

Special Talents

He was pleased to learn that Chibi knew all the places where the wild grapes and wild potatoes grew. He was amazed to find how much Chibi knew about all the flowers in our class garden. He liked Chibi's black and white drawings and tacked them up on the wall to be admired. He liked Chibi's own handwriting, which no one but Chibi could read, and he tacked that up on the wall. And often he spent time talking with Chibi when no one was around.

But, when Chibi appeared on the stage at the talent show of that year, no one could believe his eyes. "Who is that?" "What can that stupid do up there?"

Until Mr. Isobe announced that Chibi was going to imitate the voices of crows. "Voices?" "Voices of crows?"

First he imitated the voices of newly hatched crows. And he made the mother crow's voice. Then he imitated the father crow's voice. He showed how crows cry early in the morning. He showed how crows cry when the village people have some unhappy accident. He showed how crows call when they are happy and gay. Everybody's mind was taken to the far mountainside from which Chibi probably came to school.

At the end, to imitate a crow in an old tree, Chibi made very special sounds deep down in his throat. Now everybody could imagine exactly the far and lonely place where Chibi lived with his family.

Then Mr. Isobe explained how Chibi had learned those calls – leaving his home for school at dawn, and arriving home at sunset, every day for six long years.

Every one of us cried, thinking how much we had been wrong to Chibi all those long years.