

Preface

Sometimes I envy cats...and from time to time I am especially irritated by their « devil may care » attitude. Nevertheless, I do love them, simply for being themselves.

Cats have exerted a special fascination since time immemorial, and have been the subject of many mysteries, myths and fables. They are controversial animals, both revered and hated. Many of us share our family homes with a pet of some kind, but it seems that dogs and cats are our most treasured companions. But who are the people with a preference for cats? We can be sure that cats don't have masters; rather they live together in harmony with their companion, under the same roof. Cat-lovers have a few common traits: they love peace, freedom, independence. They dislike appropriating things by force, or are simply incapable of doing so. The way they love their partner reflects their vision of tenderness and togetherness. Sometimes they have yet to find an unconditional love which corresponds to this ideal, but their secret desire is to be loved for their gentleness, for who they are. They dream of a love freely given, without undue effort, and the security of knowing that they will not be abandoned. These qualities are also exhibited by the animal they favour.

If we neglect to nurture a positive outlook, the violence projected onto our television screens can edge us towards depression. But somehow, in spite of all this human violence, we can still discern a stupendous array of cohabitant species on this shared planet of ours. With a sense of revulsion I note that some species, despite being totally harmless to man, have been cruelly martyred, exterminated for the sole purpose of profit. But let us leave to one side certain apocalyptic images diffused by the media, and consider our individual conduct with regard to our fellow beings. An animal's condition, except when it is afflicted by illness, is a reflection of the psyche of its owner. To name but a few: horses, dogs and cats. What inner turmoil leads people to abandon their pet by the roadside whilst they are on holiday, when the poor animal is in no state to fend for itself? Where are their scru-

ples? Pets often find themselves playing a principal role in the emotional life of human beings, and where harmony is lacking, they are often on the receiving end of the ensuing violence.

Nevertheless, they have highly developed senses, and their perceptions are far more acute than our own. Often children, whose senses have not yet been numbed, build a close relationship with the family pet, precisely because their reciprocity and sensitivity are still natural.

I have chosen to share some stories about a house-cat. Such cats are presumed to enjoy a princely life. But this rosy image can sometimes blind us to the fact that these animals' lives are at least partially intertwined with those of their owners. They share all their adventures, their ups and downs.

With keen perception, always striving to understand the behaviour of house-cats, Miss Daisy recounts her life story with both tenderness and lightness of touch. The stories should appeal to young people as well as animal lovers, but most especially to cat lovers. Domestic pets can contribute to the overall education of our children, teaching them how to give and receive love. This in turn can engender a positive approach to their relationships with the outside world. Recent research suggests that listening to purring can have therapeutic effects, such as pain relief, release of tension, and an overall calming effect on the body. Purring stimulates our senses, echoing the contentment felt by our feline friends whenever they are in close proximity to us.

In short, I can only affirm the beneficial effects of such tender relationships. They amount to a rich exchange, and can also act as a safe haven in hard times, stopping us from sinking into deep despair. I have chosen to use simple language, with smatterings of joy and humour. Naturally, as is to be expected, the cat's actions are instinctive. Ah! To stretch out on the couch whenever we feel like it, just like our purring friends! They are a picture of independence, and we often envy them. My son, a young man now, recently said to me: « Sometimes I wish I was a cat: To be able to sleep whenever I want, to be free of money worries or any other restrictive obligations, to listen only when I feel like it ».

Finally, I wish to express my support for all the organisations and individuals fighting to preserve other species and their habitats. The people who are fighting this real battle to protect nature often work on a voluntary basis.

How to read the texts

After the story entitled «Moving», the pages are entitled either «Daisy» or «Laura». You could read the pages entitled «Daisy» first, then go back and read her owner's version of events, or indeed vice versa. Alternatively, you could opt to read the stories paragraph by paragraph, comparing the two versions as you go along. I have tried to convey the difference between the two parties, a process which afforded me genuine pleasure during the writing of the stories.

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