



Hidemi's Rambling No.211

I spent the whole day giving much thought to the apartment that I'd found. There are numerous cons about the place, but moving in a better place with my low price range seems impossible. I looked for solutions for the cons – the soon-out-of-order water pipes and the broken boiler, except for the neighbor who is wanted for murder, as there's nothing I can do about it. Thanks to the Internet and my partner's unconventional ideas, I reached the solutions at the end of the day. I was so excited and happy that moving in that gorgeous apartment was getting feasible. I got up this morning only to find out that the place had been just taken. I hope you can imagine how disappointed I am...

Hidemi's Rambling No.212

I shopped at the discount supermarket that I'd recently noticed its existence again. Their usual prices are at the level of special sale prices at other supermarket. They also have their private brand at even lower prices for beer, noodles and wine. Meat is cheaper than the half-price one at other stores. I get the meat there with further discounts because of the imminent expiration date, so that the price is unbelievable for meat. It's open 24 hours and I can go there any time I want without worrying about its closing time. It's a perfect place to shop for me if not one particular thing –the music played in the store. They play Japanese hit songs annoyingly loudly. Their problems are they sound like a patchwork of fragments from hit songs of U.S. that were popular ten years ago. Their lyrics are particularly horrible with childishness. I try not to listen to them but it's loud enough to beat any defense like earplugs or portable music devices. I don't want to be contaminated, so I have to leave the store quickly each time. Being unable to enjoy shopping leisurely is the catch of this otherwise great store. The low price always has its reasons...

Hidemi's Rambling No.213

The summer break has started in Japanese schools. It's about 40 days long and followed by the second term. When I was a student, schools imposed tons of homework as a common practice. It was an enormous amount with which you would deal everyday to finish. Because I was a negligent student, I used to spend the whole summer break without doing my homework until the last day of the break every year. As a result, I had to stay up all night on the last day, weeping and regretting. My homework would become a family matter because my confession of unfinished homework was made to my parents on the last night of the break. For its considerable amount, my parents had to get down to my homework right away without finishing to scold me as much as they liked. My mother's strong vanity couldn't afford embarrassment that I would be scolded by the teacher in front of the class for not having done my homework. Continuously reprimanding me, my parents would help my homework all night...

Hideki's Rambling No.214

The most troublesome homework for the summer break in elementary school was a picture diary. It was a big blank book in which you would draw and write about what happened each day, along with the day's weather. Because I held off on my entire homework as a lazy student, the last day of the break would become a shambles involving my parents every year. While I was doing other pieces of homework sobbing from regret and their rebuke, they were tackling the picture diary by forging happenings and making sentences. But the thing was the required daily weather. There wasn't the Internet yet at the time and the weather record of the past 40 days depended on my father's memory. My mother drew pictures and I wrote down the stories my parents told me. My picture diary was evidently written by a grown-up with peculiarly well-drawn pictures and mature sentences. Of course, the total amount of homework was too huge to be done in one day even by three people, and I would submit only part of it on the first day of the second term. When asked by the teacher for the rest of it, my excuse was always 'I've done it, but somehow, I forgot to bring it.' The first couple of days of the second term would be spent likewise. Although my parents made me promise that it would never happen again, I repeated it every summer break...

Hidemi's Rambling No.215

I had a dream about my sister last night. In each and every dream about her, she takes my parents away from me. She's four years younger than I am and I still remember the time when she was born. Although everybody told me that I must have been very happy to become a big sister, I felt gloomy more and more as my mother's due date was drawing near. I strongly wished my sister would never be born because I knew grown-ups' attention would leave me. And I was right. She was born to be my parents' favorite. My mother especially stood by her all the time, both physically and mentally. I was sent away to my grandparents' room to sleep with them. My mother's arms and lap were always occupied by my sister and I was constantly driven away to my father. Only consolation for me was my grandfather's attitude. Because Japan was excessively male-dominated –it still is, in my opinion-, he was bitterly disappointed that his newly born grandchild was a girl again. He kept complaining about it to his neighbor friends, saying 'It's no good! A girl again! No good!' For that matter, he had six grandchildren in all and none of them was a boy. I regard it as a curse. My sister still gets along well with my parents as their favorite, lives with them in my hometown, and they brag about whatever she does while they criticize for whatever I do. To this day, they remain taken away from me by my sister. It can be a good thing for me, though...

Hidemi's Rambling No.216

One day in my early teens, I heard a scream from my younger sister's room. My mother and I went in and my sister was crying over the open drawer of her desk. She said her money was gone. She had stashed all her money in an envelope there by saving her allowances and money as New Year's gifts from relatives. She had thought the total amounted to well over \$1000 and had decided to count for the first time in a long time. But there was less than \$500 and she was devastated. My mother lulled her by explaining that was how money was gone. While spending a small amount of money on candies and snacks at a time, it accumulated a big amount in total. 'That's why we say money has wings,' my mother said to her. But my sister insisted she had never bought candies that much and never wasted her money like that because she loved to save. My mother's theory wouldn't change though, and she kept telling her that money disappeared slyly while we were unaware. She said, 'You learned an important lesson today. Now you know what is money.' Quietly seeing my sister cry hard saying repeatedly that was impossible, I had a clear idea what had happened really. It was I who had regularly stolen her stashed money. I was in junior high school and my allowance was always short for what I wanted. I was constantly in a battle with my mother for a raise and denied. While there were countless things in the world that I wanted to buy, my sister wasn't interested in buying at all. So, her money was useless and I did a favor by spending it instead of her. My sister's money had wings all right, and brought me a lot of records, posters, concert tickets and accessories. Neither my mother nor my sister had the slightest idea what I had been doing. And they still don't know about this...

Hidemi's Rambling No.217

My sister won the first prize of a local poem contest for elementary school students. Her poem appeared in the local paper and many people read it. The title was 'My Mean Big Sister'. Back then, every time she saw my face, her habit was to say 'Play with me!' As I liked to spend time alone, it had been an endless torment. Her continuous play-with-me chant would often drive me crazy and I tried to escape from her as much as I could. Her poem described how coldly I snubbed her whenever she felt happy to see me at home, and that was highly praised. To congratulate her, I told her that she owed me for this prize because if I had been nice to her, her poem wouldn't have existed, and added that my meanness proved right and so I would try harder. Needless to say, she got on the verge of crying and ran straight to my mother as usual to tell on me...

Hidemi's Rambling No.218

Fernando Alonso won GP of Germany last Sunday. He is my most favorite driver in the current Formula One competition. He transferred to Ferrari at the beginning of this season, which caused me to cheer for my least favorite team. Ferrari was infamous for foul play and preferential treatment when Michael Schumacher was in the team. Because a couple of years have passed since Schumacher left Ferrari and the team crew changed, I had hoped that the team had gotten out of wickedness. But it hasn't, judging from the way they won the last race. They made Alonso's teammate slow down so that Alonso overtook him by team orders that were banned. I wonder if Alonso can stay fair and right as he has been, in a dirty team like Ferrari. The question is awfully similar to the one I always ask myself. Can I stay fair and right in the dirty world like this...?

Hidemi's Rambling No.219

This time in my fourth grade, I was in the hospital. It started as cold-like symptoms with a high fever. But I was left unattended because summer was the peak season for farming and my parents were extremely busy as farmers. To make things worse, my family had been rebuilding our house at the time and extra attention of my parents was paid to that. A week or so later, I vomited blood and fainted. That at last captured my parents' attention and they realized the seriousness. When I became conscious, they had called a nurse who lived in the neighborhood and she was attending me. She suggested taking me to a hospital. After examination, I was diagnosed with nephritis. As the summer break for school was just around the corner, I was admitted to the hospital on the day the break began. Although I had been longing for the summer break as the precious time of my freedom, I was locked up in the hospital instead...

Hidemi's Rambling No.220

When I was in the hospital with nephritis, I shared the room with five other girl patients. Except for a very small or very sick child, parents weren't permitted to stay overnight with the patients. They came during the visiting hours. I was nine years old and had never stayed outside home such a long time before. I suffered from homesickness rather than from nephritis. My parents were too busy working seven days a week as farmers and only my mother visited me everyday. But she only made it less than one hour before the visiting hour ended although I was waiting for her all day long. No matter how desperately I begged her to come earlier, she prioritized her work and I got to see her merely forty minutes or so a day. Sometimes my father also came to see me, taking my younger sister with him. In that case, when the visiting hour was over, I would see my parents and my sister off. They went into the elevator together and the door shut before me, excluding me alone. That was the thickest door I'd ever felt it was. I went back to my bed and lay down hiding tears from other girls and nurses. Maybe it hinted my future relationship with my family. The three of them still live together in our old house that I left after I struggled and couldn't quite fit in...