

Extend Your Listening

What's for English Dot Com

This is an example of a "Past Narration" - a story about an incident or experience you had. If you would like to improve your ability to use past narration

- Look at the way we use both the past tense and the present tense (as well as present continuous) in past narration.
- Notice the cohesion words and expressions. These are the words that link sentences and ideas together.

Your Last Photograph

This was a disturbing story. It was in the newspaper the other day. A well-known Japanese cartoonist died recently. In fact, he fell from a 100-meter cliff while hiking in the mountains. His name was Yoshito Usui. He was famous in Japan for the cartoon character he created, called Shin-Chan.

Now, I didn't really know that much about Shin-Chan, except that my kids, when they were young, they seemed to watch his TV program fairly often. But I never paid that much attention.

Given that there's quite a high rate of suicide in Japan, some people speculated (guessed) that he may have taken his own life. But it turns out to have been an accident. He didn't leave a note, and his family did not believe he had been depressed. And, the interesting thing is - or the very strange aspect of the story - is that his digital camera was found. Somehow his camera didn't break when he fell down off the cliff 100 meters. So the camera preserved some of the last photos that he took - including one that was taken at the very spot on the cliff where he was standing just before he fell.

That's the part that disturbs me. It's chilling to think that you could be out taking photographs, and that the photographs you take may be the last photographs of your existence on Earth.

This story reminds me of an incident in my own life. Many years ago, when I was in my early twenties, I travelled for a while through Asia and in particular I spent about five or six months in India. As you would expect, I travelled on the cheapest trains, and I took these very long bus rides on very crowded buses, and I stayed in the very cheapest of hostels.



Arafune - where Usui-san fell

On one of these bus trips - which was up in the Himalayas. I think I was going to Manali or maybe it was Dharamsala. So the bus is travelling on these really narrow mountain roads in the Himalayas and suddenly one of the tires busted. So everyone had to get off the bus while we waited for the driver and his helper to change the tire. I took a few pictures of the stunning view from up there in the mountains. Because we were right next to this steep drop and you could look across the mountains and out to this valley. The view was beautiful. And I took one photograph of the people standing around the bus. Later we got moving again. And as we bumped along in the afternoon heat, I had this fantasy. I started to imagine what would happen if, suddenly, going around one of these curves, the wheel fell off again. Or something happened because of the way he tried to fix that flat tire. And suddenly the bus just goes off the cliff. And that's the end of all of us. I'm imagining what might happen if the authorities come to the scene of the crash. And then they find my backpack and the camera inside. And somehow these belongings are sent back to my family. And then they develop the film inside the camera. (I wasn't using a digital camera back then." And then they find these final photographs that I'd taken. The shots of the mountain road and the views and then finally this last photo of the rickety bus surrounded by men trying to repair it.



*Could have been my last photo.
(photo by Gerald)*

It's crazy where your mind can go if you let it. It wasn't the most fun way to spend an afternoon riding on a bus in India. But I remembered that when I heard about the man who made the Shin Chan cartoons.