

The death of a dog

RECENTLY I GOT involved in the emergency care of a very sick (blind, deaf, bald, festering, bloated...), abandoned, run-over neighborhood dog. I'd seen this dog once before and tried desperately to assist it only to discover that city services for animal "rescue" are only available during business hours. By the time the city was equipped to "help," the poor thing had disappeared on me.

Upon finding the dog bleeding in the street, I ran home to call Animal Rescue Kansai (ARK), an organization that is willing to come to the assistance of animals in need, regardless of inconveniences related to travel-time or hour of the day. Unfortunately for the dog, ARK is located in Toyono-gun, a good 2.5 hours from Hirakata, where this drama was unfolding. So in the meantime I returned to the dog with water and food. To my surprise (given the wilful indifference of my neighbors the last time I tried to engage with them), the dog was surrounded by neighborhood

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people chanting "shoganai" and "kawaii so" and "daijobu kana" and the like.

I speak minimal Japanese, being a newcomer here. So, fortunately - or so I thought - someone willing to offer more than empty words emerged from the crowd. A hero! He picked up the dog and invited me to join him at the local vet. An entourage of silent women tagged along for good measure.

To make a long story short, sometime after 1:00 am, I finally walked out of the (second) neighborhood vet's office (the first claiming lack of medical resources to tend to such a severely traumatized animal) in disgust.

Four hours after we had dragged this quivering mass of a dog into a vet's office, nothing had been done for it. For the duration, while we went in circles concerned about the immediate fate of the dog, the dog itself remained in a box on the floor in a puddle of vomit, bleeding and hyperventilating. In the meanwhile, our "hero" and his female entourage came to the conclusion that I

and my friend had a moral and somehow inherent obligation to pay for the dog's care as well as to adopt it. Conversely, he argued that it was immoral of us to want, as we did, to have it euthanized. "After all," repeated our hero again and again, louder and louder, "I am not God!"

When, at about 12:30 am, I discovered that I was the only one to have disclosed contact information to the veterinarian (presumably for billing purposes), our hero justified this by explaining that he and his entourage did not agree with our desire to have the dog collected by a non-Japanese shelter; that the authorities (*hokensho*) would be preferable, because "of course, they are Japanese." Also, our hero asserted that by depositing the dog at a city holding tank, it would eventually be reunited with its so-called "family." He insisted upon this even when we put the veterinarian on the spot and forced him to concede that the City would in all likelihood ("99.9%") simply kill the dog after honoring the mandatory legal, "one-week" wait time.

It also needs saying that the veterinarian sub-

sequently conceded that the dog's blindness and deafness and baldness and festering skin and tremendous abdominal swelling, etc., were due to extreme and chronic neglect. So much for the loving family rescue scenario. In any case my friend and I backed-down and agreed to let them do what they liked with the dog. Still, the doctor wanted contact information and still, we were the only ones willing to deliver. Only when the veterinarian finally made it clear that no medication at all would be provided to the dog at no boarding fee extracted, did our hero and the his silent entourage hand over their telephone numbers.

We got home at 2:00 am. Four hours later I've called me to say that the dog had died. It had died after receiving nothing more than some oxigen. Nine hours of needless agony.

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