

A Chicken, Three Ducks and a Party of One

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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 4th 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 4th ~ 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.