I was going to school on the bus, which shook every time it passed over a bumpy area of the road.

As I watched the landscape change from area to area, the passengers on the bus increased gradually.

Most of the passengers were wearing school uniforms.

The lone frustrated salary worker who got on the bus remembered the time when he accidentally groped someone the last time he got on a crowded bus.

An old woman standing in front of me stood precariously on her unsteady feet, looking as if she would fall over at any time.

I made a mistake by taking the bus.

Even though I was able to secure a good seat, the cold wind was blowing towards me and the whole bus was crowded.

That poor old woman will have to wait until the bus arrives at her destination.

The cloudless sky and clear weather is refreshing… I think I might fall asleep.

My tranquility and peace was suddenly interrupted.

“Don’t you think you should give up your seat?”

For a moment, I opened my eyes that were about to close.

Eh, by any chance, were you scolding me?

That’s what I thought at first, but apparently the person in front of me was being warned.

A young, well-built, blonde-haired man was sitting down in the priority seat. I mean high school student. The old woman was standing next to him. An office lady was next to the old woman.

“You there, can’t you see the old woman having trouble?”

The office lady seemed to want him to hand over the priority seat to the old woman.

In the quiet bus, her voice got louder and attracted the attention of the other people in the bus.

“That’s a really crazy question, lady.”

The boy might have been angry, ignorant, or perhaps brutally honest, but he just smiled and recrossed his legs.

“Why should I give this seat to an old woman? There’s absolutely no reason for me to give it up.”

“Isn’t it natural to hand over the priority seat to the elderly?”

“I don’t understand. Priority seats are just priority seats, and there is no legal obligation for me to move. Whether or not I move should be decided by me, who is currently sitting in this seat. Will you give up your seat because I am a young man? Hahaha, that’s a stupid way of thinking.”

It’s a manner of speaking that one wouldn’t expect from a high school student. His hair is dyed blond, and there are some unexpected traits for a high school student.

“I am a healthy young man. Certainly, I don’t feel that standing up would inconvenience me. However, it is obvious standing up will consume more physical strength than sitting down will. I don’t want to do such a useless thing. Or maybe, are you telling me to be more lively and energetic?”

“What, what kind of attitude is that towards your superiors!?”

“Superior? It’s obvious that both you and the old woman have lived longer than me. There’s no doubt about it. However, that ‘above’ refers to height. Also, I have a problem with you. Even if there is a difference in age, isn’t that an awfully rude and impertinent attitude?” (T/N Superior in Japanese is literally “person above”—he is saying that the “above” in the word superior refers to height, not socially “above”.)

“Wha…! You’re a high school student!? Honestly, just listen to what adults say!”

“It’s fine, it’s fine…”

The office lady was worked up, but the old woman didn’t want to make the situation worse. She tried to calm her down with hand gestures, but the office lady continued to insult the high school student and looked like she was about to fly into a rage.

“Apparently the older woman seems to have better hearing than you do. Oh dear, I guess Japanese society isn’t completely useless yet. Enjoy the rest of your life to your heart’s content.”

After showing a uselessly refreshing smile, he put headphones in his ears and began to listen to loud music. The office lady who spoke up was clenching her teeth in annoyance.

His self-important attitude annoyed her as she tried to argue with him.

Personally, I didn’t get myself involved because I agreed, at least in part, with the boy.

Once the moral problem is solved, the obligation to give up a seat disappears.

“Sorry……”

The office lady tried to hold back her tears while apologizing to the old woman.

A little incident happened on the bus. I was relieved that I wasn’t involved in the situation. I don’t care for things like giving up my seat to the elderly or stubbornly refusing to move from my seat.

The disturbance ended with the boy who won with his big ego. At least, everyone thought it was over.

“Um… I also think that the lady is right.”

An unexpected helping hand was extended. The owner of the voice seems stood next the office lady and bravely spoke her opinion to the boy. She wore the same school uniform as mine.

“This time it’s a pretty girl, apparently I have luck with women today.”

“Grandmother, it looks like it’s been hot for a while now. Won’t you give up your seat? It may be none of your concern, but I think it will contribute to society.”

With a “pachin”, the boy snapped his fingers.

“Social contribution? I see, that’s an interesting way to put it. Giving seats to the elderly may be a way of contributing to society. Unfortunately, I am not interested in contributing to society. I only think about my own satisfaction. Oh, and also. In this crowded bus, you’re asking me, who’s sitting in the priority seat, to give up my seat, but can’t you ask the other people who are staying silent and leave me alone? If someone truly cares for the elderly, I think that ‘priority seat here, priority seat there’ would be a trivial concern.”

The girl’s intentions didn’t reach the boy, and the boy’s brazen attitude didn’t change. Both the office lady and the old woman couldn’t say anything and stood there with a bitter smile.

But the girl who stood up to the boy didn’t crumble.

“Everyone. Please listen to me for at least a little bit. Can anyone give their seat for the old woman? Please, anyone.”

How is there so much compassion, courage, and determination in those few words? It’s rare to see such genuine intentions.

With her remark, the girl may have seemed like an annoyance. But she seriously appealed to the passengers without fear.

Like everyone else in the bus, though, I didn’t move. No one felt it was necessary to move. The attitude and behavior of the boy had caught on with some of the passengers and they convinced themselves that the boy was right.

Of course, the elderly are undeniably important contributors and supporters of Japan.

But we, the youth, are the important human resources that will support Japan from now on.

Also, because the general population is gradually aging, our value is also increasing.

So, if you compare the youth and the elderly, it’s obvious which one is more important now. Well, this is also a perfect argument, isn’t it.

Somehow, I started to wonder what the other people would do. Looking around, people were pretending to not have noticed or had a hesitant look.

But—the girl who was sitting next to me was completely different.

Among the confusion, she had a completely expressionless look.

When I stared at her unintentionally because of her strangeness, our eyes met for just a moment. I could tell that we shared the same thoughts. Neither of us considered giving up our seats for the old woman.

“Oh, here you go!”

Soon after the girl’s appeal, a woman stood up. She gave up her seat, unable to endure the guilt.

“Thank you!”

When the girl lowered her head with a full smile, she pushed through the crowd and guided the old woman to the seat.

She thanked the girl over and over again, then sat down in her seat.

While watching the old woman and the girl, I folded my arms and closed my eyes.

The bus soon arrived at the destination, and stopped at the school.

As I got off the bus, there was a gate made of natural stone waiting for me.

All the boys and girls in uniform got off the bus and passed through the gate.

“Wait a second.”

As I tried to take my first step of courage, I was instantly stopped as someone tried to talk to me.

I was stopped by the girl I sat next to on the bus.

“You were looking at me a while ago. Why?”, she said with a firm look.

“Sorry. I was just a bit interested. Whatever the reason, you didn’t have any thoughts of giving up your seat to the old woman, right?”

“Yeah yeah, I didn’t want to give up my seat. What’s wrong with that?”

“No, it’s just that I thought the same thing. I also didn’t have any intention of giving up my seat. I like to stay out of trouble; I don’t like being concerned with such things.” (T/N When he says “I like to stay out of trouble”, he uses an idiom that is similar to “let sleeping dogs lie” in English but I felt it would be weird to put that here.)

“Stay out of trouble? Don’t compare me to you. I didn’t give up my seat because I did not feel any sense in giving up the seat to an old woman.”

“Isn’t that worse than just staying out of trouble?”

“I don’t know. I’m just acting on my own beliefs. It’s different from people who avoid troublesome things like you. I don’t want to spend time with people like you.”

“… I feel the same way.”

I just wanted to give my opinion, but I wasn’t really in the mood to talk back and forth.

We both deliberately sighed and started walking in the same direction.