

## C H A P T E R   F I V E

### How Animals Help Us Awaken

*Could you look an animal in the eyes and say to [him or her]:  
“My appetite is more important than your suffering?”*  
Moby

I, Judy, was sailing with my husband on a trimaran off the eastern coast of the Baja peninsula. We were sailing at night in order to arrive at our destination at dawn when we could better make out the landmarks we needed for safe harbor.

It was exhilarating beyond anything I'd ever experienced. At first, things seemed to be going along well, but then the wind came up and waves started crashing over the bow. I could feel myself beginning to panic, but I knew I had to remain calm. I said a prayer, and the waves got bigger. However, within seconds of my prayer, a flash of white caught my eye.

I looked, and there in the glow of our stern light, a brilliant white gull flew—staying perfectly even with our boat and also staying in the light where I could see her. How can one explain a “knowing”? It is just something you feel so deeply that no one can talk you out of it. I “knew” that gull had come to help me. How did she know I needed her, and how did she arrive so quickly? She stayed near to me for as long as it took for me to become completely calm and full of peace. I “knew” that she had come to calm me and care for me. Somehow, she communicated to me—“Look at me. I am safe here on this windy sea, and because I am safe, you are safe. We are in God’s loving arms now and always. Have no fear. Love is everywhere present.”

No one knows how many people have been saved from drowning, and shark attacks, by dolphins, yet human beings kill millions of dolphins each year and enslave many others in the “entertainment” industry. Whales, also the target of human greed for centuries, have saved many an unfortunate sailor. Just about everyone knows a story of a dog who has rescued a person, but few know that pigs, horses, cows, monkeys, birds, and many other animals have done the same.

But beyond the saving of our physical lives, perhaps the most entrancing, mysterious, and thought-provoking sort of help we get from animals is spiritual and emotional. Though the reason for this help may elude us at this point in our development, we cannot help but wonder if animals are divine messengers, far more in tune with God than we, and willing, whenever called upon, to touch a needy, hurting heart and heal it. Cody—part chow, part golden retriever—comes to visit us almost every day from his farm house down the road. When I look into his eyes, I see God, for God is unconditional love, and that love just beams and shines from Cody’s eyes.

The lesson learned from animals is clear. If we harm or kill them, we suffer great spiritual grief, unconscious though it may be. When we see them as our planetary relations, worthy of our respect and love, the love and peace that envelops us is beyond measure.

## Then I Met “Chicken”

*It took a little chicken showing love to awaken Jennifer Rotondo to the realization that chickens not only have personalities but can sometimes even be heroes.*

Jennifer Rotondo, an editor for *The Observer Dispatch*, was so moved by the heroic action of a little chicken that she felt the need to write an article in her publication about it.

Early in her life she had loved cows and pigs so much that she did not eat them. However, as she explained it, she was still “able to separate poultry from the other animals”. But that was to change when she reached the age of sixteen.

At that time her boyfriend Tom purchased a chick to feed to his pet python. The chick was so adorable that it was difficult for Tom to put her into the python’s cage. Nevertheless, he did, but to his and Jennifer’s amazement the chick was too quick for the snake. Tom was so impressed with this little “scrapper” that he took her out of the cage, and she became a part of the family. He named her Chicken.

“She developed a distinct personality,” wrote Rotondo, “and preferred certain people to others. She would meet you at the car when you pulled into the driveway.” However, the event that ended chicken-eating forever for this teenager was yet to come.

One day Jennifer and Tom were walking in his unfenced yard with his niece, who was just a toddler. A large dog started coming toward them growling and appearing quite threatening. The two teens picked up the baby and began to walk quickly toward the house. At this point the menacing dog began to run toward them.

It was then that Chicken showed her heroic nature. “Chicken swooped in, flying erratically, hopping and flapping her wings while pecking at the dog’s face.” This confused and distracted the dog so much that he ran away. And Chicken resumed her normal day, pecking in the grass, as if she had done nothing extraordinary.

Through this, Jennifer saw first hand that “chickens are smart,

social creatures that form bonds with each other and protect their families. And I," wrote Jennifer, "am living proof."

*Rotondo, Jennifer. "Observer-Dispatch", posted online May 22, 2008. Rotondo is Weekend Plus editor for the Observer.*

## The Story of Queenie

She made a daring dash from a New York City slaughterhouse in Queens and won the hearts of thousands of people who joined her quest for freedom.

We're talking, of course, about Queenie, a young cow who was slated for slaughter at Astoria Live Poultry, a meat market that keeps live animals and allows customers to choose the animals they want butchered. After hearing the screams of other animals, Queenie made her own choice—a choice any animal would make in the same situation if given a chance. After escaping from the slaughterhouse, she ran several blocks through the streets of New York City, surprising motorists and passers-by. Though she avoided capture at first, the five-hundred-pound cow was finally caught after a wild chase with NYPD cars, local authorities, and a tranquilizer gun.

Gene Bauston (now Baur), Director of Farm Sanctuary, reported on her heroic escape to freedom: "Queenie's freedom dash was quickly picked up by the media—and her story spread throughout the country. Queenie's courageous escape was featured on national television, and millions of viewers saw a frightened cow running from the slaughterhouse, clearly aware of the fate that had awaited her. Hundreds of calls poured into The Center for Animal Care and Control and Astoria Live Poultry, urging both the agency and the slaughterhouse owner to release the animal to a sanctuary where she could live out the remainder of her life.

"Alerted to the cow's plight by Farm Sanctuary members, we immediately contacted the animal control agency and offered to provide Queenie a safe, loving, permanent home. For several hours, it

was unclear if the agency would obtain custody of the cow, but public sentiment and pressure paid off—and the slaughterhouse owner agreed to give the cow to the city. In statements to newspapers, Aladdin El-sayed, owner of Astoria Live Poultry, which is a halal slaughterhouse stated, ‘God was willing to give it a new life, so why wouldn’t I?’ (*Newsday*). El-sayed also stated he had paid \$500 for the cow, and had been fined \$1,000 for causing an ‘animal nuisance.’ The Health Department may fine him an additional \$2,000. El-sayed claimed he ‘lost a lot of money,’ but that it didn’t matter because, in his own words, ‘There is something with this cow.’ (*Daily News*)

“After receiving the word on Friday afternoon that Queenie would be given to Farm Sanctuary, our animal transport vehicle was rolling to New York City by Friday night. We picked up Queenie from the JFK Airport where she was being held, and drove her directly to our New York shelter. Queenie jumped off the trailer amid cheers from the sanctuary staff...and loud ‘welcome’ moo’s from the shelter cows.

“Queenie has put a face on vegetarianism. With news stories on the major television networks, Associated Press, and articles in *The New York Times*, *New York Daily News*, and dozens of other newspapers, millions of people have learned that farm animals have feelings too.

“Queenie’s quest has also launched a neighborhood effort to close the slaughterhouse. Like Queenie seizing her moment for freedom, residents have seized the news media to draw attention to their demand to close the meat market. Among their concerns reported in the *New York Post*, residents stated, ‘This is a market that we don’t believe is treating anything humanely, and we want to see it closed for that reason alone...Through the night, you can hear the screaming of the animals. I don’t know what they are doing to them.’”

Queenie knew, and now the rest of the world knows, too.

*Volpe, Tina, reprinted from The Fast Food Craze: Wreaking Havoc on Our Bodies and Our Animals, Canyon Publishing, LLC.*

## Smitten by a Kitten

*Eddie Lama, a tough-minded, New York City construction contractor was trying to get a date with a woman who just happened to be looking for a pet-sitter. Although Eddie disliked animals, he thought it would impress her if he took care of her cat while she was away. Little did he know that in the next few days, his entire life would be turned upside down. This one little kitten began to open his heart.*

*Eddie started watching the kitten with fascination. He was so playful and affectionate. Within a few days, this little cat awakened him to a whole new world of animals and animal consciousness. His entire perception of animals shifted.*

*Eddie began rescuing animals off the streets of New York and finding them homes. As he grew to know and love each one of them, he had another awakening. While petting one of the cats he noticed how much her leg felt like a chicken's leg. That evening he went to his brother's house for dinner, and they were serving chicken. He couldn't eat the chicken, because he had made that mind-blowing connection between the pets whom we don't eat and the animals whom we do eat. They are all the same in their desire to live and be loved.*

*Naturally he became a vegan. He also quit a 20-year smoking habit when he noticed that the smoke caused one of the cats to cough. The next step in his journey of expanding compassion was to begin participating in animal advocacy rallies, marches, and outreach events. Eventually, as a result of his passion to help animals and his inventive nature, he put together the FaunaVision van. This van traveled the streets of New York city showing videos of the plights of animals on TV screens mounted on the van. Activists everywhere, inspired by Eddie, developed smaller mobile units and other vans to bring the truth of what is happening to animals to the people. Eddie also founded the Oasis Sanctuary.*

*The award-winning documentary, The Witness ([tribeofheart.org](http://tribeofheart.org)), chronicles Eddie's journey from a violent world to a life of compassion and animal advocacy. This unique documentary has been called "the most persuasive and important documentary film ever made".*

*The following speech was given by Eddie at a Witness screening in London:*

...I know that many of you lead busy lives and may think that there are more important things to do than to sit here and watch a movie about furry critters. After all there is a war going on, so do we really need to worry about pigs and foxes and cows and cats? What about the children, the refugees, the starving and the dispossessed —shouldn't they be the focus of our efforts? Does it really make a difference if we stop hurting animals? Can we end human suffering by giving a damn about critters? The answer is yes.

What you saw here tonight is not necessarily a movie about animals as much as it is about the principles and concepts of compassion and nonviolence. Compassion is defined as sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it.

After all what is compassion if it is applied selectively? It's a form of an 'ism, no? Can we claim to love children if we only love white children? Can we claim to be peace lovers, but only as it applies to our own country?

There is also the idea of bearing witness to wrong-doing and speaking out against it. Currently in NYC there is an advertising campaign that urges the public to inform the appropriate authorities if they suspect something potentially harmful is going on. The tag line is: "If you see something say something." It is a media push by my government to help local authorities prevent terrorist attacks. I have not been in your wonderful city for about three years but I understand there is a similar message being presented to the people here. I think it is an imperative duty of all human beings to say something if they see something is wrong. It is this idea that has compelled me to action, in many ways by personal experience. Back in the seventies I was a victim of wrong-doing. Three people tried to kill me during a robbery related incident. (It was not all disco you know!) No one heard my pleas and no one came to my rescue and no one came forward. The crime went unpunished and the perpetrators went about wreaking their violence upon others seemingly with impunity. Since then I have often thought that if someone had said something, their reign of terror would have at least been shortened and maybe fewer people would have been hurt.

The ugliness of evil can only exist in the dark. Bearing witness and saying something shines a light on it. Being a voice brings with it a message that something is unacceptable. Gradually a particular ugly act becomes a source of shame and in turn makes it less salable to people of goodwill. It is much like slave ownership. It was once a measure of success but is now seen as a gauge of brutality and insensitivity.

There is a saying that goes, and I will paraphrase, that *truth* undergoes three phases before it is accepted as such. First it is ridiculed; then it is violently opposed; and finally it becomes self-evident. In my experience I have found this to be true. I think with the concept of animal rights we are at the second stage, with barely a toe into the third phase. We may not be able to end the atrocities in Darfur; or be rid of the oppressive nature of the Taliban; or end the war in Iraq; or the brutal occupation of the Palestinian people. No single action can do that. However, we can end the horrors and violence in our own lives by being mindful of the unheard suffering of our fellow-beings with just one act, right now, and that is by going vegan.

We can help alleviate the suffering of many sentient beings right away. This is something that is not as easily accomplished in the area of human suffering. So for me the areas of human rights and animal rights are not mutually exclusive but rather, inextricably intertwined within the concepts of compassion and nonviolence. It is not necessary to first end all human maladies before we address animal issues. In fact, a veggie diet will very likely extend one's life allowing the opportunity for one to advocate longer on human issues, how about that? Well, you have the idea.

Again I want to thank everyone for caring enough to be here. I will end this already too long soliloquy by quoting my best friend and Oasis sanctuary co-founder, the great, late Eddie Rizzo's favorite line: "The job of a good citizen is to keep one's mouth open."

P.S. In case you're wondering—all went well with the woman who introduced me to the cat, but the real love story lies with the animals. It's amazing what being smitten by a kitten can do—maybe change your life.

## Lauren's Lesson

*Kay Pfaltz (kaypfaltz.com) is the author of a lovely book entitled Lauren's Story: An American Dog in Paris. In her book one finds, possibly, the best description of that special bond between a dog and the person she or he loves. Those who read Kay's book and have not experienced the unconditional love and deep connection that animals can offer us will find it so beautifully explored and explained, they may well find themselves on their way to the local animal shelter to rescue one. Those who have experienced that dear and unforgettable connection will be forever grateful to Kay for putting it into words and indeed validating it. This mysterious and wonderful love that crosses the species barrier is absolutely real and, for some, the greatest gift on earth. As an example, here is a wonderful passage from Kay's book:*

*"I looked over at Lauren there beside me like always. Her face was now all white. She looked up and into my eyes. In all my life, I have never known such sustained happiness as that which I've felt when with her. I realized my gratitude had not only to encompass past and future, but present, and in this moment was perfection."*

*While Kay's book chronicles her travels with Lauren, her beloved beagle, it also touches upon her work as a restaurant critic and the many cafés where she and Lauren dined in Paris. But something amazing happened to this woman who once called herself a "raving carnivore". Lauren's unconditional love for Kay began opening up a space in her heart for other animals. In her "Afterword" to the third printing of Lauren's Story, Kay explains what happened next.*

When I wrote *Lauren's Story* I was still a gourmand and raving carnivore. One of my greatest pleasures was sitting down in a bistro and ordering an elaborate—usually several courses—yet simple meal. I knew how to order like the French. And I knew how to eat. This pleased both me and many a waiter...

[However, over time, I came to understand] if we dog-lovers look

in our dog's eyes and know he or she has a soul it seems obvious then that all animals do and that all animals are capable of feeling love, affection, pain or fear, no different from our dogs and cats. Yet the vast majority of farm animals lead abominable lives and we can no longer pretend this isn't so just because it's convenient to (our desires and pleasures beg us to turn a blind eye), or inconvenient not to (what-ever would we serve for dinner?). There is something wrong when dogs are flying on planes to Paris, dining out in restaurants or sleeping on plush pillows and ten billion farm animals never know one good day of life. Often we, the consuming public, perpetrate crimes against animals through ignorance. By educating ourselves to what is really happening behind the closed doors of the factory farm, I believe we can change this and move towards sustainable farming.

For these and other reasons I am now a vegetarian—something that seems antithetical to the French mentality of eating and dining and food itself, for not only are the French a nation of meat eaters, but the connotations surrounding the term “vegetarian” are the very things that make the French cringe and think badly of Americans: diets, fads, not valuing or understanding food. Said differently, “wimpy when it comes to food”. The vegetarian, to the majority of the French, is someone who doesn't take food seriously. Well, I understand food. I love it and what it means, particularly in France when it goes beyond ritual and tradition. *La table* in France signifies so much more than just “the table”. It means a place where family and friends can eat, drink, talk and be together, often for hours, over a simple, fresh meal. But I also value each individual life and especially in the case of factory farming, foie gras and other undeniably cruel practices. I no longer believe a few minutes, or even hours, of my pleasure is worth an animal's life, or suffering...What difference is there between my dog sitting next to me in a Parisian restaurant and the duck or lamb on my plate into which I'm about to stick my fork?...

We are all in this together, and helping the animals doesn't preclude us from helping humans. In fact, showing compassion to those supposedly weaker than us may be the first real step of social progress. As Gandhi said, “The greatness of a nation and its moral

progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.” Compassion, like love, is such that the more you give, be it to humans or to animals, the more you have.

## No Debate

*Zarinee Lee Zolivea was interested in vegetarianism as a child, but it was a yogi, a chicken and a giant marlin who helped her live true to her beliefs.*

From the time I can remember, I felt extremely close to animals. I never enjoyed eating meat, but did not understand why. From childhood through early adulthood, several pivotal and traumatic situations occurred in my life that marked my decision not to eat animal flesh. The first event occurred when I was seven years old, one day when my mother had just served breakfast. I asked my father what we were eating, and he said that we were eating a cow. I was horrified. It was incomprehensible to me how an innocent animal could be killed, cut up, and sold for food. I told my father I no longer wanted to eat meat, but he said I had to. He then proceeded to explain the importance of eating meat. Something told me this was inhumane. I knew that when I was old enough to make my own decisions, I would choose otherwise.

Time passed, and my father taught me to like the flavor of steaks, but I still despised the idea of killing animals. Then when I was seventeen years of age, while taking a summer business course, I walked into a business bookstore to purchase my textbook. As I reached up to pick out the book, an invisible hand stretched up further, and in so doing, I saw a book titled *Yoga for Americans* by Indri Devi. I knew that I was destined to read it, so I purchased the only copy I saw, and subsequently stayed up all night reading this wonderful book. It still amazes me how this book ended up in a business bookstore. The author taught me that over 50% of the world's population is vegetarian. I knew then I would follow suit when time gave me the privilege.

The opportunity finally came during my three year stay on the lovely multi-cultural island of Singapore. It was here that another crucial event took place. I had gone to the town square market to buy chicken. Instead of purchasing chicken packaged in cellophane, the consumer had to choose a live chicken, who was then decapitated and her feathers removed. The corpse was then cut up and ready for sale. After witnessing this suffering, I decided not to purchase any chicken. This event affected me greatly.

While in Singapore I had the privilege of taking yoga lessons, an experience that influenced me to study Hinduism and Buddhism. Many life lessons were learned, most importantly, to respect life in all forms.

Thereafter, I discontinued eating meat for the most part, except fish. However, this changed one summer when I visited the beautiful island of Catalina, where I witnessed the killing of a giant marlin. The fisherman was acclaimed a hero for catching “it”—him or her—but I wept at the sight. It occurred to me that this being must have had feelings. Sure enough, just a few years ago, a scientific study was conducted on marine life proving that indeed these creatures are sentient beings, with a pain system that functions like that of human beings.

After my daughters and I left Singapore, we continued to eat mostly vegetarian. Then about five years later, while at a church retreat, we made the decision to become full-fledged vegetarians. It was tough for us at first, as we were not acquainted with anyone else who followed our philosophy. It was very difficult for my parents, as they did not understand our beliefs. However, my stepmother tried her best to prepare vegetarian meals when she invited us over for dinner.

Another significant occurrence happened in 1987 when *Diet for a New America* by John Robbins was published. Based upon eight years of research, including collaboration with over 20,000 doctors throughout the world, the book impressed me greatly. Robbins taught me about the horrors of factory farming, how our food choices affect the environment, and how many diseases are caused by the

consumption of meat and dairy products. His book enabled me to make the transition from vegetarianism to veganism.

Robbins also influenced my profession when I was an instructor at an adult secondary-education school in Claremont, California. One of the subjects I taught was nutrition. I was able to teach both philosophies, that of the textbook and that of veganism, and I introduced the work of both Robbins and Dr. Michael Klaper. When the students were asked to debate both issues they said, "There is no debate." Spirit had helped me to teach them as well as humanly possible. Naturally I was delighted at their abundant enlightenment.

This commitment, the best choice I have ever made, has had a profound effect on my life. I am concerned about the suffering of animals, the violence perpetrated upon them, the assault on the environment, and world hunger. All these evils are lessened a little as a result of my choices. In addition, my health has improved and my body feels lighter.

It appears to me that this is an avenue for bringing in more light, as George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends, feels is paramount. Since I have adopted Quakerism as a way of life, my existence is now so much more joyful. The values that are set forth by George Fox are those I have held deeply all of my life. For example, Quakers do not believe in war or in hierarchy, but in manifesting peace and social justice. This is what life is all about, both in our relationship to our fellow humans and to animals. My heart is grateful to Fox. His inspirational writings and his indomitable spirit have inspired me to look for "The Light" in all sentient beings.

My intensive pilgrimage journey continues, in the words of Keats, as a "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness". My prayer and hope is that all human beings will not only walk in the light, but also come to an understanding that all life has meaning, and should be respected.

*Zolivea, Zarinea Lee. Online Vegetarian Friends journal.  
"The Peaceable Table", December, 2005, vegetarianfriends.net.*