



Letter from BADGER ハシヤーからの手紙

犬を「ぎゃくたい」する話をよく聞くけど、人間って、自分の家族を「いじめる」こともあるんだね。

チャッピーがアークにやって来たのは、彼女のせいじゃない。年をとったご主人が死んで、彼女の面倒をみてくれる人がいなくなったから。チャッピーは8さい。新しい飼い主を見つけるには、ちょっとむずかしいかもね……みんながほしがるのは、子犬か、若い犬。病気にかかりやすい「年寄り」はいやというわけ。「病氣しらず」で16-17さいまで長生きする犬もたくさんいるんだけど……アークでは、「ねんばい」の人には、「ねんばい」の犬を選ぶようにすすめている。子犬や若い犬は元気がよすぎて、「こうれい者」には扱いにくいけど、その点、「こうれい犬」だと「気ごころ」が知れているからね。おとなしいし、落ち着いているし、もちろんそれ以上大きくなることはないもの。チャッピーは「おばあさん」と暮らしていたから、新しい飼い主も、やはり、ひとり者か、年寄り家族がいい——とアークでは考えた。小さい子供がたくさんいたりすると、犬も「ストレス」を感じちゃうからね。

ある日、男の人がやって来た。「ひとり暮らしの父親が犬をほしがっている」というんだ。おとうさんは元気だし、自由な時間はたっぷりあるし……おくさんにも、飼っていた老犬にも「先立たれ」て、さびしい思いをしているとか。自分と家族はすぐ近くに住んでいるので、もしも、おとうさんに「なにかあっても」、「責任をもって」犬の世話をします——男の人はそう言った。次の日、彼はおとうさんを連れて犬を見にやって来た。いくつかの「こうほ」の中から選んだのはチャッピー。おたがいに気に入って、まさにぴったり」に思えた。チャッピーにすてきな家が見つかって、みんな大よろこび。

ところが……3日とたたないうちに、男が父親とチャッピーを連れてまたやって来た。「犬をお返しします」とむすこは言った。「どうかしましたか?」

「犬にはなんの問題もありません。父はこの子が気に入って、とてもよろこんでいました。ただ……」それから、「真相」が明らかになった。男は、おくさんと彼女のおとうさんといっしょに住んでいたのだ。意地悪なおやじさんは言った——「もし、じいさんがくたばっても、犬をわしの家にいれることは許さんぞ」と。もともと、「おしゅうとさん」が犬を飼うことに賛成していたおくさんも、主人にさからって、言った——「ぜったいだめ。犬を返してらっしゃい」と。

おじいさんは、お別れにやさしくチャッピーをなでてやった。その背中をまるめた姿はさびしそうだった。声をあげて泣けるものなら、そうしたかったのかも……犬の首輪と写真をにぎりしめて、「記念」に持ち帰ったおじいさん。人生さいごの「ささやかな楽しみ」をうばってしまうとは、なんてひどい「身内」なんだろう。実の父親を守ってやれないとは、なんて情けないむすこだろう。仲間がいるよろこび、「生きる力と希望」を老人からとりあげて、かわりに老いと病氣と、そして老衰という「さいごの苦しみ」を負わせてしまったとは……ざんこくな話だよね。

We all know about cruelty to dogs but sometimes people are cruel to members of their own family.

Chappie came to ARK through no fault of her own. Her elderly owner had passed away and none of her relatives could keep her. She is eight years old which is a bit borderline for the chance of finding a new owner. People prefer puppies or younger dogs because they don't want to be faced with the increasing possibility of illness associated with old age. Of course this is not necessarily true as a lot of dogs live to the ripe old age of 16 or 17 with never a day of sickness. At ARK we generally try to persuade elderly people to adopt an older dog. It makes sense since a puppy or young dog is often too boisterous for an elderly owner to control and with an older dog you know what you are getting. They are quieter, more settled in character and temperament, and of course they won't get any bigger.

Since Chappie had been the companion of an old woman, we felt she would be better rehomed in a similar situation with a single person or an older family. She would be too stressed in a family with lots of young kids, for example.

One day a man came saying that his father, who lived by himself, wanted a dog. He was still very active and had plenty of time on his hands. Since his wife and his old dog had passed away, he was very lonely. The son and his family lived only a few doors down the street so he would take responsibility and care for the dog should anything happen to his father. The next day he brought his father to look for a dog. From several possible dogs, he liked Chappie. They fell for each other and it seemed the perfect match. Everyone was very happy that Chappie had found such a nice home.

Within a couple of days the son reappeared with his father and Chappie. They had to give her back, he said. What was wrong? Nothing was wrong with the dog at all, his father loved her and was so happy, it was just……then the whole story came out. It turned out he lived with his wife and her father. That spiteful old man said that if anything happened to Chappie's owner, he wouldn't allow the dog in his house. His daughter who had originally been supportive of her husband's father having a dog, turned against her husband. "No way," she said, "the dog would have to go."

The old man looked hunched and withdrawn as he gave Chappie a last pat, if he could have cried, he would have. He clutched her collar and a photo to take home as a memento. What mean relatives to deprive an old man a bit of happiness in his final years. What a weak son not to stand up for his own father. By removing something that could provide him with companionship, activity and a will to live, they had sowed the seeds for the onset of senility, ill-health and final decline.