

## 英語の短編小説

時間が経つのは速いもので「Hakumonちゅうおう」に短編小説を掲載して頂くのはこれで6回目になります。今年の物語は、比較的短く読みやすいものですので、あまり苦勞しなくてもよい英語の勉強が出来ると思います。そして、これを読んで、人生についてちょっと考えて頂ければ、とてもうれしいです。

読んだあとで、何か感想や意見などありましたら、私のメールアドレス(gwarren@tamacc.chuo-u.ac.jp)までお送り下さい。どうもありがとうございます。

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### Today Is the Day

by Gary W. Cantor

Gans rubbed his eyes. He had been checking data for the past two hours, and he needed a break. So, he put his pencil down on top of the computer printout and slowly stood up.

Gans hated his office; it was tiny, had no door, and was located adjacent to the noisy reception area, which made it a very difficult place to concentrate. Nevertheless, there was one aspect of his office that he did find to his liking, and that had to do with its proximity to the coffee maker. Gans loved coffee, and since there was always coffee available for free right down the hall, he would frequently take a short walk, grab some coffee, and bring it back to his office.

Gans had just about reached the opening that served as the entrance to his office when he heard familiar footsteps. He knew right away who it was. He hesitated, but decided not to turn back. "Today is the day," he said to himself, and so he continued out of his office and down the hall.

Gans walked quickly, and was within fifteen feet of the coffee maker when Stubbs noticed him. At that moment, Stubbs had just picked up the coffee pot and was filling up his cup. He looked at Gans briefly, and then looked down. Gans kept moving. I'm going to do it, he thought. And he looked down to make sure that his feet were still moving. But as his eyes followed the movement of his shoes, Gans noticed that they were slowing down. I've got to hurry, he thought. But it was too late. He heard a sound, and when he looked up he could see that Stubbs had already put down the coffee pot and turned his back on Gans. How about if I yell out, Gans thought. But it was no use. His heart screamed, but his voice was silent.

A moment later, as he poured coffee into his mug, Gans could still hear Stubbs' footsteps as he turned the corner and headed toward his office. Oh well, Gans thought, I'll do it later.

Gans went back to his office and resumed his work. However, as he checked the figures and thought about what they meant, he couldn't help thinking about what had just happened. My feet definitely did slow down, he thought. And he cursed himself for the lost opportunity. But he also cursed Stubbs. "He hurried away," he said under his breath. "He always does that." And slowly but surely, he felt anger rising up within him. And, just like every day, he remembered the day that started all of the trouble. As he recalled how Stubbs had ridiculed him in that meeting a year earlier, he felt that he was completely justified in shunning him. Wouldn't anyone, he

asked himself. And this made him wonder why he felt the need to approach Stubbs. "Why do I have to be the weak one?" he said to himself. "He never apologized for all the things he said." But then, his thoughts changed course once again. I did say some pretty nasty things myself, he remembered. And he laughed and shook his head. Why do I have to be like a child, he told himself angrily. Stubbs will never apologize. I'll have to be the one to do it. And once again, he muttered quietly to himself. "Today is the day...Today is the day."

At lunchtime, Gans went out to the little diner around the corner and, like usual, took a seat at the counter. He wondered if Stubbs would eat there too, and tried to look casual as he searched the seats of the restaurant again and again. There was no sign of Stubbs. Gans knew that Stubbs ate there from time to time, and if he came that day he knew exactly what he was going to do. He had it all planned out. He would finish eating, and then he would walk over to Stubbs and greet him. "Hi," he would say. "Can I sit down?" And then, no matter what Stubbs did or said, he would sit next to him and start to talk. "Listen," he would say. "Why don't we end all of this? It's really silly, you know." And then, he would reach out and shake Stubbs' hand. He had it all planned out.

Of course, as he imagined this scene, Gans did realize that this wasn't an original plan. This was a plan that he had thought of months ago, and every time that Stubbs had actually walked into the diner, he had panicked and abandoned the plan. Still, though, something is different, he thought. "I'm ready to go through with it," he said to himself. And he was sure that he would. However, it didn't matter because Stubbs didn't appear at the diner that day, and so Gans walked slowly back to his office.

The mountain of printouts that Gans had to look over that day made for a full day's work, and he realized that he wouldn't be able to leave the office until seven or eight at night. But he was used to that type of workday and patiently went through one printout after the next. He stopped from time to time to get a cup of coffee, and each time he looked for Stubbs near the coffee maker. But Stubbs never got coffee at the same time that he did. So, after each trip, he would slowly walk back to his office and wonder when he'd run into him.

At exactly five o'clock, Gans decided to make a bold move. He got up, walked past the coffee maker, went around the next corner, and walked over to Stubbs' office. Then, he stood near the door for about five minutes while various words ran through his head. He could see that the light was on in Stubbs' office, so he knew he was there. And two or three times his feet started to move toward the door. "Just do it!" he said to himself. "Just end it!" But he couldn't. He was frozen. Then, all of a sudden, he heard something move in Stubbs' office, and he quickly moved away and dashed back to his own office.

Gans went back to his printouts and worked for another half hour, and then, once again, he became restless. This is ridiculous, he thought. I have to be bold. I just have to. And so, once again, he decided to go over to Stubbs' office and to put an end to their feud. This time he walked faster than before, and he was determined not to slow down. "I'll just walk right into his office and demand to talk it out," he said to himself. And to psyche himself up, he muttered that same line over and over again: "Today is the day...Today is the day...Today is the day..."

Gans was about to barge into Stubbs' office, when he noticed something: the light was off. Stubbs went home already, he thought. And he felt completely despondent. But, thinking that there was nothing else that he could do, he slowly walked back to his office as he resigned himself to having to wait one more day. "Oh well," he muttered, "I'll do it tomorrow."

However, when Gans approached his office, he heard something that gave him hope. It was Stubbs' voice. He was saying goodbye to the receptionist and was on his way out. Gans raced

toward the reception desk and when he got there he looked through the glass door that led out to the elevators. Immediately, he spotted Stubbs standing in front of an elevator. Okay, I'll do it now, he thought. And he quickly opened the glass door and started to walk toward Stubbs. However, then, all of a sudden, something stopped him. It was a bell. The elevator had arrived, and Gans watched as Stubbs walked in. Gans saw Stubbs push a button, and then, before the doors closed, there was a moment when Stubbs looked out and the eyes of the two men met. I can still do something, Gans thought, and in his mind he saw himself racing to stop the elevator before the doors closed. I can still do this, he thought. But his feet didn't move. And as he watched Stubbs, he saw Stubbs' eyes move away from his own and down toward the floor. Then, the doors closed and the elevator left.

Gans walked slowly back to his office and returned to his pile of printouts. He felt depressed, but eventually he was able to cheer himself up. "I'll do it tomorrow," he said to himself. And he worked with barely a rest until eight o'clock that night.

The next morning, Gans was tired, but he was also determined. "Today is the day," he kept repeating to himself, and when he arrived at work there was a spring in his step that even he found surprising. He got off the elevator and approached the receptionist with a big smile. "Good morning," he said. He expected a cheerful greeting in return, but none was offered. Instead, the receptionist simply nodded weakly and handed him a piece of paper.

Gans took the paper to his office and read it. Then, his body fell into his chair like a big lump of clay and he just sat there staring at a wall.

About a minute later, Gans heard footsteps. Shortly after that, he saw Anderson, a salesman with the firm, standing in front of him. Anderson was holding a piece of paper, and Gans could tell that it was the same notice that he had just received.

"Did you read this?" Anderson asked.

"Yes," said Gans.

"Shocking, isn't it?" said Anderson. "He looked like he was in great shape. But, I guess you never know. From what I understand, it happened just as he was entering his house last evening. He collapsed, and his wife called an ambulance, but it was no use. He was dead before he got to the hospital."

Gans listened, but he didn't say anything in response.

"Anyway," said Anderson, "I just stopped by because I thought that there was something that you should know."

"What?" said Gans.

"Well," Anderson said, "I knew Stubbs pretty well, and I thought that you should know that he felt terrible about what happened between the two of you."

"He did?"

"Yeah," said Anderson. "He was a strange guy, old Stubbs. He must have talked to me about a hundred times about you. He kept saying that he was going to talk to you and patch things up. But, I guess he never did, did he?"

Gans shook his head.

"Well," Anderson said, "I just wanted you to know. He wasn't a bad guy, you know."

Gans nodded. Then, he opened his mouth to say something, but nothing came out.

"Are you going to the funeral?" Anderson asked. "It's tomorrow."

Gans looked up. "Yeah," he said. "Yeah. I think I'll go."

"Okay," said Anderson. "I'll see you there."

"Okay," said Gans. And he watched as Anderson turned around and left.