



Hideki's Rambling No.281

On my way to do the holiday shopping, I dropped by McDonald's for breakfast. Although the place was huge, it was crammed with people and I gave up eating there. I usually eat in a thrifty way at home with food at the sale price or half price. But since it was the holiday season, I decided to eat out luxuriously for once. There was a hotel near McDonald's and I had all-you-can-eat breakfast at a restaurant there. I hadn't been there for a couple of years and noticed things had changed. Most of the customers having breakfast there are the ones who stay at the hotel. Last time I had breakfast there, all the customers were Japanese. But now, most of them were Chinese and South Korean. They traveled by package tours and left almost all at once. After their big buses departed the hotel, only a few tables were occupied by Japanese. And I found out that Chinese and South Korean travelers' manners have become better than Japanese ones. Japanese customers' kids were shouting and running around the restaurant. Young couples were eating with the room slippers of the hotel on. Japan has been in a long economic downturn for years. In these years, Japanese people have lost money and also manners. Thinking about the transition of times, I spent two hours for the breakfast while having as much as I could to the verge of a burst of my stomach, in order to make the most of money I paid...

Hidemi's Rambling No.282

When I decided to go back to the mix down from the mastering of our new song in order to boost its overall volume, I prepared to take a few more months to complete it. Once I accepted the delay and released myself from constraint called time, things presented a new twist. I had compared the volume of our song to other CDs with the stereo components. Our song came from the computer through the line-in of the stereo, which meant I compared the line-in sound to CDs. Before going back to the mix down, I burned the song to a CD as a small-volume version because except for the volume, the mastering went perfectly. It happened when I checked the sound of the CD. The volume was as large as other CDs! It had been indeed boosted already during the mastering. I just compared it in a wrong way through the line-in. I had been struggling with the volume for a couple of months based on my false judgement. When I heard our song at the right volume, I found out how silly I was and laughed out loud. At the same time, I burst into tears for indescribable joy. The only remaining problem to complete this song was the volume. Now that the volume was boosted, the song's completion was within my grasp. Looking up at the ceiling of my room, I was loudly laughing, crying, then laughing, and again crying, with tears falling down. It was so funny, ironic, stupid and joyful...

Hidemi's Rambling No.283

I saw God for the first time in my dream the other day. I was preparing for work in my room. I looked out the window and noticed three small dots in the cloudy sky. While I was figuring out whether they were aircraft or UFOs, the three black dots were getting bigger and bigger as they were coming closer. They were flying with tremendous speed toward my window and I recognized each dot was in the shape of a human. The two of them were leading the way for the third one that was flying a little behind them. I was extremely frightened and covered my eyes. Even so, I felt an urge to see them and opened my eyes. They were hovering right in front of the window. As soon as I saw them, I clearly understood, or was told somehow, that the two human-shaped things at the front were angels and the also human-shaped one in the middle behind was God. In this dream, God was Jesus at the same time. Their looks were so different from my imagination. None of them had wings nor was wearing white. All of them were quite young with black hair, wearing black hooded coats. They were flying just by themselves, with their arms lightly forward and their knees slightly bent. I was completely awed and fearful. God/Jesus was looking straight into my eyes with a serious gaze while hovering. Then, He turned and flew away with His angels high up in the sky. When they disappeared, my mother came into my room. I told her what had just happened but she showed no interest. Instead, she asked me to let her hear our new song. The moment I pushed a play button, I woke up. Later on the same day, totally unexpectedly, our new song had been finished at long last.

Hidemi's Rambling No.284

The finals of the Japanese 'manzai' tournament was held yesterday. 'Manzai' is one of Japanese comedy styles, which is a stand-up comedy by two or more comedians as a team. The tournament for both professionals and amateurs is held annually and decides the best comedy team in Japan. The finals is broadcast live nationwide and the winner takes one hundred thousand dollars. It's a big annual event for me, as I adore Japanese comedians. I wait for this event for the whole year like Christmas, wondering who will win each year. Prior to this year's finals though, I heard the shocking news. The tournament would be discontinued and it was going to be the last one this year. To me, it's like Super Bowl isn't held anymore. They cooked up various reasons for the termination but it's obviously due to lack of sponsorship and the ratings. I can't believe that more people watched a figure skating this year that was aired on a different channel. While watching the last 'manzai' competition on TV, clenching my hands for excitement as usual, I knew how much I would miss this event. Now, my favorite comedy tournament is over, so is 'LOST', so is Christmas. Our new song is completed and come new year, the move to my new place will be in full swing. When change happens, many things come to an end simultaneously. It's a little sad, but that's what moving forward is all about...

Hidemi's Rambling No.285

Japanese people spend New Year's Eve cleaning. Basically, they spend the closing days of the year on cleaning frantically because somehow they need to clean up the house thoroughly and wash the car before the new year comes. The cleaning reaches the climax on New Year's Eve. Mothers also need to prepare the special meal for New Year's. The pressure that everything has to be done by New Year makes them prickly all day. They often take it out to someone in their families. So, New Year's Eve is a day of cleaning and fighting in Japan. I recall few New Year's Eves in my childhood that I managed to escape my mother's scolding. I sincerely wanted to get rid of that custom, and have firmly decided not to clean up on New Year's Eve. Even so, every year I find myself cleaning up somewhere in my apartment in spite of myself. I did it today, too. Does DNA work in this act...?

Hidemi's Rambling No.286

New Year is the biggest holiday in Japan. There is a traditional meal for it, which is called 'osechi'. It's assorted foods of beans, boiled vegetables, boiled fish, and steamed fish paste, boxed in layered containers. The kinds of an assortment are slightly different at each family according to the family tradition. My family's traditional 'osechi' was absolutely terrible. The assortment consisted of only three kinds of food. Boiled carrots, boiled burdocks and black soybeans. That's it. We even didn't have to buy them except for black soybeans because they were grown in our family's field. It was accompanied by miso soup that had sticky rice cake and big taro in it. Big taro was grown in our front yard and my family held a superstition that you would become a head of something by eating it in the New Year. Unfortunately, it's huge and painfully tasteless. As a child, I always wondered how they could call them a New Year's special feast since our daily meals were better. To conclude the 'feast', we drank special tea. A cup of Japanese tea with a pickled plum sunk in the bottom. As another superstition, my family believed that it would bring happiness, but it tasted horrible and made me unhappy right away. And then, what I thought couldn't be any worse hit the new bottom. On one New Year's Day, there was a new addition to our traditional meal. It was called 'kuwai' and looked like a chestnut with a sprout. My mother heard that eating it in New Year made you 'sprout' to the world. It became her new superstition and my father began to grow it in the front yard. It tasted utterly awful. If primitive people found it in the woods and tried it, they would certainly dismiss it as inedible. Although I had endured the terrible feast until I left home, I'm not a head of anything, nor don't sprout to the world...

Hidemi's Rambling No.287

When I lived in my hometown, there was our distant relative's house at the back of ours. The relation was too distant for us to consider them as more than old neighbors. The man in the family was usually just one of our neighbors but once a year, he behaved as if he was our close relative. In the New Year, he would visit our house, coming right into the living room. No doorbell, nor calling. He would simply walk in, pass along the hallway, open the living room door and say, 'Happy New Year!' Unlike my parents, I would never complain about his behavior, though, because he gave me money as a New Year's gift each time, which was also the Japanese tradition. Actually, he was generous all the time. He liked to hold events for the neighborhood such as a golf competition, and treat people to dinner and drinks. He had long been a PTA president. He was well-off enough to build a new house of a modern style with the lawn. I often heard his daughter play the piano. The mystery was, we didn't know exactly what he did to afford his generosity. One day, we noticed that we hadn't seen him and his family for days. Then, his house got off limits with a banner of foreclosure. The family had run away with huge debt. A collection agency came to our home, as they thought we knew his whereabouts as a distant relative. Later on, his beautiful new house was demolished. The lavish family disappeared with its house...

Hidemi's Rambling No.288

Our new song 'Sunrise' has been completed and sent out to a distributor. It's finally released and available worldwide, that I'd been hoping for a long time. The distributor put up the song on online stores such as iTunes and Amazon MP3. I had looked forward to seeing 'Sunrise' displayed there. When I was looking around them, something caught my eye. They categorize songs according to genres. 'Sunrise' is categorized in six genres, like pop/general etc. One of them is miscellaneous/comedy. They felt a sense of comedy in 'Sunrise' when they categorized it. It's interesting because I wrote this song being dead serious with a deep theme...

Hidemi's Rambling No.289

My moving process began in earnest. I've already sent several boxes to my new place, and now I set about my furniture. I looked up on the Internet for the lowest possible price and decided to move furniture separately by a small cargo container, since I don't have a car. Although it's the cheapest way, the cost of the shipment is about the same as the total value of my furniture, because all my furniture is the lowest price one. I might as well replace them to new ones as spend money to move them, but people don't do a garage sale in Japan. I can't throw away what is still usable and I'm attached to them. For the first shipment, I emptied and cleaned the shelves and drawers. They were seven pieces and it took me more time and energy than I had thought to do the work. I was exhausted, but it's just the beginning. Only about a quarter of the moving was done. More pieces of cheap furniture await me...

Hidemi's Rambling No.290

As the process of moving, I went to my new place for the second time. The area was covered with deep snow this time and it looked like a different world. I got to my new apartment on foot from the train station, walking along the sidewalk sandwiched between the plowed snow walls. The snow walls were my shoulder high and I'd never seen this much snow in my life. As soon as I arrived, I got down to cleaning the room. I spent first two days cleaning the stained carpet. On the second day, I was to receive several boxes I'd sent from my old apartment. Looking at the heavy, ceaseless snow, I was afraid that my boxes wouldn't reach here, but they came all right, to my relief. On the third day, I went shopping for food. To get to the supermarket, I needed to take a train, and I walked along the snow walls to the station again. I concentrated on my steps not to slip when an icicle dropped from a lamppost right before me. I got almost skewered. All the way to the supermarket, I was busy watching up and down, for my steps and icicles. That was awfully similar to an advanced stage of Mario Brothers. It was an ordeal just to get to a store. On top of that, my toes became icy as slush had seeped inside my supposed-to-be waterproof boots that I'd bought specially for this trip. You can't make light of snowy country...