

The Families

Chapter 4

Arimoto Family, Matsuki Family

‘She Is Our Strong Ally.’

In the early 1980s, Japan was stirred up with headlines about removal of Giants coach Nagashima, a new formation of the Nakasone Cabinet, and the grand opening of the Tokyo Disneyland. But in the same nation, three families in Sapporo, Kobe, and Kumamoto were tormented with disappearance of their children. The three missing youngsters have never had connection in Japan. Each of them disappeared at different times in different European countries where they were studying.

In September 1988, a surprising letter was delivered into Japan that says the three Japanese, who even never met in Japan, were now living in Pyongyang with each other's support. It had been five to ten years since they disappeared. Toru Ishioka from Sapporo, a fresh college graduate from Veterinary Medicine Department at Nihon University in March 1980, took off for Europe via Moscow to learn cheese-making skills. Keiko Arimoto from Kobe, a graduate from Kobe City University of Foreign Studies, set off to London for studying English in April 1982. Kaoru Matsuki from Kumamoto, a stop-out student at Kyoto University of Foreign Studies, left Japan for Spain to study in April 1980.

The letter from North Korea was delivered at the Ishioka family in Sapporo. It was in Toru's handwriting. The following is the original of his letter. (Note: the Ishioka family is not a member of the Abductee Family Association.)

‘How are you all? Sorry for all the concern I am causing. Mr. Matsuki (a graduate student of Kyoto University of Foreign Studies) and I are doing well. We are living in Pyongyang together with Ms. Keiko Arimoto who joined us later. Due to circumstances, we came to North Korea from Europe and started living here for such a long time. We are living on our own basically, though we receive some monthly allowance from North Korean government. However, under such a poor economic condition, I have to say it is very difficult to live here for a long time. Especially, we three are suffering from lack of clothing and books about education and culture. I asked someone from overseas to send this letter out, because I wanted to let you know our survival, at least. So please don't worry about us as three of us are fine. Please contact to the families of Matsuki (Kumamoto city) and Arimoto (Nagata-ward, Kobe city, address and phone number). Also please give your grateful appreciation to the person who mailed this letter for us. Your son, Toru.’

The letter was written with old form of Chinese characters and old-fashioned expression; they were Toru's writing habit. The Ishioka family received this airmail in early September, just before the Seoul Olympic Games started. Since Toru disappeared in the year of the Moscow Olympic Games, three Olympic games had finished: Moscow, Los Angeles, and Seoul. Toru's mother called Arimoto right after she read the letter.

Keiko's mother Kayoko was relaxing at home in Kobe after sending her husband and children off and finishing other morning routines. A telephone rang around 10 a.m. It was a woman Kayoko did not know. "Is that Ms. Keiko Arimoto's residence?"...It had been five years since her daughter disappeared; Kayoko unexpectedly heard her daughter's name even her family had no longer mentioned.

"I was really surprised. The lady on the phone was also confused and her voice was high-pitched. I have never thought that my daughter is in North Korea, because she was to 'travel around Europe' according to her letter just before her disappearance," Kayoko recalls the time.

"Mr. Ishioka's mother said it would be the best to bring such issues to the Socialist Party, as they have a connection to North Korea. She also told Kayoko that Ishioka had already contacted to the party in Sapporo. She was told, 'Our colleagues are now in Beijing. They would be able to contact to North Korea.' So at that stage, I thought my daughter could come home as soon as we contact to them; because at that time I didn't know that North Korea is such a horrible country."

Kayoko Arimoto called all her family members immediately after the call from Ishioka's mother. She called her husband Akihiro's office (an owner of an ironworks), the offices of Keiko's brother and sisters, and the workplace of Keiko's aunt (Akihiro's younger sister) who was especially fond of Keiko. Kayoko also called the police because they had asked questions from time to time since she filed her daughter's missing case. Therefore, she had to report them about what she had been just told.

In the meantime, Kayoko received a call from the Socialist Party. A caller said, "I have just talked with Ishioka over a phone. Please do not tell anyone about this." Kayoko answered, "I will keep it within my family, but I have spoken with the police." Ishioka mailed the copy of the letter immediately to Arimoto. Other than Toru's message as shown before, the letter included Keiko's signature, her passport number, and her parents' occupation. It also had three photographs: each of Toru and Keiko, which were supposedly taken in North Korea, and a crawling baby.

The original letter paper was in rectangular shape that seemed to be a half page of a notebook with poor quality. Many folding lines on the paper suggested that the letter had been once folded as small as possible; we could gather that Toru asked someone like a traveler to mail the letter to Japan with the risk of his life.

There was a note on the back of the letter written in English: "Please send this letter to Japan. Our address is in this letter." As Toru said on his letter, "I asked someone from overseas," the letter was postmarked in Poland. It had to be mailed out outside of North Korea. Keiko looked very skinny in the photo. She had completely lost her plump face that she used to have in Japan. But the woman in the photo was surely their daughter. Keiko is alive. The mother was gradually overwhelmed with joy after a tremendous surprise. But Kayoko Arimoto had got confused with the baby on the photo for a while: at first she did not notice that the baby could be of Keiko and Mr. Ishioka. Three names and three photos were in the letter, and there were photos of Keiko and Mr. Ishioka. So Kayoko had no doubt that this baby is Mr. Kaoru Matsuki in childhood. But why was he carrying his own photo as a baby to Europe? Kayoko had wondered so for many years.

In fact, since its arrival it took more than two years for the family of Kaoru Matsuki to learn about "the letter from North Korea," only evidence of Kaoru's existence. Arimoto and Ishioka had struggled to find their address for long time.

It was because the letter only said "Kumamoto city" as Matsuki's address. It had neither his signature nor any of contact details of his family. And the crawling baby in the photo was not Kaoru; so there was not his photo as well.

Matsuki's family had moved several times within Kumamoto City while the two families were searching for them. It made their search even more difficult. After going through long search, Arimoto finally contacted to Matsuki in the end of 1990. Kaoru's father Masuo had passed away for subarachnoid hemorrhages early in the year.

"If my father lived a little longer, he could at least know that Kaoru had been in North Korea. He died at 75 years old. Even though I was a little, I still clearly remember how hard my father had been struggling to find Kaoru," said Nobuhiro Matsuki, Kaoru's brother who is nineteen years younger than Kaoru.

Since his son disappeared in Spain, Masuo went to the police and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs several times, but they never gave him convincing answers; so Masuo started visiting people along with Kaoru's photo, who had been studying in Spain. He always initiated with the same question: "Have you met the man in this photo in Spain? Or have you seen him somewhere?"

Nobuhiro recalls those times, "I was an elementary school student at that time. My father went around not only within Kumamoto but also outside the prefecture. Taking me along, my father visited more than ten houses as far as I remember. Once he heard about someone who has been to Spain, my father went nearby without his/her address, and started looking for the person. I walked around with my father asking, "We are looking for the person who has been to Spain." Those

people we found were always surprised saying, 'How did you find me without my address? Despite our efforts their answers were the same:

'It may not look it, but Spain is actually a big country and is a pleasant place, too. Local foods taste good for Japanese. Even I wished if I could stay permanently. It is a very passionate and attractive country. If he is good at the language, your son must have been enjoying his life there.'

Hearing their answers, child as I was, I always thought that Spain might be a wonderful place. Once I have said to my father as a joke that I wanted to live in Spain, and he got really upset.'

Masuo had asked for help to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs several times, however, their answers were the same as the other people: 'I guess your son is enjoying his life there as Spain is a nice country. Many people are living like your son.' Masuo even contacted to the Japanese Embassy in Spain, but their answer was as follows: 'Since there is no such a person at the address (on his postcard from Spain), we cannot search him any further.'

Soon Matsuki family moved out the house that Kaoru had grown up. Around the time, Kaoru's father Masuo started showing symptoms of dementia. Recalling those times, Nobuhiro says, 'Confused father repeatedly called me Kaoru. I was fine with it at first. But I was getting uncomfortable, especially at dinnertime. When I said to him to eat more to cheer him up, he replied, 'I had enough, Kaoru. You eat them.' I couldn't stand that. So gradually I become coming home late so as to avoid having dinner with him.'

Masuo's symptoms progressed in his later years. He started calling a taxi and going out every day: it was his wandering symptom using a taxi. Since he called the same taxi company every time, a driver always let us know with radio where he was heading to, and always brought him back home. Masuo usually visited around his old friends; however, Masuo's family recently learned that, before visiting his friends, he always stopped by the police station nearby. With his almost inaudible voice, Masuo begged his son's search, saying, 'Please find my son.' Masuo was 'well-known' at the police station. Nobuhiro was recently told that a police officer listened to Masuo's story with tea, and asked him to go home at the end.

Soon his father passed away, then here came the news that Kaoru is in 'North Korea.'

'This is Mr. Kaoru Matsuki's residence, isn't it?' It was a call from a lady identifying herself as an 'aunt of Keiko Arimoto.' The caller continued to talk to his mother Sunayo, 'I'm calling regarding Kaoru.' Hearing Kaoru's name, Sunayo hurriedly called up Nobuhiro. He jumped up and took the phone. 'Hello?' 'Kaoru has been still missing, hasn't he?' 'Yes.' 'We have found out his whereabouts that are beyond your guess.' 'Where is he?' 'Do you know the country of North Korea?' 'What?' Nobuhiro had totally lost his next words.

The three families, who had never had link each other, were finally connected with one single string. Since they were living in Hokkaido, Kansai, and Kyushu, they decided to meet in the middle of these regions, Kobe in Kansai region. It was in January 1991. At that time, Matsuki family only had an old mother and a high school student Nobuhiro, so he attended the meeting alone wearing his high school uniform.

The abductors of these three students, who took them to North Korea were ‘Yodo-gō’ group, nine of radical Japanese students of a Japan Red Army Faction who hijacked ‘Yodo-gō’ passenger plane of Japan Airlines and headed to North Korea in 1970. They all had been thought to disappear in North Korea, but were actually married with other Japanese in the country. Then wives of the hijackers were in charge of abductions of Japanese students overseas. The recent revelations of these facts made many people unspeakable. It had confirmed that the North Korean spies were closely related to the abductions. Thirty year-old ‘Yodo-go hijack plot’ was revived in today’s Japan with the lead of revelation of the abductions. The details of these hijackers will be given later.

Parents of Keiko Arimoto had been struggling in their way from when the letter arrived from North Korea in September 1988 until the first meeting of the three families in January 1991.

Keiko’s mother Kayoko did not know how terrible North Korea was at the time she received the first call from Ishioka in Sapporo. ‘But the more I learned about North Korea, the more I realized that is a horrible country.’ She started thinking it would not be easy to get her daughter back. Kayoko went to see many politicians within the month when she knew her daughter’s survival. At first, she visited the office of the then leader of the Socialist Party, Takako Doi in Arimoto’s hometown. (Nishinomiya city, Hyogo).

But the politician was in Tokyo, so Kayoko left a message to a secretary to ask for a confirmation of her daughter’s safe and rescue her. She had waited long, but never been replied. Then her husband Akihiro said, ‘Maybe we should talk to the ruling party,’ Keiko next attempted to contact to leaders of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). She even made a call to then-Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita, but she could never reach to him. While none of politicians gave their hands to her, the office of Shintaro Abe, ex-minister of the Foreign Affairs and then-secretary general of the LDP, told her to come to Tokyo for a hearing. Since Akihiro could not leave his work behind, Kayoko went alone to Abe’s office in Tokyo. A secretary of the politician, Iizuka was so kind that he traveled along with her for half a day. Iizuka first took Kayoko to the Metropolitan Police Department. He even waited while she was explaining. Unfortunately, the Metropolitan Police Department could do nothing for cases overseas, so they went to the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs next. But the ministry official turned them down, saying, "We don't have diplomatic relations with North Korea." The officer even did not let Kayoko and Iizuka into the room; they were talking at the lobby standing up. Kayoko tried her best to convince the officer about importance of her story, but the officer was cold: His attitude was implying refusal of Kayoko's further request to see his bosses.

Iizuka said that the Japanese Red Cross would be their last hope. Kayoko was so disappointed because, with no doubt, she thought that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would take care of the issue, and that the things would go through smoothly. Since it was only a daytrip for Kayoko, she did not have enough time; it was fall and getting darker. She said to Iizuka that she would come back some other time, and returned home.

Kayoko traveled around the same route again with her husband within the same year. Akihiro said, "I could not let my wife handle this issue by herself anymore, so I decided to travel along with her taking off from work." After the Abe's office, the couple went again to the Metropolitan Police Department. The officer said, "We can investigate any of domestic cases, but it is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that handles international cases." Then a junior officer escorted them to the ministry, where Akihiro and Kayoko were convinced with their words as follows: "We'd better keep this issue only between us, because the revelation of the case possibly put your daughter in danger." The convinced parents thought that, at that time, it was a fair enough consideration so they returned home.

Akihiro said later, "While expecting that they are progressing to solve the abduction cases, I had been watching actions of the government. Because the ministry knew it, even the public doesn't know about it."

Then when the new year of 1989 had just started, a comment of Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita was explored: "the government is now ready to discuss with North Korea without any condition." The diplomatic relation between Japan and North Korea had been closed until then. According to his comment, they were going to start a negotiation to recover the diplomatic relationship. Heard about the news, Akihiro hoped that this would be a chance to talk to North Korea, and the government would rescue the abductees while they are talking their issue. He sent a letter to the office of Prime Minister Takeshita.

Since the Prime Minister's comment was revealed, there had been a rumor that Japanese politicians were going to visit to North Korea. Although these movements eventually led to the establishment of "Kanamaru-Tanabe North Korea Visit Group" (established by representatives from the LDP and the Socialist Party) in September 1990, Akihiro gave a send-off to the group with huge frustration.

It was spring in 1990, a half-year before the group's visit of North Korea. Since members of the visit group had been lining up, Akihiro made up his mind to ask for his daughter's rescue directly to leaders of the Visit Group: Shin Kanamaru,

the former vice president of the LDP, and Makoto Tanabe, the vice chairman of the Socialist Party. Akihiro first visited to the Diet Members' Building to meet Tanabe with an appointment, but he failed as the politician was absent. Before meeting Kanamaru, Akihiro visited the office of Hajime Ishii (now a member of the Democrat Party), who was then a member of the LDP in Arimoto's hometown, and also one of the key members of the visit group. At Ishii's office, his female secretary contacted to her boss, and said to Akihiro that Ishii would be back in two hours. Thanking to the secretary, Akihiro left the office to kill the time until Ishii is back.

It was a beautiful spring day. While he was hanging around a slope in Japan's political center Nagata-cho, Akihiro saw the Prime Minister's official residence. The then occupant of the residence was Toshiki Kaifu after the resignation of the former Prime Minister Takeshita by the Recruit Scandal. It had been two years since the new era of Heisei started. Akihiro had already sent a letter to the new Prime Minister Kaifu and called to the office several times, but their answers were persistently the same: "We have never seen your letter." They treated him in the same way they did when Akihiro wrote letters to the ex-Prime Minister Takeshita. This would be a good opportunity. Decided to stop by at the official residence to confirm directly if they received his letter, Akihiro asked to a security guard on the street where the entrance was. Akihiro later recalled that the guard "gave him a hard time" with series of questions: What do you want? Did you write a letter? Where are you from? Show me your I.D. Three or four other guards started gathering around Akihiro.

Akihiro replies: "I don't have I.D., but I have a driver's license. Is it not good enough? What else do you want?" People were now crowded around him. When Akihiro was digging inside his purse, the guard noticed some business cards there. They had series of names of the people: the officials at the Metropolitan Police Department, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the chief secretary of the LDP. The security guards changed their attitude asking that you had connections with such people. They advised him to make an appointment before visiting. Akihiro is only a local factory owner and never needed any practices of Nagata-cho in his life; the passionate father wishing his daughter's rescue realized that his straightforward action with parental love is unacceptable in this world.

This is actually not the story of Akihiro's real frustration. It happened at Ishii's office later.

It was nearly the time to go back to the Ishii's office. Hajime Ishii welcomed Akihiro. Although Ishii did not offer to meet the leader of the group Kanamaru, he promised to hand the copy of the letter (from Ishioka in North Korea) to Kanamaru, and take responsibility to talk to North Korean government about the issue. It

seems to go to the right direction. Before leaving the office, Akihiro bowed deeply to Ishii hoping that the politician would be their hope.

After summer, it was almost the time that the group of Kanamaru and Tanabe visit North Korea. An advance team was sent before their official visit in late September. Ishii was one of key members in the advance team. Akihiro wanted to know the result of Ishii's visit immediately as he knew the advance team was supposed to have done a real negotiation. With the news that the advance team had returned to Japan, Akihiro headed to Tokyo. It was September 19th. Since the Japan-North Korea Normalization Talks were just around the corner, the nation's interest was so high that Ishii's office was in chaos with reporters and the staffs. Akihiro met Ishii in the back room in his office.

'Ishii's explanation did not make any sense. He didn't seem to talk to North Korea about the abductions at all. Ishii even said, 'We can do nothing with only one letter.' Oh, no. The advance team that has done a real negotiation left no words to North Korea about the issue. I thought that it was impossible to rescue my daughter. I turned to pale at that time,' recalling Akihiro says about the meeting with Ishii.

'The Japanese abductees in North Korea have to be the issue of the highest priority at the talks. There are two more people other than my daughter.' Akihiro said to Ishii persistently, but Ishii avoided the topic and tried to change subjects. Akihiro thought Ishii trashed the matter of the letter completely.

Akihiro headed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs immediately after Ishii's office to protest against the visit group as they are trying to leave the issue of Keiko's abduction behind. He also argued that it would be too late if this issue were not brought up now. We, the abductees' families, had filed the petition for rescue to the ministry, and had kept it a secret as they were told by the ministry. We have been waiting for the government's action with our great expectation. Why didn't they try to face to North Korea with such an important issue?

Kanamaru-Tanabe North Korea Visit Group took off to North Korea as scheduled. They did not pay any attention to Akihiro's frustration, as well as the existence of the abductees. This visit later led to the negotiation for normalization of diplomatic relations with North Korea; but also it was criticized because the government was said to conclude secret agreement of rice aid following time. They also discussed about 'compensations' for the times of before and after war.

While 'the letter from North Korea' was being ignored in political world, its existence somehow leaked out to the media. In December 1990, after angry and disappointing Akihiro heard the news of the departure and the return of the visit group in September, a reporter of a weekly magazine 'Shukan Bunshun' came to Akihiro's house, saying that he wanted to write an article about the three abductees. How could they find this out? Akihiro was growing his anger.

However, Akihiro made up his mind at this chance. Since the government (politicians) was trying to avoid the issue, he had no other choice but to let it go into public in order to rescue his daughter. Coincidentally, two other newspapers had started investigation. While Akihiro was cooperating with their interviews, Kayoko was growing her concern. She was afraid to publicize the whole story, even though their real names would be hidden. Naturally, Kayoko and Akihiro often had arguments.

In early January 1991, the media gave a great deal of space for the first time to “the letter from North Korea” (January 7th). There was a series of big headlines: “Three Japanese disappeared in Europe in ’80s are now in Pyongyang, North Korea. Letter Arrived to Family” (Mainichi Daily News), “North Korea Abducted Three Japanese. Disappeared in Europe 10 Years Ago” (Sankei Evening News)..

It was when shortly after Matsuki family knew about “the letter.” With the information about the articles of newspaper, a reporter from NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) door stepped Matsuki early in the morning. Nobuhiro was sleeping in the room near the door. He found that outside was too bright for early morning, and opened the door. There were TV light and a camera taping him. The yelling reporter was banging the front door as hard as they were trying to break in and yelling, “Kaoru Matsuki is in North Korea, is that true?” Unable to go out of the house, Nobuhiro had to be absent from school for two days.

Since newspapers and magazines released his daughter’s case, Akihiro Arimoto was again going to file the petition of the rescue to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and to have a press conference. It was when the three families first gathered in Kobe. They prepared the petition with joint signatures of the three families. Akihiro was going to reveal his daughter’s name, Keiko Arimoto, in order to appeal to the public.

Immediately before the press interview, Akihiro received a call from a reporter from NHK which had arranged the whole interview on that day. The reporter asked to Akihiro to meet a person called Tadao Endo. He opened the conversation with suggestion to cancel the press interview. “We have been working for one and a half years to arrange the North Korea Visit Group. If you bring the story (abduction incident) out now, all our efforts would be ruined. Since I have a strong connection with Kim Jong-il, I promise to bring you good news, if you wait for a month or two. So why don’t you cancel today’s interview and go home now?” said the old man with aloof appearance.

If the abductees could return home by the way the man is offering, let’s take it. Although it was a very abrupt offer, Akihiro and the others decided to take Endo’s words with a feeling like clutching even at straws. However, the press conference was already set up. They went up to the stage and sat, but could not say their names or addresses. They could say nothing. With dissatisfaction erupted

from the reporters, nothing went to the paper. But later, Akihiro and Kayoko reflected the whole thing with feeling of regret. They later found that Endo was a publisher of left wing publication, had connections with North Korea and the group of “Yodo-gō” hijackers. A big opportunity to lighten the news was skillfully smashed down eventually. On January 16, 1991, the next day of the interview, the Golf War broke out. Endo broke his promise.

Once they had slipped a great chance to make the scoop away, the media never look them back any more.

‘He is a mysterious child like a present from God.’

Fumiyo Saito, Kaoru Matsuki’s elder sister, says about her brother. When she wakes up in the middle of the night, she starts thinking how Kaoru, once called a patient boy, has been forced to live in tough life, then Fumiyo cannot go back to sleep. Since she did not join to the Abductee Family Association for a long time, Fumiyo promised to herself to do her best for his brother on the New Year’s Day of 2003.

The first four girls were born consecutively in Matsuki family. Fumiyo is the oldest. The fourth baby died only at one month old. Kaoru was born exactly one year later, on the first anniversary of the baby’s death. The delightful family thought that Kaoru was reincarnated as the fourth baby. It was June 13, 1953.

Kaoru’s father Masuo had long waited for a boy. Fumiyo, eight years older than Kaoru, remembers that around the time Kaoru was born. Their father often said he would never stop having babies until they have a boy. So he was overjoyed for Kaoru’s birth.

The father taught young Kaoru many things having his son on his lap. He just adored his son. ‘Kaoru, when you eat fish, get rid of bones and eat like I do. Then pour hot water to make soup. That’s the way to enjoy the whole fish.’

Fumiyo often felt jealous, and sometimes pushed Kaoru out of father’s lap to take over.

When Kaoru was born, Matsuki family was living in Yahata city (now called Yahata Higashi-ward, Kitakyushu city), Fukuoka Prefecture. Kaoru’s parents were both from Nagashima, an island in offshore of Kumamoto. They both came back to Japan from Taiwan after the World War II. Kaoru’s father Masuo had worked very hard for his family, from early morning until late night. To help family income, Kaoru’s mother Sunayo was selling peanuts on the street in the neighboring town, Tobata. Elementary school girls Fumiyo and her sister Teruyo picked up a big can filled with peanuts at Yahata Station every morning, and delivered it to their mother at Tobata Station; because the mother had to leave home earlier to take a good place to sell peanuts. The sisters were often late for school because of their ‘morning job,’ and were yelled by their teachers as they did not know about it.

Fumiyo's evening duty was to cook rice for the whole family with a charcoal stove and firewood.

Being like an actual mother, Fumiyo often took her younger sisters to a vegetable market nearby carrying Kaoru on her back. "Mister, please let us clean up." The sisters were expecting cracked watermelons or disfigured radish for rewards of cleaning. It was a time of shortage. There were people by a well stepping something in a big metal basin. "What are you washing?" Fumiyo didn't know what it was at that time, but now she knew they were washing bull's guts. The lady told her to bring a container if she wanted some. They were from North Korea. Speaking with strong accent, those people were wearing white shoes with curled-up toes like the head of a boat and their traditional dresses.

See, we used to get along with people from North Korea. But why did they take Kaoru away from us? Why? Kaoru was my parents' beloved one who was grown up as their dream. Fumiyo wants to throw those words towards North Korea. What did Kaoru do to your people? She wonders if she could serve the dish with gut for Kaoru once again that she learned from the Korean lady.

When Kaoru Matsuki was a student, he was a quiet and diligent young guy who was especially keen on language. He was always carrying English dictionary and trying to memorize a whole pages.

When studying at Nagasaki College of Foreign Languages, Kaoru won the first prize of a Spanish Recitation Competition. One of the professors, who expected Kaoru's bright future, recommended him to enter Kyoto Sangyo University. Moreover, the professor promised to write a recommendation letter for him for graduate school at Kyoto University of Foreign Studies after Kyoto Sangyo University. The professor said: "I would like Kaoru to succeed to my position in my college in the future. Therefore, in order to add his value, I eagerly suggest Kaoru to study in Spain for one year immediately after entering the graduate school."

In his mid-60s, Kaoru's father Masuo didn't want to let his beloved son go away anymore. He was hoping that Kaoru would come home and find a job in hometown after graduating from the university. Therefore, his father never allowed Kaoru to study in Spain. Confronted his persisting son, Masuo eventually permitted it; but told him that it would be only one year.

However, Kaoru disappeared shortly after he arrived in Spain. Feeling guilty, the professor had visited Matsuki family many times. Until passed away, he had never missed to send a letter to Masuo every year. The professor might die with great regret.

Kaoru's mother and sisters were on his side and asked Masuo, "Let him go only for one year." Kaoru's mother Sunayo, a street peanuts seller said quietly: "I was married to your father without any education. I wanted to study." Actually, Masuo

had never hesitated to support his children for their education. He often said to young Kaoru, "I will do anything to send you to school. When I asked your grandpa that I wanted to go to high school, he yelled at me swinging up burning iron chopsticks, 'You are going to be a farmer as I am, so you don't have to go to school.' But our relatives gave words to him to send me to high school. I went to a school in Izumi (Kagoshima Prefecture) by a ferryboat from Nagashima Island. You all can study as much as you want."

In fact, Masuo had sent all his five children, three daughters, Kaoru and Nobuhiro, to private high schools. After changing jobs several times, Masuo worked very hard for his family as a salesman at a famous housing company. The father worked from early in the morning until late night to visit his customers. He had even lived in Tokyo apart from his family for his job. His effort enabled him to build his own house in Kumamoto city, which was the family's long waited dream.

Kaoru's studious attitude might be taken after from his parents. With a wry smile Fumiyo said: "The girls didn't really care about our parents' wish, so didn't study hard, but Kaoru was studying very hard admiring his father."

He was shy, patient, and a person who did not waste things.

Fumiyo has a memorable episode about him: When Kaoru was visiting his home from Kyoto during school holiday, he gave a snack box to his mother Sunayo, saying, "Here are snacks for you." Saying thank you, the mother opened the box; it was filled with money that she had sent for her son. Kaoru saved that money and gave them back to his mother as a gift. He kept them in a snack box maybe because he was too shy to express awkwardness. He was such a person.

"I don't know how I was blessed with such a caring child." Impressed Sunayo was so touched that she filled her eyes with tears. Kaoru's thoughtfulness made them think he was sent by God. He was a boy whom Matsuki family was proud of. When Sunayo gave him money for haircut, Kaoru cut his hair by himself to save that money. He has a long hair in a photo appeared in the media as an abductee; Kaoru trimmed them by himself.

He saved 900,000 yen with part-time jobs to study in Spain. Once Masuo decided to support his son, he gave one million yen to Kaoru.

When 27-year-old Kaoru went to Spain, Nobuhiro was a second grader of an elementary school. Nobuhiro is Kaoru's nephew. Shortly after he was born, Masuo adopted Nobuhiro as his son. Kaoru was very diligent brother even in young Nobuhiro's memory. As soon as Nobuhiro entered an elementary school, Kaoru bought some of thick English textbooks for Nobuhiro and told him to study, because English would be a very important subject in near future. When Nobuhiro was doing nothing, Kaoru always called him and made him study. Even Nobuhiro felt bored and sneaked out, Kaoru was absorbed in his own study. When Nobuhiro

took an admission exam for a private school where Kaoru used to go, the principal said to him, "You must be a good student as Kaoru is your brother." After entering the school, Nobuhiro asked teachers who knows about Kaoru, "He doesn't come back from Spain. I only remember my brother when I was small. What was my brother like?" All the teachers said, "He was very studious student." Some laughed and added, "Not like you." Even a strict teacher said, "Truly diligent student." Then he added, "I can add more words to those to describe him."

Kaoru was a caring brother, too. When Nobuhiro had carsick and made a mess on his shirt, Kaoru cleaned up for him without saying anything. Nobuhiro had never seen Kaoru being angry. It was Kaoru who agreed to adopt Nobuhiro along with the parents, and who named him Nobuhiro. Kaoru is like his benefactor. He wanted to do anything for his brother on behalf of the deceased father and the old mother. When they heard about Ishioka's letter from North Korea, all of his sisters had married and left home. When his mother heard about the letter over the phone, she said to Nobuhiro, "Don't tell anybody, not even to your sisters." She might have thought that they would be in trouble if somebody knew the family has a "connection" to North Korea because they were living in a conservative area. Nobuhiro followed her words and kept everything inside his heart for a long time. When the meeting was held with other two families, he attended in school uniform on behalf of his mother.

At the time Kaoru disappeared, there were only Nobuhiro and his parents in Matsuki family. Kaoru took off for Spain in spring 1980. They received only a few postcards from Kaoru because he was lazy with the pen, though, they had phone calls several times from him. When Kaoru said he would start a part-time job, Masuo told him not to worry about money but to concentrate on studying. The following is the last postcard from Kaoru sent from Madrid in late April.

'How are you? It's been nearly one month since I left home. It's sometimes cold here because of the changeable weather. But summer is coming soon. I'm getting used to the life here and doing fine. Since my boarding house is located at the center of the city, it is good for shopping. But the living expense is almost the same as Japan as prices are increasing. I am handling my money pretty well, so please don't worry about me. I am doing OK with my monthly allowance for a while. Perhaps I will ask for some financial help in October or November. I'm going to study really hard. I will write to you soon. Give my best to Noriko (his sister, married just before Kaoru left home = note by editor) and Nobuhiro. Bye.'

The family thought Kaoru had been busy for studying for a while, even his letter stopped coming. They knew that Kaoru was a lazy correspondent. However, they started worrying about him when it had been almost one year since they lost

Kaoru's contact. Masuo visited the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and started looking for people who had studied in Spain.

Kaoru's parents became very sensitive about the news related to Spain. They often checked newspapers being worried about their son. At that time, there was an incident that a married Japanese male was shot by his Spanish girlfriend when leaving the country. Because she found out that he had a wife in Japan. Masuo said that such a thing would not happen to Kaoru. However they checked even tiny news in newspapers, which were as tiny as others could hardly find. If Sunayo found a TV program about Spain, she called her husband, saying, "Hey, come here, this is about Spain." Then they stared into the TV screen. When they see the scene of people in the town, they said to Nobuhiro, "Nobuhiro, watch them carefully. You have better eyesight than we do."

When started studying English at junior high school, Nobuhiro asked a teacher how to send an airmail, and wrote letters to Kaoru many times to the address in Spain where Kaoru supposed to live. It was shown on his last postcard. The letters were never returned to Japan, so Nobuhiro expected that his letters had been delivered to Kaoru. His letter was always concluded with the same sentence: "please let us know your survival." His father Masuo had started showing symptoms of dementia maybe because he had been worrying about Kaoru too much.

Keiko Arimoto was born on January 12, 1960. Her due was at the end of the year, but Keiko was born overdue. Keiko's mother Kayoko still remembers that she made rice cakes with her husband holding her big belly at the end of year before Keiko was born. When she was reaching to rice cake in a mortar, her husband mistakenly stroked her head lightly with a wooden pestle. She remembers the pain on her head at the time clearly as if it were happened yesterday. That is a part of her sweet memory. It was an Arimoto family's custom at that time to make homemade rice cake for New Year. Keiko was 23 years old when she was disappeared, and now she is in her mid-40s. Kayoko thinks of her missing daughter everyday when she is praying in living room for Keiko's survival and her safe return.

Keiko was really a quiet kid and easy to care. She didn't cry much as a baby. When going shopping, Kayoko always told her daughter, "Play with toys while I am out." Keiko nodded, even she was not able to talk at that time yet. While she was waiting for her mother, Keiko was always playing with toys quietly as her mother told her. Kayoko's father-in-law (Keiko's grandfather) was always willing to look after Keiko, saying, "I like to nurse her as she is very easy to look after."

Keiko is their third girl. Arimoto has 5 daughters and a son. It is just coincidence but Arimoto has exactly the same family structure as Matsuki: the first four are girls followed by a boy. Keiko did not demand much even when she began

to understand things. When her parents went to pick her up at the kindergarten, Keiko was always coming out after other kids. Keiko had never race things with others; she would even offered her turn for toilet to other kids. Keiko's kindergarten teacher, who still gives a big support for her rescue, is wondering: "Why such a quiet girl like Keiko wanted to go to London by herself?"

Keiko might want to change herself. That's why she jumped onto the job opportunity in Europe. Not knowing she was being cheated, Keiko took a job, "a global marketing research," offered by a wife of "Yodo-go" hijackers. She used to be careful, but might have pictured herself working aggressively; despite the mother's word in her letters, "Come home soon. Come back as soon as you finish your study. Take good care of yourself."

When she entered high school, Keiko started going to an English school at night. She always considered things without advice. She was as well a very diligent student. Keiko entered Kobe city University of Foreign Studies. While studying at evening classes, Keiko had a part-time job while learning sewing in daytime. Kobe city has many membership facilities that are owned by shipping companies; Keiko worked for a restaurant in such facilities in part-time and saved money for studying abroad. Eventually, Keiko saved all the money she needed to study abroad, and finally told her parents after she sent the entire school fee: "I want to study abroad." She asked her parents for ex post facto approval, but both Akihiro and Kayoko strongly opposed. Akihiro's sister (Keiko's aunt) did not approve, either.

Keiko had lived with the aunt since high school. It was because her English school was closer from her aunt's house, so Keiko did not have to go home late night. They started living together. Keiko continued to stay with the aunt during her university years because it was on the same railway line as aunt's station.

Persistent Keiko never give up her dream to study abroad, and eventually the people around gave her permission. Akihiro and Kayoko reluctantly decided to let her go with a promise to come home straightaway after study. Arimoto family held Keiko's farewell dinner party before her departure. Remembering that night, Kayoko believes that they all will gather again sometime like that night.

Thus, Keiko Arimoto left Japan for London on April 10, 1982. It was over two years after Kaoru Matsuki left home. At the same time, parents of Kaoru Matsuki had started searching for their son in Kyushu.

Keiko was going to the International House Language School in London while working for baby-sitting at her home-stay family. Keiko had sent letters to her parents frequently. She said by the postcard sent on the next day of her arrival: "I think I am going to be fine." Her following letters reported about her life in London such as the town she was living and her school life.

In early June 1983, one year after Keiko left Japan, her parents received a postcard they had been waiting for. Keiko finally sent them a schedule of her return home.

‘I inform you about the date of my return as I bought a flight ticket. I will leave London for Singapore on August 2nd, and stay there for a week. Then I will go back to Osaka on 9th. I will arrive at Itami Airport at 5:17 p.m. by Singapore Airline on Tuesday, August 9th. I will be staying here (host family in London = note by editor) until the end of June, and will travel around Europe in July before I leave London.’

What if something happened while she was traveling around so many places? Kayoko was very worried. She replied her to come straight back from London. However, this letter might have never reached to Keiko. She left her host family earlier than her original plan. She was falling into North Korea’s plot of abduction at that time, but that was revealed recently. Just one week after Keiko wrote to her parents about her return, Keiko wrote to her friend in Japan as followings:

“All the sudden, I have found a job. What I will do is marketing research, and the details are (omitted). I am going to cancel my flight ticket for home. I feel so lucky. I’m so happy that I will work abroad. I may look overexciting, but I am feeling like I have finally forwarded the first step in my real life. I’ll do my very best.”

The letter delivered Keiko’s innocent feelings so much. A big merciless trap that destined her fate was secretly set inside Keiko’s young innocent mind; it was only about one week after Keiko’s parents received their daughter’s postcard with her flight schedule to come home. Not knowing what had been happening to their daughter, looking forward to seeing their daughter, Akihiro and Kayoko were just waiting for August 9th, Keiko’s arrival date.

The day came. Kayoko and her family were preparing to pick Keiko up at Itami Airport. Keiko’s aunt called the airline to make sure she was on the plane since they didn’t hear from Keiko for a while. However, they were told that Keiko wasn’t on board. What happened to her? Everyone was getting anxious. But then an international telegraph was delivered, as if she was trying to blow their anxiousness: ‘FOUND A JOB, COME HOME LATER, KEIKO.’

Soon after that, they received her letter dated August 3rd. Keiko said in the letter, ‘I will be home later than the original schedule because I found a job here. I am not going to stay one place, as this is marketing research. I’ll write to you from

wherever I go.'Kayoko was surprised. If she is not staying at one place, how can we contact to her?

In fact, Keiko had been taken to North Korea already at that time from Copenhagen, Denmark. (It was confirmed by the intelligence service of a western country that was investigating North Korea's spy activity. The actual date Keiko arrived in North Korea was July 16th. Keiko was being watched as a new face with a North Korean spy.) The abductors might have sent both the telegraph and the letter written on August 3rd. Those letters could be the abductors' deliberate scheme in order to delay her parents' action to search their daughter.

They received another letter with Keiko's name in mid October. Strangely, the letter did not have date, which she had never missed. No address, either. The description of the season sounded strange, too. Now they knew that somebody else might have mailed out the Keiko's letter written in advance.

It was the last letter; her letter had never been delivered since. Kayoko's anxiousness gradually became conclusive. The year was ending soon. She had no idea what to do to search Keiko. In the meantime, Kayoko went to an office of Hyogo Prefecture. She decided to seek advice to officials. Even at the office, however, she still didn't know where to go and what to say about Keiko. Kayoko ended up explaining passionately to a lady at the reception: 'My child had been missing overseas. Do you know where I should ask to for such a case?' The lady was very kind. She said kindly, 'I think the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would take care of you.' She wrote down the telephone number of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for her while Kayoko was explaining.

As soon as Kayoko returned home, she dialed the number. She does not remember which section she called, but the person at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was cold. As if he was sneering at the pleading mother's words, the officer irresponsibly answered to Kayoko with carefree voice:

'She will be back soon. There are so many cases that young people left home and never returned. She must be enjoying her life there with a boyfriend.' In spite that the mother was being worried so much and was desperate for help, those elites, who are totally different from ordinary people, had no human feelings. Such was a feeling that Kayoko received at her first contact of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Not much has changed even now.

Kayoko filed a request to the police to search Keiko in the New Year. The police said, 'We cannot do much for cases overseas.' But she had had phone calls from the police from time to time. She was asked many questions about Keiko at the police station. How tall was she? What's her foot size? What kind of clothing did she like? At first Kayoko thought the police was working hard for the search. But it sounded weird. One day Kayoko asked: 'Is this report going to inspect for

people who died in the foreign country?’ The answer was yes. Saying no way, Kayoko left the police station. Keiko is not dead!

Time had gone by without any contact from Keiko. In the meantime, Kayoko was often said by her colleagues: ‘Kayoko disappeared again.’ ‘Where have you been to?’ It was because Kayoko always rushed in shrines or temples, and prayed for Keiko to her ‘safe return,’ wherever she passed by even she was with her colleagues.

When Korean Airline was exploded in autumn, 1987, Kayoko was worried if Keiko was in the airplane. Any incidents made her worried about Keiko, because at that time she did not have any clue that North Korea had abducted her daughter. Kayoko never stop worrying about her daughter: Has Keiko been taken to somewhere for prostitution? But she could still contact to us; then she might have been involved into an accident.

Almost five years passed since they completely lost Keiko’s contact. Even between Kayoko and her husband, they didn’t talk much about Keiko any more as it made them feel painful.

Kayoko had been convincing herself every day: I have to let her go and start new life.

Then, September 6, 1988 when summer was nearly ending, Kayoko received that phone call.

‘Hello, is this Ms. Keiko Arimoto’s residence?’

Kayoko did have no chance to ask back who was calling, as the caller continued to talk hurriedly.

‘I just got a letter from my son, and it says that he is staying with your daughter in Pyongyang.’

From the day, the couple started getting into a new battle: the battle with the many forces that try to smash the incident as mentioned before.

Now, let’s bring back about the maneuver by ‘Yodo-gō’ Group. It was just around the time when Akihiro and Kayoko received the postcard from Keiko about her returning schedule. Let’s take a look at what kinds of tricks had been planned while Keiko’s parents were expecting Keiko’s return?

Megumi Yao, a wife of a hijacker Yasuhiro Shibata, had confessed about the abduction as follows: ‘I deceived Ms. Keiko Arimoto, and took her to North Korea in order to get her to be a wife of one of the Japanese students (Toru Ishioka and Kaoru Matsuki = note by editor), who were abducted by two other Japanese wives beforehand.’ Her words have a grave meaning because this confession was made during a trial at the Tokyo District Court. It was a trial for Emiko Kaneko (a wife of ‘Yodo-gō’ criminal Shiro Akagi), who was suspected on violation of the Passport Law. It was March 12, 2002, a half-year before the Prime Minister Koizumi visited

North Korea. The abduction of Keiko Arimoto has been highlighted greatly since Yao's testimony.

Moreover, Yao published her essay after the trial, and revealed the detail of the abduction ('I Apologize' by Megumi Yao, published by Bungei-shunju). The followings are referred from the book.

Yao first explained about herself that she was deceived as well to be taken to North Korea, and forced to marry at last. However, as Yao had been a member of the Society for the Study of Chuche ideology when in Japan, she later confessed that her act to abduct Keiko was based on her belief of justice for the revolution.

It was late mid-May 1983; Megumi Yao arrived in London under the order "to get a Japanese girl." She found a language schools that had many Japanese students and enrolled herself at one where Keiko Arimoto was studying. Yao targeted Keiko, and got closer to her as they had common things as Japanese. It was late May, just before Keiko sent a postcard to her parents in early June to let them know her schedule of returning home as mentioned before. If Yao took her action just a half-month late, Keiko's fate would have been different completely. Gradually Yao was getting closer to Keiko as she invited Keiko to her apartment and cooked Japanese food for her. After earning Keiko's trust, Yao eventually mentioned about a job of marketing research that did not exist. Keiko might have been considering about her future seriously at that time, so she happily took the job; then they promised to meet at the station of Copenhagen, Denmark, on July 15th. Keiko was introduced to Kimihiro Abe, one of the 'Yodo-go' criminals, as the president of a trading company. A North Korean big spy also attended pretending as a business partner. Keiko was told to go to North Korea with him immediately. Three of them skillfully made her agree on the job; the next day, Keiko and the North Korean spy met again at Kastrop International Airport in Copenhagen in order to fly to North Korea via Moscow. The entire scene at the airport was actually being watched by an intelligence service of a western country. They even took their photographs.

In summer of 1990, over 10 years passed since Keiko was taken to North Korea, a detective unexpectedly visited Arimoto family introducing himself as a officer from foreign affair section of Hyogo Prefectural Police Department. The detective showed Akihiro and Kayoko a photograph. "It's Keiko!" They held their breath. They have never seen that photograph before. Keiko was sitting on a bench in the picture reaching her crossed legs out and leaning her back against the wall. Surprised Kayoko asked the detective where it had been taken. He said that they were at the lobby in Copenhagen Airport. Right next to her was a man with half of his body in the picture. He was a North Korean spy whom the National Public Safety Commission had been watching. Kayoko started shouting in her mind: 'Keiko, why are you and what are you doing there?' Keiko looked very relaxed. It

might have been the best moment for her with a great hope, but no doubt at all. Keiko put lightly her clenched left fist under her chin. This gesture was her habit when she was comfortable.

The letter was delivered to the Ishioka family from North Korea, and the photograph of Keiko with a North Korean spy. they were certainly important clues for Keiko's whereabouts, but at the same time, they were the seeds of suspicion. Until Keiko's abduction became certain, Keiko was suspected as a person who sought out with North Korean spies, not as a victim. One of Arimoto's relatives had even been investigated his office locker. The abductees' families had been carrying a pile of agony. In that sense, Yao's testimony was valuable for the Arimoto family.

Ten days before the testimony at the Tokyo District Court, Megumi Yao met Keiko's parents at a hotel in Yokohama and apologized to them. She prostrated herself as soon as the couple entered the room.

'I am so sorry. I kidnapped your daughter. I am sure that you have been in trouble for a long time. I am truly sorry.'

Tears busted out from eyes of all three.

Megumi Yao could be the worst enemy for Keiko's parents, but Kayoko didn't blame her at all. Instead, Kayoko held her up and talked to her as if she was consoling an abductee. 'Thank you for your confession, really.' Yao had also been in torment by being apart from her two daughters in North Korea.

After Megumi Yao left the room, Akihiro answered to interviewers.

'She is our strong ally.'

However, this part of the interview was cut out the TV program. The words could surprise viewers. Akihiro explains about a true meaning of the words he wanted to deliver:

'We had been ignored for a long time. No one cared us begging for rescue of our daughter. The government, politicians, Japan Bar Association, the media, all of them completely ignored us. Compared to that, I thought that Yao's confession was the most valuable help for us.'

Akihiro called Yao as a "strong ally" instead of the worst enemy. Behind the word were his indescribably deep regret and anger as he had been forced to go through long, lonely path.

After Yao's testimony, the situation had been dramatically changed. When they first formed the Abductee Family Association, most people ignored them and walked away from their monthly petition campaigns in Moto-machi, Kobe city. They always felt restless. 'My daughter had been kidnapped. What would you do if this were your situation?' Even if Akihiro screamed for two hours straight, only few people stopped to listen to him. But since Yao's testimony, people queued up to give their signature. Her testimony also made the police recognized Keiko's missing as an abduction case, eventually.

In addition, immediately after Keiko's abduction case was highlighted by the Yao's testimony, Arimoto received a phone call on March 20th from the Chairman of the Abduction Rescue Federation of the Diet Members, Masaaki Nakayama, a member of the House of Representatives (LDP). Kayoko picked up the phone. Nakayama said, "This atmosphere would be unable Keiko to return home." He even pressed Kayoko to choose "either his group or 'the Abductee Rescue Association' (Katsumi Sato, the Chairman)." "The Abductee Rescue Association" had been giving a great support to the Abductee Family Association such as initiating petition campaigns. On the other hand, regardless of his position as the Chairman of the Abduction Rescue Federation of the Diet Members, Nakayama had been showing favorable acts toward North Korea since visiting North Korea in 1998, so that he had been repelling the members of the Association and their supporters. At the scene, Nakayama was now trying to smash their activities. Kayoko answered to him clearly that she would go with "the Abductee Rescue Association" as they always are, and she hung up the phone. Soon afterwards, Nakayama resigned his position of the Chairman, and the Federation broke up. A month later, a new Abduction Rescue Federation of the Diet Members was formed, which has been functioning today.

At the trial, Megumi Yao testified that she had heard "two Japanese males were taken" in another abduction by wives of 'Yodo-go' criminals. It was certain that these two males were Toru Ishioka and Kaoru Matsuki, as Yao mentioned later in her essay. The abductors were Yoriko Mori and Sakiko Kuroda. Mori is a wife of deceased Takamaro Tamiya, the leader of the 'Yodo-go' hijackers.

According to Yao's essay, Mori and Kuroda met Toru Ishioka at a zoo in Barcelona, Spain, and they became closer. At that day, the three took a picture together at the zoo. It was approximately a half-month after Ishioka left Japan, in April of 1980. After that Ishioka moved to Madrid and met Kaoru Matsuki who had just arrived from Japan at Hostel San Pedro. It was a resort style motel as described in Kaoru's postcard sent to his parents (mentioned before). Kaoru said about the motel in his postcard: "My board house is convenient for shopping as it's located in the center of the city." With the purpose to abduct the youngsters, Yodo-go wives Mori and Kuroda often invited Matsuki and Ishioka to their apartment, and cooked dinner for them. Then the Yodo-go wives skillfully asked them for a trip to North Korea, saying that it would be only a one-month tour. Thus Ishioka and Matsuki disappeared in summer of the year they left Japan.

After entering North Korea, two of them were compulsory educated at a guest house about Kim Jong-il's ideological education. The following is an excerpt from Yao's publication.

“As far as I know, Mori and Kuroda were staying with the students at a guest house and learning about their ideological education, too. They were pretending as if they came to North Korea and they had learned about Chuche ideology for the first time.”

Then the two men realized that they had been tricked, and became very angry. “Yodo-go” group had thought that, with education of North Korea’s ideology, they could easily bring new Japanese members in their group. However, they failed to educate Ishioka and Matsuki and to brainwash them; so they started having trouble to handle the two students. The group’s activities had been based on orders from North Korean government. Otherwise they were not able to go in and out of the country freely.

Two years had passed since two Japanese male were kidnapped. This time Megumi Yao abducted a Japanese female in Europe in order to force her and one of the Japanese male to marry. The victim was Keiko Arimoto.

The three Japanese had never met in Japan before, though, they were gathered in North Korea under such circumstances, and managed to smuggle the letter out telling the world of their life: “Mr. Matsuki and I are fine. We are living together with Ms. Keiko Arimoto who joined us later, in Pyongyang.”

However, as mentioned before, the “letter” had been crashed and concealed by various forces. Since 1991, when Keiko’s father Akihiro missed the chance for appealing to the public after being convinced by Tadao Endo’s lie, Akihiro had been searching for new opportunities. Despite his effort, the public response was cold.

Akihiro had sent hundreds of copies to each media. He was trying to draw their support with the copies: “I am going to appeal to the Japanese government to take the issues of clarifying the abductions and of confirmation of the abductees’ survivals as formal subjects at the negotiation of normalization of Japan-North Korea diplomatic relations. Therefore, I sincerely ask for supports from the media.” The copy was printed in A3 size paper. He put the articles on both sides of the copy about the abductions from newspapers and magazines. On front side was the very first article about the “letter” published on January 7, 1991. A headline of the article was as follows: “Three Male and Female Missing in ’80s in Europe All Alive in Pyongyang, North Korea. Family received a Letter.” On the other side of the copy was a scoop article published on a magazine in 1994. It included a newly discovered large snapshot, which was taken at a zoo in Spain. In this photo was Toru Ishioka (appeared as an assumed name in the article) with two ‘Yodo-go’ wives. The article points out that the photo is clear evidence that the abductions were conducted by the ‘Yodo-go’ wives, and they took the students to North Korea.

(Toru Ishioka went to Spain with his friend who took the photo. That is why the photo was discovered.)

Akihiro sent the copies of all these evidences attached to his letter to the media, but none of them replied to him.

Akihiro could not help but think that Japanese media were trying to avoid the issue. He felt so alone. He also contacted with a couple of major networks that had talked to him before, but all of them seemed to avoid him. Summer passed, fall passed, and another New Year had come.

Finally, Kenji Ishidaka, a reporter from the Asahi Broadcasting News Bureau in Osaka, called to Akihiro. He came to see Arimoto on January 4, 1995. He saw one of the thirty copies that Akihiro faxed to the reporters' club in the police department. At that time, Ishidaka was investigating Park Choon-sun, a female used to live with a North Korean spy Shin Kwang-soo. Akihiro told the reporter all the stories he had been through. "Then you should file in rescue for your daughter again at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Let's go together at once." With his support, Akihiro and Kayoko decided to go to Tokyo again.

On the morning of January 17, 1995, when they were going to head to Tokyo, the Great Hanshin Earthquake struck. The city of Kobe was destroyed. Although their house was located in Nagata-ward, one of the worst devastating areas, fortunately Arimoto's house was safe; they only needed to repair some cracks on the walls. In March, while local buses and trains finally started operating, Arimoto finally boarded on a bullet train to go to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tokyo. They made a petition to the ministry and held a press conference, but only Sankei Newspaper and a local paper published his story into a small article.

The worst was the Human Rights Protection Committee of Japan of Bar Association. Akihiro was painfully made to aware that this sort of association was hopelessly irresponsible and cruel to a powerless citizen. Firstly, Akihiro made an allegation of human rights through Osaka Bar Association, and then they delivered it to the Human Rights Protection Committee of Japan Federation of Bar Association. After that, they replied to him that they would take care of the issue and start investigating the abductees' safety; but they never came to interview to Akihiro. As a result, he had been ignored for many years. Once when he called them to make sure how the investigation was going, the person in charge said, "You have been doing the worst things. So please do not expect too much from us to take care of the issue." What is going on? Not believing what he had heard, he called them repeatedly and he received the same answer.

Akihiro's lawyer also contacted with them several times, and then Akihiro gave them a final warning: "I will not bother you any more. However, I will go to the media to tell how you had handled the issue." As soon as they heard that, four of the officers, including two superiors, ran to see Arimoto. Nonetheless, what they

did for Arimoto was writing a proposal letter to the government. They were so ‘irresponsible.’ They had been ignoring the allegation for a long time, and as soon as they knew that they would be in trouble, they pretend as if they were working on it. Akihiro had asked them what they meant that he had done “the worst things.” But nobody could give him a clear answer.

Although feeling at the edge of the rope, Akihiro still had an ace in his sleeve. It was the minutes of the Budget Committee of the House of Councilors in March 1988. A member of the Japan Communist Party Atsushi Hashimoto brought up the issue about the abduction by North Korea at the meeting. According to the minutes, Seiroku Kajiyama, then the National Public Safety Commissioner, was asked about the missing of three couples (Kashiwazaki, Obama, and Kagoshima), and he answered clearly: “There is a strong suspicion that North Korea had abducted these couples.” Akihiro made up his mind to ask Hashimoto with the minutes to question about the abduction again at the Diet. Hashimoto’s question, at the time of spring of 1988, did not include Keiko’s case as the letter had not arrived yet from North Korea. It supposed to be mentioned this time. The Communist Party was most distant from Akihiro’s political views, though, they were his only hope, after all.

Fortunately, Akihiro received a positive reply. Hashimoto’s question was scheduled in February 1, 1997. Hashimoto’s secretary Tatsukichi Hyomoto invited him: “Please come for the hearing.” Hyomoto had investigated the missing cases of the three couples all by himself, and led to Hashimoto’s questioning at the Diet. The secretary had also invited the families of the couples. Akihiro could not believe that the government had done nothing for their cases, even they admitted in 1988 that the couples were abducted by North Korea. He felt sympathy to the victim families as he could easily imagine that they have been suffering like the Arimoto family.

The question was suddenly dismissed for unknown reason. Although the victim families lost a chance to meet the others, Hyomoto eagerly convinced each family to take this opportunity to form “the Abductee Family Association” in order to support each other. Kayoko Arimoto had asked the same thing to the other families before. “Why don’t we act together as we are under the same situation?” Their reactions were chilly: “Please leave us alone. You have evidences of the ‘letter’ and the ‘photos,’ but nothing has been confirmed about our case but we only have newspaper articles.” She could feel their feelings of powerlessness and resignation from the other side of the phone. It has been almost twenty years since their disappearance. The families seemed trying to forget their children.

After all, the families started acting towards gathering of the victims. The greatest supports were offered by Hyomoto, Ishidaka, Masami Abe (a reporter from Sankei Newspaper who wrote the article about disappearance of the three

couples). At the same time, “13 year-old girl missing case” occurred 19 years ago was suddenly brought into the public as “Megumi Yokota Abduction Case”; the news shocked the public enormously. Seven families, including Megumi’s parents, formed “the Abductee Family Association.” It was March 25, 1997.

Later, Akihiro learned that around that time Hyomoto was dismissed from the Japan Communist Party. Akihiro was so impressed by his support. Hyomoto had never run away from the confronting issue, even his bosses dumped the victims. He offered his devoting effort to gather the victim family without telling us his dismissal from the party. Hyomoto said to Akihiro later:

“Your never-give-up attitude always encouraged me, Akihiro?”

The Association of the Families of Victims Abducted by North Korea (the Abductee Family Association). when the association was formed, Akihiro suggested his opinion about its name. He said that it might be better not to have the word “abduction.” On the bottom of his opinion was his thought that no politician or diplomat would be able to negotiate with North Korea using the word “Abduction,” according to his long experiences: he did not mean to insist that the cases of Keiko and other Japanese was not conducted violently.

September 17, 2002, Prime Minister Koizumi visited North Korea.

Akihiro and Kayoko Arimoto were told Keiko’s “death” by the Chief Cabinet Secretary, Yasuo Fukuda.

Fukuda’s tone was unbelievably cold. When they were told their daughter’s death, Akihiro regret what he had been doing until now: “What had I been doing for the last ten years?” Kayoko felt blinded and her face turning pale. The next moment, Akihiro knew that Keiko was murdered because of that “letter.” She was killed as a warning to other abductees because the Japanese government left the letter on the shelf for a long time. How do you take this responsibility? Akihiro pressed to Fukuda.

The press conference of the Abductee Family Association started before 6 p.m. Sakie Yokota was in the back row putting her hand on Kayoko’s shoulder. As if trying to hold her tighter, Sakie strained her finger onto Kayoko’s shoulder. Sakie said, “I wanted Keiko to survive. I wanted Megumi to survive, too. Are you OK? OK? Hold on to yourself.” Her straining fingers told everything to Kayoko.

If the Abductee Family Association did not exist, if there were no other victim families, Kayoko would accept “the declaration of her daughter’s death” without doubt and gave it up. The information was delivered between tops of both countries. Before their announcement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs made the victim families wait at Iikura Official Building for a long time in order to “clarify the information.” If we were going through this all alone, we would obediently withdraw ourselves, saying; Oh really, OK then. We have done here.

While they were discussing about the newly revealed facts, the victim's families started doubting them. Keiko gradually started thinking that Keiko is still alive. It was all thanks to the support from the Abductee Family Association. Kayoko convinced herself never to give up.

On the same day, Fumiyo Saito was watching TV at home near Aso Mountains. She had not been a member of the Abductee Family Association yet. 'Kaoru Matsuki Dead'--it is not true, not true! Kaoru would not die so easily. She started shouting at the television. Surprisingly, no tears came out. Her anger was much stronger.

Turned off the TV, she hurried to the hospital in the Kumamoto city where her mother Sunayo was staying. Her mother was over eighty years old at that time, and was not able to recognize her daughter any more. Sunayo had also been in dementia since a couple years ago. As soon as she saw her daughter coming into the room, Sunayo asked, 'Did you watch television?' Fumiyo ignored, but the mother continued, 'Kaoru was.' It was very strange since she was no longer able to understand the news. A nurse told her that Sunayo was watching the news reporting 'Mr. Kaoru Matsuki Dead' at the cafeteria earlier on the day. The director of the hospital explained to Fumiyo: 'Even though a person has dementia, they still have memories that would never disappear.' The mother had black eyes next day. They indicated that she did not sleep the night before. She would not be able to understand anything anymore, but still had to have a tough night thinking about her missing son.

Nobuhiro Matsuki, now living in Tokyo, received his brother's 'death information' over the phone from one of his sisters. He was too emotional to watch the television and had no idea where to throw his anger. Nobuhiro was forced to fight with his huge regret: 'I should have joined the Abductee Family Association, and should have been appealing as much as I could. If his father were still alive, he would have done so. Have I treaded down his will? Was it a mistake to keep using my brother's name as M concerning for his identity and safety?'

His regret was even increased two days later, when Nobuhiro was informed the date of his brother's death as August 23, 1996. Kaoru died most recently among the eight people who were said to be died. It had been more than ten years after he knew his brother was alive in North Korea. Would he be surviving, if I did not keep the silence and joined the activities even the battle had already started?

However, it gradually turned out that the 'death information' was questionable itself.

Nobuhiro determined to join the Abductee Family Association after that, and started taking the lead for rescuing activities. He thought, 'after our father passed away and mother is in hospital, I should speak up because I am the only one who

knew Kaoru's disappearance at the time." On October 3, 2002, Nobuhiro joined the Abductee Family Association's press conference for the first time. On the day before, the team of investigators from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs came back from North Korea with the results of the official's hearing about the "reasons" and "details" of the abductees' death. They said that Kaoru Matsuki was killed in a car accident, and his grave had been washed away with a flood. Later they found his remains and cremated twice. Among eight people, only Kaoru's remain was brought back.

Kaoru Matsuki's disappearance was finally confirmed as "abduction" by the Japanese government one week after Nobuhiro attended the press conference. Nobuhiro said at that time: "I comprehended as the government admitted that my brother didn't go to North Korea by his own will." Since the "letter from North Korea" was revealed, the police occasionally patrolled around his house. He believed their explanation at that time that the house only had elderlies and a juvenile, but now Nobuhiro knew they were watching for their family's movement.

On October 15, 2002. --- Five abductees returned to Japan by a government airplane. Kaoru Matsuki's sister, Fumiyo Saito was staring at the top of the landing steps of the airplane until they all came out. This time, only five of them, whose survival was confirmed, came home. But Fumiyo couldn't give up her tiny hope.

They had found one more survivor and the person is on board. She was dreaming if such a wonderful "change of the plan" would happen. While welcoming those five people waving a small flag heartily, half of Fumiyo's mind was caught into inside the airplane until everyone came out. Over and over, she pictured her brother appearing at the top of the stairs. But she realized that it was only her imagination. No one came out any more.

At the bottom of the stairs, they were nearly finishing tearful reunion and taking photos. When completed her duty to welcome them as a member of the Abductee Family Association, Fumiyo felt so exhausted. Why didn't Kaoru come out with them? Another "Kaoru" was there. She felt sadder when she thought of one of the returnee's name, Kaoru Hasuike. How had they been swapped? Did God make a mistake? Before Prime Minister Koizumi's visit of North Korea, it had been said that higher possibility was held on the return of the abductees disappeared in Europe including Arimoto. Because it was thought to be easier for North Korea as the abductors were the Japanese "Yodo-gō" criminals.

On the way to the guestroom of the airport, Fumiyo started crying loudly in the bus along with her sister Teruyo. She just could not hold her feelings any longer that she was carrying since in a bus to the airplane. Those crying sisters swore each other that they would never give up until Kaoru comes back: We will

hand flowers to their brother when he comes down the stairs. Just like the five returnees' families did today.

In a hotel in central Tokyo at that night, where the members of the Abductee Family Association were staying, the younger sister Teruyo felt ill and immediately hospitalized. In fact, Fumiyo had bad headache and nausea after returning to the hotel, and had a prescription from the doctor of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Then right there, she was told, "Your sister is sick in the other room." The doctor and Fumiyo hurried to Teruyo's room. "I want Kaoru back." Their emotions seemed to have lost the direction, and erupted into sickness by watching returning people as if their sorrow exploded inside Fumiyo and Teruyo's bodies. The doctor instructed that Teruyo needed to stay at the hospital. But if they call an ambulance, it would become uproar. There were the people from the media waiting downstairs. Avoiding the crowd, Teruyo got in a taxi surrounded by the doctors.

About one month after that day, Fumiyo received the DNA test result of Kaoru's ashes, which were brought back by the investigating team. "Sister, I should say congratulations." Dr. Hashimoto, in charge of the test, said to Fumiyo. He told her that the ashes were a female around sixty years old. Kaoru's brother Nobuhiro never believed that the ashes were Kaoru because of the suspicious "death report." Still, he took his mourning dress to a cleaner and prepared for the day, just in case.

Nobuhiro and Fumiyo had concealed one thing for more than a month. In early October, when the investigating team brought back the ashes, Nobuhiro said at the press conference, "I heard they would conduct a DNA test on the ashes." In fact, he was also told that they would run phrenological diagnosis too, but he did not reveal it to the public as they decided not to. They said that the DNA test result would not be certain since the ashes were taken after a second cremation. That is why North Korea thought it would not bother them to give the ashes. But Japan has a technology to find out the person from the shape of bones. Apparently, North Korea didn't know about it. "Until the result comes out, I don't want North Korea to know our move. So I kept it just in my mind." His decision seemed to be paid off.

Akihiro and Kayoko Arimoto, now over mid-70s, still stand on the street for the petition activity with their supporters. The reaction of people has been so much better than one or two years ago. Thankfully, even more people queues up to sign the petition these days. "I hope the enthusiasm would last long. People's continuous interest is the precious power. I hope people do not forget about Keiko and the other abductees until they all come back. We are old, but we want to finish this matter in our generation without leaving any burdens to our children." With these wishes sincerely, the couple leave home to attend daily rescue activities in Kobe.

Placing her hands together every morning, Kayoko continues to pray to their family altar for Keiko's safe return.

