

The Revolution in Giving Presents

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How would you choose a present for an important person in your life? Would it be something the important person likes? Or would it be something you like? You try to imagine the receiver's happy face, don't you? To tell you the truth, however, I don't enjoy any of these methods. You have to say "Thank you" to the giver and use the present even if you don't like it. I feel I am forced to accept the present with a happy smile whatever it is. So, I make it a rule to give a piece of cake for my friends' birthdays. You can eat it on the spot. It is easy and not pretentious.

Four years have passed since I entered Kosen and we'll soon have to say "Good-bye" to each other. The human relationships were complex in elementary and junior high school days. So, I like the easygoing students at Kosen. Kosen life is very comfortable. Since I didn't want to let my happy school life at Kosen end just simply, I proposed an idea to my close friends. "Let's make our birthdays especially memorable this year." 'Heartfelt' does not always equal 'memorable.' So, I said, "Let's do something we hate for our birthdays. How about giving undesirable presents to each other?" It's true that we can clearly remember our bad or scary experiences. We all thought that's a good idea and agreed. That was how the revolution in giving presents started.

The first target was a friend who was born in April. We all knew that she hated being celebrated in a big way. On her birthday, we ate lunch together near the baseball field at our school. After lunch, we suddenly took out a huge Swiss roll and put 19 candles on it. Then we lit all the candles and sang the birthday song to her in a loud voice. Everybody passing by us stared at us with a strange look. We asked her to blow out the candles. She blew them out with a bitter smile. She said to us, "I will never forget your 'distorted' affection," munching the giant roll full of holes.

Since the first operation was successful, we were encouraged. We started to try to find a "suitable" present for our second target. She was born in May. The concept was something you have to use daily but difficult to use. Finally, we found the perfect gift on the Internet. We wrapped it carefully with several sheets of paper and gave it to her on her birthday. She removed one sheet and found a message card. It said, "Use it cleverly." She removed the next sheet and found another card saying, "Not eatable." And then finally, the present appeared. It was a massive eraser. It was 500 grams, 8 centimeters long by 16 centimeters wide, and 3 centimeters thick. It was just about the size of a 500 milliliter PET bottle. "Oh, my!" said my friend. The second operation was also a big success. She is using the monstrous eraser even now, saying, "This is hard to use."

The nickname of another friend of mine is DJ. The way she turned a potter's wheel in quick rhythm during arts and crafts class was just like a disk jockey at a disco. That's why she got this nickname. She is always calm and never upset. It is difficult to surprise her. What

would she like, no, what would she dislike? We discussed what to give her for a while, surfing the Internet. Then suddenly we found a big cubic lamp. It was a retro signboard which flashes "On Air." Yes, this is the most suitable gift for DJ! On DJ's birthday, we gave the neatly wrapped present to her. When she saw the wrapped box, she looked delighted. In clear contrast, however, she immediately wore an expression of mixed feelings when she saw what's inside. She left, grumbling, "What should I broadcast? Should I enjoy pretending to be a DJ alone at home? It's so ridiculous!"

This school year, we all have our 19th birthday. When I was an elementary school student, I was happy to be getting on in years. I was always looking forward to my birthday. Recently, however, I feel that I am neither an adult nor a child. I have to pay admission for adults at a movie theater or a museum. However, I'm not allowed to smoke nor drink. It's hard to understand these inconsistencies. That's why I haven't been very excited about my birthday recently. Also, celebrating my friends' birthdays has been a hassle. However, this school year, everything has changed and we are enjoying our birthdays to our heart's content.

I would be happy if my friends would remember how we celebrated our birthdays as one of the exciting memories of Kosen life.

By the way, don't you want to know what happened on my birthday? Yes? You'll have to wait four more days. My birthday is January 30.