



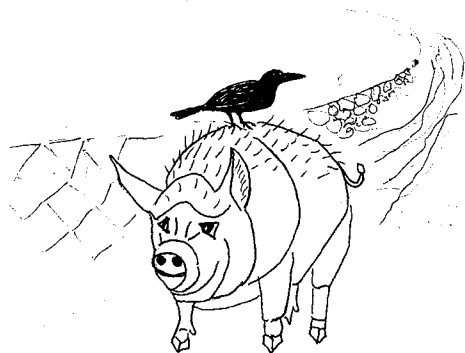
Letter from BADGER バジャーからの手紙

心やさしい“大もの”のウィルバーが天国へ行っちゃった。アークには8年くらいまえ、けいさつの車で「おめみえ」した。大阪のまちを「おさんぽ」しているところを「たいほ」されたんだって。「ふこうへい」だよね——だれにメイワクをかけるわけでもなく、こっそり「ひとりあるき」を楽しんでただけなのに。せなかには、はでなピンク色のペンキで「タツヤ」とかいてあったから、もちぬしがいたんだね。映画「ベーブ」がこうかいされてから日本中におこった“ブタブーム”のギセイシャだったのかも。みんなが「かわいい子ブタ」をほしがった。でも、だれも思わなかった——子ブタはすぐに大ブタになり、ネコでもきゅうくつなアパートに100キロのブタがおさまるはずがないなんて。

アークでのウィルバーは「水を得たさかな」だった。気のむくままに河原を行ったり来たり……遊びつかれると、しゃれたワラギマイホームでひとやすみ……と「ゆうが」な生活。おきゃくさんには「大モテ」で、リンゴやバナナのごちそうにありついた。子どもたちは、あまりの大きさとゴワゴワの毛にビックリ……でも、さわってもダイジョーブだとわかると大よろこび。ウィルバーは、せなかをかいてもらうと、うっとりして「キモチイー」て顔をしたもね。冬は、ゆっくり起きて、あたたかくなってから外に出てちょっと「ひとまわり」するだけ。でも、夏になると大いそがし——「川どこ」でミミズや地虫、草の根っこなどをほじくったり……自分だけの「ドロぼろ」をつくり、ほてったからだを冷やしては楽しんでいた。

仲よしのカラスは、ウィルバーのせなかにとまって、くちばしでゴワゴワの毛をしごきながらフケをつついていた。イノシシのイズイーも友だち。彼女は、おなじ皿のごはんを仲よく食べるくせに、ウィルバーをロマンスの相手にはしなかった。そのうちに、イズイーはどこかへ出かけては、こっそり「デート」してくるようになったみたい。やがて、4ひきのやんちゃなベビーを連れて出てきたから、ヒミツがばれちゃったというわけ。ウィルバーは、「河原には食べものがいっぱいあるから、ここにいれば？」とイズイーを引きとめたけど……野生で「がんこもの」の彼女は、それっきり、ゆくえがわからない。やっぱり、「シンなべ」にされちゃったのかも——ちょうど「しゅりょう期」だったし…… イズイーは「ひとみしり」しないから、キケンだとは思わずに、てっぽうを持ったハンターたちに、このこついて行ったのかもね。1ぴきだけ生きのこったベビーも、いつのまにかいなくなり……ウィルバーは「ひとりぼっち」になっちゃった。

ブタはどれくらい生きるかって？ ワカンナイ。でも、「ようつん場」でかわれているブタのみじかい、みじめな一生にくらべると、ウィルバーは幸せだよね——せいりっぱい楽しく生きたんだもの。ウィルバーのいない河原なんて……さびしすぎるよ。



Wilbur the gentle giant has departed this world. He arrived at ARK about eight years ago in a police van having been 'arrested' while wandering along a street in Osaka. This was unfair since he wasn't bothering anybody, just a pig out for a stroll, minding his own business. He had been sprayed with shocking pink paint and the words "Tatsuya" daubed on his back, so clearly someone had owned him. He was probably a victim of the 'pig craze' that swept Japan after the film "BABE" was released, everyone wanting a cute piglet but never considering that little pigs soon become big pigs and that a 100 kg porker doesn't really fit comfortably into your average apartment where even a cat would have problems finding space.

At ARK Wilbur came into his own and lived the life of Riley, roaming up and down the riverbed with a snug straw house to retire to. He was very popular with visitors who would bring him choice tidbits like apples and bananas, and especially with children who although intimidated by his size and hard bristles, found they could pat him without him reacting at all. In fact he took on a kind of glazed look of pleasure when scratched on his back. In winter he would stay in bed until the day warmed up sufficiently for him to take a short stroll outside but in summer he became more active, rooting for worms, grubs and plants in the riverbed and digging a soft mud bath for himself where he would wallow happily to keep cool.

One of his companions was a crow who perched on his back wiping his beak on Wilbur's bristles and picking off bits of dandruff. Another was a wild boar named Izzy. Although she enjoyed eating with him from the same dish, she hardly considered him the romance of her life and before long she began staying away for longer periods enjoying love affairs elsewhere. Her secret finally came out when she appeared with four cavorting baby boars in tow. Although Wilbur did his best to persuade her to stay in the riverbed where food was plentiful, she was wild and willful. We don't know exactly what happened but she probably ended up on somebody's dinner plate, it being the hunting season. Being unafraid of people she would have gone straight up to a group of hunter with guns before realising what was about to hit her. One of her babies survived but he too eventually disappeared so Wilbur was left alone.

How long do pigs live? I don't know, but I'm sure that compared to the short miserable life of battery-farmed pigs, Wilbur enjoyed his to the full. The riverbed sure looks empty without him.