



2018 ViBe Story Exchange Event Series

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Sassy's Story

We picked out our kitten at the Town Lake Animal Shelter in Austin, Texas. My son picked a tortoise/calico kitten with an orange “carrot” going up her nose. He named her Sassy. Her fur was the softest soft, and she let me rub her tummy every night before I went to sleep. Buddhists believe that any sentient being can be the incarnated Buddha; I believe that Sassy was just that.

From an early age, Sassy understood the importance of verbal communication with humans. She learned words, like “ah-er” for water, and “out” which she said quite distinctly. She would engage anyone in conversation, and she became the pet of the whole neighborhood. She would take walks with people, conversing as if she understood what they were saying to her. Upon returning, she would roll over and invite them to rub her tummy. She was very endearing and incredibly intuitive.

One cold, winter solstice night, a “Blue Norther” was headed to Austin. The temperature was dropping quickly, and I needed to cover my porch plants. For security reasons, I lived in a second story apartment and always double-bolted my door. For added security, I had a broom pole that I inserted into the sliding glass door of my porch. I called to my son to help me as I went onto the porch to cover the plants. I had no coat and no cell phone.

My son followed me onto the porch and slammed the sliding glass door behind him—as most male adolescents will do. He was shoeless, coatless, and phoneless as well.

“Mom, I locked us out,” he said, “The pole slid into place, and we are locked out.”

“No, no,” I replied in denial, “we can get back in.”

“No we can’t, Mom,” he asserted, “the door won’t budge an inch.”

I tried the door. He was right. It did not move an inch. The force of his slam had caused the pole to slide in place at the bottom of the doorway. The dangerous magnitude of our situation slowly dawned on me: we were stuck outside with the temperature dropping; we had no coats and no means of communication, and we were on a high, second-story porch. I also realized that my front door was double-bolted from the inside, make entry into the apartment very difficult. I looked around; there were no lights shining from other apartments; my neighbors had already left for the holidays. The night was black and cold.

“Mom, what are we going to do?”

“Start yelling!” I replied, and we did.

Nothing. No response. No lights. No help.

My poor son was starting to panic, and I was coming up with no solutions. That was when Sassy appeared in the living room, sat down, and stared at us as if to say, “What are you doing out there? Why are you yelling?”

In complete desperation, I told my son to imagine her pulling the pole from the doorway and to tap on the window by the pole. I had recently seen a Jane Goodall television special about how animals talk, and she believed—based on scientific research-- that they communicated through visual imagery. I also started imagining the pole falling from the door.

To our amazement, Sassy walked to the door and started rubbing her cheek against the pole. “Yes! Yes!” we cried. Then, to our added amazement, she rolled onto her back, slipped her paw under the pole, and pulled it off the door. We cheered! We were so relieved! We had been rescued in less than ten minutes! Sassy was our heroine! She acted like it was nothing at all, of course.

Our lives were filled with sweet Sassy moments. She was capable of deep intimacy in her cat way. On the night before she died, I was crying. I knew the time was close; she was very sick. I couldn’t imagine a day without her conversation, or a bedtime without rubbing her soft tummy. She was laying next me as I was doing our nightly tummy rub, when she suddenly rolled over and looked straight into my eyes with great clarity. Then she took the tip of her soft tail and touched my nose, then her nose; my nose, then her nose; my nose, and her nose--three times while looking into my eyes as if to say, “We are one. I love you.” She died the next day.

Although there is a Sassy hole in our lives now, we feel blessed to have had the privilege to know such an exceptional being. She filled our lives with laughter and wonder. She was a delight. She was a shelter cat. You never know where you might meet the Buddha.