

することが出来なかったのです。

保護して来た犬は、私達の責任としてツテを頼りに但馬中を走り回って、優しい里親を捜しましたが、ハチは、その外見や年齢的な条件が難しすぎました。万策つきて、動物愛護団体や動物福祉協会、さらにはペットフード会社のお客様相談室にまで、ハチを保護してもらえ施設がないかと問い合わせました。近畿一円から埼玉県の方までそれらしい情報を頼って連絡をとってみましたが、良い情報のないまま空しく5日が過ぎました。希望を失いかけた6日目、川西市の知人の知らせから、ついに、オリバー先生に辿り着くことが出来たのです。必死の思いで、オリバー先生にハチの窮状をお話しました。そうして、オリバー先生のおかげで、ハチはアークに住めることになったのです。その時の私達の安堵の思いは何と言えれば良いのでしょうか、本当に助けて頂いた感謝の気持ちでいっぱいでした。

それなのに、ハチの苦難はまだまだ続きま

した。アークで落ち着く間もなく、パルボを発症してしまったのです。1週間足らずの間に、ハチは立てない程に衰弱していました。そのまま、茨木市の田村動物病院に入院し、実に3ヶ月もの大変な闘病生活を送ることになるのです。とても辛く苦しい3ヶ月でしたが、田村先生と巡り会えたことは、それからのハチにとって、一生の幸運になります。

田村動物病院に入院してから、止まらない下痢と嘔吐で、ハチは、13キロの体重が7キロをきり、骨と皮だけの、犬とは見えないような姿になってしまいました。力なく横たわったままのハチを、日曜日ごとに、珠恵ちゃんと但馬からお見舞いに通いました。珠恵ちゃんは、そのころ、ちょっとしたことから自信をなくして引きこもりがちな、動物の世話と絵を描くことが大好きな、中学生の女の子でした。一緒に暮らしたのは、わずか1週間だったのに、ハチは私達のことを覚えていました。そればかりか、私達に信頼を寄せて、愛情



をみせるかのように、力をふりしぼって、這って来ようとしていました。毎日の点滴や輸血で、ハチの四肢の血管はどの部分も、もう注射針が入らなくなっていました。食べてもすぐにもどしてしまい、点滴だけがハチの命の支えでしたので、最後はもう首の血管から点滴するしかないだろうと、田村先生もため息まじりでした。痩せこけて眼窩が落ちくぼみ、瞼が目の中に引き込まれてしまわないように、糸で縫って瞼を引っ張り上げてもらったハチの顔を見た時は、さすがにもうダメかとあきらめかけました。安楽死のことが頭をよぎりました。しかし、そんな不自由な目で私達を一心にみつめ、鼻をすり寄せて来るハチのいじらしさは、ハチの持っている生きる力を、精一杯私達に訴えかけているように思えたのです。私達は、ハチの生命力を応援することに決めました。田村先生に、ハチの為になる可能な限りの治療をお願いしました。

ハチのケージに、私のハンカチを結んで帰りました。後日、田村先生夫人から伺ったことには、私達が帰ったあと、ハチはそのハンカチに鼻をおしつけて、クーンとさけぶように一声大きく啼いたそうです。

瀕死の状態から2ヶ月、田村先生と夫人のすばらしい治療と献身的な看護を受けて、ハチは、奇跡的に死の淵から蘇りました。

home. In spite of doubtless experiencing enough misery at the hands of human beings to hate us all, he maintained a quiet self-possession that struck our hearts. Our bringing Hachi home should have been the start of a happy new life for him, but instead it was the beginning of more trials. We already had two dogs, Korota and Potato, who like Hachi had been strays we had picked up. The size of our house and other circumstances meant we simply could not keep Hachi in our family. Having brought Hachi home, we realized it was our responsibility to find him a home, and we raced all over the Tajima region looking for prospective owners. Due to Hachi's injuries and age, we had no success. We then contacted animal welfare organizations and even pet food manufacturers to find a shelter that would take him. From the information we got, we called places all over Kansai and even as far away as Saitama, but nothing panned out. Six days had passed and we were starting to lose hope, when an acquaintance living in Kawanishi told us about ARK. We immediately contacted Oliver-sensei and desperately spilled out Hachi's story to her. She agreed to take Hachi in. I can't express the relief we felt then; we were simply overcome with gratitude. Again, what should have been the start of a happy new life for Hachi was the beginning of more hardship. Scarcely had he gotten settled in at ARK than he was discovered to have Parvo. Within a week, he became so weak he could not stand up. He was taken to the Tamura Veterinary Clinic in Ibaraki, and there he stayed for three long months, battling bravely against the disease. It took a terrible toll on him. But his meeting Dr. Tamura changed Hachi's luck for the rest of his life. During his first weeks at the clinic, Hachi suffered continuously from diarrhea and vomiting, and his weight went down from 13kg to under 7kg. Reduced to just skin and bone, lying inert with no strength to move, he was barely recognizable. Sumie and I visited

him at the clinic every Sunday. At the time, Sumie was a junior high school student. She loved caring for animals and drawing pictures, but due to some events had lost self-confidence and spent most of her time shut away inside her room. Although Hachi had spent only a week in our home, he remembered us. Not just that, but he seemed to trust and even love us, struggling to crawl towards us whenever we came.

With daily IVs and blood transfusions, there was no place left on any of the blood vessels in Hachi's legs to inject a needle. Because he threw up everything he ate, however, the IV drips were his lifeline, and Dr. Tamura sighed that finally they would have to use the blood vessels in his neck. Hachi's eyes were sunken into their sockets from losing so much weight, and Dr. Tamura had had to sew his eyelids open so they wouldn't be pulled into the sockets. Seeing Hachi's face like this, we started to give up hope that he would ever recover. The thought of euthanasia crossed our minds... but when we saw Hachi gazing steadily at us with those sunken eyes and felt him rubbing his nose against our faces, we felt that he was trying desperately to communicate to us his strong will to live. We decided then to support him in his fight to survive, and asked Dr. Tamura to do everything in his power to bring him back to health.

I tied my handkerchief on one of the bars of Hachi's cage and went home. I heard later from Mrs. Tamura that after we left, Hachi pressed his nose against the handkerchief and let out a loud, keening cry. Two months after hovering at the brink of death, Hachi had undergone a miraculous change for the better thanks to the unceasing care and splendid ministrations of Dr. Tamura and his wife. Sumie's weekly visits also played a large part in his improvement. Once on the road to recovery, Hachi's convalescence