

Cat Equivalent

Aspirations

by

Danny Cherry

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My decision to leave off the eating of animals had been a matter of conscience; Prison was devouring me alive, and the agony was almost unbearable. As I sat watching a pack of hyenas — they consume their prey alive — on "Nat-Geo Wild" tearing a herbivore to shreds, from its rear end, the shredded beef burrito in my hand immediately lost its savour. The camera-man zoomed in on that pitiful creature's face: He was crying. Gazing around at the atrocious conditions under which I was compelled to live — Considering the inhumanity of prison staff, I began to ruminate. All the endless agonies of my animal-brethren — Fish suffocating as they dangled on hooks, the screams of lobsters thrown into boiling water, the cries

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of cows and pigs being slaughtered—weighed  
heavily upon my mind. No longer were they  
food to eat, but rather living beings to be  
respected.

█ Cellhouse's young, black, female-night-sergeant  
had unceasingly advocated for my vegan diet's  
continuation. Because I had just arrived to  
Indiana State Prison, therefore the less  
civilized despots resolved on making me  
reapply through the facility's Chaplain. At  
Pendleton it had taken a month, and my  
lack of commissary made matters worse. I  
could not afford to wait that long at ISP,  
so when the sergeant came to my cell, I  
appealed to her.

"I would rather starve to death, than eat  
animals!"

She silently left, however, returned several  
hours later.

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"They were being dicks, but I took care of it."

"Thank you so much Sarg!"

I lay down relieved that my Vegan diet would continue at ISP.

It was really quite extraordinary how some ISP prisoners had been allowed to purchase cats. These feline companions were a godsend. Not only did they directly help to preserve the sanity of their owners, they also indirectly civilized prisoners in interaction with them. As I daily watched the cats freely roaming, and being caressed, that liberty, and that love, were projected onto me. In those moments, I remembered that cruelty to animals was a Federal crime, and that a great football quarterback had been sentenced to three years in Federal prison for "fighting dogs." I would ponder prisoners' rights, then mentally ask myself, "If I am less than a dog, then surely not a cat!"