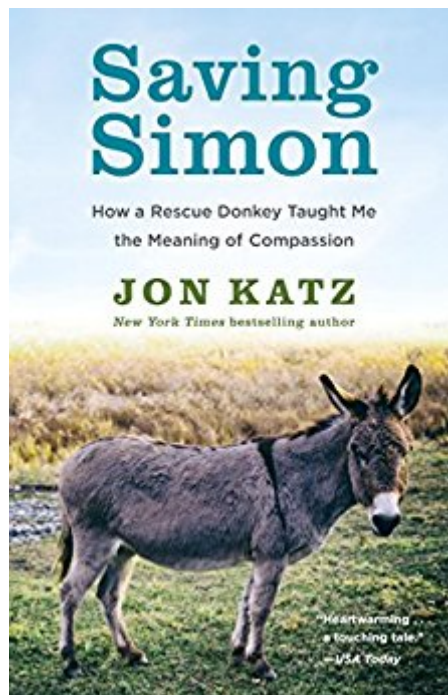




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Saving Simon: How A Rescue Donkey Taught Me The Meaning Of Compassion



Synopsis

In this heartfelt, thoughtful, and inspiring memoir, New York Times bestselling author Jon Katz tells the story of his beloved rescue donkey, Simon, and the wondrous ways that animals make us wiser and kinder people. In the spring of 2011, Jon Katz received a phone call that would challenge every idea he ever had about mercy and compassion. An animal control officer had found a neglected donkey on a farm in upstate New York, and she hoped that Jon and his wife, Maria, would be willing to adopt him. Jon wasn't planning to add another animal to his home on Bedlam Farm, certainly not a very sick donkey. But the moment he saw the wrenching sight of Simon, he felt a powerful connection. Simon touched something very deep inside of him. Jon and Maria decided to take him in. Simon's recovery was far from easy. Weak and malnourished, he needed near constant care, but Jon was determined to help him heal. As Simon's health improved, Jon would feed him by hand, read to him, take him on walks, even confide in him like an old and trusted friend. Then, miraculously, as if in reciprocation, Simon began to reveal to Jon the true meaning of compassion, the ways in which it can transform our lives and inspire us to take great risks. This radically different perspective on kindness and empathy led Jon to a troubled border collie from Ireland in need of a home, a blind pony who had lived outside in a pasture for fifteen years, and a new farm for him and Maria. In the great tradition of heroes—from Don Quixote to Shrek—who faced the world in the company of their donkeys, Jon came to understand compassion and mercy in a new light, learning to open up not just to Simon, not just to animals, but to the human experience. To love, to risk, to friendship. With grace, warmth, and keen emotional insight, *Saving Simon* plumbs the depths of the bonds we form with our animals, and the rewards of living a more compassionate, considered, and meaningful life. Praise for *Saving Simon*

Heartwarming . . . a touching tale. USA Today Highly recommended . . . an enjoyable and thoughtful work. Library Journal (starred review) [Saving Simon] handles the emotional highs and lows of living with animals with empathy and thoughtfulness, forcing readers to re-examine their own meanings of compassion and mercy. Kirkus Reviews The message of this true story will linger with the reader long after the book has been placed on the shelf. Bookreporter [An] uplifting and insightful memoir . . . Katz's fans and animal lovers of all kinds will no doubt be delighted by Simon's heartwarming story. Publishers Weekly Praise for Jon Katz With wisdom and grace, Katz unlocks the canine soul and the complicated wonders that lie within and offers powerful

insights to anyone who has ever struggled with, and loved, a troubled animal. John Grogan, author of *Marley & Me* "Katz's world of animals and humans and their combined generosity of spirit is a place you're glad you've been." The Boston Globe "From Toto to Marley, our canine friends are a sure bet in the literary biz. But no one seems to speak their language like Jon Katz." San Antonio Express-News From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

File Size: 3816 KB

Print Length: 225 pages

Publisher: Ballantine Books (October 7, 2014)

Publication Date: October 7, 2014

Sold by: Amazon Random House LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00JNQMME4

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #75,597 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #27

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Customer Reviews

While I commend Katz for saving Simon, like some of the other reviewers, I find his contradictory views hard to tolerate. I have read other books by him that I liked much better. I just wanted to call him up and scream at him when I got to the part in this book about how he dealt with poor Rocky the pony. Anyone with animal experience knows that older, infirm animals are a target for other animals and are often at risk of being bullied or injured. Yet, instead of separating the pony from the donkeys, which speaking from personal experience is in no way an insurmountable obstacle, he has the pony euthanized. I understand the pony was old and blind but he seemed to be doing ok before

Katz moved his animals onto the property where the pony had lived his whole life. He was stupid enough to put Rocky back in harm's way again after Simon had attacked him once, then implies that the pony suddenly goes downhill and needs to be euthanized, when what he probably needed was to be protected from Simon. I'm not blaming Simon, he was just being a donkey, but Katz shows poor judgement and the pony pays for it with his life.

I would not recommend reading this book if you care about animals. I thought I would be reading about Simon's life. Yet surprisingly and after detailing Simon's horrific neglect, near death, and months of needed recovery, the author veered off in later chapters talking about having compassion towards people that abuse animals. I did not get that at all. He goes on and on about the "dead eyes" of the farmer that abused Simon and writes about how we should have compassion for him. It's interesting to note, that during his conversation with the farmer, that the farmer did not apologize for abusing Simon. You did not get a sense that he knew what he did was evil. What's to stop him from abusing the next animal unfortunate to be on his farm? That issue was never mentioned in the author's musings. If that farmer had been a descent human being, he could have gone to a local library, cruised the internet for free and found a home for Simon. Farm Sanctuary is in upper state NY and I know they would have come and gotten the donkey for free. The farmer didn't do that. Instead he left Simon confined to rot and die in a too small, poorly rigged up hog pen, fully exposed to the elements. Simon would have died if the farmer's son had not had compassion and alerted the authorities. Compassion is earned: when you realize, you comprehend, what you did was so wrong and you make amends by changing the way you act in the world. From the author's book, you don't get the feeling that the farmer is even close to this state. Dismayed with what I had read, I continued on. That was a big mistake because you come to the history of the old, blind pony that is euthanized because the author cannot afford to put up a fence to separate the pony from Simon. Out of herd instinct, Simon takes to attacking the pony, head butting and biting him. Ugh just so frustrating and unfair, because the pony had lived his entire life on the farm property that the author had newly acquired. It just feels so unjust that the pony was killed. Judging from way author writes about animal rights people, he took a lot of heat for urging compassion for the farmer and for euthanizing the pony and I think he deserves it. It's amazing that people concerned over animal welfare rate poorly in the author's estimate than an animal abuser. Where's his compassion for them? I think he fails to understand their commitment to animal welfare and rights because in the end humans are more important than animals in his worldview. He writes this in his book. Furthermore, I think this book was really skirting around personal issues in the author's life. He mentions being abused as a child

and closing himself off from people and his emotions, but it is all on the surface, no details. Mix this up with Simon, and it is a really confusing and unsatisfying book, especially for me because I believe that humans must treat animals humanely at all times. We are not separate and not better than them. Period. When we get this right, things will change for the better on this planet. It's a given.

Katz has done it again. His books are always mesmerizing. His telling of Simon's story will make you mad at the mistreatment of all animals but as he weaves donkey history and his own history into the telling of Simon's story you will feel as if you are there listening and watching the story unfold. Jon does not just tell a good story. His own history story of the love of his dogs, sheep and the land makes you part of Katz love for his country home and care for all his animals. I always hate it when the book ends. Jon's heart is so big and his personality so warm, I always feel that I have been on a visit to his farm. Katz made me angry when he failed the little blind pony. I just think that Simon should have been tied up or put in another place due to his mean nature toward Rocky. Knowing what Simon did made me wonder why Jon did not take some preventative measures to keep Rocky safe. I truly got mad at Katz for being lax around Simon and his savagery. When I read about Rocky, I just stayed mad at Katz for days. Also, I do not think that the vet was right. I have learned my lesson about vets, you have to be the judge for your own animals--don't leave it up to science--the heart knows. Even Jon and his wife saw that Rocky was thriving. I think Jon might have feared the outcry from his neighbors if townsfolk would have seen Simon tied up as he should have been. Because I wasn't there, I have to pass on too strong an objection, but upon reading about Rocky's improvement and then suddenly having a vet tell Jon to put him down--I was shocked and in disbelief. Was this Jon Katz--animal lover? I would love to scream at Jon and say--"You just killed a healthy Donkey"!

What is compassion? Why do many people find it easier to feel compassion for animals than humans? And how can you feel compassion for a truly despicable person? Saving Simon is one person's (and one donkey's) story about defining compassion and attempting to follow through on it.

Another story of an abused animal that was rescued from the cruelty of it's owner. The only reason this got 4 stars instead of 3 is that it is a well-written book. The writer weaves in details of his own life into the story and it is nicely told.

Not my favorite Jon Katz book but OK. From the descriptions, the old pony was not given the consideration that he deserved. If one is going to properly care for an old animal one must be prepared to accommodate its needs and protect it from harm.

The book was alright. I can't decide how well I liked it. The sample lured me in so I bought the rest of the book. I believe there was a lot of repetition in his story. I don't know that I would read another of this author's books.

An enjoyable and easy read. I found his content to be a bit repetitive, telling the same thing over and over. However, if you have a love for animals and have an interest in small time farm life then the book is a delightful read.

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