

Pecker

Shirley was suddenly apprehensive. The strange sounds seemed to coming from outside the fence of her yard. She cautiously opened the tall wooden gate and looked up the track leading to the road, where she saw two young boys tormenting a large bird. Shirley didn't hesitate to go to it's defence and shooed the boys away.

The bird cowered between the tree and the fence and stared up at her. Now, she thought, what am I going to do with you. This was one big ugly bird, but it was obviously in distress with a damaged foot and buckled wing and Shirley was not one to leave an injured animal to suffer. The trouble was that this bird was over two and half feet tall, it was black with a scary, sharply hooked beak, with a bald red head and fearful staring eyes. It looked liked a gigantic ugly turkey.

She had seen these before, the locals called them Gyanasers, they were a type of vulture and not the friendliest of creatures. Shirley pondered

what to do. She didn't think that there were any vets around here and even if there was one, how was she going to get this creature there.

First she thought, let's get you somewhere safe. She went back through her yard into the kitchen, quickly cut up some pieces of meat and returned to the bird which was still exactly where she left it. She threw a piece of meat at it's feet which it hungrily gobbled up. Then she backed up a few feet and dropped another piece of meat. The bird half limped, half hopped forward and devoured the meat. She repeated this process until she had successfully enticed the bird into her yard.

She noticed that it was missing a toe on it's right foot and it didn't look like it could fly because it's right wing seemed damaged. She closed the gate of the yard, bolted it and then opened a door to one of the out-houses. She then threw some meat in through the open door. The bird looked at it, but didn't go in and looked at her suspiciously.

She had an idea that it would help it, if she could bathe it's foot and straighten it's wing, but the the look of that beak and those claws deterred her. Shirley dropped another piece of meat at it's feet and that was also quickly eaten. Then she had a thought and went into the house and came out again wearing a pair of gardening gloves and very slowly approached the bird. It hopped backwards against the wall of the shed. "Come on bird",

she said “I am not going to hurt you” and very gently she put out her hand towards it, moving very cautiously. The bird tensed, it's neck stiffened, it's head went back and it's eyes gave a warning glare.

Shirley thought better of it. Time for plan B. Except she didn't really have a plan B. She decided to leave it alone for now and returned to the house.

She also decided that more meat was required, so she set out to drive into town in search of some. She would get some scrag ends and off-cuts for it.

Later returning with plenty of meat, she cut some up and placed it in a bowl and took it out for the bird, which was still in the yard. She noticed that the piece of meat, that she had thrown into the out-house had gone, so she concluded that it had ventured inside, which she thought was a good sign. She threw it another piece of meat that it gratefully ate and then showed it the bowl and placed it inside the out-house. The bird was still reluctant to go in. Finally she filled the trough outside with water and went back into the kitchen. She watched from the kitchen window as the bird timidly ventured into the out-house. Shirley was happy that she was making progress.

Later that evening when Joe, her husband, returned from work, she

enthusiastically told him the story. Joe was amused and supportive of her helping this unfortunate creature. He loved her soft and caring nature. However, he was not quite so amused when she confessed that she had fed his steak to the bird. It was chips and egg for him tonight.

Shirley was ashamed that she forgot to mention, that she had been out to get more meat for the bird and forgot to replace the steaks that she fed it with.

The following morning, they were woken up early, by a tapping on the kitchen door. Shirley got up and opened the door to find the bird pecking at it.

“Oh it's you pecking at my door. I suppose you want breakfast? You a look a bit perkier today. Fancy pecking at the door, that's clever. We will have to call you Pecker.” Shirley chopped up some meat and filled his bowl. Pecker certainly had quite an appetite.

This continued for a few days. Then on the Sunday morning, as Joe and Shirley slept after a good Saturday night out Peck, peck.....Peck, peck, peck.

Joe woke suddenly, “That bloody bird, doesn't it know it's Sunday!”

Shirley jumped out of bed, “Don't worry I'll sort him. You stay there, I'll bring you a coffee.”

That day Joe and Shirley had discussions about Pecker. Shirley promised Joe that Pecker wouldn't effect him and she would do all the looking after that was required.

Later that evening when she went out to feed Pecker. She found him on the roof of the out-house.

“Good boy, how did you get up there?”

As soon as Pecker saw her, he jumped of the roof and lop-sidedly glided to her feet and looked up at her expectantly. He looked much improved, his right wing wasn't opening fully but it was working and he was walking again. She was happy that Pecker was recovering.

When she told Joe, he said that was really great and perhaps the bloody thing would fly off now. Shirley thought that perhaps he would and that saddened her. She had got very attached to Pecker and looked forward to him pecking on the door when he was hungry. It was not everyone who had a pet vulture.

The next morning Shirley woke at the usual time, Joe was still asleep beside her. She lay on her back, slowly rejoining the awoken world. Then it dawned on her, there was no pecking. She rushed out of bed, through the kitchen and into the yard and there was no Pecker. She looked all around and he was nowhere to be found. She had mixed emotions, glad that he was

able to fly away and she really hoped that's what he did and that he was safe, but sad that he was gone. She was going to miss him.

Joe tried to console Shirley.

“There wasn't a good bye“, said Shirley.

“What did you expect him to do.. leave a thank you note” said Joe rather insensitively.

Shirley didn't think that comment was called for and toyed with idea of feeding Joe with the rest of Pecker's meat.

Shirley thought a lot about Pecker over the following week and Joe re-assured her by telling her that she had saved him and, thanks to her, he was alive and well somewhere.

The following weekend, Joe and Shirley were having a lie in, when they heard it. Peck, peck..... peck, peck,peck. They both sat up and stared at each other in disbelief. Shirley was at the kitchen door in an instant with Joe right behind her. She couldn't open the door fast enough.

There, before them, was Pecker, missing a toe, but otherwise looking fine. He gazed upwards at them, then hopped backwards and stretched out his wings displaying an impressive six foot of wingspan. He let out a raucous cry and flew up high above them. Then with his wings raised in a “V” he soared around in wobbly circles, letting out a series of high pitched

shrieks, before flying off into the distance.

Joe smiled at Shirley's astonishment.

“Well”, he said “I think that was his thank you note”.