

Who Do You Trust?

By Malcolm J. Brenner

When it comes to reproduction, male mammals seem to have it easy. No menstruation, no cramps, no pregnancy, no hormonal fluctuations, no painful childbirth! No lactation and no responsibility for raising the young, a job most males shirk! Easy, reliable orgasms from vigorous thrusting! And most of all, male mammals seem to have their choice of available females, as long as she's in heat.

Trusting your partner? A *female*? Not really an issue! In smaller species, if you just grab her by the nape of the neck and hang on, she'll eventually mate with you just to get rid of you. You may have to jump off and run away to avoid getting mauled, but hey, your job is done when you've planted your seed in her womb, right? Let evolution take it from there. Easy, simple and fun!

Appearances, however, can be deceiving. Leaving aside the cannibalistic sex lives of arthropods like the black widow spider and the praying mantis, trust becomes an issue in the sex lives of animals whenever they remain together afterward. It is the beginning of the social bond, and its role in sexual issues cannot be discounted. Given that, in mammals, the male is almost always larger and heavier than the female due to the rigors of male competition, he must frequently win her trust at least long enough to do the job, when the health and continuity of their social structure is at stake.

In other words, sexual trust plays a role in relationships in direct proportion to the partners' non-sexual interactions with each other. The greater the non-sexual bond, the greater the need for trust in all issues, of which sex is the understandably most sensitive, given that it requires penetrating/being penetrated. This, because of the vulnerability and close cooperation involved between two creatures, one the active, searching partner, and the other, being properly responsive to the male's advances. The male's suitability for reproduction will be determined by the contests he faces with other males, whether they're antlered jousts on the field of battle or sperm competitions in her vagina.

Investment of resources is another factor that influences trust. Since sperm cells require relatively little effort to produce, male mammals can economically spread them widely, impregnating as many females as they can. For them, trust really isn't an issue, as there

isn't much the female can do to injure the male, prevent him from mounting her or getting her pregnant. Eggs being more biologically expensive to produce than sperm, and a female mammal having only a limited number of them, it behooves females to be far more picky about their partners than males, holding out for the fittest of the lot to impregnate them and give their offspring the best chances for survival.

As such, the female animal must trust the male more than he trusts her. His is, after all, a short investment of time and energy; hers will take at least until the next breeding season, possibly far beyond in the case of long-lived animals like horses or elephants. Finding this trust, and requesting it from the female, is the process called courtship. It may require days, as in the case of the rhinoceros, or only seconds, as when a male dog sniffs a bitch in heat and quickly slips right into her, getting "tied" almost instantly. (This is one action where you'd think the partners would make their choices more carefully, and indeed, among wild canines who mate for life, they do. But the first thing humans did making wolves into dogs was replace their own drive to breed with our choice of partners. So if you're a K9, you may spend half-an-hour stuck with somebody you aren't fond of, because your owner has something different in mind!)

So males don't need to trust females like females need to trust males. But what if the tables were turned? What if the female, supposedly the passive, patient, receptive partner, turned active? What if she demanded a vigorous style of courtship that suited her? And what if she was large enough and strong enough to produce, if not an existential threat to her partner, at least a formidable challenge?

Such was the problem I faced in 1970 when I realized a female bottlenose dolphin at a cheesy Florida amusement park was courting me, seeking my attention, and wanting to mate with me. Me! A human being!

This was not some displaced reproductive behavior brought on by isolation; at one point Dolly (her human name) had her choice of no less than 5 sexually active male dolphins, and still... she wanted *me*! Every day, she swam several times in the open waters of Lemon Bay pacing a tour boat, leaping 11 feet (3.35 m) out of water for fish from her trainer's hand. He proudly told us she was the only dolphin outside the U.S. Navy that performed in open water. So she was rather unusual, in captive dolphin terms.

I asked her trainer what would happen if she swam away. He replied that she did, whenever the urge hit her. Once she was outside her sea-level pen he couldn't control her, and after a couple of days of being rolled in the eel grass by the local males, only goodwill brought her back.

Let me back up a bit. In 1970, when all this started, I was a sophomore liberal arts student at New College of Florida in Sarasota. A writer who had just moved to town asked me to photograph her book about the dolphins at Floridaland, an amusement park south of town. It was the biggest thing in the state until Disney arrived, and one of the attractions was a “porpoise show,” featuring several locally captured specimens of *Tursiops truncatus*, the bottlenose dolphin¹. These had been trained according to their various talents and dispositions to perform different roles in the show, and Dolly’s role was to swim with the *Delta Queen*, a mockup of a Mississippi river boat, and leap for the aforementioned fish from her trainer’s hand.

When I asked the trainer why he’d taught Dolly to perform in open water, his answer surprised me. “I can afford to lose her! She’s about the dumbest porpoise I’ve got.”

What I discovered was that, on the contrary, Dolly was a very dedicated individual with her own methods and agenda, and if one strategy failed, she could quickly develop another, showing great resourcefulness and sophistication.

As to her objective... the late Dr. Ken Norris, UCSD, considered by many to be the “godfather” of wild dolphin studies, has said “Dolphins have sex the way humans shake hands.” Like many dolphins, Dolly was puzzled as to why humans didn’t want to shake hands with them. But unlike most other dolphins, Dolly decided to do something about it. She would seduce a human, and thus find out what shaking hands with them was like!

Of course, this would require a cooperative subject, or one that could be induced to cooperate. Dolly conducted her search by initiating some mild courtship behavior directed toward humans and observing how her prospective subjects reacted. Usually they flushed hot pink, giggled, pointed and got out of the water. So much for that!

And then I came along. Me, the teenage zoophile.

I don’t want to get into the sexual, psychological, physical and emotional abuse that was inflicted on me as a child -- both my parents were damaged by a pseudoscientific quasi-cult -- but I never developed what most people would consider a “normal” teenage interest in girls. (A normal interest, for most boys, seemed like a starving leopard looking at a fat gazelle with a limp. You can read about it in my memoir *Growing Up in*

¹ “Porpoise” here is a local colloquialism for the bottlenose dolphin, a mammal, to avoid confusion with the dolphin fish or mahi-mahi, so named for its rounded forehead, similar to a dolphin’s melon.

the Orgone Box: Secrets of a Reichian Childhood, available from Amazon and Smashwords.) At that time my involvement with other species was limited to one abortive copulatory experience with a canine bitch and a long, mutually-satisfying relationship masturbating a male dog, both family pets. I felt guilty about it, and I couldn't even admit it to the psychologist I was seeing weekly. I wasn't happy with myself, I didn't want to be a zoophile, and there were no handy guides or advice columns about how to achieve happiness as a zoophile. I decided I could change myself by simply resisting the urge.

So by the time I got to Floridaland I'd put all the dog-fucking and dog-jerking-off behind me. My interest in dolphins, which I've held since childhood, is more sociological, even anthropological. It's very simple: *I don't believe we'll get a really informative view of what it means to be human until we're able to communicate with another intelligent species. It will give us a new view of ourselves, and will throw all of human experience into stark relief!*

Dolly, however, had other ideas. They didn't involve platonic conversations about fishing and the tides.

At this point, I have to ask a favor. If you're skeptical that bottlenose dolphins can be *telepathic*, that is, communicate mind-to-mind remotely without speech or gestures, I ask you to put doubt aside until you finish this article, as it will become increasingly troublesome. If you wish to resume a healthy, and, I acknowledge, probably justifiable skepticism afterward, that's fine. In fact, I encourage you to do so, except in the case of personal experience otherwise.

In 20-20 retrospect, Dolly's first overt telepathic contact with me was one night in late fall of 1970, shortly after I'd met her at Floridaland. I was at Turtle Beach on Siesta Key with some friends, trying to roll a joint under dark, windy conditions amidst the sand dunes. Needless to say I was having some difficulty when my mind was... *occupied* by something utterly foreign yet benign, which was using my eyes as remote sensors to see my hands. They looked like strange, pale crabs, trying to perform the difficult maneuver of folding the thin white wrapper around the herbal substance. I was highly motivated to consume the substance, this invisible narrator continued, when the foreign entity popped out of my mind as suddenly as it had come.

It's important to note that, at this point in the evening, I had not yet consumed *any* psychoactive substances. After I smoked the joint with a friend and we were heading back to New College, the foreign entity returned and again used my body as a remote

sensing device without even asking permission! This upset me, and I adopted a confrontational attitude. Since the entity appeared to be impressed and perplexed by the functioning of the car in which we were riding, I took it outside and exposed it to the panoply of human civilization. Overwhelmed by our complexity, it fled screaming.

Those were my first two encounters with what turned out to be Dolly, the dolphin of my mind's eye. It is my assertion, here and in the novel, that these mental communications, of which I was extremely sceptical at the time, were authentic telepathic contacts with the dolphin herself. In this I am indebted to the revealing writings of two ex-commercial dolphin trainers, the late Frank Robson of New Zealand and David Holroyd (who performed as David Capello) of the UK, both of whom mastered the art of telepathic dolphin training. Quite independently of me and each other, we each developed methods for communicating with the dolphins at a fairly high intellectual level, purely by telepathy. While our stories differ, our experiences with human-dolphin telepathy correlate down to details and support the reality of our experiences of this bizarre-sounding situation.

(I suspect there are more humans, most of them commercial dolphin trainers, who have had some telepathic communications with their charges, but won't talk about it for the same reason commercial airline pilots don't report UFOs to the U.S. Air Force.)

The entity demonstrated that it could return at any time and penetrate my thought process at will. Since it remained consistently curious and benevolent -- even jovial -- I rejected the hypothesis that it was a form of schizophrenia or a "demon," either in the modern sense of a destructive psychic entity or the ancient Greek sense of *daemon*, a familiar or family spirit.

It eventually required that I play a guessing game to establish its identity! Rather exasperated, I guessed "God?", got rejected, and worked my way down to lesser spiritual entities, all of which it denied. It requested I think very clearly about who would need to communicate in such a dodgy way, and the only thing I could come up with was... Dolly.

Immediately it showered me with a mental flood of warmth and affection the likes of which I'd never experienced before, but at the same time a note of condescension, as if I was a beloved but stupid pet who had, after long hours of training, finally figured out a simple trick.

At the same time this self-identified she-dolphin appeared on the astral plane, I was also having difficulty adjusting to what would turn out to be Dolly's indomitable will.

Like everyone else ever, I wanted to swim with the dolphins. When I finally got the chance, it was with Dolly, "the gentlest of all the dolphins," and I was disappointed that she wouldn't let me touch her. I got the feeling that my hands frightened her, so images flashed through my mind of how we humans use our hands in day-to-day life, and one of them was of how a man uses his hands to pleasure a woman during foreplay.

Men, on the average, think about sex nine times a day; since I was a very young man, double that. So that thought wasn't as weird in context as it seems... was it? It doesn't matter what my motivation was, the important thing is that *Dolly changed her behavior almost immediately*. She swam to me in the shallows and allowed me to stroke her, suddenly quite unafraid of my human hands! As described in the film, I began rubbing her forehead, watching scraps of her easily-shed skin flake off. As I did so she swam forward and spun belly-up, so that I ended up stroking her labia! I put her right and went back to her head, and she repeated the same tactics a second time. I got out of the water.

Things got worse when Dolly evinced a very human emotion in no uncertain terms. The photo (illus. #1) shows the misfortunate events of a day when I brought my wannabe girlfriend to the park so she could commune with dolphin sisterhood.

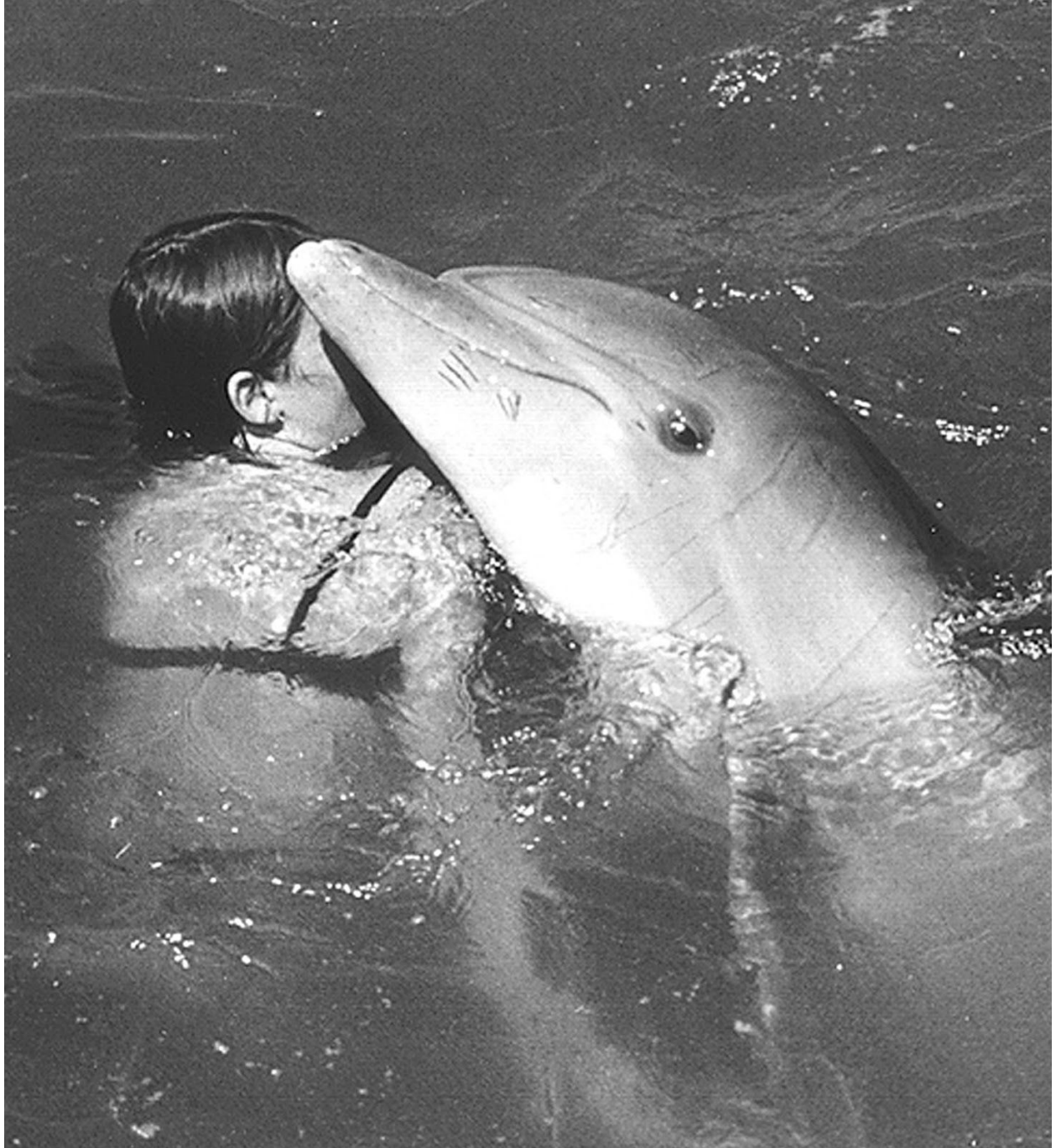


Photo #1

A female dolphin, species *Tursiops truncatus*, thrusts its snout aggressively into the face of an 18-year-old woman (*H. sapiens sapiens*) it had previously been swimming with peaceably. The author interpreted this unprovoked behavior as an expression of jealousy on the part of the dolphin over his relationship with the woman. (© 2011 Malcolm J. Brenner)

Dolly beat her up in front of me, demonstrating unequivocally that she understood the concept of *jealousy* quite clearly, and when it came to dominance-hierarchy challenges, being a female who was merely human didn't cut it!

The point is, Dolly responded to our mental communications by altering her behavior toward me in asked-for ways, or ways that benefitted a closer physical relationship and intimacy between us. This is very important, because the first lesson Dolly taught me was that when I was in the water with her, she was in control of the situation!

Let me illustrate.

Dolly's desire to masturbate by rubbing her vulva on my foot, or the soles of my sneakers, became an issue, so much so that at one point when I refused to accommodate her, she pushed me to the bottom of her 12-foot (3.66 m) pool! I was completely helpless and totally at her mercy. I remember lying there, wondering if she would let me up when my breath ran out; she did, but as I tried to stand in the shallows she attacked me again. This time I struck back at her with a closed fist, and knocked the wind out of her for long enough to escape.

MORAL: Don't bring a flipper to a fist fight!

This led, in turn, to one of the longest and strangest "close encounters of the wet kind," as I dubbed these apparent journeys into her world. As I mulled over the conditions of her captivity, it occurred to me they were strikingly like those of a human patient in a locked mental ward -- except that Dolly was ostensibly a sane dolphin when she entered, and would never be offered the chance for release. It was a life sentence.

This realization allowed a new assessment of her situation, and a bridge to further communication. She was deeply puzzled by my reluctance to shake hands with her! The situation required me to demonstrate to her, if not explain, the many, many hang-ups humans have with sex and our sexuality: circumcision, clitordectomy, subincision, patriarchy, puberty rituals, etc. *ad nauseum*. As when I'd shown her the complexity of human technology, Dolly recoiled, finding the physical carnage and the attitudes that encouraged it both horrifying and incomprehensible from her oceanic point of view.

In response, she offered to take me into her world. I used a technique I'd practiced earlier with her help to create a "dolphin astral body." Together we jumped the wire fence around her sea-level pen and set off on a journey. Along the way I was treated to

her view of things, or rather, the way she heard them, since sound occupies the same place in the dolphins' sensory hierarchy as sight does in humans. We eventually came upon what I can only describe as a vast whirlpool of mating dolphins, but I realized, too late, that her trainer had moved Dolly out of her sea-level pen and into a closed pool with the other captives. The image shattered, Dolly protesting her innocence as it did so.

But the outcome of this abortive attempt to exchange some information was striking: *Dolly abandoned her attempts to force her sexual behavior on me. Instead, she adopted new tactics and became very gentle and erotic, raking her teeth lightly along my arm or leg, making the hairs on my neck stand up!* I do not know how she knew to make this behavioral change, but she did. The closeness of our relationship was reinforced by a 2-week absence while I hitchhiked around Florida, looking for a summer job working with dolphins, which I did not find. I returned to find the park closing permanently, and eventually only Dolly and a male dolphin named Jimbo were left.

Dolly having proven herself, through these and other experiences described in the novel, as complex and self-aware as any human, I determined to try and make love, that is, have sex with her. I felt utterly right, correct and just in this, and her continued amorous behavior supported my assumption. She had demonstrated, time and again, that she wanted to have sex with me, as distinct from the other male dolphins she was exhibited with, and I strongly felt like I was granting something important to her, for whatever reason.

That last afternoon, we had the park to ourselves until sunset. Dolly was penned with Jimbo, and that presented a problem: he was as jealous of me as she'd been of my girlfriend! As I got into the water, he tried to attack me, and Dolly physically intervened. At this point, it was clear to me that whatever illusions I'd had about being in control of the situation, or even influencing it, were blown to smithereens.

Either dolphin had four ways of killing me: 1) rip me with their teeth; 2) smack me silly with their flukes; 3) ram me at 18 knots (32 kmph) or 4) just drown me; dolphins can hold their breath for 10 minutes, I can manage one, maybe two. So no, I was not in control, and never had been. The dolphins had been humoring me all along!

However, Dolly here displayed what I can best describe as a theory of Jimbo's mind. (This is a projection of another creature's thought processes.) Many authoritative writers have commented on the fact that as air-breathers, dolphins are very wary of swimming under an overhang, into a cave or other situation that might keep them from returning to

the surface. Dolly now swam to a narrow gap between two horizontal boards that comprised one wall of her pen, collapsed her lungs (a neat dolphin trick that comes with deep diving), turned on her side and swam between the boards, barely scraping through! Jimbo was effectively barred by his own fears, but he was still in our audio space.

And it was here that I was finally facing Dolly in all her splendid female dolphin glory.

If you watch most mammals mating you'll find a very predictable pattern of behavior: the female usually holds still as the male mounts her from behind and delivers a succession of rapid thrusts blindly until he penetrates her, culminating in a shuddering orgasm, while the female remains motionless. This doesn't mean she doesn't have an orgasm, it just means she doesn't have an *orgasm display*! Aside from her, the only individual qualified to tell whether she's had an orgasm or not is her mate, who feels the involuntary contractions of her vagina. Female animals do experience orgasms, but they don't fake them.

Dolphins are an exception to the rule of female immobility during mating. Their lifestyle demands constant movement, and sex is no exception. In fact, if you watch, you will see the male turns upside-down under the female, erects his penis (it's voluntary) and comes belly-to-belly with her. The female locks her pectoral fins (flippers) behind the male's and pushes them both forward with vigorous thrusts of her flukes, providing not merely locomotion but also controlling the rhythm of sex until climax! It is one of the most compelling demonstrations of female control of the sex act in the animal kingdom.

After some experimentation, this is what Dolly and I ended up doing. It wouldn't have been possible if I hadn't placed all my trust in her and allowed her to control the experience completely. In return, I was given access to something vast and timeless. Because we were both self-aware creatures, we knew we were crossing the boundaries between our respective worlds. What happened to me goes far beyond sex, into the realms of initiation and transcendence. I made love with an ancient intelligence that was literally extra-terrestrial, and I can testify that Love is a thing unto itself, an expression of something thoroughly primordial, probably dating back to the synthesis of oxytocin in the proto-mammal brain some 200 million years ago.

As for Dolly, she synchronized her thrusts to match mine. I was totally aware of everything she was doing, as if our minds had become one. As we swam together on the surface, I saw her blowhole open to breath and knew she was going to take me under water. When she did, she uttered three quick cries, matching my thrusts, in

succession, and then we both climaxed. The shared feelings were indescribable. Whether the cries were of genuine passion or intended for Jimbo to hear, I am unsure to this day.

Unfortunately, our story does not have a happy ending. I thought Dolly was tough, and she was -- physically. She could ram sharks and bite a barracuda in two. Emotional strength was another issue. She was chattel, and she was sold to an oceanarium where she and Jimbo were separated. She languished for a couple of months in a concrete tank barely bigger than a bathtub, then her trainer, who was a competent, compassionate man, walked out and found her dead on the bottom of the pool. Breathing in dolphins is voluntary, each breath requiring an act of will. Dolly had apparently held her breath until she went unconscious and suffocated. She had killed herself, one of countless dolphin victims of captivity.

Do I need to say that although she was in Mississippi and I was 3,000 miles away at The Evergreen State College in Washington, I had a very disturbing nightmare about dolphins dying in an environment that closely resembled many details of the physical structure where she was housed? I have not been able to ascertain the exact date of her death -- federal record keeping under the Marine Mammal Protection Act started just a couple of months later -- but I know it was within two weeks of that dream. It took me five years to begin to get over the pain of losing her.

I loved Dolly, and I believe she loved me. I judge this not just from our sexual encounter, but from the gesture she made immediately afterward. I was clinging to the wire fence between pens, exhausted. She swam up to me, placed her snout on my shoulder, embraced me with her flippers and *looked deep into my eyes*. We held each other's gaze for about a minute and exchanged thoughts I cannot describe. Then she let me go, swam to the gate and asked to be released back into the pool with Jimbo. That was the last time I saw her.

As a result of my childhood, I have trust issues with women. It is difficult for me to know when they are interested in me as a partner, and difficult to let down my guard. Once Dolly realized she was courting a *human being* and not a male dolphin and changed her behavior, becoming erotic in human terms, I found myself trusting her more deeply and profoundly than any woman I have ever met, including the two I married. I had to. We were reaching across the species line to each other. She was, after all, capable of killing me without even thinking about it. My human wives would at least require some preparation and subterfuge!

I feel both humble and proud that Dolly chose me for her mate, and that we were able to get as close physically and mentally as we did. Regardless of whether you believe we communicated telepathically, the results speak for themselves. I know of only one other man who has had sexual intercourse with a female dolphin; I believe him because he showed me a video of it. He reported a very pleasant experience, but not a cosmic one. They made love on a beaching ramp, not in the water, where she would have had freedom of movement, like Dolly and I did. Perhaps that accounts for it.

As humans, we limit ourselves, and one of the chief ways we do so is to build a pyramid of animal hierarchies and put ourselves on top of it. But that only emphasizes our participation in the routine activities of the animal world -- hunting, eating, shitting, reproducing. It does not take us out of it, and confers no special status. We don't know whether human intelligence and technology will be, in the long term, our salvation or our doom. I suppose it depends how we use them.

The dolphins went another way, a way that doesn't manipulate objects, but they have become deft manipulators of the people they encounter. Their problem now is how we treat the ocean, in which they still swim naked and free. I feel compelled to tell people about my experience with Dolly; I have become, in effect, a dolphin evangelist. There is a race of creatures on this planet who, of ancient times, reached out to us and saved us when we were lost in their domain. One of them reached out to me in ways that defy explanation. Don't be afraid when the strange, the weird, the unexplained calls. Be willing to step out of your stereotyped masculine role, even your human one! Listen closely to your mind, your heart, and your dreams. If I had, my life would be different, and Dolly might still be alive.

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