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Masashi Iwakura accompanied Director Shindo to the Israeli Embassy for a meeting regarding a surveillance satellite deal. After the business meeting was over, Cohen, the person in charge, accompanied them out of the building to see them off.

Just then, demonstrators gathered on the road in front of the Embassy, holding up placards that read " Stop indiscriminate attacks on Gaza " and "No to genocide," and shouting slogans. They were also protesting Japan's military expansion and preparations for war.

Enraged by the sudden attack by the Palestinians who had been confining them in Gaza, a prison with no ceiling, Israel has used overwhelming military force to slaughter defenseless people. Children and women are particularly vulnerable, and with food aid halted, hunger is widespread in Gaza. The fighting continues, with repeated temporary ceasefires.

Cohen grimaced and clicked his tongue at the protesters.  
" It's troubling that people don't understand that their daily lives are only guaranteed if there is national security."

Masashi was about to respond when he noticed a young woman mixed in with the demonstrators, and when he looked back to check, she had disappeared. She looked very similar to his daughter, Misaki. But it must have been a case of false resemblance. There was no way Misaki would be involved in this kind of activity.

Japan Communications Co., Ltd., where Masashi works, is engaged in space development projects around the world. In particular, the company is recognized for its world-leading technological capabilities in earth observation satellites. Israeli government agencies have also shown interest, sending inspection teams, and Japan Communications Co., Ltd. has also made sales pitches there. Cohen is the person in charge of practical matters, and Masashi, his counterpart at Japan Communications Co., Ltd., has met Cohen many times and is on a first-name basis with him.

2

Masashi suppressed his inner turmoil and returned to the Kokufu site with Shindo. The site is built below a river terrace and is lower than the station, which is located on top of the terrace. Previously, if we crossed the road

that runs along the perimeter of the site on an overpass, we had to descend to the ground and go through a security gate. However, in conjunction with the construction of the new building, the overpass was extended into the site so that we can enter the site at the same height as the road from the station. Now, we can complete the security check halfway up the overpass and enter the new building straight away.

"It's a wonderful sky corridor."

Shindo is delighted. With the national defense budget set to double to 2% of GDP, the company has begun construction of a new building as an upfront investment to prepare for the increase in orders. This has led to an increase in the business division's budget. The number of employees has also increased, allowing everyone to work with more leeway. Because the division chief is in such a good mood, Masashi generously approves his subordinates' requests for time off to go on private trips, saying, "That's fine. Have fun."

The time of restructuring was tough. When Masashi went to the home of a subordinate who was on leave and persuaded him, who was exhausted from illness, that he should accept early retirement because he would receive a bonus, Masashi felt like he had lost his humanity and become a demon.

Masashi is a radar engineer, and has been particularly involved in the development of synthetic aperture radar (SAR) to be installed on satellites. Radar generally observes an object by irradiating it with electromagnetic waves known as microwaves or millimeter waves, and analyzing the signals that are reflected back. Microwaves have a longer wavelength than visible light, so observations can be made without being affected by clouds and other factors. However, because resolution is proportional to wavelength, radar that uses microwaves requires the antenna diameter to be extremely large, but there are physical limits to this.

Synthetic aperture radar was developed to solve this problem. The concept of synthetic aperture radar is to arrange several virtual antennas in orbit. They repeatedly send and receive radio waves while moving in orbit, and combine the received radio waves taking the Doppler effect into account, creating a virtually giant radar.

Satellite SAR does not require sunlight and is capable of stable observations regardless of the season, day and night, or time of day. For civilian use, comparing before and after images of an object makes it possible to understand changes in land use due to the construction of buildings and roads. For military use, it can be used in a variety of ways, such as detecting signs of nuclear weapons tests in neighboring countries.

The project with Israel aims to significantly improve SAR performance and achieve high resolution.

Curious about the scene from the daytime, Masashi returned home early and saw Misaki talking to a man who appeared to be a foreigner in a park near his house. The man had a sturdy, muscular body and a thick beard. He shook off Misaki's attempts to stop him and headed off towards the station. Misaki watched the man leave with a troubled look on her face.

Masashi hesitated about whether to speak to Misaki, but he couldn't believe this was something serious, so he decided to speak to her.

"Who is he? He seems to be from a foreign country."

"It doesn't matter who he is. Just a friend of college."

"Hmm, but you looked pretty serious."

It was a casual remark, but it seemed to strike a chord with Misaki.

"It would be very serious for anyone if a relative was killed in a missile attack."

Misaki shouted, venting her pent-up anger. As expected, Misaki had been with the demonstrators he had seen that day. But Masashi thought it would be best to keep quiet for now.

"Why can't there be a ceasefire? The majority of the casualties are women and children. It's the work of the devil that Israel is using planes, tanks and heavy weapons to attack defenseless civilians. "

Misaki, who has a strong sense of justice, expressed her anger at the news that many women and children are dying every day in Gaza due to Israeli attacks. Masashi, who knows Misaki's character well, is quick to act and move forward when she has such thoughts, so he was pondering how to respond.

"There must be people who are making money selling weapons to Israel."

It was unclear whether Misaki was speaking with knowledge of Japan Communications Co., Ltd., but Masashi felt as if he was being criticized and remained silent.

When they got home, his wife Yuko came out to greet him.

"Oh, what's up with you two together?"

"No, we just happened to be there together."

Yuko quickly agreed, saying, "That's right," and changed the topic.

"I just got a call from my mother-in-law in Nagano. She said that my father-in-law's knee has gotten worse again and he's having trouble going to work."

Masashi's family home is an old temple, and his 80-year-old father, Masaaki, is the head priest. Until now, sons have become monks and taken over the temple. However, none of Masaaki's three sons have taken over. His father never forced them to do what they wanted. However, Masashi never left his mind

feeling guilty that he, whose circumstances were different from his older brothers', was obligated to take over the family business.

4

Masashi was called by Shindo and entered the department head's office. Shindo explained that a space exploration project had requested Masashi to provide technical support.

" Well, the budget for purely scientific research is limited. From now on, a large portion of the budget will be allocated to projects that can be converted to military use. Over there, you don't get much out of your efforts. "

Shindo also conveyed the message formally due to his position, but he made it clear that it was not his true feelings.

Without needing to be told by Shindo, Masashi was concentrating all his energy on the Ayin Project, which was about to reach a major climax, and nothing else was on his mind. Soon, as Masashi was about to return to his seat, Shindo's voice followed him.

"By the way, since the Ayin Project is subject to the Economic Security Information Protection Act, we will both be subject to security clearance. I think we have both kept our personal affairs clean, but this time, our families will also be subject to this."

Masashi stopped in his tracks. He turned around, wondering if Shindo had any concerns about Masashi, but Shindo was already busy scanning the computer screen. It seemed like he was worrying for nothing.

Security clearances are conducted by government agencies for engineers and researchers who handle important economic and security information. These tests involve an investigation into the individual and their family members and cohabitants, including their criminal and disciplinary history, illegal acts related to the handling of information, drug abuse and its effects, mental illness, alcohol moderation, credit status, and other financial matters. If an individual does not pass the tests, they will not be able to handle the relevant information and therefore will not be able to carry out the relevant work.

Naturally, there was nothing shameful about being investigated for the items specified in the law, but various private and sensitive information would likely be collected during the investigation. Masashi could not shake off his anxiety about how the government agency that held this information would use it.

5

Masashi took advantage of the Golden Week holiday to return to his parents' home in Nagano with his family to visit his parents. Misaki, sitting in the back seat, looked pale and kept looking outside. His wife Yuko, sitting next to her, asked what was wrong,

"My friend Ahmad said he was going home today because he was worried about his family. I told him there's nothing he could do now and that he should wait until it's safe, but he said he wanted to go at least as far as the entrance to Gaza from Egypt"

As Masashi heard about the situation in Gaza on the news every day, a map of the Middle East came to mind. Southern Gaza shares a border with Egypt. But because border control is handled by Israel, even food aid is strictly restricted. Approaching such a place would be nothing short of reckless. Still, it's only natural to want to get closer if Ahmad thinks about his family. Even so, Masashi never imagined that something reported on the international news would become such a close-knit issue for his family. From Misaki's somber expression, it was clear that her relationship with Ahmad was no longer something that could be dismissed as someone else's problem. In fact, perhaps Masashi and Yuko should all breathe a sigh of relief that Misaki didn't go to Egypt with Ahmad.

As Masashi exit the highway, one nostalgic scene after another of his hometown leaps into view. The mighty river flows leisurely, and as a child he often went fishing with friends. In contrast to the neatly divided farmland, narrow roads wind through the old town. On one side of the gentle slope, weeds are ablaze with fresh greenery. He comes to a fork in the road, and choose the path flanked by stone pillars. His car slowly enters the temple grounds, surrounded by white earthen walls.

When Masashi opened the door to the kitchen, his mother, Yoshiko, greeted him with a bright smile, as if she had heard the sound of the car.

"You came all the way from far away, didn't you?"

Seeing how happy his mother was, Masashi felt sorry that he had been so far away from her, even though it only took three hours by car.

Leaving the women who had begun chatting behind, Masashi went around to the living room and found his father, Masaaki, sitting in a rattan chair with a high back.

"How's it going? How's your leg?"

"I'm sorry to have made you come all the way here. I'm sure Yoshiko was exaggerating. I was in a bit of pain while standing and moving around during the sutra chanting."

Masashi thought that if his patient father admitted to the pain, it must be

something serious.

"So, Did you go to the hospital to get checked out?"

"Well, I've been making do until now, but I've been told that I can't get better without surgery. However, it seems that all surgeries for osteoarthritis of the knee have their pros and cons. If I have to undergo a full-scale operation, it will take six months including rehabilitation, and that will interfere with the memorial services held by the temple and our parishioners." His father seemed to be in deep distress, but Masashi, unable to offer any help, changed the topic.

"Do my elder brothers come home sometimes?"

"Neither of them have been back for a while. Shigeki said he's going to sue the research institute to keep him employed for more than ten years. Kenji got seriously ill and had to quit his previous job, but it seems he's managed to find a new one. I guess they're both busy with their own things."

The information his father knew about his brothers was not much different from what Masashi knew. Compared to his brothers, Masashi might say he was in a more peaceful situation, but Masashi thought that since it was his parents' problems, elder brothers should make time to come home even if they were busy.

"By the way, is Dad still continuing that activity you were so passionate about?"

Masashi asked, looking away from Masaaki and towards the garden.

"What is that activity?"

"You see, you worked hard to protect Article 9 of the Constitution and collect signatures to ban nuclear weapons."

"Of course, I am. It's important. At last, are you interested?"

Masaaki said with a somewhat cynical smile. Ever since Masashi was a child, Masaaki had been involved in peace activities in the community. Masashi respected his father for this, but by the time he was in high school, he began to wonder why his father was stepping forward to do such things when the head priests of other temples weren't doing so.

After he joined Japan Communications Co., Ltd., he was able to grasp the political situation in society, and he stopped talking about Masaaki's activities to anyone. It may have been important to his father, but from the perspective of mainstream society, especially the management of Japan Communications Co., Ltd., which is a large company, it was something that had to be kept secret, something that he had deeply ingrained in his mind during his time at the company.

Without waiting for a reply from Masashi, who had fallen silent, Masaaki spoke. "Tomorrow is the 9th, so I need to carry the hand microphones and banners from the warehouse to the street campaign location. I wonder if there's anyone kind

enough to drive me there."

He spoke in a voice that the whole house could hear, and Misaki came over after hearing Masaaki's voice.

"I have a driver's license, so I'll take you there. Dad, can I use the car?" Unable to say no, all Masashi could say was, "Drive carefully."

6

Masaaki, who had been helped by his granddaughter, returned from his street campaign activities in high spirits. Misaki also said with flushed cheeks:

"A parishioner asked me if you were the priest's granddaughter and if you would be able to take over the temple."

"And what did you say?"

Masashi and Yuko asked in surprise. Then Masaaki answered for Misaki.

"She is still a student, so She is currently learning a lot and thinking about her future career path, that's what I answered."

"You didn't rule out the possibility of becoming a monk?"

When Masashi said with a tone of reproach, Masaaki calmly replied, "The possibility is not zero." Misaki herself ignored her father and grandfather's argument and went inside, saying, "I'm hungry."

"Now that I think about it, there was a strange man at today's street campaign activities who kept taking pictures with his camera."

Masaaki muttered as he sat down in his chair. Masashi wondered why he was concerned about something like that.

"He was a very sharp-eyed guy."

Masaaki still seemed to be worried.

"It's probably just tourists."

Yoshiko said, laughing at her husband's worry and putting an end to it.

Misaki felt energized in the countryside and returned to Tokyo, where she went to university in high spirits in the morning, but when Masashi returned home, the house was filled with a somber atmosphere.

"What's wrong? What happened?"

Masashi asked Yuko, and Yuko said while looking up at Misaki's room.

"Apparently, the university had received a call that Misaki's friend Ahmad had gone missing. Apparently, he had snuck into Gaza on a humanitarian aid truck and was attacked by Israel there. She came home in tears, so when I asked her what had happened, she finally told me that much."

"He's missing. So, there's a chance he's still alive."

The next morning, Misaki still didn't show up at the breakfast table. Masashi's heart ached at the thought of his daughter's sadness.

The following month, Masaaki came to Tokyo to undergo surgery at a university hospital. Misaki showed up to welcome him at dinner. However, her usual bright smile was gone, and she seemed to be forcing herself to eat. Her face was haggard, and only her eyes were strangely shining.

Masashi had told Masaaki about Misaki beforehand, so he started talking without mentioning it directly.

"Buddhism teaches that one must not kill, and that a spirit of tolerance is important for that purpose, but religious organizations cooperated heavily with the war effort during the last war. My father, Misaki's great-grandfather, was named Masateru, and was 22 years old when the Sino-Japanese War began. He was hot-blooded and became a military monk, carrying out missionary work on the continent. Not only did the religious organization provide metals like bells, but they also provided the military with fighter planes and battleships built with donations from their followers."

Masashi was also surprised as he had never heard such a story before. Misaki's eyes were wide with shock.

"How could that be... I can't believe it."

"You may not believe it, but it's true. I hadn't heard anything about it either, so when I started looking into it, I was shocked. I thought that the military and the country had forced them to donate bells and such, and that they had no choice but to do so. But I was wrong. Everyone was competing not to fall behind. The people were enthusiastic about the war. Sects and religions also bear responsibility for inciting the people."

Silence fell over the room. Masaaki said with a bitter expression on his face.

"Ever since I learned this, I have believed it is my duty to do what I can for peace."

"Ahmad told me that in Judaism God is called Yahweh, and in Islam God is called Allah, but they are the same God, just called by different names. He said that he wondered why people who believe in the same God have to kill each other."

When Misaki mentioned the name Yahweh, Masashi's breath caught in his throat. He was reminded of the words Cohen had explained to him at the beginning of the project: "Ayin means 'eye' in Israelite. Our God, Yahweh, watches over us from the sky with His divine eye."

Masaaki listened to Misaki's words, nodding deeply. Perhaps inspired by this, Misaki continued.

"Ever since Ahmad went missing, I've been thinking about what I should do? What I want to do? After listening to my grandpa's story, I felt like I



understood. I want to continue my grandpa's activities. I will quit my current university, become a monk, and take over the temple."

Masashi and Yuko were taken aback by Misaki's sudden declaration.

"Misaki, maybe you should think about it a bit more before quitting college."

"At least graduate from college. Please."

While Yuko was shaken, Masashi thought to himself that something was coming. When he turned around, Masaaki was looking at Misaki with loving eyes.

8

After the surgery, Masaaki was hospitalized for about a month to undergo rehabilitation. Masashi visited him on a day off, and his father was delighted. Masaaki was in a bed by the window in the four-person room.

"If that's what she wants, I wouldn't be opposed to her becoming a monk and taking over the temple. My daughter is taking over the work that I should have been doing, so perhaps I should be grateful to her."

Masashi sat on a round chair next to the bed and began to talk, occasionally glancing out the window.

"When I was choosing a university, my brother Shigeki told me that Shigeki and Kenji were not your real brothers. He said that your name had the kanji character Masaru in it, and that ours didn't have that in them. That's why you had to take over the temple. But I loved science. Father also told me to just pursue the path I wanted, so I never told anyone what my brother had said."

Masaaki listened to Masashi's story quietly with a smile on his face.

"I always thought I would have to talk about this someday, but I never had the chance to face you properly. The two children's mother was the daughter of a parishioner. She went to the city, got married, and had children, but her husband passed away. It seems her husband had debts. Struggling to make ends meet, she returned to her hometown with the intention of dying, but the sight of her adorable children's faces made it difficult for her to die, so she sat on the steps of the temple. I heard what had happened. At the time, my wife and I had no children. I offered to look after them until you could come and get them. When you were able to support yourself, please come and get them.

After five years, I received a letter from her. It said that she had finally paid off her debts and was somehow able to make a living. The other day, she visited the temple and watched her children from the shadows. She could see that they had grown very attached to madam and were very fond of madam. I wonder how they would look upon me now, telling them that I was their mother, after leaving them alone for five years. It would be a shame to take them back and force them to live in poverty again. It's a impudent request, but I hope

you will continue to take care of them. I want you to tell them my death. I have taken those children from their mother, and I have taken their mother from them. I have done a terrible sin.

Then you were born. I thought that treating you specially would be discriminating against your brothers, so I couldn't tell my children to take over the temple.

I was really happy when Misaki volunteered to take over the temple. I don't know what will happen, though."

The two of them looked out the window at the view of the Tokyo suburbs. "I'll be able to have a long talk with you, so being hospitalized isn't so bad."

"I will contact my brothers and ask them to come and visit you. Please have a good talk with them."

Masaaki nodded with a smile.

9

When Masashi entered the department head's office, the usually cheerful department head was gritting his teeth and looking troubled.

"Iwakura-kun, your security clearance has been ruled unacceptable."

"Oh, whose is it?"

"You. Is there anyone in your family who has inappropriate relationships with foreigners, or who is publicizing their opposition to increasing defense spending? If this continues, the Ayin Project will be impossible."

Masashi thought of Misaki. Perhaps his father's street campaigning had also been filmed. Masashi bowed solemnly to the department head and said, "I'm sorry," before leaving the room.

As he walked along the skyline, Masashi looked up at the buildings. He had devoted all his energy to the advancement of SAR radar. There were still many problems to be solved, and he had his own solutions tucked away in his heart. Being removed from the list would feel like having half of his body ripped away. Why would he be removed? Aren't the issues covered by security clearances "criminal and disciplinary history, illegal acts related to the handling of information, drug abuse and its influence, mental illness, alcohol moderation, credit standing, and other economic circumstances"? Race and ideology shouldn't be a factor. And his family's friendships and ideology are different from his own. They're a different person.

However, just because the government or a company does not explicitly state the requirements does not mean that ideology is not an issue. Looking back at history, it is clear that ideology has always been the biggest problem. Even

under the prewar Peace Preservation Law, those who could be used were given leeway and used for their own purposes, even if they had a minor criminal record, but ideological criminals were absolutely not tolerated. The current law also does not explicitly state the requirements, but the specific implementation is likely to remain a mystery, open to interpretation at the discretion of those in power.

Although he was disappointed, he also felt as if a haze had cleared from his mind. Masashi had always pursued technological advancement. However, if the technology he had advanced was being used not for the happiness of humanity but for an endless arms race, he began to question whether that was what he really wanted. In that sense, he had been influenced by his father and Misaki.

Although it was not my will, being forcibly excluded from military use of technology may actually have been a good thing for me, as it prevented me from deepening the wound any further.

Space development isn't just about the military. A transfer to a space exploration project that offers hope to humanity, even with a small budget, seemed like a bright path for Masashi.

The next day, Masashi went to see Shindo to ask about moving to a space exploration project. After listening to his request, Shindo frowned and took out a piece of paper from a drawer.

"If you had come a little earlier, your wish would have been granted, but unfortunately, this is your official appointment."

The transfer order handed to him by Shindo read, "You are being ordered to transfer to the Quality Control Department as an expert." It was a transfer to an administrative department that had nothing to do with technology. Masashi's legs gave way and he desperately tried to stop himself from collapsing.