

大阪法務局長賞

Osaka Legal Affairs Bureau's Director's Award

おじいさんの気持ち

What He Feels

履正社学園豊中中学校二年 三井仁

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In my town, we have been trying to create a suitable environment in order to watch over the elderly. We always greet them and plan for food gatherings and some other events so that they do not feel left out. There is an elderly couple living in my neighborhood, but they have no children who can take care of them. They were having difficulties living on their own, so my mother has become a legal guardian for them and has been taking care of them for almost a year since then. The elderly woman has developed cognitive impairment and wanders about every day. Fortunately, she does not go far, and my neighbors have been watching over her. Ever since my mother has become their legal guardian, she has been quite busy every month. The legal guardian basically has no need to run errands to take care them, but seeing them in my neighborhood every day, she cannot leave them alone. She does the laundry and the cleaning and goes grocery shopping at times. She can ask for the day care, but it seems that the elderly man feels uncomfortable to ask strangers to do all for them. It was during the summer break. I visited their house, thinking maybe I could do something for them. It was obvious that her cognitive impairment had developed since I saw her last time. There was nothing I could do but only stand there. My mother was running errands promptly. I was surprised at her strength. The elderly man was in the garden, so I went there to talk to him. He was taking care of tomatoes, eggplants, and morning glories he had been growing from seeds.

“They will have purple flowers.”

“I will have just one eggplant left so that I can keep its seeds for the next year.”

He explained it to me with a smile. Pointing at the small eggplants and unripe green tomatoes, he said, “Come back to pick them in a few days.” Two days later, I visited him again feeling so excited. I found him sitting still in the garden, but I could tell something was wrong.

“Hello,” I said to him, but he answered nothing. I took a look at where his eyes were on. There were no tomatoes, no eggplants, and no morning glories at all.

“Why are they all gone?” I asked him. He said nothing back to me.

Then, his wife came out of the house. She had a trash bag with her. I looked at it carefully and found there were tomatoes, eggplants, and morning glories being pulled up from the roots and placed in the trash bag. Apparently, she uprooted all of them. Probably she mistook them for weeds.

“No, you cannot do that,” I said on impulse.

“It is alright. I uprooted them,” he said. I went home without saying any longer, and I told it to my mother. My guess was right. It was his wife who pulled them all out. My mother told me that it was not the first time and it happened several times, but he stands up for her every time it happens. My mother says he does not want to accept that she has cognitive impairment. He wants her to be as she used to be. He does not want others to think she has cognitive impairment nor treat her so. What if her condition gets worse and she has to be institutionalized? I guess he feels insecure about it.

Thinking that there is nothing I could do for a disease like dementia, thinking how he had been feeling, I felt a lump in my throat.

“Don’t criticize her. Don’t even mention it to him,” said my mother to me.

I have learned how difficult it is to watch over them quietly.

I bought his favorites, some figs, and brought them to him. “Thank you,” he said with a smile. He peeled them and let his wife eat. They both were smiling, and it seemed they did not remember what had happened earlier.

“I will come stop by again,” I said. “Definitely,” they replied.

There were some tomatoes and eggplants abandoned in a trash can.

I covered it and went back home.