**Living Life Forward Looking Up**

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Look up as you walk,

So that your tears won’t fall;

Remembered are the spring days,

On such a lonely night.

I hear that Rokusuke Ei, who died on Tanabata Festival Day, wrote these lyrics hoping for the peace of Japan and wishing that we don’t look down but look up at the sky to be happy. I have no classmate at school. I have always been the only student in my grade since my first year at school. So the lyrics of the song flowed straight into my heart.

What comes to your mind, everyone, when you imagine me being the only student in my grade? Do you think, “How lonely it sounds! I feel sorry for you.” Of course, there are many inconvenient things about being the only student in the grade. You can never get away from teachers calling on you in class. You cannot chat with classmates sitting on your side, nor would there ever be a chance to change seats. You have only yourself to read the textbook aloud, you check answers to questions all on your own, and if you sing or play a wrong note on a musical instrument, it would be noticed right away. In such moments, I feel a little embarrassed, and let it pass with a chuckle.

This year I’m a sixth grader, spending my final year at school. On a variety of occasions, I must represent the student body and speak in public, such as at the school entrance ceremony or during exchange learning programs. Without standing forward and saying, “I will do it,” I know I am the only student to do it. Honestly speaking, I have thought many times, “How nice if I had just one classmate besides myself.” For example, if I had a classmate, we could discuss class material and advise each other, and we could perhaps make a student pamphlet together. We might have great fun talking about our favorite TV shows during recess.

Some time ago, I heard my parents say, “Maybe we can accept a visiting student if joining Marin’s grade.” In hindsight I suspect my parents had wishes for me that I could someday have a class reunion from elementary school.

Anjō Elementary School has a long tradition, which is where both my parents and grandparents studied. There are unique experiences that only this school can offer. Pole sword dancing, sending a message in a bottle to the sea, the Bark Cashmere Commemorative Festival at the school’s stone monument, participating in the Annual Music Festival from first grade, and furthermore it is determined this year that I will lead the cheering squad on the School Sports Day. At the Long-Distance Swim Event, I have six kind swimmers to accompany me, which includes both school teachers and community members. There are many ways I am blessed. Accordingly, I don’t feel lonely. Nor am I miserable. It is just that there are often inconvenient things.

The other day, my class teacher said to me: “Marin, I was wrong about you. I was using my own yardstick as a measure, and was obsessed with the thought that you, Marin, must be lonely, that you’re having a hard time. I’m sorry.” When I heard how my teacher understood me after talking a lot about my candid thoughts over my five years at school, warm feelings welled up and filled my heart.

Wherever I am, whoever I am with, I want to flourish where I am planted. “There are many inconvenient things,” as we would say, “but it is not that we’re unfortunate.” This is the place where I stand right now. I want to live my life forward looking up and being the person who I am. Moreover, I want to make of myself an enduring light of the lantern of Anjō, the hometown I am very proud of.