

# 韓 国 に 架 け る 橋

**Don't Go Away, Chris!**

by YOSHIYUKI MASAKI

“How was it?”

“I failed.”

“Failed?”

“Yeah, failed.”

“Congratulations!”

“Congratulations?”

“Yeah, congratulations.”

“On what?”

“On the beginning of your new life.”

“New life?”

“Yes, new life. You failed the entrance exam which might be a disaster for you because you have put all your efforts into being enrolled at a university. But look at your life from a different angle?

“Different angle?”

“Yes. Going up to college and studying for four years or more is interesting in its own way, but that’s not the only way. Besides, that’s what everybody else is doing. You’ve got a chance to do things that people who have passed the exam cannot do.”

“But I’ll lose my friends because of this. I don’t want to talk with friends who have passed the exam. They will laugh at me. They will think I’m an inferior.”

“Are you?”

“No, I’m not, but they will think I am. And besides, up until today I have tried every possible means to be Japanese, because I know that the moment I tell my Japanese friends that I am a Korean I’ll be rejected. I won’t make any friends after that. I’ll have to suffer a lot of discrimination like you have had to. I am afraid. I don’t want to lose my friends. What shall I do?”

So saying, she burst into tears and threw herself into her father’s arms.

Her father had been brought to Japan at the time of the invasion of the Japanese imperialists. He has had a hard time since then. But he has no ill feelings toward Japanese people because he believes that what happened was not caused by the Japanese people as a whole but by a handful of Japanese imperialists. Having lived in Japan for thirty-seven years, though, he has encountered many cases of discrimination against Koreans. It was really torture. It seems to him that Japanese people are brainwashed into hating Koreans. But the situation is changing day by day, although very slowly. A better relationship is developing partly because of the textbook issue that enflamed Japan

and partly because of the best-selling book revealing the hateful and inhuman deeds of Unit 731.

“Chris, I understand your feelings, but why not stop trying to be Japanese? You may lose your old friends, but they are not really friends if they desert you knowing what you are.”

“Stop trying to be Japanese?”

Chris sat up as if she had seen some light in the darkness.

“Yes. I have to do that. I've been afraid to look at life that way. But I realize I have to be a human being before I am a Korean or a Japanese. And as an individual human being, I make friends. There's nothing to be afraid of. What have I been worrying about? Thanks, Dad.”

She ran out of the house not knowing where to go. She had forgotten, until she failed the exam and until she had talked with her father, that she was a Korean, partly because she had taken things for granted and partly because she had not had the courage to face the reality of being a “miserable” Korean. Her Japanese friends often say that Koreans are dirty and mean and dangerous, and these images are merely the creations of the Japanese to rationalize their wartime behavior.

## 2

Chris was sitting on a bench in the park wondering what future course she should take. The cold wind was blowing through her streaming hair. A man about forty years old came by and stopped.

“Looking for stars?” he asked.

“Looking for gals?” she asked without answering.

“Do I look like it?”

“Oh, yes.”

“You’ve read my mind.”

She smiled. He smiled. Then she asked the question.

“Do you often come to this place?”

“Yes, to find pretty little dollies.”

“Do you live around here?” she again asked without paying heed to his pretentions.

“Yes, to hunt as many sweeties as possible.”

“Come on, answer me. I’m sorry I began this.”

He looked at her silently for a while and said:

“Did anything happen to you? Your face looks as though some misfortune has befallen you.”

“Do I look like it?”

“Oh, yes.”

“You’ve read my mind.”

They felt closer.

“What’s your name?”

“Taro.”

“As in Momotaro?”

“Yeah, but no relation. Taro Shimoda. What’s yours?”

“Chris. Chris Chan. I’m a Korean.”

She felt she shouldn’t have told him that. She hoped he would not ask anything more about her nationality.

“Korean?”

She wanted to change the subject. So she just said “Yeah,” fearing another question might come. He stared at her. She felt this was the end.

“Why did you say that?”

“Say what?”

“That you are a Korean.”

“I don’t know. Maybe I thought you would understand me.”

“Yes. I’m glad you said that. I think we can get along well.”

“I don't know.”

“Chris?”

“Did I say you could call me that?”

“Can't I?”

“Yes, you may.”

“Thank you, Your Highness.”

Chris became a little more relaxed.

“What are you doing, Taro?”

“I'm teaching.”

“Oh, you are a teacher. I hate teachers.”

“I hope it doesn't follow that you hate me.”

“It might if you are the kind of teacher I hate.”

“What kind of teachers do you mean?”

“I hate my homeroom teacher.”

“Oh?”

“I hate him because he is anti-life, because he is a male chauvinist,

because he is nationalistic and because he treats his children as if they were thieves and destroyers instead of worthy individuals.”

“He seems to have a monopoly of all the evils.”

“Seems? He does. On top of that, he has authority and uses it as a shield to protect himself from his students’ criticism. And what he does in class is only to cram useless knowledge into unhappy students’ heads. You know, creativity is very important in education. Don’t you think it’s more important to make a snowman than to spend an hour on your grammar books?”

“You become eloquent when you talk about the things you hate.”

“I also become eloquent when I talk about the things I like.”

“Like me?”

“You narcissist!”

“Well, it’s getting late. Let me listen to more of your eloquence next time. I’ll walk you home.

While they were walking, Taro told her that he was teaching at the university and that he was also a poet. He hoped that he would not be filed among the kind of teachers that Chris didn’t like. They arrived at Chris’s home.

“I’m glad to have met you,” Taro said as he turned to leave.

“So am I. Can I see you again?”

“Why not?”

“How about tomorrow afternoon?”

“Sure.”

“Deal?”

“Deal.”

They parted and night fell as if the curtain of the stage had fallen after a scene. The cold wind became a little bit warmer as if to welcome their first encounter.

### 3

Next morning Chris went to City Hall to fill in her alien registration forms, and she was required to record her fingerprints as long as she lived in Japan. She often talked about this with her parents and had come to the conclusion that she must refuse to do it. She arrived at the counter.

“My name is Chris Chan. I am a Korean. I came to fill in the forms and record my fingerprints.”

“Oh, sure.” (Sure? Who the hell do you think you are? A devil judge?)

“But I’m not going to record my fingerprints.”

“Oh, that’s wrong.” (What’s wrong? Isn’t what you’re doing wrong?)



“You see, I was born in Japan and brought up in Japan. I went to Japanese schools. I have Japanese friends. So I am Japanese although I am of Korean ancestry. But you require us to record our fingerprints although you do not ask your own people to do the same. What is it for? What can you get out of this?”

“We can get nothing. Our rules say you have to.”

“Have you ever thought about those rules?”

“Yes, I have. They’re good rules. We are letting you live in Japan so you have to observe our rules.”

“It’s not a matter of observing rules or not. We have to question the existence of the rules.”

“They’re good rules. You should appreciate the fact that you are able to live in Japan. We have to keep an eye on you in case you attack us.”

“Attack you? For what? You feel you may be attacked because you are doing wrong to your potential attackers. You are afraid of them because you’re doing wrong. That’s why.”

“Anyway, you have to.”

“Anyway, I don’t want to. And I’m not going to.”

She came out of City Hall disgusted and hurried to the place where Taro had promised to meet her. It was around one o’clock at a coffee shop in the park. Taro was there already.

“Hi, have I kept you waiting?”

“Yes—one minute.”

“I should have kept you waiting two minutes.”

The waiter came.

“May I take your order?”

“Coffee, please,” said Chris.

“Make it two, please,” added Taro.

“Cream or sugar?”

Taro looked at Chris and she shook her head.

“No, thank you,” said Taro.

The waiter went.

“Taro,” began Chris, “I can’t understand Japanese people.”

“Oh?”

She explained what had happened at City Hall.

“I’m sorry about that,” apologized Taro.

“You don’t have to be sorry.”

“But I’m ashamed that such a system is still in existence thirty-seven years after the war ended.”

“Tell me, Taro, do Japanese people hate Koreans?”

“Hate is too strong a word, but it is true that many of them don’t like Koreans. That is because of the tragedies that occurred between our two countries. Like other people the Japanese don’t want to admit that what they did in wartime was wrong. They did very cruel things to Koreans in Japan as well as to Koreans in Korea. They want to believe that war made them do those things and that they were only pawns in prosecuting this cruelty, which is true, of course, in some cases. Also, by saying that Koreans are dangerous to their children they justify their acts.”

“I often wonder at how much discrimination against Buraku people is talked about and how little discrimination against Koreans is talked about in Japanese schools.”

“Yes, that’s true. Because Koreans are not Japanese, but Buraku people are.”

“Does that make any difference? Just because you are in the majority, are you entitled to discriminate against a minority? I am not Japanese, but I am a human being just as Buraku people are. Am I not entitled to live on this island as a human being?”

“What you say is right. And besides, we are what we are, and not what we have or what we make. People often forget that we were born naked. They try to seek material things and send their children to prestigious schools hoping that in the future they can work for a big company. In order to do that they have to be on an escalator going

up. You cannot go one step up or one step down or sideways, you have to stay where you are to reach the “summit”. Few parents have the courage and independence to think more of their children’s happiness than their ‘success’.”

“I understand what you mean. I have seen in Japanese schools that what the teachers care about most is how many students they can send to prestigious schools. To enter university is the only objective. How unfortunate the situation is!”

Just then, the strong wind buffeted them hard and Chris hid herself inside Taro’s overcoat. After the wind had gone she looked at him silently.

“Taro,” she said changing the subject. “Tell me more about yourself. What do you usually do?”

“I write.”

“Write letters?”

“Sometimes. In fact, I write stories, poems and novels, and prepare my lectures.”

“A professor and a poet?”

“Umm.”

“You’re going to write about me.”

“Well, I only write about pretty girls.”

“Then I’m the one.”

“I’m not so sure.”

They both laughed.

“Taro,” said Chris a little seriously, “you are not like other Japanese.”

“Aren’t I? I think I’m an ordinary Japanese. Look at my long legs. Look at my beautiful white skin. Look at my blond hair. No one but a *“dokingan”* (a very near-sighted person) would take me for an American or an Englishman or an Indian.”

She smiled, thought for a moment and said, “Taro?”

“Yes?”

“I think I love you.”

He looked at her and said “Why?”

“Because...”

They smiled and hugged and kissed—a long time.

4

After Chris went home she phoned him.

“Hello, is this Taro?”

“Oh, hi, Chris. What’s up?”

“Nothing. Just that I wanted to hear your voice.”

“Why not tape-record my voice and listen to it until you’re sick and tired of it?”

“It never tires me, darling.”

“Okay, suit yourself.”

“Taro, I have an interesting story to tell you.”

“What, on the phone?”

“Yes, wherever. When I came home this evening after seeing you, I met someone leaving my house. I wondered who it was because there are very few people in my neighbourhood who come and see our family, knowing that we are Koreans. I asked my father who it was. Who do you think it was?”

“I haven’t the slightest idea.”

“It was the father of someone who wanted to marry me.”

“Marry you?”

“Yes, you’ve got a rival, Taro.”

“And what happened?”

“Do you want to hear about it on the phone?”

“Yes, wherever.”

“Okay. The father came to my house to oppose the marriage.”

“Oppose?”

“Yes. Relieved?”

“Not really.”

“He said it was because of my birth”

“Oh?”

“You see what happened? He asked an agency to find out what sort of creatures we are. And they found out what they had been looking for. A Korean is not the sort of human being that an honorable Japanese can marry. Do they think their blood is more purple? Do they think their flesh is cleaner? Do they think only their tears are worth shedding?”

She was suffocating with tears.

“Calm down, Chris. Let’s meet this Saturday and you can hear my voice as much as you like. I’ll pick you up at one o’clock.”

“Okay. I’ll be waiting. Take care.”

“Thanks. Bye.”

“Bye-bye.”

5

Saturday afternoon in a car.

“Taro, I found some interesting articles in a magazine called *Viewpoints* that I came across in the bookstore. It featured the problem of hair in Japan; whether long or permed hair should be banned in schools or not.”

“How do they treat the problem?”

“They asked people of different nationalities this question: Should long hair or permed hair be banned at school? And almost all of the foreigners said it should not be banned. I think that’s interesting, because when you are in Japanese schools there’s no such question as to whether it should be banned or not. It’s a simple fact that long hair is wrong and that permed hair is worse. So when Japanese people read these articles they will be surprised to find that their standard of values may not be shared by other societies. I wonder how teachers will react to this.”

“Won’t you read one of the opinions for me?”

“Sure. One American cowgirl says:

‘No. I think you are taking away individualism when you tell a child that he can’t wear his hair long or she can’t wear hers long. I don’t believe in uniform types of anything, because we’re not all uniform. I don’t believe people should be stereotyped and made to look and dress and act like other people. I think you’re taking away individual personalities



when you do that. In teaching, you realize as much as anybody that children are not all alike. They don't think alike. They don't act alike. We don't want them to. That's what makes the world go around. We have differences of opinion, and to me opinion governs what you want to wear and how you want to wear it."

"Also, there's one quotation from a history book. It goes:

'At three o'clock on the morning of October 8, 1895, a party of Japanese went to Kongdong-ni outside the Great West Gate to meet the Taewon'gun and escort him to the palace. On their way they were joined by Training Unit soldiers and a number of Japanese guards. A number of mysterious Japanese civilians, who appeared to be criminals of some sort, also came along. Reaching Kyongbok palace, they opened fire on the royal guards, who were no match for them.

There was no escape for Queen Min this time. The Japanese ransacked the palace, and, when they found her, immediately stabbed her. She was carried, dying, into the courtyard and there, even before she was fully dead, her assassins poured kerosene over her body and set it aflame, to hide the evidence of how she had been killed...

The Japanese troops occupied the palace and seized the King Kojong. They were now ready to proceed to the restoration of a pro-Japanese government...

This barbarous act provoked widespread indignation throughout the world. The Japanese government, pretending to know nothing about it, sent a special envoy to inquire into

the matter. Japanese Minister Miura Goro and some forty others were arrested and imprisoned in Hiroshima, where they were put on trial. All of them were shortly freed, however, on grounds of "insufficient evidence". By this means the Japanese government hoped to exonerate itself of blame, but the fact that the murderers and those who had employed them went unpunished is sufficiently significant.

Having punished the guilty with a slap on the wrist, the Japanese tried to continue with the reform program as before...

...one of the reform laws, typical of the mechanical and insensitive approach of the Japanese, touched off an uproar. It was decreed that all Korean men should cut off their top-knots and wear their hair short in Western fashion. This might seem trivial to an outsider, but to the Koreans it symbolized the denial of all their customs and traditions, and Confucian scholars especially were outraged. Their attitude is perhaps best summed up by the scholar Ch'oe Ik-hyon, who said that he would sooner have his head cut off than his hair."

"Well, I agree. No one has the right to tell others what to do."

"Except the Japanese."

"What do you mean?"

"The Japanese have the right to tell Koreans to come to Japan against their will and then treat Koreans like hell," Chris said angrily.

"I'm sorry."

“I’m sorry. I said it again.”

“But it’s true.”

“Taro, tell me, why do I hate the Japanese?”

“You don’t. You don’t hate me and I’m Japanese. You say you hate them because you’ve been treated badly by some Japanese. But you have to remember there are Japanese people who are not like the ones you hate. There are people who love you. Besides, hate is not the opposite of love. If you don’t love people, you will not be interested in what they are doing. So you become indifferent to their actions. But that doesn’t happen when you love people. If they do hateful things, you hate them because you love the people doing those things. You want them to know that what they are doing is wrong. So hate is not a feeling you should be ashamed of.”

“But I hate the Japanese.”

“I’m Japanese.”

“I hate you.”

She leaned her head on Taro’s shoulder and whispered in his ear.

“I hate you because I love you.”

6

Today is Sunday. Chris was invited to a concert. Since she had two tickets she phoned Taro but he was not at home. She went alone.

After the concert, when Chris was leaving the hall, she saw in the distance a familiar figure walking beside a blond girl of all people. It was undoubtedly Taro. She ran away with tears running down her cheeks.

7

Next day there was a phone call from Taro.

Chris answered the phone.

“Hello.”

“Hi, Chris, it’s me.”

“Who?”

“Me.”

“Who is this?”

“Me.”

“I don’t know anyone called ‘Me’”.

Taro sensed the anger in her voice.

“What’s happened, Chris?”

She hung up.

There was a call again immediately. After many rings Chris picked up the receiver.

“...”

“Chris? Explain.”

“...”

“Okay, I’ll come to see you now.”

Taro drove fast, wondering what was the matter. On arriving Taro knocked on the door of her apartment. No one answered. The door was unlocked. Taro went in and found Chris standing there.

“What’s the matter, Chris?”

“Nothing.”

“Tell me.”

“You know.”

“I know what?”

“That girl.”

“Girl?”

“Yeah.”

“What are you talking about?”

“What am I talking about? You know you went to the concert with a girl. I saw you with my own eyes.”

“Oh, that.”

“Oh, that? It’s an everyday thing for you. You are a professor and a poet. You have such status you can change girls every time you feel like it and leave the last poor girl forlorn.”

“No, Chris, listen. She was my wife.”

“Your wife?”

“Yes. I met her when I was studying at university in America. We married there and came back to Japan after three years. She had never been to Japan before. So what she saw in Japan was quite different from what she had heard and read in the States. She was quite shocked and couldn’t get used to things Japanese. She wanted to go back to America. I knew she didn’t love me any more, and I didn’t love her, either. She suggested divorce and I agreed. Yesterday was the day when she’ll leave me and Japan. So we had a last date.”

“And she left you?”

“Umm.”

“Poor boy!”

She placed her hands on the sides of Taro’s neck and looked into his eyes.

“Taro, I’m sorry.”

“Chris...”

“Taro, would you please.”

She softly closed her eyes. This was the first time it happened.

## 8

In Taro's apartment.

Taro and Chris are talking about education in Japan. They believe that what's happening in Japanese schools is not education at all. Terrible things have been happening in Japanese schools. For example, one elementary school requires all its pupils to have a number and their names on the front of their chests and they have to go to and from school in this uniform. One pupil refuses to do this but as the years pass he feels invisible pressure coming from the teachers and also from his own fellow pupils.

In a junior high school, one pupil refuses to change his hairstyle to the one the school requires; bozu. His hair is short and normal even in Japanese society. But since that junior high school requires bozu, his hair is regarded as abnormal. But he sees no reason why he should cut his hair. And his father goes to court to determine which is right. Surprisingly, this is the first case where parents go to court about this kind of problem. More surprisingly, this father is the only person who is against the rule. The other parents are all for it.

Basically, Japanese education is anti-life. Young people's energies are not respected. Many teachers and parents believe in corporal punishment. There are very few parents who have the courage and

independence to believe that their children's happiness is more important than their "success". School life is like the army without arms. Japanese teachers' mentality is very much the same as that of the Japanese soldiers in totalitarian wartime, even after thirty-seven years.

Under these circumstances Taro and Chris are talking about what they should do.

"Taro, when I was looking at your shelves, I came across this book called *Summerhill* by A. S. Neill."

"Oh, *Summerhill*."

"I read it and it seems to offer a solution to the Japanese educational system."

"Yes, the idea is very good, but I wonder whether it would ever be accepted by Japanese people."

"Why? If it works once, it can work elsewhere, can't it?"

"One difficulty is that Japanese people are not used to the idea of freedom, which they easily confuse with licence or permissiveness. Neill's education is far from permissiveness. Neill's basic precept is love of life. Someone who loves life is characterized by the expressions "He's really alive" or "staying alive". A life-loving person is someone who wonders, tries to do something new, loves the adventure of living, sees the wood beyond the trees, and especially enjoys life. Also Neill treats children as equal individuals, not as destroyers or thieves.

Chris said:



“It is true that in Japan teachers are not treating their students as independent individuals worthy of respect. It seems to me that the relationship between Japanese teachers and their students is just like the relationship between Japanese soldiers and Korean people. Japanese soldiers said to the Koreans, ‘Come, follow our ideal and we will all prosper. But I can hear the Koreans saying, ‘Your ideal is different from ours. You follow your own ideal and we’ll follow ours. Leave us alone, please. Let’s live and let live.’ In the same way Japanese teachers say to their students, ‘Come, follow our ideal and we will all prosper.’ I can also hear the students say, ‘Your ideal is different from ours. You follow your own ideal and we’ll follow ours. Leave us alone please. Let’s live and let live, if you want to live at all.’”

Suddenly Chris felt dizzy and fainted. Taro caught her in his arms and hurried to hospital.

## 9

At the hospital.

Taro is waiting in the lobby. The doctor appears. Taro talks to him.

“How is she?”

The doctor sighs. Taro asks:

“Serious?”

The doctor nods.

“How serious?”

“She has leukemia.”

Black clouds cover his face as if to prevent him from facing reality.

“Why? God, Why? Why does she have to suffer from such a terrible disease? What has she done to deserve such cruelty? She has had more than enough of it.”

Turning to the doctor, Taro says:

“Can I see her now?”

“No. She is not awake. Come tomorrow. We will contact her parents.”

“Okay. Thanks.”

## 10

The next morning at the hospital.

When Taro arrives at the hospital, Chris's parents are coming out of her room. Taro asks:

“Awake?”

“Yes. She wants to see you,” her father says.

Taro goes into the room and finds Chris lying in bed.

“Taro, come here. I need you,” says Chris.

Taro seizes her hands and says:

“Chris, how are you feeling?”

“Okay.”

“The doctor says it’s getting better,” comforts Taro.

Chris smiles thank you and says:

“Taro, I have to die. And I want to say this to you. I don’t mind dying now because I know I can die with someone loving me. I thank God for letting me meet you. This encounter with you means everything to me. I love you from my heart and I’ll always be with you even after I die. You have taught me what love is and what life is. You are Japanese, but to me you are not. You are Taro, a human being. My death may not mean anything to other Japanese people but it means something to you. A Korean means something to a Japanese at last!”

Chris closed her eyes and died.

“Don’t! Chris! Don’t! Oh, God! Don’t take her away!”

Taro held her close and cried.

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