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Chi Chi, The Little Bird That Could
By Jennifer Donnelly



Chi Chi came into my life when his previous owners left him at the Sacramento Animal Shelter complaining that he was aggressive, loud, and a biter. They didn't paint a very pretty picture for me, but I trusted the Mickaboo coordinator with whom I had talked and agreed to foster this little 'Angry Bird'. Well, he turned out to be not so angry after all! I ended up adopting him almost immediately after he entered my home.

He came to my home with feathers in disarray, plucked, streaked and frayed from constant chewing. I introduced a few toys to entice play rather than OCD feather grooming. His favorite was the string plucking toy I bought - see that "who you lookin' at" eye while he cuddles the toy? A little Dirty Harry action going on there in his brain. You can almost hear the 'Go ahead, make my day!'

Together we went through a change of diet (with a dose of patience), introduced a foraging mix, removed seed from his diet (with another dollop of patience), introduced vegetables, gave him daily out-of-cage time (and a lot of patience), appropriate lighting and lots of love (and patience, did I mention that part?). I progressed him through various stages of foraging prowess: eating foraging mix in an uncovered food dish, to shredding into a dish covered with wax paper, to two sheets of wax paper, and now to multiple layers of parchment paper (I'm still poking a 'starter hole' in the parchment paper though).



June 1 was our one year adopt-aversary and Chi Chi's overall improvement has been pretty awesome. He's still cagey (get it, cagey?) about stepping up, but we've improved. He steps up on his own terms (never on hands though; apparently hands are the Voldemort of the Chi Chi world). He loves his full height play stand and will run away from me to avoid bedtime (literally, he'll run to the back and hide behind branches so I can't offer him his travel perch). He still leads with his beak and if you don't pay attention he will bite you just to show you who's boss, so caution is the name of the game. If I hold my finger in just the right place he will groom it with his little black tongue. A few days ago while cleaning his cage my hair fell into the cage - he latched onto the opportunity to groom me. I'm assuming this wasn't a commentary on my non-showered self, but it could have been.

He greets me every morning with a cheerful and patient 'Good morning!' until I uncover him. He calls out to check if I'm still home when the door opens. He loves to play and swing from his beak on the side of his cage. He loves to flirt with visitors and he will do ANYTHING for sunflower seeds. So, with a steady supply of sunflower seeds we will embark on our second year's adventures together!