



A Plum Job

The last couple of stories have been about my participation in local community affairs, and let's have one more on a similar topic before we move on to something different next week!

I mentioned in last week's story how most of my neighbours have known each other for many years. Because of this, there are many episodes and stories that they all remember, which I know nothing about. I have become quite friendly with a couple of my neighbours - let's call them A-san and B-san - but realized some time ago that the two of them almost never speak to each other, even though their houses are so close that the eaves almost touch.

Don't misunderstand; I don't mean that there is any outward show of trouble between them. This is not one of those cases like the one I read about in my newspaper, where a woman played extremely loud music pointed at her neighbour for many hours each day. But they are fairly 'cool' towards each other, and I almost never see them talking together on the street.

Bit by bit though, I have come to piece together parts of the 'story', and understand something of the situation. It was all about a tree ... and a car. A-san has a car, but no parking space in his own home; his property is just too small. He rents a parking spot a few hundred meters away, but when he comes home from shopping at the grocery store and needs to unload the heavy bags, he temporarily puts his car in the only place available, against B-san's stone wall. It doesn't block any access, and he never leaves it there for extended periods, but it is perhaps slightly bothersome.

Inside the stone wall, in B-san's garden just at that spot, is an old - a very old - plum tree, and this tree has a bit of a strange shape. A couple of feet above the ground the trunk splits into two forks. One of these climbs right into the air, and indeed, the entire top section of the tree comes from this branch. The other branch - just at the point where it overhangs the wall - is broken off with a jagged edge.

Can you play Sherlock Holmes? Can you now solve the mystery of why these two neighbours are somewhat cool to each other?

Yes, it seems that one day, while A-san's car was parked against B-san's stone wall, there was perhaps a gust of wind, and 'Craaaaak' ... down came a very thick and heavy tree branch, right onto the car.

Who to blame? A-san for parking his car against his neighbour's wall? B-san for not properly maintaining his old tree? I certainly wouldn't be able to say! So I guess they called it a 'draw', with nobody being at fault.

That was Act One, and now, I have come to realize, Act Two has begun. A-san considers himself the 'caretaker' of our section of the street, and takes it upon himself to sweep it thoroughly every day, sometimes more than once a day. But here we are in early summer, and the same old plum tree in B-san's garden, which really isn't properly maintained at all, is now shedding green plums by the dozen. These bounce down onto the road, where they are squashed by passing cars, leaving a mess that is quite difficult to sweep up ...

I have a ringside seat for this little drama!

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