

- 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

with my own apartment, I quite happily bobbed in under the little curtain at the door only to be met by two women all made up and in their *kimono*, and with a greeting of 'irasshaai' oddly drawn out at the tail end. One plump, the other thin, and over their heads a large good-luck decoration – the elaborate bamboo rake that you get at the shrine at the end of the year. I realized immediately that I had blundered into the wrong sort of place, but I couldn't possibly back out now, so I sat at one end of the counter and ordered a beer and a couple of small dishes.

The counter was L-shaped and there were one or two customers sitting on the far side drinking. I tried not to look at them, concentrating instead on the beer and picking at the fish.

[section omitted]

Surely a working woman, beholden to nobody, ought to be able to treat herself to this kind of thing once in a while without the roof falling in. I was sitting there, keeping my eye on the television, mumbling excuses and bluffing it out. I'd got through about half a bottle, when one of the women snapped off the cap from another bottle and plonked it down in front of me.

'What is this? I.....'.

Before the words were out of my mouth, a plate of squid's tentacles arrived.

'From him over there'.

She pointed to the man drinking at the far end of the counter.

From Mukōda Kuniko, *Mumei kamei jinmeibo*.

6

久しぶりに友達と温泉へ行っても楽しい思い出をしてもどってきたら、息子がこの始末なんでもの、せっかくの楽しい思い出も吹っ飛んでしまったわ。

I had a great time going to a hot spring resort with a friend after a long absence, but I returned to find my son in this state. Precious memories blown to the winds.

オランダではカメラを盗まれたり、タクシーの運ちゃんにぼられたり、いやな思い出ばかりしたので何だかあの国の印象全体が悪くなってしまった。

In Holland I had my camera stolen and I was ripped off by a taxi driver: nothing but bad experiences. Somehow or other I don't have a very good impression of that country.

7.1

自分のことばかり考えている我がままな息子に見えるでしょうが、あれで案外やさしいところもあるんですよ。

He may seem to be a spoiled child who thinks of nothing but himself, but he can be surprisingly gentle at times.

今日は朝から沈んだ顔をしているところを見ると、昨日課長に言葉遣いを注意されたのが余程こたえているらしい。

When I saw how subdued she looked this morning, it would seem that the warning she was given yesterday by her boss about her tone had really struck home.

何かうまくいかないことがあると、自分に責任があるのかもしれないとは決して考えないで、すぐに人のせいにしようとするところが気に入らないんですよ。

I don't like the way that when something untoward happens, he immediately blames others and never dreams that it might be his fault.

## 7.2

乗り遅れるところだったわね、あとちょっとで。

We very nearly missed it, didn't we? Just a few seconds later...

彼が言ってくれなかったら大損をするところだった。

If he hadn't warned me, I would almost certainly have lost a lot of money.

すんでのところで危うく命をおとすところだった。

I was within an inch of losing my life.

## 8

あれ、おかしいな。このあたりのはずだけど。道を間違えたのかもしれない。

That's odd! It should be around here somewhere. Perhaps we've lost our way.

## 9

それはある本屋の二階だった。

It happened in a bookshop upstairs. (Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, *Aru aho no isshō*)

その一年前、朝川昌子は女子大を卒業した。

A year before that (incident), Asakawa Masako had graduated from college. (Matsumoto Seichō, *Sankyō no shō*)

その岩場は、遠くから私の目を惹いた。

The rocks attracted my attention from afar. (Kita Morio, *Iwaone nite*)

## 11

友人や家族の者から何度も医者に行くように言われていたにもかかわらず、一日延ばしにしているうちに手遅れになってしまったようだ。

Despite being told time and time again by his friends and his family to go to the doctor, he kept on putting it off day by day until now it seems it's too late.

時間の余裕がなかったのでヨーロッパへは行ったが、イギリスへは寄らずにもどってきた。

We didn't have much spare time so although we went to Europe, we came back without visiting England.

あの子は栄養のあるものはちっとも食わずに甘いものばかり食べている。  
That child never eats anything nutritious; all she eats is sweet things.

13

彼はブツブツと文句を言い言い帰っていった。  
He went back home complaining all the way.  
倅約をしいしい何とか生計をたてていますが....  
I manage to get by somehow by constantly economising, but...

14

電子レンジでものを温めることを「チンします」っていう人が多いらしいわよ。  
Lots of people seem to be using the phrase 'chin shimasu' to mean 'warm up in the microwave'.  
てんぷらはやっぱりカラッと揚がってないとおいしくないわよね。  
Well you know, unless tempura is fried so it's crisp, it's not very nice.  
そうめんのおいしさは味そのものより、あのツルツルッと喉を通っていく感じですよ。  
The appeal of sōmen noodles is not so much their taste, but rather the feeling of them slithering smoothly down your throat.

まるでごみでも捨てるようにポイッと捨てられちゃった。  
I was cast aside without a thought, just like a piece of rubbish.  
事業に失敗してさぞ参っているだろうと思ったら案外ケロッとしているんでちょっと安心しました。  
I thought he'd be really down when he went bankrupt, but in fact he seems quite unconcerned; so I feel a bit better about it.

15

店員 高橋様ですね。こちらがご注文いただいたダイヤとエメラルドの指輪でございます。  
高橋 えっ。私そんなもの注文しませんけど。お願いしたのは時計の修理だけで。  
Assistant Mrs Takahashi, isn't it? Here is the ring with the diamonds and the emerald you ordered.  
Takahashi What? I haven't ordered anything like that! I just wanted my watch mended.  
和子 あなたひどいわ。黒田さんに私は気が強いから、結婚相手を見つけるのは無理だろうなんて言ったんですって。  
佳子 あら。私そんなこと言わないわよ。  
Kazuko You're dreadful! Kuroda said you had said I was too strong willed and so there was no point in me trying to find a husband.  
Keiko What! I'd never say such a thing!

誠                   おい。大型の外車買ったんだって。  
 憲一                買わないよ。どこにそんな金があると思ってるんだよ。国産で十分じゃないか。  
 Makoto            Hey! I heard you bought a big foreign car.  
 Ken'ichi           Not me! Where do you think I'd get that kind of money? A Japanese car will do me  
                       fine.

## Lesson 17 'The wrong end of the stick'

---

The other day I answered the phone.

'Ah. Hello?' It was a man's voice. Insistent and a bit rough; one I hadn't heard before.

'Yes?'

I'd hardly replied when 'Thank you. Thank you. I love you. I really do love you.' He sounded just as if he was electioneering or something.

'Ah. I'll just put Mother on', I said.

'What?' he asked in a flurry.

Then Mother took over, and I'm not sure what went on after that because someone came to pick up the washing and I missed what she was saying; and then she waved me away and I went to my room. But when she had finished on the phone, she told me about it. Apparently it was some man who had been on the same panel of editorial writers as her since April. Until recently he had been the main reporter assigned to the Metropolitan Police Board, a top journalist who had won various prizes; but he was hopeless at writing anything and had always got others to do it for him. Now of course, being a leader writer, that wouldn't wash. So Mother, who had the desk next to him, got asked to correct his work for him every time, which she did. Gradually he had convinced himself that she was doing it out of affection for him and he had fallen for her hook, line and sinker, she said.

'He was given a right ticking off by Mother and apparently he's really down in the dumps. Of course for her he's just a colleague. Then he said "Apologies to your daughter." It's all a bit bizarre.'

The two young men kept on laughing out loud.

'What a twit.'

'Well, "apologies": it's just convenient to say.'

'I ask you. A reporter who couldn't write!'

'Not unusual. Types like that. Some university teachers like that too.'

They were really amused.

From Maruya Saiichi, *Onnazakari*.

---