



Hidemi's Rambling No.141

To me, the best guitarist is Toshiyuki Abe of Tulip. Once, he came to a local radio show, which was recorded with the audience. My past best friend and I were determined to go to the studio because Mr. Abe hardly appeared on TV and the only chance to see him had been Tulip's concerts. We called the radio station for the location and it was a 30-minute bus ride plus a one-hour train ride with a number of connections. It was Saturday and the only way for us to make it was going there as soon as school was over, as we were still high school students. We were tired from a long trip with our heavy school bags when we arrived. But to our huge shock, we found that we came to the wrong studio since the radio station had two studios at the totally different locations and the phone operator had told us the wrong one by mistake. It took another one hour to the other studio by train. We finally reached the studio exhausted, and the security guard at the gate didn't let us in because we didn't have the required pass which existence we didn't know. After all the toil, we were denied on the spot. We were standing at a loss when we saw two girls beckoning to us at the gate. They had the pass and although we were completely strangers, they told the guard that we were their friends and came here together. The two girls looked like angels. The show had already begun but because Mr. Abe was the main attraction, his appearance was the last part, for which we were barely in time. I had never seen him so closely. We spent about four hours of turmoil in total on that day for Mr. Abe's 15-minute appearance. It was so worthwhile, really...

Hidemi's Rambling No.142

Cherry blossoms begin to bloom. That means it's the season for Japanese people's customary cherry blossom-viewing picnic. It sounds lovely but the reality is a dreadfully gross event. Every once in a while, they feel the need to confirm their unity as a nation by doing the same thing at the same time. Their cherry blossom picnic is the perfect example. Before the full bloom, they save a spot a few days ahead with a tarp. On the picnic, they get together with their colleagues and bosses if they are office workers, or seniors and juniors if they are college students. And they drink beer into a stupor sitting on the tarp. A couple of people are killed by acute alcoholic poisoning every year. Parks and the areas with cherry blossoms are crammed with the tarps and people on them. It's a completely miserable sight to me not only because of the tarps but also because it has become an obligation. They have to do this not to disturb the harmony in their community. I enjoy cherry blossoms every year by taking a walk near my apartment, because I've never been under obligation of any kind. I'm so outside of any community...

Hidemi's Rambling No.143

My cell phone is almost exclusively used to receive coupons from shops and restaurants via e-mail. I got a special coupon for big burgers from McDonald's. It's only valid for three days and makes the big burger at \$2 each. I rushed to McDonald's today and used the coupon. There were quite a few people ordering at the counter but to my surprise, no one was using a coupon although the deal was exceptionally good. They had a cell phone, all right, but were looking at it for other purposes, not for a coupon. When I think about what to eat, I give priority to coupons. But watching people order randomly and pay at its list price, I was wondering if I was crazy to try to save money to the maximum. Since the coupon was for two burgers at one purchase per customer, I actually exited the place once after I got two, then entered again, and placed an order for another two. That certainly no one was doing...

Hideki's Rambling No.144

Japanese school year ends in March, and it's the time for good-byes. I, for one, had my fair share of good-byes in March. It was March when I left my hometown. A few years before that, I saw my best teacher off crying at the train station, also in March. She was my homeroom teacher when I was a freshman in high school. I had never had so helpful, close teacher as her in my life. Every time I felt gloomy, she somehow sensed it and encouraged me. Whenever I was talking with my friends after class, she joined to hear my stories, which she really liked because she thought I was funny. She saved me from my otherwise dismal school days during the year. One day, I heard that she was going to transfer to a distant city. I had felt so sad from then on. I couldn't stop thinking about it. One morning, I was walking to a train station for school as usual. Near the station, a steep slope led to a small bridge over a filthy, smelly, purple river from some factories. While I was walking on the slope toward the bridge, from nowhere, a song came to my mind. That was the first song I ever wrote and was about my teacher. At her farewell party, I sang my song with playing the guitar in front of people for the first time. Although I played and sang flawlessly, nobody applauded. Instead, everybody cried. My teacher was crying for the whole song. My first song was probably too sad for the occasion...

Hidemi's Rambling No.145

It's April. Time for a new class, a new school, a new job, and a new life. I remember how disappointed I was at my college life when I started it. Everything was so stupid. To get out, I planned to go to school in England. I didn't have any money and that was why I got my first after-school job. It was a cashier at a restaurant. The bar code era was years ahead and I had to memorize all the prices on the menu to put them on the register as quickly as possible. People came to the place all at once at dinnertime and the cashier wasn't allowed to be slow punching down the keys of the register by looking at the price one by one. I memorized innumerable prices and punched the keys fast, but there was one thing I couldn't manage to do. Changing small rolls of paper inside the register. It had two rolls inside, one for receipts for customers, and one for the record for the headquarters. When it's running out, the color of paper turned pink. My boss told me how to change it with a new roll for several times, but I couldn't get it anyway. Every time the pink paper came out, the only thing I did was to pray that the paper would last until my shift was over. It worked for a month, and then, my luck ran out with the paper. The customers came to check out ceaselessly after the roll for the record turned pink. The paper was finally out, but it was such a busy night and I kept punching the keys. When my shift was over, I was reprimanded, and worked overtime unpaid to complete the record by hand from the order sheets. My boss told me to conclude the record with my apology to the headquarters. Although I was supposed to write 'I'm sorry', I wrote 'I'm not sorry' by mistake. I burst into laughter while other workers were staring at me with stern faces. They say a cashier is one of the easiest jobs, even that I couldn't do. I've been observing myself for many years and it seems there's no job in this world that I can do satisfactorily...

Hidemi's Rambling No.146

An online supermarket had given me five-percent off coupons for its physical store. I was going to shop there yesterday but the weather was awful with strong winds. I stayed home, cleaning and doing the wash. The wind was picking up more and more, and at night, it was a storm like a typhoon that was quite unusual for this time of year. It was caused by the low-pressure system and as I was afraid, my headache started. As the storm got stronger, my headache got worse. With the noise of blowing winds and a bad headache, I couldn't sleep well. About twice a year, some kids visit and stay with my neighbors two doors down, and their running footsteps disturb me because the walls of my apartment building are too thin. Unfortunately, yesterday was one of their visits. Their relentless drum roll footsteps joined with the storm and the headache in the morning and I got up with the three-way attack. Although the storm subsided, I couldn't go to the store today because I felt ill from the severe night...

Hideki's Rambling No.147

When I woke up, it was already Easter evening. After lunch, I walked to the train station to shop for party foods. On my way, I enjoyed cherry blossoms in full bloom, taking pictures at a park. Because it was night, there was nobody in the park so that I monopolized the view in the quiet environment. One of a few good things living in Japan is safe enough to walk around a park at night. Then, I arrived at the supermarket at perfect timing as they had just started putting half-off stickers on the unsold prepared foods. I got tons of Chinese food and took more pictures of cherry blossoms from a pedestrian bridge on my way home. As soon as I came home, I had to take a bath because I've set a cutoff time for a bath not to disturb my next-door neighbors with the noise, which is all because of the thin walls of my apartment as I've mentioned. By the time I finally sat at the table for our Easter party, only half an hour was left to midnight. I had been looking forward to the party for some time but it turned out to be a short one...

Hidemi's Rambling No.148

Last night, I had a dream about being disliked. I got on the bus with my mother and there were a few dogs aboard. She told me to pick one dog as a favorite and I pointed at one dog. He looked at me startled, wrenched open the window and ran away by jumping out of the bus. Then, my mother detailed what she hated about me one by one, and it went forever. When I looked outside, a teenage boy was slapped and scolded by his father who shouted 'You're no use! You're a disgrace!' I was thinking, 'I'm not the only one who isn't loved. He is having a worse day than I am. Maybe my life is better than his. I'll put this on my blog today anyway.' And, I woke up...

Hidemi's Rambling No.149

Today is Buddha's birthday. I had lived with my grandmother until I left my hometown and she led a secluded life. She rarely went out but the Buddhist event was one of her exceptions. Although she had a limp and hated to step out of the house, she was willing to take a one-hour train ride alone to the head temple of Buddhism. There, she would pour special sweetened tea over a statue of Buddha and bring the tea home. Drinking it was supposed to make us healthy and happy. Unfortunately, it tasted horrible. Since it was considered sacred and a precious result of my grandmother's rare long trip, I had to finish it thankfully with a forced smile. It was no more than annual torture for me...

Hideki's Rambling No.150

The house in which I grew up was about 100 years old. Pieces of the wall plaster were falling off little by little and it was to be rebuilt when I was ten. During the days of moving out, my grandmother took out an old paper talisman from her ancient drawers. It had a mysterious picture on it. According to my grandmother, the talisman drew clothes if it was kept in drawers so that the drawers would be filled with clothes. She gave it to me and told me that I would never be short of clothes. I didn't say out loud but thought it wouldn't work because I knew how small her wardrobe was. When our new house was completed, I had my own room for the first time and kept the talisman in my wardrobe. As I thought, I was always short of clothes for years. Although the talisman didn't work, I brought it with me when I left my hometown. Since then, the number of my clothes has been increasing and now, my closet is full of clothes. The talisman does work after all, but it has an awfully delayed effect. Another magic is, that almost all of my clothes cost around \$10...