

1977_01

1. ENTERING NORTH CAROLINA

The mountains were covered with a blue haze that could not be called smoke or anything else. It was moist and cold. It was just the beginning of April.

Through the translucent blue, the cliffs that the coal was perilously resting on stood out in front of us like the mouths of giants breathing silently. A quiet line was drawn through the area corresponding to the lower lip, reflecting the indistinct light source of the pre-sunrise sky.

-We're going up that, aren't we?
I said to John beside me.

-Yeah.

There was an audible grunt in the crisp collar of my fisherman's sweater, pulled up to the base of my nose. John's face, only the upper half of which was exposed, had a high nose, intensified by huge eyes that seemed to stare at something all the time beneath thick, blond, hairy eyebrows, an impression that usually haunted him.

-It's Hannibal over the Alps.

It's Hannibal over the Alps," he said in a dull voice that still had the languidness of sleep seeping into it.

-Hannibal.? I was just thinking of a hawk scavenging for food.

-Another hour or two? I thought it would take half a day again. Then you could have paddled last night... So you wasted at least 15 whole dollars.

-Oh, oh, oh, oh.

John held up one hand in a gesture signifying the situation.

1977_02

I don't know.

-There's a good reason for that, I'm sure, Mr. Hannibal, you didn't sit down to cross the Alps in the middle of the night.

I was still in the mood to say something. I had barely scraped together a thousand dollars or so, and I was planning to live for at least a year in the foothills of this strange part of North Carolina, where fifteen dollars was 1.5 percent of my total budget, or the percentage I was planning to put toward medicine.

This is based on the assumption that I am in the best of health. If I were to catch a terrible disease or fall off a cliff and break my leg, the whole project would be in complete failure. As far as I can see, it seems to be a very sparsely populated area. It was more than I had imagined.

1977_03

Yesterday, I was reminded of the wretched remains of human houses that I had seen from the car driving along the state highway to the valley.

It was a bizarre wreckage, as if it had been drawn by a corpse unintentionally released. A dark brown, gloomy conglomeration of tin, pillows, boards, and glass, all completely forgotten from the original purpose for which they had been gathered there.

It was as if even the earth had ruthlessly refused to assimilate, and had therefore been meaninglessly disfigured year after year. But even this disfigurement is already giving me an unfathomable sense of cold exhaustion.

-Is there a human being living in that?

I asked John, who was driving next to me with one hand on the wheel, with a somewhat chilly feeling.

-Maybe. Rural poor.

-Yeah, some buildings never die nicely.

1977_04

Yeah.

Yeah. It's probably because of the building materials. For example, look at Rome, which is also a ruin. That's because they used natural materials such as stone. It's absolutely elegant...

However, the elegant impression of the stone was overshadowed by the realization that in just an hour or two, we would be at the place where we would live for the next year. The number of poor people in the countryside seemed to be increasing as we approached our destination.

A serious illness in a place like this could be fatal. As soon as life falters, the object must deteriorate into something as ugly as that human house. In the end, it will become a horrible, meaningless, ugly scab of an object that will turn into an unimaginable deadly ugliness. I was so horrified that I shivered audibly.

-It's cold.

It's cold," I said, hoping that John wouldn't find it strange. In fact, even though it was April, it was cold before dawn.

-Let's get in the car. Let's get in the car. It'll warm up soon.

You'll be warm in no time," John said. He looked completely indifferent to my concerns.

-It's going to be a little scary when it finally starts.

I was halfway through the car ride to the Giants. [**Great Smoky Mountains?**]

1977_05

I said half to myself, the other half to test John's reaction.

-A kind of stage fright, I suppose.

John glanced sideways at me. There was a hint of a smile in the corner of his eye, but he didn't seem to be responding in any way that would give me a clue.

-What's the total population?

-Fourteen and a half in total, I think.

-Fourteen and a half? No way...

-I'm talking about the Mountain. My dad's house, my uncle's house, my aunt's house, and...

-Wait a minute. Wait, I've already heard that. I've already heard about the mountains where your relatives live and work. I'm talking about that village that thrives at the foot of the mountain. How big is it? I'm sure there are a lot of movie theaters, libraries, ... and hospitals, which are the belly button to civilization.

-But you're planning to escape from all that, aren't you?

-Yes, I do. But

I looked at the precipice that almost overhung the roof of the car. There is nothing more visceral than a silent scream. The scream itself is distant and isolating while it rips my insides apart. There is nothing to embrace our presence.

-Don't worry. Don't worry, the people of the mountain are alive. Unless, of course, the Japanese need some kind of special device to sustain life.

1977_06

-There was such a thing, but I've long since outgrown it. I don't have the luxury of walking around with a degenerate hanging over my head. Or maybe it's just a sinking ship tossing its cargo onto the shore.

-It's not that difficult.

-I'm having a pretty hard time, by my standards.

John was silent for a while, though he seemed to be concentrating on the steep curve of the mountain road, which now went downhill.

-Do you really have to paint?

I said in a whisper.

-That's a rude question. But it's certainly true. I can't tell you how many times I've asked that question myself. Oh, how fortunate we are to be able to think of our destiny as not allowing us any choice at all!

-You can draw it, or you can not draw it, It's like Hamlet sloppily asking each other whether he should live or not. It's a clean choice between life and death. In other words, to paint or not to paint, to be or not to be.... There are too many choices in this world.

-So, you adopted an affordable method of obliteration? After you've thrown away all you can, it doesn't matter what's left.

-That's right. I don't think I'm doing this with a clear conscious intention to do so.

1977_07

For the most part, you're acting out of necessity.

-Hmm. I'm trying to keep your journey in mind.

-What do you mean?

-I mean, it seems to me that the reason you want to come here is to ask the question of whether or not to paint by putting yourself in the greatest possible predicament, within the limits of what is feasible and objectively respectable in civilized society.

-I hope you're right. I hope you're right, because I hadn't really thought about it in my head until you mentioned it. To be frank, I was just strangely curious as I listened to your North Carolina story. Thank you for that. It helped me get in the right frame of mind to get out.

Just when I was bored out of my mind in the dank room, I heard something whirring outside the door. Even if I thought it might be a small mouse, I would still feel like getting up and opening the door.

Once you open the door, no matter what the sound itself is, there is a whole new world waiting for you. Even if that world is just "outside the room," change is change.

-Was that how you felt when you left Japan?

-Sort of. That's pretty much it. When I was on the verge of leaving Japan, one of the people who inspired me to leave in the first place said to me with a straight face, "I'm going there. In other words, it's important to go there. It's not about "getting out of here.

It's not about "getting out of here", it's about "getting there". He, like you, was American. His name was Dave. [*Andrew Delaney?*]

1977_08

He was a tall Jew named Dave. He was an earnest good guy, and every time I saw his face I was reminded of Nietzsche's words, "To be good is a vice." Not because of that, but because we had a tendency to dismiss his advice as a bunch of hogwash. At best, I listened to them as if I were memorizing an English proverb.

-We're not getting out of here, we're getting there....

John repeated Dave's words in a strangely quiet tone.

-I'm going there.

It's been a few weeks since I wrote to Dave, who is still living in Japan, that I was going to try an experimental life in North Carolina for about a year or so. His reply will probably go to John's parents in the mountains.

The reason I came to Japan in the first place was because of my acquaintance with Dave. At that time - almost two years ago - there was a foreigner who used to come to the coffee shop in front of Kichijoji station called "Concerto", where we art students used to hang out, every couple of days, all by himself.

"Concerto" is, of course, a musical term for a concerto, and other than the fact that the coffee is inexpensive and that you can listen to classical music of your choice through self-service, it is a place where people can enjoy themselves.

1977 09

It was a very poor place; there was absolutely nothing worth enjoying except cheap coffee and self-service classical music of one's choice. So many of my fellow students were struggling with their wallets. So it was quite unexpected that a foreigner with a reputation for being good with money would come here.

-Perhaps they were from some poor country.

We whispered to ourselves as we stole glances at Dave, who had a dark complexion, long hair, and dark eyes.

-Maybe he's Indian.

-No, maybe Arabian, maybe Israeli. They say the Shem-Hams are dark.

-But

it's not as if the Arabs don't have enough money for a classical music lover.

It's also possible that they're **raft-eaters**. [?]

-Not many rich people in less developed countries eat squid. They're too busy looking good.

So it took almost a month or two for Dave's mysterious, mute presence to gradually assimilate with the other entities within the walls of the coffee shop and become an invisible object.

-One day, we were sitting there almost oblivious to his presence, when he looked up at us with his nose in the air and said, "Dareka, watashi wo tasuketedasai masuka?"

I heard a nasal voice behind us saying, "What?"

-What? What?

My friend, who was sitting next to me, turned around, and the foreigner was momentarily confused.

-The foreigner was momentarily confused, but then said, "Could you help me please?" he said in English, cutting off each word.

1977_10

-Yes, yes.

My friend replied enthusiastically, shaking his head. In truth, I was glad that the foreigner was finally talking to me. Although he had become invisible, he hadn't disappeared from our consciousness. If Dave hadn't just been sitting there, we would have been observing his every move.

Wood you please tell me how can I play my music?

-Your music?

-Yes my music.

-Are You a Composer? An artist?

-Oh, no, no, no, no!

-it-sweeps-like-every-buddy-is-playing-his-own-music••••.

He pointed to a shelf full of records. My friend was totally puzzled.

-Hey, that's mean, man. You've got to deal with him.

He said to me quickly and without moving his lips. They knew that I was from a mission school. It was Ives' Central Park Symphony that Dave suddenly wanted to hear that day after weeks of silence.

-I said, "I've been mad about Rachmaninoff and Beethoven all year.

I said, "I'm sorry, but I don't have anything by Ives.

1977_11

-Maybe I'm homesick, he said.

-Is your hometown in the United States?

-Yes, Brooklyn, New York City. I used to go to Central Park a lot. I was told that it had been almost a year since I came all the way here to study *Ukiyoe*. He told me that he had been living alone in a cheap apartment in Kichijoji, Tokyo, under the tutelage of a fluent English speaker who was an assistant professor at an art college in Ueno."

-The oriental boom in the U.S. today is huge. I'm just at the beginning, but I'm sure that soon there will be a huge influx of people coming to study Oriental art. Japanese film technology is amazing."

I'm just at the beginning.

From then on, Dave became one of our friends. He attended the graduation ceremony of the Musashino Art School with a dignified look on his face.

-What are you going to do now? Right after the ceremony? Dave said, sitting on the tatami floor in my room.

- I'll probably be a teacher, but there's no chance I'll be able to make a living selling paintings.
- Maybe I'll stop painting, at least for a while. At least for the time being.
-

-What a waste. You're wasting your talent.
-Talent? Talent? We don't live in a world where such things are useful. It's all about publicity.
-For example, Okada's Yugenism?
-For example, a certain man's Chindonism...
A certain man was a popular child of the Tokyo art world at the time.

1977_12

The man, in order to burst out with the most expensive curiosities, was determined to make the most of his fashion-child status.

It was said that he would fill his studio with high-fidelity music. The name "ding-dongism" was coined by my fellow art students.

-But don't you think that good technique is a unique gift in itself? But don't you think that good technique is a unique gift in itself?" said Dave, who had long been a generous admirer of my skills as an artist. For example, a pianist. If you don't have the technical talent, no matter how creative you are, you won't be able to make a sound.

-Technical talent is something that can be acquired by anyone with a little practice.

-I wonder....

He pondered for a moment.

-For example, in my case. I always wanted to be a pianist. I even wish I could be one now. When I was a kid, I went with my sister to learn. I went with my sister to learn when we were kids, with a rotund Jewish lady.

- My sister grew, but I stopped at a certain point. It's not that I've completely stopped progressing, but my progress is slowing down. In addition, I just can't seem to catch the right moment. If perfect piano playing was something that could be attained through technical mastery alone, then one would think that I could be Horowitz if I just gave it time, right?

However, I stopped at Rubinstein, who was a terrible pianist.

=====

1977_13

It's not a mechanical thing. I think it's a combination of an internal urge of motivation and a natural aptitude. I think there is an unexpected complexity at work behind the existence of what is commonly referred to as a mere technician.

-Maybe I'm just a lousy Horowitz. It doesn't add up to three sentences.

--That's unfair. I'm talking about excessive self-deprecation, which is just as dangerous as excessive self-congratulation. Don't forget that from my perspective, I'm at least one of your art students.

-You certainly have talent. To be honest, I'm even grateful for it. I've yet to meet anyone in real life who can draw as well as you. Not even in Ueno.

-My professor says that **my skill is technical decadence.**

-That's because your insides don't have any direction, and you're joking around drawing and painting nudes to get credit. It's no wonder you're decadent.

-It's also a lack of something special. There's no reason to be special at all, if you ask me. If the ideal of human welfare is to make world peace a reality, then it is better to eliminate as much as possible the urge for specialness that lurks in our lives. Future people must be people who have no such sense. Otherwise, there might not be any humans in the future.

Or, in the style of Herbert Read, we could use art as a means of wiping out the demonic impulses of human beings.

1977_14

Or, in the style of Herbert Read, we could turn the act of art into a sewer to wipe out our demonic impulses. Then all that specialness would be worth as much as manure. Maybe I'm suffering from artistic constipation at the moment.

Dave shook his head with a look of helplessness on his face.

(delete from here)- Samizu's request

One early morning, about two weeks later, he burst into my room, his white breath huffing in the March air.

-Why in the world don't the Japanese have the habit of turning on the phone?

-Because it has the geographical advantage of being able to reach both sides of the street by shouting.

-Anyway, listen up. I've been in touch with the guys in New York the last few days. I know a widow, an elderly woman with an extravagant medical condition who's having trouble spending her money. She happened to be a patron of the visual arts. I told her about you, and she asked me to visit her, with her travel expenses covered.

For at least six months. It's in an upscale neighborhood on Long Island outside of New York. What do you say? Don't say no. I went ahead and said yes. I'm familiar with the Japanese sense of duty and gratitude. As a condition, I offered to walk the dog once a day.

(until here)

End Delete

1977_15.

-What are you going to do with that? In your mind, you don't seem to be into technology transfer, and schooling these days doesn't call for it, does it? Are you going to devote yourself to Read's sewer construction?

-Yes, I am. Yes, we're going to do the manure work in the dark. Interesting. It's rich, creative manure that still retains human body heat. For the most part, apart from the children that women produce, the only thing that comes purely from the individual, without any worldly ambition, is excrement.

I was once obsessed with the idea that the only thing a man can create is hair. There was a young professor who had a habit of harping on the notion of pure originality. One day I cut out all the hairs I had created, even the ones on my body, and carefully pasted them on canvas in the order of the date I had cut them out, and took them to class. Literally, the return of the beard.

He was very unhappy because he thought I had taken his goatee. As it turns out, his idea of purity meant purity within a predetermined lack of purity. Not so different from those who thought the analyst's angel face was an expression of purity. I guess they meant angelic, mindless greed and color.

If that's the case, I'd better devote myself to making paints. Besides, I've always been paranoid about what people call creativity. Especially when it's allowed to go unchecked under the title of "freedom" as it is nowadays. From Phidias, through Michelangelo, to Cézanne, a kind of leap in seemingly creative evolution has been made.

1977_16

From Phidias through Michelangelo to Cézanne, the seemingly creative evolutionary leap was only a leap in the direction of the mind from the secular view, my friend. When one of us makes the leap, we begin to make the leap. Eventually, the meaning of the first leap won't matter to anyone. The important thing is to take the leap anyway.

Then, they start to pick up the details of how to make the leap. This process itself becomes a creative activity. Eventually, laws will emerge from this. Authority will emerge. The mundane view becomes a stumbling block.

Then again, the phenomenon of the leap of faith occurs. You are mistaken if you think that if this leap continues, you will someday arrive at a psychology or something, and anticipate the warmth of the pulse of human history. That's where the difference with art lies.

In other words, as far as the act of art is concerned, there is no such thing as positive progression.

There is no one but Michelangelo who can continue to progress from the point he reached. However, no matter how genius a person is, there is a limit to his or her individual existence. After a certain period of time, the individual has no choice but to disappear. Therefore, only the next generation after Michelangelo can make the leap of self from the starting point of returning to the individual.

It may leap to the point that Michelangelo reached, or it may be able to do more than that. But this is not an extension of Michelangelo. And after six or seventy years of successful work, the flea dies. The whole thing returns to the individual. Somewhere else, another flea is born. And when a flea falls to the ground, all that comes out of it is a flea. Sorry to break it to you, but that's the story of Christ.

---The premise that a genius can reveal the truth through the act of art is hopeful, even if I don't agree with you.

1977_17

The mere premise that a genius can reveal the truth through the act of art is worthy of hope. The emergence of the genius flea requires a flea field made of geniuses. If it were not for the infantry, there would be no Napoleon.

-What happens when that infantry army starts to realize that? Napoleon would have no place. The inspiration of creativity is the perfect thing to break up an army. It is possible that both Napoleon and Michelangelo excreted the same things in their latrines.

-But creative expression and automatic expression are not the same thing.

-What's the difference? I think the former is an idea based on the assumption that humans are independent creative beings, and the latter is just trying to say the same thing where that same human being is assumed to be a product of social activity.

This is why both can be applied to similar phenomena. Of course, if the art dealer has a sales pitch in mind, then the "creative" side will prevail. No one is going to pay for a trail of urine on a fence unless it has a big name on it. I was thinking of Sam Francis*, whose work had recently been beautifully displayed on the walls of a famous gallery.” *Post-war abstract expressionist

-Pacific School. You should definitely take a look. You must see it. You will see the new horizon of art! said the professor with a pompous and scary look on his face.

Hmm, I wonder if the new horizon is leaking," said one of my friends, folding his arms and placing his feet in front of the big screen.

1977 18.

- "Jackson Pollock used to make a hole in a bucket and pour color out of it, like diarrhea., he said.

-It's a shame. It's a waste of time. It's a waste of time. It'll only make Kusakabe rich.

-He's probably getting paid by the pigment shop.. (We were aware of the gentlemen cautiously observing us from the side, and were experiencing a particular kind of secret bonding pleasure.)

-If more and more people like them, they'll be great for merchandising. Pushing this line of reasoning, I'd say Pollock has a greater chance of attracting popular adulation than this guy. After all, he consumes dozens of times more pigment than he does.

-Even so, it's ridiculously large for American tastes. There was a young man who seemed to have come from Ueno, glaring at us with a hateful look in his eyes. He looked as if he had a banner on his back. It was ironic that a statue of Takamori Saigo stood in Ueno!

Aside from me, Musashino, with its many people who had come here after dropping out of Ueno, had a natural tendency to pander to the spirit of the opposition. It didn't matter what the subject was. The art

critics of the time who were art dealers generally all belonged to the family of complete cancer, in our opinion.

-A lad from a mission. A kind of Westerner who can't be boiled or baked.

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.So, when I first entered the school, I was looked down upon by the barbaric and majestic people. Of course, it was not because of my religious beliefs that I chose to go to a mission school. In short, I didn't feel comfortable with the idea of studying hard.

I was influenced in no small part by my father. My father's friend, a priest named Smith, was also an influence. He was a teacher in the foothills of the mountains of south Hokkaido. My father had a history of barely escaping punishment for shouting of Western ideas during the war, while quietly covering his heart with Taisho liberalism. Therefore, the post-war period was truly a period of flowering, awaiting the arrival of spring.

“As a young and up-and-coming principal, I was assigned to a school in the mountains, which I called a wind-scented white birch plateau, where I developed my home, Sun-Mar Hill.” he said.

This place was the first target of his education. In addition, even before that, I, his eldest son, had been a test subject for the Tanaka-Binet method and various new methods of Western education, starting with Piaget.

Perhaps my father told my mother one day, "This child has unusually developed visual abilities. Let's make him a painter". Anyway, the story goes that by the time I was old enough to remember, I was hard at work copying Raphael's Madonna.

In my own memory, I vividly remember looking at impressionist reproductions with my father. It was before the war was over, and I vividly recall my father coming home from a secret hiding place and sitting beside me, I was staring at a dark green book with a stiff cover with a fluttering heart, thinking that it must be a secret document for spies.

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At that time, the snot-nosed kids at the national school were giving me special cruel treatment.. There were even people who threw stones at me, saying, "Spy, spy, spy boy!" I felt that it was apparently my father's fault. Or maybe my father was a bandit, I thought to myself. He might have been a spy who was working for the enemy

-My mother, of course, denied it.

"Teacher, is my father a spy?

I once asked a teacher who was left alone in the classroom after school.

-If he were a spy, he wouldn't be able to come home, would he?

The teacher looked at me with a kind face and stared into my eyes.

-So why do people say you're a spy?

-Because they don't know better, I guess.

-Some people say they have a wire device in their closet that secretly transmits information. That's a lie. I searched all the closets and found no such thing. I just keep a radio in there to listen for the location of enemy planes during air raids.

During an air raid, I would go into the closet with my mother.

-The teacher would listen to the radio in the closet.

The teacher laughed and said, "But you are not a spy.

-But I'm not a spy. They can't think for themselves yet, that's for sure.

-Can't you teach them to think for themselves?

-Don't say "they". You can't teach them to think for themselves.

She was puzzled.

1977_21.

-Maybe I'm not ready...

-Still?

She looked troubled and smiled a little. And...she said something strange.

-I'm almost ready.

She was one of the teachers who had evacuated from Tokyo. About a year later, the war ended. I was in the fourth year of National School.

I was a fourth-year student at the National School, so I was a bit more of a Shinbo. I don't know where she is now, but God bless her! God bless her! I still think so, mysteriously.

Anyway, I couldn't take my eyes off the cover of the dark green book, which was delicately tangled with fine dust flying in the air due to the direct rays from the window. It was a book that I had never seen in my house before.

My father's white fingers quickly opened the book. I stared at it for a moment, my breath catching in my throat, but I didn't move. What should I do? I'm going to be an accomplice! A voice ran through my mind.

-Come here.

I think my father was saying, "Come here. Before I knew it, I was leaning against his lap., I was leaning against his lap, and in front of me was a picture of a silvery, fat female monster, naked and slumped over.

-It's Picasso.
I heard a voice say.

-Picasso?

-Picasso...

Picasso... I thought it was an appropriate name for a monster who looked so cheerful with her round eyes wide open. That it was the name of a French painter became clear to me later, when I was reading the book. A few days later, my father came home.

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-What do you think?
He asked me what I thought of the book.

-I don't think anything of Picasso. It looks the same as the others. But I'm impressed with Degas.

I was so impressed that I was almost shaking, and flipped through the book as hard as I could. Then I held up to my father a Degas sketch of a nude woman dressed as if she were washing her feet in a kind of tub.

I'll be able to draw like this in no time!

The next time he came home, he brought me a book on Michelangelo. As far as I can remember, I don't remember my father making any comments about my schoolwork. I had the impression that he was just watching something inside of me bloom. Like a flower on a plateau.

When I was in junior high school, my mother would often tell me that I needed to focus more on math and science.

-If you don't get the basics right, you won't be able to keep up when you enter high school.

It was around that time that I almost lost the desire to follow high school studies.

I wasn't thinking of becoming a painter in the future. I had a vague idea that I wanted to be a person who made the most of the situation that I was in.

First, I wanted to have great eyes and hands.
I also wanted to be as strong as a beast.

On the question-and-answer sheet of paper given to me by the teacher in charge of my college education was "What do you want to be in the future?"

I had written in the box
-Renaissance human image.
I wrote it honestly and proudly.

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-The teacher must have thought it was some kind of prank, because I had a reputation for making fun of teachers, but he advised me to take it a little more seriously because going to school was an important thing that would affect my future.

I was very serious. I was very serious. After listening to Father Smith, I decided to enter a mission school. My father said

-Oh, really?

He just smiled and affirmed.

-My mother was somewhat embarrassed.

My mother used to say, somewhat shamefacedly, that it was a place for idiots who could not even pass high school.

-I've decided to hand over my talent to Jiro or Sayaka.

I consoled my mother.

-He's totally your experiment," she said.

My mother would sometimes complain about my father.

-That's okay. I'm most excited about his future.

That was my father's usual response.

-I'm worried that he won't be able to adapt to society once he gets out of the experiment.

Even so, I won a contest for the best healthy child in Hokkaido, which alleviated some of my mother's worries. My mother's fears were reinforced, however, when the time came for me to enter college.

-Since you have good language skills, why don't you go to a foreign language university? I've heard that the employment rate is very good.

-You mean you'll end up in some trading community? I can't do that. I want to go to Tokyo, but I don't have any desire to go to university.

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-I'd like to be the apprentice of someone wonderful.

-What wonderful person?

My mother gave me a look of utter dismay.

-You don't mean...

-It's true.

-What kind of person is this wonderful person?

-Someone who lives life to the fullest. Someone who lives life to the fullest, to the fullest of their abilities.

-It's not wartime, and you don't have to work that hard to survive in this world.

I suddenly thought of my mother, who was making a living while my father was in retirement, with her eyes shining brightly. But it was like a flash of lightning, and the next moment, she was gone in the form of an ordinary middle-aged woman, half bewildered, half angry, against the background of her peaceful life. In the end, she decided to enter an art school where she would not even receive a bachelor's degree upon graduation.

-If I had a hard time eating, I would become a teacher in the countryside. There is a purity in the motivation to enter a school that doesn't have the strange bait of a bachelor's degree dangling in front of it.

It's a little song about the state of not getting in," I once said to one of my friends who was deterred from going to college because of his financial situation.

I think it's a waste of money.

1977_25

It's been a few weeks since I had a long talk with Dave. During that time, I had been holed up in a boarding house, unable to make up my mind to fit myself into the framework of employment. I wanted to get a bachelor's degree. I wrote to my mother to continue sending money to her, but I had no intention of doing so. I had no intention of doing so, although I wrote a letter to my mother to continue sending money to my family, but I had no intention of doing so.

I was thinking of becoming a doctor if I really needed to have a qualification. But to do so, he would need a lot of resources. For my parents, who were already paying for the schooling of my younger brother Jiro and my younger sister Sayaka, it was not an easy task to continue paying for me over the next few years. I had casually told my friends and Dave that I would be a substitute teacher in the countryside, but the thought of going to the country reminded me of a monotonous country town, filled with stubborn provincials and an unfathomable boredom. The birch plateau was nothing more than an enclave fabricated by my father. The words of the mission's art teacher, who had heard that I wanted to go to art school, flashed through my mind.

You could be a cartoonist.

That was the best way to describe the lack of artistic soil in me.

I don't have anything to teach you. Taking arts and crafts is a waste of time.

But for me, there was no better place to pass the time than in the arts and crafts department. Depending on how you look at it, the biggest motivation for me to enter an art school may have been to pass the time. If I had to kill time somewhere anyway, I would rather do it at work or at school.

If I had to kill time somewhere anyway, there was no reason to unjustly spend my time, which was free from schoolwork, on such constraints. As far as art was concerned, I was confident that with enough effort to move my little finger, I could successfully pass the barrier, and indeed, I did.

-I was thinking about becoming a manga artist....

I was thinking about becoming a manga artist. It was just before eight o'clock in the morning when the sliding door of my room swung open and Dave came in. Breathing over his shoulder, he said, "What the hell?

-Why in the world don't the Japanese have the habit of turning on the telephone?

-It's because of the geographical advantage of being able to reach both sides of the street with a few shouts. It's a kind of luxury. What the hell's going on?

-Well, listen anyway.

He sat down next to me, still under the covers.

-I think I know you pretty well. Don't you?

-Well, yeah.

-I have enough evidence to assume that you're currently on the verge of extinction. Am I right?

-Sort of.

-I would not be wrong in assuming that you do indeed have greatness in you. Isn't that right?

-I doubt it....I don't know.

-Oh, no. Then the question is, if I had the means to rescue you, would it be a violation of your human rights to do so? What do you think?

-It depends on the nature of the situation.

He looked at me intently for a moment.

I don't like America, especially New York, which seems to be having an art festival all year round.... I don't care much for Central Park, either.

Dave's shoulders slumped as if he was disappointed. I could see the light fading from his dark, round eyes.

-I can't help it.

He was lying on the tatami mat beside me, arms crossed, staring at the ceiling.

-If I had enough money to study in America, I would go to France, if only to please my mother. People of her generation are still convinced that Paris is the capital of the arts. It gives me a foil when I come back home. If you paint Notre Dame over and over again, you can make a lot of money and become a celebrity. In Central Park, you have no idea where Central Park is. In addition to that, there is the fear that some rich person will mistake it for a souvenir that they bought.

-Wait, wait, wait. Wait a minute. It may be rude to say this from a Japanese perspective, but \n ..he seemed to be hesitant about how to start.

-Don't worry about that. . Besides, your respect for Japanese sensibilities sometimes goes beyond ..

.
-I'm going to go out on a limb here and say it's actually about the money. I've found a patron for you. I've actually been in touch with my mom in New York about you for a while now. At first it was for no real reason, actually. I wrote to my mom about the graduation ceremony in Japan, and mentioned

you. She was suddenly very interested. She thought I was a modern version of Hokusai. I immediately got her in touch with a friend of hers, a rich art collector who had recently become a widow. Totally Jewish in this respect, I think.

Anyway, she's ready to invest in you. So I sent her three of the sketches you made of me. It was a quick decision. The woman's theory is that a person who has not mastered the basics of realism will not become a great artist. Of course, she herself collects only second- and third-rate Impressionists, though.

Well, I don't care about that. It doesn't matter, because you can cultivate your own way out of that dimension. Anyway, I'm asking if you'd like to visit me for at least six months, with my travel expenses covered.

Dave seemed to be excited by his own words.

-Long Island, a suburb of New York City. Long Island, a suburb of New York City, an upscale residential area. Since you don't want me to ingratiate myself with you out of Japanese consideration, you're supposed to take the dog out for a walk about once a day. He said that he would not interfere at all and that I could spend my time as I pleased! It's an artist's paradise!

That's exactly what happened. You'll have to go there to see what develops from there.

-Thank you, Dave.

And that night, after the excitement wore off, we went to a nearby bar to have a drink.

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Thanks, Dave," I said to him over a toast in a nearby bar.

-Thanks to you, I don't have to write comics anymore.

-What?

-I've been trying to figure out how to make a living for a while now. Being a country teacher doesn't make sense, frankly, no matter what you think. Besides, country folk have a knack for fertilizing their fields with manure. It's not my place."

My preparations for leaving the country went very smoothly. As one of the guarantors for the American side, the widow, Mrs. Sullivan, even brought up the supervisor of a museum in New York City.

-What an ostentatious reception. You wouldn't dream of a self-destructive greenhorn like me arriving.

Hey, hey," Dave said.

I'll give you a word of advice before you leave, though: when you get there, don't let that self-deprecation get the better of you. It's not the kind of place where you can dwell on the virtues of modesty.

-It's not humility. It's just a feeling.

-If that's the case, just shut up or blow off some steam. I'm well aware that you can overwhelm an area with your skills alone.

-It's like a circus. You're going to show off your acrobatics?

Even though the other side will pay for it, the ulterior motive is to show our sincerity by keeping our

expenses as low as possible.

I'm not sure.

I decided to take a British plane, which was quite cheap in those days when there were no price controls. At the airport, in addition to Dave and his Musashino friends, my mother, who had traveled all the way from her hometown, arrived with my sister, who was already working in Tokyo. My father, she told me, was stuck in a prolonged educational conference before the summer vacation. When I called him the day before.

He said, -You'll be fine. My father is expecting you. My father always had high expectations. I was a product of his educational beliefs.

-Take care of yourself. Take care of yourself, eat well, and let me know if you have any problems.

My mother seemed to be in a hurry, as she kept saying and saying, but all she could say was the usual parting gift. Finally, trying hard to hold back her tears, she said, "And then, you have to think about others, too. The world is not a wilderness, you know. Instead of being strong, be kind..."

I began to worry that my mother would start crying.

-It's okay, Mom. It's okay, Mom, it's only been six months or so...
I said.

After a while, Dave came up to me.

-I didn't want to disrupt the separation between parent and child," he said.

I didn't want to disrupt the father-son separation," I said. The gate time had already started, and people were starting to move around us.

-My mother should have cried a little. After all, I'm the first one to escape from Japan with all my relatives.

-Escape....

31

Dave stared at me with his dark round eyes.

-When I came to Japan, an acquaintance of mine told me, "It's not about getting out of here, it's about getting there. I'm going to use those same words as a wreath for you. ...I don't know what else to say.

Or maybe I'll just meet you on the other side. Good luck. Tell my mother I said hello.
Suddenly, as I was walking toward the plane in line with the other passengers at the airport at night, I heard a voice out of the darkness.

-Ichiro, hang in there!

from the darkness. I turned around, but behind the glowing lights, it was just pitch black and I couldn't see anything. I squeezed his hand against the blackness, and this time only a faint, thin voice came

back. I couldn't make out what she was saying, but from the broken inflection, I thought it was probably my mother shouting, "Be careful.... Or maybe it was my sister..

Page 31 June 1961, JUNE 1961

-4) Dear Dave.

It had been two or three weeks since my arrival in New York.

-If I were to write to the people of Musashino, describing the objects surrounding me at present, they would probably think that I had become the first adult of the school. In fact, the desk at which I am writing this letter to you is, according to Mrs. Ollivant, "trivial and venerable" and incomparable to the pure-blooded Vitrian furniture in the other rooms.

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In any case, to my eyes, it looks several times better than the president's desk in the president's room at Musashino. Oh, how many times I was made to stand in front of that desk and listen to that old man's speech! Eventually, in my mind, the old man and the desk became one and the same, so much so that I couldn't imagine the old man without the desk, or the desk without the old man!

I told Mrs. Sullivan the first day I arrived that I had no use for such a magnificent desk in my room because I don't have the habit of working at a desk, but it's still here because it can't be placed in any other room in harmony with the furniture. Anyway, the conversation started at the desk, and lately I've been listening to her antique lectures a lot. I've heard for a long time that Americans have a strong attachment to their treasures because of their lack of tradition, but I never imagined it to be this strong.

As I mentioned before, Mrs. Sullivan is a good-natured person, , although I sometimes wonder if she is frustrated by her lack of companionship. She is still convinced that I will start painting any day now, and sometimes she asks me, in a casual way, when I should clean up the empty room next door. The room used to belong to her daughter.

She was married to an eccentric man from the South named "something" who lived in the Marshall Islands to the south. They both belong to Peace Corps. She seems to be more than a little upset about her daughter's situation, but from the pictures I've seen of her, I can imagine that she would have to go all the way to a remote island in the south to find someone to marry. Incidentally, I have yet to meet a beautiful woman who could stun me.

33

Of course, sometimes I feel like the only creatures I see in this neighborhood are old men and dogs. Recently, the number of mute birds has been increasing. They start singing noisily early in the morning.

According to the Mrs., it's because of the southern cedar trees that grow around our house. They build their nests in the cedar trees on their way south to Florida and spend the summer here. I've been killed by them," he said.

Somehow, as I listened to her, I became curious about the existence of the girl's mate. She herself had never met him, but according to her daughter's letters, he seemed to be a rather peculiar person. I'm thinking of the Civil War and imagining a somewhat devastated and noble figure. From the snapshots I've seen of him, all I know is that he's a handsome man with blond hair.

He's going home at the beginning of July, so I'll write about him as I see him through my eyes. There's something about the man that seems to have a fever of its own, an obsessed soul.... I don't know why I'm attracted to such things.

I took a quick tour of the museum. It's always awe-inspiring to see the real thing, something that you've been familiar with through printed materials. It occurred to me that I wanted to show them to my grandfather. I think he would be more impressed than I would be. I'm not going to tell you what my views on modern art are, because you know exactly what I think.

34

I should mention that I was humbled when Mrs. Monet almost sat down on the ground in her excitement in Monet's water room at MOM. Around next week, I'm going to see a certain man who works at the museum who has vouched for me. The Mrs. is suggesting that I join the Art Students League just to get to know people of the same year, but I can't bring myself to do it. I'm a little jaded about art. At this rate, I'll probably be back to my old self in six months. Until then. Ichiro.

-May 1986 [?]

Dear Ichiro

Thank you for your letter. To tell you the truth, I was hoping for better economic news.... But, come to think of it, you've only just arrived. You have quite a bit of time before your six months expire. Instead of retreating to Mrs. Sullivan's mansion and listening to her and the birds sing, why don't you go out to Manhattan now and then?

There must be an international center or a Japanese club or something. There are a couple of them that I know of. I'll write down the addresses so you can try them out for yourself. Also, there is a nice Japanese restaurant near the UN. It's called Shima. You should definitely try it. Even if you are a Mrs., you should go with her...

-It's a shame that there are no good girls around you. I'll introduce you to some of the girls I know, and if you're so inclined, you can give them a call. However, this is something I have experienced myself, that foreigners and Japanese have different limits to human beings.

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However, it has been my own experience that there is some difference between foreigners and Japanese in their aesthetic judgment as far as human beings are concerned. For example, my big nose, which I used to think was an eternal evil, has become a target of admiration since I came to Japan. Besides, look at the beautiful women in Ukiyoe! No matter how out of date they are, there is no way that this woman could possibly be considered a beauty by the average American.

I have to confess that it took me a long time to master the Japanese aesthetic judgment. So I came up with the idea that your sister, for example, is very beautiful according to the American sense that still remains in me. If it weren't for the special circumstance that she was your sister, I would have been a little too glum to approach her.

This is a bit of an exaggeration, but she looks like a beautiful woman to me. But she doesn't seem to be aware of her own beauty. Or maybe, like you, she's a self-deprecating landlady. Since we met at the airport, we've been going out to coffee shops and the like frequently. My English is still not as good as yours, but I can communicate pretty well.

His mind is also very clear. I don't know why he is studying ballet, something that doesn't feed his soul, but but my mother says it's a form of art. Anyway, that's why you may have met a lot of American beauties without even knowing it. Mrs. Sullivan's daughter may be one of those beauties. I'm looking forward to hearing from you in July. However, the letter should be addressed to your own home.

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-Don't be surprised! Don't be surprised! I've been invited by your sister and mother to spend the summer in Hokkaido! I've been itching to follow the Western custom of ending sentences with the biggest news, but I'm finally going to share it. This is my best summer ever! I'll probably send a bunch of letters from here.

- If there is anything I need to know about Hokkaido, please write to me. For example, what kind of a man is your grandfather? According to his sister, he's not exactly what you'd expect from a typical Japanese.... But in that respect, you and your sister fit into that category.

-It may not make sense to talk about art to you, but I was actually a little disappointed that you didn't mention Guernica at all. Were you completely unimpressed? Let me ask you this. I think it's the greatest artifact in New York City. If there's anything I can send you, please don't hesitate to tell me. Take good care of yourself and your desk.

See you soon.

Dave.

On a separate sheet of paper, there were a dozen or so addresses written in a precise handwriting. I wasn't interested in any clubs or organizations, but my eyes followed the names of the six or so girls on the list. The name "Lisa" caught my attention. From a distant memory, a petite girl with long black hair appeared in my mind.

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She was the daughter of an American who had been stationed in Japan on a trading business. There was an American school for such families in the same city, but because her parents were devout Catholics, she had transferred to our mission. Because my English was better than everyone else's, she showed a special affinity for me and approached me. On weekends, she would almost always invite me over for dinner. Compared to the food at home, which was poor in both quantity and quality, this new American cuisine was a godsend for me.

For a boy, you have a lot of interest in cooking. Maybe you'll make a good Husband. I'm sure you'll make a good husband," said my mother, who was a little overweight and looked somewhat like Lisa. To tell the truth, I had been writing to my mother in detail about the cooking methods she had taught me. At that time, even if you weren't in a remote area at the foot of a mountain, Western cuisine was quite rare.

Hey, you. Don't you have a thing for her?

My roommate asked with an awkward mix of curiosity and concern.

What if she is?

It's nothing. It's just... it's just... he's a foreigner.

So what does it matter? A woman is a woman.

That's why it's dangerous.

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They're going to start doing crazy shit like betting.

Are you worried about my virginity?

My friend blushed when he heard the word "virgin". He was a small boy with a pale neck that still smelled of urine.

As he had feared, I lost my virginity shortly thereafter. It wasn't because of Lisa. It was a friend of hers, a blonde girl who went to an American school. Her yellow curls clung to my face in the dim light of her room with the curtains closed. There was a subtle, unfamiliar smell, like the evening primrose on a birch plateau.

I'll call this girl tonight. I thought as I looked at Dave's handwriting, which read Lisa Schaefer.

When I told her I was a friend of Dave's from Japan, the voice on the other end of the line became immediately familiar and started talking at once. He said he would love to meet me. It was almost clear to me that he had gained a lot of trust. When I mentioned the name of a Japanese restaurant near the UN called Shima, he immediately understood.

I've been there with Dave," she told me. The next day I was sitting at the bar in the restaurant, dressed as I had told her I would be, when she walked in right on time, wearing a brown beret and a light trench coat of some color, just as she had said she would. She had a big nose and dark brown eyes that were also very wide open. She might be beautiful, I thought.

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I made a vague aesthetic judgment. All in all, she had a somewhat non-white, interracial look to her. Her forehead, which was half covered by a beret, was strangely narrow, and there was a dense growth of what looked like downy hair around it, which blended with her dark brown curly hair in a kind of wild animal-like way.

"I'm Israeli," she said, when she had finished telling me about Dave's situation.

"You can hear the accent in my English. But you speak English very fluently for a Japanese. Where did you learn it?"

"I went to a Catholic school," I replied. I didn't want her to think that I went to a mission school like Mrs. Sullivan's friends did, because I didn't want her to imagine a strange scene that didn't necessarily resemble a colony.

Are you a Catholic?

No, of course not.

Zen?

What?

Buddhist Zen?

How do you know that?

My father's family was Zen.

Dave was interested in Zen at one time. He never said anything about it, you know. I guess he was embarrassed when he got there. Maybe. It's become a bit of a fad among the young artists around here. But why in the world would you, a Zen Buddhist, go to a Catholic school? Isn't that contradictory?

40

"We Japanese have a tendency to disregard religious issues. If it's more convenient to be an atheist, so be it."

Are you like that yourself?

Yes, I do. Maybe I have more of a tendency to do so than most people.

She looked down at her plate of tempura shrimp tails in bewilderment. I'm a rather devout Jew," she said. I'm a rather devout Jew, and I'm not supposed to eat any food other than kosher. I'm a rather devout Jew.

He gave a small, embarrassed laugh.

Thanks to Dave, I've been able to break a lot of old-world restraints, but... I don't know if that's good or bad for me.

Her relationship with him, after the initial passion, gradually turned into a brother-sister one, and now they are just good friends. She herself works as a secretary at a clothing wholesaler in the Seventh Avenue, but because of her relationship with Dave, she has many friends who are artists. I wondered if the other five were similarly involved. I thought to myself. If that's the case, he's a very strong man, even though he's putting on a casual face. I showed her the rest of the names, thinking that if it was just a friendship, she wouldn't be jealous.

"You've already made a black list!"

She rolled her eyes.

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Hmmm. I see. Linda, Sally, JoAnn, Pat, this is the only one whose name doesn't ring a bell. Are you going to try to meet them?

I don't know.

Why don't you go see Joan then? Yeah, that's a good idea. There's a party at her place this Saturday. Why don't you show up? I'll tell her about you and Dave. I'll tell her about you and Dave and she'll

probably stick with you.

After all, she was so crazy about Dave.... I wanted to go to Japan with her. I wanted to go to Japan with her, but it was like Dave ran away from her. You know what I mean?
Come on.

“Typical Jap...”

“Jap?!”

“Oh, excuse me. I didn't mean Japanese Japs. You know, the Jewish American Princess JAP. In other words, a typical impatient girl. She's the daughter of a very rich man, and she thinks she can do whatever she wants... But at heart, she's a good and compassionate person. She's fine as a friend, but as a lover, especially for someone like Dave, she's unbearable.”

Were they that close?

I think João wanted to be. It sounds a bit smug, but I think I was the only one Dave was serious with, even temporarily... My boyfriend is not what you would call a womanizer. He seemed to have a crush on Sally at one time or another.

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Sally, on the other hand, could not help but think of him as a reliable older brother. He was tall and beautiful, but.... ...I probably shouldn't tell you this, but she has a reputation as a lesbian. Let me warn you before you fall in love with her. Everyone seems to be attracted to her at one time or another. You see, Pat here is her best friend....

Lisa smiled at me with a strange look in her eyes.
We're all going to Jo-Ann's party. Please come.

As they parted, Lisa reached into her pocket, pulled out a thin, bony hand from a pocket. Her fingers looked weak and unreliable. Then she turned on her heel, stuffed her hands in her pockets and walked off in the direction of the subway, looking down.



What's she like?" said Mrs. Sullivan.

Not much of a date, really. I was just curious because she was a friend of Dave's. She looked like your daughter in the forehead and eyes. But I can't tell much about her from the picture. She said she was Israeli.

“So she's a beautiful girl.” She said.

I was wrong in my aesthetic judgment.

I heard that people here don't like large noses, is that true?" I asked. She herself had a huge nose.

First draft of letter written in 1977 by Samizu to “Dave”

Dear Dave

I have decided to write my correspondences from now on in English only, in order to improve my communication skill. "A" is an important member of alphabet nowadays. A homage to Americans!! Not that I have numerous alternatives.

Recently I find myself thinking in English. I have just completed reading a pocketbook version of an Isaac Asimov. The book is about linguistics at its most primitive level. Okokuri-ya bookstore I saw it there. Probably you are familiar with it If not take a look at it.... And guess at my linguistic progress!

If nothing else, I'll be back with marketable quality: an interpreter or even translator.

Page 2

Mrs Sullivan's daughters are coming back for the summer.

I'm now in the process of moving into the basement. Mrs. S. feels “terrible” about my moving down the architectural hierarchy and says that she would never have permitted this if only the one of them will be occupying the house for two months.

But this time all of them, which numbers up from 3 to possibly 4. And I could hardly be grateful if I let her sleep in the basement on makeshift metal springing bed. Nowadays Mrs Salivan can handle balance herself, without high heels - when she is “on the wagon”.

All deplorable. As you may well know, she 's got a lot of the infos, and connections and sadly the last on the list is the Vitality, of which she has known for a long time.

Dave, I have this question to ask you: exactly what Mrs Salavan's ambition or dream is.? If I may be permitted to be a bit on the rude side. What is her

motivation for achieving MY SUCCESS?