

Song of Jaja, the Medicine Bird

Contributed by Jessica Logsdon

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Life and death, shadow and light, read me o' reader if you find delight for I am rarely reborn into this life. JaJa the silkie medicine bird brought an egg to life in 27 days, but it only took the cold breath of winter thirty seconds to bring it death. Winter is a long cold brutal master that is difficult to tolerate and even more difficult to please. Winter took the life of that beautiful chic and winter made me awaken once again to the fact that difficult things are hard to know. After I placed JaJa and her clutch of eggs next to the wood stove, I monitored her very closely for several days. She was not satisfied with just one chic, she kept sitting on her clutch of eggs while mothering her new chic, keeping it warm, talking to it and pointing it to the direction of the food and water. Even with the warm stove going it was still a little bit frigid inside, but I thought JaJa would keep the new chic warm. One evening as I was stoking the fire I heard the chic chirping even more than usual, as I walked over to its basket I noticed it was standing inside of the 1/2 cup measuring cup that I was using for its water bowl. I thought maybe it could not leap out so I scooped it out and placed it next to JaJa, who I expected to nudge underneath her like I already had seen her do so many times before. Hens will often sit on eggs and chic's all at once as they wait for the rest of their clutch to hatch. This time though JaJa did not push the chic underneath her and the chic just kept chirping louder and louder so I picked it up again. What a magical little soul it looked right into my eyes as it chirped frantically. I held it gently examining it closely trying to understand why it was suffering. Then I noticed one of its legs was bent awkwardly and I wondered if it had a broken leg. Perhaps it had injured its' leg when JaJa was rotating it around underneath her along with the other eggs. Broody hens rock and rotate their eggs every few hours. The chic held one leg as if in pain and I thought maybe it had previously injured its' leg and this is why it could not get out of the water bowl. I gently placed the chic next to JaJa once again thinking she would know best being the mama bird, but as the chic became paralyzed JaJa became increasingly more alarmed and clucked and wailed loudly, but she never covered it up. I picked up the chic once again and held it in front of the wood stove directly in front of the blowing hot air and it seemed to calm down and it closed its' eyes, so I then gave it back to JaJa to calm her down. The chic stood for a moment and then just collapsed, both of its' legs were frozen, it closed its' eyes gave a faint chirp and died. JaJa, just kept starring at the chick in distress, it all happened so fast in less than one minute. What happened I asked myself as I picked up the dead chic that was still perfect in its' beauty, it was healthy and happy for days and then out of nowhere dead. I thought about it as I held its' soft, limp, lifeless little body in my hand, it felt lighter than a feather. I then realized after it had gotten wet, it had also gotten very cold and went into hypothermia and died. I was struck by my profound ignorance, I should have lifted the basket up off of the floor, where it was warmer and I should have put a light on them to keep them extra warm, but I thought the mama bird would provide enough heat. What a fool I am and I paid the price of a precious life. I put more wood into the stove, got it roaring hot and then burned the remains of the chic. JaJa gave up on the other eggs after this, she got up out of the basket and walked outside to the other chickens. At first I felt a bit of malice and rage, some of it even directed toward JaJa. Why didn't she keep the chic warm? Why did she just stare at it instead of covering it up? And then I remembered that clothes serve as a protection against the cold as patience serves as a protection against wrongs. If you put on more clothes as the cold increases it will have no power to hurt you. In the same way patience must grow when you meet with great wrongs and they will be powerless to vex your mind.