

Intro to Japanese Literature

Japanese 4060

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The Human Chair in translation

Every morning, Yoshiko saw off her husband's visit to the office and then became her own person. So, she's now working on a lengthy creation for this summer's expanded issue of K magazine. She had become famous as a beautiful writer, and almost every day she received several letters from unknown admirers, overshadowing her husband, who was a secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

This morning, she sat down at her desk in her study and read those letters before getting to work. I had to read letters from unknown people. It all began with a sudden call of "ma'am" without a single complaint. Hatena, then, I wonder if it is a letter after all, she thought, and as she casually ran her eyes over two or three lines, <she had a premonition of something strange and strangely eerie from it. And her natural curiosity made her read ahead.

Dear madam,

As for the wife, please forgive me for the sin of suddenly sending such an imprudent letter from a man who does not know the slightest. I am sure that your wife will be astonished when I say this, but I have now come before you to see the strange guilt which I have committed, and she has read all of it, whatever it may be, out of the kindness of a woman. The simplest ones were left behind, two sealed letters, and one that appeared to be a modest manuscript.

Although she had not received a letter of notice, she thought she would take a look at the rabbit, the horns, and the title, but somehow, she could not find the title. It is.

Of course we did. Of course, no one in the wide world knows what I have done. If I had been able to hide from the human world for a few months and continue to live like a demon, I might not have returned to the human world forever.

Recently, however, a strange change has occurred in my heart. And no matter how much I tried, I couldn't help but repent of this causal situation of mine. However, I am sorry that there are many points that may make you suspicious, but please read this letter to the end. If so, why did I feel that way? And why you should listen to this confession, especially your wife, these things will become very clear.

I don't know where to start, because it's such a human, machine-in-the-mill fact that I find it strangely awkward and dull in this kind of way of writing in the human world, such as letters. But there's no point in getting lost. Let's write about the rabbit and the horn in order, starting from the beginning.

I was born with an ugly appearance. Please remember this clearly. Otherwise, if you accept this imprudent wish and meet me, it will be unbearable for you to see without any prior

knowledge that my ugly face has become a terrible appearance that cannot be seen again because of the unhealthy life of many years.

What a causal birth I am. While waiting for such an ugly appearance, in my chest, I was burning with a fierce passion that was unknown to people and to the world. I had forgotten the reality of my ghostly face, being extremely poor, and being nothing more than a craftsman, and longing for various "dreams" that were unknowable, sweet, luxurious, and so on.

If I had been born into a rich family, I would have been able to indulge in all kinds of games by the power of money, and to disguise the impetuosity of my ugliness. Or, if I had been given more artistic talents, I would have been able to forget the tastelessness of this world, for example, for beautiful poetry. At the same time, I, who was unhappy, could not bask in any of the blessings, and as the child of a poor cabinetmaker, I had no choice but to make a living day by day through the work that my parents had handed down. My specialty was making a variety of chairs. The chair I made was sure to be liked by the owner of the most difficult commentary, so the Chamber of Commerce paid special attention to me, and I was only able to do my work and make good things. When it comes to such a fine product, there are various difficult notes on the carvings of the armrests, the construction of the cushions, the dimensions of each part, etc., and the person who makes them requires a lot of hard work that an amateur cannot imagine. However, there is no such thing as pleasure when you take the pains to make it. It may sound cheeky, but I think that sentiment should not be compared to the joy that an artist feels when he or she completes a magnificent work. When a chair is made, I first sit on it myself and try to sit down. And even in the bland life of a craftsman, I feel an indescribable sense of pride only at that time. There must be a luxurious room there that is worthy of such a magnificent chair, because it is a mansion that will tell you what kind of noble or beautiful person will put on it, and what kind of splendid chair will be there. There must be oil paintings by famous painters hanging between the walls, and decorative lamps like great jewels hanging from the ceiling. The floor is covered with expensive carpets. And on the table in front of this chair, there are awakening Western flowers blooming profusely, emitting a luscious fragrance. When I indulge in such delusions, I feel like I have become the owner of that magnificent room, and although it is only for a moment, it is an indescribable, pleasant feeling. My fearless delusions will continue to grow. This I, who is only a poor, ugly, artisan, but in a world of delusions, I have become a noble prince and sit in a fine chair that I have made. And beside me, my beautiful lover, who always appears in my dreams, is smiling and listening to my story. But that's not all. In my delusions, I hold hands with that person and even whisper sweet words of love. But on any occasion, this purple dream of mine was interrupted by the voices of the elders of the neighborhood and the voices of the sick children around me

crying in hysteria. The ugly reality exposes that grey strip. When I return to reality, I find there a pitifully ugly version of myself that bears no resemblance to the prince of my dreams. And now, that beautiful person who smiled at me. Where is all that? Even the dirty babysitter who is playing in the dust, does not look at me. The only thing left is the chair I made, like a remnant of my current dream. But isn't that chair going to be carried away to a world completely different from ours? Every time I finish the chairs one by one, I am struck by an unknowable tastelessness. That indescribable, nay-like feeling gradually became unbearable for me as the months passed. "If you continue to live like this, you will be more likely to die." In the workplace, while using a chisel, hammering nails, or kneading a paint with strong embroidery, I continue to think about the same thing obsessively. "But wait, if you're going to die, if you're going to make up your mind like that, isn't there a way out, for example,?" And so my thoughts gradually turned in a terrifying direction. At that time, I was asked to make a large leather armchair that I had never worked on before. This chair is an item to be delivered to a hotel run by a foreigner in the same city, and if it is a chair that should be ordered from its home country, the company employed by me, is campaigning, and there are chair craftsmen in Japan who are not inferior to marine products. I finally got the note. In the meantime, I forgot to eat and sleep and worked on its production. It was something that I really put my soul into and was passionate about. Now, when I looked at the finished chair, I felt a satisfaction that I never remembered. It was a splendid workmanship. As usual, I took one of the chairs, which were a set of fours, out between the sunlit boards and sat down comfortably. What a comfortable place to sit. The stickiness of the cushion that is neither too hard nor too soft, the texture of the tanned leather, the moderate slope, the gentle support of the back, the plump, delicate curves, The armrests on both sides, all of which seem to maintain a strange harmony and express the word "comfort" as it is. I sank deep into it and caressed the round armrests with both hands, mesmerizing. Then, as a habit of mine, unstoppable delusions spring up one after another with dazzling colors, like a rainbow of five colors. Shall we call it an illusion? My thoughts came to my mind so clearly in front of me that I was terrified that I might not even think about it.

As I was doing so, a wonderful thought suddenly came to my mind. The whispering of the devil probably refers to such a thing. It was as wild as a dream, and it was very creepy. However, the eeriness of it becomes an irresistible charm that intrigues me. At first, it was just a simple wish that I would not let go of the beautiful chair that contained my painstaking care, and that I would follow it with it wherever I could. While it was spreading its wings of delusion, it was connected to a terrible thought that had been fermenting in my head for a long time. And I'm like, well, what a madness. I decided to actually go and see

that bizarre delusion. I was in a hurry to tear apart what I thought was the best of the four. And once again, I reworked it to suit my strange plan and to make it more convenient.

Since it is an extremely large armchair, the part that hangs it is stretched with leather until it passes on the floor, and the outside and armrests are made very thick, and there is a large cavity inside it that is so common that even if one person is hidden, it will never be recognized from the outside. Of course, there is a sturdy wooden frame and many springs attached to it, but I have made appropriate work on them, put my knees in the part where the human is hung, put the neck and torso in the fold, and make enough room for me to sit in the shape of a chair.

Since such workmanship is handmade, it was finished in a sufficiently neat and convenient manner. For example, in order to breathe and listen to external noises, we made a gap in a part of the skin that could not be seen from the outside, and we put a small shelf inside the house, right next to the head, so that we could store something, and we stuffed water bottles and hard bread for the army into it. A large rubber bag for a certain purpose is equipped, and various other ideas are used to devise food.

Yes

As long as there was a fee, I made sure that even if I crawled into it for two or three days, I would never feel inconvenienced. In other words, that chair has become a room for one person.

When I got to my shirt, I opened the lid of the doorway at the bottom and crawled into the chair. It was a very strange feeling. It's dark, it's suffocating, and I feel like I've crawled into a graveyard. If you think about it, it must be a graveyard. As soon as I crawl into the chair, I disappear from this human world, just as I put on a hidden iron.

Soon a messenger from the Chamber of Commerce came with a large cart to receive the four armchairs. My inner disciple (I lived alone with the man) was receiving the messenger's without knowing anything. When I was loading the car, one of the husbands yelled, "This is ridiculously heavy," and I was involuntarily relieved in the chair, but the armchair itself was very heavy, so I didn't feel any special discomfort, and eventually the rattling vibration of the cart transmitted a kind of strange feeling to my body.

I was very worried, but in the end, nothing happened, and by that afternoon, the armchair I had crawled into was already in a hotel room. Later, I found out that it was not a boudoir,

but a room where people waited, read newspapers, smoked, and various people came and went frequently.

As you may have noticed by now, the primary purpose of this strange act of mine was to get out of my chair and wander around the hotel to steal when there were no people. Who would have imagined such a ridiculous thing to have a human being hiding in a chair? I can run from room to room at will, like a shadow. And when the time comes when the people start to make noise, they can run back to their hideouts in their chairs, hold their breath, and watch their goofy search. You know that there is a kind of crab called "Yadokari" on the shore of the waves. It is dressed like a big spider, and when there are no people, it walks around with a selfish face, but if it hears even an inch of a person's noise, it escapes into the shell at a terrifying speed. And the creepy, hairy paws peek out of the shell a little bit, watching the enemy's movements. I was just that "Yadokari". Instead of shells, they have a hideout called a chair, and they walk around the hotel, not on the beach, with their own faces.

Well, this outlandish plan of mine, which was outlandish, came out unexpectedly and succeeded spectacularly. By the third day after arriving at the hotel, I had already done some work. The horrible but joyful feeling of stealing, the indescribable joy when you succeed, and the funny feeling of watching people make a fuss right up your nose about running away this way and that. Well, what kind of mysterious charm it has entertained me.

But unfortunately, I don't have time to talk about it in detail right now. There I discovered a grotesque pleasure that pleased me ten or twenty times more than such stealing. And to confess about it is, in fact, the real purpose of this letter.

I have to go back to the front and start with the time when my chair was placed on the loan of the hotel. When the chairs arrived, the innkeepers of the hotel went around to see the sitting, but after that, it was quiet and there was not a single sound. Maybe there is no one in the room. However, it is not possible to arrive or get out of the chair because it is too scary. For a very long time (maybe it was just that much), I focused all my attention on my ears and listened intently, trying not to miss a single noise.

Then, after a while, a heavy rumbling sound, probably from the hallway, came out. When I had approached for a couple of minutes, it was replaced by a low sound that was almost inaudible because of the carpet in the room, but soon I heard the rough snorting of a man, and before I knew it, a large Western-looking body fell with a thud on my lap and shook me two or three times. My thighs and the man's big buttocks are so close that I can feel the warmth of them, separated by a thin tanner. His broad shoulders rested right on my chest,

and his heavy hands overlapped mine, separating them from the leather. And the man must be puffing on a cigar. A masculine, rich scent flows through the gaps in the leather.

Ma'am, imagine what it would be like for you to be in my position. It is, well, what a strange scene. I was so frightened that I shrank back tightly in the darkness of my chair, cold sweat dripping from under my armpits, and I lost all my ability to think.

Starting with him, various people sat on my lap all day long. And no one had the slightest realization that I was there—that what they believed to be a soft cushion was actually my bloody thighs.

It's pitch black, and you can't move. How suspicious and attractive is the world? There, human beings are perceived as mysterious creatures that are completely different from the human beings that we see with our daily eyes. They are nothing more than a voice, a snort, a squeak, a roar, and a few round, elastic lumps of flesh. I can identify each of them by their texture instead of their appearance. Some are fat and fat, giving them the feeling of rotten ribs. On the contrary, some of them are skinny and look like skeletons. Outside of that, if you look at all the points such as the curvature of the spine, the opening of the shoulder bone, the length of the arms, the thickness of the thighs, or the length of the tail skeleton, there is something different about the person who looks like him. Human beings must be completely identifiable not only by their appearance and fingerprints, but also by the feel of their entire body.

The same is said for the opposite sex. Ordinarily, we would criticize it mainly on the basis of the beauty and ugliness of our appearance, but in this world of chairs, such things are completely out of the question. There is a naked body, a voice, and a smell.

Ma'am, please do not be offended by my explicit description, for I was there in the flesh of a woman (she was the first woman to sit in my chair. I felt a strong attachment to it.)

Judging by her voice, she was still a young maiden from a foreign land. At that moment, there was no one in the room, but she seemed to be happy about something, and crawled into it with a leaping step, singing a strange song in a low voice. Then, as soon as she came to the front of my armchair, she suddenly threw his plump, yet very supple body on top of me. What's more, she suddenly starts laughing ahahaha, flapping her arms and legs, and splashing around like a fish in a net.

Then, for almost half an hour, she sat on my lap, singing a song from time to time, and moving her heavy body to the tune of the song. This was indeed a major event for me that I did not expect. Women are sacred, or even scary, and I was reluctant to even look at their faces. I am now in the same room, in the same chair, with a maiden from a foreign country whom I do not know, and I am so close that I can feel the warmth of my skin through a

single layer of thin tannery. In spite of this, she has no anxiety whatsoever, and she entrusts the weight of her whole body to me, and she has a selfish appearance with a carefree appearance that no one can see. I can even imitate hugging her in a chair. You can also kiss the rich nape of the neck from the back of the skin. Outside of that, you are free to do whatever you want.

Since I made this astonishing discovery, I have been able to indulge in the world of its strange feelings, leaving aside my first purpose, such as stealing, as a second purpose. I thought. I believe that this is the world in this chair that I have been given a true home. An ugly and faint-hearted man like me is a helpless body that goes on to live a shameful and miserable life, always feeling humble in a bright, bright world. Once you change the world you live in, as long as you are in a chair like this, you can get close to a beautiful person, hear their voice, and touch their skin, even if you are not allowed to speak to them, let alone touch them.

Love in the chair (!) Well, you can't tell how mysterious and euphoric it is unless you've actually crawled into the chair and seen it. It is only a love of touch, hearing, and my sense of smell. It is a love in a world of darkness. It's never out of this world. Isn't this the love of the devil's kingdom? If you think about it, it is really beyond imagination how strange and horrible things are going on in this secluded corner of the world.

Of course, my original plan was to run away from the hotel as soon as I had accomplished the purpose of stealing, but I was so engrossed in the strange joy of the world that instead of running away, I continued to live in the chair as a permanent residence forever.

When I went out at night, I was careful not to make the slightest noise or be seen, so of course there was no danger, but even so, it was truly surprising that I had been living in a chair for several long months without being found at all.

Almost all the time, I was in a cramped place in my chair, bending my arms and folding my knees, so my whole body became numb, and I couldn't stand completely upright, and in the end, I crawled back and forth to the kitchen and the restroom as if it were a lie. What a madness I am. Even if I endured so much suffering, I could not feel like abandoning the world of strange feelings.

Some of them stayed there for a month or two, using it as a residence, but since it was originally a hotel, there were always guests coming and going. I couldn't help my strange love and the fact that the other person changed over time. And the memories of these mysterious lovers are etched in my mind, not by their appearance, as is usually the case, but mainly by the appearance of their bodies.

Some had a body as virile and slender and toned as a foal, some as bewitching and squishy as a snake, some as fat and fat as a rubber scabbard, and some had a body that was rich in fat and elasticity, and some had a strong, well-developed body, like a Greek sculpture. In addition, each woman's body had its own characteristics and charms.

And so, as I moved from woman to woman, I also had a different and strange experience.

One of them was that on one occasion, the ambassador of a powerful country in Europe (which I learned about through the gossip of a Japan boy) put his great body on my lap. He was better known as a world-class poet than as a politician, and I was so proud that I knew the great man's skin. He spoke to a couple of his compatriots on top of me, and then walked away. Of course, I don't know what he was talking about, but every time I did a jestuar, the tickling sensation of my body, which seemed to be warmer than ordinary people, gave me a kind of indescribable sting.

At that time, I suddenly imagined the following. Young! What result would it have been if I had stabbed him through the heart with a sharp knife from behind this leather? Of course, it would be a fatal wound to him that he would never be able to do again. What kind of fuss will Japan's political circles play for him, let alone his home country? What a passionate article the newspaper will carry. It would have a great impact on diplomatic relations between Japan and his home country, and from the standpoint of art, his death would surely be a great loss for the world. Such a major event can be easily realized with one move. When I thought about it, I couldn't help but feel a strange sense of pride.

The other is that when a famous dancer from a certain country came to visit in the morning, she happened to stay at the hotel and sat in my chair only once. At that time, I was impressed in the same way as in the case of the Ambassador, but on top of that, she gave me a feeling of ideal physical beauty that I had never experienced before. I had no time to think of her so beautifully, but I admired her with the same reverent feeling as I do with a work of art.

Besides that, I have still had many experiences that are unusual, mysterious, or creepy, but it is not the purpose of this letter to describe them here, and since it has become quite long, I will hasten to get to the main point.

Now, a few months after I came to the hotel, a change has occurred in my life. The reason for this is that the owner of the hotel decided to return to Japan for some reason, and handed it over to a Japan company without leaving him. As a result, the Japan company decided to change its conventional luxury sales policy and aim for advantageous management as a ryokan for the general public. For this reason, I entrusted the unused

furnishings to a large furniture dealer and auctioned them off, and my chair was added to the auction inventory.

When I found out, I was disappointed for a while. And I even thought about taking that opportunity to go back to my grandmother and start a new life. At that time, the amount of money he had stolen had amounted to a considerable amount, so even if he went out into the world, he would not live as miserable as before. However, looking back, the fact that I left the hotel was a great disappointment on the one hand, but on the other hand, it meant a new hope. For even though I had loved so many different sexes for several months, I could not help but feel a strange lack of mental strength, no matter how fine and likable the body was, because the other person was a foreigner. After all, Japan people cannot feel true love unless they are also Japan. That's what I was thinking. It just so happened that my chair was put up for auction. This time, perhaps, it will be bought by the Japan. And they may be placed in Japan homes. That was my new hope. I decided to continue to watch both the rabbit and the horn live in the chair for a little longer.

I had a very hard time for a couple of days in the storefront of the tool shop, but as soon as the auction began, my chair was immediately bought. Even if it was old, it was a magnificent chair that was eye-catching enough.

The buyer was an official who lived in a big city, not far from the city. When I was transported by a very shaking truck several miles from the storefront of the tool shop to the man's residence, I suffered to death in a chair, but that was nothing compared to the joy of knowing that the buyer was as Japan as I had hoped.

The buyer was the owner of a fine house, and my chair was placed in a large study in the Western-style house, and to my great satisfaction the study was used by the young and beautiful lady of the house rather than by the master. Since then, for about a month, I have been with my wife constantly. Except for her meals and bedtime, her supple body was always on top of me. This is because during that time she was immersed in her study and a certain work.

I don't need to tell you how much I loved her. She was the first Japan I had ever met, and she had a beautiful enough body. It was there that I felt true love for the first time. Compared to that, the many experiences at the hotel should never be called love. The proof of this is that I have never felt such a thing before, but I am not satisfied with the mere pleasure of secret caresses, and I have taken great pains to make my presence known somehow.

I wanted my wife, if possible, to be aware of me in the chair. And as for the good story of the insect, I thought that you loved me a lot. But how can we signal that? If she had openly

informed her that there were people hiding there, she would surely be so surprised that she would tell her masters and servants about it. Not only will everything be ruined, but I will have to wear a terrible name and even face legal punishment.

So I tried to make my wife at least feel comfortable in my chair and to get attached to it. As an artist, she must have a more subtle sense than most people. If she could feel the life in my chair, if she could feel attached to it as a living creature and not as a mere substance, then I would be satisfied.

When she threw herself on top of me, I tried to take it as gently as I could. When she was tired on top of me, I moved my knees and shifted her body position as much as I could. And when she dozed off and began to doze off, I shook my knees and acted as a cradle.

I don't know if the thoughtfulness has been rewarded, or if it's just my distraction, but these days it seems that my wife somehow loves my chair. She sinks into my chair with the sweet tenderness of a baby being held in her mother's bosom, or a virgin responding to her lover's embrace. And even the way he moves his body on my lap looks nostalgic.

In this way, my passion burned fiercely day by day. And finally, oh ma'am, at last, I have come to have a great desire that I do not understand. I even thought that if I could see my lover's face at a glance and exchange words, I could die as it was.

Ma'am, of course, you have long since been enlightened. Please forgive me for being so rude. Actually, it's you. Ever since your master bought my chair at that tool store in the city, I have been a poor man who has been in love with you more than you have.

Ma'am, it is my wish for the rest of my life. Shall you not go to see me just once? And shall you not say a word of comfort to this poor ugly man? I never want more. I am too ugly and dirty to wish for such a thing. Please listen to the earnest wishes of the unfortunate man in the world.

I slipped out of the mansion last night to write this letter. It is very dangerous to ask your wife to do this to your face, and it is something that I cannot accept.

And now, as you read this letter, I will be wandering around the mansion with a blue face of worry.

If you will heed this unseemly request, please put your handkerchief on the potted plant in the window of your study, and I will take it as a signal to visit the entrance of your residence as a casual visitor.

And this mysterious letter concluded with a fervent prayer.

When Yoshiko had read about half of the letter, she turned pale because of a terrible premonition for her.

Then, unconsciously, she stood up and ran out of the study with the creepy armchair and came towards the living room built in Japan. As for the latter part of the letter, I thought I would tear it up and accept it, but apparently I was in a hurry to read it on the small desk in the living room, both the rabbit and the horn.

Her hunch was correct.

What a horrible fact this is, well, what a terrible fact. Was there a stranger in that armchair where she sat every day?

"Oh, it's creepy."

She felt chills, as if cold water had been poured over her back. And no matter how long it took, I couldn't stop shuddering.

She was so stunned that she had no idea what to do with it. Examine the chair and look at it (?) How could such a creepy thing be possible? Even if there is no more human being, there must still be food and other filthy things attached to him.

"Ma'am, this is your letter."

I was stunned, and when I turned around, I saw that a maid had come with a sealed letter that had apparently arrived.

Yoshiko unconsciously took it and tried to open it, but when she suddenly saw the book, she was so struck by a terrible surprise that she involuntarily took the letter away. There was her name written on it with a postscript that was exactly the same as the one I had written earlier.

For a long time, she wondered if she should open it or not. But at last, I broke it and read the contents with trepidation. The letter was very short, but it contained a strange phrase that seemed to make her feel at once again.

Please forgive me for my indiscretion in sending you a letter so suddenly. I love reading his works on a daily basis. What I sent in a separate envelope is my poor creation. If you can give us a critique on the list, we will not be happy here. For some reason, I posted the manuscript before writing this letter, so I would like to ask if you have read it. What do you think? If I could impress my teacher in any way, I would not be so happy.

In the manuscript, I have omitted the form, but I would like to give it the title "The Human Chair."

Then, please don't be rude, until you ask. How-to.