

TALKING TO CATS

by

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The weather has taken a turn for the worse. Snow is predicted. I feel it in my joints. Furthermore, Trump's recent lies have put me in a bad mood. And my knee hurts. I fear it is arthritis I have inherited from my mother. Two years ago I made a decision. It was either anti-depressants or a cat.

A cat it would be.

Tasha jumps on my right knee, the one where I have pain. I call her Tasha, short for Natasha, the heroine of Tolstoy's War and Peace. She starts to knead the pants I am wearing. She is a top-of-the-line cat, a cross between a Siamese and a Burmese. She purrs. I run my hand along her back. Her fur is silky beige with chocolate color markings. Her eyes are a blue green. She is truly beautiful. Her warmth penetrates my knee. I swear, as do my other cat-crazy friends, that animals sense when you feel pain or are depressed. Tasha does. My mood lifts.

I am learning to communicate with Tasha. I am convinced she understands. I tell her that she has the most beautiful long whiskers in the world, and that I am sorry she can't go outside. I say I am sorry we had her spayed. She would have made sensational kittens. I tell her to take her claws out of my rug. She plonks herself on the key board of my computer and purrs when I tell her how much I hate technology.

In addition to cat chatter I now find myself increasingly interested in animals. Rather than listen to our president's latest idiocy on CNN I turn to the amazing animal programs on PBS. I learn that elephants grieve for their dead and that an octopus is capable of showing affection for a marine biologist.

I recall my mother's later years when she cut a coconut in half and hung it outside the living room window. Occasionally a small grey field mouse braved the brick wall to join the sparrows at the coconut. My mother named the brave little creature, "Hercules". There was nothing exotic about these little non-descript sparrows who tweeted incessantly and fought among themselves for the coconut. My mother spent hours watching them.

"But they are alive!" My mother would say. When I asked how she could waste so much time watching them.

I admit it. I spend a lot of time watching Tasha. My observations are a kind of meditation. I watch as she places her paws with great precision on the counter top where she is not supposed to go. She moves on velvet pads delicately, careful not to knock anything over, waiting for me to tell her to get down. If nothing else, observing this beautiful creature who is so vibrant, I have an inkling of my place in the universe and forget covid-19 for a few minutes. I even half believe in God. I certainly believe in Nature.

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