

「電池が切れるまで」 or “Till the battery dies”

By Miriam Davis

This was the title of a 10 week drama series by Asahi Television in the spring of 2004 which had me glued to the screen week by week with a tissue at hand to wipe away the tears. The drama is built around the true stories of children battling with serious illnesses in a children's hospital in Nagano prefecture. Key figures are the teachers who help them to keep up with their studies in the hospital classroom and the doctors and nurses who care for them medically. Running through the story is a poem written by Miyakoshi Yukina (宮越由貴奈) just 4 months before her death at the age of 11. It is published in the book 「電池が切れるまで 一子ども病院(びょういん)からのメッセージ」すずらん会 編 (へん) 角川書店 (かどかわしよてん) ¥1,200.

いのち 命

命はとても大切だ
人間が生きるための電池みたいだ
でも電池はいつか切れる
命もいつかなくなる
電池はすぐにとりかえられるけど
命はそう簡単にはとりかえられない
何年も何年も
月日がたってやっと
神様から与えられるものだ

命がないと人間は生きられない
でも
「命なんかいらない」
と言って
命をむだにする人もいる
まだたくさんの命が使えるのに
そんな人を見ると悲しくなる
命は休むことなく働いているのに
だから、私は命が疲れたというまで
せいいっぱい生きよう

Through the book and drama Yukina's courage is said to have touched the hearts of many people and given them the will to live. However, as I watched the drama and heard the poem quoted frequently, I found myself wanting to cry out "But this life is not all there is! It does not just end like a battery going dead!" In the last scene of the drama, a young girl called Kaoru lies dying. The doctors have done all they can. Kaoru herself feels the end is near and whispers to her teacher 「もう・・・だめかも・・・ごめんね。」 Hearing this, Kaoru's mother cries out in despair 「薫！ あきらめないで！ お願い！ 頑張っ！ 生きててくれればそれでいいの！」

Perhaps you may be able, as I have done, to use this drama and the poem 'inochi' to illustrate the contrast between non Christian and Christian attitudes to death, to show that death is NOT a case of the battery of life fading out without the possibility of replacement, but rather the gateway to a glorious future and fullness of life that no human mind can ever comprehend.

More information about the drama and related topics in Japanese with pictures can be found at http://www.tv-asahi.co.jp/denchi/index_top.html For those interested in easy reading material in Japanese, the book of poems is written with elementary school children in mind and all but the simplest kanji have furigana on them.