

## **Kate The Animal Communicator and Nala The Oracle**

Early in 2014 I approached Kate Muller for help with a Boston Terrier I had rescued. She had a multitude of physical injuries and from their nature we suspected they were from being used in dog fighting. He had an eternal sadness about him and we needed to know if there was anything in particular insofar his rehabilitation went, that he needed us to help him with. Thus started the journey with Kate and our family of four Boston Terriers and Foster Bostie Shey.

At the time Shey was receiving daily physiotherapy to physically strengthen as well as working with a behaviourist weekly to help his emotional well being improve. We were somewhat wide eyed when Kate very accurately pinpointed all Shey's physical injuries, as they have previously been diagnosed and treated by both the Physiotherapist as well as the Veterinarian. With the numerous challenges Shey was facing, we were concerned that we might not find him a perfect new family. Kate did however tell us that it would take some time but that we must not search too hard because the perfect family would just "pop" up and that we would instantly know that they were the ones. This is exactly how it happened. There is a lot more to this story than what I have shared here, but for now it will have to suffice. The real story that needs telling for now is how this anticipated once-off encounter turned into a family affair where some truly special and unexpected things happened.

Considering Kate's accuracy we decided that we would like to communicate with all four the other Bosties as well. I am going to skip the equally phenomenal sessions Kate had with The Whistler, our deaf rescue Bostie, Phoenix the NikNak, our youngest rescue and Kwaito Kai our enigma, to get to the story of Nala Moonbeam (aka the Boss Diva of the Whole World...).

Nala is the only female amongst the boys. She is also the matriarch of the pack even though she weighs in at only 7kg compared to the 3 boys at 18kg each. Nala has always been exceptionally bright and high energy. We learnt

early on that she has a bossy streak, when she took a disliking to the Australian Cattle Dog pup in puppy classes. Soon after, in basic socialisation classes she showed us how deep her dislike went when she twisted out of her collar and attacked the Cattle dog. As a matter of fact, she showed no mercy and wanted to eat all other dogs full stop. This was a fear based aggression which took us on a special journey. Clicker training and Agility training and Brain Games, she loved it all. She was and still is, in such a hurry to get tasks done. Getting frustrated when the human trainers are not fast enough to have the next challenge/obstacle ready for her to solve. Finally, we also bought her a treadmill to drain excess energy. This proved to be the tool that made the breakthrough for Nala. She runs free on it for as long as she likes. It settles her and keeps her relaxed. During this time, I developed a close and deeply emotional bond with her. It was against this background that we asked Kate to please chat to Nala and just check in if she is okay and if she has much to say. Neither Kate nor us, were quite prepared for the birth of the Nala Oracle!

At this point, I need to sketch the context of what was happening in my own world. I had been involved in Bostie rescue for approximately 4 years. I was a volunteer and was involved in the informally structured management of said group. It brought me great joy and it ignited a passion in me that surprised even me. Every spare moment was dedicated to fundraising and growing this cause. Sadly, in mid 2014, the situation came to a head when the three key people in the organisation could not agree on various organisational, management and financial matters. I was asked to leave. Here enters Kate and Nala Moonbeam once again. During the very first session Nala informed Kate that she was fine and that instead dwelling on her, that she would like to talk about this very rescue organisation, its people and its dynamic. (For context once again, I live in KZN. Kate lives in CT. We have never before met. We had at that stage had 2 feedback sessions, one for Shey and one for the Whistler)

Nala's first business instruction was "Yulinda needs a secretary" – I had to smile at that one. From that moment onwards, Nala proceeded to take control of my journey insofar it concerned rescue work and Boston Terriers. She

outlined a business model. She predicted all the behaviours of the two other people involved before they acted! She would insist to Kate that Kate call me immediately to “tell me” of impending events. Never once was she wrong. I am talking about specific information, such as “Yulinda be careful of a person in e.g. Cape Town with a name beginning with a specific letter – as she is going to e.g. doing this specific thing” Poor Kate! Nala was relentless and Kate just smiled and indulged her and passed on the information. Throughout all of this, Nala continuously assured me that I should “let them be”. That I should “shake it off”. That if my passion is about the Bosties, then I should refrain from letting my ego retaliate and take control. That there was already something happening that would be taking its place and that it would be GOOD! I was so compelled that I put my ego aside, kept my counsel to myself, and listened!

Once again Nala suggested (actually Nala does not “suggest”, I was instructed...) that we establish a new organisation so that we could continue the work we do. The team has been working together for almost 3 years in any case and the decision was immediately taken that we would establish our own NPO. We would do it right from the start and learn from the lessons of the past. Enters, Nala once again. Her directive via Kate “Tell the team that they should not have the word “rescue or KZN” in the name as they will be doing more than rescue work in a wider area than only KZN. Almost simultaneously, the group was playing with name suggestions and we had just agreed on BOSTON TERRIER ACTION GROUP or the shorter BTAG. Nala wins the day once again.

At this point, Kate so graciously offered some dedicated time with Nala in aid of the work we were doing. Four amazing sessions sponsored by Kate in aid of the establishment and moulding of BTAG with input by the Oracle as she went along. I think what I find most amazing was that the feedback from Kate and Nala was always business directed, specific and sound in terms of all business principles. Yet, there was also the “softer side” which Nala shared with Kate. As a large team of about 15, mostly women in KZN, we are aware of and share a level of caring on a personal level without being intrusive. Few

of us see each other, other than at 3 or 4 events during the year. Yet, somehow, our shared passion has given us a sense of community and caring. Several times Nala would insist Kate call me “now!” to tell me that someone in our team was going through a bit of a tough time. She would once again be specific enough that I would immediately know who it was. She would often give me hair colour and “guide” Kate (or is it the other way around?) via letters in names. Then it would be a simple matter of connecting with that person and just saying “hi, how are you doing!?” In the same manner Nala has been very vociferous in pointing out some bad apples. Always, geographically specific and giving hair colour and letters associated with a name, and most accurately, what they intend doing.

In a way Nala has taken ownership of BTAG and is guiding us in such subtle ways. As I read my sentence I almost want to delete it - as it sounds too bizarre. Yet, for me, it has opened a world of intense curiosity and a need to know more and explore more. Who knows where this journey with her will take me and on what other levels she is “directing” my and our lives. As for Kate, how fortuitous that you came into our lives at exactly the right time. Thanks for indulging our little Moonbeam in such a gracious manner. Thank you also for the quiet, unbeknownst to many, time and dedication you gave to the establishment of our newly found rescue organisation. We are the stronger for it and you will always be a honorary BTAG member!

I am sure The Oracle has lots more to say! For now, this will have to suffice though....until the next time the Oracle licks Kate’s ear for immediate attention!

Yulinda Noortman

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