

by all means

by Edward Brown and Margot Koch

112 pages with illustrations

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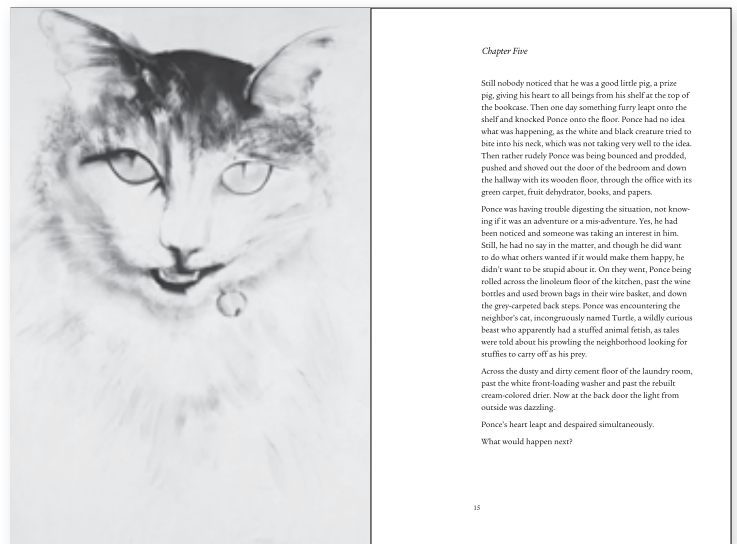
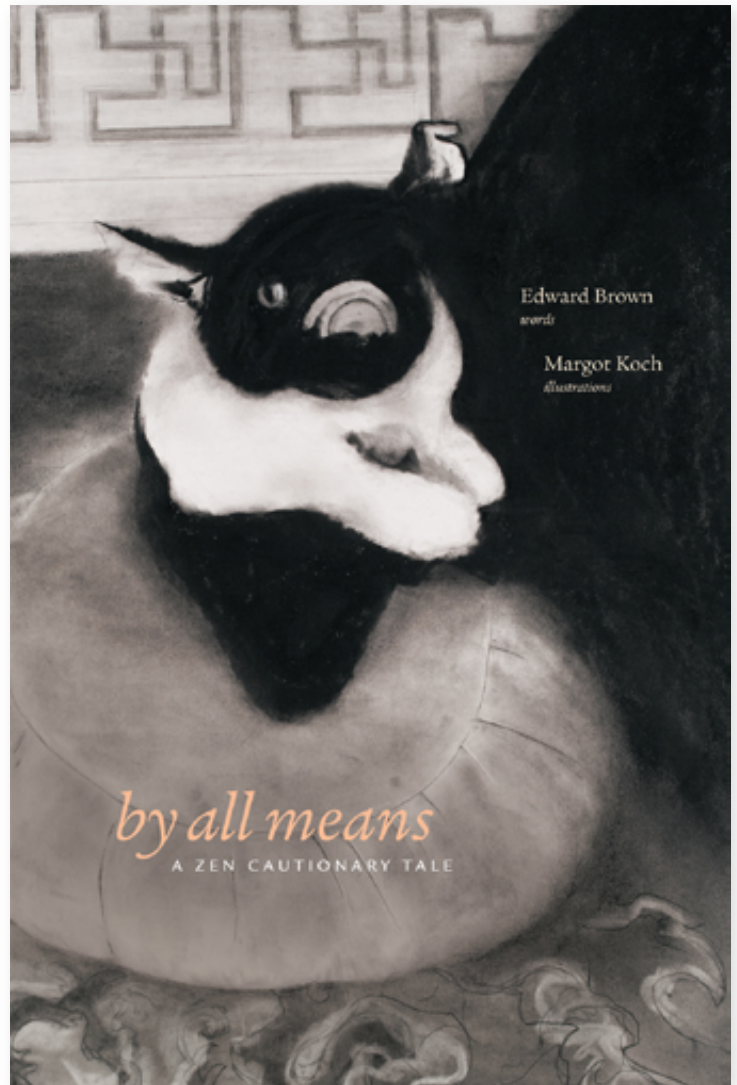
Edward Espe Brown, chef and author of the beloved *Tassajara Bread Book*, along with *Tomato Blessings* and *Radish Teachings*, has cooked up the tale of a surprising critter, whose deep intimacy with a Zen priest's inner life may strike your fancy. Margot Koch provides drawings illuminating all the action.

As the cover advises, this is a "Zen Cautionary Tale." But against what exactly are we to be cautioned? The darkness that may lurk beneath the safe refuge of childhood memories? The ordinary life you may find yourself living after all the spiritual aspirations? The inevitable way every little thing in the universe is hitched to everything else (and time is not a one-way street)? Perhaps it's simply a warning that Zen practice could lead to talking with stuffed animals—and you don't know what they will say!

Edward Brown takes us on a winding tale through the real-life events of a stuffed piggie named Ponce, whose path suddenly crosses with that of an imaginary person, named, at times, Edward. The challenges of their everyday lives and lucid perceptions lead ultimately towards a most singular moment of enlightenment and mutual recognition.



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Chapter Five

Still nobody noticed that he was a good little pig, a prize pig, giving his heart to all beings from his shelf at the top of the bookcase. Then one day something furry leaps onto the shelf and knocked Ponce onto the floor. Ponce had no idea what was happening, as the white and black creature tried to bite into his neck, which was not taking very well to the idea. Then rather rudely Ponce was being bounced and proscribed, pushed and shoved out the door of the bedroom and down the hallway with its wooden floor, through the office with its green carpet, fruit dehydrator, books, and papers.

Ponce was having trouble digesting the situation, not knowing if it was an adventure or a misadventure. Yes, he had been noticed and someone was taking an interest in him. Still, he had no say in the matter, and though he did want to do what others wanted if it would make them happy, he didn't want to be stupid about it. On they went, Ponce being rolled across the linoleum floor of the kitchen, past the wine bottles and used brown bags in their wire basket, and down the grey-carpeted back steps. Ponce was encountering the neighbor's cat, incongruously named Turtle, a wildly curious beast who apparently had a stuffed animal fetish, as sales were told about his prowling the neighborhood looking for stuffies to carry off as his prey.

Across the dusty and dirty cement floor of the laundry room, past the white front-loading washer and past the rebuilt cream-colored drier. Now at the back door the light from outside was dazzling.

Ponce's heart leapt and despaired simultaneously. What would happen next?

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