

機械部の部長の古屋は、大柄な男である。

大きい癖に、猫背で、ひとと話すときは、いっそう背中を丸める。

そして、意外なほど柔らかな声で、囁くように話し掛ける。

その古屋が、昼すこし前に、佐藤のいる部屋を覗いた。

佐藤は総務部の部長である。

古屋は、佐藤のデスクの横へ来ると、

「あのな」と、例の柔かな声で呼び掛けた。

「なんだい」

「昼めし、つき合ってくれないか。ちょっと話があるんだ」

「ああ、いいよ。どこにする」

「まかせてくれ。新しく見つけた家があるんだ」

「ふうん。じゃ、まかせる」

「それじゃ、あとで」

気心の知れた仲である。

それだけいって、古屋は部屋を出て行った。

丁度いい、と佐藤は思った。

多分、高島のことだろう、と、見当がついた。

忙しさにまぎれて、聞いていなかったが、その後、高島の様子がどうなっているのか、古屋に聞いてみたいと考えていたところである。高島が倒れてから、ずっと、病院や留守宅の面倒をみているのは古屋なので、他の誰よりも事情をよく知っている。

高島が突然倒れてから、もう半年近くになっていた。彼は機械部で古屋の下の次長、古屋も高島も佐藤も、同じ年に入社した仲間であった。

高島は、その日たまたま出掛けたゴルフ場で具合が悪くなった。すぐに最寄りの医院に運ばれたが、そこではあまり適切な処置は受けられなかったようである。

症状からすると、蜘蛛膜下出血だろうということだったが、その日は土曜日で、なにとも手筈が付き難かった。設備の整った病院に移されたのは、なお一日おいた月曜日である。ずっと意識を失った状態のままであった。

「運が悪かったよねえ。せめて月曜日に、会社で倒れてくれりゃ……」

古屋は、手当の立ち遅れを、そういう風に歎いた。佐藤も同じような思いであった。それでどうなるということはないだろうが、自分たちが居合せれば、なにかが出来たのに、と思いたかったのである。

古屋は、病院や留守宅にせつせと足を運び、家族の相談にも乗り、まめに雑事を処理した。直属の上司ということもあったが、大きな身体をした彼は、高島の家族にとって見た目にも頼もしく頼り甲斐のある存在として映っただろう。

Kiyomoto

Mr. Furuya, the manager of the Mechanical Section, is a very big man. As is often the case with a big man, he is stooped and when he speaks he bends his back much more. No one can imagine he speaks with a soft voice as if he whispers. A little before noon, Furuya looked into Mr. Sato's room. Sato is the manager of the General Affairs Department. Furuya walked to Sato's office and stood beside his desk.

"Well," Furuya said with that soft voice.

"What's the matter?" Sato responded.

"Can you eat lunch with me? I need to talk."

"Of course, do you have any special place in mind?"

"Don't worry about it. I found a nice restaurant."

"OK. I'll leave everything to you."

"See you later."

They are close friends. Furuya left the room after he had gotten Sato's word that he would join him. Sato guessed it was a nice chance to talk with Furuya. Maybe he wanted to talk about Takashima. Sato has been so busy lately that he hasn't been able to ask how Takashima has been after the accident. Sato has been wanting to ask Furuya about Takashima. Furuya has been taking care of Takashima at the hospital and his family since he had an accident. Furuya has known Takashima's situation better than anyone else.

About half a year has already passed since he suddenly had an accident. Takashima's position is the section manager of the Mechanical Department and his position is lower than Furuya. Furuya, Takashima and Sato are colleagues joining the company the same time.

One day when he happened to go golfing, he felt unwell there. He was taken to the nearest hospital right away, but he must not have gotten the right treatment there. His symptoms led a doctor to diagnose subarachnoid bleeding. Things were not handled well, due mainly to the fact that it was on Saturday. He was left unattended in the hospital the entire next day, but on Monday he was checked into a well-equipped hospital. He has been falling unconscious.

"It was very unlucky of him. We could have helped him if he had broken down on Monday at the office." Furuya lamented over the late treatment. Sato felt the same way. They didn't think they could have done much, but they'd like to think that they could have done something if they had been with him. Furuya visited the hospital and Takashima's home very often, had many talks with his family and cleared up some of the household chores.

It seemed that Furuya was a very reliable and dependable person to Takashima's family; for one thing he was directly responsible to Takashima; for another he was very big.

佐藤は、古屋の面倒見のよさに感心した。

入社当時からの仲で、気のやさしい男だとは思っていたが、あらためて、その上に、厚みを増した年輪を感じた。ふだんは見過ごして、或る日、その樹の幹の太くなったことに驚くようなものである。

仕事の面でも、高島が抜けて、その分をかぶっている筈だが、別にこぼしもせずに、淡々とやっているし、自分の家族のほかに、もう一つ家族を抱えこんでしまったような状態なのに、気負ったところも見せない。

「なにか、出来ることがあったら、遠慮なくいって下さい。まあ、古屋君がよくやってくれてるようだから……」

古屋ほどではなくても、佐藤も何度か病院へ足を運んでいる。

付き添っている高島の細君に、そういうと、彼女は、

「本当に古屋さんにはなにからなにまで……、」と、声をつまらせて、ベッドの病人の方へ目をそらせた。

高島は、依然として、意識不明のままである。人相が変わって、見馴れた高島とは別人のように見える。佐藤は、しばらくその顔を眺めていた。最後に話したときは、彼となにを喋ったのだろうと記憶を辿ってみたが、結局なにも思い出せなかった。

「おれがいうのも、へんかかもしれないがね。有難う」

女中が、注文を聞いて去るのを待って佐藤はまず古屋に頭を下げた。

古屋は、怪訝な顔をした。

「高島のことだよ」

「ああ……」古屋は頷いた。そして、ちょっといい淀んだが、

「あすは我が身って気がするんでね」といって、佐藤の目のなかをのぞいた。

今度は、佐藤が頷く番だった。

「それに違いない。…たまたまあいつの方が、順番が先になったんだ」

「そういうことだと思うよ」古屋は肩を落していった。

「…しかし、こういう場合に出来ることといったら、後手後手に廻るしかないんだね」

「そうだな」

「倒れる前になんとか出来たら、と思うと、口惜しいよ」古屋のいう通りだった。

「それで、見込みはあるのか」

「医者手術をすることといってる。それが成功しても、植物人間だろうね」佐藤は溜息をついた。

「それ以上の可能性はないのかね」

「まず駄目らしい。接触の悪い蛍光灯みたいなもんで、繰り返してスイッチを入れてると、たまにふっと点くことがあっても、また断れてしまう。素人考えだけど、そんなものらしい。手術するのは、ぱちぱちスイッチを入れてみるようなものじゃないかね」

Sato had been moved by Furuya's good care of Takashima. Sato had been good friends with Furuya ever since they joined the company the same time and he had always known Furuya to be gentle, but lately he had become aware that he had acquired the wisdom of age. It was like a tree which people were not aware of its growth, but one day, when they fixed their eyes on it, they were surprised at its growth.

Because Takashima had been unable to perform his duties at the office, it had fallen to Furuya to cover for him. Without complaint of his difficult circumstance, he continued the job diligently. He has his own family in one hand and now he comes to have another family in the other, without ever bracing himself for the circumstance.

While not as often as Furuya, Sato does pay many visits at the hospital.

"I'd like to help you whenever you need me, though Mr. Furuya helps you more than I expected," said Sato.

Takashima's wife who stays at the hospital attending to the patient, was choked up with emotion.

"I thank Mr. Furuya for everything. I'm very grateful for him."

She couldn't look at him any more and turned her eyes to the patient.

Takashima has stayed unconscious. He looked quite different with his old face gone. Sato looked at his face for a while. He tried to remember the last conversation he had with Takashima, but this effort was in vain.

"You've been so kind to Sato and helped his family instead of me. If I say this, you might think it very strange, but I'd like to say, thank you very much." He bowed to Mr. Furuya as a waitress went away after taking their order. Furuya gave a dubious look. "You know. This is about Takashima."

"I see." Furuya nodded. He paused for a moment.

Then he said, "His condition reminds me of a proverb; Others' misfortune today might fall upon us tomorrow," and he looked straight into Sato's eyes. This time Sato nodded.

"You're right. He just happened to have his misfortune earlier than us."

"I think you're right."

Furuya was disappointed and said, "In such a case, we try to do anything but it seems like we are forestalled in every attempt."

"That's right."

"It's a pity to think that we couldn't do anything before he went into a coma."

Takashima agreed with Furuya.

"Does he have a chance to recover?"

"The doctors told me that they were going to continue to operate on him. Unless the operation is a great success, he will be left to spend the rest of his life as a vegetable," Sato sighed.

"Is that his best chance?"

"His odds are one in ten. His condition is like a fluorescent light that doesn't always make contact, occasionally the light works by chance. The next minute it might turn off again.

Though this is just a layman's view, it seems right to me. I guess the operation is something like turning on and off his switch."

「そういうものかな。……命はどうなんだ」

「生かしておくことは出来るらしい。でも、半年か、一年か、もっと生きるか、その辺はまだ解らないそうだ」

「暗然とするなあ。…奥さんはどうだ」

「しっかりしてる。覚悟はしてるようだ。しかし、今はまだ気が張っていても、長くなると大変だ」

「君の部も大変だな」

「仕事の方は、なんとかかなる。それよりも、目下のところ、問題はこれだよ」

「金か」

「入院費、手術代、生活費、いくらあったって足りやしない。それで今、会社と掛け合ってるんだがね。正直いって頭が痛い」

「渋いのか」

「いや、なんとか一番高いとこへ釣り上げようと思ってるのさ。それで知恵を絞ってるところなんだ」

古屋は、そこで、なにかを思い出したらしい。ああ、と眩いて、上着のポケットを探ると、小さなものをつまみ出した。

「これなんだがね。何の鍵だか解るかい」

受け取って、佐藤はその鍵を調べてみた。小型で、なにかの符号らしい英字と数字が刻んである。

「なんだい、これは…」

「高島の机を整理してたら出て来たんだがね」

「ほう。いつやったんだ」

「つい一週間ばかり前に、奥さんの了承を貰って、俺がやった。なんだか厭な気分だったけどね」

「ふうん」

佐藤は、なんとなく解るような気がした。

「なにか出たかい」

古屋は、首を振った。

「いや、なにも…。奥さんに見せない方がいいと思うものも、二三あったがね。それは始末した。机もロッカーも整理して、結構時間が掛ったよ。翌日、奥さんに私物だけは届けたんだが……」

「そりや、よかった」

「ところがね。この鍵だけが宙ぶらりんになってしまった」

「ほう、奥さんにも心当たりがないのかい」

「そうなんだ」

「ふうん、…なにか曰くがありそうだな」

「おれも咄嗟にそう思った。それで、出どころが解ったようなふりをして、持って来ちやったんだけど…、これは何の鍵だと思うね」

「さあ、おれにも解らん。ロッカーの鍵でもないし、ファイル・キャビネットの鍵でもないな」

Oh, I see, but do they think he will live?"

"They managed to keep him alive, I guess, but they are not sure if he will live for half a year, one year, or longer."

"That's very sad. How 's his wife?"

"She stays firm and strong. Though she seems to be ready for the worst, she still has every nerve strained. It'll be very hard for her if this lasts long."

"Your section faces hardship, doesn't it?"

"It's no big deal. But right now the problem is this," he said and rubbed his finger against forefinger.

"Money?"

"Hospital charges, operation charges, living expenses. No matter how much money she may have, it's not sufficient for her. That's why I'm negotiating with the company now. Things are not going well, to tell you the truth."

"The company doesn't want to pay him much, do they?"

"You know. I'd like to have the company pay the highest amount of money possible. That's why I'm racking what little brains I have right now."

Then, he was reminded of something.

"Oh," he said fumbling in his pocket. Then he pulled out a tiny object.

"This is it. Do you know what this key is for?"

Sato took it and examined it. It was a very small key, inscribed with some insignia in letters and numbers.

"Oh, what on earth is it?"

"I found it when I put Takashima's desk in order."

"When did you do that?"

"Just a week ago, his wife requested that I do it, so I did, though I didn't feel like doing it."

"I see."

Sato understands what Furuya did.

"Did you find anything else?"

"Nothing special, a few things which shouldn't be shown to his wife. I got them squared up. It took lots of time to put his desk and locker in order. The next day I took his personal effects to his wife."

"That was very nice of you."

"But, you know, this key is left unsettled."

"You mean his wife hadn't the faintest idea of what the key is for?"

"That's right."

"Well, there must be some story behind it."

"That's what I thought initially. And I brought it with me from his desk, pretending to know where it was from. What do you think is it for?"

"Hmm, let me see. I have no idea, but this key doesn't seem to be a key for a locker or a filing cabinet."

「そうだろう」

「庶務か、守衛室あたりに聞いてみたら」

「当ってみたよ」

古屋は、指の節で、こつこつと額を叩いた。

「…この種の鍵は、社内では使われておりません、といわれた」

「とすりや、ゴルフ場か」

「ゴルフ場で鍵を使うのは、ロッカーぐらいだろう。それも当ってみるか」

「しかし、ロッカーの鍵って感じじゃないね。たとえばだな、会員制クラブの鍵で、これが会員証代りになってるとか…」

「なるほど」

「……でも、妙だな」

佐藤は、ふと思いつくところがあって、古屋を見つめた。

「……どうして、小さな鍵ひとつに、そう拘るんだい。なにか、訳ありなのか」古屋は頷いた。

「引き出しの奥の、蔭になってるところに、テープで留めてあったんだ。なんでもない鍵なら、そんな風に隠しておいたりしないだろう」

「ほう」

佐藤は、そこで、もう一度その鍵を見直した。なんの変哲もない、小さな鍵である。

まだ使い古していない証拠に、つまみ上げると、きらりと光った。

高島が倒れたことは、佐藤にとってやはり大きなショックだった。同年輩でもあるし、高島を見舞ったと同じ災厄が、佐藤の身の上に起っても、なんの不思議もないのである。

明日は我が身、と、古屋がいった言葉は、以前の佐藤たちにとっては、冗談めいた使われ方をされていた筈であった。

それが、こうまで切実になって来ると、佐藤も動揺しない訳にはいかなかった。

「どうしたのよ、佐藤さん、この頃、影うすくなったみたい」

飲んでいて、突然耳もとでそんな声が聞えてびっくりすることもあった。いつの間にか自分だけの妄想の世界に迷い込んでいて、周囲のことは見えなくなってしまう。

「やあねえ、ほんとに影うすいよ」

「そうか、おれ、電池が切れかかっているのかな」

「そうよ、充電、充電、ちょっと、こちら、お代り……」

佐藤は、思いついて、その店の女たちに聞いてみた。

「これこれこういう訳でさ。或る会社の、或る男の机の引き出しから、素姓の知れない鍵が出て来たとするね。隠してあったその鍵は、何の鍵だと思う」

それに対する反応は、さまざまだった。

「これよ」と、小指を立ててみせて、

「絶対間違いなあし、女のマンションの鍵」と断定する女もいたし、

「実物見れば解るんだけどなあ。私、何十回と引越ししてるから、いろんな種類のマンション知ってるのよ。ひと日見りゃ、ばっちり解るわよ」という女もいた。

“You're right.”

“Did you ask the General Affairs Section or a guard?”

“Yes, I did.” Furuya tapped himself on his forehead with his fingers.

They told me, “This kind of key isn't used in our company.”

“Then, possibly it's a key for a country club?”

“In a place like that a key would only be used in a locker room. I should check with a country club about it.”

“But this doesn't seem like a key for a locker room. After that I thought, perhaps, this could be a key for a membership pub and this would do for an ID.”

“Could be.”

“But it's still strange.” Then Sato was reminded of something he had forgotten until now and he looked at him.

“Why do you stick to just a small key ? Do you know something special about it?”

Furuya nodded.

“I found this fixed with tape at a hidden corner in the back of drawer. If this is just a key everybody uses everyday, he wouldn't have hidden it like that.”

“I see.”

Sato once again picked it up and examined it. It was just a small, common key. When he picked it up, it glittered a bit because it had not been used very often. It was, of course, a great shock to Sato that Takashima broke down. They were the same age and no doubt the same misfortune could befall on Sato.

What Furuya had said , “Others' misfortune today might fall upon us tomorrow.” was meant as just a joke, but it turns out to be very serious; Sato was disturbed more than a little.

“What's the matter with you, Mr.Sato? Darling, you look very weary lately.”

He was surprised to hear someone say such a thing to his ears while he is drinking at the pub.

He slipped into idle speculation before he was aware of it. He never cares what is going on outside of his world.

“Are you all right, Mr.Sato? You look so weary.”

“Oh, do I? Am I like a dead battery?”

“Yes, you are. You need a jump-start. Yes, for sure. Hi, Bartender! Give him some more!”

Sato decided to ask the girls at the pub about it.

“Well, such and such is the case. Suppose in a drawer of a person in a company we find a key which is very suspicious in its use. What would you think of such a key hidden in the back of the drawer?”

The reaction to this scenario was different from person to person.

“That must be it,” she exclaimed extending a little finger.

“Surely it's the key to a girl's apartment,” one girl concluded.

“If I can see the real key, I could tell you the truth hidden behind the key. Because I have moved from place to place a number of times, I know a lot about apartment. If I have a close look at it, I can tell it unmistakably,” said another girl.

「しかし、マンションの鍵にしちや、ちょっと違うような気がするなあ。こんなもんなんだぜ」と、佐藤が反論すると、

「そういうものもあるのよ」と、引越し数十回が、自信ありげにいう。
「きっと、私書箱の鍵じゃあない。今流行ってるのよ」
「私書箱は、めいめいに合鍵を持たせるのかい」
「さあ、よく知らないけど、……じゃ、銀行の貸金庫か、ホテルのセーフティー・ボックスかな」と、思いつきばかり並べる女もいた。
「結局、女の線かね」
「もちろんよ」
「そうかなあ……」
「あら、佐藤ちゃんがよく知ってる人なの」
「いや、そうじゃない」佐藤は打ち消した。
「女の部屋の鍵だとすると、その女はどうしてるだろうね。今まで足しげく来ていた男が、ふつつりと姿を見せなくなったら……」
「その一、次なる男を探す」
「それとなく会社に電話を掛けて、様子を聞くだろうな」
「〇〇は只今欠勤して居ります」
「初めは、居留守かもしれないと思うかな」
「二三目して、また掛けてみる」
「〇〇は只今欠勤して居ります」
「いよいよこれは病気かもしれないと思う」
「私は深追いしないほうだもんね」
「由美は、追われもしないほうだからね」
「ちょっと、今、なんていった」

女たちがはしゃいでいる横で、佐藤は、気持が沈んで来るのを感じていた。

病床にいる高島には、ときどき、意識が戻ることもあるようだった。
或る夕方、付き添っていた細君は、帰り支度をして、高島の耳もとに口を寄せて、
「それじゃ、帰ります」とささやいた。聞えなくても話し掛けよう、彼女は、そう決めて、入院以来、ずっとその習慣を続けていた。
その夕方、声を掛けると、高島の顔に、ほんの僅かな反応があった。
閉じられた目蓋が、かすかに動き涙が溢れて、ひと筋、頬を伝った。
それを見て、細君は号泣したそうである。

一回目の手術で、いくらか上向きになりかけた病状も、続いて行われた二回目の手術の結果、また、元へ戻ってしまった。

一進一退で、次第に悪くなるだろう、という医師の予測が、不幸にも当たってしまったようだった。

“But you know, I don't think this is a key for an apartment because it looks a bit different. The shape of the key is not for an apartment,” countered Mr.Sato.

"You just don't know many shapes," a girl who has experienced moving to a number of places said with confidence.

"It must be a key for a P.O. box. They are popular right now."

"Does every P.O. box have its own key?"

"Well, I can't say for sure. Maybe then it must be a key for either a safe-deposit box in a bank or a safe in a hotel," said another girl to him as the thought hit her.

"After all, this is the best way to trace girlfriends, isn't it?"

"Yes, of course."

"Are you sure?"

"Oh dear. Mr.Sato, you seem to know his girlfriend well, darling?"

"Oh, no," he denied at once.

"If that is a key for a girl's apartment and her boyfriend suddenly stops visiting her, what will she do?"

"First, she will find another boyfriend."

"She will call his office and ask how he is doing so that no one can notice what she is doing."

"Mr. So and So is absent today," would be how they would answer her call.

"She would think he pretended to be out, when she went over the call in her mind."

"A few days later she would call him again."

"Mr. So and So is absent today, ma'am," the phone would reply.

"Then, she would take it seriously that he was ill."

"If I were his girlfriend, I'd never chase a boyfriend like that."

"But, Yumi, in your case you'll never be chased, either."

"What? What did you say? Are you joking?"

As the girls were frolicking beside him, Sato felt depressed.

While Takashima has been ill in bed, it seems that he sometimes has become conscious.

One evening Takashima's wife was attending to her husband. She was almost ready to go back home.

"It's time I was going home," she whispered in her husband's ear. She knew he couldn't hear her, but she had kept on talking to him since he had been taken to the hospital.

However, that evening when she talked to him as usual, she recognized a slight reaction on his face.

His closed eyelids moved very slightly and his eyes were filled with tears; one tear drop ran down his cheek. When she saw this, she burst into tears.

After the first operation, Takashima's condition had improved, but after the doctors' second attempt, he returned to his previous state. Doctors described his condition as improved a little, but he soon had a relapse. As time went by, they suspected he would only get worse in the end. Unfortunately their diagnosis became realized.

見舞いに行って、ただ昏々と眠っているだけの高島の顔を見ると、佐藤は、不思議な感慨に囚われてしまう。これが、かつて一緒に入社し、共に仕事をし、連れ立って飲み廻った仲間

だろうかと思う。揺り起して、自分がここに居ることを知らせてやりたくなる。

高島の細君は、つとめて明るく振舞っているが、やはり疲れは隠せない。話すこともつい途切れがちになる。

古屋は、会社のなかのあちこちに働き掛けて高島の家族の為に、なんとか有利なかたちを造ろうと奔走していた。ときには佐藤も助太刀に出ることがあった。

或る日、佐藤のところに電話が掛けて来て、受話器を取ると、古屋からであった。

「おい、喜んでくれ、なんとかあったよ」古屋は、そういった。

それだけで、なんのことも佐藤にはよく解った。

その晩、二人は落ち合って、ささやかに祝杯を挙げることにした。

吉屋の話によると、かなりの額の保険金をはやばやと支払われることになったし、会社の方も、出来るだけの処置をしてくれることになったようである。

「これで、もしものことになっても、まず心配はいらないだろう。おれもやっと安心して眠れるよ」

古屋は満足げだった。大きな身体がひと廻り縮んだように見えたが、それは、続いた心労のせいなのだろう。

「一度に二つ三つ年を取ったような気がするよ」古屋は、そう弱音を吐いたが、表情は晴れ晴れとしていた。

「ところで、あの鍵はどうした」佐藤が気にしていたことを聞くと、古屋はポケットを探って、ほかの鍵と一緒にキイリングにつけた例の鍵を出して見せた。

「で、何の鍵か、正体が解ったのか」

「結局、解らん。解らずじまいだ」

古屋は、しばらくその鍵を眺めていたが、

「この鍵は、おれが貰っとくことにしたよ。いいかい」

「もちろんさ。それがいちばんだ。なにか幸運でも待って来てくれるかもしれない」

「そうだといいが」吉屋は、もう一度、その鍵をじっと見ていたが、やがて、しっかりとポケットに納めた。

その鍵は、それ以後も、ずっと、古屋のポケットのなかにある。

行き場のない鍵というのは、奇妙なものだ。

どこかで、なにかが、開けられるときを待っている筈なのに……。

鍵は知っているのに、語ってくれない。

もう一人、それを知っている高島も、口を噤んだまま、語ろうとはしない。

When Sato went to see Takashima at the hospital and found him in a coma, he felt very strange and unusual. He wondered if this could be the man who joined the company at the same time, worked

together, drank at many places together and had a nice time together.

Sato wanted to shake Takashima up and make him aware that an old friend attended on Sato.

Takashima's wife tried to behave very brightly; however, she couldn't veil her tiredness.

When she spoke with people who came to see Takashima, she tends to be silent.

Furuya was busy trying to get financial support for Takashima from the company.

Sometimes Sato also helped him with that task.

One day Sato got a call and when he picked up the receiver, it was Furuya.

“Hey, I'm very glad. I can make it at last,” said Furuya.

When he heard this, Sato understood what he meant to say.

That evening the two planned to drop in on a pub and toast Takashima.

According to Furuya, a premium was to be paid without delay and the company had decided to guarantee his life as much as they could.

“Whatever may happen, we don't need to worry about him. I can sleep without fear.”

Furuya seemed satisfied. However he looked to waste away one size because of long care.

“I feel as if I aged two or three years in a year.” Furuya drew in his horns, but his countenance was as bright as it had been since the ordeal started.

“By the way, Did you find anything new with the mystery of the key?” asked Sato.

He had been very curious for a long time.

Furuya then fumbled in his pocket and brought out the key in question, bound together with some other keys on a ring.

“So, can you unveil what the key is for?”

“No, I can't. Sorry.”

Furuya stared at the key for a while then said, “I'd like to keep this key. OK?”

“Of course. That's best. The key will bring you good luck.”

“I hope so.”

Furuya once again looked the key over, then he took hold of it and put it into his pocket.

The key has been in his pocket ever since then. It's very strange to hold a key which is of no use.

The key should be waiting for the chance to open the lock it matches. The key knows what it is for, but it will never tell.

There's one more person who knows what the key is for, but he keeps silent and will never speak.