

Justice Minister's Award

Irreplaceable Things

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There is a memory that usually lies dormant, but occasionally comes back and depresses me. It happened when I was in elementary school. I liked school and I thought I was getting along well with my friends. I was just an ordinary student. However, what happened that day was something shocking which changed my values.

As usual, I was preparing the textbooks on my desk for the next lesson. At that moment, it sharply and coldly jumped into my eyes.

“Die!”

Just one word written in someone's handwriting. My whole body went stiff and I felt as if my blood had frozen. I could hardly breathe and tears welled up in my eyes. For a while I couldn't stop trembling.

My friend, who was shocked by my appearance, rushed to call the teacher, and we immediately had an emergency discussion. Some of my friends stood next to me looking worried. Others were angry and sad at what had happened to me. But still, I felt afraid of all of them. All I could do was look down and cry. No matter how much we talked about it, the person who did it would not come forward, nor did I have any idea who could have written that word. That feeling directed at me by an unknown person was very frightening, like being attacked from behind in the dark.

As I was walking home after school, I thought about how I should tell my parents about the incident. That was all I could think about. I got home in what seemed like no time. When I opened the door and heard my mother's voice greeting me, I felt like crying again. In the end I was unable to tell my parents what had happened because I was confused as it was the first time I had felt like that and I didn't want to make them sad. My mother found out about it through a phone call from the school. I thought it would embarrass her if I talked about it, but I took the plunge and told her what happened that day and how sad and scared I felt. Looking me straight in the eye, my mother listened earnestly and nodded. Then she told me that I am an irreplaceable and precious person. Realizing that there was someone who really cared about me, I felt very relieved and my stiff body loosened up a little.

The next day I was frightened to go to school. I still couldn't stop crying and my legs shook. I clung to my mother, who had come to school with me, and said I didn't want to go in. Then the teacher and my friends came to get me. The teacher came close to me and said he/she was always ready to listen. My friends greeted me with smiles as usual. Thanks to everyone's support, I somehow managed to get through the day. The unpleasant days continued for a while, but before I knew it I was able to go to school and laugh together with my friends like I used to.

However, even now I occasionally think about the person who anonymously directed such feelings at me. Why did he/she hide their name? What was he/she feeling when we discussed the matter in the

class? How did he/she feel seeing not only me but also the teacher, my friends, and my mother looking so sad? I think he/she must have been very afraid and filled with fears and regret. The school must have become a hard place for him/her to be.

I still get a little down when I remember it, but I still enjoy school. I like spending time with my friends. But something has changed in me. I've come to accept that it's alright not to be liked by everybody. As my circle of acquaintances gets wider and my connections grow, I am sure to encounter people I don't get on with. But I have someone who say I am a precious person. I have people who will be there for me when times are hard. To keep those people smiling too, I want to be myself.

It was a horrible incident, but it taught me something important. Confronting people with faceless and anonymous feelings can be a violence. Hiding the name your parents gave you with all their love and venting your feelings is selfish and cannot make anyone happy. The right to express opinions freely and the violence of venting feelings are completely different. Rights must be founded on happiness. Before people express ill feeling in spoken or written words, I want them to pause and think. And I want them to take responsibility for those words. If we can just do that, I think the society will change a little.

I am who I am today thanks to the people who supported me during a hard time. I would like to help people who are in trouble or suffering. I want to take responsibility for my actions and words, and to be my own best friend. That is because my mind and body are irreplaceable and precious things. To realize a society where everyone can live happily, I want everyone to take responsibility for their words and live a life without regrets. Because everyone's life is irreplaceable and precious.