

Sep.24/2019

3rdDraft

Mystery of the Contrabass Case

By Hitomi Kino

It was the last night of my group Baltic Cruise from Stockholm after visiting some Scandinavian countries. The tour conductor Ms.HN accompanied 17 people. I stayed at a hotel (a cultural property near the fishing port in Helsinki.) My room was on the upper floor, so I had to go up the stairs from the last floor with the elevator. It was a simple attic room showing a part of a wooden pillar going down and to the right by a small French window made of iron. One side of the window was open. I could see a forest of masts and several seabirds were flying in the white night. Smelling a chilly breeze from the sea, I felt something like a mysterious feeling.

Suddenly knocking on the door three hotel staff members carried a big case into my room. It seemed like the case of a large musical instrument. They carried such a big instrument up long steep stairs. A female staff said to me smilingly,

“Mrs. Hitomi Kino, Please sign signature here.”

“You are a famous player? ~~~~~ Aren’t you?”

I couldn’t catch her words clearly. But I said clearly.

“No. I am not a musician. It’s not mine. Please take it out of my room.”

They seemed to be embarrassed by what I said. Still, I refused firmly to accept the big case, so they had no choice but to carry it out of my room.

“What’s all this about, then? Is that a contrabass or harp case?” I thought.

Anyway, I had to hurry to have dinner with my tour friends. I closed the French window and locked both the doors. Then, I rushed down the stairs to the elevator and the dining room.

It was late at night, when I got back to my room. I felt that something was wrong with my body and my brain was muddled. Suddenly, feeling sick I brought up my food and got diarrhea several times.

Why? I had little appetite so I didn't drink and left most of my dishes uneaten. There was no doubt that somebody had mixed alcohol or something in my food or water. I was so exhausted that I made sure the window and the door were locked up and I also with difficulty, put the Don't Disturb tag on the knob. Soon, I fell into a deep sleep. How much time passed?

Half asleep and half awake, I had a feeling that a sound was hitting on the window, and I saw a shadow that looked like a big bird on the window. Whether in reality or in a dream I saw it. The sound of hitting continued for a while. And then I felt like I'd heard a scream, but I couldn't wake up~~~~.

How much times passed, I vaguely heard ambulance sirens in the distance.

At dawn, I was suddenly awakened by a loud voice with knocking at the door. The conductor Ms.HN accompanied the policewoman and came into my room. Staring me in my face, they seemed to feel relieved. They said in Japanese and English,

"Are you all right Mrs. Kino?" "No Problem?" "Please, Don't worry!"

"Yes ~~~ I am." I replied weakly.

I didn't understand what had happened. I felt my confused. They crossed the room to the window and looked carefully around there. I said with difficulty in English.

"When I came into my room the window was open. I felt chilly so I closed the window"

"Please don't worry, Madame!" the policewoman said with a smile and they went out of my room.

After a while, little by little my vague impression of that time came to me. Sounds of hitting the window, the shadow on the window, a scream and an ambulance siren came back to my muddled brains. Suddenly, with a knock on the door a powerfully built policeman accompanied Ms. HN and came into my room. He also investigated carefully around the window. I told him that I

felt chilly so I closed the window and locked it.

“Are you OK, Madame?” “No problem?” “Don’t worry, please~~~.”

Having a worried look he said a lot of things but I scarcely understood what he said. Ms.HN responded to him instead of me. After that, with Ms.HN present the contents of my bag were checked and I was told to leave my suitcase, as it was unlocked. And yet, I was kept ignorant of the information. Feeling unwell I skipped breakfast.

At the hotel lobby, the police officer made me identify myself and asked me several questions about what had happened the previous night. Then, pointing to the big case kept open and standing upright in the lobby he asked me,

“Mrs. Hitomi Kino, That case belongs to you, right?”

“ You are a famous Japanese musician, right?”

I was at a loss for an answer.

“No, It’s not mine, I am not a musician. I don’t know it at all~~~!”

I had no other way to reply. Because I was still in poor physical condition and disoriented. First of all my English was not so good to explain the fact. Standing by me Ms.HN helped me all the time. Her English was excellent. During that time, all of them treated me so politely. But I couldn’t understand what had happened. I thought in my heart something strange was going on.

Leaving the hotel, I saw the empty contrabass case that I had seen in my room last night. It was kept opened in the lobby. Going through the exit outside the hotel I saw briefly the flow of something bright red under the sheet. Instinctively, I turned my head away from it so I couldn’t remember the details. Our tour schedule was changed then we enjoyed free time during the morning.

“You look so pale!” my tour friends said, worried about me.

Near the hotel, there were so many fascinating tourist spots, free markets and some medieval seaside scenery. Ms.HN went with me except during the time when she had work to do. She was very concerned about my condition. She said to me many times.

“Are you all right?”

“Stay here in the market near by the hotel. Don’t leave here.”

I often saw some police officers on patrol. I enjoyed an open-air market. I noticed many delicious looking seafood stalls but I didn’t want to eat. Then, I bought a framed picture of a sailing yacht painted by a female artist. She said that she liked Japan and she went to Japan several times. I liked her color contrast of painting, white and blue, a sail, the ocean, the sky and the cloud. From a distance in front of the hotel, I saw a crowd of people and a police car.

“What’s happened?” I asked Ms.HN but she said nothing. And took me to another place,

“Are you all right?” she only repeated kindly, looking into my face.

“You have nothing to worry about” she often said anxiously.

After we enjoyed the medieval portside our party left for the airport.

On the flight from Helshinki to Narita, I often suffered from a pain in the intestines so I needed to go the toilet on each occasion, but nothing had happened. That’s not surprising considering my empty stomach, though I had to change underwear at Narita Airport. Coming back to Japan I felt hungry and finally enjoyed my favorite Japanese seafood–sushi.

Come to think of it, what on earth was going on with me?

That reminds me before I got on board I got a strange message in Japanese at the hotel desk in Copenhagen. Who were they? People were following me around like a shadow, including a Japanese woman. Feeling something was fishy I refused to get their suspicious message at the hotel. I know who the woman was now.

Were they bearing some kind of a mission?

Did they plan some evil plot?

Because, I had overhead unexpectedly several fragments of people’s conversation from nowhere apparent.

“It might be her last photo and someone took a lot of pictures that seemed to be beautiful.”

What did that mean her 'last photo'?

I thought this and that, a lot of fragments of talking were coming and going in my brain.

"A man having a knife fell."

"The rope has broken."

"There was the flow of something bright red under the sheet."

What was the shadow on the window?

If I hadn't locked the window, I wonder if maybe I wouldn't be here, now.

"It is impossible to know, if they threw it into the North Sea."

What was 'it'? Was it the contrabass case?

What was the reason why three hotel staff members carried the empty contrabass case into my room? Requiring the efforts of three people, they carried such a big case up a long flight of stairs.

Was the contrabass case my intended coffin?

★1503