STUMPY

by

Jasmine Tritten

Stumpy hopped along the top of the adobe fence surrounding our portico. With a black tuft and long tail feathers, he looked like any ordinary roadrunner. Except one leg had broken off half way and hung loose, not useful for running. Imagine this poor bird, unable to live up to his name as a roadrunner.

Every morning he showed up on our fence. Sometimes he jumped on a chair in front of the dining-room window, to say hello to our indoor cats, by staring at them. With great speed, their whiskers moved back and forth. When spotting me in the window, he cocked his head to the side as if greeting me, and I nodded back. A relationship developed on a regular basis.

For weeks he visited. Curious how he survived with only one leg, I decided to keep an eye on him to find out the way he consumed food. One day he stood on the stone wall in the sun with a lizard in his straight beak, shaking the lively creature from one side to the other. An hour later I found him still standing, but the reptile in his bill hardly moved. Later on, he swallowed the whole lizard.

 Roadrunners I detested, because of their cruelty to other animals, picking out their eyes and pecking at small sick birds. These bold creatures robbed eggs from nests and gobbled up small quail babies. But after observing my bird friend, I realized they need to eat too, for survival.

Stumpy changed my outlook on roadrunners. Because of his boldness, courage, fearlessness and how he managed to survive for this long time with a handicap, I admired him. Almost every day he visited for four months. Until one morning, while feeding my llamas, I found him floating head down in the water bucket. While sitting on the side of the tub drinking water, the wind must have pushed him, and he fell.

Tears trickled down my cheeks because I liked him, and we had developed a unique relationship involving our cats too. Since that time I have great respect for roadrunners in general, not yelling at them anymore. They are amazing birds. I will miss *Stumpy*.