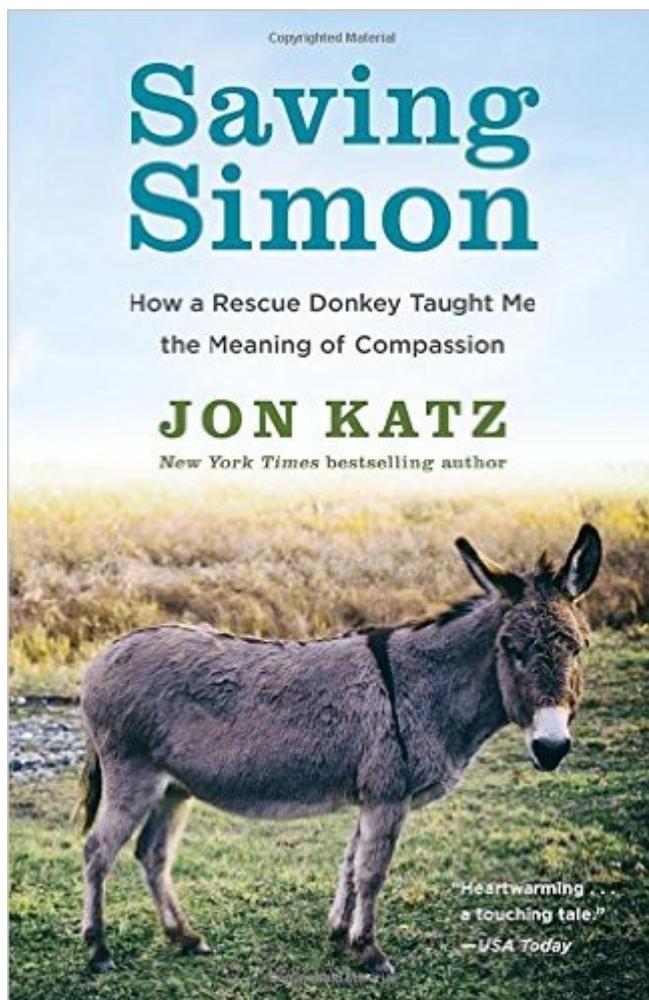


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# Saving Simon: How A Rescue Donkey Taught Me The Meaning Of Compassion



## 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

youâ™ve been.â "The Boston Globe Â œFrom 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.â "San Antonio Express-NewsFrom the Hardcover edition.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

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.

I loved the story about saving this horribly neglected donkey who was on the brink of death, and then slowly nursed back to health, but I was confused by the author's larger story about his relationship with animals and his notions of compassion and empathy. What I found most irritating about this book was his anthropomorphizing, constantly projecting an array of thoughts, feelings and moods onto his animals. And then he turns around and states that animals don't have emotions, but are merely responding by instinct or trained behavior. Katz is a barrelful of contradictions. Another example of his hypocrisy is when he laments about the thousands of dogs in shelters who are euthanized, but then buys his border collies from breeders because he wants to know their background. And now I read that he had his border collie Orson euthanized because of behavioral issues; this challenges Katz's premise that buying dogs from a breeder insures that one is getting a dog who will not be problematic. In a separate essay, Katz writes that one option would be to build a more secure kennel for Orson behind the house, away from traffic and visitors. But it seems like convenience and cost were the factors that led to Orson's death. Katz is very clear that he likes some species (like donkeys and dogs) and not others (like cows), and seems totally obtuse regarding any insights about how he, like the majority of Americans, has unconsciously adopted social norms and values around certain "food animals" that's specific to the U.S. He is merely a reflection of those deeply ingrained values, and is thus thoughtless about his preferences and empathy toward some species and not others.

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