

Hotoke: "Hey, Chie, how did you find out how life works?"

Chie: "Uh... life and death?"

Hotoke: "Indeed"

Chie: "I found out about it in the library."

Hotoke: "What do you mean? Library? Books are not even living things!"

Chie: "Books are living things, you idiot. They have stories to tell, they have marks, they have feelings. I worked for a while in the conservation lab in the downtown library and I did a lot of small repairs with Japanese paper to mend the torn pages. Do you want anything more human than that? The action of time is violent, so is life. The pages become worn out, yellowish, corroded until nothing else is left. that damage can also happen with the lack of care in handling... The entire human story shows us the things that people did and also destroyed, so messed up. But what we can do is try to alleviate the loss and reconstruct the fragments that are left."

Hotoke: "Wow, you get unrecognizable talking about these complex, kind of philosophical things. The human beings just mess things up, look at me. Who will take care of me? Oh talking about that, tell me more about the small repairs. How does it work?"

Chie: "It is like a surgery. The library conservation lab would be like a hospital to take care of the books. Don't laugh, Hotoke, it's serious! First, the book needs to be cleaned. We used brushes, sometimes even scalpel to get rid of some dirt in the book. There's so much dirt you wouldn't believe."

Hotoke: "Scalpel, man... it is serious, then. you were a book doctor..." Hotoke spoke as if he were pondering. "weird, but fancy."

Chie: "You have to take care of the books, Hotoke. They have dirt, pieces of their own cover that have shattered and even dead insects. The book is a universe that gives life to words, scenarios and characters. Anna Karenina, Don Quixote, Gregor Samsa, Raskolnikov, they all exist. They were eternalized by literature. But the book is also a cemetery of not spoken words, feelings, and people who didn't get out of the paper, it's a grave of everything that could have been. Wow, I'm doing a lot of digression here... but going back to the small repairs, after the book is cleaned, the process of conservation begins. We try to save what can be saved with japanese paper, which is this finer but really resistant paper, that fills the torn spaces and sustains the page. Get it?"

Hotoke: "But what about that smell of old books? it's terrible, Chie, how'd you handle it?"

Chie: "The sensation of touching an old book, one of those with the spine all fragile, which makes a noise when it opens, has broken, dry pages and makes your hand dirty, all of that wins every rhinitis attack . It's a time travel feeling. Crazy, huh? Seeing the notes, grips, scribbles and

Small Repairs With Japanese Paper

Page 3

handwriting of so many people over the course of several hundred years, has always comforted me. These are books that have had several owners and a thousand stories with them, can you imagine that? Sometimes crumpled letters appeared in the middle of the pages, old flyers, black and white pictures... It was a huge emotion, I swear to you."

Hotoke: "Bro, that's amazing. how come you never told me about that? Even I would like to work in a place like this. I'd go crazy finding a letter in the middle of these old pages."

Chie: "The best thing was to read the dedicatory texts. They're so beautiful, written with that perfect ink handwriting, you know. It seemed like they were dedicating their lives to someone else, seriously."

Hotoke: "And in the meantime you are there with your ugly handwriting... you better not dedicate anything to anyone."

Chie: "Shut up, Hotoke!"

Hotoke: "Okay, okay, I'll stop it. But really, do people still read books? Isn't everything digital now, pdf, kindle and those kinds of stuff?"

Chie: "As long as the human being exists, the book will continue. Trust me. The desire to try to eternalize things and leave them to be carried forward is one of mankind's most primitive feelings."

Hotoke: "I think i'm going to write a book saying how much you love me, so that in the future people will know that there were two idiots loving each other."

Chie: "Holy crap, Hotoke. I'm talking about a lot of serious stuff and you're making fun of it."

Hotoke: "My bad, my bad. I'll stop it, I promise. So... it was with these shattered books that you understood the life cycle?"

Chie: "Yeah, Hotoke, it is the entire life and death cycle. Of these pages that are disintegrating over time, ink notes that are going away, people who come and go. Death is decided before birth. One day, the book that has my backpack will no longer exist. i

Insects, fungi, heat, water, air, salt, light, are all enemies. They eat, corrode, wear out, and weaken the paper. Everybody wants to decompose the world."

Hotoke: "And we also are constantly being decomposed by a lot of these substances that are out there, aren't we?"

Chie: "By all means. I don't want to be one of those nihilists, but it's all decomposition."

Hotoke: "The idea of decomposing is ugly, it reminds me of a rotten corpse full of worms. How do we avoid that?"

Chie: "You can't avoid it. if it starts, it's because it's going to end. It's part of that miserable cycle of life. A cycle that repeats itself and is nothing new to anyone. We know about mistakes and yet we make mistakes."

Hotoke: "So what's the point of all this?" Hotoke looked closely at his hand, as if he could see his cells disintegrating. Chie knew that life was not just suffering. It can be tough most of the time, but that's not all.

Chie: "Hey, Hotoke. you know what you need?"

Hotoke: "What?"

Chie: "A little bit of Japanese paper."