

A Guy Upstairs (1) :
田辺聖子「二階のおっちゃん」

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A Guy Upstairs (1)

—田辺聖子「二階のおっちゃん」*—

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要旨：主人公の持田義明は 50 歳代。北摂にある古い土蔵を改築した家にツル子と長い間同居しているが、岸和田のだんじり祭が終わって、ツル子が間借人の若い虎夫と関係ができてしまったことが発覚したことでツル子と別れる決心をする。持田とツル子が出会った頃、ツル子はこの土蔵の家に「二階のおっちゃん」と暮らしており、持田はその間借人であった。物語前半は、岸和田だんじり祭りの描写とともに、主人公とツル子とのいきさつが述べられる。

キーワード：田辺聖子、翻訳、メタファー、異文化理解

After I went to see the Kishiwada Danjiri Festival, I decided to break up with Tsuruko. Because she had become involved with young Torao.¹

(They were probably...but...) Until now, I sometimes suspected they were having an affair, but I pretended not to notice. This might be the cunning that a man in his fifties has. I loved Tsuruko, so I did not want to break up with her, and, in our long time together, we had established a pattern of living, and it might be too much work to wreck it all now. I am tempted to say, “If turning a blind eye to it is enough, why not turn a blind eye to it?” These are the words of a guy who had lived upstairs a long time ago.

Now, Torao is living in the room upstairs, (because Tsuruko rents the upstairs room), but, until now, the lodger has changed frequently. Tsuruko never rents it to women. She gets jealous easily, and says I should not have an affair with the lodger and cause trouble for her, though I am not the kind of person to do anything with a lodger.

However, she is also worried about renting it to older unmarried men, so she always chooses students, or young workers as lodgers. Over time, she rejected students because they invite their friends and make a lot of noise. She started

renting the room to young office workers these last several years. Torao is 24 and is a factory worker at a major company in this town. He has been living here for more than two years. Long, long ago, “a guy” in his fifties lived on the second floor, and what he said at the time means something to me, partly because I have now turned 50.

He would often say, “If turning a blind eye to it is enough, why not turn a blind eye to it?”

I got the feeling that Tsuruko and Torao must have been having some kind of affair, but while I thought, “Oh, well. I’ll turn a blind eye to it,” I could not believe, “Tsuruko, really? Tsuruko?”

Tsuruko is lively, hardworking, good-natured, and more than that, very straightforward. She is not such an evil-minded person as to do something bad behind my back (although I do not necessarily think having an affair is bad) and keep it under wraps for a long time, or praise someone to their face while talking bad behind their back.

In addition, this house and property belong to Tsuruko. She also has a job. Every day, she goes to Kofukuen to work as a housekeeper at one of the municipal welfare facilities (the facility for mentally and physically disabled children,

and for some elderly people with no one to depend on). She is entitled to a pension because she is a city employee. I must say she is both a decent worker and an independent woman. Therefore, she does not need to sneak around behind my back without talking to me.

If there were something she wanted to talk about, she would honestly come out with it, like, “Darling, I... actually...”

She is openhearted, so she would not hesitantly keep things from me. Tsuruko and I must be the same age, and she has nerves of steel.

And, one more thing.

Here is the story that Tsuruko would always tell in the past. No, she still sometimes tells it, and this is one of her boasts. When she was young, Tsuruko worked as a hostess bar girl at a big cabaret on Chuo Street in Amagasaki City. Shortly after she started, a senior bar girl’s patron dumped her for Tsuruko. Tsuruko said that the other girl was a slut and got involved with a lot of men, so the patron got fed up with her.

When it came to light, she said, the senior bar girl and Tsuruko had a huge fight that came to blows when Tsuruko decided, “I can’t leave Mr. H to such a hussy” because, actually, Tsuruko had fallen in love with him.

“Mr. H” was Mr. Hatta, a timber merchant and the senior girl’s sugar daddy. However, after that, Mr. H kept Tsuruko as a mistress, and every time he came to Tsuruko’s apartment, he would say with a deep sense of safety,

“Thank goodness I don’t have to be sneaky when I come to you. When it comes to that other woman, my heart was always thumping anxiously, thinking what should I do if I find out she brought another man into her room. So, I would come to her with stealthy steps. Compared to that, I can always come to you with peace of mind.”

In short, this is her boastful talk.

She said Mr. H died of a disease, so there is no way of confirming if the story is true or not, but that she is not the type of woman to sleep around is probably a point of pride to her.

Therefore, I have been thinking that she would say it outright if she had some relationship with Torao, though I hope not. Although I have never registered a marriage, I have been living with Tsuruko for more than twenty years.

By the way, I watched the Kishiwada Danjiri Festival on television many times before, (in the future, we want to see the real thing), and Tsuruko and I were looking forward to that day.

However, this fall festival is held on September 15th, and Tsuruko’s workplace was open. But, as she said she was able to take the day off this year, plans to go had been made early on. Then, she suggested inviting Torao from upstairs. I talked to him, and the three of us decided to go together.

Next to Osaka Bay is located a small castle town, Kishiwada, Senshu. Kishu-kaido Road runs through the middle of the town. This is the road which the lords of Kishu, Wakayama used in their mandatory trips to Edo every other year. There used to be a large castle, and they say the Danjiri Festival has been held since the Genroku era.² More than thirty gorgeous wooden floats from each town go down the city’s streets, boisterously racing each other. It is a magnificent spectacle even if you watch it on television.

Kishiwada is about twenty minutes train ride by Nankai Line from South Osaka. Because of a velodrome stadium there, people in Osaka feel familiar with Senshu, but the character of Senshu people is totally different from that of other Osaka people: Senshu people tend to be very rough.³

Full of energy.

That is why Danjiri is not a relaxed festival like the Gion Festival in Kyoto, or a leisurely one like Tenjin Festival where people look at the illuminated boat procession from the bridges.

But the very day before September 15th, Torao suddenly said that he caught a summer cold and could not go.

Tsuruko also started saying she felt sluggish because of the summer heat. Then, I was going

to give up on going to the festival, but the young workers in the company said they wanted to go, so I ended up going with that lot instead of Tsuruko and Torao. It was hot, like mid-summer, and Kishiwada was overflowing with people. I thought it would be impossible for someone who had a summer cold or who was affected by the summer heat to come.

Because the cycle races were held in that town, the police had gotten used to handling crowds, but the police had gathered in numbers in high alert over the extraordinary mass of people today. The number of the tourists who ceaselessly got off the trains was gradually increasing in front of the station, and we got stuck.

We did not know where to go to watch the *danjiri* floats because this was our first time in Kishiwada, but the square in front of the station seemed to be the center of the festival, and the sound of drums and flutes being played at the same time could be heard.

We could see the roofs of the floats beyond the shopping arcade.

“Wow, they’re so big! Have a look at this, Mr. Mochida”

The young people shouted for joy. (I have been working at the factory, Kinki Chemical Co., Ltd for a very long time, but nobody called me “Boss,” I go by the name of “Mr. Mochida.” Most of the employees are young workers in their 20s and 30s, there are three shifts, and I am the oldest, the only one who is in their 50s. As expected, I become exhausted after finishing an overnight shift, but I can still keep up with younger people, so I feel better being called “Mr. Mochida” than “Boss” or “Supervisor.”)

Anyway, the *danjiri* floats were very grand. Children and girls holding white tow ropes, followed by rough men. Behind that, accompanied by the sound of drums and flutes, a hill-like *danjiri* float came creaking. Elaborately crafted carvings were gorgeous, and at the back stood colorful banner flags. Lots of men in festival *happi* coats and white close-fitting trousers were riding the overcrowded *danjiri* floats, and moreover,

you could see a few men dancing vigorously with fans in both hands.

The younger people were absorbed in taking pictures.

With a piercing whistle and the sound of drums, a cheer like a tsunami went up from the audience on both sides of the street. For some reason, I felt the atmosphere became lively, when suddenly the float leapt into motion.

The people pulling the ropes were running down the street at full speed, towing the floats behind them. The atmosphere became frenzied.

The summer sky became hazy with the repeated drum beats and cheers.

Rumbling loudly, the float was just in front of me. It looked like a tank rushing into an enemy’s territory.

Then, the float careened around a 90-degree corners near the station, courageously, without losing any speed. Great cheers arose from the crowd at the frightening momentum of the float. The sweat of those pulling the ropes of the floats flew through the air, and the tourists who were watching breathlessly heaved a sigh of admiration and relief. It was splendid that the hill-like *danjiri* floats were racing around corners at full speed without overturning, while I have to say the guys jumping and dancing on the roofs of the floats in *hanten happi* coats were truly reckless.

“They’re daredevils.” We were also very excited.

Then, there’s another float from the neighboring town. It was also approaching quietly from far away, but the moment it came near the street corner, hundreds of those pulling the ropes and the crew on the float suddenly changed their countenance (it seemed like that to me), shouted, “Ready? Go!” and, with a rumbling of the ground, as a unified team, they rushed around the corner.

The massive wheels and axle shaft supported the tall, unstable and top-heavy float, and when the float turned the corner nimbly (the local folks call this “*yarimawashi*”), the audience erupted into loud cheers, the sound of applause echoing

in the summer sky.⁴

Actually, this festival is rough, brave, reckless, and beautiful. (I heard that they suffer fatal casualties once every few years.) It has an air of excitement as if almost all the people in the towns join the procession of *danjiri* floats. The colors of the festival *happi* coats are different from town to town. The children and women join, too.

I went into a popular Japanese restaurant in an alley with the younger guys. As I treated them to beer, I wished I could have shown her such a lively, cheerful festival that she would love. “Her” meaning Tsuruko.

I was sure that Torao would also have been delighted because he is young. When night falls, they say, *chochin* lanterns are lighted on the sides of the *danjiri* floats and they are very beautiful. However, we left Kishiwada before dark, and I treated the young guys to *yakiniku* (Korean barbecue) in the Sen-nichimae area as the final stop of Nankai Line is Namba. After which, I came back to Koyano, a small town in the Hokusetsu area, at around eight-thirty.⁵

It takes about ten minutes from the station by bus. For a long time, this area was countryside, but when Koyano City came to be within commuting distance of Osaka and Kobe, it developed greatly and the houses are crowded close together inside the city.

That is why our house (although I am not sure I can call it such as it belongs to Tsuruko) became completely invisible from the main street. The house was originally a storehouse with thick mortar walls. There were a lot of old farmers’ houses, (in other words, old wealthy farmers’ houses in the neighborhood), but they were ruined after the war, and their property was divided up for sale as deserted lots. The storehouse in the corner of the yard remained solitary without being torn down, and I don’t know how things got this way, but it became the property of Tsuruko together with 33 square meters of land around it.⁶ Tsuruko says, “A man who took care of me gave it to me in his will,” and continues that this man

was not Mr. H, but Mr. U. I don’t know at all how many patrons Tsuruko had, but thanks to Mr. U., she seemed to secure the place to sleep, was helped in finding a job, and came to make a living for herself.

In the past, the mortar storehouse could be seen clearly from the road, and people in the neighborhood called it “The Storehouse Home.” Tsuruko remodeled it so that she could live comfortably enough by covering the floor with *tatami*, adding a well-lighted kitchen onto the main building, arranging to install an electricity, gas and water, and erecting a fence around it.

But, as the neighborhood gradually developed, many houses were built, and Tsuruko’s house became cut off from the main road, completely invisible. People have to take a narrow private path to it as if they are going to a hiding place.

When unfamiliar passersby catch a glimpse of the white-washed wall of the storehouse behind the thick growth of shrubbery of someone else’s house, they might think, “Oh that’s strange, it’s uncommon to build such an authentic looking mortar storehouse nowadays,” but the storehouse is not part of a house on the main road.

The storehouse dates from the prewar days, and it does not store household goods, but is now a house for humans.

Even so, how thick the walls of the old storehouse are! It is solid, undamaged, cool in summer and warm in the winter, so air-conditioning and heating equipment are unnecessary. It was far more comfortable to live in than it looks.

The first floor is divided into a room about 10 square meters, and a room about 7.4 square meters, and in addition, there is the extension built on of kitchen, and an alcove with a wooden floor, a small bathroom, and a gas-heated bath that looks like a casket. Believe it or not, we lived a very cultured life. When you go up the steep stairs, there is one room about 13 square meters lighted by bright fluorescent bulbs, and it is a very good room...⁷

By the way, when I came back, Tsuruko and Torao were having dinner in the wooden alcove next to the kitchen.

Fried eggplant with sweet miso paste.

Sliced cucumbers and dried young sardines seasoned with vinegar.

A bowl of rice with Japanese herbs.

Let me add something here, Tsuruko's cooking is very good. Even though there is nothing of particularly high-quality or dainty about her dishes, everything is delicious.

The lodger is usually supposed to fix his own meals, but, apparently, Torao liked the meals he was sometimes invited to. He said that he would pay for meals, so he would like Tsuruko to prepare them, which is the arrangement that is still continuing on to this day.

Torao is tall, quiet, hard to pin down, dependable, but not a bad guy. Although he is serious, he is sometimes so full of himself that I don't understand what he is thinking, as is usual with the modern youth. In short, he is still not mature.

When Torao saw my face, he said, "Thanks for the meal," and went upstairs hurriedly as if running away. His face looked pale. Rather than from catching a summer cold, the reason seemed to be that he did not want to see me recently.

I took a bottle of beer from the fridge and drank it.

"Would you like some?" I said to Tsuruko, but she shook her head "no," which was unusual. I finished gulping a medium-sized bottle, and then, I made a glass of whisky-and-water and drank it. I especially drink alcohol in times like these. By "times like these," I mean... I can't say it exactly, but...when times are complicated, tough, helpless, and unpleasant. Long ago, the guy living upstairs said, "It's hard to say exactly, but alcohol should be drunk when you've in a complicated, tough, helpless, and unpleasant situation. Alcohol is only for a diversion. It's a waste to drink when you're happy. 'Cause when you're happy, you're happy, that's it. You don't have to blow off steam by drinking, it's a waste of alcohol."

I can understand that, too.

Tsuruko put down her chopsticks and said, "Darling, I... actually..."

Tsuruko's face is chubby with fair skin, and when she laughs, her eyes become droopy and you cannot tell how old she is. I discovered that she had put on years because her hair is getting thinner, but she is so charming and cute with her pudgy cheeks that I don't know her true age. No matter how many times I ask her, I forget her answer quickly. I sometimes admire her because she knows about very old things, while her words are sometimes wild and youthful. She is a hard to pin down, too.

"...with Torao..."

I recalled that Torao had forgotten to put his hands together in prayer after his meal, and had left the table in a fluster. Although he is young, Torao puts his hands together lightly in thanks before and after meals. He was raised by his grandmother and seems to have been taught those table manners. Even now, he says, "I won't pick up my chopsticks without doing this." Even he thinks of it as a troublesome habit, but he says if he started eating without doing this, he would feel as if he were starting breakfast without washing his face. He puts his hands together in thanks at lunch at his company and is laughed at by everybody, but his habit is one that his coworkers seem to have gotten used to.

I also remember that my grandmother did that sort of gesture in my childhood, but I do not do it myself, of course.

However, when I see younger people doing it, I feel nostalgic, a sense of closeness, instead of feeling that it is "weird." The same thing seems to be true for Tsuruko, and when Torao was introduced to us by a young guy who lodged here before, she invited him to dinner. When she saw him put his hands together in thanks before the meal, she started having friendly feelings toward him.

"What a lovely guy! Someone who has such a habit can't be bad." —I do not agree with this. That is not a gesture that expresses his spirit of

gratitude to every Buddha and every power above with deep consideration. It is only a habit, in other words, a mere formulaic practice, and therefore might be the habit of someone who steals things after putting his hands together in prayer... This is what I thought to say, but I did not because I am not a contrarian.

Leaving that aside, at the time, looking at Torao's slow-witted, timid-looking, fair-skinned face, I said, "Well, he doesn't look like a bad person," and agreed to rent the room.

I also remembered that.

But, I cut in on Tsuruko's speech and said hurriedly, "The Danjiri Festival today, you know, you also should've seen it... When we came to a street corner, the *danjiri* float started rushing suddenly, at top speed..."

But, Tsuruko looked like she did not hear my words.

"Torao, and I ..."

"People in Kishiwada have a violent temper, and are full of energy. That's something people in Kyoto or Osaka don't have. A *danjiri* float, it was very large..." I interrupted her again.

I wanted to change the subject to the float and push through at all cost. I don't want to listen to what I don't want to hear.

Then suddenly, the words that the guy upstairs said a long time ago came to mind. I could not remember in what situation he said it, but it was something like "You shouldn't think of restricting others or trying to force your ideas on them."

I was young then, and when I asked him if he meant one mustn't try to subjugate others, he said, "Don't use such difficult words, speak in a simpler way. Say everything, every word in a simpler way. You'd better think simply, and speak simply."

He continued, "It's impossible to make people do just as you like."

The guy upstairs seemed to believe in not restricting others or trying to persuade others. I lost motivation and energy as I remembered his words. What he said means something to me in

this exact moment because I am now almost the same age as he was then.

"Listen to me, darling. Actually, I have fallen in love with Torao, — I'm sorry for saying it so straightforwardly,"

Tsuruko said this apologetically, but I thought she was too straightforward. I believe that it is not always good to be straightforward; if turning a blind eye to it is enough, I will turn a blind eye to it.

She continued, "I don't want to break up with Torao. To tell the truth, I didn't go to Kishiwada because I wanted to have in-depth talk with Torao. Then, both of us found that we don't want to break up after all."

How boring the thing they found out is, I thought. Anyway, why is this whisky so good? It's in just these such situations that people should drink alcohol, I kept thinking. Then, Tsuruko leaned forward over the top of the low *kotatsu* table with her elbows on the top, and said,

"I feel bad for you, you know, but, I can't break up with Torao."

"You've already said that."

"I've been thinking what I should do... I wish I could divide myself into two," Tsuruko looked downhearted with tears welling up in her eyes, "If it were kidneys, I have two of them, so I would give one of them to you..."

"Stupid!" I raised my voice at last. "Even your kidneys aren't something you should give to others!"

I am not a man of great learning, but I have serious doubts about what is coming into fashion now, that is, removing an organ from one person and placing it in another. I am always worrying secretly that doing things like that might make God angry. Are clever scholars unaware of it? If God gets angry, it's none of my business.

As I was always thinking like that, the words came from me naturally even in such a crisis like this. It might be anger against the growing trend of transplants, or against clever scholars, or against Tsuruko, or against Torao... I was really confused and could not help yelling,

“It’s true there are two kidneys, but there’s no way God created an unnecessary pair!”

“But I heard that people can live in full health even if one of their kidneys has been removed.”

“There must be something still unknown to us. Human wisdom is shallow. Surely, God must have created two kidneys out of some necessity.”

“I can’t give you my heart or liver because there is only one of each, but as for the kidneys...”

“I said ‘no!’ Even though you have two, you know, you can’t give them to others! God would get angry at you!” I was as mad as if I had been made God’s representative.

“If that’s true, what should we do?”

“Even if you say you’ll die without being divided into two, I can’t do that.”

“Then, darling, will you break up with me?”

“That’s the way it has to be.”

We had been talking about organ transplants, but we suddenly found ourselves talking about breaking up.

What’s going on?

However, there was nothing to be done about it.

I heard that Torao said he did not want to break up with Tsuruko. He went so far as to say that he would die if they broke up.

Who does he think he is?

But Tsuruko seemed to be infatuated with Torao. I thought, with my intoxicated brain,

What will become of me?

If I had continued arguing and said, as Torao had, “I’ll die if I break up with her,” or if I took a threatening attitude and sought a large amount of consolation money, or well, if I tried anything... No, I should not act in such ways at my age, and I would have to endure hardship if I remained here.

Again, at this moment, the words that the guy upstairs was always saying suddenly came to

me. “It might be better to run away from trouble, if you can.”

Although people usually said, “No pain, no gain” or “What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger,” the guy upstairs told me that trouble usually makes people mean.

He said, “It might be better to run away from trouble, if you can.”

He didn’t say, “Run away,” or “You must run away,” which would not have been in character for the guy upstairs. He did not say it as an imperative sentence, as he always said, “You shouldn’t think of restricting others or trying to force your ideas on them.”

A timid structure. If there is such a thing as “a timid structure” in grammar, that was what he meant.

He said, “It might be better to run away from trouble, if you can” in a timid grammatical structure, meaning “It might be a good idea to do that, if possible.”

I decided to back off. I thought about leaving this place. When I went to the bathroom, the small unisex toilet, I gazed into myself in the mirror.

Bald on top with black hair mixed with white on the sides.

Red eyes from getting drunk.

A short, stout nose.

Patient lips.

Stubbly beard with white hairs.

— In it was a reflection of a miserable man in his 50s. I was “my version” of the guy upstairs.

I said, “Hey there, guy,” to myself, “I’m doing the same thing. Go ahead and laugh, please. I’m going to be the second guy upstairs.”

When I was young, I was the lodger on the second floor of “The Storehouse Home.”

(To be continued.)

*この翻訳は田辺聖子「二階のおっちゃん」(『田辺聖子全集』第5巻(集英社))にもとづいている。この作品の翻訳についてお世話下さった田辺聖子文学館学芸員住友元美先生、快く翻訳の許可を下さった田辺美奈様に感謝いたします。初出は『オール讀物』(1989年1月15日発行)。また、だんじりの写真については、岸和田市役所観光振興担当様に、「フォトバンクきしわだ」の写真使用の許可を確認させていただいた。

続きの「A Guy Upstairs (2)―田辺聖子「二階のおっちゃん」―」は、2024年度の本紀要に掲載予定である。

Notes:

- 1 「岸和田だんじり祭」。“*Danjiri* (だんじり、地車)” is a Kansai dialect word of “*dashi* (山車).” Although it is often translated into a “float” in English, they’re not similar at all. *Danjiri/Dashi* is usually a large cart, made of wood and there are two types: one people tow and the other is one people carry on their shoulders. *Danjiri/Dashi* is often decorated with things such as dolls, carvings, flowers, flags..., and brought out in the shrine festivals such as Gion in Kyoto or Chichibu in Saitama as a place to invite gods (神座). The *danjiri* of Kishiwada Danjiri Festival in the story has a roof on its top and it looks like a small shrine. The person on the roof performs a traditional fan dance to control the violent movement of the *danjiri* (Figure 1).



Figure 1 (出典「フォトバンクきしわだ」)

(以下、原文からの引用は「 」で示す。またページ数は全集のページを示す。)

- 2 Genroku「元禄」is the name of the era from 1688-1704, in the middle of Edo era.
- 3 *Happi* coats are “loose-fitting, colorful, cotton jackets tied with an *obi* belt. They are usually worn at Japanese festivals and other events.” (<https://www.japan-experience.com/plan-your-trip/to-know/understanding-japan/happi-coats>) See Figure 2.
- 4 “*yarimawashi* (やりまわし)” See Figure 1.
- 5 473 ページ「昆陽野 (こやの)」という地名、また同頁に出てくる「昆陽野市」は実在しない。兵庫県伊丹市の地名として昆陽 (こや) があり、また古くから昆陽池・昆陽寺などがあったことから、伊丹市がモデルではないかと住友学芸員から情報をいただいた。
- 6 「十坪 (10 *tsubo*)」in the original. *Tsubo* is a unit of area in Japan. One *tsubo* is about 3.3 square meters.
- 7 Ten square meters, 7.4 square meters, and 13 square meters are originally 「四帖半 (4.5 *jo*)」「六帖 (6 *jo*)」and 「八帖 (8 *jo*)」, respectively.

「帖 (*jo*)」is also a unit of area in Japan. It means the size of one tatami mat and about 1.62 square meters (about the half of 1 *tsubo*). The size of a room is often referred to with this unit of measurement in Japan.