はじめに

私たち夫婦は猫を飼うのは退職してからと決めていた。が、まだ二人とも勤めているのに、すでに五年も二匹の猫と暮らしている。今にして思えば、捨てられたであろうオレンジ茶色のトラ猫のひとなっこさに惹かれたのが事の始まりであった。

その猫が妊娠しているとわかると、知らんぷりもできず、我が家に入れて出産させた。三匹生まれたけれど、一匹はわずか二週間で死んだ。母猫も子猫二匹と一緒に室内で飼うつもりであったが、戸外での暮らしが長かったせいか、母猫は室内で飼うのは無理とわかった。いまは閑静な住宅地にある友人の家の広い裏庭とその周辺をテリトリーとして暮らしている、私たちが住むこのあたりは交通量が多くて危険なので。夫は定期的に母猫用のドライキャットフードなどをとどける。

Preface

My husband and I had planned to have cats after we retired. However, although we are still actively employed, we have lived with two cats for five years. Looking back now, it began when we were charmed by an extremely friendly orange-brown tabby cat who perhaps had been abandoned.

When we realized that the cat was pregnant, we were unable to pretend not to know. Therefore, we invited the cat inside our house and took care of her while she gave birth. Three kittens were born, but one died only two weeks after its birth. We planned to keep two kittens with the mother cat as indoor cats. Probably because the mother cat had lived outside for long, we realized that she would never get used to staying inside all day long. We moved this cat to the large backyard of a friend in a quiet residential area, since we live near heavy traffic. My husband brings the bag of dry cat food and others periodically.

猫を室内で飼うことになってから、私たちの生活はすっかり変わった。猫を安心してあずけられるところがなく（一度、ある動物施設にあずけたが、二匹ともそれは嫌がって大変であった）。誰かに、毎日、給餌に来てもらわない限り、夫婦して旅行には出かけられない。週末や休日も含めて、朝は五時に起きて猫に食べさせ、月曜から金曜までは、常夏である此の島の日中の猛暑から猫を守るために、エアコンを適温に調節して家を出る。二人とも常勤なので一日中働く。夕方に帰ると、猫は待ってましたとばかりに私たちに遊びを要求する。

親が子に教えられることがあるように、家族猫（飼い猫というよりも）に教えられることもある。私たち夫婦の口喧嘩に拍車がかかったある日のこと、その言い争いの烈しさに耐えかねたのか、二匹の猫が突然に騒がしく鳴きだした。とりわけ、メス猫は、私のひざまでよじのぼって、「パパ・キャット（夫のこと）と喧嘩するのはやめて!」と言わんばかりに鳴いた。そのあまりの凄まじい鳴きぶりに、私はただただ驚いて黙った。すると夫も黙った。

Having to keep cats inside our home has changed our lives tremendously. There is no good facility for boarding our cats (the one we tried was a nightmare), so unless we hire someone to stop by each day to care for our cats, we (my husband and I together) cannot travel anywhere. Daily, including weekends and holidays, we get up at around 5: 00 a.m. to feed our cats. On weekdays, we leave home for work after adjusting the air conditioning to the appropriate temperature, to ward off the island’s perpetual summer heat. We work all day long. When we get home in the evening, our cats ask us to play with them as if they were waiting for this time.

Just as parents learn from their children, we can learn from our family cats (rather than house cats). One day, the cats took issue with an argument we were having. Perhaps the cats could not stand to hear harsh words. Suddenly, they began to meow loudly. The female cat put her paws on my knee, as if asking me, “Please stop fighting with the Papa Cat (my husband)!” I was so surprised at the intensity of the cat’s reaction that I became silent. Then my husband stopped talking, too.

This was t learned something important from our cats. It is shameful behavior for a husband and wife to argue loudly in front of their children. In the same way, we learned that it is shameful behavior for us to quarrel in front of our cats.

猫に教えられた瞬間であった。子どもの前で喧嘩する夫婦は見苦しい。同様に、家猫の前で喧嘩する夫婦は見苦しいと私たちは実感した。

子どもの頃によく耳にしたテレビのコマーシャルに「赤ちゃんも夢を見るのかしら」というのがあった。このフレーズを私は長らく忘れていた、少なくとも家族となった猫の寝顔をみるまでは。長々と肢体を伸ばして眠る猫の寝相と寝顔は笑いをさそうほどに心あたたまる。猫の昼寝を含めて猫の存在は私たち夫婦の日常の暗がりに明かりをともしてくれる。気持ちよさそうに安心しきって眠る猫の寝姿に日々の疲れが癒される。猫の大事な仕事は寝ること。「ガブちゃん、ピー君、たっぷりと眠りなさい」と、寝ている猫にささやく。ところで、猫も夢を見るのだろうか。

ユキコ　イノウエ　スミス

2017年12月

This was the moment we learned something important from our cats. It is shameful behavior for a husband and wife to argue loudly in front of their children. In the same way, we learned that it is shameful behavior for us to quarrel in front of our cats.

When I was a child, I often heard the phrase “Does a baby have dreams while sleeping?” in a TV commercial. I had forgotten this phrase for many years, until I saw the sleeping face of our family cats. Along with their stretched-out postures, the way cats look when sleeping is heartwarming enough to make me smile. Their presence, including their naptime charm, brings lightness to the sometimes-monotonous lives my husband and I lead. Looking at these cats sleeping comfortably and peacefully, my daily fatigue is somehow healed. The primary task of a cat is to sleep. I whisper to our sleeping cats, “Sleep tight, Goblin and P. J.” I wonder, however, whether cats have dreams during their sleep.

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