

## A moving story about how meeting a “talking” cat changed one veterinarian’s life

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Source: **Sonikku Sokuho** Top image: Family's e-mail



Have you ever wondered what your pet would say to you if it could talk? What kinds of things would you want to ask it in return? One Japanese woman claims that she encountered a cat that could talk around the time when she first started working as a veterinarian. This cat shared many things with her that changed her whole outlook of the profession and view of animals. The vet recently decided to share her profound experience with the rest of the world on an online forum. Whether you believe her words or not, this introspective story is sure to touch your heart. Keep reading to decide for yourself.

Thank you for clicking on this thread. My story will be a bit long, but a recent occurrence has reminded me of these events once again. This time I would like to write it down to share with everyone. So if you'd like, please listen to what I have to say.

The following events happened to me eight years ago. I had just graduated from college with my veterinary license. I had just started working at a university-affiliated animal hospital. Even with the university connection, the facility wasn't that large. The veterinarian who acted as my boss was always saying, "Our work as veterinarians may involve a lot of charitable work, but it's unrealistic for us to take in every stray cat or dog. If we gave shelter to every stray animal, we would go bankrupt. Even under normal circumstances our salaries are low, so how would we ever make a profit? Never forget that this profession is a business." This man resembled the actor Takao Ozawa in some way, so from now on I will just call him "Takao."

Takao was 10 years older than me and fulfilled a central position at the animal hospital. I hated him because I couldn't understand his concept of "veterinary science as a business." However, it was an accepted truth at the hospital and most of the staff operated under that principle. It was a shock to someone like me, who had always loved animals and grew up wanting to become a vet, for the hospital to adopt such a concept. Of course, I understood that just because someone loves animals doesn't mean that he or she will make a great vet. You need to acquire many official qualifications, too. However, my ideal image of a vet was very different from the "business, for-profit" stance of the hospital, so no matter what I couldn't bring myself to like it.

For example, I want you to think about this. Using even just one kind of antibiotics as part of a medical treatment for an animal can be extremely expensive. When the lovable pets that you consider as part of your family get ill or injured, you take them to an animal hospital in the hopes of easing their pain a bit. Even when you are desperately concerned for them, you are charged a large bill for the medical treatments. As the pet owner, you may be thinking, "I just want to save my pet," but the reality of the monetary situation may trample over your feelings.

I was disgusted with this system of the hospital. I felt that I couldn't continue working for such people. I even considered quitting my job to join some kind of volunteer organization. In the beginning, I couldn't help feeling this way.

Then one time, an old woman stopped by late at night. She said that something was wrong with her 19-year-old tomcat, which was a charming American Shorthair. A quick inspection showed that his kidneys were failing, and he had fallen into a comatose state.

That day, Takao and I were staying up all night because we were concerned about a dog whose condition wasn't improving. Takao was making a blatantly reluctant face. Because there was no other choice, I performed a brief medical examination and explained the current situation to the woman. "I would like to do a more thorough examination, so we will look after your cat tonight. If we don't do a detailed examination, we won't know which path to take for the treatment. So please come back tomorrow," I told her. "Okay," she replied, and left by herself.

The next day, the cat was still unconscious. After a more detailed medical examination, we discovered that a large tumor was spreading throughout his entire body. He was probably in terrible pain. Due to kidney failure, his heartbeat was very weak. Taking into account the fact that the cat was 19 years old, I wanted to lessen the pain as much as possible, and concluded that it would be best for him to spend his last moments alive at home with his owner. When I told this to the old woman, she wanted some time to make preparations and asked if we could watch over the cat for one more day. I consented. That evening, the cat opened his eyes. In his pitiful state he made a movement as if to search for his owner and meowed. I felt a little relieved and went home.

The next day was my day off so I slept until the evening. But then Takao called me – his voice sounding angry. When I asked what was wrong, he said that no matter how many times he tried, he couldn't make contact with the cat's owner. It looked like the old woman had weaseled out of the bill. The name, address, and phone number that she had written down for us were all fake. Well, it wasn't an unusual occurrence, to say the least.

For the time being we ended the conversation by agreeing, "Let's wait until tomorrow." I worked the next day, but the old woman still had not come to pick up her cat. Takao said, "We can't continue treating him for free. It's a shame, but we have no other choice but to stop giving him medicine and wait for him to die." I looked at the cat's face and was overcome with sadness.

"I'll take the responsibility!" I suddenly blurted out. When I think about it now, I was lacking in professional sense as a veterinarian by doing that. It wasn't something that I should have done, and I don't know what made me say that. But I couldn't just abandon the cat.

After that day, all of my time outside of work was dedicated to looking after the cat. He stayed hospitalized for a few days, and then after his condition improved I took him home with me on an IV drip. I tried everything to lessen his pain.

Then one day I returned home from work to find the cat standing on his legs. Even though the disease had not disappeared, his pain had lessened to the point that he could move around again. He could also eat soft food. I was overcome with a feeling of relief. I thought about how I wanted to make the cat's remaining time as happy as possible.

The next day I had an experience that I'll never forget. I'll tell you beforehand that I've told this story to many people and none of them have ever believed me. They say that it's definitely impossible. I've even been told, "You should go and get yourself checked at a hospital."

To put it simply, the cat spoke to me. As soon as I got home and before I had even turned on the lights, I said out of habit, "I'm home. How's your condition today?" The cat then replied, "I'm hungry." I couldn't believe my ears. "What?? You spoke?!" The cat repeated, "I'm hungry." I was so surprised that I couldn't speak. After that, the cat began to talk a lot.

He talked about his previous owner and lots of things about cats' feelings in general. What was most strange, though, was how he knew about things going on inside of the animal hospital that even I didn't know about.

Without fail, the chatting became one-sided whenever I turned off the lights at bedtime. Even if I tried to say something, the cat wouldn't respond, but just rambled on.

"That old woman didn't need me anymore so she threw me away. I became a burden to her so she got rid of me."  
"Your boss isn't actually that bad of a guy. Watch him closely."

"The woman who feeds us smokes at the hospital."  
"That cat with the long hair—I can't stand him."  
"The dog that was at the hospital will get better."  
"The food you give me tastes terrible."  
"We cats don't like catnip as much as you humans think."

He especially liked to talk about the animal hospital staff. At that time, I was only half-convinced that Takao was actually a decent person, so I thought to myself, "Why are you backing up such a cold-hearted person?"

Above all else, the female staff member smoking at the hospital became a big topic. I wanted to see whether the cat was telling the truth or not, so the next day I secretly spied on her at work. She entered a private room and really did start smoking. She had been working there close to 10 years, and was a well-liked person. I was afraid that if I said something, the repercussions would be bad. In any case, I reported it to a superior and she received a warning. I don't know what she was thinking, polluting the air at a hospital like that. Shortly afterwards, she quit.

At any rate, the cat kept talking. Sometimes, as if he could see my worries, he said,  
"You shouldn't carry so much weight on your back. We animals are stronger than you think."  
"Don't pity us. We're happy."  
"Humans are always in a hurry. Don't rush so much."  
"Don't feel like you always have to save us on a whim. There are some animals that would be happier dying."  
"Of course life is cruel."  
"Watch your boss more closely. Don't you want to be like him?"  
"You don't know anything, do you?"  
"Don't worry that you understood just by knowledge. There are some things that you can't see with your eyes."  
"Those things that you can't see are exactly what should be important to you now."  
"Every now and then you should take a walk or something for fun. Walks are good!"

The cat knew a lot about me. How I was always looking at the bad in people, chasing after my dreams, and lamenting that reality was cruel. On that day, I drank alcohol with the lights off.

Then, several days later, the cat passed away. He looked very peaceful in his last moments. The evening of the day before he died, he told me, "I am in your debt. Thank you. Be happy." I couldn't stop crying. We had only been together for a week, but that week was long enough to change my life forever.

At that time, I aspired to become a vet like my ideal image of one. I wanted nothing more than to be a kind vet. However, reality is not so kind. Takao knew how much empathy I felt for each animal patient, and told me, "You need to have a more professional outlook. Don't think that you can save every single animal. Animals are different from humans. You can only save a handful of the sick animals that come to the hospital—don't think that all animals that get sick come here. More come now than in the past, but there are still many pet owners who don't want to spend so much money. In the end, animals are just animals to humans. No matter how hard we try, the number of irresponsible pet owners does not decrease. Consequently, the number of animals that are mistreated or abandoned also does not decrease. It's impossible to save them all, even if you spend your whole life trying. As for me, I want to save as many as I can. But the pet owners are the ones who pay the medical fees. They're the ones who decide whether the animals will live or die." I could hear the regret in his voice.

It was just as the cat had said. Takao understood the reality of it well. I couldn't become a true veterinarian if I always opposed death. I resolved myself to not run away from death anymore.

I worked tirelessly after that. At times, I had to harden my heart and become like a demon. A few months after the cat died, there was a Shih Tzu dog afflicted with a heart disease that had been coming to our hospital since the time it was a puppy. It was six years old. One day, the owner became unable to endure the dog's frequent seizures. While signing a letter of consent, he said, "If it's suffering so much, please put it down. Contact me when it's done," and left the dog at the hospital. I was filled with troubling emotions.

Just before administering the drug, Takao spoke to the dog with a kind face. "Humans keep animals as pets for their own selfish desires. Even though your owner treated you so well up until now, he doesn't want to see you at the moment of your death. How selfish. But I have to end your life now; it's my job. I might not want to do this, but I'll be with you at the end. You lived to the fullest without giving in to your illness. You may have had more hard times than fun times. I'm sorry that I can't save you. You don't need to keep fighting anymore. Be reborn as a human in your next life. We can go drinking together. I swear. It's a promise."

I mustn't cry at the hospital. The animals would pick up on my anxiety. I mustn't transfer my insecure feelings to the dog at the moment of its death. I held back my tears and injected the drug. The dog died peacefully. When the

owner came to collect the body, he was crying loudly. "You don't have the right to cry!" Takao reprimanded him. It was the first time I had ever administered euthanasia.

This is the end of my peculiar story. My mother, father, younger sister, and friends all make fun of me and say, "You're lying!" Takao was the only one who didn't laugh. "So that kind of stuff really does happen," he said. "You could talk with a nekomata (note: nekomata refers to a mythical, two-tailed cat in Japanese folklore). Animals can probably see the true nature of humans better than we can ourselves."

### **Afternote**

Approximately two years ago, Takao said to me, "I'm going to start my own practice. Do you want to join me? We can get married at the same time. You're too slow at thinking about these things. Soon it's going to be too late for you to get married," he said while laughing.

We are now married and have opened our own practice. As always, we are just scraping by, but are living happily along with one cat. Takao said, "In 15 more years this cat is going to speak, too. Let's teach it many words before then so that it won't have trouble when the time comes. I want to meet a nekomata, too." We talk to the cat every day but it still hasn't showed any signs of speaking.

Excuse me for telling such a long story, and thank you for reading to the end. No one believes me, so maybe it really was all just a dream. But it's undeniable that my encounter with that cat completely changed my values.

Recently, I became pregnant. Our family will soon be blessed with a new life. I would like to face whatever life has to offer with the words of the cat and Takao engraved in my heart.

