

**SOLITUDE IN THE PLAZA ( 2 )**

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## Chapter IV

The train was delayed about half an hour by a breakdown and Kigaki missed his connection for the last train from Tokyo Station to take him home. He went back to the office to spend the night there.

The big editorial room was now dormant, contrasting strangely with the daytime scene in which men, telephones, and copy paper were mingled in such confusion that it was hard to tell which was the master and which the servant. Reporters on night duty were grouped here and there in twos and threes, their heads on the desks among the telephones. If the telephone bells should ring, the heads would pop up and separate themselves from the tangle of cords on the desks. Some of the reporters were awake, playing *go* and Japanese chess. The sound of the stone counters and chess men thrown down on the playing boards echoed hollowly from the walls which were tangled with telephone wires and tubes of the interoffice communication system. The sound seemed out of place in this world which was symbolized by telephones and cylinder presses.

Wondering if anyone was at the Liaison desk, Kigaki looked between the grimy pillars toward the window and saw Haraguchi and

Mikuni talkig there. After recognizing them, he turned toward the lavatory and walked quickly to the door. He was anxious about the scraps of paper in his inside pocket.

The lavatory was the place for clandestine—no, private matters. He recalled the time when he had been in the army. In a society where the privacy of each individual is entirely disregarded, secrets lurk in the breast of each man as he crouches to evacuate his bowels.

The scraps of paper in his pocket....he had known they must be paper money when he had fingered them in the train and found they were long and narrow, with all thirteen sheets the same size. As he thought back, he realized that Tilpitz must have put them in his pocket as he was getting into the taxi and Tilpitz had jostled against him in a peculiar manner.

The scraps of paper were American dollars just as he had expected. Thirteen bills. Thirteen hundred dollars. Five hundred and twenty thousand yen at the black market price. Kigaki had never touched or even seen such a sum of money before in all his life.

*Why did Tilpitz give—or entrust—this money to me? Why?*

Coming out of the lavatory, he went toward the Liaison desk, walking heavily across the cement floor of the huge, gloomy room which seemed to smell of crime and darkness despite the bright glare of electric lights.

*Why did Tilpitz give this money to me? It might very well involve me automatically in the machinations which are going on behind the scenes that the newspapers report every day. I must look up that telephone number the old man gave me and see what it is.*

Haraguchi and Mikuni looked up at Kigaki, the unspoken question

'What happened to you?' showing on their faces.

"I had a few drinks in Yokohama and missed my last train from Tokyo, so I thought I'd stay at the office." Kigaki said.

"Doi phoned a while ago." Haraguchi said. "He said Hunt was there. You've been rubbing elbows with the 'great I see."

Haraguchi loosened and retied the handkerchief around his head and nervously fingered his half-grown moustache. "I'm going to lie down for a while," he said. "You take night duty with Mikuni." he said to Kigaki.

"Kigaki is only a temporary employee, so he's not supposed to have night duty." Mikuni said.

"Oh. Well...." Haraguchi stared at Kigaki for a minute, his brows clouded in thought, before he went to lie down.

The teletype at the Foreign News Desk had been clicking automatically while the reporters on night duty slept soundly, hunched over the desks. Mikuni went over and tore off the yellow paper from the machine, brought it back, and handed it to Kigaki after first reading it through himself.

Kigaki read: "London. Financial circles here reported they have information that the Soviet Union intends to sell a large sum of gold bullion in foreign markets. In order to get gold to send to Macao, Hong kong, France, and Sweden, she is said to be selling diamonds now on the European market, especially in Brussels. If she continues to sell large amounts of gold in foreign markets, especially in the Orient, it is feared that a general deflation will result all over the world with consequences more serious than those of the post-war inflatin. No one knows exactly how much gold bullion the Soviet Union has, but the market in Paris today reflected the fact that traders

are keeping a sharp watch on the Soviets' intentions...."

Mikuni returned the dispatch to the Foreign News desk.

"What does it all mean? You seem to be a Communist, so maybe you can explain it to me," Kigaki said. On his forehead there were deep wrinkles that contradicted the light tone of his question. To him this short report seemed like the top of an iceberg sticking out of the depths of the political world. *Chances and mischances in international politics like this must surely have increasingly important implications for the future—but how can the individual digest their meaning and fit all the different events into a pattern? Or maybe, as in the case of the people suffering in Korea, events happen apart from human agency and only drag humans into them later.* Tilpitz's words echoed in his mind, "Disorder and revolution begin from human ideals although their results are inhuman." As he returned the dispatch to Mikuni the thought had flashed through his mind, *Either these chances and mischances must be a "fiction" or else human beings are. And if one is fictional, aren't human beings closer to being fictional in our age, since the importance of the individual seems to count for less and less?*

"To put it the simplest way," Mikuni said, "Communism has gotten enough power to shake the world economic system without going through the steps of revolution or civil war. Up to now capitalism has had the initiative and has controlled international markets for imperialistic purposes. To put it in words that you might use, the anti-humanistic economic system of capitalism has already begun to be replaced throughout the world by a humanistic economic system which excludes the worthless spectre of gold. Gold bullion, whether it is pure

gold or not, is as useless as counterfeit coins to us laborers and farmers."

Listening to Mikuni, who could explain things so cleanly and sharply, Kigaki began to feel uneasy with the thirteen hundred dollar bills of Tilpitz's in his pocket. *Is this money connected with that dispatch? Didn't the old man say he had stayed in Hong Kong on his way back from Europe? And Hong Kong is near Makao.* Kigaki also remembered a long dispatch about trade with Communist China through Hong Kong which he had translated a few days ago and other dispatches kept crowding into his brain.

*If this is money of that kind and if I use it for any purpose whatever, it will be assimilated and exploited by the other side or by the specter of the international situation, no matter what my intention or how I use it. And if my individuality is weak and I am close to being a "fiction"....This is the borderline....*

He remembered Tilpitz's eager sense of being alive when, after asserting that he was only a "fiction", he had said in his low, sepulchral voice that he wanted to see disorder actually happening.

"I'm going to lie down for a while," Kigaki said. Mikuni nodded, while Kigaki gathered four chairs from the various desks and stretched out on them in as comfortable a position as he could find. As soon as he had lain down and closed his eyes, although the teletype was clicking loudly near him, his thoughts about the international situation and the nature of human beings were wiped cleanly from his mind and he could see the image of his wife Kyoko and his baby who would soon have her second birthday, sleeping in his house in Asagaya--no, in a rented room which had been converted from a parlor into a one-

room apartment. *It's a common enough scene—but it is strange that I can remember the peaceful sleeping faces of my wife and child when in Korea, just beyond the sea, thousands upon thousands of suffering people are wandering in the night and dying for lack of food, and every day there come dozens of dispatches all telling of the instability of the world. Yes, it's strange....*The faces of his wife and child disappeared from his retina and he could see something which looked at first like a narrow island and then became a boat. The boat was crowded with people sprawled untidily on the deck, and as it approached a narrow strait it seemed about to sink of its own weight. The people on the starboard side tried to moor the boat to the land on the right without standing, looking around with stealthy glances as they sat on the deck, and the people on the port side were desperately throwing ropes toward the land on the left. But most of the passengers didn't seem to be much worried about the boat's sinking, and kept sitting calmly sprawled on the deck. Kigaki was sitting like the others, craning his neck from one side to the other. He was thinking uneasily, *Maybe I'm too heavy. With a heavy fellow like me on board, this boat must sink. I'm acting like a spoiled child to just sit here and do nothing....*The rivets of the deck were sticking into his hip, as if they were punishing him for behaving as he was. He twisted his body around to try to get into a more comfortable position and hit his head against the leg of a desk.

As he raised himself on his elbow, the bills in his inside pocket rustled again. *Thirteen hundred dollars. Five hundred and twenty thousand yen. Money that I am under no obligation for—I didn't even pick it up off the street.* Ever since he had

realized in the train that the scraps of paper must be money, he had been building a plan in the part of his brain that was free from hesitation and fear.

A few minutes before when he had thought about Kyoko and his baby, he had called them "my wife and child", but he had stopped abruptly in his thought. He and Kyoko were not legally husband and wife. When the executive of the newspaper which he had worked for before had helped him with the negotiations, his real wife had agreed to give him a divorce if he would pay her half the amount of money which he now had in his pocket.

*Thirteen hundred dollars. Five hundred and twenty thousand yen. I could—I ought to pay her the whole sum, of course . . . . But even if Kyoko's and the child's names can be legally entered in the city records that way, the freedom bought with this money will turn sour. This money did not come from my labor and if I use it, I will no longer be the hero in my own drama. The money and the freedom it would purchase are mere accidents, and if I use it, chance will replace me as the hero.* The acquiring of the 520,000 yen in that way was entirely accidental. It was not a necessary consequence of any action on his part and he felt almost as if he had become a cipher. He touched the outside of his breast pocket, as if he wanted to make sure of the hero in himself. As he was staring absently at the ceiling with his hand on his chest, he remembered talking about the novel with Mikuni—*incidents, facts, or accidents become the heroes*—and he remembered Tiplitz's face as he said, "I am one of those results of disorder." Even if the bundle of money in his inside pocket had been seized from the sewerage of the international situation, it was real money now—not

counterfeit—just as Tiplitz is not a ghost, but a real character in the play of events. *But if the money were used to buy my freedom, to atone for a mistake I once made, it would suddenly change into stage money and I would no longer be the hero of the play. That is the borderline.*

This borderline stood out dimly, like a misty, soaring peak of a continental divide, in the middle of the situation in which accident, money, and man were hopelessly entangled. *This is the true drama of the modern age, free of chance and mischance.*

*And that is the theme for my novel.* As he lay there thinking, stretched out uncomfortably on the chairs without changing his position, the novel began gradually to take shape in his mind. *Chance and Drama....mischance and drama....* Then the face of his legal wife appeared indistinctly upon his retina and gradually became clearer and clearer, driving all thoughts of the novel out of his mind. He opened his eyes quickly, and stared wide-eyed for some minutes like a drowned person, until his eyelids closed again slowly and he sank to the bottom of sleep, leaving thoughts of the novel and the chances of life on the surface of his consciousness.

With the same haste that he had opened his eyes just now, he had married precipitously at the beginning of the war, in an attempt to close his eyes to the outside world. A month after the marriage he had been called into the Army. A few weeks later, x-rays had shown trouble in his chest and he was discharged after three months in an Army hospital. It had been too brief an experience for him to get hardened to Army life or surrender to its numbing routine. But it had been long enough to tear away from him the talisman that young Kigaki had been cherishing so carefully lest it should be broken. The

charm had been made up of such terms as 'fatherland', 'Imperial Army', and 'Imperial Throne', which had been transmitted in an unbroken line. He had believed that these words had the power to change the world into a misty utopia which was too vast and spacious to even imagine. But after his discharge he was bored and the freshness of life itself was gone. When life loses its freshness one becomes cruel and irresponsible, even to those he loves. He neglected his wife. Events from the outside world race through the air like electric waves, and reach into our lives, changing our relation with other people.

He went to Hong Kong to look for a job and then moved to Shanghai. There he met Kyoko, who was working in the Intelligence Section of the German Embassy. In the Embassy there had been a Chinese youth whom Kyoko had become friends with. Sometimes they would talk about the work she was typing and about Japan. After the war he was revealed to be a spy from Chungking and Kyoko was afraid that she had innocently given him important information, although Kigaki doubted it. She had also been forced by the Japanese *Kempei Tai* to report on the actions of the Germans and she had probably given the Germans information about Japan in the course of daily conversation. Thus she had become a sort of treble spy. Kigaki was surprised at first that she was so upset about having given away information, although he later came to understand how she felt. Her worrying brought on a fever which the doctors couldn't diagnose, and she suffered a nervous breakdown. Kigaki told her about the advisors to the Konoye Cabinet who had been connected with the Sorge spy ring and were said to have given Japanese national secrets to Russia. He tried to console her by saying, "Maybe it was really a kind of patriotism after all, and it's the same sort of thing you did." But she

shook her head and couldn't agree with him, although at that time many people were changing their ideas and committing themselves to an internationalist way of thinking which transcended the old nationalist conceptions of patriotism.

At that time in Shanghai, as in Japan after her defeat in the war, one could always eat if he had ability in languages; but she didn't want to work any more. She came back to Japan with Kigaki and they continued living together. Even when Kigaki's income was not enough to buy decent food for them, she stubbornly kept refusing to work for the Occupation Forces, although she had several good chances, and they ate the cheap, rationed bread made from corn flour. He and she were united at the broken places of their spirits. The poison of the international situation had burned the thin skin covering the spirit of these young people brought up in the relative seclusion of their island country. Perhaps the venom had even penetrated to the quick and destroyed their resolution. Such people, as in the case of Doi, are the best fitted to become treble spies.

When the humid summer night was just breaking into dawn, Kigaki was suddenly awakened by high-pitched voices raised in argument.

“What are you talking about, you son of a bitch! Patriotism of your kind! Why don't you go to Russia if you like it better than Japan?”

Kigaki opened his eyes. Haraguchi had just been speaking, his voice angry and indignant.

Mikuni answered him. “You're not worth arguing with. The patriotism you're talking about is not that of our country where the people, oppressed with taxes and hard times, are actually living, but

only the kind of patriotism which called people 'slackers' during the war if they dared to think for themselves!"

Doi, just back from Yokohama, stood between them like an adult trying to separate quarreling children. "Don't get excited, Mr. Haraguchi! Take it easy now, Mikuni!" Although Kigaki had just awakened, it was apparent to him that Doi did not know what the cause of the argument had been.

The reporters on night duty, who always got bored toward dawn, gathered around to watch the excitement. Haraguchi, his thick lower lip projecting, looked as if he were just waiting for the chance to hit Mikuni. Kigaki swung his feet down to the floor and sat on the chair, watching Mikuni's face closely. He wondered whether Mikuni was thinking for himself or whether he was just parroting what he had read somewhere. Nine out of ten newspaper reporters are good conversationalists while they talk casually; but if they get in an argument they suddenly lose their individuality, become stiff, and sound as if they were talking out of a book. Kigaki couldn't gather much from Mikuni's face, which was very pale with the eyelids and lips twitching convulsively. He couldn't guess what the cause of this argument had been, but Haraguchi's face was flushed and angry; he looked as if he had felt a physical repugnance to Mikuni's words. *It's five years since the end of the war, thought Kigaki, but we still can't think of our country without automatically thinking of the precariousness of its position.*

Kigaki stood up, not knowing what to do, reached for a half full cup of tea which someone had left on the desk, and drained it. He noticed that Haraguchi was holding in his hand a manuscript typed in English. Haraguchi and Mikuni had clamped their mouths shut and

were staring at each other when the teletype broke the tense silence. While Japanese were arguing about patriotism, other countries of the world were scattering so-called news over the restless earth.

Mikuni and Haraguchi continued to stand stockstill, staring at each other. Kigaki crossed his arms and noticed that the signature on the manuscript which Haraguchi was holding in his hand looked familiar. Haraguchi sat down heavily at his desk and took a manuscript out of the drawer. Then he got up again and left the room.

Pointing to the typed manuscript on Haraguchi's desk, Mikuni said to Kigaki, "This came from Howard Hunt a little while ago. You were with him, weren't you? What did you talk about? Apparently this manuscript is the result. That's what started the fight. That damn fool Haraguchi, parroting Hunt's criticism, said that Japan's intellectuals will ruin the country, so——"

"Rearmament talk?"

"No——so I said that if you stopped to think about it, there is no case in history where a country has been ruined by serious thinking, but that opportunists, who are always changing sides without thinking about anything except their own immediate selfish interests, will ruin a country. Then he got sore."

Holding Hunt's manuscript in his hand, Kigaki was amazed at this American's diligence. He must have returned from Yokohama directly to his office, typed the manuscript, and sent it right over. Under the headline "Strange Theory of Patriotism Held by Japanese Intellectuals", he had written: "Though Japanese intellectuals seem to know more about Sartre than the average Frenchman, they are amazingly naive in their attitude toward the international situation, for their understanding of it is still that of a child. Some say that Japan must

remain neutral—isolated and solitary—but they do not realize that in the world today, especially since the outbreak of the Korean War, isolation and neutrality are no longer possible anywhere. Even if they are aware of this fact, they dare to close their eyes to it. Others say that the future of democracy in Japan, her living standard, her security, her freedom, all depend upon American aid; that if their country is to be worth living in, it must be supported by America. What is the origin of such an ignominious theory of patriotism, which seems to despise the Japanese nation itself? Perhaps it has become an habitual way of thinking from the long history of suppression which the Japanese intelligentsia have been subjected to....”

As Kigaki read on, he could feel Mikuni’s sharp stare on his back, almost as if the rays of the sun, focused through a magnifying glass, were burning his skin.

“At the beginning Hunt repeats what I said,” Kigaki began.

“Yes. An extrovert like Hunt doesn’t seem to know the meaning of that word ‘solitude’.”

“I don’t know what Haraguchi intends to do with this article, but in one respect what Hunt says is true. Lately I can’t help thinking that international politics have been moving in accordance with some monstrous logic which is entirely divorced from human reason and in which war is the only reality.”

“And man is left solitary and helpless, standing between the idea of peace and the reality of war.”

“Yes.”

“And that’s just the reason—as I said before—that we must give a humanistic base to our economic system to unite the ideal and the real and put an end to human solitude and misery. That’s why the French

Communist newspaper is called *L'Humanité*."

Kigaki could find nothing to answer this logic. *But*, he thought, looking at Mikuni's eager face which had the beauty of conviction written on it, *his logic has no shadow of ambiguity. A theory which has no ambiguity in it is not for ordinary people, but only for men who fight and struggle for a cause. But then, I wonder if peace and security have ever been gained without a struggle....*

"Actually," Mikuni was saying, "I've never had this feeling of solitude, but maybe it's the hard core at the center of things which nothing can dissolve and from which everything bounces off in another direction. But just thinking about it won't get us anywhere. If we don't go forward and act for ourselves—even under the Occupation—we will lose even our solitude and Japan's existence will fade away like the last scene in a movie."

A boy delivered a copy of the last morning edition to each desk, and Doi opened the pages with a crackling sound. Pointing to one of the advertisements he called over, "How come you're working on this paper, Kigaki, when you could get jobs like this?" Doi was pointing to an advertisement for a detective story which Kigaki had translated.

"What's that?" asked Mikuni, coming and leaning over to look where Doi was pointing. "*A Spectre Haunts*. Hey, that's a good title, isn't it? 'Ghost wanders around a terror-stricken town at midday.' Say, did you steal that title from the first paragraph of the *Communist Manifesto*?"

Mikuni's joke fell a little flat after the previous argument.

Haraguchi phoned the dining room and asked Kigaki to have breakfast with him, since he had something he wanted to talk over

with him.

"I guess he's going to offer you a permanent job," Doi said. "But don't take it. You'd be more in your element translating mystery stories at home. I think you'd be happier doing that. And in the long run you won't get anywhere working on a paper like this." Doi glanced over at Mikuni as he continued, "And if a revolution breaks out like the one in Korea, we'll all be in hot water...."

Doi opened his desk drawer and showed them several American paper bound books, most of them mystery novels. A typical cover, printed in garish colors, showed a young woman with plump breasts lying loosely in death on a stairway with a revolver and a vial of poison nearby. One of the books caught Kigaki's eye. On the cover was a picture of a man standing dazed in the center of an intersection which seemed to be near Times Square. The man was about to be run down by the automobiles converging on him from all directions. The title of the book was *Stranger in Town*.

Kigaki climbed the three flights to the dining room with heavy steps and a heavy heart. He was tired from not having slept well, but there was something more than that. *What will I say if he offers me a permanent job? There's a lot more to it than the money....By his choices man asserts his individuality....Freedom which remains unused is not freedom at all.*

He paused abruptly before climbing the last flight to the dining room. *Stranger in Town.... I might write a novel with a hypothetical stranger as the hero. The initial situation of this stranger would be determined by the crossing of his own circumstances with the conditions of the outer world. And then various chances and mischances in turn would act upon*

*the initial situation diagonally, so to speak, determining the direction that he will take. It's like the machines they use for pinpointing the location of an airplane. Until the exact location has been plotted, the plane is still a hypothetical one, just as the stranger remains a hypothetical person until his exact situation has been determined. That must be described first. Hypothetical people—like people hired for a job temporarily—do not exist. Everyone is an individual. A hypothetical person would be purely fictional. It may not be the way human beings really achieve individuality, but by going from the outward fiction to the inner reality, I can make clear the unknown quality, the unpredictable area in which every person differs from every other person. I shall concentrate my efforts in lighting up that area. In other words, I will try to explain the quiet area at the center of the typhoon which brings the typhoon into existence, by describing the actual wind outside. If I can place the unpredictable area which seems to be at the center of my own existence in its proper perspective with outer reality, then I should be able to find out what makes me tick. The unpredictable area, the quiet center of the typhoon—these correspond to the spark of life at the center of any human being. If it is dead, it must be rekindled.*

*For a title....that's it, I'll call it "SOLITUDE IN THE PLAZA". That's the way a "stranger in town" would feel.*

He stopped again on the landing and faced the open window, his face clouded in concentration, almost as if it were distorted by pain. The damp morning breeze blew against his face, bringing a sour smell

of open sewers. His neck and face became damp. And the idea for his novel gradually turned sore too. *Nothing can resist the powerful force of decay that this wind spreads over everything it touches*, he thought. His sense of fatigue and frustration increased. *There's a war in Korea. What the use of trying to think things through, if the only conclusion I can reach is that I will die with my eyes open? We — Korean youths, American youths, Russian youths, French youths, British youths, German youths, Japanese youths—were we born only to learn about war? They talk of enemies .....but war itself is the enemy.*

Mikuni's words came back to him: "By year after next three will surely be world chaos. You know that, don't you?" *What do I know? Did he think that war can be prevented if we realize the danger, or did he mean that we must all get read to take sides when it comes, in order to keep our honor untarnished? "you know that, don't you?" What do I really know? Nothing.... Should I accept a regular job as reporter if he offers it to me? Will the third world war break out tomorrow? If it does, it will have nothing to do with what I know or don't know. But still, events demand knowledge and action from each man.* In one of the dispatches scattered on his desk some time ago he had read: "The most economical use of the atomic bomb would be to bomb large population centers. However, production of the bombs has probably reached a stage where less economical uses may be considered...." Kigaki was tired of living in a world where one's attitude and even his very existence depended upon the decisions of other people.

He looked down at the street from the window. Trucks were returning to the office one by one after delivering the morning edition.

*If I should throw myself down on the pavement....Is that the only way to escape from the decision of other people? But to die before you have asserted your individuality is not even to die, but merely to destroy a fiction.* The lurid scenes on the cover of Doi's mystery novels flashed through his mind.

Haraguchi was stuffing large quantities of rice into his mouth with his choopsticks. Dregs of soup stuck to his scraggly moustache. He finished eating before Kigaki, wiped his moustache carefully on the handkerchief tied around his neck to catch the sweat, and stuck out his lower jaw as he started to speak.

"I'm going to tell you something in strict confidence," he began, "because I've heard enough about you to trust you." Haraguchi paused impressively. "I'm retiring from the office and starting a new job. Now, you don't intend to work here permanently, do you? Or do you?" "I guess not."

"That's not a very definite answer. Well, never mind. Now, frankly, I'm resigning from my job to enter the National Police Reserves. I'm going to do public relations work there. I mean...." Haraguchi leaned across the table toward Kigaki in a confidential manner. "I've been writing only unsigned articles for the paper. I mean I'm tired of....well, not having more responsibility. I mean it's boring."

As Haraguchi talked on, his manner became more and more confidential and he dropped his usual pretence of superiority. "Well, that's it," he continued. "I suppose I ought to make sure that you're regular and aboveboard in your thinking and your politics, although everyone says you are."

"I'm certainly not 'regular' in my thinking, though I don't know who is, for that matter," Kigaki replied. "Regular or irregular, things

aren't that clear to me. There are a lot of ghosts wandering around in my brain." Haraguchi's manner had inspired a feeling of intimacy in Kigaki, even though he realized that such intimacy might be dangerous.

Haraguchi laughed. "A lot of ghosts, eh? That's an interesting way to put it. But I trust you. I mean, will you come with me? You don't want to stay in this office all your life, overworked and underpaid. After all, the way you can rattle along in English...." Haraguchi paused as he worked a toothpick around in his mouth. "This is an age when a knowledge of languages can take you a long way in politics, so you——"

"I can read and write English, but I'm not that fluent in speaking it. And besides, I hate the police and the army. I'm sorry, but I can't accept your offer."

Haraguchi stretched out his hand abruptly to the tea pot on the table and poured himself a cup of tea, staring all the while at Kigaki. He drained the tea rapidly, his Adam's apple bobbing up and down. On his throat there were small purple dots where he had cut himself shaving. These ugly blotches may have been part of the reason why Kigaki refused his proposal.

*Mikuni said that Haraguchi had accused me of being a troublemaker for bringing up the question of whether the North Koreans should be called 'enemies'. Why did he make this proposal just now? What has he heard about me to make him trust me? Was his statement at the meeting just a ruse to get me fired so he could persuade me to join the police reserves? Or did he see through my weakness and understand my lack of resolution? Kigaki, not knowing what to do, was almost afraid of himself.*

Prefacing his next remarks by saying that he was speaking for Soneda, Haraguchi went on to ask Kigaki if he would agree tentatively to become a regular reporter, since he couldn't persuade him to join the police reserves.

"If I agreed, it would be finally, not tentatively."

"What do you mean by 'if'?"

"I mean I'd have to talk it over...."

"With your wife? Or with the man from the Sekai Newspaper office who asked you to help us out?"

"With both."

Haraguchi nodded in understanding and stood up to go. "Well, I guess that's all then." Kigaki couldn't help noticing on Haraguchi's face the expression of contempt for someone who was irresolute and let his chances slip away.

"Anyway, our newspaper might be called reactionary and I guess maybe you're like the fellow travelers after all, so I suppose you think the police are fascists," Haraguchi said sarcastically as he left the room. Kigaki could see an official looking document sticking out of his back pocket. The word 'Report' was written in a broad flourish at the top.

*I'd have to talk it over.... Do I really have to talk it over with anybody? Or did I take advantage of the Japanese custom of avoiding decisions on individual responsibility and postponing matters by saying 'Let me think it over for a while' or 'I must talk it over with So-and-so'. Perhaps we don't want to escape from the decisions of other people. And Haraguchi said 'I guess maybe you're like the fellow travelers after all.' Who am I traveling with?*

The ground felt unsteady under his feet as he walked back to the editorial room. More than half of the reporters on the day shift had already arrived and telephones were ringing on the desks everywhere. Another day at the newspaper office had started, just like all the days which would continue in an unbroken line until the end of the world.

Mikuni, who was getting ready to go home, called to Kigaki. "Let's have coffee somewhere and catch a train from Tokyo Station. I signed you in for having done night duty."

*(to be concluded)*