



Crow Trouble!

Last year, one of these little stories discussed the garbage collection methods here in Ome, and how we have a very large number of categories into which our garbage must be sorted before being put out for pickup. I also mentioned - fairly proudly - that 'all' of us here in the neighbourhood of course carefully follow these rules quite closely. We feel that this kind of system, troublesome though it sometimes may be to keep up with, is necessary to help conserve energy and preserve our environment. But I had an experience this week that makes me wonder about that phrase 'all of us here' ...

It happened last Thursday, a day of the week which is marked on the Garbage Calendar from city hall as a day for burnable garbage. We are required to put the garbage into the authorized green semi-transparent bags, and place it at the curb by 8:00 AM, after which it is collected by crusher trucks, which take it to the incinerator.

When this system was first put in place some years ago, the bags were opaque, but at some point along the line they switched to using a transparent type. It seems that when the contents were hidden, there was a problem with the wrong kind of garbage being placed inside, so the transparency is an attempt to solve that little 'problem'.

As it happens, I was a bit late with the garbage that day, and it was nearly 9:00 before I remembered. I might have been too late, but when I grabbed the bag and took it outside, the row of green bags along the edge of the street showed me that I was still in time; the collection truck hadn't reached our area yet. But I also noticed something else. The bag belonging to one of my neighbours had drawn the attention of the local crows, and had been dragged out into the street, with most of its contents getting strewn across the pavement.

It had already been struck by at least a couple of passing cars, and as it seemed like a real mess would ensue if nothing was done, I went back into the house for a brush, dustpan and empty bag, and headed out there to clean it up.

And what I found there made me wish that I had remained in my workshop, and not seen this.

The garbage I found was mostly a mix of kitchen waste and other items that did belong in this bag, but ... there were also plenty of things there that had no place in this 'burnable' selection. The lady of the house had obviously found a bargain on toothbrushes and bought everybody a new one, because here were all the old ones ... which should have been put out with the 'plastic items' collected on Tuesdays.

There were also a few pairs of socks (actually without holes too, which I felt was a bit strange!) and these should have been put out with the 'old fabric' collected on the fourth Wednesday of each month.

A couple of empty pet bottles rounded out the 'illegal' items; they normally go out on 2nd and 4th Tuesdays.

So now what do I do? Well, nothing of course. It's not my place to act as a 'garbage policeman' for the neighbourhood. Such busybodies end up being disliked by everybody. But I really wish that I hadn't seen this! I had no intent to 'spy' on them, but just by helping to clean up this little accidental spill, I have learned that this particular family is not being very 'fair' with our garbage system. A recycling system can only work efficiently if most people follow the guidelines; otherwise we would think, "Why should I go to all the trouble sorting everything, if such effort is wasted by my neighbours?"

Troublemaking crows!

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