4. FREEDOM

Three weeks after my accident, I was given permission to move to a hospital in London. At last, I could fly back to England.

Once I was safely in the hospital, my family came to visit me. We all did our best to be cheerful. But seeing me in that condition was too much for my mother, and she began to cry. My father, unable to hide his shock, looked at me with an expression of great pity in his eyes and silently hugged me. I tried to explain to them that with artificial limbs my life would be normal again.

Personally, I knew I could live with the accident. After all, that way of life had been my choice. But it made me feel really bad to see my elderly parents upset.

After I was moved from the isolation ward to the general ward, I went around in a wheelchair. But I didn't want to depend on that forever. My right leg was fine from the knee up, and if I had an artificial leg I would be able to walk.

Artificial legs are normally attached after one year. Before that, the pain is too great. If I followed the doctors' instructions, I knew I would have to wait a long time. They told me to take it easy and make sure everything healed properly. But I didn't want to wait so long. My dream was to return to normal life as soon as possible. Above all, I wanted to be free.

'It's still too soon to attach the artificial leg.' I heard these words many times. Still I kept trying, until one day I finally persuaded the doctors to have a temporary artificial leg made for me. Very soon after that, a mold was taken of my leg. If we don't speak out, we will not achieve anything. And it is only after trying something that we can know the results.

My artificial leg was of a better quality than the ones I had seen in Cambodia, and it looked expensive. But it was very uncomfortable to wear. When I tried it on the first time, it felt like a strange beast and cut into the flesh of my knee. I took five or six careful steps, but I couldn't walk straight and it was hard to keep my balance. The only way I could practise was by holding onto a railing. The leg hurt. I felt pain each time I put my weight onto it.

Once I had learned to keep my balance, I walked up and down a slope outside the hospital with the help of a walking stick. In order to protect my right leg, I put more weight on my left leg. As a result, this leg got very swollen. Without my right arm, it was hard to keep my balance. I realized it would take a long time before I could use the artificial leg freely.

I also had to think about my artificial right arm. Luckily, I still had the elbow of that arm. I decided to learn how to use two kinds of artificial arms. For meeting people, or for smart occasions, I had a pink, plastic, electrically controlled arm. For daily life I used a hook, which was efficient and simple to use. With that hook, I was soon able to make phone calls, pick up a coffee cup and even use a computer. One day I placed a pen in the claw of my hook and began to practise signing.

EXERCISES (4)

Ａ　本文の内容に合うものにはＴ、合わないものにはＦを書きなさい．

(1) I was really sorry to see my elderly parents upset. ( )

(2) With a wheelchair my life would be normal again. ( )

(3) I followed the doctors' instructions and waited one year to have the artificial leg attached. ( )

(4) I use two kinds of artificial arms, a plastic arm and a hook. ( )

Ｂ　日本文の意味に合うように、（　）に適語を入れなさい．

(1) この問題は私の手に負えない．

This problem is ( ) ( ) for me.

(2) コンピュータがあれば、在宅勤務ができるのだが．

If I ( ) a computer, I ( ) be able to work at home.

(3) 私は両親を説得して、アメリカに行かせてもらった．

I persuaded my parents ( ) let me go to America.

(4) 努力して初めて、成功できるのだ．

It is only after trying hard ( ) we can succeed.

(5) このジャケットを試着してもいいですか．

May I ( ) this jacket ( )?