

## **The Demise of Beauty**

**A letter to his family**

**By Prof. Danny McCain<sup>1</sup>**

### **Introduction by Jan H. Boer**

I am passing on to you an email story from a friend of mine in Jos, Nigeria, where I used to live. The friend is Prof. Danny McCain, a distant relative, I believe, of the more famous Senator McCain in the USA. Danny wrote this story as an email letter to his adult children who are spread all over.

"The Demise of Beauty"--that sounds pretty heavy and serious, doesn't it? It also sounds heavily philosophical. Well, it is heavy and serious if you consider the life of a bird a serious and important thing, the bird in this case being a pet parrot called Beauty. Especially if Beauty happens to be your pet for twenty years or more, his death can be devastating to its owners. His demise may not have been noticed by the world, but it was kind of devastating to Danny and Mary.

So, please read this story, both charming and sad. It is so good that we humans, ruthless as we often are to each other and to animals, can also have such a long and tender relationship to animals. Sometimes we think that nature is more at peace with itself than we humans are, but that is not always the case. In this story there is a strong and tender connection between humans and an animal, while the animals in this story display extreme hostility. Just because something is natural, does not make it good, useful or peaceful. Remember this when you are considering food or medicine!

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<sup>1</sup>Written March 26, 2018.

Dear Family

Last night, shortly after we went to bed, we heard a very terrible screech from Beauty-- a real parrot screech of terror. We looked out but could see nothing. This morning when Mary went outside, she found that something had attacked Beauty. She appeared to have one eye scratched out. There were about four or five large feathers in the floor of the bird cage. Beauty was huddled over in a corner. Mom called a veterinarian about possibly repairing her eye. I was quite amazed that at mid-morning, Beauty was out there making all of the typical sounds that she normally makes. She seemed quite happy.

When I came back in the mid-afternoon, she had moved to a different perch. That was good news. I was encouraged. However, she did not seem to have much appetite. Around dark, she had moved back to the edge of the cage and was sitting there with her head lowered down.

About 8:40 this evening, Amos came into my office to inform me that Beauty had "given up." She had fallen from her perch and was lying upside down with her little feet sticking in the air and her red tail feathers all spread out in their red glory.

We assumed that this was a big rat that had climbed up into her cage and attacked her. As you know we have some rats that are as big as small cats. However, when Adamu got here this evening, he said it was a black and white cat. Apparently, Beauty saw the animal and stuck her head out at the cat and the cat really went after her. Apparently she was injured more than just a scratched eye. Adamu is on the lookout for that cat.

Beauty came to live with us during the summer of 1989. She had been owned by a family from Mississippi named Jess and Dot Boggin who worked at NAVCON, a fertilizer company near Port Harcourt. We had seen Beauty many times when we had gone out there to visit them. She made the move with us to Jos and has been out there on that porch ever since squeaking and squawking and making braking sounds and squeaky door sounds and speaking in English and Hausa with a Louisiana accent. Even though she was loud and made a mess, we would bring her into the house during the cold weather, at times trying to keep her from biting my hand as we moved the cage. She loved Mom and any time she came near she would poke her head out of the cage and lowered it so Mary would rub her head. The first 20 years we had her, I was not her favorite friend and she tried to bite me every time I came near her cage. She has been successful several times. However, she mellowed over the years and I don't think she has tried to bite me in 10 years or so. Maybe once.

This evening, Amos and Adamu dug a hole between an orange tree and a Mango tree not too far from where Sarki is buried. We put Beauty in a little wrapper and Adamu lowered her into the ground with the words of Jesus who said, "But not a single sparrow

can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it" (Matthew 10:29 ). Beauty was much bigger than a sparrow and much bigger in our lives than many things so I am sure the Lord noticed our little loss.

Beauty has been such a part of our family that we will hardly know what to do without her. No more peanuts and fried eggs (she was kind of a cannibal); no more getting her the small avocados that fall from the tree and mango seeds to chew on. No more enjoying her loud belly laughs and her making the sound of water being poured into her water container. However, we will always live with the happy memory of this rather obnoxious, loud, beautiful and ever present friend.

Be sure to shed a tear tonight for Beauty.

Dad