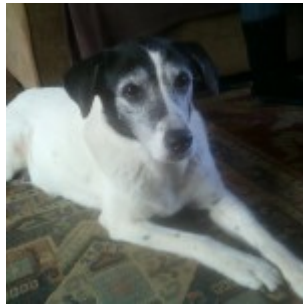


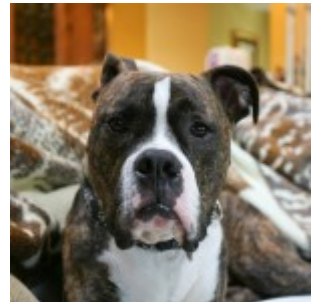
# Animal communication or fanciful thinking? Good question!



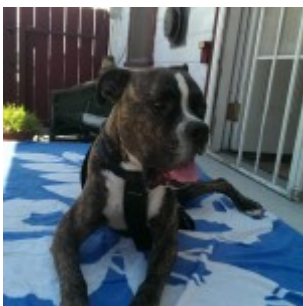
Mia (13 years old) and Nina



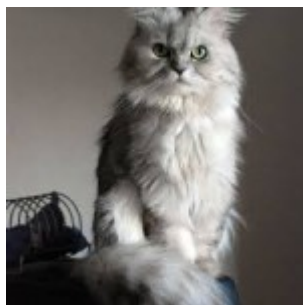
Senior Mia: composure itself!



Taz



Taz-Droopy right side of face



Likeness of Eli

**On trusting the information I receive.**

“How do you know the information you are receiving is from the animal and not from your own mind?” is a question that pops up at every workshop I’ve taught. Inevitably, I have times when doubt creeps into my mind as I’m conveying the information I receive telepathically from an animal client, but I make a point to remember important confirmations I’ve received in the

past and refrain from second guessing.

Early on I devised a way to obtain some form of confirmation. Of course, I would have some feedback at the time of the consult, but for the remainder I implemented a follow-up call a month or so later. It is then that I find out what kind of changes and improvements have occurred since our consult and if they support the communication material or not. To this day, this process of confirmation continues to move me forward and keep me from getting flustered when the animal's person challenges the information I've translated as impossible or incorrect. Typically, I calmly remain confident about the information I've received from my animal client unless proven otherwise. I go on to suggest that the person wait and see what comes of it before ruling it out as improbable.

Here are three examples that illustrate the importance of trusting information received non-verbally from the animals:

### **Believing Mia: I didn't do it!**

Mia was a lovely female black and white English Pointer who was seven years old at the time of her first consult with me. We would have several more in the years to come. I appreciated her intelligence and well-behaved demeanor.

Mia's predicament was heart wrenching and her case study remains one of the most significant I have about understanding the information correctly. In such instances, a dog's future can depend on it. She lived with her person, Nina, and her daughter, Cambria, on a rented property, where they shared a common yard area with the main house. The landlord's dog, his girlfriend's dog and Mia used the yard. The girlfriend's dog, a small white fluffy terrier type had been found disemboweled at the bottom of the stairs of the main house and had to be euthanized. It was a gory scene.

Mia never really enjoyed the company of other dogs. Nina thought it was a lack of proper socialization. I saw her as a

very sensitive and refined dog who preferred to be on her own or with her people. There had been two incidents where she had been in a scuffle with landlord's female dog, with the landlord viewing Mia as the aggressor. Mia stayed inside when Nina was at work and Nina kept a watchful eye on her when she was outside. Nevertheless, because of those two previous incidents, the landlord squarely laid blame on Mia for the little dog's dreadful death. He believed Mia had attacked and savaged him. This wasn't really logical because Mia would have had to get out of the house. In addition, the severe gut wound was more suited to a wild animal's behavior than that of a domesticated dog. But emotions were running very high and Nina didn't know how to respond. She felt at a disadvantage, emotionally and financially. The level of the landlord's anger and accusations were such that even she started to consider the possibility Mia had found a way out and injured the little dog; though this was a totally irrational conclusion. At her wits end, she brought Mia for a consult so we could investigate what had really taken place and set things straight.

This is what Mia communicated:

BN: You are such a lovely dog. I am so happy to have you here with your people. We all love and adore you. I can tell what a sophisticated girl you are!

Mia: *I am so devastated, so, so, to be the subject of so much doubt and anger. People are mad at me. People are upset. People are everything to me. I feel so, so, so humiliated. I have lost all, all, all my status. All.*

BN: Mia you are here so we can re-establish your status. Will you help me do this for you?

Mia: *How can I, everyone says I am responsible when I am NOT. I am NOT.*

BN: Do you know what happened to that little dog?

Mia: *I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED I WAS SLEEPING , I WAS NOT THERE. I WAS NOT THERE WHEN IT HAPPENED, I WAS NOT.*

BN: I see, and I believe you. We'll figure this out with your person.

BN: What have you come in to do?

Mia: *To be a totally devoted and true companion to my people. Not a trouble maker, not, not, not. How could people think so little of me?*

BN: What are you here to teach?

Mia: *"Devoted", "totally devoted" (dog).*

Mia: *Humiliated; humiliated.*

BN: Mia what happens with the female dog that belongs to the landlord?

Mia: *Bosses me around. Wants to be the boss of me.*

Mia was inside and she was sleeping when the drama took place. That is what she always did while her person was at work. This consult turned out to be helpful because it brought clarity and balance to a situation that was spinning out of control. Her skirmishes with the other female dog weren't aggression, she was simply not allowing the other dog to push her around. Keeping them separated was the best solution. Nina felt so guilty that she had doubted Mia's behavior. I explained that everything is a learning curve. She resolved that she would apologize to Mia and unequivocally stand up for her. Nina left the office with new confidence and resolve to stand her ground and deny any responsibility in the little dog's death. She also made up her mind to move as soon as financially possible. I hoped the situation would eventually resolve itself in Mia's favor. Mia's innocence appeared obvious, but I didn't know how or when the confirmation would come.

Nina did move away to a new place. Finally, the former landlord and his girl friend started to take notice of the daily presence of hawks circling, even swooping down very close above their yard and house. They came to realize that the little dog had most likely been attacked by a hawk or another local predator. Had their emotions not run so high and hot they might have recognized earlier that her injuries were more in line with such an occurrence. They could only blame themselves for leaving the little white dog alone, unsupervised in the yard. Mia was absolved of all blame and her status completely restored. Mia's truth, which was communicated in the consult, empowered Nina to stand up for herself and refuse to accept the false blame cast upon her and her dog by an over reactive male figure

### **Believing Taz: Ice cream please!**

Just a short while ago one of my male dog clients, Taz, asked for something totally impossible according to his person Chrissy. She absolutely adores her dog and has seen him through two ACL surgeries, full on rehab and two bouts of what the veterinarian identified as a form of Bell's palsy on his left side. He gets the best of everything, always. During our last consult I checked in with Taz because he had again lost mobility, his face drooped, and one eyelid wouldn't close. The vet confirmed it was also Bell's Palsy, this time affecting the right side of his body. In most cases, the body recovers slowly but surely over a period of six months. Chrissy knew what to do and what to expect this time around and that was helpful, but it still felt like such a letdown to them both. Taz needed comforting and moral support.

Here is some of Taz's communication:

Hello Taz,

BN: Chrissy has explained you have a droopy side again.

Taz: *I'm so so sad. I'm so depressed. Why? Why? Why?*

BN: Things like that happen. Chrissy is on top of it. She is staying with you today and tomorrow all day. She wants you to get well again. That will happen, don't you worry.

Taz: *I'm so so S A A D.*

I explained about eye drops and why Chrissy had to give them to him for his dry, unblinking eye etc...then we went on to the following:

Taz: *I want my routine, I want my music, Chrissy forgets the music.* (He's asked for soft music to be left on in the past. Wants his world to be "normal", like before again.)

Then I asked "What else can Chrissy do to cheer you up?

Taz: *Ice Cream?* He asked.

BN: Okay, she is going to give you ice cream. (He wants to be coddled and be "baby" Rascal right now...)

Are you in pain?

Taz: No.

When Taz asked for ice cream I thought nothing of it. A little ice cream doesn't do much harm and obviously it would mean a lot to him. However, his request threw Chrissy off completely. She is lactose intolerant, there is no dairy in her house and she has NEVER, EVER, given him ice cream. Chrissy was totally puzzled. How did he even know about ice cream? She immediately went to work sleuthing out the ice cream mystery, all the while devising a way to make luscious, organic fruit based sorbet for Taz. She did admit to being so pre-occupied by his care and condition that she forgot his music, which she would be sure to remember from now on.

A week or so later she called me with the answer to the ice cream mystery. She had talked to Taz's pet sitter, at whose home he had stayed some time ago when Chrissy was out of town.

The pet sitter hadn't fed him ice cream either, but at the end of the conversation she suddenly connected the dots. Her husband, who loved ice cream, had shared some of his with Taz on several occasions! Taz knew what he was talking about and I had relayed it correctly. Ta, da! There was our confirmation. Chrissy was so pleased and I was too. Taz didn't seem to mind that his evening icy treat was dairy free and healthy. Everyone was happy.

### **Believing Eli: I want my collar!**

This incident happened many years ago and involved a cat named Eli. Eli was a beautiful silver-haired Persian, five years old and neutered. Eli's original person couldn't keep him and had relocated him to her mother's home. Her parents were busy professionals who didn't have much time for pets. Nevertheless, her father, who perceived Eli as distant and independent, decided he wanted a more affectionate cat around the house. They got a two year-old female cat named Zoe.

Soon Eli started spraying in the house. It got worse, he was put outside. The mother had not really wanted a second cat and when Eli started to act out and got relegated outside she felt she needed to find a way to help him out of his predicament. A friend suggested she try a consult with me.

It was very difficult for Eli to be outside, because, as he communicated, *"I'm not a fighter. It is difficult for me to maintain my territory. I get into fights and skirmishes all the time. I am not a fighter by nature. I just fight to maintain the boundaries around my house. I wish to be let inside again...I spray because I'm unhappy and so misunderstood"*. I inquired: "Do you want to be the only cat?" He replied: *"No, but I do need my position and rank. I was here first, I'm number one."*

I explained to his person how to properly treat each cat according to their place in the natural hierarchy so they

could get along better. Eli was “first arrived” and “senior” in age. No matter how cute, affectionate and cuddly the young female made herself, she needed to be number two and “junior”. The people had given more attention and importance to the new cat and, therefore, led her to believe she was in the number one position. She was quite the affectionate charmer, which made it much easier for her to get attention so that the human attention scale was quickly and completely leaning in her favor. Eli could only respond by marking. That made matters worse, as it usually does. Relegating Eli to the outdoors strengthened the new cat’s importance in her eyes and further diminished Eli’s. When I asked Eli what he wanted his people to do to get him out of his difficult situation this is what he communicated:

*Eli: First of all I want to be cuddled. I want to be bathed and shampooed and made completely beautiful. I want to go to a good (he means professional) groomer for this. I want to enter the house with a bow on my collar. I have a collar with a tag with my name on it. I want my new address on the tag and my name. Not that old address. I am of Persian extraction; I want to be treated like a Persian. I am truly a beautiful cat, they do not see my beauty, and they do not see my breeding. I am not a shorthaired country bumpkin.... I have come to be a cat on the satin pillow. To be someone’s treasure and love; to be treated like royalty that I am. I am cat royalty.*

Eli summed up what a Persian needs to be happy. They gift us with their beauty and presence in exchange for a lot of attention and care. They really don’t feel they need to “do” anything in particular. As Billy Cristal would say they are just “faabuloos!”.

All went well during the consult until Eli brought up having a collar. He wasn’t wearing one and I was told had never had, a point about which his person was adamant. I simply asked her to go home and work on the cat/people dynamics and follow the suggestions I had provided based on Eli’s communication. We’d



find out soon enough how valid the session would turn out to be.

I sensed that the communication experience, and especially the doubt cast by Eli's collar request, had unsettled this rather left-brained person. At this point, all I could do was cross my fingers and wait.

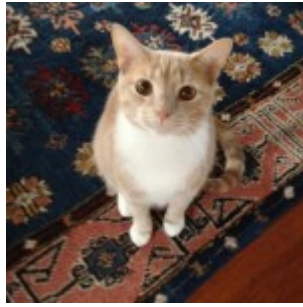
When I called back a month later to get an update, the situation had improved. The people and the cats were doing much better. Eli got professionally groomed; he wore a new collar with a tag which included his name and present address. He also received the kind of attention he needed and was recently let inside again without incidents. But, most revealing, was how Eli's information about the collar had been confirmed and validated. One day, while rooting around in a desk drawer for new checks, the woman had come across an old pink cat collar with Eli's name and her daughter's address on the tag. It had been taken off shortly after he arrived a few years ago and forgotten by all except Eli. I breathed a sigh of relief and smiled. It was exactly the kind of confirmation one would want for the lady and for myself. And that is how I find out and know with certainty that I'm not imagining things!

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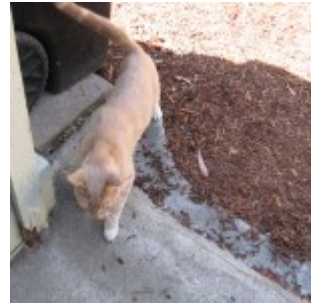
## **My cat Simon and Klaudia Birkner**



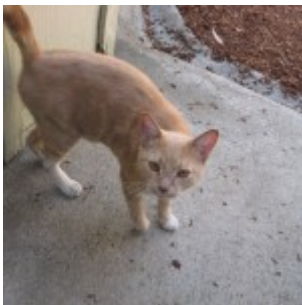
Klaudia Birkner  
and Morgan



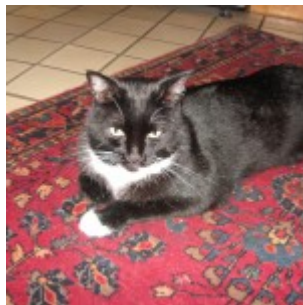
Angel Simon



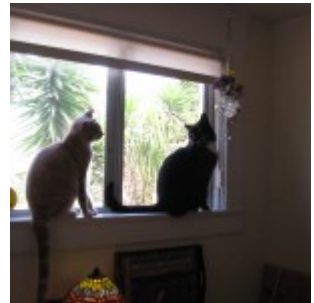
8/10/13 Trying his  
luck at the back  
door.



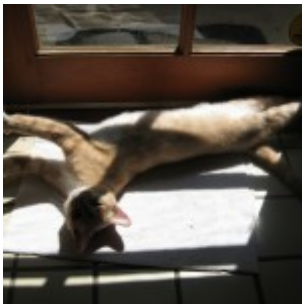
8/10/13 So  
looking for a  
home.



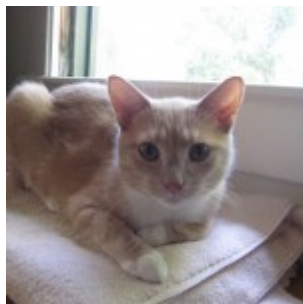
Clara Belle: Not  
too sure about  
the changes



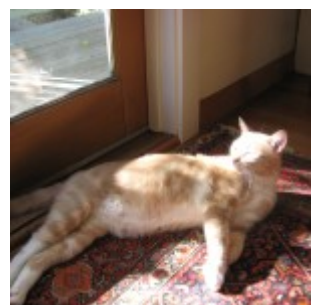
Sorting out the  
window space



My first month.



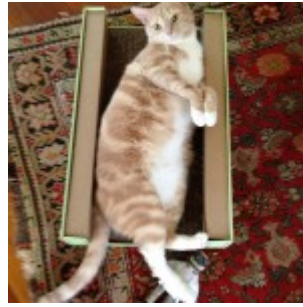
Seashell pink  
ears



Good to be home



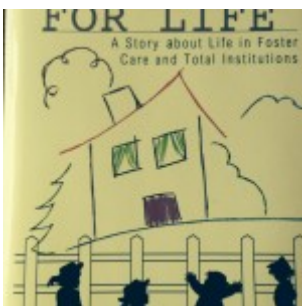
Lightness and joy



Simon Sept. 2014~  
I'm two years old  
now.



Klaudia when her  
book came out in  
1998



**Simon, the cat, and a tribute to Klaudia Birkner, peaceful warrior and light-worker (October 29, 1972-August 9, 2013).**

"And when are you going to write about Simon?", inquired a reader of my last blog about Clara Belle. "There isn't much to write about", I replied. "He is pure sweetness and love. Problem free, playful, easy going, but not a push over, smells like butterscotch and manages to cohabit with Clara Belle." Only issue: everyday ~ the moment the sun peaks over the horizon ~ he wants me to get up. Because he is so determined and creative about how he achieves his goal, I forgive him at 5:45 AM. However, at 9 AM, when he is in a deep sleep after breakfast and having so much fun, I do admit to sometimes feeling a bit resentful. But not for long...

As I think about Simon, it is obvious there actually is much more to tell. His angelic qualities set him apart. He does have his devilish side, but of course it is supremely

endearing and cute. I have never encountered a more guileless being, other than perhaps Klaudia Birkner, also known under her pen name as Julia K. Anderson.

August 10 of last year, a Saturday, I was taking a bit of time to sit in my yard when a young cat walked out of the bushes behind my chair. He sought out my company, and I petted him. "New people must have moved in the neighborhood and let their little guy out", I thought to myself.

Sunday morning he was back and dashed up to the house, showing great interest in me and my home. I fed him, but he gave me priority over the food. I put a small dose of flea treatment on his neck area. Clara Belle didn't react negatively when he tried to jump on to my narrow kitchen window sill. I pushed a tall city trash can up to the window so he could jump up and lie on it to peer inside. Still no growling or carrying-on from Clara Belle. He stayed around the house all day, leaving periodically for a nap somewhere and then returning to the window and doors. I had the two cats meet nose to nose, separated by the screen door opening to the porch, and set up a bed for him there too. He soon discovered the squirrels in the pepper tree opposite the porch and started to run up the trunk and branches to chase them. The squirrels sure gave me a piece of their mind about that! He was so keen on human companionship, that calling out was enough to get him to come to me. At that point I told him he was welcome in my home, but only if he could sort it out with Clara Belle. If she accepted him, he was "in". Things were going very smoothly as they interacted and smelled each other on their respective sides of the screen door, so I let him in. Clara Belle had a strong reaction that indicated it was still a bit too soon, so I put him back out for the night.

The next morning, Monday, I opened up the house and looked for the little butterscotch guy. He wasn't there. I started to be concerned and so was Clara Belle. She looked for him through the door and out the kitchen window. She meowed. It seemed

that in forty-eight hours he actually had won her testy self over! He finally showed up mid-morning, rather dusty, with a small wound on one ear from an encounter with another cat. That was it, my mind was made up. I opened the screen door, he walked in all happy and tail up, and has been here ever since. He arrived neutered, at about nine or ten months of age and is the very definition of clean. It is obvious he was raised with a lot of love and kindness.

Simon's energy, then and now, sparkles. When he stands in the light, the flesh inside his ears is seashell pink; and his cream and light ginger colors blend with my home interior. Oh my! I felt this cat had dropped down straight from heaven. He was exactly the sort of cat Klaudia Birkner would have drawn to her, not me. For good reason, I get the problem cases or, at best, the difficult ones!

Two weeks prior to Simon's arrival, Klaudia asked me to come up to San Marcos to have a consult with her cat, Odelia. Usually, we worked on the phone, but I sensed this time was different. A serious, and poorly known spinal cord syndrome caused her to be bedridden for weeks at a time ~ her body as weak as a rag doll. I hadn't heard from her for a while and this latest a phone message came through a friend of hers, not Klaudia herself. Clearly, I needed to make the trip to see her and Odelia.

We met on Saturday afternoon, July 27. I located her apartment in a large, pleasantly landscaped complex in San Marcos. The front door had Klaudia hallmarks: a crafted welcome sign, planters, and a cheerful wreath ~ but the energy wasn't happy. Someone was already visiting with her and I was asked, by her friend, to wait in the darkened living room. That visitor, who appeared tearful and moved, was invited to pick a potted plant as a memento from the patio area on her way out.

Klaudia wanted to freshen up before seeing me, so I waited a bit more ~ taking in her small apartment. I had often

visualized it in my mind's eye. It was cozy, cheerful, and had been decorated with care. The wall behind the couch had a lovely stenciled saying. It faced a large flat screen television. On the wall behind the dining room table was a poster-sized photograph of a downhill skier, knees bent, poles balanced, chest and helmeted head facing the slope as she raced past a gate. The skier was Klaudia. At the time, she was legally blind and followed voice commands. Still, she placed at the top, race after race, at 60 miles an hour. Her email address, 5150skiracer@, suddenly made sense ~ it was the racer number she wore in the photograph. Klaudia had told me about her ski racing days, and how she found sponsors. I had not quite registered the reality of her abilities because of how frail and weak she had appeared since I'd known her. There were so many amazing things about Klaudia's life I still had to discover.

By the time she first came to see me in 2006, her vision was restored enough that she was able to write handwritten notes in a clear print, and she had been able to climb the twenty-five steps to my office door. Nothing indicated to me she had impaired vision. I found her to be a most delightful person. Sensitive, intelligent and heartbased; Klaudia loved animals, hers and those of her friends. She cared deeply about people and, over the years, drew to her the most supportive and helpful kind of friends. This woman was beautiful inside and out.

We had multiple consults; first about Bun Bun her first rabbit, who's company kept her going in some of her darkest hours; then Morgan and Moby, also rabbits. Morgan was a very athletic rabbit who didn't really get along with cuddly Moby, so he went to live with someone who adored him and who gave him the run of his house. Klaudia adopted and then nursed an elderly orange cat, Morris, and she became auntie to a terrier dog, Bella, who lived with her mom in Julian. Finally, she had adorable Odelia, a round-eyed tabby girl brought to her by her

sister. Each of these animals had needed Klaudia's intervention at one point or another in their lives. I also worked with her sister's two Dobermans in North San Diego County. From what I could tell, she had a pretty normal family.

Therefore, when Klaudia mentioned in passing she had written a book about foster children and her experience through the foster child system here in California, it just didn't register. During that time she had juvenile diabetes and she told me she had lost her eyesight at seventeen, but that did not register. (The loss of eyesight was not related to diabetes.) She spoke calmly, without resentment or anger, about her difficulties. They contrasted so much with the individual in front of me, that my mind balked at making the connection.

At that first encounter in my office in 2006, she wanted me to know that a consult with the late psychic, Sylvia Browne, had saved her life when she was lying near death in a hospice a some years prior. The doctors didn't know what was wrong with her. She was fading right in front of their eyes and they could do nothing. I don't know who made the call to Sylvia Browne, but the world renowned psychic found the situation so grave she agreed to make time for her and perform a once-in-a-lifetime reading immediately. Apparently, Sylvia narrowed the problem down to the brain stem and gave enough precise information for the doctors to go on. It saved Klaudia's life. One of her nine lives. I think it was then, that they uncovered a rare, life threatening spinal cord disorder that, among other things, seriously affects eyesight.

Through her animals and our consults over the years, I was privy to a lot of the difficulties Klaudia had in maintaining her health. She was in and out of hospitals regularly. Just as regularly she got overmedicated and had side effects that kept her there longer than necessary. We commiserated because, I too, being very sensitive, have to stand my ground when it

comes to medicine and doses, even in the alternative medicine world. With me, Klaudia found a kindred spirit who validated that being so sensitive was a quality, not a detriment. I also confirmed her extra-sensorial abilities. For example, she would take photographs and some would show auras around the individuals. I have one she took where each person in a procession, making their way down the center isle of a Catholic church, has a whitish mist surrounding their shoulders, head and space above the head. The mist formation goes upwards. The priest, holding a tall crucifix, and closing the procession, has a misty, but more structured and braided cord emerging from the top of his head, also in an upwards direction. I surmised he was reciting a rosary type prayer, with pauses between repetitions. All this I was more than happy to validate for her. Klaudia felt very blessed and pure to me, not unlike my boy, Simon.

Klaudia was now ready for my visit, so my mind wandering ceased and I entered her room. She had propped herself up on her pillows, and applied a tad bit of make-up. Her bed, a real hospital bed, took up a good portion of the room. There was an IV hook up, but it wasn't being used at the time. Around her, at arm's length, were all the things she needed. I saw the empty rows of cubbies along the wall by the bed, where Odelia had kept her awake playing with anything she stored in them. As a last resort, Klaudia had taken everything out and stopped using them. Dark curtains kept the harsh, summer sun from entering the room. Odelia, who I had communicated with often, hid behind stacks of books and underneath the bed. We knew each other's energy, but not in physical form. I tried to make myself as unthreatening as possible because she had a shy temperament. She would come out and then dash back behind something, although she eventually jumped up on Klaudia's bed as we started to talk and laugh.

And laugh we did that afternoon. We laughed at the idea that an afterlife might come as a big surprise to some when they,



too, crossed over. I could see Klaudia was dying and, to her immense relief and delight, she talked about it openly with me. Her strength temporarily increased and she was able to see me for more than an hour. For many years she had been taking great amounts of pharmaceuticals to combat the nausea that plagued her daily. It was a horrific, debilitating nausea, most likely linked to the spinal cord issue. The doses of medicine had been increased to maximum levels. Her neurologist, a top practitioner in the area, had prescribed the latest anti-nausea drugs given to cancer patients, but nothing was working anymore and Klaudia was at her wit's end. Literally. The nausea was linked to the circadian rhythm, which meant it kicked in as soon as the sun went down. She spent night after night, all alone in her apartment with Odelia, wracked with nausea of such tremendous intensity it left her completely drained when dawn broke and the sun rose in the sky. She dreaded sunset as a prisoner dreads entering a torture chamber—and she did so night after night.

This woman, who faced so much adversity from a tender age with great courage, had reached the end of her ability to cope. We talked about it and she shared her concerns. I listened with the ear of my heart, in the same manner I listen to the animals and their people. Without judgment, with great empathy and compassion. She wanted to be admitted into hospice. I told her she just looked too good for her doctor to believe she was dying. When I suggested she use her make-up to look much worse before he came we totally burst out laughing. At that moment, energized and enjoying our conversation, she did look good. Inside, her physical body was in ruins and her will to live was greatly diminished. Guided by her heart and soul, she had no fear of death. The process by which this was to take place was another matter. That final decision is not left to the terminal patient and it was the last challenge she would face in this life, to get her way and be admitted into hospice.

Odelia's well-being and security after she passed was

Klaudia's greatest concern. The close friend who had called me, and was in the apartment, was going to take Odelia back to Nevada with her. Odelia took to this woman and I assured Klaudia that Odelia would have no difficulties in being rehomed. This good friend would also be taking care of practicalities for Klaudia for the next week or so.

Klaudia and I hugged and kissed and said good-bye. A final good-bye. We knew we would not see each other again in this life and we were perfectly fine with it. She wanted so much to be gone within seven days. She asked me if this could and would be so. I truly didn't know, but I said "yes", because I knew my answer would bring her comfort and moral support at a time when she most needed it.

As the days came and went, I received no news about Klaudia. I tried to send out psychic feelers and I sensed she was slipping away but it was difficult to discern if she was still with us. I looked for an obituary on-line, there was none. Then one day in late September, I received a call from her sister, informing me that Klaudia had passed away August 9 (the day before Simon showed up here). Her sister was devastated by her loss and concerned about Morgan, the remaining rabbit, who appeared to be needing frequent vet visits for his teeth. I explained misaligned teeth was a problem he had had for some time and that his caretaker was probably doing the right thing and taking him to the vet as he required.

I don't know how Klaudia did it, but I feel she had something to do with Simon showing up when he did. She would also have selected his temperament. I accept the gift with gratitude and wholeheartedly desire to acknowledge her as the sender from the Otherside.

When I decided to write about Klaudia, I realized how spotty my memory was about the details of her life. I Googled her name and immediately located the information I needed, in the

form of a memorial written in an e-publication. Of course, I wanted to read her book. An immaculate, used copy reached me two days later, sent by an Amazon seller in Chula Vista! Chula Vista is also the place she landed, at seven, with her mother and sister when they immigrated to freedom from behind the Iron Curtain.

This small person packed an enormous amount of experience and learning into a short forty-one years. She speaks simply, and straight from the heart, as she recounts how she ended up in foster care. The world is a big, lonely and harsh place for a young ward of the State. She was not believed when she told the authorities about what was going on in her home and they wanted to send her back. Her straight A record at school was held against her because most abused children do poorly in school, so they thought she must have been fabricating the story about her home life. The fact that she spoke the truth and was not believed was a recurring theme in her young life.

Early on she discovered how many foster homes take the money the State gives them, but do not spend it on the children in their care. Klaudia, a child who saw much, felt the wrongs intensely, talked back, then refused to talk, got labeled as difficult, attempted suicide—was labeled mentally unstable. Klaudia's circumstances resulted in her being transferred to a psychiatric establishment for adolescents.

Juvenile diabetes added yet another layer of complications. Foster homes made sure she had insulin shots, did not understand, or dare I say, care about the importance of a modified diet. She was a problem in a system whose depersonalized approach created the very issues she suffered from. She was lonely, vulnerable, sensitive, unloved, and unseen (unless in a negative light), in short, a case number. The people meant to help Klaudia were distant and professional, when she was yearning for warmth and recognition. She loved art, but supplies were scarce to unavailable. Her book is written to enlighten professionals

and the public about the foster care system, and hopefully inspire changes.

Klaudia was a smart and gifted child with amazing spirit. In spite of everything, she used any opportunity that came her way to improve herself and move forward in life. A program for handicapped children in Los Angeles introduced her to sports, skiing and then racing. Despite her physical issues and poor eyesight, she proved to be very good. It was her turning point. She was given the opportunity to finally reach her full potential and make a name and stellar reputation for herself. She finished high school, went to college in San Marcos, and became a public speaker and member of the National Speakers Association. In that capacity she encouraged others with disabilities and addressed the issues of the foster care system in the most constructive manner. Klaudia received numerous awards in recognition of her contribution, among them: The United to Serve America Diamond Award and the Lifescan Award for Athletic Achievement.

Now, Klaudia, peaceful warrior and light-worker, is shining bright on the Otherside. May she be filled with timeless love, laughter and peace. I look at Simon and more often than not, think of her and her gentle, but ever so strong spirit. She lives on in my heart and in my cat.

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For a first hand, sincere account of the trials and tribulations of going through the California foster child system:

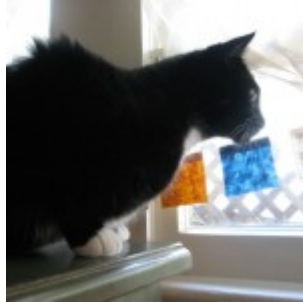
*Labeled for Life: A Story About Life in Foster Care and Total Institutions*, by Julia K. Anderson (her pen name).

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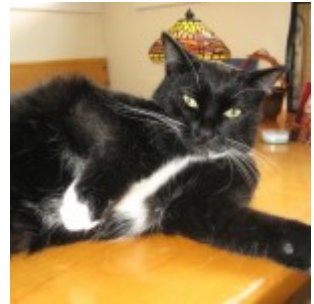
# Where are my glasses? Is this a raccoon in my kitchen!?



Just arrived.



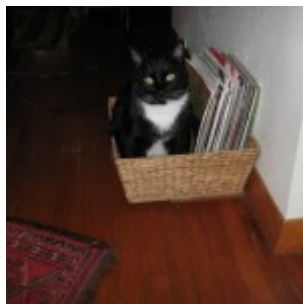
Constant watch



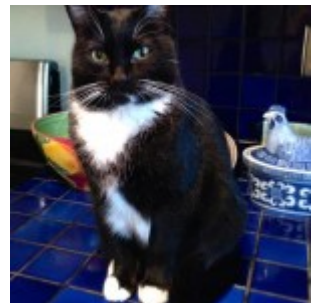
Testy cat



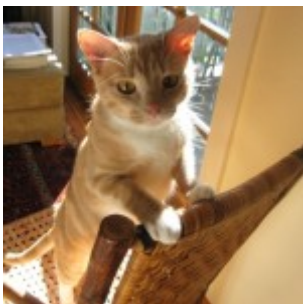
Wild girl



Look, I can do this!



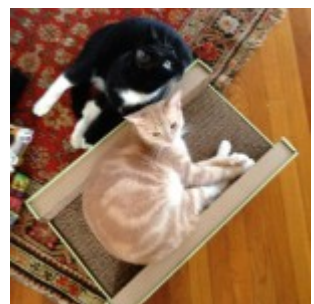
3/2014 Beautiful and content.



Adorable Simon



6/2014 Barricade

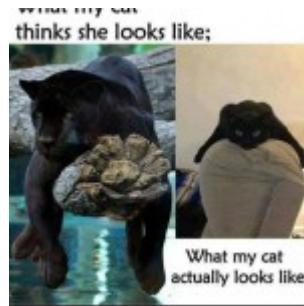


8/2014 Friends

again



Harmony



Yep, that about  
sums it up.

In an instant I was jolted, no, catapulted into another reality. Thirty minutes earlier I had pulled down the shades and blinds, and set the alarm system. I was in the bathroom getting ready for bed when a familiar dry cat food crunching and tinkling noise came from the kitchen. It reminded me I needed to feed Simon and Clara Belle wet food one last time to keep them content until 6 AM. I stepped out of the bathroom to see who was eating. Instead of a fuzzy black mass or an orange one, there was a huge tabby at the food station. My mind did a double take. Before I got my tuxedo girl and a butterscotch boy I had several tabbies. I ran for my glasses, completely bewildered as to how this stranger had made it inside. In a flash it all came together. It wasn't a tabby cat at all – it was a raccoon, in a more intense version of the Lens Crafter commercial. (A middle-aged woman in her nightgown tells her cat to “come with momma” as they both walk into her house from her patio. It is of course not her cat, but a raccoon. Punch line: “Need glasses?”) I yelled “out” in a commanding tone – it turned around – looked at me – evaluated the situation – then headed for the kitchen door which was ajar by 10 inches.

Both of my cats were; out somewhere in the evening darkness. I knew I could not show any signs of distress or anxiety to get them back inside, since such intense emotions would have added

to their sense of prevailing danger and kept them away. I got a grip on my nerves and my emotions and centered myself.

Never has a Petz headlamp felt so handy. I put mine on and started to circle my house, calling my cats in a calm, reassuring voice. At this point, all I wanted was to find out where they were on the property. I couldn't keep the kitchen door open for them to run back in because the raccoon hadn't retreated very far. It could and would seize another opportunity to go back for more food. Right about then, the nine o'clock fireworks at SeaWorld started to go off and added another layer of difficulty to getting the cats back. This was one crazy evening. Eventually, the fireworks stopped and Simon popped out of the darkness with a meow and ran to my legs. I picked him up. As I got close to the kitchen he wriggled and struggled, all amped up by the excitement of that location. I got him inside. Then it was Clara Belle's turn. I located her by noticing movements in some bushes, and then she let me see her. She looked exhilarated and scared all at once as she headed in the general direction of the closed kitchen door. I quietly caught up with her, then leaned down and got a hold of her. She growled, screamed, turned around, bit me, and ran off. (Now, to top it off, I had blood on my brand new summer p.j.'s.) At this point I sensed the raccoon was far enough away to leave the kitchen door wide open, since Simon was safely locked in the bathroom. My plan was to herd Clara Belle back inside. Suddenly, on her own, she made a wild dash towards the light and the door opening, like that's what she wanted all along. Whew! The cat round up took a total of only 10 minutes but felt like much longer. I made sure the kitchen door was securely locked and dead bolted and called it a day.

What a wild wake-up call! The raccoon, according to Ted Andrews in *Animal-Speak*, represents dexterity, disguise and transformation. It is a powerful animal totem. What did this event mean for us? The dexterous paws opened the door, and then what? Aside from pointing out that I was operating under

a false sense of security that evening, I was stumped. Little did I know then how this troubling incident would turn into a blessing in disguise, and an opportunity for transformation for Clara Belle.

Things started to shift next morning. Clara Belle appeared uneasy and kept looking towards the back door. She found that area unsafe. If she saw a cat from any window in the house, or through the glass panes of the French door where the raccoon had entered, she would become enraged and attack the glass. If Simon happened to be near and vocalized at the wandering cat, she would shift her aggression to him. I intervened. Good thing he has a mild temperament and didn't engage. Over the next week her unease and tension increased instead of calming down. She kept looking out, fixated on "what is out there?", reliving her fear over and over in a loop. I explained and demonstrated how the door was locked and no one could come in, but she ignored me. Why shouldn't she? The unthinkable had happened. When she came to me, she had serious personal space issues, and the events of that evening had violated her hard-earned confidence in the safety of her home. From her vantage point, it could happen again at any time. When I pulled down the back door shade to block the view, she would peek from either side or slip behind it and get all worked up. Finally, I pulled down the shade and used heavy objects to make a barrier in front of the door, so neither of them could slip behind the shade. And so it stayed for a week or more. She appeared to appreciate the barricaded door but it didn't stop her from regressing further. Her sense of play was gone. She wanted nothing to do with Simon and hissed at him all the time. She refused to return to the basket she was in when the raccoon entered. Her fear-based survival instincts predominated; my Clara Belle was going back to being primal. It finally dawned on me that she was regressing to her early days with me 5 years ago.

Clara Belle's Back Story ~



On October 25, 2009 she had appeared at that very same back door looking for a home. She was probably one or one and a half years old; extremely hungry. Later, I would remember having noticed her looking out from a window in an apartment complex close by, wearing a flea collar. I felt sorry for her. From what I could gather, her people had moved out three months prior and left her behind. During that time, she had fended for herself more or less. Those three months of survival on her own brought out deep fears and insecurities. I don't believe she was ever an easy cat even as a kitten, but that time in the alley turned her into the dangerous cat that entered my home that day. Totally unaware and under the temporary charm she mustered to get adopted, I let her in. She lay down in the middle of the living room on a carpet and soon showed me two things. She wanted to stay, and she knew how to use a litter box. That was it. The agreement, according to her was: I was to feed her, clean her box, leave her alone. No touching, no emotional connection. We were to live quasi-separate lives under one roof.

Fortunately, there was another side of her that yearned for connection. But even that didn't go very well. She would jump on my lap while I watched TV, but then reach back and bite me hard if I stroked her one time too many. The first time it caught me completely by surprise. Never had a cat bitten me so hard without any warning. She didn't seem to think anything of it. It turned out, biting was the answer to all her problems. All she had wanted to do was make me stop, but instead of showing me by twitching, vocalizing or jumping off, she bit. With Clara Belle there was no warning. She was extremely self-protective and movement sensitive, so unless I was absolutely still when she was close I was open to biting. She had no idea how to lie on, or by, someone in bed. She so wanted to, but then would not position herself properly or be too close to my neck, threads of drool streaming from her mouth. She'd react strongly and bite if I moved a hand or a part of my body or worse, tried to reposition her. This was the cat from hell.

One day she got out when that back door slipped open and I heard blood-curdling screams from the other side of the fence. There was Clara Belle attacking and cornering my neighbor's female cat. I managed to get her away from that poor cat with a water hose and lure her inside with food. Clara Belle was unsuited to life inside a house or outside. She simply didn't know how to be a house cat, period. I had my work cut out for me. It felt like I had a lion in the house, not a green-eyed tuxedo cat. I detected a core of sweetness dying to get out and be appreciated; it is what kept me going and gave me hope for her. To introduce a sense of innocence and softness to the situation I decided to address her as "baby girl".

During that first year she had no peace. Everything was cause for concern. She was "on alert" all day, tensely looking out for any intruder in the vicinity of the house. At night she slept on my bed. Had I lived in a bunker it would have suited her better. My wood china cabinet and antique chest of drawers, which are located beneath windows, barely survived her enraged clawing if she spotted a cat nearby. One morning she did see a cat through the blind above the kitchen table. It was early and I was totally unprepared for what she did next, since I couldn't see the cat outside. When I reached for the rod to open the blind, she instantly caught the hand movement and displaced her rage to my right arm. She jumped on it, attacked it, and sunk her teeth deeply into my inner wrist. I had to pry her off with my other hand. The rage cursing through her body was palpable. I had never felt anything so intense and primal. This was a low point. Clearly, no shelter would take her and she was unsafe to let out or adopt out. I gave her a choice: She had six more months to improve or she would face euthanasia.

By putting my animal communication skills to work after she showed up, I had determined she had serious past life issues. She communicated she had been a caged lion in a roadside attraction; the type that you'd find by a gas station in a

small town. She had no place to hide and take a break. She didn't have animal companionship. People threw things at her, teased her, and woke her when she slept to get a rise out of her. During our communication she brought up a lion cub, but I could not quite figure out if the cub was herself, or a cub taken from her. In any event, there had been the wrenching time when men took the cub from its mother and that pain ran deep in her heart. Overall, ill and disrespectful treatment from humans had left her with cellular memory of intense anger against people; an anger that consumed her. Also, not to be underestimated, was the physical switch from being a big cat to becoming a small domestic one in this incarnation. The difference in size brought about its own set of issues. She had trouble adjusting to this small domestic cat body. The lack of bulk made her feel vulnerable. Her aggressive temperament came from a complete lack of confidence and know how. She was also hyper sensitive to noises, touch, energy, in short everything.

What would work to help Clara Belle?

Apparently, she found the right home because I was willing to understand her and work with her 24/7. I had to address the anger first. Unless she released it, we would not be able to move forward. It took a total of eighteen months from her arrival, several Bach flower remedies and one specific homeopathic remedy for deep rooted anger to get the job done. Gradually, Clara Belle learned the basic skills of a house cat. I taught her not to resort to biting as a response to everything, and if she did, to know her strength and do so lightly. She would hold her ground or move in on me anytime I needed to displace her out of the way. This is a normal "face forward and stand your ground" response of a predator. (A prey animal would turn around and run away.) I managed to show her that a house cat yields to a human; it does not stand its ground and take the human on. That is the correct, expected behavior. I also taught her not to choke me with her bulk and

paws when she lay on my chest and drooled puddles. Still, if I dared reposition her she got all upset and irritated. She finally figured out I was just trying to help and make it better for her. All this took time and a lot of positive reinforcement. When she made a mistake and I knew it was an honest one, I simply ignored it. Each time she looked back at me, grateful that I given her some slack. She suffered from being called a bad cat, when she was just a clueless cat. I refer to animals like her as "first timers". It is a life of learning, and most of the time not an easy one. I became her problem solver and teacher; always there to re-direct and help when I saw her hesitating or confused.

I made a point of talking about her in the most positive terms to anyone. She would look at me and glow when I praised her progress. And make more progress. Now, finally she had house cat training wheels on and someone to help her solve her daily problems. She loved to lay in my laundry basket on top of the washing machine, which is itself on a platform. Jumping up that high onto a slick surface for such a big boned, heavy cat wasn't easy. I waited for the proper moment and quickly picked her up and put her in the basket. All went well until I had to pull my arm away from her body, then her rapid movement instinct kicked in. I got my arm out just in time to avoid her sharp, long teeth. I repeated this with her until one day she sat below the basket and meowed and asked me to pick her up! Since then we've been diligently working on "being picked up", quickly or slowly, carefully or sloppily, and ending up in the basket. The idea is for her to adjust to all the variations and not get reactive or upset. I felt she could transfer those newly acquired skills to being picked up and put on an open screened windowsill to watch the trees and the birds outside. It took a little while, but she loves it now and shows me when she wants to be placed there. Tonight she jumped up there all on her own.

In five years we had come so far. Now, this security breach

problem threatened to destroy it all. I wouldn't let her slip backwards. Her relationship with Simon was suffering as well. Again, I turned to Bach Flower essences to give her general emotional support, help her to be flexible and tolerant, diminish her anger, reduce the emotional hysteria and break set patterns. Each time we went through a blended bottle I made a new assessment of where we were and modified the remedies accordingly. The essences balanced out her emotional body layer by layer. The final remedy put together with the help of my acupuncturist and homeopath friend got the job done. We addressed the loop of fear she maintained and the emotional over-reacting over everything. I am so relieved to see I have my Clara Belle back. Not only is she at the place she was before the raccoon incident seven weeks ago, but also, thanks to that last remedy, she has made a leap forward in her progress as a house cat. She has acquired a greater sense of confidence. Her basket, the kitchen door, the home in general feels safe to her. She is playing with Simon again, happily looking out the windows and holding her personal space without drama. Her body is relaxed; the sparkle is back in her eye. Clara Belle is still a work in progress, she might always be, but the situation in our home is transformed. Thank you, Raccoon, for pushing us to the next level.

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## **A Chicken, Three Ducks and a Party of One**



Likeness of Gigi



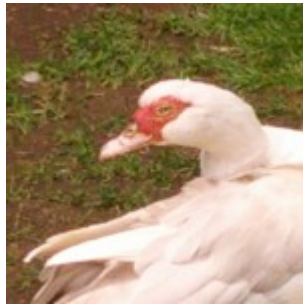
Alfie & Athena  
evacuated in  
truck bed during  
Witch Creek fire  
2007



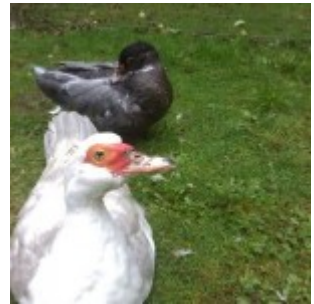
Young Belle



Enclosure with  
duck house & pond



Preening



Athena and Belle



"Only duck", all  
fluffed up and  
swimming

This is a real story about barnyard animals and their person, Susan, with whom I have had dozens of telephone consults over

the years.

People easily overlook or dismiss barnyard animals because they are common, humble and feel more distant. Susan is not one of those people. Her love and consideration for her feathered barnyard friends always touches me deeply. To her they are whole, full-fledged beings who she sees from her heart and spirit. In return, they meet her in like manner and clearly reveal their personalities, likes and dislikes. Lessons learned about the choices animals make, and human projections about those choices, have been profound for Susan. This blog is a synopsis of my communications with Gigi the Rhode Island red chicken, Alfie the mallard, and Athena and Belle, muscovy ducks.

When Gigi (the hen) passed in 2006, her feathered companion Alfie (the mallard drake), appeared to greatly miss her companionship. Alfie had never been without Gigi! They had been bought together as a duckling and chick one Easter, then quickly neglected and forgotten. Tom, her husband, worked on that property and finally brought them home because no one else wanted to take them and he couldn't bear to see them in such miserable conditions.

As a temporary measure Alfie was offered a stuffed toy, in which he seemed to find comfort. Susan and Tom wanted another companion for him and contacted me to learn Alfie's wishes about how to proceed. This was our conversation:

BN: Hello Alfie,

Alfie: *I am so sad, I am so lonely; I am so left behind without Gigi. She was everything to me. She was.*

BN: Is the stuffed toy helping you?

Alfie: *Yes it is. I need something to lie against. I need to see an outline of a friend.*

BN: You understand Gigi died. (Reasons unclear. Six isn't that old for a hen.)

Alfie: *Yes, yes, I do. It is breaking my heart. I've never been without Gigi, never.*

BN: Susan and Tom would like to know if you would like another companion?

Alfie: *Yes, I would. I do not choose to be alone. I would like another chicken now. Very quickly. Like Gigi.*

BN: How can they pick the right chicken for you?

Alfie: *Just a big chicken like Gigi. She must look just like Gigi. Love, love, Quack, Quack, Alfie.* ( I heard his quacks in my mind's ear. He would do this many times more in the future. I absolutely treasured his telepathic quacks.)

BN: Would you like more than one chicken companion?

Alfie: *No.*

BN: Is there anything else they can do for you?

Alfie: *No, just get the chicken.*

Tom and Susan discussed the chicken idea but felt Alfie didn't know other ducks and probably didn't have a proper point of reference. I agreed. So they located and brought home a beautiful white muscovy they named Athena. Alfie was six or seven years old and Athena was, perhaps, three years old. Alfie took to Athena right away and soon discovered he could mate with her. At first he was tentative and awkward, but soon became quite familiar with the process and very active. They settled into an active life around the pond and were offered the best possible fresh nutrition. Susan quickly learned this was not an easy task. Obtaining the exactly correct amount of protein was not always possible, but she managed to work out a nutritious diet consisting of tiny fish, mealworms, little



crickets, algae, and some millet. As a result of her efforts, I learned that locating clean, wholesome, fresh, live bait is a challenge. For example, bait stores would keep perfectly fine bait worms in newspaper strips, which leached ink and other chemicals onto them and made the worms inappropriate to feed to the ducks. To top it off, the ducks didn't like the same things, which necessitated finding out their individual likes and dislikes. These preferences would periodically change and, once again, send Susan on a quest to locate what they could and would eat.

The dynamic between Alfie and Athena was strong, although Athena did have to put up with a lot of mounting and pursuing. Among duck species, mallards are known to be quite feisty in that department. On a few occasions her efforts to quickly dodge out of the way impacted her hip and leg on one side. Susan treated the injury but from then on, if Athena moved around too much and too quickly she would start to limp.

During the last communication with Alfie before the family left Southern California for Washington State, he imparted that he felt very tired and old. At the same time I got the feeling Alfie was winding down, I also sensed that Athena would carry on just fine on her own. I revealed my feelings to Susan, but it wasn't easy for her to hear any of it. The past experience with Gigi and the close interaction between the two ducks led Susan to believe Athena would be very lonely without Alfie. A month or so after they had relocated and moved into their new home, Alfie crossed over in Susan's arms one morning. Athena was on her own. She had a large green space, a house and, eventually, a new pond all to herself.

Watching and caring for companionless Athena disturbed Susan and broke her heart. She remembered how much Alfie didn't want to be alone, and pushed aside our prior conversation about Athena. At this same time, Athena started a strong moult and was constantly preening causing her to jab hard at her feathers with her beak to make room for new ones. Billows of

white down feathers settled everywhere around her on the green grass of her enclosure. She gave up swimming in her pond. The magnitude of this moult alarmed Susan and she concluded that the over grooming and change in pond habits meant Athena was stressed and lonely. Her search for a companion led her to a duck ranch where she noticed a small, seemingly sweet, very pretty duck with dark plumage. She appeared to be picked on by her peers. Belle came home with her. Initially, the pairing appeared to be okay, although not an ideal one. Before long, Athena was pushing the new girl around and I was called upon to check in with Athena.

BN: This is Brigitte, the One Who Listens. Susan has asked me to check in with you for her.

Athena: *Hello, I am here. I'm very happy, very content. I am. Susan worries a lot about me, she does. Before she worried about Alfie, now she worries about me.*

These were Athena's first impressions of Belle:

BN: She wants to make sure all is going well for you. How do you feel about the new girl?

Athena: *She is fine. She is different. Very different.*

BN: Please explain what you mean by different.

Athena: *She isn't tame like me. She isn't confident like me. She is a very timid duck. Very. I am very confident. I am very dominant. I am very assertive and secure about my pond, about my space. I am, I am, I am.*

Athena's aggressive behavior escalated to the point Belle didn't seem to have any peace in their enclosure and Athena's bad leg was getting sore from chasing her. We had another consult with Athena about Belle.

Here is the communication with Athena and Belle:

**ATHENA:**

Athena: *I'm here, I'm very happy, very happy. I'm so, so, so, happy. I'm very HAPPY.*

BN: Wonderful. And how do you feel about your companion Belle?

Athena: *I'm okay. I'd rather be alone now though. I'd rather be alone.*

BN: And what do you like about being alone?

Athena: *I'm in charge. I want to be "in charge".*

BN: Susan tells me Belle is very accommodating and submissive.

Athena: *She is, she is, but I'm in charge and I want her to go away, away, but she isn't going away.* (Explains the incessant the chasing.)

BN: This is her home too. She is in her new home.

Athena: *I'm not happy about that. I'm not at all happy about that.*

BN: What must Susan do to improve things with your new companion?

Athena: *TAKE HER AWAY. TAKE HER AWAY. TAKE HER AWAY.*

BN: Okay, I'll communicate that to her.

**BELLE:**

BN: How do you feel?

Belle: *I'm okay.*

BN: How do you feel about Athena?

Belle: *I'm concerned. Nothing pleases her. I'm not welcome, I am not. This is very distressing. Very.*

BN: We can help you. I'll talk to Susan and explain. We need to make your life less stressful.

BN: Belle, would you like to go back to the ranch?

Belle: Yes. (I could feel Susan's sinking heart.)

BN: Susan is going to make arrangements and check to see if you can go back to the ranch. She is aware of your clear desire to go back.

Two days later Susan returned Belle to the duck breeding ranch she came from. As Susan walked away, she turned and observed Belle waddle rather quickly to the flock of ducks. She knew she had done the right thing by her even though ducks were sold for all sorts of commercial purposes and her future was uncertain.

At home, Athena went back to a peaceful routine and did not miss Belle in any way. It is interesting to note that strangers to the story might see her all by her self in her enclosure and mistakingly feel she needs a feathered companion.

A few months later, an event related to the Super Bowl in January 2014 created an unfortunate and totally unexpected situation for Susan, and it turned Athena's life upside down. At the end of the game, it became apparent that the usual loud and extremely unpleasant July 4<sup>th</sup> type fireworks were too tame for the rural neighbors next door. To Susan's outrage, they set off a series of dynamite sticks to celebrate the victory of their football team. Convinced that the incredibly loud and strong explosions were terrorizing Athena and her dog Sophie, she drove them to a quiet place, where they waited for several hours. She had taken some of the straw from Athena's nest and placed it in the carrier for her. When they returned home, and Athena was back in her enclosure, she appeared very distressed. She looked for her nest, noticed the missing

straw. From then on she chose to sleep on the hardwood floor planks every night. She refused to use a new nest Susan made for her, or get into a warmer carrier placed in her duck house. Her body appeared to be stiff when she moved about during the day. It was February, in a cold climate, so not a good time to have nesting issues.

We checked in with Athena to get her take on her behavior:

BN: Susan apologizes for the move in the car a few days ago. She wanted to get you away from the loud explosions outside. They were noisy and disturbing for her and Sophie. Athena, why have you taken to sleeping on the floor and not in your new nest?

Athena: *I am very disturbed by my space. My space has been violated. I do not want this space. I need a "new" space.*

BN: What do you need from Susan?

Athena: *Tell her I BUILD MY NEST. I BUILD MY NEST. I build my nest, it is very important I build my nest in a specific manner. Each movement, each placement (of hay or straw) builds my trust in my nest. My nest isn't "SAFE" any longer. I must start over. Please ask Susan never to move me again. I COULD NOT CARE LESS ABOUT THE NOISE. MY NEST IS MY PRIORITY. MY NEST IS WHERE I AM COMFORTABLE AND AT HOME.*

I asked Athena how to restore things to her liking. She wanted new straw to build her nest herself. She also wanted her old crate back. They had used a new one for that last transport.

I asked her what Susan needed to know that she didn't already know?

Athena replied: *How confused I get. I abhor change. NO MORE CHANGE. PLEASE, NO MORE.* She gave little telepathic quacks of annoyance.

Susan did all she asked, but Athena didn't rebuild her nest.

She continued to sleep on the floorboards of her house. Two months later, at the end of April, I checked in with Athena again. She had completed her moult:

Athena: *Please tell Susan I am very happy, very content. I love everything about my enclosure and my house. It is my house. I no longer have to show territorial behavior. I'm happy. I'm safe. I'm content.*

BN: Susan would like to know why you aren't swimming?

Athena: *Don't need to swim. My feathers are fine. Don't need to swim. It isn't necessary for me to swim.* (She had completed that lengthy and thorough moult probably brought on by the change from a warm to a cold climate. Her new feathers were strong, plentiful and beautiful.)

BN: How can Susan make you feel safe?

Athena: *By sitting still by me and singing to me. I just love it when she sings to me.*

BN: So you feel safe in general?

Athena: *Yes, I feel very safe here, Very. Not to worry Susan. Not to worry I feel safe.*

BN: Do you want a straw nest again?

Athena: *Don't need one. I'm not cold. I'm totally contented.*

Athena started to make little greeting trilling and a few pip noises again for Susan, even playfully bumping up against her legs. Thanks to homeopathic remedies and less wear and tear she doesn't limp anymore. Just a few days ago Susan observed her swimming in the pond. She still hasn't made a new nest, but that will most likely happen when the weather shifts or she feels the need for one. In addition to reiki, Susan sings her to sleep regularly. Athena loves that and has asked her to remember to do so in several communications. She

listens attentively to Susan's voice and then gently closes her eyes and nods away. How fortunate she is to be so respected and loved.

These days, all is well with the duck who chooses the lifestyle of a Party of One. I'm pretty sure she is staying put this July 4<sup>th</sup> ~ no matter how loud the fireworks are around the property. They will leave with the dog, Sophie, but will check on Athena to make sure she is okay.

Susan's love for animals and her general concern for their wellbeing created a desire to provide holistic health care for them whenever possible. This desire led her to become a certified Reiki Level III Master practitioner for animals and their people, which she provides locally and long distance from her log home near Olympia, WA.

Find her at: [AnimalsLoveReiki](#)

She sends for organic feed non GMO, non medicated and hormone free, from McGeary Organics, Inc, in Pennsylvania.

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**Benjamin Rabbit: I am different and I roar!**



I'm different and  
I roar!

Chloe in front,  
during trial  
bonding phase.



Easter portrait  
with Allison,  
Benjamin, Ginger,  
Sitara



Benjamin and  
Ginger



Benjamin



With best friend  
Sitara

Recently I was reminded of something Benjamin, a New Zealand white rabbit, had expressed when he was 1-1/2 years old. What he conveyed was so extraordinary that I went back to my files and found the transcript. And there it was in bold, capital letters:

*..."I like being DIFFERENT! I AM VERY DIFFERENT!"*

*"I am dominant, I am dominant, I am dominant". "That's what makes me different. I am a bunny that ROARS...roar...roar...roar..."*

Benjamin was adopted from the Oceanside Shelter (now the North Campus of the San Diego Humane Society) where he had spent three months. His potential adopter, Allison, consulted with the San Diego House Rabbit Society (SDHRS) for guidance before



making the decision. His affectionate personality and behavior fit the calm and easy going criteria Allison desired and he wasn't afraid of friendly dogs. Benjamin seemed like a perfect fit and settled into his forever home as part of Allison's family. It went so well with the two golden retrievers, Allison thought adopting another rabbit would be fun and would give him a companion of his own species.

Anyone familiar with rabbits knows putting two strangers together can be fraught with difficulties and result in serious injuries. Likes and dislikes are strong, and immediate harmonious connections are in the minority. Allison did her homework and again consulted with the San Diego House Rabbit Society for a suitable companion. Chloe, a two-year-old New Zealand White in foster care, seemed a suitable candidate. Both rabbits were introduced to each other in neutral territory at the SDHRS Adoption Center. They appeared to accept each other, so Allison took Chloe home. There she took all the appropriate steps to facilitate a successful bonding. After four days of relative success, their behavior took a negative turn and Benjamin made it clear he wanted nothing to do with Chloe.

Allison relates: "While intervening in their first major scuffle, I got bit by Benjamin, who was in a high state of excitement. Initially, Benjamin would lie by me but when Chloe would attempt to approach him to get acquainted he would run behind me or chase her away. When I contacted the House Rabbit Society for their take on how it was going, they surmised, since often female rabbits are more assertive than males, that Benjamin might be nervous or scared of her. This didn't seem fit the situation, so I thought I better get clarification from you."

Indeed, Benjamin shared his well-founded reasons for his behavior.

This is the transcript of our time together in my office

5/4/2006:

BN: Hello Benjamin,

BN: Allison loves you very much and has brought you here so we can listen and learn more about you.

Benjamin in italics:

*Please let Allison know I am Number One of Everyone. I am "Number One BUNNY."*

*I am DOMINANT*

*I am STRONG*

*I am MASSIVE*

*I am #1*

*I am, I am, I am.*

*I am so dominant I could bite the dogs. I could, I could, I could.*

BN: What have you come in to do?

*I have come to be well taken care of and, in return, I am ETERNALLY grateful. Please let Allison know I like being A-L-O-N-E.*

*I LIKE ALL, ALL, ALL the attention. I like being DIFFERENT. I AM VERY DIFFERENT.*

BN: In what way? Please explain.

*I am DOMINANT*

*I am DOMINANT*

*I am DOMINANT.*

*That's what makes me DIFFERENT. I am a BUNNY that ROARS*

*roar*

*roar*

BN: You are funny too.

*I don't mean to be funny, but if that is the case, I'm funny too.*

What are you teaching?

SMART BUNNY

*I am very S-M-A-R-T.*

BN: What do we need to know about you and Chloe?

*I don't care for FEMALES THAT QUESTION MY DOMINANCE. CHLOE IS NOT COMPLIANT ENOUGH.*

BN: I see, so you don't think you can get along with her at home?

*DON'T NEED HER. ALL I NEED IS ALLISON. She is very COMPLIANT.*

BN: What does Allison need to know she doesn't already know?

*I ADORE ALLISON—SHE IS MINE, MINE, MINE. Even the dogs know she is MINE.*

BN: How do you feel inside?

*Inside I feel great. Inside I roar, inside I MOUNT. I mount, I mount, I mount.*

BN: What else would you like to share?

*I like it here. It is comfortable and I love communicating like this.*

BN: Would you like to have a bunny companion at all?

*No, not really. I'm fine the way I am. I ROAR.*

It is understood that Benjamin expresses a state of mind. He feels strong and powerful, therefore, he figuratively roars. Although he never did actually vocalize a roar in my office or at home, when I communicated with him I could clearly sense the feeling he was projecting of a mighty male rabbit roaring like a lion and expressing his dominance by evoking mounting.

Rabbits are known to make all kinds of noises. A knowledgeable rabbit person sent me the following quotes about rabbit vocalizations from Carolyn Crampton's "RABBIT LANGUAGE ~ Or are you going to eat that?" "A humorous guide to communicating with your pet rabbit". (You can find it on Amazon.com). This rabbit person added that her many rabbits have grunted (for emphasis preceding or following a thump), growled, honked, whimpered and even snored/snorted, in addition to the more common buzzing-humming.

Carolyn Crampton mentions the following rabbit noises:

"Grunting ~ This is usually a noise of sexual arousal made while running around the prospective mate. May include thumping and wild tail waving.

Humming and Buzzing ~ Humming while running around, usually referred to as grunting, is a sound of sexual arousal. It apparently drives female rabbits bonzo. It is usually heard when your rabbit is running around you in circles or right before your rabbit starts biting your feet. It may also mean general excitement such as it's time for breakfast. I never heard buzzing til I got a dwarf but it's definitely the same behavior.

Roar ~ One rabbit is to have roared like a tiny lion. "When he is chasing your feet or if you piss him off. Often he will run in circles around our feet roaring like this."

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHLOE'S STORY ~

Chloe was a lovely, cuddly, companion rabbit in her own right. And even for rabbits, there is always another side to a story. Here is Chloe's perspective on the situation with Benjamin:

BN: Hello Chloe, it is your turn. Would like to share with me?

*I would love to be # 1. I am #1. I am. I am so pretty, so cute, so adorable, so cuddly but UNAPPRECIATED*

*I feel so unappreciated.*

BN: Well, we are here to fix that situation, Chloe.

BN: What have you come in to do?

*To be ADORABLE. I do ADORABLE very well. I do.*

BN: What are you teaching?

*Very cute, lovable rabbit COMPANION. I am a COMPANION RABBIT.*

BN: Do you mean of a person or another rabbit?

*Both, I can be both.*

BN: And what happens with Benjamin?

*He is so bossy*

*He is so arrogant*

*He is too much. Too much. Too much.*

*I can't get my way with Benjamin. He is unaccommodating to me. We are not compatible.*

BN: What does Allison need to know she doesn't already know?

*I need a new home. Can't stay with Benjamin. Can't.*

BN: Can you live separately from Benjamin in the same house with Allison?

*Maybe? That's up to Allison. We would need to be in SEPARATE ROOMS. I want my own room.*

BN: How do you feel inside?

*Inside I'm confused. I'm confused.*

BN: Do your pads in the back legs burn or have pain in any way?

*A little, they are too sensitive. I need very SOFT bedding. Very.*

BN: How do you feel about the dogs, Ginger and Sitara?

*Dogs are harmless, they are.*

(Chloe had been in a foster home before going to Allison's house with Benjamin)

BN: Did you like a rabbit in the foster home?

*I'm very flexible. I find friends everywhere I go, except here.*

BN: Chloe, Allison is going to find another more appropriate home for you. A loving and appreciative home. She wants you to be happy.

*Thank you, thank you, thank you. (Heard in a "bunny" voice.)*

The incompatibility of Benjamin and Chloe made keeping two rabbits totally separate and safe from each other a lot of work and was not the fun Allison had envisioned. But, by this time Chloe had found her way to Allison's heart. The problem bonding was a great disappointment to her. After Benjamin's

session she knew with certainty it would never take place. It helped to know the House Rabbit Society was an amazing place and they would find a suitable home for Chloe but at the same time, Allison felt badly that returning her would burden an already over-crowded foster care system. The SDHRS honored their commitment to the welfare of all their bunnies and graciously took her back into foster care. In a fortunate turn of events, Chloe pretty quickly found another family and a companion rabbit. In line with his nature and wishes, Benjamin got to be the "only rabbit" and enjoyed Allison's love and attention to the end of his very successful life.

In late April 2014, Allison and I had a final communication with Benjamin who was now an ailing senior bunny. He had successfully overcome health issues with a few surgical procedures in the past year, but now a large mass on his shoulder was getting the better of him. We asked how he was feeling, and if, when, and how he wanted to cross over. Benjamin expressed his gratitude to Allison for her care and her love and clearly stated his need to go. He conveyed that he was in great pain all the time and didn't want to linger. That gave Allison the confirmation she needed to go forward with the euthanasia process. The next day, April 22, 2014, with the assistance of a veterinarian, Benjamin, the bunny that felt "different" and that "roared" left this life at the ripe old age of 9-1/2.

\*\*\*\*\*

Many thanks to Allison for letting me share her story and to Phyllis for her vast rabbit knowledge and assistance in proof reading and story flow.

\*\*\*\*\*

For over 20 years, San Diego House Rabbit Society has supported our community through education about responsible rabbit care, spay/neuter, and adoption. They are a 501(c)(3)

volunteer-driven nonprofit organization.

For more information and donations:

<http://www.sandiegorabbits.org/>

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## **Dog?Rabbit? Where Am I? What am I?**

It is a well-known statement among trainers and animal lovers: The most difficult animals to work with are those that teach us the most. And we humans have SO much to learn. As a younger woman I used to wonder why the wiser among us would feel the more they knew, the less they knew. It didn't seem to make sense. All that studying, all that life experience, contemplation and meditation to end up back where they started? How could this be? Now, I just smile because time and time again I feel that the more I know, the less I know about the wonders of life. We live in a physical world and a dimension that is parallel to another dimension that is beyond the five senses. A dimension that is invisible for the most part but one that gives us a glimmer of its existence when we are faced with a situation that challenges our limitations and pushes us beyond them. Little Tori, a bichon rescue, turned out to be an unusual learning curve for her special Bichon foster person, Mary.





Tori, Mary and  
Binky



Tori and Binky



Tori held all on  
her own by family  
friend.

Four-year old Tori was brought in from the shelter to the Bichon FurKids Rescue in La Costa, CA and placed in a foster home for two months before she was entrusted to Mary for further fostering. This little Bichon appeared terrified of people. She always kept herself at a safe distance from a human and shook for several minutes if she was ever picked up. It was obvious it would take some time before she would be up for adoption and the rescue organization hoped Mary might eventually bring her around. When Mary contacted me, her hopes for adopting out Tori were low. She was even contemplating keeping her because she had made a strong attachment to her Bichon boy, Binky, nine years old. A rescue himself, Binky's self-confidence around his home and his good nature drew in Tori like a magnet. She couldn't be without him. On the other hand, after four months, her trust in Mary was diminishing and she seemed to be slinking away into her fears and apprehensions more and more.. Mary didn't want to upset her further by imposing herself on Tori. They were locked in a dead-end pattern Tori created for herself. To top it off, Tori wasn't house trained and seemed to have trouble with that concept.

Here is the transcript of my communication with Tori. It would have been too stressful for her to come to my office so we conducted the session on the phone.

BN: Hello Tori, this is Brigitte, the One-Who-Listens. Mary

has asked me to connect with you. She would like to know how to help you adjust more easily to her home.

*Tori: Please let Mary know I am very happy, very content. She just needs to be more direct and "no-nonsense" with me. I do trust her but I am ALWAYS, ALWAYS, ALWAYS fearful. I have always been this way.*

BN: Have you ever been mistreated by a human?

*Tori: I just don't know humans. They are so, so big. They are so, so, quick and unpredictable. I just don't know humans.*

BN: What have you come in to do?

*Tori: To learn all about "dog". I am all about learning, learning, learning. Binky is a very good teacher. I love Binky.*

BN: What does Mary need to know that she doesn't already know?

*Tori: That I DON'T KNOW. I don't know. (... how to be a dog.)*

BN: Mary can certainly help you with that. What happened before the rescue?

*Tori: Not much. Lived alone.*

BN: Did you live with another dog?

*Tori: No*

BN: Did you live alone with a person?

*Tori: Very, very, very kind person. Very good person. Loved, loved, loved my person.*

BN: Did something happen to your person?

*Tori: Moved away. Left me behind. Moved away. Waited and waited but never came back.*

*(Note: Perhaps an elderly person that went into a care facility*

*or died, sensed grief and depression in Tori around this loss.)*

BN: Mary is here to help you learn and get a new very good home for you. She will make sure to match you up correctly when you are ready. Not before.

BN: Do you remember what you were before you came in as a little dog?

*Tori: I am a R A B B I T, a big white R A B B I T.*

BN: I see. Now, Tori, you are a little dog. A very cute little white D O G. Remember, you are learning dog. You are a dog. Mary and Binky will teach you dog.

After a great many consults that had to do with re-incarnation in animals and cross species re-incarnation specifically, I have the data to support how instrumental they are in achieving a shift and a movement forwards for the animal and for the people involved in the present. Tori re-discovered herself through the communication process. She had been living as a white rabbit in a “dog suit.” Rabbits are prey animals with a strong fear and flight response. They associate being grabbed or held to a predator pouncing down or swooping down on them. Movements (human gestures, human walking, running etc.) loud noises (speaking loudly), direct eye contact are all sources of concern, because they broadcast danger and trigger the immediate flight response. Essentially, just living around humans in a home was a tall order for such an animal. Even contact with other dogs could be testy and lead to misunderstandings because Tori didn’t speak “dog” either. In her world, everything would appear to have a contradictory signal or message. She understood people wanted to be friendly but, from her perspective, they went about it all wrong. They were loud, too quick in their movements and on the whole, unpredictable. That made her run away and shy away. Her reaction was instinctive, motivated by self-preservation.

In the communication she says she is happy and content in Mary's home. I'm not surprised. Mary is a compassionate, extremely caring person for people and animals. Tori understood Mary would not hurt her and she created a good little world for herself with her bosom buddy, Binky. Simply said, it was a bunny world, not a dog world. And not that tame of a bunny, either! Fear for a rabbit is a way of life, it is essential to their survival. There is nothing negative about it, however in a dog or in a human for that matter, fear of this nature is a problem. To solve this existential dilemma we needed to convert her bunny world into a dog world. The real-time experience of the consult provided her with the information she needed to make the jump (pun intended) into a new awareness. It was my hope the consult would be the gateway into her new life—Her “first time” dog life.

Before anything else, Tori asked Mary to be direct and no-nonsense in her approach. That meant that she wanted Mary to be confident in her manner. If Mary wanted to pick her up, she would do so in a direct, calm, self-assured way. Before, Mary would mirror back Tori's fear and hesitation, waffle on her intent and let her be. This, because she interpreted Tori's fear of contact behavior with prior mistreatment and she didn't want to make matters worse. Mary was relieved to learn there was no mistreatment in her past. Tori, herself, dispelled that misconception in her communication. Her prior owner, I surmise, lived alone in a quiet, consistent environment. She loved her dearly and probably didn't make a lot of demands on her little dog. Problems arose when she lost that sheltered, protected environment and found herself flung into the world of shelters and foster care.

~~~~~

Follow-up a month later: Mary and Tori have done great work together. I'll let Mary tell you in her own words:

**Tori**

Approximately four year old, female Bichon Frise

Rescued from shelter in July 2013

Basic info:

I started fostering Tori August 9, 2013. She had been with another foster for two months before she came to me.

When she arrived, I was told to keep a leash on her otherwise I would never be able to catch her. She kept a good distance away from me at all times, but followed my dog very closely. She was not house broken and never made a peep. She would never sit near me and at night slept under my bed. She would not eat if I was in the same room as she was.

After having a session with Brigitte:

Almost immediately after her session with Brigitte on December 12, 2013, she:

Jumped up on the foot of a recliner I was sitting in, laid next to my legs, actually touching my body. (The one time prior to this that she jumped on the recliner, she paced back and forth at the foot of the recliner for about 20 minutes, finally jumped up on it, but jumped immediately back to the floor and left the room.) This time she didn't even flinch when I moved which prior to this would have sent her running. Not only did she sit there once, but I got up a few times and when I was reseated in the recliner she would jump up immediately and lie down!!! A few days later, she joined me again and eventually climbed into my lap and let me pet her!!!

Tori is more independent than she was, doesn't follow my dog around so closely

She obeys voice commands now

She follows me and will actually get within a foot of me

She doesn't bolt at the sight of a person moving

She has actually gotten up on my bed at night a few times without me coaxing her

Most of the time at night she puts her paws up on the mattress and looks at my dog and me, but decides to sleep in the dog bed on the floor

She is now housebroken about 90%

She barks now when someone comes to the door or if she wants to go outside

You can look her in the eye now without her running off

Her personality is now coming out

She will eat even if someone is in the same room as her

Although she has a way to go, I am very impressed with the progress she has made in such little time after her session with you. I actually think she may be adoptable in the near future.

Thank you so much Brigitte!!!

~~~~~

As for me, Brigitte, my heart is filled with gratitude, love and wonderment. Another good day at the office, hurray for Tori and Mary.

Information on Bichon FurKids Rescue:

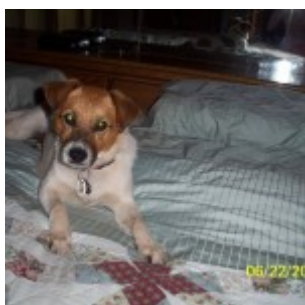
<http://www.bichonfurkids.org/>

Thank you Sydney, Tori's favorite Auntie, for taking the pictures. That wasn't an easy assignment because shy Tori kept turning away from the camera. Also, a big thank you for your professional editing and proofreading skills.

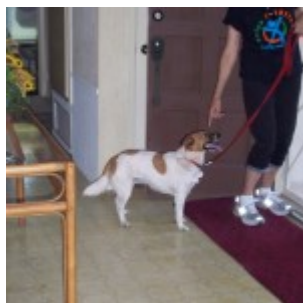
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# Breaking through to Sophie

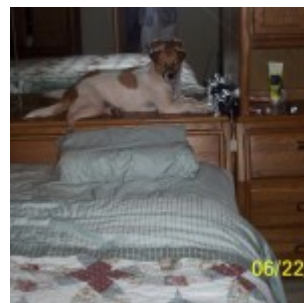
A 2 year old stray no one had claimed and slated for euthanasia, Sophie made her way with 29 other dogs from Kern County to El Cajon, CA. where she was taken in by a no kill rescue group. A sorry sight , with an ear tattered from flea and fly bites, she acted fearful and nervous. No one had even heard her bark. The first line of the adoption preparedness process established she had whipworm and needed to be spayed. Therefore, her initial encounter with well-intentioned people in the rescue group was painful. Wire(!?) sutures for the spaying, several strong wormer treatments for the parasites and topical treatment for her sore ear.



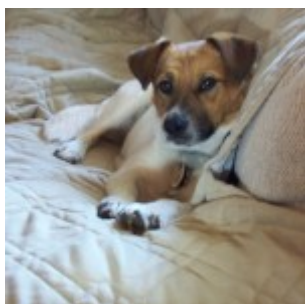
On the bed June  
2013



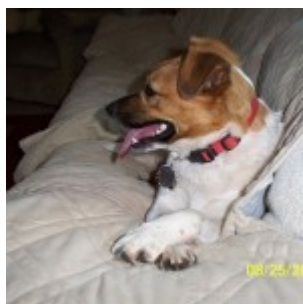
Getting ready to  
go on a walk...



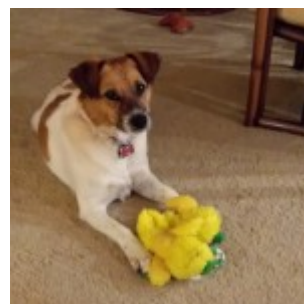
On the back board  
June 2013



Couch? What a  
good idea!



Pretty paws,  
August 2013



Happy Sophie

February 2014

Alice and John were ready to adopt again. They had waited three years after their female dog passed to be sure not to compare a new dog to her. John spotted Sophie on a website and was immediately drawn in. They located her at the rescue group and decided to take her home. Flighty and not easy to catch, they watched in dismay as she cried in pain and anguish as she was grabbed and microchipped before she was handed over to their care. At home, they continued and completed her various medical treatments.

After three months of consistent care and love they found she remained very much to herself, and it was getting worse. Everyday, she'd go outside on the hilly part of their back yard and stay there for hours on end, watching into the distance, her back to the house. She came in at dusk and yearned to go back out in the morning. She would have stayed out all night had they let her. No amount of calling or coaxing could bring her to come down for long. As soon as she could, she would make her way back to her lookout. An invisible line separated her life from theirs. They tried taking her places in the car, but she found no pleasure in the rides and threw up. Alice and John were flummoxed by their new dog's mind-set. She was so different from other dogs adopted in the past. In all ways Sophie was sweet and intelligent. They yearned to develop a proper relationship with her. They couldn't figure out why she was so distant and hoped a consult would enlighten all of us as to what was going on inside Sophie's heart and mind.

Here is Sophie's transcript of our communication last summer:

BN: Hello Sophie,

This is Brigitte, the One Who Listens. Would you like to share with me? I am a translator for dogs. I communicate what you



send to me to your people.

Sophie: *I am very happy and safe here. (In BN's office.) Please let them know my primary concern is always, always, always how safe anything or any place is for me. I am very uncertain about "New". "New" hasn't been easy for me. There is a lot of new, new, new, all, all, all the time. I get very tired of sorting out "New".*

BN: Yes, I understand that. John and Alice love and care about you very much. They want to know more about you. They are very curious about who you are and so am I.

BN: What have you come in to do?

Sophie: *I have come in to be loved. I CRAVE, CRAVE, CRAVE LOVE. All I desire is LOVE. I am a very loving dog, very, but I'm UNCERTAIN. I'm NEVER SURE, NEVER, that I won't be hit or pushed back when I reach out for love. All I ever heard was how stupid and dirty I was. "Get out of the way you stupid and dirty dog", is all I heard.*

BN: I see.

BN: What was your life before the shelter/rescue place?

Sophie: *I stayed in a yard. I was the "yard" dog. They had inside dogs, but I was the yard dog.*

BN: Did you get food?

Sophie: *We all got food.*

BN: Were there other dogs (outside)?

Sophie: *No, cats. There were cats. I ate cat food.*

BN: What does Alice need to know she doesn't already know?

Sophie: *I'm okay. I'm okay.*

BN: What does John need to know?

Sophie: *I'm okay.*

(BN: Internal note: this dog's expectations of life very low.)

BN: What can they do to help you adjust?

Sophie: *Just tell me everything. Talk to me, talk to me, talk to me. I LOVE it when they TALK to ME. love, love, love, love, love (it).*

BN: Great. You are very pretty. They so love having you.

BN: How does your body feel?

Sophie: *Fine*

BN: How do you feel about your house?

Sophie: *It's "my" house?*

BN: Yes. It is Alice and John's home and your home too. This is your "forever" home.

Sophie: *Not a temporary home, an in-between home?*

BN: No, this is your "forever" home.

BN: Do you like your home?

Sophie: *Strange, still.*

BN: *You like the yard?*

Sophie: *FAMILIAR, I've always been outside.*

BN: Now, you are both an inside and outside dog.

BN: Do you like the car?

Sophie: *Love the car, love the car, love the car.*

This communication is filled with relevant information about why Sophie spent all this time outside—why, after three months, she still hadn't made a permanent association with her new people and her new home and why she didn't seek out the love she craved.

As is often the case, contained within the communication is the solution to the problems. Sophie asks is for her people to talk to her to help her adjust. Of course, they had been talking to her all along, but now, the intent behind the talking would be imbued with awareness and knowledge obtained from Sophie herself. They knew why she was doing what she was doing—she knew they knew. At last, Alice and John were confident that she craved their love. Until then, they had given her the emotional and physical space she seemed to prefer. I sensed, until she experienced it on a consistent basis, inclusion in her people's world would never be self-evident to Sophie. We needed a clear link Sophie could use to join in (if she wished to do so.) That took the form of "invitation/inclusion". Alice and John were to make a point to invite her to come inside; to invite her to participate in everything all the time. To show and reinforce, beyond a doubt, she was part of the household and their life.

Everyone went home feeling there had been a breakthrough, but would it carry through into a change of behavior? Would Alice and John be able to draw cute Sophie into their life? Would Sophie be able to shed her "baggage" with ease or would it take some time? Would she become more confident about her environment?

After four weeks I made my customary courtesy follow-up call to get an update on Sophie. I was overjoyed by Sophie's progress. She, Alice and John had come quite far. Alice observed Sophie improve drastically the day after her consult. Her tail relaxed and appeared fluffier. They had wisely chosen not to go on a planned trip to stay home and work with their dog. They talked to her a lot and made a point to invite her

to join them. They diligently applied all the suggestions we had come up with and Sophie started to choose to be with them. Alice walked her briefly twice a day to broaden her range of experience. Sophie progressed enough to explore her neighborhood in a secure, controlled manner. Soon, she wasn't returning to her lookout spot on the slope anymore and started to sleep with them on the bed or picked numerous places in the house to nap. Eventually, she became confident enough to visit a friend's house and explore and enjoy the company of "strangers" in a new environment. Sophie continues to glow with joy and happiness in her new life with Alice and John. And a final update if you wondered, like I did, if Sophie now barks. She does, like an emotionally balanced dog.

**\*\*Thanks goes out to all these hard working volunteer rescue groups that make it possible for down and out companion animals like Sophie to get a second chance.\*\***

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## **Noble Shady**

The Year of the Horse (January 31, 2014-Wood element) and an article in California Riding Magazine February '14 issue couldn't be a more fitting time to kick off my blog. A project that has been on the back of my mind for quite some time. And, of course, we must start with a horse. A horse that represents all that is noble and generous in horse spirit and body. Shady, a gifted hunter/jumper who generously contributed to the success of several riders over the years is such a horse. At the time of our consult this Thoroughbred was 19 years old and ready for a change of pace.



One of her first jumper shows.

Her person, Christy, contacted me because she was about to make a very important decision about leasing out her mare out of the area to a young girl in Pony Club. Spending quality time with her horse is always an issue. Christy is often out of town for her work and wants her horse to stay active mentally and physically. Shady had recently come back from a lease with a teenage rider and she wasn't too sure she should send her off again. She knew her mare liked her work and was concerned about limiting her to a more sedentary lifestyle. But this time, upon her return, Shady's legs really showed physical signs of wear and tear. Young riders benefit from riding a mature, seasoned horse but can drive them a bit too hard. Most likely, this is what happened. Christy recognized the years of jumping were taking their toll and she needed to find out what her mare wanted to do next.



I'll let Shady give her point of view through the transcript of our phone consult:

BN: Hello Shady,

This is Brigitte, the One-Who-Listens. I am here to be a go-between and translator for you and Christy.

Shady: Please let Christy know I do NOT, NOT, NOT, NOT want to leave her ever again. I want to be with her. I want to be with her. I am very attached. Very. I do not care to be leased out ever again. I am "somebody's horse" when I'm leased out. I get a big hit to my STATUS. Here I am "Queen Mare". I am recognized, respected. I am very, very happy here. I am. Please let Christy know this. I am very happy here and I do not want change. I am not as flexible as she thinks. I am not. I do not like the idea of a new person and a new facility. This is the best, best, best place, EVER. The best.

BN: I'll be sure Christy understands.

BN: What have you come in to do?

Shady: To be honored and appreciated. I thrive on appreciation for my qualities and my abilities. I am a horse with substantial abilities to overcome any obstacle or challenge. I am, I am, I am.

BN: What are you teaching?

Shady: I teach nobility. I am noble, I am noble, I am noble. I have great courage and stamina. I am noble (BN: Also as in excellent breeding.)

BN: What does Christy need to know she doesn't already know?

Shady: I am tired. I am tired. I am tired.

BN: Please explain "tired".

Shady: Need a rest, need consistent-same. Don't want any more changes to my routine. I am tired.

BN: How does your body feel?

Shady: Okay.

BN: Do you have any soreness?

Shady: Hocks (ankle joints just above the rear hooves) get puffy and sore, they do. Knees too.

...BN: What else would you like to share?

Shady: I am worried.

BN: That's okay, we'll sort it all out for you. Christy hears your concerns and she is keeping you close by. You will not be leased again. She apologizes for even thinking about leasing you again. She is very sorry.

Shady had therapeutic shots to her legs a while ago, Christy wanted to know how they helped.

BN: How did the shots help when you stopped being ridden by the young person?

Shady: My appreciation goes to all the body work and the shots. I leave it up to Christy, I'm in need of a shot now. It is hurting again, everyday, not just every other day.

Christy learned so much about her mare's state of mind from

this consult. She hadn't realized how attached Shady was to her, personally. And that she needed her presence more. They are now more bonded than ever because the nature of the relationship and the horse's feelings towards her are clear. Her veterinarian came out and treated Shady's legs. Her stifles (back knee) in particular. She did move her to another barn, but it isn't very far away and she seems to be fine there. We will perhaps do follow-up and "hear" how Shady likes it there from Shady herself.

A frequent question in a horse consult is "Does my horse like me?" Rarely is this a concern in respect to a dog or a cat. Dogs show their feelings and their devotion clearly. A cat person knows about their cat's affection too. But it seems people have more difficulty in sensing a more intimate connection from a horse. Horses live in a barn or corral and don't jump on your lap for a cuddle. Most often they work for us in one manner or another. Nevertheless, they show they care in many ways, often in subtle behavior that may not communicate the depth of the feeling as effectively or clearly as a companion animal. I am always so happy to let a person know how much their horse cares about them.

In Antoine de Saint Exupéry's *Little Prince* we find the story of the Little Prince and the fox, where the fox teaches the little boy how to develop a bond with him. A bond through which each of them will see each other as special and unlike anyone else. He asks him to come back at the same time so that he may begin to look forward to his visit several hours before he shows up. He prefers to know which days he will come, it makes those days different than the others, more special. During his visit, he would like the Little Prince to develop a routine he can identify with him, and only him. These simple and essential steps foster their special connection.

One of the best places to develop a connection with a horse is during the quiet communion of grooming. In *Zen Mind Zen Horse*, Allan J. Hamilton, MD, has a chapter called "Grooming



as an Act of Love.” Grooming is a natural opportunity for closeness and for developing a feel for the particular horse. During regular grooming sessions one detects the horse’s moods and state of mind. One finds out how he likes to be brushed or curried, his or her sensitivities and particularities. In ideal circumstances it is done in silence, at a slow, regular pace. A person’s inner awareness is turned towards the horse. They are both present, in sync. By this I mean, the person has slowed down to “horse time” which is a flowing continuum far different from our chopped up mental clock time. (Many people don’t switch gears and prefer to talk and socialize and/ or think about what is next on their agenda.) When grooming is done in the present moment, with complete presence and awareness, it sets the stage for receptivity in the person. A receptivity that allows the deeper, special, connection with the horse to take place and flourish, like the Little Prince and his fox. The very connection Christy recovered when her mare returned to her care and Shady became “Queen Mare” and special again.