

わが妹・パール

小川 光

誰でも自分の子供時代を振り返って感慨を述べて思い出すことが必ずあると思いますが、私の場合、実に幼年～少年～青年時代に渡っての特別な思い出として、鮮明に甦ってくる一つのことがあります。それはパールという犬のことなのです。パールは雌犬、たぶん紀州犬とスピッツの雑種で、生後40日でわが家にやってきました。小学校2年生の時の11月のある寒い夕刻、アパートの庭で友達とキャッチボールをしていた時、前から小犬をくれることになっていた近所のおばさんに呼ばれて、そのお家について行ってパールと初対面して思わず「かわいい!」と叫んでしまったことに始まって、イギリス留学中に電話でパールの訃報を知らされ涙にくれたことまで、パールについての思い出は全て昨日のことのように鮮明なのです。わが家の歴史は、とにかくパールと共にあるのです。

私と弟がそれぞれ8歳と6歳になる少し前で、パールがいわば0歳の赤ん坊で、私達兄弟にとってみれば新しい妹が加わったようなものでした。私達は犬・人間などということを意識せずに、文字通り寝食を共にしていました。腕白盛りの3人はいっしょに悪戯をした時など、私と弟とパールが兄、弟、妹のように両親の前に並んで叱られたものですし、父などは私達兄弟のどちらかを叱るとき、よく間違っってパールの名をいしい口調で呼んだりしたものです。そんな時のパールの濡れ衣を着せられたといわんばかりの顔は、本人には悪かったですが滑稽でした。パールと私達との兄弟喧嘩もありました。たいていは特に私が悪い場合が多く、そもそも自分のことを犬とっていないパールを、犬よばわりして怒らせて喧嘩になるようなことがほとんどでした。そんなとき腹いせに家の壁に書いたパールの愚口の落書きを後年みつけて苦笑したものです。父は概して私達には厳しかったです

Pearl, A Rare Gem

by Hikaru Ogawa

Everyone has one special event or figure from their childhood that, when recalled, conjures up feelings of deep emotion. For me, this particular figure is Pearl and my memories of her span most of my childhood and youth.

Pearl, probably part kishu and part spitz, came to us forty days after her birth. As a second grader, I remember one very cold evening in November when I was playing catch with a friend. The elderly neighbor who was to give us a puppy called us over to have a look and when I saw how adorable she was, I screamed with delight. I also remember much later, when studying in England, being told of her death and breaking down on the phone. These and other memories of Pearl are still as vivid for me as if they were just yesterday. Pearl and her stories are an inseparable part of the history of our family.

Pearl was just a little baby. My brother and I were not quite six and eight years old. We felt that we had acquired a new baby sister. The three of us ate, played, and slept together and it never occurred to us that Pearl was canine and we human. When we were caught doing something wrong, we three —



し、大学の講壇では厳格な教授であったようです。そんな父がパールを溺愛し、文字通り目に入れても痛くないような可愛がりようであったのは、微笑ましい限りでした。父のゼミの学生の一人の話では、英文学にはよく犬が描かれています。犬について話が及んだときなど、厳しい小川教授は顔を一瞬ほころばせて学生たちにパールの話をしたりしたそうです。

母はパールとの独自の“共通語”を持っていたこともあって、実は母が一番パールに好かれていたのです。いつも母の後をパールがまといわすようについてまわるのを見て、「パールは賢い犬でなく、ちょっとだけアホな人間」であると真顔で主張する父が、少しうらやましそうに「あれはいつも御飯をもらっているからだ」と、唯一パールを犬と認めるようなことをいっていたのも微笑ましく思い出されます。



older brother, younger brother and younger sister — lined up in front of our parents for a scolding. Sometimes, my father, as absent-minded professors often do, would mistakenly blurt out Pearl's name when it was us he meant to reprimand. We couldn't help, at these times, laughing at the embarrassed look on her face, though we also felt sorry for her. Other times, we quarrelled with Pearl and, in most cases, I was the one who provoked her. First, I would call her "Dog!" and Pearl, who didn't think of herself as a dog at all, would get angry and we'd fight it out. Years later, I was amused to come across an insulting remark about Pearl I'd scribbled on the wall. It must have been one of the times I'd been angry at her.

My father was strict with us and with his students, but Pearl was the apple of his eye. A student once told me that the face of Professor Ogawa, usually so stern, beamed with pleasure as he mentioned Pearl during a discussion of dogs in an English literature class. In fact, it was my mother that Pearl liked best. They shared a "common language." But my father's jealousy led him to contradict his own belief. Although he often insisted "Pearl is not just an intelligent dog, but a slightly stupid human

being," he changed his tune when Pearl followed only Mother around. "It's because she feeds Pearl," my father pronounced, implying after all that Pearl really was more dog than human.

今ふたりは、長く住んだ東京郊外の、霊園の同じ場所であいっしょに安らかに眠っています。

All families experience difficulties over the years. My family was no exception. Our sorrows were eased by pouring them out to Pearl, "... you understand, don't you, Pearl?" Greater still were our joys, magnified twofold, as we shared them with our beloved Pearl. In our family and our neighborhood, she was always referred to fondly as "Pearl-chan" or "Pearl-san." She was and expected to be the center of attention in our lives and, so, my memories of her go on and on.

Pearl took her last breath as she lay resting her head on the lap of the one she loved most, my mother. She was just short of 17. Father succumbed while I was living in Switzerland. At the end of his final letter to me, he said: "Those compassionate eyes of Pearl's are etched in our minds forever, aren't they?" It was the last thing he ever wrote. Both Pearl and Father are now resting in peace together at a cemetery in the suburbs of Tokyo.