**避難所に「トイレの女神様」　掃除、一手に引き受けて**

The Shelter’s Toilet Goddess – Takes Sole Responsibility for Cleaning

水道も電気も来ない、まだまだ不自由な生活。でも、そんな避難所にも「トイレの神様」がいる。「ちょっとでも気持ちよく過ごせたらね」とほほ笑むのは、女神様の村上キクエさん（７１）だ。

There is no electricity or running water; the lifestyle is restricted. But even in such a place, there is a “toilet god”. This goddess is Mrs. Murakami Kikue, 71. Smiling, she says that her goal is to “brighten people’s day just a bit.”

宮城県境に近い岩手県陸前高田市気仙町。６４段の急な石段を上った高台にある月山神社に、津波で家を失った６８人が暮らしている。

The setting is Kesenchou in Rikuzentakata, Iwate prefecture, near the border with Miyagi. A temporary flight of stairs leads to a high ground on top of which is Gassan Shrine. 68 people who lost their homes in the tsunami are living here.

「うちにはトイレの神様がいるんです」。衛生状態を見回りに来た県の担当者は、説明を聞いてきょとんとした。「あそこ」と指された先、マスクにゴム手袋姿で動き回る村上さんがいた。トイレ掃除を一手に引き受けている。

“Here we have a toilet god.” The prefectural official who had come to look after the sanitary conditions, pointed with a blank stare to a figure wearing a mask and rubber gloves. This turned out to be Mrs. Murakami. She single-handedly took care of the cleaning of the toilets.

　３月１１日、大きな揺れの後、「津波が来るぞ」と町中が大騒ぎになった。キクエさんはお年寄りに声をかけて回り、高台へ一緒に逃げた。夜が明け、避難所になっているという月山神社を目指した。

On March 11th, after the large tremors had passed, the alarm was raised that “a tsunami is coming!” and the center of the town exploded into chaos. Mrs. Murakami called out to the elders of the town, and escaped with them to the high ground. At dawn the next day, they set out for the Gassan Shrine, which had been designated a shelter.

約１５０人で避難生活が始まった。「当番を決めよう」との声が出たが、村上さんは反対した。「当番では責任がなくなる。トイレ掃除は私がやります」

For about 150 people, that was the beginning of life in the refuge. Some people said “let’s take turns”, but Mrs. Murakami was against the idea. “If we take turns, responsibility vanishes. I’ll just clean the toilets myself.”

　阪神大震災の時の話を思い出したのだ。山のようになった汚物に皆が立ちすくんでいた時、ある人が手ですくって片づけ始めた――その姿が思わず、頭に浮かんだ。

I remembered a story from the Hanshin Earthquake. Everyone was petrified with horror at the mountain of garbage that had piled up, until one man had put his hands together and started to clean up. (???) For some reason, that story floated into my mind.

　夫の孝一さん（７０）は水を運んでくれた。娘の智子さん（３８）が拾ってきた台所洗剤を使い、タワシでごしごしと便器を磨く。「うちは家族そろって無事 で時間があるし」と、キクエさんは小声で言う。行方不明の家族を捜したり、仕事を探したり、毎日出かけなければならない人を気遣う。

Mr. Kouichi, her husband (70), brings her water. She scrubs and polishes the toilet bowls using kitchen tools brought by her daughter Tomoko. “Our family is safe, and has this time during which we are together,” Mrs. Murakami says in a small voice. She worries about the people who have to go out every day and look for work, or for lost family members.

トイレが汚れていると、飛んでいって拭き取る。「マナーをきちんと」と怒った時もあった。そんな姿を見て、屋外に仮設トイレが二つできた時、「女 神様２号」が誕生した。「一緒にやらせて、と押し売りしたの」というのは坂井小雪さん（７４）だ。「キクエさんは一人暮らしの私を気遣い、よく様子を見に 来てくれた」と話す。

If the toilet gets dirty, she rushes out to clean it. She has also gotten angry a couple of times, at people who “don’t have good manners”. Another woman observed this scene, as well as the clean toilets, and decided to join as “Toilet God #2”. “I sweet talked her into letting me help her,” says Sakai Koyuki, 74. “Kikue worried about me, because I was living by myself, and often came to look after me,” she says.