

Audio file

[2024-11-12 KST Kafka 11 A Cross Breed v1.mp3](#)

Transcript

A crossbreed. I have a singular animal, half kitten, half lamb. It is an heirloom from my father's possessions, but it has developed only in my time; previously it was much more lamb than kitten, but now it may well have an equal amount of both: from the cat its head and claws, from the lamb its size and shape, from both its glinting and mild eyes, its fur, which is soft and lies flat, and its hopping and crawling movements; on the sunny windowsill it curls into a ball and purrs; in the meadow it runs around like mad and is almost impossible to catch; it flees from cats, wants to attack lambs, on a moonlit night, its favourite path is along the roof-gutter; it cannot meow and abhors rats; it can lie in wait next to the chicken coop for hours, yet it has never taken advantage of an opportunity for murder; I nourish it with fresh milk, which agrees with it best; in long draughts it sucks in the milk over its predator's teeth. This is naturally a great spectacle for children. Sunday morning is visiting time; I have the little animal on my lap and the children from the entire neighbourhood stand around me. They ask the oddest questions which nobody can answer. I don't even try, but content myself with showing what I have without offering any further explanation. Sometimes the children bring along cats; once they even brought two lambs but, contrary to their expectations, there were no scenes of recognition; the animals gazed calmly at each other with their animal eyes, and evidently took each other's existence as a divine fact.

On my lap, the animal knows no fear and has no desire for the chase. He feels most comfortable nestled up to me. It clings to the family that raised it. This is surely not some exceptional loyalty, but rather the right instinct of an animal that has indeed countless step-relatives on earth, but perhaps not a single close blood relative and thus considered sacred the shelter it is found with us. Sometimes I have to laugh when it sniffs about me, winds itself between my legs and cannot be parted from me. Being both lamb and cat isn't enough, it almost even wants to be a dog. I seriously think something of the sort. It has both kinds of restlessness within, that of the cat and that of the lamb, however different they are. This is why it feels that its skin is too tight. For this animal, the butcher's knife might be a deliverance, but since it's an heirloom, this is something I must deny it.

A little boy had a cat, his only heirloom from his father, and thanks to it he became lord mayor of London. What shall I become through my animal, my heirloom? Where is the great sprawling city?

