

Pet Loss First Aid



A Reference to Help You Survive
the Passing of Your Soul Pet

Kathleen E. Hearons

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DEDICATION

This book is inspired and co-written by my soul pet, Lolita, whose spirit guided me through my hardest loss – one I never expected to survive. I dedicate it to her and to all who are fighting to go on living after losing their soul pets. We are in this together, even if we never meet.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe the knowledge quest I share herein to the selfless souls who help people hit hard by pet loss. I give special recognition to Kelly Cormier at Lap of Love and Grief Ever After, Beth Bigler at Honoring Our Animals, and the creators of all the works cited in this book. Above all, I thank Lolita for pushing me to pry my mind open wider than I ever could have imagined to discover things I needed to know to survive.

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FOREWORD

On July 7, 2023, the unthinkable happened. In one instant, I lost my best friend, daughter and life partner – all embodied by the same soul, Lolita. She was my entire world, my twin flame, my everything. Losing her was the *one* thing that could never happen to me because it was the one thing I could never survive. When it did, I fell into total darkness.

I'm still alive to tell my story only because of all the help I received from those mentioned in the acknowledgements. It took a year of intensive self-guided and expert-facilitated studying to carry me back into the light and give me the strength to go on living.

This book is for anyone who's new to surviving life without their soul pet. It presents the abridged form of everything I learned through pain, terror and despair in many months of unthinkable agony spent searching for a reason to live. All the things I learned ultimately came together to free me from the ignorance that had trapped me in the most severe depression of my life. I believe that if I had learned these things sooner, I would have emerged from the darkness sooner. That is my hope for all who read this book: that you will find your way back to living life.

How to Use This Book

Each chapter shares my personal experience with the subject matter discussed, but I open with a concise summary of the core information:

- What I studied
- What I learned
- How my thinking was changed by new knowledge
- How this new knowledge helped me manage grief

I provide references for independent study at the end of each chapter.

Topics are organized alphabetically for ease of use, not in terms of priority. Feel free to skip over anything that you're not ready to consider yet. Just open your mind as widely as you can, moving at your own pace.

INTRODUCTION

To expand more on why I wrote this book, I'm summarizing my journey from having less knowledge to having more knowledge.

First, meet Lolita. (Also, her portrait is on the book cover.)

Lolita's Obituary

Lolita Hearons, 14, of Fort Worth, Texas, passed peacefully on July 7, 2023, in the comfort of her home, joined by her mother and an attending physician. She was born on May 14, 2009, to Arena Hearons in Palmdale, California. At 8 weeks of age, she was adopted by Kathleen Hearons and moved to Washington, D.C. She and Kathleen moved often after that, living in many other cities in many other states, but both of them always called Southern California home in their hearts. She was predeceased by her grandmother, Nancy Hearons. She is survived by her birth-mother, Arena; her mother, Kathleen; her brother, Rudy; her grandfather, Richard Hearons; and numerous aunts, uncles, cousins and beloved friends. Those who wish to do so may sign her online memorial book by lighting a candle at <https://www.lapoflove.com/pet-memorial/25792>.

Lolita's Eulogy (written by me on July 29, 2023)

Lolita was the first pet in my life that belonged only to me. She wasn't the family pet; she was my pet, and mine alone. She was the offspring of Arena, the cat I had grown attached to but had to leave behind when I moved out of state, and missed terribly. So, she was extra special for that. And my mom chose the runt in Arena's litter for me to adopt because that little one would lie in the sun even when it was really hot already. I love heat, and my mom said that this particular kitten was meant for me. As soon as that kitten was old enough to board a plane, my mom flew from California to D.C. to bring her to me. I named her "Lolita," which means "little Lola" in Spanish, reflecting both her irregularly small size and her roots in Southern California.

Lolita was with me during the most formative period of my life, my entry into adulthood. She witnessed and was part of every milestone I reached as a 26-year-old young woman fresh out of college and finding herself. My first apartment, my first car, my first career-launching job, my first serious relationship – every critical “first” someone can experience included her. I learned to live on my own while she was with me. I learned who I am while she was with me. I have never known any way of defining myself that doesn’t involve her. Never have I seen myself as “Kat,” because I’ve never interpreted my existence singularly like that. I’ve only ever seen myself as “Lolita and Kat,” as two sides of the same beating heart, existing simultaneously with no conceivable alternative, no separation without extinction.

Lolita was also with me through the deaths of three family members: my maternal grandfather, whom I cared for in his home while he was on hospice care, until his last breath in 2012; one of my maternal aunts in 2014; and my mother, whom I watched cancer steal slowly away from me, and whom I cared for during her two weeks on hospice care in 2016. Lolita was my rock no matter who was snatched from me by death. And she was my rock in the aftermath of my failed marriage, the crushing depression of prolonged unemployment, the horrors of an abusive boyfriend, the devastation of addiction – and the light of recovery. I could handle anything as long as I had her. She made me emotionally invincible in a way second only to my faith in Christ, which has spared me from dangers Lolita couldn’t protect me from, but would have if she could have.

Lolita was the first being I ever felt perfectly safe with and loved by. My relationship with her was the only one in my life that harbored no threats. There was no threat of being neglected because she was never too busy for me, and we were side by side anytime we could be. There was no threat of rejection because we had unconditional love for each other, and neither of us went anywhere without the other, both inside and outside our home. There was no threat of deceit or betrayal because she lacked the capacity to lie to me. In everything, there was no possible way for her to harm me – and if there had been, she’s the only being in my life who wouldn’t have done so anyhow. She had no competition for her time or companionship; I was hers entirely.

Lolita was also the first being I felt truly watched over and protected by. When I would cry, she would snuggle with me to comfort with me. When I was having a seizure aura, she would pace around me as I lay in bed or on the floor. She was always attentive to how I was doing at any moment – far more so than anyone would expect a cat to be. Her empathy was so deep that she even had to go on pain medication briefly in 2013 because her absorption of my high stress from work had made

her unable to urinate. Extensive testing ruled out all physical explanations, leading the doctor to ask me whether I had been stressed as of late, and concluding that her empathy was the cause of her psychosomatic illness. She loved me sacrificially. And she was the first being in my life to care that much about both my physical and my emotional health.

You learn who you really are in your 20s and 30s, and she became gradually embedded in every part of my identity. At 40 today, I have never known myself or who I am without her. For 14 definitive years, she wasn't just passively present, but was woven into my emotions and my survival. She was part of the process of realizing what my personality is like when it's tested and sliced and remolded. And that's why I'm struggling with accepting that our shared soul has been halved while one of us is still alive with only half of a soul. We can't be apart and still exist; I just can't comprehend how that's possible. How can we exist in different planes when we are one and the same?

And so, for the first time since finding myself, I'm alone. My best friend is gone. My soulmate is in heaven with half of our soul, and I can't see or hear her anymore. Now, I have to completely redefine myself and rebuild how I see myself. And I'm alone this time. People may offer their help, but there will never be another Lolita in my life, not from this age onward. It's a new, frightening era for me – one I have yet to enter into due to the chains of shock and denial that, even three weeks since her passing, bind me to a past I can't let go of even just a little.

Lolita, you were – and still are – everything to me. We were never supposed to part, never supposed to have to live without each other, never supposed to be separated by anything. I miss you. And I need you here. I don't know how to do life without you. But I'm trying – and I'm staying sober like I promised you I would. Someday I'll bring you the other half of our soul. I'll do my best with it until then.

And now, my story.

Initially, I remained a devoted – albeit flawed – Christian.

At the time of Lolita's passing, I had no doubts about my faith; I was a solid Christian in my mind and heart. I didn't go to church because I couldn't overcome my social anxiety, but I did read the Bible daily and regard every word in it as the ultimate truth. I had only ever drawn tremendous strength from Christ when facing extreme hardships: deaths of family members, addiction, my failed marriage, severe depression, 20 moves (10 of which were thousands of miles from one place to the next) and much more beyond even that. I was deeply connected to Christ.

For the first two weeks of acute grief, my faith kept me from ending it all. Every day, I had a plan; every day, I resisted the temptation – a few times, only with divine intervention at the last minute. What mattered was that God was giving me strength.

Then, I transitioned from accepting “God works in mysterious ways” and “Everything happens for the best in God’s plan” to being furious with God. I had intense anger and so many questions, such as:

- Why didn’t You take me with her like I had prayed for?
- Why didn’t You heal her?
- Why do You make us capable of loving so deeply when it only ends in pain?
- Why do You have to use pain to teach us, when You could – as the Creator – choose absolutely any way possible to teach us, or even create us with all the knowledge we need?
- Why do evil people live healthy lives while Lolita, who didn’t deserve pain and torture, got the worst health?
- Why don’t You give us the option of living when we can’t bear it anymore, without condemning us to hell?

Those are but a few of the thoughts that kept me enraged. Gradually, I lost my ability to “let go and let God,” to accept that God’s way is different from ours but still loving. I lost my ability to see God as a loving father at all. I lost my love for God; in fact, I came to *hate* God. I lost my trust in Christ. I lost my spiritual stability. More than anything, I lost hope.

Unwilling to let go of my faith, and saddened to have so ugly a thing as hatred toward God, I got a spiritual mentor. Although this mentor proved to be horribly toxic, my engagement with her did restore my faith. In fact, by inadvertently demonstrating the opposite of Christ-like behavior, she had the effect of inspiring me to pursue Christ-like behavior myself.

Even so, my questions never disappeared. They marinated in my subconscious while depression filled my mind and heart in the places where I used to store my faith and hope. I still prayed, but I prayed only for God to take me. I wanted nothing from Him but a merciful death.

After a couple of months, I needed things Christianity prohibited.

Faced with the prospect of life carrying on despite my fervent wishes, and far more concerned with my role as a caregiver for two ill cats, I made peace with sticking around – but on one condition: that I be able to feel Lolita’s presence and still be together somehow. This required me to research ways to connect with the Other Side.

As a Christian, I knew that trying to communicate with the dead was not only forbidden but also considered aligning with the devil. However, my desperation to be with Lolita in some form was about 100 times stronger than my shame and fear of sinning against God. I didn't care about offending God; all I cared about was getting through the life that He had forced me to remain living. Don't get me wrong; I was not open to devil-worshipping, and I never have been. What I *was* open to was learning whether there was a way to connect with the Other Side that didn't involve invoking the devil or anything evil.

I had just begun the Honoring Our Animals pet grief program, which offers all kinds of workshops in addition to regular meetings and instructive and therapeutic cohorts. To prove to myself that I wasn't wallowing in pain for the sake of wallowing in pain, I set my mind to attend every event offered by the program, no matter how far it deviated from my preconceived notions of morality and prejudices. The next workshop was on tarot, scheduled for Halloween night. I RSVP'd, "Yes."

The more I learned, the more I realized how misinformed I had been.

The Tarot chapter explains this, so I won't go into it much here, but basically I learned that tarot had nothing to do with the devil or any evil spirits or anything. Inspired by that discovery, I chased down anything that interested me but either didn't make sense to me or seemed totally phony to me. I explored what it means to "raise your vibrations," what it means when you repeatedly see a specific number sequence, what the idea of higher dimensions is, whether people can really communicate with animals (dead or alive), and so on – tons of stuff. I read and studied as though I were prepping a Ph.D. dissertation to defend. I was insatiable.

After ripping my faith apart, grief reassembled it as something new.

In brief, grief opened a black hole in my mind, and Christianity was among the numerous things sucked into the vacuum of pre-grief reality. I have total respect for anyone who follows Christ (or any other religious figure and system of faith), but the part of me that had that in common with them has been spiritually amputated; it simply isn't there anymore.

What *is* there now is an amalgam comprising bits of all the things I've learned throughout my grief journey. I believe in God, and I believe He creates using the only substance ever to have existed: Himself. All things *are* God because all things are *made of God*. Even souls, when considered at the particle level, consist only of God, despite being individualized as discrete entities. For that reason, my mind can't process any plan for redemption – why would God need to redeem Himself? – nor the idea

that God loves us – He is above having opinions of Himself – nor any other action resident in the world's systems of belief. Absolutely everything in my heart and mind was changed by grief. And my mid-grief reality (it won't be "post-grief" reality until this life is done) has no label.

This is who I am now, even if it disappoints some people.

I was going to use a fake name as this book's listed author. I agonized over how certain people who knew the pre-grief Christ-serving version of me would react to my transformation – one I hid from those I feared might reject me. Also, I dreaded being lectured by people who believe – as I once did – that tarot is evil, or that numerology is a scam, or anything else that contradicts what I've learned through studying and experience. I didn't want to add their disappointment in me to my grief. It's a grief that ages but never fades, one that I will carry for years or decades more.

The reason I used my real name is that owning up to whom I've become is part of my knowledge journey, and this journey is my entire survival strategy in grief. To do anything less would be not only hypocritical but also harmful to me at the soul level. And so, I've set an intention to be at peace with my rebuilt beliefs, no matter who else might not be at peace with it. We all have our own paths, and this is mine.

ANIMAL AFTERLIVES

What I studied: What happens to animals after they die.

What I learned: Animals' souls return to spirit form and reside in a realm that encompasses mankind's physical world.

How my thinking was changed by new knowledge: I believe that the souls of the departed are metaphysically all around us, even though our five senses can't detect them due to limits in our electromagnetic fields.

How this new knowledge helped me manage grief: I ceased to wonder whether Lolita was gone forever, and I realized that she's beside me.

Explanation and Experience

As with all things that possess consciousness, animals exist in soul form (i.e., pure consciousness with no physical body) both before and after they experience life in a physical body. When their physical body ceases to function as needed to sustain physical life, their soul simply returns to where it was before it entered that body.

Where is that exactly? There are so many names for it: aether, spirit realm, quantum field and so on. Here's an analogy: If the quantum field is their permanent residence, the physical body is simply an extended-stay hotel. When they "check out," they return home from their sojourn on Earth. Consciousness is uncaged, released from the body. It still exists, but its presence is now no longer confined. In other words, animals don't *need* the physical body to be in your presence; they simply need consciousness. And they've had that from the minute God created them.

As a fellow soul, you too are merely in a "hotel" in your body. And you too will one day check out and return to pure consciousness with no physical form. In the meantime, while you're here in physical form, you have to contend with the indescribable torment of being deprived of the physical connection to your beloved that you've relied on for as long as

you've shared your life with them. The key to managing that – in my experience – is to learn to communicate soul-to-soul. As soon as I found a way to maintain contact with Lolita, I became ready to live again.

My first experience with encountering Lolita's soul occurred a few hours after her passing. I was still in shock, functioning only at a primal level: breathing and pumping blood. I was lying on the floor, when my other cat, Rudy, hopped up onto my belly and assumed the loaf position. Only Lolita had ever done that, *never* this cat. The whole thing felt surreal and natural in a way that only Lolita's presence could make possible. In the moment, I noticed that it was a Lolita-like behavior, and in the back of my mind, I suspected that it was Lolita herself. I had no way of explaining or confirming it, but I remember thinking that.

My second experience occurred 11 days after her passing. The best way I can describe it is that I suddenly became aware that she was right there. It's like sensing someone sneaking up behind you or staring at you from across the room. A metaphysical third eye sees it, and you react by spinning around or looking in the direction of the perceived staring. In the same way that you just suddenly sense someone's presence, with no gradual or buildup or concentration on trying to sense it, I just suddenly became aware of her presence.

I thought it was that easy: She's back! I even posted about it (vaguely) on Instagram the next day, with the following caption on July 19:

“Today I have this feeling like Lolita and I have now officially been joined eternally, like something happened overnight in the Beyond.

“She doesn't feel as far away now. I still lose my breath when I process what happened, but because I can feel her presence more now overall, like she's back, reliving that night feels almost like a false memory.

“Idk, that's the best way I can explain it.

“Whatever the case may be, it's spiritually soothing, and I thank God for it.”

I had been considering getting another cat so that my surviving cat, Rudy, could have a friend. I could tell right away that he was depressed – well beyond absorbing the shock waves emitted by my emotions – and I wasn't enough for him. Now that Lolita was back, I figured that she and I could just do our own thing, and another cat would take care of Rudy.

On July 20, I adopted a cat I named Silverene. (Her portrait is on the back cover of this book.) I felt Lolita with me in the car as I drove 75 miles each way to get Silverene, and I felt Lolita with me there in the Humane Society shelter as I was being introduced to and signing paperwork for Silverene. When I let Silverene out of the cardboard carrier box at home, she took several minutes to adjust to her new surroundings, but she was immediately affectionate toward me from that night onward. I was happy to have such a great playmate for Rudy, and I was happy to have things back to normal with Lolita by my side again.

That first night with Silverene in the house, I posted the following caption on Instagram:

“I hurried to get her because Rudy needed a friend asap. But Lolita’s spirit is still very present everywhere I am, and she and I will have our old room together (idc how insane that sounds) while Silverene has the creative room while she gets acclimated. It still feels like Lolita came home. I feel it in my heart and soul that she’s with us.”

That same night though, Lolita’s spirit departed. It was the same process: sudden awareness. It was as if she said, “I have to go now.” I wasn’t expecting it at all, and there it was, out of nowhere. She told me (telepathically) that she would come back if I needed her to, but that she didn’t expect me to need that. And with that, she was gone.

There are many other instances in which her soul made a short-term visit, but none as long as that three-day visit the month of her passing. At most, she’d stay for a few hours – usually, just a minute or two.

As I learned more about other things covered in this book (notably, quantum physics, numerology, tarot and reincarnation), I gradually prepared myself for a much, much longer visit. Only when I was ready to not only *perceive* but also *believe* it did she return in physical form.¹ Until then, however, I accepted that she was in the aether of the afterlife.

Resources for Studying On Your Own

“A Pet Death Doula’s Guide to Sacred Transitions” online course
taught by Monique Brignoni, hosted by The Shift Network

“Animal Reincarnation: Animal Life After Death” by Brent Atwater
(pp. 31-32)

¹ See the chapter on reincarnation.

“Demystifying Reincarnation” by Chaitanya Charan (pp. 170-173, 180-181)

“Goodbye, Friend: Healing Wisdom for Anyone Who Has Ever Lost a Pet” by Gary Kowalski (pp. 111-117)

“Pet Mediumship” online course taught by Danielle MacKinnon, hosted by The Shift Network

“Signs from Pets in the Afterlife: Identifying Messages from Pets in Heaven” by Lyn Ragan

“Signs: The Secret Language of the Universe” by Laura Lynne Jackson

“Soul Comfort for Cat Lovers: Coping Wisdom for Heart and Soul After the Loss of a Beloved Feline” by Liz Eastwood (pp. 68-70, 91-99)

“The Amazing Afterlife of Animals: Messages and Signs from Our Pets on the Other Side” by Karen A. Anderson (pp. 85-88)

“The Emotional Wound Soul Contract Between Animals & Their People” online course taught by Tammy Billups, hosted by The Shift Network

“The Incredible Animal Afterlife: What Your Pet Wants You to Know” by Danielle MacKinnon (pp. 43-52)

“The Loss of a Pet: A Guide to Coping with the Grieving Process When a Pet Dies” by Wallace Sife (pp. 217-231)

“The Pet I Can’t Forget: Finding Hope and Healing with Signs from the Afterlife” by Karen A. Anderson

“The Rainbow Bridge: Pet Loss is Heaven’s Gain” by Niki Behrikis Shanahan (pp. 9-11, 42, 46-59, 66-68, 114-118)

“There Is Eternal Life for Animals: A Book Based on Bible Scripture” by Niki Behrikis Shanahan (pp. 37, 43-56, 89-96)

ANIMAL SOUL CONTRACTS

What I studied: Whether animals come into humans' lives to teach the humans lessons that they agreed to learn in the next life together.

What I learned: Animals' souls connect with humans' souls for focused instructive purposes.

How my thinking was changed by new knowledge: I believe that every pet I end up with – planned or (seemingly) unplanned – is in my life with a very specific lesson to teach me.

How this new knowledge helped me manage grief: It helped me to understand Lolita's motivation for sending me signs, and to use soul-contract-focused signs from her to be a better guardian of my living pets.

Explanation and Experience

You feel it when you look into their eyes and when you hold them to your heart. You can't *explain* it, but you can *sense* it. As I state in the chapter on animal afterlives, animals have souls.

Now, I'll add to that: Animals' souls have intent. Rather than floating randomly into our lives, animals' souls deliberately draw us to them through synchronicities (commonly mistaken as coincidences, mistakes, accidents or anything similar). These construct the precise chain of events that ultimately unites you with what becomes your pet. And this establishes the teacher-student relationship between your pet and you.

Why do this? In short, the two of you planned this out. Before entering a physical form (i.e., incarnating), your soul and your pet's soul – neither animal nor human in that realm, but simply two souls – chose one or more lessons for you to learn during your shared time in the physical realm. This is because the overarching objective of souls is to learn all there is to know, at which point they cease to incarnate. Thus, the two of you agreed to this plan and, metaphorically, signed a "soul contract."

Soul-contract lessons vary by lifetime and by soul, and only *you* can discern the lesson(s) your animal came to teach you. The sources cited in this chapter can help you piece together the clues about it though.

In my case, to identify my soul contract with Lolita, I thought hard about what had changed about me during my time with her. I listed major changes in my life, including significant events and people. Ultimately, I realized that what had changed was my capacity for being responsible. With Lolita in my life, I had, for example, gotten sober. I had also started to care about my nutrition and physical well-being.

One author in the sources at the end of this chapter says that animals' souls exit your physical life once you've learned the lesson they came to teach you. Also, the author says that even the way in which they die – no matter how peaceful or how traumatizing – is part of the lesson resident in your contract. In my experience, however, Lolita actually amped up her teacher persona after she left her body; she didn't drop it.

Granted, I didn't realize that until I had learned more and become far more observant of synchronicities and signs from the afterlife.² But I came to realize that I got more signs from her when I was mindful of my nutrition, exercise and sleep. Also, I was sometimes nudged to work out by seeing the right thing at the right time, such as my favorite fitness instructor posting on Instagram, or something comparable for diet and sleep. So, I believe she kept up with that contract after her physical body gave up on her due to multiple chronic illnesses.

Here is a list of the soul contracts I was later able to identify with my other cats as a result of my training and independent study:

- **Rudy: Commitment.** When I got close to ending it all, it was my commitment to Rudy that kept me around. He taught me what it really means not to betray someone you've shown can trust you to be there for them. I knew that if I went through with it, Rudy would suffer. And that was completely unacceptable to me. I even told him: "Tonight, I lived for you. You don't know what that means, but it's a big deal."
- **Silverene: Acceptance.** The morning after I had adopted Silverene, I noticed her coughing very, very forcefully. She seemed paralyzed by the pain of it, and she was incontinent. It was so alarming to me that I rushed her to the emergency vet. I had had her for only 12 hours, so I couldn't answer any

² See the chapter on signs from the afterlife.

questions about her medical history or how long she had had this cough. They diagnosed it as “kennel cough,” an upper respiratory infection, and put her on antibiotics.

After a couple of weeks, when nothing had improved, I took her to my primary vet to see Rudy’s (and before him, Lolita’s) doctor. I showed him a video of Silverene’s coughing, and he agreed that it seemed like something more than kennel cough. He did a blood panel and took x-rays of her lungs.

A week later, he called me with the results: congestive heart failure, a terminal illness. I had had Silverene for only three weeks, and here I was, being told she was dying. He gave her one to three months to live.

At first, my head was spinning, compounding my still-fresh grief. Gradually though, through my acquired ability to communicate with Silverene, I learned to acknowledge the reality of it without judging it – in other words, to accept it. I set my mind on spoiling her for whatever little time she had left, focused on her comfort and happiness, not on myself and what I would experience with added bereavement.

She made it a year and eight months before her quality of life became dangerously low, and I set her free from the pain. She taught me to accept reality for what it is.

- **Father Karras: Addressing Codependency.** As the chapter on reincarnation explains, Father Karras is Lolita’s chosen vessel for returning to me in physical form during my current life. For that reason, and since I’ve been raising him since he was 8 weeks old, I latched onto him very tightly emotionally.

The first time he chose to spend time with the other cats instead of with me, I took it deeply personally and was quite jealous. Eventually, I realized that this was an issue of personal growth for me, and that I needed to stop expecting him to want nothing to do with anyone but me. In other words, I needed to stop laying the foundation for codependency between us and learn both to share him and to manage fine without his exclusive devotion to me.

- **Reina: Patience.** Like Rudy, I rescued Reina from dangerous physical illness after she had become a regular customer at what I call my “porch diner” for stray animals. Unlike Rudy, however, she was (and still is) extremely slow to trust me. It took Rudy two weeks to trust and love me, and then he was a lovebug and is the biggest mama’s boy to this day.

Silverene, too, was a sweetheart right away. I figured that they could see that my intentions were pure, and that my soul was trustworthy, so I took it personally when Reina didn't warm up to me. Every time I thought I was getting through to her, I'd be proven wrong by a hiss, a swat or a dart away to hide from me.

At some point, I realized my impatience was unreasonable – and then I realized that this must be the lesson: patience. She continues to move very slowly toward fully accepting and trusting me, but I've made a lot of progress. And I've learned – very slowly – not to take it personally, and to simply accept her for *who* she is and *how* she is. I'm still fundamentally impatient as a person, but she's teaching me.

- **Renfield: Nonattachment.** I didn't want a third cat after losing Silverene, but God sent me Reina. And I *definitely* didn't want a fourth cat after feeling overwhelmed by the three I had, but God sent me another one anyhow. This one wasn't gravely wounded like Rudy had been, and wasn't emaciated and pregnant like Reina had been; his deal was that he seemed lost. He was too friendly to be a stray and too beat up to have been home anytime recently.

I felt an immediate connection to him, but more than anything else, I felt solely responsible for his well-being. I was going to trap him and take him to the vet to be scanned for a microchip, but he walked right into my living room the minute I opened my front door. He even let me pick him up and close him in a room away from my three cats. He was so, so cuddly and so, so loving, and he seemed very grateful to be in out of the sub-freezing winter weather. He spent a cozy night in his own room, with his own food, water and toilet. The next morning, I took him to the vet for a checkup.

When his microchip resulted in my being able to contact his owner for what I was expecting to be an emotional reunion, I was stunned by what his owner was like. The woman hadn't even known that her cat had been missing. And she didn't care that he had been out in weather in the 20s F (-5 C) for the past week on my porch. Also, she was indifferent to all the wounds he had, and she wasn't the least bit grateful that I had gotten him treated for ear mites, let alone scanned.

The woman seemed irritated to have been bothered by me, but she said she'd pick up the cat after work. When I gave her my address, she said she lived on the same street. I gave

the microchip company permission to share my name and phone number, and I hung up expecting the woman's arrival.

The more I thought about her picking him up though, the more it stressed me out. I feared for his mistreatment, which I regarded as abuse due to the owner's harmful negligence. I hadn't even handed him over to her yet, but I was already feeling horribly guilty for giving him to her. It was like dropping him off at a shelter that would kill him after a 24-hour hold or something. My guilt kept building and building.

For relief, I contacted my spirit guides for answers during a meditation session. They told me two things. The first was a strict warning: Don't interfere with this cat's soul contract with his owner, i.e., if he's meant to be with her, let it happen and release your illusion of control in the matter. The second thing they told me was that his soul contract with me is to teach me nonattachment, and that this was why I had become disproportionately attached to him in so brief a time. Having that information, I was able to face the situation more spiritually maturely, and I calmed down.

As the evening wore on, I started to hope that the woman had been lying to me to get me off the phone, and that she had no real intention of showing up. And, you know what? She never showed up, never called, never did anything to get him back. So, I renamed him to my liking and committed to keeping him through the winter so that I'd know he'd be safe from the cold. All the while, I kept his lesson for me in mind.

Possible Soul Contracts Between You and Your Pet

In the suggested resources for studying on your own, the following themes are frequently part of pet-and-owner soul contracts:

- Correcting a behavior of yours that harms you or others
- Processing trauma that you've been avoiding
- Getting medical attention for something you've ignored
- Showing you how to love yourself and/or how to love others
- Working on your abandonment issues to be a better partner
- Practicing forgiveness for yourself and/or others

Resources for Studying On Your Own

Specific to Animal Soul Contracts

"A Pet Death Doula's Guide to Sacred Transitions" online course taught by Monique Brignoni, hosted by The Shift Network

“Animal Lessons: Discovering Your Spiritual Connection with Animals”
by Danielle MacKinnon (pp. 34-40, 53-59, 68-77, 81-100)

“Animal Reincarnation: Animal Life After Death” by Brent Atwater
(pp. 55-57, 76)

“Animal Soul Contracts: Sacred Agreements for Shared Evolution” by
Tammy Billups (pp. 36-37, 74-107, 151-157)

“Animal Wayshowers: The Lightworkers Ushering in 5D
Consciousness” by Tammy Billups

“Beyond the Fur: Discover the Hidden Keys to Understanding Your
Animals’ Behaviors and Physical Issues” by Tammy Billups

“Pet Mediumship” online course taught by Danielle MacKinnon,
hosted by The Shift Network

“Soul Healing with Our Animal Companions: The Hidden Keys to a
Deeper Animal-Human Connection” by Tammy Billups

“The Emotional Wound Soul Contract Between Animals & Their
People” online course taught by Tammy Billups, hosted by The
Shift Network

“The Incredible Animal Afterlife: What Your Pet Wants You to Know”
by Danielle MacKinnon (pp. 3-4, 12-14, 20-23)

“Your Animal – Your Soul Mirror: Healing the Emotional Wounds of
Animals and Their People” by Tammy Billups

Soul Contracts in General

“Samadhi: Unity of Consciousness and Existence” by Ivan Antic
(p. 33)

“The Angel Numbers Book: How to Understand the Messages Your
Spirit Guides Are Sending You” by Mystic Michaela (pp. 11-12)

DISENFRANCHISED GRIEF

What I studied: Why so many people didn't believe how much pain I was in after losing Lolita, and why people thought there was something wrong with me for hurting so deeply.

What I learned: Pet grief is one of the many forms of grief that society, for many reasons, refuses to validate.

How my thinking was changed by new knowledge: I discovered that I've been socially programed to regard pet loss as something trivial.

How this new knowledge helped me manage grief: I realized that I am not alone in having my pain invalidated and dismissed because it was over an animal, and that this is very common.

Grief Illiteracy

If you were brought up in Western culture, you were likely taught to avoid the topic of death – human and animal deaths alike. The topic makes people uncomfortable, and Western culture tends to regard it as something almost unnatural, something to be avoided and postponed at any cost. By contrast, other cultures see it as a normal, cyclical event.

Psychological forces are at work, too. Some people don't like to talk about death because it forces them to confront the reality of their own mortality. Or, related to that, it forces them to confront grief of their own that they never processed and have been content to let fester in a dark corner of their mind. Or, as Wallace Sife, Ph.D., explains, it can be a gender-mandated response. One example is a man who denies his grief because to acknowledge it would go against "a lifetime of restrictive customs and cultural mores."³ Whatever the cause, it's something at the ego level, somewhere between instinct and obedience.

³ "The Loss of a Pet: A Guide to Coping with the Grieving Process When a Pet Dies," 46.

The result is that Western culture indoctrinates people to have no idea how to handle grief and how to comfort someone who's grieving. Death is unfamiliar and scary, and we're threatened by the fact that we can't understand it – or, worse, *control* it. As Dr. Sife notes: "We leave [death's] handling to the professionals: the clergy and mortuary specialists. Since nobody knows the answers or even the right questions, we tend to evade its consideration or discussion."⁴

Disenfranchised Grief

Compounding grief illiteracy, Western culture has also instructed people on what kinds of grief are valid and what kinds of grief are – for lack of a better word – imaginary. If your spouse dies, that's "real" grief. If your parent dies, that's "real" grief. If your child dies, that's "real" grief. Anything beyond immediate family and intimate friends and partners crosses the boundary between "real" grief and "fake" grief.

This is evident in, among other things, employers' bereavement policies. If you need a week off after your mom dies, for example, you've got it – possibly even paid leave. But if you need so much as *one* day off of work because you can't function due to the grief of losing your cat, good luck! At most, you'll be granted unpaid leave (like I was, after fighting for even that). That's because pet grief isn't "real" in companies' employee handbooks and Human Resources policies.

It's not just pet grief though; there are numerous other kinds of grief that go equally invalidated and unrecognized. These, along with pet grief, are the disenfranchised kinds that are outside the boundary of "real" grief. Divorce is another great example. The magnitude of that loss is disregarded because no (physical) death (of a person) took place.

The Reality of the Crushing Intensity of Pet Grief

In her book "Grieving the Death of a Pet," Betty J. Carmack goes into detail on how pet grief can be more intense and last longer than the grief we experience after losing a human: "Our lives with our animals are atypically closer than our lives with humans. Relationships with humans are fraught with ambivalence and conflict, whereas relationships with pets are more pure, uncluttered, unspoiled and based on unconditional love and trust."⁵ There's an entire chapter about this in "The Pet Loss Companion" by Ken Dolan-Del Vecchio and Nancy Saxton-Lopez.⁶

⁴ Ibid, 201.

⁵ "Grieving the Death of a Pet," 84-85.

⁶ "The Pet Loss Companion," 39-44.

Carmack also contrasts human death with pet death: “After human death, there are cards, visits, wakes, funerals, flowers, gifts of food, and memorial donations. Such responses aren’t typical when a pet dies. One’s reality is frequently negated by the minimization of others. Though others may think, ‘It’s no big deal,’ to the griever it *is* a big deal, and it matters profoundly. Frequently, because grieving persons anticipate negative reactions, they choose not to disclose their loss, increasing their sense of isolation and lack of support.”⁷

My Experience

My inordinately severe pain from losing Lolita is clinically diagnosed as “acute grief,” which Dr. Sife defines as follows: “Acute grief – also called exaggerated grief – is not a normal mourning response. This kind of intense overreaction is not difficult to identify. Some of its many symptoms are desolation, overwhelming misery, and a terrible agony of the soul. There is often a brief loss of rationality involved. S****dal ideation [*censorship added*] (but not an attempt) is fairly common.”⁸

And here’s how people responded when I let myself be vulnerable enough to discuss my pain with anyone outside the pet grief community:

- “It’s just a cat.”
- “This isn’t about Lolita; the *real* reason you’re depressed is ...”
- “You knew she wouldn’t live forever. What did you expect?”
- “So what? Get another one.”
- “She looked like she was dying; you should have seen this coming.”
- “You should’ve put her down a long time ago.”
- “You’re crazy.”
- “You just want attention.”
- “You’re overreacting.”
- “Get over it.”
- “You’re making it worse because you *want* to be sad.”
- “Stop feeling sorry for yourself.”
- “Can we just change the subject?”

The things I’ve been told since losing Lolita still amaze me. It wasn’t until I started attending pet grief support groups at Lap of Love that I discovered what grief illiteracy is, particularly in the realm of pet loss. To this day, the people who have been the most helpful to me started out as total strangers on the internet, in the online pet grief community.

⁷ “Grieving the Death of a Pet,” 84-85.

⁸ “The Loss of a Pet: A Guide to Coping with the Grieving Process When a Pet Dies,” 61.

Some people you were close to in your pre-grief life will be there for you throughout your grief, despite not understanding your pain. They're the ones whose empathy reaches from their soul to yours, irrespective of whether you've shared this experience. I was incredibly fortunate to have several of those people in my corner, but such people are very rare.

However, some people you were close to in your pre-grief life will – unintentionally or deliberately – belittle you for hurting like you do. They'll call you "crazy." They'll get sick of hearing about your beloved pet and shut down conversations about your beloved with "She/he wouldn't want you to be sad," "Just be thankful for the time you had with her/him," "It'll get better," "It won't always hurt this badly" and so on. Some of these people might be flat-out mean (I had my share of them), and some people just won't know how to act or what to say. They probably mean well, but they end up making you feel more isolated.

I'll wrap up my thoughts with another sample of Dr. Sife's insight: "In our emergency time of need, it often seems that there are too few people who have a sense of the depths of our bereavement. As a defensive posture, we readjust our relationships with others, including close friends and family members. This can be extremely disappointing or even aggravating at times. But we must also learn to be cautious and avoid hasty, angry overreactions – which are very easily experienced now and most likely will be regretted later."⁹

Resources for Studying On Your Own

"Grieving the Death of a Pet" by Betty J. Carmack (pp. 84-85)

"Soul Comfort for Cat Lovers: Coping Wisdom for Heart and Soul After the Loss of a Beloved Feline" by Liz Eastwood (pp. 1-2, 15-18)

"The Amazing Afterlife of Animals: Messages and Signs from Our Pets on the Other Side" by Karen A. Anderson (pp. 127-130)

"The Incredible Animal Afterlife: What Your Pet Wants You to Know" by Danielle MacKinnon (pp. 3-4, 86-88)

"The Loss of a Pet: A Guide to Coping with the Grieving Process When a Pet Dies" by Wallace Sife (pp. 46-47, 82-87, 199-202)

"The Pet Loss Companion" by Ken Dolan-Del Vecchio and Nancy Saxton-Lopez (pp. XVII-XVIII, 15-17, 29-31, 45-49)

⁹ Ibid, 4.

DREAM ANALYSIS

What I studied: Whether dreams mean anything or are just our brain's way of dumping junk to make room for useful information.

What I learned: The customized symbolism in dreams relays information that you need to have and can receive only from higher dimensions.

How my thinking was changed by new knowledge: I believe that I can learn from my dreams by analyzing the motifs and details the only my intuition can interpret.

How this new knowledge helped me manage grief: Analyzing my dreams enables me to receive additional signs and guidance from Lolita.

Explanation

When we dream, our consciousness is untethered and can interface with otherworldly beings in the area where time and space disappear, the place known by many names: aether, quantum field and so on. There, communication takes place in the most rudimentary form of language: symbols. Alternatively, knowledge can be transmitted directly, as is the case with clairsentience. This phenomenon refers to when you suddenly know something even without knowing *how* you know it. Between having knowledge imprinted on your consciousness and being presented with symbols that can carry over into the lower realm of consciousness (waking life), the Other Side can speak to you through dreams.

My Experience

It was the second night after Lolita's transition, and I was dangerously depressed. Looking for comfort, I sought out videos on YouTube about pet grief. I wasn't searching for any specific discussion; I just wanted to be in the immediate (albeit digital) presence of people who understood me and, in some way, cared about the pain I was in.

That night, I discovered Danielle MacKinnon's YouTube channel,¹⁰ and one of her videos kept me on the proverbial ledge that night: [3 Steps to Get a Message From Your Pet on the Other Side Tonight.](#) I followed the instructions in that video to address the guilt I was grappling with, worried that I had insulted Lolita and alienated her from me by taking in another cat (the one I went on to name Rudy). Her behavior had been off for months, and I was sure that it was because I had betrayed her and cost her our relationship in some way.

Before going to bed that night, I asked Lolita whether she forgave me for taking in Rudy, and I requested that she answer my question in a dream that very night. She responded by visiting me in my dream.¹¹ She told me two things, the first being that she had *sent Rudy to me*, and that he was a gift from her, not an imposition on her.

The second thing was an explanation for her change in behavior, which was her misery from the horrid experience of having pills rammed down her throat and shots multiple times a day, every day. I had been so focused on myself and my fear of losing her, that I had put my comfort ahead of hers all that time, and she had been miserable for bits of each day. *That* was why her behavior had changed: She was fed up. It wasn't betrayal; it was extreme, prolonged discomfort.

Although I got a new reason to feel guilty, I still felt tremendous relief over learning that I hadn't been in the wrong for taking in Rudy. Moreover, the surprise of being told something I hadn't even suspected revealed to me that dream communication with her was possible. Dreams didn't go on to be her primary means of communicating with me, but I learned that it was possible to communicate with her, just at all.

The more I learned about how to interpret dreams, the more I received answers to questions I had – not every night, and not always from Lolita. Gradually, I learned to communicate with the spirit guides in my Light Team,¹² and that's usually where my answers come from. But it's valuable to me to know that communication with the Other Side while in the state of heightened consciousness achievable only through dreams (or mediation) is a very real thing.

¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/user/daniellemackinnon>

¹¹ Note: There's a difference between a dream *with* and a dream *about* your beloved soul pet. When there's a visitation and you dream *with* your beloved, it feels incredibly real. Even if you're not a lucid dreamer – as I am not, myself – you can be aware while still in the dream that it's a visitation and not a dream. Upon waking, you will be convinced that you really were together.

¹² To learn about that, read "Spirits Beside Us" by Chris Lippincott.

Resources for Studying On Your Own

“3 Steps to Get a Message From Your Pet on the Other Side Tonight”

by Danielle MacKinnon

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YyUqfjikB4g>)

“12,000 Dreams Interpreted” by Gustavus Hindman Miller

“Conscious Dreamer” by Tree Carr

“Dream Guidance: Connecting to the Soul Through Dream Incubation” by Machiel Klerk

“Dream Symbols and Angel Numbers: A Comprehensive Guide to Interpreting Dreams and Angelic Symbols” by Silvia Hill
(pp. 1-108)

“Dreams: A Portal to the Source” by Edward C. Whitmont and Sylvia Brinton Perera

IDENTITY LOSS AND RECONSTRUCTION

What I studied: What the common effects of pet grief are with respect to the core elements of one's identity.

What I learned: Losing your identity when losing your closest bond – whether with a human, a pet or anything else – and having to recreate who you are as a result is very common.

How my thinking was changed by new knowledge: I believe that many people who lose their soul pets become a completely different person after finding their way through the aftermath of that kind of loss.

How this new knowledge helped me manage grief: I stopped worrying that I was overreacting by undergoing such radical change. I gave myself permission and patience to figure out who “post-loss me” was, and I stopped allowing other people’s expectations of me (based on “pre-loss me”) to stop me from transforming into my new self.

Explanation

In “Grieving the Death of a Pet,” Betty J. Carmack uses real-life case studies to analyze the effects of pet grief. In her first chapter, she notes:

“Many voices spoke of the loss of an abiding presence – the constancy and stability that animal companions bring to our lives. Their pets were there for them when they went through difficult times and events. Through all of the ups and downs – ending relationships, divorces, life-threatening illnesses and accidents, deaths, job transitions, moves to new homes, painful memories of past abuse – their animals had been their one stable and constant presence. To lose this reassuring equilibrium and balance is to be painfully shaken at the core of one’s being.”¹³

¹³ “Grieving the Death of a Pet,” 6.

If you've gone through those kinds of life-altering experiences and had *only* your soul pet as your abiding presence, you understand the kind of connection she's talking about there. Later in her book, she notes:

"Unequivocally, life has changed. Some feel this is the end of a chapter, others the end of a book. Still others feel it's more like the end of their world as they knew it. For many, the idea of 'getting back to normal' is impossible."¹⁴

Adding to this, here's how Ken Dolan-Del Vecchio and Nancy Saxton-Lopez put it in "The Pet Loss Companion":

"Sometimes the loss of a pet results in extraordinary grief because they helped us through an extraordinarily difficult time in our lives or because the pet's death marks the 'end of an era' in our own lives. ... When a pet has seen us through major life changes, ... we're grieving not only for our deceased friend but also for all the changes that happened during the time we shared. The loss of our friend powerfully reawakens all the losses endured together."¹⁵

How can losing something that's physically, emotionally and spiritually part of you *not* end – or at least alter – the pre-grief version of yourself? It wouldn't make any sense for something that traumatic to have a disproportionately minor effect on your identity. Sure, the extent will vary among people, but to pretend that it shouldn't be that drastic is not only unfair; it's irrational, too.

Of note, science corroborates this. To repurpose an article¹⁶ I wrote on grief for Head Magazine, I'm adapting my research findings below.

While you are forming an emotional bond with your pet, the molecules in your brain build that pet into your *physical* body. Anatomically, your beloved becomes a part of you; they're in your brain in a very physical way. They are woven into your neural map, wired into your nervous system every bit as much as your ability to wink or smile or raise your hand. Consequently, when you lose that pet, the part of your brain that you built just for your beloved is slowly torn apart as the molecules deconstruct it during what's called "neural bereavement."

¹⁴ Ibid, 77.

¹⁵ "The Pet Loss Companion," 42.

¹⁶ "Cannabis and Grief: The Science of How Our Bodies Are Custom-Built to Process Cannabis While Coping with the Death of a Loved One," <https://headmagazine.com/cannabis-and-grief/>.

My Experience

In my case, I can say for certain that “pre-grief Kat” wouldn’t recognize “mid-grief Kat.” In fact, the me of today doesn’t recognize the me in photos taken before Lolita’s passing, either. Many things about me that are core to who I am – my sense of humor, my taste in movies and music, etc. – are still there, of course. But other self-defining things are not. One of these is my spiritual beliefs, which were dismantled and reshaped.

My Christian faith had gotten me through every prior life-altering experience, including human grief from the deaths of my grandfather and my mother. It had kept me afloat after a failed marriage, fortified me during an abusive relationship with a live-in boyfriend, led me toward the light of recovery after battling functional alcoholism, and more than that. So, I could never have expected that *anything* would change that part of me – something so vital to who I am and how I define myself.

And yet, it did.

Now, there’s a gross oversimplification to contend with: “Just because you lost your cat, you abandoned your faith in Christ?!!” My dread over hearing that from people who couldn’t understand smothered both my healing and my growth for a while. In truth though, I was more afraid of having to live without my soulmate than having to live with disappointing judgmental people. I reasoned that if I had been willing to end it all and wasn’t worried about what they’d think of me afterward, it was foolish to fear their judgment over something far, far less severe.

Nearly all of this book constitutes a microcosm of the identity changes I’ve undergone since Lolita’s transition. It would be redundant to repeat the book’s introduction, which summarizes it well already. My key takeaway for you, the bereaved, is to assure you that redefining who you are is a common and explainable occurrence. Those who judge you, ridicule you, punish you or reject you might disagree, but the resources cited at the end of this chapter offer proof beyond my humble story.

Those who haven’t gone through this are quick to dismiss it, but *you* don’t have to dismiss the reality that *you* are living. Instead, I encourage you to explore, study and understand it. Above all, give yourself permission to at least ask questions that you never dared to ask before. It’s OK if you learn something and it changes how you perceive the world. Equally true, it’s OK if you learn something and it *doesn’t* change how you perceive the world. What’s important is that you understand that what you’re going through is not an overreaction but the scientifically examined, predictable effect in a cause-and-effect scenario. It’s normal.

There's nothing wrong with how you're reacting to this change. You're not weird for going through something this extreme. You're not "doing it wrong." You're right where those who know better would expect you to be. So, take whatever time you need to process your experience.

Resources for Studying On Your Own

Anderson Allen, Moira. "Coping with Sorrow on the Loss of Your Pet" 3rd ed. CreateSpace. 2015. ISBN 9781508411468.

"Cannabis and Grief: The Science of How Our Bodies Are Custom-Built to Process Cannabis While Coping with the Death of a Loved One" by Kathleen Hearons
(<https://headmagazine.com/cannabis-and-grief/>)

"Grieving the Death of a Pet" by Betty J. Carmack (pp. 5-17, 77-79, 116-119)

"How Grief Changes the Brain" by Sophia Dembling
(<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/widows-walk/202208/how-grief-changes-the-brain>)

"How the Brain Rewires as We Grieve: Understanding neuroscience to help manage the pain of loss" by Deborah L. Davis
(<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/laugh-cry-live/202303/as-you-grieve-your-brain-redraws-its-neural-map>)

"The Grieving Body: How the Stress of Loss Can Be an Opportunity for Healing" by Mary-Frances O'Connor (pp. 117-170)

"The Grieving Brain: The Surprising Science of How We Learn from Love and Loss" by Mary-Frances O'Connor

"The Loss of a Pet: A Guide to Coping with the Grieving Process When a Pet Dies" by Wallace Sife (pp. 9-18, 23-27, 29-31, 36-37)

"The Pet Loss Companion" by Ken Dolan-Del Vecchio and Nancy Saxton-Lopez (pp. 41-43)

"The Traumatic Loss of a Loved One Is Like Experiencing a Brain Injury: What happens in the brain when someone you love dies — and how to overcome it with time" by Amy Paturel
(<https://www.discovermagazine.com/mind/the-traumatic-loss-of-a-loved-one-is-like-experiencing-a-brain-injury>)

NUMEROLOGY AND ANGEL NUMBERS

What I studied: Whether numbers can be used as messages from the Other Side.

What I learned: Numbers are a universal means of communication, and beings in higher dimensions often use them to communicate with beings in this dimension.

How my thinking was changed by new knowledge: I believe that numbers – including the numeric equivalents of words (determined by their letters, from A = 1 to Z = 26) – never appear without meaning beyond their obvious context (e.g., license plates, bill totals).

How this new knowledge helped me manage grief: By using guides to interpret numbers that I see repeatedly throughout the day, I can decode messages. Also, from having discovered Lolita's signature number (7), I became able to receive additional signs from her from the Other Side.

The Basics

Numerology holds that each number constitutes a reality representative of a rate of vibration, and angel numbers are coded messages revealed in repeated sightings of the same number or series of numbers. Souls in higher dimensions who have an interest in your well-being (some referred to as angels) will show you these however many times are needed to get your attention. From there, you have a wealth of guides to assist you with interpreting the message – the most reliable of which derive from antiquity, not some random person's blog.

Although there is clearly a distinction between numerology and angel numbers, I have them together in one chapter due to the shared function they serve: universal communication. To open the channel for this kind of communication, keep an eye out for the numbers that you “randomly” encounter in:

- Your government-issued numbers (Social Security, driver's license, license plates, passport, etc.)
- Your phone numbers (home, mobile, work)
- Your addresses (current home, childhood home, work, etc.)
- The number of the parking spot you got
- The total amount on your bill or receipt

My Introduction to Numbers' Innate Meanings

About a month after Lolita's transition, there was a day when I noticed that I was seeing the number 777 repeatedly. I'm admittedly not a very observant person, so I can't even guess how many times I had been shown 777 before I finally noticed it. It wasn't until I had seen it several times in a row within only minutes, on completely unrelated things, that it caught my attention.

Knowing that this number is significant in the Bible and many other places, I began to research the number. In the process, I realized that 7/7/2023 (the day Lolita passed away) is a 777 date ($2 + 0 + 2 + 3 = 7$). (Incidentally, her actual last breath was right around 7 p.m. that evening, too, which I had noted the very night of her passing.) So, that made me even *more* curious, and I posted on Instagram about it, asking the question, "Why did Lolita leave on 777?" I clarified that I was looking for hidden significant reasons, not the reasons of her illnesses.

Although I received no comments offering any ideas or answers, I remained determined to figure it out. Meanwhile, I continued to see 7s frequently every day, and it would fill me with joy every time I saw one. I felt connected to Lolita each time, like placing a long-distance call and hearing "Hello?" on the receiving end. It became a love language, a way for Lolita and I to tell each other, "I'm thinking of you right now." Thus, I recognized 7 as her signature number, and I was motivated to explore the hidden meanings of numbers, the field of numerology.

I loaded up on books on both numerology and angel numbers, and the more I learned, the more I noticed every day. My first book on the topic was "The Big Book of Numerology: The Hidden Meanings of Numbers and Letters" by Shirley Blackwell Lawrence. From that, I learned about the origins of numerology, dating clear back to the 500s B.C. with Pythagoras of Samos, and I learned about the meanings of the base numbers (0 through 9) and master numbers (double digits). This prompted me to go to the source material, so I read a book on Pythagoras and his teachings. From there, I read the books that the author cited the most frequently, always digging deeper into source material. These are all cited in the resources section of this chapter.

Remarkably, the angel number 777 refers to spiritual awakening and enlightenment, and that is *exactly* what has transpired in my life since Lolita's passing.

My Experience with Numbers

Both Lolita and Silverene, who passed one year and eight months after Lolita did, regularly use numbers to communicate with me. Here are but a few examples:

- **Confirming that I made the right choice:** About a month after Silverene's passing, I rescued a pregnant, emaciated kitten who had become a frequent visitor at my "porch diner" for stray animals. My plan was simply to get her healthy, ensure that she gave birth safely, kept her until her kittens had all been rehomed, and then release her back out into the wild.

However, this sick little girl had a miscarriage, and that changed the plan. By that point, my certainty over releasing her had become muddled, and I was unsure of what to do. Still grieving Silverene, I didn't feel ready to open up my heart again. More troubling than that though, I doubted whether the kitten was happy being in my home.

I spent days agonizing over the decision, and I sat and talked with the kitten, whom I had named Reina, and asked her what she wanted. I ultimately decided to keep her. That day, Lolita told me (via angel No. 3939) that I had recently made the right choice, and that (via reducing 3939 to 6) I was creating a family.

- **Getting my attention about a bad habit:** One day, I got in my car at 2:20 p.m. to head out for a 2:45 p.m. appointment. Although it had never been wrong before, the clock in my car mysteriously read 6:54, nowhere near 2:20. When I looked up angel No. 654, the dual meaning was that I needed to beware old habits, and that present events were causing me to slip into old patterns of behavior that I had been doing well at keeping out of my life.

This was spot-on for my returned struggle with a hair-pulling and face-picking anxiety disorder that I had gotten under control for several months before resuming the habit in response to above-average stress levels that I was experiencing that week. I hadn't considered that my spirit guides (including Lolita and Silverene) were keeping track of this behavior, and I suddenly felt motivated to get back on track owing to a newfound sense of accountability.

- **Nudging me to respond to a call for help:** When an estranged relative called me out of the blue, I ignored the call because I was cynical and assumed they just wanted something from me. I hadn't even heard from this relative when my mom died, and I think it had been about 12 years since I heard from the person at all, for anything.

Later, through angel No. 911, I was told to use my spiritual development to inspire others. So, I called that relative back. Despite being of a different faith, I provided spiritual comfort and helped relieve that person from a lot of very heavy anxiety. Somehow, they knew to call *me*, of all people, for what they were going through.

- **Reminding me that's she's closer than I can see:** While out at numerous socializing-intensive events for work one day, I was run ragged by my extreme social anxiety. As I was driving from one place to the next throughout the day, I kept noticing the number 69 on license plates and billboards.

It wasn't until late at night that I remembered to look up the number, and I saw something I had completely forgotten: the numerical equivalent of the letters in Lolita's name reduces to 69. When I saw that, I realized that she had been trying to tell me all day that she was there supporting me, right beside me.

Resources for Studying On Your Own

Index of Meanings by Number: Numerology

- "Dream Symbols and Angel Numbers: A Comprehensive Guide to Interpreting Dreams and Angelic Symbols" by Silvia Hill (pp. 156-166)
- "Llewellyn's Little Book of Numerology" by Richard Webster (pp. 5-21)
- "Pythagoras of Samos: First Philosopher and Magician of Numbers" by Nigel Graddon (pp. 89-97)
- "The Power of Numbers: How to Manifest Your True Purpose and Find Meaning in Your Life" by Jessica Allen (pp. 31-85, 90-107, 175)

Index of Meanings by Number: Angel Numbers

- "Angel Numbers: A Beginner's Guide" by Emily Grace (pp. 40-58 for triple-repeating digits)

- “Angel Numbers and Divine Numerology: Unlocking the Meaning and Divine Messages of the Universe” by Sarah Ripley (pp. 14-182)
- “Angel Numbers Explained” by M.D. Holmes
- “Angel Numbers: The Message and Meaning Behind 11:11 and Other Number Sequences” by Kyle Gray
- “Deciphering Angel Numbers: Translate Your Guardians’ Messages” by April Wall (pp. 20-147)
- “The Angel Numbers Book: How to Understand the Messages Your Spirit Guides Are Sending You” by Mystic Michaela (pp. 29-276)
- “The Angel Numbers Meaning Book: A Complete and Detailed Manual for Mastering Repeating Digits and Divine Messages” by AstroLoom Publishing (pp. 21-36)
- “The Power of Numbers: How to Manifest Your True Purpose and Find Meaning in Your Life” by Jessica Allen (pp. 114-143)

Explanations of Basic Concepts: Numerology

- “Dream Symbols and Angel Numbers: A Comprehensive Guide to Interpreting Dreams and Angelic Symbols” by Silvia Hill (pp. 134-138)
- “Numerology Up Date: As Pythagoras of Samos Taught C. 570 BC- C. 495 BC” by Santino Vatore
- “The Power of Numbers: How to Manifest Your True Purpose and Find Meaning in Your Life” by Jessica Allen (pp. 87-89, 167-172)

Explanations of Basic Concepts: Angel Numbers

- “Angel Numbers: A Beginner’s Guide” by Emily Grace (pp. 7-10, 12-14)
- “Angel Numbers and Divine Numerology: Unlocking the Meaning and Divine Messages of the Universe” by Sarah Ripley (pp. 6-9)
- “Deciphering Angel Numbers: Translate Your Guardians’ Messages” by April Wall (pp. 9-15)
- “Dream Symbols and Angel Numbers: A Comprehensive Guide to Interpreting Dreams and Angelic Symbols” by Silvia Hill (pp. 112-113, 121-131, 138, 166-167)

- “Llewellyn’s Little Book of Numerology” by Richard Webster (pp. 235-241)
- “The Angel Numbers Book: How to Understand the Messages Your Spirit Guides Are Sending You” by Mystic Michaela (pp. 11-16)
- “The Angel Numbers Meaning Book: A Complete and Detailed Manual for Mastering Repeating Digits and Divine Messages” by AstroLoom Publishing (pp. 6-11, 14-20, 54-66, 79-81)
- “The Power of Numbers: How to Manifest Your True Purpose and Find Meaning in Your Life” by Jessica Allen (pp. 109-113)

General Instructions for Use: Numerology

- “Dream Symbols and Angel Numbers: A Comprehensive Guide to Interpreting Dreams and Angelic Symbols” by Silvia Hill (pp. 139-141)
- “Llewellyn’s Little Book of Numerology” by Richard Webster (pp. 227-233)
- “Numerology Up Date as Pythagoras of Samos Taught” by Santino Vatore
- “The Power of Numbers: How to Manifest Your True Purpose and Find Meaning in Your Life” by Jessica Allen (pp. 173-174)

General Instructions for Use: Angel Numbers

- “Angel Numbers: A Beginner’s Guide” by Emily Grace (pp. 17-39, 58-98)
- “Angel Numbers and Divine Numerology: Unlocking the Meaning and Divine Messages of the Universe” by Sarah Ripley (pp. 10-13, 142-153, 188-195)
- “Angel Numbers Explained” by M.D. Holmes
- “Deciphering Angel Numbers: Translate Your Guardians’ Messages” by April Wall (pp. 17-18, 149-150)
- “The Angel Numbers Book: How to Understand the Messages Your Spirit Guides Are Sending You” by Mystic Michaela (pp. 16-25)
- “The Angel Numbers Meaning Book: A Complete and Detailed Manual for Mastering Repeating Digits and Divine Messages” by AstroLoom Publishing (pp. 9, 38-52, 67-78)

- “The Power of Numbers: How to Manifest Your True Purpose and Find Meaning in Your Life” by Jessica Allen (pp. 145-147)

Worksheets for Self-Discovery Through Numerology

- “Guided Numerology Workbook: A Beginner’s Guide” by Kelli Miller
- “Llewellyn’s Little Book of Numerology” by Richard Webster (pp. 23-226)
- “Pythagoras of Samos: First Philosopher and Magician of Numbers” by Nigel Graddon (pp. 142-250)
- “The Power of Numbers: How to Manifest Your True Purpose and Find Meaning in Your Life” by Jessica Allen (pp. 13-29, 148-166)

Origin and History: Numerology

- “Dream Symbols and Angel Numbers: A Comprehensive Guide to Interpreting Dreams and Angelic Symbols” by Silvia Hill (pp. 132-133)
- “The Power of Numbers: How to Manifest Your True Purpose and Find Meaning in Your Life” by Jessica Allen (pp. 9-12)
- “Deciphering Angel Numbers: Translate Your Guardians’ Messages” by April Wall (pp. 5-7)

Origin and History: Angel Numbers

- “Angel Numbers: A Beginner’s Guide” by Emily Grace (pp. 10-12, 14-16)
- “Dream Symbols and Angel Numbers: A Comprehensive Guide to Interpreting Dreams and Angelic Symbols” by Silvia Hill (pp. 114-120, 175-187)

Other

- “Quadrivium: The Four Classical Liberal Arts of Number, Geometry, Music, & Cosmology” by John Martineau (editor) (pp. 11-56)
- “Signs from Pets in the Afterlife: Identifying Messages from Pets in Heaven” by Lyn Ragan (pp. 41-47)
- “The Big Book of Numerology: The Hidden Meaning of Numbers and Letters” by Shirley Blackwell Lawrence

QUANTUM PHYSICS

What I studied: What quantum physics is, and what the concept of raising your vibrations means at a scientific level.

What I learned: Everything in existence consists of quanta within a single quantum field, and what we experience in seemingly linear time and three-dimensional space is the result of electromagnetic frequencies manifested as vibrations.

How my thinking was changed by new knowledge: I learned about the essence of all things in creation, along with how reality itself is shaped.

How this new knowledge helped me manage grief: Focusing on ways to bring my emotions up to the electromagnetic frequency (vibration) where Lolita can be contacted – notably, through meditation – is a powerful way to keep in touch with her regularly.

What Everything Is Made Of

To put this chapter's abstract concepts into some sort of concrete framework, here's an arbitrary analysis in dialog form:

What is a wooden chair made of?

Wood from trees.

What are trees made of?

Elements (carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, etc.).

What are elements made of?

Molecules.

What are molecules made of?

Atoms.

What are atoms made of?

Protons, electrons and neutrons (i.e., subatomic particles).

What are subatomic particles made of?

Quarks.

What are quarks made of?

Quanta.

What are quanta made of?

Nothing. Quanta are the *source* of everything.

Quanta (plural of “quantum”), being self-contained, aren’t “made” of anything. Where do they come from? And who/what is arranging them in the shape of a chair (or anything else) and holding them together in that configuration? The answer is rooted in one thing: faith.

Some people – including me – believe the quanta come from a singular supreme creator: God. Some people believe they come from one or more gods in a group of gods. Some people choose not to think about it or write it off as an absurd thing to have an opinion on, often self-described as “agnostic nihilists” (or a variant thereof).

Some people stop their thought process at the Theory of Evolution or the Theory of the Big Bang, never tracing either back to a single point of origin. Questions they never ask (or don’t provide a direct answer to) include: “Where did the single-celled organisms in the Theory of Evolution come from?” “Where did the things that exploded in the Big Bang come from?” “Where did the amount of oxygen needed for an explosion of that magnitude come from in the oxygen-impoverished region of outer space?” And so on.

In short, each of us believes whatever we feel moved to believe. And each of us is as “correct” as any of us can be. At a certain point, proof is either impossible or, to some, insufficient. (This is called “quantum uncertainty,” by the way.) So, there is no *one* answer; there is only my answer and your answer and his answer and her answer. The answer always derives from faith – even to the people who bristle at the very word “faith” and might prefer “a strong belief derived from an intuitive conviction despite the absence of or impossibility of obtaining proof.”

So, how do quanta become arranged and stuck together to ultimately form a chair? Regardless of whether you believe that one supreme creator (God) is arranging the quanta, consider that these have to come together with unimaginable precision to create objects – not only tangible ones like the chair, but also intangible ones like emotions. (Yes, even emotions are reduced to quanta.) And then, they have to stay together in that arrangement, as if glued or soldered or stitched together, but without any adhesive that isn’t itself composed of quanta.

Here’s one way of looking at this, although not everyone will agree with it – which is OK. If quanta can’t be reduced to anything smaller, then

the foundation for all of creation is the source of quanta. If there is no outside supplier of quanta, then the quanta and the source are one and the same. If each thing that the quantum source (often called the “God particle” or “divine particle”) generates is made not only *by* that source but also *from* that source, then only the quanta source truly exists.

Personally, I agree with that notion from a purely logical standpoint. To phrase it differently, I have come to believe that God uses Himself to create, and that He doesn’t need to go to anyone or anything in order to create minerals, plants, animals, humans, thoughts or anything else. He chooses to create something, and by virtue of that choice alone, the thing exists.¹⁷ He doesn’t need a supplier or manufacturer to assist Him.

Returning to the example of the wooden chair, one can conclude that the chair is made of God because everything in it came from God, who didn’t go outside of Himself to get anything He used to create. He used what He already possessed: Himself. This isn’t saying that the chair *is* God. That’s as backwards as saying that a sunset looks like a painting, in which life is meant to imitate art; that’s impossible, and the reverse is true. Rather, God *is* the chair, in that pieces of Himself are what the chair is ultimately made of, at the furthest point in the quantum supply chain.

An unpopular opinion? Maybe. But it’s my faith, regardless of popularity. And all of this comes down to faith: mine, yours and everyone else’s.

Vibrations

This dips into a quantum physics sub-field, Quantum Field Theory (QFT), which incorporates quantum electrodynamics and other sub-fields. In QFT, electromagnetic fields are all around us, and these serve as mediators of energy, and vibrations are energy in motion. The frequency at which they vibrate, ranging from Scalar (aka non-Hertzian) to Hertzian, determines the form they take in any given dimension.

Scalar entities vibrate at the highest frequencies and exist in a dimension above our three-dimensional world, such as the astral plane and the aether/quantum field. Hertzian entities are things that vibrate beneath and up to the speed of light and exist in the three-dimensional world. They are visible to humans only within a tiny segment (roughly 0.0035%¹⁸) of the electromagnetic spectrum.

¹⁷ For an analysis of *why* the creator creates, I recommend reading “The Physics of Consciousness” by Ivan Antic.

¹⁸ “Visible Light: Reading the rainbow for NNSA’s missions,” <https://www.energy.gov/nnsa/articles/visible-light-reading-rainbow-nnsa->

My Experience with Quantum Physics in Grief Management

Piecing all of the above together, along with a ton of things I left out to keep this concise, the conclusions most pertinent to my pet grief are:

- When a living thing dies (seemingly, although nothing dies), it is basically just absorbed back into God (i.e., returns to the quanta source), remaining accessible to all other quanta.
- The vibrations of quanta occur at measurable frequencies, and in order to better sense quanta that are vibrating at Scalar frequencies (in the astral plane) while you are at a Hertzian frequency (in the three-dimensional realm of Earth), you need to reach the highest-attainable Hertzian frequency.

Does knowing that Lolita never really died and was only transmuted energetically help me with the pain? Not at all, no. So, why bother learning about that? Because I'm assured of having access to her while we're at different frequencies, which means that I can still connect to her in a very real way – one that, in of itself, gives me a break from the pain.

The way I connect with her is by raising my vibration, which, for brevity's sake, I'll just describe as putting myself in a better mood.¹⁹ That's easier said than done when you're in the lowest depression you've ever experienced, right? I couldn't agree more. That's why I needed help to get there. And that help came in the form of guided meditation.²⁰

With guided meditation, I was able to go from vibrations at the lower end of the spectrum (grief) to ones that were a little higher up (hope). From there, my consciousness connected with Scalar beings, and I was led to Lolita's soul, and I had an intense experience that moved me to tears – happy tears. I got to see her again and hold her again, and it felt like what it had felt like when she was in this dimension.

Eventually, I got to where I could connect with Scalar beings without needing a guide while I was meditating, and that's what I do to this day. I don't get to visit with her every time, but I do get to have an experience that lifts me up (i.e., raises my vibration) every time. And that's huge when you're dealing with pet grief, no matter how far into it you are.

missions.

¹⁹ Do an internet search using the keywords "vibrational frequencies of emotions" for charts and in-depth explanations.

²⁰ Do an internet search using the keywords "raise your vibration through meditation" for in-depth explanations and recommendations.

Resources for Studying On Your Own

“12 Laws of the Universe” by Manhardeep Singh (pp. 7-8, 15-19)

“Blessed with Energy: The Mystery of Energy Medicine Explained Through Science and Scripture” by Marcy Meyers

“Christianity and Quantum Physics: Analogies Between Christian Teachings and Quantum Physics Laws” by Samuel Padilla Rosa (pp. 13-21, 59-94)

“Demystifying Reincarnation” by Chaitanya Charan (pp. 108-124)

“Eastern Body, Western Mind: Psychology and the Chakra System as a Path to the Self” by Anodea Judith

“Law of Perpetual Transmutation of Energy” by Sherry Lee (pp. 6-13, 22-29)

“Law of Vibration” by Sherry Lee (pp. 21-35, 93-96)

“Magic: A Treatise on Natural Occultism” by Manly P. Hall

“Meditation: First and Last Step from Understanding to Practice” by Ivan Antic (pp. 17-102)

“Physics II for Dummies” by Steven Holzner (pp. 37-337)

“QED: The Strange Theory of Light and Matter” by Richard P. Feynman

“Quantum Physics for Beginners: From Wave Theory to Quantum Computing” by Carl J. Pratt

“Sacred Geometry & Patterns of Divine Design” Derek Dodds

“Sacred Geometry: An A-Z Reference Guide” by Marilyn Walker

“Samadhi: Unity of Consciousness and Existence” by Ivan Antic (pp. 12-22, 23-27, 45-65, 96-100)

“Self Reiki: Tune in to Your Life Force to Achieve Harmony and Balance” by Jasmin Harsono

“Signs: The Secret Language of the Universe” by Laura Lynne Jackson (pp. 247-250)

“Spirits Beside Us: Gain Healing and Comfort from Loves Ones in the Afterlife” by Chris Lippincott (pp. 47-52, 154-156)

“The 7 Healing Chakras: Unlocking Your Body’s Energy Centers” by Brenda Davies

PET LOSS FIRST AID: QUANTUM PHYSICS

“The Little Book of Sacred Geometry” by Astrid Carvel

“The Loss of a Pet: A Guide to Coping with the Grieving Process When a Pet Dies” by Wallace Sife (pp. 231-237)

“The Physics of Consciousness: In the Quantum Field, Minerals, Plants, Animals and Human Souls” by Ivan Antic

“The Pineal Gland: The Eye of God” by Manly P. Hall

“The Secret Teachings of All Ages” by Manly P. Hall

“The Spiritual Implications of Quantum Physics: On the Nature of Science, Reality and Paradigm Shifts” by Jeff Carreira (pp. 33-51, 57-71)

“Unraveling the Multiverse: The Christian’s Guide to Quantum Physics, Entities from Higher Realities, Strange Technologies, and Ancient Prophecies Being Fulfilled Today” by Josh Peck

“What’s My Aura?” by Mystic Michaela

REINCARNATION

What I studied: What reincarnation is and whether it's feasible.

What I learned: All souls experience multiple lifetimes.

How my thinking was changed by new knowledge: I believe that after we die, God transmutes our energy and places it into another vessel (any living thing, not limited to human beings) in accordance with His timing and will. I believe that God allows souls to coordinate among one another prior to being placed into a new vessel for another life, enabling a core soul group to experience a number of lifetimes together in the shared pursuit of learning predetermined lessons each life.

How this new knowledge helped me manage grief: I was able to recognize when Lolita was preparing to reincarnate, and I was able to locate her new vessel and reunite us for another shared experience.

Summary and Disclaimer

I believe in soulmates, beings who are metaphysically intertwined and constitute two halves of one entity. I believe that if one of these leaves a life before the other one does, the departed soul can return in another vessel and rejoin the waiting soul, versus waiting until another life (or the interim between lives) to reunite. In my case, because I was suffering too greatly without Lolita to finish this life naturally, and – far more importantly – because I was at a point of karmic maturity that would allow me to receive knowledge about reincarnation, Lolita returned in a new vessel so that our intertwined soul could resume this life whole.

If I hadn't experienced this firsthand, there's no way I'd believe it, so I acknowledge that this chapter might be hard for some readers to take seriously. This is especially true if you – like me – have always dismissed reincarnation. That said, if you can set aside your disbelief long enough to read my story, and if you can envision your beloved in Lolita's place, you might be surprised by what you're capable of deeming possible.

Laying the Foundation for Lolita's Return: A Month of Messaging

Note: Although the following explanation consists largely of tarot communication, it is separate from what the chapter on tarot covers.

During one of Lolita's visits, I felt her presence leave me. It was May 13, 2024, the night before what would have been a major milestone for us: Lolita's quinceñaera (15th birthday). I was absolutely wrecked.

I had been communicating with her a lot through tarot,²¹ so in a reading on May 21, I asked her what I could do to feel her presence again. I drew the Ace of Pentacles, a card about new beginnings, receiving gifts from God and taking the first steps toward prosperity. Following up on that, I asked her how I could use a new beginning to feel her presence, and asked her what I should do. I drew the King of Cups, a card about taking action from a place of compassion and love, and of supporting and providing guidance to others. The message from the reading was, to summarize: When a gift from God is accompanied by a chance to guide someone, do so, and you'll feel Lolita's presence as a result.

The next day, I asked her where she goes when she's not with me, and I drew Judgment XX. This is a card about release from the afterlife, an awakening to a new phase of existence, and a period of rebirth and transformation. In my tarot journal, I wrote about the possibility that she might come back to me as a kitten, and that the kitten would be the gift from God mentioned in the reading the day before. About a week later, I asked again what I could do to feel her presence, and I drew the reversed Page of Cups. This card is about empathy, compassion and acting on the human imperative to help fellow man. I concluded once again that by helping someone, I would invite her presence back.

By the end of the month, intuition told me that my Light Team¹⁴ was now answering my questions, and that Lolita had ceased to reply. On June 2, I asked my Light Team what Lolita's plan was. My cards – reversed 8 of Swords, King of Cups and Strength VIII – built on messages from readings I had done across the previous two weeks to deliver this answer.

Phase 1 of Lolita's plan had been to establish regular communication with me after her transition on July 7, 2023. That took a long time, as I was not at all ready to perceive, believe and interpret signs from the afterlife.²² Overlapping with that phase, Phase 2 began when I started getting help with my grief: the Lap of Love support group, the pet loss

²¹ I explain this and provide examples in the chapter on tarot.

²² See the chapter on signs from the afterlife.

community on Instagram and the pet grief program Honoring Our Animals. The third and final phase overlapped with Phase 2 and centered on introspection and accepting the situation.

When I asked what was going on that day (June 2) in Lolita's plan, I drew Lovers VI, the reversed Knight of Swords and reversed Judgment XX. The first card represents an important choice that will significantly influence the course of one's life; the second addresses being impatient; and the third warned against not heeding the call to wake up and change the direction of your life. From this, my takeaway was to focus not on what *she* was doing, but on what *I* was doing to further her plan.

June 7, I asked my Light Team how Lolita was doing, and I drew the 3 of Swords, King of Wands and 6 of Wands. The first card refers to a type of separation that will culminate in a fresh start; the second speaks of departing for an adventure and expecting the unexpected; and the third declared being rewarded for a job well done. I followed this up with a very direct question: "Will Lolita come back to me in another form?"

I drew the 9 of Cups, reversed 10 of Swords and 6 of Wands. From it, I concluded that if her returning was something I desired strongly enough, she would arrange for it. Also, I acknowledged that my doubt that she would return had been hurting me. I decided to keep waiting and reassured myself that I would see her again, and that she hadn't gone away forever, even though I couldn't feel her presence right then.

June 13, I asked my Light Team what sign I should expect to see when Lolita had reincarnated (assumedly as a kitten), and I drew The Chariot VII, reversed 7 of Pentacles, 5 of Pentacles and Knight of Wands. The first of these is about embarking on a journey (literal or metaphorical); the second addressed anxiety over money; the third emphasizes a willingness to support someone through adversity; and the fourth foresaw excitement coming into my life through a major change.

The Big Day: June 17, 2024

By this point, through numerous chains of events, I was expecting to find a kitten any day now, and I was expecting it to be a female whom I was to name Reina. I even had a collar and tag ready for her.

I was at the vet on June 17 for my cat Rudy, who's better known by his original name, Buddy. While I was there, a man with a kitten mentioned that he worked for the cat rescue organization Buddy's Place, and that they had a lot of kittens that needed adopting. He told me where to go, but when I got there, I found no kittens at all. Also, it was just a shelter,

not an adoption center, so no one was staffed there. You just showed up, looked at the cat you wanted, and then applied online. I decided to apply to adopt an adult female orange tabby named Renni, figuring that the name's proximity to "Reina" was some kind of sign.

Wasting no time, I decided to fill out the application in my car in the parking lot. It was really hot, so I had the windows down. Halfway into the application, I was interrupted by someone who was pleading humbly for money to get something to eat. The lady, who introduced herself as Julie, said she was in between paychecks and couldn't afford food and still had to pay for three bus rides to get home.

After talking with her for five or 10 minutes, I agreed to buy her food at a nearby grocery store. She worried that I was just saying that to get her to leave me alone, and that I wouldn't actually return – something someone had done to her before, apparently. She felt guilty about imposing on me though, and said she hoped that I had already been out to buy groceries, and that she wouldn't be asking me to go out of my way for her. I told her I was actually out to adopt a kitten and had been in the process of applying online to adopt a cat when she approached me. She informed me that she had seven²³ kittens at home and told me they needed homes, and I could have as many as I wanted.

After talking with Julie another five minutes or so, I offered to take her with me to buy her food and to drive her home, where I could see the kittens and possibly bring one home with me. She feared for her safety and asked to call her house to tell them to expect her. Her phone's battery was dead, so I let her use my phone. She called, and then we were on our way, two strangers taking a leap of faith. (Of note, the phone number included a 7, and we had to pull over at a 7/11 because she urgently needed the bathroom. Lots of 7s.)

At the grocery store, every line was incredibly long. Julie offered to leave, but I said I was willing to wait. We chatted while in line, and I didn't notice the number of the lane until we were already at the register: Lane 7. She asked whether I could give her a gift card to the grocery store to buy more food, but that wasn't an option at that lane. She dismissed the idea and told me to never mind. But I persisted and asked her how much she needed so that I could just give her cash. The amount was so modest that I took out more than 4 times that amount and gave it to her without telling her how much it was or letting her count it.

²³ As the chapter on numerology explains, 7 is Lolita's signature number, which she uses as a sort of ID tag in events.

At her house (in a dangerous neighborhood I never should have gone to alone), I met the guys she rented a room from, and they showed me the kittens. I had mentioned that I was partial to orange tabbies, and although they didn't have one of those, they were eager to present alternatives. The only one they *didn't* introduce me to was off on its own, alone. It was a tiny black and grey tabby.

I asked about it, and they had forgotten that one – hadn't even given it a name, in fact. I picked it up, and when our eyes met, it felt like we had known each other for centuries. It was intense. And the kitten immediately pushed its little mouth right up to mine for kisses. The guys concluded, "I guess that one's going home with you!" and I agreed.

Since they hadn't really noticed that particular kitten, they didn't know whether it was male or female. And since it was covered in its own feces due to the living conditions there, I didn't tinker with the tail to go exploring. Instead, I told them that I already had the name Reina picked out and ready on a collar, as I was convinced it was the girl I had been expecting. I told them that my backup name, should the kitten be male, was the name of my favorite character from my favorite movie, Father Karras from "The Exorcist" (1973). Julie quoted a line from the movie as she and her roommates escorted me to my car and watched to make sure I got out of the neighborhood safely.

The kitten was sitting on a scarf I had found in my trunk, protecting the passenger's seat from getting the kitten's poo on it. The drive to my house from there was really long, and I kept talking to then-Reina to acquaint her with my voice and her new name. The whole thing had been so spontaneous, and yet it felt like it was going perfectly according to plan. I hadn't felt that kind of intensity from those eyes since looking into Lolita's eyes. It was like nothing I could have expected or even imagined.

Linking the Messages to the Outcome

Here are the most noteworthy synchronicities that pointed me toward discovering Lolita's reincarnation in a new vessel.

First, the kitten definitely qualifies as a gift of God that resulted from my seizing the opportunity to help someone. The May 21 and May 31 readings indicated as much. Also, this opportunity emerged from a situation involving Julie's anxiety over money and my willingness to support her through adversity, as was foretold in the June 13 reading. Also, going back to the "What is Lolita's plan?" reading from June 2, I had confronted my limiting beliefs and thereby removed the obstacle for recognizing and intellectually embracing her return.

This might seem like a stretch to anyone who has only the details presented in this chapter. You'll just have to take my word for it that my tarot journal, coupled with later reflections when I held far more knowledge and could see far more in the notes from those days, says a lot more than what fit on these few pages.

Prologue: A Year and a Half Later

From the night of June 17, 2024, onward, the kitten, a male I did go on to name Father Karras, took on Lolita's personality more and more. He still has plenty of his own traits, but I feel her in him so much that when I see photos of her, I feel what I can only describe as an absence of death and unbroken continuity. I see the same soul despite there being two distinct vessels. It could be that Lolita's soul will go through periods of a diminished presence and periods of a heightened presence, but for now, I'm just enjoying not analyzing it and simply feeling it and living it.

Resources for Studying On Your Own

“12 Laws of Karma” by Manhardeep Singh (pp. 39-42, 55-57)

“12 Laws of the Universe” by Manhardeep Singh (pp. 39-47)

“Animal Reincarnation: Animal Life After Death” by Brent Atwater
(pp. 23-30, 38-40, 48-53, 67-80, 83-85, 143-154, 157-158,
165-174)

“Animal Soul Contracts: Sacred Agreements for Shared Evolution” by
Tammy Billups (pp. 45-56)

“Animal Speak: The Spiritual & Magical Powers of Creatures Great &
Small” by Ted Andrews

“Astrology and Reincarnation” by Manly P. Hall

“Demystifying Reincarnation” by Chaitanya Charan

“Destiny of Souls: New Case Studies of Life Between Lives” by
Michael Newton

“Discovering Your Past Lives: The Ultimate Guide Into and Through
Your Past Life Memories” by Gloria Chadwick

“Journey of Souls: Case Studies of Life Between Lives” by Michael
Newton

“Law of Vibration” by Sherry Lee (pp. 48-54)

“Looking Into Your Future Lives: A Trip Through Time” by Gloria
Chadwick

“Meditation: First and Last Step from Understanding to Practice” by Ivan Antic (pp. 49-65, 93-102)

“Metaphysical Answers: The Violet Book – Life After Death, The Higher Dimensions, Karma and Reincarnation” by Georgio Mylonas

“Near Death Experiences: The Science, Psychology and Anthropology Behind the Phenomenon” by Anthony Peake

“Reincarnation Described and Explained” by Emmet Fox

“Reincarnation: The Missing Link in Christianity” by Elizabeth Clare Prophet

“Samadhi: Unity of Consciousness and Existence” by Ivan Antic (pp. 33, 48-65)

“The Amazing Afterlife of Animals: Messages and Signs from Our Pets on the Other Side” by Karen A. Anderson (pp. 133-145)

“The Big Book of Reincarnation: Examining the Evidence That We Have All Lived Before” by Roy Stemman

“The Complete Do-It-Yourself Guide to Past Life Regression: Time Tripping Adventures Into Your Soul” by Gloria Chadwick

“The Incredible Animal Afterlife: What Your Pet Wants You to Know” by Danielle MacKinnon (pp. 57-59)

“The Pet I Can’t Forget: Finding Hope and Healing with Signs from the Afterlife” by Karen A. Anderson (pp. 349-357)

“The Physics of Consciousness: In the Quantum Field, Minerals, Plants, Animals and Human Souls” by Ivan Antic (pp. 134-163, 184-197)

SIGNS FROM THE AFTERLIFE

What I studied: Whether we receive signs from those who have passed on, and what these signs are.

What I learned: There are numerous signs that come from those who have passed on, and you need only keep your eyes and mind open to receive and understand them.

How my thinking was changed by new knowledge: This opened my mind further to the idea of communicating with my departed beloved.

How this new knowledge helped me manage grief: I gradually became able to notice, and then to interpret, signs from Lolita.

In-Depth Explanation

Deep in your heart, mind and soul, you know how indescribably close you and your beloved pet were. You didn't need a common language to communicate then, and you don't need one even now. When a love is *that* strong, communication continues as a force of nature, essentially.

What changes is an exponential expansion of the vocabulary. Among humans, we're limited to written, spoken and gestured/signed words and symbols. Our senses of sight, hearing and/or touch (depending on the individual) confine our capacity to exchange ideas with other people. That all changes when they leave this world.

In the afterlife, your pet is back in pure-energy form and can use all forms of energy as the equivalent of this world's words and gestures. Here are the most commonly used signs, including ones Lolita uses.

Commonly Used Signs from Your Pet in the Afterlife

- **Animals:** Encountering animals (birds, butterflies, etc.) at a seemingly random time. (Look up the meanings of each one.)

- **Imprinting:** Suddenly having an image, idea or memory appear in your mind, seemingly prompted by nothing.
- **Music:** Hearing a song that was special to you and your pet.
- **Names:** Seeing your pet's name repeatedly in a short period.
- **Numbers:** Encountering meaningful numbers and numerical sequences, such as your pet's date of birth, in seemingly random places, unexpectedly.
- **Objects:** Finding your pet's food dish or other belonging in a place where you didn't leave it.
- **Odors:** Smelling your pet's fur, saliva or anything else that was unique to your pet and couldn't be confused for another.
- **Orbs:** Seeing globes of light, of any color.
- **Over-souling:** When one of your surviving or new pets suddenly and briefly takes on very specific personality traits and/or physical mannerisms of your deceased pet.
- **Sky Signs:** Seeing a rainbow, shooting star, peculiarly shaped cloud or anything else that makes an impression on you.
- **Sightings:** Seeing your pet briefly in your peripheral vision.
- **Sounds:** Hearing your pet's meow, purring, bark, footsteps or any other sound unique to your pet.
- **Synchronicity:** The alignment of seemingly unrelated events in a way that is meaningful, often mislabeled "coincidence."
- **Touch:** Feeling your deceased pet lick you, rub up against you, jump up onto your bed, or anything else physical.

My Experience with Receiving Signs

I could probably write an entire book on signs I've received from not only Lolita but also the cat she chose for me shortly after her passing, whom I named Silverene. What I'm sharing here is but a tiny fraction of what I've received from the two of them.

- **Digital Photo Frame:** I have a digital photo frame displaying random photos and videos of Lolita 24/7, and the timing of which photos and videos appear when I happen to walk by it occasionally – not always – aligns with the season or special event. For example, throughout the December of my second Christmas season without her, all of the Christmas photos and videos would pop up in sequence. They're not labeled in any organized way in their filenames, and they're among thousands of photos and videos spanning 14 years together. But those particular ones kept surprising me all month long.

- **Dreams:** Lolita visits me in dreams only about once a year, but when she does, it's powerful. The difference between a dream *about* your beloved and a dream *with* your beloved is how you feel during and after the dream. Whereas a dream *about* your beloved can be happy, bittersweet, sad or any other such emotional experience, a dream *with* your beloved feels like life back on Earth with them. You may or may not notice it during the dream, but you'll definitely know it in your gut upon waking. When Lolita has visited me in dreams, upon waking, it felt like I had just left her side.
- **Electronics Malfunctioning:** Whether it's a flickering light, the TV shutting off on its own, the clock in my car showing the wrong hour and minute out of nowhere, a toy's sensor being tripped to turn it on, or my electric candles turning on without my touching them, disturbances with electricity are one way Lolita gets my attention. Sometimes, it takes several instances of malfunctioning electronics for me to realize that the "coincidences" are adding up; other times, I know to drop what I'm doing and contact her through meditation or a card reading (tarot cards, angel numbers and/or oracle decks).²⁴ Invariably, *every* reading I've ever done has been a detailed reflection of what I'm going through in any given moment (e.g., struggling with my eating disorder, overcommitting myself at work or with friends, delaying working on my book).
- **Fur:** I had to deep-clean the carpet in one of the rooms of my house, and it was the room that had been Silverene's when she first arrived, and the room she had been in when she was euthanized. I struggled with knowing that I'd be removing all remaining physical traces of her, but I also felt her nudging me to do it, giving me both her approval and her order. And after I had cleaned the carpet and put the rugs in the room back down, I accidentally kicked over the corner of one of the rugs. And there on the bottom of that rug was a tuft of Silverene's fur. It was like her way of giving me something to hang on to, despite having cleaned the room so extensively.
- **License Plate Letters and Numbers:** This is one of Lolita's favorite ways to reach me – one that took a long time for me to get used to looking for, too. I have many examples to choose from, but here's just one. One particular day, while I was out driving far more than usual, and having a very

²⁴ See the chapters on tarot and numbers, as well as the Meditation entry in the Tips for Self-Care chapter.

stressful day, and I kept seeing the number 69 over and over on license plates. (If I had known I was going to see it so many times, I would have kept count; I didn't, so I didn't.)

I forgot to look up the number until late that night, when I was crying over missing her and needing her to comfort me after a bad day. And I had forgotten that 69 is the numerological equivalent of her name.²⁵ When I saw that in my notes in my tarot/numerology journal, I switched from sad tears to happy tears. That *whole* time, she was trying to soothe me through stressful hours just like she would have if we had been at home together while she was Earth-side.

- **Music:** Lolita and I have a special song that's *our* song: "All I Have to Do Is Dream," as performed in the 1950s by the Everly Brothers. Unlike many oldies but goodies, this song isn't the kind to pop up places – and yet it did, unexpectedly, when I was on my first road trip without Lolita and had Father Karras with me. When we got up to our hotel room and I turned on the TV, the default channel came on – playing our song! It was in the middle of the chorus, and when it ended, the news and weather report came on. I never heard it on the TV again, despite leaving it on for Father Karras' benefit. I believe it was Lolita's way of confirming that she was with us.
- **New Pets:** Lolita sent me a cat I named Rudy while she was still alive, and she reincarnated as Father Karras, whom I discuss in the chapter on reincarnation, so I'll share another sign. This sign was from Silverene.

Hours after Silverene had crossed over, she let me know that her signature number would be 8. Two nights after her passing, I did an angel card reading after discovering that my electric candle had turned on by itself. The number I drew was 888. I used that as the theme for a tarot reading, and I drew four cards to be interpreted based on the meaning of 888.²⁶ In addition to the cards' numerical values, combined, reducing to 8,²⁵ one of the messages in the tarot cards was: Look after someone new.

I thought she meant Father Karras, who wasn't exactly new, but it was the closest I could get to understanding it. The next morning, a stray kitten appeared at my doorstep, starved.

²⁵ See the chapter on numerology.

²⁶ I go over the entire reading in detail in the chapter on tarot.

After a series of events that could fill an entire chapter,²⁷ I ended up adopting her and naming her Reina. The name derived from my already having a kitten-sized collar with that name,²⁸ but it also is the Spanish word for “queen,” which happened to be Silverene’s nickname: Queen Reenie.

- **Whiskers:** I sculpted Silverene and mounted the sculpture on a painting of mine. Then, when it was time to glue on the whiskers, I went to my craft drawer to get the fake ones out. When I returned to the sculpture, a real whisker identical to Silverene’s gradient-colored whiskers was sitting beside it. I wept as I thanked her, and then I used that on my sculpture, along with the faux whiskers for the others.

A Note on Self-Doubt and Disbelief

If you’re not ready to accept even the *possibility* that your pet is trying to reach you, that’s OK. I encourage you to heighten your awareness of the signs covered in this chapter though; your pet may yet change your mind by prying it open like Lolita did to my own mind. And if not, that’s OK too. What matters most is letting go of even 0.01% of your disbelief in signs from the afterlife. Once you’ve allowed the *possibility* into your consciousness, *that* is when your pet’s mystical voice can emerge.

If you *are* open to receiving signs but haven’t seen any yet and are sad or frustrated, I encourage you to be more observant of everyday things: the time of day (12-hour and 24-hour time) when you happen to check your phone or another clock; the numbers in the total on a receipt from a last-minute decision to buy something; the name of the barista who made your coffee or rang you up; the letters and numbers on license plates that surround you when you’re at a stoplight; and so on.

Odds are, you’ve been so focused on seeing only *one* thing that you’re missing the *dozens* of things your beloved is using instead to reach you.

If you’re open to receiving signs but aren’t sure whether you’re seeing something because you *want* to, and it’s not *really* a sign, I encourage you to choose to believe. Whether it is or isn’t a sign is mathematically a 50-50 split, right? So, *choose* the 50% chance that they *are* trying to reach you, rather than always choosing the 50% chance that they’re *not* trying to reach you. You can choose to welcome the message every bit as much as you can choose to reject it, so go with “yes” instead of “no.”

²⁷ The abridged version is presented in the chapter on numerology.

²⁸ See the chapter on reincarnation.

In my experience, once I started trusting my intuition, the signs started coming more frequently and in greater variety. Once your pet knows that you're listening, they start talking more and more, basically. So, here's a rule to live by while surviving life without your soul pet visibly beside you: **If you suspect it, believe it.**

Keep in mind that nothing about grief involves hope and happiness, so grief can't "trick" you into having the joyous experience of receiving a sign from your pet. Rather, it's your pet trying to get your attention so that they can keep your wonderful relationship going. Nothing can get in the way of anything so special. And they'll persist in trying to reach you however many times as are necessary to get you to relinquish disbelief and self-doubt. Once you let go of those, the signs will likely multiply.

One final suggestion is to keep a signs journal. Every time Lolita or Silverene sends me a sign, I write down the date, the time (if I noticed it), details (numbers, words, animals, etc.), and the context of the moment (what I was doing, where I was, what I was thinking, etc.). When you have a visual representation of how often your beloved is reaching out to you, it helps to loosen the grip that self-doubt can have on your mind.

Resources for Studying On Your Own

"A Pet Death Doula's Guide to Sacred Transitions" online course
taught by Monique Brignoni, hosted by The Shift Network

"Animal Reincarnation: Animal Life After Death" by Brent Atwater
(pp. 81-82, 109-110, 123-127)

"Animal Speak: The Spiritual & Magical Powers of Creatures Great & Small" by Ted Andrews

"Goodbye, Friend: Healing Wisdom for Anyone Who Has Ever Lost a Pet" by Gary Kowalski (pp. 101-107)

"Grieving the Death of a Pet" by Betty J. Carmack (pp. 73-74)

"Pet Mediumship" online course taught by Danielle MacKinnon,
hosted by The Shift Network

"Signs from Pets in the Afterlife: Identifying Messages from Pets in Heaven" by Lyn Ragan

"Soul Comfort for Cat Lovers: Coping Wisdom for Heart and Soul After the Loss of a Beloved Feline" by Liz Eastwood (pp. 99-100)

"The Amazing Afterlife of Animals: Messages and Signs from Our Pets on the Other Side" by Karen A. Anderson (pp. 48-50, 53-63, 78-82)

PET LOSS FIRST AID: SIGNS FROM THE AFTERLIFE

“The Emotional Wound Soul Contract Between Animals & Their People” online course taught by Tammy Billups, hosted by The Shift Network

“The Incredible Animal Afterlife: What Your Pet Wants You to Know” by Danielle MacKinnon (pp. 65-73)

“The Pet I Can’t Forget: Finding Hope and Healing with Signs from the Afterlife” by Karen A. Anderson (pp. 52-54, 60-61, 71-72, 78-79, 91-92, 98-99, 105-108, 118-119, 148-149, 156-157, 172-173, 182-186, 193-194, 361-366)

“The Rainbow Bridge: Pet Loss is Heaven’s Gain” by Niki Behrikis Shanahan (pp. 40-41)

“There Is Eternal Life for Animals: A Book Based on Bible Scripture” by Niki Behrikis Shanahan (pp. 115-116)

TAROT

What I studied: Whether tarot is devil worship or involves asking demons questions, and whether it's overly generalized junk with forced meaning.

What I learned: Tarot is an esoteric communication mechanism that blends intuition with guided self-analysis.

How my thinking was changed by new knowledge: I believe that what I learn from a tarot reading is knowledge that isn't available to me in other ways, and that it bridges this dimension with higher dimensions.

How this new knowledge helped me manage grief: Tarot is my primary means of receiving detailed messages from the Other Side.

Deconstructing the Stigma

As I mention in this book's introduction, I was always taught that tarot was a sin, something that offended God and poisoned your relationship with Him. I was taught that it was devil worship, and I was told explicitly and repeatedly never to have anything to do with tarot.

I think what first opened my mind up to learning about tarot to discover whether the staunch prohibition was substantive or merely dogma was reasoning that ending my life would be a greater sin than reading cards, and I was ready to end things if I couldn't connect with Lolita. I had just begun the Honoring Our Animals pet grief program, and there was a workshop on tarot, and I registered for it. I made up my mind to learn about it before committing to judging it.

From that workshop, I realized that I had misunderstood the way the cards are even used. In the first place, you don't begin by asking Satan or demons to speak to you. Granted, I suppose you *could* do that, but it's not some rule or magic spell that you have to use to make the cards serve a purpose. You can address anyone whose spirit you'd like to reach, and you can specify that you're not addressing anyone else.

Before giving an actual reading a try though, I bought books about the complete history of tarot. I wanted to learn all I could to find out whether it really was this demonic, heinous sin I had always been told it was.

In brief, that proved not to be the case at all – not even a little. If someone calls out to the devil or demons when reading the cards, it's because they desire to connect with such beings, no matter how; it is *not* because the cards are designed for that. To quote Anthony Louis, author of "Llewellyn's Complete Book of Tarot," when debunking the myth "The tarot is evil and owes its accuracy to the workings of the devil":

"The tarot is simply a deck of seventy-eight cards with imaginative images printed on them. The accuracy of the tarot depends on the intuitive faculties of the reader. Evil does not reside in pieces of cardboard; it is a distinctly human trait."²⁹

To summarize Louis' extensive history, let's go back to the appearance of a card game with cards that resemble the numbered cards of today's tarot deck. (Note that the Chinese had invented card games thousands of years earlier.)

These cards were being used in the Middle East, and they made their way to Europe via Arabs who had come to Spain in the late 1400s. From Spain, they made their way into Italy, where new cards were added to the deck. Also, the designs were given a makeover using Renaissance art styles. These were influenced by the Roman Catholic church, whose clergy relied on expressive imagery to preach to illiterate masses.

Sometime in the 1500s, the Italian nobles who had the leisure of spending their lives painting and writing poetry started using the cards for creative inspiration. They'd choose one at random and construct stories and poems around it, and these eventually took on a divinatory significance. Within 200 years, that general perception took hold beyond the nobility, and they made their way into France, where the definitive deck ("tarot" being a French word) was established from then onward.

The cards combine two fundamental things: chance and intuition. Therein lies the appeal: receiving what you determine as either a random or deliberate selection of cards, which is then left to you (or the reader you consulted) to use your instincts to interpret.

²⁹ "Llewellyn's Complete Book of Tarot," 13.

My Experience with Using Tarot

To me, tarot is a form of guided self-analysis, and those guiding you are in higher dimensions, from which they shape your cards' quanta.³⁰ The guides are whomever you address when asking your question before shuffling or cutting the deck. In my case, I've only ever addressed Lolita, Silverene, the spirit guides in my Light Team³¹ and my Higher Self.³²

It's important to note that *only you* can truly know what the cards are trying to tell you. Your intuition is the decoder. That said, unless you're familiar with the key themes of each card, you'll need reference books or an experienced reader to assist you.

I consult five to 15 books for each card I draw, depending on how quickly and clearly I receive the intended message. For instance, if the first five or so books tell me the same thing, I note it in my journal and move on to the next card. If I keep finding different ways to read the card, or if none of the ways I find feels relevant to my question, I consult every book on the shelf so that I can combine everything I read to construct the interpretation.

Here are a few examples of how Lolita has communicated with me via tarot since late 2023:

- **Comforting me in times of painful uncertainty:** When it was clear that Silverene was having more worse days than good days (in terms of quality of life), I asked Lolita, "What can you tell me about Silverene?" and did a four-card reading.

The first card I drew (3 of Wands) told me that I was entering the next phase of my adventure and a would assume a new role or identity. The second card (Judgment XX reversed) told me that I was resisting transformation due to a difficult transition. Of note, the number XX [20] is associated with the word "death" and has the added meaning of companionship at the crossover.

The third card (6 of Pentacles) addressed the need to be sensitive to others' needs and pass along something of value. Also, the number 6 pertains to nurturing and caring

³⁰ See the chapter on quantum physics.

³¹ To learn about Light Teams, read "Spirits Beside Us: Gain Healing and Comfort from Loved Ones in the Afterlife" by Chris Lippincott.

³² A great resource for learning about the Higher Self is "Meditation: First and Last Step from Understanding to Practice" by Ivan Antic.

for those who need it, and the number 6 is the reduced sum (from the total of 24) of the letters in the word “cat.” The fourth card (3 of Cups) said to focus on spending time with friends and family.

From this, I could tell that Silverene’s time was nearing an end, and that I needed to put her quality of life ahead of my fear of losing her, and that I needed to stop torturing myself by fearing the future and instead enjoy Silverene every moment I had her. It was a comforting message.

Lolita had given me similar but deeper input the night before a quality-of-life consultation I had had with Lap of Love. During that consultation, I learned that Silverene was well past the turning point for having fewer good days than bad days. (The issues encountered during her actual euthanasia verified that abundantly.) The total number of that reading was a 49, which means “say goodbye” and “closure.”

- **Divination and instructions:** The evening of Silverene’s passing, as I sat beside her body, I asked her what her number was, and the number 8 popped into my head instantly, so I said that would be our number together. Two nights after Silverene passed away, my electric candle spontaneously ignited, so I drew a number from my angel deck. It was my first card reading since losing Silverene. The angel number I drew was 888. Naturally, I broke down sobbing in amazement and gratitude to hear from her.

I then drew four tarot cards to further interpret the angel number. The first card I drew (4 of Cups) told me to open myself up to something new by letting go of something painful from the past. The second card (9 of Wands) told me to remain strong and resilient in difficult times, and to find hope and encouragement from this card. Also, the number 9 symbolizes completing one cycle and beginning the next cycle. The third card I drew (4 of Wands reversed) told me to live in the moment and return to the joy of the present. The fourth card (Ace of Cups) told me that I would begin a new relationship in the form of a gift of a new beginning rooted in love and emotional experience, and that I was to care for it. The next morning, a pregnant, dangerously underweight kitten showed up on my porch and became a regular stray cat to dine at my house.

After about a month of my regularly feeding that kitten, people began telling me to rescue and adopt her. I didn’t feel

ready for that, but I didn't want to ignore a call to help, either. I asked Lolita and Silverene what their expectations were for me with the kitten, and I did a four-card reading.

The first card I drew (2 of Pentacles) told me to remain flexible, and the 2 carries the message "let's be friends." The second card (5 of Wands) spoke of conflicting desires and an urgent need to take action. The third card (4 of Wands reversed) spoke of an extended family. The fourth card (The Empress III) addressed maternal urges and motherhood. The total number of the reading was 14/5, which is a karmic number about learning through experience.

About two weeks later, I did a three-card tarot reading asking no question, just saying, "I miss you so much," to Silverene as I wept. For that reading, I chose an angel number as the theme to center my tarot reading on, and I drew No. 510, which means that I need to lead by example, and which reduces to 6, the number representing home and family life. The first tarot card I drew (5 of Cups reversed) said, "A new relationship will enter your life to dispel feelings of emptiness from suffering a loss." The second card I drew (Queen of Swords reversed) said, "You may not be coping well with a loss of something important in your life." The third card I drew (Queen of Cups reversed) warned that I was getting caught up in negative emotions. All of these things factored into my eventual decision to keep Reina.

About two weeks after I had taken in a then-pregnant Reina, I asked Lolita and Silverene what they could tell me about Reina and did a three-card reading. The total number of the cards was 26, which reduces to 8, Silverene's number. The first card (The Hermit IX reversed) conveyed that Reina was spending too much time alone in the room where I was keeping her safe from my two cats. I agreed with that, and I started sleeping in that room every other night to keep her company. The second card (8 of Cups) said that a project had not lived up to expectations, not long before Reina excreted the substance indicating a miscarriage. The third card (9 of Pentacles) indicated that actions would be taken by a generous woman of independent means – presumably me, a single breadwinner who rescues stray cats.

- **Nudging me to write:** Whenever I would put off writing this book or would become discouraged by worrying about what people would say, she would send me cards about:

- Writer's block
- Not finishing a project that I had started
- Giving up too easily on projects
- Needing to help others with things I've learned
- Predicting a successful writing project

- **Requesting another way to be in contact:** When I asked her how to use dreams to connect with her, she used cards to tell me to focus on astral travel – which I later learned is exactly what happens when we dream – to be used as a vehicle for cosmic energy to express itself.

Resources for Studying On Your Own

“Guided Tarot: A Beginner’s Guide to Card Meanings, Spreads, and Intuitive Exercises for Seamless Readings” by Stefanie Caponi

“How to Read Tarot: A Modern Guide” by Jessica Wiggan

“Kitchen Table Tarot: Pull up a Chair, Shuffle the Cards, and Let’s Talk Tarot” by Melissa Cynova

“Llewellyn’s Complete Book of Tarot: A Comprehensive Guide” by Anthony Louis

“Numerology and Tarot: Unlocking the Power of Numbers and Tarot Spreads” by Mari Silva

“Numerology: Key to the Tarot” by Sandor Konraad

“Tarot by Numbers” by Liz Dean

“Tarot Elements: Five Readings to Reset Your Life” by Melissa Cynova

“Tarot for Your Self” by Mary K. Greer

“The Big Book of Tarot: How to Interpret the Cards and Work with Tarot Spreads for Personal Growth” by Joan Bunning

“The Big Book of Tarot Meanings” by Sam Magdaleno

“The Complete Book of Tarot: A Comprehensive Guide” by Anthony Louis

“The Complete Book of Tarot Reversals” by Mary K. Greer

“The Little Book of Tarot” by Elena Alden

“The Ultimate Guide to Tarot: A Beginner’s Guide to the Cards, Spreads, and Revealing the Mystery of the Tarot” by Liz Dean

“The Ultimate Guide to Tarot Card Meanings” by Brigit Esselmont

TIPS FOR SURVIVING SOUL PET GRIEF

Grief is a time of survival. We're struck by what I call "grief tsunamis" at any given moment, and we're paralyzed by certain times of day, days of the week and dates associated with our pet's passing. We also have innumerable "This is the first ____ since losing my beloved" moments, too. And certain times of day can provoke these more than other times of day. So, the question is, "How can I possibly survive grief?"

In addition to using the knowledge shared in this book and its sources (including the resources listed after the Works Cited section), here are some things that have kept me going and that might help you.

Altar

Create a special place where you keep sacred objects belonging to your beloved: their collar, their favorite toy, their food dishes and so on. You might need to do this bit by bit over time, versus all in one sitting, as it can stir up some very deep, very difficult emotions.

Art Therapy

My amazing Lap of Love counselor, Kelly, introduced me to art therapy after seeing what a creative person I am. She recommended that I start an art project shortly before predictable trauma-triggers are activated. At that time, it was Halloween season, and I love carving pumpkins. So, I loaded up on pumpkins and carved one every night for at least a week.

Then, I started to incorporate other artistic endeavors into my pre-trigger self-care plan. I began sculpting with oven-bake polymer clay, using makeup and props to make myself look like my favorite horror movie characters, and, much later, painting scenes of Lolita and my other cats in acrylic on cardboard boxes I had lying around and repurposed.

It's important to note two things here though: I didn't repress my feelings, and I didn't dodge every trigger every time. The point of the art

therapy wasn't to hide from and bury my feelings, nor to attempt (and fail inevitably) to make the triggers disappear. Rather, it was to counterbalance extreme pain with heightened enjoyment. Often, I would still cry when going to bed, but not as intensely, and not weighed down by the kind of despair that strips you of hope. It was like adding an equal part of sugar to an equal part of salt when you had to eat the salt anyhow. It was a way of softening the impact of the triggers. And it worked – not to the same degree every single time, but enough to be no exaggeration when I describe it as life-saving.

Compartmentalizing Intrusive Thoughts

It can be nearly impossible to focus on work or any responsibilities at all while you're in survival mode after your soulmate pet passes away. What I found helpful was to compartmentalize my grief and schedule it for a certain time. When intrusive thoughts of the loss would hit me while I was trying to work, I would dismiss my new reality temporarily and set an intention to address it later and feel all my feelings.

Because I had the privacy of working from home, I was able to vocalize my intention: "No reality. Not now. Lolita is just sleeping in the other room. She's fine. Everything is normal." I would maintain a sort of controlled denial simply to power through the work day, and then after work (or whenever was the appropriate time, depending on commitments I had), I would be still and invite it to return. And I'd go through a waking nightmare, but I'd feel my feelings at the right place, at the right time, and I could still fulfill my "adulting" obligations.

Education

Take classes (online or on-site) on pet grief-related topics. Two that I highly recommend are available on demand from The Shift Network: "The Emotional Wound Soul Contract Between Animals & Their People" by Tammy Billups and "A Pet Death Doula's Guide to Sacred Transitions" by Monique Brignoni. Inquire about accessing the classes by sending a request to support@theshiftnetwork.com.

Eulogizing

Write and share (email, blog, social media post, etc.) a eulogy of your beloved pet. You can do an internet search for a template, or you can use my eulogy for Lolita (provided at the beginning of this book) to give you an idea. If a eulogy is too much to handle at this time, you might find comfort in writing a formal obituary. Here as well, you can search for a template or use my obituary for Lolita as a guide.

Fill Empty Sacred Spaces

Whether it's their bed, their favorite spot on the couch or anything else, if there's now a permanent vacancy where you always used to see your beloved, fill it. One example is Lolita's favorite corner on our bed, where she'd nap during the day. I had a stuffed animal made with a photo of her sleeping printed on it, and I place it on that corner during the day. That way, the place isn't completely empty every time I walk by it.

Jewelry

Get something that you can wear that contains remains from your pet. Some people get necklace urns and place a tiny amount of their pet's ashes in them to carry with them wherever they go. For me, that was too much, so instead I bought lockets to hold Lolita's and Silverene's fur.

Keeping Their Spot in Bed

If you always saved a space on your bed for them, continue to do that for as long as it feels comforting to you. If they had a favorite blanket, lay it out for them. Keep up whatever feels like it's meant to continue – no matter who gives you a hard time for it. Remember, grief is about survival, and you don't need anyone to co-sign on how you survive.

Meditation

Whether listening to a guided meditation or guiding yourself from experience, you can lead your consciousness to visit with and/or see your beloved. Search for guided meditation options on an online video platform, have a friend read a guided meditation script to you, or participate in group sessions that teach you self-guided meditation.

Meeting Place

This is another one I have to give Kelly from Lap of Love credit for. Choose a place in your home to go to when you want to feel your pet's presence or meet with them. Invest yourself in connecting with your pet while you're there.

Memorial Webpage

Use Lap of Love's free-of-charge self-guided service (available at <https://www.lapoflove.com/pet-memorial>) to create an online memorial wall for your pet that anyone can leave a message on. If you've got a personal blog, you can create one there too. Anywhere you can facilitate others' honoring and remembering your pet will be highly therapeutic and helpful in surviving grief.

Memories Log

I kept a running log, The Lolita Journal, of only positive memories of Lolita. I committed to writing at least one a day, and I'd carry the journal around with me all day, everywhere I went, so that I could capture anything I remembered before it had a chance to slip away.

Singing What You Used to Sing

Continue to sing all the little songs you made up for your pet. Sing them anytime they pop into your head (which, incidentally, is most likely your pet's requesting it from the Other Side). If you know how to write music on staff paper, try capturing your cute little songs on paper. You might even end up with a songbook that you can add to your altar or share with others.

Support Groups (Pet Grief Specific)

There are numerous options available, but I prefer the ones available online that meet via remote collaborative platforms (e.g., Zoom). The two I've leaned on most heavily to survive are hosted by Lap of Love (see <https://www.lapoflove.com/pet-loss-support-resources>) and Honoring Our Animals (visit <https://honoringouranimals.com/>). Some of these groups center on sharing what you're going through, and other groups incorporate a teaching element before or during a Q&A and/or sharing session.

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Danielle MacKinnon's YouTube channel,

<https://www.youtube.com/@DanielleMacKinnon>

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