O couldn't find the words. He was a man. *Too many new words and opinions.* He found a word in the youngest son's note. *Self-esteem. What's that mean? Is it an egotist's word? The meaning may be to treat yourself right or be selfish and do not think of others. The center of the heart should not be the heart's owner. The core should be devotion. Each man exists for society, being selfish destroys society. Is it American religion that a person is more important than a community? But a person can't live alone. So everyone has to think of others to create a good community. Confucius was certainly great, but all we have now is egotism or Marxism. Our culture's mother, nature, hundreds of gods, is ignored by the new power MacArthur brought. Our culture's father, ancient Chinese greats, was destroyed by so-called American freedom. He looked at his sons. I wanted to be a water buffalo, sleeping peacefully in a muddy rice field in Borneo.*

He remembered the days he had been forced to walk more than a hundred kilometers with a heavy sack on his back, worn-out boots, heat, sweat, hunger, disease, despair, and fear. He thought as he was onboard the ship from Borneo, *I will be healthy in mind and body after the family reunion.*

Sometimes, he had expected his old atmosphere would allow him to forget the man, but all he found in his motherland was exactly the opposite of what he used to know. *Is this my culture? Is this what men gave their lives for? America has brought material culture like a tsunami.* "Why are kids running

after big, odd-looking white people for chocolates?” He was so sad. “They have to recognize the shame.”

“My dear,” Ino said gently, “our children never have occasion to get chocolate. They’re happy enough with the sugarcane I planted. It’s fun to watch them crazily crunch and chew such hard sugarcane.” She smiled softly.

“The words Americans speak are the ones I heard in the chaos.” The language reminded him of when he thought he had died.

American movie posters were everywhere downtown. Many questions formed a tsunami in his mind all day. He didn’t tell anyone about the war because people didn’t ask him how it had been. They were too busy building new lives. Tom-O wasn’t special. The experiences of ex-soldiers were ignored, buried. People were taking a hard look at what Nihon had done to other countries and to its own people. People learned that when the government couldn’t manage domestic problems, the upper class would find an enemy outside to blame. It had shifted people’s focus from their daily frustrations.

The deep soul searching shamed people about militarism. A lot of judgments against the upper levels of the former government and army had been passed out by courts martial. The loud voices of the new powers shouted, “Patriotism is militarism.”

It was thirty years later when Tom-O spoke a little about his anguish. His granddaughter Jericho visited his room one summer day. It was the tradition that all sons and daughters would gather at their parents’ house twice a year for Bon, a Buddhist festival in mid-August, and New Year’s Day. Jericho’s father, Hisaharu, suggested she ask Tom-O about the war.

Hisaharu thought it would be good for her. *Kids should know history. Listening to Tom-O, who had experienced war, is thinking about the future.*

“Gran’pa, what did you do in the war?” Her question was innocent, like *What did you do in the garden?*

Tom-O had turned out to be slow of speech and tongue after the reunion. His experiences were too many to speak of. He was surprised and pleased at the first appearance of the grandchild. “Well!” Tom-O was afraid of the distance between him and his after-war grandchild. “Look at this bamboo pipe. I made it of a bamboo there.”

The way he touched it was so meaningful. It made her say, “Let me listen.”

“Well,” Tom-O was pleased and afraid he would make her disappointed. But he saw Jericho waiting for him silently. Tom-O put the pipe to his lips. The sound was so deep, wide, and sad.

Gran’pa, you must have many things in your heart.

“Your cousins are listening to music on a machine,” Tom-O said.

“Yes, Michel Polnareff’s on the record player.”

“You’re nice, interested in this old man. What different music. So far from me.” *Is it the man’s culture?* he thought. “The heart distance is much more than on a map.”

“Oh, Gran’pa, why is difference distance? I’m curious about anything different.”

“You’re so young, my granddaughter.”

“I wanna be near differences. I’m curious about your story, not only because my father said I should ask.”

“My story, oh, my dear. That’s why you talk to me. Even your mother doesn’t wanna hear it.”

“Am I different from you?”

“You don’t know about war.”

1948

Misao, eleven, couldn’t understand her father. *He’s stiiiiiill drinking. Daaaaytime!*

All she could understand was that Ma’s hardship wouldn’t end. “Ma, you still pick grass to eat along streets.”

“They’re good for your health. I couldn’t find them during the war because everyone picked them.”

Misao didn’t want her mother to do that. Misao was an adolescent. She also couldn’t understand her mother never complaining about him.

Ino never forget the day he came back. It was a hot day on the seashore. She was carrying four buckets filled of sea water and *ao-sa* sea herbs with two balance poles on her shoulders. *I must make salt as much as I can during this sunny season. And these sea herbs will be well dry for the autumn.*

Hearing someone near her, she couldn’t turn her head because of the heavy water. The moment her shoulders got free, she saw him taking the poles on his shoulders. He saluted her formally.

“I survived only to say I honor you.”

Ino couldn’t say anything. *Is this a fantasy?*

“I appreciate this miracle I see in front of me. It must have been very hard for you to protect our children for a long time.”

It’s not a fantasy. She looked at his eyes, scars, and bare feet on the rocky beach. They were bleeding. Ino felt all the hardship she had suffered were rewarded by that moment.

“Well, it was perfect if only Misao would grow,”

“This is enough, this is enough. She lives. And,” he paused, “no one can be graceful like you.”

“Tom-O-san, I surprise you. You have another child.”

Tom-O tried to find a job, but it was very hard. Ex-soldiers were told no in places. Days were always the same as well for Misao. She didn’t like the man when he was drunk or blowing on his bamboo pipe.

“Mother, why do you let Pa have money?”

“Misao, he has too many nightmares he wants forget.”

“I don’t understand! We need food! I need shoes!”

“You need to be more considerate.”

Misao turned away. She didn’t want to hurt her mother.

“Pa! Do ... not ... *drink!*”

“Well, well, well. It’s true. It’s socks and women that get stronger after the war. My daughter is ordering me around.”

“I’m not socks! I woon’t let you have money anymore!” Misao couldn’t stop. “It’d be better if you weren’t back!” Misao ran off, her own shouts tormenting her. She loved him, but not when he was drunk. *Pa often goes to a river in a dark forest to get small crabs. He grinds them with a wooden pestle very well. Then he mixes them with fermented soybean paste and sake. It is the great meal. I hate Pa, I dislike Pa. I love Pa.*

Tom-O felt something in his heart had broken.

“My dear.” Ino talked softly to Tom-O. “I’ll show her you’ve began to grow vegetables in the backyard.”

“I wish our land were enough for farming.”

“This red clay earth can’t be good for vegetables from seed.” Her voice was always soft and comforting.

“Not only here. Farmers are great. But it’s always farmers who are left behind in economic growth.”

“Farmers and common people’s poverty are the basement of communism nowadays, *ne?*”

“Not only nowadays. For a long time, the majority of people have been poor. They say if Takahashi, the minister of finance, hadn’t been assassinated in 1936 and kept decreasing the military budget, Nihon wouldn’t have been so militaristic. But behind the assassination was poverty and frustration. If there wasn’t militarism, there would have been communism, I think.”

“Which is worse?”

Tom-O felt he was still bound by the war. He remembered Goro’s father’s saying, “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”⁶⁴ *If I could see Goro-san again. If I could see his father again. But I have to earn money for Holland. And I won’t give Ino any more hardship.*

It took a few years for Tom-O to find a job.

One day, when Misao visited a junior high, she saw a boy learning English. “I know him.”

Every morning, he used to force pupils to bow deeply to a wooden box at the gate. He had said there was a spirit of the O-Kimi couple. He was one of the majority who had enthusiastically praised the war. It was surprising to see such a quick change in him. She came to know he belonged to the majority. The huge change in the nation was simply beyond her imagination.

On the radio, she heard unknown words repeated on the news. “A new constitution was enacted last year. It has many kinds of human rights, democracy, freedom, and equality for both sexes.”

⁶⁴ John 8.

What a stupid rule. Tom-O thought. Who would wanna destroy the world?

“Ma!” Misao was pleased. “Sooo cuuute!”

“I curled my hair.” Ino turned around.

“A permanent! How stylish. I like it! Lovely! Then you need Western fashion. Well, no, kimonos are enough ’cuz you’re not tall.”

Being fashionable had been a sin in wartime. Women, girls, and boys were hungry for what was cool looking and trendy. It began to change the male dominated world gradually.

1955

“Pa, Ma,” Kiyoto said, “I’d like to marry a lady working in the factory where I work.”

“Oh no. Is this the new age? Where’s she from? What do her parents do?” *Times had changed. He didn’t get any advice from me, Tom-O thought. It’s the age of freedom. Each man can say, “I am the rule.”*

One Sunday, he introduced a woman with smooth, clear skin.

Any man would be fascinated. Ah, Kiyoto. Ino went to the fireplace for tea. Tom-O was proud that his son had brought home such a beauty.

Gorgeous woman won’t have any respect for others. As she put tea leaves in the pot, Ino’s thoughts ran around in her mind. *I must be very careful with my other sons and daughter. Ah, Misao has a little, a big problem. It’s impossible for her to be the first son’s wife. Son’s marriage means his mother’s labor will be reduced. I need to talk to my sister. She bought a new*

rucksack for school when Misao was six. She's resewing her kimono for Misao's twenty-year-old day. Misao trusts her. She's a nurse, a respected job women can have.

While warming the cups, she wondered, *I'd been so busy running the big family without Tom-O during and after the war. To get food, I went to mountain villages with my kids, bringing huge luggage on our backs. Clothes and other daily necessities for food were the luggage. We had to take a train full of people. Many men were on roofs. I pushed Misao through a window, then I squeezed my body into the carriage.* Kiyoto came to the fireplace and told Ino, "She says she wants to be more elegant in the traditional way. She's elegant enough, you see, but you wouldn't say anything about her going to classes of for tea ceremony, flower arranging, and dance."

"Oh, learning culture would cost a lot. We're not rich. How can we?"

"I will. I'll handle it. Please, mother."

How can my son tackle the money problem? He's too honest.

1962

In June, the aunt who recommended to Misao the marriage said, "Have a go. Try once," she smiled. "If you marry him, you don't have to cook in a kiln. Your children won't have to gather cedar leaves for the fire."

Misao remembered her young days gathering leaves. *My effort was always fruitless. Other kids had already taken the oil leaves. Um, I long for a modern kitchen. I don't like a dark, high-ceilinged kitchen. They even say a smoldered ceiling is protection for a house!*

Misao decided to meet him. *When I see him, I will be me. I will chat. It was a failure the last time I wasn't myself. Pa and Ma told me to cover my chatterbox personality for success. When the guy and I happened to see his bosses and friends, I should expect they would say something to me before I spoke. But it's an old rule, a myth, that woman shouldn't speak before men do. He had been disappointed with me. He asked, "Why didn't you say hello?"*

In the myth, there were three gods without intercourse at the beginning of the universe. Later, there were a god and a goddess under them. The three gods asked the couple to give birth to land for men. At their oath of marriage, the goddess spoke first. They failed to give birth to islands. So women should not talk first.

But my aunt used to say, a witch ruled the islands 1,800 years ago. After her death, another dynasty created the myth to limit females.

The next Sunday, Hisaharu and his sisters visited Tom-O.

"I've never seen masculine women like them!" Misao said to Ma in the fireplace.

"Stupid girl! *You* are!"

"Are so alike! Tall, long legs and arms! Tough, skinny. And high cheekbones. They're like Native Americans in pictures! Farmers' faces are sometimes like this. Why?"

"Shut up!" Ino knew they had a long history. *It doesn't matter for my daughter because the young man can create a new family.*

"Hisaharu is our youngest brother," one masculine sister said.

Bringing tea, Misao looked at him. *Not bad. Another Indian! What high cheek bones.*

"I heard," Tom-O said, "you're in the Defense Force. I mean a patriot. I'm very sorry that this is the age patriots are looked down upon, humiliated."

"Yes," Hisaharu said politely and saw her smooth fingers. But Hisaharu couldn't look at her as she was serving tea. "Thanks." He glanced at her. *The woman in the picture! The honest, round face with big eyes is here! And her accent is like what I had heard in high school.*

"played volleyball in high school." Her high school education was her pride. Misao didn't say that the tuition had been paid by her aunt, not her pa.

Listening to her talk, he found her tomboyish. *That's why she was left behind in spite of her looks*, he thought. It reminded him of a movie that had encouraged him. The heroine had been incredibly tough. "By the way, have you seen *Gone with the Wind*?" he asked.

"No," she said short and clearly.

Hisaharu thought she was simple and good. Hisaharu squeezed out all his bravery. "Would you ... can ..."

He's trying to invite me to the movie I bet!

"Could we go to the movie together?"

Oh, a date! Misao felt her heart pumping. "Well, er, I couldn't. Oh, I could." *Now it's hard to be reticent. Walking outside with a guy! How modern! Is it the first for him, too? No way.*

"Why not *Gone with the Wind*?" he asked. He hesitated. "We'll see how wonderful skills to surprise people appeared in the creator's heads twenty-three years ago."

"I've not thought about that." Misao felt good to know the beautiful actress was now aged.

“You might be surprised wondering why our ex-government decided to begin the war against such a powerful country.” Hisaharu continued. “Just for making this movie, they constructed huge buildings and burned them down. Just for an entertainment, they could use high skills such as color for the film. As you did, we turned over all the metal in our kitchen to make bullets. Big bells in shrines and temples were taken.” Hisaharu could for the first time glance at her eyebrows.

“Even other generations before the war were also on the edge of death,” Tom-O said.

“You must have spent hard days in the war.” Hisaharu couldn’t hear what the elder had said.

“Oh,” her mouth couldn’t stop. Her mouth listed the movies she had seen. “I’m not interested in foreign movies and why they started the war. Everything’s over. And you spent your days in a farm village. You never imagined how we, town residents, spent all days being hungry and being bombed.”

But I have few complaints about you, she thought. I don’t think I will meet a much better man. All the men I’ve seen before were shorter than me. I’m sure that tragic starvation for more than a decade made people’s physiques much worse.

Misao’s mouth kept chatting a lot about her family. *This is the last chance. I’m twenty-six!* She created a noble, modest smile like Ma to win his heart.

But at the moment, his sister cut in. “My brother has another *omiai*.” She tried to put her brother higher up on the supply-and-demand balance. She thought Misao’s parents would be in a hurry, though the girl had too much pride, she thought. *Misao-san isn’t bad. Might be good as brother’s bride. But the pride should be crushed.* “The other girl is very good at both dress making and kimono making.”

Almost all people had changed their clothes from kimono to American styles, so the skill to mend and make shirts, trousers, and skirts was useful. Many young women began to learn it to contract better marriages.

Misao felt disgusted with that attitude. She felt inferior because she had not learned those skills—she had found them too difficult to master. But her pride made her say, “Please go on with her. It’s not *ari-gata-i* at all!” Misao stood.

Hisaharu was too naïve to know how to salvage the situation. On the way home, he said to one of his sisters, “It’s too difficult to decide with whom I should spend the rest of my life after only one meeting.”

“Ya think too much, that’s why ya have no progress.” She wanted him to be a man. Her shy brother had worked so much on rice paddies. *For him, I have to be smart*, she thought.

“I’m not like you,” Hisaharu said. “Yer now the electoral district’s Ladies Club leader of the ruling party. With no reward.”

“Ya know I wanna protect farmers. In this economic growth in three metropolises on Main Island, we would be homeless, landless.” Her eyes were burning with a mission.

“If *ya* were a man, *ya* could be a candidate. Well, now, women also can,” Hisaharu said.

“I wanna be a driver. Backers are greater than politicians. Besides, well, women wanna pull down any woman trying to get ahead, don’t *ya* know?”

“No.” He didn’t want to know the horrible side of women.

But he had already decided it. Miss Oda. *She talks a lot. Her eyebrows were so active. Life with her might bring me brightness. This omiai let me forget Tera and the man. How does Miss Oda think of me? She must be angry at what sister said. She doesn’t like me.* He thought his life was at the bottom.

The next day, he left for Beppu without letting the Oda know. He had no idea what he should do in the situation because it was the modern age.

For three weeks she waited for his decision. She became irritated. Her parents and she thought a man should express his decision before a woman does, as was the tradition.

What is he thinking about me? I hate those who won't express choice!

"They think silence is golden," the aunt told Misao. "I don't like it. But it's society."

"Arrah, I laugh, I cry! Anywhere, to anybody! I think I can pull it off." Misao told her aunt. She felt she was missing something.

At last, Hisaharu asked Misao's parents to meet his parents at his house. It meant a proposal. Tom-O asked Kiyoto to drive him there. Though the long walk would have been easy for him and his daughter, he wanted to show the Hanada that the Oda had a car and three brothers. *So treat my daughter right. Please.*

The farmer's house was old and big. The roof was made of reeds more than seventy centimeters thick.

This well-done job needed the cooperation of all the village people. Hisaharu-san must be a good man to have been raised here. All the wooden sliding walls were open. *Shouji* walls inside along the corridor were reflecting the light. All grass-made papers on the *shouji* were brand new. It was clear they changed the *washi* paper on these sliding walls yesterday. *It means they will treat us well.* Tom-O was content. The man in the emerald jungle came back to Tom-O suddenly and said, "I'm afraid my daughter grew up and married without me."

For her daughter's wedding, Ino bought a tall mirror with drawers made of mulberry wood. "The mirror is the soul of the woman," she said. "Check your posture. Check your expression. Do not forget you were raised by me."

The day before Misao stepped out from her family, Ino called her in the formal room. "Misao?" She straightened her kimono. She sat beautifully on a tatami and said, "Be patient, be generous. Do not be full of yerself. Yew're going to experience thousands of worries, pains, troubles, especially constraints ya never thought of but that have tortured each wife and mother. Ya should not expect a return from others, but ya must repay others. Thank everyone around ya. Do right because the sun and ancestors are always watching ya. I can't help ya any more after tomorrow."

"I have been and always will be your daughter."

"No, ya must understand."

I don't understand, Misao thought.

1963

The house between the mountains hosted a wedding banquet. All sliding grass-paper doors between rooms had been taken off. All village folks and kin were invited. Ayako, Jiro's wife, had been working without sleep to welcome more than 200 guests. Weddings were a kind of village festival. All wives in the village gathered to help and have a day off from their stark daily labor.

"Is Hisaharu-san's yome gonna help us?"

"No, I don't think so. She's from town. She doesn't know what farmers are."

“But she has to. It doesn’t matter where she’s from. She’s a yome of a farmer’s son.”

“Yep, yer right. She’s gonna come to be a yome in this village.”

“I’m curious to see how she’ll go about it.”

Fires in kilns made of mud and straw cooked the food, which they carried on bamboo trays to the next room. Men were drinking and singing loudly around a sunken hearth cut in the middle of the floor. The fire pit had been changed to be down under the floor since Jiro’s wedding.

A gorgeous silk kimono was wrapping the bride. The long sleeves were like a butterfly. The embroidered train was trimmed with thick, red cloth. Her good friend had let Misao use it. She stayed still in the formal room, where once Ichiro said the last good-bye. The heavy hair ornaments covering her head made Misao keep looking at the tatami. Misao’s eyes caught a man’s feet in brand-new white *tabi* crossing the room toward her.

The bridegroom was swimming in *sake*. One after another, kin and friends said, “Yer so lucky to have such a beautiful wife!” They made him so happy. *Yes, she is beautiful for me. I’ve got a wife to protect. This must be the responsibility, they say, a man’s responsibility. Does she like me? It doesn’t matter. But does she?*

Hisaharu’s mother, Yone, came to Misao and said, “Though I was raised up to obey my husband’s mother, ya don’t have to.” She looked at Ayako, another yome who said, “Misao-san, please take care of him, would ya? He’s good. He’s always calm. He never had an argument nor a fight with brother, sisters and friends.”

“And ya know,” Yone said, “I lost our son in the war. Ayako and yew are only two yome for me. Ayako-san, ya might remember the day ya came here,” Yone said to Ayako, who was bringing dishes to guests.

“Arrah!” Ayako felt relief. She sat beside Yone.

“Ya need a break,” Yone said.

“I can chat.” Ayako recalled the days she was new in the house. “I was surprised to see ya worked all day long,” Ayako said to Yone, her mother-in-law.

“On reflection, my attitude made yew busy. Yer mother’s milk had dried up,” Yone said.

“The twins could have enough goat’s milk. Now they’re healthy, no problem.” *How I was exhausted in those years, caring for twins. How I worried about my sons’ health.*

Yone stood up for her guests. She was very pleased at this marriage. *All my sons and daughters have partners. My life as a mother is finished. I can go to Ichiro anytime. For a long time I have not seen ya. I wanna see yer wife, Ichiro.*

“Oh, Misao-san,” Ayako dropped her voice, “I have to tell yew a good point of Hisaharu-san. While I was at my parents’ house giving birth to the twins, only he visited us.”

Misao smiled and expected he would be a nice husband. But also her anxiety got stronger. She would be a member of this big family, big community. *But my, our, new home is far away, in Beppu.*

New life began in a tiny apartment in Beppu. The door wasn’t a sliding one.

“Arrah, this door is modern!” Misao said. She had chatted all the way there.

“But is it alright in case of earthquakes?” Hisaharu asked.

“It doesn’t matter. This is American or European.”

“But it’s made of thin plywood. American and European doors are different. I saw them in movies.” He opened the door. “Ah no, the height of the tatami floor is lower than our knees. Do we have to sleep here? Dusty and humid!”

“I used to spend nights in a cave when we were being bombed,” Misao said, happy. *I’m married! And this tiny space doesn’t belong to the big family.* “This is modern design, I think.”

There was only space for a pair of futons. Water, gas, and a toilet were at the entrance. No place for bathing.

“How do people here bathe?” Hisaharu said.

“Maybe *sentou*.” Misao mentioned a public bath.

“Yer house was in town, so yew might use a public bath, didn’t ya?”

“No. I didn’t use *sentou*,” Misao said proudly. “My da made a bathtub with a fireplace on the right end of the entrance.”

“He made a bamboo pipe too. He’s talented.”

“We need to ask somebody about soaking.”

“Sunlight is on the tatami room through glassed windows.” Hisaharu pictured the old big house in which tatami were never exposed to the sun. The house had no windowpanes. Rooms were surrounded by a corridor. Between the rooms and corridor were paper-covered sliding walls framed by thin latticework. The corridor was surrounded by sliding wooden walls. It was his job to slide them open and closed at dawn and at night. The overhanging roof protected the walls from sunshine, rain, and wind.

A woman next door came up and said, “Hi, I heard you talking. You may be from Fukuoka, aren’t ya?”

“Our accents?”

“Yep. Beppu folks are from many places. By the way, I heard you were talking about a bath. An *onsen* is over there, behind the tall bamboo bushes.” She pointed to steam rising.

“Arrah-mahhh! *Onsen*!” Misao screamed with joy.

“Is a *sentou* an *onsen*?” Hisaharu asked.

“This is Beppu.” The woman smiled, “I’ll take you to a community *onsen* manager from now. Enter your names on a community list. Pay there every month.”

“You’re so good to newcomers. As I was raised in a farm village, it’s a surprise that local people accept outsiders easily,” Hisaharu said.

“Beppu is made up of outsiders. It’s natural to help each other. How could we live otherwise?” She smiled.

“We’re lucky to have good neighbors like you.” Misao was happy.

“You’ll soon find other *onsen* around,” the women said. “Pools of Bubbling Mud, Blood-hell springs are good to see. Food in the hydrothermal spring is delicious, getting minerals inside, especially the eggs in the Blue-hot spring.”

The spa was built of cheap wood and a tin roof. Between the spa shack and the bushes, Misao saw boiling water gushing out three times as high as her. It was fun watching the geyser shooting a hot water jet and steam high into the air behind the shack. The ground around was covered with some kind of white minerals and boiling water. A big bamboo pipe from the hell mouth was connected to the shack. The end of the pipe was separated and ran into both the men’s and women’s rooms.

“It’s amazing.” Misao couldn’t stop watching. “Who put the pipe there?”

“Beppu has so many places like this. I’ll take you one by one. Let’s find towels and take a bath. In which box are the bath buckets?”

Hisaharu walked to the entrances with a bucket of bath things. Putting his nametag on the counter, he said to Misao, “If you get out earlier, you may go home.” He opened one of two sliding doors.

The narrow space was filled with steam. The pipe was on the wall. Boiling water was falling along bundles of bamboo twigs to reduce the heat a bit. *This is a hot spring!*

Seven men were soaking in a big tub.

“*Kon-nichiwa*. I moved here today.”

Some said, “*konchya*.” Others raised their hands.

He neatly folded his clothes and put them on the top of a shelf. “How comfortable steam is!”

“Yeah, isn’t it?” A man in the tub answered.

“I’m getting over my nasal congestion.” Hisaharu was pleased.

After washing his body completely on the floor, he bathed. The sulfur smell wasn’t stimulating at all there. *Why? The smell of steam outside is much stronger. It’s cold outside, but this is heaven.* The minerals in the water softened skin.

Near the tiny apartment was a seashore. Pine groves along the beach protected the town from wind in winter and gave shade in summer. They walked together, feeling the sea breeze on their left. When they looked to the right, along the foot of the green mountain range, they saw columns of steam from hot springs. They touched the sand on the beach; it was hot.

“The hot spring is heating this beach, isn’t it?” Hisaharu was happy walking with his wife. *My life has had loss and disappointment, but now I have my wife.*

“Some people are lying in this hot sand.” Misao was also happy.

As it was hard to live on her husband's salary, Misao started handiwork at home. She made bamboo baskets. *I can buy a piece of chicken or a few eggs once a month with this. Or beef once a year?*

In the autumn, his salary got to be 18,200 yen at last. Hisaharu took Misao to a theater.

“*Ben-Hur* and *The Ten Commandments*.” Hisaharu said excitedly. “The newspaper says both of them have dynamism. And I've read a little part of the Bible. Have you ever heard of it?” He wanted her to have some interest in knowledge.

“No.” She had no will to ask, but as a good wife, she asked, “What's that?”

“Kind of myth, but many people in Europe and America seem to believe it's true.” *I should give up talking about philosophy. It's useless to expect intelligence in women. My sister and Ayako-san are exceptions.*

“Oh.” Her face was looking for anything else. She wanted to laugh with some comedy in her mother tongue. Later she thought, *Ben and Ten were boring. I couldn't read the words on the screen.*

The husband was getting frustrated. The wife's tears and anger were beyond his understanding.

Misao discovered why his legs grew as long as a spider's. *He hasn't had any discipline. His legs have spent twenty-eight years without getting stiff by sitting right on tatami. Always barefooted even in winter. He's like the Earth Spiders and the*

Long Shins in kids' tales. And his muscles made by farm labor are not to help women! He longs for an illusion of a woman, not me.

"Hi, Hanada-san, how are you doing?" The landlady, Mika, was always kind to her. "You don't need to be so serious about housekeeping! Let's chat!" She was a woman with open arms.

Misao was pleased. "I do love chatting!"

"Your name is Misao-san, isn't it? How do you feel to be called Hanada-san? I married nine years ago. Nobody calls me by my first name, Mika, except my friends from my single days. But you know, all the friends I have here are friends I've made after marriage. I feel I lost myself! Well, I got used to this. You?" She laughed aloud.

It's beyond me. Misao had never thought about such changes. "I'm happy to be called only Hanada-san. It's natural."

Mika smiled and said, "Good wife! Not like me. I'm selfish to think such things." She decided not to show her excitement about an article in the new constitution about the equality of the sexes. She was very moved to learn that an American woman born in Vienna, Beate Sirota, had pushed through women's rights in the new constitution though the makers, the occupation army was made of men. She had accompanied her parents to the country when she was five and came to know how miserable the lives of women there were. She energetically endeavored to achieve legal equality of the sexes, which was not in the draft of the constitution.

Mika wanted somebody to share what she was thinking of. Women were not subordinate till the continental influence 1,300 years ago. Myths recorded strong women. The sun was a woman. A goddess ruled the heavens. A wife in the underworld, not like Eurydice, let her army chase

her husband, who broke his promise. It was a woman who invaded an oversea land first; it was a she who created the first navy.

Women in Kyushu were especially strong. Eighth-century records say the Earth Spiders on the Pacific Ocean side and another on the continent side were led by women respectively. They fought for independence from Yamato.

Why have women endured this situation? There must be someone with whom I can share this idea. But she always felt alone and isolated. *Is it women who support this male-dominated society? I don't wanna be one of the silent majority. I will voice my opinion. But how?*

"I like to chat," Misao told Mika. Misao wasn't good at following lines of thought.

"Arrah," Mika smiled. Mika liked Misao's frank personality. "You do. I like it too."

"But my husband won't talk." Misao didn't notice she was speaking with a perfect Beppu accent though she kept her Hakata accent when she talked with Hisaharu.

"Yeah, men often won't. They think they can communicate by telepathy," Mika said. "When my husband says something, it's one word, *tea!*"

A stork soon flew to the new couple. *A baby! Babies have been everywhere. But this time, it's my child. My baby will change this stubborn man.* Misao had been a mother already those weeks. She was simply happy when a midwife confirmed it. But he didn't seem to be happy. It disappointed her. "Aren't you pleased?"

"Oh I'm pleased." He sealed his lips tightly. *I'm going to be a father. The whole life of the baby will depend on me. I will have*

unlimited responsibility. Am I fit to be a father? If I die, Misao can find another husband, but a child can't find another father. Heavy responsibility weighed on him. Many thoughts haunted him. Times have changed. The baby won't know the war. I grew up on a farm. Misao grew up without a father. Hisaharu wasn't confident. I was eleven then. It was early May, and everyone was busy planting rice. Adults and kids were picking bundles of young rice and putting them into rice paddies covered with water in grids twenty centimeters square. The work has always given us terrible lower back pain. All the village people had helped plant for each other, one day for one family, the next day for the other. It was the day for a family next to mine. There was a woman with a big abdomen in the rice field. Her husband's mother was very proud of her and said, "My yome is a hard worker. Look, she has been working since dawn." "Pregnancy isn't a disease," they said. The pregnant woman died the next day, and so did the baby. Such a horrible "accident" will never happen to Misao. Here she has electricity, gas, and running water. She doesn't need to do farmer's work. I've never let her work hard.

1964

The change in her body forced her to become aware of happiness and responsibility and made her very sensitive. Hisaharu was far away from her feelings. To forgive him, Misao tried to think how her mother had had hard times when she had been pregnant during the war. Misao tried to imagine elder women's days every time she washed clothes. *If I had a washing machine! In my dreams!*

Every day, she took clothes and a washboard to the spa. There, she knelt over the clothes. Her husband's clothes showed how hard his work was. She felt deep appreciation. Cleaning his uniform required strength and skill. *May the baby be born on the expected day. Not the rainy season! They say I should prepare at least forty nappies. Oh, our tiny house will be a white jungle with nappies! Already many yellow flypapers hang from the ceiling. Nappies! How many times will my baby make me change them per day? I heard some do seven or nine times per day besides pooping. I wish my baby wouldn't do that! Is he gonna help me?*

Women in villages, Hisaharu thought, watch each person around them and look after them. Without a break, women devote all their energy thinking and watching. I bought her a proper coat. In my village, I used to make overcoats, boots, and hats with straw before cold winds blew.

"Why does he talk to me in such a military way?" Misao grumbled to Mika.

"The point I can't stand is, men think it's women who have to change not only where they live but also every custom, habit, and way of thought. You know I have four boys. I train them to be able to be loved by girls in the future."

"Four boys, *nee!*"

"I use the bath after them. There's so much sand at the bottom of the tub. I saw sh—, show—, hmmm, something in an American drama."

"You mean a *shower*."

"That's it! I really long for a shooweer!"

In the hydrangea season, she gave birth to a girl.

In the '60s, the economic growth was remarkable in metropolitan areas, but remote regions were left behind. TVs and cars were still dreams. Still, Hisaharu could watch the beautiful, starry sky at night.

He had taken a paid holiday for the first time since their honeymoon. Taking the day off was a secret because he had kept saying, "Husbands shouldn't be with wives giving birth. It's not manly."

His long, thin newborn reminded him of a newborn mouse. He felt a new happiness he had never had when he held the soft, fragile, tiny life in his hands. The soft, warm smell of the baby moved him.

This is, he thought, the fragrance of trumpet creepers Akutagawa Ryunosuke had mentioned in his work. The man of letters described a newborn as a pleasant aroma of that flower. The baby was the only hope in the novel about the miserable lower class. The distinguished writer might have an opportunity like I did. But I think the fragrance of gardenia is closer to baby's smell. I had seen a lot of babies in villages. But this one is special. She's mine.

The baby made him feel that every child belongs to something, someone great above. *Parents have responsibility for the great. So parents' love must not be selfish.* The soft smell touched him. "Misao, smell her! Did you know babies had such an aroma?"

She was trying to feed the baby. "No," the new mother said and turned to him. "It doesn't matter." The baby wouldn't open her tiny lips for Misao's breast. Misao kept struggling to feed the baby, who seemed to have no will to live.

"All babies have such an aroma. Their frailty makes parents care for her." *I found the thing that's more important than*

anything else. I never expected to feel this way. Parents might divorce, but they can't lose ties to their children.

"What name?" Misao asked. She expected that deciding the name would make the man a father. *I'm a mother already.*

"Mmm. For a girl."

"You dislike the counting numbers in Chinese characters for giving a baby a name." Misao said.

"It's superstition. So many people believe such a stupid thing. The frame of mind is still the same now. We've been brainwashed in the war." Hisaharu thought for a while. "I've been thinking of a few names. Kyrie?"

"Kirie? It sounds old, sad. It's for our generation. Nowadays, girls' names have *ko* at the end."

"Ko. Nowadays, all girls are aristocratic," Hisaharu said, watching the baby in his arms.

"You are! I mean, parents want girls to be graceful."

"So how about Jericho?"

"Eriko? Ah! Sounds graceful." Misao smiled.

"Jericho is one of the oldest cities." Hisaharu held the baby up.

"You're always strange. But the sound *Eriko* is beautiful."

"We must think of the Chinese characters for this name."

"You must be the first parent who thinks pronunciation before Chinese characters." Misao smiled.

"Sound is important. I've had sympathy for elder women named *Tiger* or *Bear*."

"Yeah, there're many Tora-san and Kuma-san."



From Hisaharu's old album

“You’re lucky,” Ino said. “Hisaharu-san is sobriety itself.” Ino stayed in their apartment to help her for a few days after Jericho was born.

“Um, well, he isn’t interesting at all.”

“You can’t say that! Honesty is most important.”

“He never jokes.” *He’s easily angered. Don’t mind, Ma.*

“His parents lost a son in the war. I heard they’ve never smiled since then. I understand the family. Misao, honesty is enough. Do not want more.”

After her mother went back, Misao did all the chores, nursing and washing fifteen nappies a day. Her mother’s milk stopped. Powdered milk was expensive. The baby cried for milk every two hours. Then she cried whenever Misao tried to put her on a mat. It took three months for Misao to get ninety uninterrupted minutes of sleep. She was exhausted.

Though Hisaharu cared for the baby in the evenings, he never did any housework. Four weeks after the birth, it was her turn to clean the public hot spring bath, the women’s area, in

the morning from ten to eleven. She had heard that newborn babies' fathers would brush and wash the area for their wives. She hesitated to ask her husband to do the job, but she finally did. Hisaharu refused, saying, "It's women's work." She had heard that before.

In the evening, after she finished the cleaning, she bled a lot while cooking. A fibroid in her uterus developed in her soon after the bleeding, but all she did was just put up with it every month.

"Eriko, my sweet baby, when you give birth, I'll do all the domestic chores for you for at least four weeks. I'll live and put up with him till the mission's end. I'll never make you go through what I'm going through," Misao said to the newborn as she kissed her.

The new life made him decide to take an exam to earn senior rank. *It requires a lot of learning and training. They say ranger training will make a hole in your stomach.* He didn't like to see younger ones graduating from universities and running their lives in the fast lane everywhere. *Poor village people have wisdom.* Hisaharu had tried to take pride in his upbringing. But he could accept guys from the National Defense Academy. He knew the NDA students had been criticized since it had been founded in 1953. An influential antiwar journalist wrote in 1958 that the National Defense Academy students were an insult to the new generation, and the media were quick to broadcast his comments. Female students in Tokyo who loved peace on earth marched with placards, "We won't marry National Defense Academy students!"

They never want to know the concepts of pride or obedience that were chiseled in each NDA freshman's mind. It was the prime philosophy of the first chancellor, who graduated from

Oxford. We voluntarily obey orders from the prime minister, who presents democracy.

Journalists and voters believed that security came naturally. They misunderstood the reason for the U.S. forces in the country. People believed life and property were protected without effort. A famous writer, Kenzaburou O-E, insisted of the Defense Force, “Shame on you!” The journalists and intellectuals wanted politicians to handle domestic rather than foreign problems. The ex-militarism was a way to distract people from daily frustrations.

When China conducted its first nuclear test in October, Hisaharu was afraid of war. *This time, if it would happen, I’ll have to leave poor Misao. She grew up without a father till she was ten.*

1965

The Vietnam War broke out in February. “The U.S. Army shouldn’t be in Vietnam. It’s Vietnam’s land,” Hisaharu told his boss.

“This is a matter of philosophy—freedom or communism. You better read other newspapers,” the boss had said.

“It wasn’t just freedom versus communism,” Hisaharu said. “Borders are made by colony owners. Residents are just fighting for their traditions. Exposed to Europe, South East Asia had woken up to nationalism. As Vietnam is a part of the Asian continent and nearer to Europe than us, it didn’t have enough time to mount any countermeasures. On the other hand, the ocean and distance gave us three hundred years’ freedom from exposed situations.”

Jericho wasn't eating enough. Misao chopped food into pieces. The baby had almost no appetite. Every time Misao brought a spoon to Jericho, her tiny lips closed and her face turned away. Even a nine-month baby knows how to express "No!"

Jericho seemed to lack spirit. She often caught colds. Misao was afraid her precious girl would die. Misao used her savings she had gathered before marriage to take their daughter to a clinic every month.

"We need to look for cheaper rent," said Hisaharu.

They found a house managed by Beppu City. It was a terraced house of five families in a row. Each house had a tiny garden, running water, gas, and a toilet on the entrance side and a room with tatami. The smell of fresh tatami grass made them happy. Misao put her tall mirror between a window and the entrance door.

Misao was surprised to see washing machines at entrances to other houses. *How happy I would be to have one!*

They saved, but what Hisaharu bought was a refrigerator. The fifty-centimeter-square box saved their food in burning summers.

"Hi Misao-san, I brought a baby rose." One day, Mika visited them.

"It's very nice of you." Misao pointed to the tiny land and said, "A gate. I'll make a rose gate. Like gardens in foreign movies. Dreams, far from reality."

"Then I'll get a baby willow to make an arc for the rose," Hisaharu said. "I'll go to a marsh and get one next Sunday. It will be an arc for vines to climb."

Misao put the baby rose in the earth that day, and Hisaharu got a baby willow the next Sunday. The next month, he made

a meshed wall. The garden reminded him of the old house garden in Munakata. He cared for the roses and made a beautiful rose garden for his wife. He buried the memory of the man and Tera under it.

“Raising an infant is like making a human, isn’t it?” Hisaharu asked.

“You sometimes laugh. You didn’t laugh before.”

“Didn’t I laugh? You might be right,” Hisaharu said. “Our baby makes me laugh.” The baby laughed in his arms.

It was a fresh surprise that his baby loved him so much. She laughed happily when Hisaharu crawled under her mosquito net. *Was I like this? I don’t remember my parents adoring me. They had been on the edge of living.* He wished he could talk with his wife about a poem from 1,500 years ago.

The hem of my cloth my children grasp, cry,
I left them.
Their mother had passed away.

“You know this poem? You went to high school,” Hisaharu asked Misao, afraid she wasn’t interested in poem at all.

“No.”

“Men were sent from the east to Kyushu Island, a thousand kilometers away from home, as protectors. The ruler was afraid of invasion from the continent. My grandfather told me, ‘Kyushu had belonged to Hayato, one of the Earth Spiders in the island, till Yamato conquered it. Many Hayato leaders obeyed the invader, Yamato.’ But my ancestor and others didn’t. I guess those ancestors might be like the guerrillas in Vietnam. The official reason Yamato ordered the east men to

move was to protect the island from the continent, but the unofficial reason was to kill the Earth Spiders.”

“It sounds like a foreign tale,” Misao said. “It makes my head ache.” She went to the kitchen.

Instead, Hisaharu told to the baby another poem from 1,500 years ago,

Silver, gold, and valuable stones
Can't be worth a precious child.

This nine-month-old baby listens to the rhythm so happily though she can't talk. These might be deep and meaningful conversations. Such conversations are rare among friends, even husbands and wives.

1966

She vomited every day and came to know of her second pregnancy. She wished her husband would handle the chores though she knew he was a good husband. *No violence, no smoking, no gambling, no affairs, maybe a few cups of sake at home*, she persuaded herself. Misao's sensitivity and part-time jobs made her fibroid bigger. Misao felt a knot tighten in her stomach. She vomited every meal. Misao miscarried. *I can't have any more children.*

Hisaharu couldn't understand the new woman but could understand her health and her inability to have another baby. *Women are women because they can have babies. I don't need an unhealthy woman. I have to prepare for our old age. Misao and I won't be able to be supported by our son and his wife. Will Jericho be able to give birth to a son? Poor women—they can't*

earn, they have to raise children, care for elders, do community activities, and support husbands respectively. When a husband gives up duties to his wife, her life will be ruined. Jericho must be raised to be loved.

Jericho, twenty-eight months old, still wasn't active. Hisaharu remembered well the boy who survived that tsunami. *He was sleeping on my back. Now he's a teenager. What's he doing? Will Jericho be as strong as that boy in a disaster? She's a girl. I must live for my child.*

Their frugality allowed them to buy a new motorbike. He was very happy to have it. *Next, a car.* The economic growth had saved half the population from poverty, but his income from the DF remained low, and he couldn't take any side jobs. Each DF mam needed toilet paper from home. The government's annual expenditure for defense had been exposed to criticism.

It was in 1945 that Main Island was attacked for the first time in history. Its geography and international tensions had kept it independent for long. In 1274 and 1281, Mongolia, which had once ruled the Asian continent to the mouth of the Danube, tried to conquer Nihon, but typhoons destroyed their fleets in Hakata Bay on Kyushu Island. Samurai thought gods' winds had saved the land. They called the typhoons kamikaze, divine wind.

Few knew that though the emperor of Mongolia tried other attacks, he couldn't succeed because of resistance in the south part of the Korean peninsula, south China, and Vietnam.

Many people didn't lock their houses. Hisaharu said to Misao, "I didn't know anyone who locks houses in my village. All houses' sliding doors and windows are open all day."

"In my town too," Misao recalled.

1968

Rose and willow grew and formed an arc. In four years, their ends touched the ground at last. Sometimes, Hisaharu carried his daughter on his shoulders. Smelling the roses on the top of the gate, which gave her peace of mind, was one of her earliest memories. Hisaharu came to understand how Shiro and Yone were feeling the day Ichiro was going. *The brother turned to me. And Father explained me the virtue on the wall, the Four and the Five Chinese classics.*

How can I teach my daughter those? Women have been denied higher education. But Jericho should learn virtue in this TV age. Bad things spread much earlier than before. TV is a double-edged knife—good and bad. Children learn from bad things instinctually. Parents must guide them. Bad things are attractive. Coddling and indulgence ruin children. Do I have to tell her about our tale? This is the twentieth century. Maybe I have to tell her about it. There must be errors. Somebody must bring imagination to history.

“I’m going tell you a story,” he said, putting her on futon mats. Hisaharu hoped his stories would give her a positive outlook.

“A story?”

“Yes, a story. I heard some tales from Aunt Ayako.”

“Aunt Ayako?”

“You know, my brother’s wife. She was born and raised in the Munakata Shrine, so she inherited lots of stories.”

“I wanna listen.”

April 25, 1185

“Where’re we goin’, Gran’ma?” a boy in the biggest boat asked. Women around him were wearing twelve-layered silk gowns. Ten thick clothes covered mist like two. Each women composed her own color rhythm by showing the hems of necks, sleeves, and trails.

“A palace under the sea for you, Your Majesty An-toku.” She held the O-Kimi in her arms and went into the water with the Dragon Sword.

Warriors and other noble families in five hundred boats followed the three-year-old O-Kimi.

Genji samurai were eager to take their enemies out of water to prove they had distinguished themselves in battle far from the Capital. But the *Genji* didn’t dive into the wave; their metal armor would have dragged them to the bottom of the sea. They saved only the O-Kimi’s mother and some high warriors.

La vie est un roman que chacun de nous porte en soi.

—George Sand

Chapter Three

*Breezes are blowing among forests on water.
In a triangle of Western influence, communism, and legends,
another girl was born and raised in a
small town far from the capital.*

On the other end of the sea, Kyushu Island, lots of sea women were watching the battle, hiding among rocks and waves. They understood something was happening on Main Island. *The loser seems to be the family line that beat us hundreds years ago.* They dove into the cold water without a splash. It was easy to find the royal family and the followers. The women's hair was longer than their height. Clothes were unbelievably bright, long, and wide. Warriors' head protectors were huge and gorgeous with gold and horns. The people on the island had never seen such elaborate, beautiful things. Abundant gold, silver, and beautiful stones were glittering on their clothes and ornaments, but they made them sink.

The sea women held the aristocrats' hair and horns. The child was easy to find because his kimono was shining the most. Their colors were beautiful as flowers in spring and summer.

Carefully, they peeked at the *Genji* samurai. They were far away on Main Island. They were walking to the East Land to establish the age of the samurai.

Holding the well-breds' faces up, the sea women silently moved to Kyushu.

Hisaharu found Jericho had fallen asleep, but he kept talking. *It was the age that your fathers and mothers, the Hayato, were on the verge of extinction. But the aristocrats brought the Hayato letters, the way to convey information. So we could survive in secret, waiting for the right time.*

Misao couldn't understand why her daughter was so shy and caught colds so easily though she cared for Jericho with all her heart. Misao's earliest memories were of running to the air raid shelter, a mere cave. Bombs were falling like rain. A child's back was ablaze in an instant in front of Misao. People stood in line for a long time for food. *Quiet infants like Jericho wouldn't have survived then.*

Hisaharu sometimes drew pictures for and read newspapers to his daughter.

Misao said, "While you're not at home, she often pretend-reads by herself."

"Oh? She has a voice."

Misao wanted Jericho to be loved by others, so she kept telling her to never be a nuisance to others and never be selfish or assert herself.

Jericho was always sitting and drawing; she didn't like to play with others. Hisaharu and Misao understood their pride and joy needed a sister or brother, but they knew Jericho wouldn't be able to have one. Misao couldn't learn how to control herself, and Hisaharu didn't want to understand her.

The Ogasawara Islands were returned to Nihon by the United States. Campus protests were in the news; students were breaking windows. *It was like yesterday that my school*

windows had no glass. How precious glass was. I can never accept their violent ways.

Misao began to work as a hotel cleaner from nine to three. She put Jericho in daycare and managed to buy a doll for Jericho.

“Could I have a change of clothes for my doll?”

“Um, I’m afraid not. It’s too expensive.”

Jericho made a dress out of paper, but she couldn’t make them nice. All Jericho wanted was just to play alone; others would make her cry or shrink away. “She’s a girl. We can’t expect anything of her, so ...” Hisaharu bought books for Jericho though he was sure women should not go to college; besides, he couldn’t afford it. “For character building, books are suitable. Reading will bring Jericho power, skills, and knowledge.” Hisaharu explained to Misao why he bought books by saving on other things.



A river near Beppu, from Hisaharu’s album

“A car at last!” Hisaharu had bought one.

“Come on in!” Hisaharu sat behind the wheel and was very proud. Misao was surprised that the inside was so tight. Her shoulder almost touched Hisaharu’s.

He soon got accustomed to driving. There were beautiful roads around Beppu. It was his joy to drive his wife and child around. But one day, his sudden braking made Jericho in the back seat fly against the windshield. She was okay, but they thought her brain got worse.

1969

“Mother, here, I have fifty yen.⁶⁵ Will it buy me a TV?” Jericho showed Misao a coin. She felt uncomfortable every time she went to a neighbor’s to watch TV. The neighbor had three very active children. Their big-hearted mother often made doughnuts. Her home made Jericho, who was five, happy and miserable.

“Yer going to kindergarten, Eriko,” Misao said. “Ya need to remember the way home.”

Fifteen minutes on foot is fun, she thought. But I’m alone at kindergarten. How can they change shoes so fast at the entrance? Why can they move so fast to the playground from the building? I always see them so far away by the time I get my shoes changed. I’m always behind. Why can they talk a lot? I’m afraid of my classmates.

The dull girl’s life in a kindergarten started with books every morning. Her favorite one was a picture book; it brought her to a faraway desert at night. “An Arabian prince and an Arabian

⁶⁵ \$0.14.

princess were crossing the romantic night desert under the moonshine on camels.” She had dreamed it in the noisy class.

The book made Jericho forgot anything around her, her too-strict father, hysterical mother, active classmates, and the uniform that was too tight around her neck. Being a girl should be shameful; Jericho thought so because Misao repeated, “Girls should be ...” and “It’s a shame!” every day.

One afternoon, Misao found Jericho was back home from the kindergarten while she was doing the laundry. The daughter hadn’t said, “Ma, I’m back.” Misao didn’t notice that Jericho was timid much more than usual. Her girl had become a victim on the way home from the kindergarten. Under the blue sky, the filthy smell.

The grimy man had come to her on a downward slope along a small playground. She could see her house just fifteen meters away. He squatted down, grabbing her right arm. She had frozen. Terror had deprived her of her voice. The mean man had put his finger in her underwear.

Time stopped.

Jericho saw cirrus clouds in the blue sky high above the bay. Her nerves had died.

He asked her, “Is it painful?”

She gathered her bravery and nodded. The tremendously disgusting man had gone. She could walk but not run home. She found her mother doing laundry out back. *Luckily, mother didn’t notice me. I can’t tell mother what happened to me. She will get angry with me and scold me. “This is all your fault! All your fault! ’Cuz you are sooo ...” Mother’s gonna panic when she knows everything.*

So Jericho snuck to her mother's big mirror to look at herself. On the way home, she had thought a terrible illness had struck her. *It must be an incurable one. I'm not normal anymore. I've become so dirty. It's impossible for me to be happy ever again. I might live in darkness for life.*

In the mirror, she was convicted of her "guilt." She lost her laugh completely. The memory caused her pain every day for years. The scene and the smell had often flashed into her mind, and it cut into her heart for decades.

"Eriko, is it you?" Misao called her daughter. Jericho glanced up. Jericho seemed to be drifting in far way thoughts.

1970

Hisaharu felt kids and youth after war were very different. *Especially my daughter. I don't wanna admit it, but my daughter's dullness has gotten worse. How is Misao caring her while I'm not home? One problem might be TV. At last I can buy a TV. But I found that my brain stops thinking while watching it. Misao laughs and cries when she watches it. We had the terrible era of thought control by the government. Though at last we've obtained freedom to think, TV's making us passive again. People are going to be easily manipulated again. Goofy TV programs will create millions of stupid people.*

Jericho hated her own body. *It's filthy as that man.* On rainy days, on cloudy days, on sunny days, she felt sick. The sky was blue. The clouds were white. The man was nothing but filth. My house roof was *just over there.*

“The teacher is good. I’m content now, though I was afraid, you know, new education,” Misao kept talking to Hisaharu about Jericho’s entering school.

“You must be in harmony with other people.” The teacher looked around at the forty-five young faces. “You shouldn’t point out other’s faults. Be kind, be gentle, and be benign, or selfishness will return to you.” “Avoid confrontation. Give; do not try to take.” She checked a few boys’ eyes. “Quid pro quo.”

Ninety eyes showed they didn’t understand what she was saying. Jericho was one of them.

“If a monkey scratches another’s back, he’ll be scratched by the one.” Students laughed, and a few boys told others, “Scratch my back!”

“Fools despise wisdom and discipline,⁶⁶ elders used to say.” The teacher looked at each chatter mouth. “I’ll tell you a proverb a day.”

Jericho wondered what a proverb was.

“A proverb is what a wise ancestor said,” the teacher said. For her, the wise ancestor was a grandfather who died in Hiroshima. *Tomorrow, I’ll tell them to hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech.*⁶⁷ She became a teacher to teach children his words. She had begun to write down her memories with her grandfather in her childhood years after the A-bomb. She couldn’t understand what he said at all then. She noticed the meaning of what he said while she was struggling to live. *I wanna ask him about them.*

⁶⁶ Proverbs 1.

⁶⁷ Proverbs 8.

When times are good, be happy;
But when times are bad, consider;
God has made the one.⁶⁸

She thought how to teach the children that wisdom was a shelter. *Who told these to Gran'pa?*

Do not be overrighteous,
Neither be overwise.
Why destroy yourself?⁶⁹

"Misao, I'll be a master sergeant!" Hisaharu told Misao.
"So I should go to the academy in Gotemba."

"Congratulations! You've studied so hard."

"We have to move. Men sometimes move alone, but it's not my way."

"It's okay. I like anywhere." Misao was very happy. *Travels! New places! New faces! Gotemba, oh, it'll be my first experience to be out of Kyushu Island!*

On the ferry, Hisaharu saw Beppu, which was on the lower slopes of Mt. Turumi and Mt. Ogi, like an enormous fan upside down.

"Jericho, look. Let's count steamrisings from the hot springs. We won't see such columns of steam on Main Island, yea? It was a sight to behold, isn't it?"

This time, leaving Kyushu Island let him feel the island was his homeland.

⁶⁸ Ecclesiastes 7.

⁶⁹ Ecclesiastes 7.

Misao felt sick all night in the ship. Dawn at last. She walked out onto the deck to feel better. *Oh, this is the Inland Sea. That is Main Island. Almost no waves.* The ship had passed Hiroshima and headed to Kobe, near the ancient Golden City. The land on her left was the road her father had walked. She didn't know it. Tom-O didn't tell that to anyone except Jericho.

"This is a modern technology. Great, yeah?" Hisaharu was very pleased to drive on a new highway. "How good this road is. Main Island is so different from ours. This highway goes to the capital city. Technology shortens the distance between cities."

"Welcome to the academy." The academy was in a pine forest. "Information is the key to keep this nation free." The principal stared into all eyes. "You're here to lead the 160,000 members. The number is small compared with other countries, but quality is more important than quantity. You're going to be leading youth who were born after the war. You remember the army. The old army existed for O-Kimi. But we do for the people."

The principal kept checking each eye. "You will learn how to tackle problems. This is not a school kids go to in which kids can't work with other kids on exams. Here, you must have coworkers working with you on exams. For example, you—" He pointed to men on the window side, "—need to find problems, analyze them, and show your steps. And you—" he pointed to men on the corridor side "—have to make objections. Then you—" he looked at all men, "—talk in detail about them, discuss them, debate them, but never argue, never

be emotional like women.” The men smiled. “Be logical. You have lived in the hearts of *giri* and *ninjou*. Forget them, I mean, never make your kin and friends your priority. ‘Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.’”⁷⁰

He’s like my gran’ma. Society has taught people to obey, to follow. The elder’s voice had been the only solution. That was why militarism was so powerful. This school also has a strict pecking order. But what the teacher said is a totally new idea.

Hisaharu learned many new things, including that Nihon used to rely on the United States for 70 percent of its oil before the war.

Their residence in Gotemba was better than the tiny terrace house in Beppu. High pines surrounded the house. Mt. Fuji, a holy place, was visible through the window. Hisaharu made the upper part of a built-in closet Jericho’s bed. She was happy with the bed because she was attracted with “a bed”. *It’s very modern. Foreign princesses sleep in beds. Though my bed is far from a real bed, it’s okay. It’s unique.*

“Here we have a bath!” Jericho said. *I hated going to the sento with father. Why didn’t mother take me there?*

Their TV received many channels because they were near the capital. “They’re garbage again!” Her father rejected all that entertainment. “Broadcasting is for the public. It’s a sin they scatter moral decadence. Those lowbrow programs ruin kids, new generations’ hearts.” So her father’s late evenings came to be Jericho’s happy TV hours. It happened so often.

⁷⁰ Proverbs 31.

Her new teacher repeated morals every day. “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than you.”⁷¹

Some of the six-year-olds listened to her, but others had no ears. “Do you hear me?” She walked to the new girl with dull eyes. “Eriko-san, you also should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.”⁷²

She couldn’t look at the teacher. *I’m always slow, parents say.*

One rainy day on her way home, a classmate pushed her into a puddle. It was miserable being wet, but much more than that, she was afraid of her mother’s reaction. *Mother will get irritated and say, “Why can’t you answer back? Who was the boy? Why are you so—!”* She tried to hide, but Misao found her in the mud. “Why can’t you answer back? Who was the boy? Why are you so—!”

Jericho would not tell the boy’s name, didn’t want mother barging to his house. *If she does, he will be more violent to me.* Jericho had no willpower, however. Her mother got the name and *tsunamied* to his house, grasping muddy Jericho’s hand. “Why!” Misao shouted. “How weak! I have to be stricter with you!”

It was a sports day.

“*Gumbare!*” She tried to cheer up Jericho.

“Well, what do I have to hold onto?”

“Onto everything!”

“Ah.” *Why do I have to try hard? What’s “gumbare”? I don’t wanna do what she wants.*

⁷¹ Philippians 2.

⁷² James 2.

Misao shouted it loud on the twenty-meter run. “*Gumbare!*” Her daughter turned to her and waved her hand because she had been called. Misao cried, “I can’t believe this!”

“Honor one another above yourselves.”⁷³ Jericho repeated what Misao memorized from Ino. “Favoritism is forbidden.”⁷⁴ *But could Ma do that when she was a child?* Jericho wondered. *Listen humbly to what parents say? I can’t.*

My daughter needs a human voice, not a TV, or she’ll be more lazy and stupid. I haven’t told her old tales for a long time, Hisaharu thought. “Tonight I’ll tell you a story.”

“You will?” Jericho smiled.

She smiled! Hisaharu was surprised at the light in her eyes. It was as if she were back from a long sleep. *Children need tales.*

Jericho didn’t notice that her horrible memory had left her, at least temporarily.

“I’ll tell you one from the Old Fact Record. I read it in the high school library, and it’s still vivid in my mind.”

“Fact? Oh, a real story?”

“No it’s not. It’s a history. Any history is the history of the winners. Every book expresses the will of the writer. The Old Fact Record had been an oral tradition till 712 in the House of Aray, a female line long, long ago. Aunt Ayako used to tell us another history, our history. She used to tell us it at nights while we were working with rice straw.”

“Is Aunt Ayako a daughter of the Aray?”

⁷³ Romans 12.

⁷⁴ James 2.

"I hope so. Her history was about the loser, the Earth Spiders, long arms and long legs in old, old days."

"I like stories, but not about spiders. The one I love is the sisters, Flower-blooming and Rock-long! A son of a goddess was in love with beautiful Flower-blooming, but their father said his plain elder daughter should also be his wife. The crown prince from the sky denied Rock-long, so the father said men on earth wouldn't live into their hundreds anymore." She talked fast.

"Where did you learn that?"

"In kindergarten."

"Great. It's also a part of the Old Fact Record." He thought his daughter would be worried to know she was a Rock-long, not a Flower-blooming. At least if her eyes were like Misao's.

"What else do you know?" he asked.

"I like, um, the story, the brothers. The elder didn't like the younger."

"The Sea-blessing and Forest-blessing."

"Yeah. I like the part where Forest-blessing went to the bottom of the sea to look for the brother's fishhook."

"There was Princess Toyotama in the Dragon Palace. She later helped the Forest-blessing to be their father's successor."

"Um? All I love is the scenery. Colorful fish and swaying sea forest, bubbles, a castle, a princess, and a man. I thought he was just a hunter, not a prince."

"Well, the brothers' mother was Flower-blooming. Their father was from the sky, ordered by the son of goddess to rule the islands."

"Oh, the stories are in the story."

He wondered whether he would tell her the brothers' father was from the Korean peninsula, not sky. *Later.*

Princess Toyotama had knowledge to control water; that was the reason her father was called the god of the sea. She gave the skill to the handsome young man to make him the next O-Kimi.

“I’ll tell you the story’s much older part. It’s in the age of gods. Today’s tale is the oldest part.”

“It’s fantastic.”

“In the first, at the highest universe, three gods with no shape talked and decided to make a world, land, and gods for humans.”

“Is it real?”

“Oh this is a tale. Someday, I’ll tell you about Greek mythology, Hinduism, and Genesis from the Bible. You’ll notice the same stories in them, like the three gods, the sisters, the brothers.”

He saw his daughter’s shining eyes. *I’m sorry I’ve left you for so long. A child’s week is worth my ten years.*

Three gods ordered a god and a goddess to create the world. They created many lands and gods. When the goddess was giving birth to the god of fire, she died. Even the long passing of time couldn’t ease her husband’s sorrow. So he went to the underground. The palace’s stone gate was closed. The goddess came to the other side of the huge stone gate knowing her husband had come all that way.

“My dear,” he called her with a soft voice, “I need you. The lands we created are not completed. Come back to me please.”

“My dear, I’m so moved. I’ll talk to the gods here. Please wait and never look at me.”

He waited for a long time. He couldn’t wait anymore. He decided to walk into the darkness. He put a tiny fire on the

tooth of the comb on his head. After a long walk, the fire showed him a terrible figure of his wife. Her husband froze, then he ran away.

She noticed him and cried, "You saw me!" She got angry and sent her soldiers to her husband who had broken his promise.

Hisaharu saw that Jericho slept tight.

The next day after school, Jericho gathered all her bravery at last and visited a classmate. "Let's play together."

"Ah, Eriko-chan. My pa and ma say I must not play with you. You're a soldier's child." The classmate turned and left Jericho at the door.

Seven-year-old Jericho felt the sky fall on her. She was utterly crushed. *My father belongs to a group that kills.* Somehow, she had come to know through media that there used to be militarism that had started a war.

Many parents and teachers expressed their notion, "The existence of the Defense Force is against article 9 of the constitution that renounces war." Professors at the universities expressed their intelligence by stating they were on the side of China and the anti-Defense Force.

Article 9: Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Nihonese forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

(2) In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces,

as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

This article has been the subject of heated debate continually since the birth of the constitution after the war. It was far beyond the first grader's understanding. She was very sad and miserable. *My father's work is hated.*

Disputes once raged through the country from 1959 to 1960 over the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. Though it was before her birth, public opinions had been at the boiling point over the treaty and article 9.

"Father, TV and teachers say the DF is bad. They say it's not allowed by article 9. What's article 9?"

Hisaharu was pleased with the question from his daughter. "Do you think safety is important?"

"Yes." But Jericho couldn't go further. The word *safety* reminded her of the terrible incident the previous year.

"Good. There are two kinds of safety. One is safety from crime, another is from other countries. But the majority of people don't think of the second one."

"Mmm."

"People think independence is given, not a thing they have to create." He found she didn't understand well. "So what do you feel if someone attacks you here in your home?"

"I would be so scared." Jericho slowly raised her eyes.

"I'm going to protect you. The Defense Force is for this. And it's also a lock for a house."

"Locks on doors."

“I’m glad you understand me. Article 9 was written in important rules called the constitution. It went into effect in May 1947, after World War II. It was made by the occupation force, but their leader said that nothing in article 9 prevented any and all necessary steps for the preservation of the safety of the nation. A country cannot be expected to resist the overweening law of self-preservation. If attacked, it will defend itself. Article 9 was aimed entirely at eliminating aggression. Difficult?”

“Difficult.”

“Remember. Try to think with your brain, this—” he touched her head “—the one between your ears. Chose good books. They will tell you how to consider problems from every aspect. Do not believe mass media blindly. I wonder who’s handling the media. They want this country unlocked, free to be invaded.”

“Difficult.” Though Jericho’s understanding was not enough, she tried to keep those words in her mind.

Hisaharu was getting nervous about the training in the Jukai, trees-ocean, at the foot of Mt. Fuji. His group wasn’t informed how many days it would take. Each man’s food was only about a hundred grams of dried bread. Experienced men told him a lot about the Jukai. “It’s a notorious place for suicides. Compasses point the wrong way. Its magnetism isn’t ordinary. We must have knowledge and a sense of orientation.”

His group headed north. They elbowed their way through bush. They were unable to cover more than a few kilometers on the first day. They found their compasses weren’t working. *I have to find what I’ll eat and drink here in this thick forest.* Old pine trees’ roots were curling. The wind shrieked through the pines, scattering leaves and twigs. “Prepare to move out!”

The light was getting yellow. *It will soon be gone. My stomach's empty. Oh, leaves!* He tore a soft leaf off a branch and put it in his mouth. *If I only had salt! Frogs can be food. But I can't eat them. Insects might be easier to eat. But not now.* There were canyons. They all felt a deep chill as they crawled into one of them. He felt something moving underfoot. He trampled on a snake. *At any cost, I'll eat it. If we could only start a fire!* Smoke was forbidden because it would let the enemy locate them.

On the third evening, dark clouds got to be heavy rain and wind. It turned out to be a terrible storm at night. Thunder and lightning. Water in boots and socks. Packs got heavier. Rain down his neck. His fifth sense awoke suddenly. And the sixth sense. He felt it was a joy. *I will be able to feel the moisture in the air before two days.* He suddenly thought the pilot was alive.

The goal was in front of him. His throat was parched. He almost fell, but he kept moving his legs. *Water! Water!* They spied a rice paddy through the forest. They couldn't run; they had to crawl to the water. *Terrible!* They spat out the water.

"What's wrong with the water?"

"It's 'cuz of chemicals."⁷⁵ All the men's parents were farmers.

"My father's labor is reduced, but I'm afraid for his health."

"I do too." They looked at the water. There were no frogs, no grass.

"I should go back and start traditional farming," one man said.

⁷⁵ Hisaharu's best friend, Kenji Handa's talk, 2008, March

The training made him an executive, but his income was still much less than that of the average thirty-three-year-old man. Executives had to pay for their uniforms.

“Before leaving here, why not go sightseeing in Tokyo?”

“Yeah!” Misao was pleased. “And to the Yasukuni Shrine to pray for your brother Ichirou-san.”

They didn’t think the shrine would accept war criminals, class A, eight years later.

Tokyo, once bombed completely, was on the rise. It was not like other places. So crowded, the capital had been rebuilt faster than public planning after the war. He felt Tokyo was abroad. Tokyo’s sky was edged with buildings. It reminded him of the sky in Hakata in 1954. Its immense sky once made him afraid he was from the mountain area. *Big cities’ spaces are edged by man-made things, not nature-made things.*

People were dressed well. “There must be many wealthy families who had to pay 75 percent tax.” Hisaharu said. The tax system had been devised by Carl Sumner Shoup, an American economist, soon after the war. It produced economic growth and the middle class, which Shoup had aimed for. It was the basis of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

“This is the center of the mass media and the academy. The metropolitan era has almost no storms like the ones in the south. No snowfalls as in the north and on the other side by the ocean. Here, all earth is covered with asphalt and concrete. Rain can’t make mud here. There is not a vestige of any primary industry.”

Hisaharu talked to Jericho without expecting her to understand. Then he asked Misao, “Do the capital people

know the majority of farmers in Nihon grow rice on steep mountains, using terraces?”

“No way.” Misao’s mind was on the styles women were wearing. She got hungry, so she said, “Eriko may be hungry.”

Restaurants were so expensive, the food they had brought was gone.

“Let’s go to this *shoku-do* for supper.”

Each of them needed a little bit of courage to enter a *shoku-do*. *Do they notice we come from the island in the end? Our pronunciation? It sounds like they speak another language. What is so-called manners? The culture of chairs and tables is so embarrassing.*

1972

In January, the family went back to Beppu. “*Onsen* again.” Misao was delighted. “It’s really good for the skin.”

Hisaharu was pleased, “It’s really good for my nose problem.”

Jericho was disappointed. *No house bath again. I dislike sentou. It doesn’t matter hot spring or not.*

Two months later, he received orders to move to an island near the border between Korea and Kyushu. Jericho was pleased, expecting she wouldn’t have to go to *sentou* anymore.

It’s the nearest land to the North Latitude thirty-eight degrees, divided countries. The geography of the Tu-shima strait has strategic importance. Russia was blocked by Nihon from the icy sea when the Russians wanted to ship on the Pacific Ocean.

The order reminded Hisaharu of Ichiro. *Brother, now the maritime Defense Force owns data about foreign submarines*

traveling under the Tu-shima Strait in common with the U.S. Navy you fought against. He thought of the history of Tu-shima. It had been the only connection between the continent and Nihon.

Three thousand years ago, men from the Korean peninsula had landed on Tu-shima and sailed to Kyushu and Main Island. The agricultural population increased more quickly than did the natives, who were fishing and picking nuts and living in caves. The original people's legs and arms were long, and their faces were different from the new people.

The old Earth Spiders were the natives. Native women had babies with the new people. Now, pure natives are nowhere except on North Island. That's why Nihonese faces were the same as Korean faces.

Tu-shima had been the most important island. In the first century, Tu-shima people watched men riding big animals get out from ships. The half-animal, half-men passed the islands many times. They didn't come back. The Tu-shima tribes didn't know what was happening on the main islands.

A hundred years later, the tribe watched a woman leading thousands of men and huge ships from Kyushu to the continent.

In the seventh century, when the last king of Paekche in the Korean peninsula was taken to Silla, another dynasty in the peninsula, a prince of Paekche asked Nihon, where millions of ex-peninsula people were living, to send its navy. Tu-shima was its base.

When Paekche totally disappeared in 660, thousands of people crossed the sea. In 668, Kogryō was conquered, and they also landed on Tu-shima and then sailed to Kyushu. The east islands were better than China for refugees because

they knew that through their skills and knowledge, they could rebuild their lives on the islands. But all the new refugees found in the whole new world was what Kaya and Paekche had already established. Their descendants called themselves Yamato, and the new generation didn't understand Korean.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, though Nihon was closed, Tu-shima traded with Korea.

"The fourth move! We're getting poorer! I heard private companies pay the cost for moves for personnel changes, but the DF doesn't," Misao complained. "I wish they would pay us too, but now, we have to think about tokens of our thanks, the food and drinks for his fellow workers and neighbors who're going to help us move. We'll go by ship again, won't we? I'm afraid Eriko and I are going to get seasick."

The ship was surprisingly small.

"No wind, good!" someone said.

But as soon as the ferry went out of the Hakata Bay, the ship turned out to be a leaf in a swell of the Straits of Tu-shima. Misao and Jericho were sick for hours. They couldn't move at all; they just squatting down under the falls of luggage. Hisaharu had disposable bags for his wife and daughter. *They say it's good today. This seaway used to be the only tie between the continent and Nihon till a thousand years ago. How did ancient men pass this strait? This stream will reach Izumo after here.* Hisaharu saw the direction to Izumo through a small window. *In Izumo, a friend said that the ocean stream brought people and skills from the continent to Izumo. They might not have been able to go back to Korea 'cuz of this strong stream.*

He thought of what the ancient people must have felt. *How about the Strait of Dover? How wide is it? Was it also a risky journey?*

Misao crawled to the outside to breathe fresh air. Looking forward, she saw grey shade between the sky and water. It was getting clear and huge.

“How did the bottom of the ocean jut out into the sky suddenly?” Hisaharu asked, seeing the coastal erosion. “There’s no flat land between mountains and the sea. How do people live here?”

The port of Izuhara came into view. It was inside a pocket surrounded by high cliffs. The official residence was in another pocket surrounded by a cliff with a deep forest on it. The residence was a very old terrace house with mice. On the ground floor, there was a tiny kitchen. Above it, there were small two tatami rooms. The noisy animals were busy and wouldn’t stay in the ceilings. They ran around anywhere and kept Jericho awake the first night.

“These residences might have been here since the Mongolian attack in the thirteenth century,” Hisaharu said to Jericho at futon-side. He was sitting on stairs, as it was only about thirty centimeters from Jericho’s thin pillow. Hisaharu wanted his dull daughter to learn something and become active.

“What’s that? Is it the tale of the kamikaze?”

“It’s a history, not a story. The great Mongolians landed here and Iki Island on the way to Kyushu. They destroyed everything in these islands. Though Main Island people believe kamikaze saved Nihon.” Then Hisaharu heard a ten-year-old boy asking his father, far away among his memories, “Are our armaments

really miserable? Last week, a typhoon made a fighter crash. Are typhoons our only defense? What happened to the pilot?"

"Oh ..." Jericho heard the tragedy's echoes in the wind.

"I'm sure women and kids hid in the deep forest. Even in the twentieth century, here are plenty of primitive forests. Anyhow, Mongolians, Nihonese, and Koreans were originally the same people." He didn't say girls were taken with a long rope through their hands.

"We're relatives to each other," Jericho said, "not only our looks, mother said, but also the Mongolian marks on babies' backs!" Jericho made her eyes bright.

"Mongolians have been very smart. While they ruled Asia and east Europe," Hisaharu continued, "they allowed local religions. They were intelligent enough to know freedom of religion was the key to success."

"Why father, you sometimes say religion has been the cause of troubles, corruption, and wars since ancient days. That's why you have no belief, isn't it?"

Hisaharu was surprised at what his daughter said about his religious cynicism. *Had I repeated that?* "I'll give you the answer for the first question, which was the point. Religion has framed a complete guide for people to think and act and for rulers to rule. You might hate it if someone tried to dominate what you think." He talked slowly, remembering how the militarists had manipulated religion.

"No way!"

"It happened to us, when I was a child."

"No way."

"Anytime, religion has been the core of human beings. That's why the Mongolian kingdom allowed freedom of religion but took over other aspects like taxation."

“Mmm.”

“The answer for the second one is the difference between subjectivity and objectivity.”

“Sub ... and ob ...” Jericho glanced up for a moment.

“Subjective is the opposite of objective,” he said.

“Two fundamentally opposing views, they are?” Jericho reconfirmed.

“Yes, subjectivity is looking at something with your heart, and objectivity is looking at something with others’ eyes. It’s my subjective opinion that a lot of religions are skilled systems to collect money for a handful of people’s luxurious lives.”

“Okay, we can have at least two aspects for one thing, can’t we? I think I understand you want me to be also objective.”

“It’s hard for you. You’re too young to understand.” Hisaharu looked for something for her. “Now I have nothing good for you. But once, I read a book in my school days. Though that is one of religions.”

“Um.”

“The Christians’ book. I think their Bible is divided into the two aspects, objectivity in the first half, called the Old Testament, and subjectivity in the latter half, called the New Testament.”

“Umm.”

“Rules from outside, rules from your heart.”

“Umm.”

How can I grow humanity in this eight-year-old? How can I protect her from false teachers⁷⁶ who will exploit her? How can I raise her not to be bold and arrogant?⁷⁷

⁷⁶ 2 Peter 2.

⁷⁷ 2 Peter 2.

The base in Tu-shima was tiny. *It's impossible to protect my homeland with this system*, he thought. But life there was peaceful.

"Hanada-kun, we're gonna have a welcome fishing for newcomers. How about next Sunday?" the chief asked.

"Fishing?" *It's the most boring thing in the world*. He tried not to show his discomfort. *This might be the best small talk to make*.

"You know we have no cinema. All we have is the sea. You like *sashimi*, do you?"

Oh no. They might want me to eat raw fish. "Well, my home village wasn't at seaside. Raw fish were—"

"Don't say raw fish, Hanada-kun. It sounds bad. If you have a fresh one in perfect slices, I'm sure you'll like it."

Elders always wanna push their tastes. May the day be rainy.

The next day, the family visited a school.

"Arrah! It's built of wood!" Misao said. "I'm happy!"

"It reminds us of when we were kids," Hisaharu said.

A typical old teacher appeared. "How do you do, Mr. and Mrs. Hanada. My name is Antoku. I live there." She pointed to a tiny house beside the playground. "So don't hesitate to ask me anytime you want."

"Mrs. Antoku." Hisaharu repeated the name.

"Anyone from other islands is surprised at my name, the famous O-Kimi's, who died in the battle eight hundred years ago. This island has many Antokus. Let me show you around. We have two rooms. One is for the first grade, the other for the second. Eriko-san, your room is here. I teach your class."

Talking to the shy girl, the teacher felt relaxed with this family. *These parents are not the after-war style. Good. Parents*

these days put the blame for their problem children on teachers.
“When you get to be in the third grade, you will use a school bus to the main building over the bay and the peninsula.”

“Ah-lahh!” Misao turned to Jericho, “You must be punctual!”

“In an age with no watch and clock, Tu-shima-n’s moves were done by the tides. The time, the date, the month, each schedule!”

“So if I was lazy, I would drown!” Hisaharu laughed.

“She will,” Misao looked at her daughter. *It’s made my blood boil each morning to make my dull daughter on time for school!*

“Have you heard about the Parent Teacher Association?”

“In Beppu and Gotemba there were those associations.”

“You’re gonna hear about its activities and how to select the executives.”

“The executives! Oh, I can’t. I have no ability,” Misao cried.

“Ah, everyone says so. But they handle these community activities for children.”

“There must be mothers who don’t become executives for reasons, such as work,” Hisaharu said.

It reminded Misao of the time she heard that reasoning. *I knew full-time working mothers had no intention of looking down on housewives, but I felt misery listening to them. Working mothers’ children also go to school. Housewives are the nurses for husbands’ parents, religious functions operator, tomb-flower-keepers, and community safe keepers. Earning money is not more important than these.*

“No,” the teachers said. “Here, community ties are strong. I heard that in towns, only mothers join the PTA.”

“Of course fathers have to work,” Hisaharu said.

“PTA, in English, parents, means *ryoushin*. There should be fathers.”

“Oh, I think I learned that English word in school.”

“Too many foreign words. People get confused.”

Hisaharu saw a beautiful April dawn on the fishing day. *Oh no.* The fishing place was on the other side of the island. The deep coastal inlet formed a heavenly view. Over the thick forest of aroma, water was clear to show fish among waving grasses. *Here, every tiny island is covered with forest all the way to the sea. Elder people say a mountain is a clod of water. I see here that an island is also a clod of water.*

“Oooover there, it’s Korea, part of the continent!” The chief pointed to grey-blue land in the mist. “We can see a foreign country. We’re on the route that had brought agriculture, bronze, iron, letters, Buddhism, and Confucianism since three BC.”

“I can see it.” Hisaharu was surprised to see a foreign country for the first time.

“Imagine the thousands of years! Picture the journey! Feel the ancient wind!”

“And amazingly, there are sea women.”

The boss handed him a rod. “He’s gonna tell you how to fish.”

“My name is Hanada, originally from Munakata.”

“Oh yeah. The Munakata Shrine! Historical! My name is Iwai. I’m eighty-eight,” he said proudly. “My wife is still a sea woman over there. She’s seventy-seven, but you wouldn’t imagine it.”

“Wow, is she? Great.” Those sea women were old.

Hisaharu looked at Mr. Iwai. Hisaharu recalled the story Ayako had told. “May I ask you how your name is written in Chinese characters?”

“Do you know the battles of the Iwai against Yamato’s O-Kimi of the mainland Kyushu fifteen hundred years ago?”

“I’ve heard of it as a legend in my village, not in school,” Hisaharu answered. “When Silla sent troops to Kaya, both in Korea, the O-Kimi on Main Island, Nihon ordered Iwai in Kyushu Island to help Kaya. But Iwai was on the side of Silla. I heard Iwai perished.”

“No, no. It’s what the Yamato’s history says. Kyushu’s history says he ran away into the forested mountains. Yamato’s army couldn’t find him. And Iwai was not on the side of the Silla. He was Hayato, one of the Earth Spiders. He just wanted to get complete independence from Yamato, whose origin was Kaya in the continental peninsula. My name in Chinese characters is its meaning!” He smiled.

“We’re not Yamato, but Hayato, men of Kyushu! As you’re tall, and with your cheeks, you could be a son of the Emishi.” An old man said.

“E-mi-shi, you mean. They’d been forced by Yamato to move from North Land to protect Kyushu fifteen hundred years ago.” Hisaharu couldn’t find out what to say, so they just laughed together. *Unbelievable again. Here’s a family who has passed down the tale for fifteen hundred years. It’s the twentieth century, and I’m one of the protectors of Yamato, including ancient Hayato and Emishi.* “They say late spring in North Land brings many kinds of blooming at a time.”

“*Sakura* pink, snow-willow white, *tutuji* red, *tampopo* yellow altogether. I’d like to see them too!”

“Time had changed,” the old man said. “Now we have countries on earth, but legend says we had no borders. Along Tu-shima, Kyushu, the Small Islands in line, Taiwan, Korea and China, our fathers freely sailed, landed, and had sons.”

“Wasn’t it the age of pirates?” Hisaharu smiled.

The young O-Kimi, Antoku, was taken into the sea. His mother was from ocean-oriented people. When the boy was lost, the age had come to become land-oriented people. Ocean people were half-traders and half-pirates who had gained enormous wealth. Then they made efforts to be guards for the O-Kimi and aristocrats who lived at the inner end of their sea, Golden City. The guards were called samurai. Aristocrats looked down on the weapon holders. One of the ocean people at last succeeded to give a daughter to an O-Kimi. The enormous wealth was spent for the aristocrats’ life and architecture, not for armament. Gold and silver were easy to get at the time. Aristocrats consumed clove, rosewood, sandalwood, and musk every evening. Every nanny prepared a fragrance for her princess to put in her hair and clothes, and it was for beautiful men to identify the princess in darkness.

It was the land-oriented people who gave fame and pride to samurai. They helped one of Antoku’s half-brothers come to be an O-Kimi.

New history was being developed by the people focused on the land, not by the people watching over the ocean.

“Oh yeah, along the coast, it didn’t matter where you’re from. Why do people want to separate themselves because of language?”

“Ahh, because. Mmm. I hadn’t thought of that.”

“Young man, think about that.”

“Um, to, to, to ... The ways to collect and spend tax?”

“Young man, you persuaded me! Er, Tu-shima is very far from Tokyo, but you should understand the political system we’re governed by.”

The old man let the freshman fish freely at first. Hisaharu cast his line, but it got caught on his back. The old man taught him the knack. Other old boys' buckets were filling quickly.

"Do not hurry. You seem to be hasty. But hasty men are good for fish because they pay attention to the smallest changes on the water."

"Is that true?" He sighed.

"I have inherited a scroll." The old man sad.

"Oh, family treasure?" *My father also had a scroll.*

"The old writing proved to us a lot of things." the eighty-eight-year-old boy continued, "Antoku O-Kimi didn't die in the naval battle in 1185."

He suddenly felt something pulling on his arms through the line and rod. The reel began to turn violently. *This time I'll catch one!* He saw it just under the water. He frantically turned the crank of the reel. At last a splashing fish was in his hand.

"You did it! It's a rockfish. Suitable for miso soup." The old boys gathered around him.

"You've forgotten yourself, have you? Now you're one of us." They patted his shoulder respectfully. "I have a *sashimi* knife. Do you know how to slice this?"

"I'm afraid not."

"Here." He cut off the head and gills. "Into three sheets." Using the edge out, he cleared the insides and washed the fish well. "The knife angle is the key. Use the middle, not the tip of the knife to take the first side of the fillet so you don't waste the fillet. Then from the hole to the tail." He inserted the knife tip into the gap he cut from downside. "Push the tail by your left fingers and move the knife from tail along the bones. Here, one sheet." He sliced it into five and gave one to Hisaharu. "So fresh, isn't it?"

“It’s ... Ahh! What a good feeling on the teeth and tongue. I never had one like this. The sea was far from my house when I was young. And there weren’t refrigerators. All the fish I ever had was dried,” Hisaharu said.

“What was protein for you?”

“Eggs and goat milk. For guests and festivals, we cooked a chicken.”

“Farmer? You may have had cows.”

“They’re for field work, not for food. You know, eating animals is a Western influence.”

“Here you have another.”

“Ah, fresh *sashimi* is very delicious. If I could keep *sashimi* in the refrigerator. My refrigerator door is out of order. I have to put something outside the door to keep it closed.”

“No fridge can keep *sashimi* well.”

The Tu-shima Sea was abundant enough for even a beginner. The powerful feeling of a fish tugging on the line, the sight of a fish splashing on the surface—that day made him an angler.

Jericho enjoyed the natural life. Stormy seas often stopped the ships that brought rice, vegetables, meat, and newspapers. There was only one telephone in the community. Cold winter froze water pipes at night. The electricity was cut off usually. It was an exciting moment for Jericho that the light went off and mother lit a candle. It gave off a faint light in the darkness, in the roaring sound of a typhoon.

At last, Hisaharu’s first maneuver as a leader was set. He felt nervous about his men. He knew that they always rated their bosses; he had been one of them once. Now it was his

turn to be judged. *The community in this island is small. I have to be good. Water shortages occur often. Helping each other is the only way to live, as in my village.*

The night before the maneuver Hisaharu came home and ordered Misao to make a hundred rice balls. "I'll need them by six o'clock tomorrow for my men."

How dare he speak to me that way! Misao was at a loss for words. *Without adding "please," just ordering me! Why do I have to make such a lot of rice balls?* She wanted to ask him, but his look was severe. She stayed all night cooking rice. Dawn was approaching, and she was still furious with his attitude. She could guess maneuvers were hard, but she wished he had helped with the cooking. *At least change the attitude!* At six, he left with a hundred rice balls without expressing gratitude.

A woman next door rushed to Misao. "Was it you who made all those rice balls?"

"Oh yeah, it was me."

"Why didn't you tell me? I would have helped you! It must have been such hard work!"

Her kindness moved Misao to tears. "My master didn't say thanks!"

"Oh, my master said, Hanada-san was so friendly with all fifty men during the maneuver. When they were hungry and groggy, Hanada-san handed out the rice balls. My master said it was the first time for him to receive such a good thing during maneuvers, and he thought Misao-san had made them all. *He sure thanks you. And the other forty-nine thank you also, I'm sure.*"

Hisaharu called his colleagues at least once a week when he wasn't training in the mountains. "Let's blow off steam!"

In front of the kitchen, seven or eight men sat on the tatami floor around a tiny table. He wanted to be a good coworker in their eyes. They could show their real faces after five. Sufficient communication was impossible in the base and fields. Moreover, he was happy to have them enjoy the hairtail, seabream, flounder, and yellowtail he had caught and sliced up.

"Go upstairs," Hisaharu told Jericho.

She went to the narrow stair between the kitchen and entrance. She lay down on the futon by the stairs, but it was hard for her to sleep because of their laughter and loud voices. Some of them smoked; the smell annoyed her.

Misao prepared dishes for them and served them beer. She was always friendly, but she was worn out by such parties, which the men never helped her with. Once, she asked a very young man to pass her a cup. Hisaharu scolded her loudly, "Don't use a man such a thing!"

There was one question she really hated.

"Hanada-san, why don't you have one more child? Only one child isn't good." One of the men turned to Jericho, if she was still in front of the kitchen, "You're lonely, aren't you?"

"Well," Jericho touched her mother.

"My wife is too old." Hisaharu spoke for Misao. "Jericho, go upstairs."

"No, no, no, she's young enough. It's natural for our generation to have many brothers and sisters. Those mothers often gave births in their thirties," another man said.

"It's a woman's duty to have a son, Madam!" the oldest man said.

Every time she heard this, Jericho felt people were belittling her because she was a girl. Misao felt a pain in her stomach.

“Payment for the liquor has been a lot for the parties ... every month. I want to buy a doll or something for Eriko, but it’s impossible ... Poor Eriko.”

Jericho brought her imagination to bear on a *sake*-bottle box. Misao asked her the day before garbage day, “Do you want this?”

I am a queen in the world of this box. The box was the place she belonged to. Jericho loved floating in fantasies. I’m in a world where I don’t have to eat fish anymore. The world I can eat meat. I eat beef with no white and hard thing. I don’t have to go to the stream to wash my shoes. I wonder why no one walks down to the rocky side of the stream. The water is clear there. The forests on both sides are beautiful. There I am always only me.

“We have more tasty things at the bottom of the sea,” a coworker said to Hisaharu one day. “My father is a diving fisherman. Let’s go dive.”

“No, no, I can’t dive.”

“You don’t have to be able to swim to dive. My father will tell you how to make a harpoon.”

“Make a harpoon?”

“Yes. The bottom of our sea is very rocky. If you look between the rocks, you’ll find very good fish. Under the sea is very wonderful. You can forget everything there.”

Jericho, eight years old, loved the forest on the cliff in back of her house. It brought her the higher view. Beyond the

cliff, there was thick forest spreading. She walked into it. *How beautiful nature is.* When she made a deep breath, she felt the trees gave her power. She was alone but not lonely. The forest spurred her imagination; her fantasies were clearer than in the house. She tried to feel something supernatural. *Classmates say they saw ghosts, heard something strange. They say spirits are floating.*

But all she could see was the solemn forest and her mental pictures. She closed her eyes. All she could hear were songs of birds and leaves and her creation. *Transparent boys and girls are among the bushes and clouds.* She knew they were born in her and flew away. So there was no reason to be afraid of them.

A short walk let her discover crystal-clear water running under deep *sa-sa* bushes. She walked along it and found a beautiful fountain. Whole forest was sparkling by sunshine above and beneath. Sunbeams that filtered through the foliage were dancing on the water. She stared in amazement at the frog eggs in the clear stream. There were hundreds of black spots in long jelly tubes. It reminded her of the jelly-like sweets her mother made from sea plants on the third of March. She didn't realize at last she was free of the terrible memory that made her shudder. Everything in the forest attracted her.

Transparent! Trees, streams, air, sunbeams, and bugs—every bit of nature has a transparent body. Spellbound, she felt she was melting into nature. It made her very happy.

She came to know rain changes her forest much magical. 'I love a bright day after the water falls from the sky. Running waters spring out, drawing transparent waves along roots and stones. Jumping on such water is interesting. Think quickly, or, my feet!

One rainy day, she decided to make a doll house with papers Misao kept. The doll was the one Misao had bought years ago. *Gran'ma said she would buy the fascinating house next year. But I know she can't. Gran'ma has to buy toys for my cousins who live together.*

School life was unpleasant again. She couldn't talk with others as usual. A boy called Kajiya especially frightened her. One day in music class, all the boys and girls were singing. Kajiya, on her right side, whispered something to the class leader boy and put the leader in front of Jericho. After the song, the two boys burst into laughter rolling on the floor. Jericho couldn't understand what happened. "Out of tune!" They were still rolling on the floor. "Hanada sings off-key!"

All her classmates turned to her. Jericho was embarrassed because she didn't know she wasn't good at singing. *I'm bad at singing. I'm good at nothing. I'll never sing again.*

The old teacher liked her because she cleaned the classroom and corridor though some kids did not. It didn't matter for Jericho whether someone was watching her or not at cleaning time. One hot day in July, the teacher told Jericho softly, "Jericho, stay here after school."

"Today? Am I alone?"

"Yes. Let's master the multiplication table, till *kuku*-81."

It was only Jericho who couldn't recite the table.

"Before the summer break, let's memorize it."

Seven days later, Jericho could recite it. It took great patience for the teacher to teach Jericho. "You did well, Jericho. Now is your summer vacation. See you on the ninth of August."

"The ninth?"

"Do you know what that date is?"

“Umm—”

“Let’s offer a moment of silent prayer for the atomic bomb victims. As you’re from outside of Nagasaki Prefecture, it must be your first experience. Tu-shima is far from the city of Nagasaki, but all schools in the Nagasaki Prefecture have devoted that day to pray for twenty-six years now.”

“When I was in the first grade, the day I had to go to school during the summer vacation was the fifteenth,” Jericho said. “I was in Gotamba, Shizuoka Prefecture.”

“How far. It’s the day the war ended. Do you remember what teachers told you about the ninth?”

“Well, no. I’m sorry.”

“You don’t have to apologize. You were just eight,” the teacher said with a pleasant smile. “One atomic bomb killed 74,000 people in the city of Nagasaki.”

No book, no media, no teacher have a stress on the country which made it. This history had been in the passive voice. Sometimes, the subject of the sentence had been “a” bomber. The teacher was also one of the majority who had no hatred for America. She was also one of them who regretted the militarism of her father’s age.

1973

Hisaharu went to the seashore alone. He wanted to be alone for a while after a maneuver. *The incoming tide will be in the evening.* A boss had told him he would find delicious turban shells under the sea. He looked around. ‘Tide is low now.’ He saw rocks in layers under thick forest along the sea. All the rocks were like plates piled horizontally. He felt billions of years. Little by little, sea had piled up the dust of lives.

It reminded him of Tu-shima-houses' roofs that used such rocks as tiles. *No typhoon can blow off such a roof. Here, no earthquake, maybe. Anyhow, how beautiful! I wanna share this feeling with, ah, how happy if Misao had the same sense as I. Ah, she's my life, my life. I'm still alone now. My home village also had beautiful rock walls supporting farms. Do my people still keep them?*

Walking in the deep inlet's water, he saw other grace beyond the trees. *That must be the Watatumi Shrine. The gate I saw fourteen years ago in Izumo was significant and a set. Here, the gates in line on the water are seven sets of two logs with sacred straw rope between them. This is the holy place. Ancient people used to gather here in boats. No one could cross the steep mountains around here. They say here is a goddess of all the sea, Toyotama. The Old Fact Record says a young beautiful man, Forest-blessing, was floated in a grass basket from Kyushu to Tu-shima by the instruction of an old man who raised up from the water. Here, the prince saw a great castle, Dragon King, and his princess Toyotama. She told him the secret to becoming the next O-Kimi of Yamato. The secret was the way to control water. I think in the ancient age, Nihon was left behind. But this Tu-shima, nearest to the continent, had developed architecture and other technologies.*

When he dove into the water, he couldn't believe his eyes. He saw many turban shells on rocks, big ones. Deep dive let him find much bigger ones. They were in a line. *Funny.* Hisaharu noticed they were on something that was long. *Man-made?*

He went back for air and returned to grab it. It was too long to put in his net. He hung it on the net with strings.

Touching huge rocks, he advanced slowly, not realizing he was out of the inlet. He felt something dark above him. Looking up, he saw a shark drifting just above him. It gave him goose bumps. Hisaharu had barely managed to hide himself before the shark's eyes had turned to him. 'Do not move. *I am a part of this rock. How long can I hold my breath?* It reminded him of holding his breath underwater at Tera's house. *How young I was. I thought I could hold my breath forever. Isn't it a sin I think of her in this situation?*

Hisaharu's left hand searched the rocky wall to keep his body there and snatched something. His eyes traveled around to look for a way to escape. *A long and narrow crevice between rocks is over there. It seems to lead to shallows.* When the shark turned away, he rushed into the crevice. The moment he put himself between the walls, the shark noticed him and turned back. He climbed up to the shoal desperately; the shark's heartless eyes were in front of him. It opened its mouth to sample him, but the slit was narrow enough to protect him.

It's a spring tide day today. The tides are the fastest. The lowest or highest, above me? He went through the crevice and was cut by rocks. Soon, he found his nose and mouth above water. *The tide is still low. How lucky I am!* Taking a full breath, he imagined the faces of Misao and Jericho. *They're waiting for me.* He didn't feel the deep scratches on his shoulders, back, elbows, knees, and hips. His swimming trunks had been torn by rocks. He tried to stand up with the heavy net bag full of turban shells and then noticed the object that the shells had attached themselves to. *How heavy it is. What is the material? It seems to be a case for something.* When he tried to check it, he felt sharp pains all over his body. *I'll look it over back home.*

Suddenly he felt his heart beat strong just four or five times. *These strong beats are not the ones I used to know. Something is wrong. Am I tired? My body must be exhausted.*

At the moment, he stepped on wet seaweed and fell. That's when he realized his other injuries. *How many wounds do I have? It's incredible I didn't feel them.* A fierce pain gripped him. His right shin was bleeding. *What's this? It must be the bone!* He gritted his teeth and put the leg on a rock to get his wound higher than his heart. He covered it with a towel to push it hard. He had to walk more than 500 meters to his car. *The nearest village is six or seven kilometers away. Is there a phone there?*

He examined the wound. *Okay, the bone doesn't seem to be broken.* He waited for the bleeding to almost stop, and he stood up. *This is better than that shark. The Vietnam War is over. Think of the Vitamese guerillas.* The sun had set. The lights of fishing boats shimmered on the sea.

Misao was shocked when she saw him getting out of the car. His whole body seemed to be wounded. It made her scream. Stressful things always made her scream.

"What happen to you? You're bleeding! What's that wound on your shin? Oh please, don't go diving anymore, please!" She couldn't stop yelling.

"You're a terrible fussier. It's no problem at all." He thought the detailed story would make her choke.

"It does too matter! How did you get such wounds?"

"Nothing. I'll soon recover. Don't worry."

The fuss awakened Jericho. "Oh, father! You have to go to the hospital." She was also surprised to see his wounds.

“I don’t need a doctor. Such accidents always happened to me when I was young. There was no doctor.” He tried to be composed. *There was no doctor, in the situation of a doctor, a kan-nushi from a shrine.*

The acute pain had settled down to a dull throb.

“But, father—” Jericho was scared. Her eyes went wide. “You don’t say ouch.”

“Of course. It’s only children who say ouch. It’s not proper for grownups.”

“Mother often says it.”

“Ha, ha! Your mother is, well, tends to become emotional. All animals have the power to recover naturally. I think this wound will remain, but it won’t affect anything. Push my shin. The flesh there stays sunken.”

Misao massaged his bad leg in 2004. She recalled the night he had received his injury. *It’s like yesterday.* “Can you feel me touch you?”

“Yeah, I can.”

“Good, ya’ll get recovered. This summer, I wanna go to Tushima again.” She wanted him to have a purpose in life. *Life in the border island must be peaceful for you*, she thought. There seemed to be no one who discriminated against DF members. She was very saddened by the news; DF members’ resident registrations were refused in Okinawa when the United States returned the area to the homeland. DF members’ children couldn’t go to school.

Jericho came to be in the third grade. She rode a school bus to the school near the port. One day, when she was stepping up on the bus, a girl behind her touched Jericho

between her legs. Frightened, Jericho looked back. She was a girl who never chatted. Jericho smelled her automatically. Her instincts cried out. Jericho couldn't do anything, just like four years earlier.

Another day, the girl asked, "Can I come to your house?"

On the day, Misao was chatting with neighbors in the tree shade as usual. The girl came in and said, "Let's play doctor."

"What's that?" Jericho asked. The girl's expressionless face was strange. *But she's always like this*, Jericho thought.

The girl opened a sliding door of the futon closet in the tatami room. In the downside of there was no futon. She took Jericho into there, and closed the door.

Darkness in this daytime! Jericho was curious. *I don't have to be afraid of this. It's my house, and she's smaller than me.*

The girl was unnaturally skinny. She said, "Look at the wall on all fours."

Jericho didn't like it, but she wanted to be good to her, as her friends were so few. The girl pulled down Jericho's underwear. Jericho was frightened; she opened the door.

Daylight.

A dull face was in front of Jericho. The way she looked at Jericho, the way she closed her mouth let Jericho understand what the smell was. *It seems I could forget that dirty memory. Her situation was worse than me. Terribly worse. My case was once. She, she, No! Always. And in her house.* Jericho didn't want to accept what her instincts were telling her. *Hopeless.* Jericho felt the daylight had gone from the girl. *She's been on the bottom. She's broken. The scum broke me. But oh, she, totally. Now she is, is what? What should I do? This must be my misunderstanding.* She wanted to believe so. On the other hand, she knew the truth. *I can't tell my mother about this. She*

makes everything worse. My teacher? When? How? There are many people always. I can't tell her even my case. I don't want anyone to know that.

Jericho wondered why she was there. *Does she do this in other houses? Can she smell me like I smelled her?* The thought was horrible. *I have no future.* She pictured endless unhappiness was waiting for her.

"Hi," a colleague gave Hisaharu a calm look of apology, "I'm afraid it's your turn to be a caretaker family for our official residences next year"

"Caretaker family?"

"You have to care for all houses, no pay. You're gonna be busy! As you see, the official residences are so old, almost in ruins."

"Yeah, every time a typhoon hits, I'm afraid our small houses will be blown away."

"The DF residence was divided. One is where you live, the other is at the mouth of a river, Ko-ura, ten minutes by foot. The Ko-ura residences were terrible too due to the sea wind. So the caretaker needs to live there."

"Two areas, only me and my wife?"

"Yeah. I've done it."

"Do we have to move again?" Hisaharu was surprised. *I'll make my family poorer.*

"All residents will help you to move. It's our custom," the colleague said sympathetically.

How many dinners do I have to prepare for the helpers?

"Do we have to move again?" Misao glanced at bowls and dishes. "I need newspapers to wrap them in. Eriko, this time,

you must work a lot. You're eight. Begin to put your out-of-season clothes in *kori*."

"What are *kori*?"

"Those big willow boxes."

"Oh, I see them every time we move. They're made of glass and strong. I like them."

"Perhaps it's only DF's who use *kori*. Using them is like in the samurai age. Others use modern ones."

"Others rarely move."

Every day, Misao prepared for the move. Women in the neighborhood gathered to help her wrap dishes and clean while their children were in school.

Eleven months after they had arrived on the island, the family moved to another old building at the mouth of a river that had eroded its banks. Gurgling sound of the sea was everywhere. Only a thin wall protected the building. The height was shorter than Jericho.

Living here must be a matter of survival, Hisaharu thought.

But Jericho was very happy with the new situation. She found the sea behind the wall had a great range of tides. At high tide, the mouth of the river was a part of the bay. At low tide, its rocky bottom was exposed. She could cross the river and get to the forest-covered peninsula. *Here, oh, there, water's left among the rocks!* Jericho looked into the pools. *Oh, fishes and crabs are active in such clear water. Sea anemones!* She touched them. "You move!" she shouted.

Now, the gate of the Sea Dragon Palace stood open for her. *What a wonderful cave!* Only when the tide was out, the cave appeared on the other side of the peninsula, facing the ocean. There huge rocks had fascinating hollows in them. Each hollow

was a grotto for Jericho. *This is a ballroom, this, umm, is the dressing room, and this, mirror room, then this, my bedroom, others, guests' bedrooms.*

In this dreamland, she had many friends to invite. The young heart forgot the poor, skinny girl completely. In the forest on the peninsula, the sound of waves was always with her. She saw an ocean on the left, the bay on the right through the leaves.

Time passed, and some pools began to connect. Some turned into streams. Building dams with stones was fun. Playing with the tidal changes made her hold her breath in wonder.

Every time she got back from school, she checked the tides. *Today, I can run to the shallow river and cross it jumping on rocks to the palace!* She paddled and splashed in her sea. She had many secret places. *If only I could have a real friend to share such secrets!* She didn't see other children around. *It's natural adults would never care about this place, but why don't children play here?*

When the tide came again, the peninsula was isolated. The whole land was capped by the deep forest above sea. Giant trees touched their elbows to the water. It was a miracle that all the leaves were above water but the boughs were growing beneath their roots.

A few months later, Jericho decided to find what was on the other side of the peninsula neck. Heart racing, she adventurously hopped to the rocky bottom of the empty sea. Holding her breath, she climbed up huge rocks and crawled along on all fours on the cliff facing the ocean. It was surprising for her that she wasn't afraid of the water below. Nature told her which bough, vine, or rock was firm enough to hold on to. She shifted her position to get a better view.

After the great adventure, she found herself between old, short houses and narrow, winding streets. As the houses were made of thin wood and surrounded by grass and bush, they were part of this great nature. *Somebody lives here, but I don't see anyone.*

Though it was just a fishermen's village, the unknown place was well worth her effort. The maze-like narrow streets brought her to another part of the peninsula, the mouth of the river. She didn't notice she could forget her worst memory at all.

The next day, Jericho had a fever and then spots all over. But there were no pediatricians in the area. In addition, Hisaharu's nose problem was getting worse.

An old doctor sent him to a hospital in Hakata for surgery. Misao and Jericho went with him. They stayed in Misao's aunt's apartment.

"Don't wash your hair while staying here," Misao ordered Jericho. "They'll see you use a lot of water."

Three days had passed. Jericho couldn't endure her hair. Jericho felt miserable. "Aunt said I could use water a lot."

"Anybody will say that, but *never* use water and gas a lot." *I think they don't like me being dirty.*

"I'll take you to a salon."

Jericho felt ashamed at the salon. *An unknown woman is touching my greasy hair. Miserable!*

While Misao was cleaning the kin's apartment with Jericho, Hisaharu was checking his wallet after paying for the hospital. *I have enough for books for Jericho. There isn't a big book store in Tu-shima, but this is Hakata.* He went to the biggest bookstore and found shelves filled with biographies. *Beethoven, good.*

Life is full of problems. With any handicap, she'll learn from him and be able to endure. Nightingale, Elizabeth the First, good, but my money is limited, and they all had silver spoons. Ah, Hideyo Noguchi, Columbus, Lincoln, Yes Kirist, yep, good. All of them were born poor and worked hard. Especially, Kirist seems to be the prime philosophy, as the basement of European and American culture that has overtaken the whole world. He seems to be a history changer. For millions of years, people had been in the age that the weak fell prey to the strong. More than 1,970 years ago, he kept teaching love. In that age! But European history is ironic.

My daughter will learn many things from them. How much for those five books? Yep. Misao and I won't eat or drink till we're home. I'm accustomed to being hungry. Misao, too. The books will guide her places I don't know about and in situations I don't understand. Books will give her resilience.

“Oh, you bought books! I can forget about the mice!” He saw Jericho's bright face. Her smile was bigger than his hunger. “Intelligence is not for school, Jericho, it's for life,” Hisaharu said. “You like reading. That's very good. If you were a boy and I was rich, higher education could be provided to you.”

On the way back to Tu-shima, Misao got the usual seasickness. Hunger made her sickness worse.

In the third summer in Tu-shima Island, Hisaharu took Jericho to a yellowtail farm when he was invited by Nishiyama-san, the father of a coworker. Nishiyama-san was an unsophisticated but pleasant old man who kindly prepared two boats. He got on one of them alone. The boats passed through clear, quiet water heading to a farm in a bay surrounded by a

steep cliff. There were hundreds of small bays and tiny islands in the huge bay between two big islands. In the bay, the water was like a mirror. The fisherman stopped his boat at one of his fish preserves and said, "Keep away from my boat. You'll know why soon." He laughed. His looks reminded Hisaharu of Uncle Simple from his childhood. He raised his arm and shouted to Hisaharu, "Wait for me over there!"

About a hundred meters from the preserve, the father and daughter waited for a while and saw how things turned out.

Nishiyama-san stood up in the boat and pulled up a fish from the water. It was more than a meter long. When the fish fell into the boat, he grabbed it by the gills on the left side with a sharp tool. Blood splattered. He repeated the action very fast.

"How cruel!" Jericho said.

"If fish die slowly, it won't be worth money 'cuz the meat will be stinky before somebody buys it. Blood should be drained soon."

"But ..." She couldn't express herself.

"He said wait here so we wouldn't get blood on our faces."

While he was in the boat, he realized she had to learn to swim. *It's not mere sport. It's a matter of life or death.*

The next Sunday, he brought her to the river mouth in front of the house, but Jericho was too timid to put her face in the water. The Sunday after that, he took her to another bay with more beautiful scenery. She put herself in a floating ring with a string. He pulled the string to another tiny island.

"Father! My feet! No land!" She was frightened.

"Trust me. I won't let you go!" He kept pulling the floating ring. She could trust her father, but she remembered the movie *Jaws*. She was afraid of looking into the deep water.

But the next day, she could put her face in the shallow sea water in front of her house.

An oil crisis began on October 17, when the members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries announced, as a result of the ongoing Yom Kippur War, that they would no longer ship petroleum to nations that supported Israel. About the same time, OPEC raised oil prices. It was called the toilet paper crisis in Nihon. Misao tried to buy as much toilet paper as possible.

"It's stupid to buy such an amount of toilet paper at terrible prices," Hisaharu said to Misao. "Silly women. The next car I'll buy will use less gas. Car makers will create them."

Hisaharu knew Jericho was always alone after school.

"Does she have friends?"

"Well, I dunno."

"Sometimes, being alone is valuable. It creates the capacity for making the right judgments. But Jericho isn't a man. She needs to learn to be helpful to others."

"You're often alone for hours while fishing. Jericho is like you. Oh, no, her legs are the same as yours."

"Does Jericho watch TV a lot? I don't think too much TV is good. For you too. You should read the newspapers. Yesterday, the leader of the National Parent Teacher Association was interviewed and talked about TV. She said good things even though she's a woman."

"Even I read newspapers!" Misao answered. "She's Mikasan, the landlady in Beppu. She had no right to talk about family or children. She divorced and moved to Tokyo with her four sons."

“Oh is she? You know lots of things about people. In another interview, she commented about the tax system. To give equal opportunities to ordinary people, the inheritance tax on 300 million yen asset should be seventy or eighty percent, not fifty like now. The tax should be used for public schools. I think she’s right. Men’s hard work should be rewarded. But their sons should experience hardships too. Average people must get chances too.” *This is what my elder sister had said long ago.*

“Sounds like you like her!”

Hisaharu sometimes tried to be gentle with his child, but his mind required him to have order in his home. As he rejected chaos, he couldn’t be optimistic. *Elders have said, “If you’re not disciplined, you are illegitimate children and not true sons.”*⁷⁸

Jericho was gazing blankly out the window. The four pieces of glass were trembling in their shoddy wooden frame. Her whole room seemed to be sinking in midwinter. She was afraid the north wind would break the panes. *Father went fishing. He says soon after a storm is good for fishing among rocks. If Father died, I’m gonna lose house, lose food. Mother can’t feed me. She’s too, she’s so—It’s impossible for her to work outside. Come back, Father.* She suddenly thought, *This is the only reason I want Father back?*

The noise coming from the window panes got louder. She came to herself. *I have to pull the wooden slides or the panes will be broken.* She tried to pull them out from between the cover and warped wall. *I’m weak! on everything. I’m a kid. Helpless. I won’t forget these child days. All adults seem to forget. Why?*

⁷⁸ Hebrews 12.

On that day, Hisaharu was on a tiny boat, fishing with Nishiyama-san. They were chilled by the cold wind.

“Hanada-san, look. The island is covered in clouds.” Bright sunshine shone on umbrella-shaped clouds on the land.

“No wind, sunshine. Though it’s so cold, it’s really a good day for fishing, isn’t it?” A huge, gray shadow was coming. “Is that an island? No, it’s a ship. Sooo huge. What ship is it?”

It was a Soviet battleship. Hisaharu became tense. The old man stood up and waved gaily at the ship. Hisaharu was surprised. For the government, the Soviets were the enemy. But the old fisherman seemed to enjoy the international relationship. *There are no politics or international problems on Tu-shima Island in the twentieth century*, Hisaharu thought.

The huge Soviet ship was moving fast. Hisaharu saw men on the deck. All of them were naked from the waist up and utterly relaxed in the bright sunshine. Hisaharu looked at himself and the company. “We wear winter clothes, and we still feel cold.”

“Yep, every time I see them on a sunny day, they’re naked. First time I saw them, I was so surprised they had no color. Even their heads have no color. Unhealthy?”

“I saw an American in the war when I was ten. He had a different color.”

“Did you? I can’t see any difference between British and Russians in those 007 movies.”

“I can’t either.” Hisaharu remembered the stinging sunshine of that 1945 summer.

Some of the colorless men waved cheerfully at the old fisherman. He shouted in a Tu-shima accent, “Let’s fish together some day!” A few men on the deck also shouted something.

The aliens seemed happy with the communication. Hisaharu became happy. The battleship left peacefully.

Times have changed. But memories of the war were still clear in his mind. *A boy said they're the oni and tengu in tales. If his hypothesis is true, Russian men might be in the north people's tales.*

"The days grow shorter," Nishiyama-san said.

Mist began to settle over the area.

Misao's monthly pains became stronger during those years. It was very hard for her to manage her emotions. She had kept trying to be a good wife and wise mother. She had avoided instant food. She never used powdered seasoning. She had not bought *ramen* and sweets. *He never notices my efforts!* Often, her irritation at her husband led her to be less patient with Jericho. Her love and worry for her daughter came out as anger.

"How dare you use water!" One day, she hit Jericho with a rubber tube hard when Jericho used cold water to clean her hair and feet after playing on the seashore.

Jericho couldn't understand her anger at all.

"You'll catch cold from the almost frozen water!" Misao hit her again, remembering her sickly infant days. She had to save money for a taxi to rush to a clinic. "In this isolated island, if you would get worse and it turned into pneumonia, you would die!" she shouted. Her child was crouching down in the corner of the bathroom. Misao didn't notice that the Tu-shima forests had been strengthening her daughter.

Misao and Hisaharu belonged to a generation that believed, "Children know their parents love them all the time." Their generation had spent their childhood in wartime, which had

forced them to recognize just staying alive was a miracle. Death had been always nearby.

Misao liked going to her daughter's school on visiting days. *Children get to just study in school. What peace!* The teacher was teaching how the sun's heat was accumulated and the earth radiated it. "What time is the highest point on this graph? And what time is the lowest?"

A child was called and stood up. "At two, and ..."

"Yes, it's not twelve but two. Will somebody explain why?"

Listening to the explanation, Misao was moved. *I didn't know this. My elementary school days were during the war and the postwar hunger, confusion. I don't like learning, but it's good my daughter can have school like this.*

Just then, a girl behind her child passed a paper to her and said something. Jericho took the paper. Misao got angry, stepped to her daughter, and slapped her on the shoulder. *She should've ignored the child. She must understand the value of school.*

But her daughter didn't get the meaning of it. *The girl behind me should've been scolded! It was she who ordered me to take the paper. What shame in front of my classmates and their parents! I've been trying to avoid attention every day!*

1975

Jericho was drawing flowers. A teacher came to her and said, "Use the color you feel. You don't have to use the real color of the flowers. Listen to your voice inside. It will tell you which color you want to use."

The advice saved her. She didn't know her inner self could be expressed through art. "My ideas are worth being expressed

on paper.” She recognized freedom for the first time. Though she had heard the word, it wasn’t a universal idea at that time. *Freedom* was considered something imported from the United States, which was a double-edged blade. The majority of people were afraid that the bad side of freedom would bring irresponsibility and immorality. But the other side of the concept saved her. *Subjectivity, Father said. I’m free to use the colors I wanna use. I can make great art!*

Her work won a prize. But before accepting the honor, she had to move again, to mainland Kyushu.

“We have to go back to Beppu,” Hisaharu said.

“I think the terrace house in Beppu is too small.” That meant Misao didn’t want to live there anymore.

“I’m asking them to find us an apartment.”

The day Hisaharu had to leave Tu-shima came at last.

“Fishing will be far,” Hisaharu said to Iwai-san and Nishiyama-san. He put the long box he had taken from the sea into his bag. He had opened the box and found a very old sword. A name, An-toku, in Chinese characters and a date were there.

The ferry ride to Kyushu was easy. Hisaharu imagined the world 3,000 years ago. Men from the continental peninsula could go to Tu-shima and Kyushu easily, but they couldn’t go back.

To woo women, the men mastered the native girls’ language. Women kept native languages through oral communication even after the age of Chinese influence. Being raised by the Earth Spiders’ women, the men’s children forgot who they were generation by generation. The ocean stream made one people into two countries.

On the way to Beppu, Jericho was thinking about the girl who had taken her into the futon closet. *I should forget that. We were in third grade. The shock she touched me is still here. The real shock was that I found her situation was worse than mine. No adult would notice. She's left in her hell, called family, this moment. I'm leaving her. I didn't do anything for her. Am I bad? Yes, I'm bad.* Jericho felt a sharp pain in her heart. *Yes, I'm bad. I'm bad. I will forget about her. I wanna forget.*

Hisaharu was enjoying crossing Kyushu Island in a Honda. As soon as their move was over, he had to go to the school for cadets again in Gotamba on Main Island for twenty-two weeks. He decided not to take his family for the sake of Jericho's education. *How many times will I able to go back home? Such a double life will cost more. I must take night trains, not shinkansen, those high-speed but expensive trains.*

The small car was filled with boxes, bags, wife, and daughter. They arrived in Beppu. The light smell of the sulfur springs was in the air. They heard trains. Tu-shima had had no rail system. *Oh, we're back in the material world. No spirit on me here. That sea and forest were special. Though I never believe anything spiritual, religious things, I found Tu-shima was special.*

Though his hometown was still far from Main Island, where development had accelerated, Hisaharu found concrete buildings and plastic materials everywhere. *Modernization. Where have rock walls and bamboo bushes gone?*

"We used to see the bay view from anyplace, but not now." Misao looked around, "Eriko, do you remember Beppu?"

"Sure." *Good-byes, hellos. No old friends. New circumstances, new local languages. No more Sea Dragon Palace only for me.*

No more emerald forest only for me. No fishing lights on the horizon at nights. By their apartment was a broken shed with spider webs and spiders bigger than her hand. Smashing them was fun. My new classmates are so different. Curious eyes again. Again, I disappoint them. Transfer students must be cute. I don't know how I look, but I know they don't care for me. So I know I'm not cute.

Misao's irritation with her daughter came out almost every day. *Why is she so lifeless? She's been free from the fear of death and hunger.* Her dull daughter always bit her nails. Her nails came to be ugly. Besides, Misao had to tell her, "Get that stoop out of your back!" Jericho needed to bend her head and shoulders forward and downward. Her chest was beginning to change. It was very shameful, very fearful for Jericho. The phobia was the kind of terror she had had six years previously.

Hisaharu made efforts to go back home from Gotemba as much as possible. He expected to see happy faces at home, but every time, his blood pressure went up. His daughter made him nervous. "Modern children are free from labor. Running water, electricity, heat. If she could experience life on a farm, which requires teamwork, she would be much better," he told Misao.

"That's why," she said, "many parents let boys join baseball teams."

"Agriculture tells kids how life is created, how it grows, how it's eaten, and that humans should be thankful to them."

"I'm not from farmers. But I can see that farmers' children see parents' hard work every day. They learn this in a big family."

“Kids in towns grow up like dictators.”

“They’re ‘overrighteous, overwise.’⁷⁹ They’ll destroy themselves.” Misao said what her father used to repeat.

“Elders said, ‘Do not be proud, do not be conceited.’⁸⁰ ‘Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment.’”⁸¹ Hisaharu said what his aunt used to repeat.

Hisaharu visited his father’s home with Misao and Jericho. Shiro had been on a futon for months and had been nursed by Ayako for years.

“Father, long time no see!” Hisaharu shouted into his ear.

“Long time no see. Yew sound good,” Shiro said. His eyes couldn’t see anything.. “Ichiro is waitin’.”

He was solemn. Age had hollowed his cheeks. It showed how his bones were thick. The muscle on the shoulders and chest were lost. But they were still mounted by bones. He was a born farmer.

Father, the speed of change in society has been so fast. Ah, do you know how much the world had changed?

Jericho was holding his hand.

Jericho, I don’t think I’ll be able to keep up with all the changes.

Ayako came in. “Alla, Arrah!” She was active as usual. “Go to the living room. Tea is ready. It’s time to change Shiro.”

“I’ll help you. Father is very heavy.” Hisaharu put his hands on Shiro’s futon.

“No, no. Go. This is my job. The tea will be lukewarm.”

⁷⁹ Ecclesiastes 7.

⁸⁰ Roman 12.

⁸¹ Roman 12.

While Hisaharu was talking to Jiro, the smell spread out.

"She does very well. You have to thank her." Hisaharu thought it was lucky he had no son. *I won't let Misao care for me.*

"Yeah, yeah." Jiro had been sitting at a *kotatsu* built in the tatami floor. It had once been the fireplace. He wanted to change the subject. When somebody talked about her, he felt he was being blamed. "Hisaharu-san, you don't have a son. How do you think you will be cared for? Eriko-chan will leave you."

"Well, I'll die quickly." He laughed. Hisaharu knew the brother didn't like the praise of his wife. His pride was destroyed in the former army.

"Smell? ha, ha!" Ayako was back with a bright smile. "Eriko-chan, you got thick!"

"Thick?" *They say I'm too skinny.*

"Thick means tall, we say," Hisaharu said.

"We wish," Ayako continued, "she had a brother or sister, for her, for you, Hisaharu-san. The first child brings a whole new world on us. Did she? The second one gives you another point of view. The third one will let us know what being human is, though I couldn't have."

Jiro hadn't had a third child because he had worried her labor would be harder. But his wife wished he would share her work; then, she could have another child. *At least if he talks to me, asks me if I was alright.*

"Kids need brothers and sisters, each other, to grow right. They will learn how to live in an adult world there. You know, it's Eriko-chan who will have a hard time in places you won't know about. She won't be able to have good relationships with others." Ayako didn't say she had noticed Jericho already had

difficulty with others. *It's not her fault. Though her parents discipline her, it's not enough. There're thousands of things only brothers and sisters can do for each other.*

Misao pretended to hear nothing. *Mind your own business. Your brother-in-law has no consideration for me. If he would share even just the washing, I'd have another child. At least if he talked to me, asked me if I was alright. I know some couples without kids though they want them. Such husbands are always good to wives.*

"It still smells here. Why not go to the *en-gawa*?" Jiro pointed to the hallway around the house.

"Ya, Misao, Jericho, let's go. There, summer heat is cooled naturally, without electricity. Modern houses lost *en-gawa*. It protects tatami rooms from sunshine in summers and wind in winters."

"Glass is enough," Jericho said. "If the wooden walls are slid closed, it's complete dark."

"Long before you were born, we didn't have glass. You can't imagine," Jiro said.

Jericho liked the way her uncle talked. *So sympathetic. Very different from my father, though they're brothers.* Jericho looked into the sliding wooden walls layered at corners.

"New for ya. Ya live in a town. *En-gawa* is a bench for chatting. In spring and fall, people sit on *en-gawa* to look at the garden and have tea. In summer, children eat watermelon and sleep there," her uncle said.

Jericho touched the comfortable old *en-gawa* and looked at between the earth and *en-gawa*.

"Old houses' floors are high, here. Flat rocks are put down for the feet." Jiro pointed to a big stone.

"Chicken is ready!"

“Ah, Ayako-san, you don’t have to make a big meal for us.”

“What does ‘Chicken is ready’ mean?” Jericho asked.

“One rooster was cooked just now,” Hisaharu said.

“Eeee!”

“We have to pray for the life,” he said. “Every time we visit here, you’ve eaten chicken *sukiyaki*, haven’t you? Traditional farmers prepare chicken for guests. Farmers do it only for guests.”

“*Sukiyaki*? Beef?” Jericho asked.

“Eating beef and pork is a new, foreign custom.”

Hisaharu and Misao decided to buy a piece of land and build a house on it. They figured Beppu was a good place to spend the rest of their lives. The town was on a slope that led to the bay. The mountains justly boast of the beauty. Bushes and terraced rice puddles were left. No billboards marred the scenery. Some places had magnificent views of the bay and the mountains.

Their land was in a developed area. Hisaharu found the lie of the land would be safe if the beautiful volcano Yufu erupted; volcanic rocks and lava would be walled by the Fan Mountain. *It’s mild in winter. The summer heat is cooled by abundant trees and bamboo. Markets, a post office, and schools are within a walk. And I will have a phone. Now we won’t have to use one next door.* “Husbands die earlier than wives. You won’t need a taxi for daily life here.”

“What are you talking about?” Misao pushed her anxiety out of her mind. “But I like Beppu too. This is the place we started our life together.” She was happy to have a tiny house.

“We’ll have a table and four chairs.”

“Oh, life with chairs. We can be modern at last! The only chair we have is the one Jericho uses for studying.”

While planning the house, Hisaharu said to Jericho, “Why don’t you use a bed in your room? No futon on tatami. And a shower in the bathroom.”

“A shower?” *I don’t need to use a bathtub anymore! I don’t need to use the water after someone else! I don’t need to keep it clean for someone after me. Father won’t scold me anymore if I make the water lukewarm ’cuz I won’t use bathtub water! A TV drama showed that Americans didn’t share bathtub water with others. Though it’s wasteful, I prefer the American style.*

Her eyes were bright. It made him feel pride. *I can give my daughter life in the modern style.* He also wanted a bed, but he was afraid whether he would get used to such a new style. It reminded him of the days in the dorm on the base. *Beds for houses might not be like those at the dorm. Those were wooden pallets.*

Misao objected. “I don’t like a bed. I prefer a futon on tatami. A bed will hurt my lower back.”

Hisaharu went to the building site as much as possible. *The pillars are so thin. This is a modern house. Those pillars of the house between mountains are not for us in the twentieth century. Walls are also thin. These walls don’t include bamboo, rice straw, and mud to control heat, cold and humidity. The storehouse in front of the old house built in 1805 has been perfect to keep rice for years without mice and bugs. But I am the master in this house. Thanks to the times, I, the last son who can’t inherit anything, don’t need to put myself down among kin.*

A neighbor who had a phone ran to Misao. She took all coins for the phone owner and ran to the house.

Shiro's condition had become critical. Hisaharu felt as if his chest was frozen. *The time has come.* He felt all the blood in his body draining. *I have calmly prepared for this call.*

Shiro was on a futon on the tatami floor, nursed by Ayako as usual. The room was the formal room in the old house. Here, Ichiro gave gratitude to Shiro and Yone. Wedding ceremonies had been held here. Pictures of Mr. and Mrs. Patriarch and sons killed in war were looking down on everything there. Ichiro's picture was dark yellow.

Shiro had been gradually petrified into rock. His hearing and eyesight were almost gone. In his young days, he had read many books on agriculture after hard work by moonlight to save firewood and oil. The words in the books were all Chinese characters, ideographs. Reading complicated letters had led his eyesight to fail little by little. His life had been filled with hardship like all other farmers' lives.

"I fulfilled my obligation," Shiro told Jiro when the youngest daughter married fifteen years previously. "I have kept this land by eroding my body. A drop of my sweat. A drop of my blood. When the government allowed peasants to own land in 1872, then 1946, many of such new farmers sold their land for easy money. We have owned land for more than a thousand years. Are you listening to me? The point is to overcome temptation or the family will be lost. Now I can hand down the heritage to you. You have sons. Our family line will continue."

Shiro knew that as long as Ayako was beside Jiro, this family would be fine. "Jiro, listen. Hisaharu is not a fool to require a share. Stupid new laws have given the right to claim a share to each child, even to daughters. Modern lawmakers don't understand anything. If the inherited rice field would be shared on every succession, soon the land would be lost

to someone for destroy-nature usage. And whole agriculture would be lost. It's a preposterous idea, equality. There must be order in society, in a family, between kin. Brutes in victorious nations have depraved our traditions." Shiro closed his mouth. He knew nobody could destroy this order that had come from China. He couldn't hear the blaring guitar sound from his grandsons' room, practicing Jimmy Page, Jeff Beck, and Eric Clapton.

"Ayako-san," he said, "yew've devoted yourself to looking after me very well. Yer a hard worker and like to learn. I knew yew wanted to go to school rather than marry my son. We've been lucky having ya. Yew will be cared for by yer son's wife when yew get old like me."

"No, you didn't fulfill your obligation yet. You didn't tell our legend to your grandchildren," Ayako said. "I told it as once-upon-a-time stories. I've been waiting for you to begin to talk."

"I think, well, now, we've in one country these hundred years. The legend should be a tale."

"Father, it's our roots. We need to keep our pride for generations." Ayako waited for an answer.

His eyes were closed.

"Father," as Ayako called Jiro's father, "the school system that began in 1886 had a strong effect on boys. It made minorities disappear. It changed people into the ruling people, Yamato. In this meaning, I'm lucky I'm a woman who couldn't go to school. I can keep myself."

Shiro took a deep breath. He has been waiting to see his eldest son again. If he hadn't had other sons and daughters, he would have died. For thirty-one years, he had been counting the days. Every time he noticed the seasons change, he felt

heartache. *But, the pain my son had is much harder than mine, he thought. Time froze when he left. Why is the burning summer sky gettin' mild? Where has the heavy heat gone? Why are trees colorin'? My son can't walk among autumn splendor anymore.*

Each season of colorful scenery had kept damaging his heart though brain-spoiling summer air over. *Why do young men in the village get old?*

It was painful to be outside. Whole surroundings forced him to accept the reality.

He had continued working in the fields, mouth closed. *Surely Ichiro will come back to me, now he's just laughin' with friends or walking with his wife and children somewhere far, in Osaka or Tokyo, on this earth, not in the sky. Is he still young? Did he get old? Can he recognize me?*

Your mother and I got old. We're sorry, sorry. We lived till we got white hair and deep wrinkles. Your hair and face were perfect young. How beautiful and young you were.

"Shiro-san hasn't had any meal, any drink, for days," Ayako said. "Every time I brought a spoon on his mouth, he turned his head with mouth closed."

"I'm leaving. Do not call a doctor. My decision. I don't let new technologies decide my end of life," Shiro whispered.

Decision. The word hit Hisaharu. *This is the act I had needed for, for what?*

Shiro was in a thought. *This solid wooden house is forever. I was born in this hundred-year-old house and will pass away here with our history.*

The Twelfth Century

The royal bloods who sank were rescued by the Hayato sea women. The Hayato sent the royal bloods and clans to smaller islands. The sophisticated losers taught Chinese characters to the Hayato. So we could have the ability to live in this Yamato ruling Kyushu, began to cultivate our land among deep forests. Now, all Hayato houses have every man's name recorded for 800 years. The grass-made papers are also in this room.

It was the time the shogun fixed the basic-four-social-standings and Buddhism temples each family must belong to because the shogun, the ruler, was afraid of the influence of Kirishitanity brought by the Portuguese and the Spanish. The ruler closed the nation. One nation, one people. Others are assimilated or crossed out.

In 1666, the government made a law to get more tax; only the first son inherited the assets, and each farmer had to settle in his village for generations.

Shiro was in the middle of the field of *ren-ge* flowers. The deep pink flower formed a bright carpet. Every year before rice planting, Shiro had seeded his rice fields with *ren-ge* for more than seven decades. He loved to see the flower in his fields in full bloom. He loved to see little girls picking them and making rings for their small heads, small wrists, and shoulders. The mountains in bright green, fields in deep pink, and children's laughter had saved his soul from extreme heartache.

Laughter? I lost it. But children laugh. That's enough. When nature told him it was time for rice planting, he ploughed the tiny flowers under. The pea plant produced nitrogen for rice to grow rich. *I'm flying. I wanted to meet our Savior Boy. When he's taken by an eagle, he may see like this. Gran'pa used to*

say that when the child is back with us, he'll bring Hayato more power than Yamato.

Hisaharu felt his father expire. He closed his father's eyes. *Decision. Father, I made it. Love is a decision. I'll never let Misao care for me at my end. This might be not only from love but from pride.*

Hisaharu looked at his sisters. "Father must be talking with Brother Ichiro. Father used to be proud of him." He wanted to console his sisters. He felt something in himself falling into a depth. *Where is his soul now? It may not exist. It's difficult for the families left behind, but it's true. There isn't another world. If you die, that's all. A lot of stories about the world after death, heaven, and hell are just consolation. Without such imagination, people can't overcome sadness. I can't talk with him anymore. I can't see him anymore. Even after my death. Should I have talked with him much more?* "Anyway, we have to call a doctor. I wanna respect father's decision, but it's the law."

Misao was wondering why Hisaharu didn't cry. *No tears. He's really cold.*

Hisaharu found a soft feeling coming through. It was a pain. The jelly was streaming in through a window. He thought he didn't have any window in his mind. Cracks and chasms in him let him know a depth and a feeling he hadn't known.

The night Shiro died, all the village people and kin gathered. They were drinking and chatting all night long.

Jericho whispered to Hisaharu. "They're too cheerful."

"Yeah, your gran'pa called those people to let them reunite."

"They should be calm."

"They're grownups. They know their own turns will come."

Misao wanted Ayako to feel relaxed. “Ayako-san, you have a modern kitchen now.” Misao looked around.

“Yes, at last I can cook with gas. No more fire. Look. There, the old kitchen was left.” Ayako opened a sliding door. There was the old cooking place. Ayako stepped down to the place and put on sandals. “How dark it had been. You remember the smoke, the heat in summer, the cold earth floor in winter.”

“Smoke hurt your eyes and throat,” Misao replied.

“The first time I walked into this house,” Ayako said, “in my wedding kimono, I was shocked to see the inside of rice-straw roof. Logs and cut bamboos to support straw piles were above me. They said they wanted to complete the ceiling before my marriage.”

The next day, the old house had its 173rd funeral. A Shinto priest sat on the finest cushion in front of the big wooden box.

Hisaharu listened to what the priest was saying. *When I went to funerals out of this valley, they were in Buddhist way. It's impossible to catch what the Buddhist priest was saying. It needs extra study to listen to the recitation. Maybe that's why average people are far from religious. That's why men's heads can be filled by others.*

1976

Jericho transferred to another elementary school again when they moved to the new house.

“I’m sorry I have forced you to change schools six times, but this may be the last.” Hisaharu was apologizing to Jericho.

“It’s okay. I got to know many people. Local dialects are interesting. I couldn’t understand what they were saying at first, but soon, I could speak.”

“Yes, kids are talented when it comes to learning languages.” he added. When he found some strong points in Jericho, he always used the word “kids,” not “you,” because he was afraid she would become puffed up. *Haughtiness is hated.*

Hisaharu could buy a telephone at last. In July, Vietnam became a Communist nation.

1977

Yellow sand from the Chinese desert covered the sky. It meant the cold winter was over. It meant one more educational step for Jericho in April. Hisaharu was back from Gotemba to see that his daughter would go to a junior high. Jericho's hands were white and thin like those of that Mr. Universite he had met twenty-eight years earlier. Hands without labor, hands with arrogance.

He had to take a night train. He read for the entire seventeen-hour trip. *They say*, he thought, recalling the days before Jericho was born, *a woman can mature only by bringing up a child, but it's true for a man also. The future world came to be important for me because my daughter lives. The new life had set me thinking since her birth, meditating that how a pure soul changes, thinking about how an infant gets to understand right and wrong, considering how society influences a person. I created time to read books for her when she was a baby. It was fun to watch her “uttering incantations” chasing letters on books when she was twenty months or so.*

At the end of March, before entering junior high, Misao said Jericho should go to a hairdresser. Jericho's bristly hair

always reminded Misao of one of the experiences of her younger days after the war. All kids had been dusted with powder to combat lice.

While waiting in the salon, a picture on a magazine caught her eyes. There was a man looking at her with peculiar charm. Jericho picked up the third-rate magazine. She wouldn't have touched the magazine if her mother had been with her. His name was Jon Rubin, a musician with the Sky Blues in New York.

That night, Jericho turned on the radio and heard a DJ say, "Sky Blues, a new single from the latest album!" The music fascinated her. The singer's voice was on Jericho's wavelength.

The next Sunday, she walked forty minutes to a record shop downtown for the first time just to look at the album. She found there was another world besides home and school. She sat in front of the radio every night. *The globe's certainly big enough to have a place I can belong to.* Home was stressful with her opinionated father and her hysterical mother. School was also not a place for her. A tall girl had dominated the sixth grade. The queen looked down on Jericho. She was the president of the student council. Jericho didn't like her because she was arrogant. *She's beautiful and rich enough to be proud.*

It was the morning of the school trip. In front of all 234 kids and teachers, the queen showed a pair of underpants and said, "Hanada Eriko-san, you left this on the shelf in the hotel public bath! Here's your name!"

Jericho's blood drained away. *If I could only pretend! Oh!*

All the students turned to her. Jericho was at the end of line. Jericho was too timid to ignore the queen. Jericho stood up and began to walk to the queen through 234 children. She wanted to disappear. *Everyone's watching me!*

Her underwear was held high until she grabbed it. Her school life was over. *Not only am I alone in school, but two hundred and thirty-four pupils and teachers have learned I'm stupid.*

Jon Rubin's music, however, saved her from her daily life. *He exists at this moment in New York. He isn't in stories.*

Whole new worlds opened their doors one after another. Her junior high was the way to new knowledge—English, world history. A rock magazine mentioned that Jon Rubin was Jewish. That integrated her scattered knowledge. TV news had been all about Palestinian issues.

A *kokugo* teacher said, "Jewish people read the Old Testament." So she went to the library to learn about the cool musician's roots. *What interesting stories in the Old Testament!*

An ill-fitting social studies teacher was also fun. *He's so unpopular, but I like his way of teaching so much. He tells us about interesting history, the antagonism between the Jewish and the modern Islamic world.*

"The brilliant brains of the United Kingdom had three secret agreements during World War I about the Arabs—the Hussein-McMahon Agreements in 1915 with France and Russia, the Sykes-Picot Agreement in 1916, and the Balfour Declaration in 1917."

This teacher is worn out always, like clothes in my washing basket at home, Jericho thought.

"The first agreement was about the independence of the Arabs from the Ottoman Turks. The second agreement was about the partition of Turkey. Palestine after the Ottoman Turks should have been under international control. The third one promised to establish a new nation for Jews in Palestine. It's the place Moses arrived with his people in 1230 BC

from Egypt.” He was drawing a map on the blackboard. “Ah, intelligent United Kingdom, poor Arabs, poor Jews!”

Jericho nodded.

“There’s a girl named Eriko, in variations in Chinese ideographs also in this class, *na*? Look at the map. You see Eriko! In English, it’s spelled Jericho.”

“J!”

“Nooo waaaay, Jeriko.”

Girls twittered.

Am I Jericho? I’ll go to the Middle East someday after looking for Jon Rubin in New York. She could dream.

“Longtime oppressed Jews have continued to immigrate into the land promised. There, Arabs have lived for more than three thousand years.”

The ill-fitting teacher recommended that the class read Anne Frank’s diary to understand how Jewish people were treated. Jericho went to the library for the book.

“You’re reading Anne’s diary.” Hisaharu saw the book at the entrance when he was back from Gotemba.

“Nihon’s win over czarist Russia in 1904 was very connected with a German educating the army in the 1880s and a Jewish person’s financing of the war.” He repeated what he had heard from Brother Ichiro. *Brother Ichiro might say each of us is connected. My daughter should know it.*

“Umm.” Jericho asked, “What connection?” She asked though she didn’t want to talk to him.

Hisaharu was a little surprised. *She’s talking to me.* “Our win helped the Communist revolution in czarist Russia. The Russian Communists’ success spread to the west, south, and east. As China and Russia came to be Communist governments,

America has helped us after they beat us." Hisaharu didn't expect she would understand.

"Is that why the O-Kimi family was left untouched?"

"I don't know. If they tried to touch the family, guerilla battles might have broken out everywhere on Main Island."

"I can't believe it. Were they so popular?"

"You're twelve. You'll get to know that."

The twelve-year-old girl's head popped off from the royal family and left him. He thought, *I might take more opportunities to talk with her. There might be something I could do.*

He began making sandwiches on Sundays when he was home. He liked Jericho watching his slicing soft bread so thin with his *sashimi* knife. Jericho wondered why her father made sandwiches. *He never prepares meals. But sometimes, Father likes Western ways. Mother doesn't know how to deal with such foreign food.*

Misao cooked paper-thin omelets for his sandwiches. Margarine and mayonnaise were proudly spread out by Hisaharu. Misao said, "American fat! American seasoning!" The show reached its climax when he cut down the bread with sliced ham and cucumber and apple slices and omelets that showed their colorful edges.

"Is junior high fun?"

"English class has begun. It's fun."

"I was good at English in high school," Misao proudly said.

"Mother, tell me, what are *is* and *are*?"

"Dunno!"

"Mother, you *said* you were good at English. Why does it change in the plural?"

"Ah! That's why you go to school," Misao answered.

Well, I can't depend on her. She doesn't know anything! She's nothing but hysterics. Why is she my mother? Why is she like that?

Jericho once asked Ino when they were walking on a hill covered with red earth, "Gran'ma, why is my mother so hysterical? Uncles are gentle."

"Ah, I had been so nervous while Misao was in my tummy."

"I can't stand her attitude! She's always looking down at me!" Misao mumbled while washing dishes. "She won't wash a tea bowl!"

Hisaharu tried to comfort Misao. "Our school days were in the wartime, an age of hunger. The times are changing. Girls need education. The percentage of girls who go to high school has been the same as boys for two years, but some girls sell themselves for money. Their families are not poor." He recalled Tera. It was like yesterday.

"She should—" Misao threw words, "—recognize that she's blessed. She doesn't know wartimes, and I wanna forget them!" The war was always in her mind. Each darkness forced Misao to remember the war days. *Sirens at nights. Dashing into the cave with Ma with a drawn face. Every night in the summer when I was eight. I had tried to be good for Ma in the cave. But I was so scared. I wanted to hold on to Ma.*

Misao couldn't stand that Jericho wouldn't use lights. Darkness and Jericho's act caused Misao's hysteria to erupt like a volcano.

"I say lights on!" Misao shouted.

1978

Yasukuni Shrine accepted the war criminals, class A. O-Kimi's attendant Tomita recorded what his highest said. O-Kimi wouldn't go to the shrine anymore.

It was a month later that Hisaharu completed the Academy again in Gotemba and went home. He sensed that his daughter still disliked him and that Misao did too. It made him think of Shiro's life, Shiro's thoughts, Shiro's acts, Shiro's words. *Love is a decision, so I have to be patient with Misao and Jericho. How difficult! Father's death brings a son another depth of life. I'm also stupid and dull. My way is adding up nines seven times instead of multiplying nine times seven.*

Jericho liked the way the history teacher talked and wrote on the blackboard. He was always disheveled, so students made fun of him. Jericho was one of them, but she began to think a lot. *Why do we have to learn ancient history—Rome, the Tigris and the Euphrates? In such details, more than 2,000 years ago, why is the area known? In the same age, there must have been people in America and Vietnam. We also have to learn about ancient China. Why do I have to learn the two parts on the earth? Didn't other places have writing? Or are their records just not found? What were people doing on the left area 3,000 years ago?* Her imagination flies beyond time and place.

At school, a classmate spoke to her. "Your mom stays at home when you go back home, doesn't she?"

"Nooooisy, really boooooothers me. Your mother?"

"She won't be back till seven. K's mom work from five, I heard. Ain't that good?"

“That’s why she can have friends over, boys too! I envy K!”

“As my mom works a lot, she gives me money for meals, but I use it for games. How about your mom?”

“My mother works in a hospital kitchen, but never gives me money.”

“Adults are sly. Poor Eriko, that’s why you don’t know games. You should keep up with your peers or you’ll be alone.”

How? I need money to buy a White Queen and Black Queen and a KISS Love Gun. Money is not for games. How? But I need time to listen to the radio. I can’t live without the United Kingdom music programs by Y. Shibuya and the American top ten by K. Kobayashi. Radio is the only door that frees me from family and school. My world is very small in this small town. But the music tells me there is a big world. I want a bigger world than game centers. I wanna be a music writer like Y. Shibuya. If only I had been born in Tokyo or if my parents had money to send me there. They say rent for just a room there costs much more than Father’s income.

1979

During New Year’s, Jericho asked Hisaharu’s brother Jiro, “What was the most fun thing in your childhood?”

“Nothing.”

“Nothing?”

“No fun in my life.”

Jericho imagined. *War, hard labor, obligations. How poor. Life is for fun. Who will I marry? Freddie Mercury, Paul Stanley, Jackie Chan? Jackie Chan. He’s the nearest. I need to master Hong Kong Chinese.*

While Jericho was hearing Jiro's old stories, Misao was picking *mikan* with Ayako. Those citrus fruits were bright orange in the cold winter air.

"Misao-san, in my village, there is a tale handed down from mother to daughter. I have no daughter. You're from the town. Have you heard something about this?"

"I don't think so."

"You know, women's lives have been full of patience, especially after marriage. Before daughters leave home, mothers teach them this."

"Girls these days are far from patient! Eriko really makes me mad!"

"She's young now. She'll know what life is. Of course, her husband will be perfect, but—"

"I know, I know."

"This is just a cheer upper for women in devotion."

AD 365

A girl woke up in a tiny boat. She found the boat wasn't floating anymore. She raised her head. The boat was on a beach.

"Father!" she shouted out with joy. "Father!"

He was lying over an oar, not moving. He was the crown prince of Silla on the continental peninsula.

She shouted, "It was that man who drove my father out of my Kingdom. I have a plan."

Seven years later, she gave birth to a girl. The baby's father was a chief of a rice field union. The chief's grandfather came from Silla with better skills for rice planting; as a result, the

union was wealthy, so the chief could see the O-Kimi every autumn.

The chief said the first O-Kimi was from Paekche on the continental peninsula.

She raised her daughter, BreathLong, carefully. As Silla had not been affected by Chinese Confucianism, women were educated the same as men. She told her daughter everything she knew.

BreathLong was the first wife of the fourteenth O-Kimi.

"My dear Pei-kah," she whispered, putting her lips on his neck, "you are able to conquer the Earth Spiders on Kyushu Island." Her long hair smelled like musk in winter and jasmine in summer; the perfumes were brought by her father every autumn. She wanted to go to Kyushu, nearer to her mother's homeland.

One night in the Palace Kashii on Kyushu Island continent side, the O-Kimi was playing the harp to get a god's advice. The god spoke through BreathLong. "Cross the ocean, and you will find shining treasures. I will give the country to you."

The O-Kimi replied, "I can see no land. Only waves on the immense ocean."

The god was angry, "Even this country doesn't belong to you! You belong to the underground!"

To ease the god, he began to play the harp again in the dark. Soon, the melody stopped. A minister put fire on a leaf. People found the O-Kimi was not breathing. He was fifty-two.

BreathLong had been taught how to use plants by her mother.

After the purifying ceremonies, the god said, "The land will belong to the son in the first wife's womb."

She created the first navy in Nihon. She declared, "My men, as you see, my son will be coming very soon! But I will fight at the front! I prayed to the god! Now I put a stone on my belt to postpone his birth!" She had been taught how to count the months of pregnancy by her mother. She wanted the dynasty in Nihon change from Paekche to Silla. Women can do many things men can't. Sometimes secretly.

Silla's king was her grandfather's youngest half-brother. She gained a victory on the continental peninsula. The king promised her to send hundreds of ships filled with treasure every year.

When she went back to Kyushu, she gave birth to a son. As she had set ninjas to the capital, Nara, before the war, she got word of plots there from a ninja even as she was nursing her infant.

She made one more huge ship with a gorgeous small coffin. She let rumors spread that the baby had died. After the first victory against traitors, she faced another plot. The battles were intense; she let her navy and army declare that BreathLong had died.

Her soldiers cut their bowstrings, then her enemy cut theirs. But her soldiers took new strings out of hair. The queen conquered all the plotters on the way to the capital.

"Um, Ayako-san, men surely get angry with this."

"And many good women too."

Misao couldn't listen to the story well. "Wasn't she a symbol of the ex-army that went to Korea? People hate the ex-army, so my da has been miserable. My husband's occupation is looked down on. I don't like this."

"Ah, Misao-san."

“I really don’t know how to tell Eriko this. I think I can’t.”

The Iranian people purged their king and created an Islamic Republic. *Again in this world history, Hisaharu thought, Religion causes more change than politics. It’s happened in my life. Religion is stronger than anything. The reason was not militarism but religion that we had kept that war. Perhaps the reason we had started it was not religion, Brother Ichiro? Because the reason was the religion, we had said, “We will fight till the last man dies.” That’s why we kept fighting after Italy and Germany had stopped. Though we’re in the Cold War between communism and freedom, the conflict will be the end, but the conflicts religion raises won’t end as long as humans are alive.*

“Father, will you change our newspaper to *Asahi*?”

“Why?” Hisaharu asked. “The *Asahi* is the biggest newspaper and leftist. It’s been on the side of Communist China after the war. But it was one of the enthusiastic media that praised the battles in China in 1912⁸². Now it criticizes the Defense Force. I don’t like it.”

“Well, the columns on the first page are often on exams, even entrance exams. My classmates are reading *Asahi*.”

“Jericho, it’s difficult to explain.” Hisaharu understood the left wing’s long-term strategy. *The teachers’ association is being used as one of the strategies. They say they don’t want to send their students to war anymore. That’s right.* “If just saying ‘No more war’ had any power, the world would not have had wars for these three thousand years. *Asahi* wants to make Nihon a part of China, so I don’t want to buy it.” He saw his

⁸² Nihon Keizai newspaper’s columns, Noaki Komuro’s books.

daughter was frustrated. Politics wasn't important to her; she just wanted to do well on her exams.

"Not only *Asashi* but many other newspapers have used spiritual, subjective expressions to promote sales. Articles and news are not what they are but what their writers think. People never care about this and like to be entertained. In the last war, newspapers cheered people up like cheerleaders nowadays. Anything printed in ink has a strong effect on people."

Rejection again, Jericho thought.

"Jericho, the world is changing. The Iranian revolution broke. The Chinese Cultural Revolution is over. Muslim and Chinese won't stand for modernity. They want the status they once had."

All I'm trying to do is prepare for my exams!

He remembered the old man's talk when he was young like her. *Continent people had brought farming to this archipelago, where people had gathered sea urchins and collected acorns. Like the Ainu race on North Island, they had been defeated by organized people.*

Day by day, Jericho's dream solidified. *I wanna actually see Jon Rubin, at a glance. What place is Israel where he was born? Why did his parents immigrate to the States? How did he spend his days in Israel till nine? He said he couldn't speak English. I wanna try to track his life. Oh, I'll go abroad. But how? Money. I'll need it to go abroad.*

The next day, she went to the teachers' lounge. "Mister," Jericho called him by his nickname.

"Oh, Hana-chan."

"Mister, if your parents are poor, can you still keep on studying?" She was serious.

“You mean in high school and college?”

“Well, maybe.” She couldn’t say she wanted to go to abroad; that seemed too much to wish.

“Have you heard of scholarships?”

“No.”

The teacher decided to learn much more about scholarships and explain about them to all the students. He had seen many of them forced to give up higher education because of their parents’ income; sometimes, the reason was that they were female.

One night, an atlas gave her an idea. *I’ll write letters to mayors. Which cities? One is Jericho, of course. And wherever Jon was raised. Well, the biggest one, Jerusalem.* She checked spellings of cities in a dictionary.

Dear Mayor,

I want to study in your city. I’m 15 years old.
If it is possible, I want to have a scholarship. I am
looking forward to hearing from you.

Jericho Hana da.

Is this composition good? Mister will know.

“Mister?” She hesitated.

“Yah, Hana-chan,” The teacher wanted to help her. “I know you want to go abroad. I’ve looked for scholarships for you to study abroad, but I can’t find any for junior high or high school students. I wish there were the system of jumping grades like other countries. In Nihon, age is everything. But don’t give in.”

“Have you been abroad?”

“Well, do you know Okinawa was considered ‘abroad’? I was born and lived there till I was eighteen. Okinawa had been occupied by the United States. There used to be a lot of Americans there.” Mister wanted to make her smile. “Every time I saw them, I looked in a mirror later.”

“Why?” Jericho couldn’t understand his humor.

“You know my face. My looks. It’s perfectly a Far East Asian one. Flat, small eyes and nose. Short. Short legs. I’m shorter than you!” He laughed.

She had never considered racial differences or racial inferiority complexes. She recalled Jon’s beautiful looks.

“That’s all for my ‘abroad’ experience. To tell the truth, I’m afraid I’d be looked down on in America or Europe. I became an English teacher because new generations need English. But I don’t think I want to go to foreign countries. They might not like I’m walking in Paris.”

Jericho was shocked. *‘It seemed to be true.’ She looked into a mirror, too. ‘Flat big face. This is me?’* It was her first time she considered her looks.

Misao wondered about a letter that appeared one day. It was written in English. *What’s this? Hmm, J? J? From who? What is she doing?* Misao couldn’t understand her daughter at all. Jericho seemed to be very unsteady. *I have disciplined Eriko strictly to care how people judge, but she always gets on my nerves.*

It was a hot summer day in the Beppu garrison where was no air conditioning. Hisaharu was told Jericho was at the gate. He was happy to hear that but felt anxious. It was her first time at his work place. *Is she alone? She must wanna say something.*

He went to the gate. She looked displeased as usual. The guard saluted him. Jericho seemed to lose her nerve a little when she saw the salute.

“Yeah, Jericho! How did you get here?” He tried to be frank to make her relax.

“Walked.” As usual, all her answers consisted of one word.

“Come in.”

“I came here to talk with you. I can’t talk at home as mother would blow up, you know.”

He took one consideration with another.

“I want to go to America.”

“Your dad is ‘slow of speech and tongue.’”⁸³

That night, he and Misao showed a pay slip to Jericho. “Honest living might seem boring to teenagers,” Hisaharu said.

“This is my take-home pay. It means we pay tax, which is used for fire departments, police, roads, bridges, and toilet paper in your school,” Hisaharu explained. “From what’s left, we have to pay for electricity and heat, food, the house, and other expenses.”

The pay slip shocked her. *This is why father has been so stingy.*

“This is all we have left to life on.”

Jericho didn’t say anything and left the tatami room. In her room, Jericho put her head on her bed. She cried. Many feelings rose in her.

Misao wanted to know why her husband had explained the family finances to Jericho. Hisaharu knew the answer would drive Misao to hysterics and her monthly condition would worsen.

⁸³ Exodus 4.

“You worry too much. Worries never work well.”

Misao wanted to shout, *Look at me! You make me unhappy!* Misao took out a kitchen knife and cried, “I worry? I worry? You’re cold!”

She didn’t know the war was still haunting her even after thirty-three years. *Bombs will fall on my daughter. Hunger would attack her. Darkness would cover her. Lice will infest her hair.*

Soon after the cry, she threw the knife. “You never change!”

Hisaharu put the knife in a kitchen drawer. He explained what their daughter wanted. “She wants go abroad because she wants to. My brother was forced to go and died. Your father was also forced. She’s happy ’cuz she can have her way.”

“My da wanted to go abroad, somewhere,” Misao said.

“Goin’ to foreign countries is more than a dream.”

1980

Hisaharu flew the red and white flag on national holidays. He knew Jericho was ashamed of it. No one else flew the national flag; they thought it symbolized militarism, nationalism. Soldiers had died and attacked other countries for the flag. *But this is my house.*

Suddenly, he was assigned elsewhere. “Hanada-san, I’m afraid to say, but here is your personnel change. To Mie Prefecture,” the boss told him.

“Main Island.” Hisaharu took a breath.

“Are you taking your family?” The boss knew Hisaharu had taken his family to Gotemba and Tu-shima.

“Yes sir.”

“How old is your daughter?”

“She’s a freshman in high school. This time it will be long. I’ll take my family.”

“It’s the first time I’ve heard changing high schools.”

“It’s a good opportunity to broaden her horizons.”

In Mie, their speech was very rhythmic, like the comedians on TV.

“Are you from Kyushu?”

Why would anyone ask me that? Jericho wondered. Misao didn’t wonder. She quickly picked up the new accent.

Their official residence was shabby once again. In Tu-shima Island, their dwelling had been shabby, but all her classmates lived in such shabby houses. This time, she felt misery. *Almost all families my parents know are DFs. They never understand how miserable I am. I can’t let them know this.*

Misao made friends quickly, while Jericho discovered her classmates’ sophisticated lifestyles. *The language here is different.* “You add *ken* at the end, it’s Kyushu, lovely!” Jericho understood the girl had no intention of being rude, but she decided to be very careful about talking.

One day, she was invited to a classmate’s house and found the house had many books. “My parents used to take me to museums in Nagoya when I was in elementary school. In Nagoya, there are science, art, and history museums,” the girl said. “How did you get the information you needed on Kyushu?”

“Hi. Here’s some juice.” A sophisticated woman brought glasses on a beautiful tray.

My mother never talks like this! And she never prepares juice for my friends. Umm, well, I never invite them to my miserable house. I never want them to see my parents. “How do you do?” Jericho used the words for the first time in her life.

“Thanks for being friends with my daughter.” The elegant lady put two glasses on a glass table. “What does your father do?”

It was a pain that she saw the extent on their reaction when she said her father’s occupation. “He works as an officer for the government.” Jericho couldn’t say he was in the DF.

She learned new things in school. “You live in a society of laws,” the social studies teacher said. “Laws are very complicated, but if you learn their hierarchy, you’ll understand them.”

He took a textbook out. “You have studied our history. The law system had been imported from Germany in the late nineteenth century. Human rights, the sovereignty of the people, and democracy were developed in Europe. People gained them by wisdom, courage, and blood. Don’t take them for granted. ”

Jericho was getting hungry. She must wake up early for the train and bus to the school.

“Living in this law system, learning about human rights, the sovereignty of the people and democracy will make your life better.”

A sixteen-year-old girl wanted food more than a better life.

The teacher wiped his face with a handkerchief. He knew laws prohibited teaching religious things in tax-run schools. “Their origin is the Bible.”

Lunch, lunch, lunch!

“First are the laws from God. Second, laws of nature. Third, human laws. Now, you’re learning the third part. The second is the part humans can understand by taking a rational approach. It’s mathematics. You might wonder why I’m talking philosophy and not about parliamentary democracy.”

A student raised his hand. "The exams for universities are divided into those subjects, aren't they?"

He's really cute. Jericho sighed. *I don't need a lunch break if he continues to say anything.*

"Yes, but if you notice this hierarchical menu, you'll be better at math and science. Now, we call Copernicus and Newton scientists, but there weren't such occupations at that age. They were philosophers. It was Descartes who established the x and y coordinate system. You've mastered quadratic functions, *na?*"

A boy next to Jericho muttered, "*Je pense, donc je suis.*"

Jericho sighed. *This is why girls don't like him.*

"You study very hard," the teacher continued. "Math, science, social studies, English, but outside of Christianity. It means you study one dot by one. Some of you will make the dots a line and notice the upper dimensions by your effort. But I wish you would be able to think in the third dimension. Though your body and material world is in the cubic, your minds are in the first dimension or second without Biblical understanding."

I'm back to starving again.

1981

After twenty-four months in Mie Prefecture, Hisaharu was ordered to work in Nagoya. "It's for recruitment. The recruiters are in very tough situation, especially in big cities. Your office is in the center of Nagoya."

At last, this job. At my age, I'll have to quit if I don't accept this. No income. "I'll go." He decided not to move but to commute to Nagoya by train. It was amazingly what millions

did. *This is the notorious rush hour. This is what metropolitan life is like.*

Nagoya was a big city that reminded him of Tokyo, but it was much cleaner and more beautiful than the crowded capital. The center of Nagoya was rebuilt on a good plan after the war.

Who can imagine it was bombed out and flame had covered the whole city? I can picture it. Millions of bodies all around, a ten-year-old boy running under a rain of bombs. His new job wasn't in the basement, in a busy town. "How do you do, Hanada-san," a gentleman said to Hisaharu. His eyes were thoughtful. He owned the building.

"How do you do, Marta-san?"

"I understand the situation of the Defense Force in big cities. I almost died in the war. This life is a gift. I decided to give the rest of my life to peace. That's why I made these rooms for the DF. I studied in a theological seminary in Nanzan. I met an American there who changed my life."

"America has changed all of us." Hisaharu thought of two pilots.

"When we say globalization, it means we have to change to become suitable to others. Can you imagine? Some people think globalization is others changing for them."

"I've never thought of that."

"American and Chinese."

Hisaharu thought of his daughter's room filled with a Chinese actor's huge posters. "America, that's true. Well, China isn't a developed country now. The ministry of Foreign Affairs' Official Development Assistance for China reached a cumulative total 3.3 trillion yen, \$800 trillion."

“China had been the center of the world. They will be the biggest again,” Marta-san said.

“How do you know?”

“It’s clear if you see their influence on us for these 1,500 years. China had influence on and changed all the countries around it. Their pride is greater than any other Asians.”

“It’s a Communist country now.”

“Even communism is a tool for the intelligent Chinese leaders.”

“Globalization is the Western way, Christian based.”

“Brilliant leaders can use religion as a tool.”

While they were talking, they heard a loud voice from a speaker on top of a car driving by.

“Right wing again!” Hisaharu said. “In big cities and towns, they’re one of reasons the Defense Force is misunderstood.”

“It’s not the right wing this time,” Marta-san said.

“Believe in Jesus Christ—” It was louder than the right wing’s “—or you’ll go to hell!” The car stopped at a traffic light.

“Threats. They’re one of the reasons Christianity is misunderstood.” Marta-san’s voice disappeared in the noise. The car drove off.

“It reminds me of the war,” Hisaharu said. “It was the age of horrible brainwashing.”

“You’re reminded of that too?” Marta-san looked at Hisaharu’s eyes. “My son was one of the pilots whose fuel was enough for only one way. He was seventeen and believed he would go to heaven for his dedication.”

“My brother was in a *kaiten*.” Hisaharu nodded.

“Now the reaction is this pacifism.”

“That’s why it’s hard to find students for the DF.”

“This area has the head offices and factories for Toyota, Honda, Yamaha, and others. High school boys have plenty of choices. Working conditions are incomparably better than you offer. I understand your difficult situation, Hanada-san. It would be better if you grew your hair a little bit.”

Hisaharu said, “I need to. Even men are very soft here.”

“Their smile doesn’t mean they’re content. *Je me presse de rire de tout, de peur d’être obligé d’en pleurer.*”

“*Le Barbier de Seville.*”

“I know you know. Your way of talking to me shows you like books.”

“Does it?” Hisaharu was surprised. “All my moves have affected the way I talk.”

“A man named Paul, who had moved a lot, wrote like this: ‘Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.’”⁸⁴

“Good advice. It’s too difficult for me. In this big city, I’m at a loss.”

He had to go into town. It was burning hot. Hisaharu couldn’t buy an air conditioner.

1982

His pulse had ceased beating; the moment felt forever for Hisaharu. The night air was cold. *Glass-clear darkness. Where does this spring smell come from?* He looked around

⁸⁴ Colossians 4:5–6.

and breathed deep. In the big city, the pleasant smell of earth calmed him.

At the end of February, fear caught up with him. *How many years do I have left? I won't recognize my death. Will somebody tell Misao of my death?* His pulse was thundering this time. *I can't die now. What will happen to Misao and Jericho if I die? I won't let Jericho go to a nightclub for a living. Misao is helpless. What a good-natured woman. Wherever I take her, she becomes a part of the community though I can't. When someone says "we," I feel outside of that "we." Misao is always in the "we."* His pulse returned to normal. *Could be the coffee. Why do they serve coffee instead of tea nowadays? It's not only I who doesn't like coffee. I don't wanna be rude, so I drink it. I should go to a doctor.*

Marta-san sometimes visited Hisaharu at his office. Talking with him was fun. "You read *Oliver Twist* and *Les Misérables*, right?"

"Yeah. Both of them were very moving."

"Dickens and Hugo knew some souls couldn't be ruined by environment and heredity. It doesn't matter the place, though they were Europeans. It's the case all over Asia and Africa."

1983

Jericho graduated high school and started working at a factory near Nagoya. So she and her parents moved to Nagoya.

Misao was surprised to see that wives in this big city had lunch in restaurants. Spending their husbands' income was a form of secret revolt for wives who had to clean bathrooms every day. The faces of wives in Nagoya seemed happy.

Husbands knew the rebellion and let them free for a happy daily life. Misao was amazed.

“Let’s go to lunch, Hana-chan,” Mrs. Nakamura said. Misao felt great happiness feeling she was accepted by them at last. *My husband’s old way will be destroyed by Nagoya!*

Formal language annoyed Jericho. She had not used respect-formed words and sentences. *This language duty creates distance*, she thought. *I’ll never find friends.*

“Hana-chan,” the boss told Jericho, “you need training. You’re in the business world. You must not be rude.”

Formal language is used to avoid people, she thought. Girls around her said their parents had taught them the formal way. All Jericho knew was the several grammar classes per year and conversations in books.

Misao began a new custom, drinking coffee with Nakamura-san. “*Ne*, I had thought, women shouldn’t be in front.”

“My generation. I have two daughters.”

“But still, Eriko shouldn’t start anything new. That causes trouble. I don’t want her to be a shameful nuisance to anyone.”

“*Arrah*, my daughter said that way means not living. We have a house to protect us from rain and wind. We have gas, water, and electricity. What young generation needs more than that? It’s greedy to want more. *Ne-e*.”

I like tea more than coffee, both Nakamura-san and Misao were thinking in the cafe.

“Eriko told me, ‘I have the right to choose my life.’ What do you think? No, no.”

“Choosing you own life? I wouldn’t think of it. My master says young people are addicted to imported ideas. It’s egocentric.”

Misao kept chatting. "My daughter was born into this plain family in Kyushu, so she has very plain features. She shouldn't have fantasies or she could lose her entire life. No one can choose their life. Jericho has to understand her limits."

"Youth claim rights, but they don't care about responsibilities," Nakamura-san said. "Too many choices in these modern times."

Jericho's job from 8:00 was to clear men's ashtrays and tea servings before men start work at 9:00. The one hour every morning were not paid. All male workers had graduated from universities, but all the females had no degrees; this was the reason for the difference in their jobs. The Ministry of Labor wanted more women with higher education in offices, but men couldn't accept such new-wave thinking. Girls should simply help men and then get married to them, they thought. The families would be faithful to the company.

"Hana-chan! Old sport, here! The eightieth day!"

There was a face, now middle aged. Ryuji was on the platform of Toyohashi Station. After retirement from the Dragons, a baseball team, he had lived just sixty kilometers from Nagoya.

"It's been almost twenty years! You talk perfectly in this area's dialect! I'm so happy you called me!"

"Yattokame, the eightieth day is also said here, *dayo*. It's like in Nagoya, *danamo*? Marta-san is a Dragons fan. His friend introduced me to Sara, my wife." Ryuji put his arm on Hisaharu.

"You look fine."

“Yep, you’re gonna stay in a public house near a shrine tonight with us, *dayo*. It’s the festival eve; we have a lot of things to do.”

“I’ve been looking forward to this festival. Is there anything I can do for you?”

“Thanks, but you’re my guest, *dayo*. We’re handling gunpowder.”

“You do fireworks?” Hisaharu pictured fire-works in the sky.

“Kind of.” Ryuji smiled. “You’ll see. We call it *tezutu*.”

“Is it your hobby?”

“No, but I like it. All men in the community have to do this. Over there is the *tezutu* shrine.”

He saw the symbol of a shrine, a gate, rebuilt in concrete. *There’s no wood big enough for the shrine gate anywhere. If there is, it’s better to keep it alive. Big trees are holy. It is a simple combination of logs that represents pure hearts to nature.* He remembered the gate of two logs and straw ropes in Tushima. *This colored cement can never symbolize the mystery of the forest, which man has destroyed.*

Still, the shrine was surrounded by beautiful, tall trees in the middle of the busy town. *In a few weeks, the green will turn to red and yellow. Shrines and temples in Nagoya sold and rented lands, so forests became buildings and parking lots.* Hisaharu recalled the shrine in his hometown. In those days, he didn’t realize how valuable trees were.

“Big trees remind me of Kyushu. Don’t you wanna go back to Kikai Island some day?”

“Of course, *dayo*, but my wife!”

“Your wife had changed your life and accent. You had kept your ‘T’ sound while you were playing baseball. You’re often interviewed. I’ve seen you on TV.”

“Cause the island is my pride. An American player in the Dragons once said my ‘T’ was the same as his.”

“I thought your ancestor was a Spanish missionary.”

“My great-grandfather failed to open this country before Perry Calbraith. Maybe. This is the house we’ll stay tonight, *dayo*.” Ryuji opened the old sliding door. Men were putting black powder into big cylinders. “*Yo*.” They saw Ryuji and Hisaharu. All wore *tabi* to move their five toes freely. They were holding big cylinders with all their fingers and toes.

“This is mine. I made it.” Ryuji pointed to one. It was rolled up with solid rope made from rice straw.

“You made it?” Hisaharu kept his eyes on the some kind of cannon.

“Yep. We went to a bamboo bush in the rainy season five months ago to find *mousou* bamboo, big enough for *tezutu*.”

“You use them for fireworks?”

“You can’t sleep tonight. You have to watch what we do. We’re mixing those powders. You know what they are.” Ryuji opened a long box.

“You compound powders for the fireworks? Is it lawful?”

“I don’t know. I mix, I hold. My responsibility, *dayo*.”

“Saltpeter, sulfur, ash, and iron powder,” Hisaharu said without touching the box. He imagined how they felt if he touch it. “It costs a lot, doesn’t it?”

“A man pays up to 100,000 yen for the powder.”

“Expensive.”

“And crazy. The first year, you do this whether you want to or not. But when they go off, it’s like an addiction.”

“*Tezutu* seems to be holy for you. You need moisture to mix everything. What do you use?”

“This!” Ryuji proudly pointed to a bottle.

“*Shou-chu*?”

“Ya, rough distilled spirits.”

An old man near him said, “And the night dew, *dayo*. That’s why we won’t sleep tonight.”

Another elder said with a smile, “Have fun tonight and tomorrow night, *dayo*.” He called his wife. “Let the guest have a glass of *shou-chu* and *sushi*!”

Early Saturday morning, the men were excited. Endless firecrackers were going off outside.

“Firecrackers? Chinatown around here?” Hisaharu found he wasn’t sleepy at all.

“No. I was also surprised at the noise on the first year. They say just tradition here,” Ryuji replied.

Ceremonies and entertainments in the daytime were familiar to Hisaharu. Drums and little girls’ solemn dances in the morning.

Essa! essa! essa! He heard the familiar chant. About twenty men were carrying an ark made of acacia wood. It was about 1.1, meters, two cubits long, and 0.7 meter, a cubit wide.⁸⁵

“It’s a popular size, but it’s taller than I’ve ever seen.” Hisaharu was interested in the ark.

“You’ll see why.”

“You have many arks, do you?”

“Each community association has its own. Surprised? When I was with the Dragons, the team used to take us to the Atuta Shrine before each season. We could step into the main site.”

⁸⁵ Exodus 25:23.

“Common people must stop at the gate in the forest. I want to know, is there no figure or image in the main house?”

“Of course not. A shrine isn’t a temple. I wonder why Buddhists pray to Buddhist figures. I can understand the art, but art is art.”

Listening to Ryuji reminded Hisaharu of the sword in the box he had found in the Tu-shima Sea. A name, Antoku, in Chinese characters and a date were there. The Atuta Shrine was where the Dragon Sword had been set. The sword had been taken out from the Eight-Headed Dragon, which represented eight tribes. When the Yamato, continent-oriented people, were conquering Izumo, there were eight strong tribes. The Yamato beat the eight tribes and took the weapon. The sword made from special skill came to be the strongest weapon in their battles to keep winning battles to east, Nara, Nagoya and others.

When a Yamato hero came back from the far east land to Nagoya, he died. His wife built the Atuta Shrine to house the sword. It had come to be one of the three treasures of to be an O-Kimi. But in 1185, a young O-Kimi and the sword were sunk in the sea between Kyushu and Main Island. New legends had been created eight hundred years ago. They said the Atuta Shrine still housed the sword.

But I have it in the tiny DF residence in Nagoya. When I came to know what the Atuta Shrine was, I was surprised. What sent me to Nagoya? I also visited Izumo. It’s like a power carry me. But I don’t know how to deal with high-class people, just like I didn’t know how to handle the yakuza thirty years ago. The legend should be back in wild nature. The shark was a protector.

A woman brought them short kimonos called *happi*. They wore the vivid blue and red on pure white and black. Women were very busy in the pubic house preparing to serve *sake* and meals.

“We need to have a nap for a few minutes, *dayo*. We didn’t sleep last night and we won’t tonight.”

“Okay.” It was exciting for Hisaharu, who had not been to a festival for a long time.

Ryuji lay on the wooden floor, his head on his cannon. An old woman brought a pillow for Hisaharu. He heard women talking. “I regret I worked even at night for my sons’ university tuition.”

“I understand you, they went to Tokyo and have families there.”

“They say it’s difficult to come back here, *ne*? When I look around, only high school educated boys remain here. I prefer it. My master and I lack money, but I even don’t know my sons’ incomes.”

“The whole society is wrong. The younger generation is going bad.”

Another woman joined in. “My son is a carpenter at age thirty-five, but he has no job ’cuz the prime minister is bad.”

Hisaharu was surprised to know there still existed parents who raised sons who focused on their parents.

It was ten minutes to six. “Hana-chan, the main event is starting.” Ryuji pointed to a place circled by hundreds of people. Five boys showed up in the middle of the circle holding smaller cannons. “It’s show time!” Ryuji shouted.

The boys made *tezutu* level with the ground and lit them. Violent flames exploded with orange sparks.

Are these your fireworks? The moment Hisaharu tried to say, the boys raised the small cannons. Left arms on sides of

the cannons, right arms around them. Boys were in the falling sparks.

“Wow, what boys!”

“Let the ark go! Open!” men repeated. Ryuji and Hisaharu stepped backward. Men were carrying the heavy ark on their shoulders. They kept shouting and struggling with the poles on which the ark rested. It was set in the middle of the circle. A man with a torch climbed on top of the ark, danced and put the fire on the top of the ark. Sudden sparkles jumped up to the stars from the ark. The gorgeous fireworks remained for a few minutes. Hisaharu was astonished.

“I also was struck when I saw it first. Arks should have been divinities, *na*?” Ryuji asked. “It’s time for my preparation.” Ryuji went into the house telling Hisaharu to keep a position in front of the shrine steps.

Ryuji appeared with four men. They held the cannons they had been using as pillows. Five flames of dragons licked the earth. The blazes were much bigger than the boys’ blazes. Feet in *tabi* were placed firmly on the ground. They stepped his right leg and made knees angled. The five men raised the *tezutu* up. Its lower side was supported by his right hip. Sparks exploded. The fire raged just right of Ryuji’s eye.

The roaring fire rose higher than the highest tree in the forest, throwing sparks high. Orange rain flew up and came down on Ryuji, but he kept his feet. Sparks from the fire were dancing in the air. Sudden explosion took place from the both ends of the cannon. The sound shook the land. *Amazing!* The explosion knocked Hisaharu off his feet. The other four men’s cannons also caused earthquakes. Darkness covered the shrine forest again.

“In this area, Nagoya to Toyohashi, it’s very wealthy compared to our homelands, don’t you think?” Hisaharu asked Ryuji at the station.

“Yeah. Hills and cliffs were covered with constructions to prevent landslides. I haven’t seen them in other places. The local government here has much better income, as the area has many huge companies’ head offices and factories. Adolescents don’t have to leave to make a living, and they can find partners here. They don’t know how people in other areas live.”

1984

Jericho was getting to be a part of the big city. She found girls in town had learned how to play piano and at least one of the cultural traditions—tea ceremony, flower arrangement, or dance. Going out with them was like walking on tiptoe.

One day, an attractive boy was talking with his friends, and Jericho was there. He had been kind to her. She began to like him.

“Listen, guys, to what happened to me.” He spoke excitedly. “When I was in Tokyo, I was told I had a good physique and should join the Defense Force. Can you believe it?”

He had graduated university in Tokyo, and he ridiculed the DF. *Does my father recruit for the DF? No. I don’t believe it. But maybe he does go to schools to recruit. Again, I can’t tell others what my father does.*

The guy took her to his parents later, and they were so good to her. Jericho saw who gave the boy such attraction. *Such different parents.* But Jericho couldn’t take him home. *Miserable again. His world is very far from mine.*

At a party, a boy asked her, “My father manages a very small company. What does your father do?”

“Well, he works for the DF.” It was almost a confession.

“Oh I’m scared! Is he very strict?”

“Well—yes, he is, very—not too much.”

I had thought that when I went to work and learned about society’s ways, I would come to love my father and mother, but I still don’t. Jericho remembered the feeling when she was on Tu-shima Island. *They may love me, but I’ve not been able to feel any affection, tenderness for them. Well, it’s okay they don’t have money. It’s okay father belongs to the DF. But why are they my father and mother?*

1985

“Hana-chan, you wanna learn English, *ne*? Why not go to my church, Nanzan, next Sunday? Some of the fathers preach in English as the area has many foreigners.” A new friend in the factory, Mari, said to Jericho.

The place to pray was smaller than she had expected. Mari whispered, “We have unique people today. One is called Goro-san, from Nagasaki, and the other is from America, but he’s been in Nagoya almost forty years. He belongs to another church, Protestant. Do you know? Catholics and Protestants in Nihon often help each other ’cuz they’re minorities.”

“Pro—?” Jericho gazed at the beautiful decorations.

“Well, you know, some Protestants in Europe criticize Catholics. I think Catholics had been based on the era when the majority of people were illiterate for more than 1,700 years. Basically, people couldn’t have written things ’cuz papers and ink were too valuable.”

“Common people couldn’t get them, I imagine.”

“Books, I mean. The Bible was in only Latin, Greek, Hebrew, I dunno, before John Wycliffe in the fourteenth and Luther in the sixteenth century. Translations are good, but it always has misunderstanding and the will of the translator.”

“Uhh, you know everything. I know, Muslims never translated their important book.”

“The invention of printing changed Catholics. Ah, am I on the Protestant or Catholic side?” She laughed.

“I’ve read the words *Protestant* and *Catholic* in history books, but they’re out of my life. Religion has been used to rule nations for thousands of years.” Jericho said what Hisaharu used to say, “Religions are stronger than ideologies.” Jericho didn’t like talking like her father.

She looked at Mari. *She’s so brilliant. But she gave up college for her younger brother. She said it wasn’t as bad as having to work to pay for his tuition as other girls had to do. Women!*

“People think Christianity is a part of a foreign culture, oh, they are!” Mari eyed the corner of the beautiful room.

“Today, we fortunately have students learning physics and chemistry,” an old father next to a foreigner said. “Picture the Earth in the solar system, the system in the Milky Way Galaxy, and that galaxy in the galaxies that make up the universe. Picture again, but this time smaller and smaller. Everything on the Earth, the universe is made from elements, hydrogen, helium, and so on, tabled in 18 and 7.”

Jericho’s bag slipped off. The moment she took it, a touch was on her left hand, and the feeling pierced her body. It was the fingers of the young man next her. “Oh, thank you,” Jericho whispered.

“Nothing.”

His voice melted her heart.

“Moons, the Earth, other planets, the sun and other stars, all galaxies are rotating in balance.”

Jericho’s mind was elsewhere. *What a nice touch.*

“Turn back to the elements. Electrons revolve around the cores are also in balance.”

Jericho felt heat running through her body, a kind she never had felt before. She straightened her back to look at him again without moving her head. His shoulder and chest was there.

The shoulder and chest!

“You might think it’s a wonder of nature.”

Yes, this is a wonder. Jericho held her breath.

“Do you think why this miracle of balance was created?”

‘Yes, this is THE miracle.’

“Let’s think about the Creator.”

Jericho fell in love. Her skin still remembers his touch. *I’ll die if he touches my hand again.* Jericho hated any man’s touch. It reminded her of the disgusting day fifteen years earlier.

“Our bodies, brains, and hearts are made from these elements, nitrogen, calcium, and so on. In this container called a body, what do you have? And why?”

My body’s full of thunder and lightning. My brain’s broken.

“Let me tell you the difference. The *how* is the field of science, and the *why* is the field of God.”

I live! I live! That’s why I live! This is how I live!

The Mass was over. “Thank you.” Jericho talked to him with all her bravery. Jericho looked at his face at first. His smile was bright as early summer. *He belongs to another society. He doesn’t have any difficulties in his family. His parents are the*

ones who help him soar. Still, her heart got hot. *How do I look? I ain't cute at all.*

He said, "I came here 'cuz my professor said the Goro-san here was interesting. Do you belong to this church?"

"No, she doesn't," Mari said when she saw that Jericho wasn't able to answer herself but her eyes were twinkling.

"His talk about movement, rotation, made me imagine the *samsara* of Buddhism or Hinduism. Of course," he stressed, "I don't believe in any religion."

"The cycle of reincarnation? You're smart. You're a student." Jericho found her voice. His intelligence made her heat up and feel distant from him. "I'm, well, a factory worker. But I wish I could study in college."

"You can." He said it easily. "Christianity is a European religion born in the Middle East. I feel a distance. The distance between Bethlehem and the United Kingdom is less than the distance between the India-Nepal border, the place Buddhism was born, and here."

It was clear his mind was not on Jericho at all. Jericho understood it. *That's usual. No boy cares for me.*

"It's not a matter of distances on Earth," Mari said softly. "For example, you'll be moved when you listen to Bach's Toccata and Fugue."

"Well, we take the subway. Bye."

"He's gone." Jericho couldn't take her eyes off the student.

"Ah, Hana-chan, my fault, he—"

"It's okay. Next Sunday, take me here, please!"

Mari saw a fever spreading on the friend's cheeks and nose, tears covering her eyes.

"He won't be here," Jericho said, but she hoped he would.

“Yeah, I understand it’s hard for him to believe Christ as God here. The great teachings of Confucius have been the basis of this society for hundreds of years. Everyone knows he was human. Even a human can think and leave lessons and doctrines. It’s natural for Asians to think Jesus was a very great man like Buddha.”

“You think *Yes Kiristo* wasn’t a man?” Jericho’s mind was half gone to a subway with the young man. Her nose was still red like the reindeer.

“God knows that humans believe only what they see. That’s why the Lord was on earth as a human. You don’t believe this, do you? Well, I’d never say this to anyone except you or I would be judged. But I can tell you.”

Jericho was happy hearing that her friend trusted her.

“I like what Moses said, do not be afraid of any man, for judgment belongs to God. But you know, I always worry about how people judge me.”

“It’s like my mother. But in your case, something’s different.”

Next week, Jericho couldn’t spot him. *I knew it.*

“Yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.”⁸⁶ the wave of air from the American former pilot’s lips reached her ears and went out with a sigh.

English is impossible. I’ll sleep till ten on Sundays.

1986

Hisaharu was reading some mail. One letter was for Jericho from Foster Plan. “Misao, did you hear anything about this

⁸⁶ Ecclesiastes 3:11.

from Jericho? Is it a donation? Does she have any money for donations?"

"She wansta to know why my pa could play the bamboo pipe and knit."

Her explanations always irritated him. "I'm asking how she can afford five thousand yen per month for a poor child."

"Ah, Borneo. Eriko wansta know anything about the island. Eriko asked about him and his kin, but no one answered."

"Especially knitting is women's work."

"Donations are great, but Eriko is a fool. Her income is so small. She has to prepare for her wedding."

The next week, Foster Plan sent her a picture of a nine-year-old girl in Borneo.

1987

Jasmines were blooming at the window. The room was filled with their fragrance. He couldn't breathe for a while. *What's this?* He looked at the jasmines and smelled them to escape his fear. The smell gave him his breath back. *If I only knew when I'll die. Is it terrible? We're determined not to know it. I wanna die on tatami beside by Misao. Am I gonna be alone when I die? Is it painful? Is it hard, Brother Ichiro?* Fear of death forced him to face his life. It reminded him of *samsara*, the cycle of reincarnation. *What a stupid idea. Well, but, yes, the cycle. The homeland, wild nature, has always been in me.*

Plants produce things animals and men consume. Small things break down the soil, which produces new life. This idea should ease me, but it doesn't.

Ino was in a hospital. Tom-O wanted her to live. He had been beside her all day long.

“Eat this.”

She had no appetite. She kept her lips closed. Each memory was in Tom-O. *I killed a man. For thirty years, the man has been in me. Is that you taking my Ino? Take me before her, please. My cofighters, take me with you. I can't stand this.*

“Eat this. You need to. Or you—” He put a finger on her chin and poured food from a spoon into her mouth. His weak voice made her cry. She didn't want to eat anything.

“Ma!” Misao stepped into the room with Hisaharu. She couldn't believe what she saw. *Ma protected me and my brothers during the war. Every siren, Ma held my hand. Ma's strength is still in my hand. She ran like an arrow through the bombings with a baby on her back and two children in her hands, watching the elder brother. Ma was strong enough to protect me and my brothers during the war. That first air raid, my legs were paralyzed and hip was floating. Ma's dynamism made me stand up. Why is she so powerless now?* “Ma!” Misao looked into Ino's face. *She's noble and beautiful as usual. She won't die.* “Ma!”

“You're Misao. Hisaharu-san brought you a long way.” Ino still expressed gratitude to her daughter's husband first.

“Let me see your mouth, Ma.” Misao found something wrong there. “Oh!” Her mouth was full of food.

“Da!” Misao cleaned it thoroughly. “Da! Never!”

“She must eat, or—” Tom-O cried.

Tom-O passed away five weeks after Ino. He just lost all power and couldn't stand up. He was holding a picture of

statues of angels at a Catholic cathedral in Nagasaki that had been destroyed in the atomic bombing. Angels' heads amid the rubble. She read what he had written on the photo. "I saw this face, living, on the street. A child was looking at me. How I was worried for my wife and children."

On December 8, the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty was signed between the United States and the Soviet Union in Washington, D.C. by President Ronald Reagan and General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev.

A famous writer, O-E Kenzaburou, insisted that the Defense Force should be ashamed. He received a Nobel Prize later. Jericho thought she couldn't marry because of her father's job.

1990

Hisaharu's fifty-fifth birthday was the day of his retirement. Coworkers and friends had a party for Hisaharu on the day. The next day, his family left the small official residence and moved into a dormitory in the south part of Nagoya. The dorm was for bank workers, and he was its caretaker. Misao had to be one of two cooks there.

Jericho felt miserable in the new situation. *This is not a house. My father can't afford living in this big city. Even if I had a boyfriend, I couldn't introduce him to them. If I was cute and not dull, somebody might like me. But I'm poor.*

Hisaharu had planned to go back to Beppu after retirement, but his daughter was still at home. She wanted to save money to go abroad anywhere totally different from her culture.

It took ninety minutes for Jericho to commute to the factory. She was sleepy all the time. At night, the many drunken men

on trains smelled of alcohol, just as that man had. The memory of her fear emerged from the dark. *The sky was blue. The clouds were white. The man was nothing but filth. My house roof was just over there. My body came to be filth too.*

That year, female workers didn't have to clean ashtrays because the head manager stopped smoking. He had accepted the new law and started employing women with degrees.

Not only Jericho but all the female employees realized that women with degrees didn't do more work than they did, but even the higher-educated girls at age twenty-two received more pay.

Jericho went to Turkey when the yen hit a record high.

Hisaharu worried about her. *Isn't Turkey ruled by religion?*

She was standing on the side of the Bosphorus.

1992

The next year of the Gulf War, the Diet approved a disputed law, the Peacekeeping Operation. The Defense Force could join the operation by the United Nations. *We made it!* Hisaharu wanted to go to the PKO in Cambodia for cease-fire surveillance as part of the United Nations. All the media criticized it as a revival of militarism.

On May 4, H. Takada, a policeman member of the PKO, was shot and died during election-monitoring activities. The media got a chance to campaign to criticize the dispatch of soldiers.

Hisaharu wanted to be young again. The DF was sent to Mozambique in '93, to Rwanda in '94, and to the Golan Heights.

1994

In June, a Socialist Party leader came to be prime minister. Hisaharu had met the tall man soon after the war. He was Mr. Universite. *I thought the man with white hands was a Communist. I thought such elite never understood us. Now I read his father was a fisherman near Beppu.* That beautiful face remained in Hisaharu's memory. Others said the DF opposed the constitution, but the prime minister admitted that the DF was constitutional.

In July, the prime minister announced he would respect the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security with the United States. *Has he changed his policy? Couldn't he change others?* Hisaharu felt something was wrong with his heart. *How long do I have left? Months or weeks? Should I call Jericho? I don't wanna disturb her. Coming home requires much money.*

A tatami room came into his mind. It was in the old forest of Kyushu. It was the room in which his father, he, and his siblings had been born. The next room was where Ichiro had said good-bye to his parents. *The house has witnessed births and deaths. The house I built in Beppu won't witness any births. How wonderful if I could die at home watched by my family.*

No pulse? No way. It frightened him. He moved his fingers along his left wrist. *Am I gonna die?* The terror turned out to be darkness. He went down on his knees. His hands tried to grab something, and a bonsai fell down. The noise brought Misao.

“What’s wrong?” Misao asked. “Arrah! Ahllah! What’s happening! Somebody! Somebody! Help!”

He was in the ICU.

A doctor looked at him and then at his wife. “Your heart was in convulsions. It won’t let the blood out. Usually, someone with an irregular pulse has a heart that beats too fast or too slow, but you have both problems. We need to check how your heart is working, then we’ll decide on a cure. Medicine may help the fast pulse, while a pacemaker may help your slow pulse.”

Misao couldn’t say anything. She stared at the floor.

“He needs a catheter test,” the doctor said.

Hisaharu understood his situation, Misao’s heart was in her mouth. She put her hands on the mouth.

The doctor drew a picture. “Here, from the groin, a thick vein goes to the heart. I’ll insert a very thin catheter. I’ve done this a hundred and twenty-eight times in the last four years. Though I haven’t made mistakes, there is some risk, especially if your irregular pulse happens during the procedure.”

“It could be I won’t wake up.”

“Exactly. But if we leave you in this condition, you’re in peril. Putting in a pacemaker is less dangerous than the catheter test. The biggest part of a pacemaker, the power source, would be put here—” the doctor pointed to his collarbone “—just below the bone and between the muscles.” He showed him a pacemaker. “This needle would be in the muscle of the heart. If your heartbeat gets too slow, it will make your heart pump regularly. The battery should be changed every five years, but it will last more than ten.”

Back home, Hisaharu felt the fear of death when he thought of the catheter procedure. *It's for me to decide, but I can't.*

"Oh, my daughter is gonna marry a man with a house, the first son of farmers!" Misao was calling relatives with the news.

"Mother, he's a lab worker." Jericho was back from Turkey.

"You know nothing," Misao said with half happiness.

"This is not your generation, Mother."

"It's not a matter of generations."

"You must serve his parents with all your might," Hisaharu said.

Jericho said nothing. *I hate this. I hate this. I'll use my time as I want to. Your generation is over!*

Hisaharu understood Jericho didn't want advice from her parents. *I can't do anything for her about a better job or going abroad or getting married. We're useless in her eyes.* But he continued. "Jericho, you're gonna be a yome." Hisaharu called her from the other side of the grass-paper wall. "You shouldn't take your time for your own like you used to. The first thing in your life is your husband and his parents. You shouldn't listen to noisy music anymore."

*I Love Rock 'n' Roll!*⁸⁷ *I'll commit suicide if I can't listen to it!*

"You need to," Hisaharu said. He was afraid his daughter would lose her husband's love.

Jericho could tell only Aquila where she and her parents lived and her father's previous occupation. He understood that being the first son in a traditional family could cause walls in a marriage. As Jericho knew she wouldn't see other men she

⁸⁷ Joan Jett and The Blackhearts.

would be able to introduce to her parents, she decided to give up her work for the sake of getting married. She had begun a small business selling things from Kapali Carsi, Istanbul, to Nagoya.

She had met Aquila in a beautiful post office in Istanbul. He had been sent there by a company in Nihon as a chemist with a sales team. He was at a loss because he couldn't speak Turkish or English though he had a doctorate. But the Turkish people were very kind; some tried to help him, but he was shy to make a gesture of communication.

"Life is not as simple as you think," Hisaharu said. "Jericho, life is an enigma. It's not as simple as yes or no. Positive thinking might be good, but it often hurts harmony."

Jericho didn't answer.

A few minutes later, she heard, "Eriko! Your father—!" Misao shouted. "Can you drive?" Misao was frantic.

The doctor looked at Jericho. "Have you heard what I explained?"

"No."

Misao cut in. "Your father didn't want you to worry."

The doctor told Jericho about the catheter and the cure.

"Father, why—? You have to."

"I will, I will," was all he could say.

"The sooner the better. How about the day after tomorrow? Wednesday at ten?"

"Sure," Jericho answered. A nurse was supporting Misao. Her tough father was helpless.

On the day, he tried not to think about the catheter check, about the risk. Lying on a hard bed, he imagined how Misao

had felt going into the operating room to get rid of her fibroid. *Same as me? No. I was angry with her at that time 'cuz of the expense. She's at least not angry now.* The local anesthesia kept his mind clear.

"Can you watch this monitor?" Dr. Aoki asked him.

"No."

A nurse turned its angle. "Yes, thank you."

He felt nothing. *There's the inside of my vein. What technology!*

The red light went off. The door opened. *My husband lives.*

"Hanada-san, as we expected, a pacemaker operation is needed as soon as possible."

His next anesthesia was general. "Breathe slowly, then close your eyes," He heard the nurse's voice. He felt his bed was moving gently to somewhere. *Where am I going before an operation?* He tried to open his eyes, but they were heavy. He let them close.

He heard a familiar voice. "Oh, you're awake. Good!" He saw Misao and Jericho. *Is the operation over?*

"Don't move your shoulder, Father."

It seems to be over. Is this the general anesthesia? Anesthesia and sleep are entirely different. The voice of the nurse and the vibration of bed-moving were continued in my consciousness. No darkness between them.

"Let father rest," Jericho said, but Misao kept talking. "This is a single room. We can't care for you in a big room. Money should be spent in this case. But I remember that when I was in the hospital, you said—"

"I'm okay." Hisaharu said. His heartbeat was loud, too loud to sleep. "Do I have a pacemaker?"

“Sure!” Misao was excited he was awake.

“Good, Hanada-san,” the doctor said. “Everything’s fine.”

“Oh, doctor, how can we express our appreciation?”

“You must not move till your X-ray six days from now. When we confirm the needle is fixed in the heart muscle, we’ll start rehab.”

The six days were harder than his days of hunger. *I must not move my upper body, or the sting will hurt my heart. Every joint aches. Especially the back.*

Misao’s devotion brought him mixed feelings. *I can see this is not a happy time for you. I’m a big, heavy baby. Misery, love. I won’t let you do this again.*

Ayako, Hisaharu’s sister-in-law, visited Jericho on the day before her wedding. “Eriko-chan, *omedetou!* I met your new parents. They are very nice people. I remember the day the first I saw your gran’pa, Shiro-san. He put a big band made of straw around him to make his clothes fit. On the belt were knives, wedges, and other tools. He was a hard worker. I understood I had to work hard too. I don’t think you can handle a farm.”

“Oh my dear aunt, my husband is a company worker.”

“You’ll understand it someday.”

In a service in a Shinto shrine with the two families limited, the *kan-nushi* of the shrine prayed, “May the lineage be blessed with prosperity. May the line last.”

Jericho was surprised that there was no blessing for a new couple as the one and only person. *A new couple is required to devote their whole life to the man’s lineage*, she thought. *There’s no concept of happiness and love between a couple. Maybe ‘cuz family was the only way to earn one’s daily food. Nobody could wish for their personal benefit. Egoism had been a vice.*

“Our daughter is settled. Our plan was delayed, but it’s time to go back to Beppu, isn’t it?”

“But when Eriko will have a baby—” The memory of bleeding had haunted her for thirty years. “I must care for her after childbirth or—” Misao became defensive “—like me.”

Hisaharu couldn’t understand what she said. “We have a house in Beppu. We can’t be here. Everything is so expensive. Jericho isn’t in Nagoya, so there’s no reason to be here.”

“From Nagoya we can have access to her much easier.”

“This place is really good. This region is a galapagos.”

Misao was angry. *What’re you talkin’ about?*

“Hiding wealth between Tokyo and Osaka. Not only factories, but also agriculture is abundant. If you were born here, you don’t have to pay rent for an apartment for university. And there are lots of companies to work for and lots of candidates for marriage. Grandparents can often see their grandchildren. The residents don’t know the other world so they don’t know they’re blessed.”

He always ignores me.

1995

In August, the prime minister from Kyushu Island officially apologized to China and Korea about the war. He established a fund for Asian women who had been forced to be in sheds for men during the war.

“*Arrah-mah*, how poor the elementary schoolgirl in Okinawa! Done violence.” Listening to the news, Misao couldn’t stop.

“Without the U.S. presence, Okinawa would be a second Taiwan. The Marines landed on Okinawa in 1853. The islands are two thousand kilometers from Tokyo. It was before Matthew Perry shocked the samurai government. Okinawa’s place on the globe helped keep peace all throughout history. Peace is not a matter of one country. Whole countries are connected whether we like it or not.”

“Ah! *You* have a daughter!” Misao grumbled.

“You know very well what would happen if peace would be broken. Not just a girl would be victimized.”

“It’s okay if it’s just one girl?”

“Many places in the world have had conflicts. Nihonese are given seats in American and French helicopters. Nihon can’t send a rescue party to battlefields for our businessmen.”

“An elementary school girl is more important than men.” Misao began to wash dishes noisily. “I’ll vote for the Socialist Party. It has lots of women candidates.”

1996

Jericho had been thinking about how she’d die for months. The summer heat made her insane. The humidity weighed heavily on her body. She had expected she would find a man at last who would share her happiness, but all he could talk about was his parents, kin and neighbors. They were good people who were devoted to others. Especially the mother-in-law was a hard worker.

Jericho felt a deep sense of gratitude to her. It caused her to feel a deep sense of duty to the big family, farms, kin, their tomb and neighbors for the first time in her life. *They manage everything so voluntarily. All of them are cheerful. They do not*

judge. They do not condemn.⁸⁸ They forgive. They give. A good measure they use. I can't!

They were talking a lot joyfully. This time, Jericho didn't like the local accent. Jericho couldn't fit in, though she tried. She tried to smile and felt her cheeks harden. She tried to have a happy, loud voice like them, but no one could understand her reedy voice. *I want to be close to them. The problem is mine.*

Aquila's attitude showed his love was lost. *It's 'cuz I'm not living up to his expectations.*

From the beginning, he had no strong feeling for her. He was not the type to dream and be lost in passion. *So he married me*, she thought. She was a human who was eager to dream. The wings of wishes and hopes made her feel alive.

He knew to be an average person required great effort. To win the trust of coworkers, clients, and people in his community, he had to keep his feet on the earth. *Imagination brings greed and misunderstanding. It won't make you content with daily routines.*

Jericho thought, *I know I can't hope for more. But why am I here? I disappoint them. I'm trouble for this family. I wanna laugh again.*

Aquila's mother kindly had taught her the worship places in the house. "This is the family altar." From tatami mat to ceiling, it was elaborate workmanship in gold. "All parents are here."

It was surprising such a religious custom was still alive in the area. Only when a family member died did others learn what religion they belong to, Jericho had thought. She saw the mother-in-law was an angel, never arrogant or evil tongued.

⁸⁸ Luke 6:37.

“Our temple and tomb are over there—” she pointed out a window “—surrounded by rice paddies. I’ll take you there soon. You and I must change the water for the flowers on our tomb every morning.”

Jericho felt her ugly heart was such a contrast to her mother-in-law’s transparent beauty.

“It’s Shin-ran’s temple, Aquila-san said,” Jericho said.

“Yep. Eight hundred years ago, he said two good things. Man’s ability is limited, so man needs Buddha. Buddha saves whoever is fully aware of his evil inside.”

“Oh, I misunderstood. Even bad men are saved, I thought.” Jericho looked at her.

“Many people seem to think so.”

I think I heard the two things somewhere, before. Man isn’t perfect, so ... ? We have to realize our sin?

“That is,” she pointed at a tiny *tori-i* in a formal room near the ceiling, “from a shrine. I’ll show you the gods’ places in this house.”

She prepared five small cups of water for each god. “You and I must renew these waters every day, before breakfast.”

This family’s religion is Buddhism, and the altar is Buddhist. But other worship places are for Shintoism. How traditional a family. Jericho almost slipped and mentioned two religions. *I shouldn’t point that out. It’s the tradition for hundreds of years that many kinds of things blended in Nihon. Why should I disturb someone who goes to the fields before dawn?*

The puritans of Shintoism in the late nineteenth century had destroyed Buddhist buildings of great value. The purist movement grew into militarism. Jericho thought, *The tradition of sharing is still alive here. The majority of the people are*

not good at thinking like the puritans, but those who think theoretically become powerful.

“This is for the god of fire.” She put hands on a little piece of wood in the kitchen. “This is for the god of water.” She guided Jericho to a former well.

“Yes, mother.” *Buddha might be one of the gods for the majority*, Jericho thought.

“You see mountains far around. We say a mountain is a chunk of water. If we treat forests badly, the god of water will get angry. The god makes landslides, floods.”

A mountain is a chunk of water. Jericho had heard that. *Who had told me? Gran’pa in Kyushu?*

“That is for the god of harvest.” She walked out to a barn.

“Yes, mother.” Jericho thought, *The difference between Buddhism and Shintoism is that nature worship never has statues, images. We don’t mind contradiction. That’s the basis of our way of thinking. So our language lacks the flow from general principles to details.*

This reminded Jericho of people in the Middle East and Europe. *Does their language flow come from the belief in one god, the creator? Even they don’t have any religion personally, their culture is based on God. Or, does the flow come out of their history, harsh negotiations and battles? Severe experiences make tongues progress. It can’t be ambiguous and vague like ours. That’s why they could have colonies all over the world.*

“This is for the god of the mountain.”

“Yes, mother.” *A thinking woman won’t be loved, but I can’t stop thinking. So no one loves me. If our language speakers make either empiricism or rationalism flow, we need to use the fatherly strictness of Chinese ideographs; it will lose its motherly softness. I hate myself.*

Aquila's mother was setting water for each god with love.
*Traditional people are utterly without greed or irresponsibility
like the famers I met in Turkey.*

"Eriko-chan, you shouldn't call your elder sister by her first name," Aquila's mother said to Jericho gently. She was afraid Aquila's wife would gain a bad reputation for rudeness.

Jericho called her sister-in-law by her name because she thought it would make the sister feel young. She wanted to be friendly with her. *I can't be like people here. I'm a selfish woman. I wanna listen to Joan Jett.*

"Your mother dedicated herself to nursing her father-in-law." Jericho tried to find a talk in common with Aquila.

"The father was thankful to her and left in his will part of his assets, but kin said she shouldn't be given it." His way of talk was always soft when Jericho talked about his mother.

Aquila is the first son. He's expected to live with his parents. I knew it. But I don't want to adapt to their life of farming and religious functions at home and taking part in such functions at neighbors' houses and with kin, cleaning this big house and huge gardens and community activities. They are out of the money flow. They're but a ghost of the gross national product. I have to be prepared to dedicate myself twenty-four hours a day, 365 days per year and decades years till I die. But I wanna listen to Don Henley, Paul Stanley, and Steven Tyler loud. Give me Bizet or I'll die! Even Saint-Saens and Bach are noise for Aquila. Bach's arias take me back to the healing waters in forests of Tu-shima Island. Nothing was made by man there. Leaves' shadows danced with the sunlight on the water, where tadpoles in gel.

Jericho couldn't find the rhythm of her new family. *It's traditional women who support agriculture outside of economic growth. Modern women don't wanna be one of them. It seemed their doors and windows are closed in front of me. Inside, their lives are blooming. The mind is the strongest shield. It's hard to enter their souls. They're shy to outsiders. I'm back to being shy. Distance and difference used to be my curiosity. Marriage shows outsiders how the family inside is, how the lover had grown up. His mother is perfect. She is full of love and a sense of humor. Her jokes turn troubles into smiles, while I can't tell jokes. Aunt Ayako, now I understand what you said. Why did I marry? I had expected he would change his attitude after marriage. I had changed mine 50 percent, and that took enormous effort. I had figured both of us should try to make an effort to respect each other. He laughs, talks a lot, and tells jokes among his family, but he never talks to me like that. I thought I was very good at fitting in with unknown people. I changed schools seven times. But he dislikes change. He wants his wife to change. Just follow. If your husband's mother says white is black, believe her. Aquila's mother was said so before her marriage. We should follow the way we are given. We should fulfill our duty. It's evil to resist.*

A tiger was roaring in her. An elephant stepped⁸⁹ on her.

1997

She slowly stopped menstruating. She went to a gynecological clinic. In front of the entrance, she turned back.

⁸⁹ Proverbs 26.

1998

Two weeks after Hurricane Mitch had hit Honduras, seventy-five DF members, six doctors included, arrived there. *This is a landmark for us*, Hisaharu thought. *This isn't an operation under the United Nations. It's our first independent operation.*

A revised law concerning Dispatch Disaster Relief Teams had passed the Diet in '92. The law had been limited to police officers, firefighters, doctors, and nurses. But it was only the DF that could do everything: handle freight, establish medical facilities, and turn unsanitary water into drinkable water. In the capital of Honduras, 2,000 patients per day lined up at the doctors' tents. Hisaharu was happy to know that. But the same time, he sometimes felt an eraser was working in his brain.

1999

At last, Jericho's periods stopped. She gathered her courage and went to the clinic.

"I'm afraid to say I wish you had visited us earlier, at least nine months earlier." The doctor's voice was gentle.

"You mean I can't have my baby?" Jericho expected a good answer.

"Well, that's what I have to say."

Jericho couldn't remember why or how she got to Aquila's lab. He was busy and didn't like private business handled at work. Moreover, he was fed up with her anxious face. She used to have soft features. When he saw his wife at the door of his lab, his eyes hardened. He turned to his desk.

Jericho felt a chill. She went home and packed her things. *My love for him can't change anything. Even romantic feeling is over for a married couple, respect and tenderness should keep couples together. Or maybe only patience, like my mother and father. Is there anything to fill the emptiness? Like an ocean holds islands.*

Suddenly, a soft voice returned to her. *Whose voice was that? The light shines in the darkness.*⁹⁰

*Ah, it's Goro-san's. I went to the Nanzan church that next Sunday expecting to see that guy again, but he wasn't there. So I listened to Goro-san preaching, "The true light that gives light to ..."*⁹¹ *I don't remember well. Ah, now I would say, the light is the answer for my question. The light is the ocean, the biggest love that holds islands of desire, passion, romance, attraction, crushes, infatuation, affection, tenderness, attachment, and devotion. If only I could talk about this with Aquila like before. He doesn't wanna talk with me anymore. Alone again. Ah, I was alone even when he was with me.*

She remembered how she had felt lonely abroad. *I wanted a family to love. I'm going to live my life. I can't be a well-loved figure. Now I understand why elders say marriage is not for individuals. I had thought marriage was the start of one new life for two people. The rate of marriage has been decreasing. A friend once said this slow perishing of Nihonese is the choice of women. I agree with her.*

"This divorce is not Aquila-san's idea? You can't be serious." Hisaharu felt something wrong with his heart as he

⁹⁰ John 1:5.

⁹¹ John 1:9.

spoke on the phone. Blood pressure was breaking his head from inside. "This is my fault. Too many moves place to place. Rolling stones gather no moss." He talked to himself more than her.

"I hate moss. It's been good facing changes. Thanks only for that," Jericho replied.

"Marriage is the system that protects a woman when a man's affection leaves him." Hisaharu wished he could change the situation. "The law is for the wife's benefit."

Jericho didn't want to say any more.

"You can't imagine how hard it is for women to earn money. Even now if they have children." Hisaharu expected a grandchild.

"I'm not pregnant." *I wanted a new life*, she thought but didn't say so. She knew how stupid she was.

"I won't let you in my house."

I don't wanna live with anyone anymore, she thought. *I don't wanna regulate my days by someone else's standards. I divorced because I can't stand living twenty-four hours a day for others.*

The phone was broken.

"Aquila-san doesn't have a violent temper, she says. He doesn't have affairs, she says. He doesn't gamble or smoke, she says. He's honest, she says!"

Misao was listening. *Oh, good, just like you. And how I wanna be apart from you. You've always looked down on me.*

"Akira-san doesn't seem to look down on Eriko," Misao replied.

"How selfish! Stupid! Egocentric!" Hisaharu's face got red.

Misao could understand her daughter. All she wanted was money for independence.

"I raised a stupid balloon! No roots at all. Her feet are in the air!"

"Whatever the result, the process of raising her had amazed us, *ne?*"

"What're you saying?"

I will leave you, Misao decided. There is no more reason to endure this marriage. *I must earn some money. Maybe I can get a job cleaning. Ah, but I must nurse him when he falls. He has only me. I won't let my daughter devote herself to his nursing. I've been with him for thirty-seven years.* "What will people think?" Misao asked.

"What will people think? That's your standard!"

"What are you saying? That's most important. You can't live without other people."

He put his two fingers on his left wrist. *No pulse. It must be over 180. I must be cool or I'll die.* But it was hard thinking of others. "Our daughter belongs to a typical after-war generation."

"Eh?"

"Without your norm. Others' reputations, backbiting. After-war stages have been trying to get away from the old standard."

"It's not old at all."

"I understand you. But the rule had been very strong when we were young. This is a reaction."

"Eriko's wrong. Without any standard, no one can be strict on their own when they're alone."

"We used to say the sun was watching."

"That's for children."

"Europeans can have their God even when they're alone." Hisaharu felt his heart calming. *If I'd been born in that culture,*

would I believe it? He breathed. Getting away from worry to wider thinking heals me.

“We have gods too,” Misao said.

“I’m not sure, but it sounds very different.”

2000

Beppu, at last. Twenty years later. My homeland. A highway had been constructed through the mountains. Bridges over valleys connected villages. While driving the six hundred kilometers to the old town, he thought about fishing. It was a night. A long drive brought them to a sudden bejeweled town below the highway. *This is where I belong.* He headed down to the town and saw steam coming from the hot springs as usual. In the night, the white columns of steam were like an illusion.

Misao counted the tunnels for the whole trip. *I shouldn’t sleep while he drives.*

In the daylight, Hisaharu saw that his old town was lost. Like other places on Main Island, cheap plastic and metal were everywhere. *We didn’t have metal fifty-five years ago. I crushed my aluminum lunch box with a stone in the schoolyard when I was ten to make warplanes.*

Ugly colors were everywhere. *Signs. Merchants. Same in any cities, towns, and villages. This is modernization. Convenience stores and vending machines are everywhere.* The stone terraces had been rebuilt in concrete. The natural walls had been so beautiful; their shadows had softened their look. They were art. He saw mansions in the uptown area still retained the stone construction. Those walls were covered moss and small plants. *Moss is beautiful, Jericho.*

My old house. Some neighbors had changed. Hisaharu and Misao visited the neighbors to say hi. Hisaharu found an old man in the neighborhood who loved fishing. "I feel good when I'm on the sea," the old man said in the Beppu accent.

"So do I." Hisaharu tried to get his accent back but couldn't.

"Why not go fishing in Sagano-seki after you settle in?"

"Oh, the Mecca for fishing lovers! I can't wait!"

"Mackerel and horse mackerel are famous there."

"We can fish on the wharf and the breakwater."

"It's easy. By the way, the forests are almost gone here."

"You saw big companies in big cities had welfare institutions with plenty of forests here in Beppu."

"Did they sell the land?"

"International competition, they say. Companies can't survive with welfare and forests."

"The forest along the bay came to be just lines of trees."

"Population increases."

"In case of typhoons, high tides, and tsunamis, there must be terrible disasters." Hisaharu remembered an old man on his back had said forests protected people from disasters.

When they arrived at Sagano-seki, Hisaharu found people on the wharf and the breakwater. There was no place left. Walking and watching, the old man talked to a young man.

"Yeah, you're skilled."

"Oh, no, no," he answered. "Where are you from?"

"Beppu. And he," the old man turned to Hisaharu, "is from Nagoya."

"Oh? Nagoya? How far! Come, sit here." He put himself and his stuff aside and made space for Hisaharu and the old man.

The man beside the young man moved over and said proudly, "I live in this village."

"Thanks a lot for making space for us. I haven't fished for twenty years as I've been far away from a sea, except Nagoya."

"Isn't that the port for exporting Toyotas?"

"Maybe. This is the moment I've been longing for. I really thank you. I moved from Nagoya to Beppu last week." Hisaharu was happy casting his line. Only sixty minutes later, he got a bite.

"This is a battlefield," the man from the village said.

"Battlefield." Hisaharu smiled. "I'd been in the Defense Force for a long time."

"A man's life is in battlefields anytime, anyplace," The man said. "A man should keep fighting till the last blood."

"Right," another old man said. "Nowadays, most men have become women."

"Have you noticed that samurai had no shields but European knights and Chinese soldiers in the Middle Ages had shields?"

"Oh!" Hisaharu thought, *That tradition might be the basis of the tragedy at the end of the war, 1945. Ninety percent of the soldiers were farmers and fishermen, not samurai. Why was I taught to attack American tanks with only sharpened bamboo and no shield?*

"Man's duty is stronger than life," the old man said. "But these days, those people on TV want to cut men's balls off!"

"A real man never needs protection," the old man in the village said. "Only attack."

"I protect, but I don't wanna be protected," Hisaharu said, thinking of his heart and Misao.

It took no time for Misao to get back to the provincial life.

“Now you use lots of ‘G’ and ‘D’ sounds from many dialects. It’s you.” Hisaharu wondered.

“I talk, I talk, I talk! It doesn’t matter you don’t.”

“Hi, Hanada-san, long time no see!” A woman opened the sliding door.

“*Ahllah! Mah! Mika-san! How long has it been?*” Misao knew the ex-landlady had retired from politics. She had ambitions for local government. *Ex-woman-politician! I have to accept her. My daughter is also divorced. I hope she will be accepted too.*

Mika said, “I heard about you.”

“I never expected you to remember us. You were in the—the—”

“National Assembly, the Diet.” Mika had faced just such mental barriers in other people’s minds before. *But I won’t give up.*

“Yeah, the things I don’t know!” Misao couldn’t help smiling when she saw Mika smiling.

“You’re always in my mind, I still remember you in the wash place. You were pregnant.”

“Come in. My master is out fishing.” Misao let her in her house. *She’s lucky now he’s not home. He dislikes the Socialist Party.* Misao was proud she never paid attention to politics. “Have a seat.” She went to the kitchen. *Women have important work at home, but home labor is so looked down upon! It’s not only men who make fools of us, but also some women! Home is the place where humans are raised! They’re the foundation of the country! Housewives are greater than the American prime minister.*

“How’s that baby Eriko-chan?” Mika asked.

“Uh, it’s a shame. She divorced. She’s been stupid. She just couldn’t be a yome of a farmer’s eldest son.” Misao took out a set of finest *yaki-mono* from a cupboard and poured hot water into the cup to keep it warm. “I am very sorry for Eriko’s ex-husband’s family, thinking who will take care of their house altar, and all the Buddhist services. Who will keep flowers on their tomb fresh every day after his mother?”

“Men can remarry more easily. But yes, being a wife of a farmer demands the ability to manage a farm, a big family, and social events and traditions. Well, Eriko-chan was, is, great. She once married a farmer. Our agriculture is in crisis though. Producing food is the most important work of any country. Now, in Nihon, most farmers are older than sixty, and their first sons don’t get the chance to meet many women.”

“It’s not surprising. Who wansta marry into that old-thinking society?” Misao changed tea leaves in the pot. The fresh smell of dried leaves colored the air green.

“Ah, you’re right. Farmers’ work itself is good. I like it. My parents were farmers. Being farmers’ children is a happy, but being a farmer’s yome is, was, a life of devotion.”

“Your parents were? I am so sorry. I said too much.” Misao carefully watched the tea leaves opening in the pot to cover her embarrassment.

“Ah, Misao-san, I understand you and Eriko-chan. I agree. That’s one of the reasons I stood in elections. This is the result of the male-dominated world. All traditional industries sadly lack the next generation, so safe food is getting scarce. Though the agricultural union was on the side of the ruling party, it was only the Socialist Party that accepted woman candidates without names when I began my political life. Within the party’s rules, it was impossible to work out my thoughts.”

“Here’s your tea.” Mika’s every word slipped away from Misao. Making perfect tea was more important than politics.

“*Mah*, thank you.” Mika smiled. “Your husband is lucky to have your tea always.”

“Only when I want some do I ask him if he does too. I used to do it the way others do, but I quit that. He’s taken my goodwill for granted.”

“Men hardly express gratitude.”

“To me. He’s good to others. I want him to be good to *me*.”

“Typical husband, isn’t he? That is why young people remain single. This is the silent women’s resistance.”

“Women’s choice, this tea.” Misao still couldn’t understand Mika.

“You say very good, yes. A woman knows now is not the time to give birth. There is a time for everything.”⁹² Mika decided not to say anything about the source of that quote. *Misao-san would put up a wall in front of me. There’s a time to be silent and a time to speak. The twentieth century’s mission, the Communists’ task, was over. My new duties. I will make a better country from Kyushu, this land’s end.*

Misao said, “I worried about the divorce. I got lymphadenitis and dizziness. I quit thinking. It makes things worse.”

“You don’t have to be worried at all. Nowadays, women can keep working. They don’t have to endure bad marriages at all.”

The rainy season had started. *My time seems to be short. Death might be lonely. Is Misao going to be lonely? I don’t think so. She’s a woman. But I’ll leave her a warm present.* “Let’s pull

⁹² Ecclesiastes 3.

a pipe from the hot springs into our bath,” Hisaharu said after checking his bank account.

“You sure?” Misao’s eyes were bright.

“Nine thousand yen per month after the construction expenses. Considering water and gas, it’s reasonable.”

“I love it! I know why. Gas-water bathing isn’t deserved for Beppu.”

“You told me triumphantly. Yep, I don’t wanna go to public bath for *onsen*. I can’t stand the visitors’ bad manners.”

One day, Hisaharu was back from sword fishing and gave almost all his catch away. He cooked some for supper and dried some fish under the sun.

“Jericho loves swordfish,” Hisaharu said to Misao.

“You want to send some, don’tcha?”

“Freshness is the key. Let’s take them to Munakata tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow?”

I’m not sure I’ll be alive next week. “With the new highway, it will take only three hours.”

“Yah, Ayako-san. Yah, brother.” Hisaharu visited the old house between mountains. “It’s amazing. Farms disappeared, and the town goes from the high school to the station.”

“Yah, Hisaharu-san, long time no see.” Ayako was bent with age. Hisaharu’s heart swelled with something he didn’t understand. It must be her life, the life supporting the family.

“*Kon-nichiwa!* How do you do?” A beautiful woman came out from the kitchen.

“This is my son’s wife.”

He noticed boys behind the grass-paper walls. "Come in!" Jiro seemed happy.

"Three generations in a house. It's ideal." Hisaharu praised the family.

"Come and say hello to Uncle Hisaharu."

The generation is showing a stream of ages. Hisaharu thought. *Brother Jiro is an old-type farmer with thick bones and muscles, no fat. His son is tall but less muscular. And his grandsons are typical modern boys. Is it because of new generation's soft food? Or no labor?*

"How is Eriko-chan?"

"She divorced."

"Ah, well, how should I say. Well, it's the modern way."

"I am very sorry for Jericho's ex-husband's family," Misao said in a thin voice.

Hisaharu said, "My daughter is a shame. She should've been patient. It's my fault I didn't raise her to be responsible."

One of the modern boys cut in. "That was the feudal age."

I must be careful about my attitude toward youth. Jericho is enough. I want brother's grandsons to grow up right. Hisaharu hid his slight anger.

The teenager continued. "My generation is lost in this freedom."

"Oh you're so smart."

"He likes difficult talks influenced by our sister," Jiro said.

"Oh, our eldest sister. So you might have thought." Hisaharu expected the youth was like himself. "What is government? What do you think?" Hisaharu remembered what the old man in Tu-shima had said clearly. *I was young.*

"Um, I don't know." The boy looked at Hisaharu.

“My opinion, a government is a group that decides how to spend tax.”

“Tax?”

“It’s for bridges, firehouses, and schools. Adults pay tax for administrative services. Administrative services are different from sovereignty. You’re young and not a taxpayer, but you’re one of the people who have sovereignty. You better know the world you belong to. You’re one of men of Kyushu.”

“Ah.” The young man closed his mouth.

“He doesn’t like the words *Kyushu men* ’cuz he’s young.” Jiro’s son said, “He says girls dislike men who look down on women.”

“Kyushu men are an endangered species.” The teenager smiled.

“The Earth Spiders have become extinct,” Jiro said.

“Gran’pa! Again, don’t say such thing to others or you’ll be thought to be lost.”

“I’m one of them,” Hisaharu declared. *Why did I say that?*

“My son’s generation doesn’t like what girls don’t like.” Jiro’s son made a weak smile.

“This is a time woman can decide about reproduction.” Ayako came in with onions. “Our country is losing its younger population. A quarter of us will be over sixty-five within years. Which policy do you think better, using taxes for elders or for babies, I mean, supporting young families?”

“Ah.” The young man was at a loss. *Politics belongs to the older generation. She asks me which is better. Of course for young families. But here are all aged people.* He chose to respect his elders. “Elders suffered hardship during the war. I don’t mind paying taxes to help them.”

“You don’t have to consider us, good boy. Each soldier died for children.” Jiro said, remembering his army days.

“Taxes should not be used to create equal outcomes but equal starts in life,” Hisaharu said. “So I vote to help the babies.”

“The big aunt said so, Uncle,” the boy said.

“You think well,” Hisaharu said.

“It’d be nice if he thought about our rice paddies,” Jiro said.

Hisaharu also worried about the dear old farm’s future. *The house is a part of the fall of agriculture. It’s great that Jiro’s son could find a wife who agreed to live in this big family. But what about the boys? Another of Jiro’s sons is in Tokyo. He won’t come back. Ayako-san is a survivor of the old age.*

She is clothed with strength and dignity;
She speaks with wisdom,
And faithful instruction is on her tongue.
She watches over the affairs of her household.⁹³

Hisaharu and Misao went back to Beppu with lots of onions. *I still have some power to go far. I must finish a few things. When I was reading Solzhenitsyn, I fell asleep. I’m old. First of all, the box with the sword. It might be my duty to put it back, though this is the age of science.*

2001

In August, Hisaharu crossed Kyushu for Tu-shima. “You used to get terribly seasick,” Hisaharu said to Misao through the airplane window.

⁹³ Proverbs 31.

“From here, I can’t see waves at all. Those boats don’t seem to be rolling. Modern technology is convenient,” Misao replied.

Though an airport had been constructed, wild nature, primeval forests, and rough coasts were still there.

“Augusts here were not humid compared to others.”

“I’m happy!”

I feel something great in this sea and forest. He took a deep breath. *This is what I needed.* Hisaharu turned to Misao. “While you’re at Antoku-san’s home, I’ll go to Toyotama.”

“Oh?” Misao didn’t ask him why. She was busy breathing fresh air at last, out of the heat of the frying pan.

With the box that contained the sword, Hisaharu drove a rented car to the Watatumi Shrine. The thick forests made everything dark even in daytime. The cool air was so comfortable. *Will I hear gods talking? No way. I never believe anything. But why do I feel I hear something in Tu-shima? It’s like a spring tide day.* He looked up at the sky. *The sun and moon cause the tides. How great nature is. The tide is the lowest now, like that day. The water is also incredibly calm, but the outer sea is rough. This bay is a maze.*

He kept walking and found that the gates had been rebuilt with concrete. *Wasn’t it possible to keep the old gate? We may have high technology, so why can’t we save old wood?* He talked to the goddess, Princess Toyotama. “This Dragon Sword belonged to your sons in the legend.” He walked into the water. *How young I was. Even at low tide, the crevasse is far off for this aged man. When I was in this sea holding my breath, I thought of the dark water Tera had been in. It’s like yesterday. Her pale, beautiful face is still vivid. And I can’t remember what I ate this morning.*

Walking among the wilderness let him back to one of the legends. *The young hunter in the genesis was placed in a grass basket and floated from Kyushu to Tu-shima. The lady's maid in the legend wouldn't be pleased to find my face reflected on the surface. If I were beautiful like the hunter, the descendant from the sun goddess, the shark would be the princess. In this old nature, stories are still alive!*

Remembering legends made him step into the water. *Can I hold my breath for such a long time? I have to. This is why I'm back. This is the place to die. The shark was once in front of me. Imagine, the shark was writhing with the pain of giving birth to the crown prince at the seashore house in a storm. The husband peeped and found what she was. It's true. A woman would turn into something.*

Imagination helped him hold his breath longer. He found the crevasse at last. Looking around, he put the Dragon Sword back.

The legend is alive. Brother Ichiro, my work is done. If I die here, my story will be perfect. My brother's story also ended in a sea. One of my uncles' stories ended in the Mediterranean.

Hisaharu imagined how it was for Ichiro. *Such a narrow space in the kaiten, feeling water on the other side of a thin wall. Deep ocean, darkness. Brother, I'm afraid. I will prepare my death before cerebral thrombosis destroys my decision ability. I want Misao to live properly. Fool women, Misao, Jericho. I can be a Le Pere Goriot. Mon coeur est grand, il peut tout recevoir. Balzac, you'll never know your influence on the other side of the continent.*

“Heard a terrible thing,” Misao told Hisaharu waving hands to friends at the other side of the airport check.

“What?”

“You heard that a newborn baby was found in a ladies room more than twenty years ago?”

“Ah, somewhere in a big city, I remember. What an irresponsible woman. The worst.”

“She was from here, once in our house. When Eriko was eight, I saw her. She was, so, so—she had empty eyes.”

“Was she Jericho’s friend?”

“Only once I saw her in our house. I don’t think Eriko had been to her house. They said her stepfather had abused her for a long time. Now I understand why she was like that. How poor! He gave her to an underground showbiz when she was fourteen for money!”

“No.”

“I say that when a woman is bad to her baby, the cause is the baby’s father.”

“It’s wrong that an innocent baby should suffer. A mother must be a mother all the time. Lots of mothers raise babies in bad situations.”

“A man can run away from his baby. And in that girl’s case, she’d been abused since she was so young. He must be punished.”

“In that case, no one can blame her. Well, I had cared for Jericho when she was a baby.”

“I say, I give you a prize on that point,” Misao said happily, stressing the *that*. She appreciated his attitude a little. *He was not the type to force me to have another baby.*

Hisaharu thought of Tera and her two children. *Had she been forced? No. Did she love them? Yes. They’re grownups now. They’re the blood of Hayato. Are they still in the underground?*

2002

Jericho met Mari at Nagoya Airport.

“Hana-chan! Long time no see! You live! Goin’ to Borneo!”
The voice of an old friend was a lifesaver.

“You call me Hana-chan! I understood now that this is what I want.” Jericho felt empowered.

“I see, as your nickname is from the family name, you went far for marriage. You lost your identity.”

“How did you know that?” Jericho was excited by Mari’s words.

“I know others like you. One said being called a new family name was like being called a number in jail.”

“I just couldn’t be me there. Who’s Chloe-san? Me? There were many Chloe-san!”

“But your ex-husband sounded like an honest man.”

“Yeah. It’s me. I was wrong, I know. He had endured this wrong woman ’cuz he couldn’t stand change.”

“You prefer changes, *ne*?” Mari sighed.

Jericho asked about Mari’s life.

“My son’s handicap is a trial for us.”

“You have such energy.”

“Faith in God makes me tough.”

“That’s you.” Jericho thought a little. “I have nothing.”

“In a world without faith, anxiety can torture us.”

“You’re still beyond my understanding. I’m full of worries for the future.”

“Be careful, if you’re full of worries, clever business will take energy and money from you.”

“If I could only have enough to be a shopping addict!”

“I mean, it doesn’t matter if you have money or not, they will take it. Well, it’s time. Have a good journey!”

“Excuse us, but you must be Jericho, aren’t you?” A young woman and a man came to her.

“Hi Nuttida!” They hugged each other. She was the girl that Jericho sponsored with her donations.

“You have come so far.”

“This is my husband, Chindanai.” Nuttida looked at the young man beside her with a blush in the traditional expression.

Jericho felt an old feeling in her attitude. *It’s not the way of the Europeans and Americans I’ve ever met.* Jericho felt familiar. “Hi. I’m Jericho.” Jericho put her hands together instead of offering to shake his hand. Nuttida and Chindanai widened their clear eyes with surprise and also put their hands together for Jericho.

“Nuttida has talked about you. You let her study in elementary school and junior high. So I could meet her. You never know how I also appreciate your aid.”

“He works in this restaurant as a cook. His parents came from Thailand, like mine.”

They walked around the garden.

“I see—” Jericho looked at Nuttida’s body “—you’re going to be a mother. How wonderful! The baby is like my grandchild.”

“Oh, Jericho, I felt you were my mother. You know, my parents passed away.”

“Let’s go upstairs. We reserved a table. It’s special.”

“Special?”

“Only for us.”

“Wow, what beautiful scenery!” Jericho found big windows open to the Sulu Sea. She hadn’t seen the ocean from the street. Palm trees were shining under a heavenly sky.

“Oh I love this place. This is the perfect situation for our celebration. By the way, while you were living with family, had anybody talked about old times? Like Indonesian independent days?”

“A little. My friend’s grandpa might remember the old days. His name is Ken.”

“Is the name Malaysian or Indonesian?”

“I don’t know.” Nuttida turned to her husband.

“Neither do I.” He looked at her eyes gently.

“The name sounds familiar to me. By the way, the way you look at each other is so moving. I used to have that feeling.”

“Oh? You’ll have it again.”

“The second time I met you,” Chindanai said to Nuttida, “at the window table, you sighed four times. I thought you didn’t like me.”

“It was—” Nuttida started to say, but Jericho cut in.

“—’Cuz you were already in love too much, you’re in tension, and your lungs needed more air.”

“How did you know?” Nuttida’s eyes were big.

“I used to have that feeling long ago.”

Having fruit and ice cream in coconuts, Nuttida looked at something far away and said, “Did you hear that?”

“What?”

“Something, something, um ... nothing.” She turned to the coconuts. “It’s delicious.”

“Yes, I like South Asian dishes. I had *kanom jeen* this morning. It was delicious too.”

It was then they felt something a strange air wave. They looked at each other. It was a tiny shake at first, but the shaking grew stronger little by little. A fear was coming from underneath them.

“Did you feel the ground rumble?” Nuttida asked, “This is the one I heard, muffled.”

Jericho remembered earthquakes she’d experienced. “Is it an earthquake? This is not like the one I’ve ever experienced!” Jericho looked at Nuttida. Nuttida was frightened. She held her thirty-four-week belly gently.

“We don’t have earthquakes.” Chindanai looked at Nuttida.

The rumbling started coming from the earth, not the air.

“What was that?” The lovers exchanged uneasy looks.

“Let me go check.” Chindanai gave a lovely smile to Nuttida and went down the steps. Jericho stood and saw him talking with staff and walking out to the street.

The rumbling was getting louder and nearer. Nuttida clasped Jericho’s hand. “Look! There’s no water in the sea.”

“Oh?” Jericho held her breath. Life in Tu-shima gave her class. “It can’t be the ebbing tide.” She wanted to deny her thinking, but Jericho understood what was going on, “Tsunami!” Holding Nuttida’s shoulders, Jericho looked for a way out.

“We have to run! To a higher place!”

“No higher place than here!” Nuttida shouted, “Chindanai!”

“Save the baby! We will move to the roof!” Jericho said and took Nuttida’s hand. They checked but couldn’t find a way to the roof. A few minutes later, the ocean started roaring in furiously.

The moment Jericho clenched Nuttida’s hand, the air was filled with the sounds of rumbling. Jericho felt a sudden surge

of energy on the street. She saw the overwhelming black water was covering everything on the street and carried it all away.

“Chindanai!” Nuttida shouted.

Jericho held her tighter. “Don’t go down! The tsunami will burst in!” Pushing away cars, trees, everything, the ocean struck the ground floor of the restaurant. A few men ran to the stairs. Cruel water broke the stairs to pieces.

“Chindanai!” Nuttida yelled and slipped from Jericho’s arms.

“Nuttida!” Trying to help Nuttida sit up, Jericho saw another water under Nuttida. *What’s this?*

She was holding her breath, and let out long breath.

“Nuttida?” Jericho asked her gently as possible as she could.

“Chin ... da ... na ... i.”

“Don’t talk. It’s okay. You’ll be better.” Jericho put a cushion under Nuttida’s head and gathered more for her.

“Rescuers will soon be here.” Jericho prayed.

Nuttida turned on her side and held her breath again. Jericho massaged her back carefully and looked into the hole that once was the stairway.

Help us, somebody, somebody help us! No one’s here! “It’s alright, Nuttida. Rescuers are coming.” A different tsunami overcame Jericho, a tsunami of emotion. *I have to save her.*

Jericho grabbed all the soft things around her she could find. Twenty minutes later, a second tsunami shook the restaurant. The ground floor’s walls had been broken by the first tsunami, but the concrete pillars still supported the upper floors.

“Oh my God!” Nuttida cried.

The third tsunami came.

Four hours passed. Jericho found some wood and metal to make a long pole to wave at rescuers.

The two women noticed the labor pains were coming every thirty minutes.

“Have you gone into labor?” Jericho wiped the sweat from Nuttida’s face.

“Maybe.” Her nostrils flared. “Rub ... stronger ... Thanks.”

“I’m always with you.” Massaging her back, Jericho looked into Nuttida’s eyes. She forced herself to look between Nuttida’s legs.

One hour had passed. *I want a curtain to fasten to this pole.* Jericho looked out the window. *But the baby’s going to need a soft cloth.*

“The tsunami is going down,” Jericho said gently. Jericho didn’t say how the town had been destroyed, wiped out, between the restaurant and the seashore. The beautiful beach was gone. An enormous amount of debris covered the sea. *No sign of life. I’ll never let her see this.*

Four hours later, the pains were coming every fifteen minutes. *No rescue.* Jericho was frightened by the bleeding. Nuttida was bleeding with every contraction. Jericho cleaned it up every time, but cloth was limited. *I should save some cloth for the baby.*

Nuttida was pale. “Will I see my baby?”

“Sure, Nuttida, you will!” leaning toward her, Jericho put Nuttida’s lifeless hand on her cheek. Jericho heard a helicopter. “Rescue! I’m gonna climb to the roof.” The moment Jericho tried to stand up, Nuttida’s lifeless hand gained strength. Nuttida screamed.

“Help turn me over on my back.” She sighed.

Jericho cheered her up. “It’s the rescuers! We have to let them know we’re here.”

“Jericho, I know, but please keep holding my hand!”

The helicopter buzzed overhead. Nuttida screamed through her nose. "Check me." She looked at Jericho. Jericho found a new life in the blood. "Nuttida, a head! The top of the head. I can see! Go on!"

The sound of the helicopter went away. "It will be back soon." Jericho told Nuttida and herself. Nuttida showed all the power left in her.

"He or she's coming! Hold on! You'll see your baby very soon!" Jericho spread out a curtain for the baby. "I'll catch the baby."

Nuttida screamed again, and Jericho was holding a tiny life in her trembling hands. *Amazing*. Jericho knew what she had to do next. Pulling out a part of the umbilical, she cut it with a knife from the table. *The boy isn't crying*. Jericho looked at Nuttida. She almost fainted. *I have to do something for this baby or he'll die*. Jericho opened the baby's mouth. It was filled with his mother's blood. Jericho looked around. *Is there some tool? No*. Jericho covered his nose and mouth with her lips and sucked the blood out. The baby cried. Jericho cried.

"Nuttida! Nuttida! Can you hear him?" Holding the boy gently, Jericho called her. *No reaction*. "Nuttida, here's your baby." Jericho put the baby on Nuttida's chest and placed her arms around the baby. The warm, soft life made the new mother come alive. She held the baby. She was absolutely delighted.

Jericho felt warmth inside. With supporting Nuttida's shoulders, Jericho unbuttoned the new mother's blouse and put the boy's face on her breast. The moment the baby felt his mother on his cheek, he opened his tiny lips.

"You've been bleeding terribly, but now your breastfeeding." Tears kept falling on Jericho's cheeks. *Rescue! Hurry! Help this*

mother and baby! She couldn't hear any helicopter. Why not? It's a disaster here! This new mother has been bleeding!

Hours passed. Jericho kept putting the baby on his mother's breasts, right and left in turn. *It doesn't matter if the baby is asleep or awake. His warmth will keep her alive.*

She was so pale. Her lips moved.

"What?"

"Take ... care ... him." She breathed once.

"Nuttida?" The baby was sucking her breast. In a few minutes, he went to sleep.

Jericho couldn't understand what was happening. The mother's arms were still wrapped around her son. Jericho put her finger to Nuttida's lip. Air flow was faint. Jericho panicked. Tears were falling on Jericho's cheeks. *Are we going to die here?*

In the darkness, heat drained her of all her strength. Smells began to rise from the streets. She felt such fear and despair. Exhausted, she lay down on the floor next to Nuttida. *I'm dying.* She closed her eyes, losing power.

Then she smelled something soft and sweet. She opened her eyes. She saw an angel. The newborn seemed to be bringing inexhaustible strength to her in spite of his frailty. *I know why,* she thought. It was Mari who took me to the Nanzan for English study.

He gives strength to the weary
And increases the power of the weak.
Even youths grow tired and weary,
And young men stumble and fall;
Who's he?
What's next?

Will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles.⁹⁴

Jericho took a deep breath lying. In very far away, she heard a buzz. *A helicopter! I have to stand and wave my flag!* But her body couldn't move. Her sight got to be whole dark and red, she didn't know if her eyes were open or not. *Am I dying?* The baby cried. *I must save her and this baby.*

An eagle flew to her, opening its wings. It was wider than a car. It turned above her and grabbed her shoulders. The pain made her sight come back, and the wings made her head rise with vomiting from the empty stomach.

She took the curtain used for the baby and fastened it to the pole. She stood up and staggered with the pole to the window.

"You?" Hisaharu couldn't breathe. "You?" He almost broke the phone. *With suddenness again. This time, an adopted baby? No kidding! Everything's out of order with her.* Hisaharu opened his mouth, but still no voice came. A strong heartbeat disturbed his pulse. *Will the next beat come back? I can't die now! I must not drop the phone.* Then no heartbeat. He waited a beat, he felt the moment for long. He fell down.

"Ah! Ah!" Misao crawled with shouting to the phone and called an ambulance.

The sunrise was still bright, but the humidity had gone. Jericho waited until her father was alone in the clinic. "Please, keep this secret. The first and last favor I'll ask of you. I trust you, father."

⁹⁴ Isaiah 40.

Trust. She said she trusted me.

“George is my son legally.”

“Legally? What do you mean?”

“I met an embassy staff at a shelter. She, Ms. Koda, was there to help her people. I told her that I had given birth to him and that I had lost my passport, everything, in the disaster.” Jericho told him the reason she had gone to Borneo and what had happened there. “A rescue helicopter took us to a hospital in confusion. A doctor said it would take a long time for his mother to recover. She asked me to care for the baby till she recovers and gets a job.”

“You should have told the embassy staff you had adopted the baby.”

“As I’m single, I can’t legally adopt. I didn’t want the baby to go to an institution. It was absolute confusion there. Who would doubt me, a woman with a crying, hungry newborn? Ms. Koda was so understanding and gentle. She managed to bring us milk and clothes, and she said the stress had frozen my milk. She signed some documents for George and me.”

“You’re a big liar.” Hisaharu said. *Jericho has shunned me since she was small. But she said she trusted me.* “I trust you. I will keep this secret till I die,” Hisaharu said. *Now I have two secrets.*

He took a deep breath. Visions of forests above the sea came to him. *The place I had put my secret.* “Now that you have a child, you can’t restart this time. You have the biggest responsibility a human can have.” He was dazzled by the glittering sunlight. He felt his body was going somewhere.

Jericho sang a song to the baby. *I can sing for only George. I haven’t sung since I was seven ’cuz of that boy Kajiya!*

2003

A miracle passed by the Diet. The government for the first time passed a law concerning the Defense Force's action for emergencies. Public opinion had never permitted it for forty-eight years because people thought it would lead to war, war-opener was only Nihon.

A phone rang next to Phalaenopsis orchids. "Misao, this is Kiyoto."

"Ah brother, what's up?"

"The Ministry of Welfare called me just now. A former American soldier handed over a flag to the Houston consulate."

"I don't understand."

"He had picked it up in Borneo."

"Our da."

"Yeah. Father's name is also there, and his pocket diary too, the ministry said."

"Why now? Fifty years later?"

"They say the American had cancer. He went back to farming after the war. Though he needed to be in a hospital, he visited the consulate with the flag and diary."

"Da." Misao couldn't talk anymore because of her tears.

"The farmer's very nice, isn't he?"

"*Ya, ya.*" Misao prayed for the farmer from the bottom of her heart.

Kiyoto sent the diary and a copy of the flag. "Next, you send them to our younger brothers."

The diary and the copy of the flag were with old air.

“We used to run desperately from the falling bombs.” Misao said to Hisaharu. She opened the diary.

Dear Oda-san,
a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain,
a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep up and a time to throw away,
a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.

Ecclesiastes 3, from Goro

“This isn’t Da’s handwriting.”

“Who’s this Goro?”

“Dunno.”

“What’s Ecclesiastes? I think I’ve seen the word.”

“Dunno.”

“I think I wouldn’t have liked some of these phrases if I’d read them when I was young. But now I think I understand them.”

Misao tried to keep reading, but her eyes grew tired. Hisaharu turned the next page, but the letters were too small for his aged eyes.

“These are in Da’s handwritin’.”

Life is pain.

Pain comes from desires.

Vanishing desires is vanishing pain.

Vanishing desires is established by your will
along the Eight Right Way.

“Those aren’t Da’s.”

Mateus 6 Therefore I tell you,

do not worry about your life,

what you will eat or drink; or about your body,
what you will wear ...

Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow,

for tomorrow will worry about itself.

Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Tiago 4–1 What causes fights and quarrels
among you?

Don’t they come from your desires that battle
within you?

You want something but don’t get it.

You kill and covet, but you cannot have what
you want.

You quarrel and fight.

You do not have, because you do not ask God.

When you ask, you do not receive,
because you ask with the wrong motives,
that you may spend what you get on your
pleasures.

“Your father was young to read these small letters. I can’t.”
“Hmmm. Those are in Da’s handwritings.”

Search for saver only in the truth.
Ask inside of you with efforts.
Do not ask any one for help. Buddha.
Buddhism had transformed and separated in
many ways.
Now millions Buddhists search for saver outside
of own-insides.

“I’ll pack them neatly for you,” Hisaharu said. “Your brothers want to see those as soon as possible.”

“Da, fifty-five years ago.”

“Fifty-five years. It’s like I’m in a dream experiencing this change. No phone, no TV, no radio, no books, no information about the world. There were deaths always. I had thought I would be killed after the war. But I lived, experienced tremendous change. It’s a triangle—Western influence, communism and socialism, and legends.”

His daughter had always been on his mind. *Like my experience, can father’s death open the door for her to think more?*

Packing the diary, he found something written in the size he could read.

Do not conform any longer
To the pattern of this world,
But be transformed by the renewing your mind.⁹⁵

“What does it mean?” Hisaharu asked Misao.

“Dunno. This isn’t Da’s writing either.”

Caring for pots of *Vanda coerulea*, Hisaharu called to Misao. “Our tomb, Misao. We need to buy our tomb.” *The preparation for my passing away made me feel a deep sense of isolation. But I never want Misao in trouble after my death.*

“Eh? Isn’t it too early?”

“We can’t be buried in Munakata.”

“I know we can’t. You’re not their first son.” *And I don’t wanna be in my husband’s ancestors’ tomb.*

2004

Jericho visited her homeland for New Year’s Day with George. Nuttida had recovered but was still too weak to get a job.

Hugged by the infant at the Oita airport, Hisaharu didn’t know what to say. Misao talked to Jericho continuously about her duties as a mother. George brought Hisaharu back a flood of fond memories of childhood. They got out of the airport. The wind was fresh, and the winter wasn’t cold there. Misao

⁹⁵ Romans 12.

was talking about what had happened without a break. While Jericho was driving, the sun above the mountains of Kunisaki began to give off a soft light. The infant's lovely face was lit with the light from the purple air. It was as if someone were talking to Hisaharu. "Hug him now or he'll melt in the scenery. Eyes of a pure heart."

"A doctor said he can't see." Jericho said.

Misao listed all her worries.

"I had guessed." Hisaharu held him up in the air. The boy laughed happily. It brought Misao a smile of forgiveness for her daughter. "It's incredible that an average woman can continue to work," Hisaharu said. "After the war, men had to work hard to rebuild lives on the land burnt to ashes."

"I understand why men have forgotten wife and children, family." Jericho answered.

"I haven't, never. Misao and you have been always at my center."

"Okay." Misao tried to express her forgiveness.

"Men's competitors had been only among men," Jericho said. "But now, new rivals, women."

"The number of jobs is limited. Society will be broken if men can't get proper work and incomes." Hisaharu worried.

"You're a man and haven't been to Europe or America. I mean, you have no experience of sexual or racial prejudice. The sea protected us from foreign powers, but that happy age has gone. I mean, other new competitors are coming, foreigners. They're much tougher than young men here."

"I can't imagine it at all. But nothing will overcome the war experience," Misao said in accents from many places.

"The majority of local boys will be dropped out," Jericho said while remembering many kinds of people on the continent.

“Women with children will be also dropped out,” Hisaharu said.

They saw Beppu Bay at night. There were tall buildings. The scenery was not what Jericho remembered. Hisaharu kept holding the boy.

“George will be able to speak a few languages,” Hisaharu said. “You have to teach him our language or I won’t be able to communicate with him.”

“I am.”

“I don’t understand English. It’s impossible to catch its rhythm and sounds. But the world’s standard is English, sorry to say.”

“Cuz Elizabeth the First beat the invincible Armada with the help of storms, like in our history.”

Jericho’s way of explaining is like Brother Ichiro’s, Hisaharu thought.

“It was 1588, almost just before the time the samurai closed the islands. The queen’s islands were on the opposite side of the biggest continent. I think it’s the farthest language from ours.”

A picture popped in her heart. Caravans were traveling through deserts on the continent and experiencing many cultures and words. It was the picture book she had loved in kindergarten.

“If the Spanish won, the pronunciation of the international language would have been easy for us to master. I wish Italian or classic Latin was the universal language. Much easier.”

“Is it?”

“Their vowels sounds are easier than English.”

Misao cut in. “You’re talking like your father. Oh no!” She took George’s hand.

“We put our tongues in the front of our mouths, if you compare our language to others, Chinese and so on.”

“For thousands of years, we have eaten small fish, dried, cooked. We need to use tongues in front or tiny bones would hurt the inside of our mouths.”

“Cuz you eat while talking,” Misao said.

“Nowadays—” Hisaharu ignored Misao as usual “—we can have big fish like tuna, for big ships can be built. Smaller fish are healthier than larger fish because the big fish accumulate mercury, they say. You must teach George how to handle bones.”

Hisaharu noticed that Jericho found her life with George simple but contented. The boy brought her smiles and laughs.

They arrived in Beppu at last. Some steam vapors were lit up. Though it was winter, people were chatting while standing over the lattice covers of hot spring streams, enjoying the heat. The warm vapor calmed their throats and noses.

“I saw the mountains of Ararat. You like geography and histories, don’t you?” Jericho asked.

“Ah, they’re fun.”

“You used to tell me tales, uh, when I was six or seven.”

“You remember.” Hisaharu was moved. He forgot his anger for her.

“I noticed many similarities between the tales and the eastern Mediterranean traditions.”

“Greek myths and the Bible.”

“You told me.”

“I had wondered, too.” Hisaharu hugged his two-year-old boy stronger. “I still wonder so much. The Old Fact Record was completed in the sixth or seventh century. Had Greek myths and Bible stories spread out so fast? To this east end through

the biggest continent? Mouth to mouth? Or maybe people think the same wherever they are.”

“I was surprised that many people believe the Bible is the only history,” Jericho said.

“I heard many people are left without science education even in developed countries. It’s pitiful,” Hisaharu said.

“Those people think that it’s pitiful many people are left without Bible education, it’s pitiful.”

“I can’t understand why they confuse science and religion. Science is for *how*. Religion is for *why*.”

“In Europe, all studies come from the study of one god. Though the cultures of Greece, the Middle East, India, and China influenced Europe, they were branches. You know, it’s our identity for these fifty years to mix science education and nature worship, Buddhism and Confucianism. It’s natural for us to be confused. But as long as we can see and touch things, there’s less confusion.”

“Once, I read part of the Bible. I was in high school. Its translation was too hard to read. I forgot most of it. The Old Testament seemed to be laws, from outside. The New Testament seemed to be heart, from inside. The parts I remember well are in two movies, *The Ten Commandments* and *Ben-Hur*.”

“You let me see the movies on TV, I remember.”

“After high school, I tried to find a Bible but couldn’t. Even tiny bookshops sell all kinds of stupid magazines and *manga*. In bigger bookshops, all I found were explanations and opinions about the Bible. I’ve wondered why. I don’t want to read what someone wrote about it at first. I don’t want others’ judgments.”

“Many parts of it were hard to understand.”

“Old men have said, read a difficult book a hundred times and you’ll understand it.”

“Isn’t it the reason my name is Jericho?”

“You were born in isolated Kyushu, which was once connected to the world. I had thought you would live in Kyushu your whole life. Jericho is a name I found in the Bible. I thought the place had been the center of all histories. I wished you would understand the wider situation. All humans are on the shoulders of their ancestors. I suggested the name to Misao, and she liked the elegant sound, Eriko.”

“You have not explained anything to me!” Misao complained but knew the reason had no meaning.

“Why not read it again? You don’t have to believe it, but it will give you a lot of understanding and new questions.”

“Now my eyes are not for reading.”

“Eh?”

“You don’t have to worry. Just for age. It doesn’t matter for driving. Have you read it?”

“Part of it. I was advised to read Proverbs first. I think you’ll like it. It’s amazing, in Christian’s tradition, first, they set a goal, second, they think of ways to achieve it, and third, they make a plan. It’s a new way for us, only for these past thirty years. You know, I’m often among Muslims. They’re very good people. They check religious laws before setting goals. On the other hand, our tradition doesn’t like such a logical way. We don’t mind contradiction. I wonder why we act in order but our minds are in disorder.”

The old house was in front of her. She looked at it for a while. Misao took George’s hand. *Was it here in Beppu? I was an elementary school pupil. The class teacher said a part of*

*this. I couldn't understand what she said at all. But they were like the seeds on soil.*⁹⁶

for attaining wisdom and discipline;
for understanding words of insight;
for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life,
doing what is right and just and fair;
for giving prudence to the simple,
knowledge and discretion to the young-
let the wise listen and add to their learning,
and let the discerning get guidance-
for understanding proverbs and parables,
the saying and riddles of the wise.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.⁹⁷

“I think Aunt Ayako is the woman at the end of Proverbs.”

“Farm women were all like that.”

Misao turned on the heater. Jericho held George away from it, telling him how dangerous it was.

“Jericho treats him right.” Hisaharu told Misao.

“You’re lucky to be born in this age,” Misao said, putting rice into a microwave.

“Women can choose men now,” the daughter said. “That’s why lots of youth are single. Women don’t need marriage for living, so arrogant men are never chosen.”

⁹⁶ Matthew 13:8.

⁹⁷ Proverbs 1.

You're talking about me? Hisaharu thought. "I'll prepare the bath."

"That's why there are fewer children." Hisaharu said. "Fewer boys, fewer DF members, less ability to protect ourselves. We'll be eaten up by someone." Hisaharu remembered his days as a recruiter.

"Nowadays, there are many working mothers. I wonder how Parent Teacher Associations can function." Misao remembered the time she spent working on school festivals and camps, making newspapers and so on. Those community ties had created safe places for children.

"Maybe that's why," Jericho replied, "the majority of children are getting stupid. All they do after school is play games or be forced to take private lessons. Children are like pets in cages."

Hisaharu said, "The hot spring is ready. Not too hot for George."

"Women used to handle community activities for free." Misao replied while heating some soup.

"Now crimes increase. But, I know, some retired men are going back to help communities. Some work as conciliators in courts for free. Some are human rights protectors in their areas for free." *Hisaharu must be on the males' side.*

"Women used to be caretakers for their husbands' parents," Misao told George.

"Even now, the majority of women are involved in PTA besides working. Many of them take care of four parents," Jericho told George.

"Yeah," George answered.

"They say in a few years, twenty-five percent of the population will be over sixty-five. To help such women, the majority of government revenue is spent on elder care,

so there's less money for children, science and technology, intellectual property rights, diplomacy, and national defense," Hisaharu said.

"This is women's silent protest." Jericho repeated what a friend had said. "You also said Nihon would be eaten up by someone gradually."

June 19, 2004

Hisaharu's whole body made him feel his days were numbered. *What's left? I couldn't do anything as an Earth Spider. This age is not for minorities' independence. But is it right? Earth Spiders are like the Taiwanese. The old tale was that the first boy who was back from an eagle would save the original inhabitants. I was the first boy. I haven't done anything.*

Should I have used the Dragon Sword for minority activities? Legend is legend. The place for the sword is in the Tu-shima Sea.

Can an individual belong to one tribe? Misao is from a family with no story, so my daughter is half-majority.

I must think of Misao more than the legend. I must protect her till she dies, after my death. I bought a tomb for us. Misao can walk there. We'll see the beautiful bay in the east from the tomb. We'll see the beautiful mountains in the west. The view is one of what I was made from, the old mulls, slieves, firths, loughs, glens, bens, and kyles in Tu-shima and Munakata. Then I made shelves at her request. Also, I put in three lights for her, near the stove, the electric kettle, and the phone for her chatting at nights. What's left? I'll mow the lawn tomorrow morning. This heat makes the grass grow fast. To whom will she give the lawn mower and my fishing gear?

Misao gave up on his offensive attitude. *Originally, he had no sense of humor, she thought. He's getting old. Some old men get angry easily. It's like his head has turned to stone. Blood's not flowing in his brain.*

George woke up in tears. "Gran'pa died."

It was 11:30 at night on June 19 in Istanbul. Jericho eased him. Something caught her, deep in the heart. "George, I'm going to call your gran'pa. It's six thirty in the morning over there."

"Hi." It was her father.

"It's me. Are you okay?"

"Everything's alright."

"How's your heart?"

"It's perfect. Every time I get a checkup, nothing's wrong, the doctor says."

Jericho knew he'd never tell the truth if the doctor had given him bad news. "Good." *I have to believe him.*

"It's early in the morning. What happened?" His voice sounded normal, which relieved Jericho. "George says you were in his dream." Jericho didn't say it was a nightmare.

Jericho looked at the Bosphorus through the window. The strait was dark, but she could see lights. She loved the view. A sea far away, below the buildings; it was like Beppu and Tu-shima. *Well, no, in Tu-shima, any place I stood was close to the sea. In Istanbul and Beppu, walking up and down the hills, you were surprised to see the sea suddenly.*

It was hot even in the early morning in Beppu. After breakfast, he was mowing the grass before it got hotter.

Misao went upstairs to dry clothes in the sun. She heard the lawn mower.

After putting the machine back, he was suddenly overcome with drowsiness. He couldn't resist it. He sensed his body falling to the ground. *Nothing's wrong. I'll sleep just for a while here.*

Misao finished hanging the wash, went downstairs, and saw his arm on the doorstep through the opened sliding door. It seized her with terror. She tried to rush to him, but the lower half of her body wouldn't move at all. She crawled desperately to the arm on the ground. He was just lying there. She panicked.

Hisaharu felt his shoulder being shaken in darkness then heard something. It was Misao screaming and crying. He tried to look at her, but he was too sleepy to lift his eyelids. It took several seconds for him to process why she was shouting. *She's so noisy in the neighborhood. I have to calm her down. How difficult it is to move my mouth.* "I'm just sleepin'. Don't worry."

"You're sleepin'? You're *sleepin'*? No way! Somebody, anybody, help!" she kept shouting high, shuddering.

Her voice had broken the calm Sunday air and there was a man next door walking down the street. He ran over and immediately understood what he should do. He called 119.

"Hanada-san." He wanted her to stop panicking, but it was in vain.

"Take courage! An ambulance will be here soon. He'll be alright. And do not touch him." He began to move the bonsai away from the entrance.

Hisaharu didn't want an ambulance. *It's noisy. I'm just feeling heavy, no pain. I don't want people to gather here.*

Misao kept praying. *This is a nightmare.*

A young woman in white was standing in front of her. "I'm a doctor." She had surprised Misao. "Doctor Suzuki." The short woman knew what Misao was thinking. "No one thinks I'm a doctor."

Misao was surprised to see such a young woman working in a professional role. *My husband looked down on me because I was a female. Now his life is in the hands of a female. Times have changed.*

The doctor said, "Mr. Hanada has suffered a cerebral infarction. The top of his right brain has been damaged. You can talk to him."

Talk? I can talk to him? Misao followed her.

There he was.

I don't wanna believe it's him. His head was unnaturally facing the headboard. "Yo, I'm here." Misao touched his arm. "The doctor said you'll be alright." Misao believed the doctor.

But Hisaharu didn't believe the doctor. *They say it's a cerebral infarction. The cell damage can't be undone. But I mustn't give in. I'm really afraid of death. Brother Ichiro, help me. Tera, help me. Mr. Pilot, help me.* He heard a young woman's voice calling his name on his right side though he couldn't see her. He realized no sound from the left ear. The doctor walked over to where Hisaharu was looking.

"I'm Doctor Suzuki."

He tried to look at her. Everything was foggy, and moving his eyes was difficult.

"Don't move your head. Keep it on the bed." She gently put her hand on his chin. "Mrs. Hanada, don't recline the bed, for this drip infusion."

"Yes." Misao answered like a pupil.

“These are CT films. This dark area has been damaged by bleeding. We’re trying to stop this internal bleeding. Whether this bleeding stops or not, on Wednesday, we’ll check you by CT again. Then let’s undergo rehabilitation.”

Hisaharu felt a little bit of hope.

“An MRI would give us a much clearer image, but Mr. Hanada, you have a pacemaker, so we can’t use that. But a CT will be enough to give us information.”

Female doctor again. But he had started trusting female doctors. Eighteen months earlier, a young female doctor solved the eye trouble he’d been suffering for more than ten years, while an old male doctor had kept prescribing the same treatment for four years. His eyes were going steadily downhill. A fishing friend told him about the new doctor. She found a cause quickly and removed micro lumps of blood deep in his eyes by laser. It was far better than he had expected; a vivid world had returned.

On the way down the corridor, Dr. Suzuki looked at Misao. “Damaged cells will swell and continue to do so for forty-eight hours or so. If worse comes to worst, he’ll need surgery.”

Misao’s eyes began to drift. Everything was beyond her capacity. The young doctor could understand the elderly lady, but a doctor in modern times had to explain the situation. “Are you alright? Do you have sons or daughters?”

“We have a daughter.”

“I’m going to explain this to your daughter too, so call her, please.” She suggested a last family reunion. “Swollen cells will put pressure on healthy cells and damage them. To prevent that, a part of his skull will have to be removed.”

Misao made up her mind. *It won’t happen.*

In the afternoon, he was moved from the ICU to a ward. Neighbors visited one after another. "I called Eriko. She was at home. She said she'd go to the airport with George promptly. And your brother and sisters are on the train now."

Maybe I won't see Jericho again, but I'm prepared for that. I decided the rest of my life with Misao would be far away from Jericho. She's independent at last. Misao has lots of problems, but technology made it possible Jericho will be able to help Misao from a distance. In my young days, there was no means to help someone except being near.

He sensed a familiar atmosphere. Brother Jiro, his wife Ayako, and his sisters arrived. They had been surprised by Misao's call and had dragged their old, handicapped bodies onto a train.

"You'll soon be alright. Many recover from cerebral infarctions." They held Hisaharu's hands in turn. Hisaharu seized their hands with his right hand to let them know he still had energy. Jiro's hand was still manly. *A farmer's hand*, he thought. *Rehab will make my arm live.*

He didn't want to seem lifeless in front of them. Grasping and shaking their hands, he felt the head moving and got tired. He fell asleep. Jiro wondered, *Will at last my family tale end?*

Ayako didn't give up. *I will see Eriko-chan. I will tell her about our history.*

When they'd gone, silence arrived. He woke up. He tried to roll over but couldn't. "Would you push around my waist?" Hisaharu's polite tone caused Misao to become sympathetic. *I haven't heard this way of asking from him.* She kept massaging his paralyzed arm and leg, remembering the days after his hospitalization years ago. *He will survive.*

Visiting hours were over. Sitting on a simple chair beside him, Misao began massaging again. ‘Curtains around us are drawn.’ Misao decided to use her foot for massage. ‘Using hands is also bringing me pain in my back. But *I don’t wanna stop massaging.* His ache was soothed by Misao’s massage. *I should say thank you to Misao. Maybe I should’ve said so before.* Voice of ‘thank you’ was on the tip of his tongue, but he couldn’t say it. *Saying so seems like a final farewell to her. I want a little more time with her. I don’t wanna show my tears.*

“Let me see your mouth.” Misao remembered her mother in bed. Her mouth had been full of food. “I’ll clean your teeth.” Hisaharu opened his mouth.

He noticed what it would be. *I’ll never let Misao take care of me more than this cleaning. I’m too heavy for her to turn over. And a man of Kyushu has pride. I will be in a minority who won’t accept living in a paralyzed state. I once resisted death ten years ago. The rest of my life with Misao. They say it’s the law all hospitals must give the best treatment to each patient even when their minds are gone as long as they have brainwaves and heartbeats. This highly progressed technology keeps patients living, but Misao will lose her love and respect for me. And media reports that worn-out families have been arrested for neglect. I don’t want Misao to become a criminal. This is my last protection for her. She’s been a wife of this man of Kyushu for forty-one years. I will die as I have lived.*

George answered the phone in the middle of the night. Jericho woke up at the sound. He had had a nightmare ninety minutes earlier. Poor George. He couldn’t sleep. George turned to Jericho. His face was drawn with tension. “Mom, Gran’mā

called. Gran'pa fell down." It froze Jericho's breath. "He's in a hospital." A surge of grief cut through her bones.

The time has come at last. Jericho called an airline and a taxi, took a big bag and put a wallet and passports into her pockets, took George's hand, and locked the door. She felt her feet were in the air. As they waited for the taxi on the street, George rubbed her cheeks.

Waiting in the airport, she gave up controlling her sadness. Feeling her sadness, George kept being a good boy. George could understand something big had happened since the nightmare.

The airplane seemed to be so slow. She was afraid his condition was worsening. There was no way to ask her mother about it, as she didn't have a mobile phone. Jericho couldn't eat; she was sick to her stomach. *Please live! I have important thing left. I have to say thank you. I have to hug him.* During the seven-hour flight, George seemed to get sick.

Before taking a local line, she called home, though she knew nobody would be there. *Please be alive. Why didn't I hug him before, when he could stand? Now he's lying in bed.*

Jericho pushed George into a taxi. Then she ran into the hospital and asked a guard where her father was. He checked a list and pointed to an annex. *He lives!* Vitality gushed out like new spring. Her fear disappeared.

He suddenly heard a familiar voice.

"Father!" walking to the bed, she immediately understood she had to move to where he could see her. It was heartbreaking. The angle of his head reminded her of a newborn. George had been like this, tiny. Here was a tall, old man lying at the same angle at almost the end of a life.

“Oh, Jericho, you’re here, all the way.” His voice made her relieved. *This is not the end.*

“Of course. I heard you fell.”

“You came to me. I can recover from this.”

“Here’s George to see you.” Jericho pushed George to where her father could see him. George was frightened at the atmosphere; he tried to stay near the foot of the bed. Hisaharu tried to see George.

“Oh, you’ve grown up.” It was clear to Jericho that Hisaharu couldn’t see George.

Misao explained to her daughter what had happened to him since the morning. “You called us early, at six thirty. Why?”

“George woke up and said Gran’pa had been in his dream.” Jericho couldn’t say it was a nightmare in which her father had died. It made Misao stood up.

“Dream? Oh! Something, something was ... Oh George! You saw your gran’pa in your dream?” George nodded.

“It was ninety minutes later your gran’pa fell down.” Misao sat in a chair again. She turned to her daughter. “When you called, your father was reading a magazine beside the phone. I was doing exercises, the keep-fit program on TV as usual. I’ve been asking him to exercise with me, but he wouldn’t move at all in the morning. Always. Every day.” She pinched his paralyzed left arm sharply and cried again.

“Can you sense when you’re touched?” Jericho asked him.

“Yeah, of course. It’s the end if I can’t feel it.” Instead of expressing his gratitude to Misao, he chose to report it to Jericho. “Your mother is thankfully massaging me.” He vowed, *I will tell Misao thanks next. Yeah, next.*

He fell asleep.

Misao took George home for a rest.

Jericho was alone with her father. *I have to tell him I love him.*

She had tried to say so these four or five years. *I've never said it before. I resisted him. I had wished my parents were other people. I wondered why they were my parents. I was miserable. I couldn't tell friends about father's work. I had thought all parents were the same when I was ten. But there are so many kinds of people, fathers and mothers. I had persuaded myself, there are terrible parents in this world. There are so many things I have to thank my parents for. Since he had had a pacemaker, I thought I should hug him and tell him I cared about him. But I didn't. Such greetings are not in our dictionary. Hugging is a foreign custom. Though I have learned such greetings are comfortable and can bring a fresh sense to a relationship. I need to put myself next to him first time in these thirty-two years for his everlasting peace of mind.*

Massaging his fingers, Jericho talked to him. "Are you sleeping?" *I may lose my roots.*

He shook his head energetically. It made Jericho frightened. "When you want to say no, don't shake your head." It must be hard for him to open his mouth. "Can you talk?"

"Yeah," he barely managed to say. Hisaharu noticed that she had used the word *can*. *It means my ability was almost lost. But yes I can, with my might.*

I have to tell him now. I have to tell him I love you. Jericho pushed herself. "Mother and George are having a meal now." *What am I saying? This is the last chance to say, I can't miss.* Jericho walked to his right side and sat on the bed. *Be brave.*

"Father, I'm lucky to have a life as your daughter." *Am I?* Jericho sensed he was glad to hear this.

“Why?” Hisaharu asked. *It was more than thirty-five years ago that Jericho loved me. She was a baby. Children eat from the tree of knowledge. The foreign story gets the point. I was very strict. I’ve been poor. My life couldn’t catch up to the economic growth. I couldn’t have any advice for her. I had no way of getting her a job. I knew she was miserable, especially in Nagoya.*

Why? Jericho repeated his response in her mind. It was beyond her expectation. *I didn’t prepare anything. Well, this is my life. I’ve been always without preparation.* “Cuz I think your great.” *Foolish answer. Don’t I have another?* Jericho was caught off balance.

“I’m not so great.” *The conversation is going nowhere. As usual, this is my life.* “I made you change schools seven times.” *This may be why she couldn’t have any good relationships.*

“It was fun. I think the changes made my poor brain better than worse. I saw many places and cultures. Regional dialects and provincialism were so interesting. It’s given me sensibility to sound. This came to be a steady base when it came to learning English, despite all my education about English is only reading sentences in junior high and high school.” Jericho couldn’t sense what he felt. “Ten moves brought me flexibility. I can adjust myself to anywhere.” She thought, *Except marriage.* Then she thought he might have had something to ask her just like she had something to tell him.

“Father?”

He tried to turn to her.

“Do you have something to say to me?”

“Something to say? To you?”

“To me.”

“Why did you move to Turkey? The Islamic world seems to be dangerous.”

Why? 'cuz ... Jericho searched for words. True words were confusing in her head. "No danger. People are so good in Turkey." I needed a whole new world. I wanted be free from the memory of what happened to me when I was five. I thought I could be free of my inferiority complex and self-hate. I wanted to be free from the homeland people who require supernatural power with each other, to sense others' feeling and act in symphony, without words. It should've been, "In the beginning was the Word."⁹⁸ But Nihon is far away from the Word. Well, that's why we were left, protected, kept from the continents. Then our language was gutted. Our sentences have no "I" and "You" in natural conversations for the sake of humility. I can't understand what mother says. I couldn't understand what bosses said. They don't like me. I know I'm the one to be blamed. "First—" at last her mouth moved—"it was Turkish history that caught me. You like history, don't you? You used to watch the world history programs on NHK. The area has Hittite and Aegean cultures from at least 19 BC. Persia, Greece, Rome, Byzantium, Islam, and modernization." It's meaningless to talk about history. My time with him is limited. How foolish I am as always.

Hisaharu recalled he liked history. In my dreams, I wanted to visit ancient ruins. Traveling abroad is a distant dream for the majority of men who have jobs and families to feed. Pursuing a dream was selfish. Family first.

Jericho was waiting for his reply. I can say without shame abroad that my father was a veteran. An American man expressed respect to my father for the first time in my life. In another place, when I said we had no army but the Defense

⁹⁸ John 1:1.

Force, a Kurdish woman said, almost all countries' armies were meant for defense force except Israel's. I felt as if the scales had fallen from my eyes. Jericho couldn't endure the silence. "And Turkish people are very nice. Raising George is—" Jericho swallowed the words he used to say "—They say mothers have to be with kids. It's impossible to do so here. But there I can. My coworkers like George in the office."

"Unbelievable." All he knew was workplaces belonged to men. No nuisance.

"Probably 'cuz I'm a stranger there. Our lawyer from Aleppo, Syria, said to me, Muslims have open arms to people from far. They help each other."

"Great people." It reminded him of the closed people he had met. *Have I been open? Maybe not.*

"You know, I began another guide business in Turkey. People are mainly from Germany and America. They always welcome me with George, especially when they learn he's visually impaired. They want him on the bus and take his hand to places."

"Good." Hisaharu was trying not to sink in his sleep. *Work! Work, my brain!*

"Besides, I left Nihon for George." Jericho was going on to make him float on his consciousness. "Our conversation stands on a visual language. George can't picture Chinese ideographs. Our homonym-heavy language is based on visual ties. A phonogram world is better for him."

My daughter is showing me adoration. For thirty-five years, she hated me. But now she's letting me remember the days she was a baby. Those days were the only time in my life that I felt deep love from others. Her tiny hands used to hold my neck. She doesn't remember. But now she comforts me, the first time

in these thirty-five years. Affection is good. This is enough. It's my turn.

It's dawn. I'm living. Will I see the next dawn? Was it a dream? I was flying. The eagle will come to me again. Shiro had believed a legend a boy who had come back from an eagle flying would bring fame back to Hayato. He had gone without knowing his son was back from the flight.

Misao and George came in. Misao found Hisaharu's eyes getting better. Misao was relieved. "Your eyes look much healthier."

Jericho told Misao, "Look, massage at last let his left big toe move a little." Jericho pulled the blanket. Watching the toe moving a little, Misao decided resolutely to devote the rest of her life to looking after him. *It will be hard every day, all day. I had been angry with him always.*

Then George said in a delicate voice, "Good morning, gran'pa."

The other patients in the room were eating breakfast.

"I'm so hungry. Let me have something." Hisaharu asked. *Hunger. It's good. I'm living. We were hungry even in the postwar years.*

Misao called a nurse. "May I give him a bite of food?"

The nurse replied, "Not now. I'm afraid it would stick in his throat. If CT pictures tomorrow shows a better situation, we'll give him some soft food." The nurse's words let him down.

"I'm thirsty." He squeezed his voice. *Water must be alright. My dry mouth makes talking difficult. I must communicate.*

Jericho asked the nurse, "How about an ice cube?" The nurse was pleasant. She went to the nurses' room with quick steps and brought crushed ice. "These will melt in his mouth."

But don't support his head when he swallows water. Keep his head on the bed."

Hurry! Hisaharu didn't want to hear such advice. Misao chose the smallest one and put it between his lips. It was the most delicious food in the world. *Misao's father had once told me about the raindrops in the jungle. Was it like this?* It melted the moment his tongue touched it, and he swallowed perfectly. His desperate way of eating it broke Misao's heart. *He had been like a big shot to me.*

Misao brought a few more pieces to his mouth. And more. Haste makes waste. He choked. He thought he had had his last supper ever.

It was past nine, time for Doctor Suzuki's morning rounds. She nodded to Jericho outside the door and explained to Jericho the details. "There are three thick vessels on the right and left of the brain. One of them in the right side was stopped by a blood clot. That's why he can't move the left side of his body. We're trying to stop the swelling. But as the damaged area is large, it's possible the swelling will continue. We'll give him a CT to check his condition this morning. We'll show you the results around noon."

While massaging Hisaharu, Misao noticed he was not sound asleep. "Are you awake?"

"The pain gets me deep in my right eye. It's fierce." Misao felt the same pain in her heart. She called Jericho. Misao didn't know what to do for him. Dr. Suzuki called for medicine. "This drug will work."

Within thirty minutes, Hisaharu felt relaxed. After the CT scan, friends came into the room. Every time they wrapped their hands around his right hand, he answered with a firm grip. *I still have strength. You don't have to show me compassion. Each*

time he gripped someone's hand, his head trembled. Misao was afraid it was not good for his recovery, but she couldn't tell him that as he'd get angry at any advice.

Hisaharu wanted to see something outside his room. *I want fresh air more than perfectly conditioned air. If there's a tree, if I can see green leaves, they might give me a new power. This hospital is surrounded by trees.* "Will you open the window?" he asked Misao.

Although being afraid of how the other patients would feel and what the nurses would say, Misao opened the window.

There was a wall.

It made him so disappointed. *Thirty years ago, this hospital was in a forest. But it's been replaced by annexes and a parking lot. These newest techniques that saved my life are provided by this modern building.*

The dull air was broken. A nurse told Misao, "Would you go out? We'll wipe his body with warm towels."

Misao sympathized with him in his sorrow. *If he's healthy, it's a treatment for a king. But now he has no power to resist hiding his old and weak body from them.* At the door, Misao turned to the curtains.

The nurses finished their work efficiently and called Misao and Jericho in. Hisaharu imagined the days at home with Misao. *The work was too much for her. Especially in the three months of terrible heat and humidity. How many times a day. She will break her back. She will lose her peace of mind. Or she won't clean me.* At the moment, he felt heavy pain deep in right eye again. *I don't like these tubes. I don't like this highly developed medical system.*

He shook his head and pulled a tube out of his nose. Jericho was surprised. "No! Father! What're you doing!" She

put his head on the thin pillow and kept her hands on his head. He raised his right arm and tried to turn the oxygen inhaler off. "Father!" Jericho and Misao couldn't understand him.

"Rehabilitation is coming. Look forward to it!" Jericho said desperately.

It was their love that had driven him to that point. *Misao, Jericho, you don't have to care for me at all. Do not nurse me. The medical system will keep my body alive without my soul. It will take all the money, energy, and health from you. I saved money not for the hospital but for Misao's life. When Misao will get exhausted, she'll be charged with criminal neglect.* Hisaharu tried to stretch out his paralyzed left arm to grab the drip infusion on his right arm and rolled shoulders, but the left arm wouldn't work. It made him terribly sad. He tried to touch the tube with his right fingers.

"What are you doing?" This time, Misao and Jericho saw what he wanted to do. It was lucky his right fingers couldn't touch the tube.

"Live! Find the will to live!" Jericho implored him to be positive. Misao understood him. *It was why you've been so strong willed all your life, which I never understand. It has put a lot of pressure on my mind and body.*

My arms, my fingers. His soul was rolled in a big wave that he couldn't control. *Brother Ichiro, at last I can imagine a bit how you felt on the day of your departure.* Hisaharu talked to Ichiro. *Did you fear it? I do. I do. Man has to die.*

The results of the CT scan in the morning showed his condition was getting worse. The doctor said, "We'll add this drip infusion." Her words helped Misao and Jericho get stronger.

Misao decided again to devote the rest of her life to caring for him. *He is so heavy. Though I can't move him to the bathroom, there must be some way. I can't think of it now. I can't think.*

Jericho began to consider how she could help Misao. *I need information. There must be some nursing system that can help. Mother can't do this by herself. I have to stay for a while; I must call some people.*

Mrs. Urata came in with George in the evening, saying, "Hi, we folded *origami* cranes." That cheered up Misao. "Arrah, how nice of you. You are always so good to us."

George showed dozens of cranes and said, "Mrs. Urata, her gran'child Tomoka, and I made these."

Hisaharu could hear them talking. "I'm losing my eyesight. Like George. *On ne voit bien qu'avec le coeur. L'essentiel est invisible pour les yeux.*"

"*Le Petit Prince*," Jericho responded.

"I know you know."

I had disliked him because I'm like him. Jericho understood.

"Gran'pa, I love you." George held the paralyzed arm. George's voice was so sweet.

I never expected anyone to love me. I never expected somebody to say "I love you." What a heartwarming thing. Am I worth it to him? Why can this new generation express such feelings? George might have said that because of Jericho's influence. I've been in a vertical relationship, parent and children, elder sibling and younger, man and woman.

"Today's visiting hours are over." Jericho asked Misao to take George home. "Mother, you need a break or you'll fall down."

Misao went out with George.

Jericho expected she could stay in the chair beside him. While changing his position on the bed around nine, a nurse came to Jericho. "Do not stay here. You'll disturb the other patients." Her voice was mechanical.

Jericho said, "I live overseas. I'd like to be beside him." Jericho thought anyone could understand that feeling.

"No. If you want to stay near him, there's a waiting room on this floor with a bench. You can use it." The nurse was like a stone wall.

"As he has a terrible pain in his back, I'd like to massage him." Jericho kept after her.

"We'll care for him for you," the robot said.

Jericho gave up and told Hisaharu she would stay on the floor.

Hisaharu thought she should lie on the bench and sleep well. *Leave me. It's alright.*

Jericho couldn't sleep well. She sneaked into the patients' room and found him fast asleep at midnight.

It was past midnight that an agonizing pain awoke him. *I'm about to die. It's not only in my back but also deep in the right eye again. No one around me. Loneliness grew in him. I don't wanna die alone. Misao! Jericho!* His voice wouldn't come out. *How many nights I spent with feeling I wouldn't wake up in the morning? Misao was always beside me on such nights. This time she's not here.*

A long time passed, and at last, he heard a nurse opening the door. She noticed Hisaharu's groaning, so she rolled his body to ease the pain in back. He tried to complain of another pain, but his dried mouth wouldn't work.

Jericho awoke and snuck to the room. Between the door and wall, Jericho saw the nurse walking with a flashlight. Jericho went back to the bench. A clock indicated two thirty-five.

After a light sleep, Jericho saw the clock. *It's five ten! Oops!* She rushed to the room. Wishing he'd be sleeping, she found him writhing in pain, groaning. *What? That nurse! I should've insisted on more.* "What's wrong?"

"I have a dreadful pain in my back."

Jericho pushed both sides along his backbone.

"That helps."

But still, his face expressed pain. It hurt Jericho. He was a man who endured pain stoically.

"What's hurting you?"

"My right eye."

Again? How long has he been in pain? Jericho walked to the nurses' room and came back with the nurse. She used the same medicine he received the day before.

"This should ease the pain," the nurse said.

It didn't work.

"Excuse us, but when does Dr. Suzuki come around?"

"She's coming around nine, but I'll contact her sooner," the nurse said.

I don't want any more of this awful pain. He shook his head.

"Father! Don't move your head!" He didn't answer but hit his head with his good hand. "What're you doin'?" Jericho was scared.

"I don't need such head." His right fist was clenched.

"Father!" Jericho pushed his shoulder and head on to the thin pillow. *It was a cold windy day. Was I ten? I was afraid of father's death because I was gonna lose house and food. Not because I loved him. I found I didn't love my father.*

Dr. Suzuki came around eight thirty. Misao wondered how long she worked every day.

“Cerebral infarctions won’t give you pain. We need to check your right eye. I’ll ask an ophthalmologist to check your eye.”

Misao was just reminded of an appointment. “He has an appointment with the eye doctor Nagata, of this hospital, next week.” Dr. Suzuki told a nurse to contact the eye doctor.

Hisaharu could hear the conversation. *Good. The ophthalmologist is an excellent doctor who brought my vision back. She might lessen this pain or at least the reason for it.*

Jericho asked him, “Father, what’s your earliest memory?” She thought memories of young and happy days might save him from the struggle for a few minutes.

It was very hard for him to recall what the world was like before the war. He moved his head.

“Stay down!” Jericho pushed his head back gently.

“Stay down!” That’s the word from my training days. “Move out!” “Get down!” Take cover on your right!” “Dig in!” I was frantic to catch up. “Down!” That was my daughter. He found himself flying over the highlands he had walked through. They were covered with flowers of miyama-kirishima red in May. The old house, flowers were blooming in line on the top of the roof. I wanna live. He was running all night. “Do not stop and you might save a life!” No moon. The stars were cruel. The boot camp started.

A firefly was in front of him in the darkness. *Faint, flickering. It’s my soul. It’s getting out of my body. This great pain is breaking me into thousands of shards. I’m a clodhopper still. But I still have confidence. I have a forest, a hunk of soil in me now. I have an island, a big hunk of water.*

“My first memory? You ask me?”

“I just happened to think.”

“An air raid siren wailed again in the morning. I dashed out to a mountain. I heard parents shouting.” He took a break.

“The wartime?”

Hisaharu consumed all his energy relating his memory.

“It’s my birthday, tomorrow, Father, so you have to be better.”

“Is it? How old are you going to be?”

“Forty.”

“Forty? You’re forty?” *How childish*, he thought. *It’s the generation grown in lukewarm water, without spirit or bone. Well, it’s enough.*

“Father?” Jericho tried to tell him about the eagle when she almost fell into consciousness at the tsunami soon after George was born. But right then, female eye specialist and Misao came in. *I’ll talk to him later*, she thought.

What a relief. Hisaharu felt a blade of light in the darkness. *The doctor who brought me fresh vision is here. She’ll save me this time too.*

While the nurse set instruments on the windowsill, she wiped her fingers with cotton balls. Hisaharu could recognize the nurse was a man. *What a change.*

Dr. Nagata gently asked him, “As there are no instruments to check your intraocular pressure in this room, may I touch your eye?”

“Yeah.” His voice was weak. She opened his eye and pushed it lightly with her clean finger. He didn’t move his eye at all as it was being touched.

What? Misao and Jericho were shocked. It seemed he had no feeling in the eye. The doctor looked into the eye with some instruments.

"I'm afraid there's no reason for his pain from the ophthalmological point of view."

"How is he?" Misao asked Jericho.

"Father falls in and out of consciousness. By the way, I heard about the eye doctor."

"I know it. Her grandfather came from America soon after the war."

"Why?"

"Dunno. They say he was a fighter pilot who crashed in Munakata but was saved by someone."

"Oh?"

"I heard the female doctor's gran'pa died of cancer in Nagoya 'cuz he had been in Hiroshima for a while after the atomic bomb."

"So she came to be a doctor?"

"Maybe. Beppu has some a-bomb patients' sanatoriums."

A fighter pilot? Hisaharu perked up. Could it be, was he the man in the fighter plane? I knew this, in the storm at the Fuji's Ocean Trees, but I didn't take it as real. Could he be the grandfather of this doctor, the one who brought me light? Hisaharu couldn't say anything. In his final moments of life, his brain became clear. His life, mine, and others. It's like the heavens have woven us together for thousands of years and the braiding will last forever. Men are like a part of an immense design woven by God. I learn only from my failures. I repeated failures. André Gide, For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction. To let men notice, the heaven keeps tragedies. But men can't stand millions of victims! I've seen children's bodies under a mudslide in a flood. Tradition says the reason for innocents' tragedies is because of their ancestors.

How hopeless. What is man? To get the answer, it took my whole life. Literally, all my life. But it's only a small part. If I could express this, my next generation, Jericho or George, will take the second step.

He wanted to say it, write it. Throughout his life, he had given up thousands of wishes. But now he didn't give up. *He concentrated on, 'Understand the first step, Jericho, George! The new generation is full of trifles—money, food, washing, like I used to be. Now your capacity has no space for this, but catch it. It'll grow in you someday, long after my death.* He kept concentrating.

Feeling helpless, Misao sat on a chair. She heard sneezing. It was an usual sound for her. She listened, but the sound stopped. Watching his face, Misao put her finger on his upper lip. Frightened, she called Jericho. "I don't feel his breathing. What should I do?"

Suddenly he breathed. *Something's wrong.* Jericho looked into the mouth and found that his tongue was blocking his throat.

Jericho shouted, "Ms. Nurse! Please! His tongue is—"

An experienced nurse understood what was happening and brought a small instrument with a pair of surgical gloves. She set it into his mouth to pull the tongue to its normal position. Hisaharu came back from the deep and felt something hard in mouth. *I don't like this.* Moving his chin, he spit the instrument out. His tongue fell down again.

"Father! Please keep it in or you won't be able to breathe!"

That's Jericho's voice. She's shouting. She seldom shows her emotions. He accepted the instrument in his mouth that time. *I don't like this, but I'm happy that you're shouting at me. Misao, Jericho, thank you. I love you.*

Out of a white mist, Jericho's shouts came to him. "Father! Say *hah!*" A few times Hisaharu said "*hah,*" which caused him to take a breath. Nurses rushed and put an oxygen mask on him. They moved his bed to an annex for brain surgery. A door closed. The scene was like a TV drama.

I might be in a nightmare. Misao tried to see through the closed door. "I need to see him, Jericho, I'm so scared. Will he talk to me again?"

Looking at the door, Jericho felt Misao get smaller. "Sure."

A cranial nerve surgeon explained the risk of the surgery to Misao, Jericho, and friends who rushed to the hospital from home and work. "This surgery won't make him recover. The latest CT shows the bleeding in his brain is spreading. These are the latest CT pictures. And those are the ones taken before. Comparing them shows that the bleeding has been pressing on the brain stem that controls breathing. Destroyed cells are swelling and pressing healthy cells. The aim of this surgery is to get rid of the pressure. But even successful surgery won't help him move. At best, he'll be bedridden."

Misao thought it would be happy if he'd live.

He drew a picture of a head on a whiteboard and showed how the surgery would be done. Jericho glanced at Misao, who seemed to be fading.

The doctor continued, "We need your signature here for the surgery."

Misao and Jericho were escorted to a waiting room. Friends followed them. One of the friends took George home for a meal and some rest. A lot of *origami* cranes made by George were in front of Misao.

Misao wanted to cling to a faint hope that these cranes had magic. *Though I'm not such a fool.* Setting cranes' heads in the surgery room, she tried to believe a miracle. *Concentrating might make it happen, they say.* She tried to send all her energy to him.

Past eleven at night, the surgeon opened the door. "The surgery went as planned."

Looking at each other, Misao and Jericho breathed a sigh of relief. "Thank you very much, doctor."

A nurse took them to the ICU and said, "Before entering this room, would you put on these caps and white gowns here and exchange your shoes for slippers?"

Misao and Jericho went into the ICU. He was asleep with his head in bandages. *Asleep,* Misao thought. *Is his face bigger than usual?* Reality made her step backward a pace or two.

"Father," Jericho called softly, knowing there would be no answer. "Father." She called him again a little bit louder.

"Yeah?" A voice flew up from the other side of the nurses' station.

How wonderful. That patient can speak, Misao thought.

"Father," Jericho called him gently.

"What? I'm here!" the voice answered again.

Stepping to the other side of the bed let Misao find a bag filled halfway with red liquid. At the moment, she understood what it was. "Eriko," Misao called her daughter's name. Jericho already had a stool for her mother.

"Mother, here you are." Putting her hands on Misao's shoulder, Jericho stared at the bag. A faint hope was vehemently opposed by calm judgment. Dark-red materials were sinking to the bottom of the bag. A tube from the bag went into the bandage.

There are also other tubes. I know you don't like it. Misao talked to her husband.

A nurse said, "You can go home. Take a break. We'll take care of him. If there's any change, we'll call you."

Misao and Jericho went out of the ICU and found friends in the waiting room.

"How nice of you."

"We're always with you." They walked to the entrance. Some of them walked to their car. "Wait here, Hanada-san, Eriko-chan. I'll take you home." When they were getting into three cars, Misao heard a nurse calling loudly. "Excuse me! You're Hanada-san's family, aren't you?"

"Yes we are," a neighbor responded.

"He became suddenly worse. We took a new CT. It shows the bleeding in his brain hasn't stopped. Can you come back?"

Jericho jumped out from the car, Misao crawled out from another car, saying to friends, "Please go back home. Please stay with George." Both of them were rejecting what the nurse was meaning.

The cranial nerve surgeon was already in front of the CT pictures. "The problem is the bleeding inside the brain. We can't make it stop."

When Jericho tried to ask him about the bag, the doctor said, "Letting bleeding outside into the bag was successful, but more bleeding began." The surgeon paused and said, "There's a possibility your husband will be brain dead."

Misao felt faint. Her heart pounded, but her whole body was frozen. *I don't wanna hear such a thing.* She rejected every word. "Here is Jericho. She will do something for me."

After giving them a careful explanation of Hisaharu's condition, he locked his eyes on Jericho. "In this case, there are

two choices. The first is putting him on instruments to work his heart and lungs. The second choice is no instruments.”

Jericho took a glance at Misao and saw her drooping. The surgeon’s next words destroyed her last wish. “The instruments won’t help him recover consciousness.”

“How long will those let him live?” Jericho knew it was a helpless question.

“One or two weeks.”

Jericho was surprised to hear this answer. “Oh, only one or two—” Sensing Misao’s emotions, Jericho knew she was the one who would have to choose. Jericho corrected her posture.

Misao opened her mouth. “Your father did love to help others. But he had too much pride to be helped.” Looking at the air, she continued. “He was a real Defense Force man. Not only as a job, but as his whole life. He’s happy to be told thank you.”

“Please don’t use instruments.” Jericho sensed her mother’s emotions. Tears gushed from her eyes, “Father used to say—” she fought back her tears “—‘I dislike being plugged in to anything.’”

Misao nodded sympathetically. Misao remembered that talk. Hisaharu said he didn’t want that. Misao didn’t like him to say so because it seemed cold blooded. Young Jericho had insisted that in such a case she would ask the doctors to use tubes or anything to help him live longer. *I also reject being plugged in, Father. I understand you.*

Misao knew Hisaharu would get angry if she insisted on using tubes and machines. Misao let out a wail of grief.

The surgeon continued with genuine sympathy. “I’m afraid you should prepare yourself. It would be tonight or, as it’s almost one o’clock, Wednesday, today.”

I'm in a drama, Misao thought. But she didn't forget to say and bow her head respectfully to the staff, "How I appreciate your treatment, doctor. You must be very tired."

A nurse said, "We can offer you a private room without extra cost. Would you like to use it? The room has a bathroom and a fixed sofa and some chairs. We'll bring you blankets."

"Thank you. Let us use the room."

A machine was set to indicate his heartbeat and blood pressure. "I'm always checking the same data on this indicator. If you find something wrong, push this button."

Misao and Jericho were left alone with Hisaharu.

Misao put her hand on his shoulder. And his arm. And his hand. A voice was telling her. "You need to touch him now or you won't be able to tomorrow."

He's warm. A voice told her, *He's going to be cold.*

"You have to sleep or you will fall down." Sitting on a chair beside the bed, Jericho said to her father, "I'll be with you for Mother."

Misao cared about Jericho. "You need sleep too."

"I'm not sleepy at all." Jericho noticed she had been awake for a long time without coffee. *This had never happened before. I could sleep even on the night of my great love breakup when I was in my twenties. And the nights I needed to work. I didn't know my body could stay awake for so long.*

His blood pressure had almost hit two hundred. *Father won't die yet 'cuz the doctor said to call people when his blood pressure begins going down. How does high blood pressure influence his body? What's happening to his mentality now?* Jericho tried to listen to his voice but couldn't. *I don't have such ability like George had the nightmare.*

Wednesday dawned. A new day began. Misao was counting about ten breathings and periods of non-breathing all night. *I was counting the tunnels to Beppu. I might have been happy then.*

Jericho was wondering. *Where is his soul? What is the mind? What makes us think? Is our soul made from chemicals such as carbon? Scientists say the whole universe, including human bodies, is made from chemical elements created by the births and deaths of stars ten thousand million years ago. Space scientists say debris from stars exploding will become material for new stars. Every creature on Earth after death will be resolved and will be material for new lives. Is Father going back to a part of space?*

To check where her father's heart was going, Jericho threw a glance out the window. *It will be a sunny day. The morning sky is perfect blue. Today.*

The morning sun filled the room. Sitting up from the sofa, Misao murmured to Hisaharu, "Good morning," as usual. She put her hand on him and was relieved to feel abdominal respiration was going on.

Jericho knew his blood pressure lowered to around 170. *The moment is coming.* Soon it came down to 150. *Doctor said to make calls to people. I won't. Mother and I better be here with him the rest of our limited time rather than calling.*

Keeping a hand on him, Misao couldn't look at the indicator. It was falling minute by minute. *Stop! Freeze! Don't leave me alone! Tell me something. Tell me I love you. You've never told me so.*

Jericho pushed the nurse call button.

"How stupid you are! He didn't expire. His body still perspires!" Misao sensed the surgeon and a nurse came in. But her eyes were locked on Hisaharu.

When the indicator began to be a line, Doctor stepped forward and checked Hisaharu while Misao and Jericho kept calling him loudly.

“Go-rinju des.”

I know, I know. What’s the difference between life and death? Where are you now? Crying, Misao couldn’t understand what was going on.

A nurse came to Jericho and said, “How will you take him home?”

Misao blinked. *How? I?* She was caught in the bottom of sadness of life. The partner she spent her life with was gone. She could not imagine the sun still turning after her husband died. *I need to give him a funeral.* “How do people do that?”

The nurse understood Misao’s feeling. “Some use their own cars.”

“Oh no. His car is too big for my daughter to drive.”

“Some ask morticians.”

Misao was at a loss. “I don’t know about morticians at all.”

“We have a list.”

Misao asked her friend Sato-san about this. That was the start of some busy days.

Another nurse came and showed Misao a carefully wrapped thing, “This is the part of his skull that came off in the operation. Please put this in a coffin.”

“I can’t hold it.” Misao turned to her daughter. Jericho accepted it.

“It’s my fortieth birthday, George.”

“I know. Happy Birthday, but it’s not happy. You’re crying.” George held Jericho’s legs. “You smell!”

Jericho smiled. “I haven’t changed anything for three days.”

In front of Misao's house, there was a tiny public place for children. "George, you like to swing. Let's play."

"With you?"

"Sure."

"Oh, how happy I am. I have been waiting for this!"

Being pushed, George chattered continuously. "Mom, everything is alright. Gran'pa is here."

"Where?"

"Well, look, that cloud." He often used the word *look* though he couldn't see.

The sky at six in the evening of the summer solstice was a beautiful blue. The sun just went behind Mt. Turumi. Heat had gone and fresh air was around. George pointed to a cloud.

'How can he recognize the sky?'

"The biggest cloud. 'Cuz Gran'pa is big, he needs a big cloud."

"Oh dear, I can see."

"You do. And look, there's the moon." A white moon was high above them.

What are clouds and moon in George's mind?

"He's on the cloud. It's carrying him to the moon."

"Oh, I didn't tell you about the eagle!"

"An eagle?"

"An eagle saved your life. I have lots of tales. I'll tell you one each night."

"Starting tonight?"

"Starting tonight."

The mortician said, "I'll be here tomorrow morning, at six." He had set dry ice around Hisaharu. Neighbors and friends went home.

Jericho asked Misao, "Do you wanna open the wrapped thing the nurse gave us?"

"What're you saying?" Misao was surprised this grown still lacked common sense.

But Jericho's curiosity was strong. *Mother used to say I inherited his coldness. He knows I like learning. And there will be no more chances in my life to touch his bones.*

While Misao was bathing, Jericho took it and went up the upper floor. George went after her. She took the clean cloth off and found a clean, white bone. *This is a part of his skull.* She mentally thanked the nurse who had treated it carefully. *What a miracle. this calcium plate had protected his brain for 69 years.* "Your grandfather left this for your science education. And to grow your heart to think of life." She took George's hand softly.

George was fast asleep. Hisaharu was between futons in a tatami room. Misao was exhausted, but Jericho was full of adrenaline. "I'll prepare futons for you. You must be so tired. Where should we sleep tonight? The next room to him, okay?"

"Sure, he's your father." Misao kept the paper walls between the two rooms open. "It's hot. I want a breeze."

It was so hard to sleep. Misao seemed awake. "Did he ever have an affair?" Jericho asked Misao, who was lying down.

"No," Misao answered. Forty-one years flashed through her mind. "No." *Maybe. I dunno. There were two or three women I came to be jealous 'cuz she or they got respect from him. He used to praise them. Did he ever praise me to others? Never.* "Did he tell you something about me?" Misao wished he had said something good about her.

“No. I’m sorry.” Jericho sympathized with her. “I didn’t hear about you. I thought I would ask him on Tuesday what he had thought about you.”

“Oh! How I am vexed to hear that! I haven’t heard what, how, he thought about me!” Misao sighed.

Mother, he died for you.

Misao kept telling her daughter her bad memories about him. “He had gone without saying anything about me ... What, how, had he been thinking about me for these forty-one years? He was cold blooded when I was in the hospital for surgery twenty-three years ago. Your father said he had to pay a lot for that. I felt so miserable. I was a mere burden for him.” She believed it. Recalling unpleasant memories let her forget her bottomless grief.

Heartbreaks in memories could cover this heart-tear.

Jericho was surprised at Misao’s words at first but could understand her feeling as she also had experienced marriage. *It must be true that his words cut her to the quick so often. He always hurt my feelings. I had hurt him. I had hurt mother. Something is automatically protecting her from despair. That’s her strength she doesn’t even know about.* Jericho kept listening to her sincerely. *In a week, I have to go back to the office. I must listen to her now.*

“Your father said he didn’t marry me to pay big money to hospitals.”

Everything was first for Jericho. *I didn’t know what had happened between them. It’s easy to understand he’d say such a pitiless thing.* But Misao’s endless complaints put Jericho at a loss. *Should I say he was good? I wish his soul was haunted this place. Are humans’ brains, which let us think, love, and hate, made from material?*

“He didn’t like that I always got motion sickness. He liked to travel.” Her grumbling let Jericho recall one bit of his advice for driving a car: “Take your foot off the brake pedal at the moment you stop the car. Be careful about your speed, especially before corners. Movement makes your mother sick.” *Should I tell Mother this? No. I should not throw her into grief now. I’ll tell her later.* “You wanted a dying wish, ne?”

The mortician came the next day at six with many traditional things. Neither Misao nor Jericho had witnessed a traditional ceremony. Misao and Jericho were very moved watching Hisaharu being treated on a futon in a tatami room.

He is my husband, but for the mortician, he’s just a body. A body! Why he can be so good to him? For only money? No. Because he has his heart. Mere money can’t make him like this. Maybe he is special. My family is very lucky to have him.

Misao’s friends came to help serve tea. Neighbors, kin, and friends began to gather. Some men put Hisaharu in a coffin, as was traditional. The coffin was carried to a funeral building. Kin from far stayed the night.

Ayako told Jericho all the tales she knew.

The next morning, Misao found a friend in Mie and Nagoya. Misao kept crying.

Misao was amazed to see members of the DF in uniform as well as retired colleagues. Misao bowed to each of them, thinking, *You might not know my husband personally. How kind you are.* Misao felt she could understand a little bit about the strong ties between strong-willed men.

Looking at her father silently, Jericho was lost in thought. *I’ve lost lots of memories. Maybe we should’ve talked a lot, but I didn’t want to. There must be something you wanted to tell*

me about life. You lived during the time democracy, human rights, and rule of law came about. Feudal society before the war forbade questions. Obey Confucius. Discussions and debates were evil. No diversity, no arguments or debates. Authority is always right. Only one race here. Earth Spiders are no longer remembered. I hear the voices of lost people. I might be a Hayato. I might be an Emishi.

The coffin was moved to the crematorium. Misao thought, *I'll wake up and he will be beside me.*

On the next New Year's family reunion, Misao said to George in mixed dialect, "I will live till you say, 'Oh no! You still alive!'"

Jericho accepted a letter from Nuttida in the spring. "I've got a job."

*Après je me suis remis de ma maladie,
je voudrais commencer à étudier le français.
Je ne peux pas courir plus, mais je peux pratiquer tir à l'arc.
Pour vous dire la vérité, je voulais jouer le Kyudo
(un art martial Nihon (budō), issu du tir à l'arc guerrier)
mais ...
Je participerai aux Jeux paralympiques.
Je souhaite qu'il se déroule en Turquie, non à Tokyo.
Je veux vraiment y aller.*
—Yuki

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*Please let Yuki's life continue
after her fifteen years, eleven months,
and twenty-seven days.*

—Hana da Yumiko

