

# Overtime on a Rainy Night

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〔翻訳〕

## Overtime on a Rainy Night

— 田辺聖子「雨の降ってた残業の夜」 —

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Jennifer Rose Smith

同僚から「斉ちゃん」と呼ばれる主人公の女性は25歳。勤続も6年になりベテランの域、つまり「ハイミス」の世代にはいつている。同僚の岸部じゅん子も同じ年齢で、2歳年下の「千葉クン」に首っただけである。主人公とじゅん子の大阪弁のやり取りが小説の魅力のひとつだが、小説は主人公の冷静な視点から語られる。しかしこの雨降りの残業の日をきっかけに、主人公の中で何かが変わり始める。主人公の視線の冷静さは一貫しており、最後はアフォリズムで締めくくられる。

In the evening, it starts raining heavily with strong wind. The rain comes down in buckets.

It makes me feel depressed to work overtime on such a terrible day.

I would have to work until eight. Oh, well.

I phone for an order of stir-fried rice from the Chinese food restaurant, “Horaiken.”

Mr. Ono, who is going on a business trip tomorrow, and the assistant manager were in the office just a moment ago. At that time, they were taking about a job.

But they stopped work a while ago and went home, saying, “Sorry to bother you, but can you finish this job? I’m off.”

I have to prepare the documents for Mr. Ono’s business trip tonight. If this were a regular business trip, I would have finished preparations two or three days before the trip (I fancy myself an efficient office girl), but this is all so sudden.

“I’m so sorry, Sai. Be careful not to stay too long. The bogeyman will come and get you!” the assistant manager said, feeling sorry for me. <sup>1</sup>

“I’m not the kind of weak, feminine woman who would be taken by a children’s monster,” I replied, and then guys left the office, laughing.

Because I’ve been working here for six years and I am a twenty-five-year-old experienced office girl, it’s not unusual for me to work overtime alone. Besides... somehow lots of extra work gets dumped on me.

Young girls working here seem to criticize me behind my back, saying, “It’s a shame she’s so competent. That type of person will always carry a heavy load. She assumes she’s playing an important role in this company, and is forced to work harder than anybody else. Who does she think she is?”

They might be right, but, I have to do the job properly. I can’t help it.

I can’t stand sloppy work.

I don’t dislike the job itself. Keeping books by filling out small numbers and letters, or calculating with an abacus... I like it all. Also, I like hearing the men in the department speak to me happily,

“Your handwriting is beautiful, Sai.”

“Very legible.”

I don’t know why, but since I started working for this company, everyone calls me “Sai,” which is an abbreviation of my last name “Saito,” everyone except the manager and the assistant manager. But at times when they are busy, the assistant manager unintentionally calls me “Sai.”

Although I don’t dislike the job, I feel myself losing enthusiasm, even being somewhat lifeless when working all alone in a brightly illuminated room. Two higher-ups, who will retire next year, were playing checkers in the general affairs section at the end of the corridor. They opened the door of our sales section, and said, “Oh, Sai! Are you working overtime again today?”

“Yeeeeees! I love working overtimeeee!

“What an energetic worker!”

“I can’t put up with this job unless I cheer up myself with my voice.”

“Huh, well, work hard, and I hope you make pots of money!”

“Thanks a lot.”

After they leave, the office become silent, again. Except for the sound of my abacus.

I go to the bathroom and come back. To my surprise, Junko Kishibe is there. I thought she had already gone. She is looking down at the rainy town from the window with her coat on and ready to go home.

“Oh, dear! Are you still here?”

“It’s raining terribly outside, isn’t it? Chiba hasn’t come back, yet,” Junko said anxiously.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Chiba is the love of Junko’s life, although it is a totally one-sided affair, and I don’t know what Mr. Chiba thinks of her. He is a lovable, pleasant young guy and has a reputation as a real go-getter in the sales section, but he is twenty-three and two years junior to Junko and myself.

“Where on earth is he, on such a rainy night? ... He has a cold,” Junko says as if she were a newlywed waiting for her groom.

She looks so ridiculous that I cannot bear to watch. Every woman in the office knows that Junko has a crush on Mr. Chiba, and now, even the men in the section seem to know about it, too.

“Get a life!” I slap her turned back.<sup>3</sup>

“He might already have gone home. Directly...”

When the morning comes, men in the sales section fly away in all directions like bees, and in the evening, they fly back to the section one by one. But those who go farther sometimes return home directly.

“No. In the afternoon, the manager got a call from Chiba, and it seemed like he said that Chiba would come back to the office after the factory in Sakai. So, he’s expected to come back...”

Junko knows Mr. Chiba’s movements well.

She looks like she’s even paying attention to his phone calls to the manager. She must have tuned her attentive ear to the phrase “a call from Chiba.”

Why in the world does Junko come to work? Probably, she comes here to meet Mr. Chiba. I feel sort of envious of her for having this obsession.

I know Mr. Chiba is a lovely young man, but I have absolutely

no inclination to lose myself as Junko has. First of all, I'm completely uninterested in men younger than me.

"When he comes back, I'd like to make hot green tea for him, so, I'm boiling water....," Junko says pensively.

"Then, since you have boiled the water, can you make tea for poor Sai who is working overtime?" I ask.

Junko, with a solemn face, answers, "I won't make tea for you, Sai. Why don't you make it yourself."

"I see how it is."

"Of course. Now, my heart's filled with Chiba. If I move a bit, it'll spill out. I wonder if he had an accident or something. Should I call Chiba at home? What do you think?"

And, Junko talks in earnest. If she said it as a joke, it would be one thing, but I don't know what face to show because she is too serious for her age.

"Whatever," I give up talking to her. Junko was once a levelheaded, sensible woman, but I can't believe how imprudent she has become.<sup>4</sup>

In my mind, it is like this:

To be so imprudent in romance is not becoming to a woman of twenty-five whose skin is beginning to show signs of aging. Love for a twenty-five-year-old woman should be classier, and must be mature.

Junko was very sensible about love in the past, but she seems to have lost her head.

The young women are laughing at her behind her back, it's like, "A middle-aged woman with puppy love."

The men in the section often put their towels or combs in desk drawers (because the lockers are small), but Junko makes everyone frown by washing Mr. Chiba's towels and drying them in the office kitchenette, or by tidying up Mr. Chiba's locker. On occasion, during lunchtime, she vigorously washes Mr. Chiba's business shirts (the ones in the locker), hangs them up to dry.

"Oh, it must be tough having a boyfriend. You don't even get to rest, even at lunchtime," the men in the section call out, teasing her.

And when there's a phone call from Chiba, she pricks up her ears attentively as if she were a sensitive, and cowardly prey animal.<sup>6</sup>

The sales section staff often make calls from outside the office, and report on the progress of business or wait for directions from the boss. When Junko hears even just a bit of the name "Chiba," she looks in that direction.

Then, the guy who is answering the phone mischievously says to Mr. Chiba, "Hold on. I'll pass the phone to her," and to Junko, "A call for you, from Chiba!"

Junko springs to her feet and goes to answer the phone, not knowing that she is being ridiculed by the staff. I don't know what Mr. Chiba is talking to her about, but Junko seems so happy speaking with him. As a friend, I can't stand watching it.

I feel like shutting my eyes.

The other day, she behaved worse than that. Mr. Chiba tore a hole in the shoulder of his business shirt. During lunchtime, while he was wearing the shirt, Junko insisted on sewing up the tear. After she finished, instead of cutting the thread with scissors, she brought her face close and broke the thread with her teeth.

There were three or four men, and women were looking on from near and far. It is, so to speak, an act of indecency in public.

Mr. Chiba said repeatedly in an annoyed tone, "That's enough now. Please leave that alone. I will wear a jacket, anyway."

"Why shouldn't I? If you do nothing, the tear will get bigger," Junko didn't listen to him and kept sewing. Mr. Chiba was not altogether displeased, but his face showed some annoyance and became a little flushed.

Junko casted her dreamy eyes toward him, paying no attention to what other people think and say.

That's why Junko was warned by a senior worker, Miss Sawano. She is an old maid who has the most seniority among the girls in the office.

"It is impolite to do such a thing in the presence of others," Miss Sawano said. "I mean, I don't want you to bring your disturbing displays of public affection into the workplace."

“Being in love is no one else’s business,” Junko says.

“If you want to have a decent romance, you should observe the proprieties, try to make a favorable impression and have everyone’s blessings.”

“Hum! Are there any rules when in love?”

“Love is just a game to you. Isn’t romance a precursor to marriage?”

“I’m not thinking of getting married!”

“I can see that. You think love is one thing and marriage quite another. You must think marriage is something so meaningless.”

“That’s for sure, I don’t find any meaning in marriage,” Junko said flippantly.

“You finally admit it, I wanted to make you say it,” Miss Sawano said triumphantly. She is strange. I felt something unusual in the tone she used to interrogate Junko harshly. It might be jealousy of a woman.

“I’m not like you. Don’t lump me in with those idiots whose eyes start flashing different colors at the mention of marriage,” Junko said without mincing words.

“I do have a crush on Chiba. I’m crazy about him, that’s all.”

“Wow...,” Miss Sawano was taken aback and smiled a wry smile, “Is that so?”

Since Miss Sawano wears glasses as thick as the bottom of a milk bottle, the curses Junko said later were, “What a near-sighted fool. That fading old maid will never understand what love is!”

Junko was not the type of girl who normally makes such blistering remarks.

Even though she fights fiercely in battles, she is meek in front of Mr. Chiba. When I go back to the subway station with Junko, she sometimes does not get on the train.

“What’s the matter?”

“I’ll wait here. No doubt he has left the office, so I think he’ll come soon,” she says.

When Mr. Chiba comes, he and Junko just say, “Oh, good night!”

because he takes the train going the opposite way, although they stand on the same station platform. But, Junko said she would wait for him until he came.

From my viewpoint, it seems like Mr. Chiba regards Junko as someone who amuses him. He has become used to the job and the company, and seems like he is always interested in everything, and enjoys working with his male coworkers more than the office girls.

He seems happy to get invited for drinks, or to play mahjong. As for Junko, because Mr. Chiba's coworkers are always teasing him, he probably thinks of her as nothing more than "material for funny topics of conversation."

"Junko, if you love him that much, I think you should catch him and sleep with him," I said, and Junko, who is usually formidable, flushed a little and said,

"I don't know what to do. But that's okay with me. It's exciting to remember that today he spoke to me, or he gave me a call. I'm satisfied with just that."

"Indeed. That's enough, thank you."

I'm no Miss Sawano, but that's too much even for me. Mr. Chiba is a smart, agile, tall and slim young man, and I admit there is something fascinating about him, I deal with him quite easily, because I can't be crazy like Junko.

"He probably didn't take an umbrella with him, you know... he'll come back soaking wet," Junko said still continuing.

"He won't come back to the office this late at night. He knows there's no one here," I said.

Junko, as if she finally made up her mind, came near me while tightening the belt of her coat and said, "Well, Sai."

"What?"

"Can you do me a favor? When that boy comes back, would you make him a cup of tea?"

"Okay, okay," I laughed scornfully.



“Made with boiling water so that he won’t catch a cold. *Gyokuro*, green tea, his favorite. It’s here waiting for him.”<sup>5</sup>

From her desk drawer, Junko reverently took out a small can of tea, as if it were a jewelry box.

“So, for this, put the tea leaves in the teapot — you’ll find a teaspoon inside — put in one and a half. Pour boiling water in, alright. There’s a clean tea cup over there.”

“Huh!”

“It’s not good for him to become chilled. He gets an upset stomach easily. Even in the middle of summer, he likes hot tea.”

“Enough already.”

I frowned and waved my hand.

But, Junko was fully committed. “You can say that I asked you to do that. Please tell him you made tea because I asked you to... Then, let me know what he says in response.”

“Nonsense. I don’t want to make a fool of myself, so I won’t do it,” I said firmly.

Junko thinks that I’m joking and persists, “Oh, come on! Really, make him a cup of tea and try telling him that.”

“No. I’m so busy that I don’t have that kind of free time.”

Junko said, “Bye,” and left the office dejectedly.

“Bye.”

I am speechless by her helplessness. Her imprudence was too much. Junko has a good figure, fair face and does her work well, but I can’t help wondering why she loses herself in love that much.

I devoted myself to my work.

The door opened, and I turned thinking that my order from the Chinese restaurant ‘Horaiken’ had arrived, I suddenly felt hungry, but it was Mr. Chiba.

“Welcome back!”

He says it’s raining heavily outside. He was soaking wet.

“Are you working overtime, Sai?”

“Yes. Didn’t you meet Miss Kishibe? She was around here.”

“No, I didn’t see her.”

“Did you know she was waiting for you?”

Mr. Chiba didn’t answer my question, saying, “Ugh, it’s so cold, I’m freezing.”

He went to change out of his sopping-wet clothes into the ones in his locker. While he was away, I called the Chinese restaurant and ordered one more bowl of ramen because I thought he would want a bowl of hot ramen.

When I saw Mr. Chiba blue with cold and exhausted, I felt pity for him and wanted to make hot tea for him, though I had talked to Junko about just that. According to the look on his face, it is not likely that he was late because he was gambling on mahjong games. It was the face of someone who had been working.

“Thank you. It tastes good,” he said, and had a cup of tea, happily. Then, he complained about this and that machine shop which had made him work this late.

While drying his hair with a pure white towel (which is the one Junko bleaches and dries), Mr. Chiba seemed too tired to speak another word.

I have finished most of my work and began to clean up the desk.

“You are working so hard, Sai,” Mr. Chiba said, sounding as if he were concerned for me.

“Oh, it’s you Chiba who works so hard.”

“Let’s not work too much.”<sup>7</sup>

“You’re right, but lots of work gets dumped on go-getters, like you and me.”

“Exactly.”

Then, the delivery guy from Horaiken arrived with a ramen delivery box in his hand, saying, “Thanks as always.” I put the bowl of hot ramen in front of Mr. Chiba, which made him jump for joy.

“How thoughtful of you! ... Thanks a lot.”

I told him, “Junko asked me to do this.”

“She couldn’t have! My darling couldn’t be that thoughtful.”

“Good gracious!”

“What?”

“You said ‘my darling.’ You two are together.”

“Busted!”

Mr. Chiba was eating ramen with a relish. I ate fried rice.

This was the happiest and the most delicious meal I’d had recently.

“Junko... I can’t stand her. She might be making up story about a pregnancy before long,” he said in such a straightforward way.

“Well, a fake pregnancy... but it’s men’s responsibility for forcing a girl into thinking that way.”

“You may be right, but girls who expect too much in romance, or who are clingy... men soon get fed up with them. And, when a girl gets out of control and loses her temper, it’s very bothersome, tiring, you know.”

The men in the sales section, however young they are, become good at speaking the Osaka dialect for business by learning it from the senior workers. Mr. Chiba also uses the dialect naturally.

“Aren’t you happy when girls rely on you?”

“Well... in the beginning, yes. It’s good in the beginning, but it gradually starts to bother me. Even Junko had some good points at first. Just like... well, you Sai, she was simple and undemanding, cute, and very thoughtful, lots of common sense... but suddenly she completely changed. Women are scary, aren’t they?”

Mr. Chiba loudly slurped down the ramen broth, until the last drop was gone. It seemed to be really delicious.

“I don’t know how to put this to you, but Junko is coming on to me all the time, she is always flirting with me in the office. The assistant manager even made a dig at me for it being weird, you know, that’s breaking the rules, I can’t stand it anymore.”

I understood what Mr. Chiba meant well.

The world of a man in the company looks more severe than the world of woman, and as everyone saw, Junko was going too far, he must be subject to criticism. I felt sorry for him.

“She used to be like you, Sai,” Mr. Chiba continued, “Sai, you are really a hard worker. I like a serious, hard working girl. But Miss Sawano is scary... I don’t know why... but I like you the best. I like you because you are simple, kind and cute. You’ll never become a persistent, clingy girl.”

“I don’t think so. I don’t know what will happen in the future.”

“Umm... Is that so? But, to tell the truth, I like women who are closer to your age the best. I have a sister who’s senior to me by two years, and I’m close to her. Because of that, a woman, who is one or two years senior to me, is the best.”

“Damn! You have a thing for older women!”<sup>8</sup>

Mr. Chiba laughed out loud.

“That’s what I love about you. I love your face. I love everything about you.”

Mr. Chiba grasped my hand tightly.

“I love your lovely handwriting. And your voice on the phone — which a girl of twenty-one or twenty-two cannot make. Only a woman over twenty-five can have that indescribably charming atmosphere...”

Mr. Chiba grasped my hands and asked, “Have you finished your work?”

“Yeah.”

“You’re not tired, are you? How about a drink tonight?”

“Sure.”

Mr. Chiba has shining, mischievous, energetic eyes, and the way he talked is not in the least boring, and he is good at giving compliments to women, so he is a perfect man to kill time with.

Although I don’t do anything conspicuous like washing Mr. Chiba’s towels, we are secretly really close. Mr. Chiba said he doesn’t like clingy women, so I’m trying very hard to be cheerful, and not persistent.

But, I’ve gradually come to love him.

I think of him every day.

When I hear the name “Chiba”, I turn my eyes as if I were the cowardly prey animal. When he goes out and comes back to the company late, I wait for him with hot tea and an order of ramen.

I don't do anything that attracts people's attention like Junko, but in the subway station, I follow Mr. Chiba with my eyes, just to say, “good night.”

The rainy night working overtime had such a fun, freehearted, comfortable atmosphere. Now, I have an uneasy premonition that such a night cannot come again. Maybe love is the most fantastic before it is born.

## 注

\* この翻訳は田辺聖子「雨の降ってた残業の夜」(『孤独な夜のココア』(新潮社, 昭和 58 年発行) 所収) にもとづいている。原文の解釈についてアドバイスをいただいた住友元美先生(田辺聖子文学館学芸員), 快く翻訳の許可をくださった田辺美奈様に感謝いたします。翻訳にあたってはまず小森がテキストを英語に直し, Smith と小森で短編の構造, 文化的背景などの検討・情報共有を行った上で, それを現代の外国人読者にとって自然な英語となるように改訂する方法で行っている。

同短編集所収の「愛の罐詰」では, いつも主人公が好きな男性を好きになる, 富永ミキという女性が登場する。男性を奪う側の視点, 奪われる側の視点という意味でこの二編は対をなしているように思われる。

- 1 「ねずみに引かれそう」は「家の中で一人きりでいてさびしいたとえ」(『日本国語大辞典』(第 2 版) 小学館)。「ネズミに曳かれんようにしてや」は, 一人寂しく留守番をする人などに対してかけることばで慣用句である。直訳すれば, **Evil mice will take you away!** などになるろうが, 表現を支えるストーリーがない。ここでは, 親が子どもに「言うことを聞かないとお化けにさらわれるぞ」という時のお化け(**bogeyman**)の表現を用いた。
- 2 「千葉クン」の「クン」はちょうど, **Mr. Chiba** と **Chiba** の間ぐらいのニュアンスである。**Chiba** で統一したいところだが, 英語読者にとって姓・名の区別がつかないので, 地の文では **Mr. Chiba**, 会話では **Chiba** を用いた。またハイミスの **Miss Sawano** は, 昭和のまだ既婚/未婚を明示していた時代背景を考えて **Ms.** ではなく **Miss** を使った。
- 3 「私はじゅん子の背中をどやしつけた」の「どやしつける」は相手を, ① 殴りつける, 強く打つ, ② 強くしかる, どなりつける 2 つの意味がある(『日本国語大辞典』(第 2 版) 小学館)。ここでは「背中を」という動作の対象が明示されているので①の意味で解釈した。
- 4 「ヌケヌケ」は短編中に 3 度登場する。いずれもじゅん子の千葉に対す

る盲目ぶりを表す表現である。没頭していることを表す **self-absorption** 等の表現も候補として考えられたが、「ヌケヌケ」の「あつかましいことを平気な顔でする様子」(『岩波国語辞典』第7版)という意味を考慮し、本人には見えていないが、周囲にとってあつかましく見える行為になっていることの表現と解釈した。その結果、賢明でなく・不注意で・その結果がどうなるか全く考えられていないという意味を持つ **imprudent** を用いた。

- 5 「しゅんしゅん沸いているお湯だね」の、湯気を立てている様子が想像される **steaming and boiling water** のような表現の可能性もあるが、**steaming** は湯気を立てているだけで必ずしも沸騰していないという意味を持ち、表現としては落ち着きが悪い。
- 6 「臆病な草食獣」に対応する表現として、草食動物の意味を持つ **herbivore** には、日本語のいわゆる「草食系」のひ弱な意味合いはない。共訳者の Jennifer Smith によると菜食主義者 (**vegetarian**) を連想させるという。
- 7 “Let’s not work too much for the company.” のように、**for the company** まで訳出してしまうと、本当に会社を辞めたいという意味になってしまう。
- 8 英語には恋愛関係における年齢差を表すスラングがある。性別にかかわらずずっと年下の異性が好きなのは、**cradle robber**, **cradle snatcher**, その中でも若い女性が好きな年上の男性を **sugar daddy**, または **aristo** という。反対に若い男性が好きな年上の女性は **cougar**. 年上好きについては、年上の男性を好きな若い女性は **gold digger** という(「金目当て」を意味するが、通常相手の男性は年をとってあまり魅力的でないことが多い)。反対の、年上の女性が好きな若い男性、つまりここで問題になる「年上キラー」にあたる英語は見つからない。理由はわからないが、言語学で **accidental gap** (偶然の空白) と呼ばれるものだと思われる。そのため **have a thing for** ~ (～のことが大好きだ) を用いた。

**Comments for Readers:**

Seiko Tanabe's *Overtime on a Rainy Night* illustrates a particular point in time in Japanese office culture that becomes particularly relevant in current changing workplace norms internationally. In this story, gender, work, and romantic relationships take the forefront. One of the more challenging aspects of this translation was appropriately conveying the tone that Tanabe infuses in her story for these themes. First, issues concerning gender were prominent in the story. In *Overtime on a Rainy Night*, there was a stark divide in gender roles and the way in which men and women were referred to in the office. We attempted to match this tone in the translation by using phrases such as "office girl" or "girl," to refer to the female workers when more modern stories would have probably referred to them as "women" or "workers." Next, the tone used to describe work and romantic relationships was difficult to match because of the differences in language usage between English and Japanese. In Japanese, much can be inferred about a person's status and relationship by the level of formality used in their conversation with each other. While English certainly has different levels of formality, that formality is conveyed in a less firmly structured manner. Thus, English may make a request more formal by making it indirect or longer: "Can you give me that?" to "Would you mind giving me that?" In contrast, Japanese sometimes uses specific verb conjugations or word endings to indicate formality. It was therefore difficult to match Tanabe's tone while still adhering to the original text when translating conversations about relationships taking place at work. Hopefully, the translation conveys the feelings surrounding the main themes of this story, as *Overtime on a Rainy Night* is a vivid snapshot into the lives of Tanabe's characters.



