

Pets Are People Too



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A Bird In The Hand by Carol Dorsey

My feathered friend, Charlie, is a Lovebird. He loves to sit and cuddle in my hand while I rub his head and neck. It is quite an experience to have a bird sit willingly in your hand, requesting love. A human is an absolute GIANT to a small birdie, yet he sits and receives without fear.

About 6 years ago when I moved to North Carolina, my partner Chris and I were in the midst of extreme change. Houses were moved, jobs were changed and just random chaos ran the show. Charlie was being ignored. Of course he received food and water, but daily chats and head rubbies were a thing of the past. Charlie decided that plucking his own feathers out was the answer to this dilemma. It kept him occupied and he did get some attention, although negative. Charlie didn't love himself enough at that period in time and imparted damage on his own body. We decided to get him a Lovebird friend. As we continued to run amuck in our lives, we didn't notice that Charlie and the new bird, Lorraine, were not compatible. More feathers were plucked and Charlie was just plain mean. If you are familiar with birds, you'll know their beaks can probably open a metal can with their strength and precise cutting edge.

After a few more months of torture, we decided one day to let them outside to go free, to find their way in nature and be happy. The thought of a sad, caged bird was not an option for us anymore. They flew up into the trees and we said a sad, but accepting good-bye. We could hear Charlie screeching from afar, but knew he had the intelligence to find his way. Charlie decided

not to stay outdoors. He came back that very night and landed on Chris's shoulder. It was time to come home, back to familiar although not ideal surroundings. Lorraine also was retrieved but clearly she didn't want to come inside. Some time went by and more Charlie feathers flew; there was no comfort for poor Charlie with Lorraine. One Summer day, Lorraine decided to make her way in nature and we have yet to see her again. After her departure, Charlie started singing again. He found happiness within himself.

I began to ponder how Charlie's challenges reminded me of my life. My past circumstances were torturous. I didn't want to be alone, but being with the "other" was worse. I didn't love myself or feel worthy of abundance, so I hurt my body in many ways and stayed a victim of others in my life story. I was unhappy and, in a sense, I too 'plucked my feathers' to show the world I was unworthy, so I could receive some

attention. I decided one day I'd had enough and became best friends with aloneness. Once I did, I felt fullness in my heart. I could hear myself singing in the quiet moments, whispering words of encouragement and hope.

Charlie and I decided to give ourselves the best gifts of all: loving-kindness and nurturing. Our plumage speaks for itself! Thank you, Charlie.



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