

Lesson 15 Cheating

It was when I was sixteen, in the first year class of my high school as it was then. I think it might have been on the occasion of the Japanese history exam in the first term. My memory of it is not certain. I looked at the exam questions but didn't know the answers. In my desk there was a history notebook. I quietly pulled it out and placed it on my lap. And do you know, I was just about to flip the pages and look up those sections that were covered by the exam.

My seat was in the back row of the class. Just before opening the notes, I looked to check where the invigilator was standing. He was Dr Sawano, the *kanbun* teacher. But Dr Sawano was nowhere to be seen. I thought this was odd and so glanced round the whole class but still couldn't locate him. Then, glancing sideways, I suddenly realised that he was standing there right behind me.

The blood rushed from my cheeks. This must be what they mean by 'the end of the line!' I thought. No escape now. Caught cheating, I would be dragged out to the student office and rusticated. In that one instant my mind was in turmoil. The teacher was standing there looking down at me from behind. I sat there motionless as if in manacles. I could not sneak the notebook back into the desk from where I had taken it, and of course it was impossible to flip through the pages either.

Time stood still. Then Dr Sawano passed on by my side and quietly walked towards the dais between the line of desks. He paused in front of the step, then went to the window and stood there gazing outside, his hands clasped behind his back. In other words, nothing happened.

This little incident disappeared from memory soon after and I thought I'd forgotten about it, but in fact it has returned to me on numerous occasions in the intervening forty years.

From Takahashi Yoshitaka, *Kogoto tawagoto hitorigoto*.

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毎日毎日手紙が来ないかと待っているのにブラジルへ行ってしまったきり彼女からは音沙汰がない。

I wait every day in case a letter comes, but she just went off to Brazil and I've not heard from her since. [lit. I wait, thinking 'will a letter not come?']

五時になったので帰ろうかと思ったが雨が降り出したので少し待つことにした。

It was five o'clock so I thought I might leave for home, but it started to rain so I decided to wait a little.

とても声が似ているので、電話に出たのは山田さんかと思ったらお母様だった。

Because their voices were very similar, I thought it was Miss Yamada on the phone, but it was her mother.

祖母が亡くなった時、あのやさしい笑顔がもう見られないのかと思ったら急に涙が出てきた。

When grandmother died, I thought of how I would never again see that sweet smiling face and I suddenly burst into tears.

誤解をしているのは課長ではなくて部長ではないかと思ったがなかなか言い出せなかった。

I felt that perhaps it had been head of department rather than the section chief who had misunderstood, but I couldn't bring myself to say so.

よく話し合ったのでお互いの考え方が理解出来たかと思ったのだが、そうでもなかったみたいだ。

We had a good discussion and so I thought we might have come to a mutual understanding; but it doesn't seem so.

カンニングがばれてしまったかと思った。

I thought that perhaps my cheating had been revealed.

そんなことを言うのは無神経な証拠じゃないかと思う。

Surely to say such a thing is proof that he is insensitive.

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その医者は自分の体を実験台に使って、その薬が効くかどうかを試そうというのである。

That doctor went so far as to actually use his own body for the experiment to test whether the medicine would work or not.

飛行機のなかった時代に八十日間で世界を一周してみせようというのである。

In a period when there were no airplanes, he actually tried to show he could circumnavigate the globe in eighty days.

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ここまできたらもう終わったも同然ですが、油断をしてはいけませんよ。

Now we've got this far it's almost as if we've finished, but we mustn't let down our guard.

断わりもなしに持ってきてしまったんなら盗んだも同然じゃない。

If you've gone and taken it without asking, that's tantamount to stealing, isn't it?

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まだちょっと左が下がってますね。少しずつ上の方に行かせてみて下さい。

It's still down a bit on the left hand side. Can you try and move it up a little?

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あの子は親に相談することも出来なければ、友達に話すことも出来ずに悩んでいたみたいですよ。

It seems that child was really suffering, being unable to either discuss things with his parents or talk to his friends.

ものごとに行きづまってしまって、前に進むことも出来なければ、後にもどることも出来ない時に「にっちもさっちもいかない」という表現を使います。

When you are completely stuck and can neither move forward nor go back, you use the expression 'nitchimo satchimo ikanai' [be in a real bind].

祖父は大変なわがままで母が世話をするのでなければいやだと言うので、手伝いをやとうことも出来なければ、老人ホームに入れることはもとより不可能である。

My grandfather was very spoilt and said he would only have mother look after him, so we could not employ someone else and it was of course impossible to put him in an old-people's home.

私が大学二年の時に父が突然解雇されてしまったので、それからは授業料を出してもらうことも出来なければ、生活費をもらうことなど全く問題外だった。

When I was in the second year at university my father suddenly lost his job, so from then on I couldn't ask him to pay my tuition fees, and living expenses were completely out of the question.

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先生にしかられてその子は泣き出すかに見えたが、ブイッと横を向くと何も言わずに教室から出て行ってしまった。

It seemed as if the child would burst out crying because he was scolded by the teacher, but he just turned away and left the classroom without saying a word.

景気は一時は順調に回復するかに見えたが、またスランプに陥ってしまったらしい。

At one time it did appear that the economy was recovering gradually, but it seems that it has slid back into a slump.

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- Tomoko I really messed up yesterday's Japanese History exam.
 Yūko Couldn't you do it?
 Tomoko Well no, I couldn't do it, but that's not the half of it!
 Yūko What do mean 'that's not the half of it'?
 Tomoko I cheated. Well I mean, I tried to; but I was caught at it.
 Yūko What! Cheated! You? I don't believe it!
 Tomoko It's true. When you're in a corner you tend to do stupid things, don't you. What can I say? Tempted by the devil? Doing something like that.
 Yūko Tomoko. What on earth happened?
 Tomoko The exam started and I looked at the questions, but there were so many I didn't know the answer to.
 Yūko You seem to be really good at maths, but not much good at history or geography.
 Tomoko History's just like a test of memory, isn't it. People's names or what happened in which year. No matter how much you try, if you don't remember you just can't answer; don't you think?
 Yūko Well, I suppose you're right, but...
 Tomoko So there was nothing else I could do but spend the previous evening studying what I felt might come up, but none of it did.
 Yūko Goodness me. Surely you shouldn't do that; you should revise everything. Well anyway, what happened then?

- Tomoko I was sitting right at the back, so I just moved my seat a little and took my history notebook out of the desk. I put it on my lap.
- Yūko Do you mean you were going to try to flip through the pages?
- Tomoko Yes. Well.
- Yūko I don't know whether you're brave or what. I'm stunned; speechless.
- Tomoko Well, I suppose I deserve it.
- Yūko Who was the teacher in charge?
- Tomoko Dr Sawano, the *kanbun* teacher. Before opening the notes, I looked all around trying to make sure where he was, but he was nowhere to be seen!
- Yūko That's ridiculous.
- Tomoko Yes, I thought it was odd as well, so I just looked beside me and there he was, standing right behind me! I'm sure I stopped breathing for a second.
- Yūko Well, I'm not surprised.
- Tomoko 'That's done it', I thought, but of course I couldn't put the notebook back where it came from, and I couldn't possibly open it up and look at it, so I just froze.
- Yūko So, did he say anything?
- Tomoko Well. He stayed there for a bit and then without saying a word he just passed by and walked towards the blackboard. Then he went to window and stood there looking outside.
- Yūko Really?
- Tomoko Never mind about the exam; I thought I'd be thrown out of the school, but I've heard nothing from either him or the student office, so...
- Yūko Just like Dr Sawano. Worse than being bawled out face to face, that kind of thing. You'll never forget this for the rest of your life, you know.
- Tomoko Yes. I think you're probably right.

Lesson 16 The half-curtain

For a woman to enter a drinking establishment on her own, for her to sit at the counter and order a *sake*, demands the kind of courage you need to travel abroad by yourself. True, came the rebuttal; but really it's no different from the courage a man needs to go on his own into a little tea-house full of women and to stick out like a sore thumb by ordering himself something sickly sweet. I suppose it's a bit like putting on a show of being a regular customer, of being quite used to it all, when actually you are feeling very much ill at ease and uncomfortable.

When I sat down at the counter in that restaurant, that was exactly how I felt. I came across it in the 'Good Food Guide' column of a weekly magazine – 'home cooking' they said. As it was cheek by jowl