

April 1, 2024
Entrance Ceremony (2nd)

Congratulatory Address

KITAGAWA, Eriko

Hello, everyone. I'm the screenwriter Eriko Kitagawa.

I apologize for not feeling well enough to be with you there today. Yesterday, I could have gone. I wonder whether an unstable weakling like me should be reading a congratulatory address, but I imagine that sometimes there should be speeches for people who are wandering, who are not perfect. Please forgive me for the discourtesy of only having my recorded voice.

Congratulations everyone on your entry to Waseda University.

To the families as well, and everyone here today who cheered you all on during entrance exams, congratulations to you as well.

You can finally relax, I think.

I have memories of my own entrance exam.

I received a C, on a scale of A, B, C, D, E, I received a C, and gained entrance into the School of Letters No. 1, which is what we called it in those days, and I was extremely happy.

Even now I remember it well. Time has gone by since then. On top of those days, a lot of time has been stacked up.

I'll pick out my college days from the stack of time, dust it off, and look at it closely.

My college days, those four years, what were they, I'm going to think about them now.

I'll talk a little about my new drama. It goes on air in May.

I wrote a special drama called *Ikitoshi, Ikerumono* (all living things) for the 60th anniversary of TV Tokyo. It is completely original. It stars Ken Watanabe and Satoshi Tsumabuki. The two were cast upon my request.

The drama is the story of life and death, a patient who dies and a doctor who lives.

The patient role is played by Ken Watanabe, and the doctor role by Satoshi Tsumabuki.

I have long been sick.

And I wrote this scenario.

Even now.

I have wanted to write a drama on living, dying and euthanasia for around ten years, but we couldn't make it happen because sponsors would be hard to come by. Handling a subject like euthanasia. But now we've done it.

I'll talk a little about Ken Watanabe.

At first, when the broadcaster approached him with the project, he immediately turned it down. His words were strict. He said he's never come across a drama that accurately depicted life and death. He had had leukemia and was probably thinking about its reality.

I didn't give up. I wrote down the plot and sent it to him, asking him to read it.
But he turned it down again.

I receive a polite email from him directly.

He now knew the plot but for him it was still not possible, I imagined.

For some reason I thought he might be afraid. People who encounter disease and death are afraid to go back and relive it.

But I didn't say, OK, I understand.

I wrote back saying if Ken-san turned down the part another person would play it. But wouldn't that be fake? But Ken-san, a person actually afraid of death, were to play the role, play the role of going to die, it would give the drama a grimness not found in other works.

Conniving, aren't I.

After that, we exchanged emails for a time.

I'd never met him.

At one point, I made a confession.

I said, actually, I, too, am scared to write it.

Knowing disease, I'm afraid to write this.

If you could, could you meet me halfway? I got up the courage to say this.

And then I regretted it.

Why would someone I'd never met, someone I passed on the road, why would they have to shoulder half the load of someone like me. It was preposterous

Forget about it. I won't say it.

I hope we can meet on another project sometime in the future, I wrote in a final email.

I was hospitalized at Keio Hospital feeling worthless.

The next morning when I opened my email, there was a response that came at an early hour. Around 6 a.m. I think. In the email it said, Kitagawa-san, I don't know if you'll like how I'll play the role, but I'll do it.

I met with him in person, wrote a scenario, made preparations, and now the work is getting music added to it. It's almost done.

I don't know what I did to change Ken-san's mind.

But, I was speaking the truth. And I was fully prepared to write a good script for the drama *Ikitoshi Ikerumono*.

I am a weak person. But I wish I were strong. I want to be tough.

When was this person created, I ask myself, and I think it was during my days at Waseda.

All that is important in life I learned at Waseda. I think that sometimes. What I want to tell you is:

Don't be afraid of interacting with other people.

Socialize with them.

To the point of being annoying.

Talk with people in the middle of the night, and if you think their opinion is wrong, don't hold back and leave it at that, go ahead and challenge them on it, I think you should find things you like and really try doing them.

These are things you don't normally get to do once you're out in the working world.

People have work the next day, so they need to go to bed early, they prioritize such things.

But during college, you don't have those responsibilities.

I want you to interact deeply with other people.

I want you to waste some of your time.

I want you to get into arguments.

I want you to be awkward.

I want you to make up.

You have a lot of time.

I think it's OK to hurt one another. You'll get stronger.

Being young is on your side. Wounds will heal.

Try diving in to the sea of people that is Waseda, a mammoth university.

There are a lot of wonderful people. No, there's doesn't need to be a lot. Go around and meet people. I think that charming people are assembled here. If you interact with others, things will be produced that can't be produced on your own.

Back in the day, I wrote a work called *Orange Days*. It was a coming-of-age drama with college students. It obliquely reflects my own college experience.

You can see it now on Netflix or Disney+. TVer was streaming it for free apparently.

The theme song is "Sign" by Mr. Children.

At the time, I was told to choose a memory of my own college days because they wanted to reference it for the song.

I was taken aback, but what popped into my head was me and three friends riding in a junky car. I think it was after fourth or fifth period had ended and the sun was going down. It was that kind of scene.

I was sitting in the back seat, and a boy my same age sitting in front turned around and said.

"Right now, the setting sun is shining on your hair; it looks beautiful."

I remembered that time and told it to them just like that.

As a result, some really beautiful lyrics were written for the song.

"Sunlight filtering through the trees on the greenway touch you and waver. I know the beauty of time and its cruelty."

Seemingly insignificant scenes stay in the heart.

I think the four years of college are like a treasure hunt.

Find those treasures that are all your own.

Life is a treasure and will continue supporting us into the future.

I've gone on too long, I'm sorry.

Thank you very much. Have a wonderful college life. It's sure to be fun.