

Chapter 1

I hope this [book] will inspire people. I like to think that this could be a start of the human race understanding the animal kingdom. I hope people will read this to their dogs and cats and horses so they know they have a voice. They can actually be heard. They can communicate their thoughts and feelings.

We are all of us alive and are all connected to the same consciousness. Life is life, souls are souls.

Ganimesdes

Ganimesdes, or “Gunny” for short, was a chocolate Labrador retriever who, as you will come to see, had hopes and dreams for his life, and had a lot to say.

Before he was able to communicate in complete sentences, Gunny was talking *all the time*. I didn’t hear him in terms of an audible voice, other than his barking to demand service. But if you have ever lived with a dog, you know that he or she is communicating with you constantly. The only question is whether or not you understand.

There was no mistaking when Gunny was happy, when he wanted dinner, when he wanted to play, when he wanted to be left alone, or—God help us all—when he was displeased. He most often communicated by staring at me and then looking over in the direction he wanted me to go: look up the stairs, ready to go to bed; look in the kitchen, time for a snack. If “the look” didn’t work, he would gently take my hand in his mouth and lead me to where he wanted to go. If he was feeling impatient, sometimes he would just go get his leash and give it to me as a way of telling me to take him outside. And on occasion, he literally nipped at my butt, driving me like a cow into the room that contained what he wanted. He once herded me into the kitchen all the way from the upstairs bedroom because I was five minutes late with his breakfast.

Occasionally, he would just stare into my eyes for long periods of time, wagging his tail, clearly talking to me, and I would have to shrug my shoulders and say, “Sorry, buddy, I just don’t understand what you’re saying.” This was often met with what I can only describe as a, “Hrmph,” and then he would walk off in frustration at my lack of ability to understand him—making clear that the failing was mine, not his.

At the risk of stating the obvious, I am not an animal communicator. There

are many people who are. I don't know how they each work, but they all seem to have an ability to forge a telepathic connection, a shared knowing, with animals. Telepathic communication has no geographic boundaries and no language—no words. It is a pure thought connection that can be “heard” across a room or across the country.

As I have now learned, every animal, just like every person, is unique and has his or her own *voice*. My voice is different from yours, of course. The mere fact that we are the same species doesn't mean that we think the same, feel the same, or talk the same. Why would it be different for non-human animals?

The fact that I can even raise the question represents quite an evolution on my part. I spent two decades as a corporate lawyer, dealing in a very structured world of irrefutable facts. But on some level, I have always believed that animals can communicate. After all, the first book that I fell in love with when I was nine years old was *Charlotte's Web*. However, until Gunny, I don't think that I really ever considered that animals could have articulate and profound observations to share if the right person was listening. Or, shall we say, was able to *hear*. In Gunny's case, Alexandra, my long-time friend who also happens to be clairvoyant, was that right person.

Gunny and Alexandra had met briefly when he was a puppy, but we then moved overseas and they didn't see each other again until he was eleven years old, when she came to visit me outside Washington, D.C., where I live now. During many of Alexandra's visits to Washington, she would spend a day doing psychic readings for various friends of mine who wanted one. She did not work with animals at that time, but only because no one had ever asked!

Since Gunny had had more than his fair share of illness, on one of her visits I asked her to draw Gunny's aura and do an energetic healing to try to help him, just like she did for people. As it turned out, she was able to see Gunny's energy quite easily, and the thing I remember most about that drawing was all the bright green-colored energy under his feet—that boy loved grass more than anything. He liked to lie in it, run in it, roll in it, smell it, and look for disgusting things hidden in it, as often as possible.

As she finished drawing his aura, she heard him speak to her. As Gunny himself would explain it later, *“I had watched Alexandra sitting at our dining room table drawing peoples' auras and speaking to them. I'm not sure why I started to pay attention to what she was doing, but now that I think about it, I liked the way the room felt and looked. I decided I would try to speak with her about me ... I like that she can hear me. It's so easy. She's interesting.”*

To be clear, Gunny didn't “speak” English. Alexandra understood the thoughts that he conveyed to her and she expressed her understanding of those

thoughts in English, because that is the language that *she* speaks. While she expressed the thoughts he shared with her in English, the things she said sounded nothing like the way Alexandra talks: *"I want a new bed. Mine is not comfortable. I want a red ball to play with. I want Laurie to explain to me what stars are. I sit outside at night and see them but I don't know what they are. I want her to talk to me the way she talks to her friends. Why doesn't she talk to me like that?"* If Gunny was going to speak, it didn't surprise me in the least that his first words were a to-do list for me.

Predictably, I immediately began fulfilling his wish list. I went to Orvis to get him a giant orthopedic bed so that he would be more comfortable. We went to PetSmart together so he could walk up and down the toy aisle and pick out the red ball that I *knew* he was never going to play with, and never did. (He didn't like to fetch. He found it pointless.) I lay down with him one night in the grass, under a clear sky, and did my best to explain to him what stars were. I began talking to him in complete sentences, telling him about my day, telling him everything I thought and felt.

What started as a "lark" (his word, not mine) one day in my dining room grew into something none of us could have anticipated. For the next several years, Gunny and Alexandra spoke occasionally, usually at my request, and usually about how he was feeling or if he was willing to undergo one medical treatment or another. He was always forthcoming with his opinions, but the conversations never seemed to trend to the philosophical—they were more transactional: *"Yes, I want the surgery if it is necessary for me to live,"* or *"My back hurts,"* and so on. Back then, he sounded simple and dog-like.

That all changed when he became gravely ill at thirteen years old. It is a story that we will get to, but something changed in him during the course of that illness and his recovery. Perhaps being so close to death gave him a heightened awareness; an awakening of sorts. I truly do not know what happened. But from that point forward, the clarity of his thinking, his choice of words, his ability to remember things, and the nature of his comments when he spoke to Alexandra evolved rapidly. His words were astonishing, and much more complex than in their earlier conversations.

In light of that, I asked Alexandra to do something she had never done before: *"Please interview Gunny on a list of subjects that I have come up with to get his thoughts and feelings about them."* She didn't laugh, but she was a bit wary because this was a mighty strange assignment. She said she would do it on one condition—*"I am going to write down whatever he says, as he says it, and will not change anything or edit anything even if what he says is not what you want to hear."* I agreed.

The list of subjects I had put together ranged from, “What was the best moment of your life?” to “What is life’s purpose as you see it?” I yearned to understand more about his perspective on his life; *our* life. We had a relationship of equals by that point. I no longer really noticed that he was in a dog suit and I was in a person suit. We were a single unit. Two who fit together as one. It was unconventional at best, and I needed him to help me make sense of it all.

But the driving factor in asking her to interview him was that I felt that we should write a book—*this* book—about our life together. For years, people who knew us and who knew of our adventures had said to me, “You really should write a book.” I laughed it off because what on earth made my life so special that anyone would want to read about it? Over time, however, I realized that while I was not so special, *he* was. *We* were.

So having agreed to participate in this crazy project, Alexandra told Gunny that I wanted him to share his thoughts about a variety of subjects because I wanted to write a book with him about our life together. His response? “*Oh goody. I get to write my memoirs.*” Pardon me, Gunny, but it is *our* memoirs. (He always was a bit of a narcissist.)

Once Gunny started this writing project, words poured out of him for hours at a time. He had had many years to observe and to think. He was now ready to talk about his life and our journey together. I had always had a lot of respect for Gunny, but I had never imagined that stuffed inside a chocolate Labrador retriever body was a being not so different from me, and who had rather humbling insight into life.

Gunny and Alexandra spoke regularly over a six-month period of time, whenever Gunny was in the mood. Alexandra would contact him, let him know which question she would like to discuss next, and Gunny would often reflect on it and then contact her when he was ready to talk—even if that meant he woke her up in the middle of the night in Los Angeles. Although they continued their conversations until the day that he died, he dictated the bulk of what you are reading here during the last year of his life. They discussed one by one each subject I had identified, although he often went off on tangents and offered up his point of view on questions that I had not thought to ask. He made sure he talked about what was important to him, and humored me by answering the questions that he found naïve or simple. The process of talking to Alexandra stimulated thoughts and feelings, and in some instances, memories of times long ago—much the way asking your grandfather about one event in his life might lead him to reflect on other events, resulting in his sharing a treasure trove of memories and feelings that you otherwise might never have known.

I have done my best to explain the process by which Gunny spoke to

Alexandra in the hopes that it will enhance your understanding of our journey and how this all came to pass. But I want to be clear that Gunny and I didn't write this book to convince you of anything. We have no agenda. We just want to tell you our story and have you walk with us for a while on our beautiful, and endless, path.

Let's begin at the beginning.