

HAPPY HOMES

シュナプス Schnapps



シュナプス（5歳、写真）が動物保護団体からわが家に来て3ヶ月がたつ。飼い犬を2年前に14歳で亡くし、もう犬は飼わないと思っていたが、寂しさを紛らせるため、ご近所の犬を散歩させてもらっているうちに、犬の感触、濡れ濡れの鼻、香ばしい肉球のにおいなどを思い出し、いても立ってもいられなくなった。動物保護団体では何十匹かの犬を見せてもらったが、そのうちの1匹だけを選ぶというのはつらい。どの子もかわいらしく、濡れた鼻を顔に押しつけられたり、なめられたりすると、もう立ち去れなくなってしまう。何匹かを散歩させてもらい、それでも決めかねていると、突然夫が「この犬にする」と言い出した。それがシュナだった。聞けば、スタッフと話をしている間中、シュナがずっと夫の足の上に自分の前足をのせていて、もうこの子からは逃げられないと思ったそうだ。シュナが家族の一員となって、子どもが巣立った後の私たちの静かな生活は一変し、毎日が張りのある賑やかなものになった。車好きの彼は、私が駅まで車で夫の送り迎えをするのに同乗し、夜は車から降りて改札口の前で伏せをして夫を待つ。改札口からどっと出てくる同じようなスーツ姿の男性の中から、夫を見つけたときのうれしそうな顔。そして、その何倍もうれしそうな夫の顔を見ていると、シュナに巡り合えた幸せをつくづく感じる。施設で3年間を過ごし、苦労も我慢も知っているはずなのに、おおらかで人なつっこく、いたずら好きのシュナ。ちなみに、シュナプスというのはヨーロッパの強いお酒の一種で、“一杯やる”というのをmake a schnappsというそうだ。わが家ではシュナの話を肴に、毎晩文字どおりmake a schnappsである。山本紀子さん（週刊朝日2005.2.25発行「犬ばか猫ばかペットばか」より）

It's been three months since we adopted Schnapps, five years old, from an animal shelter (ARK). After our dog died two years ago at the age of 14, we decided never to have another pet. My neighbour let us walk his dog to divert our minds from this sorrow, and it reminded us of the dog we had lost --the feeling of the body, a black wet nose, the scent of the pads on the feet--so vividly that we could not resist our desire to keep a dog again.

After being shown many dogs at the animal shelter, it was difficult to choose “our dog” from among them. Each one looked lovely—we could not leave them when we had a wet nose pushed in our faces or when we were licked by them. The staff allowed us to walk some of them, but we still couldn't make up our minds. Then, all of a sudden, my husband said, “Let's take this one.” And that was Schnapps. Later I was told that the dog had put his paw on my husband's foot all the while he was talking to the staff. It made my husband feel that he could not get away from “this chap.” Since then, our life has completely changed—from the quiet one without our children, who have grown up and left us, to the cheerful, lively life we knew before.

When I drive my husband to and from the station mornings and evenings, Schnapps, who is a car fan, rides with us. Every evening, he lies down at the ticket barrier waiting for my husband to come out. What delight he shows when he recognizes my husband among the crowd of men in similar dark suits rushing out of the gate! And it is my husband who looks even happier to see Schnapps waiting there. I truly feel thankful for the good fortune we had in meeting Schnapps and adopting him. Considering that there must have been some hardships for him to endure during his three-years at the shelter, he is a dog who is incredibly cheerful, friendly, and playful. By the way, “schnapps” is a very strong European liquor, and “to make a schnapps” means “to have a drink.” We enjoy “making schnapps” every night with the topic of Schnapps as an accompaniment.

Noriko Yamamoto

From the column “Inu-Baka, Neko-Baka, Petto-Baka(=Dog-Lovers, Cat-Lovers, Pet-Lovers)” of Shukan Asahi(=the Asahi Weekly)