

How it all began...

Since 1997, Friskeröd Farm has been run based on a wish to create a sanctuary for individuals of all species, who for various reasons have not been able to adapt to systems based on subordination. These may be animals that are considered difficult to handle, or individuals who have been traumatised by past experiences. It can also be about physical injuries that have not had the time or opportunity to heal.



It all began with a pony named Pyret ("the tiny one"), who was the opposite to a people pleaser. We met at a riding school in Gothenburg when she was five, and I was eleven years old. This was a large riding school, which at the time was run in an almost mechanical way. The horses were worn out and broken down as on assembly lines.

Pyret however, was different. She was furious and fought to preserve her integrity. Her strength both frightened and fascinated me. At one point I was standing outside her stall. I didn't dare to go in, as I knew she both bit and kicked people. Sometimes she wouldn't even let them out of the stall again. So,

we just stood there, looking at each other. I have no idea how it happened. But suddenly it was as if the invisible wall that defined us in relation to each other was removed. I could experience her entire reality from within - and she did the same with me. It was extremely terrifying. There were no fixed points to relate to.

Everything fell apart. I have no idea how long this went on for. Time did not exist in this place. And afterwards, nothing was the same. The double swinging doors that were opened could not be properly closed again. At any moment, and without warning, it could happen again. The self, the definable, no longer included only myself. This was not the same as a projection. I didn't think I was Pyret. We could still distinguish each other - but at the same time we shared each other's experiences, fully. Perhaps there is no need for explanations, or translations, if empathy is the bridge between. Thus, the isolation ends. Words are the descriptions we need to reach each other, as long as there is a distance.



After a number of years at the riding school, Pyret became seriously ill. She developed a lung disease called emphysema, or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD in humans). As there is no cure for this disease, plans were made to put her down. She was eight years old at the time, and I was completely devastated. Ever since the day we met, I had been her groom, which was no easy task. She was biting, kicking and testing my patience as much as she did everyone else's. But I couldn't give up. My grandmother realized the seriousness of the situation and decided to buy Pyret. With her help, we were then able to leave the riding school and Pyret was moved to a farm in the countryside. I was overjoyed and thought that from now on everything would be fine. But it really wasn't that simple.

Pyret's lifepath was not primarily about getting well, but about becoming free. I was driven by fear of losing her, while she was motivated solely by the love of life itself. To be able to follow her on this path, I had to let go. Not just about the fear, but about absolutely everything. My whole identity, everything I had thought and done so far, and everything I knew to be true. Sometimes I think that we humans surround ourselves with domesticated animals because we need their unconditional love. We have such a great need to be seen and confirmed. But for that to happen, we must also be prepared to see ourselves, without making excuses and without any illusions. It requires a deep and honest self-examination. The animals around us must be given space to fully become who they truly are, both on a personal level and in terms of meeting the natural needs of the species. Otherwise there can never be a genuine meeting on equal terms. We have so many methods to make animals to listen, obey and follow us. But all too rarely the opposite happens.

*"If you have come here to help
me you are wasting your time.*

*But if you have come because
your liberation is bound up
with mine, then let us work
together"*

Lilla Watson



Pyret wasn't going to compromise. If I wished to follow her path, it was entirely up to me. Her healing process had only just begun. As the external stress subsided, all symptoms flared up. The breathing and coughing worsened significantly. Her vital force had been raised, the space had increased, and everything that had previously been suppressed rose to the surface. It was a long and winding road, but in the end, it brought us to the place where we are now. At first, she did not respond to any treatments, either conventional or alternative. This was not an isolated problem that could easily be removed or fixed. The work must continue where it had started.

In the dissolution of the ego and the individual identity. Towards the expansion of the self to ultimately include everything. And towards the individual's longing to dare to live fully. In this process it also became clear that all forms of subordination as well as any kind of hierarchal structures, which we humans so often assume, would constitute an impossible limitation. If everything is ultimately one, there can be no such distinctions. And no empathetic communication would be possible if there was any kind of difference in value. One of my greatest teachers, Marion Rosen, once explained that you can never heal someone else. The only thing you can do is to help maintaining a space where others are given the opportunity to fully become

who they are. This is the basis of any individual healing process, as well as the foundation of all the work we do here.

Pyret showed the way, and over time it also became possible to allow space for more individuals of different species to undergo similar healing processes. The goal is not, and never has been, to re-adapt, sell on or relocate any of the animals that come here. For that reason, we only accept animals that have no chance of recovery, or the possibility to be rehabilitated where they are. Almost all the animals on this farm would have been euthanized if they hadn't been given the opportunity to come here. For a large part of these animals, their previous problems are based on the fact that they have not been able to renounce their natural instincts, in order to adapt to the needs of humans. Many of them have a history of abuse and neglect. For others, what is considered normal training and handling has led to excruciating trauma. From a treatment point of view, one must then ask whether it is the individual who is unbalanced, or whether it is a system error? And if it is to some extent a matter of system failure, then there is also an obvious conflict between recovery and rehabilitation.



Foto Carina Albertsson

Pyret eventually recovered from her chronic pulmonary emphysema, against all odds. She then devoted the rest of her life to free herself from everything that had previously bound her identity. When she finally left her body, at the

age of thirty-five, she was completely free. She was lying down in one of the largest pastures, late in the fall. Her red colour blended with the grass and the falling leaves. During her time at the riding school, she had been confined ten months a year. There were no outdoor paddocks, and the stables were built directly adjacent to the indoor arena. The horses barely saw any daylight, except during hacks outside. But for two months of the year, they were let out to graze. Pyret could never be caught. When autumn came, it happened that she was left alone in the pasture, after all the other horses had left. Until they finally surrounded her and forced her to go on the trailer. She kept wishing that the people would forget about the horses in the fall, so that they could remain in the big pasture all year round. Now it was autumn, just like then, and her whole herd roamed freely around her. It consisted of as many horses - about sixty - as there had been at the riding school at that time. Pyret was completely contented. Everything she had fought for in life, she had now achieved. There was nothing left to do. Her dream had come true. I had always thought it was my vision, and my bad conscience about all those left behind. But it was Pyret - this stubborn, furious little horse - who had made all this possible. Because anyone would understand that you can't save everyone, right? We often hear that. Of course you can't... But you can still do a lot; for very, very many.

When Pyret let go, in her very last breath, she became one with everything. It was as if all the stories dissolved. Like thousands of little flakes of life force, which passed into each of us, who were around her at that moment. And so her dream lives on, undiminished.

*I wish
I could show you
when you are
lonely or in
darkness,
the astonishing
light of your
own being.*

Hafiz

