

## Keiko Kobe, *With the Light: Raising an Autistic Child (Volume 2)*

Yen Press, New York, NY, 2008, 527 pp, ISBN-10: 0-7595-2359-2, \$14.99 (paper)

Ernst VanBergeijk

Published online: 29 August 2009  
© Springer Science+Business Media, LLC 2009

In the second installment of this four part award winning manga series about autism, Sachiko and Masato Azuma, the parents of Hikaru (“To be Bright”) reconcile and avoid divorce. Readers learn that Hikaru’s autism is quite profound as he progresses through school. The family welcomes the birth of Kanon, a baby girl who is not affected by autism. Hikaru must learn to share space and parents with his little sister. The family must learn to balance life between the needs of Hikaru and his neurotypical sister. The family’s life is turned into turmoil when a beloved special education teacher, Aoki-sensei, is transferred to another school and the administration of the school is changed to one that is not sensitive to the needs of children on the autism spectrum.

The Azuma family’s story is compelling and one that many families can relate to regardless of culture. Imbedded in the story are wonderfully helpful techniques concerning a variety of situations. Some of these techniques include the use of picture boards and phrase cards to help Hikaru communicate, using technology to locate a lost child, creating a newsletter describing their son and his needs, and incorporating naturally occurring social support networks.

As in the previous volume there is a reading tips guide for western audiences who may not be used to reading from left to right. The book is bound on the right side of the page and appears “backward,” at first glance. The rationale for

printing the book in this manner is to maintain the integrity and flow of the artwork and story. These graphic novels are beautifully drawn and captivating. The book also contains “Translation Notes” that helps readers understand the culturally specific Japanese references in the story. Since Hikaru’s character has Filipina neighbors and he is somewhat echolalic, this volume also contains a Tagalog translation guide for the phrases he utters in this language.

New to this volume are three additions. The first is a short essay by a young man in his thirties who is affected by autism and works as a public employee for Kawasaki City. He describes his experiences working and living on his own, and provides readers with a concrete example an individual on the spectrum who lives independently in the community with supports. The second is an excerpt from United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children. It is a part of this volume to remind readers not only of the basic rights of children, but also the world’s commitment to the plight of children with disabilities. The third addition is an essay written by Kiyokazu Nagae, a special education teacher, and the basis for the Aoki-sensei character. In this essay he reminisces about his early days as a special education teacher and the lessons his students taught him.

This second installment, like its predecessor, contains a message of hope and patience. One subplot involves a single mother of a young girl with autism who has given up. Eventually the character sees progress in her daughter and changes in the school personnel’s attitude toward her daughter. Hikaru, the story’s protagonist also makes progress in his independent living skills and his ability to connect with others. This second volume may be ideal for families struggling with raising both a child with autism and a neurotypical child or simply struggling with raising a child on the spectrum who is in his or her later years of elementary school.

---

E. VanBergeijk (✉)  
Vocational Independence Program, New York Institute of  
Technology, 300 Carleton Avenue, Room 112 Independence  
Hall, Central Islip, NY 11722, USA  
e-mail: evanberg@nyit.edu